Migrant identities in a new immigrant destination: revealing the limitations of the 'hard working' migrant identity

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Abstract

Migrant labour has transformed local economies in many places, often helping to reverse long-term decline. The emergence of new immigrant destinations (NID) globally brings mixed opportunities for the individuals involved. This article uses empirical evidence, focusing on the workplace, to show the performance, construction and significance of migrant identity. By using social identity theory to examine what it means to be a 'migrant', it follows from Goffman's overarching concern with social interactions and his promotion of microanalysis as analytical lenses.

The article reveals the ambiguity of the label 'migrant'. It shows how the external application or internal enactment of migrant identities bestow particular status that represents an asset or an obstacle to integration. It can mean 'hard working', 'less deserving' and 'exploitable' and it also denotes 'lazy' and individuals. While some individuals assume the hard working migrant and 'exploitable' identity in certain circumstances because of the benefits that it brings, this status can also cause high levels of dissatisfaction and distress among migrants. The research shows how the creation of a migrant identity limits the structures and networks from which migrants may draw resources and in so doing curtails the possibilities for social change due to migration.

Introduction

Labour and capital mobility from globalisation has given rise to significant increases in the reliance of migrant labour in established gateways, but also in new immigration destinations (NID). Quite distinctive to urban migration that characterised post-war urban and industrial areas; this form of migration is not yet fully understood. The changing labour markets that have shaped migration to NID's, including those of the agri-food and the service sectors, occur in different contexts and have different consequences.

The emergent challenges facing NID's are multi-faceted and they involve macro structures such as migration policies as well as more local influences (Massey, Durand and Malone 2002; Jentsch and Simard 2009; Marrow 2011). In other words they involve individual, interaction and institutional orders (Jenkins 2014). The resultant processes of integration and assimilation are notoriously "path-dependent," relying on contextual factors like racial/ethnic boundaries or economic circumstances (Alba 2005: p.41).

NID's have become 'natural laboratories' for studying rural transformations and inter-group relationships resulting from these distinctive migratory movements (Waters and Jiménez 2005; Lichter 2012, p.3). Emerging scholarship explores migrant incorporation by highlighting the relationship between migrant communities and social structures. The construction of migrant as a marker of identification in these areas is often applied. Researchers have begun to study different aspects including the distinctive 'rural cosmopolitanism' (Torres et al. 2006; Popke 2011; Krivokapic Skoko et al. 2015;

Woods 2015) and the emerging transnational/transregional relations (Göler and

Krišjāne. Although there has been some interest in employer and employee relations

in NID's (see for instance Rogaly (2008) and Rye and Andrzejewska (2010), it has not

been thoroughly examined.

This article contributes to the growing scholarship on NID's. More precisely it responds

to a call from Batnitzky et al. (2009, p. 1290) for additional attention on what 'the

practical and symbolic effects of migration are as people move across different

structures and institutions of social control….' Mindful of Goffman's (1969, 1983)

emphasis on individual interactions and experiences and, within the context of NID's,

the article examines what it means to be an economic migrant in terms of everyday

encounters and experiences. It draws on Jenkin's (2014, pp. 94-95) three orders (after

Goffman) of individual, interaction and institution thus recognising that identification

is a process arising from entanglements between individuals across social space.

Following Jenkins we can say that what goes on in people's heads, what goes on

between people and established ways of doing things are all interconnected. Using

this framing for social identity, the article explores what it is to be a 'migrant'[1] in an

NID. It shows that migrant identities are socially constructed and they are shaped both

externally and internally. These different categorisations and enactments of the

'migrant' identity are shown to affect individual behaviour and subsequent actions and

outcomes. The analysis illustrates how some people value and exploit the migrant

identity because of the benefits that it brings in certain circumstances. The status can

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[1] I am mindful of the generic and ambiguous nature of this label - migrants are an extremely heterogeneous group, made up of individuals with different experiences, values and so forth. Moreover like any individual, they have multiple identities, something that has increasingly come to the fore in the age of mobilities (Glick Schiller et al. 1992)

also create obstacles to integration, causing high levels of dissatisfaction among migrants in less beneficial situations. The extent to which migrant identities create an opportunity for social change is evaluated.

The performance of identity

Individuals 'do' identities through everyday encounters. Always negotiable and changeable, identities are multi-faceted, evolving, flexible, responsive to circumstances and reliant on contact with others (Goffman 1969, 1970; McCall and Simmons 1966; Burke 1991; Woodward 1997; Jenkins 2000, 2014; Stryker and Burke 2000; Elliott 2013). Personal interests, wider social structures and networks thus determine a chosen identity at a particular moment. In the football pitch, being a schoolboy may be more important than being Polish, but that same boy may emphasise his Polishness in the company of his extended family. Rather than possessing a given and fixed identity, individuals select a preferred identity that aligns with internal expectations and external influences arising from social interaction and social structures (Goffman 1969; Jenkins 2014).

Internal factors

Social identity is guided by standards and can be understood as 'a set of meanings applied to the self in a social role or *situations defining what it means to be who one is*' (Burke and Reitzes 1981; Burke and Tully 1977, p. 387, cited in Burke 1991, my emphasis). Those standards are formed by internal processes including personal values and meanings as well as expectations that are associated with a role and with group membership. Crucially standards are connected to materiality. Social and material

costs and benefits impact on the consequences of giving prominence to a certain identity and give rise to a 'salience hierarchy' (Tsushima and Burke 1999; Jenkins 2000; Stryker and Burke 2000). Identity standards are related to the desire to be accepted and the image that individuals wish to present of themselves, this public image typically diverging from self-image (Goffman 1969): differences between the personal social self exist (Harter 1997 in Cote and Levine 2002). Ultimately individuals identify with a particular group due to similarity to them and difference with others across a shared boundary (Barth 1969; Woodward 1997; Jenkins 2014).

External factors

Identity is thus not only an internal, cognitive process as there can be no 'self' outside of society 'each of us, as individuals, fashions a sense of our own selfhood through engagement with other selves' (Mead 1934[1974] p.164, see also Jenkins 2014; Stryker and Burke 2000). People hold multiple identities, enacted according to the social context and validated through external categorisation. This is illustrated by national identity which is often taken for granted within the national context but becomes more important in a new country. With this shift in the salience hierarchy, migrants may develop stronger patriotic feelings, seeking opportunities to celebrate aspects of their national identity and attracting external validation in their new country and from their home country.

The way in which identities are externally assigned in a derogatory manner is evident in the application of the term migrant in the UK. For instance, tabloid newspapers and many political groups portray an image of migrants as 'sponging' off the welfare

system. Jenkins (2014) argues that such categorisation of others can be more significant for the categoriser than the categorised, such as when powerful groups categorize those in subordinate positions in an attempt to retain their standing in society. This is a critical issue for right leaning politicians as they secure votes among traditionalist and typically anti-immigrant voters. Such wider power relations were aptly demonstrated in the recent EU reform package that was negotiated by the British Prime Minister[2]. The paradox is that many of these individuals rely on migrants to shore up elements of the economy but they simultaneously peddle an image of lazy migrants. Jenkins (2014) argues convincingly that most power arises from the way in which others deploy identity as a category, rather than when it emerges from self-identification and this provides a clue as to how people view themselves and also of their group's relationship to wider society.

Fluid identities

The different migrant identities including 'hard working', 'scrounger', 'benefits claiming' and 'foreigner'; carry different implications and are shaped by an interplay of internal and external forces. They arise because individual migrants' lives are enacted across multiple spaces and scales and encompass both local and trans-local communities, contexts that are made increasingly visible in an era of migration. Emerging identities are shaped and constrained by structural factors and power relations and through everyday interactions.

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[2] https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-commons-statement-on-eu-reform-and-referendum-22-february-2016

Individuals prioritise a particular identity to achieve identity congruence *at a particular moment in time and according to their social situation* and their salience hierarchy (Burke 1991), but these factors are subject to change over time and, as previously explained, give rise to multiple identities overall. Interruption in a preferred identity arises between internal standards, subjective meanings and external factors of environment including others' perceptions, socio-political setting and availability of resources (Burke 1991; Thoits 1991; Stets and Burke 2005). With wider networks there is clearly greater potential for identity disruption as there are increased and variable influences, such as could be expected in a transnational context. This can lead to individual frustration and distress for a number of reasons including loss of control and of self-esteem (Burke 1991; Stryker and Burke 2000; Stets and Burke 2005). Identity theorists show that events connected to identity disruption are more likely to cause anxiety than any other life events (Thoits 1991, Burke 1991).

Jenkins (2000) urges us to pay attention to consequences of identity formation across different contexts. By doing so, we will better understand why certain identities carry more salience than others, why individuals understand them differently and the implications for social change.

Globalisation and migrant labour: New Immigrant Destinations

One of the major impacts of globalisation has been the increased mobility of labour and capital and resulting in the arrival of migrants in all corners of the globe including NID's. For many NID's, the total numbers of immigrants are small but the accompanying changes represent significant shifts to population diversity overall.

Generalisations are not always possible with variation existing within localities, as Popke cogently reports on rural eastern North Carolina: 'Although many long-time residents have reacted to this change with a sense of openness and generosity, I have also witnessed a growing sense of unease, and even anger, over the recent social and cultural transformation of the region' (2011: 243). The complex impact of these diverse immigrants may have both positive and negative (or even neutral) consequences as these non-urban, multi-cultural locations negotiate social and cultural differences. For instance, it may stimulate local economies but it can bring challenges such as increasing pressure on local health and education systems (Dax and Machold 2015) or confronting prevailing social and cultural norms (Marrow 2013)

Winders (2014) identifies a number of features that define these places, including the scale and pace of settlement, the lack of institutional infrastructure, the fact that historically these areas are ethnically homogenous with little or limited experience of immigration, and that immigrants in NID's are often younger than the native-born residents (see also Kandel and Cromartie 2004; Jentsch and Simard 2009; Hugo and Morén-Alegret 2014; Crowley et al. 2015). NID's are evident across the globe. For example, Fonesca identifies significant migrant inflows working in agriculture in the Alentejo, Ribatejo and Oeste regions of Portugal and in some labour intensive industrial activities mostly in the Northern and Central Littoral regions (Fonseca and Malheiros 2003 in Fonesca 2008). Similarly Collantes et al. (2014) describe how among other patterns of immigration, agricultural dominated regions such as Almeria and Murcia in south-eastern Spain have attracted migrants. Other examples exist throughout small towns and rural areas in Europe including Greece (Kasimis et al.

2010); Northern Ireland (McAreavey 2012) and Norway (Rye and Andrzejewska 2010) as migrants find work in agriculture and food processing. The phenomenon exists in many other high income countries (Hugo and Morén-Alegret 2014) including the USA, South Africa and Australia (see for instance Kandel and Cromartie 2004; Kritzinger et al. 2004; Krivokapic-Skoko and Collins 2016 respectively). Many of these areas have capacity to accommodate more migrants because in the past they have faced economic decline and/or depopulation due to youth emigration, falling fertility rates and an ageing society. In light of this and the existing 'migration crisis', NID's are important.

Demand for migrants in NID's is often stimulated by firms actively lobbying for larger immigration flows, as evidenced in the EU (Awad, 2009; Findlay et al. 2010; and Findlay et al. 2013) and the USA (Hanson, 2009). Migration is controlled by the state through the implementation of appropriate structures that aim to regulate employment while also meeting general labour shortages (Castles et al. 1984; Castles et al. 2014). This is typically achieved using mechanisms such as work permit schemes (Hoggart and Mendoza 2000; Preibisch 2007; Preibisch and Otero 2014). These influences have led to a predominance of migrants globally in agriculture, horticulture; food processing, construction, small industries and social care (see for instance Kandel and Cromartie 2004; Kritzinger et al. 2004; Missingham et al. 2006; Broadway 2007; Jensen and Yang 2009; McConnell and Miraftab 2009; Lichter 2012; Findlay et al. 2010). Labour market segmentation and employment restrictions curtail economic mobility and outcomes for migrants. In the face of increasingly competitive markets the very existence of many businesses in these diverse sectors is reliant on the

availability of low cost, flexible and unskilled labour. This creates jobs with little security that many local people refuse to do (Rogaly, 2008; Geddes and Scott, 2010) and that are typically filled by migrants (Hoggart and Mendoza 1999, Ruhs 2006; Preibisch 2007; Kofman et al. 2009; Anderson and Ruhs 2012).

Migrants exist in a precarious position in the economy as they face discrimination and unequal access to employment rights (Niessen et al. 2007; Standing 2011), something that is well illustrated for modern migrants working within the food-related sector (see International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food Special Section 2012). There is evidence of migrants being paid less to undertake the same work (Ruhs and Anderson 2010; Rye and Andrzejewska 2010; Maher and Cawley 2014) and of low wage traps affecting ethnic minorities disproportionately (Barnard and Turner 2011; Barnard 2014). Migrants often experience lower levels of unionisation compared to the rest of the labour market (Gorodzeisky and Richards 2013; Preibisch and Otero 2014). In the UK this is 18%, compared to 26% for the rest of the workforce (LFS 2010 in Cam 2014). Specific regulations for farmworkers in Canada outlaw migrant unionisation (Tucker 2012 in Preibisch and Otero 2014). Other restrictions impede migrants' full participation in the labour market, for example in the Netherlands and Germany limitations exist on migrants' right to change jobs (Gorodzeisky and Richards 2013). Part of what it is to be a migrant is evidently to be less deserving of equal treatment than the rest of the population.

It is unmistakeable that structural factors have created demand for migrant labour in new locations, and have shaped workplace conditions. While structural cause and

effect are difficult to disentangle, it is evident that much of the demand for migrant labour per se is socially constructed whereby employers shape the 'good' worker (Findlay et al. 2013; Shubin et al. 2014) and I would suggest the 'hard working' and the 'exploitable' worker. A prevailing discourse within NID's suggests that migrants are more willing and better able, than non-migrants to undertake this typically undignified work. By creating distinctions between migrants and non-migrants, a 'migrant worker' identity starts to take shape, justifying differential treatment including the conditions of the workplace and the extent to which employees may work their desired hours. However, what is less clear from the literature is how individual interactions and workplace conditions, albeit in the context of these broader social structures, help to shape migrant identities, and the implications of this for individuals. Drawing from Jenkin's (2014, pp. 94-95) orders (also after Goffman) of individual, interaction and institution, I move on to present the empirical data.

Data collection

Data is drawn from research that [the author] has been conducting with migrant communities in Northern Ireland since 2005, with particular emphasis on Eastern European migrants. That research examined migrants' experiences of life in Northern Ireland and identified links between poverty and ethnicity. This paper uses data from a total of four focus groups (FG) convened with mostly Polish women in 2009/10 (3) and another in 2012/2013 along with 17 interviews conducted with Polish migrants in 2013. This data was supplemented with three FG's and five interviews that were also conducted with migrant advocacy groups during that time. The research was

conducted in the council areas of Craigavon, Armagh and Newry and Mourne[3] all of which encompass rural hinterlands and small and large towns. Northern Ireland has been identified as a NID (Winders 2014) and accordingly these sites were ethnically homogenous; they experienced significant levels of immigration over a short space of time which reversed historical trends of emigration (NISRA 2013) and the impact on local services was exaggerated due to the (young) age profile of the migrants (McAreavey 2010).

With consent, interviews and FG's were recorded, transcribed and coded for emerging themes. Initial access to respondents was gained through several gatekeepers who provided advocacy to migrants and their families. Respondents ranged in age from late 20s to late 50s. Educational attainment included graduates in diverse subjects including psychology, teaching and architecture. Each migrant participant was paid an honorarium. Interpreters were always offered and they were provided for a number of interviews and FG's. Moreover, the series of FG's with the Polish women were co-facilitated with interpreters and involved simultaneous interpretation[4]. The nature and format of all focus groups and interviews was discussed at length with co-facilitators, interpreters and steering committees as appropriate.

Context for migration to Northern Ireland: a New Immigrant Destination

Country of birth figures for NI (NI) show that the proportion of the population that was born outside the UK and Ireland rose from 1.5% to 4.5% between 2001 and 2011

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[3] Local government boundaries have changed since the research was conducted.
[4] Additional methodological issues including language and interpretation will be discussed in a future article, Author forthcoming.

(NISRA 2013). Geographic pockets have emerged with growth rates as high as 21%
recorded one district council area (Doyle and McAreavey 2014). During this period
those with Accession 8[5] nationality increased from 710 to 35,560, with Polish migrants
comprising the largest migrant group (NISRA 2013). Many challenges are emerging for
this society: migrants have settled in all areas across NI[6] and there is emerging
evidence of the creation of migrant ghettos set against the legacy of civil unrest (Doyle
and McAreavey 2014). Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) the main source of
employment for migrant workers to NI, have been shown to be more discriminatory
than larger employers towards ethnic and migrant groups (Green et al. 2005; Irwin et
al. 2014). Meanwhile there is growing evidence of migrants being employed in jobs
well below the level of their skills and experience across many sectors of the economy
within NI (see for instance Irwin et al. 2014), but this is only starting to be understood.

Different third sector and government sponsored support structures were created to
help migrant incorporation, including a government scheme for recognising overseas
qualifications and third sector-led advocacy projects. The latter were often named
using terms as crude as 'migrant worker project' and many were created in a short
space of time, illustrative of the limitations and inflexibility of government support
(McAreavey 2012; Jentsch 2007: Jentsch and Simard 2009). This 'way of doing things'
or the institutional order (Jenkins 2014) follows a pattern of behaviour within civil
society organisations whereby their raison d'être is to advocate for social groups

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[5] Accession 8 or A8 countries refer to the eight European countries from Eastern Europe who joined the
EU in 2004. They are comprised the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia
and Slovenia.
[6] Context is important here: NI has a population of 1,814,000 which encompasses the two main cities of
Belfast (pop. 280,900) and Derry/Londonderry (pop. 108,261).

deemed to be on the margins of society. However, by creating migrant specific projects, a discourse of a static migrant identity is formed at a precise moment in time. This ignores differences within and between migrant groups and does not respond to evolving needs. An employee of the statutory housing agency explains:

I have seen us running a number of events especially for foreign nationals and some migrant families came but not in the numbers that we had hoped or expected, we were disappointed...but whether they didn't feel yet that they were part of the local community, or whether they didn't feel ownership of the facilities, I don't know. You would hope that the critical mass has now been reached, and you would imagine that they would move out of these immediate circles that they might feel safe outside of this immediate family network (FG advocacy and support workers 18th May 2009).

As a NID, the housing agency, along with other service providers was suddenly under pressure to accommodate users from different cultural contexts and with different languages. They lacked experience and expertise to meet this new demand. This incident shows how key traits of NID's, namely the pace of change and the lack of institutional infrastructure, challenge migrants' incorporation. Local history also framed the event, providing rules for how the housing agency should engage with its users (Jenkins 2008). Running an exclusive event for 'foreign nationals' was designed as a platform for integration. Ironically by following a pattern steeped in convention, it sharpened boundaries between migrants and the rest of the population, exaggerating

difference and potentially stigmatising migrants as 'foreigners'; reinforcing the ethnic hegemony of Protestants and Catholics. It is hardly surprising that migrants did not wish to participate, especially if they perceived that their attendance would underscore difference between them and established residents. Actions such as these do not facilitate easy 'blending;' something that a number of individuals talked about wishing to achieve.

The event perhaps reveals more about the categorisers than those being categorised (Jenkins 2014) and it highlights the significance of local context and history. Little recognition was given to the way in which change is constant in the 'human world' involving melding between individuals and the collective (Jenkins 2008; Jenkins 2014). Like many other NID's Northern Ireland is largely ethnically homogenous, but it also has a particular legacy of division between the two largest ethno-national groups, Protestants and Catholics. This presents certain challenges for migrant incorporation, including the persistence of using the binary of Protestant/Catholic to evaluate social relations (Doyle and McAreavey 2014). Furthermore, the Belfast Agreement requires politics to function as nationalist, unionist or 'other' and it is demonstrative of the inadequacies of governance structures. Social structures are so fixated on measuring community relations in binary terms that they are unable to take account of growing diversity. There are few opportunities to nurture new relationships between people. The binary framing pervades social structures and so exclusive practices are embedded within institutions. This is evident in the education system that is predominantly either state controlled (Protestant) or church controlled (Catholic). Meanwhile spatial elements of this institutional order are visible in residential segregation, with walls

dividing communities, and a strong association between identity and space (territorialism) (Nolan 2014, Doyle 2015). Challenges are frequently made regarding the eligibility of foreign-born residents to social housing based on ethnicity rather than according to official measurements for assessing housing need. This helps to shape migrants' identities as 'foreigner' and as being less deserving. It ignores other aspects of their identity such as skills and experience. Such a 'way of doing things' creates an institutional order that is premised on pre-existing patterns and it confines migrants to particular physical and social spaces, a particular feature of NID's. There is little room for interactional networks of possibility that arise through entanglements between individuals (Jenkins 2014). The knock-on effects of this are described by one advocacy worker:

In Portadown they [migrants] were all hemmed into interface initially. For example, the Portuguese when they first came in 2000/01 they couldn't walk into Portadown mainstreet because of the politics of this country. They couldn't go to the bars in the town, now they are living everywhere. Ok it has been a difficult journey in terms of being rejected and certain things happened to allow them to move… (Interview, advocacy worker 20th June 2013)

In creating these social divisions, migrants have few opportunities to display other aspects of their identity outside their ethnic networks. They are unable to properly embed within wider social structures. Compromising the individual order in this way has serious ramifications: Jenkins (2014) reminds us of that an individual's sense of

identity is established in relation to others, otherwise they are unable to know who

they are and therefore their ability to act, including their capacity to contribute to

society, is curtailed. As an NID with little history of immigration, the social institutions

in Northern Ireland appeared to be inadequate and unequal treatment was largely

unchallenged by wider society. An advocacy worker articulated it nicely:

> *I also think it's something to do with where we're at in terms of Northern*
>
> *Ireland and in terms of our systems and our understanding…it's almost as if the*
>
> *people who are coming here are still visitors and the idea is that they are going*
>
> *to go home again and it's reflected right through the system... when [refugees]*
>
> *sign up at jobcentre plus or wherever they are not called in for interview in the*
>
> *same way as locals would be because the thinking is that it's easier to keep*
>
> *them on benefits than to train them. That's a real problem and I really do think*
>
> *that we haven't …got our heads around the fact that people are here to stay…*
>
> (Focus Group Support Agencies 3rd April 2012).

An emerging categorisation of migrants, in this case as foreign, lazy and work-shy was

evident, even though there was no logical rationale for that designation. The opposite

could be claimed since many migrants demonstrated their willingness to get a job by

frequenting the job agency. However, emphasising difference to the mainstream

Protestant and Catholic communities valorises the prevailing institutional order (and

the power of the categorisers). In the longer term this sustains static social structures

and maintains existing power relations.

Shaping the migrant identity

Goffman showed that the way in which individuals make sense of their social world is by 'framing' as a means of applying norms and rules so that they understand everyday encounters. Lithuanian farm workers soon learned the 'rules' of their employment, although somewhat ironically, they were never furnished with employment contracts: one of the rules of being a migrant worker was that they should never request such a contract. Actually the employer-employee relationship was extremely complex with many migrants living in accommodation provided by their employer. A support worker described psychological struggles. According to her migrants did not have the 'courage' to ask for holidays: the cost was too high as they feared job loss and subsequently loss of housing (interview advocacy worker 20th June 2013). Understanding such social contexts is important for identity formation as migrants were found to exchange information on social norms, unwritten rules and the like. They learned about the situational properties of interactions (after Goffman 1982). Polish women elaborate in a FG:

> *#1 When I started I didn't really know the rules, and there was this man who asked me to rearrange some stuff. So I completed the task in two hours and went to him to ask what he wanted me to do next. And he said: but it's simply impossible. You wouldn't have done it. But I had. An Irish worker wasn't able to complete this task in one day. But I was asked to lift 500 pieces of boxes or something like that. And then everybody was giving me a hard time and I had no idea why.*

#6 This type of behaviour leads to higher expectations. Employees can be

expected to do more…At the beginning we want to prove how good we

are, that we are hardworking. And probably we do it unconsciously. This is

what people who want to show off do. They want to be better than other

people. But it means that everybody is then expected to do more and

more. (FG Polish Women (1 of 3) 1 December 2009)

The women contributed to the institutional order by changing expectations and

thereby influencing the dominant way of doing things. However, strategies of 'rate-

busting' through high, often unrealistic, levels of productivity raise the bar for other

migrants and nurture a discourse of migrants as being hard working and exploitable.

This does not necessarily benefit them: in the same focus group discussion, the first

woman goes on to describe how her husband ended up with an injury in his

workplace, something that she attributes to the speed at which he worked. Other

migrants enacted the hard working, exploitable role using it to get a job, as a Polish

woman articulates (Date: 1 December 2009):

#3 There is this expectation, I think, that we would do more. There was

this Czech who applied for a job at the company where my husband works.

And he claimed to be a Pole on his application. There were 3 or 4 Czechs

applying for this job and he was the only one who got it. The boss said: I

know that Polish people work well; I know I can trust them. (FG Polish

Women (1 of 3) 1st December 2009)

This hard working, exploitable identity was often performed due to lack of choice. A

Polish man, also working in meat processing, explains:

There were a lot of situations where foreign nationals, especially Polish

people were asked to stay longer hours. The Irish people came to work at

7am and finished at 3pm and they said that's it, we have done our work.

The managers or supervisors came up to the Polish people and said our

factory has to stay working, can you stay on. Actually we couldn't say no,

because the supervisor would say there are a hundred people waiting

outside to take your job. Very often I would work 12-15 hours per day

and so I did a lot of overtime, also night shifts were absolutely packed

with foreign nationals and not the local people…. I was appreciated

because I was asked to be a supervisor, but I wasn't getting any extra

money for it. I was told that I was really good, it was all words, but there

was no extra money for it. After five or six years of working, when I was

*dismissed, nobody came and said anything to me. (*Interview Polish M,

13*th* June 2013).

Part of the way in which migrant identities were formed arose because of the

perception that migrants were not entitled to equal treatment and that they were less

deserving and exploitable. An underlying assumption was that they would 'put up'

with differential and discriminatory treatment and would be hard working despite

their treatment in the workplace:

Absolutely we were not equally treated… if an Irish person doesn't come to

work for a day or two then on the following day the supervisors do not

make a big deal about it. If a Polish person does this, they make a big deal

about it. The same if an Irish person comes late, they don't mention it, but if

a Polish person is late, then the supervisors make a big deal about it…if

someone missed a day, sometimes he would be fired, this would never have

happened to a local person…When people were employed they were not

given a chance to learn the job, from the very beginning they were expected

to work hard and well…sometimes there were nightmares where

supervisors would bully people to make them give up work and they

wouldn't have to fire them…Like standing in front of them and telling them

they should work faster, faster, faster…they would try and find any flaw

possible, such as making sure the bone is clean and so they would find any

type of meat. Or they might change the positions where they work very

frequently so that they did not get the opportunity to become familiar with

the work and all of this to get them to leave the job.

Would you like to have been a supervisor?

It's a difficult question because if I knew English I could be a supervisor. But

on the other hand I would not like to be a supervisor because I work with all

of these Polish people and they are my friends. A lot depends on the

people… (Interview Polish M, 13th June 2013)

For these individuals working in the factory their Polish identity was more important to

their employer than being meat factory workers because it differentiated them from

other workers and it created potential for exploitation. Moreover for the individual

interviewed, although being Polish and being a hard worker were compatible for him

in his current position, it was not something that he believed possible in the supervisor

role. He expected that the proposed management position would overshadow his Polish identity and with it his social circle.

Juggling migrant identities

Migrants are often caught been contradicting and evolving constructions of identities arising from internal standards and from external pressures. One of the 'signs' of being a migrant is being successful in the new country; but this external expectation does not always align with a migrant's lived reality. Migrants' identity, more precisely their individual order, can be disrupted due to perceptions of 'hero at home' and 'loser at destination'[7] which requires migrants to reconfigure their internal world as they internalise these different ascriptions of identity. They often uphold images of success by inflating earnings and concealing other life-related difficulties.

One man described the plight of a close relative who spent five year working maximum hours in a meat processing plant while remitting cash to his wife and family in Poland. He committed suicide not long after his return home. That interviewee had spent his time in Northern Ireland in a similar way and he went on to express his personal anxiety, if not outright sense of failure:

> *At this point I am at a moment in my life where I would like to devote time with my family. I have 2 or 3 connections where later on I will try and talk to those people and get some work in Poland. I think I will manage to do that….but at this moment my priority is with my family. I wasted 8 years…*

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[7] My thanks to XXXXXXX for so effectively crystallizing this point.

Yes, I mean there is a house and I have got good contacts with my son, but it is not the same. This family life has been lost… (Interview Polish M 13th June 2013).

Over the course time this man's priorities had changed and with it his sense of identity. Like many migrants, he had left family behind with the sole purpose of 'working hard' and remitting money, his identity as a provider overshadowing his family identity. It was evident during the interview that the negative impact of his geographically fragmented family had not been anticipated and was a major disruption to his personal identity: he was very, very upset as he recounted his experiences. Rather than earning money, what became more important to him was family time, clearly a re-ordering of the salience hierarchy, as his family identity assumed centre-stage, over-shadowing his 'hard working' identity. This identity transition had disrupted his individual order, challenging what this man understood himself to be in Northern Ireland and causing distress. He decided to return to Poland: an indicator of remedial action to align his internal identity standards and overcome this loss of control. This was echoed more widely within the Polish male community as manifest by high levels of suicide and anecdotal evidence of rising alcoholism, broken relationships and gambling (Interview support worker, 13th June 2013). The Polish consulate and the local health agency were working together to tackle mental health issues. Burke (1991) argues that individuals juggle identities to achieve a balanced homeostatic identity model, but this research shows that the effort involved can lead be stressful for many individuals, especially complicated by geography and further by the lack of support structures within a NID.

Polish teachers, architects and psychologists described how they were not able to get jobs within their profession and how they also rejected the ascribed migrant identity of being less deserving, the 'exploitable migrant'. While employed in her profession one woman discovered that she was being paid less than her peers, even though they did the same job. In great detail she describes how, during many different conversations with colleagues they never validated her professional status; they only ever viewed her as a migrant or a woman:

> …then I noticed that I was extremely underpaid…this is your first job, you are foreign…they knew rightly that I had a post-graduate degree, but they would rather call the job a technician, always trying to belittle my qualifications, but I was happy to work anyway. The responsibilities and duties were the same as for the [other professionals] but I was being paid [less]… I was always referred to as a wee girl, or something like that….
> (Interview Polish F 27th June 2013)

She goes on to explain how she front-staged her performance in the workplace:

> 'I was told that I should be happy about the single fact that I am working at all, especially in my own profession, and that was exactly when I developed the "I need to prove that I am intelligent, professional and have full rights to work in this country" attitude. It means overworking, making more effort than peers on the same position, spending much more time, taking work

home. The result is feeling burnt and frustrated. To be honest, once I have

found out that I am being made redundant, I actually smiled with relief. My

financial problems started though…' (Polish F, 27th June 2013).

There seemed to be an implicit acceptance that this woman was less deserving than other employees, with little concern that she was overworking and possibly even an expectation that this was acceptable: a defining feature of NID's perhaps? In the end she was not able to effectively exercise her professional identity and she was forced to take drastic action to rectify the lack of identity congruence. Eventually the woman left her professional job. She relied on family in Poland to support her financially and she found work in an alternate career, even though that subsequent job was not well paid. Doubtless this helped to achieve identity congruence by aligning personal standards and self-esteem (Tsushima and Burke 1999). That woman's internal standards were highly developed: she had a clear vision of her life as a professional and accordingly she sought a workplace that allowed her to maintain her professional identity. However, upholding these standards was a complicated activity involving an interplay of Jenkins' (2014) individual, interaction and institutional orders and bringing with it emotional costs, all the while relying on resources from her wider family network:

I'm going home now and my mother had to transfer money to me for my

flight, I'm really embarrassed about that. This is what I have heard from my

other friends – they are professionals and they do have skills, they work

really hard, they are trying to show that they can do it, but they are not

being noticed at all… (Polish F 27th June 2013).

Effectively, resources provided her with choice and meant that she could operationalize her preferred identity. A Polish teacher experienced similar identity interruptions when it was suggested to her that she might take a job in an unskilled position because her qualifications were not recognised. However, she started working in a casual capacity as a teacher even though she could probably have made more money working elsewhere (but she would not have been able to use her skills). Simultaneously she set about having her Polish teaching credentials recognized. She emphasized how she did not move to Northern Ireland simply to 'make money'; it was part of a wider quality of life issue that entailed a career and of being a 'professional'. She was able to do this by availing of resources external to the household, including cheap accommodation and informal childcare from friends.

Polish teachers, architects and psychologists described how they were not able to get jobs within their profession and how they also rejected the ascribed migrant identity of being less deserving. The research indicates that resources are important for achieving identity congruence by allowing individuals to enact their preferred identity: in the examples above they were used to reject the less deserving, exploitable migrant identity in favour of other preferred roles (father, professional). By definition many migrants in NID's have access to fewer networks and resources than migrants in established gateways, so their options for countering identity interruptions are often more limited. The level of stress and distress among immigrants as they are forced to

internalise external ascriptions of identities by balancing them with internal values, is not yet clear. Nonetheless it is obvious that migrants constantly juggle different aspects of their identities as they negotiate identity standards and engage in different social interactions.

Discussion and conclusions

This article reveals the practical nature of doing identity (after Jenkins 2000). It shows that migrants' identities are shaped by internal and external processes arising from individuals' interactions, all set within social structures and institutions. The collective 'migrant' identity is a catch-all, encompassing multiple identities and with differing outcomes for those enacting (i.e. migrants) it and for those deploying the category. This article highlighted different aspects of the migrant identity - the hard working, exploitable, less deserving migrant identities and, to a lesser extent, the scrounger identity.

Many, but not all migrants, moved to NID's due to global transitions within the agri-food sector that created employment opportunities. This has contributed to an externally assigned understanding of migrants as being 'exploitable', 'hard working', 'willing to put up with anything' and 'less worthy' than the non-migrant population. Somewhat paradoxically, and to a lesser degree in this research (but unmistakable elsewhere), another discourse of migrants as 'foreigners' who are 'work shy' was evident. Employers assign particular meanings to the migrant identity that allows them to enjoy the benefits of cheap, exploitable and hard-working employees. Meanwhile

social structures that remain rooted in the past are unable to accommodate diversity. These factors reinforce prevailing power relations within the workplace but also more widely in society and so curtail migrants' opportunities for upward economic and social mobility. The extent to which these inequitable ascriptions of migrants are common among NID's is an avenue for further study.

This research also shows how in certain circumstances migrants exploit assigned identities, such as by enacting the role of being hard working and willing to put up with what are fundamentally exploitative practices so that they can get a job. Migrants continually use internal identity standards to shape their individual order and to determine what is feasible and acceptable - both emotionally and practically. Individuals will always minimise disruption to the identification process weighing up shifting circumstances and altering their preferred identity over time. Such interplay between assigned and enacted identities is constant. Migrants may accept derogatory categorisations of identity if the personal gains outweigh the costs rather than due to an inherent acceptance of being 'less worthy'. Many were compelled by their circumstances to simply put up with exploitative practices. This research reveals how choices are connected to resources and individuals who can lever resources are able to resist categorisations that conflict with their internal standards. The overall implications of identity interruption are significant, mirroring the findings of both Thoits (1991) and Burke (1991). Ultimately what goes on in people's heads can lead to problems if individuals, in this case migrants, are unable to enact their preferred identities, causing anxiety, loss of self-esteem or physical injury. This research reveals how the identification process is heightened for migrants in NID's due to the added

dimensions of transnationalism and the elevated external expectations from the country of origin and because of the way migrant categories are deployed.

The connection between migrant identities and socio-economic status and the implications of this for different groups of migrants is not fully understood, for instance why are foreign academics and doctors not typically referred to as 'migrant workers' in the same way as unskilled workers? Gender differences impacted on migrant identities, and this could be a fruitful avenue for further research.

Identities and the identification process are important in NID's. They can be assets or obstacles, depending on context and contingent on which identity is enacted (internal) and assigned (external). NID's face very real challenges to integration if their social structures are unable to respond positively to diversity. Prospects for newcomers will remain fitful and ultimately limited. Rather than categorising them as the 'other', a more fruitful welcoming would be to ensure equal treatment for all within society, recognising the spectrum of identities encompassed by migrants. This would entail moving from Goffman's (1983:3/4) 'categoric' form of identification according to narrow categories and typically stagnant terms, to one based on the 'individual' that recognises the multiple and fluid dimensions of identities across Jenkins' (2010; 2014) three orders of social space. At the very least, the way in which migrants' juggle different identities within a NID and the implications that arise warrant further investigation.

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