Work(ing) Dynamics of Migrant Networking among Poles Employed in Hospitality and Food Production

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Abstract

Recent studies of migrants provide us with an understanding of their social relations beyond work; however, workplace networking practices among migrants, particularly as they are mediated by their jobs and their working environment has not been addressed as a substantive subject. Drawing on two studies of Poles, working in hospitality and food production, which utilised interviews, participant observation, netnography and a survey, this paper examines how occupational and organisational factors, including the nature of work and the characteristics of the workplace, impact upon migrants' intra and inter-group relations. Furthermore, the data are used to consider how migrants 'work' (ie. utilise and exploit) the dynamics of the work(place) to facilitate their networking. We distinguish between task, spatial and related temporal dimensions affecting their interactions, arguing that such a conceptual lens is necessary for understanding migrants' networking strategies.

Introduction

Research on migrants suggests that relations formed in workplaces can be a source of emotional and instrumental support, particularly in the early stages of resettlement (Alberti, 2014; Ryan, 2011). Migrants' accounts highlight that the extensive presence of other migrants can hinder engagement with the host community, which may inhibit adjustment and restrict future labour mobility (MacKenzie and Forde, 2009). Furthermore, studies also stress that workplace interactions can be a source of discrimination and conflict, which fuels tensions between migrants from different backgrounds, and also

between migrants and members of the local community (Parutis, 2011). This emerging body of work on migrant experiences and employment points to the role of workplaces as sites of functional relations; they do not, however, analyse workplace interactions and networking in depth. Importantly, much of this research was conducted in low-paid sectors such as hospitality (Alberti, 2014), agriculture (Andrzejewska and Rye, 2012) and packaging (MacKenzie and Forde, 2009), but these studies did not attempt to examine distinctive features of these working environments in which substantial numbers of migrants work and cultivate relationships. Specifically, we know little about how the dynamics of work practices, and of the workplaces in which tasks are performed, shape migrants' relations with other communities in the context of low-paid jobs. Given the significant role of migrants in these low-paid sectors (Rienzo, 2013), and the importance of such employment on migrants' settlement, integration, prosperity and future spatial and labour mobility (Rydzik *et al.*, 2012), this is a significant gap in knowledge.

This article thus contributes to and extends existing work on the migration-employment nexus by analysing how spatial, task and related temporal elements of their low-paid jobs affect intra and inter-group relations. By way of delimitation, in this paper we are not seeking to analyse or qualify the outcomes of interactions: ie. the nature of social networks or friendship ties. The word restrictions and disparate ties formed amongst our respondents prevents us from examining these in detail; nor do we take an overly deterministic approach in claiming that certain types of work(place) conditions inherently lead to the formation of specific network types. Rather, within this paper we present the views and experiences of European Union citizens engaged in labour mobility to argue that specific features of the employment sector introduce remarkable differences in terms of both occupational and context-specific organisational practices that shape work(place) experiences; and, consequently, migrants' interactional practices. Importantly, the data also show how migrants can 'work', ie. utilise and exploit the dynamics of the workplace to facilitate networking strategies.

This paper is based on two separate studies of Polish migrant workers conducted in the United Kingdom (UK) hospitality and food production sectors. Poles represent the largest migrant group in the UK (Rienzo and Vargas-Silva, 2013) and they have a broad and complex engagement with the UK labour market. The movement of successive waves of Polish migrants, the development of networks and the evolution of migration careers has resulted in a variety of migration and employment experiences (Alberti, 2014; Rydzik *et al.*, 2012). Focusing on Polish migrants therefore offers insights into complex and varied interactions between migration experiences, work and workplace relationships. Moreover, the variety of experiences among Poles helps to identify issues surrounding organisational and occupational factors shaping relations with their colleagues that can then be used to examine the experiences of other migrant groups in future research.

The paper is structured as follows: the following section reviews conceptual areas in the literature on migration studies and sociology of employment, which underpin the current paper: firstly, migrant networking; and secondly, work and workplace dynamics in which we distinguish between and consider occupational and organisational factors. The two studies and their methods are then explained. This is followed by the presentation and discussion of the findings, including their implications for human resource practice and further sociological enquiry.

Migrants' employment-based interactions and workplace dynamics

It is useful at the outset to establish a working conception of interactions with which we can subsequently examine networking practices at work. Social interactions are verbal and non-verbal

transactions within a particular spatial and temporal context involving speech acts, embodied gestures and objects (cf. Collins, 2004). Interactions have agentic, situational and structural dimensions. Agentic dimensions refer to individuals' choices regarding who they interact with and how they code and decode communicational acts. Structural dimensions refer to social norms and forces that extend beyond individuals referring to aspects such as class and cultural values that are not the unique property of individuals, but are instead intersubjective and reproduced through social practice (Collins, 2004). Finally, there are also situational dimensions referring to the social and physical contexts in which interactions occur that shape how they are performed and experienced (cf. Collins, 2004).

Work-based and work-related social interactions are increasingly being conceptualised as network formation or 'networking' (cf. Forret and Dougherty, 2004; Urry, 2012; Ryan and Mulholland, 2014). Forret and Dougherty define employment-related networking behaviour as 'individuals' attempts to develop and maintain relationships with others who have the potential to assist them in their work or career' (2004: 420). However, this suggests that interactional practices have a specific goal and that this encompasses all relations that are relevant to work, and not just enacted *in* workplaces. Moreover, it is important to stress that not all work-based interactions are instrumental. Furthermore, the notion of networking emphasises the processes of constructing relationships without necessarily specifying the quality of either the encounters or the relationships that subsequently develop. Social interactions may evolve into meaningful strong ties, involving ongoing interactions, trust, co-identification, as well as emotional, psychological and resource based co-dependency. However, they may result in weak ties that are more fragmented in nature, discontinuous and selective in terms of co-dependency (cf. Granovetter, 1983; Ryan and Mulholland, 2014).

Networking has become an important conceptual theme in migration studies: examining social network formation has contributed to our understanding of migrants' adaptation and settlement (Anthias, 2007; Ryan, 2011). Research on migrant networking has drawn extensively on Coleman (1988) and Putnam's (2000) conceptions of the resources that may be mobilised by and within social networks (cf. Ryan, 2011; Ryan and Mulholland, 2014). Initial conceptualisations of resource mobilisation and social capital were associated with dense networks, based on close ties (Coleman, 1988), and instrumental functions. Coleman (1988: S104) points to 'the potential for information that inheres in social capital', while others also note the importance of emotional support that networks provide (Putnam, 2000). Putnam (2000) distinguished between bonding and bridging social capital. Whereas bonding may be relevant for conceptualising resource mobilisation within dense social networks, bridging is relevant for understanding resource mobilisation across 'weak ties' (Granovetter, 1983). Bonding ties may help to reinforce identification and reciprocity; bridging ties can provide access to new information and external resources (cf. Burt, 1998; Putnam, 2000). Importantly, the two types of ties may coexist and it is increasingly seen as unhelpful to conceptualise these as binary opposites (Ryan, 2011).

Recent research on migrant workers' labour mobility has placed considerable emphasis on the importance of networking and relations (Bloch, 2013; Ryan 2011; Ryan and Mulholland, 2014); however, it is important to stress that the emphasis has been on workers' experiences beyond the workplace (Bloch, 2013; Ryan, 2011; Ryan *et al.*, 2008). The few fragmented accounts of migrant interactions within and across national groups in workplaces often emerges as precursors to discussions of migrant interdependency or of racial and ethnic tensions (McKenzie and Forde, 2009; Parutis, 2011; Williams *et al.*, 2011; Ryan and Mulholland, 2014). Nevertheless, two recurring issues in emerging studies of migrant interactions and networking are important in examining interactions in and away from the workplace. These are, firstly, the consequences of relations within and outside one's own ethnic group (White and

Ryan, 2009); and secondly, the functions of 'strong' and 'weak ties' (Granovetter, 1983) within settlement and adjustment (Ryan, 2011; Ryan and Mulholland, 2014). Gill and Bialski (2011) and Ryan (2011) suggest that reliance on strong, co-ethnic or national ties within work contexts may be a source of emotional and instrumental support, certainly at the beginning of migrants' sojourn as they adjust to new cultural contexts. Beyond helping migrants to integrate within workplaces, these functional social ties may subsequently facilitate future occupational mobility (Gill and Bialski, 2011; Ryan, 2011). However, ongoing reliance on such ties may ultimately limit interactions beyond 'ethnic bubbles' (Williams *et al.*, 2011), leading to various forms of exclusion and isolation. Ryan (2011) suggests that workplace networking with individuals outside one's ethnic group, particularly through weak ties, can offer opportunities to develop language competencies and thus reduce reliance on ethnic ties. In short, these studies point to the significance of migrants' relationships constructed in places of work, their content and structure; nevertheless, the nature of the work and the role of the workplace as the social context for relations has remained absent from existing sociological analyses.

This is not to argue that existing studies of migrant workers have been acontextual in their focus. In a study of Guatemalans working in two industries, Hagan (1998) pointed to the role of the sector in shaping migrants' networking over time. Men employed in a supermarket chain were able to use and maintain their well-developed social networks. In contrast, women in the domestic sector, gradually weakened their ethnic networks. This suggests that both occupation and industry shape opportunities to form relationships and to develop networks through which resources could be mobilised.

Parutis' (2011) study of Polish and Lithuanian relations, also offers useful albeit patchy insights into the workplace as the site of inter and intra-national encounters. Parutis' (2011) interviewees suggest that differences in management's and colleagues' attitudes towards migrant groups in how tasks were delegated and (under)performance was managed, led to, or perpetuated, social divisions in workplaces. Furthermore, Parutis points to how poor language ability and negative perceptions of different national and ethnic groups' work ethic influenced migrants' attitudes towards them and the likelihood of interaction. Similar adverse attitudes by European migrants towards other non-white immigrant workers have also been noted in other research (McDowell *et al.*, 2007).

Ryan and Mulholland (2014), focusing uniquely on the London's business and financial sector, offer different insights. The highly-skilled French migrants in their study could mobilise various socio-cultural competencies in their efforts to network with locals. Nonetheless, in many cases, work-based networking did not translate into meaningful strong-ties or friendship networks outside work, resulting in more attachments with co-ethnics. Ryan and Mulholland's findings highlight how human capital variables such as linguistic skills and cultural values intersect with features of work to influence networking practices and their outcomes. These factors shaped the meaningfulness and utility of social ties and restricted networking to specific work and leisure domains. Importantly, their work points to the need to examine more closely why and how certain domains of social practice, and the characteristics of networking contexts, may facilitate particular interactional routines.

Most of the studies, which have focused on low-paid sectors, point to incidents of tension and animosity in workplaces, which reflect particular organisational cultures and management practices but these studies do not examine specific sectoral or organisational features that may aggravate such behaviour. As we argue, these features can play a major role in shaping migrants' workplace interactions. Our study aims to identify organisational and occupational features that may facilitate or hinder networking practices. To do this it is necessary to conceptualise key elements of workplace dynamics in a way that allows us to foreground these factors in our analysis of migrant interactions.

Our approach to understanding workplace dynamics among migrant workers adopts a socio-spatial conception of organisations. Following McDowell (2009), we seek to understand how the management of productive labour, embodied performances of work and the subjective experiences of workers are entangled at the micro-scale of everyday interactions. Organisational space is thus conceived as power laden, (re)produced through the mobilisation of human and physical capital, and in which meaning and expression of experience is contested by different organisational stakeholders. As McDowell *et al*. (2007) argue, for migrants, such organisational spaces are experienced through intersecting discourses of gender, class and ethnicity as social and economic divisions are (re)produced and occasionally challenged through the organisation of work and the place in which it is performed (see also Slavnic, 2013).

Workplace dynamics can be conceived in part by understanding interrelated task and spatial dimensions of work. The task dimension refers to job content, particularly as workers perform specific aspects of their employment roles. There is a temporal aspect to tasks, which concerns the time frames in which workers are required to complete them. The pace of work, whether in manufacturing or in service contexts, which is shaped by management's design of the task and the work environment, may facilitate or limit interaction and is thus also likely to influence migrants' ability to interact meaningfully. In addition to time is the actual task. For example, manufacturing or production work may require less interaction, but is also conducted in an organisational soundscape that may restrict interaction (cf. Holgate, 2005; Zhang, 2015). In contrast, frontline customer-facing service work may offer greater opportunities for interactions, although not all migrants may benefit from such encounters. Some (migrant) workers who have 'appropriate' linguistic skills and embodied competencies, which can range from physical strength to aesthetic qualities such as attractiveness and light skin colour may be able to benefit from some occupations more than others who do not (McDowell, 2009). In service sectors employee appearance matters (Warhurst and Nickson, 2007): employers are not only concerned with recruiting good looking employees but then further enhance their appearance through the use of uniforms, dress codes and grooming standards. Importantly, for our analysis, considering vastly different work sectors comparatively enables us to examine further how such task dimensions impact upon migrants' intra and inter-group interactions.

The spatial dimensions can refer to the inclusive or exclusive nature of employment spaces, which can be understood at multiple scales. However, McDowell's (2009) analysis suggests it is important to account for experiences at the micro-level of organisations (see also Collins, 2004). Spatial integration or segregation emerges through everyday organisational practices, for example, as Sherman (2011) demonstrates, in the difference between front and back of house roles in hospitality. Spatial divisions of labour can fundamentally alter migrants' experiences inside organisations and beyond, insofar as the nature of workplace interactions can facilitate or hinder the development of productive social relations.

Importantly, the spatial features of work and workplaces also have temporal dimensions. The temporal demands of work structure workers' lives. For example, the length of the working day, week or the nature of shift work affects people's ability to network and also to pursue activities outside the workplace. Watt (2011) suggests that the long hours migrant workers are required to work may subsequently limit the time they have available for education but also to apply for further jobs. Furthermore, as Andrzejewska and Rye (2012) and Hagan (1998) demonstrate, such work commitments limit migrants' opportunities to socialise and network, both within their own ethnic groups, but also outside it. A key issue which remains unanswered in previous research is how such spatial issues at the organisation level can shape interactions, and how migrants can negotiate those spatial imperatives.

Finally, in considering workplace dynamics, it is important to recognise the importance of workplace cultures, including the nature of power structures, which leads to a consideration of organisational and occupational cultures (Sherman, 2011). Some of the task and spatial issues highlighted above are specific to particular occupations, and, as we argue, it is important to be mindful that some occupational factors transcend individual workplaces and operate in similar ways across different organisations. For example, mass production manufacturing relies on the ability to perform repetitive tasks at an intensive pace (Zhang, 2015); frontline service work requires interactive skills and emotion management (McDowell, 2009). In contrast to manufacturing, close proximity between frontline staff and consumers is a distinctive feature of service occupations, and, as our data suggest, direct contact with customers shapes employees' opportunities for interaction. These occupational factors intersect with contextual, organisational factors particular to individual workplaces. Specifically, individuals with access to and thus control over information and resources may be better able to exercise power within an organisational unit. There may also be a hierarchical organisation of labour, with distinctions between management decision making and the employees who carry out the tasks. Considering multiple organisational contexts enables us to tease out these organisational and occupational variations empirically.

In summary, existing literature has pointed to the presence and potential implications of migrants' workplace networking, but existing research has not explored in any depth how the nature of the work and contextual, organisational features of the workplace impact upon relationships within and across ethnic and national groups. Conceptualising workplace dynamics, through interrelated notions of task and spatial dimensions, enables us to explore how those features of employment shape interactions and networking practices. Conducting a comparative analysis of two vastly different work environments helps to identify some context-specific factors and more general issues that may be used to examine migrants' experiences in other organisational and occupational contexts. Finally, the empirical work enables us to avoid taking a deterministic view of workplace dynamics and recognising migrants' abilities to utilise, transform and in some cases challenge dynamics to shape their relations and migration trajectories.

Research methods

The paper is based on two studies, which considered different sectors, but both examined Polish workers' employment and migration experiences, with emphasis on how the nature of work, including access to jobs, work-based tasks and workplace relationships intersected with adaptation. The projects used a varying combination of participant observation, interviews, netnography and an online survey to generate data. Nevertheless, the focus on Polish migrants and similarity in conceptual themes driving the research enabled us to re-examine the data from both studies to provide new insights into how organisational and occupational factors shaped workplace interactions. Importantly, focusing on two fundamentally different organisational and occupational contexts helps to appreciate how particular workplace dynamics emerge as factors shaping migrants' experiences.

The first study, focusing on hospitality, used a mixed-method approach to examine migrant workers' profiles, motivations, job scope, networks and the nuances of individual experiences of migration and of working in the sector. Three data collection strategies were adopted: a study of online discussion forums; exploratory qualitative interviews; and finally, an online survey that collected both qualitative and quantitative data from respondents across the UK. The first stage comprised of a netnographic study of online data collected from publicly available forums (Kozinets, 2010). Three sites with the biggest traffic were chosen for thematic analysis: gazeta.pl, mojawyspa.co.uk and ang.pl. Following

Kozinets' (2010) guidance, around one hundred threads, launched between 2004 and 2008, were sampled purposively based on the volume of their content and their relevance, which included discussions of job searching, employment experiences in the sector and living in the UK. For example, one of the threads used for the study, launched in January 2005, contained 311 posts, totalling 20,400 words.

In the second stage, six interview participants were recruited via snowballing through contacts at a Polish community centre. The employees interviewed had worked in hotels and a restaurant in a range of front and back of house positions in a seaside destination. The interviews were conducted in public spaces and hotels, in Polish, and lasted between one to two hours. The interviews investigated migrants' employment experiences including gaining employment, language learning, and their networks in and outside of workplaces. The interviews were audio-recorded and fully transcribed prior to thematic analysis. These interviews provided rich insights about individual circumstances and experiences, but the emerging themes also informed the survey.

The online survey targeted former and current migrants employed in hospitality across the UK and was distributed on 45 Polish online discussion forums and two social networking sites (nasza-klasa.pl or nk and Facebook). Respondents were questioned on how and why they accessed jobs, their experiences of working in the sector and future employment and migration plans. This was a fluid and mobile community and it was difficult to ascertain a definitive picture of a sample population or to sample randomly. Therefore the survey data did not seek generalizability. Interestingly, the respondent profiles mirrored those from other studies (cf. Alberti, 2014) indicating a young and feminised hospitality workforce: 71% of the respondents were female, with the vast majority (84%) under 30 years old and highly educated, often to a tertiary level. Specifically, 47% of respondents were educated to at least degree level and another 18% were still studying. Out of 420 questionnaires returned, 315 were fully completed and used for analysis.

The second study, conducted at the same time period, analysed Polish migrants' working lives at a food processing plant (referred to hereafter as Food Co.). The case study employer was one of the largest in the area, employing almost 950 people, and of these approximately 26% were of British origin, 47% were Polish and 9% were Romanians. The large number of Polish workers was a result of direct recruitment from Poland. The rest of the workforce was made up of small numbers of other nationalities such as Indian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Slovakian and 21 others. Additionally, an on-site recruitment agency employed around 160 workers, all of whom were Polish. They remained employed by the agency for various periods of time depending on their performance and the availability of permanent positions, some for over 18 months.

Poles and Romanians constituted the two biggest groups on the shop floor with Romanians employed in a few skilled jobs such as Quality Assurers, Machine Minders and Line Leaders, performing duties of relatively higher importance than an average employee. For this reason they were paid slightly more and enjoyed the privilege of having some level of control on the shop floor. British and Romanians dominated managerial positions, but all nationalities were evenly split among various departments, performing low skilled jobs.

The study was conducted in two stages: the first involved participant observation in the factory. Access to the plant was gained primarily by personal contact with the human resources manager of the factory who had graduated from the local university and knew the researcher from previous research activities. A relatively unrestricted right of entry to the factory was granted in exchange for sight of future observational findings. Over a continuous period of 12 weeks the researcher actively participated in food production and packing, working on a full-time basis, eight hours per day with different

departmental teams and shifts. The researcher was gradually introduced to managers and co-workers as the research was never meant to be covert. Observations were recorded daily on a voice recorder on the travel home from work, which lasted around thirty minutes, then transcribed and analysed once the observation stage finished.

The second stage utilised 20 autobiographical narrative interviews with Polish migrant workers and other organisational actors. The interviewees were selected on the basis of contact established during the period of work in the factory. The sample profile broadly corresponded to Home Office (2009) data on those registered with the UK's Worker Registration Scheme: it consisted of an equal number of males and females, with most aged below 34. The majority of respondents were well-educated with little previous work experience. The employees interviewed all shared similar positions in the plant, earned slightly above minimum wage and lived in shared houses. There was a mix of backgrounds, family and work circumstances to better serve the overarching objective of exploring the richness and complexity of migrant workers' experiences. These interviews helped to gain detailed, subjective accounts of migrants' experiences, both in the workplace and beyond, including how these affected their acculturation. The interviews, which lasted about one and a half hours, were audio-recorded, and fully transcribed for analysis.

The analysis of the qualitative data from both studies involved a multistage process of data familiarisation and coding using a combination of open coding alongside pre-existing sensitizing concepts, for example, concerning inter and intra-ethnic interactions. The data were reduced and reordered into higher order themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Importantly, the thematic areas discussed in this paper: task, spatial and related temporal dimensions were common to both studies. This was one of the rationales for structuring this paper around them rather than according to alternative themes of language competency or other 'human capital variables'. Issues of language, education and class differences have been discussed in other studies of (Polish) migrants (e.g. Janta et al., 2011; McDowell, 2009; Watt, 2011) and focusing on these thematic areas enables us to present a novel conception of factors shaping migrant networking.

Findings and Discussion

Task dimensions of workplace interactions

In discussions of the food processing work environment, many informants used the powerful and particularly symbolic 'labour camp' metaphor to describe Food Co. In part this was reflected in the depersonalisation which was a key feature of the work. The nature of the work required rigorous hygiene standards resulting in strict rules regarding wearing appropriate coats, boots and hairnets, and forbidding any jewellery or make-up, which added to the pressure of working on the production line. Constructions of workplace identity and interactional practices were consequently shaped less by aesthetic expressions of self but instead by the ability to perform demanding physical labour within the intensive production process.

The erasure of individuality within the working environment was accompanied by high levels of work division, expectations of high-level productivity and monotony of performed tasks. Conversations were impossible due to the intensive nature of the work, but interaction was sometimes also prohibited by supervisors. As this field note entry shows, lack of communication was quickly noticed by the researcher:

> I've learnt that it really does make life more difficult when all you can manage to squeeze in in conversations is the odd 'how are you?' or 'can you help at line number 5?'. Half the time in the noisy section it is even difficult to tell whether someone can hear you or is just ignoring you.

The temporal dimension of work, in particular, the fast pace of the line combined with the other features of the job made building new ties at work challenging. Importantly, the intensity of the work rate also inhibited interactions during breaks. Networking was assessed by Urry (2012) as a form of 'work', requiring one's substantial time and effort, even in regular close physical proximity. Some of the participants explained that fatigue and an inability to motivate themselves to improve English meant they did not use these brief moments of leisure to network beyond their own national group. In short, breaks were used to relax, communicate in Polish with their co-nationals, and not as the opportunity to create new ties with other groups.

In contrast, a distinctive occupational feature of front-line service work is ongoing interaction with customers, which required staff to perform emotional and aesthetic labour (Warhurst and Nickson, 2007). Customers played a significant part in migrants' workplace interactions. Encounters with individuals, who could make work rewarding or tense, were mentioned by interviewees as beneficial in terms of accessing various resources, making new contacts, learning or even as a means of finding new work opportunities. Hotels, restaurants and bars became 'places of in-between-ness' (Rydzik *et al.,* 2012) facilitating the flow of information between its mobile occupants - migrants and customers.

Here, access to extensive weak ties, including ephemeral connections, provided 'bridges' between different groups (Boyd, 1989) and subsequently led to various opportunities. More importantly, respondents working in hospitality, utilising interpersonal skills, self-confidence and language capital were conscious of the benefits their employment provided. This was highlighted by Artur, a 29 year old ex-hotel worker and law graduate, who had experienced being a housekeeper, waiter and a porter: 'The fact that you could speak to a customer making linguistic mistakes and that you could speak to an English customer who has his needs – this is something that you wouldn't learn anywhere else.' Interviewee narratives and online comments frequently highlighted that interactions with British workers and customers with different accents was challenging, but this intensification of learning led to resilience in adaptation.

Consideration of the task dimension highlighted that, beyond the job content, its enactment within particular organisational regimes also had the potential to shape the nature of workplace interactions. The data from both studies highlighted that performances of work routines in micro-social contexts led to perceptions of other national groups that consequently became points of distinction and dis-identification, shaping networking practices. Tensions often stemmed from Poles' self-perceptions as hardworking, which positioned them in contrast to less productive members of the host-community. Grzes, a 34 year old college-educated line worker, for example, pointed to inter-cultural tensions stemming from workers' self-perception of their work ethic and their perceptions of other groups' work-related attitudes and behaviours:

> One day two Englishmen came to work in our department. … Do you know how long they survived? Two hours! They just left the factory and we've never seen them again… That's how much we experienced working with the Englishmen… An ordinary Englishman will never come to work like this. In our department there is only one English person, he's been working there for 12 years and it is only because of his laziness

that he hasn't found a different job. ... Besides, if English workers worked in this factory, the efficiency would drop by 50 per cent.

Conflicts emerging from Poles' views of themselves and others have been highlighted elsewhere (cf. Parutis, 2011). However, the key issue here is that such strains and points of division led to fractured social relations and reduced the incentives to interact meaningfully. Beyond perceived task performance, reluctance to interact can also be partly explained by perceived differences in the status of young educated and mobile migrants and members of the English working class. This reflects further the potential intersection of work(place) dynamics with broader social and cultural factors in creating formative conditions for workplace interactions.

Resentment and animosity also emerged in the accounts of migrant hospitality workers whose self-perceptions as diligent and committed workers were contrasted with impressions of local staff. For example, as pointed out by a 36 year old survey respondent working as a housekeeper in an Aberdeen hotel, her Scottish female colleagues were 'only pretending to work' – a comment echoed by many others. Feelings of exasperation and anger towards local colleagues also emerged from online comments posted by former and current hospitality employees. Such commentaries not only highlight perceived differences in the working styles of Poles and British, but also stress the perceived enabling role of management. Poles observed that management were aware of differences in effort, but showed favouritism which contributed to divisions in the workplace:

> So far, I have noticed that while we are told off from time to time, the local staff are untouchable. They can be late for work, go for a cigarette break every five minutes, do crappy work, and avoid the less interesting tasks at work. I used to work in a bar where a manager said to the local staff: 'leave it to the guys' – he meant washing glasses and 'guys' was us, Poles. How nice. Somehow, I understand managers. It is difficult to get English staff, so once they have a girl who completed primary education, understands the local accent and is willing to serve drinks, she has to be snuggled, doesn't she? (gazeta.pl, 31.10.07)

The data help to stress that animosity did not stem from occupational aspects alone; the work could be hard, repetitive and dull in both the food production and hospitality sectors. Beyond occupational dimensions, organisational mediators, which refer to context-specific factors, for example, workplace (sub)cultures, power structures and relationships, decision making processes and social dynamics including ethnic divisions also shaped social interactions and the possibility to construct and maintain ties.

Spatial dimensions of workplace interactions

Spatial dimensions refer fundamentally to physical locations and the characteristics of the work environment; however, we are not suggesting an overly deterministic view of work-space, which denies individual agency in interactional choices. Rather, we highlight spatial features of the workplace as factors that intersect with other human capital variables such as education, language ability, attitudes and beliefs in shaping the choices made by individuals regarding where, when and how to interact (cf. Ryan and Mulholland, 2014).

Within the context of food production, the spatial dimension of the workplace continued to be particularly important in shaping the quality and quantity of interactions and opportunities to develop

bridging and bonding ties (Putnam, 2000). As Holgate (2005) observed, within the factory setting, workers' actions are strictly governed through surveillance and the regulation of routine. Importantly, ethnic and class divisions are enacted through the division of labour, with certain social groups being restricted to particular work domains (Holgate, 2005). Within Food Co., spatial division had horizontal and vertical manifestations ie. division of people doing the same level of tasks and also division of people across job hierarchies. The perception was that migrants 'belonged' on the shop floor, while British occupied the majority of managerial positions 'upstairs'. Hierarchical divisions of labour were thus reinforced spatially and limited inter-ethnic interactions.

Networking 'upstairs', in the offices, presented opportunities for migrants who could make the transition to managerial roles. Developing working relationships with managers enabled migrants not only to enhance English language skills, but also to mix with people, perceived by Poles to be better educated, with 'mobilisable' (Anthias, 2007) social and cultural capital. The value of these relationships were evaluated in terms of resources that could be mobilised through them: building social and linguistic capital was seen as essential for living in the country, boosting their prospects of promotion and increasing workplace well-being. The mobilisation of human capital thus intersected significantly with the spatial dynamics of the workplace: language proficiency appeared to be a key determinant of migrants' symbolic and physical positioning. Participants frequently noted that a good command of English helped some colleagues gain promotion, while many others felt they were held back because of deficiencies in their English.

The horizontal division of labour on the shop floor resulted in spatial segregation between ethnic groups, with Poles often working in distinct work groups. In principle, this facilitated intra-ethnic encounters between Poles; although, as discussed above, meaningful interaction, and the possibility for developing bonding ties during work was limited by the essential nature of the tasks. Importantly within this organisational context, spatial segregation extended beyond the production lines. One of the first observations reported in the field notes concerned the seating practices in the canteen, which were recurring themes:

> There are certain tables where managers tend to sit (left corner). The tables at the back are occupied by Romanians, and the middle and front tables are taken by groups of Polish workers. I haven't noticed any 'mixed' tables.

English workers also picked up on this division, which they sometimes experienced as exclusionary themselves. For example, Lee, who had been a line worker for over 15 years observed that: 'Poles always speak Polish and never try to say anything in English so that other nationalities could understand what they are talking about. So what's the point of sitting with the Poles if we don't understand a word?' Ethnic enclaves were thus enacted throughout the organisation, which were fundamental in shaping migrants' interactional behaviours.

The majority of respondents used the environment and intensive working conditions as justification for not learning English at work, hence, for not forming any relations with other non-Polish groups at work. However, as the comment below from Ewa, a university-educated, 31 year old line-worker suggests, members of other national groups were perceived to be more willing and able to exploit this segregation:

> Romanians are just the opposite [to Poles] and sit [in the canteen] with the English people on purpose. They want to practice their English because they know that good language skills are some of the key things needed to be promoted.

In contrast to Poles, Romanians demonstrated deliberate attempts to network with local employees. They were seen to capitalise on their relationships with British co-workers, using networking skills to improve their English and subsequently gaining promotion.

In occupational terms, frontline service work facilitated, and to a great extent necessitated, the development and mobilisation of interactive skills as employees performed their work identities. There is a risk in reducing hospitality workplaces to singular spatial models, but the service contact zones of restaurants, bars and reception areas were characterised by visibility and embodied social interaction. The previous comment from Artur regarding interaction with guests was frequently noted by online commentators and interviewees, but participants also highlighted the benefits of interacting with co-workers. For example, Madga, a 27 year old hotel worker noted that working in a service environment meant they interacted with other nationals; formed close ties with others that lead to various opportunities, and enabled them to learn about foreign customs, meals, religious traditions and languages:

> As there are so many foreign people in this hotel, mainly Portuguese, I always tried to ask about what a word means. So I started learning the language slowly. Because I spend so much time with them and they constantly speak in Portuguese between themselves, I learned some [Portuguese] words. (Magda, hotel worker)

The data also showed that back-of-house jobs frequently allowed for a less stressful albeit slower development of language skills. The spatial dimensions of hospitality occupations thus shaped employees' ability to improve their language skills. However, back-of-house roles such as housekeeping also involved interactions with guests and members of other nationalities. It is therefore important not to draw a deterministic distinction between inclusive, socially-accessible frontline service spaces and isolating back-of-house ones. Nevertheless, three factors often intersected to reduce opportunities for cross-cultural interactions: first, working in spaces with fewer social contacts in general; second, working in roles in those spaces that required limited interaction; and third, being surrounded by co-nationals or large groups of other national groups, which restricted cross-cultural interaction and reinforced co-ethnic ties.

It is important to highlight that the temporal dimension of their occupations also influenced their relationships and networking. For example, working on Sundays and through split shifts during unsociable hours frequently determined their ability to form social relations beyond the work-based social networks. Anka, a 26 year old university graduate, employed as a receptionist in a 4-star hotel saw benefits from working with women from around the world, but she was also aware that she could not socialise with others, for example her English boyfriend's friends, locals, who had more typical working hours. Building on themes highlighted by Watt (2011) and Hagan (1998), our data therefore show that, in these situations, the organisation of the specific occupation, which is based around most people's leisure time, drastically shaped her spatial-temporal geographies and subsequently her ability to network.

Conclusion

Existing research on migrants has pointed to the importance of forming work-based relationships, but the emphasis in existing studies has been on networking beyond the workplace (Ryan, 2011). Studies of migrants' experiences of low-paid work point to such workplace factors as geographical isolation and inter-group conflict influencing encounters and relationships within and across cultural groups (Andrzejewska and Rye, 2012; Parutis, 2011). However, our data demonstrated how certain low-paid workplaces can provide particular networking opportunities and how migrants' attitudes, occupational status and language capital in particular can intersect to shape migrant's willingness and ability to capitalise on those opportunities.

The analysis presented here highlights the importance of considering how occupational and organisational mediators of migrant experiences can influence the adoption of particular interactional practices. As we argue, occupational mediators refer to the essential nature and content of particular occupations, including the task and spatial dimensions of work, which require differing competencies. These may vary little according to context and facilitate particular kinds of interactions. Based on the above, it may be possible to argue that certain occupations, because of their nature, lend themselves to greater levels of social contact, which can enable, though not guarantee, the formation of ties that provide opportunities to access 'mobilisable' resources (Anthias, 2007). However, building on Ryan and Mulholland's (2014) work, our findings also stress that in order to understand migrants' networking more fully, it is necessary to examine the organisational contexts in which work is performed and experienced.

Our studies were limited to one national group and to two occupational sectors, and we are not seeking to make generalisations. Nevertheless, the themes emerging from this study can act as conceptual lenses in future research. Considering task, spatial and related temporal features of work can be used to better understand the experiences of migrants in other occupations and organisations. Existing work has shown that migrant networking can influence integration strategies in host societies (cf. Hagan, 1998; Janta et al., 2011; Rydzik et al., 2012). Examining how work(place) dynamics may affect their networking thus has practical implications insofar as it can help to understand migrants' adaptation in host societies and their labour mobility trajectories. In light of the often antagonistic debates concerning the impacts of migrants on community cohesion (Demireva, 2014), studies focusing on the links between employment and migration experience may inform wider debates among academics and policy makers about how work may shape migration careers.

Conceptually, this study helps to distinguish between contextual and acontextual analyses of the migration-employment nexus. Acontextual sociological analysis may thus examine how different work practices in employment sectors in general utilise, restrict or transform migrants' existing capabilities and subsequently impact upon migration trajectories within and beyond particular employment spheres. Importantly, contextual analyses of work and workplace dynamics can examine how everyday enactment of labour practices actually determine interactions. Context-sensitive studies can thus seek to understand how migrants exploit those dynamics to influence their migration trajectories. Our research also highlights the need to account for individual agency in examining how migrants adopt interactional strategies to mobilise social and human capital in the workplace. There is a particular need in future research to question how human capital factors, including attitudes to work and to other ethnic groups alongside linguistic and interpersonal competencies, may intersect with organisational and occupational variables to shape interactional and networking practices that underpin migration experiences.

Conceiving future research through a contextual analysis, using multiple types of workplaces comparatively, may subsequently help to identify, and distinguish between, more or less significant features of work(places) that influence interactional practices. This may also have practical implications regarding the organisation of work(places) to facilitate networking. For example, this may lead to closer attention being paid to the ethnic divisions of labour that are (re)produced through spatial and task divisions, which, in turn may perpetuate ongoing segregation. Changes to human resource management practices, for example, in the creation of ethnically mixed work groups, and actively seeking to promote members of diverse ethnic groups to managerial positions, may reduce the enactment of workplace ethnic enclaves and help promote inter-ethnic and inter-national interactions.

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