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Aktuelle Befunde in und jenseits von Organisationen

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Kurzzusammenfassung

Die im Zeitalter des ‚unorganisierten Kapitalismus‘ auftretenden Entgrenzungen und Flexibilisierungen von Arbeit bringen atypische Beschäftigungsformen mit sich, sei es Leiharbeit, Solo-Selbständigkeit oder Graubereiche wie die stetig wachsende ‚Gig Economy‘. Nicht wenige, der in diesen Sektoren tätigen Menschen, sehen sich prekären Bedingungen ausgesetzt – teils mit den entsprechenden gesundheitlichen Folgen wie Depressionen oder Erschöpfungszustände. Überdies sind viele Tätigkeitsfelder marginalisiert und zwar in mehrfacher Hinsicht: So sind einige Gebiete des Entrepreneurship in der Forschung nur wenig bis kaum beachtet, etwa Klein(st)-UnternehmerInnen bestimmter Professionen (z.B. Sexarbeit) oder beispielsweise in migrantischen Kontexten. Andererseits zeigt sich Randständigkeit auch im Forschungsfeld selbst – etwa im Falle von LeiharbeiterInnen, die sich Ausgrenzung und Stigmatisierung gegenübersehen.

Die vorliegende kumulative Dissertation bündelt drei wissenschaftliche Artikel, die sich jeweils im Spannungsfeld eben jener Marginalisierung bewegen. Dabei handelt es sich konkret um eine Mehrfachfallstudie zu Selbständigen vor und während der COVID-19-Pandemie, eine Untersuchung zu Stigmatisierung in der Leiharbeit und schließlich ein konzeptionelles Papier, das eine Klassifizierung prekärer und marginalisierter Formen des Entrepreneurship vornimmt.

Neben dem Fokus auf Strategien des Umgangs mit prekären Arbeitskontexten ziehen sich durch alle drei Artikel Fragen professioneller und sozialer Identitäten. Dabei ist es insbesondere das konfliktäre Aufeinandertreffen – etwa von Stigmatisierung, professioneller Identität und sozialer Normung – das sich herausarbeiten ließ. Auch widersprüchliche Logiken, wie im Falle der untersuchten UnternehmerInnen, konnten beleuchtet werden. Der organisationale Kontext und entsprechende Rückschlüsse auf Managementprozesse treten vor allem in der Studie zu LeiharbeiterInnen hervor, einige Anchlüsse ergeben sich aber auch in Kategorien des marginalisierten und prekären Entrepreneurship.

Methodisch sind die in dieser Dissertation zusammengefassten Beiträge im Bereich der qualitativen Forschung angesiedelt. Trotz des vergleichsweise geringen Anteils entsprechender Arbeiten innerhalb der Wirtschaftswissenschaften, wird deren Bedeutung für die Theoriearbeit, Hypothesengenerierung und damit auch als Basis für quantitative Forschung häufig betont. In der vorliegenden Arbeit ermöglicht der gewählte Ansatz zudem einen Zugang zu den Wirkungen prekärer Arbeit auf individueller Ebene, aber auch einen Blick auf intraorganisationale Prozesse, dies vor allem im Falle der Leiharbeit.

Abstract

In the age of disorganised capitalism, increasing flexibility of work and deregulation entails atypical forms of employment, such as temporary work, self-employment or grey areas like the steadily growing 'gig economy'. People working in these sectors are often exposed to precarious conditions, sometimes leading to health problems such as depression or fatigue. In addition, many occupational fields are marginalised in more than one way: For example, some areas of entrepreneurship have received only little or hardly any attention in research, such as micro entrepreneurs in certain professions (e.g., sex work) or within contexts of migration. On the other hand, marginalisation is also evident in the actual fields of research. This can be seen in the case of temporary workers, who face organisational segregation and stigmatisation.

This series of papers presents three articles, each of which is framed by marginalisation and precarious contexts. Namely, this involves a multiple case study of four self-employed before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, an examination of stigmatisation in the field of temporary work as well as a conceptual paper that proposes a classification of precarious and marginalised forms of entrepreneurship.

While focusing on strategies of coping with contexts of precarious work, questions of professional and social identities emerge in all three papers. In particular, conflicting elements – such as stigma, professional identity and social norms – were identified. Similarly, it was possible to shed light on conflicting logics, as in the case of self-employed entrepreneurs. The organisational context and conclusions about management processes were most prominent in the study on temporary workers, whereas some correlations also emerged in categories of marginalised and precarious entrepreneurship.

From a methodological point of view, the studies gathered in this dissertation are all positioned in the field of qualitative research. Despite the rather moderate proportion of such work within economics, its importance for theoretical work, the generation of hypotheses and thereby as a basis for quantitative research is often emphasised. In the studies at hand, the chosen approach provides an insight into the effects of precarious work at an individual level, but also into intra-organisational processes, especially in the case of temporary agency work.

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1 EINLEITENDE BETRACHTUNGEN

Im Zuge des postmodernen Denkens und des – wie wir heute mit größerer und vielleicht auch unbehaglicher Sicherheit wissen – nur vermeintlichen Endes der Geschichte (Fukuyama, 1989; Kagan, 2008) wurde bereits früh und noch vor Fall des Eisernen Vorhangs auf die Auflösung der Grenzen zwischen Arbeit und Freizeit, Ökonomie und Kultur und das Kollabieren etablierter Institutionen verwiesen. Den Ären des liberalen und des organisierten Kapitalismus folgt das Zeitalter des unorganisierten Kapitalismus (Lash & Urry, 1987; Offe, 1985). Diese Auflösungserscheinungen und das Verschwimmen einstmals wohl definierter Einhegungen wurden in der Folge eingehend untersucht – etwa am Beispiel der schwindenden Bedeutung von Gewerkschaften (Gooberman et al., 2019; Katz, 1993; vgl. bspw.: Ulrich et al., 2014; Visser, 2007; Wallerstein & Western, 2000) oder der Entgrenzung von Arbeit (Ashforth et al., 2000; Henninger & Papouschek, 2006; Reissner et al., 2021) – nicht zuletzt auch im Schatten der zuvorderst oft positiv konnotierten Entwicklungen hin zu Vertrauensarbeitszeit und Home-Office (Gisin et al., 2016; Janke et al., 2014). Die negativen Effekte der Flexibilisierung von Arbeitsverhältnissen sind dabei seit langem bekannt (Martens et al., 1999). Auch die Etablierung und Einbettung von Freizeitangeboten in Unternehmenskontexten und Organisationskultur und die damit einhergehende Verschmelzung beider Sphären („Leisure at Work“; Duerden et al., 2018) weisen in eine ähnliche Richtung. Bei den letztgenannten Beispielen ist es nicht zuletzt die mit der Organisationskultur einhergehende Normierung, die sich auf einzelne Arbeitnehmerinnen und Arbeitnehmer auswirkt und auf die bereits kurz nach dem frühen ‚Boom‘ der Kulturkonzepte in der Organisationswissenschaft kritisch hingewiesen wurde (Willmott, 1993).

Eine andere Facette der Liberalisierung und Entgrenzung ist die Lohnentwicklung, die vor allem durch einen Anstieg der Beschäftigten im Niedriglohnsektor seit Ende der 1990er Jahre und dem Stagnieren auf relativ hohem Niveau seit etwa 2007 gekennzeichnet ist (Grabka & Schröder, 2019); hier zeigt sich seit Längerem eine Tendenz hin zum sogenannten Lohndumping – in Deutschland auch unter Umgehung des gesetzlichen Mindestlohnes seitens der Arbeitgeber (Bruttel et al., 2019; Knabe et al., 2020).

All jene Zeichen des Zerfalls können mithin als Paradigma gelten; So zeigt sich in der Gesellschaft der Spätmoderne auch das Zerfließen der früheren Mittelschicht zugunsten des Entstehens neuer gesellschaftlicher Gruppen, darunter ein mittlerweile nicht mehr allzu neues Prekariat, das mindestens auf das gefährliche Potenzial einer „Abstiegsgesellschaft“ weist

(Nachtwey, 2016; siehe auch: Reckwitz, 2019). Prekäre, instabile Formen der Beschäftigung, bei denen die ArbeitnehmerInnen es sind, die Risiken tragen und überdies nur begrenzte soziale Leistungen oder gesetzlichen Schutz erwarten können (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2017; Standing, 2011, 2012), prägen längst nicht nur weite Teile der Arbeitswelt, sie werden gar als ‚neue Norm‘ gesehen (Rubery et al., 2018).

Im deutschsprachigen Bereich waren es insbesondere Voß und Pongratz (1998) die mit dem „Arbeitskraftunternehmer“ ein Konzept vorstellten, das den langfristigen Wandel von Lohnarbeit aufzeigt, der unter anderem in der Flexibilisierung von Beschäftigungsformen seinen Ausdruck finde – etwa in Form von Outsourcing oder Scheinselbstständigkeit. Die in den letzten Jahren stark wachsende *Gig Economy* (Todolí-Signes, 2017; Woodcock & Graham, 2019), als abhängige Form der Selbstständigkeit mit über digitale Plattformen vermittelten Jobs („Gigs“), ist hierbei nur eine weitere Zuspitzung, die sich seit dem Erscheinen des „Arbeitskraftunternehmers“ vor mittlerweile über 20 Jahren ergeben hat. Längst sind die düsteren Facetten und prekären Arbeitsbedingungen einschlägiger Lieferdienste wie *Gorillas* ein Thema des breiten gesellschaftlichen Diskurses (siehe bspw. Moorstedt, 2021), aber auch einschlägiger, betriebswirtschaftlicher Forschung. So wird hier beispielsweise im Bereich des *Strategic Management* auf moralische Fragen verwiesen, die sich im Zusammenhang mit der aufstrebenden Gig Economy, einem schwindenden Schutz von ArbeitnehmerInnen und dem zweifelhaften Selbst-Framing von Unternehmen wie Uber als bloße *Plattform* (und nicht als Arbeitgeber) ergäben (Cornelissen & Cholakova, 2021).

Die verschiedenen Formen atypischer Beschäftigung, zu der auch Leiharbeit und Solo-Selbstständigkeit zählen, sind in ihren Wirkungen keineswegs auf das jeweilige Arbeitsfeld beschränkt, sondern greifen auch in die private Lebensführung (Keller & Nienhüser, 2014). Somit stellen sich nicht nur prozessuale Fragen und etwa jene nach *Arbeitsbedingungen*, sondern es bleibt auch zu eruieren, welche Formen des Umgangs mit prekären Situationen und Kontexten („Coping“, exemplarisch: Pljevaljic Simkunas & Thomsen, 2018; Premji et al., 2014; Santilli et al., 2021) der oder die Einzelne findet.

1.1 Relevanz des Themas

Dass prekäre Arbeitsbedingungen und Beschäftigungsverhältnisse zu einer Reihe von Erkrankungen führen und diese – parallel zur oben beschriebenen Entwicklung – zunehmen, kann als Gemeinplatz gelten. Zuvorderst sind hier psychische Erkrankungen zu nennen; Arbeitsplatzunsicherheit und atypische Beschäftigungsformen wirken sich negativ auf die

mentale Gesundheit aus, dies auch im internationalen Vergleich und in verschiedenen ökonomischen Kontexten (Llosa et al., 2018; Rönnblad et al., 2019). Im Abgleich mit regulär Beschäftigten zeigen sich etwa unter LeiharbeiterInnen höhere Raten an Depressionen und Erschöpfungszuständen (Hünefeld et al., 2020). Ähnliches gilt – trotz weiterem Forschungsbedarf – beispielsweise für den bereits erwähnten Bereich der *Gig Economy*, wobei hier als zusätzlicher Faktor die räumlich und sozial isolierte Position vieler ArbeitnehmerInnen ins Gewicht zu fallen scheint (Bérestégui, 2021; Glavin et al., 2021). Prekäre Arbeit beinhaltet jedoch nicht zuletzt auch körperlich risikoreiche und z.T. die Gesundheit gefährdende Tätigkeiten, etwa unter hohen Temperaturen, im Kontakt mit giftigen Stoffen oder schweren Maschinen (Mosoetsa et al., 2016). Letzteres gilt insbesondere für informelle Tätigkeiten in Ländern des globalen Südens, etwa der ‚informellen‘ (ergo illegalen) Müll-Industrie (Annamalai, 2015; vgl. exemplarisch: Wilyani et al., 2018). Gleichwohl sind derlei prekäre Bedingungen auch in westlichen Industrienationen zu finden, hier sei etwa auf ‚Tagelöhner‘ im US-amerikanischen Kontext verwiesen, die – oftmals einem migrantischen Milieu entstammend – sich zahlreichen Gefährdungen gegenübersehen (Haro et al., 2020; Rathod, 2015; Seixas et al., 2008).

Bezogen auf Selbständige, Freelancer und Kleinst-UnternehmerInnen sind es insbesondere die *Critical Entrepreneurship Studies* (CES), die den Fokus auf die dunklen Facetten gelenkt haben und damit weg von der rein positiv konnotierten Vorstellung von Entrepreneurship als ‚Erfolgsgeschichte‘ (Gerpott & Kieser, 2020; Tedmanson et al., 2012; vgl. u.a.: Verduijn et al., 2014). In den Forschungen, die sich diesem Feld zuordnen lassen, geht es nicht zuletzt um die Bedingungen und möglichen Hemmnisse, denen sich der oder die Einzelne ausgesetzt sieht. Entgegen der Vorstellung des erfolgreichen, männlichen und westlich sozialisierten Unternehmers werfen etwa Studien zu Unternehmerinnen aus einem migrantischen Milieu (vgl. bspw. Ozasir Kacar & Essers, 2019) Schlaglichter auf oftmals vernachlässigte Bereiche. Insbesondere in der kritisch ausgerichteten Forschung zu Entrepreneurship wird auf Forschungsbedarfe hingewiesen, bei denen es auf die Verbindung *ökonomisch-funktionaler* Ansätze mit Betrachtungen aus einer *soziologisch-institutionellen* Warte ankomme. Dabei stünden unter anderem „soziale Rationalitäten, Biographien, Karrieren, Arbeitsmuster und neue Arbeitsmarktkonfigurationen“ im Fokus (Bögenhold, 2020, S. 30, Übersetzung MT). Auch im Falle *hybrider Erwerbsformen*, also der Kombination von Selbständigkeit und ‚regulärem‘ Arbeitsverhältnis, bestehe Bedarf nach weiterer Forschung, etwa hinsichtlich der *Motive* für derartige Modi (Bögenhold, 2020); ein Aspekt, der im ersten der in dieser Arbeit gebündelten

Beiträge behandelt wird. Auch seien weitere Arbeiten dazu notwendig, wie UnternehmerInnen mit *stressbeladenen Ereignissen* umgehen (Fauchart & Gruber, 2020) – ein Punkt der ebenfalls im ersten Beitrag dieser Arbeit und mit Fokus auf die COVID-19-Pandemie adressiert wird. Daneben seien auch Fragen nach *Rollen und sozialen Identitäten* sowie des *Umgangs mit spannungsreichen Identitäten* von „necessity entrepreneurs“ (im Vergleich zu „opportunity entrepreneurs“, Fauchart & Gruber, 2020, S. 775) fruchtbare Felder weiterer Untersuchungen. Hier lassen sich aus dem ersten und dritten Artikel der vorliegenden Arbeit Erkenntnisse ableiten.

Schon seit längerem wird auf den Stellenwert von *Identitäten im organisationswissenschaftlichen und betriebswirtschaftlichen Kontext* hingewiesen – etwa im Bereich *Human resource management (HRM)*, wobei es unter anderem mögliche (verborgene) Konflikte sind, deren Bedeutung nicht zu verkennen und zu ignorieren sei, obgleich dies oft geschehe (Deetz, 2003). Auch wird auf die Komplexität von Identitäten verwiesen, die es zu erfassen gelte (Pratt, 2020). Diesem Postulat wird im Beitrag zu Leiharbeit dieser Arbeit gefolgt, indem die Bedeutung identifikatorischer Momente aber auch entsprechende Ambiguitäten hervorgehoben werden.

Wird der Bedarf an weiterer Forschung zu *unternehmerischen Identitäten* betont, so wird dabei insbesondere auf den *prozessualen, dynamischen Charakter* hingewiesen. Der Fokus solle dementsprechend vermehrt auf Prozesse der Identitätsbildung und weniger einer bloßen Bestandsaufnahme oder fixen Abbildung liegen (Leitch & Harrison, 2016). Eben jene Aspekte sind einige der verbindenden Momente dieser Arbeit: Das Herausarbeiten der für die jeweiligen (und teilweise hybriden) Identitäten formgebenden Positionierungen. Mit Blick auf atypische Beschäftigungsformen wie auch auf den Komplex „Entrepreneurship“ sind dies beispielsweise Formen des oben erwähnten *Coping* und die Frage, wie sich dieses im konkreten Fall gestaltet.

Auf der anderen Seite wurde vielfach auf die Bedeutung von professionsgebundenen Identitäten verwiesen (siehe bspw. Alvesson et al., 2008; Barker Caza & Creary, 2016; van Maanen, 1979; van Maanen & Barley, 1982), auf deren Adaption in organisationalen Kontexten (exemplarisch: Ibarra, 1999) aber – insbesondere in jüngerer Zeit – auch auf hybride Identitäten, die sich beispielsweise in professionellen Kontexten mit divergierenden Anforderungen oder konfligierenden institutionellen Logiken ergäben (Barker Caza & Creary, 2016; Bévort & Suddaby, 2016; Currie & Logan, 2020).

Während in eher randständigen Bereichen der Wirtschaftswissenschaften Identität seit längerem von Bedeutung und Gegenstand (kritischer) Forschung ist, bleiben derlei Fragen im sogenannten Mainstream weiter marginal. Dennoch wird gelegentlich auf die Relevanz des Individuums und seiner sozialen Einbettung hingewiesen, verbunden mit der Hoffnung, dass diesen Aspekten doch mehr Raum gegeben werde (exemplarisch: Davis, 2021). Zugleich zielen entsprechende Ansätze zuvorderst auf Konsumentenentscheidungen und wirtschaftliche Ergebnisse (Davis, 2021; Kranton, 2016), obwohl auch in Bereichen wie der HRM-Forschung seit längerem auf die Stigmatisierung aufgrund bestehender sozialer Normen hingewiesen und der weitere Bedarf an Forschung betont wird (umfassender Überblick: Del Triana et al., 2021). Derlei Aspekte sind gerade im Lichte des demografischen Wandels und oft beschworener, fehlender Fachkräfte bedeutsam, denn sie weisen auf Bruchstellen einer sich ohnehin weiter spaltenden Gesellschaft, sowohl in ökonomischer als auch – und in Wechselwirkung stehend – in sozialer Hinsicht (Butterwegge, 2018, 2020). Die Frage, was Menschen dazu bewegt, in Organisationen tätig zu sein oder sie im Zweifel davon abhält, ist nur eine, die hier gestellt werden kann. So gibt es beispielsweise Initiativen von Unternehmen, die in Ressentiments und gruppenbezogener Menschenfeindlichkeit letztlich auch wirtschaftliche Probleme sehen und sich für Toleranz und Weltoffenheit einsetzen¹.

Die im Sinne der *Theorie der sozialen Identität* (Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel & Turner, 1978; Turner & Oakes, 1986) stattfindende Abgrenzung von In- und Outgroup und die sich daraus ergebenden Ab- und Aufwertungsprozesse innerhalb sozialer Gruppen, Organisationen oder schlicht der Gesellschaft stellen vermutlich Kontinuitäten menschlichen Verhaltens dar (Bourdieu, 2000, 2017; Dörre, 2017). Sie sind somit auch und insbesondere in Arbeitskontexten relevant. Die Frage nach einer professionellen Identität kann beispielsweise als Teil eines Subjektivierungsprozesses verstanden werden, wobei sich hier mit Reckwitz oftmals eine narrative Struktur zeige: “das heißt, die Selbstrepräsentation des Subjekts folgt Erzählmustern (Aufstiegsgeschichten, Kampfgeschichten, defätistischen Geschichten etc.), die für die jeweilige Subjektkultur charakteristisch sind” (Reckwitz, 2016, S. 71). Ferner ist der Fokus auf das Individuum auch deswegen von Relevanz, weil in zahlreichen Arbeits- und Beschäftigungsformen Entfremdungen und Isolation auftreten; So ist der Kontext zwar ein organisationaler, die Effekte betreffen jedoch den oder die Einzelne(n) – prominent einmal mehr am Beispiel der *Gig economy* ersichtlich. Andererseits ist es beispielsweise die Leiharbeit,

¹ Als Beispiel sei der Verein *Wirtschaft für ein weltoffenes Sachsen e.V.* genannt; <https://www.welcomesaxony.de/>.

bei der ArbeitnehmerInnen sich in mindestens zwei, sich überlagernden organisationalen Kontexten befinden. Die seit einiger Zeit auch in der organisationswissenschaftlichen Forschung (Alvesson et al., 2008) in den Fokus gerückten Subjektivierungsprozesse gilt es – wie auch jene oben beschriebenen Fragen nach Identitäten – mittels qualitativer Methoden zu eruieren. Ist es doch insbesondere die narrative Formung, der sich auf diese Weise angenähert wird.

1.2 Qualitative Forschung in der Betriebswirtschaftslehre

Qualitative Forschung hat in der Betriebswirtschaftslehre, der Organisationswissenschaft wie auch – allgemeiner – der Wirtschaftswissenschaft nach wie vor gegen eine randständige Position zu kämpfen, insbesondere was die Publikation in hoch gerankten Journals angeht (Runfola et al., 2017). Gleichwohl ist die letzte Dekade auch von einer zunehmenden Bedeutung qualitativer Ansätze geprägt, so verweisen etwa Bansal et al. (2018) auf ein Allzeithoch an entsprechenden Einreichungen beim *Academy of Management Journal* im Jahr 2017. Während etwa Fallstudien immer noch vergleichsweise wenig publiziert werden, ist deren Bedeutung vielfach hervorgehoben worden. So sind sie nicht nur ein geeignetes Instrument um Phänomene in ihrem jeweiligen Kontext zu untersuchen, sondern sie können auch wertvolle Theoriearbeit leisten (Runfola et al., 2017; Tsang, 2014) und stellen somit nicht zuletzt die Basis für weitere, quantitative Untersuchungen dar oder liefern Hypothesen (Patton & Appelbaum, 2003).

Mit Blick auf die vorliegenden Beiträge und die Beforschung prekärer Arbeitskontexte ist das Primat eines qualitativen Designs zu betonen, da hiermit individuelle Sichtweisen, Sinnzuschreibungen und Strategien – also auch oben bereits erwähntes Coping – identifiziert werden. Es wird sich folglich auf *individueller* Ebene den Phänomenen gewidmet, die sonst eher abstrakt bleiben und es ist gerade die Aktualität jener Erscheinungsformen von Arbeit, die ein Greifbarmachen ermöglichen; vielleicht auch als Grundlage größerer und auch quantitativer Untersuchungen.

Somit stellt die Nutzung qualitativer Methoden in den Wirtschaftswissenschaften auch die Chance dar, sonst meist ungehörten wirtschaftlichen Akteuren eine Stimme zu verleihen und nicht zuletzt auch deren Perspektiven, Erfahrungen und Deutungen in den Diskurs einzubringen (Starr, 2014), was gerade mit Blick auf *atypisch Beschäftigte* und *marginalisierte UnternehmerInnen* in dieser Arbeit versucht wird. Auch Lenger (2019) weist auf die Vorzüge qualitativer Methodologie hin, die sich durch die analytische Rekonstruktion der

ursprünglichen Konzepte von Gewährspersonen auszeichne – im Gegensatz zu a priori formulierten Schemata, deren ‚Passfähigkeit‘ letztlich ungesichert bleibe (Lenger, 2019).

Zwei der in dieser Arbeit vereinten Beiträge liegt ein qualitatives Forschungsdesign zugrunde. Der dritte, konzeptionelle Beitrag stützt sich in der Literaturschau auf qualitative Forschungsergebnisse. Zugleich wurde das Ziel einer methodischen Vielfalt angestrebt; das jeweilige methodische Vorgehen soll in der Einordnung der einzelnen Artikel im Folgenden kurz skizziert werden.

1.3 Einordnung der Beiträge und theoretische Grundlagen

Aus den Ausführungen zur Relevanz des Themas und der aufgezeigten Forschungsdesiderata ergeben sich übergreifende Themen, die sich in allen drei in dieser Arbeit gebündelten Beiträgen widerspiegeln: Zum einen ist dies der Umgang mit prekären Arbeits- und Beschäftigungskontexten, sei es als *Leiharbeiter oder Leiharbeiterin*, als *Selbständige* angesichts der COVID-19-Pandemie und in marginalisierter Position oder in weiteren, *marginalisierten Formen des Entrepreneurship*. Ein anderes, die Arbeit umspannendes Gefüge sind Fragen nach Identitätsprozessen und -Ambiguitäten.

Schließlich ist auch der Fokus auf randständige Bereiche der Erwerbsarbeit als Baldachin dieser kumulativen Dissertation zu verstehen: Randständig aufgrund *sozialer Ausgrenzung* (hier: Leiharbeit), im Sinne *wenig beachteter Forschungsfelder* oder schlichtweg vermeintlicher *unternehmerischer Nischen* (beides: marginalisierte Bereiche des Entrepreneurship). Unter Einbeziehung der oben aufgeworfenen Blickpunkte geht es dabei nicht zuletzt auch um die Sichtbarmachung marginalisierter Gruppen und bislang teils vernachlässigter Aspekte organisationaler Prozesse oder unternehmerischen Handelns.

Alle drei Artikel folgen grundsätzlich einer sozialkonstruktivistischen Perspektive, die in ihrem Kern davon ausgeht, dass Wirklichkeit und ‚Wahrheit‘ nicht per se existieren, sondern in von Individuen geschaffenen Bedeutungskontexten sozial kreiert werden (Berger & Luckmann, 1969; Hatch & Yanow, 2005). Aus diesem interpretativen Paradigma ergibt sich auch der methodologische Ansatz einer qualitativen Untersuchung, die das Ziel hat, jene Deutungen und Zusammenhänge nachzuzeichnen. Dabei gilt es nicht zuletzt, deren Prozesshaftigkeit und Ambiguitäten (Berger & Luckmann, 1969) zu erfassen, etwa wenn es um Fragen *professioneller Identitäten* geht.

Wie lässt sich die vorliegende Arbeit nun in den Bereich der Organisationswissenschaft oder – weiter gefasst – der Betriebswirtschaftslehre einordnen? Hierfür soll sich entlang der einzelnen Artikel und unter Bezug auf die oben aufgeworfenen Problemstellungen positioniert werden.

Bei dem *ersten Beitrag* handelt es sich um eine ausgedehnte Fallstudie zu *marginalisierten UnternehmerInnen im Kontext der COVID-19-Pandemie*: Die hier vorgestellten und untersuchten Formen von Selbständigkeit bewegen sich teils in gesellschaftlicher Randständigkeit und werden oftmals nicht als Entrepreneurship (an-)erkannt, beispielsweise *Sexarbeit*. Gleichwohl sind sie – wie auch andere, ähnlich prekäre oder stigmatisierte Bereiche – nicht nur weit verbreitet, sondern eine fast schon alltägliche Form von Mikrounternehmen. Insgesamt werden hier vier ausführliche Fallstudien von Klein- und KleinstunternehmerInnen präsentiert, die vor Beginn der COVID-19-Pandemie begonnen und währenddessen fortgeführt wurden, in toto über einen Zeitraum von mehr als anderthalb Jahren.

Die Relevanz dieser Forschung ergibt sich auch aus den hier vorliegenden Figurationen von Arbeit und den zugrundeliegenden Motiven: So ist es insbesondere der Wille zur Autonomie und wirtschaftlichen wie persönlichen Entfaltung, der in der alltäglichen Praxis auf eine institutionelle Einhegung trifft. Dass der Erhebungszeitraum in die Zeit der Pandemie fiel bzw. hierfür erweitert wurde, hat der Frage verschiedener Widersprüche und konfligierender Logiken eine weitere Dimension hinzugefügt. Für die Analyse wurde ein neo-institutionalistischer Bezugsrahmen gewählt. Der Fokus der Untersuchung liegt dementsprechend auch auf dem Umgang und der Rahmung staatlicher Maßnahmen zur Eindämmung des Virus. Diese werden mithin als Regularien und Normen verstanden, wobei sich bereits in der Vergangenheit gezeigt hat, dass die Reaktionen auf die Umwelt innerhalb eines Feldes nicht nur auf organisationaler Ebene eruiert werden (Greenwood et al., 2011), sondern auch in der Forschung zu Entrepreneurship ergiebig sein können (vgl. bspw.: Su et al., 2017). Die theoretische Fundierung dieses Beitrags im Bereich des Neo-Institutionalismus hat sich auch deswegen als fruchtbar erwiesen, weil an die Identitätsforschung angeknüpft werden konnte. So sind es nicht nur hybride Logiken, sondern sich ebenfalls überschneidende und ergänzende Identitäten, die hier zum Tragen kommen. Auf diese Weise werden auch jene oben beschriebenen Forschungsbedarfe adressiert, die die Komplexität und das ‚händeln‘ spannungsvoller Identitäten betreffen. Ferner liefert der Beitrag auch Erkenntnisse zum Umgang von Klein- und Kleinst-UnternehmerInnen mit stressbelastenden Situationen und dem oben erwähnten Coping.

Die dem **zweiten Beitrag** zugrundeliegende Untersuchung beschäftigt sich mit Stigmatisierung in der Leiharbeit. Unter dem Titel „*Temporary Employment, Permanent Stigma? Perceptions of Temporary Agency Workers Across Low- and High-Skilled Jobs*“ wurden hier Ab- und vor allem Ausgrenzungsprozesse von Zeitarbeiterinnen und Zeitarbeitern beleuchtet. Der eingangs beschriebene Wandel von Arbeitsverhältnissen und eine damit einhergehende Prekarisierung verleihen diesem Beitrag eine große Aktualität. Die Arbeit basiert auf einem heterogenen Sample von insgesamt 16 LeiharbeiterInnen, das sowohl niedrig wie auch hoch qualifizierte Berufe und Tätigkeiten einschließt. Die Studie macht sich das von Boyce et al. (2007) vorgestellte Modell der Stigmatisierung von LeiharbeiterInnen zu Nutze und unternimmt den Versuch, dies zu erweitern. Unter Stigmatisierung wird hier die Abwertung eines Menschen aufgrund eines bestimmten ‚Schlüsselmerkmals‘ verstanden, in diesem Falle angesichts des Status ‚Zeitarbeiter/Zeitarbeiterin‘ (Boyce et al., 2007). Boyce et al. legen in ihrem Modell einen holistischen Ansatz vor, der etwa das Arbeitsumfeld oder Coping-Strategien einschließt. Die postulierte Unterscheidung von verdeckten und offenen Formen der Stigmatisierung hat sich in der vorliegenden Untersuchung hingegen als nicht fruchtbar erwiesen – da die Grenzen hier schlichtweg verschwimmen. In der Gesamtbetrachtung konnten eine ganze Reihe stigmatisierender Praktiken und Verhaltensweisen, aber auch des Umgangs seitens der Betroffenen herausgearbeitet werden. Dabei sind Unterschiede bezüglich des Status der jeweiligen Tätigkeit (hoch/niedrig qualifiziert) evident. Die Bedeutung des Beitrages ergibt sich nicht zuletzt aus dem Abgleich der Stigmatisierung von LeiharbeiterInnen in niedrig und hochqualifizierten Tätigkeiten, der in dieser Form bislang noch nicht unternommen wurde. Aus den tätigkeitsbezogenen Ergebnissen der Studie werden auf organisationaler Ebene sogleich einige Handlungsempfehlungen abgeleitet. Überdies lassen sich auch aus diesem Artikel Erkenntnisse zu Prozessen der Identitätsbildung, zu sozialen und in Teilen konfligierenden Rollen ableiten.

Bei dem **dritten in dieser Arbeit vereinten Beitrag** handelt es sich um einen konzeptionellen Text, der auf einer umfassenden Literaturschau zu prekären und marginalisierten Formen des Entrepreneurship aufbaut. Unter dem Titel *Marginal people: Towards a classification of research on precarious and marginalized entrepreneurship* wird der Versuch unternommen, die aktuelle Forschungslandschaft zu diesem Thema zu skizzieren, so wie sie sich im wissenschaftlichen Diskurs und in entsprechenden Studien darstellt. Unter den sieben, in der Folge herausgearbeiteten Kategorien sind etwa “*Marginalized female entrepreneurship*”, “*Dependent (digital) self-employment*”, “*Dirty work entrepreneurship*” oder “*Disabled*

entrepreneurs“. Die vorgenommene Konzeptionalisierung greift auf das von Robert Ezra Park etablierte, soziologische Konzept des „*marginal man*“ (1928) zurück. Park bezieht sich ursprünglich auf Menschen die – als MigrantInnen – zwischen zwei Kulturen wandern und sich als ‚kulturelle Hybride‘ zwischen Traditionen auf der einen und einem ‚neuen‘ gesellschaftlichen (und in Teilen feindlichen) Umfeld auf der anderen Seite befinden. Dieser fortwährende Zustand wird von Park auch als permanente Krise beschrieben. Dies, wie auch weitere Elemente jenes Konzeptes, dienen im vorliegenden Papier als Analogie zur prekären Situation in marginalisierten Formen und Bereichen des *Entrepreneurship*. Letzteres zählt als Forschungsfeld seit langem zum wissenschaftlichen Kanon der Betriebswirtschaftslehre, zurückgehend unter anderem auf Schumpeter und dessen frühe und zum Klassiker avancierte Betrachtungen zum Unternehmer (Schumpeter, 1912). Gleichwohl wird unter Bezugnahme auf VertreterInnen der *Critical Entrepreneurship Studies* ein Zugang gewählt, der die traditionelle Konzeption und Rahmung von *Entrepreneurship* bewusst erweitert und teilweise auch in Frage stellt.

Das Feld der oben bereits erwähnten ‚*Gig economy*‘ wurde im Artikel unter der Kategorie „*Dependent (digital) self-employment*“ aufgegriffen. Dieses fällt in Teilen in den Bereich der Organisationsforschung, sind hier doch größere Unternehmen und weniger der oder die einzelne Selbständige der Ausgangspunkt. Dabei stellen sich zum Beispiel Fragen nach Machtausübung, (digitaler) Kontrolle und neuen Formen des Monitorings (Gandini, 2019; Newlands, 2021). Einmal mehr werden in diesem Text aber auch Fragen nach professionellen und sozialen Identitäten innerhalb und außerhalb von Organisationen aufgegriffen; diese Thematik zieht sich somit durch alle drei Forschungspapiere.

Im Folgenden werden die einzelnen Beiträge dieser kumulativen Arbeit präsentiert². Einige, sich daran anschließende finale Betrachtungen greifen deren Ergebnisse und thematischen Überschneidungen noch einmal auf.

² Zwei der drei Beiträge dieser Dissertation sind bereits veröffentlicht. Zugunsten der Lesbarkeit wurde die Formatierung jener Artikel für diese Arbeit angepasst und vereinheitlicht. Die jeweilige Gliederung und Zitierweise wurden beibehalten; hier ergeben sich zwischen den Artikeln geringfügige Unterschiede.

	Autorenschaft und Eigenanteil	Publikationsstatus	
1	Tümpel, Markus; Cardone, Pia (2022): 'If things really go on as they are at the moment, then I will work illegally. End of story.'—Pandemic realities in marginalized entrepreneurship. <i>Qualitative Sociology Review</i> 18(1):74-95. https://doi.org/10.18778/1733-8077.18.1.04 .	Federführender Autor 0,5	Publiziert in: <i>Qualitative Sociology Review</i> 18(1):74-95
2	Cardone, Pia, Tümpel, Markus, & Huber, Christian (2021): Temporary employment, permanent stigma? Perceptions of temporary agency workers across low- and high-skilled jobs. <i>Qualitative Sociology Review</i> , 17(3), 6–33. https://doi.org/10.18778/1733-8077.17.3.01 .	Ko-Autor 0,33	Publiziert in: <i>Qualitative Sociology Review</i> 17(3):6-33
3	Tümpel, Markus (2022): Marginal people – Towards a classification of research on precarious and marginalized entrepreneurship.	Alleinautor 1,0	Im Review (double blind) bei <i>The International Small Business Journal</i>
		Eigenanteil gesamt: 1,83	

Übersicht der in dieser Arbeit gebündelten Publikationen

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2 EINZELNE BEITRÄGE DER DISSERTATION

2.1 ‘If things really go on as they are at the moment, then I will work illegally. End of story.’ — Pandemic realities in marginalized entrepreneurships.

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Abstract

Micro-enterprises and self-employed individuals have been hit particularly hard by the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, but few studies have tackled the issue. This paper is based on four in-depth case studies of self-employed people from different sectors who have been greatly affected by measures taken to control the pandemic. By capturing shifts in the perception of institutional and economic pressures, as well as precarities after the outbreak of COVID-19, we gained profound insight into crisis management among entrepreneurs working in niche or marginalized fields of business. We found parallels in their biographies and attitudes, but their perceptions of the COVID-19 pandemic differ. We observed paradoxes and hybrid logics, as well as different ways of coping with the crisis. Having a ‘plan B’ helped in some cases, while all of them benefitted from the solidarity of networks and communities.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Covid-19, biographical study, autonomy, narrative approach, sex workers, fitness instructors, clothing stores, caterers

JEL Classification: Z1, Z130, Z190

Introduction

In spring 2019, we began a study of self-employed individuals and freelancers with the aim of exploring ‘deviating biographies’. We were interested in people whose biographies and personalities largely diverge from the stereotype and archetype of the ‘successful entrepreneur’, which have been criticised for quite a while (e.g., Johnsen and Sørensen 2017; Gerpott and Kieser 2017). However, after we collected a considerable amount of data on four individual cases, COVID-19 emerged. The pandemic changed the working routines and lives of people across the world and impacted our investigation. By accident, our sample of four cases included entrepreneurs in professional fields that were severely restricted by measures taken to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. We soon realised that we should capture this disruption. Hence, we added another round of data collection to the existing individual case studies, (re-)setting the focus on recent developments.

Therefore, the aim of our study evolved to capture shifts in the perception of institutional and economic pressures, as well as precarities after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and gain profound insight into crisis management among entrepreneurs working in niche and marginalized fields of business. The research questions are as follows:

- R 1: Are there specific ways of reacting to the new constraints and requirements imposed by various interest groups during the COVID-19 pandemic? If so, what are they?*
- R 2: How are new institutional demands experienced in these specific fields of business, and how is reality individually framed or constructed in the context of COVID-19?*

Although nearly every sector of the economy has been affected by the crisis, micro-enterprises, self-employed individuals, and entrepreneurs have been hit particularly hard (Kartseva and Kuznetsova 2020; Fabeil, Pazim and Langgat 2020; Cepel et al. 2020; Fairlie 2020). Depending on the sector, they have faced a total loss of earnings or extremely precarious conditions. Initial studies conducted in different countries and regions have dealt with how these groups coped with the crisis (Shafi, Liu and Ren 2020; Bartik et al. 2020; Blundell and Machin 2020); however, only a few of these studies have adopted a qualitative approach (e.g., Wijaya 2020; Rukti Tanaya and Ekyawan 2020). Shepard and Williams (2020) emphasised the need for studies focused on entrepreneurial activities in the context of the current crisis, especially as it relates to individual resilience. The role of resilience for entrepreneurs and ways of responding to precarious and uncertain circumstances seem to be very prominent matters among scholars

who have conceptualised and called for studies on the ongoing crisis and its impact on entrepreneurship (e.g., Hite and McDonald 2020; Portuguez Castro and Gómez Zermeño 2020; Ratten 2020). This is why our study focuses on how entrepreneurs are responding to and coping with economic and social burdens during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Theory

Given the strong institutional pressures and demands on business owners resulting from measures and regulations enacted to control the spread of COVID-19, we propose approaches of new institutionalism as a theoretical perspective to frame the analysis and acquire knowledge about current events. Basically, the neo-institutionalist approach claims that organisations adopt dominant practices of other – successful – organisations (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Following the original approach, institutionalised ‘techniques’ and ‘policies’ are strong myths that organisations are forced to implement (Meyer and Rowan 1977:340).

Taking this as a basis, studies on organisational responsiveness and organisational logic help to understand how various institutional pressures embodied in regulations, norms, laws, and social expectations stemming from various sources, such as the state and public or private interest groups, are managed (Delmas and Toffel 2008; Greenwood et al. 2008; Greenwood et al. 2011). The COVID-19 pandemic and the urgency of containment have led federal and regional authorities to impose numerous constraints, such as regulations on social distancing, border closures, the prohibition of mass events, and the temporary closure of numerous businesses during the lockdown. Additionally, social expectations regarding business policies focused on protecting the health of employees and customers have risen. The new prioritisation of health protection logic represented by institutions, such as the state and community, has led to criticism of organisations that failed to protect their employees, knowingly endangered them, or caused outbreaks (e.g., at *Tönnies* meat processing factories³). This not only illustrates the increasing public pressure but also shows how questions of mismanagement and resulting precarities can enter the discourse.

Studies have shown that organisations develop diverse strategies to respond to their environment, and not all organisations experience institutional demands in a given field in a similar way (Greenwood et al. 2011; Crilly, Zollo and Hansen 2012; Kraatz and Block 2008;

³ In June 2020, a major outbreak of COVID-19 occurred in one of Europe's largest meat processing plants in Rheda-Wiedenbrück. Its primary causes were the catastrophic and unhygienic working and living conditions for the workers, most of whom are migrants (Paul 2020; Deutsche Welle 2020).

Oliver 1991). Moreover, an institutional perspective in research on *entrepreneurship* is well established and proven to be helpful (Su, Zhai and Karlsson 2017; Bruton, Ahlstrom and Li 2010), and some qualitative studies have taken this stance (e.g., Eijdenberg et al. 2019). By drawing on this theoretical framework, the current study takes a micro-perspective focused on individual behaviours and mindsets (e.g., Wicks 2001). This approach will provide new insights into the perceptions and reactions of entrepreneurs in fields of business strongly affected by COVID-19 pandemic-imposed institutional pressures and suffering economic precarities. Thus, this study contributes to the evolving scientific discourse tackling the questions arising due to COVID-19 from a managerial viewpoint (Spurk and Straub 2020; Hite and McDonald 2020).

In addition, several studies have begun to examine the identities of entrepreneurs (e.g., Leitch and Harrison 2016), including research on conflicting identities (e.g., Schediwy, Bhansing and Loots 2018; Pécoud 2004; Slay and Smith 2011) and hybrid ones, for example within the context of migration (e.g., Essers and Benschop 2009; Essers and Benschop 2007; Barrett and Vershinina 2017). Since our study follows a narrative, biographical approach, identities also play a role here (Czarniawska 2004; Ozasir Kacar and Essers 2019) and with regard to the field of ‘non-typical entrepreneurs’ questions of identity *formation* may arise. As Laclau (1990) concludes, ‘[E]very identity is dislocated insofar as it depends on an outside which both denies that identity and provides its condition of possibility at the same time.’ (Laclau 1990:39). By Drawing on this notion, this paper also seeks to trace facets of the individual identities.

Data and Method

Our research design is a multiple case study (Stake 2013; see also: Yin 2018; Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007) based on four in-depth case studies of self-employed people from different sectors: a *fitness instructor* who is also the owner of a CrossFit® gym, the *head and founder of a catering company*, a *retailer and importer* who owns a small clothing store, and a *sex worker* who also works as a sexual assistant. All four case studies focus on people who run their business in the eastern part of Germany and belong to two cohorts of the so-called ‘*Wendejugend*’ (the youth of the transformation) and ‘*Wendekinder*’ (children of the transformation). These individuals were born during the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) between 1971 and 1980 or 1981 and 1985 (Kubiak and Weinel Martin 2016; Lettrari, Nestler and Troi-Boeck 2016; Ahbe and Gries 2006a; Ahbe and Gries 2006b). All of them spent most of their adolescence during the final years of the GDR or during the years of transformation during the 1990s. Hence, they all share the experience of ruptures and

fluctuations in the course of the transformation or its results. To date, numerous studies have investigated the distinctive characteristics of these generations (Lettrari, Nestler and Troi-Boeck 2016; Bock 2000; Kubiak 2020) but also raised the question of whether these generations have common features (Benkert 2016). A broader perspective was adopted by Banalieva et al. (2017), who argued that the long-term effects of communist societies on individual behaviour continue to the present day and, for instance, shape management practices (see also: Vadi 2018). Other authors have examined the transition of East German identities after the reunification with West Germany, focusing on somewhat marginalized Eastern German perspectives (Maclean, Harvey and Stringfellow 2017).

Our study focuses on entrepreneurs by accident (Sarasvathy 2001; Görling and Rehn 2008) and so-called necessity entrepreneurship (Brewer and Gibson 2014) within this context (see e.g., Blokker and Dallago 2017; Welter, Smallbone and Isakova 2006). We followed the four cases over a period of 18 months, starting in spring 2019. We conducted multiple interviews, as well as participatory observation and shadowing. We had the unique opportunity to directly accompany self-employed people dealing with the crisis in ‘real time’. We used the autobiographical-narrative interview approach (e.g., Schütze 1983) and extended it by splitting the interviews into two parts to stimulate people’s reflexivity between sessions and make it possible for us to prepare the second session based on the first, which supports sociological reflexivity (Caetano 2015). This procedure also gave us the opportunity to capture people’s reflections on the ongoing pandemic and doing business under these circumstances.

A special feature of this study is access to the field and respective sampling: We were able to draw on personal contacts and, thus, a sense of trust. The selection of cases was, therefore, also based on pre-existing (while fragmentary) knowledge of their biographies or, at least, the knowledge that their biographies and, perhaps, their intentions, differ considerably from those of a ‘prototypical’ entrepreneur. Thus, they ‘fit’ the original aim of our inquiry in its focus on biographies deviating from the ‘prototypical’ entrepreneur. We used MAXQDA and followed an inductive approach to analyse all the transcripts and documents. Nonetheless, our theoretical lens sharpened the focus on response strategies and interpretations of entrepreneurs with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, in the discussion of the results, we will draw on approaches of new institutionalism. Based on the coding and respective categories, comprehensive case descriptions were elaborated, and triangulation was used (Denzin 2009; Flick 2011; Flick 2018; Patton and Appelbaum 2003; Stake 2013; Natow 2020): Both authors were equally involved in the analysis, and their interpretations were discussed on a regular basis

(Kuckartz and Rädiker 2019; Stake 2013). In the next section, we will present our four cases in detail, focusing on their biography and the effects of the Covid-19-pandemic.

Results

Case #1: Tom

Tom was born in 1981 in the former GDR and grew up with two siblings. He is interested in many things, which are reflected in his biography. In early childhood, he was active in sports. Contrary to his ambitions, his school career ended early: *'I was [...] very sad when I had to leave school. That was, as one would say today, chicanery by the school management, or it was just a lack of motivation'*. He then began an apprenticeship as a carpenter and discovered his passion for woodworking. After a phase of burnout, he decided to take a break and travelled to the Philippines. What started out as a holiday in Asia ultimately became nine years of his life: After returning home from the trip, he immediately quit his job, sold his property, and returned to Asia. In the Philippines, he met his former partner and entered the hotel business, where his training as a carpenter gave him a foothold. His way of working and his ideas were well received, and he was promoted to general manager of the hotel within three years.

After the hotel was slated to be sold, Tom and his partner decided to go to Australia. Drawing on their contacts with boutique owners and manufacturers, they set up a business engaged in importing accessories from Asia. This was a great success: *'It was really fantastic. During the sales weeks, I drove two and a half thousand kilometres every week across Australia, so it was really great'*. During this period, Tom tried to visit Germany once a year. One summer, he arrived home just as his father became ill. After returning to Australia, he received word that he died. The early death of his father prompted him to return to Germany, as he wanted to support his mother. He separated from his partner and left all their joint businesses to her. However, the financial loss did not seem to make him feel bitter, and this stance illustrates his general attitude quite well:

When I left Australia, I left a relatively large amount of cash behind. It was clear to me that I would never go back. (...) I liked working there, and I liked the life there, but I did not care about the money.

In Germany, Tom had to build a new life for himself without money or his partner. Living on his parents' farm, he had no major expenses. Based on his experiences in Asia, he began working in the hotel business again while also working as a personal trainer. Looking for a new challenge and passion in his life, he thought about CrossFit, a sport he discovered abroad and a

megatrend that had not yet arrived in his hometown. His training space, the 'CrossFit-Box' as it is called, is very important to him, and he invested all his money and time in the project.

In explaining his *motivation*, he describes himself as a person who had a lot of luck in life, which he would like to share with others. His travels and various activities equipped him with a great deal of experiences, for which he seems grateful. The CrossFit-Box is run as a non-profit business, where he gains satisfaction from doing something he likes to do and getting positive feedback from clients.

My profit is when I make people fit, my profit is when I make people healthy, my profit is when people like to come to me. And that was also a criterion for me, why I said, 'ok I don't offer memberships'. Because I really want to see that people want to be here! If someone doesn't want to be here, then I don't want his money either.

As he shows little interest in material possessions, he also has a less capitalistic view on work and entrepreneurship. Money seems of little value to him:

What do I do with the money when I get it? I have no children, I have no family, I own my property, all I have, is mine. Why should I make money with it? I don't know what to do with it.

His motivation is also driven by the search for new challenges, even if they are risky. Due to his experiences in Asia and Australia, he is used to dealing with major changes. He describes travelling as giving him '*the courage to risk things*'. He is not afraid to leave things behind and start over; if a business model does not work, he does not consider it a failure but a '*sign that brings something new with it*'. For him, it is not important to be self-employed or to earn a lot of money per se, but he emphasises that it is a matter of doing what you like to do on a professional level. In his opinion, people should ask themselves the following:

If the money is worth nothing anymore, are you in the situation where you would like to be, or have you chosen the wrong way? Because if you do that from the beginning, then no matter what happens to the business, no matter how bad your income is, you are always on the winning path. You are always happy [...] You are good at what you do, you get good feedback, and that's it.

With this positive attitude towards life, his interpretations of economic restraints and challenges are basically positive. His stance also seems to have helped him throughout COVID-19 pandemic so far. Tom's gym, his training space, had to close down abruptly, as did similar businesses. Nevertheless, he benefitted from his strategy of hybrid entrepreneurship: always relying on hybrid forms of income, including wage jobs and self-employment. Though this is

not necessarily a distinctive aspect of COVID-19, it is important as a 'back up' in precarious times:

That's exactly the situation, why I kept the workshop for years, why I did the hotel part-time for years, if ever such a situation comes up. That it [the business] is just not over all of a sudden, right?

Although his turnover is zero, he saw no reason to worry about his finances. This is why Tom did not apply for any funding or loans, which he generally perceives critically. In his opinion, the state will reclaim much of the disbursed COVID-19 aid after audits have been completed. In his opinion, this will cause severe problems for many small businesses.

Moreover, Tom seems to have been well prepared in terms of logistics and what was about to come in the winter and spring of 2020. According to Tom, he relied on personal contacts in Asia who gave him updates on the pandemic, so he took the situation seriously from the outset. Assuming that the pandemic would reach Europe soon, he started to prepare online tutorials in January 2020. Throughout the 'first year of the pandemic', Tom was constantly adapting to the situation and found alternative solutions (e.g., outdoor training sessions). However, the changes are mostly temporary, and he does not consider them to be long-lasting business developments (e.g., digital sport offers a temporary solution but does not fit his concept of personally assisted training and direct contact to the workout group). Solidarity, networks, and the support of friends and customers helped considerably: His customers continued to pay their fees for training sessions even though they could not take place. However, people who could not afford to pay for lessons or equipment rental fees were not obliged to do so. In addition to online lessons he offered personal meetings, especially for people in need or in difficult circumstances. In an interview in summer 2020, Tom states the following:

It must go on now [...] and, um, since this month, we have been going on step-by-step in small groups. Um, sluggish, challenging, and so on. But, yes, I say, if it goes on now, if no second wave comes now, or if we don't have to go back or whatever, um, it wasn't that hard for me.

His rather positive baseline might have led Tom to frame the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to slow down his routines (like another case, Hans, the caterer):

What I liked about the whole thing was that it was all slowed down. At first, everyone just stopped, stayed at home, stayed calm, stayed ... no fear of missing something or feeling the need to go somewhere. I don't think that was so bad. That brought us a little bit back to the basics, you know?

As a matter of principle, Tom is in favour of adopting measures to prevent the spread of infection. He criticises both imprudent and irresponsible behaviour. After all, he also considers his branch to be in danger and pleads for more caution:

That's also what I told my people: 'We better do a little too much. Um, the worst thing that could happen to us is that someone gets infected, that someone gets sick or has long-term damage, or worse ((clears throat)). We have all ages, from five to 65 ... or that sports are completely stopped.

Again, his rather 'cosmopolitan' perspective seems to have shaped his judgement. Perceiving the crisis as global rather than an individual problem may lead to the greater acceptance of measures and restrictions: *'I've considered this to be a world-wide problem, right from the beginning'*. His stance towards the reality of the pandemic is even more interesting when compared to questions of regulations and bureaucracy in Germany. When talking to him almost one year before the COVID-19 outbreak, he drew comparisons with Asia and Australia, stating that in Germany, it is difficult for founders who want to comply with all guidelines and regulations: *'If you try to stick to any guidelines we have in this country, then you won't get anywhere'*. His compliant position on corona, however, may be due to his anti-materialistic and people-centred values. He is very aware of the seriousness of an infectious disease and the resulting problems for those affected, and he is happy to accept business shortages in return. In contrast, he shows a rather indifferent attitude towards other regulations, perceived as 'pointless' and simply a way of over-bureaucratising processes.

Case #2 – Hans

Hans was born in the early 1970s and grew up during the GDR. As a teenager, he was sent to a 'reform school' (*Jugendwerkhof*) known for inhumane and degrading treatment of its juvenile inmates. After his release, he worked for *VEB Kombinat Robotron*, which was the largest computer manufacturer in the GDR at the time. His youth, family background, and possible experiences of repression seem to have had a significant impact on his career:

Well, I went through several factories in my youth. With ... ((pauses 4 sec.)) some rather unpleasant ... ((3 sec.)) uh ... situations, or circumstances ... where it was clear to me at some point ... that I would not end up in any factory. I mean, well, that's actually a result of ... you'd have to go back as far as into the family and how things were in the GDR and how... how circumstances led to the way I developed.

After East and West Germany were reunited, Hans joined the local punk scene in a major city in eastern Germany. He lived in a quasi-commune with other squatters in a house and was

unemployed: *'And after that [the fall of the iron curtain] it was just total collapse. So [...] for ten years, I was busy with ... being anti, basically ((laughs))'*. Later, at the end of the 1990s, he started working freelance and doing several jobs (e.g., in construction and as a stagehand), including catering for different regional organisers and concert hosts. His contacts within the local music scene helped him considerably. Initially, his start-up as a self-employed person was motivated by the pressure the employment agency exerted:

[...] at that time, we did not become self-employed because [...] we had the idea to build up a business, we had been looking for a way to escape the clutches of public employment service ((both laughing)) after uh ... ten years of unemployment or not knowing which way to go.

Hence, the beginning of his business was rather unsystematic, and he started without having a plan, as a greenhorn, so to speak. Over time, his current catering company developed, which employs four to five people. His clients are primarily larger concert agencies and tour operators, for whom he provides the tour catering. In this context, it is important to mention a social aspect; his employees include a number of people he has known for many years. Some of them might have difficulty finding similar jobs on the 'free' labour market, especially since Hans offers his employees a relatively large amount of freedom and 'takes care' of them. This has been seen in the case of employees who have lost their driver's license but continue to be employed or hired freelance, even though having a driver's license is obviously extremely important in the (touring) catering business.

As for his motives, independence and autonomy are central aspects of his narrative. He started out not only to free himself from the public employment agency but also to avoid becoming part of the industrial machinery (*Fabrikräderwerk*). However, he wound up entering the daily 'rat race' of entrepreneurship, as he calls it. His early years as a self-employed person were financially precarious, and the growth of the company inevitably increased the bureaucratic burden. After a tax audit a few years ago, Hans was forced to hire some of his former freelance employees on a permanent basis. Subsequently, the reciprocal effect of incoming orders and monthly (wage) costs seem to have become a burden. In the past, he could simply turn down orders; he now feels obliged to achieve a certain monthly turnover. This demand for constant income is also due to his family situation, which has changed over time. Being a father of a 15-year-old boy and having a family alters daily routines and demands a stable income: *'but when there's a family, it's a whole different thing. The business must be running somehow, right?'* Therefore, prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, his will to lead a largely autonomous life collided

with economic and bureaucratic necessities, especially health insurance. However, we cannot discuss this in detail here, although there is a considerable body of data on it.

For Hans, who was working in the event sector, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic was quite naturally followed by an immediate and very sudden end to all activities. Within weeks, most festivals, concerts, and scheduled tours were cancelled, and his turnover fell to almost zero. However, at this point, the solidarity and support of friends or customers came into play. Friends ordered catering for smaller weddings, anniversaries, private events, and other outdoor events that were possible under ‘corona circumstances’ during the summer. Although Hans was very optimistic and still had a somewhat positive but pragmatic outlook on the whole situation at the beginning of the pandemic, his attitude seemed to change during autumn 2020. As he is running out of savings and forced to file for social welfare, he finds himself back in the institutional scheme he once wanted to escape. Another factor of uncertainty is the employer-employee relationship; COVID-19 affects the employees of Hans’ catering company, as they are working short hours. Furthermore, Hans is unsure whether his employees will still be willing to work for him after extended periods in this status.

In addition to these fears and difficulties, another factor played an important role in the narrative of Hans and his catering company: being prepared for whatever might happen. Hans was well equipped in the sense of having financial savings, which means that initially, COVID-19 was perceived as less of a threat from a financial standpoint. However, as the pandemic and our inquiry moved on, the financial situation caused by the crisis worsened. On a later occasion, after our second interview, Hans told us that he was planning to file for social welfare (which he had always ruled out before), primarily because the situation has worsened. Scheduled concerts and the orders that accompanied them were still cancelled. From Hans’ viewpoint, the missing (proper) funding forces self-employed individuals to find regular jobs, whereas big companies (e.g., large concert agencies) are able to extend their credit line easily. Nevertheless, the idea of taking a smaller job was rejected by him, as it would mean losing time for his other project.

Even more important than his (constantly shrinking) savings is his ‘escape plan’ or ‘plan B’, which existed prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. Hans bought an old inn in the country some time ago and is currently restoring it. The inn and its grounds will be his future home, as well as a restaurant, a space for recreation, and a venue that could host artists, seminars, and other

types of gatherings. Part of this plan is to turn his original business over to someone else and withdraw from the organisational side:

Well, rock'n'roll is a nice experience, and it's also fun. And it's a big family [...] so it's nice, but it's also incredibly exhausting, you know? [...]. When you're at the venue, you work 16 hours, 18 hours a day. And I believe that at some age, I no longer have to do this to myself.

His strategy to escape from the daily 'rat race' and structural obstacles has become even more important. Similar to another case (Case #1, Tom), Hans has framed the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to do something different or be freed from the burden of day-to-day business:

Apart from that, I can say that I am ... I have been, over the years, when the machinery has always been running, when events have taken place all the time, and you ask yourself at certain times of the year or on certain days 'when you will ever again spend a day without a concert?', like December 25 or bank holidays, and so on. And so, it partly was also a relief not to have to do this as every year, as usual. And yes, Corona gave me the chance to continue my work here [at the construction site].

Case #3 – Rosie

Rosie was born in 1971 in the former GDR. After she finished school but had not sought any subsequent training or work, she was forced to apply for the only remaining positions at *VEB Kombinat Robotron*, the largest computer manufacturer in the GDR. She began a vocational training programme there as a metalworker but only worked for Robotron for a short period before fleeing to West Germany via Prague in 1989. Soon after her arrival in the Federal Republic of Germany, she started working for a company there. This job (producing shades and marquees) was not only physically exhausting, she was also humiliated by her superiors. As a result, she found another job at an environmental technology office. The working conditions were better, and the staff consisted mainly of students, foreigners, and people from the Eastern part of Germany. These years, during the early 1990s, seem to have been shaped by experiences with degradation at work and social exclusion:

It was so racist, also towards the people from the Eastern part [of Germany]. It was my first personal contact with people when I noticed 'there are several sensitivities here, you don't diminish them [...]' So, eventually, this system simply pissed me off. I didn't become comfortable with the Westerners [...] you were sitting in a pub and they heard how you talk, your dialect, then you were of course the 'Ossi' [a person from the former GDR], the freeloader who scrounges from everybody.

Eventually, Rosie moved back to eastern Germany and worked as a 'day labourer', to quote her own words (e.g., in cleaning, catering, and flea markets). In 1994, she began running a small

business selling clothes and accessories at fairs. During the first few years after the political change, she travelled to Asia frequently, primarily to India, Nepal, and Thailand. Over time, she began importing clothing and accessories from these countries and selling them at markets and started her own shop in a university town in eastern Germany. After giving up this store a few years ago, she established a similar retail shop at her place of residence in another city in eastern Germany. However, it was not as profitable as her former business, resulting in a heavier workload and precarious financial situation. Rosie describes the phase when her business ran ‘smoothly’ as her ‘golden times’ compared to today’s rather tense state.

Before the COVID-19 outbreak, she continued to travel to India and Thailand to buy and import goods to Germany. Over the years, she established a very well-organised network of manufactures and ‘knows her way around’. These almost 30 years of travelling, bargaining, and buying in Asia are very important to her as she compares cultures:

[...] this is actually my favourite kind of business, you know. [...] Because I started there as a little girl and they [the merchants and manufacturers] said to me ‘do your stuff, but you might buy only ten necklaces this time ... not twenty. Take it easy! Others have done that already.’ Very old men, they are mostly men I have to deal with there. They practically taught me how to do business. But maybe it’s an Asian ... a different mercantile perspective. And unfortunately, you can’t practice that around here.

Returning to the subject of motives, a central reason seems to be the possibility of avoiding the ‘machinery’ and, at least partially, bureaucratic procedures, as well as gaining autonomy.

And that’s probably the main reason why you’re self-employed. Because you ... probably want a bit more of yourself. ... I can’t even imagine to be somewhere else again; that would be difficult ((MT laughs)). That somebody tells me what to do ... And that [autonomy] is probably the basic idea.

Besides the will to lead an autonomous life, Case #3 shows an interesting attitude of refusal. For example, although Rosie’s business has not been very profitable in recent years, she is unwilling to introduce fair-trade labels. Although her products would probably be considered fair trade (following her interpretation), she refuses to ‘play this role’. This attitude also seems to be reflected in her refusal, upon starting her business, to accept public funding or cheap public loans, except for unemployment benefits for several months and a funding package by the Chamber of Commerce (German IHK): ‘I never wanted anything from them’. This rather refractory mindset seems to be a very important motive for Rosie, who, as an entrepreneur, does not have to yield to mainstream practices of impression management, and does not have to rely on public loans.

Rosie was already in a rather precarious situation at the beginning of our inquiry. The pandemic was another hit to her financially stricken business. At first, she perceived various reasons for this situation: First, the increase in online trade has caused problems by gradually displacing smaller shops. Second, there has been a general social change in consumption. Consumers, in particular, are increasingly aligning themselves with appropriate labels, especially regular customers. Refusing to use labels (such as fair trade) could lead to a loss of customers. International trade has also changed to her disadvantage. Interestingly, increasing globalisation has displaced her original niche, which has been taken over by large clothing chains whose scouts are operating in the same countries in Asia. This has led to some curious situations; for example, some time ago, she discovered a dress she had designed in a high-priced catalogue at about five times the price. A dressmaker in Nepal had simply sold 'her' design due to a financial 'emergency'. Besides these changes, she faces very high overhead costs despite low turnover. All of these issues had made her think of ways to get out of the business prior to 2020. Now, facing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, problems are accumulating:

[...] Prices go up steadily, my storage will also be more expensive next year ... it's going straight up, so I have to think about that one too. I have to find something smaller somehow, which is hard ... because I can't afford it anymore then ... pfff ... well, I better should have studied something proper.

After the first lockdown ended, during the summer of 2020, Rosie's business began doing quite well again. However, as autumn arrived, her turnover dropped again. At first, she could count on friends and regulars: *'People checked on the community a bit more; that was quite good. When it was over [i.e., the first lockdown in spring], they came and made some purchases and showed solidarity'*.

However, some customers do not follow the COVID-19 regulations, and business owners like Rosie bear the consequences. Therefore, the new restrictions also cause uncertainty and fear at different levels:

There are a lot of deniers and refusers; they come in without wearing a mask, without asking if it's possible or not. So, even the fine of 60 Euro does not help. I have to pay two and a half thousand if some official comes in and checks; nobody cares, though.

As for her financial situation, Rosie (as well as Hans, Case #2) is confronted with bearing the costs of health insurance while having little or no revenue. Due to the lack of alternatives, she is forced to pick up a regular job. As mentioned above, it is something she had previously ruled out:

But the woman from health insurance told me that I need a job, definitely. And I'll have to start looking for it in January. Then I'll go and get some work for a while. Keep my trading licence as a small business. And then maybe I'll go on doing fairs. Because the costs are too high, it doesn't add up here.

Compared to the first two cases, Rosie expresses growing anxiety about the future. The idea of working a regular job seems to fuel this anxiety:

Rosie: I feel a bit nervous about it.

I: About what's coming next or because of taking up a job and so on?

Rosie: Of course. Sure. How that could go... doing housekeeping.

Rather frustrated, Rosie assesses her business and the closing of her shop:

You have to reinvent yourself somehow. And there is simply an oversupply of clothes and outfits. I mean... it's not really needed. We have too much of everything. It might be a wise decision to reduce it slowly. I've put a few offers on eBay now: 'closing-down sale' blah blah blah blah, let's see if anyone is interested. I mean, there may be people who still need stock because they can't travel right now.

Case #4 – Tamara

Tamara was born in the early 1980s and grew up in the countryside in what she regards as a sheltered upbringing in the former GDR. During adolescence, she started to feel a sense of non-conformity that seems to have persisted:

Quite soon, I realised that I somehow had a strong desire for ... from today's perspective, self-determination [...] quite soon, I realised that I somehow don't really fit in anywhere because I think about certain things differently or deal with certain things differently, and these things are not very well accepted.

After graduating from high school in the late 1990s, she worked at a theatre for some time, which she perceived as a 'small window to the world', primarily because of the staff there. She met like-minded people there who were free spirits:

[...] not fitting into this classic role model ... into this classic everyday life picture uh working Monday to Friday, working nine to five, having the weekend off, living in uh heterosexual family structures ... just very different or very much very different.

She then moved to a major city in eastern Germany, enrolled in a university, and completed a humanities degree. Financing her studies with a small student loan and part-time jobs in restaurants, she started working for a public institution on a contract basis ('bogus' self-

employment⁴) after the birth of her first child. During this period, she did not earn much money, which meant that she was covered by her husband's health insurance, for example. In the meantime, her second child was born; since her husband was the main breadwinner, Tamara was inevitably left to look after the children, which she increasingly perceived as a burden:

And then it came to a sudden interruption in all respects, a turning point ... um ... I separated from my husband, which was quite unexpected for him. I mean, it was obvious that I am not satisfied with the situation as it is, but I think he believed that it was mainly these daily routines that I am dissatisfied with, um ... but I didn't feel like myself at all anymore [...] And I said to myself, 'this can't go on like this, now it's over, over! that's it!'

After separating from her husband, she continued to work on a bogus self-employment basis, as well as at a permanent job for 20 hours a week at a restaurant. However, the workload of two jobs caring for her two children mostly alone led to a sense of overload, and *'from a logistical point of view', it was 'the worst case':*

And I realised [...] that this is not going to work out in the long term because I simply do not have the strength and stamina to do it. And with the help of my new boyfriend ... with whom I talked a lot about role models and sexuality and relationships, I decided to try sex work. In other words, pretty late. I was in my early thirties.

Starting small and keeping the restaurant job at the beginning, Tamara became a self-employed sex worker; she is now working as an escort in a brothel and as a sexual assistant⁵. Tamara's motives for starting sex work are quite complex, so it is impossible to describe them in detail here. There is abundant room for further investigation of biographical aspects, especially considering the amount of data on hand. However, Tamara emphasises how becoming a sex-worker was her path to self-realisation. She describes the first time she ever met a customer as follows:

About an hour later, I walked out again, and it felt so incredibly good. It was great. I thought, 'this is exactly the feeling you always imagined during your studies, how it could be when you are totally self-determined' and well, how should I put it? ... I didn't do it for anyone else but me.

⁴ Bogus self-employment or false self-employment is a form of 'disguised' (Thörnquist 2011) employment. These self-employed workers often have only one client and working conditions are similar to those of permanent employees. From the employer's point of view, the aim is to avoid taxes, employee rights or collective agreements (Thörnquist 2015; Thörnquist 2011).

⁵ Sexual assistance is a specialized sector of sex work mainly aiming at people with disabilities. For further information see e.g., Garofalo Geymonat (2019).

Her professional activity is socially stigmatized, and she tries to hide it in certain contexts. However, it is not always possible to do so (e.g., legal regulations force her to permanently carry an ID that identifies her as a sex worker). According to Tamara, the lack of knowledge and negative attitudes toward the profession in society make dealing with public institutions challenging. Working in a highly stigmatized sector or branch, Tamara is forced to keep up a kind of parallel identity, at least in some contexts:

When I'm asked what I'm doing, and it's in a context where I cannot speak openly about it, then yes, I always find some modifications that make it compatible for this very situation. Which is absurd, of course, because I should be able to go anywhere and say 'That's what I do' [...] For instance, I certainly wouldn't tell anyone at my kids' school that I am a sex worker. I don't think that would be a good idea.

From the moment the pandemic hit Germany, the entire sex work industry was subject to a ban. Tamara, as well as all other sex workers, were required to stop working. This situation caused a whole range of problems, but we can only tackle a few of them in this paper. Given the stigma mentioned above, a crucial issue is the possible outing as a sex worker when filing for social benefits:

If you take the least strong restriction, so to speak, it is stigmatisation. Because it is a forced outing you have to undergo if you apply for something like that. And many people just do this job secretly, uh. and get embarrassed to have to explain to their husband, ex-partner, mothers, whomever why they suddenly don't earn money anymore and suddenly have to fill out such applications and what kind of job title it says in there.

Furthermore, the vast majority of sex workers do not have health insurance. Although this issue does not apply in Tamara's case, it nevertheless illustrates the precariousities of this line of work. An association of sex workers Tamara is involved in provides special training in hygiene; however, there is currently no way to implement such regularities and re-open the industry:

What's the difference to an erotic massage? There is no difference. But massages are allowed. What is the difference between BDSM and a tattoo studio? There is none. And yet everything that we dare to push forward gets rejected.

The ongoing prohibition of sex work leads to an uncontrolled black market with diverse negative effects:

You criminalise something, right? And when you do so, it becomes much, much more problematic. Because if something actually happens in such a situation, like an assault like, uh, I don't know, like an illness. Well, like hell I am going say: 'this happened to me' because I did it illegally. And right now, that's not

being considered at all.

In this case, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to the criminalisation of a whole line of work, as there are no real alternatives for those who actually want to do this job the way Tamara does:

Well, there is no plan B for me, so to speak. Because plan B, C, D, E, F and so on - I've already ticked everything off before. I am finally at a point where I can live and work the way I want to, right? No other option for me. If things really go on as they are at the moment, then I will work illegally. End of story.

As for her earnings, the situation is very tense. She still meets regular customers even though it is illegal. Personal networks seem to have been more important than in the other cases in our study:

And if it wasn't for my private social network, I honestly wouldn't know how to pay school lunch for my kids, for example. But, I do have my private network, which, uh, helps me, I have a partner who has a regular job and who hasn't lost his earnings. But, that makes me privileged, highly privileged; only very few people in my line of work have that.

Before the COVID-19 outbreak, she openly spoke about the advantages of being a white, somewhat well-situated woman:

If I, as a woman, also have this, one might say, 'power' ... well, if you want to call it power, which is very questionable, uh has 'power' over the male sex, so to speak, due to certain role distributions and certain sexualities, why shouldn't I use this to my own benefit on the one hand? And on the other hand, perhaps also undermine it by using it to my advantage?

Despite being in a very precarious situation, she still emphasises her attitude towards her profession and life, particularly when it comes to questions of legality and conformism: *I'm not going to let this self-determination, my life, and my being be taken away from me. That simply is against all my understanding of a decent life.*

Discussion

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a considerable impact on the lives of all four individuals in our study. Within a few weeks, the caterer lost all orders, the sex worker was not allowed to work at all, the fitness instructor had to close his training space, and the retailer eventually decided to close her shop permanently. Our study revealed a number of parallels in the biographies and attitudes of the self-employed. However, the perception of the COVID-19 pandemic as a business disruption differed.

All four cases had an initially sceptical attitude towards the state and its institutions (e.g., the employment office, the tax office, and health insurance). This is evident in the rejection of

business plans and public financial support, as well as a desire for independence from these institutions. Their low opinion of the state as trustworthy authority might have been fuelled by their experience with the transformation of the former GDR and all of accompanying uncertainties. Some of them also had negative experiences with public authorities, especially during adolescence. Growing up in the GDR and the experiences of working there at a young age, for instance, were mentioned several times in the interviews; even a certain feeling of being at home in the East (*'Ostgefühl'*), as *Tamara* put it. However, these findings must be interpreted with caution.

According to institutional theory, each individual is influenced and shaped by different institutional logics to varying degrees. This means that logics function as 'guidelines on how to interpret and function in social situations' (Greenwood et al. 2011:318), even though they sometimes can be competing (Brandl and Bullinger 2017).

Due to their life experiences, all four cases, in particular *Rosie* have distanced themselves from public logics. Perhaps, also for this reason, their central *individual* logics are shaped by principles of self-realisation and autonomy. With their self-employment, all four cases strive for the possibility of 'individual freedom'. *Tom* stated that he wants to pursue the activity that fulfils him and in which he can give something back to society. *Hans* and *Rosie* explained that they wanted to escape from the 'rat race' and 'wheelworks', and *Tamara* mentioned that she has finally found a way to live a self-determined life with which she can identify.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the situation for everyone. Prior to the outbreak of Covid-19, logics of self-realisation and autonomy were still somewhat compatible with necessary legal constraints, but business owners must now comply with multiple new restrictions. Doing this for the common good obviously limits their autonomy and creates additional economic pressure. Consequently, the measures taken to contain the virus are not fully appreciated by all. One exception is *Tom*, who is a strong advocate of the legal restrictions linked to the COVID-19 pandemic and proactively took initiatives early on in his CrossFit-Box business. His ability to implement early measures was partly due to his contacts in the international community. This enabled *Tom* to evaluate the situation and react based on information from other countries, where tougher measures had already been taken before COVID-19 reached Germany. The others accept but do not agree with all the restrictions. *Rosie* criticises the implementation and control of the rules, in particular her obligation as a business owner to ensure compliance with the rules on the customer's side. At this point, the pressure

and potential sanctions on shop owners do not seem to be fair to her. Tamara is highly motivated to comply with good hygiene measures, as they were quite naturally part of her business as a sex worker prior to the pandemic. However, she considers the absolute ban on working in her entire line of work to be unjustified. In her opinion, the new legal requirements will only force sex workers to disobey and lead to a criminalisation of this activity in the long term. Nevertheless, none of the four cases are ‘Corona deniers’. All of them support the restrictions, despite the restrictions causing financial problems for some of them, as they are aimed at protecting the common good.

At this point, we observe an interesting paradox. Our cases are strongly oriented towards logics of the common good, perceiving themselves as anti-materialistic, caregivers, or protectors of the vulnerable. For example, *Hans* retained one of his employees after he lost his driving licence, despite it being one of the basic requirements for being a caterer. From an economic viewpoint, this would not be rational. From the perspective of institutional theory, this is an example of reacting to multiple and incompatible logics. As self-employed, they seek to achieve both financial independence and social impact by intentionally incorporating economic and social principles. By doing so, they are continuously forced to fight against pressures stemming from capitalist logics and embrace tensions other business owners normally seek to minimise. The social logic of health protection has suddenly become the dominant logic determining business and daily life, thereby displacing the logic of profit maximisation. Consequently, some people who have adopted social logics, as in our four cases, are suffering due to the current situation. The conflict for organisations confronted with hybrid logics has been thoroughly examined in previous research (e.g., Besharov and Smith 2014; Gümüşay, Smets and Morris 2020; Kraatz and Block 2008; Greenwood et al. 2011; Reay and Hinings 2009). However, beyond the existing literature, our study provides insights into how self-employed individuals deal with hybrid and changing institutional logics, leading to a conflict between their desire to lead an autonomous life and defend social principles.

On the other hand, our study shows how entrepreneurs with a strong individual desire for self-realisation and autonomy constantly challenge existing social or cultural hegemonies by distancing from certain logics. These demarcations thus constitute the basis of ‘new’ identities in Laclausian terms (Laclau 1990:9, 39; Reckwitz 2008:77–81): *Tom* consciously distances himself from a fixation on purely material values and by taking a different stance and opposing (seemingly) universal hegemonies, he emphasizes anti-materialistic and people-centred values. *Hans* questions the centrality and dominance of work and at the same time reflects on his own

entrapment in the processes and structures. *Rosie* rejects certain forms of marketing and refuses common labels. And finally, *Tamara* associates her work with the idea of liberation from a life determined by others, which – in her line of work – also implies distancing oneself from social conventions.

Brandl and Bullinger (2017) have pointed out that in the case of conflicting logics, the individual response corresponds to a process of ‘self-verification’ (Brandl and Bullinger 2017:187). In this process, the logic that is more important for the respective identity prevails. This can be observed in the case of *Rosie*, for example, whose refusal to accept labels and marketing opposes the idea of selling goods and insofar the identity of being a retailer. Her attitude, however, ultimately dominates. This may even lead to a distancing from other identities, just as mentioned above and as described by Brandl and Bullinger as well (2017).

Concerning the COVID-19 pandemic, all four cases reacted with conformism during the first lockdown, as the federal restrictions fit their core principles of the common good. Furthermore, supporting compliance with the new regulations reflected the basic principle of solidarity in their communities. Friends and regular customers helped them buffer economic hardships, especially in the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although this helped during the first lockdown, solidarity certainly has limits and is not perceived as a solution to overcome the crisis. One could assume that public support takes effect at this point. However, as for COVID-19 aid programmes, our cases draw a critical picture. Whether it is the consistent rejection of public funding due to scepticism about possible demands for repayment, as in Tom’s or Rosie’s case, or a lack of programmes for specific niches, as in Tamara’s case, public funding plays a minimal role in our cases. The problem of sex workers not being included in the current COVID-19 aid programmes may be linked to the fact that sex work, although it is an historically long-established institution, is a very ambivalently discussed and stigmatized occupational field in Europe (Grittner and Walsh 2020; Kilvington, Day and Ward 2001; Weitzer 2018). With our case study, we would like to emphasise the seriousness of the situation for many of those affected. Marginalized in two ways, sex workers are often foreign women without a permanent residence or health insurance. According to a press release by the Federal Statistical Office in Germany in July 2020, only 19% of all officially registered sex workers have German citizenship (Statistisches Bundesamt 2020). The closure of brothels not only means financial losses for them, but in some cases even the beginning of homelessness. However, Tamara, due to her relatively stable situation and social network, has not suffered this extremely precarious situation.

Without sufficient financial support, it is all the more interesting that across the four cases, which were similarly affected by the COVID-19 restrictions, different assessments of the situation were expressed. The self-employed who already had a ‘plan B’ or ‘escape plan’ before the outbreak of the pandemic perceived this event as a less dramatic disruption and framed it as an opportunity to leave the ‘wheelworks’ of daily business and turn to other business activities. However, those without alternative plans experienced particular economic pressure from legal regulations accompanying the outbreak. Consequently, and from an economic viewpoint, all of our cases could use the strategy of having something to fall back on, including those who were working in a seemingly safe sector. With increasing economic pressure and uncertainty linked to the second lockdown, evaluations of the situation slightly changed and led to a wider range of response strategies, ranging from conformism to the deliberate undermining of certain rules and measures, up to neglecting and decoupling.

In a wider context, our four cases significantly differ from the rather few existing *qualitative case studies* on ‘successful’, ‘traditional’ and prototypical entrepreneurs and how they are depicted: Often as excessively working (Duchek 2018), passionate (Lombardi et al. 2021) and highly self-confident, emphasising the strong desire for success and an orientation towards entrepreneurial goals, even at a young age, paired with a very strong tendency towards perfectionism (Göbel 2000). In contrast, the motives of our cases relate primarily to self-realisation and autonomy and also their relationship to work is by no means free of doubt. Though passion may play a big role in *Tom’s* case, his standards for success – making people happy – are different from those of a prototypical entrepreneur. A surprising aspect are the experiences during childhood and adolescence; these support evidence from previous observations of rather typical entrepreneurs, showing that experiences in early age can have a decisive influence on the later development becoming an entrepreneur and might lead to a need for autonomy and independence (e.g., Kets de Vries 1996).

Conclusion, limitations, and future research

Our data offer a large amount of material for future research, including the topic of autonomy. The analysis of all four cases so far shows biographical similarities that seem to have shaped the personalities as self-employed individuals and entrepreneurs (e.g., their striving for autonomy is reflected in their orientation towards subcultures or ‘foreign’ cultures). Moreover, it could be hypothesised that the resilience of individuals is related to their biographies and

motives, especially their striving for autonomy. Another fruitful area for further work could be the role of networks and communities, especially in times of crises.

We were able to identify differences, particularly in the interpretation of day-to-day economic challenges and coping strategies used to deal with them. Limiting our study to four (nevertheless extended) cases and covering very different economic sectors might be considered a limitation. However, it enables an in-depth and profound analysis of individual interpretations and actions in this very heterogeneous sample and brings to light numerous interesting results. Drawing on the perspective of entrepreneurs working in niches, the four cases sketched in our study highlight the variety of manifestations the COVID-19 pandemic can take. They furthermore show the diversity of reactions to this external shock and the understandings of effects of this global pandemic within these specific fields of business. Nevertheless, the small sample size results in further research potential, and it certainly would be worth incorporating additional cases.

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2.2 Temporary employment, permanent stigma? Perceptions of temporary agency workers across low- and high-skilled jobs

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Abstract

Research on temporary agency work emphasizes that temporary agency workers (TAWs), particularly those in low-skilled jobs associated with precariousness and low social prestige, are likely to be exposed to poor treatment as well as stigmatization. Stigmatization of TAWs in high-skilled jobs, on the contrary, has not been treated in much detail in previous studies. Considering the focus on low-skilled jobs, literature provides an incomplete picture of stigmatization within the broader field of temporary employment. Hence, the present qualitative study is based on data from interviews of a heterogenous sample of TAWs employed in low- and high-skilled jobs in Germany. By using and modifying Boyce et al.'s (2007) model of stigmatization, the study shows that stigmatizing treatment towards TAWs occurs across all skill levels, although the intensity and form of those experiences as well as coping strategies differ. Thereby, this study contributes to a more differentiated and skill level specific understanding of how TAWs perceive and cope with stigmatization linked to their employment status. It also provides an important opportunity to advance Boyce et al.'s (2007) complex model of TAW stigmatization with empirical underpinnings.

Keywords: employment status, intergroup relations, skill-level, stigma, temporary agency workers

Introduction

Despite its theoretical and practical relevance, research on stigmatization in organizational settings is rather scarce (Summers et al. 2018). Organizations represent social spaces with specific power relations and inequalities that provide a breeding ground for stigma phenomena. A relationship deeply embedded in the power structures and functioning of organizations is the one between permanent and temporary workers (Boyce et al. 2007; Rybnikova and Cardone 2018). Temporary agency workers (TAWs) hold a lower position in client firms than the core workforce because of inferior working conditions. This issue has been frequently addressed in amendments of legal regulations and union actions across the globe to improve TAWs job security and equal treatment (see Keune and Pedaci 2020; Pulignano and Doerflinger 2013). Although these efforts have led to improvements, TAWs remain disadvantaged and short-term employment, less favorable work activities, lower wages and benefits, lack of career opportunities, as well as separation on an artifact level result in a disproportionate amount of power given to permanent workers within organizations using temporary agency work (henceforth referred to as client firms) (Rybnikova and Cardone 2018).

Research on occupational stigma has predominantly focused on forms of stigmatization linked to occupations with a low prestige, associated with low status, power, quality of work, education or income and on how people cope with the stigmas that are brought on to them because of their work status (Benoit et al. 2019; Benoit et al. 2015; Bosmans et al. 2016; Kreiner, Ashforth and Sluss 2006). Stigma research has also highlighted that occupational stigma is particularly dangerous, as occupation is crucial to an individual's self-presentation and is perceived to be controllable (Volpato, Andrighetto and Baldissarri 2017). Work status, as opposed to other social categories such as ethnicity, gender and sex, or physical inability that are seen as inevitable, is believed to be chosen by those affected and thus makes them responsible for their own 'misery' (Crandall 2000). Occupational stigma research has been criticized for considering a variety of occupations under the umbrella of 'dirty work', referring to occupations that are somehow socially, physically, or morally tainted, without emphasizing the differences between them (Kreiner et al. 2006). This might also be an explanation why stigma research has been made only a few attempts to address particular occupational fields or specific forms of work arrangements such as temporary agency work. However, an exception represents the study of Boyce et al. (2007) that based on a large corpus of literature, proposes a comprehensive model of TAW stigmatization, including organizational conditions, perpetrator motives, forms of stigmatization, as well as stigma perceptions and consequences. Their model comprises a large

number of relevant factors and thus provides an adequate basis for empirical studies aimed at understanding the various facets of stigmatization in organizations. Yet, despite the study of Boyce et al. (2007), research on temporary work lacks empirical evidence in regard to understand stigma phenomena. However, several studies indicate a marginalization of TAWs as an inferior group of organizational actors associated with negative attributes including a low skillset, lack of intelligence, or weak work ethic (Bosmans et al. 2015a; Byoung-Hoon and Frenkel 2004; Helfen, Hense and Nicklich 2015; Rybnikova and Cardone 2018; Stasiowski and Kłobuszewska 2018). Thus, jobs through temporary agency work have been identified as socially tainted (Boyce et al. 2007; Winkler and Mahmood 2018) and there is evidence for a higher risk of experiences of bullying for workers in these occupations (Djurkovic 2018). Generally speaking, the prevalence of bullying is significantly higher for unskilled workers (Lange et al. 2019, Ortega et al. 2009). Consequently, this applies to a large proportion of temporary workers, of which, in Germany, 31% have no professional qualification and even more (54%) are doing unskilled work (BA 2020).

Furthermore, recent research has highlighted the negative effects of employment status on TAWs' well-being, health, job satisfaction, and commitment (Aleksynska 2018; Borgogni, Consiglio and Di Tecco 2016; Bosmans et al. 2015b; Chambel, Castanheira and Sobral 2016; Hünefeld, Gerstenberg and Hüffmeier 2020; Imhof and Andresen 2018; Stasiowski and Kłobuszewska 2018). Nevertheless, the findings of previous studies on temporary agency work show an ambivalent picture regarding the experience of poor treatment within client firms, indicating that it is not solely employment status causing these experiences. Other reasons can include the working conditions, particularly in competitive work environments in which permanent workers perceive TAWs as a threat, the stigmatizing treatment of TAWs can become a function of permanent workers trying to maintain their own superior status (Becker 2015; Bosmans et al. 2015a; Boyce et al. 2007; Stasiowski and Kłobuszewska 2018). Notwithstanding TAWs' disadvantages compared to permanent employees that are predefined by the legal framework (e.g., lower wages, higher uncertainty), client firms have a certain degree of freedom to interpret legal regulations and organize the use of TAWs. Consequently, they have the power to establish management policies that shape the interactions between permanent workers and TAWs (Becker 2015, Boyce et al. 2007).

Furthermore, experiences of stigmatization depend on the individual and might differ according to the TAWs' personal circumstances, their skill-level and if they are voluntary or involuntary employed in temporary agency work (Bryant and McKeown 2016; Selvarajan, Slattery and

Stringer 2015; Sitte and Lehmann 2013; Stasiowski and Klobuszewska 2018). The legal and institutional framework of their employment, with respect to compensation, length of employment, and training opportunities, differs significantly depending on whether they are employed in high-skilled or low-skilled jobs (Bryant and McKeown 2016; Sitte and Lehmann 2013). Sitte and Lehmann (2013) classify TAWs according to the required job qualifications in low-skilled positions as helpers (perform activities for which no completed vocational training is required) and high-skilled positions as specialists (perform activities for which completed vocational training is a prerequisite, but no academic studies) and academics (perform activities for which academic studies are a prerequisite), a classification adopted in the present study.

Previous empirical research on TAWs' integration in client firms has either focused on low-skilled (Bosmans et al. 2015a; Boyce et al. 2007; Rybnikova and Cardone 2018) or on high-skilled jobs (Augustsson 2014, 2016; Bryant and McKeown 2016). While TAWs in low-skilled jobs are mainly associated as powerless, involuntary employed workers likely to be exposed to stigmatizing treatment by their permanent employed colleagues (Boyce et al. 2007; Rybnikova and Cardone 2018), high-skilled TAWs are identified as professionals that are voluntarily employed in agency work and have a high degree of autonomy in their decisions (Kunda, Barley and Evans 2002; Vallas and Prener 2012). Bosmans et al. (2015a) even hypothesize that TAWs in high-skilled jobs who enter client firms as experts are hardly affected by stigmatization. Previous studies, that have mainly considered TAWs in low-skilled jobs to be at risk of experiencing stigmatization provide an incomplete picture of stigmatization in the broader field of temporary employment. Bryant and McKeown, who analyzed the effects of the use of TAWs with different motives and skill-levels on the social capital of client firms, also emphasized that TAWs' "experiences are more nuanced and ambiguous than how they are often presented in the literature" (2016: 390). Their qualitative study with TAWs employed as IT experts revealed the struggles of highly skilled TAWs who identified themselves not only as experts but also as outsiders and strangers in client firms. Addressing this issue, this study aims to provide insights in stigmatization experiences of TAWs engaged in both, low- as well as high-skilled jobs and answers the following research question: *How do TAWs across different job skill levels perceive and cope with employment status-based stigmas?*

This research question is approached by adapting and modifying Boyce et al.'s model of TAW stigmatization and analyzing collected data from 16 interviews with TAWs. Our sample consist of TAWs of different age, gender and work experiences in low- and high-skilled jobs from independent temporary employment firms in Germany. The importance and originality of this

study are that it explores the stigmatization that TAWs experience with regard to the skill-level of their position. Moreover, this project provides an important opportunity to advance the empirical underpinnings of Boyce et al.'s (2007) complex model. This study shows the multifaceted range of stigmatization experiences from subtler to more direct forms and takes a critical look at the working environment of client firms in Germany.

Theory

Our analysis is based on the conceptual framework proposed by Boyce et al. (2007). They developed a model comprising the organizational conditions and consequences of the stigmatization of TAWs. With this holistic approach, they offer an analytical framework for critically studying the organizational practices that might lead to the poor treatment of TAWs (Boyce et al. 2007). Using this framework empirically to provide knowledge on TAWs' experiences of stigmatization may help "to ensure that the financial gains anticipated through the use of temporary workers are not offset by any negative consequences that result from these workers being treated in a stigmatized manner on the job" (Boyce et al. 2007: 6). In particular, we focus on the following areas that guide our study: work environment, stigmatizing treatment, perception of stigma, and coping strategies. These categories are described and underpinned with findings from recent research in the next section.

Work environment

Boyce et al. (2007) subdivide stigmatization into three basic conditions: perceptions of perpetrators, characteristics of the worker (referring to the visibility of their employment status), and characteristics of the work environment. Theoretically it is plausible to separate these factors, but empirically it is reasonable to more closely consider the interdependencies between them. Hence, this study – contrary to Boyce et al. – subsumes and discusses all three aspects under the umbrella of work environment. Work environment is crucial for stigma phenomena as a stigma is a socially constructed perception of being tainted that is highly context dependent. While a social category might be associated with negative stereotypes and beliefs in one context, the social category might not be considered tainted in another (Thomson and Grandy 2018). TAWs' stigmatization addresses the employment status as a socially tainted category, which is strongly embedded in the power structures and functions of an organization (Boyce et al. 2007). Not every work environment triggers stigmatizing treatment against TAWs on a social level. Legal regulations provide a framework for the employment of TAWs that already perpetuates the disadvantages for them as compared to permanent workers. However,

client firms still have the freedom to frame their respective work arrangements (Becker 2015). Empirical studies provide evidence that management practices and policies are influencing the occurrence of interpersonal conflicts between temporary and permanent workers, as well as the power potentials of both groups (Byoung-Hoon and Frenkel 2004; Håkansson and Isidorsson 2012; Rybnikova and Cardone 2018; Viitala and Kantola 2016). According to Viitala and Kantola (2016) this finding holds true for both, low- and high-skilled jobs. Håkansson and Isidorsson (2012) show that labor portfolios in the context of temporary agency work are diverse and determined by client firms' policies in regard to employment duration, assigned tasks, and access to training for TAWs. Depending on how different the tasks between TAWs and permanent employees are and how closely their activities are interrelated, the separation between permanent workers and TAWs is weaker or stronger. Another factor that is decisively influenced by management policy is the visibility of employment status. Boyce et al. (2007) suggest that stigmatizing treatment towards TAWs is stronger in work settings in which TAWs are easily identifiable. Some companies reinforce their separation from the core workforce on an artifact level: for example, through different dress codes (Rybnikova and Cardone 2018). Client firm management can organize the use of TAWs and their integration in the organization differently: for example, through workload, work allocation, length of employment, access to resources, formal and informal norms of equal treatment, or visible differentiation based on working status (Bosmans et al. 2015a; Rybnikova and Cardone 2018). Because of different everyday practices in dealing with TAWs, it is possible to promote solidarity or exclusionary behavior in the permanent workforce (Rybnikova and Cardone 2018; Viitala and Kantola 2016).

In addition to the diversity of activities and interdependencies in the work relations between temporary and permanent employees, Byoung-Hoon and Frenkel (2004) emphasize that a *company's history* plays an important role in the conflicts between temporary and permanent workers. Established conflict structures in client firms increase the tendency to discriminate against TAWs. Previous research findings further indicate that interpersonal problems are mainly an issue in organizations using extensive temporary work for cost reduction and to create a highly competitive climate between their permanent and temporary workforces. Depending on how organizations handle the use of TAWs, permanent workers can see them as competitors or a helping hand (Schwaab and Durian 2017). So far, the work environment has proven to be relevant to the stigmatization of TAWs.

Stigmatizing treatment

Stigmatizing treatment does not occur in a vacuum; it serves the perpetrators to help achieve their goals. So far, the perceptions of perpetrators, such as permanent workers and management, play a relevant role in the existence of stigmatization in client firms. Both management and permanent workers may favor excluding and discriminating against TAWs in order to maintain their power and define a target for downward comparison (Becker 2015; Boyce et al. 2007; Rybnikova and Cardone 2018). Through alliance building, management and permanent workers can stabilize the inferior position of TAWs (Byoung-Hoon and Frenkel 2004). Nevertheless, interdependencies in the work processes and social interactions between the worker groups often put permanent workers in a dilemma between showing solidarity and reacting in a stigmatizing manner to the perceived threat (Bosmans et al. 2015a; Rybnikova and Cardone 2018). As Boyce et al. (2007) suggest, the social norms of acceptance also determine the extent to which permanent workers treat TAWs in a stigmatizing way and what forms of stigmatizing treatment they adopt. According to Boyce et al. (2007), stigmatizing treatment occurs in both overt and covert forms. While overt stigmatization includes direct statements regarding inferiority linked to employment status, the more subtle, covert forms can occur as nonverbal expressions, such as avoiding eye contact or withholding resources or information (Boyce et al. 2007). Flemnitz (2018) found that when compared to their permanently employed colleagues, TAWs are hindered in their work by being denied access rights and by being confronted with poorer work conditions, including working on short notice, holiday restrictions, unpleasant tasks, or not receiving benefits. Holm, Torkelson and Bäckström (2016) provide similar evidence for the poor treatment of TAWs, showing that they often have less access to information, are excluded from professional camaraderie, and are mainly used to do undesirable work. In addition to the more covert forms of stigmatization, TAWs also report stronger and more overt and forms of poor treatment, speaking of being exposed to derogatory comments from their permanent colleagues, being bullied or threatened with physical abuse (Holm et al. 2016). While those disadvantages have been empirically emphasized in the context of low-skilled jobs, highly-skilled TAWs were mainly identified to receive less learning and networking opportunities, to be kept out of decision-making processes (Augustsson 2014, 2016) and to be less likely asked for advice (Wilkin, de Jong and Rubino 2018). Overtly hostile behavior has not been mentioned in this context. Regardless of the level at which stigmatization takes place and whether it is overt or covert, it essentially serves three objectives: to keep people down (domination), to keep people in line (avoid norm violation), or to keep people away (maintaining exclusiveness) (Link and Phelan 2014). Tyler and Slater (2018) emphasize that

most concepts of stigma based on Goffman's classic approach often side-line "questions about where stigma is produced, by whom and for what purposes" (Goffman 1990: 721). While Boyce et al. (2007) considered the perpetrators' motives in their analytical framework, Tyler and Slater (2018) still criticize the missing account of the inner organizational power structures that shape the perpetrators' motives.

Perception of stigma

Stigma, in contrast to prejudice, considers the actual perception of the people affected. Boyce et al. (2007) identify five moderating factors believed to have an influence on stigma perception: the perceived perpetrator's motive, justifiability of poor treatment, stigma consciousness, group identification, and employment status congruence. Poor treatment is not necessarily linked to employment status (Boyce et al. 2007). If TAWs associate poor behavior towards them with other reasons, such as a generally harsh attitude in the company, this behavior has no stigmatizing effect (Flemnitz 2018). Justifiability determines the perception of stigma as follows; if TAWs perceive the treatment towards them as legitimate, for example, because it is in line with the communicated management policy and their own expectations, this treatment barely develops a stigmatizing nature (Boyce et al. 2007). Chambel et al. (2016) found that TAWs tend to have lower expectations of client companies' efforts and treatment towards them, and consequently often interpret poor treatment as in line with their expectations. If client companies establish policies in favor of TAWs, they perceive these policies as exceptionally positive (Chambel et al. 2016). However, if poor treatment is perceived as unjust, it is likely to be perceived stigmatizing (Boyce et al. 2007). The perception of being stigmatized also goes along with a conscious identification of employment status as a criterion for discrimination and devaluation. TAWs who see their employment status as a tainted social category are more likely to interpret their experiences within a company based on this assumption. As a consequence, they most likely define poor treatment towards them as stigmatizing (Boyce et al. 2007). Furthermore, the ambiguity in how TAWs identify themselves has been highlighted in several studies. Both, TAWs employed in low- and high-skilled jobs identify themselves simultaneously as employees with valuable knowledge and expertise and as outsiders, whose knowledge is neglected (Bryant and McKeown 2016; Winkler and Mahmood 2018). However, as a self-protective coping strategy highly-skilled TAWs are more likely to define themselves as autonomous, self-directed employees seeking freedom from conventional work arrangements (Bryant and McKeown 2016). In addition, identification with employment status is important for the perception of stigma. According to Boyce et al. (2007),

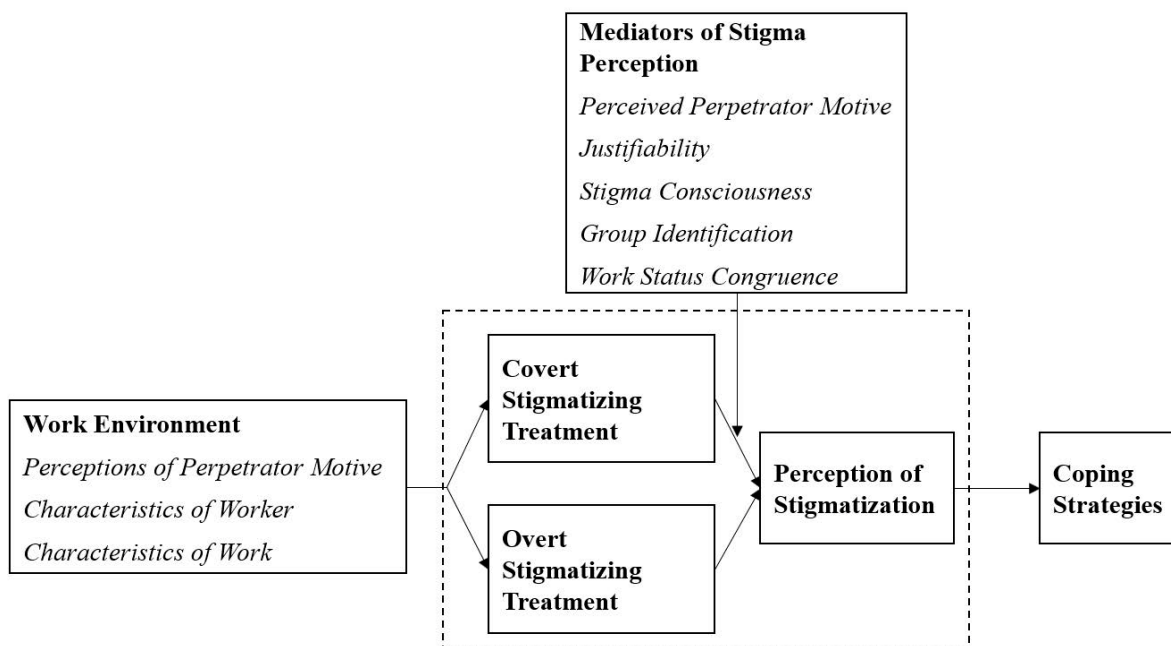
TAWs who see their employment status as a core part of their identity are more likely to perceive poor treatment as related to this attribute than others who are not as strongly committed to this social category. Previous research also suggests that gender affects stigma perception. Selvarajan et al. (2015) found that men see their job as more central to their identity than women, and consequently are more likely to perceive their status as a TAW as stigmatizing. As previously stated, TAWs are by no means a homogenous group. According to their individual life situations, personal attitude, motives for accepting temporary employment, or their qualification levels, TAW might attach varying importance to how they are treated in a client firm (Flemnitz 2018; Selvarajan et al. 2015; Stasiowski and Kłobuszewska 2018). Those working voluntarily for a temporary work agency and who make sense of their work as something that gives them flexibility will have greater employment status congruence and consequently may draw less attention to how they are treated by their permanent colleagues or client firm management (Boyce et al. 2007). Moreover, Bosmans et al. (2015a) assume that higher-skilled TAWs more easily accept their employment status and have fewer difficulties going along with it than lower-skilled TAWs.

Coping strategies

Boyce et al. (2007) refer to various outcomes of stigmatizing treatment for TAWs. Mainly, they address consequences for the well-being, job satisfaction, commitment, mood, and job-related behaviors of TAWs in response to perceived poor treatment (Boyce et al. 2007). Current empirical studies also provide evidence for negative effects, especially on job satisfaction, commitment and well-being (Aleksynska 2018; Borgogni et al. 2016; Boswell et al. 2012; Imhof and Andresen 2018; Stasiowski and Kłobuszewska 2018). In contrast, however, Winkler and Mahmood (2018) found that TAWs respond to poorer working conditions compared to permanent employed workers by a rapid adaption and demonstration of willingness to safeguard their positive self-image and impress client firms. Responses to stigmatization might be of a passive or active nature. Boyce et al. (2007) refer, based on their literature review, to a lack of research on more active coping strategies used by TAWs. One reason for the little empirical evidence of active response strategies might be that the coping resources of TAWs are limited due to their potential exclusion from social networks, a lack of representation by trade unions, or perceived mistrust within organizations (Bosmans et al. 2015a). Still, Boyce et al. (2007) refer to collective action, problem solving, or organizational citizenship behavior as active responses. There is, however, evidence that TAWs might develop different coping strategies due to their individual situations and employment sectors. For example, Bosmans et

al. (2015a) highlight the differences between higher- and lower-skilled agency workers in coping with stigmatization. As they more often have purposefully chosen their work arrangement, TAWs in higher positions appear to have fewer difficulties in dealing with their employment status. Also, they are more likely to be offered opportunities for training and learning (Bosmans et al. 2015a). Taking into consideration the above-mentioned theoretical remarks, we used a condensed version of Boyce et al.'s (2007) model of TAW stigmatization as a starting point for our field work. This model is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Condensed Model of TAW Stigmatization adopted from Boyce et al. (2007).



Understanding temporary agency work in Germany

In Germany, temporary work represents a highly dynamic branch of employment; since 1991, the number of TAWs has quintupled in size up to more than one million. After slightly decreasing, there are currently 948,000 TAWs (BA 2020). In relation to the total population, Germany is one of ten countries worldwide that have the highest percentage of TAWs (Flemnitz, 2018). Agency work is most common within the manufacturing sector, although the service sector is gaining importance (Keller and Seifert 2013). Originally functioning as a service provider primarily for metal and electrical-related jobs, temporary agency work is now relevant for a broader spectrum of activities (Schwaab and Durian 2017). From an

organizational perspective, the use of temporary agency work mainly aims at productivity and performance enhancement. Holst, Nachtwey and Dörre (2010) identified three different usage strategies in German client companies serving this objective: ad-hoc assignment, usage as flexibility buffer and strategic use. The strategies differ in the quantity of use, the qualification and working tasks of the TAW, and the impact on job security and status of the permanent workforce. Depending on the client firm, the various strategies result in different interactions between permanent employees and TAWs. Particularly in client firms aiming to create a competitive work environment between permanent workers and TAWs, interpersonal conflict is to be expected (Becker 2015). A common employment strategy seems to be the assignment of more demanding tasks to permanent employees while giving TAWs simpler tasks. This not only strengthens the permanent workers' feelings of superiority but also provides a breeding ground for tense relationships between the two groups of workers and evokes an informal hierarchy (Rybnikova and Cardone 2018). As mentioned before, TAWs in Germany often occupy low-skilled jobs (BA 2020). In line with that, the proportion of TAWs without any vocational qualification (31%) is almost twice as high as the proportion of all employed people without a vocational qualification (BA 2020). Qualified work, on the other hand, is carried out only by a very small number of TAWs (Schwaab and Durian 2017). However, there are also highly-skilled employees working as temporaries, but fewer of them. Only ten percent of all TAWs possess a university degree (BA 2020). Across all job-skill levels, TAWs are disadvantaged with regard to wages. On average, a TAW in the helper sector earns 28 percent less than permanent employed workers in the same sector. TAWs in the specialist sector still earn 24 percent less, and those in the academic sector 17 percent less compared to their permanently employed colleagues (BA 2020). Considering public discourse on temporary agency work in Germany, one can perceive this employment status as a socially tainted, considered less prestigious and with poorer working conditions than permanent workers (Summers et al. 2018; Thomson and Grandy 2018). This negative image is additionally fueled by the argument that temporary agency work replaces permanent jobs and is used by companies to maximize profits and exploit the workforce (Sitte and Lehmann 2013). There are positive effects of temporary agency work acknowledged in public discussions, such as the improvement of organizational flexibility or eventually bringing unemployed people back into the job market (Sitte and Lehmann 2013). However, the negative image of temporary work dominates the discourse in Germany (Flemnitz 2018). Consequently, TAWs often have to deal with problems surrounding social recognition within organizations and society.

Material and methods

This study is based on a qualitative research design and analyzes data from 16 interviews with people working for independent temporary employment firms. After several phases of data gathering, data collection ended in 2018. TAWs were contacted via three different channels: a temporary employment agency, a direct request to a client firm, and Xing© (a social network for professional contacts within German-speaking regions). The sample included eleven men and five women. This imbalance in favor of male interviewees can be explained by the structure of employment in Germany. As most client firms still represent male-dominated working sectors (Keller and Seifert 2013), temporary agency work in Germany is, in contrast to other countries, a male-dominated branch consisting of about 70 percent male employees (BA 2020). For this reason, our sample represents the sex division of TAWs as they exist in the contemporary German labor market. The age of the interviewees ranged from 20 to 62 years. They had worked for temporary employment agencies for two months up to 20 years. The sample consists of seven TAWs employed in low-skilled jobs as helpers and nine employed in high-skilled jobs as specialists and academics. This heterogenous sample of less or more experienced workers, men and women, older and younger people as well as those employed in low- and high-skilled jobs enabled us to gain rich insights into the various facets of TAWs' perception and experiences of stigmatization (see Table 1). In order to ensure a low threshold for participation in the interviews, we tried to provide the most convenient and comfortable settings for the respective interviewees. Accordingly, four interviews took place via telephone and twelve in person. The interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes; they were recorded, entirely transcribed, and anonymized (Davidson 2009; Dresing, Pehl and Schmieder 2015). The interviews aimed at the understanding of TAWs experiences while being assigned to their client firm(s) and included questions about working conditions in the interviewee's current client firm and their respective expectations. They also covered treatment by permanently employed colleagues and management as well as the perceptions of poor treatment linked to the interviewee's employment status. Other topics included the visibility of working status, as well as behavioral consequences and possible coping strategies.

Table 1: Interview sample

No.	Job skill-level	Employment position	Job title	Sex	Age	Employment duration as a TAW
1	Low-skilled	Helper	Production assistant	m	48	2 years
2	Low-skilled	Helper	Forklift driver	m	33	2 years
3	Low-skilled	Helper	Production assistant	m	49	2 years
4	Low-skilled	Helper	Production assistant	m	50	4 years
5	Low-skilled	Helper	Production assistant	f	47	3.5 years
6	Low-skilled	Helper	Production assistant	m	62	20 years
7	Low-skilled	Helper	Production assistant	f	45	4 years
8	High-skilled	Specialist	Automotive merchant	f	20	1 year
9	High-skilled	Specialist	HR administrator	f	27	0.5 year
10	High-skilled	Specialist	Mechanical technician	m	37	3 years
11	High-skilled	Academic	Project engineer	m	27	1.5 years
12	High-skilled	Academic	Project technologist	f	27	0.5 year
13	High-skilled	Academic	Logistics planner	m	29	3.5 years
14	High-skilled	Academic	Development engineer	m	34	3 years
15	High-skilled	Academic	Technical project manager	m	28	0.5 year
16	High-skilled	Academic	Technical project manager	m	30	2 years

The material was analyzed by using qualitative content analysis (Mayring 2014). As was mentioned above, the study is based on the framework shown in Figure 1 and mainly relies on the four key categories stemming from the stigmatization model developed by Boyce et al. (2007): work environment, stigmatizing treatment, perception of stigma, and coping strategies. Whereas the initial coding followed these categories in a deductive manner, a second step also included inductive subcategory building. This means that we applied a mixed approach for categorization. Thus, we inductively extended the original analytical framework based on

empirical evidence for additional interdependencies (Table 2). The basic coding scheme based on these findings is presented below as well as in the discussion section where we also conceptualize our proposition of a revised model.

Table 2. Coding overview

Main- and subcategories	Explanation	Examples
Work environment Characteristics of the worker Characteristics of the work environment Perceived perpetrator motives	This category describes how client firms influence the stigma experiences of TAWs depending on their strategy of use and organizational practices in dealing with TAWs. This category also illustrates the perpetrator motives behind the stigmatizing treatment of TAWs.	"...everything was explained to me in detail, I could participate in everything, there were really no restrictions and that was really nice. You really noticed that this is also a bit of a corporate philosophy. You didn't feel excluded." (Int.9S)
Stigmatizing treatment Forms of stigmatizing treatment No stigmatizing treatment	This category includes all forms of stigmatizing treatment experienced as well as all statements indicating an absence of stigmatizing treatment in client firms reported by TAWs.	"The other employees didn't even know that I was from a temporary employment agency. They thought I was a permanent employee. But when I said it, the behaviors towards me didn't change." (Int.11A)
Perception of stigma Stigma consciousness Justifiability Group identification	This category includes TAWs' perceptions of poor treatment linked to their working status and the rationales they apply to those experiences.	"Why should a temp do clean, pleasant work and the permanent employee bend and work in the mud? That's not what you'd expect, would you?" (Int.1H)
Coping strategies	This category includes statements of how TAWs deal with experiences of stigmatizing treatment.	"But it's simply a system that I don't want to work for and that's why I'm looking for a long-term permanent position." (Int.16A)

To address possible claims of intersubjective comprehensibility and validity, theory-driven and computer-aided data analysis has been carried out using software for qualitative data analysis (MAXQDA©). To sustain a high standard of qualitative investigation, a triangulation strategy

was applied: investigator triangulation (Flick 2011, 2018). All three authors were equally involved in the analysis; they crosschecked the coding and discussed their interpretations on a regular basis (Kuckartz and Rädiker 2019).

Results

In the following section, the findings of the empirical study will be described. Particular differences between TAWs employed in low-skilled jobs as helpers and those employed in high-skilled jobs as specialists, or academics are highlighted and — in addition — critically reflected in the discussion section of the paper.

Work environment

Our findings reveal that client firms differ in how they organize and define the work arrangements of TAWs, as well as their positions within the organization. The client firms' strategy, along with their history of use, shapes the work environment on several levels. Depending on the field of employment and on basic attitude, to treat TAWs for their period of use as members of the organization or as an external group, client firms either try to keep the differences between temporary and permanent employees to a minimum or highlight these same differences. Highlighting differences can take place at the artifact level (i.e., clothes, email addresses, access cards), by dividing tasks, as well as participation in organizational events and benefits that often work to the disadvantage of TAWs.

"What I mentioned is that external employees are treated like guests at best. That you aren't allowed to park in the company parking lot, but only in the guest parking lot is an example. But not the one for the special guests, which is right in front of the entrance, but the one on the other side of the company site." (Int.14A)

Through these practices, client firms can increase the visibility of employment status and facilitate differentiating TAWs. Visibly and externally perceptible differences, our results suggest, support the emergence of informal hierarchies and status differences. A common experience shared by our interviewees across different skill-levels was the assignment of more pleasant, more important tasks to permanent employees and of less pleasant tasks to TAWs. Thereby TAWs become constructed as an inferior, subordinate group compared to the core workers. The resulting imbalance of power in favor of the permanent employees opens up opportunities for the permanent employees to act as informal superiors vis-à-vis the temporary workforce. How an interviewee reports, there are colleagues who treat the TAWs on equal footing. Nevertheless, there are also such kind of permanent employees who are of the opinion

that they are superior to TAWs. For example, this is expressed by the fact that no objections are accepted (Int.2H). As a result, TAWs receive commands from permanent employees and are pressured to at least partially meet their expectations. Our interview partners suspect that permanent employees see an opportunity in the employment of TAWs, which consists of the possibility to improve their own work environment. On the one hand, this can be achieved by passing on unpleasant tasks to TAWs.

"When it comes to the unpleasant tasks, which come up every now and then. Then the regular employed colleague says: 'I don't need to do that, that's what we have the temps for!'" (Int.1H)

On the other hand, permanent employees might be able to improve their own situation by using TAWs as buffers who, due to their independence from the client firm, address unpleasant issues in the name of permanent employees. Nevertheless, not all client firms equally enhance the visibility of employment status. Particularly in employment sectors with higher qualification requirements, some client firms, apart from discreet hints in their email signature, did not draw attention to employment status and tried not to strengthen the differentiation between the core workforce and TAWs. Interviewee 15 even reported to have had experienced interactions with permanent employed colleagues from the client firm who did not know that he was employed via temporary employment agency and who stated their regrets when his work arrangement with the client firm ended. Some client firms also actively support the equal treatment of TAWs within their walls:

"There was a company guideline that I read and it said that 'temporary workers are to be treated like coworkers, so there should be no difference.' And if the company serves as a good example, then the employees will see this with different eyes and will implement it accordingly." (Int.9S)

This policy was noticed and well respected by TAWs. It further represents one example of how client firms can shape the work environment and work relationships with little effort.

However, unlike these positive experiences, our results show that most of the temporary employees interviewed experience less harmonious relationships with the permanent employees at their client firm. Client firm policies shape the relationships between TAWs and the core workforce by pre-structuring those relationships with an atmosphere either of competition and mistrust or of equality and common interests. Our interviewees stated that their poor treatment by permanent workers might be based on several different fears. In the case of TAWs in low-skilled jobs, permanent workers' fears concerned mainly status loss linked to possible decreased productivity from working with the untrained, unqualified TAWs in their

team. Fears of job loss through competition with TAWs as well as an expected increased workload due to the additional training of newcomers were perceived motives for permanent employees' poor treatment towards TAWs across the different skill-levels. Additionally, highly-skilled TAWs in the academic sector perceived permanent workers' fear concerning the loss of know-how as a competitive advantage of the client firm as a possible motive for their poor behavior towards TAWs. Based on the work environment in which TAWs have their first experiences, our findings suggest that they become more or less likely to perceive their employment status as something negative. Experiences in a work environment that is rather exclusive and discriminatory towards TAWs might leave them "branded children" (Int.10S) who will be more likely to suffer because of their employment status.

Stigmatizing treatment

Focusing now on the question of what forms of stigmatizing treatment TAWs experience, it becomes obvious that no clear boundary can be drawn between overt and covert forms of stigmatization. Nevertheless, there are a few clearly identifiable examples of such forms of stigmatization; however, within the majority of reported experiences, the boundary becomes blurred. An undisputedly overt form of stigmatization is illustrated clearly in the following sample statement:

"During the meeting, it became clear that various approaches weren't correct. So, I said to myself: 'You can't leave it like that, because it's simply wrong from a planning point of view.' Well, then I mentioned it and in that context I was told to keep my mouth shut, that I was only a TAW. In front of all the others!"
(Int.13A)

Even in a high-skilled jobs, employment status is used to prevent employee resistance in problematic situations. By highlighting the lack of affiliation with the company, TAWs' contributions within the work environment are devalued if they do not work to the favor of their permanent co-workers or management. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that interviewee 13 represents an extreme case within the surveyed interviews. Here, TAWs were not allowed to share their lunch time with permanent employees in the canteen, and instead had to have their lunch in their office. They were excluded from meetings, had no access to work-related training, and received less work-related information compared to permanent workers (Int.13A). So, forms of distinction in more highly qualified sectors are less visible but still exist. In knowledge-intensive industries, this is problematic not only for the workers affected, but also for the company, in which TAWs with no access to the necessary information are rarely able to perform their tasks to a high standard. As previously mentioned, the boundary between overt and covert

stigmatization is becoming predominantly blurred. So, being called a TAW can itself be perceived as overt stigmatizing treatment when the term is perceived to be linked to degrading features.

"The only thing that bothered me was that a colleague in my office was always talking about me as a 'temporary worker', and I find the term 'temporary worker' so outdated and a bit degrading." (Int.9S)

For persons employed in temporary work, terms that are more appreciative, for example a “person who temporarily assists,” are more desirable (Int.9S). This may seem banal at first glance, but for people with low resilience it is an important and influential factor for their self-esteem within a work context. This situation is similar to the case of interviewee 14: here, only permanent workers, not TAWS, are allowed to state their academic titles in email signatures (Int.14A). This is a mechanism for enhancing the status differences between permanent workers and TAWs, including negative consequences for both parties, employers and employees. According to our interviews, financial disadvantages are also reflected as stigmatizing treatment. Interviewee 10 stated that only TAWs who are on the loan to the client firm for nine months reach the same wage level like workers with same qualifications. However, only few TAWs are able to overcome this obstacle, as they often leave the client firm before the nine months are reached. Hence, legal regulations on equal pay are thwarted by the client companies, which in turn creates additional stigmatization for TAWs. Interviewee 16 perceived the financial disadvantages as discriminatory practices, and he feels obliged to ask for his rights and perceives the client firm as being without understanding. Instead, these firms develop strategies to avoid the legal regulations of equal pay (Int.16A). Hence, there are certainly financial disadvantages even in more highly qualified jobs, but payment can still be perceived as “good,” such as in the case of interviewee 15. It depends on both the temporary employment agency as well as the client firm (Int.15A, Int.16A). The simultaneous dependence on two separate companies has further disadvantages for TAWs. Being excluded from, for example, a Christmas party is legitimized by legal restrictions (Int.12A): TAWs in this client firm are not allowed to attend more than one company event per year. Ergo, if they participate in an event hosted by the temporary employment agency, attending the client’s Christmas and summer parties is considered taboo (Int.12A). This was subsequently followed by a further finding that no defined contacts, linked to a lack of clarification of responsibilities for TAWs, in the client firm is perceived as a form of marginalization because no one explicitly cares about helping TAWs integrate into their new working environment (Int.8S). This is problematic not only for the TAWs affected but also for the company, in which TAWs with no clear integration into

their new working environment are less able to fulfill their tasks from the beginning. In the field of low-skilled jobs, open forms of stigmatization are often associated with the assignment of unpleasant tasks. Moreover, the language used here seems to be “rougher” and easily might turn into actual chicanery and bullying. This, in the eyes of an interviewee, requires a certain physical constitution as well as a certain degree of resilience on the part of TAWs:

"For me, temporary work is almost like its own profession, which not everyone is suitable for. As a temporary worker, you have to be quite tough, and you have to want that!" (Int.1H)

If that were not enough, TAWs not only have to do the “dirty work,” they are also deliberately given unpopular, difficult tasks:

"There's an older man with us [...] I think they treat him very much... they give him everything they don't want to do. Then he has to lift the glass and put it on the car, and if you do that all day long, you're beaten!" (Int.4H)

But this is just the tip of the iceberg. Another form of stigmatization is being assigned to dangerous tasks where the TAW is not aware of the risks (Int.1H).

It seems that permanent employees exploit the inexperience of TAWs. As already mentioned above, they do this in particular to avoid unpleasant tasks and to simply delegate away parts of their own work to them (Int.4H). Additionally, depending on the respective company, working hours are very strictly monitored. The slightest break or interruption is noticed, and even going to the bathroom is suspiciously observed (Int.6H).

"Many were there only for two days and then left. They don't get the hang of it. I mean, it really gets you when you know that everyone's looking at you...that you don't stand around, that you're in motion, that you don't blabber." (Int.6H)

Furthermore, certain privileges and benefits, such as free meals, are simply not available for TAWs within the low qualification sector (Int.2H). Other forms of open stigmatization in this sector include verbal attacks or deliberately ignoring legal regulations.

"That's how they hold the pistol to your head. Once, I had a situation when I was supposed to work the nightshift. At noon they call me, saying I've to switch to an earlier shift. Of course, I know there has to be a break of eleven hours or so. And they don't give a damn! They said: 'You want to work, so be here immediately. If not, then you don't need to come here tomorrow anyways!'" (Int.2H)

In contrast to the low appreciation of skills within the helper sector, TAWs in higher-skilled jobs encounter another problem tied to expectations. As external employees whose

relationships within the client firm are less pronounced, they are expected to openly address problems and fight battles with management for their permanently employed colleagues who are at risk of losing status (Int.9S). However, in higher-skilled areas, TAWs have to struggle with stigmatization in the form of financial disadvantages too. A lower salary as well as a lower bonus or none at all are perceived as a significant difference between permanent workers and TAWs (Int.9S). Now, after clearly open as well as blurred forms of stigmatizing treatment have been exemplified, the logical next step is to consider clearly covert forms of stigmatization. An undisputedly covert form of stigmatization is illustrated clearly by the following statement from an interview:

"You have to say that when you went through the factory as a temporary worker and said 'Good morning' to someone, you didn't necessarily have to expect that something would come back." (Int.13A)

As a result, TAWs are partly ignored by the permanent workforce, or at least they assume that they are being avoided. On the one hand, there is a perceptible increase in cohesion among permanent employees. On the other hand, TAWs represent newcomers and do not benefit from existing group cohesion (Int.10S). Interviewee 16 also lacks a sense of belonging. He further reports that all agreements that apply to permanent workers are not valid for TAWs and are always subject to renegotiations (Int.16A). Regardless of his qualifications, interviewee 14 was treated as less qualified, was given special attention by the permanent staff, and his suggestions were not taken into account (Int.14A). Interviewee 2 assumes that the stereotypes that exist in the minds of the permanent workforce are difficult to overcome:

"[...] prejudices exist anyway. You're a temp standing in front of a qualified permanent employee. And he thinks: 'Well, he might be okay but he's one sandwich short of a picnic!'" (Int.2H)

It is apparent that there are fewer discrepancies between TAWs in high- and low-skilled jobs within covert stigma than within overt stigma. Lastly, what this research should not ignore is that TAWs also report the absence of stigmatizing treatment. Apart from financial differences and a marginal perception of the position as not a fully-fledged member of the company, temporary employment can also be perceived as a good model by those affected. Certain efforts on the part of the company, such as a good presentation of the company at the beginning of the assignment or a philosophy of equal treatment, contribute to this.

"[...] I could participate in everything, there were really no restrictions and that was really nice. You really noticed that this is also a bit of a corporate philosophy. You didn't feel excluded." (Int.9S)

In case of interviewee 12, the use of TAWs is deeply embedded in the firm's history, and the firm constantly uses a high number of TAWs to ensure productivity, which is why the permanent members are used to working together with TAWs and do not perceive them as threat, but rather as necessary support. There is even a feeling of solidarity towards the TAWs among the permanent staff, or at least this is interviewee 12's perception (Int.12A). Temporary work can also be understood as a positive context in which problems can be solved with a flexible change of workplace. This perspective highlights aspects of work stability that seem to go hand in hand with the conscious choice of this employment status mentioned by TAWs in high-skilled jobs (Int.8S). On the whole, stigmatization does not occur at all workplaces. As expected, it depends on the company, organizational culture, and colleagues (Int.2H). There are also depictions by TAWs who experienced their day-to-day work as equal to permanent workers (Int.5H). There are companies striving to integrate TAWs. Hence, TAWs are invited to corporate events and parties; they can participate in staff meetings, and they get presents and even bonuses (Int.6H). This again supports the impression that stigmatization very much depends on the worker's specific context.

Stigma perception

Our findings showed an ambivalent picture of how TAWs perceive their employment status and related stigmatization. TAWs in jobs requiring higher qualifications experienced poor treatment linked to their employment status in person-to-person interactions less often than TAWs in low-skilled jobs. However, they perceived their employment status as stigmatized on a societal level based on the negative image of temporary work in public discourse. This public stigma may be one reason for TAWs in highly qualified jobs to less openly communicate their employment status to others, even though their personal experiences within client firms are in most cases positive.

"Well, that's the thing about it. People ask: 'What are you doing these days?' Then I say: 'Well, I work at [client firm name].' Which is ultimately the case. I've a temporary employment contract, [...]. Only that I'm paid from another position. Yeah, right. As I said, I won't say it explicitly now." (Int.11A)

Linked to the negative image of temporary work, TAWs in higher qualified jobs criticize structural disadvantages, addressing issues of unequal pay or being excluded from client firm benefits. Instead, TAWs in the helper sector reported experiencing poor treatment related to their employment status in face-to-face interactions within client firms and perceived themselves as being stigmatized, resulting partly in self-stigmatization. A strong awareness of

an existing stigma around temporary work was also expressed by the self-descriptions of these TAWs: "You're a second-class worker, you're a temporary worker. A temporary worker is a temporary worker. Is and will always be!" (Int.3H)

The perceptions of being degraded or placed in an inferior position because of employment status becomes even more evident when reflecting on their own level of training: "[...] and I asked myself: 'Why am I here even though I know I can do better?'" (Int.2H) The perception of being degraded, however, is also an issue that TAWs in more highly qualified jobs have to deal with:

"[...] but obviously, you feel like a fool if you have studied at university for a few years and got a degree, and still receive work from someone who is formally not qualified and treats you like an idiot." (Int.14A)

The perception of structural disadvantages on the part of the majority of TAWs in specialized and academic employment sectors and the perception of interactional stigmatization of the majority of TAWs in the helper sector led to different rationales in TAWs' narratives justifying their experiences in client firms. Across all job skill-levels, TAWs argue with a specific market logic that client firms are following when planning to work with temporary employment agencies. For example, one interviewee considers that a modern technical production cannot actually be marketable without TAWs because temporary work has developed into a proven method to react in line with the market demands (Int.1H). Within legal restrictions, client firms are able to extend their workforce using TAWs without offering the same benefits they offer their core workforce.

"If there weren't temporary workers, some regular workers would have to do it. But if you've got the possibility, you take a temp, 'cause this job is easy to learn or instruct. But that's absolutely normal, that's what I'm here for. [...] Why should a temp do clean, pleasant work and the permanent employee bend and work in the mud? That's not what you'd expect, would you?" (Int.1H)

Within these limits, our results suggest that TAWs accept being treated differently without blaming the client firm and its members.

TAWs in high-skilled jobs further refer to the legitimate fears of client companies and their attempts to protect themselves. They argue that client firms develop practices of exclusion concerning information sharing or access rights towards TAWs in order to protect themselves from the perspective of data or patent law.

"When I think about IT and IT security, it's quite understandable. Because permanent employees can be threatened with being fired if they do something stupid, if you look at it like that. The company has more confidence in its permanent employees. I can understand that a bit and I agree with that." (Int.14A)

TAWs in the helper sector mainly use a completely different argument to justify being treated poorly within client firms. They see the negative image of temporary work and the associated negative attitudes of permanent employees towards TAWs as being rooted in a subgroup of TAWs who fit the existing prejudices. Instead of blaming the client firm policies, legal restrictions, or societal discourse, they search for reasons among their own. Hence, they establish some sort of secondary order:

"There are two kinds of temporary workers. There are people, I've met enough out there, they really haven't learned anything in life." (Int.3H)

"[...] the cliché isn't far away that there are really alcoholics or people who somehow have difficulties in life, who then also gain a foothold through temporary agency work." (Int.1H)

Although our interviewees clearly distinguish themselves from the group of "bad" TAWs, they assign to a part of their own group attributes such as being lazy, without skills, or acting less committed, which all justify the stigmatizing treatment or at least the existing prejudices towards them. Moreover, poor behavior towards TAWs is simply seen as an innately human characteristic, almost some kind of anthropological constant: "Well, it's human, I'd say. [...] After all, man is a pig!" (Int.4H) Our findings suggest that the stigma consciousness of TAWs across different job skill-levels differs according to the rationales to justify the status quo. Disadvantages at the monetary level associated with employment status and a negative image of the temporary employment industry in general play a more significant role in the narratives of TAWs in high-skilled jobs than in those employed in lesser-qualified jobs. In low-skilled jobs, the interactional, immaterial level tends to come to the surface, which can be attributed, among other things, to the lack of alternatives for those affected. In contrast to academics or specialists, TAWs in helper roles do not expect their situation to change in the near future and are more likely to accept their status as a TAW as part of their identity.

Coping strategies

Turning now to the question of how TAWs individually cope with stigmatizing experiences, one can observe different strategies. Whereas companies use the threat of immediate lay-off, TAWs also make use of the opportunity to leave a company:

"I said: 'Go, find yourself another stupid! If you don't like it, you get my time sheet, you can sign it and goodbye.' Short, concise, functional, clear." (Int.3H)

A similar strategy is to give up temporary work in order to find a "regular" job. Interestingly, the perspective of potentially leaving a client firm could be found in all sectors, but it seems to be even more important for highly qualified TAWs. Here, temporary work is actively used as a bridge to professional life, such as to gain experience after graduating from a university. The perspective of moving from temporary employment to normal employment quite easily or within a relatively short period of time suggests that people identify less strongly with their status as TAWs. In the same way, impression management is one strategy used in high-skilled jobs to avoid being noticed as a TAW or in any negative manner. What appears to be very crucial here is the impression of having control of the situation. This is reflected in the perception of having chosen the work arrangement and the feeling that it serves a certain purpose:

"You have somehow in the back of your mind, maybe you have the chance to get a foothold there, that means you try hard and try to do all the tasks that come up. [...] I've used the temporary work for myself, I've acquired a lot of knowledge." (Int.13A)

This supports the idea that TAWs in high-skilled jobs try to avoid any form of identification with their employment status. This is also supported by the fact that this group shows no form of self-stigmatization. For the highly qualified, temporary work is considered to be just a short phase or a stepping stone. In that regard, TAWs in the sectors with higher qualifications see the possibilities of training within client companies as further privileges that are rarely made accessible to TAWs in low-qualified helper sector. Even though some of the TAWs in the low-skilled sector try to gain skills and knowledge, such as reading hand-outs and leaflets or willingly taking up new tasks, they also do it with another objective:

"I'm paid for my time anyway and if they say now perhaps you could do this or do that, then I'll do that. It's rewarding for me, you know? 'Cause I learn something, too." (Int.6H)

This appears to be a form of assimilation, actively integrating oneself thus gradually overcoming the role of TAW. For example, one interviewee describes how he volunteered to step in for another co-worker in order to help him get a day off. On this occasion, he asked for a crash course to be able to take over this colleague's tasks. In line with these findings is a strategy for making sense of one's respective work, or feeling like one's work is meaningful.

"What I also think is a very liberating factor, and this is my deep personal impression, is that you basically do an honest job where you are needed." (Int.1H)

When it comes to verbal discrimination, one coping strategy is to perceive it as humor, or as comments that are not to be understood as real attacks towards the TAWs, especially within highly qualified fields. This is a rather remarkable outcome, as this perception might be a mechanism of highly qualified TAWs protecting their status and self-worth against discrimination. On the other hand, a coping strategy across all sectors for dealing with poor treatment is to simply ignore it. This can also include a general stance towards the temporary work. One of the interviewees describes his attitude as follows:

"I believe I go there to work, I don't care what people think about me. 'Cause after work I'm with my people, so this doesn't matter anymore." (Int.2H)

The missing affiliation to the company and the opportunity to quit at any time also gives TAWs the opportunity to speak frankly to their superiors:

"A temporary worker sometimes has a certain distance, I can talk to the really big boss without any hesitation. I also sometimes had the impression that he likes it when he gets straightforward feedback from the bottom." (Int.1H)

Also, the perspective of being in a company for only a short period of time seems to help when it comes to poor treatment and working conditions:

"There are companies where I keep telling myself 'you're only a holiday replacement for three to four weeks,' so you bear it and it's alright." (Int.6H)

Overall, these results indicate that when it comes to coping strategies, an important factor seems to be individual resilience.

Discussion

Previous research on temporary agency work emphasized that TAWs, particularly those in low-skilled jobs, are likely to be exposed to stigmatization. However, stigmatization of TAWs employed in high-skilled jobs as well as experiences of stigmatization across different skill-levels have not been treated in much detail. With a focus on low-skilled jobs, existing research provided a rather incomplete picture of stigmatization within the broader field of temporary employment. In contrast to earlier studies, this study considered both, TAWs employed in low- and high-skilled jobs and has been able to highlight the differences of perceiving and coping with stigmatization. Using and extending Boyce et al.'s (2007) model of TAW stigmatization

enabled a holistic perspective on stigmatization processes in client firms. In the literature, job-related stigma has been associated with negative outcomes for both, the individual and the organization. This is exemplified in a study undertaken by Boswell et al. who explain how poor treatment towards TAWs and their self-perception as workers with lower status might affect their “work-related attitudes and behaviors which are critical to business operations” (2012: 455). Notable are also recent findings with regard to negative effects on TAWs’ well-being, health, job satisfaction, and commitment (e.g., Aleksynska 2018; Hünefeld et al. 2020; Imhof and Andresen 2018; Stasiowski and Kłobuszewska 2018). Other studies emphasized organizational losses caused by stigmatization, such as a waste of TAWs’ knowledge and skills as well as a decrease in organizational social capital (Augustsson 2014, 2016; Viitala and Kantola 2016; Wilkin et al. 2018; Winkler and Mahmood 2018). Those findings demonstrate the need for better strategies to integrate TAWs in order to avoid their stigmatization in client firms. This study contributes to research on temporary work and stigmatization by providing knowledge of the multifaceted range of stigmatization experiences in jobs with different skill-levels. Thereby the findings may help to develop strategies to avoid negative consequences resulting from this type of stigma. The results show that stigma experiences of TAWs differ depending on the working environment embedded in different employment sectors. Regardless of qualification level, stigmatization was more of an issue for those TAWs whose employment status visibility was reinforced by the client firm. Such problematic measures comprised different clothing, the assignment to inferior tasks, or the spatial separation of office and lunch rooms. These status-reinforcing practices on an artifact level have been explicitly mentioned as means to promote separation between the core workforce and TAWs. One interviewee expressed how the treatment of TAWs drastically changed after a new management board was introduced, which implemented procedures that resulted in a sudden change in the permanent workers’ behaviors and gave rise to stigmatizing treatment towards TAWs. Organizational change, such as the change of management board, has been identified as trigger for growing hostile work environments in previous studies, especially if connected to intensified job insecurity, competition or role conflict (Skogstad, Matthiesen and Einarsen 2007; Spagnoli, Balducci and Fraccaroli 2017). Moreover, prior studies suggest that management and permanent workers may have an interest in keeping the status of TAWs low in order to maintain their own power (Becker 2015; Boyce et al. 2007; Byoung-Hoon and Frenkel 2004). For example, Rybnikova and Cardone (2018) found that the behaviors of core workers depend on whether management policies support or sanction inclusive behaviors towards TAWs. Our study confirms this argument and shows that management that promotes a status-reinforcing

atmosphere along with strong differentiation between the two groups endorses permanent workers' tendencies to distance themselves from TAWs. By doing so, management policy provides the basis for stigmatization by legitimizing open discrimination of TAWs across the different skill-levels. Several reports have shown that permanent workers seem to face a dilemma when confronted with TAWs. They are framed as outsiders and a threat, but permanent workers need to cooperate with them in order to perform their jobs (Rybnikova and Cardone 2018). Consequently, previous findings indicate that the strategic separation and devaluation of TAWs has negative effects on the core workforce, and potentially on the organization itself. With regard to working context, our findings show a blind spot in the previous model of TAW stigmatization (Boyce et al. 2007). An important contextual factor appears to be the role of the temporary employment firm and its relationship with the client firm as well as with the employed TAW. From the experiences of our interviewees, it became apparent that these relations shape stigma perception. On the one hand, the negotiation between the companies clarifies the basic terms and conditions that pre-structure the TAW's work arrangements. On the other hand, the actions of the temporary employment agency can shape the TAW's perceived level of uncertainty. Our data indicate that TAWs' perception of poor treatment is less severe if their employment agency is supportive when problems arise (i.e., helping to find a new client firm). If the client firm and the temporary employment agency have strong ties and build an alliance to the disadvantage of TAWs, poor treatment in the client firm becomes more serious. These findings are not taken into account in the current stigmatization model and represent a meaningful extension to the theoretical framework for future studies. One unanticipated finding was that the pre-structuring effect the work environment is evident for all interviewees and across the different skill-levels. However, the specific forms of stigmatizing treatment differed according to the worker's position in low- and high-skilled jobs. Basically, we found the forms of stigmatization already highlighted in previous literature (Bosmans et al. 2015a,b; Helfen et al. 2015; Stasiowski and Kłobuszewska 2018), but we were able to identify which of these forms are more relevant in each respective sector. While verbal discrimination (e.g., devaluing the skills and contributions of TAWs) and task-related discrimination (e.g., allocation of undesirable activities to TAWs) were more obvious in low-skilled jobs, TAWs employed in high-skilled jobs more frequently reported the denial of information or rights – matters that were perceived as a of lack of trust. Following the descriptions of the interviewees, the emergence of verbal devaluation in the helper sector can possibly be explained by the generally rougher tone in the manufacturing industry. There seems to be a higher level of politeness in interpersonal interaction in office jobs with higher qualification requirements.

However, this sector seems to be open to more subtle forms of stigmatizing treatment. For TAWs in jobs with higher qualification requirements, these experiences led to very uncomfortable situations in the client firm. As our interviews have shown, distrust towards TAWs can easily develop and manifest in exclusionary practices, especially in knowledge-intensive and innovation-driven professions such as engineering. In previous research there is some evidence suggesting that highly-skilled TAWs' knowledge and skills are not efficiently used in client firms and that their opportunities to contribute to organizational developments are strategically cut off (Augustsson 2014, 2016; Viitala and Kantola 2016). Whereas those studies evaluated potential organizational losses, our findings additionally raise awareness of how back holding information or denial of rights can promote the emergence of stigmatization. Moreover, and quite contrary to the theoretical framework, we found that the boundaries between overt and covert forms of stigmatizations are mostly blurred. According to Boyce et al. (2007) overt forms of stigmatization include direct devaluing statements linked to the employment status, whereas covert forms include nonverbal expressions of dislike, practices of social exclusion and denial of resources or information. Difficulties with this classification arise, however, when attempting to place the empirical findings in this framework. According to this classification, many of the stigmatization experiences reported by the interviewees in our study would have to be classified as covert forms of stigmatization, for example the exclusion of temporary workers from the canteen. The interviewee himself, however, perceived this as an overt form of stigmatization, which is why we conclude that this classification needs revision. We propose to avoid the strict subdivision of overt and covert forms of stigmatizing treatment, even though differences certainly exist. Particularly for qualitative empirical studies, this solution offers greater flexibility. In addition, our study shows that not only do the forms of stigmatizing treatment differ according to the skill-level, but there are also major differences in the extent to which stigmatization is perceived at all. We found TAWs to have developed various ways of justifying poor treatment and defining their identity as TAW, for instance as inferior worker. Nevertheless, all of them, albeit to varying degrees, were aware of the stigmatization connected to their employment status. Within the highly-qualified employment sector, including specialists and academics, the perception of stigmatization shifted to a more structural level with regard to resource issues such as the denial of information, access rights or benefits. Interactional stigmatization was rather rare within this sector. Instead, we observed a certain consciousness of being poorly recognized on a societal level. As highlighted in previous studies, temporary work in Germany is socially tainted (Flemnitz 2018). It is interesting to note that this aspect did not play a major role for TAWs in low-skilled jobs, at least in the context of

our study. TAWs tended to argue on an interpersonal level and emphasized interaction with permanent employees as central to their experiences of stigmatization. In the current study, justifiability as a mediating factor for the perception of stigmatization (Boyce et al. 2007) proved to be very multifaceted. Although TAWs across all sectors agreed that certain disadvantages of their employment status are due to market logic and the rationality of business organizations, the justification of practices encountered in client firms differed largely. Again, TAWs in high-skilled jobs relied on rather global issues such as legal restrictions and data protection, while TAWs in low-skilled jobs argued that prejudices were the main reason for poor treatment. They even partly confirmed the existence of these prejudices within their own ranks. Whereas TAWs in higher qualified employment sectors tended to blame external factors, those in lower qualified sectors indirectly blamed themselves. Compared to specialists and academics, one possible explanation for the more pronounced self-attribution of TAWs in the helper sector can be found in a stronger identification with their employment status. Referring to Boyce et al. (2007), TAWs are more likely to sense stigmatization if their employment status is a core part of their identity.

This takes us to the coping mechanisms of TAWs that our study uncovered. Particularly TAWs in high-skilled jobs avoided identifying with their employment status. Our findings show they are more committed to the work activity itself and more likely to perceive temporary work as just a stepping stone or a short stopover while pursuing a career. Identification serves to maintain a positive sense of self through self-distinctiveness and self-enhancement. TAWs employed as specialists or academics perceive a greater chance of moving from temporary employment to regular employment and might experience no advantages from integrating their employment status into their core identity. Perceived as a socially tainted work arrangement, classifying themselves as TAW might have negative effects on their sense of self, in contrast to commit to a specific profession (e.g., engineers). To strengthen one's association with contributions and qualifications rather than with employment status as a TAW, another strategy of high-skilled workers is impression management. It serves to manage external perceptions and can be used to encourage self-respect and respect from others (Winkler and Mahmood 2018). TAWs highlight that being in this work arrangement only helps them to acquire knowledge and develop business contacts.

In general, for TAWs across all qualification levels, having the perspective of leaving the client firm, whether it is for a better arrangement in another client firm or for a regular job, is a coping strategy that helps them take poor treatment less seriously. However, TAWs in low-skilled jobs

often have fewer opportunities to engage in regular employment and their job might also be considered less prestigious compared to high-skilled jobs. This explains why the attachment of low-skilled workers to the TAW category seems more likely here.

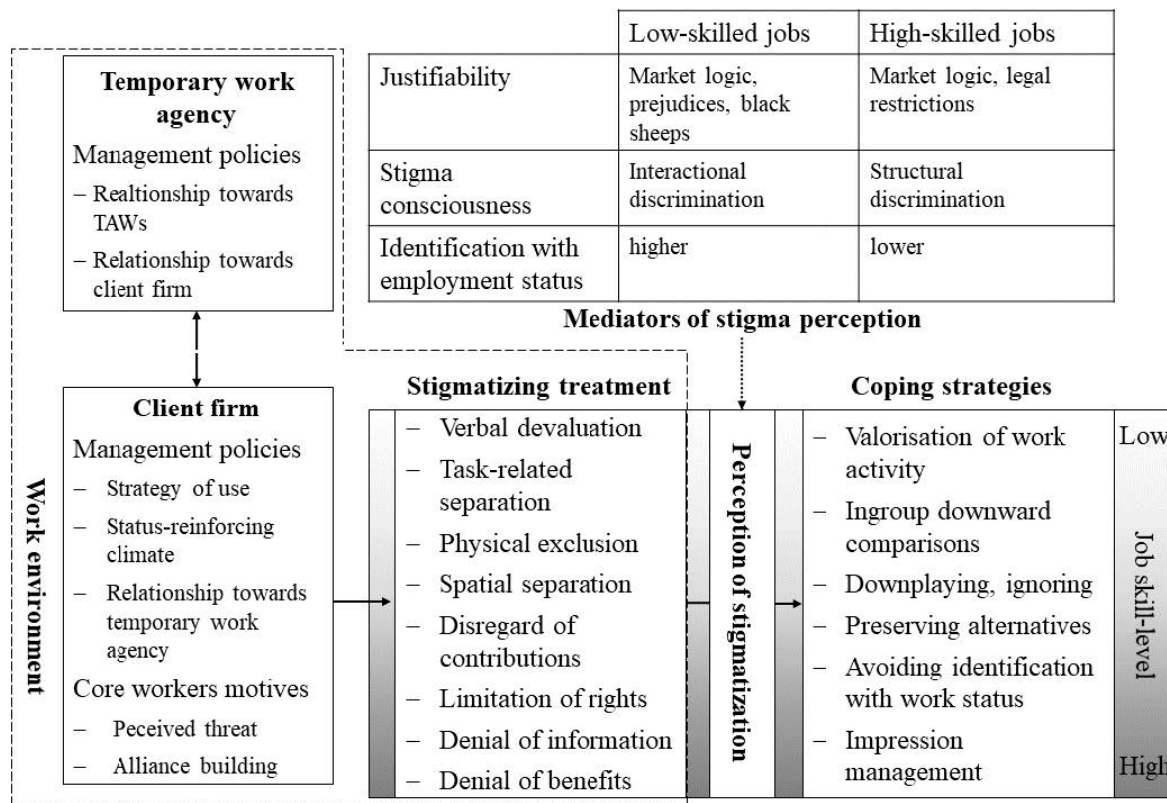
However, TAWs employed as helpers also seek to maintain a positive sense of self. In this case, one coping strategy to protect self-distinctiveness and self-enhancement can be seen in downward comparisons within the group of TAWs. In accordance with Kreiner et al. (2006), we can state that TAWs in the helper sector show an ambivalent identification with their group. In general, they identify themselves as TAWs, but at the same time they do not identify with the inferior parts of the group. These people seemingly confirm prejudices about TAWs, such as being lazy, less committed, or less qualified. Such devaluing comparison processes within one's own group can be understood as a form of in-group disidentification that aims to distance oneself from the stigmatized group (Bosmans et al. 2016). In this case, TAWs themselves contribute to the reinforcement of prejudices against them. Another coping strategy we found to be mainly relevant to TAWs employed in low-skilled jobs was the valorization of work activity. Perceiving the tasks of TAWs as meaningful contributions to the client firm's success was reported to help TAWs interpret the assignment of less pleasant tasks more positively and to perceive their position within the client firm as relevant. Such reframing tactics have been identified in occupational stigma research on domestic workers (Bosmans et al. 2016). Through reframing, TAWs overwrite the negative aspects of the employment status and infuse them with positive values.

Ultimately, despite job qualification level, TAWs' narratives also showed evidence of downplaying and ignoring poor treatment. Consequently, not all negative experiences in client firms were perceived as stigmatization; verbal abuse, for instance, was framed as humor, and the exclusionary behavior of permanent employees was simply regarded as irrelevant.

Conclusion

The purpose of our study was to explore the stigmatization experiences and coping strategies of TAWs employed in both, low- and high-skilled jobs. In addition, we critically analyzed the narratives presented by TAWs in regard to the work environments in which these stigmatizing experiences took place. Our findings provided empirical evidence for Boyce et al.'s (2007) model and simultaneously enriched the framework for further qualitative research. Figure 2 provides our proposed model of TAW stigmatization, based on the ideas of Boyce et al. (2007) and with the integration of our empirical findings.

Figure 4: Modified Model of TAW Stigmatization.



Although our study provides new and valuable insights, it has several limitations. Our findings reflect the perspective of TAWs themselves; however, including the perspectives of management and permanent workers would have extended our focus and could have helped us dig deeper into questions about power structures, perpetrator motives, and the rationales behind certain practices. Furthermore, our findings represent a snapshot for the period of time in which our data were collected. In a complex and highly dynamic society, stigmatization in regard to a specific work arrangement might change over time, particularly with revolving societal discourses. Another limitation of this study is the relatively small sample, although the heterogeneity of the interviewees enabled us to identify factors crucial to stigmatization processes. The strength of this study is that it explores the multifaceted range of stigmatization experiences that TAWs experience with regard to the skill-level of their position. From a practical perspective, a critical reflection on existing practices of client firms in dealing with TAWs with regard to their effects is recommended. In particular, for client firms employing TAWs in low-skilled jobs exclusionary practices on an interpersonal level should be reflected and avoided, whereas client firms employing TAWs in high-skilled jobs should strive for more equality on a structural level in order to achieve the anticipated objectives associated with the use of TAWs. Furthermore, prospective studies could clarify the importance of trust issues in

temporary work. Our findings revealed a lack of trust to be a crucial factor in stigma perception of TAWs in high-skilled jobs.

By focusing on the employment status embedded in specific work organizations, we have also chosen to narrow our perspective and exclude other characteristics with the purpose of conducting an in-depth analysis. However, existing literature provides evidence for other drivers of stigmatization practices that go beyond our research focus. On the one hand, leadership styles, psychosocial factors as well as occupational risks are mentioned as relevant triggers for hostile behaviors in organizations (Feijó et al. 2019). On the other hand, additionally to employment status, several other social categories, such as gender, age, ethnicity, sexual identity, religion, sickness and obesity, are well known as basis for stigmatization in organizational contexts (Thomson & Grandy 2018). Particular emphasis is also placed on intersection effects of employment status with other categories such as gender or ethnic origin (Einarsen et al. 2011; Salin and Hoel 2013). Consequently, for future studies, it would be intriguing to focus on the intersections between different social categories, such as skill-level and migration experiences of TAWs. Current developments show that migrants, particularly refugees, suffer from being placed in inferior positions. Moreover, stigma research has emphasized that ethnic minority groups are segregated into jobs that tend to be stigmatized (He 2019). This is a trend that should be more closely examined in future research.

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2.3 Marginal people – Towards a classification of research on precarious and marginalized entrepreneurship

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Abstract

For almost a century, entrepreneurship research has focused on prototypical entrepreneurs and their respective fields of business. However, a growing body of literature recognises the importance of precarious and marginalized entrepreneurship. Based on a thorough literature review, this paper categorizes the research on this topic, with the notion of marginal people forming an underlying concept. Thus, the reasons for precarity are addressed, as well as how marginality is expressed in the respective areas. Finally, common features of marginality across the various categories of precarious entrepreneurship are discussed.

Keywords: precarious work, self-employment, informal work, gig economy

Introduction

The image of the entrepreneur and the term entrepreneurship have been questioned in the last two decades. In the past, the focus was on personality traits, and the image of the male, successful and aggressive founder was promoted; however, this notion of entrepreneurship has been criticised (Gerpott and Kieser, 2017, 2020; Johnsen and Sørensen, 2017; Jones and Spicer, 2009; Tedmanson et al., 2012). In some areas of entrepreneurship research, the focus has shifted, and more attention has been paid to precarious forms of business (Bögenhold and Fachinger, 2007; Conen and Schippers, 2019; Kalleberg, 2009; Kalleberg and Vallas, 2017; Polkowska, 2016; Wall, 2015). It has also been emphasised that the terms *self-employment* and *entrepreneurship* are closely linked, if not interchangeable (Clark and Drinkwater, 2010; van Solinge, 2015). There is a growing volume of studies on marginalized and precarious forms of micro-entrepreneurship and self-employment, especially, but not exclusively, in so-called developing countries. So far, however, very little attention has been paid to typologies or taxonomies of this area of research. This paper investigates the current research on *precarious and marginalized entrepreneurship* (PME) and provides an overview of its various forms and how it is addressed in the literature. Moreover, the issue is conceptualised by adopting the idea of the ‘marginal man’ (Park, 1928) and expanding it to ‘marginal people’. The underlying question is as follows:

What general forms of precarious and marginalized entrepreneurship can be found in current research, and how can they be conceptualised?

What is precarious and marginalized entrepreneurship (PME)?

This paper focuses on precarious forms of entrepreneurship that emerge, for instance, as micro-firms, solo self-employed entrepreneurs, or self-employed entrepreneurs with only a few employees. Bögenhold and Fachinger (2007) claim that there are two ways to evaluate solo entrepreneurship. One perspective focuses on precarities by drawing on analogies to day labourers of the early 20th century and is accordingly more critical or pessimistic. Another perspective focuses more on opportunities and depicts the emerging young entrepreneur who has the potential to grow (Bögenhold and Fachinger, 2007). This perspective inevitably excludes a whole range of individuals, such as the elderly self-employed and many kinds of necessity entrepreneurship. Therefore, the precarious side of entrepreneurship will be the focus of this paper.

While living in marginal and precarious conditions has been identified as an important factor in and motive for *becoming* an entrepreneur (i.e., ‘the marginalization theory’; for an overview, see Veciana, 2007), the focus here is also the marginality of the status *of* an entrepreneur. In this paper, the term *precarious* will be used in its broadest sense to refer to all entrepreneurship and self-employed work ‘that is uncertain, unpredictable, and risky from the point of view of the worker’ (Kalleberg, 2009). This means that these entrepreneurs carry the risks of their work and are provided with only limited social and legal protections (Kalleberg and Vallas, 2017: 1). Moreover, such precariousities can have significant negative effects on one’s health, social life and family (see e.g., Giammarioli, 2020; Llosa et al., 2018; Wilson and Ebert, 2013). Whereas, in general, the term precarious work refers to several forms of non-standard employment (e.g., temporary or part-time; International Labour Organization, 2016), the main focus here is *precarious self-employment*. For instance, Horemans and Marx (2017) report that self-employed individuals in Europe are at a considerably greater risk of income poverty than contract workers. Among the exemplary precariousities is also the risk of poverty in old age (Fachinger, 2019).

Another significant aspect of PME is *informal work*, which comprises all work other than formal employment (i.e., it is not registered under the tax, social security and labour laws of the state; Williams and Nadin, 2012: 2). Over 60% of the working population in the world is in the informal economy and many of them are self-employed. Although informality exists in all countries and regardless of the level of socio-economic development, it is more prevalent in so-called developing countries (International Labour Organization, 2018). Being an important factor in the global South, informal work might be illegal, but it is largely tolerated within the respective societies (Fernández-Kelly and Shefner, 2010; Welter et al., 2015). While this undermining of regulations by members of marginalized groups, such as migrants, is sometimes framed as a subversive act (Banerjee, 2019), informal entrepreneurship should not be mistaken for precarious entrepreneurship per se. Several studies have shown that the informal sector of an economy can be a driving force. Furthermore, the individual motive of entrepreneurs is not necessarily to ‘make ends meet’, which is why it is important to differentiate here (Adom, 2015).

In this section, it has been explained that necessity entrepreneurship, formality and informality as well as matters of motivation, are some of the crucial aspects of PME research. With regard to the identities of entrepreneurs, some scholars claimed that these are constructed intersectionally and that gender and ethnicity, for example, can play an important role (e.g.,

Essers and Benschop, 2009). This is particularly relevant when it comes to systems of exclusion or oppression (Dy and Agwunobi, 2019). In this respect, research on PME is frequently research on *intersectional entrepreneurial identities*. With this in mind, the marginality of precarious forms of entrepreneurship bears many parallels to the idea of the ‘marginal man’, a concept proposed by Robert Ezra Park (1928) and then elaborated on by Stonequist (1935) and Goldberg (1941).

The concept of the marginal man

Park's original concept of the marginal man is relatively open. Whereas he refers to people who move from one culture to another in the course of migratory movements, he also points out that these transitions resemble crises and that the ‘marginal man’ lives in a quasi-permanent *state of crisis* (Park, 1928). As will be shown, it is this state that can perhaps best be related to precariousness and forms the starting point for the reflections in this paper: marginalized people who belong to a minority or a group with an inferior status in society. At the same time, they are expected to conform, adjust or to assimilate by the ‘dominant group’ (Stonequist, 1935: 2).

Few studies apply the concept of the marginal man to economics or entrepreneurship research. Baker and Welter (2018) call for more context in research on entrepreneurship and discuss Park's concept with regard to this field, but they focus solely on diaspora or transnational entrepreneurship. Another reference to Park within entrepreneurship research is made by Ronen (1989), who refers to the sociological tradition that deals with societal outsiders and notes that the status as an outsider leads or forces people to become entrepreneurs simply because other opportunities are unavailable to them. This also applies to both migrant and non-migrant contexts (Ronen, 1989). Besides the proposition of a taxonomy of PME, the aim of this conceptual paper is to show that the concept of ‘marginal man’ is applicable to this field. Moreover, this paper can be considered an attempt to bring new life to sociological research on this topic by expanding the perspective in a gender-inclusive manner. This is why, in the following section, the term ‘marginal people’ is used.

Literature review and categories of PME

Thus far, the paper has hypothesised that there are distinctive features of PME, and respective entrepreneurs can be conceptualised as ‘*marginal people*’. In support of this proposition, the following part of this paper describes, in detail, the respective categories of PME (see Table 1). They will be presented as identified in the current state of research; thus, they are based on a

thorough review of existing literature on the topic. Three databases (i.e., *Academic Search Premier*, Business Source Complete, and Google Scholar) were searched using relevant terms (e.g., precarious work, entrepreneurship, necessity entrepreneurship, and self-employment). Since most of the issues are rather new in entrepreneurship research and to include mainly recent studies, only works published in the past two decades were selected. The search was further refined by focusing on qualitative studies, case studies or studies using mixed methodology, not because quantitative studies do not tackle the same issues, but because qualitative methods can be useful for *identifying* and characterising phenomena in an explorative manner (Eisenhardt, 1989; Håkansson and Waluszewski, 2016; Yin, 2015; Yin, 2018). The selected studies were scanned for relevant citations, resulting in additional studies being chosen, including quantitative studies. Interestingly, a search performed without restricting the date of publication led to essentially the same results. This outcome underscored that the topic of precarious entrepreneurship is rather new within the field of entrepreneurship research, as well as some of the issues addressed (e.g., digital work). However, when searching for self-employment and related terms in connections with precarious work, the entries start a decade earlier, around 1990. This observation is consistent with a shift in defining ‘entrepreneurship’, such as by addressing self-employment (see above). In the course of critically examining entrepreneurship and challenging of the typical image of the entrepreneur, gender aspects are also addressed. For example, in 2002, Marlow criticised the hitherto dominant academic discourse, which was characterised as a masculinised hegemony (Marlow, 2002). Therefore, the first major area of research to be presented here is that of female entrepreneurs who find themselves in a marginalized position.

Table 1: Precarious and marginalized entrepreneurship by category

	Examples of possible subtypes	Legal status	Causes of precariousness and marginality	Ways marginality is expressed
Marginalized female entrepreneurship	<i>Female entrepreneurs in migration contexts</i>	Formal and informal	Gender roles, problems in financing, oppression in male-dominated fields of business, no access to education and training	Gendered private work vs. professional autonomy, conflicting religious and entrepreneurial identities
Minorities	<i>Diaspora entrepreneurship Indigenous entrepreneurship</i>	Formal and informal	Participation in the labour market is hindered, discrimination	Cultural heritage vs. Recent changes, conflicting identities
Dependent (digital) self-employment / gig economy		Formal	Lack of workers' rights or union protection, inferiority of work, stigmatisation of some activities	Freedom, flexibility vs. 'shit job' (Woodcock and Graham, 2019), 'anxiety' vs. 'fulfilment' (Petriglieri et al., 2019)
Dirty work entrepreneurship	<i>Sex work Informal waste sector</i>	Formal and informal	Strongly stigmatized activities	'Wandering' between two worlds, status of outsider and inferior position vs. Positive work-role identity
Precarious independent contractors and freelancers	<i>Cultural and creative industries</i>	Formal	Need for flexibility, the erosion of boundaries, low income	One's authentic self vs. Social standards and obligations
Elderly self-employed		Mostly formal	Unemployment, discrimination / Ageism, financial hardship, "bad jobs" (Moulton and Scott, 2016)	"In-between identity struggles" (Garcia-Lorenzo et al., 2020)
Disabled entrepreneurs		Formal	Adapting to the disability, time management, being on the margins of an occupation	'Liminal state' (Basas, 2010), some trying to conceal differences while coping with demands and limitations

Categories

Marginalized female entrepreneurship

First, as an essential aspect, it is important to note that women use self-employment and micro-entrepreneurship as a vehicle or component of emancipation. This applies to both emancipation from traditional roles (e.g., Anthias and Mehta, 2003; Kontos, 2008; Liapi and Kontos, 2008) and empowerment in a broader sociocultural sense (Datta, 2003; Ojinta, 2018). Emancipation is also particularly significant for women entrepreneurs in migration contexts (Azmat and Fujimoto, 2016; Essers and Benschop, 2009; Pio and Essers, 2014), which is why it can be considered a sub-type. The precariousness is caused by many different factors, including family demands (Bari, 2020) in their traditional roles, oppression in male-dominated fields of business (e.g., Harris, 2019) and non-precarious settings (e.g., Martin et al., 2015; Peterson, 2010), problems in financing micro-enterprises (Bellucci et al., 2010; Sandhu et al., 2012), and a general lack of accessibility to education and training (e.g., Karoui and Feki, 2018). These factors are even more applicable to orthodox cultural contexts and in so-called ‘underdeveloped’ countries in which societies are even more male-dominated (e.g., AdeelAnjum, 2012; Goyal and Yadav, 2014).

The marginalized position is then manifested, for example, in women caught between their family responsibilities and profession (Anthias and Mehta, 2008; Herrera and Agoff, 2019). A schism may occur between their successfully gained *autonomy* in terms of business or income and their *gendered private work* in the household (Liapi and Kontos, 2008). Starting home-based (e.g., crafting) self-employment sometimes serves as a way to regain a professional identity and configure a better work–life balance; however, these pursuits still may end in precarious and conflicting arrangements (Luckman, 2015; Luckman and Andrew, 2017)⁶. Furthermore, ambivalence between religious and entrepreneurial identities points to conflicting spheres (e.g., Essers and Benschop, 2009). In terms of legal status, marginalized female entrepreneurship includes both informal and formal work. Nevertheless, it has been shown in the past that the prevalence of precarious informal work is gender-specific and widespread among women in Latin America, for example (Biles, 2008).

⁶ In this regard, small and micro family businesses are probably a sub-category and were originally conceptualised as such. However, there seems to be no strain of research dealing specifically with questions of precariousness in this sector, and thus, there is a lack of data on this topic.

Minorities

Many of the aforementioned aspects that apply to female entrepreneurs also apply to entrepreneurs who belong to minorities. Women can, of course, also be part of a minority (e.g., Pio and Essers, 2014), which means that some categories that overlap. At least some of the other categories of PME discussed in the following sections also tackle groups that are in the *position* of a minority. However, the main focus of research and the discursive framing does not highlight this quality, or the rather narrow focus of the respective category significantly differs from the one described in the following paragraphs. This is why the other categories are treated as types on their own.

The term *minority entrepreneurship* can be considered synonymous with *ethnic entrepreneurship*, and they are sometimes used in combination (Dana, 2007). In contrast to other subfields of marginalized entrepreneurship discussed in this paper, the terms ethnic entrepreneurship and ethnic business were widely used in the 20th century, and this field of research gained popularity in the 1970s (e.g., Harney, 1978; Harries, 1971; Li, 1976; Maykovich, 1976) and 1980s (e.g., Bonacich and Modell, 1980; Ward and Jenkins, 1984). In the literature, the terms tend to be used to refer to subcultures of people who have a mutual national origin or experience of migration (Aldrich and Waldinger, 1990; Waldinger, 1990). Hence, a large subtype is the entrepreneurial activity of migrants, which can be summarised under the term *diaspora entrepreneurship* (Gedeon, 2010). In this context, entrepreneurship usually means necessity entrepreneurship, with precariousness as a fundamental characteristic (Queiroz Falcão et al., 2020; Schmiz, 2013). The precariousness of diaspora entrepreneurship arises from multiple circumstances and causes: First, migrants' participation in the labour market is hindered. While there is often a high level of structural unemployment in migrant communities, immigration laws and other legislation protect non-migrant workers from competing with migrants in the labour market. Furthermore, practices of ethnic discrimination place migrants and members of ethnic minorities in a more marginalized position in the labour market. Migrants therefore work extensively in informal and undeclared work (Kontos, 2008a, p. 20), which also leads to widespread stereotyping, as 'ethnic business is surrounded by an aura of inferiority and suspicion [...] which are the themes dominating the public discourse on ethnic communities and ethnic agglomerations.' (Kontos, 2003: 125). This, in turn, amplifies the marginalized position of diaspora and other minority entrepreneurs, creating a vicious

circle⁷. Thus, the experiences of entrepreneurs in the migration context are quite close to those described in the ‘original’ concept of the marginal man. For example, Ronen (1989) refers to the sociological tradition dealing with societal outsiders and notes that status forces people to become entrepreneurs simply because other opportunities are unavailable to them. This applies to both migrant and non-migrant contexts. Furthermore, Trehan et al. (2020) identify the economic necessities that—among ethnic minorities—are often the reason for starting a business and a result of several disadvantages on different levels. Hence, migrant entrepreneurship typically means necessity entrepreneurship (Trehan et al., 2020).

While migrant entrepreneurship also includes inland migration, there is another possible subtype that can be delineated: indigenous entrepreneurship (Croce, 2020; Hindle and Moroz, 2010). Indigenous communities and their economies can face particular difficulties. For example, they are caught between cultural heritage and recent changes, such as the exodus of younger generations and the development of tourism at the same time (Chan et al., 2016). Questions of sometimes conflicting identities thus arise, particularly in connection with ethnic minorities and communities, as well as their entrepreneurial pursuits (e.g., Barrett and Vershinina, 2017; Pécoud, 2004; Verduijn and Essers, 2013; Vries et al., 2015). The next section describes in detail the category of self-employment in the so-called gig economy, in which questions of identity and marginality arise.

Dependent (digital) self-employment / gig economy

Dependent self-employment is emerging as a rapidly growing form of precarious work. Workers are marginalized, relatively low-skilled and under contract to large companies (Williams and Horodnic, 2019). Current research on dependent self-employment centres on gig or platform work (for an introduction, see: Woodcock and Graham, 2019). This means that people obtain jobs via digital platforms, such as Uber and Deliveroo. In contrast, some other types of work are characterised by a digital workplace in the worker’s home (e.g., credit agents or online dating assistants; Rochadiat et al., 2020; Terry et al., 2021). The use of new technologies and the orientation towards entrepreneurship on a rather small scale seems to be a significant feature in urban centres with a low-income-structure. In this context, an additional precarity that arises is the constant need for technological upgrading to keep up (Avle et al., 2019).

⁷ For some early reflections on this topic, see Bonacich (1973).

On the emotional side, Petriglieri et al. (2019) describe how workers in the gig economy create a ‘holding environment’ to deal with the multiple challenges of precarious work and the anxieties that go along with it. This study points to the ambivalent nature of precariousness: ‘intense emotions ranging from anxiety to fulfilment brought to the surface by the precariousness and personalization of their work and identities’ (Petriglieri et al., 2019: 139). Another ambivalence that arises within this field is flexibility, in contrast to the qualities of a ‘shit job’ (Woodcock and Graham, 2019). Despite the precarious nature of work and the lack of workers’ rights or union protection (Ravenelle, 2019; Todolí-Signes, 2017), some gig workers emphasize the freedom to choose when to work or between different kinds of work (Woodcock and Graham, 2019). Here, again, we see the ambivalent aspects of a precarious position: a group of people who have inferior working status, yet feel at least some degree of freedom within their niche. However, from a labour process viewpoint, this freedom is quite constrained (Moore and Newsome, 2018), and from a broader perspective, criticized as largely a myth (Scholz, 2017). The inferiority of work within the gig industry might accompany the stigmatisation of some activities. However, in the following section, the focus is on *highly* stigmatized forms of micro-entrepreneurship.

Dirty-work entrepreneurship

Dirty work is typically understood as a form of work that is socially ostracised or strongly stigmatized. By large parts of society, the activity is considered ‘distasteful, disgusting, dangerous, demeaning, immoral, or contemptible—as somehow tainted or ‘dirty’’ (Ashforth and Kreiner, 2014: 82). As Hughes, who coined this term, put it, the work is ‘physically, socially or morally beneath the dignity of the profession’ (Hughes, 1964: 122). Accordingly, a number of very different activities can be subsumed under the term, including being a prison guard, dustman, debt collector, or erotic dancer (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999, 2014; Hughes, 1964). *Dirty work entrepreneurship* includes stigmatized or ‘tainted’ work performed independently not only in the informal sector (e.g., Cobbinah and Chinyamurindi, 2018; Ramirez and Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2009; Thieme, 2010) but also formally (e.g., Monahan and Fisher, 2015).

The reasons for working in this field can be manifold and are often related to exclusion (e.g., Mahalingam et al., 2019). This is also why many self-employed dirty jobs fit into the category of migrant entrepreneurship (e.g., Cobbinah and Chinyamurindi, 2018) or minority entrepreneurship, as people are forced into these occupations (Deakins and Scott, 2020: 60); thus, overlapping exists between the categories. However, the research focus in this field is on

the activity and its associated stigma. As in other forms of PME, there are many possible subcategories. However, only two of them will be addressed here as examples: *sex work* (Arnold and Barling, 2003; e.g., Erickson, 1987; Mcnaughton and Sanders, 2007; Ruebottom and Toubiana, 2020; Smith and Christou, 2009) and the *informal waste sector* (Coletto and Bisschop, 2017; e.g., Gittins, 2020; Shreeves).

The marginalized position results from the status of being an outsider, and the inferior position is due to the strongly stigmatized activity. However, marginality is also expressed in dirty work entrepreneurs sometimes *existing in two worlds*: their activity and, for example, their everyday family life. Some entrepreneurs must conceal their activity because it is associated with great disadvantages or problems. This becomes very clear in the example of sex workers, as some of them lead a double life (Koken, 2012). As far as the identity of dirty workers is concerned, some defence mechanisms are adopted that contribute to workers developing a positive work-role identity (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999). This sometimes applies to sex workers (Koken, 2012; Morrison and Whitehead, 2005).

Precarious independent contractors and freelancers

Because the term freelance is contested, a further definition of freelance status is given by Kitching and Smallbone (2012) who describe it as follows: ‘self-employed proprietors and partners in unincorporated businesses, and directors of limited companies, without employees genuinely in business on their own account’ (Kitching and Smallbone, 2012: 77). One might ask how freelancers differ from gig workers. First, traditional freelance work offers more freedom in the choice of clients. Some on-demand companies, for example, try to prevent workers from accepting certain clients outside the platform. Second, the costs of acquisition are higher for freelancers, and there may be less flexibility in setting work hours (Donovan et al., 2016). However, there seems to be a tendency towards gig and platform-based working arrangements in classic freelance jobs, and definitory boundaries are fluid (LJungholm, 2019).

While a wide variety of forms can be found here, such as entrepreneurial journalism (Cohen, 2015), one subtype will be examined more closely in the following paragraphs: *cultural and creative industries*, a field that is characterised, at least in part, by precarity and a tendency towards self-exploitation (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010; Morgan et al., 2013; Ross, 2009), aspects that are most typically associated with freelance work.

Professional artists’ careers have long been described as ‘protean’ and ‘boundaryless’ (Arthur, 2014; Bridgstock, 2005; see also: Hall, 2004). Likewise, the boundaries of work are often

blurred in relation to social spheres of life (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2010). Besides the need for flexibility, erosion of boundaries, and low income, precariousness can also result from other factors, as spatial and regulatory aspects can also play a role (Ballico and Carter, 2018). Contrary to other accounts emphasizing the precariousness of digital freelancers in the knowledge industry, Gandini (2016) notes that many digital freelancers are unwilling to be labelled as engaged in precarious employment. Although they may often struggle with financially, freelancers consider themselves to be entrepreneurs and creatives who make a change, instead of belonging to a 'precarious, freelance working class' (Gandini, 2016: 137).

In their study on self-employed within the creative industry, Bennet and Hennekam argue that 'tensions between one's authentic self' (Bennett and Hennekam, 2018: 1467) and the prevailing social standards and obligations might be particularly dominant in the biographies of people with precarious jobs. Once again, we find a lead to the concept of the 'marginal people' here (Bennett and Hennekam, 2018). However, studies indicate that young artists can reconcile apparent contradictions within their identity and perceive them to be less of a tension, such as the nexus of a 'bohemian' and 'entrepreneurial' identity (Schediwy et al., 2018). With regard to the concept of marginality, it can be pointed out here that whereas a 'subordinate' group may adapt, some individuals are able to remain in their niche. Having discussed how freelancers fit into the concept of PME, the next section of this paper addresses precarious aspects of self-employment among elderly people.

Elderly self-employed

This category encompasses 'senior entrepreneurship' (Halvorsen and Morrow-Howell, 2017), which typically refers to people who start a business after the age of 50 (Halvorsen and Morrow-Howell, 2017; Kibler et al., 2015; Weber and Schaper, 2004). While pull factors, such as self-realisation, autonomy or the need to do something valuable (Partouche-Sebban and Maâlaoui, 2019; Soto-Simeone and Kautonen, 2020) generally predominate (Halvorsen and Morrow-Howell, 2017), some elderly self-employed individuals are entrepreneurs out of necessity, especially due to unemployment, discrimination and financial hardship (Singh and DeNoble, 2003; Waldinger, 1990). This group has been described as 'reluctant entrepreneurs' (Galbraith and Latham, 1996) and their decision as the 'last-choice option' (Singh and DeNoble, 2003). In the present categorisation, this group can be considered marginalized among senior entrepreneurs. For many elderly people in non-standard work, precariousness results from inadequate social security or low pensions and low income from self-employment. For some,

this leads to de facto non-retirement (e.g., D'Amours, 2009). This scenario has also been highlighted elsewhere in the context of self-employment more generally (Fachinger, 2019). An important reason for self-employment in old age is the loss of a permanent job., often leading to forms of self-employment that has the rather poor qualities of 'bad jobs' (Moulton and Scott, 2016). Precarities and adversities also include discrimination and social exclusion (Kibler et al., 2015), which are central to this category and to marginalization. Ageism may also be a reason for becoming self-employed, and it may also hinder the development of an elderly entrepreneur's business (Halvorsen and Morrow-Howell, 2017). For people who become entrepreneurs in old age, the phase of transition, in particular, can lead to a transitional status for their identity, to 'in-between identity struggles' (Garcia-Lorenzo et al., 2020). Thus, they find themselves in a paradoxical state, as they were or are employees and will soon be entrepreneurs (Garcia-Lorenzo et al., 2020). Turning now to the category of disabled entrepreneurs, it will be shown that such a transitory state also plays a role here.

Disabled entrepreneurs

Since research on minority entrepreneurship mainly refers to the dimensions described above (e.g., ethnicity), the following area should be considered a separate category. Contemporary definitions of disability focus on the social aspect (i.e., 'the social model'; Goering, 2015) and describe disability as 'a disadvantage that stems from a lack of fit between a body and its social environment' (Goering, 2015: 134). With the help of this definition, which is not limited to medical aspects, the key issue of disabled entrepreneurs becomes apparent: Unlike many other people, they are limited in their activities, not only physically or mentally (Pagán, 2009) but also due to a social condition or a 'socially created problem' (Barnes, 2009; see also: Barnes and Sheldon, 2010), similar to other minorities discussed in previous sections of this paper. When several of these aspects come together, people find themselves in an even more disadvantaged position (Groce, 2004) and at the very margins of an occupation, referred to as 'the most marginalized members of the profession' by Basas, 2010) in her work on disabled women attorneys. Being self-employed whilst having a disability may result in a struggle to balance adapting to the disability, managing time effectively and growing the business. There are multifaceted obstacles disabled individuals must overcome as entrepreneurs that people who are not disabled do have not to face (Cooney, 2008).

Other significant issues, as shown by Ashley and Graf (2018), are motivational in nature, such as episodes of depression or self-doubt, although some studies find that disabled entrepreneurs

have specific competences, such as attitude, self-efficacy, commitment or social skills (Bagheri and Abbariki, 2017). It seems that early experiences of discrimination and other disadvantages contribute to higher levels of resilience and perseverance, which is why disabled entrepreneurs are also framed as underdogs (Saxena and Pandya, 2018). Furthermore, it seems that self-employment provides the flexibility needed by disabled persons, as well as the opportunity to design a unique workplace that meets their needs, in contrast to facing multiple barriers within organizations (Basas, 2010; Foster & Williams, 2020). Thus, for disabled people, self-employment can be initiated by a mixture of push and pull-factors (Kitching, 2014) and some research evidence indicates that the status of being disabled lead to starting a business (Maritz and Laferriere, 2016). However, there still is a need for additional studies of disabled entrepreneurs (Wilson Ng, 2021), especially in terms of identity, coping with demands and simultaneous limitations and constraints resulting from their status, such as how people feel pressured to conceal differences and try to obtain so-called normality (Gill, 1997). These aspects at least suggest that there are conflicting identities of profession and marginalization.

In a remarkable study on female lawyers with disabilities, Basas (2010) addresses the difficulties these women face. They are denied access to existing (primarily male) networks. As experienced by many other disabled people and, to a greater extent, women with disabilities, discrimination is at work here. By referring to Turner (1967), Basas describes the status of disabled female attorneys as ‘betwixt and between’, a ‘liminal state’ that applies to a greater context: ‘people with disabilities occupy liminal positions in modern [U.S.] workplaces’ (Basas, 2010: 180). In this concept of liminality, parallels with ‘marginal people’ are apparent; in both cases, we are talking about groups of people who are on the boundaries of two worlds, which can be an intermediate condition or constant transition. This scenario applies to most categories of PME and will be summarised in the following section.

Conclusion

In this paper, an effort was made to categorise *precarious and marginalized entrepreneurship* along the lines of current research. Aspects that justify the conceptualisation as ‘marginal people’, with reference to Park and Stonequist's concept, have been pointed out. Thus, precariousness can be understood as a constant state of crisis and the entrepreneurs and self-employed as people in transition. Self-employed individuals in the creative industries show tensions between the ‘authentic’ self and various obligations. People in the gig industry struggle between ‘shit jobs’ and the freedom to assign and reject work. Dirty work entrepreneurs are wanderers between two worlds, sometimes having to hide their work and maintain positive

references to their profession despite their status as outsiders. Disabled self-employed people are held back by discrimination and exclusion while attempting to navigate their professional world. In this way, all entrepreneurs operate in a field of conflicting demands: belonging to a group with an inferior status while conforming, at least partially. This tension is often an important part of their identity.

Limitations and outlook

The categories of precarious and marginalized entrepreneurship discussed in this paper are by no means exhaustive. Nevertheless, an attempt was made to include the most important fields of research in a generalised manner. This conceptual typology is thus meant to be an analytical tool (Collier et al., 2012) for those pursuing an interdisciplinary approach to entrepreneurship research. Taken together, the types of precarious and marginalized entrepreneurship within this paper appear as they are highlighted or identified in the current research on this topic. The examples chosen inevitably represent only some of the facets, but they are intended to show the manifold complexity of PME. Thus, the aim was also to draw attention to marginalized areas and, perhaps, stimulate further research. Other categories could certainly be found or derived, and there are overlaps. Furthermore, some questions that remain unanswered: For example, what about minorities who cannot be subsumed under the existing category or who have been neglected or given little attention by researcher, such as self-employed ex-convicts (Steels, 2005)? Some entire fields are under-researched, especially with regard to self-employment and marginalized statuses, including disabled entrepreneurs. In this regard, the concept of *marginal people* can serve as a further pillar.

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3 ABSCHLIEßENDE BETRACHTUNGEN

Die Fokussierung auf marginalisierte Felder der Erwerbsarbeit stellte einen der übergreifenden Schwerpunkte dieser kumulativen Dissertation dar. Die Randständigkeit manifestiert sich dabei auf unterschiedliche Weise – etwa als in der Forschung nur wenig beachtetes Gebiet (marginalisierte Bereiche des Entrepreneurship) oder im Sinne sozialer Abwertung und Segregation innerhalb von Organisationen (Leiharbeit). Dabei waren Fragen nach dem *Umgang mit prekären Arbeits- und Beschäftigungskontexten* eines der zentralen Themen; neben dem Bestreben, *randständige Gruppen und bisher teils vernachlässigte Aspekte organisationaler Prozesse oder unternehmerischen Handelns* zu thematisieren.

In der ersten Studie wurde auf in der Forschung eher wenig beachtete unternehmerische Aktivitäten geblickt, insbesondere unter den Bedingungen der COVID-19-Pandemie. Ausgehend von einer neo-institutionalistischen Perspektive zeigten sich bei den in dieser Arbeit untersuchten UnternehmerInnen fallübergreifend ähnliche Logiken: Zentrale Motive und Fixpunkte sind Autonomie und Selbstverwirklichung sowie eine Ablehnung gesellschaftlicher Konformitäten. Dies wird teilweise ergänzt um eine eher anti-materialistische Grundhaltung und eine ‚soziale‘ Orientierung hin zu Gemeinwohl und Altruismus. Zugleich sind die einzelnen Fallstudien damit auch Beispiele für das Aufeinandertreffen *konfligierender* Logiken: Steht doch die finanzielle Unabhängigkeit teilweise auf gleicher Höhe mit den sozialen Erwägungen. In diesem Spannungsfeld von Autonomie, ökonomischen Notwendigkeiten und manch ‚quer liegenden‘ Prinzipien zeigte sich auch die kontinuierliche und bewusste Auseinandersetzung mit hybriden Logiken. Teilweise waren hier Prozesse der Selbstbestätigung („self-verification“; Brandl & Bullinger, 2017, Übersetzung MT) zu beobachten, in denen die bedeutendere und identitätsstiftende Logik schließlich obsiegt – in einem der Fälle etwa in Form der Abkehr vom ursprünglichen Geschäftsfeld. Zu den prekären Rahmenbedingungen zählen im Falle der UnternehmerInnen auch die Arbeit unter der Pandemie. Während hier zunächst ein grundlegendes Verständnis und Regel-Konformität vorherrschten, zeigte sich im weiteren Verlauf Frustration und teilweise bewusstes Unterlaufen der offiziellen Regelungen. Grundsätzlich traf der Beginn der Pandemie alle vier UnternehmerInnen in ähnlich starkem Maße. Allerdings war dieses Ereignis für jene weniger disruptiv, die bereits im Vorfeld einen „Plan B“ besaßen und auf diesen nun teilweise zurückgreifen konnten – etwa eine zweite Einnahmequelle oder das Umsetzen eines bereits geplanten und nunmehr möglichen Projektes.

Mit dem vorliegenden Beitrag wurden Forschungsbedarfe adressiert, die die Komplexität und den Umgang mit spannungsvollen Identitäten im Kontext selbständiger Arbeit betreffen. Ferner liefert der Artikel auch Erkenntnisse zum Coping von Klein- und Kleinst-UnternehmerInnen in extrem stressbelastenden Situationen.

Was die LeiharbeiterInnen im zweiten Beitrag dieser Dissertation anbelangt, konnten hier sowohl Modi des *Umgangs mit prekären Arbeits- und Beschäftigungskontexten* wie auch eher *vernachlässigte, organisationale Facetten dieses Feldes* beleuchtet werden: Im Gegensatz zu vorherigen Studien wurden in dieser Untersuchung ZeitarbeiterInnen in verschiedenen Tätigkeitsfeldern untersucht: Sowohl in solchen mit eher niedrigem Anforderungsprofil wie auch in Berufen, die eine hohe Qualifizierung erfordern. Dabei wurden Unterschiede in der Wahrnehmung und im Umgang mit Stigmatisierung aufgezeigt. *Unabhängig* von der Qualifikation aber sind vor allem jene LeiharbeiterInnen von Stigmatisierung betroffen, deren Status im Unternehmen des Entleihers auf sichtbare Weise verstärkt wird; etwa durch andere Arbeitskleidung oder räumliche Trennung. In Übereinstimmung mit bestehender Forschung zeigte sich, dass das Management mit der Schaffung eines Umfeldes, das den jeweiligen Status verstärkt, auch zur Abgrenzung der festangestellten Belegschaft von LeiharbeiterInnen beiträgt und somit zur Stigmatisierung und Diskriminierung letzterer. Verbale Abwertung und aufgabenbezogene Degradierung – so zum Beispiel die Zuteilung unbeliebter Tätigkeiten – zeigten sich eher im Sektor mit geringer Qualifikation. In höher qualifizierten Bereichen waren es vornehmlich subtile Formen der Stigmatisierung, wie das Vorenthalten von Informationen. Beide Ausformungen wurden im Rahmen der vorliegenden Studie jedoch auch mit den jeweils vorherrschenden Organisationskulturen oder Unterschieden im ‚Umgangston‘ in verschiedenen betrieblichen Kontexten erklärt. Diese Erkenntnisse sind insofern hervorzuheben, da sie den Einfluss des Managements unterstreichen und damit auch Möglichkeiten aufzeigen, Stigmatisierung aktiv entgegenzuwirken.

Angesichts der auf diversen Ebenen vorgefundenen Stigmatisierungsprozesse stellte sich auch hier die Frage nach dem individuellen Umgang und den Formen des *Coping*: Im Falle der hochqualifizierten ArbeitnehmerInnen wurde eine Identifikation mit dem Status als LeiharbeiterIn meist vermieden und die Tätigkeit als solches nur als nützlicher Zwischenschritt gesehen – etwa um Kontakte zu knüpfen. Der wesentlich stärkere Fixpunkt war hier die Profession an sich, die als positiver, identitätsstiftender Bezugsrahmen dient. Hier finden sich

durchaus Parallelen zu den oben beschriebenen Prozessen der *Selbstbestätigung* angesichts konfligierender Logiken: In diesem Falle ist es die professionelle Identität, die den prekären Status überlagert.

Die berufliche Perspektive, das jeweilige Unternehmen grundsätzlich jederzeit verlassen zu können, erwies sich in der Untersuchung als eine übergreifende Strategie, die auf alle Qualifizierungslevel zutrifft und die dazu beiträgt, stigmatisierendes Verhalten als weniger belastend zu empfinden.

Im Helfer-Sektor und bei LeiharbeiterInnen mit niedriger Qualifizierung ließen sich überdies Abgrenzungsprozesse beobachten, die vermutlich zu einem positiven Selbstbild beitragen: So identifizieren sich ZeitarbeiterInnen zwar mit ihrem Status, grenzen sich aber zugleich innerhalb ihrer Gruppe von jenen KollegInnen ab, die vermeintlich den Stereotypen des Leiharbeiters oder der Leiharbeiterin entsprechen. Diese Ambivalenzen bestätigten bereits vorhandene Ergebnisse (Kreiner et al., 2006), weisen zudem auf Formen der Abgrenzung innerhalb einer stigmatisierten Gruppe und decken sich mit früheren Erkenntnissen zu diesen Prozessen (Bosmans et al., 2016).

Weisen die ersten zwei Papiere aufgrund ihrer jeweiligen Forschungsfokuse eine vergleichsweise hohe Aktualität auf, so ist diese im dritten und letzten Beitrag dieser Dissertation auch in einem *globalen* Kontext gegeben. Unter dem Titel „*Marginal people: Towards a classification of research on precarious and marginalized entrepreneurship*“ werden zahlreiche Schwerpunkte der gegenwärtigen internationalen Forschung dieses Bereichs dargestellt und in einen konzeptionellen Rahmen gebracht. Mit einer Verortung innerhalb der *Critical Entrepreneurship Studies* wurde überdies ein Zugang gewählt, der das ursprüngliche definitorische Konzept von *Entrepreneurship* aufbricht und beispielsweise um jene Selbständigen ergänzt, die sich in informellen Tätigkeiten als UnternehmerInnen beweisen müssen.

Das hoch aktuelle und sich stetig vergrößernde Feld der ‚*Gig economy*‘ (Williams et al., 2022) wurde im Artikel unter „*Dependent (digital) self-employment*“ subsumiert. Abseits der *Critical Entrepreneurship Studies* fällt dieses in Teilen auch in den Bereich der Organisationsforschung; schließlich sind es größere Unternehmen, die als organisationale Basis fungieren und weniger der oder die einzelne Selbständige. Neben Fragen von Machtausübung, der (digitalen) Kontrolle oder nach Veränderungen im Bereich des Monitorings (Gandini, 2019; Newlands,

2021) wurden in diesem Text auch professionelle und soziale Identitäten innerhalb und außerhalb von Organisationen thematisiert; bei Letzterem handelt es sich somit um einen Schwerpunkt aller *drei* Forschungspapiere.

Aus konzeptioneller Warte betrachtet wurde Prekarität im dritten Beitrag dieser Arbeit als ein krisenhafter Zustand verstanden und die UnternehmerInnen und Entrepreneure in marginalisierten Bereichen und gleichsam als in einem Zwischenbereich befindlich; so sind beispielsweise Dirty-Work-UnternehmerInnen teilweise bemüht, ihre tatsächliche Tätigkeit zu verbergen und zugleich ein positives Selbstbild zu wahren, was auch die jeweilige Profession einschließt. Hier zeigten sich interessante Parallelen zu den oben beschriebenen LeiharbeiterInnen – auch deren Status gleicht zuweilen einem ‚Dazwischen‘ und bewegt sich zwischen Ab- und Ausgrenzung und positiver Bezugnahme auf die eigene Tätigkeit.

Somit lassen sich alle drei, hier gebündelten Beiträge nicht nur unter dem thematischen ‚Baldachin‘ der Randständigkeit (im organisationalen Kontext oder jenem des Entrepreneurship und der Forschung dazu) subsumieren, sie weisen auch in den Ergebnissen Parallelen auf. Gleichwohl ergeben sich jeweils einige Limitation und Forschungsdesiderata, auf die hier kurz eingegangen werden soll:

Mit Blick auf die Fallstudien des ersten Beitrags sind weitere Untersuchungen und Fälle angezeigt, etwa um den Aspekten Autonomie und Resilienz nachzugehen – und der Frage, wie sich beides eventuell beeinflusst; zeigen sich hier doch biographische Ähnlichkeiten und Überschneidungen in den Motivlagen der Selbständigen. Ein weiteres, hier nur wenig beleuchtetes Thema ist die Bedeutung von *Netzwerken in Krisensituationen*. Dies könnte umso relevanter sein, da multiple und sich überlagernde globale Krisen⁸ auch weiterhin Wirkungen zeitigen werden.

Im zweiten Papier, das sich mit der Stigmatisierung von LeiharbeiterInnen beschäftigt, konnten bereits einige praktische Implikationen abgeleitet werden, die unter anderem das Management von Entleiher-Unternehmen betreffen. Dennoch sollten zukünftige Untersuchungen gezielt die Perspektive des Managements einbeziehen, wie auch die der Festangestellten. Ferner böte sich auch hier ein größeres Sample an. Künftig zu stellende Forschungsfragen könnten etwa die Rolle von *Vertrauen* betreffen – wurde doch insbesondere das Vorenthalten von Informationen

⁸ Vgl. exemplarisch den lange vor der Pandemie, der aktuellen Diskussion zum Klima-Wandel und dem neuen Krieg in Europa erschienenen Sammelband „VielfachKrise“; Demirović et al. (2011).

gegenüber LeiharbeiterInnen von diesen als Mangel an Vertrauen interpretiert. So bleibt auch die Frage bestehen, ob hier eine Art ‚reziprokes‘ Verhältnis besteht – Entleiher, Zeitarbeitsunternehmen, LeiharbeiterInnen und Festangestellte also *jeweils* eine, sich gegenseitig verstärkende, ‚skeptische‘ Haltung aufweisen – und welche Möglichkeiten es innerhalb von Organisationen gäbe, dieses Defizit abzubauen. Darüber hinaus sollten zukünftige Arbeiten weitere soziale Kategorisierungen als Basis der Stigmatisierung einbeziehen; bspw. Genderaspekte oder kulturelle Hintergründe – letzteres nicht zuletzt auch unter den Veränderungen der Zuwanderung der letzten Jahre (Diehl, 2021).

In der dritten hier vorgestellten, konzeptionellen Arbeit wurden insgesamt sieben Felder innerhalb der aktuellen Forschung zu marginalisierten Formen des Entrepreneurship identifiziert; diese Kategorien und die entsprechenden Subtypen sind und können jedoch nicht abschließend sein. So gibt es beispielsweise unternehmerische Minderheiten, für die sich das existierende Schema als nicht passfähig zeigt; auch da sie weitgehend unerforscht sind – etwa ehemalige StraftäterInnen und Häftlinge, deren Zugang zum ‚regulären‘ Arbeitsmarkt sehr eingeschränkt sein kann (Steels, 2005). Gerade für jene Fälle und Bereiche kann das im Artikel vorgestellte theoretische Konzept der „marginal people“ jedoch ein Fundament für weitere Untersuchungen sein.

Im Resümee lässt sich festhalten, dass in den in dieser Arbeit thematisch verzahnten Beiträgen einige Facetten des entgrenzten Kapitalismus aufgezeigt werden konnten, so wie wir ihn seit etwa 30 Jahren erleben. In der Betrachtung atypischer Beschäftigungsformen galt es dabei auch, wenig beachtete Felder – wenn auch nur exemplarisch – auszuleuchten. Nicht alle Kontexte erweisen sich hierbei als prekär und es ergeben sich zwangsläufig Unterschiede aufgrund oder hinsichtlich des Qualifikationslevels, der jeweiligen Branche oder schlicht des volkswirtschaftlichen, nationalen Rahmens.

Der bewusste Fokus auf das Individuum sollte dieses in ökonomischen Zusammenhängen zeigen, zugleich aber individuelle Sinnzuschreibungen und Strategien herausarbeiten. Die methodischen Mittel der Wahl waren hier Instrumente der qualitativen Forschung. Die vorgestellten Ergebnisse können und sollen aber Anknüpfungspunkte für weitere, qualitative *und* quantitative Untersuchungen bilden.

Die beschriebene Randständigkeit mancher Wirtschaftsbereiche innerhalb der Forschung ergibt sich weniger aus deren *scheinbar* fehlenden Bedeutung, sondern vielmehr aus der mangelnden

Verortung innerhalb des wirtschaftswissenschaftlichen Diskurses, auch wenn der Stellenwert – beispielsweise für organisationale Prozesse oder das Management – nicht zu unterschätzen ist. Insofern kann diese Arbeit auch als der bescheidene Versuch eines ‚Stimme Ergreifens‘ verstanden werden, verbunden mit der Hoffnung, das vermeintlich Abseitige gelegentlich an- und auszuleuchten.

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