The production of difference and maintenance of inequality: the place of young Goan men in a post-crisis UK labour market

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Abstract

This article examines the ways in which young migrant men are constructed as potential employees in a British town where service sector employment, often on a casual or precarious basis, dominates the bottom end of the labour market. Low-wage jobs in many British towns are now constructed as feminised, low waged and demanding personal skills of empathy and servility. In this context, young men, and especially young men of colour, including recent in-migrants, are at a disadvantage, constructed by employers, agencies, co-workers and customers as less eligible workers than 'locals'. We use the experiences of young men from Goa as a lens though which to trace the ways in which expectations and experiences when looking for employment produce a hierarchical division of labour in precarious jobs at the bottom end of the service sector.

Keywords: production of difference, migration, precarious employment, employment agencies, Goa, gender, masculinity, class

Introduction

The UK economy seems to have begun a slow recovery from the worst years after the crisis, and employment participation is increasing, albeit often in self-employment or in precarious forms of low paid work, typically in the service sector. However, the position of young workers remains difficult. For young people aged between 16 and 24, rates of unemployment remain stubbornly above average, especially for young men of colour (Bell and Blanchflower 2011, Taylor 2015). Between 2010 and 2014, for example, there was a 49% rise in the numbers of young people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities who had been unemployed for at least a year. Although many of these young people are British, some are recent in-migrants. As transnational migration continues to increase in scope and diversity, there has been an increase in the number of non-British born workers in the labour force since 2008, employed in particular in low-waged work, and as a consequence growing interest among labour analysts in the economic, social, and more recently, the emotional costs and benefits of transnational migration (Montes 2013; Lee-Treweek 2010). The literature about access to local labour markets has also expanded significantly in recent years as the effects of the intersection of class, gender, ethnicity, age and religion (Acker 2011; Essers and Tedmanson 2014; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002; Holvino 2010; Hopkins and Noble 2009; Leonard 2010; McCall 2005; Pratt 2012; Wills et al 2010; Wilson 2008) have been examined, illustrating new patterns of differentiation and disadvantage.

The aim here is to explore the intersection of the continuing expansion of casual and precarious work at the bottom end of the labour market, the disadvantaged position of young migrant men of colour and the ways in which they are constructed as appropriate for some sorts of employment but not for others. The focus is on the ways in which sets of stereotypical assumptions about Goan men, held by employers and employment agencies, intersect with ideas about self-worth and (often unrealistic) familial expectations, to disqualify, at least initially, these men from both feminised 'servicing' jobs in, for example, the retail and care sectors, and from more typically 'masculine' work in construction. We draw on recent work about the production of difference between workers in an economy increasingly reliant on interactive forms of service employment (Leidner 1993): those jobs where the customer and the service provider are both present and where bodily attributes and a civil demeanour are a crucial part of the performance. Embodied and social attributes such as skin colour, gender and accent are a key part in the production of difference between employees. Here young working class men with few skills find themselves at a disadvantage in their search for work. For young men of colour, assumptions about their masculinity, their sexuality and their assertiveness deepen their disadvantage in the UK labour market. For young men of colour who are first generation migrants, perhaps recently arrived in the UK, their disadvantage may be further exacerbated by their lack of familiarity with common customs or language, and by their own and familial expectations, combined with stereotypical assumptions by employers, co-workers and customers, in local labour markets increasingly characterised by growing diversity in the origins of in-migrants.

The disadvantaged position of in-migrants has been captured recent work in the concept of a 'new migrant division of labour' (Wills et al 2010), whereas those sets of stereotypical assumptions about the suitability for employment of racialised 'Others' has been illustrated in the Roediger and Esch's (2012) study of the 'production of difference' in late nineteenth and early twentieth century USA. Wilson's (2008) historical analysis, focused on Britain between 1945 and 1975, also documented the ways in which stereotypical attitudes about gender and race were dominant in the construction of an ideal labour force over the post-war decades. The focus here, however, is not on the broad brush or the long time frame, nor on the analysis of historical documents. Instead we draw on interviews with a small group of men of colour of Goan heritage and with six managers of employment agencies in Swindon, using this example as a lens to explore the mechanisms that result in the production of difference and a hierarchical ranking of young workers in a local labour market. The migrant men are all young and they are relatively recent arrivals in the UK, most of them moving to look for work. We found that these young Goan men paradoxically are both desirable and less eligible employees in comparison with other job seekers in the locality. Their experiences and their

narratives show how notions of masculinity and familial responsibility influence their search for work, and through the interviews with the staff of employment agencies, reveal the ways in which stereotypical assumptions by employers and gatekeepers about masculinity and nationality compound their disadvantage.

The men were all born in Goa in south west India. Although there is little published research with Goan men and they are a relatively small minority in the UK, (most of the community live in either Greater London or in Swindon), the experiences of these young men act as a lens through which to assess the ways in which difference and disadvantage are reproduced in a 'feminised' labour market dominated by forms of interactive employment. The men here are a hybrid group, Indian by origin, but eligible for Portuguese nationality on the basis of their fathers' Portuguese citizenship (Goa officially remained a Portuguese colony until 1975, although it was annexed by India in 1961), and so free to move within the EU in their search for employment. Their religious adherence is to Christianity rather than to Hinduism, and although they are still divided by (a simplified version of) caste, at least for those Goans who remained in India (Rubinoff 1995), migration largely frees them from the caste system.

They are in the main lower middle class by familial history, yet find themselves restricted to working class jobs in Britain: a circumstance that as we explore below leads to some familial disagreement. While their fathers and grandfathers who moved from Goa to East Africa and Portugal as Goa became part of India in the 1960s might have become a 'subaltern elite' (Visweswaran 1996; Frenz 2008), in middling positions in the employment status hierarchy in these territories, the most recent migrants to the UK find that they are part of the lumpen-proletariat or the newly-identified precariat (Standing 2011), despite their belief that migration would ensure social mobility. Finally, they remain connected to a diaspora population through social networks, with a keen sense of family obligation, but they are all single and sometimes living alone in Swindon. These men thus have a complex identity, yet find themselves defined as a generic category of 'Asian' in Swindon, typically indistinguishable by the general public from other men of South Asian heritage and so at the mercy of racialised name calling in public spaces, as well as unjustifiable assumptions about 'radicalisation'. Despite the particular focus and the small scale of the study, we suggest that the findings provide an illustration with wider significance for the understanding of the production of difference and emerging divisions of labour in an increasingly precarious and unequal labour market in which recent migrants are a significant group of employees in many British towns and cities.

The argument is organised in six parts. First we summarise recent labour market changes that disadvantage young men as well as spell out the theoretical concepts that influenced the

research design. We then provide details of the methodology, followed by three empirical sections – on initial expectations, and familial attitudes and responsibilities that set the frame for labour market choices, on the role of employment agencies in constructing ideal workers, and on the types of jobs and the conditions of employment secured by the ten Goan men. We conclude with a short discussion of ways in which further research about the production of difference might add to explanations of labour market inequalities.

Youth, masculinity and labour market change

In recent years, the consequences of the expansion of low wage and often precarious employment at the bottom end of the labour market have become increasingly evident in growing inequalities in the labour market. One key change, connected to the growing diversity of employees in low wage work as more mothers, young people, students and migrants of diverse origins enter waged work, has been a challenge to older assumptions about the relative advantages of masculinity and femininity in access to employment, and in its financial and other rewards (Bottero 2000; Deutsch 2007; Kelan 2010 ; McDowell 2008a; Risman 2009; Salzinger 2003; Schilt and Connell 2007). New work assessing the effects of the recession, for example, on younger and older workers, on men and women and on the production of new divisions of labour has revealed changing connections between class and gender, as well as age, in post-crisis Britain (Karamessini and Rubery 2013). As we noted in the introduction, youth unemployment has remained above the average level in Britain over the post-crisis period, affecting men and women, the better qualified and less well educated youth. Young men, however, have been disproportionately disadvantaged, more likely to be unemployed than young women (23.4% compared with 18.4% in 2013 for example) (Hough 2013).

It is clear from a growing number of studies that the types of jobs that are available for young people with few skills or little experience in the UK labour market depend on attributes typically regarded as feminised – empathy, deference, caring and civility, if not servility (Forseth 2005; Hall et al 2007; McDowell 2003, 2009; Nixon 2009; Payne 2009; Warhurst and Nixon 2009). The manipulation of emotions of customers and clients, who must be seduced to purchase and repurchase services is now an even more important attribute of the performance of interactive employment since Hochschild's (1983) initial arguments and, as case studies of young men looking for work have shown, employers often assume such men are unwilling to perform as employers and customers desire. This assumption is often backed up by young male employees themselves who may regard deferential service as a slur on their masculinity and refuse to conform to the scripts that are demanded. In occupations such as nursing or elder care for example, the performance of care embodies ideals of femininity (Dahle 2005; McDonald 2013; Nare 2010) , whereas in the fast food

industry, in hospitality, and in the retail clothing trade, interactions with clients typically are regulated and monitored, and often depend on an embodied and emotional performance of customer service that young men may find inappropriate or difficult to maintain (Bourgois 1995, Hall et al 2007; McDowell 2003, Newman 1999; Nixon 2009). As the service sector has continued to expand, however, and is often the main option for the unskilled, growing numbers of young men have had to consider doing 'girls' work' (Cross and Bagilhole 2002; Lupton 2000; Nixon 2009; Simpson 2004).

As feminist and other theorists insist, gender intersects with other social characteristics, including ethnicity and class, as well as nationality, age and sexual orientations, to produce and reproduce inequality in the labour market (McCall 2005, McDowell 2008b). This argument is increasingly important in analyses of the economic and cultural changes associated with globalisation, as well as rising rates of both internal and external migration, that destabilise traditional understandings of gendered social relations (Acker 2004; Gottfried 2013; McCall 2005; Ng 2004). As Donato et al. (2006:6) pointed out 'migrants often become particularly aware of the relational and contextual nature of gender as they attempt to fulfil expectations of identity and behaviour that may differ sharply in the several places they live'. For migrants, the act of travel and insertion in the set of social and gender relations of another, often more modern, economy, may challenge previously dominant notions of masculinity and femininity, as well as the specificity of gender relations constructed through participation in the workplace and in the home and community in the 'home' and the 'host' societies. As Mahler and Pessar (2006; 42) noted, the effects of transnational migration are not straightforward. Migration may reinforce prevailing gender ideologies and social norms established at 'home' or prove a challenge to hegemonic assumptions, constructing competing understandings of gendered lives. As a consequence, young men's identities are challenged and change through migration.

The idealised versions of masculinity common in the literature, whether the transgressive, or oppositional, of young working class men (Bourgois 1995; Connell 1991, 2000, 2002, 2005; Ilan 2013), and the hegemonic middle class ideal of a disembodied, rational masculinity (Connell and Wood 2005) may not capture the sense of self among young male migrants, who often experience a challenge to their hopes about labour market success – a key driver in their initial migration – experiencing instead downward social mobility as well as a loss of confidence as they move across continents. Neither the 'live fast and die young' version of masculinity identified among working class men by Connell (1991) nor the cosmopolitan identities of high status 'footloose' men working for global corporations and international financial institutions (Connell and Wood 2005; Jones 2008)

capture the identities of male migrants who find themselves searching for employment at the bottom end of the increasingly precarious labour markets in British towns. While the latter jobs are not accessible to most men, the swaggering oppositional masculinity identified by Connell and others may now come at too great a personal and familial cost in a cold neoliberal post-crisis world in which employment is regarded as both a personal responsibility and a duty of citizenship.

The intersection of nationality and ethnicity with changing gender identities exacerbates the disadvantaged labour market position of many young men of colour, both those who are migrants and those who are not. In case studies in, among other cities, London (Anitha et al 2012: Wills et al 2010), New York (Sassen 2001) and Toronto (Bauder 2006), the ways in which migration, or rather recent arrival, adds to embodied patterns of disadvantage have been explored, showing how the lack of familiarity with conventional norms of social interaction, and with language fluency, deepens labour market disadvantage. For men who were not born in the UK, as well as their gender and nationality, their unfamiliarity with conventional assumptions about acceptable social relations, including gender relations, in the workplace is an additional disadvantage. Sets of racialised assumptions by both employers and the public intersect to construct a hierarchy of eligibility in the labour market. Young men of African and African Caribbean heritage are often constructed as aggressive or confrontational, and so are channelled in jobs such as bouncers or security (Johnston and Hodge 2014; Monaghan 2002a and b). Men from South Asian, however, have been regarded as more docile or willing to serve, and so constructed historically as suitable for domestic service (Chinese men in late nineteenth and early 20th century USA for example (Roediger and Esch 2012) and more recently as suitable employees for hotel work (Batnitzky et al 2009), although as Manzoor (2014) recently argued the associations of 'Asians', whether Muslims or not, with terrorism in the UK over the last decade may have changed these stereotypes. In the UK, the nuances and particularities of classed and gendered identities established elsewhere typically disappear, as recruiters, employers and co-workers assume not only that all 'Asians' are alike but also fail to recognise religious differences. As Stuart Hall (1990) argued in the context of migration from the Caribbean in the 1950s and 1960s, the distinctions of skin colour that were the basis of a hierarchy in the West Indies disappeared as migrants came to the UK and found that they were all 'Black'. Migrants from the South Asian subcontinent, despite all being seen as 'Asian' are, however, more ambiguously placed in the UK as neither British nor Black (Rattansi 2000).

Naming difference

There have been various ways of explaining the intersections of these attributes and attitudes that produce and maintain structures of relative disadvantage and the resultant hierarchies

of eligibility for interactive employment. In work on the manufacturing sector, Burawoy (1979), for example, drew on the Althussarian concept of interpellation – literally 'naming' - to reveal the ways in which working class male employees in manufacturing internalised the stereotypical assumptions of inferiority made by employers and co-workers. Several years later, Williams (2006), in a study of toyshops in Texas, and McDowell et al (2007) in their study of employment in a London hotel, extended this concept, terming it 'dual interpellation' to include clients' attitudes about the appropriate attributes of employees, drawing on more recent work on the multiple and mutable construction of identity by feminist and other scholars. However, as Korczynski (2009) argued, in this work on interactive service employment, the customer, client or patient remains largely absent from studies of labour market discrimination, in large part as it is difficult to trace and interview participants in what is often a fleeting transaction. Employers too may be unwilling to reveal to social scientists the reasons for their recruitment practices. For this reason, we relied on interviews with managers and staff of employment agencies, hoping that they would be more willing than direct employers of migrant men to speak freely and to 'name' the purported disadvantages embodied by young Goan men. One in three UK businesses employ temporary workers, often recruited by agencies (McDowell et al 2008) and as Peck and Theodore (2001) have argued, employment agencies play an increasingly important role in shaping the divisions of labour at the bottom end of the labour market. They 'are active institutional agents in the remaking of labour market norms and conventions, brokering as they do between under-employed workers on the one hand and would-be employers of contingent labour on the other, while turning a profit in the process' (p 474). Their stereotypical assumptions about the attributes of potential workers have a significant effect in producing and maintaining inequality.

We turn now to the methodological strategies used to explore young Goan men's ideas about appropriate employment, masculinity, and familial responsibility in the context of a local labour market where, despite vacancies in 'masculine' work in, for example the construction industry, precarious service sector work was often all that was accessible to these men.

Goan migration and research methods

The empirical example is drawn from a larger study of the connections between precarious work, ethnic origins, migrant status and masculine disadvantage in Britain. Two towns in the south of England – Swindon and Luton – were selected as case studies, in part on the grounds that what we might term 'ordinary' towns (see Robinson 2006) have largely escaped the attention of social scientists interested in race and ethnicity and its connections with, variously, masculine identities, precarious work, urban unrest and political resistance (McDowell et al 2013, 2014). Typical locations

for such research in the UK are Greater London, the towns of the north west and north east, and in particular Bradford, and, less often, Scottish cities (Hopkins 2007, 2008). In total 80 young men, both white migrants, in the main from the new EU states, and white locals, and men from other backgrounds, including Indian migrants and British Indian young men were interviewed. 42 of the young men, ten of whom were of Goan heritage, lived in Swindon, a town on the outer margins of the South East in the county of Wiltshire, where employment seen as appropriate for men – in the railway industry and more recently in the car industry - dominated the town until recent decades. At the time of the interviews, the Honda plant in the town was contracting, especially jobs for unskilled men and female-dominated service employment was expanding.

Ten young men of Goan heritage, aged between 18 and 27, who arrived in the UK from India between a few months and ten years previously, were interviewed. Although the number of interviewees is small, through a strategy of purposive rather than representative sampling, we were able to identifying sufficient Goan men to be able to see repetition in their answers and begin to identity emerging patterns (Crouch and McKenzie 2006). The men were first interviewed in the Autumn of 2012 in a series of locations where they felt comfortable, including in cafes, parks, and the local library and were re-contacted twice in 2013 to assess their success (or not) in finding employment: in total we had thirty completed interviews and transcripts. The initial interviews lasted between half an hour and an hour and were recorded and transcribed. Inductive thematic analysis of the interviews was conducted by reading and re-reading, looking for the emergence of broad themes related to the social construction of identity, job search and familial and community connections. Key words and phrases were identified using NVivo, and themes emerging from the first round of interviews were used to structure the follow-up interviews, which were usually shorter. A basic interview schedule was followed but the men were encouraged to raise any issues they wished. At each stage we emphasised that everything they told us was confidential and that they might withdraw at any point or decline to answer particular questions. All the men's names have been changed, but reflect the common tendency for them to have anglicised first names that correspond to a Portuguese version. We also interviewed six managers/administrative staff in the main employment agencies used by the men in their job search.

Movements and transnationality

Eight of the men whom we interviewed were aged between 18 and 22; the other two were 25 and 27 respectively. They had moved to Swindon, often after a mobile childhood and early adulthood. Half of them had moved to the UK with their parents, the others alone, although in three cases other family members had followed. Many of the men had experienced multiple movements

in their childhood and adolescence, conforming to the descriptor of transnationality (Glick-Schiller and Faist 2010). James, for example who was 22, had lived in Goa until he was 10 and then moved to Dubai with his family for his father's employment. Aged 15, he returned to India with his mother and his father went to Portugal. When his father lost his job, James's uncle, already in Swindon, managed to bring the entire family to London when James was 19. Others had also lived in the Middle East and some still had family there, Jonah's sisters lived in Bahrain and Richard had an aunt in United Arab Emirates. They were commonly part of transnational families that had been separated during their childhood, for example when their fathers worked outside Goa for periods, or separated when some of them moved to England without one or other or both their parents. Anthony, for example, moved to the UK with his brother and his father but his mother and sisters remained in Goa. Others had siblings who had moved, inter alia, to the USA, Canada and Italy and so they were part of a Goan transnational diaspora. Despite these complexities, obligations to kin were important, as we demonstrate below.

The hybrid (trans)national identity of these men is reflected in their passports and in their sense of self as different from other Indian migrants: a sense that they found was not recognised in the UK. Their assumed positioning by the local population as either or both Muslim and from Pakistan was a source of complaint among the men. 'People shout at me in the street – dirty Paki, go home Muslims, things like that' (Jonah) but in fact in the UK, their citizenship was Portuguese. By 2012, they all held Portuguese passports: an eligibility conferred by their fathers, who had been born in Goa before 1961, or born in Portugal or Portuguese territories in Africa. Five respondents, however, had entered the UK on Indian passports, applying for their Portuguese one once established in the UK. As Laurence explain, the key advantage is easier mobility.

> I came from Goa, but my Dad has a Portuguese passport so Dad actually made me a Portuguese citizen right now. ... It used to be hard just living over here with the Indian passport because if I want to travel somewhere I have to get a visa, but now I have that card with me I can travel anywhere in Europe.

Although all ten mentioned the advantages of holding a Portuguese passport, no-one had visited Portugal, let alone lived there. 'We had a Portuguese passport so we could move, immigrate, down here [to the UK] with no trouble' (Michael). Despite the material advantages, some of the men expressed a sense of loss in leaving Goa and changing their citizenship. As Jonah mentioned 'I love Goa, actually, because I'm from that place. It's a bit hurting when you cancel all the things, a bit sad'. Like all the men, Jonah had arrived in the UK and moved to Swindon in search of employment, imagining a labour market in which they might be able to quickly find work, a reasonable income and be able not only to establish a decent standard of living for themselves, and other family members in

the UK, but also send money back to Goa to support members of their immediate family left behind. The reality, however, turned out differently as we illustrate below, first exploring initial assumptions about prospective employment.

Employment expectations: familial attitudes, gender and class identity

In the early years as young adult migrants, the ten men from Goa hoped to obtain work that would pay a decent wage and provide opportunities for advancement and economic security. As we noted above, they came from lower middle class backgrounds and they and their immediate families expected them to be able to secure white collar work in the UK. However, as we talked to them for the third time in the autumn of 2013, it was evident that they were disappointed by their failure to find permanent employment in jobs that they and their families felt were congruent with their class and gender identities as ambitious young migrants.

They expected to be able to find employment in semi-professional jobs, as all had completed secondary education, two had some post-school vocational training and one man had a first degree from an Indian university. Employment an accountant or an accounts clerk was mentioned by four of them. Richard, for example, had taken part of an accounting course at a College in Swindon but had not qualified. After months of fruitless search, he found he had to reduce his expectations. Several other men, Laurence as well as Richard, suggested that their parents did not understand the British labour market, especially the need for credentials to enter white collar employment. Laurence, who was 20, had left home to live with an aunt when we spoke to him, as he had had numerous arguments with his father 'all of them about work'. His father wanted financial help to support his family of five children and could not understand why his Laurence could not find the sort of well-paid white collar work that he felt his son deserved. Laurence and Richard both mentioned that they had relatives working in India in reasonably well-paid jobs as unqualified accountants. These men were held up as examples by fathers who failed to understand why their sons could not find comparable positions in the UK.

Philip had hoped to land an administrative position in the data processing sector but told us that his work experience in India was not recognised in the UK. Jobs in the manufacturing sector were also inaccessible. James, for example, had initially planned to 'work, save some money and look for college, do something like that' but soon found that he had to revise his options. He had started by applying for industrial apprenticeships: 'I tried online, sent some cvs, but nothing came through'. He then applied for clerical jobs but was not interviewed for these either and was unemployed at the time of the all three interviews. For most of these men, but especially for their

fathers, the loss of class status, as clerical and white collar work proved inaccessible, was a source of shame.

It was also evident that a number of the young men felt the burden of familial financial expectations. The relationship between employment, money and masculinity typically takes a particular form for migrant men. As well as the widespread societal assumption that all young men should be breadwinners, a further relationship between money and masculinity among migrants is an expectation of a continuing responsibility for the familial financial support, whether in the UK or through remittances to family in the home country. Osella and Osella (2000: 117) have argued that among migrant communities, money becomes 'an externalizable (detachable) form of masculine potency', and so, as Charsley (2005) has documented, male migrants typically have a 'double responsibility' to support dependants in the UK and those who remain in country of origin.

Among the ten respondents, Donald stood out as having the heaviest financial responsibility for supporting family members. He had lost his reasonably well-paid white collar job in Goa, through which he had supported a three generation family. The pressure of these bills was what led to his emigration, hoping he would be able to secure a job that would both permit him to live independently in Swindon and to support his family through remittances, but his optimism quickly deflated, as he could not find well-paid work. At the time of the third interview he was planning to return to India. Despite visiting employment agencies in Swindon every day for the first three months he had lived in the town, Donald had failed to find a job, although, as he reported, he was prepared to 'take anything, manual work, anything'. He had been told by several agencies, however, not to visit them so often, an instruction, he suggested, based on his daily observations, that lay in discrimination: 'they favour white people'.

All ten men were heavily dependent on agencies. The small size and the relatively recent establishment of the Goan community in Swindon meant that reliance on diasporic connections – a common method of securing employment among minority groups (Waldinger and Lichter 2003) – was not open to them. Employment agencies were, therefore, significant gatekeepers in access to low-wage work. To explore their practices, and Donald's contention, we interviewed the owners and managers of six agencies, all dealing with low wage and casual vacancies.

The production of difference: the role of brokers

From interviews with agency staff, clear evidence emerged of the significance of their practices in the construction of a hierarchy of eligibility among young men and women looking for work in Swindon. Five of the six interviewees explained that gender, nationality and skin colour intersected

to construct a preferred rank order of applicants commonly held by employers of low-waged casual labour in the town. They suggested that young men of Indian origins were ranked reasonably high on the scale as they were considered by most employers to be relatively hardworking, and amenable to discipline. According to the respondents, they were seen as less troublesome than other young men of colour, including African and African-Caribbean men, whether migrants or born locally, and more likely to stick to the job than British-born young white men. Young Polish men, however, a small but rapidly expanding group of new migrants in Swindon, were seen in equivalent or even preferential terms to Goans and Indians, as this owner of a small employment agency in Swindon explained:

> Indians and Goans just want to work, any hours and for minimum wage as long as they can work. … If you are looking at a Polish young male and British young male the work ethic will be with the Polish every time. They'll turn up for work and they won't let you down. Their willingness to work of a low salary is completely different.

In a different agency, the manager told us:

> I mean obviously, we have to be politically correct and we are not allowed to discriminate but referencing and people's history, it becomes very clear, what you tend to see is the Polish people will come in with fantastic educations that they have completed. And they are very presentable, very articulate and they are the obvious choice. Yes, we have clients that are very heavily laden on the Polish side and they have just found it works for them, for reliability.

A third manager concurred:

> I think particularly guys, to be honest with you, English guys, tend to be a little lazy. If you go to an employer, this happens a lot, if you go to an employers and they're not really supposed to say this, but you can go to an employer and maybe he is using fifty people in a warehouse for a job, he'll particularly ask you for Polish because their work ethic is entirely different from the work ethic of English people for one reason or another. It's a shame. Now obviously as a business we can't discriminate ... but that is an employer's mentality, which is a shame but that's the way of the world.

This image of hard-working Europeans from the new accession countries that joined the EU in 2004 is common among employers (Anderson et al. 2006). It seems that Donald's claim of discrimination in favour of white people is supported but it is young Polish people who are the beneficiaries.

The negative view of young British men was corroborated by a director of a second, larger agency.

> The biggest issue we find is work ethic. Without a shadow of a doubt it is always work ethic. It is the enthusiasm to get into work and then to get up every morning and attend on time, looking the part and doing the work as demanded. It is that basic.

Another manager had a similar view of young men, in this case undifferentiated by nationality.

> Typically they will come in and you'll say "well, it's £6.50 an hour" and they'll say "well, i won't get out of bed for that. It's outrageous money" etc etc. Then there will be the no shows, we give them the assignment and they don't turn up. Or the ones that turn up for a couple of days and then do something outrageous, whether it be go on a two hour lunch break or, I don't know, using mobile phones and thinking that's acceptable.

Personal appearance also tells against many young men in the competition for interactive jobs at the bottom end of the labour market. These jobs, as we argued earlier, rely on inter-personal attributes and 'selling the self' but as a woman manager of an agency notes 'when you are dealing with the younger males. You get long hair and unshaven. We try to address it and tell them if you are going for an interview, we expect you to attend clean shaven, limit the jewellery, cut down on anything that people might have an opinion on'. All six of the interviewees commented on gender differences in social skills, to the detriment of young men. Indeed, four of the six suggested that gender is more significant than nationality, as one agency director made brutally clear:

> I think it's with the younger females that come in, they are so much more employable, and it is just their social skills. The young female that comes in, that's pretty, that's presentable, that's articulate, is always far more employable than the young guy of the same age who comes in and kind of grunts at you and thinks the world owes him a living.

At a different agency, the same views were expressed with an addendum: 'even before the recession young men were losing out to the females and now it's worse'.

The interviews support early theoretical claims about interactive employment (Leidner 1993; Hochschild 1983), repeatedly emphasising the importance of bodily appearance and social skills, and its association with the intersection of gender, nationality, skin colour and bodily attributes as well as social capital. For new migrants, even for those educated in the medium of English, language ability, including speed of comprehension and knowledge of colloquial English, as part of the presentation of self is also important. In a somewhat guarded comment, we were told by one agency:

> We have the Asian community here in Swindon from a cultural point of view we are not the right agency for a lot of them who have come straight over because their language barriers. Most of our work is manual, it's light manual but it still requires you to be able to read and

> write and speak English. But there are plenty of agencies that are much more industrial and need bums on seats and can take them by the truck load.

And she concluded: ‘Culture wise, Asians would tend to be a lot slower, when you do put them into an assignment. The speed of work can be a lot slower’.

However, two of the six agency interviewees suggested that Goans in Swindon were slowly gaining a reputation as good workers. As the operations manager of a new agency noted:

> There’s quite a high Goan community settled in the centre of Swindon and whether it was word of mouth initially, I think it probably was, once one or two get a role or a job they’ll pass that one and suddenly you know they start getting heavily used in a particular company. And yeah, it’s just grown from there, once they are seen to be reliable. It depends on the jobs we’ve got and the language barrier of course, but that’s often not too much of an issue. If they are wanted to put tea in boxes and this is the job, as long as they can understand or maybe buddy up with somebody that can understand English and speak their language as well, then it’s fine.

A second respondent also commented on workplaces with a high percentage of Goan employees.

> You have places where there are a lot of Goans. There’s a bakery that’s just outside Swindon that uses a high percentage of Goans. It’s 70-80 per cent Goans there and they get bussed there and back. Yeah, they are good workers. ... they are quite well thought of by employers in Swindon.

However, Laurence was less optimistic.

> I go in agencies, all of them basically, two or three times a week just to find a job. But there are so many people, there are people always standing outside the agencies,. I am not really sure how I will find a job. ... there aren’t any jobs over here. People are still coming over here [from Goa] and it’s just getting more and more difficult to find a job over here now.

And, the assumptions by agencies that the Goan men whom they see are suitable for ‘putting tea in boxes’ ignores the aspirations of educated young men.

Goan young men in low status work: humping and lumping

In this final empirical section we explore how the coincidence of modifying initial expectations and agency practices intersect to affect the employment prospects of the Goan interviewees. At the time

of the first interview five of the ten men were in some form of waged work. By the third interview six were in work, including three of the original five. Their jobs typically were low skill and low status, poorly paid and on a casual and short-term basis, in retail, or cheap restaurants, on packing in warehouses. The bakery mentioned above, for example, offered work to Laurence soon after his arrival in the UK. However, still believing that he might find work that he and his family felt was more appropriate to his class position, he resigned as he disliked the working conditions. 'It was cold over there and you have to like put the mask on and the hat on and I don't like what kind of job that was'. After a short period of unemployment, he found an agency job, tagging clothes for Marks and Spencer. That job lasted 8 months but Laurence was then laid off. Although the job had been on a zero hours contract - 'sometimes I used to do overtime, other times we got sent home as there was no work' – and poorly paid at £6 an hour, Laurence had enjoyed it as 'it was basically the easiest job, one of the most easiest jobs'. Unfortunately his contract was not renewed and Laurence was still unemployed when we contacted him again several months later.

Nine of the ten interviewees told stories of having to reduce their expectations and consider almost any sort of work. The exception was Mark who had started a small photography business, working at weddings and other family events among the Goan community in Swindon. The other men had to accept that they were part of a casualised workforce, inter-changeable 'warm bodies' in the brutal language of employment agencies. As one of the agency managers reported 'There's work as pickers and packers, bodies. We call them humpers and lumpers'.

The only job that Philip, who had hoped for a job in administration, had been able to obtain was a manual job in a warehouse, where he was a contract worker, employed by an agency in a casual position. His pay (in 2013) was £6 an hour but as he noted 'it's not secure. There are people who would take the job for £4 an hour'. Richard too had had to settle for warehouse work. Over the two years since he left his accountancy course, his only employment had been first a short-term job packing in a warehouse, obtained through an agency, and then one month part-time work in a Royal Mail sorting office. In October 2013, he told us

> I've been looking for anything. I'll do cleaning, like how my Dad is doing. Also packing, warehouse jobs, anything, just looking for anything. I'll try for McDonalds, nights shifts, from 7 til 11 when they close'.

He was hopeful about McDonalds but had recently failed the customer relations test at KFC. 'I don't know what the test was. They asked normal questions like 'how is your reaction to a normal day, a person is rude to you?' I told them 'I'll be nice. I'll be good to the perso. I'll understand the person is angry because of some problem with the food'. Here a lack of familiarity with the nuances of British

attitudes to service perhaps made James appear excessively servile and, as he suggested himself, his skin colour and noticeable accent may have counted against him in an interactive job where quick turnaround is crucial. Michael also suggested that his accent was a disadvantage in jobs involving customer service. 'I could speak English properly but I obviously had an Indian accent and found it very hard to understand what people were saying'. As Newman (1999) found in New York City and McDowell (2003) in Sheffield, the intersection of class, gender and skin colour works to disadvantage migrant men seeking employment in fast food outlets: even here, in these casual poorly paid jobs, whiteness confers advantage.

Unlike many young men in other studies of low wage work (Bourgois 1995, Nixon 2009, Newman 1999), James seemed unconcerned about applying for jobs that in the UK might be associated with femininity. If he were still in Goa, he suggested, his family would regard work such as cleaning demeaning for men to undertake, not because of its association with femininity but because of its association with members of the lowest caste. 'In India, cleaner, like as in dirt, any sweepers job, this is the lowest, for the low mentality'. However, he believed that in the UK, even when employed in low paid work, 'people have respect for you, like, you are doing your job'. He suggested that his family's attitudes had also changed over time, and they now respected his determination to find and hold onto a job, whatever its terms and conditions.

The young Goan men to whom we talked clearly recognised their own labour market position and their relative disadvantage in the hierarchy of eligibility, whether compared to young women or men from other backgrounds. Here is Michael, a tall, slightly-built 18 year old explaining the position of men like him: ' I think if you want to have people at the tills, I think they'd rather hire girls for that because I think they are just more approachable and I think better character for the store'. He then suggested that men like him were also disadvantaged by age and physical build in the competition for manual work, coded as masculine. 'For more manual jobs, yes, we are men, but obviously they'll be choosing older men who are like more built, I guess' and so he sadly concluded about the only available job vacancies 'I kind of fit none of them'.

Conclusions: the production of difference in local labour markets

Through these interviews with a small group of young Goan men and several employment agencies in a single town in England we have demonstrated the ways in which different groups of young people looking for work in a post-recessionary period are differentially valued and ranked as suitable employees for low wage and unskilled work at the bottom end of the labour market. Our claim is not representativeness nor the wider applicability of the hierarchy that is evident in Swindon, although it

is without doubt that capital is working, as it always has, to exploit social differences between workers, whether on the basis of gender, ethnicity, nationality or age.

What this study has begun to show is the ways in which new migrants from parts of Europe, and Goans with Portuguese passports but Indian by birth, are regarded as superior workers to young white English men, who themselves have low levels of previous attachment to the labour market as a consequence of the recession following the economic crisis of 2007-08. Goans rank somewhere between Poles and white locals in the market for young men to undertake temporary work of various sorts, typically tasks such as packing that might be coded masculine without challenging young men's sense of themselves as male. Unlike many of the young white men who we also interviewed in Swindon as part of a larger study (McDowell et al 2013), their precarious employment position did not bring as a correlate social exclusion or involvement in street life and semi- or illegal activities (Ilan 2013, Standing 2010). The connections between migration and challenges to versions of masculinity constructed in the homeland before migration that have been found in other explorations of male migrants (see for example Lin and Mac an Ghaill 2013) were not marked here.

What was evident, however, was that the expectations that migration into the UK would provide access to secure employment and a reasonable wage were unfulfilled. These young men were relative failures in the labour market, excluded from employment other than on a casualised and precarious basis. Their disqualification from respectable white collar employment certainly was a source of disappointment, affecting their sense of themselves as men and as successful wage earners. However, among these young Goan men in Swindon, the intersection of religion, community and nationality worked, to an extent, to protect them from some of the personal consequences of the intersection of migration and a depressed local labour market. Several mentioned emotional financial support from their families and friends and the importance of social networks through the local Catholic church, for example. And yet, since their masculinities were constructed in large part through webs of relations with their families, both in the UK and in India, their inability to provide reciprocal support was also a source of regret for them.

It is also evident from this small-scale study that the men from Goa felt able to undertake 'feminised' tasks such as caring and cleaning without a challenge to their masculine identity, even though in India such jobs are associated with the lowest caste and are forms of employment they might have resisted at 'home' in India. Unlike young men in other studies of service employment who find 'feminised' jobs at the bottom end of the labour market unacceptable or a challenge to their sense of self as a man, these ten young Goan men in Swindon were prepared to take any type of job. Employment requiring servicing, caring and waiting on people, for example, was not

necessarily regarded by them as demeaning, although it was clear that this was not the sort of work that they had anticipated. Although they were willing to accept the most menial jobs, they found it hard to secure permanent work. Their nationality, accent, skin colour, age and physical appearance combined with gender to construct them as inappropriate workers both for certain forms of interactive service employment and for heavy manual labour. Competition for consumer service work and affective labour is in the main from young women rather than migrant men from the new EU countries, among whom Poles are a substantial majority, or men of other nationalities and for hard labour, in for example in the construction industry, from the 'heavier bodies' of European men. Nevertheless, as the empirical findings from interviews with employment agencies demonstrated, as a group, Goan men are beginning to build a reputation in Swindon for hard work and reliability in certain employment niches, albeit at the bottom end of the labour market.

The particular hierarchy of eligibility uncovered in Swindon is unique. However, the mechanisms through which it is constructed are not. Stereotypical attributes about social worth and labouring habits on the part of employers, their agents and customers are mapped onto the social characteristics of putative employees. Nationality, skin colour and gender, which are also associated with suitability, eligibility for particular tasks and worth in the labour market, are used as the basis of differentiation in the market, leading to patterns of superiority and inferiority, inclusion and exclusion from decent jobs. Swindon might be atypical in the concentration of a Goan population there, but it is not usual in the rising number of migrant workers of diverse origins in its labour market. The population of workers with Polish origins is substantial, growing and currently far more spatially diverse than earlier migrant groups in Britain. New hierarchal migrant divisions of labour are being constructed in particular ways in rural areas as well as in towns and cities.

The transformation of the UK labour market into a service economy, in which low wage work increasingly is insecure and precarious, has challenged older associations between gender and employment. Masculinity, perhaps in particular in the low wage economy, no longer confers many benefits, as both men and women seek employment. In the post-recessionary context, the duty to seek and retain waged employment is an obligation for all members of society. For migrants, for example, a period of employment is a requirement of claiming housing and employment benefits which are currently being reduced in value as part of austerity policies. What was once regarded as an exclusively masculine obligation in the Fordist world of the breadwinner wage has now been extended to all able-bodied adults, regardless of their family responsibilities and of the availability of work. Young women, as well as young men, including those who were not born in Britain and who may be disadvantaged not only by their social status, visible difference and credentials obtained

elsewhere, but also by their lack of familiarity with British cultural attitudes and systems of social regulation, must now compete for increasingly precarious employment at the bottom end of the labour market.

A key question remains about the implications of the labour market exclusion of many young men, especially young men of colour born in the UK, and men who are recent migrants, for individual autonomy, respect and participation as full citizens. It seems likely that the growing proportion of young people (women as well as men) without stable or secure employment and unable to access the UK housing market in their own right is not a temporary response to the financial crisis but instead is a more permanent feature associated with the radical transformations in the UK labour market in the last four decades, as well as the more immediate impact of the 2008 financial crisis and the years of austerity. While the Goan men living in Swindon are full EU citizens by virtue of their Portuguese passports, their ability to earn a wage is not guaranteed and, as the current Government reduces eligibility for and the level of the job seekers allowance to 'make work pay', autonomy on the basis of entitlement to and support by welfare benefits is also increasingly difficult to attain.

The question now is whether the intersection of migration and precarious employment, including social exclusion, will lead to greater social unrest as Standing (2011) has predicted. Among the young Goan men in Swindon, initial optimism is being replaced by a resigned acceptance of their economic predicament, leavened by a belief that their circumstances will improve on the basis of their individual efforts to find waged work. In this sense they are exemplary neoliberal subjects, though seldom the beneficiaries of this set of beliefs. Longer term exclusion from employment, however, may have more serious social consequences.

Acknowledgements:

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