

ESRC Gender Equality Network

Introductory Conference

15-16 December, Cambridge

Project 6: Gender, ethnicity, migration and service sector employment

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Introduction

The overall aim of project 6 is to explore the interconnections between economic restructuring in London, new gender divisions of labour in the service sector and the changing life opportunities of skilled and unskilled migrant workers from recent and past migrant and settler communities through a case study of a private and a public sector organisation: the former in the hospitality industry and the latter in the NHS. The project will explore the ways in which migrant workers are inserted into a rapidly changing economy, the patterns of occupational segregation that result and the consequences for living standards and urban livelihoods.

Conceptually, the project aims to bring together a series of debates about the 'new' economy, about global cities, about new forms of income, class, gender and racialised inequalities and polarisation, about the significance of embodied attributes of different forms of labour in service sector organisations, and about transnational migration and household survival strategies.

Context

The intersection of a number of key socio-economic and political changes is transforming the labour markets of global cities such as London, affecting both the demand for and supply of labour and the gender division of labour both in workplaces and in the home. In her early theorisation of the global city, Sassen (1991) explicitly identified immigration and ethnicity as fundamental to the ways in which such cities were being transformed and restructured. New flows of multi-national capital and the changing locational decisions of transnational corporations construct new patterns of inclusion and exclusion, linking a small set of global cities with each other whereas transnational flows of labour from the South to the North and within the north from more peripheral economies to 'the centre' are transforming the occupational and residential structures of western cities, especially so-called global cities. Whereas Sassen and others explored the importance of ethnic labour in industries such as clothing and electronics, especially in super exploited locations such as sweatshops in urban ethnic enclaves, it is also increasingly evident that migrant labour is a key part of the labour supply in a wide range of service occupations, in both the private and

public sectors in caring, health, education, retail and hospitality sectors for example corporations.

In Great Britain it is clear that these patterns of economic globalisation and transnational migration, as well as political instability, the upheavals in the former communist world throughout the 1990s and the recent accession of ten new states to the EU are reflected in and affected by the structure of urban labour markets. The rates of migration have increased recently, and almost a third of the migrant population arrived within the last decade. Migrants (all those born outside the UK) are now 8 per cent of the UK population and 10 per cent of those of working age. However, their location is extremely spatially concentrated into the major cities of the UK, and especially in Greater London. Indeed, census statistics for 2001 show that 48 per cent of all those born outside the UK live in Greater London (and a further 20 per cent in the South East region) and the Greater London Authority has estimated that both the total numbers and the concentration will increase, suggesting an 80 per cent increase in the Black and minority ethnic (BME) population in the capital by 2016.

New forms of work are also emerging, in association with migrant workers entering the city from a growing range of places. In addition, in the economy as a whole growing numbers of women are part of the waged labour force in cities. Thus, it is increasingly evident that workers with increasingly diverse social characteristics, including their national origin, are now employed in large cities such as London, in a wide range of occupational positions (Buck et al 2002; Fainstein et al 1993; Hamnett 2003; Sassen 1991, 2001). The net consequence of these economic and social transformations, however, seems to be an increasingly polarised labour market, in which new sets of both opportunities but also significant inequalities are emerging that are re-cutting older gender divisions (and perhaps ethnic divisions) of labour in the workplace and in the home. Men and women who are primarily dependent on waged labour for the maintenance of their own and their family's standard of living are having to find new ways of managing the total burden of social reproduction as increasing numbers of workers find themselves trapped in 'poor work' where the income of a single breadwinner is insufficient to raise a family to an adequate standard of living (Carnoy 2000). New gender divisions of labour that intersect with divisions of class, ethnicity and citizenship status in complex ways are now emerging in global cities, that both shape and are shaped by economic change and the growing dominance of service sector employment.

In Greater London, as new flows of both skilled and unskilled migrants are looking for work, it seems that the older long-established relationships between employment, gender and ethnicity, that reflect earlier in- migrations, from Ireland and the 'new Commonwealth' for example, as well as Europeans displaced by the war, are now being disrupted. Migrants from other parts of the world, including Latin America, parts of Asia and Eastern Europe, seeking asylum as well as work, are now competing in the London labour market. Their insertion into the labour market, whether as skilled or unskilled workers, results in multiple and diverse forms of opportunity and disadvantage that currently are poorly understood. As Samers (2002) noted, surprisingly little theoretical and empirical attention has been paid to the growth of a racialised service sector labour force in global cities.

As Greater London's economy has become increasingly dominated by service sector employment the social characteristics of employees have become a key aspect of their employability. In service work, therefore, gender and ethnicity as well as class, language skills and appearance – that whole set of characteristics that might be captured in the term cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984) – are of even greater significance than in earlier divisions of labour (Leidner 1993, du Gay 1996). London is the key British city for service sector growth. It not only is the centre of the financial services sector (Leyshon and Thrift 1997; McDowell 1997) but also a major player in the leisure and hospitality industries, the centre of government and a significant provider of key public services, not only for the population of the capital but in specialist medical services, for example, for the nation as a whole. It is these 'top end' services that the rates of growth have been most rapid in the last twenty years, leading to what Hamnett (2003) has termed an asymmetrical form of polarisation with 'the growth of an increasingly affluent professional and managerial class and by the decline of other groups' (p 8). Thus the rates of wage growth at the top end have been faster than at the bottom end (GLA 2002). In the Greater London economy as a whole income inequalities between men in full-time employment increased over this period. Whereas the top decile of male employees earned 2.6 times that of the bottom decile in 1979, by 2000 this gap had grown to 4.16 (Buck et al 2002) and to 4.46 three years later (Perrons et al, forthcoming). The corresponding difference among women earners had also increased although inequality among female employees was less marked than for men: the inter-decile range for women in greater London in 2003 was 3.38 which is, incidentally wider than in other cities and regions, in part because of the greater preponderance of well-paid jobs for women in the capital. But for many migrant workers, both older and newer in-migrants, jobs in the top end of the service sector remain inaccessible, although Hamnett (2003, p 107) has estimated that about 60 per cent of all migrant workers in Greater London currently work in skilled occupations. Among these migrants are the global workers – the cosmopolitan employees (Hannerz) of multinational firms, banks, and other business services, many of whom are from privileged backgrounds in the global North. However, many BME migrant workers in Greater London are found in the bottom end of the status and income hierarchies in a wide range of occupations and locations. For low income workers, Greater London is a hostile environment as housing, transport and other costs of daily reproduction are higher than in other British cities, reflected in higher than average rates of unemployment among both minority workers and single parents (Perrons et al, forthcoming), despite high levels of labour demand and high vacancy rates in some sectors.

Waldinger and Lichter (2003) have recently remarked a similar process of increasing polarisation in the new economy of the early 21st century in their study of migrant labour in the USA. As they argue in the first chapter of their book *How the Other Half Lives*, there are two distinct categories of migrant workers in the great US metropolitan areas such as NYC and Los Angeles. The first are 'the many newcomers who arrive with considerable advantages and quickly accumulate more. Well-educated, entrepreneurial, entering the professions in growing numbers these newcomers fit right into the new economy, eschewing the bottom and entering at or near the top' (p 4). But as they note 'contemporary immigration to the United States has a split personality, its legions of scantily schooled labourers and service workers uncannily recalling the immigrant proletarians of yore. But now, unlike then, the least skilled workers are overwhelmingly foreign-born, with the schooling gap separating

them form natives extraordinarily large' . . . and so 'large numbers of immigrants are not simply recently arrived, unfamiliar with American ways, and unable to make do in English but are also lacking the rudiments of formal schooling that nearly all US-born adults, regardless of ethnic origin, take for granted' (p 4-5) So what is it, asks the authors, about a so-called high tech, new knowledge economy that makes these low skilled newcomers attractive to employers. It may be that a similar set of divergent processes is occurring in immigration to the UK. The NHS and the hospitality sectors are appropriate case study locations to examine its operation.

The hospitality sector and public services have been and are two of the most important service sector employers. Currently, these sectors continue to have a high demand for workers. There is not only a growing demand for labour in both the public and private sector that is highly skilled, well-qualified and flexible, in the sense of multi-tasking – doctors, nurses, technicians, managers, human resources, professionals, those with IT skills and so on - but also for less-skilled labour. The less prestigious and less well-paid 'servicing' functions – catering, cleaning, laundry work, portering, messenger services and so on – are also significant parts of employment in public and private services. These functions have in recent years been restructured, sometimes, privatised or contracted out and often 'casualised' as labour is used in different ways to meet the ebbs and flows of labour demands. It has been argued that the nature of employment and labour demand in the service industries has increasingly resulted in the construction of a two-tier or polarised labour force, labelled by the urban theorist Castells (2000) as 'self programmable' labour and 'generic' labour. The former category is highly valued and well-rewarded, dependent on high level entry credentials and sometimes, although not always employed in permanent positions. If permanency is not a feature of the employment contract, the position of these middle class and highly educated workers is sometimes captured in the term portfolio workers, able to present themselves and their skills in ways that ensure continuous employment. The second category – generic labour - increasingly is interchangeable, undervalued and under-skilled and is employed on terms and conditions that result in high levels of exploitation: on temporary and casual contracts for example, in impermanent positions (Allen and Henry 1997, Wills 2001,2003) and too often as illegal workers with no security at all. Deregulation of the labour market has exaggerated these trends and led to the rise of 'poor work' where in order to make anything approaching a living wage, workers are forced to work extremely long hours as a way to survive (Toynbee 2003), to hold more than one job at once and/or to work in the informal economy. What is not clear, however, is how this increasingly significant division between programmable and generic labour and the growing exploitation of workers in the bottom end of the service sector are related to changing gender, migrant and ethnic divisions of labour in the workforce employed in the service sector in Greater London, how patterns of recruitment, appraisal and promotion work to construct some categories of workers as less eligible than others, and whether and how these divisions are connected to the changing relationships between citizenship status and national origins of employees.

Some of the changing dimensions of gender divisions in the 'new' economy as a whole, rather than explicitly in Greater London, are beginning to be documented. There is increasing evidence that in the UK, as in the USA and the rest of Western Europe, more girls and women are now successful in attaining educational and professional qualifications (Arnot et al 1999) and so in gaining access to many of the

professions, including law and medicine (Crompton 1999, Pringle 1998), and into highly paid employment in the financial services sector (McDowell 1997). It is less clear whether these patterns of relative success are paralleled in newer occupational categories, in for example in IT and high tech industries and in the creative and cultural industries that are important in a city such as London. There is evidence though, that reflecting the growing credentialisation of women that their patterns of labour market participation are changing in similar ways to men's as the polarisation evident in the service economy as a whole is mirrored in growing status and pay differentials between women (Rubery et al 1999), although as noted earlier the differentials between the highest and lowest paid women workers are not, as yet, as wide as those between male employees. It is also evident that middle aged men, previously employed in both professional and manufacturing occupations and jobs, as well as young unskilled and undereducated men, are relatively disadvantaged in the new service dominated economy (Bourgois, McDowell 2003). Both professional occupations, as well as 'servicing' jobs, draw on socially-constructed 'feminine skills, such as empathy, emotions management and deference, in their job specifications and in their recruitment literature and, at the bottom end of the labour market young men may be disadvantaged in comparison with their female peers and women returners who are more able and willing to conform to the sort of deferential performance at work that is valued by potential employees. It may be too that young men from minority groups find it harder to access employment in the service economy where an idealised and embodied performance that emphasises a particular version of deference that Black youth find is unattainable because of their associations with a stereotypical image of sexualised and aggressive masculinity.

However, as a wide range of research has also shown, there is still a significant gender pay gap, even among young unskilled workers, and the culture of organisations remains male-dominated (Wajcman 1998). Women in management in both the private and public sector often find it difficult to operate within these organisations and excluded from the most powerful positions. It may be too that men from minority groups, even though they possess the necessary credential, find themselves excluded from those profession that are reliant on client contacts and doing business with 'people like us' as traditional social networks based on, for example, private schools and club membership, tend to exclude a variety of 'Others'. At the opposite end of the occupational hierarchy, the 'naturally feminine' aspects of caring occupations mean that women in these jobs remain undervalued and under-rewarded, whereas men may be reluctant to enter them for status reasons as well as because of their low levels of reward. Those men who do, often from ethnic minority populations, may find themselves 'feminised' as a result as for example Asian men working as domestic servants in early twentieth century Canada were characterised or as we noted above entirely excluded

At both ends of the new divisions of labour in service economies, then, especially in global cities such as London, ethnicity and race, as well as gender, are key parts of the construction of workers and jobs and in the nature of occupational segregation. The worst parts of the 'servicing' sector – office cleaning, domestic work in hospitals and hotels, the sex trade for example, have typically recruited migrant women and men, whose bargaining power in the labour market is weakest. Minority men too often find themselves trapped in low status occupations, undertaking traditionally female tasks

in the service sector. It seems too that currently for all entry level jobs, the possibilities of progression are limited, as the importance of educational credentials has increased and so the opportunities for social mobility are reduced compared with previous decades (Cabinet Office). At the same time professional and management occupations in both the private and public sector, especially in the NHS, often rely on skilled in-migrants who also often find themselves employed in the least prestigious and well-paid occupations, with limited prospects for progression and promotion.

It seems too that the labour market disadvantages of migrant groups remain as they become long-standing British residents and citizens, due to complex intersections of migration histories and experiences of racism (Brah 1996). Although the university participation rates of many ethnic minority groups are now high, for example, once these students enter the labour market they find it both harder to gain employment than white Britons and less easy to reach the higher levels in their chosen fields. There is also evidence of increasing diversity in the life chances of different groups within the British minority population. Modood (1998), for example, notes the particularly poor labour market positions of Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups as a cause for concern. The Ethnic Minorities Employment Task Force (2004) recently published work documenting the extent of the 'ethnic pay gap'. It found that whereas Black and Asian employees earned an average of 7 per cent less than white employees, the average salary for a Bangladeshi employee was significantly lower - £12,220 per annum compared with £18,044 for all minority employees and £19,552 for white employees. These differences remain despite a slight increase in the number of Black and Asian people entering professional and managerial jobs. Whether or not the longer-standing experiences of groups such as South Asian and Caribbean in-migrants to London will be repeated among newer entrants such as, for example, migrants from Latin American countries or from the former Soviet Union, is as yet unknown. The complex interconnections between gender, ethnicity, status and skin colour remain to be investigated.

Thus important questions need investigating about the links between economic restructuring in the service sector of the economy and the intersection of ethnicity, racism, migration history citizenship and gender in explaining current patterns of labour market segmentation in both public and private organisations. These issues are currently a high priority for Government policy, as the recent White Paper *Secure Borders, Safe Haven* (2002) makes clear, as well as the long-standing debates about the implications of the commonplace distinction in migration policy between economic migrants and asylum seekers, a distinction that is increasingly challenged by contemporary events. The 2002 Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act that implemented some of the proposals of the White Paper seeks to increase the number of highly skilled migrants, as well as temporary workers and foreign-born students but hold steady or reduce the numbers of less skilled economic migrants and the numbers of asylum seekers. This Act predated the accession of ten new states to the EU which was a subject of speculation prior to accession in May 2004. It seems, however, that the numbers of new entrants from these states is significantly less than was predicted in many quarters, and is dominated in the main by Polish, Slovak and Czech migrants, many of whom may have taken the opportunity to regularise their status (TUC 2004). Further, many of these workers are in rural jobs and lived in small towns and villages rather than in Greater London. In total 91,000 workers from the accession states entered the UK in the six months from May 2004. More recently, measures have been

included in the last two budgets to facilitate the immigration of lower skilled workers to alleviate shortages, including in the hospitality industry.

The implications of recent patterns of immigration and of continuing labour market segregation for the household survival strategies and divisions of domestic labour among different types of households who have lived and worked in London for varying periods needs to be examined. Poverty rates are high in many parts of inner London and are associated with new migrant and BME populations (GLA 2002). It is clear that multiple workers is one strategy to counter low household wages but that as cheap and accessible childcare is extremely limited in most areas of the city, arrange of different household practices will be needed if more than one parent is to seek employment. Indeed some female migrant workers come to London as domestic workers for more affluent women, and themselves either leave their children behind or manage through a variety of informal arrangements, as do other low income women workers (Anderson 2000, 2003). The different ways in which households organise the total labour of reproduction, and the extent of variation will be assessed, as well as involvement in both workplace-based and local associations and community organisations to improve the welfare of migrant workers and their families.

The specific **objectives** of the research are therefore:

1. to explore the intersection of service sector employment growth and the differential opportunities of men and women from a range of different ethnic and national backgrounds, especially in light of new patterns of labour demand and new working practices (including long or anti-social hours, split shifts and so on).
2. To examine patterns of recruitment and promotion in the private and public sector among different groups of ethnic minority employees, focusing in particular on comparisons between longer-standing groups such as people from the Caribbean and the Indian sub-continent, and more recent entrants including people from Latin America, West Africa, Eastern Europe and other parts of Asia.
3. To explore the ways in which different working practices and attitudes of both employers and employees within an organisation impact on the everyday lives and differential workplace experiences of men and women from different ethnic and national backgrounds employed in a range of positions within the service sector, including an assessment of the extent and effectiveness of formal equal opportunity policies and programmes in redressing patterns of gender and racialised difference.
4. To explore the ways in which the pre-existing job skills, position in racial and employment hierarchies in origin countries, date and (il)legality of entry of migrants both affect and are affected by their employment in London.
5. To assess the impact of new forms of work on domestic divisions of labour, focusing in particular on the capacities or capabilities of recent migrants employed in bottom end service sector positions to reach and maintain an adequate standard of living in a global city where the costs of living are exceedingly high.
6. To assess the extent to which community-based migrant organisations are involved in effective campaigns to redress inequalities based on ethnicity and gender.

To address these objectives, two organisations will be investigated in depth in order to capture both the polarisation of employment that is emerging in Greater London as well as the impact of new forms of working on the organisation of daily life and household divisions of labour. The two institutions are a major London teaching hospital and one or more hotels in a large hotel chain. Claire Dwyer will largely be responsible for the health service study, where she will be able to draw on expertise in the Migration Research Unit at UCL. This Unit is directed by Professor John Salt, an internationally-respected expert on migrant labour, who has undertaken study of the recruitment of skilled international labour by hospital trusts. Linda McDowell will direct the research in the hospitality industry. Both of the RAs initially will be based in the School of Geography at Oxford where they will be part of an expanding group of post-doctoral researchers directed by Professors Clark and McDowell working on different aspects of global labour and capital markets and will be housed in a newly refurbished building in a well-equipped dedicated research room.

One of the first tasks of the principal investigators is to develop contacts with potential case study organisations. University College Hospital and the Thistle Group are possible participants. However, recently contacts with a group of researchers in the departments of Geography and Management Studies at Queen Mary University of London have been established where studies of BME workers in low income jobs in both the manufacturing and service sector in Greater London and of BME employees in the health service are just being launched. It may add to all three pieces of work if a common location is chosen, possibly in East London where there is a high concentration of poverty.

Methods and data collection

Both quantitative and qualitative methods will be adopted. Drawing on the wide range of population, household and labour market statistics collected by Government and other agencies, including data from the 2001 Census as it becomes available and the LFS, a quantitative assessment of contemporary changes in the structure of employment in Greater London will be undertaken. Particular attention will be focused on recent changes in employment demand and supply in the hospitality industry and the health services. As the QM geographers are planning a similar exercise some coordination would seem sensible here.

The second element of empirical work will consist of a number of stages involving the collection of data through questionnaires and interviews to be undertaken with both key decision makers, representing employers and management, and with a sample of employees in the two organisations selected for the detailed case studies. Up to ten interviews with key decision makers within each organisation will be carried out, including human resources specialists and those responsible for Equal Opportunities policies. Subject to confidentiality, it is hoped that basic information (gender, ethnicity and occupational position) about the characteristics of the total workforce in each organisation might be collected from Human Resources Offices.

To capture the diversity of service sector employment and to untangle the complex relationships between gender, ethnicity and national background among employees, matched pairs of male and female interviewees in three different occupational

positions within each organisation will then be interviewed. This is a strategy that was successfully adopted by Linda McDowell (1997) in her earlier ESRC-funded study of organisational change in the financial services sector, as well as by Rosemary Crompton, a co-member of the network team, in both her completed and proposed work with professional women employees in banking and other occupations.

In the hospital, men and women in domestic servicing jobs, in middle management and in medical roles will be interviewed and in the hotel(s), similarly in bottom end servicing, middle/high level management but also in those highly visible roles at the front desk (where embodied personal characteristics are crucial) will be selected. To capture the range of the bottom end jobs, and to include both men and women, it is proposed to include several different types of work including laundry and maid services, portering, and catering. In higher level and professional jobs, it is envisaged that there will have to be an over-sampling of women compared to their total numbers in these ranks because of gender differentials in rates of representation. The representation of individuals from different national backgrounds remains to be ascertained.

Ten pairs of men and women in each of the three occupational ranks within both organisations will be selected, making 120 interviews in total. The aim will be to include, if possible, members of a limited number of minority groups in the employee sample, to include representatives of recent in-migrants (Latin American and East European migrants have been identified as appropriate groups), as well as from a longer-established migrant group (South Asian migrants have been provisionally identified). The exact composition of the employee interviewees, however, will depend on the overall composition of the respective workforces. It is likely, for example, that the hotel(s) may depend more heavily on recent in-migrants than the health service. These interviews will follow a semi-structured format and will be tape-recorded and transcribed. It is planned to undertake them in a location in which the respondent feels most comfortable, whether this is in the actual workplace, or some other public or private space, in working hours or in leisure time. Whatever the location, information about divisions of labour both in the workplace and in other arenas of daily life including the home and community will be collected.

Finally, a small number of interviews will be undertaken with the major organisations dealing with migrant workers' rights and community-based issues of language, access to benefits, citizenship rights and so forth. The exact list of organisations will be compiled as the national origins of the groups of workers to be interviewed becomes clear.

Confidentiality and ethics

It is clear that there are key issues of access and confidentiality at stake. The interviews with employees clearly must have the permission of both parties, the employer and the employee, but it is hoped that the research team itself, rather than the employee will be able to select those workers who participate. It is important that employees feel that they have complete anonymity and confidence in the confidentiality of any information that they chose to divulge. All interviewees will be assured of anonymity and the organisations that participate will not be identified by name. A range of methods will be explored to contact workers from email contacts to

a mail sweep sent out by employers but with responses to the researchers, drawing on previous experiences that the key researchers have built up in earlier and similar projects. It is clear that actually gaining entry into appropriate organisations will be the major problem and it may be that alternative ways of accessing workers –through for example – migrant organisations or based on other survey – will have to be found if it proves too difficult to gain entry into a hotel and a hospital.

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