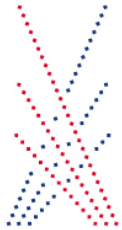

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How do Clean Workers Cope with Dignity Violations and Idiosyncratic Stigma?

Abstract

This article focuses on the under-researched notion of idiosyncratic stigma. Specifically, we explore how teaching-only faculty (TOF) in higher education self-constitute a sense that their occupation is stigmatised due to violations of their dignity at work. We identify and discuss the corresponding negative experiences of this spoiled identity state: devaluation, disengagement, and discrimination. Finally, we describe how TOF employ forms of positive identity talk that correspond to four of the five factors associated with dignity in work in order to cope, namely a sense of autonomy, high levels of job satisfaction, engagement in meaningful work, and access to learning and development. Our analysis contributes to identity theory and organisation studies in four ways. First, we identify and analyse the stigmatisation of clean work(-ers). Second, we demonstrate the theoretical linkage between (in)dignity, dirty work, and stigma. Third, the analysis of our data shows the importance of intrinsically-felt dignity-related positive identity talk as a socially creative means to cope with idiosyncratic stigma. Finally, we propose that the (in)visibility of the taint outside the organisation is an important dimension that should be added to the dirty work sense-making framework.

Key Words: Idiosyncratic Stigma; Dirty Work; Dignity; Higher Education

Introduction

'*Until we can find a point of view and concepts which will enable us to make comparisons between the junk peddler and the professor without intent to debunk the one and patronize the other, we cannot do our best work in the field*' (Everett Hughes, *Work and the Self,* 1951: 318).

This article analyses the linkages between violations of dignity at work and occupational stigma, and demonstrates how high-esteem workers employ positive dignity in work-related identity talk to mitigate the most damaging consequences of a spoiled identity state. In so doing, we make a number of contributions to the identity talk and organisation studies literature. First, Kreiner, Ashforth and Sluss (2006) discuss the possible 'idiosyncratic stigmatisation' (pp.630-631) of 'clean(er)' work(ers), but to the best of our knowledge this is the first study to explore and explain how this stigma arises, and what those impacted do to cope (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999). We use the expression 'clean' as the counterpoint to Hughes' (1951) notion of 'dirty' work. We analyse the work-life sphere of teaching-only faculty (TOF) in UK-based Russell Group[1] business schools, a group typically associated with both a low depth and low breadth of dirty work and whose 'tasks are neither routinely nor strongly stigmatised' (Kreiner, et al., 2006: 622; Chakrabortty and Weale, 2017). Second, we draw on Bolton's (2007, 2010, 2011) multi-dimensional theorisation of dignity, whereby dignity in work is linked with the notion of 'good work' (subjective factors), whereas dignity at work refers to how the organisation values its workers (objective factors). We propose this as a useful analytical lens to understand factors that

[1] See russellgroup.ac.uk (accessed June 16, 2015): 'The Russell Group represents 24 leading UK universities which are committed to maintaining the very best research, an outstanding teaching and learning experience and unrivalled links with business and the public sector.' This group of universities includes many of the elite research-intensive institutions in the UK. Note, however, that there are a number of highly-regarded research-intensive universities that are not members of the Russell Group.

contribute to occupational stigma (e.g. Goffman, 1963), and specifically the idiosyncratic stigmatisation of TOF (Kreiner et al., 2006). Furthermore, we argue that Bolton's dignity in work framework provides a system to categorise and make sense of positive identity talk (e.g. Snow and Anderson, 1987; Ybema et al., 2009; Ybema, 2010; Toyoki and Brown, 2013; Brown and Toyoki, 2014), i.e. the 'verbal construction and assertion of personal identities' (Snow and Anderson, 1987: 1348). In so doing, we add depth and richness to Snow and Anderson's (1987) proposition that identity talk is a means to 'generate personal identities that yield a measure of self-respect and dignity' (p.1339). Thus, we answer the calls for more 'research on stigmatisation in organisational… settings' (Paetzold et al., 2008: 186; Hudson and Okhuysen, 2014) as well as addressing the under-representation of 'the stigmatised person's viewpoint' in the organisation studies literature (Yang et al., 2006: 1525; Toyoki and Brown, 2013; Brown and Toyoki, 2014).

Prior work has typically focused on the stigmatisation of occupations that involve a high depth and breadth of dirty work (e.g. Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999; Ashforth et al., 2007). We use the term depth to refer to the 'intensity of the dirtiness and the extent to which the worker is involved in the dirt', whereas breadth refers to the proportion of the work that is dirty (Kreiner et al., 2006: 621). Occupations that involve a high depth and breadth of dirty work are 'socially defined by their strongly stigmatised tasks or work environment' and, despite their work being a 'necessary evil' (Kreiner et al., 2006: 619), they commonly suffer 'pervasive' stigma (Kreiner et al., 2006: 622). Hughes (1951) refers to these occupations as 'more or less lowly' (p.318), and subdivides dirty work into three categories: physical, social, and moral. Examples include junk peddlers, agricultural workers, miners and slaughterhouse workers (physical taint; Ackroyd, 2007), prison guards, cosmetic surgeons and tattoo artists (social taint; Adams, 2012), exotic dancers and sex workers (moral taint; Mavin and Grandy, 2013). Yet, it has been argued that

whilst there might be some work that is dirtier than others (e.g. Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999, 2007), no occupation is entirely taint-free. Hence any occupational group can be stigmatised (e.g. Kreiner et al., 2006). What is unclear, however, is how and why those groups that undertake work which is neither deeply nor broadly dirty become tainted, and subsequently little is known about the coping strategies that these idiosyncratically stigmatised workers employ. Our study addresses this gap.

To make our arguments, this study draws upon extensive survey and interview data. Documentary evidence and lived experience act as secondary and supporting data. First, we conducted a survey of business school TOF. We solicited views on a range of subjects, including the nature of the TOF role, the tasks performed by TOF, and the value afforded to these tasks at an organisational, departmental, and individual level. Next, we undertook 34 semi-structured interviews to explore these ideas in more detail. We also had access to large amounts of backstage and frontstage documentation given our cumulative 40+ years of experience in higher education. Finally, after the completion of the interviews, one of the research team transferred to a TOF position[2] at a research-intensive institution to better understand the struggles and opportunities faced by TOF. As Hudson and Okhuysen (2014) note, there are structural barriers to the study of organisational stigma when academics try to make sense of occupations from afar. Therefore, deep and intensive engagement is a way to mitigate the risks of drawing unfounded conclusions.

Specifically, we focus on TOF because Hughes (1951) sets up the 'professor' at the opposite end of the continuum to the 'junk peddler' (p.318). Although some tasks undertaken by TOF might be perceived to be dirty (e.g. curving grades) and some offices, classrooms,

[2] This post was held for two years before transferring back to a TTF role in a different research-intensive institution.

corridors, and so forth might not always be perfectly tended, by and large working in an elite higher education institution is regarded as a high-prestige, aspirational role. Indeed, teaching in higher education has been described as 'one of the most highly skilled and prestigious professions in Britain' (Chakrabortty and Weale, 2017: 1). Given this, we were surprised to find that the tasks undertaken by TOF are perceived to be dirty, and that TOF are exposed to multiple violations of their dignity at work – i.e. unwell-being, unjust rewards, negative dialogue, a lack of security, and unequal opportunities (see Bolton, 2011: 376 [Figure 5], 2010, 2011). In turn, this leads to a self-constituted sense of workplace stigmatisation. As proposed by Ybema et al. (2009), this spoiled identity appears to stem from a reflexive comparison with an 'other' hierarchically superior group, in this case tenure-track faculty (TTF). Respondents described three negative consequences of this state, namely devaluation, disengagement, and discrimination.

Unlike pervasively stigmatised groups, idiosyncratically stigmatised occupations are considered to be a lesser threat to the group as a whole. Thus, strategies related to entitativity, ingroup/outgroup dynamics, and resource-sharing – common amongst conventional dirty workers (e.g. Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999, 2013, 2014) – are thought to be less relevant for clean workers (Kreiner et al., 2006). We found that the coping mechanism employed by TOF was to positively talk-up (e.g. Snow and Anderson, 1987; Ybema et al., 2009) four of the five factors[3] associated with dignity in work, i.e. autonomy, job satisfaction, meaningful work, and learning and development (Bolton, 2007, 2010, 2011). Identity talk, such as this, is a key form of identity work (e.g. Snow and Anderson, 1987; Ybema et al., 2009; Ybema, 2010; Toyoki and Brown, 2013; Brown and Toyoki, 2014). It is performed as a means to deflect, defend, and contest an

[3] Most of the comments related to the fifth contributory factor – respect – were negative. Respondents talked about a 'lack of respect'.

identity state which is contradictory and/or harmful to an individual's perception of self (e.g. Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999, 2013, 2014; Kreiner et al., 2006; Ashforth et al., 2007). Thus, identity talk enables the individual to (re)construct an alternative, positive conception of self (e.g. Giddens, 1994; Brown and Toyoki, 2013; Toyoki and Brown, 2014). We propose that positive dignity-related identity talk is a crucial coping mechanism amongst idiosyncratically stigmatised workers.

Our third contribution relates to the (in)visibility of the taint (inside) outside the organisation. Prior studies suggest that workers who undertake high-esteem tasks in high-prestige workplaces are less subject to occupation-related indignity (e.g. Sayer, 2007) and stigma (e.g. Kreiner et al., 2006; Ashforth et al., 2007). Our findings do not concur. Instead we identify a contradiction between the high-esteem of TOF's work through the eyes of TOF and external stakeholders, versus the perceived low-esteem of TOF's work within the organisation. We suggest that this is a missing dimension in the dirty work sense-making framework. On a one-dimensional level, many professions view their work as clean (dirty) and characterise it as dignified (undignified), but the public perception is that it is dirty (clean) and characterise it as undignified (dignified). Or, inside an organisation one group of workers might perceive their work as clean (dirty) and characterise it as dignified (undignified), but a hierarchically superior peer group within the same organisation view it as dirty (clean) and characterise it as undignified (dignified). From here, it is possible to add another dimension. The stigmatisation of occupations might result from one or more of the following groups viewing the tasks performed as dirty and characterising them as undignified: the occupational group undertaking the tasks, a hierarchically superior 'other' occupational group within the same organisation, or/and the public.

Our fourth and final contribution relates to how idiosyncratically stigmatised occupations engage with social creativity. Kreiner and colleagues (2006) characterise social creativity as the mechanism through which members redefine their stigmatised occupation to highlight its positivity relative to a higher-status group. Traditionally, this is how pervasively stigmatised, conventionally dirty occupations employ social creativity, i.e. re-cast the lower-status occupational group's relationship with the higher-status one. For idiosyncratic occupations, Kreiner et al. (2006) propose that social creativity is more likely to involve certain cognitive and behavioural coping strategies that are less about ingroup/outgroup dynamics. In this article, we show that social creativity among clean(-er) workers involves identity talk that articulates the subjective rather than objective, intrinsically positive, dignity-related features of the work, particularly in relation to the positivity it brings to one's self. However, whilst there is a lot of talking-up of TOF and teaching-related activities, there is also some talking down of TTF and research-related activities.

The remainder of the article is organised as follows. To contextualise our subjects' academic life-worlds, we provide a brief review of the general university context. This is followed by an overview of the relevant literature examining the careers of those employed on teaching contracts in academia and addressing the status of teaching activities in higher education. We then elaborate on the theoretical underpinnings of this study, namely dignity, dirty work, and stigma. The research approach is outlined before we present our findings and analysis. We end this paper with a discussion, suggestions for future research, and some final thoughts.

Teaching in Higher Education

Teaching has always been one of the primary duties of academics. However, a stand-alone teaching-only academic career pathway has only recently emerged. It is given different

labels across the world, including but not limited to: ‘professor of practice’, ‘teaching fellow’, ‘professor, teaching stream’, and ‘professor, alternate stream’. Given the considerable numbers of academics on teaching-only contracts and their contribution to the effective functioning of higher education (Oxford, 2008), it is surprising that the occupational experiences of this group have not been investigated in more detail (one exception being, Bamber, Allen-Collinson and McCormack, 2017).

The creation of a teaching-only role is thought to be beneficial for several reasons. It relieves time for TTF to devote more attention to research-related activities, such as funding applications, data collection, data analysis, and writing up research. Furthermore, by employing specialist teachers, higher education institutions aim to professionalise and improve teaching quality (and possibly, quantity also). Yet, the creation of a specialist TOF pathway has also been the source of some tension between research and teaching staff and activities. As early as the late 1980s and early 1990s, such problems were brewing. For example, Westergaard (1991) warned of a growing rift between the two main disciplines of research and teaching, and expressed concerns about the unchecked proliferation of non-research academic positions. He argued that universities needed to dedicate resources to developing policies and processes around TOF, so that tensions could be avoided or de-escalated. These recommendations seem to have been largely ignored. The problems of this division not only encompass administrative and organisational aspects (e.g. Heffernan, 2018), but there are also consequences for individuals on teaching-only contracts who feel a sense of being trapped in occupational limbo (Bamber et al., 2017). Furthermore, Chakrabortty and Weale (2017: 1) report that teaching in higher education has become another form ‘of precarious work’.

There has been significant growth in numbers of TOF across the world, particularly in research-intensive institutions. The latest figures from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA, 2018) show that more than 27% of UK-wide university faculty are employed on teaching-only contracts, accounting for 60% of all part-time and 11% of all full-time academic staff. It is likely that this estimate is on the low side, because some UK higher education institutions are predominately teaching-oriented organisations but employ academics on TTF contracts. This figure is known to increase around the time of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), previously known as the Research Excellence Framework (REF) (Grove, 2014).

Although TTF talk about their 'love' for teaching (e.g. Clarke, Knights and Jarvis, 2012), for most academics on a traditional career pathway, research output has become the key benchmark of success (Clarke and Knights, 2015; Knights and Clarke, 2013; Learmonth and Humphreys, 2012). In the UK, the quality and quantity of an academic's research output are subject to regular in-depth audit (Clarke and Knights, 2015; Knights and Clarke, 2013; Clarke, Knights and Jarvis, 2012). For TTF, a failure to publish in high-ranked journals can give rise to feelings of failure (Clarke et al., 2012). Whereas to be 'much published' (Ford, Harding and Learmonth, 2010: S78) has become synonymous with 'success', and leads to 'recognition' (Knights and Clarke, 2013: 343). This, of course, is problematic for TOF who struggle to replicate the achievements of their TTF peers (Bamber et al., 2017).

Theory

Dignity

Dignity is a basic human right (Brennan and Lo, 2007; Kim and Cohen, 2010) which society has a moral imperative to uphold (Lucas et al., 2017). Yet, there is growing evidence that dignity in the workplace cannot be taken for granted (e.g. Bolton, 2007; Sayer, 2005, 2007).

Regardless of occupation, workplace dignity is vulnerable and almost always at risk. This is partly due to the instrumental and unequal nature of work (Lucas et al., 2017; Lucas, 2015; Sayer, 2007, 2011). Indeed, it is violated too often, and the implications of these violations are demonstrably violent (e.g. Dufur and Feinberg, 2007; Ackroyd, 2007; Fleming, 2005). Here we employ dignity as an analytical device to make sense of identity challenges at work and as a means to cope with the consequences of those challenges.

There has been a recent tightening of the conceptual clarity around the notion of workplace dignity (e.g. Bolton, 2007, 2010, 2011; Lucas et al., 2017). Bolton's work outlines a division between subjective (dignity *in* work) and objective (dignity *at* work) factors. As far as we are aware, this multi-dimensional theoretical framework proposed by Bolton (2007, 2010, 2011) has not been examined empirically, with the exception of a meta-analysis presented by Lucas et al. (2017), and its analytical utility has yet to be exploited.

We adopt and build on the definition of dignity proposed by Hodson (2001): 'The ability to establish a sense of self-worth and self-respect and to appreciate the respect of others' (p.3). Thereby, dignity has been reprised from other concepts, such as respect, worth, equality, and freedom (*cf.* Hodson, 2001; Sayer, 2005, 2007). Given our thesis that violations of dignity at work precede stigma, it is important to stress that there is also a definitional distinction between indignity and stigmatisation. Our definition of stigma aligns with Goffman (1963): A stigmatised group and its members are subjectively viewed as discredited, spoiled, blemished, or flawed to various degrees. In other words, a spoiled identity is a discounted one (Kreiner et al., 2006), whereas indignity reflects a self-devaluation.

Earlier research has demonstrated that there are serious implications for workplace dignity violations, including potentially damaging emotional consequences (Knights and

Willmott, 1989; Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Morales and Lambert, 2013; Lucas et al., 2017). In turn, these injuries manifest themselves in identity challenges (Cleaveland, 2005; Lucas, 2015). Theoretically, workers are able to address these challenges by engaging in identity work (e.g. Dick, 2005; Ashforth and Kreiner, 2014), such as identity talk (e.g. Snow and Anderson, 1987), to regain a positive self-image (e.g. Chiappetta-Swanson, 2005; Otis, 2008) and reframe prevailing ideologies (Tracy and Scott, 2006; Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999). Not only is the violation of workplace dignity costly for individuals, it can also be costly for the focal organisation (e.g. Lucas et al., 2017).

The role of identity talk here is critical. Workplace dignity is not only violated and denied, it can also be granted and upheld (e.g. Bolton and Wibberley, 2007). Thus, although human beings are inherently entitled to dignity, there is always a chance to earn it. Identity work and identity talk is crucial to this endeavour. Individuals can engage in activities that 'formulate, maintain, evaluate and revise self-narratives which promote liveability' (Brown and Toyoki, 2013: 875; Watson, 2008; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003). The dignity literature argues that this explains why workers seek further training and education, greater responsibilities, new challenges, and opportunities for development (Bolton, 2010, 2011; Lucas, 2011; Yalden and McCormack, 2010). However, there are likely to be negative consequences where an organisation fails to recognise the positive identity work undertaken by the worker whose dignity has been threatened or violated (Ayers, Miller-Dyce, and Carlone, 2008; Hodson, 2007).

Occupational Stigma and Identity Talk

A stigma is generally taken to be 'an attribute that is deeply discrediting' and that reduces an individual 'from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discredited one' (Goffman, 1963: 3). According to this view, the dirty worker is marginalised and disqualified from broader societal

acceptance (e.g. Hughes, 1951; Goffman, 1963, Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999; Kreiner et al., 2006). In response, stigmatised individuals and groups typically seek to challenge this spoiled identity state through various forms of identity work, including identity talk (e.g. Snow and Anderson, 1987; Giddens, 1994; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003; Watson, 2008; Toyoki and Brown, 2014).

Most dirty workers are able to employ some form of identity work, such as re-engineering or re-crafting their tasks (e.g. Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001), addressing occupational ideologies, establishing social buffers, confronting clients and the public, employing defensive tactics (e.g. Ashforth et al., 2007), and establishing tight-knit groups (e.g. Kreiner at al., 2006). Identity work appears to mitigate the most damaging effects for those suffering pervasive stigma because it 'moderate[s] the impact of social perceptions of dirtiness' (Ashforth and Kreiner, 2014: 413). Our study focuses on the role of identity talk as a form of identity work (Snow and Anderson, 1987; Ybema et al., 2009; Ybema, 2010).

We have drawn from a number of identity talk studies. For example, Clarke, Brown and Hope Hailey (2009) show how managers in a manufacturing plant seek to 're-author' themselves as moral beings through their identity talk'. Down and Reveley (2009) identity how a frontline supervisor (re)constructs his identity as a 'manager' through a process of self-narrative. Watson (2009) employs narrative analysis to examine a somewhat identity-revisionist autobiographical text. Toyoki and Brown (2013) and Brown and Toyoki (2014) study prisoners' identity talk, suggesting that it is used as a means to deflect the stigma of incarceration and to cope with being incarcerated. Scambler (2007) notes how identity talk allows migrant sex workers in London to deflect and defend themselves against the 'whore stigma' (p.1079). Strikingly, in all of these cases, there is a sense that individuals both embrace their dirty work identity as well as pushing

back against it. Our study focuses on the relation between idiosyncratic stigma and dignity violations, asking specifically what clean but stigmatised workers do to cope with their spoiled identity.

Method

We used a mixed-methods approach to explore the occupational experiences of TOF. Mixed-methods approaches are not uncommon in organisation studies work such as this (e.g. Patala et al., 2019). First, we undertook a survey of full-time, business school TOF and then followed up with a series of semi-structured interviews. We adopted this approach because it provides rich data, especially in underexplored areas (e.g. Creswell and Creswell, 2017) and allows opportunities for triangulation, thus mitigating bias from our lived experience as well as bias inherent in any particular data source (e.g. Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner, 2007).

Our data collection focused on TOF employed at Russell Group universities because these institutions contract academic staff to one of three pathways: research-only (ROF), research and teaching (TTF), and teaching-only (TOF). Outside these institutions, the line between teaching and research contracts is blurred.

TOF were initially manually identified via job titles provided on university websites (n=399). We received survey responses from, and conducted interviews with, TOF at 20 of the UK's 24 Russell Group universities. After discarding incomplete and/or unusable submissions, we received 113 responses to the survey. Following this, we had 34 positive responses to our interview invitation from full-time, permanent contract, business school TOF (see Table 1 for basic demographic information). The questions in the interviews followed on from the questions in the survey.

Table 1 here

The authors have considerable experience working at business schools within UK and North American universities, predominately research-intensive institutions. Drawing on this experience, we developed a survey and interview schedule, and undertook a pilot study involving interviews with six TOF (excluded from the data presented herein). This allowed us to refine our questions before conducting the interviews. The interviews were semi-structured to allow participants to narrate their own lived experiences in their own words, and to express thoughts and opinions on issues not necessarily pre-defined by the researchers. The survey and the interviews were designed to address certain core themes, namely to better understand (i) the motivations for entering academia and pursuing a teaching-only pathway; (ii) the nature of the everyday work-lives and tasks of TOF; (iii) past and future career development and opportunities; and (iv) the status of TOF more generally. The interviews ranged between 42 and 122 minutes (average 54 minutes) and were recorded and transcribed.

We adopted a modified grounded theory approach (Strauss and Glaser, 1967), whereby preliminary codes emerged from the data. The interview and survey data were analysed at the same time, at the end of this data collection phase. We simplified the data into a number of 'basic themes' to avoid misinterpretations arising from code repetition, omission, and so forth. These were inductively generated, however the theoretical framework was refined and developed in an abductive fashion as we moved backwards and forwards between theory, literature, and data (e.g. Ahrens and Chapman, 2007). We initially reviewed the survey data, listened to recordings, read and then re-read the transcripts in detail several times before coding. In line with the 'thematic networks' framework proposed by Attride-Stirling's (2001), we jointly developed a set of

preliminary codes to separate data into meaningful segments, namely (i) dignity, (ii) dirty work, (iii) stigma, and (iv) categories of identity talk. Once the basic themes were identified, the first stage coding exercise was undertaken by one member of the research team and subsequently reviewed by the other authors.

We then aggregated these basic themes into 'organising themes' according to their meaning, before eventually arriving at a set of 'global themes' (Attride-Stirling, 2001; see also Daskalaki, Fotaki and Sotiropoulou, 2019) cohering around the key issues highlighted by respondents. First, we organised the data to correspond with the dignity in/at work factors. For both (i.e. dignity *in* and *at* work), comments were classified as positive or negative. Second, we organised the dirty work comments into the three sub-categories defined by Hughes (1951), namely physical, social, and moral. Third, the responses corresponding to a felt sense of stigma were organised according to whether the individuals/groups/tasks were discredited or discreditable (Goffman 1963). Finally, we thematically reviewed the identity talk comments. During this process, we noticed a strong correlation between the subject of respondents' identity talk and the dignity in work framework proposed by Bolton (2007, 2010, 2011), and we therefore used this framework for the final organisation.

Survey Results

The survey results indicate that TOF believe there is great dignity in their work, but at the same time they are not being afforded the same level of dignity at work by other organisational insiders. Table 2 (Panel A) shows that TOF do not think their job is just like any other (M = 2.17), rather it is socially and morally important (M = 3.92). Even though TOF believe that students do not know the difference between the academic pathways (M = 4.00), there is a strong

sense among respondents that TOF are not viewed as key assets within the academy (M = 2.24), within their institutions (M = 2.29), or within their departments (M = 2.60).

As shown in Table 2 (Panel B), we also found that TOF value high-quality teaching (M = 4.75), but do not feel that high-quality teaching is valued in the same way by their institution (M = 3.32), or their department (M = 3.51). In contrast, high-quality research is seen to be important to TOF (M = 4.09), and of paramount importance institutionally (M = 4.81) and departmentally (M = 4.75). Accordingly, respondents roundly rejected the idea that high-quality teaching was valued more than high-quality research either by their institution (M = 1.71) or their department (M = 1.97).

To further explore the divide between research and teaching reported by Westergaard (1991), we then asked whether high-quality teaching was appropriately incentivised. The respondents considered that high-quality teaching was not appropriately incentivised at either an institutional (M = 2.24) or departmental level (M = 2.27). In contrast, high-quality research was perceived to be highly incentivised by both the institution (M = 4.39) and department (M = 4.26).

Emerging from the survey were two key findings that were consistent with other data. First, TOF view their academic tasks to be less valuable than those undertaken by their TTF peers through the eyes of their department and institution. Second, these results allude to TOF experiencing a contradictory identity state. There is a gap between the high esteem of teaching tasks through their own eyes and the eyes of external stakeholders, versus the perception that teaching tasks are relatively low esteem according to their department and institution.

Interview Results

Dignity at Work, Dirty Work, and Stigmatisation

The dignity framework of Bolton (2007, 2010, 2011) was employed to make sense of our data, and our analysis revealed a link between violations of dignity at work (Table 3), a reflexive understanding of teaching activities as dirtier than research ones (e.g. Hughes, 1951), and in turn, a self-constituted sense of a spoiled identity (Goffman, 1963). Importantly, we found that the dignity violations appear to drive the sense of occupational stigma. We were told that as the violations mount, the sense of stigma grows.

Central to upholding dignity at work are the contributory ideas that there should be good dialogue between the organisation and the worker, equal opportunity between occupational groups and pathways, just rewards for employees, appropriate levels of job security, and a sense of occupational well-being. Our data indicated that TOF feel strongly that these contributory ideas are not upheld in their lived experience. As expected (e.g. Hughes, 1951, 1958, 1970; Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999, 2014; Bolton, 2007, 2010, 2011; Sayer, 2005, 2007), respondents contrasted their working life-sphere with their TTF colleagues. TOF 22, for example, claims that 'good teachers' are not fairly rewarded or recognised, whereas 'good researchers' are 'worshipped by everybody'. Indeed, 'teaching is very much secondary to research' (TOF 7) in higher education. We were told that 'Literally, research colleagues would have to set fire to the Vice Chancellor's Office… not to get progressed. It is really like that… Some don't turn up to meetings. Their teaching is sometimes appalling, but they know that as long as they can get the research funding and journal papers they need… if [the institution] refuse the promotion here because their teaching and collegiate behaviour is terrible, they can just go somewhere else.' (TOF 16)

At a substantive level, and in line with the dignity at work framework which puts an onus on objective measures (Bolton, 2007, 2010, 2011), the sense of outgroup status felt by TOF

stems mainly from perceived relative contractual and rewards-based disadvantages vis-à-vis the TTF group. For example, we were told by all 34 respondents that promotion and progression are relatively undefined, difficult to achieve, and often capped for TOF. Furthermore, TOF were pressured into taking on administrative positions to compensate for undertaking teaching activities which were deemed less valuable and less intensive than research positions. Thus, 'teaching-only is an inferior pathway' (e.g. TOF 17), and TOF therefore perform dirtier work than their peers. This is engrained in the organisational culture. 'I don't think that teaching itself in day-to-day university life is valued' (TOF 10).

TOF expressed the view that the objective factors contributing to dignity at work are being withheld or violated. There is poor department-institution-worker dialogue, an unjust reward structure, and unequal opportunities. This inscribes into the fabric of the organisation, and sets up an inter-subjective peer-to-peer dialogue, a corresponding sense that TOF perform the relatively dirtier work. And it is this perception which leads to TOF feeling discredited, marginalised, and stigmatised (Goffman, 1963). There are consequences and implications to this spoiled identity state: TOF feel devalued, they disengage, and sometimes sense they are being discriminated against. These aspects are discussed in more detail below.

Devaluation

A common theme running through the interviews was that TOF felt institutionally discredited and devalued, especially relative to TTF peers. For example, our tasks 'are not valued at all… they're devalued' (TOF 15). The consequence is that it is 'very disincentivising' (TOF 7). We were told, 'even if you're good at teaching' there is little point in 'work[ing] all out' to achieve teaching-related objectives, instead 'you're better off taking any time that you can to go and do research' (TOF 23). This led many TOF to claim that they were not recognised as 'proper

academics' (TOF 3). In other words, 'You're only regarded as an "academic" in inverted commas, if you do research' (TOF 7). TOF believe that management consistently send a message that teaching is less valuable than research. For example, 'It's as if teaching was just something that anybody could do' (TOF 3).

Strikingly, the language of dirt pervades the devaluation discourse. For example, 'So there's a little bit of a pecking order… and the [teaching-only] pathway is the bottom of the pecking order' (TOF 12). Teaching is described as 'dogsbody work' (TOF 15) and 'rubbish work'. TOF believe that they are seen 'as kind of the lesser mortals who do all of the rubbish work that [research-active faculty] don't want to do' (TOF 22). This means that TOF 'get dumped on… left, right, and centre' (TOF 24). Furthermore, 'in academia, teaching-only is considered pond life' (TOF 34), and TOF are required to 'sweep up… another [TTF] person's mess… so that [they] can go on sabbatical… that is certainly not something I can put on my CV' (TOF 1).

The devaluation process both discredits and dehumanises. To this end, TOF are made to feel disposable and substitutable. The following describes a discussion between one TOF and their Head of Department about the following year's teaching allocation: 'We've got a slot we need a body for. You're a body. And you need a slot' (TOF 2). In the UK, the RAE (previously, REF) has exacerbated the divide between teaching and research pathways. There are comparable processes and practices across the world that perform the same function. Although the RAE (arguably) makes research excellence visible, this is often at the expense of TOF and teaching excellence which are held to be substantially less valuable. There are two noteworthy consequences that stem from the 'REF madhouse' (TOF 24). First, incoming TTF negotiate contracts to minimise – and in some cases, eliminate – teaching responsibilities. For example,

'Some people struck deals such that they never had to teach an undergraduate group, ever!' (TOF 24). Second, underperforming TTF are sometimes 'hidden' from the 'REF inspection' by transferring them – often, temporarily – to the TOF pathway: 'It's just a joke!' (TOF 7). Devaluation is transformed into other negative emotions, such as dismay. For example: 'It just dismays me that teaching is so poorly valued. You know what I mean?' (TOF 17).

Through all of this, respondents struggled to reconcile the fundamental gap between the public face of higher education – which includes the institutional promotion of teaching excellence through outward-facing communications – versus the private face, which left TOF feeling devalued and their teaching activities discredited. Goffman (1963) emphasised that a stigmatised attribute is not inherently stigmatised, rather it is the relationship between the stigmatiser and the stigmatised that allows this to manifest. In other words, context and relationships matter. Yet, TOF's in/visible external/internal esteem/stigma means that they face an irreconcilable identity contradiction problem. Publicly, being a teaching-only academic is a highly regarded profession (e.g. Chakrabortty and Weale, 2017), but within the confines of the institution TOF feel devalued and discredited. Compounding the problem is that these two worlds seem oblivious to each other. This dimension of stigma goes beyond Goffman's (1963) framework, possibly because scant attention has previously been paid to groups who suffer idiosyncratic occupational stigmatisation.

Disengagement

The following respondent recalls an annual performance review with their head of department: 'Well we're not really bothered what you do as long as you do this teaching and this admin. Then, we don't really care' (TOF 1). At this point, the respondent told us that they reciprocated the disengagement message by putting emotional and physical distance between

themselves, colleagues, the department, and the institution. Indeed, they were not alone. Several respondents revealed backstage conversations – often performance appraisal meetings – with management which were profoundly discrediting.

We were told that 'research is king' (TOF 29), and 'if you're good at teaching, OK you're good at teaching. So what? It's just not rewarded. It's secondary" (TOF 34). This message echoed throughout the interviews, with one respondent telling us that 'Nobody could give a damn whether I was good or bad… Beyond research articles… Nothing else counts at all… we've lost any kind of teaching culture really' (TOF 15). All too often, day-to-day encounters with management and peers ended with TOF feeling a sense of not-belonging. The TOF response was a move towards – further or total – disengagement with the institution.

Discrimination

We found that violations to TOFs dignity at work (Bolton, 2007, 2010, 2011) leads to a feeling of being discriminated against. TOF 26, for example, claims that TOF are not viewed as 'full colleagues' because 'once you opt to go teaching only, you close every door possible… We always therefore suffer, shall we say, a discrimination.' (TOF 26). Another respondent told us that there needs to be more done to 'encourage people to think that actually… being a teaching fellow is not a bad thing' (TOF 4). We were told, 'You just get squeezed into a sort of Never Never Land where nobody looks at you or talks to you' (TOF 30).

We were told that the marginalisation of TOF is physically enacted. This might mean a lack of everyday mundane interaction between the less (TOF) and more (TTF) valorised pathway staff, or teaching-related issues being omitted from formal interactions. For example, 'Teaching's just not on [the] agenda… In fact, teaching was an administrative item on the

departmental meeting agenda, which I just think really undermines our teaching… It has no visibility' (TOF 11).

The physical marginalisation also translates itself into office accommodation policy. Some respondents said that they had been moved around the business school, passing through one office after another, as research staff expressed a desire to be close to each other, or temporarily filling holes as staff joined and left. Other respondents told us that TOF are herded together in mass-occupancy offices, whereas TTF would typically get sole-ownership. For example, 'I've been here, what, now 14 years, and every time that somebody says they want to sit near somebody they research with, the teaching-only people will be moved out to other offices... it's always kind of like, "Oh you don't need to sit in the department because you don't do research. You go and sit in some other building"' (TOF 2).

The language of the institution also makes manifest the marginalisation of TOF. For example, research grant funding monies were often used by TTF to 'buy themselves out of their teaching' (TOF 19). Furthermore, TOF claim that research failure is punished by extra teaching. For example, 'I mean the very fact [that] when you fail in research you're basically given teaching. Teaching is there for a punishment, a failure' (TOF 32). Worse still, we were told that if TTF 'fail' in the long-term and miss RAE targets then they suffer the shame of being transferred onto TOF contracts. Ultimately, we were told that there is 'a mix of things making it easier for research staff and there is less of that kind of stigma around that pathway' (TOF 33).

Coping with Stigma: Dignity In Work and the role of Positive Identity Talk

Strikingly, the analysis of our data revealed that although the descent into a self-constituted sense of stigma was enacted through various violations of dignity at work that led TOF to feel their work was relatively dirty, the positive identity talk around the contributory

characteristics of dignity in work were exploited to challenge this discredited status (Table 4). In total, there were 369 comments around these dignity in work themes, of which 287 (77.8%) were positive. When we withdraw the category 'respect' from the coding, because respondents typically referred to a *lack* of respect, 98.5% of the remaining comments were positive.

Autonomy: Teaching-only Does Not Mean Only Teaching

On many occasions, TOF emphasised that there is 'academic freedom' to perform extra-contractual value-added tasks. This is a means to cope with the stigma of undertaking the dirty work of teaching, and we were told that in some cases this was the reason for carrying on (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999). For example: 'You can spend a whole day dealing with an emergency with a student… you haven't done any of the things you were going to do. But… That is very fulfilling, to feel that you have supported a student. The academic freedom is excellent … That has kept me here' (TOF 5).

TOF embraced the workplace autonomy that allows them to choose how to spend their time. Supporting students, for example, was seen to be both valuable and highly dignified work. It is ironic that the autonomy stems from the lack of managerial care and oversight. For example, on one hand we were told that nobody 'gives a damn' about TOF (TOF 15), but on the other, 'I've been very fortunate in the sense that… they're not quite sure what to do with a teacher. I effectively said: "This is what I've been doing", which they liked' (TOF 27). Similarly, the spatial marginalisation of TOF was also 'talked-up' (Snow and Anderson, 1987; Ybema et al., 2009). For example, not having a permanent office means that 'they let me work… from home… I literally can work from my study at home… So yeah, if you think about it, that saves me loads of time' (TOF 12).

Job Satisfaction: Teaching-only For the Love of It

In total, 33 (of 34) respondents talked positively about job satisfaction. Strikingly, rather than just 'satisfaction', respondents talked about 'love' for their work. Although teaching is discredited and devalued by others, TOF engage in positive role-specific identity talk. For example, 'I love being with the students and I make no secret of that, or apology for it. I'm still here and it's just for the students' (TOF 2). This respondent continued, 'I've stayed here not for the money, not because [this] university's a great employer. I stayed because I just love being with the students, and when I leave I shall miss them terribly.' For many respondents, talking positively about the TOF role and tasks seems to be an essential coping mechanism.

There are many examples of TOF talking about their 'love' for teaching. For example, 'I love it! I love being with… and teaching the undergraduates" (TOF 3). Despite feeling there are no 'real incentives… for doing a good job… I really enjoy the interaction with the students and spending time teaching them... So that's what I love about it and why I do it' (TOF 8). Indeed, respondents felt that a career in teaching was like a 'calling'. For example, TOF do it 'because we love it and enjoy it and it's what we've chosen to do' (TOF 11). Put simply, 'I really… I love teaching' (TOF 25) and 'I just think it's an incredibly rewarding and enjoyable job to do… I love it to bits' (TOF 27). One respondent reflexively asked, 'Why do I keep doing it' when there are 'significant barriers' and 'I could go back to what I used to do and earn five times as much?' (TOF 30). The justification offered was twofold: first 'because I enjoy it' and second, because it is 'what I should be doing' (TOF 30).

Learning and Development: An Asymmetrical Game

We were told by TOF that they embraced the opportunity to learn and develop. For some respondents, this means being able to design and develop courses. For example, 'There's

probably five programmes like this in the world so it's quite an interesting challenge to develop teaching materials for something with no template, no text books' (TOF 16). The freedom to engage in pedagogical research and development was also important. However, although there was positive identity talk around innovation, we were told that this work was unlikely to be noticed by management. For example, 'There's no recognition for me doing innovative things.' (TOF 23). Yet rather than dwell on the invisibility of teaching-related work, respondents preferred to talk-up their past successes.

Meaningful Work: Reshaping the 'Academic Value' Narrative

Job satisfaction and meaningful work were strongly connected. We were told that although 'benefits' such as promotion and salary 'might be nice', instead 'most people probably do the teaching-only because they find it rewarding' (TOF 18). TOF related a sense of dignity in work through intrinsic rewards. For example, 'My career? Hmmm, I don't know really. It doesn't really bother me. Because that's not what inspires me. I don't do the job because I want to be promoted. I do it because I love it' (TOF 8). Furthermore, and coinciding with respondents telling us that this career was a calling, there was a sense of evangelism around teaching as meaningful work. For example, 'I soon realised that teaching is not just about imparting knowledge, it's actually much more enriching than that. And so my motivation to continue teaching comes, I suppose, from seeing how important it is to teach… And so that makes me want to be an even better teacher, and also to champion good teaching if that makes sense?' (TOF 10). It was striking how many respondents told us that they either entered teaching or continued teaching because they wanted to make a difference. For example, '… well I'm not particularly motivated by finance, I'd rather do it because I think I'm making a difference to the students, as cheesy as that sounds' (TOF 22).

Discussion

This study focuses on an occupational group facing the challenges of idiosyncratic stigma. In terms put forward by Kreiner et al. (2006), TOF undertake work which would be considered more or less clean because it measures as both low depth and low breadth in the dirty work framework. Our findings suggest the importance of identity talk (e.g. Snow and Anderson, 1987; Ybema et al., 2009; Ybema, 2010; Toyoki and Brown, 2013; Brown and Toyoki, 2014) related to dignity in work (Bolton, 2007, 2010, 2011) as a means to mitigate a self-constituted sense of occupational stigma (e.g. Goffman, 1963; Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999, 2014; Kreiner et al., 2006; Ashforth et al., 2007). Talking-up certain subjective factors – namely, autonomy, opportunities for self-development, job satisfaction and meaningfulness – is a means to cope with the indignity of performing relatively dirty work (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999; Hughes, 1951).

When occupational stigma is pervasive – high on depth and breadth – social creativity seems to be about establishing a positive distinctiveness relative to higher-status ingroups (TTF) and about building entitativity. Our results show that TOF focus less on ingroup/outgroup dynamics but rather re-articulate positive aspects of their work for themselves. This may be because inter-group comparisons are not as pervasively relevant for idiosyncratically stigmatised workers where entitativity is less relevant, because the hurdle between groups is too high, or because feelings of precariousness are lower.

This study allows us to make two theoretical contributions. First, we demonstrate the linkage between theories of dignity, dirty work, and stigma. Specifically, we identify that when workers' dignity at work is violated, the violated group's tasks are often ascribed as relatively dirty by the group themselves and by others. In turn, the undignified workers become

stigmatised. However, these stigmatised workers engage in certain forms of identity talk related to dignity in work as a coping strategy. Second, Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) extended the definition of physical, social, and moral dirty work proposed by Hughes (1951) by classifying work as dirty according to the tasks performed and/or the work environment. Kreiner et al. (2006) further extended this framework by broadening the definition of dirty work to encompass four categories of stigma (pervasive, compartmentalised, diluted, and idiosyncratic) based on two dimensions of dirty work (depth and breadth). Our data analysis indicates that this framework lacks a(n) (in)visibility dimension. We contend that the teaching professor's work is only considered to be dirty within the organisation. Outside the organisation, the strict hierarchical structure which makes teaching inferior to research is invisible. Thus, the stigmatisation of occupations might occur as a function of one or more of the following groups viewing the tasks performed as dirty: the occupational group, a hierarchically superior 'other' group, or the public.

Our study opens up a number of important research questions and opportunities. First, we call for studies to investigate our proposed theoretical extensions. For example, the organisation studies literature focuses on visible traits of dirtiness, but for many stigmatised occupational groups the spoiled identity is invisible to outsiders. Goffman (1963: 14) makes a similar conjecture about the stigmatisation of individuals who have character blemishes which cannot easily be seen. Furthermore, we have argued the linkage between dignity, dirty work, and stigma. However, the work on dignity is relatively embryonic and our study is the first to truly exploit Bolton's multidimensional framework. For example, there may be new ways to categorise the factors as well as other factors we have not considered. Fundamentally, we believe that violations of workplace dignity are crucial to understanding an occupational group's descent into stigma, and that dignity-related identity work is a means for stigmatised groups to cope.

From an empirical perspective, it is striking that teachers do not seem to be protected by the 'shield of necessity', which guards physical and social dirty workers from the most harmful effects of occupational stigma (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999, 2014). Possible avenues for research might include (i) to understand the role that dignity in/at work plays in granting protection by this shield, i.e. perhaps it is reserved for those who suffer violations to both in and at work dignity; (ii) to explore what it means to be protected by the shield of necessity; and (iii) to investigate the types of dirty work the shield of necessity protects. It might be that the shield is reserved for those who suffer a high breadth of dirty work (as opposed to depth). For example, Kreiner et al. (2006) note that reporters, priests, and public relations officers are examples of groups that might suffer from compartmentalised stigma (high depth/low breadth) and, in the current climate, it would not be difficult to imagine that the edge of the shield does not reach far enough to cover them.

Final thoughts

This article lifts the lid on the importance of dignity in the workplace, and the identity challenges faced by those who feel violated and undignified. We acknowledge there are certainly individuals and groups in far more precarious occupations and workplace situations than TOF. Even so, we are led to a worrying conclusion. Namely, if professors feel their work is dirty and undignified, and that teaching can be stigmatised, then it may not be possible for any occupation to be safe from the damaging effects of stigmatisation in the modern organisation. Thus, we echo Toyoki and Brown's (2014) call for sustained stigma-related research because 'stigmatising and being stigmatised' appear to be 'unavoidable' and 'cross-cultural' (p.716).

We hope that this article is a way to open the eyes of senior management not just in higher education institutions, but also to senior managers who foster and facilitate hierarchies

that lead to the marginalisation of some workers. Even if individuals are professionally qualified and undertake tasks that are externally viewed as high-esteem, this does not mean they are shielded from the most harmful workplace identity challenges. We conclude by saying that dignity both in and at work are important. Ultimately, we would like to see measures that demonstrate the costs and benefits of low and high workplace dignity, respectively, for organisations. This would set the workplace (and the world) on a path of positive change and enable organisations to justify dignity-related spending and investment plans to their investors, who often view decision-making through a narrow neo-classical economic lens.

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Table 1: Characteristics of the respondents involved in this investigation.

Respondent	Age	TOF experience	Professional experience
TOF 1	60 +	11+ years	0-3 years
TOF 2	30-39	11+ years	11+ years
TOF 3	40-49	4-7 years	7-10 years
TOF 4	50-59	7-10 years	11+ years
TOF 5	50-59	11+ years	4-7 years
TOF 6	40-49	4-7 years	11+ years
TOF 7	50-59	4-7 years	4-7 years
TOF 8	50-59	4-7 years	4-7 years
TOF 9	30-39	0-3 years	11+ years
TOF 10	50-59	4-7 years	4-7 years
TOF 11	40-49	4-7 years	11+ years
TOF 12	40-49	0-3 years	11+ years
TOF 13	60 +	11+ years	4-7 years
TOF 14	60 +	4-7 years	11+ years
TOF 15	30-39	11+ years	0-3 years
TOF 16	40-49	7-10 years	11+ years
TOF 17	60 +	11+ years	0-3 years
TOF 18	40-49	4-7 years	11+ years
TOF 19	30-39	0-3 years	4-7 years
TOF 20	40-49	7-10 years	11+ years
TOF 21	40-49	4-7 years	4-7 years
TOF 22	60 +	7-10 years	11+ years
TOF 23	50-59	4-7 years	11+ years
TOF 24	60 +	7-10 years	4-7 years
TOF 25	40-49	0-3 years	4-7 years
TOF 26	50-59	11+ years	0-3 years
TOF 27	40-49	4-7 years	11+ years
TOF 28	50-59	7-10 years	11+ years
TOF 29	50-59	11+ years	11+ years
TOF 30	30-39	4-7 years	4-7 years
TOF 31	50-59	11+ years	11+ years
TOF 32	21-29	0-3 years	4-7 years
TOF 33	40-49	0-3 years	0-3 years
TOF 34	50-59	7-10 years	11+ years

Table 2: Survey responses: reflections on teaching.

PANEL A: REFLECTIONS ON TEACHING	Mean
I see teaching as a way to give something back to society	3.92
There is nothing different about teaching. I see the job in the same way as I would see any other.	2.17
I believe that 'teaching-only' staff are viewed as key assets within the academic community	2.24
In my INSTITUTION, teaching-only staff are viewed as key assets	2.29
In my DEPARTMENT, teaching-only staff are viewed as key assets	2.60
Students do not know the difference between staff on teaching pathways and others	4.00

PANEL B: PERCEPTIONS OF THE VALUE OF TEACHING / RESEARCH	Mean
I believe my INSTITUTION values high quality teaching	3.32
I believe my DEPARTMENT values high quality teaching	3.51
PERSONALLY, I value high quality teaching	4.75
I believe my INSTITUTION values high quality research	4.81
I believe my DEPARTMENT values high quality research	4.75
PERSONALLY, I value high quality research	4.09
My INSTITUTION values high quality teaching over high quality research	1.71
My DEPARTMENT values high quality teaching over high quality research	1.97
PERSONALLY, I value high quality teaching over high quality research	3.40
I believe my INSTITUTION incentivises high quality teaching	2.24
I believe my DEPARTMENT incentivises high quality teaching	2.27
I believe my INSTITUTION incentivises high quality research	4.39
I believe my DEPARTMENT incentivises high quality research	4.26

Note: Responses are based on a five-point Likert scale, as follows: 1 = 'Strongly Disagree', 2 = 'Disagree', 3 = Neither Agree Nor Disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree; N/A = Not known or not applicable.

Table 3: Thematic coding – dignity at work.

'Objective' Factors	Number of respondents who mentioned this issue	Separate comments related to this issue	Positive	Negative
Dialogue	33	326	18	308
Equal opportunity	31	143	6	137
Just rewards	34	190	3	187
Security	27	67	2	65
Wellbeing	31	115	8	107
		841	37	804

Table 4: Thematic coding: dignity in work.

	Number of respondents who mentioned this issue	Separate comments related to this issue	Positive	Negative
(Lack of) respect	32	94	16	78
Autonomy	16	29	29	-
Job satisfaction	33	97	96	1
Learning and development	25	44	42	2
Meaningful work	33	105	104	1
		369	287	82