Research Article

THE VERTICAL SILOS OF CONTROL: A SHORT CRITICAL NARRATIVE DISCUSSION OF THE ASCRIPTIVE STRUCTURALIZED INEQUALITIES AT WORK

*Abdul Aziz

Working Lives Research Institute, London Metropolitan University, Tower Building 166 - 220 Holloway Road, London N7 8DB, UK

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	In 2013 having worked over a decade in the public sector I returned to my old University where I obtained my first Undergraduate Degree to study again at a more advanced level. Weary of being a little rusty after having spent ten years away from traditional academia I embarked on my part time professional doctoral degree in researching work. The process of reading carefully and writing extensively around a subject matter that has been profoundly personal to me, the study of the diasporas Bangladeshi population residing in Tower Hamlets, provided me with an epistemological set of lenses that I would deploy on my learning journey on which I would rediscover the cultural and social narrative of my own cultural capital and human capital consumption and its value and more broadly the operational value in correlation to class power and the social organization and dispensation of human capital and cultural capital .

INTRODUCTION

The discussion that follows in this paper is a critical narrative reflection on my learning and understanding of the nature of work with a focus on three areas that I felt were pertinent in the contextualization and reframing of my own presupposition pertaining to work. Diffusely tying Habermas's (1990) [1967] model of critical reflection and Kim's (1999) framework as a foundational frame of reference within the story format model, I apply three phases of reflection: (1) Descriptive, (2) Reflective - and (3) Critical to give form to my unstructured thoughts.

Descriptive

As a practitioner of workforce planner and as a person I feel my experience on the nature of work has transformed my internalized conservative viewpoint shaped by my own thoughts and value system which previously focused on individuals and work and is now more existential and focused on the structural elements of contemporary work.

Working over a decade in both the private and public sector has given me a fuller understanding of the salience of social hierarchy and social status and its influence and pervasion into all spheres of society and working life (Bourdieu, 1986), as well as its associated power and class statuses as prominent factors in shaping the changing nature of work. Having worked in the private sector and then moved to the public sector I feel I know have a much deeper understanding of these facets of work which give rise and reason to collective identities (Thompson, 1963); and how they are embedded in the labour market and policies which influence the structure of labour in terms of race, gender and class (Escott, 2012);(Hays, 2011) (Skeggs,1997,2004) and can form the basis for organization and social action. I feel I have a much broader understanding of discrimination and marginalization of minority and disenfranchised groups and how they exist on multiple levels within the labour market and how unpacking its inherent effects remains challenging and often over looked in the analysis of the changing nature of contemporary work (Bloch ,2013); (Bolten & Laaser, 2013). Engaging with the literature of Bourdieu (1984-1986;1990;1991;1998), Weber (2013;1978) [1904-05;1956] , Marx (1990;1992) [1867;1885] and Durkheim (2012) [1933] has enabled me to unlock and change my narrative knowledge pertaining to work and some of the hidden aspects of my own consciousness that I felt were

*Corresponding author: Abdul Aziz,
Working Lives Research Institute, London Metropolitan University, Tower Building 166 - 220 Holloway Road, London N7 8DB, UK.

previously inaccessible as a disposition of living in a conditioned society and has equipped me with a better personal understanding of how the cumulative success or lack of success of individuals in the labour market is a social construct; how institutions have organized our lives as a form of social control who's dominant curricula and practices have shaped the social spheres of the individual and how these arbitrary practices of the most symbolically powerful institutions and those agents who wield power can amount to a imposition of what Bourdieu (1991) famously characterized as 'symbolic violence'.

Reflective

As an integral part of my own sense making I applied my reading of Bourdieus ' thinking tools' to my own lived experiences as an existential cathartic prism and found myself intentionally reflecting on my cultural capital posits and revisiting my recollections of my admittance into the various pedagogical institutions and subsequent entry into the labour market. I questioned my admittance into some of these positions I placed myself within and have been placed by others within the institutions I have worked, and my own position within the organization I currently work. Reflecting on my own narrative suggests that the successes and failures within the organizations I had previously worked may appear explicitly to be based on meritocracy but tacitly background will have also played a pivotal part and may not be a coincidence but a construct embedded in what Marxian's would term as a 'false consciousness' (Engels, 1893), this I feel would have been cloaked in symbolic power in the vertical silos of control where admittance into higher positions of management was not open to me as a consequence of my socio cultural and socio economic background (Aziz, 2015).

Having applied numerous times without success for a promotional position in my previous place of work despite having a proven track record to deliver results within the organization, my experiences within the organization I had worked have led me to believe that admittance into senior positions of management was only open to those with the most mediated distinctive and exigent forms of habitus and social caliber. I realize my instrumentally rationalized application of Bourdieuian theorems as a framing devise to keep control of my arguments are equally open to debate and alternative viewpoints but further semantic analysis has given my presupposition credence and reinforced the idea of 'social gate keepers' (Mirowsky & Ross, 2003) endowed with power who open social gates, filtering and favoring individuals similar to themselves from others is not far removed from what appears to been both predicated and was practiced within my previous organization of work.

Critical Emancipatory

The interconnection between theory and my concrete experiences has allowed me unpack as a measured examination of the equivocation of the recruitment and promotional practices of the organization I had worked and question the complex egregious employment selection and promotional practices. I enlarged and applied my thought process and frameworks from my learning to the structural elements of my previous place of work and questioned how this impacts individuals and the wider community the organization served

and in doing so was personally troubled by the practices of the organization that I had worked. What has become perpetually unsettling and apparent to me, that I could not avoid detecting were distinct social patterns and tropes; the existence of inequality of power in relation to authority; through a conceptual trap that appears to be embedded at the intersections between systems that predicates vi-as-vies equality and equal opportunities, but enacts a form of systematic ascriptive structuralized inequalities of women and minority groups. Which bars these unrepresented groups from entering senior levels of management, by predetermining the selection of individuals? Especially unfortunate, as these groups, on closer examination were in possession of significant scarce human capital knowledge and expertise. But, unable to disentangle from the complicated mechanisms, that infer to the sources of disparity with no recourse.

Having worked in Tower Hamlets, in one of the most culturally diverse boroughs in London with a population of around 284,500 residents (Census, 2011), I questioned why the publicly funded organization I had worked did not reflect the rich diversity and cultural composition of the community it served, within the workforce it employed, particularly within the upper echelons of management which was dominated by middle and upper class males. The borough had a high ethnic diversity composition where 64% of residents classed themselves as either Bangladeshi, black afro Caribbean, Turkish, Kurdish or Haredi Jewish (Office for National Statistics, 2014), yet there was a visible absence in the representation of these groups and women at senior levels of management which to me was not a coincidence but a social construct and predicament which appeared to be alarmingly prevalent in many spheres of public administration (Aziz, 2016).

Through structuralized process and procedure, such as spurious equality and diversity statements and policy's embossed on office walls, many organizations enact symbolic violence on black and ethnic minority workers, through appointments from among their own ranks within their organization, unchecked discriminate, whilst projecting a false sense of equality, many organizations prima fascia imply equality and diversity piffle, this means that we must not assume the system of values has in some way evolved, it is almost always imposed with the implicit purposes of keeping power within the powerful gatekeepers (Mirowsky & Ross, 2003)

Summary

Reflecting on my experiences has enabled me to enter into a dialogue with myself and improve my own epistemological awareness in self evaluation with regards to my ability to read the biases and failures of my own levels of success and lack of successes within the organizations I have worked. Reflecting and writing on my experiences has facilitated a deeper understanding of the influence of wider social systems which have patterned many of my experiences and the experiences of others within the pedagogical institutions and the labour market and the need to recognize the strengths of my arguments against the strength of the evidence I present as a balanced reflection on my continued learning. The adoption and integration of critical reflection in my research and learning has enabled me to move away from the realms of producing

descriptive work and passive learning where the language deployed in the production of academic work was simplistic and colloquial and involved me as the researcher simply retelling research findings, to a move into the realms of critical and autonomous analysis, to write from an analytical perspective, where description is more limited and extra rational evaluation more emphasized resulting in the engraining of both knowledge and the production of critically written work (Aziz, 2015, 2016).

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