

Key determinants of organisational silence for non-standard workers

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Key Determinants of Organisational Silence for Non-Standard Workers

Abstract

Purpose - The purpose of this paper is to identify the key determinants of Organisational Silence from the perspective of Non-Standard Workers. The study focuses on three research themes, firstly analysing the experiences of NSW motivations to remain silent, secondly analysing the role of the NSW life cycle in the motivation to remain silent. The final theme is to evaluate the impact on organisational voice when an organisation utilises a workforce blended with NSWs and Standard Workers (SW).

Research Design - The study utilises a phenomenological approach, as defined by Manen, (2007), to collect and analyse the phenomenon of organisational silence from the perspective of Non-Standard Workers (NSWs). The NSWs are defined as being individuals operating via Limited Liability United Kingdom registered companies created for the purpose of delivering services to organisations via Contract of Services. This study utilised a combination of phenomenology and hermeneutics to collect and analyse the data collected from the NSWs utilising semi-structured interviews (Lindseth and Norberg, 2004).

Research Findings - The study concludes with three core findings. (1) Non-Standard Workers (NSWs) experience similar motivational factors to silence as experienced by Standard Workers (SWs). The key differential between a SW and a NSW is the role of defensive silence as a dominant motivator for a new start up NSW. The study identified that the reasons for this are a new start up NSWs are being defensive for reasons of protecting their reputation for any future contract. In addition, organisations are utilising the low confidence of new start up NSWs to suppress the ability of NSWs to voice. (2) The research indicates how experienced NSWs utilise the marketing stage of their life cycle to establish voice mechanisms. (3) The study identified that NSWs, fulfilling management and supervisory roles for organisations, are supporting / creating climates of silence through their transfer of experiences from being SWs prior to becoming NSWs.

Research Limitations - This study is a pilot study, and the findings from this study will be carried forward into a larger scale study through engagement with further participants across a diverse range of sectors. This study has identified that there is a need for further studies into organisational silence and NSWs to analyse more fully the impact of silence on the individuals and the organisation itself. A qualitative phenomenological hermeneutical study is not intended to be extrapolated to provide broad trends. The focus of a phenomenological hermeneutic research methodology is on describing and analysing the richness and depth of the NSW, experiences of the silence in organisational settings.

Research Originality - This paper draws together the studies of worker classification, motivators for Organisational Silence and the impact of Blending SW and NSWs in an organisational setting. The study demonstrates that academic research to date has focused predominantly on SWs to the exclusion of the 1.5 million, and growing, NSWs in the United Kingdom. This study examines these under-represented workers to analyse the participant's experiences of Organisational Silence, and its consequences in organisational settings, demonstrating a need for further studies.

Keywords - Organisational Silence. Employee Silence, Non-Standard Workers (NSW), Standard Workers (SW) and Blending of Workers.

Paper Type - Research Paper

Introduction

If one was to present a catalogue of synonyms for 'silence', it is not such a distant imaginative leap to a conclusion that the majority would suggest figuratively that "Silence is Golden". If this synonym is applied to an organisational perspective it would suggest that the majority would suggest that it is better that workers remain silent in preference to providing management with information about problematic organisational performance.

This study explores the assertion that silence, in organisational terms, is not always a golden ticket to securing an optimal organisation, both in productivity, and performance, and in fact, employees choosing to remain silent can impede efficiency, dramatically affect staff motivation, and reduce organisational productivity, and performance.

A strong body of literature exists supporting the notion that organisational silence negatively affects performance. For example, research of 5,400 major IT projects (Bloch et al., 2011) identified that on average 45% of projects are delivered over budget, 56% fail to achieve the planned benefits, and finally 7% of the projects exceeded the original time scales. Additionally, of one hundred New Zealand-based organisations interviewed, 70% had suffered at least one project failure, and 50% reported multiple projects failed to deliver the benefits anticipated (Brame and Barlow. 2010) because employees had not communicated organisational failings to management. Furthermore, a Treasury Committee study into the causes of the global banking crisis of 2008 concluded that many banking employees had concerns about their firms trading activities but were afraid to take these concerns to management Committee (2009); perhaps for fear they too would find themselves bound to the unenviable end of their employment.

The utilisation of NSWs, under contracts of services, offers organisations the opportunity to supplement organisational core skill sets with external expertise. Kitching and Smallbone

(2012) identified that there are in excess of 1.5 million individuals, within the United Kingdom, who are classified as NSWs generating in excess of £88 billion of annual sales.

Despite the importance of the NSWs, academic studies on the role of voice and silence by workers to date have largely ignored the perspective of these NSWs. As such, this study aims to analyse the factors that motivate NSWs to remain silent through a process of collecting and analysing their experiences of silence in organisational settings.

The first section of this paper focuses on the theoretical foundations from the fields of classification of workers, organisational silence, employee silence, NSW life cycles and the integration of Standard Workers (SWs) and Non-Standard Workers (NSWs) within the same organisational environment. These theoretical foundations are analysed to generate research propositions for the methodology developed in section two. The paper subsequently outlines the research findings and evidences qualitative conclusions to the research.

Theoretical Foundation and Research Propositions

In order to identify the requisite sample size and research participants, it is initially essential to examine the theoretical foundations that support contemporary definitions of Standard Workers (SWs) and Non-Standard Workers (NSWs).

This study utilises the theoretical framework provided by Cappelli and Keller (2013) which recommended that workers can be classified with reference to the legal framework that workers operate under as shown in the following diagram:

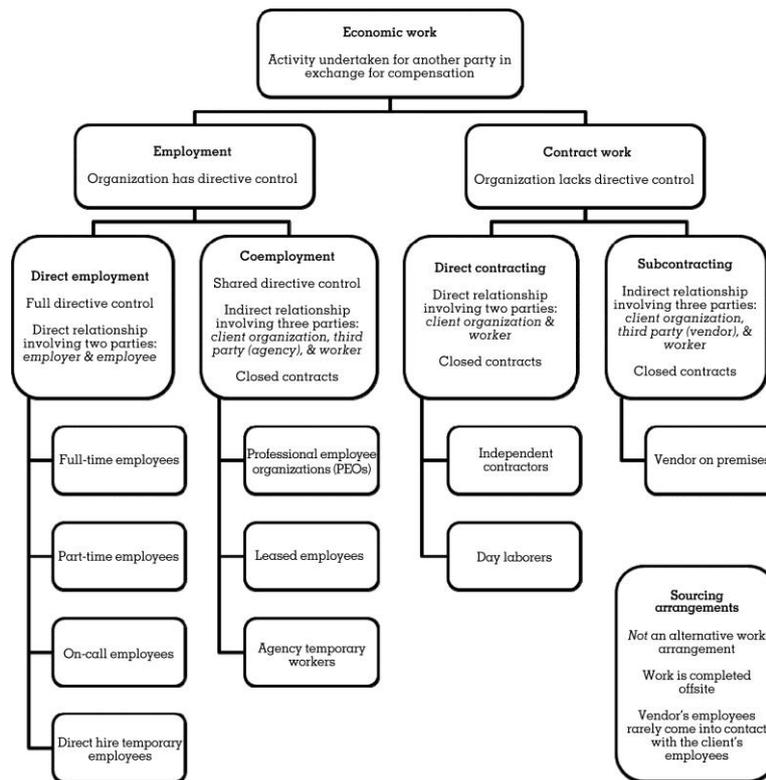


Figure 1 – Standard and Non-Standard Workers adapted from Cappelli and Keller (2013)

Cappelli and Keller (2013) demonstrated that SW expectations are that they will be recruited under a Contract of Employment with expectations of longevity and in return, they understand that they will be under the administrative control of the organisation. In comparison, NSWs are contracted within the body of Contract Law with no expectation of longevity and no administrative attachment to an organisation.

In summary for the purpose of this study, a NSW is defined as being ‘an individual delivering service via a Contract of Services within the legal framework of a Limited Liability Company registered in the United Kingdom’, this definition is consistent with the Cappelli and Keller (2013) model.

As such, participants that are operating under a Contract of Services on a temporary basis awaiting a contract of employment are excluded from this study.

The justification for excluding these individuals is the recognition that their experiences of the phenomena of silence in an organisational setting will be reflective of their experiences as a SW, not those of an NSW.

Silence within an Organisation

Existing academic literature on voice and silence predominantly traces its genealogy from the Hirschman (1970) model examining voice and silence from the perspective of consumers procuring from organisations, and it explores how customers react to dissatisfaction by an organisation's performance through a choice to voice, exit or remain loyal to the organisation.

The theoretical and empirical studies of voice and silence in organisations, however, encompass three distinct schools of thought: the forms of silence, the constructs of silence, and the organisational effect of silence (Brinsfield, 2009). This study is specifically focussed on the constructs of silence from the perspective of the NSWs, and therefore whilst Hirschman (1970) model provides a useful theoretical framework, analysis of silence within the organisation must be explored at the socio-historical and environmental levels examining the organisational codes, climates, and culture (Brinsfield, 2009).

Employee silence is the act of withholding of genuine expressions, behavioural, cognitive, and affective evaluations of organisational circumstances from individuals that are perceived to be capable of the changing the situation (Pinder and Harlos, 2001). The definition of employee silence must, therefore, accommodate the constructs or motivational factors that influence an individual to withhold rather than express ideas, information and opinions about work-related improvements (Van Dyne et al., 2003). Therefore, this study seeks to determine the extent to which SW motivational factors to remain silent are also applicable to the NSW in determining their decision to remain silent or to voice (Morrison and Milliken, 2000).

Pinder and Harlos (2001) identified two forms of employee silence: *Acquiescent* (passive withholding of information based on resignation or submission to the situation) and *Quiescent* (active withholding of information in order to protect self-based on fear of managerial repercussions). Van Dyne et al., (2003) expanded this model further, asserting that there are three specific motivators to remain silent: *Acquiescent*, *Defensive*, or *Pro-Social*.

Acquiescent Silence

The notion of acquiescent silence is particularly pertinent for this study of NSWs and is defined as being an expectation that voice will fall on ‘deaf ears’ and that the organisation will not change if a voice was raised (Milliken et al., 2003). These expectations encourage disengagement between employer and employee; and as such influence upon rates of employee retention. Therefore, the first research proposition is:

RP1 - Do NSWs expect that organisations will be deaf to their voice’, and are therefore motivated to remain silent?

Defensive Silence

Van Dyne et al., (2003) defined defensive silence as a motivation to remain silent for the purpose of self-protection, and from the fear, or consequence of voice. These perceptions emanate from the worker’s experiences of management acting in a way that discourages communication through intolerance of a dissenting voice and secondly the fear of termination to their employment as a consequence of voice (Dutton and Ashford, 1993). NSWs have to consider that not only can their Contract of Services be terminated immediately but also any potential reputational damages from early termination through a lack of reference.

As such, this form of organisational silence has developed into the following research proposition:

RP2 - Do NSWs experience a defensive motivation to remain silent due to contract termination and/or a fear of negative of reputational damage for future work?

Pro-Social Silence

Pro-Social motivation for silence is defined as being a determination to remain silent in support of group membership, or for fear of isolation from the workgroup - particularly where the individual believes that their position holds a minority viewpoint. (Milliken et al., 2003; Pinder and Harlos, 2001; Van Dyne et al., 2003)

It is asserted that NSWs typically hold minority viewpoints in organisations when compared to its SW staff. The minority perspective is justified on the basis that the NSW, in comparison to a SW, has no longevity, or association with an organisation. As such, the following research proposition has been developed:

RP - Do NSWs experience the motivation to remain silent for *Pro-Social* reasons?

NSWs in Positions of Management

Pinder and Harlos (2001) evidenced the role of management in creating a *Climate of Silence* at the organisational level and how this climate reinforced SW motivation to undertake *acquiescent* and *defensive silence*. Edmondson (2003) identified that an employee's willingness to voice was dependent on how approachable and responsive they perceived their supervisors to be.

Indeed, Morrison and Milliken, (2000) contend that *Employee Silence* is a socially constructed phenomenon, created at an organisational level and affected by differing number of contingent characteristics. These include factors such as the management processes, decision-making processes, and employee blending; and define individual perceptions of these characteristics as determinants of silence or voice.

This generates a question of the role or consequence of NSWs - undertaking supervisory or managerial activities for clients as part of the Contract of Services - in creating or maintaining a climate of silence.

RP4 - What role do NSWs play in creating or maintaining a climate of Organisational Silence when in a position of management?

Ineffectual Motivators

Brinsfield (2013) expanded the (Van Dyne et al., 2003) model finding empirical support for two motivators (Defensive Silence and Pro-Social Silence), determining a need to segregate acquiescent silence into Ineffectual and Disengagement motivators. The research introduced two new motivators to remain silent, these being *Deviant*, and *Diffident* motivations.

Ineffectual motivation focuses on the belief that speaking up would not positively affect the situation or is ineffective in changing the organisational situation (Brinsfield, 2013). This supports (and extends) the study by Milliken et al., (2003) that identified individuals are motivated to remain silent due to an expectation that their voice will be ignored (RP1). As such, the following research proposition has been developed:

RP5 - Do NSWs experience a motivation to remain silent for feelings of *ineffectiveness* during the delivery of contracted services?

Disengagement Motivators

The Brinsfield (2013) model, defined *Disengagement* as the uncoupling of the individual SW from the organisational work situation. The study identified that SWs disengaged from the organisation demonstrate: not caring what happens; not wanting to get involved; not caring about the organisation; and holding a belief that someone else should speak up (Brinsfield, 2013).

The *disengagement* motivational factor is an important aspect to examine from the context of NSWs, in particular the behaviours of absence of attachment or commitment to the organisation. There is an argument that a ‘Contract of Services’ defines that NSWs are motivated to be actively involved and active in caring about the organisational outcomes, this then generates the following research proposition:

RP6 - Do NSWs experience a motivation to remain silent due to *disengagement* with the organisation?

Deviant Motivators

Deviant motivators evidence a desire to seek revenge, purposefully harm others, to retaliate against the organisation, or to make management look bad (Brinsfield, 2013). As a possible scenario, there is an argument that a NSW will be motivated to seek opportunities to retaliate or harm an organisation when an organisation terminates a Contract of Services prior to completion of the contracted services. This then generates the following research proposition:

RP7 - Do NSWs experience a deviant motivation to purposively remain silent to seek revenge or harm a client?

Diffident Motivators

The final new motivator as part of the Brinsfield (2013) model was named as being silent for *diffident* purposes. This is defined as being hesitant in acting or speaking through lack of self-confidence of the individual (Brinsfield, 2013). The common responses in this category included not feeling confident enough to speak up, avoiding embarrassing themselves, not wanting to draw attention to themselves, avoiding appearing to be incompetent, or are unsure of the correct avenues of complaint.

It is important to recognise that the majority of NSWs participate in the journey from a SW to an NSWs, this transition period tests the NSWs confidence to speak and thus, it can be

suggested that inexperienced NSWs are motivated to remain silent for fear of embarrassment, concerns about their image, or impression and how to engage with the client. This research observation has led to the following proposition:

RP8 - Is the maturity of experience a motivator for NSWs to remain silent for diffident purposes?

Non-Standard Workers Life Cycle

In understanding the theoretical foundation of employee and organisational silence, this section reviews the theoretical foundations of a Non-Standard Workers (NSWs) life cycle, and considers its impact upon the motivation to remain silent.

The theoretical concept of the NSW ‘lifecycle’ was developed from the research by (Barley and Kunda, 2006) concluding that the life of an NSW is characterised by a temporal rhythm involving a continuous cycle of moving from marketing, role negotiation and then into the delivery of services as represented in Figure 2.

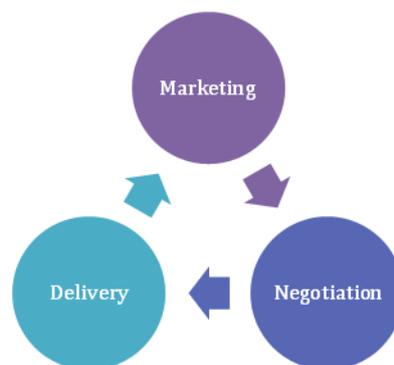


Figure 2 - The Contractors' Life Cycle (Barley and Kunda, 2006)

The following section describes briefly the elements of each stage in the life cycle, and applies this model to develop further research propositions.

Stage 1: Marketing

NSWs quickly learn that to survive in the market they need to appreciate that the marketing stage operates 24/7. NSWs need to participate actively to gather, order, disseminate, interpret, select, and utilise information about role opportunities, determining the skills required by hiring organisations and the market rates for delivery of these skill sets.

Stage 2: Negotiation

This life cycle stage is where NSWs develop and utilise skills to negotiate contracts in the form of three-way partnerships with recruitment agencies, organisational clients, and themselves. These negotiations are where NSWs sell their skills sets to demonstrate how they fulfil the organisation's needs and agree on a monetary price for these services. These negotiations set expectations, with the client, as to what the NSWs can or cannot do. Hence, according to Barley and Kunda (2006) there exists a gap between what the NSW states they can deliver and organisation client's expectations of what skills they require. The theoretical foundation of NSWs life cycle generates a research proposition that questions:

RP9 – Do NSWs experience motivation to remain silent during the delivery phase of the life cycle due to expectations gaps established between the organisation and the NSW during the negotiation stage?

Stage 3: Delivery

Barley and Kunda, (2006) empirical study highlighted that NSWs quickly identify that the everyday life of the organisation is structured around the life of SWs and not their own needs. The existing stakeholders establish organisational politics, cultures, routines, and expectations with a higher investment in the organisation. Theoretical and empirical studies have to date focused on the impact of blending of SWs and NSWs, concluding that the introduction of NSWs negatively impacts on attitudes toward the organisation management,

organisational colleagues and the organisation itself (Davis-Blake et al., 2003; Broschak and Davis-Blake, 2006).

Lautsch (2002) demonstrated a need for research that explores how NSWs adapt to operating in a blended workforce. Previous research identified that NSWs experienced an organisational life comprising of marginalisation, stigmatisation, invisibility, and being seen as a bundle of skills rather than as an individual (Inkson et al., 2001). Furthermore, studies have demonstrated that NSWs themselves appreciate and quickly adapt to systems and processes, irrespective of how an organisation treats them as individuals they will always be outsiders (Ashford et al., 2007). This study responds to the call by (Ashford et al., 2007) to provide insight into the consequences and responses to being treated as outsiders, through the following research proposition:

RP10 - Does the blending of NSWs with SWs act as an organisational silence motivator?

Research Methodology

The research methodology for this study focuses on human experience in its own right, concerning itself with meaning and the way in which meaning arises in the experience of the individual. This study is therefore founded upon a nominalist ontological perspective, which determines that reality is the product of the individuals mind and that reality is comprised of nothing more than names, concepts and labels, which are used to structure this reality. The purpose of these names and labels are to enable the description, sense making and interaction with reality (Burrell and Morgan, 1979).

Phenomenological Research Approach

This study utilises a phenomenological approach as described by Manen (2007), referred to as 'phenomenology of practice', combining interpretative (hermeneutic) and descriptive

(phenomenological) elements to focus on the essence of the phenomenon to better understand the subjective, lived experiences of respondents and examines how these individuals experience the social world in which they live (Dowling 2007; Manen 2007; Kafle 2013).

Manen (1984) proposed a four stage process to undertaking a phenomenological study (1) Conduct thematic analyses to examine the themes or experiential structures that make up an experience, separating incidental themes (that can change without affecting the phenomenon) and essential themes (that make the phenomenon what it is). (2) Describe the phenomena through the art of writing. (3) Maintain a strong focus on reflexivity on the research participant's experiences. (4) Balance the research context by considering the parts and whole to understand the essence of the experience from the perspective of the participant.

Methods of Preparation

Participants were selected for this study based upon the following criteria:

- a. The participant operates as a NSW under a 'Contract of Services' via a registered United Kingdom Limited Company;
- b. The participant has more than 36 months of contracted experience;
- c. The participant must operate and deliver services within the United Kingdom to minimise cultural, linguistic and operational differences;
- d. The participant is a NSW actively trading on delivering client operations.

The above criteria for the selection of respondents were developed to ensure that the worker classification attributes and experiences were similar across the sample, and blending between SWs and NSWs was minimised. The participants were identified through an approach to the contracting agencies recruiting NSWs resulting in the identification of a sample size of five participants who fulfilled the previously defined criteria. The sample of

respondents ranged in experience from five to twenty years as NSWs; delivering to client's specialist services encompassing Information Technology, Business Transformation and Programme Management. The delivery of services was undertaken by the public sector, financial services, international conglomerates, and the uniformed sectors. The purpose of a multi sectorial study was to identify experiences of silence that were experienced across multiple sectors and experiences that was sector specific.

Methods of Collecting Data

The data collection utilised a phenomenological interview approach utilising semi-structured, one to one interviews, comprising of an open, non-judgmental approach (Lindseth & Norberg 2004). The approach required the setting aside of the researcher's prior assumptions, understandings and/or knowledge of the phenomena of organisational silence. The researcher also utilised a pre-set of guiding prompts, informed by the research propositions, to initiate the interviews, and provide context for the discussions to follow. The participants determined the direction and or content of the discussions and the average duration of the interviews was ninety minutes.

Each participant was asked to provide a short biography, and these were utilised during the course of the open interviews to provide context to the discussions. The biographies were utilised in the data analysis stage for purposes of sector, personal attributes and validation of fulfilment of participant criteria.

Each participant was provided with an outline of the studies ethical research statement, which provided written and verbal assurance around confidentiality, voluntary contribution, the option to withdraw from the study and approval to record the interviews. In addition, during the course of the interviews, the author reminded the participants that client's details were not required and that all materials were confidential and anonymous. All the interviews were held

in neutral venues, away from client locations, to provide confidentiality and ability to speak openly.

Methods of Organising and Analysing Data

This phase comprised of transcription and analysis of the interviews, each interview was initially transcribed by the author and independently verified for the accuracy of transcription. Manen (2007) describes that the data analysis stage needs to identify the essence of the experience of the participants to identify the paradigm cases and salient excerpts (Crist and Tanner, 2003). A paradigm case is a “marker” a strong or vivid instance—of a particular pattern of meaning that helps researchers to identify similarities in other cases. Salient excerpts are stories or instances that characterise specific common themes or meanings across participants (Crist and Tanner, 2003). The following section presents the results of the data collection and analysis of the participant’s experiences.

Results of the Study

This section of the paper is structured around the previously defined research propositions, presenting the results of the data collection and analysis, bringing the section together with a section proposing overall study findings, and outlines the limitations of this study.

RPI - Do NSWs expect that organisations will be deaf to their voice’, and are therefore motivated to remain silent?

Each of the participants indicated that they had experienced, in the course of delivery of services, instances of *not being heard* by the client organisation. One participant described the experience as being like “It does not matter what you do, you just cannot get through the barriers and it just makes everything um much harder” (2).

A participant stated the impact of managerial level SWs in implementing a barrier to progressing a task or deliverable, even when the individual implementing the barrier knows that the NSW can assist in the problem solution:

So, if you're talking to somebody and you're saying right you know this is the issue we've got, we need to work on it can you help me here. If they have that natural barrier because you're not one of them, you're an external third party, it makes it a lot harder (4).

A consensus can be evidenced from within the sample that NSW participants expect barriers to their effective communication with the firm/client, and these actively encourage organisational silence.

RP2 - Do NSWs experience a defensive motivation to remain silent due to contract termination and/or a fear of negative of reputational damage for future work?

The participants all highlighted that they all experienced defensive motivations to remain silent, especially when new NSWs. The defensive motivations will be discussed upon in coming sections of the study.

RP3 - Do NSWs experience the motivation to remain silent for Pro-Social reasons?

Analysis of the experiences of the participants demonstrates a powerful example of the scenario that could generate a motivation to remain silent for Pro-Social reasons. A participant describes an event where he was motivated to protect a junior SW. The incident involved an SW voicing concerns about a major project to a senior member of the organisation outside the normal chain of hierarchy. This then initiated a series of difficult conversations between the leadership hierarchies within the organisation. The senior management of the client instructed the NSW to remove the SW from the project. The

participant described the experience as being one of “feeling uncomfortable with kind of feeding (the SW) to the wolves, I protected her a little bit and that dog turned round and bit me, unfortunately” (3).

The result of the dog bite was the NSW having his Contract of Services terminated. Furthermore, the client provided a negative feedback of the NSW performance to the recruitment agency. The consequences were that the NSW had an extended period of no contracts that matched his skills and experience and he had to undertake non-suitable roles to rebuild his reputation and rebuild a portfolio of satisfied clients.

It is also to be recognised the role of *Defensive Silence* in influencing NSWs determination to remain silent for *Pro-Social reasons*. An example of the process in considering remaining silent for *Defensive Silence and Pro-Social* reasons is demonstrated in a scenario where a client called an unplanned review of performance with its NSWs. The participant demonstrates the internal thinking between defending herself, based on based on previous client experiences and the need to protect other NSWs. The participant elected to remain silent for defensive reasons with a negative impact on her colleague:

This was my second contract (year one), eh it was his, his first one and eh I thought right I had better be prepared and I spent the ten minutes ... outlining everything that I was going to (for the client). ...over the next six months. I did not warn or provide support to my colleague, but he, he actually got the sack on the first week and eh you know that was a shock (4).

This statement, in fact, supports the academic determination that defensive motivation is where the participant is not willing to express him or herself for fear of causing trouble for themselves, particularly in the early contracts.

RP4 - What role do NSWs play in creating or maintaining a climate of Organisational Silence when in a position of management?

An unexpected and powerful experience of the role of NSWs in creating a climate of silence is demonstrated by the experiences of the participants. One example highlighted the case of a NSW acting as the overall lead for delivery of services encompassing a blended group of SWs and NSWs. This individual NSW brought a culture of silence from his previous experience as a SW:

The (Non-Standard Worker) contract programme manager was enforcing a culture in the place that very much seemed to be driving some form of culture of keeping quiet - come in do your job keep your mouth shut and just get on with it. He mandated that all contractors tell people the story of why we are changing when we are changing how we are changing so all we were allowed to talk about was very pre- determined by him and when you stood or stepped out of that line this particular individual was quite vocal and quite aggressive about it (1).

A further example highlights that as individual transitions from being a SW to a NSW that it does not change the individual, they bring across their embedded experiences and motivations for voice with them:

There were quite a few people on the programme.... had come from um organisations where they'd been made redundant and they brought that organisations culture of silence with them and, as a result, it was very secretive and very protective environment they put in place (5).

A participant describes the impact on having a fellow NSW, in a senior management role, creating a climate of silence within the client organisation:

I went over and spoke- to speak to him directly (Non-Standard Worker senior manager) and it was just a case of, it was literally a hand up, and it was don't speak to me, go away, he would not speak to me so I had to speak to his manager who would then speak to him and we were literally sitting in a line and that was just so difficult (4).

RP5 - Do NSWs experience a motivation to remain silent for feelings of ineffectiveness during the delivery of contracted services?

The analysis of the qualitative interviews identified that the determinant factor to remain silent for feelings of ineffectiveness is influenced by the level of experience of the NSW, especially as a new entrant. New entrant NSWs experienced a profound sense of ineffectiveness due to the lack of confidence as they transition from being a SW to a NSW. The participants experienced successful delivery and obtained repeated packages of work or experienced contract extensions the confidence levels expanded resulting in the NSWs having the confidence to know when their voice could be effective.

It is also important to note that NSWs may experience the confidence that their voice can be effective, but they may also still experience the motivation to remain silent as they appreciate the client will be 'deaf to the voice' of the NSW. Participants highlighted that there is a constant internal conflict when determining to voice or remain silent between knowing firstly that they can be effective; secondly, the client's willingness to hear the voice and finally the need to defend their [NSWs] reputation for future work, this "dilemma" is discussed within RP8.

RP6 - Do NSWs experience a motivation to remain silent due to disengagement with the organisation?

Interestingly, the analysis of the interviews provided no evidence NSWs were motivated to disengage from the organisation work situation. This is unusual given the proliferation of experiences regarding organisational silence and the futility of voice evidenced in the above RPs. It is suggested that this supports the proposition, that there is an expectation by the client that the use of NSWs brings with it a motivation, that the NSW will get involved, will care about them as a client, and thus contribute to vocalising any concerns with organisational culture or managerial process.

In particular, the lack of evidence to support disengagement is not unexpected given the discussions around RP2. That is the motivation by the NSWs to remain silent through a defensive silence motivation to doing the best possible job for the client in order to maintain (or enhance) their record of delivery, and to support future contract marketing and negotiations. The participants all noted a focus on doing what was right for the client in a hopeful expectation that their services would be retained through an extension of their contracts of services.

RP7 - Do NSWs experience a deviant motivation to purposively remain silent to seek revenge or harm a client?

Deviant motivation was not evidenced in analysis of the participant's experiences, the motivational factor to protect of their individual reputation in order to obtain future work results in the participants accepting that they will not always successfully engage with clients, and need to move on to the next opportunity. The protection of reputation may thus influence the participants to not become involved in revenge or harming previous clients, more detailed studies are required to obtain further insight into the question of reputational protection and motivation to remain silent.

The concern regarding the protection of a contract is highlighted in the following quotation:

I find there is a fine line between being vocal and expressing an opinion but doing it in a certain way that does not offend people. Cross the line and your contract is terminated so you learn over time where to judge that fine line (2).

RP8 - Is the maturity of experience a motivator for NSWs to remain silent for diffident purposes?

All participants highlighted their first experience of the NSW life cycle as being one that involved them effectively taking the first contract that agents and clients offered. This reflected the perceived importance for a new NSW to obtain their first contract of service in preference to waiting for a Contract of Services that was truly suitable for their capabilities and expectations.

The participants described the decision to take what was offered to them came with an emotional price that effectively hindered their confidence to voice concerns. An example being a participant that summarised this negative experience of their first contract by describing the conflict in terms of the NSW as being 'out of their depth' (2), a situation that led client to 'stifle their voice' (2). The emotional impact of this conflict is demonstrated in the following comments:

I was surprised how tough it could be, especially when in the early days of a contract where you are still finding your feet and you know trying to settle into a project. I took a role that really should not have ever taken; I was like a duck out of the water. It was the first time I had left the (Standard Worker) organisation cocoon and it was really found it quite difficult to transition... I was out of my depth <pause> out of my depth made it up as I went along, hated every bloody minute of it, and did not open up (3).

These experiences also demonstrate the motivational role of the SW, and demonstrate instances of the NSW as feeling ineffectual through the lack of confidence . Additionally, respondents would refuse to voice concerns in a bid not to appear sub-standard in front of the client. To this end, an example of the and emotions of being a new entrant is described in the following statement of how the participant describes the conflict of experience or organisational life as a new NSW:

That was only my- that was my second contract (year one), eh it was his, his first one and eh I thought right I'd know to be prepared and I spent the ten minutes ... outlining everything that I was going to (for the client)over the next six months. You know we did not have to have a project plan ready for the Friday but I knew that this is what they were going to ask me (the client) - what are your findings? What are you going to do? And so I was able to just scribble it down, um but he, he did not know this, he actually got the sack on the first week, and eh you know that was a shock (3).

The participants described as they continued to win contracts and obtain extensions and renewals that they experienced a point of transition where their mind-set changed leading them to appreciate that their skills are valuable and wanted by a client.

This transition stage also demonstrates a reduction in the motivation to remain silent for ineffectual purposes, where there is a belief that that speaking up would not positively affect the situation. The confidence of successfully delivering contracts and winning contracts both new and repeat gives the NSW the confidence to voice and that their voice can effect an action, this is demonstrated by the following commentary:

Being invited back and being asked to come back I actually so that it changed my mind set completely to actually you must have something you must being do

something right as they would not ask me back so you are being hired for a skill and they wouldn't want to rehire your services if you couldn't deliver to that skills (3).

This confidence in the ability to have contracts extended, repeat requests and winning new work changes the NSWs confidence to speak:

It was my confidence levels just grew and grew and grew to point that now I have no issue with speaking out <pause> speaking my mind although I might temper the language as appropriate in terms (5).

A participant describes the differences between new entrant and established NSW in a simple but poignant statement: “where I was never in the early days prepared to have the hard conversation I absolutely relish it now” (2).

RP9 – Do NSWs experience motivation to remain silent during the delivery phase of the life cycle due to expectations gaps established between the organisation and the NSW during the negotiation stage?

The participants all commented that the negotiation stage was central to establishing the contractual obligations of work, in addition to setting the expectations for the NSWs ability to voice. The participants highlighted the emotion of being interviewed by clients, offered roles and on day one allocated to a stranger (in many cases another NSW) and this introduces the conflict in terms of ability to voice as evidenced in the following comment:

I can think of three different projects where it has been very negative and each time I was not interviewed by the programme manager. I was interviewed by the (Standard Worker) director, I thought I would be working for him, when I actually started he then allocated me to somebody else (3).

When the participant was asked why this was a motivating factor for organisational silence it was identified that clients were utilising SWs for the interview process during the negotiation stage, but for actual delivery the NSW was being co-ordinated by another NSW in a management role. The impact of this is evidenced in the following commentary:

It makes it so much harder I believe because they (person not involved in the interview process), they have no understanding of your background ... they're taking on a, you know a person to deliver the project and they just see you as a delivery person, not as somebody who's got an actual background that may um give some insight into different ways of delivering a project (2).

To counter this conflict at the interview stage the participants evidenced the ability adopt a different negotiation technique during the interview phase. An example of this technique is demonstrated in the following comment:

The last three interviews gone for hum I have been far more challenging back and actually asking some of the hard questions they (client) are not prepared (client) they don't really want us to talk about. You ask them (client) basic stuff if you were to offer me the role what is your expectations of your hum the candidate who is offered the position what is your expectation in the first week (2).

RP10 - Does the blending of NSWs with SWs act as an organisational silence motivator?

The analysis of the participant's experiences identifies that the blending of workers is a conflict theme experienced by the participants, identifying that the conflict was at its most intense when the majority of the team members were all NSWs. This counters the received academic wisdom that a blending of SWs and NSWs causes greater impact on SWs in terms of conflict in team formation and performance. The participants further demonstrated that as

the percentage of NSWs increased they experienced a reduced opportunity to voice. This is demonstrated in the following comment noting the variation between the two aspects of a blending firstly a small community of equal blending:

My first contract was quite a small tight team, um a mixture of employees and other contractors you could be quite vocal in that (mix of Standard and Non-Standard) and it was actually rewarded if you were vocal (3).

In comparison, the participant noted that as the balance became weighted towards the NSW the experience became:

A small close-knit team of contractors ... even the director of the programme ... was a contractor (Non-Standard Worker) Lot of rows in meetings, very vocal – very vocal. The ability to voice was very restricted (3).

Another participant also highlights the impact of blending in following comment:

Most of the environments ... have been a combination of contractors and <pause> perm staff I would say in hindsight that the <pause> most troubles have actually had is with other Non-Standard Workers who are in the management team (4).

One particularly relevant example of the impact of blending weighted towards NSWs is demonstrated in the following comment:

That has been a particular problem that one client ... 90% of the team were all contractors. Ah, the senior management were contractors with the sponsor being a perm member of staff. It was a very horrible environment and the ability to voice was limited and just made a troublesome project even more troublesome (3).

A further participant highlighted that having another NSW as the programme lead reduced the ability to voice, “I learnt how horrible it is to be a contractor, how really bad it is to be a contractor for another contractor” (5).

A participant also highlighted that the ability to voice can also be determined when NSWs join a team as evidenced in the following comment:

Newer people coming onto the project (after about six months or so) were a lot quieter, they did not speak up because there was this hard core of older people for no real reason, and they could really speak up. The incomers perceived it as a clique even though there was not really a clique they perceived... maybe just because they are coming on new to the project (3).

Conclusions

The collation of the above qualitative research evidences a number of key findings that influence the extant academic status-quo regarding Non-Standard Workers (NSW) and organisational silence.

The study provided vignettes from the participants that clearly demonstrate new entrant NSWs are motivated to use defensive tactics to protect themselves in the early stage of their career. The research demonstrates vignettes that NSWs remain silent in cases of contact with SWs and other NSWs, owing to the fragility of the employment position, the danger of outspoken vocalisation, and the importance of positive references to secure future contracts.

In addition, the significance of the change for the individuals as they transform from classification as a SW to a NSW also triggered an ineffective motivational factor to remain silent.

The study also highlighted experiences of NSWs demonstrating an attitudinal change, as individuals matured into established NSWs, towards increased vocalism, both in the confidence of voice and in setting expectations as they experienced repeated marketing and negotiation stages of the NSW life cycle.

The study also provided an example of the negative consequences for one Research Participant selecting to remain silent for pro-social purposes.

The study found no evidence, from the participant's experiences, of disengagement as a prerequisite for organisational silence. Each of the participants demonstrated a commitment and professionalism to the client to complete the undertaking and to give the client the best outcome possible, and disengagement from that professional standards would have been counterintuitive; especially again considering the fragility of the contractual arrangement.

The research has also highlighted a need to understand more fully the interaction and blending of NSWs with other NSWs. In particular, there is a need to investigate the culture and expectations that NSWs are carrying from contract to contract that may be a critical factor in creating climates of silence from client to client and preventing more junior NSWs voicing concerns.

In addition, the experience of the NSW sample highlights an area of opportunity for further investigation into the interviewing process, specifically the clients utilising panel members that are different to those that the NSWs will engage with on a daily basis. The experiences of the participants of this study demonstrated that the clients are missing an opportunity to communicate the skills and capabilities of the NSWs and thus miss an opportunity to maximise the return on investment on their expertise. In this sense, then, existing managerial and organisational systems inhibit the most efficient use of NSW skills.

There is consideration how NSWs challenge the client in terms of ability to voice and to understand who they will be working for, ideally to meet and greet with the team members during the negotiation lifecycle stage to set expectations from inception.

The study noted, for example, that the literature to date has focused on blending of the work force from the perspective of the SW. This study has identified that a key inhibitor to voice is the blending of NSWs with other NSWs to form competitive and performing teams. The participants' further highlight that senior NSWs retain their former SW attitude, in turn creating a culture of silence and further barrier to voice. The study highlighted that the experience of the NSWs was that where blending was equalised between the SW and NSW workforce - the ability to voice was more open and encouraged.

The focus on the blending and composition of delivery teams highlighted that the experience indicates a gap in existing literature regarding NSWs and organisational silence. In

examining the extent to which NSWs and SWs can form functional teams, the research suggests that a greater competition and barriers to voice may exist within groups of NSWs; perhaps those managed by other NSWs. Participants described the use of challenging the client during the negotiation phase as to the composition of the colleagues and setting expectations of voice. The purpose of this challenge being to suggest to the client to recruit the NSW knowing that he or she will voice, and has an expectation to be enabled to voice.

Finally, the experience of the NSW highlights an area of opportunity for further investigation into the impact of organisational silence on the NSWs outside the organisational setting in terms of the impact of remaining silent on them as individuals and their social environment.

Notes – Each participant was allocated a number to maintain anonymity, and this number is utilised, throughout this paper, to identify the participant's comments.

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