LUND UNIVERSITY
School of Economics and Management

Temporary Agency Workers are Committed Despite Simple Tasks and Low-Status Work

A Qualitative Study about Temporary Agency Workers' Relationship, Characterized by Organizational Commitment, with the Temporary Agency

by

Simone Renz, 941007

Rebecca Wetterberg, 910907

May 2019

Master's Program in Managing People, Knowledge and Change

Supervisor: Jens Rennstam
Examiner: Roland Paulsen

Abstract

Temporary agency work is an ongoing trend that has been growing largely in the recent years. It is defined by a triangular relationship between temporary agency workers (TAWs), temporary agency, and clients. Furthermore, it is associated with low status and low-skilled job tasks. Despite its growing role in the labor market, little is known about the TAWs' organizational commitment to their temporary agency. To gain a deeper understanding a qualitative research, with interviews and observations as the main data collection methods, is conducted. The main finding of this research is that the TAWs are committed despite simple tasks and low-status work. The organizational commitment of the TAWs has several expressions, which will be presented and analyzed. Additionally, commitment-enhancing efforts of the case organization, such as the creation of a sense of belonging and the offer of personal development practices for the employees, were identified. Due to the findings, this research provides insights about temporary agency work and TAWs in specific. Hence, it contributes to the temporary agency work literature by showing that TAWs are highly committed and thereby providing a deeper understanding about how the triangular relationship influences the TAWs' organizational commitment to the temporary agency.

Keywords

Temporary agency worker (TAW), temporary agency, organizational commitment, sense of belonging, personal development.

Acknowledgements

First of all, we would like to thank our supervisor Jens for support, constructive feedback, and creative ideas which we know have strengthened our research. We are grateful that he challenged us and therefore contributed to the quality of this research.

Furthermore, we are thankful for the warm welcome, laughter, and support we received from our case organization. Not only did we get valuable empirical data, but we also experienced the organizational spirit and got to share fun evenings together.

Last but not least, no interviewees - no research. Therefore, we would like to thank the interviewees who took their time to participate in our research. Thanks for being honest, generous, and funny.

We will forever remember these interesting, fun, intensive, exhausting, instructive, and challenging months we have spent together.

Enjoy reading!

S. Renz — Rebecca Wetterberg

Simone Renz — Rebecca Wetterberg

Lund 2019-05-24

Table of Contents

1. Introduction 8

1.1 Outline of the Research Paper 10

2. Theoretical Background 11

2.1 Temporary Agency Work 11

2.1.1 Temporary Agency Work in Germany 12

2.1.2 Temporary Agency Workers 13

2.2 Organizational Commitment 14

2.2.1 Conceptualization of Organizational Commitment 15

2.2.2 Organization Types and Organizational Commitment Strategies 16

3. Methodology 19

3.1 Research Approach 19

3.2 Case Study Design 20

3.3 Qualitative Data Collection 21

3.3.1 Semi-Structured Interviews 21

3.3.1.1 Interview Guide 22

3.3.1.2 Conduction of the Interviews 23

3.3.2 Unstructured Observations 24

3.3.3 Informal Conversations 26

3.3.4 Additional Sources 26

3.4 Data Analysis 27

3.5 Reflexivity and Limitations 29

4. Analysis of Empirical Data 33

4.1 The Case Organization - Forks & Knives 33

4.2 Organizational Commitment 36

4.2.1 Employees' Extra Efforts 36

4.2.2 Loyalty Despite Better Options 37

4.2.3 Working at F&K is More Than a Job 39

4.2.4 Organizational Commitment After Corporate Affiliation 40

4.3 Efforts of F&K 41

4.3.1 Creation of Sense of Belonging 41

4.3.1.1 Social Activities to Bring Employees Together 41

4.3.1.2 Creation of a Strong In-Group Feeling 43

4.3.1.3 The Office is Designed as a Living Room 44

4.3.2 Personal Development 45

4.3.2.1 Physical Exercises Foster Personal Development 45

4.3.2.2 F&K Enables Individual Career Paths 46

4.3.3 Norm of Reciprocity Causes Organizational Commitment 47

5. Discussion 49

6. Future research 58

7. Conclusion 60

References 63

Appendix A 71

Interview Guide (First Edition) 71

Appendix B 74

Interview Guide (Second Edition) 74

List of Tables

Table 1: Overview of Interviewees 23

List of Figures

Figure 1: Outline of the Research Paper 10
Figure 2: Triangular Relationship Between TAWs, Temporary Agency, and Clients 11
Figure 3: The Funnel of F&K 29

1. Introduction

When starting this research, our experience and understanding of temporary agency work and TAWs differed significantly. Whereas one of us, Researcher A, associates positive memories from working at a temporary agency, the other one, Researcher B, had different experiences.

Working at Forks & Knives was a great experience. I'm still in contact with some former colleagues and think about that time quite often. You know what, they even made me walk over fire!

Researcher A

When I was a Staffing Assistant, the TAWs never took me serious. When I called to ask them to work, they didn't care… Honestly, most of the times they didn't even pick up the phone.

Researcher B

But let us start from the beginning…

Temporary agency work is defined as a triangular relationship between employees (TAWs), employer (temporary agency), and clients (Connell & Burgess, 2002; Spermann, 2011). It is often associated with low status and low-skilled job tasks (de Gilder, 2014; Håkansson & Isidorsson, 2012). Related to this, the work characteristics of TAWs are low salaries, low levels of employment protection, and low job security (Galais & Moser, 2018; Jahn & Bentzen, 2012).

Nowadays, temporary agency work is seen as an ongoing trend as it has been growing largely in the recent years (Jiang & Wang, 2018; Johnson & Ashforth, 2008). For example, in Germany the number of TAWs has quintupled from 181.000 in 1997 to over a million in 2017 (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2019). This trend is challenging the traditional employer-employee relationship due to the triangular relationship.

One aspect of the employer-employee relationship is organizational commitment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). According to Galais and Moser (2009), the triangular relationship affects the organizational commitment of the TAWs. However, we identified a lack of profound understanding of the triangular relationship's impact on the

TAWs' organizational commitment in the literature. Currently, it is known that TAWs develop a dual commitment due to the special constellation with employer and clients (Benson, 1998; Perera & Weerakkody, 2017). Furthermore, the majority of authors argue that the organizational commitment of TAWs is higher to the clients than to the temporary agency (Benson, 1998; Newton, 1996; Veitch & Cooper-Thomas, 2009). Consequently, little is known about the influence of the triangular relationship on the TAWs' organizational commitment to their temporary agency (McClurg, 1999).

In reaction to the ongoing trend of temporary agency work (e.g. Johnson & Ashforth, 2008) and the underrepresentation of the triangular relationship's impact on the TAWs' organizational commitment to their temporary agency (McClurg, 1999), this research is conducted. Hence, we aim to investigate the relationship between the TAWs and their temporary agency. Our research is therefore guided by the research question 'How do the TAWs perceive the relationship, characterized by organizational commitment, with their temporary agency?'. Moreover, we are interested in the temporary agencies' contribution to the TAWs' organizational commitment. This influences the formulation of the second research question 'What efforts does the temporary agency take in order to create organizational commitment and how do the TAWs interpret them?'.

In order to answer the research questions and gain a deeper understanding about temporary agency work and the TAWs in specific, we conducted a qualitative research. For this research purpose, we used the case organization Forks & Knives, whereby the main sources to collect the empirical data were interviews with TAWs and observations. Through our research, we used the analogy that temporary agency work is like knowledge-intensive work. Thereby we were able to get valuable insights about the TAWs' organizational commitment to their temporary agency and the latter's commitment-enhancing efforts.

Our main finding is the phenomenon that the TAWs are committed despite simple tasks and low-status work. Related to this, we identify several expressions of the TAWs' organizational commitment. Examples are their willingness to work in case of labor shortage and their loyalty to the organization despite better offers from other organizations. The analysis of the empirical data further shows that the case organization exerts commitment-enhancing efforts such as organizing social activities or providing individual career paths.

With this research, we aim to contribute to the temporary agency work literature. More specifically, this research liberates from the common assumption that high organizational commitment is linked to work that contains complicated tasks and has a high status. Therefore, we hope to alter the common understanding about temporary agency work in general and TAWs in specific.

1.1 Outline of the Research Paper

In the following (Figure 1), we will present the structure of this research paper.

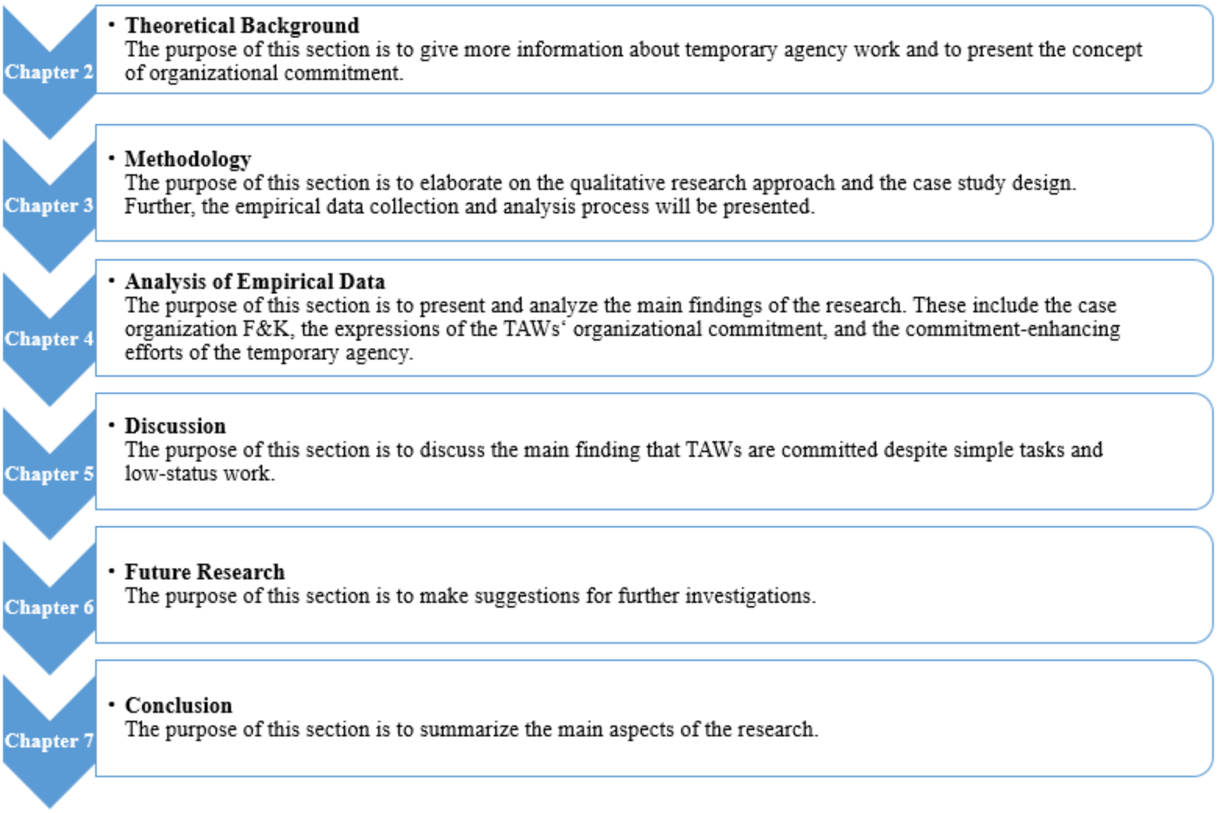

Figure 1: Outline of the Research Paper

2. Theoretical Background

This section contains a literature review about temporary agency work and the concept of organizational commitment. Therefore, we will first explain temporary agency work in general and more specifically in Germany. This will be followed by the presentation of the TAWs' characteristics. Next, we will define organizational commitment and introduce its conceptualization. Lastly, we will present different organization types and their organizational commitment strategies, as well as the impact of organizational commitment.

2.1 Temporary Agency Work

Temporary agency work is characterized by a triangular relationship between the TAWs, temporary agency, and clients (see Figure 2) (Biggs & Swailes, 2006; Connell & Burgess, 2002; Spermann, 2011; Woldman, Wesselink, Runhaar & Mulder, 2018). As the temporary agency employs the TAWs, assigns them to jobs, and pays their wages, the relationship is considered an employment relationship (Spermann, 2011). Furthermore, the temporary agency and the clients have a business relationship that includes employee placement contracts (Woldman et al., 2018). Hence, the clients manage the TAWs while at work which is thus labeled as management relationship (Spermann, 2011).

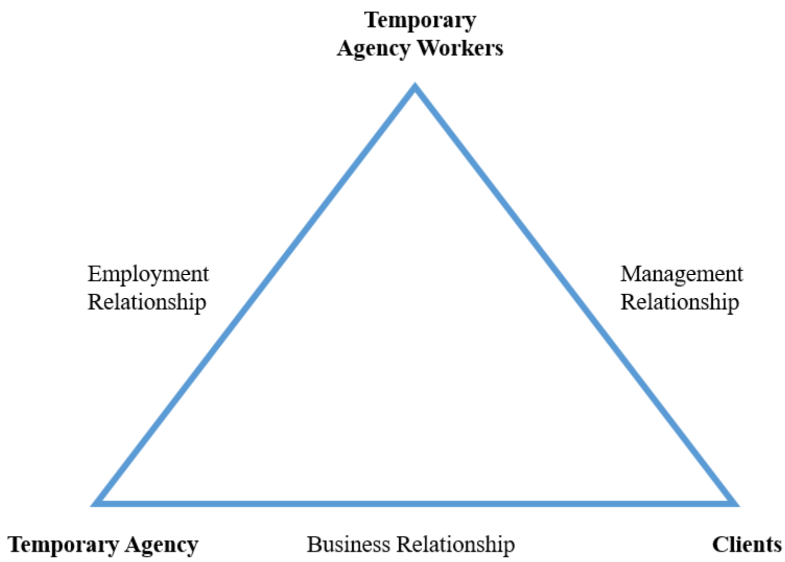

Figure 2: Triangular Relationship Between TAWs, Temporary Agency, and Clients

The benefits of temporary agency work for clients are the downsides for employees (Galais & Moser, 2018; Jahn & Bentzen, 2012). Whereas this type of employment improves the clients' flexibility and cost efficiency (Bryson, 2012), the TAWs are exposed to low wages, low employment protection, and high job insecurity (Galais & Moser, 2018; Jahn & Bentzen, 2012). In average, the wages of TAWs are about 15-20 percent below those of equivalent permanent workers (Jahn & Bentzen, 2012). In consequence of these disadvantages, TAWs tend to undergo a high rate of turnover (Galais & Moser, 2018).

2.1.1 Temporary Agency Work in Germany

In Germany, temporary agency work is legally regulated since 1972 (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2019). It has increased drastically over the last years (Galais & Moser, 2018; Håkansson & Isidorsson, 2012) as the number of temporary agency workers has quintupled from 181.000 in 1997 to over a million in 2017 (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2019). In accordance to the rise of TAWs, the number of temporary agencies increased rapidly. For example, in 2018, there were more than 50,000 temporary agencies in Germany (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2019). The high number is, among other things, due to the low threshold for entry provided by the Federal Employment Agency's licensing process (Spermann, 2011). Nowadays, temporary agency work is considered a fixed component of the German labor market (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2019; Spermann, 2011).

One of the main reasons for the growth of temporary agency work in Germany are several liberalizations of the law (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2019; Jahn & Bentzen, 2012; Spermann, 2011). The most important deregulations were in 2003 and included equal treatment, an extension of the maximum period of assignment, and a liberalization of the synchronization and re-employment ban (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2019; Jahn & Bentzen, 2012). After the deregulation, temporary agency work has taken a new role in Germany and has become a socially accepted tool for enhancing the flexibility of the German labor market (Connell & Burgess, 2002; Spermann, 2011).

2.1.2 Temporary Agency Workers

The majority of TAWs are, compared to permanent workers, rather inexperienced, perform low-level jobs, and do not have much responsibility (de Gilder, 2014; Galais & Moser, 2018; Håkansson & Isidorsson, 2012). Other work characteristics of TAWs are, according to Galais and Moser (2009), their low control over the work tasks and the duration of assignments. Consequently, TAWs constitute “a low-status workforce in society that is dissociated from the regular labour market” (de Gilder, 2014:118). To prepare TAWs for jobs and equip them with the necessary skills, temporary agencies have started to realize the importance of investing in their vocational training (Håkansson & Isidorsson, 2012; Sperman, 2011).

TAWs are not a homogenous group but must be recognized as a “heterogeneous population” (Ellingson, Gruys & Sackett, 1998:913). Thus, the authors make a main distinction between individuals that are voluntarily engaged in temporary agency work and those who are involuntarily engaged in it. Furthermore, Tan and Tan (2002) describe six different categories that have an influence on individuals’ motives to engage in temporary agency work. According to the authors, the aspects family, economic incentives, self-improvement, personal preference, means to get a permanent job, and inability to find a permanent job influence the individuals’ motivation to work for a temporary agency. Whereas the first four categories can be linked to a voluntary engagement in temporary agency work, the last two represent involuntary engagements. According to de Jong, de Cuyper, de Witte, Silla, and Bernhard-Oettel (2009) and Galais and Moser (2009), the majority of TAWs are involuntarily involved in temporary agency work and prefer permanent employments.

The involuntary nature of most temporary employments influences the TAWs’ organizational commitment towards the temporary agency and the clients (Galais & Moser, 2009). Due to the triangular relationship, TAWs have a so-called dual commitment which is targeted at both the temporary agency and the clients they work for (Benson, 1998; Perera & Weerakkody, 2017). However, many authors argue that the organizational commitment of TAWs to their temporary agency is lower than to the clients (Benson, 1998; Newton, 1996; Veitch & Cooper-Thomas, 2009). This is because “[TAWs] often feel like they belong to and ‘work for’ the client organization” (Galais & Moser, 2009:591). Related to this, George, Levenson, Finegold, and Chattopadhyay (2010) argue that TAWs have better relationships with the permanent workers of the clients than with their colleagues from the temporary agency. According to the authors, this is related to the fact that the TAWs have more contact to the former.

In contrast to the findings of Veitch and Cooper-Thomas' (2009) amongst others, McClurg (1999) argues that the organizational commitment of TAWs is higher to their temporary agency than to the clients. Independently of the main target of TAWs' organizational commitment, Connelly, Gallagher, and Wilkin (2014) claim that there will be an attitudinal and behavioral spillover from one party to the other. This means that if TAWs are committed to their temporary agency, this most likely has a positive impact on their organizational commitment towards the clients and vice versa (Connelly, Gallagher & Wilkin, 2014).

This literature review of temporary agency work elucidates a lack of focus on the relationship between the TAWs and the temporary agency. This is because most of the previous research focuses on the TAWs' relationship with the clients. Related to this, we identified a knowledge gap in how the triangular relationship influences the TAWs' organizational commitment. To provide a common base for this research, in the following we will introduce the concept of organizational commitment.

2.2 Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is a concept that has been researched for decades (Becker, 1960; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001; Porter, Steers, Mowday & Boulian, 1974). However, until now there is no common understanding of its definition, conceptualization, and impact (Iverson & Buttigieg, 1999; Mercurio, 2015; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). To create a common understanding, this research is based on the definition of organizational commitment as "the strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization" (Porter et al., 1974:604). Additionally, we assume that organizational commitment is expressed in employees' pride in and loyalty to an organization (Iles, Mabey & Robertson, 1990).

Organizational commitment can be explained by social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Chambel, 2014). According to Blau (1964:91), social exchange "refers to voluntary actions of individuals that are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring and typically do in fact bring from others". Furthermore, the author argues that trust is a prerequisite for social exchange because the obligation for returns is not binding, the value entails intrinsic significance, and the time of the returning action is not specified. Once actions are reciprocated, this serves as a sign for further transactions (Blau, 1964). To be more concrete, if, for example, TAWs are committed in response to efforts of the temporary agency, the TAWs' organizational commitment will trigger more commitment-enhancing efforts. Therefore, social exchange theory is closely linked to Gouldner's (1960) norm of reciprocity.

The norm of reciprocity states that employees adjust their attitudes and behaviors according to how the organization treats them (Chew & Chan, 2008; Kwon, Bae & Lawler, 2010). Thus, the authors argue that as long as the employees' needs are satisfied by the organization, they will be committed. Related to this, Gouldner (1960:171) established two basic rules: "(1) people should help those who have helped them, and (2) people should not injure those who have helped them". Consequently, if the TAWs perceive the organizational efforts as beneficial, it might influence their decision to remain in the organization.

2.2.1 Conceptualization of Organizational Commitment

Many authors understand organizational commitment as a multidimensional concept (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Iverson & Buttigieg, 1999; Johnson & Chang, 2006). One example for this understanding is the dominant, and often used, three-component framework by Allen and Meyer (1990). The authors identified three components of organizational commitment which are affective commitment, normative commitment, and continuance commitment. A more detailed description of the components will follow below. Despite its popularity, the framework has been criticized for its empirical lack of a clear distinction between affective and normative commitment (Bergman, 2006). Nevertheless, it will be used as a base in this research because of its simplicity and empirical significance.

The core component of the framework is the affective commitment (Mercurio, 2015). It is the employees' *desire* to remain in an organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Mercurio, 2015) and is mostly referred to as emotional attachment to the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Iles, Mabey & Robertson, 1990; Johnson & Chang, 2006).

The second component, continuance commitment, is the employees' *need* to remain in an organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Mercurio, 2015). It is related to the perceived costs of leaving the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Johnson & Chang, 2006) and is therefore influenced by the number of investments and the perceived lack of alternatives (Allen & Meyer, 1990). According to Becker (1960), this component of organizational commitment is achieved by 'side bets' which are unrelated to the decision, but still affected by it. For example, if an employee leaves an organization after two months, this could have a negative impact on her or his reputation. Therefore, the prospect of a bad reputation might influence the employee's decision to remain in the organization. Additionally, employees often decide to stay in an organization because they are unwilling to give up desirable benefits that they receive from the current organization (Johnson & Chang, 2006).

Normative commitment is the third component and the employees' *obligation* to remain in an organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Mercurio, 2015). It is influenced by individuals' perceptions (Johnson & Chang, 2006; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch & Topolnytsky, 2002; Wiener, 1982). Furthermore, it describes the fact that individuals' behavior can be based on normative pressure (Wiener, 1982). This means that individuals perceive the obligation to stay in an organization as socially expected (Meyer et al., 2002; Wiener, 1982).

2.2.2 Organization Types and Organizational Commitment Strategies

Some organizations seek low-skilled workers and consequently pursue a low organizational commitment strategy (Watson, 2009). It is mainly applied by an organization that has "a simple technology and a relatively straightforward business environment that allows it to employ easily obtainable and replaceable employees" (Watson, 2009:28). Moreover, low organizational commitment strategies are used if the control over employees' work layout and performance is high (Watson, 2009). According to Newell (2009), this organization type can be called 'volume division'. Due to the low-skilled work of TAWs and the controllability of their tasks (de Gilder, 2014; Håkansson & Isidorsson, 2012), a low organizational commitment strategy appears to be appropriate for temporary agencies. Therefore, they can be considered volume divisions.

In contrast, Watson (2009) argues that the success of today's organizations is closely linked to initiatives of implementing and managing high organizational commitment strategies for employees. Generally, organizations with high organizational commitment strategies usually deal with a multifaceted business design or a complicated technology (Watson, 2009). As high organizational commitment strategies are typically associated with knowledge-intensive firms (KIFs) (Alvesson, 2004; Hislop, 2013), we will use knowledge-intensive work literature to elaborate on means to attain highly committed employees. According to Newell (2009), this organization type can be labeled as 'gourmet division'.

Due to the complex tasks, the gourmet division needs to find employees that are multi-skilled and able to maneuver a considerable number of tasks simultaneously (Watson, 2009). A common recruitment strategy for the gourmet division is to hire "the best and the brightest" (Alvesson, 2004:140). This strategy focuses on the human capital of the knowledge workers, which means their competencies, knowledge, and skills (Newell, 2009; Newell, Robertson, Scarbrough & Swan, 2009). Due to the high requirements of becoming a knowledge worker, Tansley (2009) argues that they are perceived as an exclusive group.

There are several means for organizations to create highly committed employees (Alvesson, 2004; Hislop, 2013; Horwitz, Heng & Quazi, 2003). For example, Chew and Chan (2008) argue that complex and challenging tasks increase the employees' organizational commitment. Other initiatives to create high organizational commitment are, for example, to create flat hierarchies and enhance the employees' involvement (Watson, 2009). Additionally, organizations should give their employees autonomy (Hislop, 2013; Horwitz, Heng & Quazi, 2003). Besides that, Alvesson (2004) argues that a sense of belonging to the colleagues and the organization has a positive impact on the employees' organizational commitment. Therefore, organizations should engage in activities that create socio-emotional ties (Alvesson, 2004). Further, knowledge workers continuously look for possibilities to develop their skills and enhance their knowledge (Alvesson, 2004; Hislop, 2013). Consequently, the authors claim that organizations need to offer trainings and development practices.

The main reason for organizations to pursue high organizational commitment strategies is to decrease employee turnover (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Kwon, Bae & Lawler, 2010; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Wright & Kehoe, 2008). Additionally, the organizational performance increases because the employees internalize the organizational goals and put effort into achieving these goals (Iles, Mabey & Robertson, 1990; Johnson & Chang, 2006; Wright & Kehoe, 2008). Not only do organizations benefit from committed employees, but also the employees themselves (Meyer et al., 2002). For example, the authors found that there is a strong correlation between organizational commitment and job satisfaction.

Organizational commitment results in many desirable attitudes and behaviors, but it may also hold organizations back (Iles, Mabey & Robertson, 1990; Iverson & Buttigieg, 1999). This is the case when over-commitment to norms and rules hinders innovation and thinking outside the box (Iles, Mabey & Robertson, 1990). Put differently, if employees stick too much to the norms and rules, they will not be able to develop new ideas. Moreover, a high continuance commitment might lead to an organizational inflexibility which has a negative impact on acceptance of change (Iverson & Buttigieg, 1999). For example, due to the employees' investments in the status quo, they might be unwilling to change. Additionally, the employees might not be willing to sacrifice desirable benefits due to organizational changes.

In summary, this literature review provides an overview of temporary agency work and the concept of organizational commitment. As stated earlier, we identified a knowledge gap in how the triangular relationship influences the TAWs' organizational commitment. Therefore, this research aims to contribute to the temporary agency work literature by focusing on the TAWs' organizational commitment to their temporary agency.

3. Methodology

In this section we discuss the research approach and the chosen qualitative method. First, we will clarify the influence of social constructionism and symbolic interactionism on this research. This will be followed by explanations about the qualitative research design. After this, we will elaborate on the case study design. Next, we will present the empirical data collection with interviews and observations as the main sources. To follow, we will state how the analysis process took shape. Lastly, we will explain our intention of being reflective and discuss limitations of the research.

3.1 Research Approach

This research is based on a social constructionist perspective. This means that "terms of understanding are [seen as] the result of an active, cooperative enterprise of persons in relationship [with each other]" (Gergen, 1985:5). Consequently, the aim is not to explore an objective truth but the constructed understanding of a phenomenon (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Galbin, 2014; Prasad, 2005). Therefore, we are interested in the TAWs' perceptions and interpretations of their relationship with the temporary agency and the organizational efforts.

This research perspective is amplified by a focus on interpretative traditions. Hence, we base our research on the understanding that "our worlds are socially created [and] that these constructions are possible only because of our ability to attach meanings to objects, events, and interactions" (Prasad, 2005:14). Within the interpretative traditions, we concentrate on the research tradition of symbolic interactionism because it emphasizes the sense-making of the individuals. Thus, by focusing on how the TAWs make sense of their relationship with the temporary agency and the commitment-enhancing efforts, we are able to gain a deeper understanding of temporary agency work. The pioneer Herbert Blumer defined three fundamental assumptions for symbolic interactionism: (1) Individuals act based on the meaning they have given to something, (2) The given meaning is based on social interactions, and (3) The given meaning is not permanent (Dennis, 2011; Prasad, 2018). In regard of our research, this means that we assume that the efforts of the temporary agencies come to life through the interpretations of their employees.

As we are interested in the TAWs' perceptions, this research is based on a qualitative research method. Besides discovering their interpretations of the interviewees, the purpose of this method is to gain depth and increased understanding for the studied phenomenon (Alvehus, 2013; Silverman, 2010). Thereby, we aim to contribute to a deeper understanding about our phenomenon that TAWs are committed despite simple tasks and low-status work.

Furthermore, three ways of reasoning exist regarding the relationship between theory and research: inductive, deductive (Bryman & Bell, 2003), and abductive (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). In inductive reasoning is theory the outcome of the empirical findings, whereas deductive reasoning instead aims to confirm the theory (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Moreover, abductive reasoning is a combination of the first two mentioned reasonings and therefore "alternates between (previous) theory and empirical facts whereby both are successively reinterpreted in the light of each other" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009:4). We chose this reasoning because on the one hand, we did not want to be biased by the literature when collecting the empirical data. On the other hand, we preferred to have a basic understanding of the topic before conducting the interviews and performing the observations. Nonetheless, we are aware that we could not fully prevent being biased by our existing knowledge. Furthermore, the abductive approach enabled us, in contrast to the other two reasonings, to identify underlying patterns as the empirical field of use was developed and the theory adjusted (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009).

3.2 Case Study Design

A case study design is a common practice for doing research within the business and management field (Bryman & Bell, 2003; Yin, 2014). According to Yin (2014), the first step is to define the case. In this research, the already mentioned phenomenon that temporary agency workers are committed despite simple tasks and low-status work represents the case. In the second step, the unit of analysis must be distinguished from other units (Yin, 2014). This can, amongst others, be achieved by focusing on one location of a specific organization (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Thus, we focused our research on the temporary agency Forks & Knives (F&K) and more specifically on its office in Stuttgart. The organization qualified for the research because it employs TAWs who are the main focus of the research. Further, it enabled us to study the case because the work of the TAWs in the gastronomy industry entails mainly simple tasks. More information about the case organization will be presented in the analysis of empirical data.

3.3 Qualitative Data Collection

There are several ways of conducting a qualitative research, such as the use of interviews (both individual and/or focus groups), observations, documentary research, photographs (Bryman & Burgess, 1999; Ryen, 2004), and personal experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In order to explore the desired depth, we decided to do semi-structured interviews with the TAWs of F&K as one of our primary data collection method. In addition to the interviews, we performed one on-site observation at a clients' location and daily observations at F&K's office throughout the week we were present. Additionally, we had informal conversations with employees of F&K and used other sources, such as the organization's website, to collect the empirical data.

3.3.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

In this research, semi-structured interviews were conducted because they contain a balance between guiding the interviewee towards the chosen themes and "allow[ing] individual respondents some latitude and freedom to talk about what is of interest or importance to them" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011:102). As a result, it increases the chances of facing new, unexpected insights which may enrich the empirical data (Bryman, 2008; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). We decided against structured interviews because they are asking the exact same questions to all interviewees (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Thus, we believe that this causes inflexibility and reduces important nuances. Likewise, we did not want to use what Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) define as low-structured interviews which are highly individualized and taken to the direction the interviewee wants to go to. As we had pre-defined themes and were looking for information that was linked to them, we needed to have an influence on the directions of the interviews. After evaluating the alternatives, we decided to conduct semi-structured interviews.

3.3.1.1 Interview Guide

In order to gain a deeper understanding of TAWs, we designed our first interview guide with a broad focus (see Appendix A). The purpose of doing so was to find out which themes were most present and relevant to investigate further. After conducting three interviews, we revised the interview guide (see Appendix B) and twisted it towards the themes we will elaborate on below. We believe that adjusting the interview guide strengthened the analytical process because it supplied us with more depth, nuances, and dynamic in the empirical data.

Following Bryman (2008), we designed an interview guide that consisted of three phases (introduction, in-depth, and conclusion). The aim of the first phase was to build trust between both parties (us as interviewers and the interviewees), and to create an honest and trustworthy environment where the interviewees feel safe and free to share (May, 2011). The second phase was supposed to dig deeper into the chosen topics of research. Here, researchers usually find nuances, dynamical approaches, and depth in the data when the analysis takes place (Bryman, 2008). The in-depth phase of our interview guide consisted of four main themes (see bullet points below). These themes helped us to get most out of the interviews and to ensure that the collection of data was relevant according to the research questions (Bryman, 2008). Even though we changed the research questions as part of our abductive reasoning, the themes still provided us with guidance in the empirical data analysis.

- ***Theme 1:*** Personal Development Practices
- ***Theme 2:*** Relationship with F&K and the Colleagues
- ***Theme 3:*** Social Activities
- ***Theme 4:*** Temporary Agency Work-Related Topics

In the third phase, the interviewers summarize the main points of the interview (Bryman, 2008). By doing so, the interviewers make sure that they have interpret it correctly, and the interviewees are given the chance to add, correct, or further explain statements if necessary (Bryman, 2008). Therefore, we were able to refine nuances by rephrasing the interviewees' main points and getting their confirmation.

3.3.1.2 Conduction of the Interviews

In total, we conducted 11 interviews which lasted from 26 to 92 minutes. The interviewees ranged from the age of 18 to 32 years, and the gender balance was almost equal. The table below gives an overview about the interviewees. To guarantee the anonymity of the organization and the interviewees, but also to stay as transparent as possible, we used fictitious names.

	Name	Time of Employment at F&K
Jobbers	Jasmine	2 years
	Maria	8 months
	Martin	7 months
	Viktoria	1,5 years
Job Coaches	Christer	2 months
	Olga	1,5 years
Project Managers	Daniel	5 years
	Greta	4 years
	Jen	12 years
	Johanna	6 years
	Ruben	6 years

Table 1: Overview of Interviewees

Together with the Office Manager, we decided to conduct the interviews at the office of F&K. The selection of interviewees was a mix of targeted and random selection to guarantee a diverse interviewee composition and a variety of experiences. On the one hand, we scheduled interviews with the help of the Office Manager. This gave us the possibility to interview people that could contribute to our research. On the other hand, we interviewed random employees. Therefore, we joined F&K's group in a communication app and wrote a message that contained a presentation of us and our research as well as the request to contact us if interested. As this did not turn out to be successful, we convinced TAWs that spontaneously came by the office and had time for the interview to participate in the research. Through this random selection aspect, the chances to get a beneficial interviewee variety was increased.

Following Bryman's (2008) recommendation, we aimed to stay flexible throughout the interviews. This is because "the more spontaneous the interview procedure, the more likely one is to obtain spontaneous, lively, and unexpected answers from the interviewees" (Kvale, 1996:129). Moreover, we were both present during all the interviews which enabled us to divide tasks efficiently. One was responsible for leading the interview by asking the main questions stated in the interview guide. The other one was observing and asking follow-up questions that were relevant. Another advantage of both of us participating in the interviews was to make sure that we understood and interpreted the interviewees in the same way.

The majority of the interviews were conducted in English. However, one interview was conducted in German because the interviewee felt more comfortable in doing so. Moreover, as we are not native English-speakers, it is of importance to mention that citations might have been revised in order to use proper English. Nevertheless, we stayed transparent and solid in terms of the actual content.

3.3.2 Unstructured Observations

To strengthen and align the semi-structured interviews further, we decided to perform what Bryman and Bell (2003) call unstructured observations. According to the authors, this chosen type of observation is more fluent and unorganized in its expression and outline than structured observations. According to Bryman (2008:257), the latter is directed towards a set of rules which "inform observers about what they should look for and how they should record behaviour". However, we decided against this type of observation because we did not want to restrict ourselves by defining categories beforehand. Thus, the unstructured observations enabled us to notice unexpected behaviors of the TAWs, such as the fact that F&K's employees danced together in the office.

During our presence at the office, we passively observed what was going on during office times. In total, we spent approximately 7-9 hours at the office per day. As a result, we gained valuable insights in the social interactions of the office employees with each other and with the

TAWs who came by spontaneously. Additionally, we got a feeling for the working atmosphere. For example, we noticed that they danced and laughed a lot together while working.

Furthermore, one of us, Researcher A, conducted an unstructured observation at a client's site which lasted five hours. During that time, four Jobbers of the case organization were working with TAWs from other temporary agencies. The job took place in the VIP stadium of a soccer team and included serving beverages and keeping the tables clean. Each worker was responsible for more or less 30 guests. In the beginning, our aim was to shadow one of the case organization's employees. However, this caused irritations among the workers and the guests for several reasons. First, Researcher A was not dressed like the workers which is why she stood out. Second, Researcher A was constantly following the Jobber. More concrete, she went with the Jobber to the table when asking for the beverages, to the bar when getting the drinks, and back to the table to serve them. Thereby, Researcher A attracted the attention of the whole VIP area. Third, Researcher A had a little book for notes with her and constantly wrote down comments. This did not only irritate the Jobber, but also inspired the guests to make assumptions about the notes. Consequently, the Jobber felt uncomfortable and Researcher A was convinced that she negatively influenced the normal workflow.

Therefore, Researcher A decided to equally observe all four Jobbers and position herself at different spots. Thus, she observed the Jobbers and their interactions with the colleagues from the case organization and the other temporary agencies from the following spots: Close to the Jobbers' tables, from the bar, from the return station for used dishes, and from a central spot in the area. This observation method proved to be better suited in order to decrease irritations and thereby get insights about normal and spontaneous interactions.

Researcher A also spent the lunch break with the Jobbers from the case organization. Whereas she continued to observe their interactions in the first 15 minutes, she discussed her observations with the Jobbers in the remaining 15 minutes. This step was important because McNaughton Nicholls, Mills, and Kotecha (2013) argue that observations are highly subjective and colored by personal experiences. Thereby, to talk to the Jobbers about the observations enabled Researcher A to clear doubts and to make sure that she interpreted certain situations correctly. For example, Researcher A noticed that two Jobbers sometimes touched each other briefly when passing each other. During the conversation, she found out that they are a couple.

As the Jobbers were informed about the observation from the beginning, we are aware of the fact that the presence of Researcher A might have had an influence on the interactions. This means that the context might not have been as authentic as without her presence. However, we found new aspects, angles, and viewpoints in the observation notes that we were neither aware, nor had thought of before. Consequently, enriched empirical data was produced.

3.3.3 Informal Conversations

During our presence at the office, we had multiple informal conversations with the office employees and other TAWs of the case organization. As many TAWs came by the office to sign up for jobs or just have a chat, we took the chance to talk to them. Our work-related conversation topics ranged from their last work experience, over their opinion about the temporary agency, to the life as a TAW. Thereby, we were able to collect many different opinions, perceptions, and impressions. For example, in one of these spontaneous conversations we were told that a personal development event took place recently. In response to that, we scheduled interviews with two participants.

Furthermore, we went for an after work with some employees of F&K. This gathering enabled us to talk about the organization in a more relaxed atmosphere. Additionally, we had the feeling that the TAWs were more open to tell stories and funny anecdotes. This information helped us in getting a more holistic understanding of the temporary agency as employer and part of the TAWs' lives.

Besides the after work, we went for dinner with the Office Manager on our last evening. On the one hand, we used this meeting to thank him for his support and to reflect on the past days. On the other hand, we took the chance to ask questions that came up during the week and that we did not have answers to yet.

3.3.4 Additional Sources

Besides the interviews, observations, and informal conversations, we used additional sources to collect the empirical data. First of all, we had a look at the temporary agency's website. This helped us, and especially Researcher B, who did not know the organization before, to get a basic understanding of the business and the spirit. For example, while screening the website, we noticed how important the sense of belonging seems to be for the case organization. This first impression was confirmed by the social media presence of the temporary agency, as the majority of the posts showed happy employees who seemed to have fun and be emotionally close to each other.

In addition to this, we used the organization's marketing material to get a better understanding of the temporary agency. Aligned with the website and the social media presence, the sense of belonging and the 'we have fun together' part was highlighted. Our special attention was drawn to the catchy slogan of the organization which communicates the importance of working with friends.

To get a better understanding of the organizational efforts, we watched corporate videos on YouTube. Some of the videos had explanatory content, such as a video that presented the organization's app to sign up for jobs. However, we perceived that the aim of most videos was to deliver the spirit of the temporary agency. For example, the founder and CEO of the organization seems to have his own channel. In short videos, he presented recordings from events such as the Camp2Summer or the Stuttgarter Wasen (which is the equivalent to the Oktoberfest in Munich).

Aligned with Denzin & Lincoln (2005), we used our personal experience as a way of collecting qualitative data. As Researcher A already worked for the temporary agency, we used her experience as an additional source. For example, she participated in a personal development event while working at the case organization and shared her experiences and impressions.

3.4 Data Analysis

In line with Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018), the interviews were recorded, transcribed, codified, and finally analyzed. To avoid that technical problems had a negative influence on our research, we recorded all interviews on two devices. For the transcriptions, we used a software to support us. Thus, the software transcribed the interviews and afterwards we listened to the interviews again and made minor changes in the transcripts. Thereby we made sure that the software understood the context correctly and that the transcripts actually contained the right content. After we finished the transcriptions, we put all transcripts in one document to start with the codification. For the codification, we used two different approaches. First, we used the themes from the interview guide and added additional ones that we discovered during the data collection. Each theme was assigned one color. After that, we used Gubrium and Holstein's approach of coding 'whats' and 'hows' (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). The aim of this method is to "engage in the interplay between society's artful and conditional aspects" (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018:57). For example, this coding strategy enabled us to become aware of the interviewees' affection to their temporary agency. To be more concrete, by using words like 'home' or 'family' when talking about the case organization, they showed their emotional attachment. Our decision to codify our empirical material in two different ways was based on Rennstam and Wästerfors' (2018) recommendation to spend time with the data and thereby enhance the analysis.

The analysis of the collected empirical data took place by using three different activities declared by Miles and Huberman (1984): (1) data reduction, (2) data display, (3) conclusion drawing/verification. As recommended by the authors, we performed these three activities continuously throughout the analysis process as part of the research. The first activity "is a form of analysis that sharpens, sorts, focuses, discards, and organizes data in such way that 'final' conclusions can be drawn and verified" (Miles & Huberman, 1984:21). For example, we first highlighted several themes in the transcription document with different colors. It is important to mention that this activity overlaps with Rennstam and Wästerfors' (2018) codification. The second activity is to display, structure, and gather the information in order to either draw on conclusions directly, or to do one or more steps to bring the analysis further (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Here in order to structure the material, we collected the themes in separate documents. This helped us in getting a better overview. The third and last activity is about how the actual researchers "hold[] these conclusions lightly, maintaining openness and skepticism, [...] then increasingly explicit and grounded" (Miles & Huberman, 1984:22). To establish this successfully, we have been each other's devils' advocates. This means that, for instance, when analyzing the empirical data, we questioned the other's interpretations and challenged each other by taking the opposite standpoint.

To enrich our analysis further, we made use of some methods described in Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018), such as the analytical induction or analogies. The former is, in close interaction with the collected empirical data, "explaining a social phenomenon by redefining the explanation and/or phenomenon step by step" (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018:97). The aim is therefore to specify the found explanations and to gain a higher complexity (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). Consequently, the authors argue that researchers are able to get new, possible explanations as a result. For example, we used the analytical induction to gain further insights about why temporary agencies invest in the personal development of their TAWs. In addition to the analytical induction, we used the analogy that temporary agency work is like knowledge-intensive work throughout the whole research. By doing this, we were able to find explanations for our phenomenon, why temporary agency workers are committed despite simple tasks and low-status work.

3.5 Reflexivity and Limitations

Reflexivity is important because "a source is only one among many, and can contradict itself, voice differing opinions, or cheat and deceive. A source should therefore never be taken as an authority" (Schaefer & Alvesson, 2017:3). This is relevant for our research because we used a qualitative study design and focused on the TAWs' perceptions. Therefore, our main sources were the statements of the interviewees. The challenge with people's answers is that they must not be true or could be contradictory (Sandelowski, 2011). Therefore, it was crucial for us to stay reflective and not take the interviewees' statements for face-value.

This part will reveal important insights and limitations we encountered during the research. Our main goal with this section is to be as transparent as possible because no research is without flaws. Therefore, we decided to deliberately show all aspects that may have had an impact on the result, whether it implied a positive or negative effect. We think that it is important to elaborate on both sides in order to provide the utmost understanding of the circumstances.

The Researchers' Relationship to the Interviewees

Researcher A has, as already mentioned, experience of being part of the organization both in regards of the actual work at the clients' sites, but also in participating in the different activities such as the vocational trainings, social activities, and personal development events. In contrast, Researcher B has neither experience nor any pre-knowledge about F&K. For instance, what caught the interest of the latter was e.g. the ice bath, because she did not experience anything similar while working at another temporary agency. To clarify, Researcher A perceived this type of activities as normal happenings in the case organization, while Researcher B questioned them as rather uncommon organizational practices. Thereby, advantages of having both an inside and outside perspective were achieved.

We realized positive and negative aspects related to Researcher A's experience within the case organization. A positive aspect is related to the fact that Researcher A still has contact to some of the case organization's employees. Therefore, she was able to convince some TAWs to participate in the research. These personal relationships were helpful in the interviewee selection because it increased the TAWs' willingness to attend the interview. This is relevant because the participants did not get a compensation for volunteering. Additionally, we assume that the emotional bond between Researcher A and some interviewees led to deeper nuances in the interviews. We believe the interviewees trusted us and therefore felt more confident to open up.

Nevertheless, Researcher A's personal relationships with some of the interviewees might also have negatively influenced the data collection. For example, we suggest that the interviewees might have been afraid of being honest if this would have damaged Researcher A's image of them. Thus, they might have aligned their stories to the desirable image in order to avoid being judged by Researcher A. Additionally, it is possible that the interviewees assumed that Researcher A knows the case organization. Therefore, we argue that they might not have explicitly stated some assumptions because they perceived it as common knowledge. This became obvious in the TAWs' explanations when they used phrases such as 'you [Researcher A] know…' or 'it did not change'.

The unstated assumptions had a negative impact on the data analysis because we sometimes had to read 'between the lines' which complicated the interpretation of the collected empirical data. Furthermore, it might have been possible that Researcher A jumped to conclusions too quickly. This is influenced by her prior experiences and knowledge about the temporary agency. We therefore argue that this might have minimized Researcher A's critical thinking. To prevent that, it was Researcher B's task to maintain the outside perspective and question what was going on in the case organization.

The Influence of the Office Layout

Another aspect that we want to draw attention to is the design of our case organization's office. When entering the office, one is standing in the main office area. The other room is designed like a living room, which we will elaborate more on later. We were able to set up our office in the living room and conducted the interviews there. Even though this room was downstairs, there was no door to completely separate it from the office area. As a consequence, if paid close attention, one could follow the conversations from the other room.

The positive aspect of the office layout was that we could hear the office employees' conversations with each other and the TAWs that came by, and noticed the arrival of new employees. Hence, we could go upstairs and have informal chats with the office employees and other TAWs. Through this, we were able to identify a wide variety of interpretations and perceptions and find volunteers that participated in our research.

The negative aspect of the office layout was that the office employees had, if they paid close attention, the possibility to listen to the interviews. Consequently, this might have had a negative impact on the interviewees' openness. Even though we guaranteed anonymity, this did not fully apply for the conduction of the interviews. We assume that the participants of the research might have been even more open if we had a closed room. While conducting the interviews we were not aware of this limitation's impact on our research. With the experience, we would have done it differently. The fact that we were aware of the situation afterwards influenced our data analysis process in the sense of critically reflect upon the interviewees' answers and not taking them for face-value.

The Advantages of Face-to-Face Interviews

For the collection of the empirical data in this research, we traveled to Stuttgart where our case organization is located. This decision was influenced by our aim to conduct face-to-face interviews because we were convinced that this would improve the data collection. More specifically, beside better understanding of what they said, we were able to see and interpret the interviewees' body language which according to Vogl (2013) enriches the quality of the interviews.

Even though telephone interviews have been rising within the last years, Irvine (2011) argues that a qualitative research approach still requires personal contact for best possible outcomes of the empirical data. This is because "the lack of face-to-face contact is said to restrict the development of rapport and a 'natural' encounter" (Irvine, 2011:203). We can confirm that because we felt that it was easier to create a personal bond to the interviewees in face-to-face interviews than over the phone. As an outcome of having face-to-face interviews, we were able to interpret them on an even deeper level and bring in more valuable and useful nuances.

Our decision for face-to-face interviews was further confirmed after the first interview. Due to a miscommunication between us and the interviewee, we did this interview over the phone. Even though we gained useful data, the interview was still exposed to some problems. For example, we faced a few technical difficulties, and therefore had problems to perfectly understand each other. This is further reinforced because "in telephone interviews more requests for clarifications [are] necessary because nonverbal behavior cannot help in understanding the interviewer's intention" (Vogl, 2013:59). Besides the fact that the flow of the interview got interrupted because of the mentioned technical issues, having this interview over phone also complicated the transcription and analysis.

Additional Limitations

In line with being reflective, we are aware of several additional limitations regarding the empirical data collection and the case organization. First, we identified the risk that the interviewed employees are more attached and committed to F&K compared to other TAWs of the case organization. We came to this assumption because, as already mentioned, they volunteered for the interviews without getting paid or any other incentive. Secondly, because the interviewees are not native English-speakers, it might have constituted a barrier to express themselves accurately and fluently. Thirdly, due to our personal experiences within temporary agency work, we assume that F&K is a rather unique organization. This is supported by the analysis of the empirical data, where we show that F&K is perceived as significantly different from other temporary agencies by the TAWs. This assumption could limit the applicability of the findings to other temporary agencies.

4. Analysis of Empirical Data

In this section, we will present our findings and provide an initial analysis. Therefore, we will first interpret the case organization F&K. After this, we will show and evaluate the commitment of its employees and finish with an interpretation of the organization's commitment-enhancing efforts.

4.1 The Case Organization - Forks & Knives

As stated on its website, F&K is a Dutch temporary agency within the gastronomy industry. The work tasks of its employees seem to not require multiple skills. The following citation shows that the employees seem to be aware of the simplicity of the work and sometimes even perceive it as annoying.

> *I really don't like being treated like trash [...] It was just a horrible experience to work there because they were so unfriendly, so rude, and just treated me like I really can [do] nothing. So, they told me to polish the cutlery and just go outside and clean the tables and close the parasols. I wasn't treated well there, they just gave me the easiest work because they thought I know nothing.*
>
> ***Martin***

Thus, the TAWs seem to have a lower status than the permanent workers of the clients. This is shown in the citation because the latter seem to delegate simple and unfavorable tasks to the TAWs.

According to the Office Manager, the case organization's office lends out about 150 employees to its contractual clients. He further explained that F&K cooperates with about 25 clients in total and that the employees are either changing clients every job or are mainly working for a specific one. Besides choosing for which client they want to work for, the TAWs can choose the specific job assignments themselves. According to one interviewee, this is not the case at other temporary agencies.

C: I can personally choose where I want to work and when I
want to work through our app, so I can choose my jobs myself.
Interviewer (I): So, you appreciate the flexibility?
C: Yes. As I said, at my former employer [other temporary agency],
I didn't have that choice. So back then, I couldn't choose if I want to work
tomorrow or not, and here I can decide that myself. Back then, I got a SMS
or an e-mail, saying 'you are working there on this day and there on this day'.

Christer

This citation shows that the employees have a lot of freedom in choosing their job assignments which seems to be rather unique in the temporary agency sector. Furthermore, we learned about another particularity of F&K in an informal conversation with the Office Manager. Namely that the organization's recruitment is mainly based on employees' referrals and that F&K does not have, what we perceive as, a traditional selection process. The organization offers information meetings several times a week where interested people get more information about the organization and the job in an informal manner. After that, everyone interested gets offered a job.

We were present at one introduction meeting and noticed the attendants' diversity which seems to also be reflected in the workforce of F&K. For example, the organization employs part-time students, apprentices who simultaneously work full-time at another organization, and a few full-timers. Additionally, the empirical data indicates that the employees have different educational backgrounds, nationalities, ages, and personal characteristics. It further suggests that F&K has an inclusive approach to diversity and therefore welcomes everyone.

It [society] also has a very clear vision of what a good citizen should be.
And this vision is a very small one. But if you look at people who really
have made a difference, like Rosa Parks for example, they don't
fit in that frame. And this is why I say F&K is a little bit crazy.
We have space for these people who aren't looking at the normal.

Jen

Furthermore, F&K also seems to have an uncommon organizational chart. This is because the organization presents its hierarchy as a funnel in which the new employees, the Jobbers, constitute the main part on the top (see Figure 3). As the Office Manager clarified, this should put them in the focus and show their importance. He further explained that everyone (even the management board) has started as a Jobber. If the Jobbers are successful in their job, they are able to move further down to the next level called Job Coach. Here, the responsibility increases slightly by being responsible for the employees at the clients' sites and the TAWs compliance with the F&K standard. Thereafter, the employees may become Project Managers where they can focus on a specific role that is influenced by their personal interests. For example, one interviewee is the main responsible for F&K's professional trainings, whereas another interviewee takes care of the social media presence. Lastly, the Office Manager is responsible for the office with its operational and strategic work. Along with more responsibility comes a higher compensation which is scaled as follows: A Jobber earns 10,69€/hour, a Job Coach 11,50€/hour, and a Project Manager 12,50€/hour.

Figure 3: The Funnel of F&K

Moreover, the Job Coaches, Project Managers, and the Office Manager constitute the leadership team. In their monthly meetings, they organize social events and vocational trainings, monitor the business in its whole, and make strategic decisions.

After interpreting the case organization F&K, we will have a closer look at the TAWs' organizational commitment to the temporary agency.

4.2 Organizational Commitment

In this section, we will demonstrate how the employees of F&K express organizational commitment. We will thereby first elaborate on the TAWs' extra efforts such as their willingness to work in case of labor shortage as well as their support for colleagues in their free time. Then, we will interpret the employees' loyalty to F&K and further analyze the interviewees' perception that working for F&K is more than a job. Later, we will show that F&K's employees consider their commitment so strong that they would even stay connected with F&K after leaving the organization.

4.2.1 Employees' Extra Efforts

Independently of the TAWs' simple tasks, the employees of F&K seem to be committed. This is noticeable in their willingness to go to work even though they did not plan to. Although the TAWs did not sign up for a certain job, the empirical data indicates that they help out when necessary.

> *Sometimes it's really frustrating to come in here or get called 'yeah, we need so much more people for that, so please, could you do that?' But even though I didn't plan to work that day, so I had other plans, they always get me to work for that job.*
>
> ***Maria***

Even though the citation may sound negative, we did not perceive the interviewee as annoyed as she laughed while saying it. Additionally, the empirical data reveals that the interviewees' organizational commitment goes beyond the work tasks. For example, the employees of F&K seem to be willing to invest time and effort to help colleagues such as listening to personal problems in their free time. The following citation shows how employees extend their responsibilities.

> *It's really, that sometimes he [Ruben] just went with them for a beer. And then, when he is home three or four hours later, he is just like 'no, but they needed to talk, so I needed to listen'.*
>
> ***Jen***

Not only Ruben seems to be highly committed, but our empirical data suggests that the whole leadership team is as well. This can be derived from the fact that they engage in extra activities such as organizing events, giving trainings, or being responsible for F&K's social media presence without getting paid for it. What strikes our interest is that it seems to be a self-evident fact for them because they enjoy doing it.

And people who are actually doing the things they do, they definitely don't get paid for what they actually do, which is not meant bad or to be perceived as bad or something. It's just like, yeah, if you're committed to it and want it, then you don't ask about money, you know what money you're getting and you're fine. You're fine with it.

Greta

This illustrates that the employees of F&K engage in extra efforts without getting money or other incentives in return. We would not have expected this because, as we showed earlier, F&K's employees do not have high salaries. Therefore, we consider it impressive that they even engage in extra efforts without getting paid.

4.2.2 Loyalty Despite Better Options

Another expression of the employees' organizational commitment to F&K is through their loyalty. We derive this understanding from the interviewees' answers to whether they would leave the organization for e.g. a higher salary or a better position. There seems to be a high tendency towards remaining in the organization despite other, and seemingly better, options. For example, as the second citation shows, one interviewee wants to stay with F&K even though she started a full-time job at another organization.

I: Have you been offered a job from a partner [client]?
J: Ehm… Yes, but I turned it down.
I: Because?
J: Because they can't provide everything that I like... It's just that... No... It's not F&K.

Johanna

I: So, you wouldn't leave Forks & Knives?
M: No, no, I wouldn't.
I: What are the factors that influence your answer?
M: The family feeling I hadn't had anywhere else. So, I… I even, ehm, my plan was to work like a few months for them. But now I just don't want to quit. I even changed my contract back to less hours per month so I can further work for them.

Maria

It seems that F&K offers the employees something that is more valuable than money. Related to the employees' salaries, the empirical data indicates that most interviewees work part-time at F&K to finance their studies, or to gain some additional income. Thus, it appears that money is their primary reason to start working at the temporary agency. Surprisingly, after being employed for some months, they would not switch jobs if offered more money. A potential explanation is that they feel connected to the organization and the people.

So, if a company offers me more money compared to what I get here at the moment [...] I would say 'I don't care about more money'. Because this isn't worth the jobs because I feel safe here, I know what to do. People are nice, I feel more connected, and this is way more worth than the money I get.

Martin

Additionally, the employees' organizational commitment seems to not only influence their decision to remain with F&K, but also their behaviors while at the clients' sites. As TAWs, the interviewees have sometimes been in situations where the clients had a different idea of how the job should be done compared to F&K. Even though representatives of F&K were not present in these moments, the employees still complied with the F&K standard.

[...] Every one of our partners [clients] has of course their own values and their own, ehm, way of doing things, it's for every partner [client]. Of course, sometimes it's not aligned with how we want it to be or how we would do it in the first place. And then you have to decide if you do it their way or maybe sometimes you have to say 'sorry, I will not do it because it's not how we would do it and I cannot agree with that'.

Ruben

If they tell me, 'you can use your hair in a ponytail', I'll be like 'no, because I always do that [having a bun]. This is like our F&K standard'.

Johanna

Even though the majority of the interviewees express a similar opinion, some employees seem to not always follow the F&K standard. For example, according to interviewed Job Coaches and Project Managers, some Jobbers wear pink socks or are not shaved when going to a job. The following citation gives an explanation for why the Jobbers might not conform to the F&K standard.

J: You know, sometimes the partners [the clients], they don't require you to be super fancy. You can also come in jeans. [...] One time I really didn't feel like dressing up, so I just went to work with black jeans. And the client was totally okey with it.
I: How did the responsible Job Coach react then?
J: Well, you know them… I don't know why they always get so upset.

Jasmine

These findings are unexpected because we assumed that the TAWs would switch to the client as soon as they are given the possibility, and even more when they are offered more money. Although money seems to be the main driver for taking a job at F&K, it does not seem to be the main reason to stay at the organization.

4.2.3 Working at F&K is More Than a Job

The assumption, that money is not the main reason to remain at F&K, seems to be further strengthened by the way the employees talk about the temporary agency. In the collected empirical data, the interviewees use words like 'home' and 'family' to describe F&K. This indicates a strong affection to the organization. Therefore, the data implies that the employees feel like one entity. Moreover, they seem to perceive F&K not only as a place to work but seem to associate, for instance, friendship, support, comfort, and sense of belonging with the organization. The following citations illustrate this.

I: What are the first three things that come to your mind when you think of F&K?
O: Family. Flexibility. And friendship.

Olga

[...] and over the past two days we… Ehm, we got very close so, ehm… When I talked to them in our room or at night when we were drinking outside... It was just like family, so I really liked when we had to sleep in the container [cabin]. It was just like a family vacation together in one little cabin.

Maria

According to the majority of the interviewees, F&K is more than a job. The empirical data reveals that the TAWs perceive F&K as something that not only has an impact on their work lives, but also on their private lives.

It's just more than just a job, it's more than just waking up and going to work [...] They said in my first training that F&K is not only a job, F&K is something that brings you further in life. I would say that is totally correct [...] F&K is really more than just the job.

Martin

These findings are interesting considering the fact that the TAWs do neither work at the temporary agency nor together with their colleagues from F&K on a regular basis. Irrespective of that, the employees express strong feelings of affection towards the case organization. Based on the empirical data, we suggest that this could be influenced by some employees' past. As they lacked affection and confirmation in their past, they seem to react stronger towards the organization.

For example, in sport I was most of the time the one that was selected last for group selections. I was never really asked to do something [...] I was usually not the one that was selected. Yeah. Nobody really looked at me like, like what I'm doing, what I'm doing right, stuff like that.

Martin

Another indication for TAWs' perception of F&K as more than a job is shown in their willingness to stay connected to the organization after quitting.

4.2.4 Organizational Commitment After Corporate Affiliation

The organizational commitment of F&K's employees can also be derived from their aim to stay connected with the temporary agency after leaving it. The way the interviewees talk about their future indicates that they cannot imagine to fully leave F&K, but rather prefer to stay in both personal and professional contact with them.

The point is that I think I would never really leave. Because I would still stay in contact with the people [...] So, if I'd actually take a better job, sure, I would miss working but I wouldn't miss the things around it. Because I could still say, 'okay, I would do parts of small things' or still join the meetings.

Greta

Moreover, employee's express enthusiasm about how F&K might be useful for them in order to build a network for their future careers. For example, the citation below shows that some of the TAWs perceive F&K as a potential partner for their future business. We could also use

Researcher A’s organizational commitment as example. Due to her former employment and staying connected with the temporary agency, we could win F&K as a case organization to conduct our research and collect the empirical data.

*Okay, so my other dream is also, ehm, to open up a small hotel or a bigger one.
So, then I really want to have F&K as my partner to, ehm, go and say,
‘hey, I need some workers of you, it would be really nice if you could join me’.*

Maria

In conclusion, this section intended to show how the employees of F&K are committed. Besides that, our aim was to draw attention to the particularity of the organizational commitment of F&K’s employees. Considering the employment situation (temporary agency work) and the industry (gastronomy), we would not have expected to find such a degree of organizational commitment. To gain further understanding for this phenomenon, we will elaborate on the efforts of F&K to influence the TAWs’ organizational commitment in the next part.

4.3 Efforts of F&K

In this section, we will analyze commitment-enhancing efforts of F&K. For better illustration, we grouped the organizational efforts into two categories, those that create a sense of belonging and those that foster the employees’ personal development. We will finish this part by giving potential explanations for the interviewees’ organizational commitment.

4.3.1 Creation of Sense of Belonging

In this section, we will discuss the efforts F&K takes in order to create a sense of belonging. First, we will elaborate on its multiple social activities and events. Later, we will analyze how the organization tries to create an in-group feeling amongst its employees. Thereby, we will elaborate on F&K’s own dances. And lastly, we will discuss which role F&K’s office plays in creating a sense of belonging.

4.3.1.1 Social Activities to Bring Employees Together

An important part of being employed at F&K are social activities outside of work which are usually organized by the leadership team. To clarify, the social activities include parties at the office or going ice skating. Besides this small, everyday activities, F&K also plans bigger activities such as Camp2Summer which is a one-week event for employees from all locations.

> *We go… We go, ehm, for dinner or make parties or something like that on a friendly basis, and also on, ehm… Our official Forks & Knives events where we invite others [F&K employees from other locations] to join us, like the Trip2Ski or Camp2Summer or something like that.*
>
> ***Ruben***

According to a Project Manager, the social activities are mainly designed for the Jobbers. As they constantly work at different times, for different clients, at different locations, and with different people, the social activities give them the possibility to meet their colleagues. This is in line with our analysis of the marketing material. As it emphasizes the importance of working with friends, the social activities constitute a crucial part for the organization. The following citation shows that the employees seem to appreciate this offer.

> *I met Sara at a job, but then we didn't work together for a while. When I saw here again at the party, I was really happy to see her [...] You just don't meet each other at the job that often.*
>
> ***Jasmine***

Even though the social activities are mainly targeted at the Jobbers, the empirical data indicates that all hierarchy levels seem to participate in the social activities. Furthermore, despite variance, there is a high tendency towards the perception that hierarchical positions do not matter. This assumption seems to be in line with F&K's understanding of the hierarchy as a funnel and the graphical downgrading of the Office Manager to the lowest level.

> *Everybody... Everybody... Understands everyone, everybody knows the same, comes together, there's no real grouping in [the different levels of] F&K, it's one big F&K family.*
>
> ***Martin***

It seems that F&K puts a lot of efforts into having these social activities. This is further supported by the fact that the organization's annual result has been around zero over the last years with a negative result in 2017 (Bundesanzeiger, 2019). Hence, it seems that they rather reinvest the money in their employees than making profit.

4.3.1.2 Creation of a Strong In-Group Feeling

In addition to the social activities, F&K seems to create a sense of belonging by generating an in-group feeling. The empirical data indicates that F&K differentiates itself deliberately from other temporary agencies in the area of Stuttgart. For example, F&K has established a standard that determines the appearance of its employees when working at the clients' sites. The interviewees perceive this standard as higher and more professional than the standards of other temporary agencies.

There was this guy, he was working for [another temporary agency],
he was going to work with jeans and that's obviously not okay.
And especially not in [this location], totally obviously it's not okay.

Martin

In addition to the standard, the interviewees perceive differences between F&K and other temporary agencies regarding the TAWs' behavior. More concrete, they express themselves as better than TAWs from other temporary agencies. For example, they perceive the collaboration between F&K's employees as more effective and smoother compared to F&K's competitors. These perceived differences are further strengthened by our observation at one client's site. Whereas there seemed to be a lot of communication going on between employees of F&K, TAWs from other temporary agencies appeared to have less interactions and fun with each other.

You especially feel this when, I don't know, there's a really big,
big event and Forks & Knives is not the only company for personnel
there. There are others as well, but the others, they are just somewhere.
Our stations are clean and done. And everybody's [F&K's employees]
happy with the time, but they [TAWs from other temporary
agencies] are stressed and nobody knows who to talk to.

Daniel

However, the relaxed attitude of F&K employees seems not to be the only way to recognize them. Other expressions of F&K's distinctiveness are its own dance choreographies to chart songs. For example, one of us knows from her experience at F&K that these dances are performed at bigger events when many employees of F&K are in the same place (such as Camp2Summer). However, she and her colleagues sometimes also performed the dances at the clients' sites or in the club when going out. One interviewee talked about his experience from the last event he went to.

M: We danced.
I: You danced?
M: Yeah, but just like to wake up, to be happy, to smile…
I: Like a group dance, or did everybody dance by themselves?
M: Classical F&K dance I would call it. Everybody like, everybody has to do it, everybody gets in, everybody smiles because, yeah… Who dances at 7am in the morning all together?

Martin

The reason for these group dances is not only to make everybody smile, but one of the organizers of the event explains that singing and dancing in a group aligns the heartbeats of the participants. Thus, the TAWs do not only get physically connected because their hearts beat at the same pace, but the data shows that people also feel emotionally connected to each other. Researcher A can personally relate to this and remembers how doing the dances gave her a feeling of unity and togetherness.

Because it's about getting everybody… Ehm, music makes… Has a deep impact of how our heart is working. And if there's a group that doesn't know each other at all, because they are from [different cities in Germany], music helps them to get the same heartbeat.

Jen

However, the empirical data suggests that F&K has a bigger goal than aligning the heartbeats of its employees. It seems that the organization creates a certain exclusivity within the temporary agency sector by differentiating itself from other temporary agencies. Thus, it seems that even though the organization operates in low-status work, it tries to attain a high status within the sector. Consequently, the data indicates that the employees are proud to belong to this organization and show this, e.g. with their group dances.

4.3.1.3 The Office is Designed as a Living Room

F&K does not only care for its employees at the jobs but also encourages them to come by the office. For example, we noticed in our observations that the office is not only seen as a place to sign up for jobs but also to hang out, study, or meet friends. This is supported by the office layout as it has a room with a big couch, TV, bar, and big table. As already mentioned in the methodology, this room seems to have more similarities with a living room than with a traditional office space. Moreover, we observed that TAWs spontaneously dropped by the office to have a chat and one employee even brought a cake.

I drop by for maybe half an hour to talk to them.
I'm just catching up what they have to do, and maybe
bringing something or picking something up for the next job
[...] It's not always work-related. Sometimes I'm just
here in the city, and then I have to wait for an hour to go
somewhere, and then I'll stop by here [at the office].

Johanna

Additionally, we were told that employees sometimes hang out together in the office in the evenings or during the weekends. This indicates a blurred line between the work and personal life because the employees spend their free time at the office. As the TAWs need to have access to the office after the official opening hours, it seems that mainly the leadership team uses it for private occasions. In the following citation, a Project Manager gives examples for how they privately use the office.

A lot. From normal… Ehm… Board games... Board game evenings with
Jen and Ruben or some more. Or on the weekend, we sometimes, we
just meet up here [in the office] to have a drink on Friday evenings,
ehm, or we watch football together when it's an important game.

Greta

The fact that employees of F&K hang out in the office is another indication for how emotionally attached they are to the organization. They do not only perceive F&K as a place to work, but the organization also influences their private lives.

4.3.2 Personal Development

In this section, we will discuss how F&K personally develops selected employees, so called talents. Therefore, we will first present their events which, for instance, include having an ice bath. Following this, we will discuss the individual career paths that F&K offers key employees.

4.3.2.1 Physical Exercises Foster Personal Development

Besides organizing vocational trainings for all employees, such as wine tasting events, F&K seems to invite its talents to participate in special events. These events are designed and organized by the management board of F&K and the leadership team. Importantly, the emphasis of these events seems not to be on work-related topics, but rather on the personal development of the participants. The empirical data indicates that the events consist of workshops and discussions, e.g. about happiness, as well as physical exercises, such as walking over fire or jumping from a tree. The aim of these exercises is described in the citation below.

They will jump from, ehm, I think an eight-meter-high tree. So, they are secured of course [...] And it's just about getting the feeling that, yeah, there will be situations that will make you feel really, really scared. But if you want to reach your goal, you have to do it [jump].

Jen

Interviewees that participated in one or several of these events expressed long-term personal gains and the empirical data reveals that these events are perceived as life-changing. For example, the data indicates that the participants learn how to overcome their fears or how to get through a difficult phase in their lives. The citation below shows the meaningfulness of an event for the interviewee and how it brought her further in life.

O: Because I never thought about my life this intensive. So, I came home and I really had to think about my life for more than a week because it was really intense. Yes. And also, the empowerment [jumping from a tree] that we did there was very, I never did that before and never, I have never faced my fears. And it helps me a lot to talk to other people about the problems or issues that I have in my life.
I: Yes. So, would you say that it had an impact on how you are now?
O: Yes, of course! [...] It was a long process, but it helps me a lot.

Olga

Related to the social events, the organization seems to care more about the personal development of its key employees than about having a positive annual result. Additionally, it seems that F&K does not only care about how to improve the work performance of its employees but wants them to learn for life.

4.3.2.2 F&K Enables Individual Career Paths

Many of the interviewees that got selected for the personal development events perceive that they are offered individual career paths. The empirical data indicates that they do not only have possibilities to develop formally within the hierarchy, which means to get promoted from Jobber to Job Coach to Project Manager. The selected TAWs also seem to have the possibility to develop outside this pre-defined career path, which we label as informal development. Whereas the first citation demonstrates the possibilities and support for informal developments, the second one describes a success story. To be more concrete, Jen studied cultural sciences but never worked in her profession. Instead, she developed within F&K to soon become a national trainer.

That I have the chance to develop [...] And I can really rely on the management team as well. So, I can call the southern Sales Manager Niclas or Sandra, who is one of the management team, and tell them 'hey, I really want to do this, will you help me? Is there any chance for me to be part of it?' And they would say 'yeah, sure, why not?'

Greta

And for my future… At that moment, I'm, like I said, I'm concentrating on my, on the training part. And I think this will be the next year's… The part that will change into the absolute main part. So, it will be over the next one or two years that I will work less and less on the operational side. And then I would really, yeah, become a national trainer who's doing that…

Jen

F&K seems to be very supportive and the analysis of the empirical data indicates that the organization tries to provide the employees with their desired development possibilities. Therefore, it offers informal development options such as individual career paths.

4.3.3 Norm of Reciprocity Causes Organizational Commitment

Based on the empirical data, we assume that the organizational commitment of the employees is a reciprocal behavior. The interviewees perceive that F&K invests a lot of money, effort, and time in the creation of a sense of belonging, such as organizing parties, and in their personal development. As a consequence, the TAWs want to give back to their organization.

I like to represent F&K, that I'm here, working for F&K. Trying to… Trying to get them further, because they get me further [...] Because it brings not only us further, but F&K as well. Because if we are more positive, know what we can do, take on our responsibility, then it helps us on the jobs, makes F&K look better [...] We get money, F&K gets money, and we all help each other out, get more connections and grow…

Martin

I participated in this event where you walk over fire and I know that it's quite expensive. So, I feel like I owe them [F&K] in a sense…

Jasmine

The data further indicates that the interviewees know that F&K's efforts are unique. This means that they seem to be aware of the fact that other temporary agencies and organizations in general do not offer that many social activities or personal development events as F&K does. Additionally, the interviewees express that the organization offers more possibilities on a deeper and individual level than competitors. Consequently, the TAWs seem to be committed in order to make further use of the case organization's offer.

It was my first time and now I really want to join other events like the Camp2Summer and Trip2Ski with them.

Maria

Ehm, I always say that F&K, it's not just work. And so, we have… Like, the [personal development events], we have a lot more possibilities for the Jobbers where they can learn something about themselves, themselves... And I think this is a big difference to the others [other temporary agencies]. And yeah, like the parties and the events that we have with our Jobbers… It's not like a work.

Olga

Usually, we perceive employee-employer relationships as quite rational. The employee works for the organization and gets a salary that is perceived as fair in order to compensate for the performed work. However, the situation at F&K seems to be different because the data indicates that the employees as well as the employer are giving more than they are formally expected.

Generally, we discussed some commitment-enhancing activities that F&K is undertaking. These findings show that the organization seems to invest resources in the development of its talents. Additionally, it offers them individual career paths that support their personal development goals.

5. Discussion

In this section, we will discuss the TAWs' sense of belonging to the temporary agency. Next, we will examine the TAWs' voluntary involvement in temporary agency work. Furthermore, we will elaborate on their formal and informal career prospects which will be followed by an examination of the case organization's development practices. The section ends with a discussion of the TAWs' high organizational commitment to the temporary agency wherefore the analogy, temporary agency work is like knowledge-intensive work, will be used.

With this research, we alter the understanding about temporary agency work. This is because we found that TAWs are committed despite simple tasks and low-status work. It is interesting because we currently associate temporary agencies with low organizational commitment strategies and would therefore label them as what Newell (2009) calls volume division. Thus, this research aims to revise the current image of temporary agency work and TAWs in specific.

Sense of Belonging

When it comes to the TAWs' sense of belonging, our research challenges the temporary agency work literature. For example, George et al. (2010) found that the TAWs have better relationships with the permanent workers from the clients' sites than with their colleagues from the temporary agency. We cannot respond to this comparison due to a lack of information about the relationship of the case organization's employees with the clients. However, what we can say is that the TAWs seem to have strong feelings of affection towards the temporary agency. This can be explained by the fact that the TAWs have regular contact with each other (George et al., 2010). Thus, by participating in social activities such as parties or going ice skating, the TAWs of our case organization share moments with each other. Consequently, they develop emotional bonds to both each other and the organization. According to Alvesson (2004), these emotional bonds create a sense of belonging which has a positive impact on organizational commitment. Additionally, we showed in the analysis of the empirical findings that the layout of the office invites TAWs to hang out there and spend time with each other. This further influences the creation of a sense of belonging and the strong feelings of affection which have a positive impact on organizational commitment.

Further, Galais and Moser (2009) argue that TAWs feel like they rather belong to the clients than to the temporary agency. Nonetheless, our findings show that the TAWs feel a strong sense of belonging to their temporary agency. This becomes especially evident when they use words like ‘family’ and ‘home’ when talking about the case organization. We argue that the strong in-group feeling contributes to the TAWs’ sense of belonging to the temporary agency. More concrete, we claim that by differentiating themselves from other TAWs at events, e.g. by having a higher standard, the case organization’s employees feel closer to each other. Additionally, having common dances creates feelings of unity and togetherness among the TAWs. The fact that the employees also do the dances when going out in their free time shows their connectedness to the organization because they are not only performing them in work-related situations.

We argue that the case organization puts effort in creating a strong sense of belonging in order to distract the TAWs from the simple tasks and low-status work. To be more concrete, we claim that the parties and social activities should bring the employees so much joy and fun, that they overlook the fact that they perform simple tasks as waitresses or waiters. Moreover, the creation of a strong in-group feeling might lead to a sense of superiority over other TAWs. Therefore, we state that the employees of our case organization get distracted from the low-status aspects of their work and are instead proud of belonging to this specific temporary agency.

Voluntary Engagement in Temporary Agency Work

We could identify another difference between how TAWs are described in the literature and how we perceived them in the case organization. The temporary agency work literature indicates that the majority of TAWs are involuntarily involved in this employment situation (Ellingson, Gruys & Sackett, 1998). In contrast to that, our analysis of empirical data indicates that the TAWs are voluntarily involved in the case organization. This is, for instance, shown by their loyalty to the temporary agency even though they get better offers from other organizations.

In relation to the voluntary nature of the TAWs’ involvement in temporary agency work, it is worth to have a look at the employees’ motives for working at the case organization. According to Tan and Tan (2002), there exist six different reasons. The analysis of the empirical data indicates that the majority of the TAWs started to work for the temporary agency due to the economic incentives. Interestingly, the analysis also shows that this motivation changed with the duration of corporate affiliation. This means that after a while, the economic incentives did not seem to be the main motivation anymore. Instead, we argue that the employees remain in the organization because of personal preference.

This finding provides an interesting implication for the temporary agency work. Due to the fact that TAWs remain in the temporary agency because they want to, we claim that there might be a negative relationship between the voluntary nature to engage in temporary agency work and the according to Galais & Moser (2018) currently high turnover rate. This means that an increase in TAWs that are voluntarily engaged in temporary agency work leads to a decrease in turnover. We justify this claim with the finding that some of the TAWs seem to pursue a career within the temporary agency. Furthermore, we derive from this that employees who voluntarily engage in temporary agency work are less likely to see this type of employment as a temporary solution. This would completely change the relationship between the temporary agency and the TAWs because the focus would then shift from short-term to long-term.

Additionally, we believe that the increase in voluntarily engaged TAWs could be partially responsible for the, by Jiang and Wang (2018) and Johnson and Ashforth (2008), identified growing trend of temporary agency work. According to Bryson (2012), the main benefits of temporary agency work for clients are flexibility and cost savings. We are aware of the fact that the trend is mainly driven these factors. However, we argue that an increase in TAWs is only possible if more people are willing to work in this sector which is related to the image of temporary agency work. Nowadays, the majority of TAWs is engaged in the sector because they cannot find a permanent job or use temporary agency work as a mean to find permanent employment (Tan & Tan, 2002). Therefore, we claim that temporary agency work is currently associated with dissatisfaction, failure to find a better work, and transition phase before entering permanent employment. Consequently, we argue that an increase in satisfied, proud, and permanent TAWs would contribute to an improvement of the image which most probably attracts more people to work in this sector. Hence, we are convinced that an increase in employees that are voluntarily engaged in temporary agency work contributes to the growing trend of the sector.

Career Prospects

As most of the TAWS are involuntarily involved in temporary agency work, the sector has to deal with high turnover rates (de Jong et al., 2009; Galais & Moser, 2009; Galais & Moser, 2018). We deduce from the involuntary employment of most TAWs that they do not have career ambitions within the temporary agency, as their aim is to leave as soon as they find permanent employment. In contrast to this, we identified that some of the case organization's TAWs actually pursue a career within the organization. This is the case even though they are formally not offered many career options, as they can only develop from Jobber to Job Coach to Project Manager.

Related to the limited development levels within the funnel, we do not perceive the salary raises and the responsibilities as convincing. When having a closer look at the salary levels, we notice that the total possible increase in salary is less than two euros per hour. Thus, we consider this difference between the lowest and the highest possible salary as marginal. Furthermore, the TAWs take over more responsibility in higher positions but do not get compensated for it. This is not only related to the insignificant salary increase, but also to the statements of some Project Managers that they engage in activities without neither expecting nor getting money in return. As a consequence, we do not interpret these formal development conditions as attractive.

To make up for the limited development possibilities within the funnel, the case organization seems to offer the TAWs informal options, such as individual career paths. For example, we presented one interviewee and her development from a Jobber to a soon-to-be national trainer. Thus, selected TAWs are given opportunities to develop themselves further in directions that are connected to their personal interests. Furthermore, we claim that these informal development offers are necessary in order to keep key employees.

Related to the formal development possibilities, we consider it interesting to have a look at the case organization's funnel from a critical perspective. As already described above, this way of presenting the organizational chart accentuates the importance of the Jobbers. However, from a work-related perspective, one could argue that the funnel is hypocritical. This is because it suggests a certain authority of the Jobbers which is not given in the case organization. We argue that the TAWs have only inconsiderable influence on the business. Even though they can choose their own jobs, they are only given a choice within an already set frame which is defined by the collaboration between the temporary agency and the clients. More concrete, they do not have any influence on the amount of jobs available or the clients they can work for.

In addition to the limited job choices, low control over work tasks is a common condition within temporary agency work in general (Galais & Moser, 2009). Aligned with this, the TAWs do not have any influence on the work tasks at the clients' sites. In our opinion, this is not aligned with being at the highest level of the hierarchy. However, due to the triangular relationship (Biggs & Swailes, 2006; Connell & Burgess, 2002; Spermann, 2011; Woldman, Wesselink, Runhaar & Mulder, 2018), the temporary agency does not have much influence on the TAWs' work tasks either. As in temporary agency work, the clients manage the TAWs and assign them the tasks (Spermann, 2011), this could have a negative impact on the relationship between the TAWs and the temporary agency. For example, if TAWs are given unfavorable tasks at the clients' sites, they might project their dissatisfaction with the client onto the temporary agency. As a consequence, we claim that the TAWs of our case organization do not have the authority that we would expect from the highest level of the hierarchy.

However, if we instead look at the funnel from a social and not work-related perspective, we can see that the case organization seems to deeply care for its TAWs. Therefore, we argue that the position of the Jobbers at the top of the funnel is justified due to the case organization's efforts. It is not only noticeable in their efforts to create a sense of belonging or to offer individual career paths, but also when having a look at its financial statements. These show an annual result around zero over the last years with an even negative tendency in 2017. We therefore claim that by reinvesting the money in the employees, the case organization's care for the employees is demonstrated.

Development practices

We identified one more difference between the temporary agency work literature and our case organization. According to Håkansson and Isidorsson (2012) and Spermann (2011), temporary agencies invest in vocational trainings in order to strengthen the TAWs' professional skills and thereby prepare them for job assignments. Likewise, the case organization puts energy, resources, and effort into the vocational training of the TAWs such as offering wine tasting events.

However, our research contributes to the existing literature because our case organization combines the vocational training with personal development practices. As our data shows, the case organization selects talents to participate in events which contain workshops (e.g. about happiness) as well as physical exercises (e.g. ice baths or walking over fire). Therefore, the temporary agency extends its professional efforts by also focusing on the TAWs' individual features. These events seem to develop the TAWs on a personal level and the validity of this finding is strengthened as the TAWs refer to them as life-changing.

We claim that the case organization offers these development practices as means to compensate for the simple tasks and low-status work of the TAWs. As the work characteristics of TAWs are low salary, low status, and simple tasks (de Gilder, 2014; Galais & Moser, 2018; Håkansson & Isidorsson, 2012; Jahn & Bentzen, 2012), we perceive them as unattractive. Therefore, we argue that the organizational efforts are necessary in order to make up for the work characteristics.

However, other explanations for the organizational efforts of the case organization are possible as well. For example, it might be that the temporary agency invests in the personal development of its TAWs because it expects returns. An example for expected returns could be that the TAWs are more motivated to work and deliver better work performance. Furthermore, one could argue that the case organization has philanthropic reasons. This means that it does not have a hidden agenda, but purely cares about the employees' personal development. This would be in line with the annual results around zero.

Based on Researcher B's perception, we consider the temporary agency's exercises, for instance, the ice bath and jumping from a tree, rare practices to conduct as an organization. In addition to the physical exercises, the TAWs perform the dances several times throughout the events. As shown in the findings, these practices have a deeper and, in our opinion, rather spiritual meaning. Hence, by taking a more critical perspective, we argue that the case organization takes on traits of a cult.

On the one hand, we believe that this is beneficial for the temporary agency because it creates a high alignment and normative control. Having the triangular relationship in mind (Biggs & Swailes, 2006; Connell & Burgess, 2002; Spermann, 2011; Woldman, Wesselink, Runhaar & Mulder, 2018), normative control seems to be the most effective way for the temporary agency to influence the TAWs' behaviors when they are at the clients' sites. Thus, by creating high organizational commitment, the case organization can make sure that the TAWs' behavior is aligned to the organization.

On the other hand, this over-commitment can be dangerous for the TAWs as it might have negative influences on their reflexivity and ability to think critically. For example, we argue that the TAWs' over-commitment can be responsible for not questioning the fact that they do not get compensated for their extra efforts and assume it as self-evident. Furthermore, Iverson and Buttigieg (1999) point out that over-commitment might lead to inflexibility and negatively impact organizational change. For example, we showed one interviewee's obsession with the case organization's standard which might lead to an inflexibility about e.g. having different standards for different clients. Consequently, we argue that having traits of a cult seems advantageous for the temporary agency. Nonetheless, it constitutes a risk for both the case organization and the TAWs.

High Organizational Commitment

Whereas the literature states that the TAWs' organizational commitment is rather targeted at the client than at the temporary agency (Benson, 1998; Newton, 1996; Veitch & Cooper-Thomas, 2009), this research identifies that the TAWs are highly committed towards the temporary agency. We cannot make a statement about the strength of the organizational commitment to the temporary agency compared to the clients. However, we did not expect this high level of TAWs' organizational commitment towards the temporary agency.

One might argue that the TAWs' high organizational commitment can be explained by the efforts of the case organization. Therefore, we argue that the temporary agency rather fits to what Newell (2009) calls the gourmet division which pursuits a high organizational commitment strategy, than the volume division which has a low organizational commitment strategy. Furthermore, it might be that the efforts of the temporary agency are influenced by the practices of KIFs. This is because KIFs organize activities to create socio-emotional ties between the knowledge workers and with the organization which establish a sense of belonging (Alvesson, 2004). Moreover, they invest in the development of their employees (Alvesson, 2004; Hislop, 2013). Related to KIFs' efforts, the case organization also creates a sense of belonging and offers development practices. Nonetheless, when it comes to the employees' development, we noticed that the temporary agency even exceeds the KIFs' efforts. This is because whereas KIFs focus on the professional development of the knowledge workers, the temporary agency also invests in the personal development of its TAWs.

Related to TAWs' high organizational commitment, the norm of reciprocity explains that employees regulate their attitudes and behaviors aligned with how the organization treats them (Chew & Chan, 2008; Kwon, Bae & Lawler, 2010). In our opinion, this norm illustrates the relationship between the commitment-enhancing efforts of the temporary agency and the high organizational commitment of the TAWs. As the TAWs are aware of the case organization's investment and efforts, they seem to feel an obligation to reciprocate the favor. However, in consideration of our research design, we are not able to make any statements about the cause-effect relationship between the commitment-enhancing efforts and the organizational commitment of the TAWs. Therefore, it is also possible that the case organization is aware of the TAWs' organizational commitment and therefore feels the obligation to reciprocate the favor. A third possibility is that the organizational efforts do not have an influence on the TAWs' organizational commitment at all. However, our empirical data indicates that it is most probably the first possibility that the TAWs reciprocate the organizational efforts.

Additionally, the relationship between the temporary agency's efforts and the TAW's organizational commitment can be explained by continuance commitment. This component of Allen and Meyer's (1990) three-component framework of organizational commitment states that employees need to remain in an organization because they are unwilling to give up desirable benefits (Johnson & Chang, 2006). Thus, we argue that the TAWs' organizational commitment is linked to the aim of making use of the desirable benefits such as participating in more events in the future.

Regardless of the influence of the temporary agency's efforts, which are similar to KIFs' efforts, the type of work still differs significantly. Whereas knowledge workers perform complex tasks (Chew & Chan, 2008; Watson, 2009), the tasks of the TAWs are simple (de Gilder, 2014; Galais & Moser, 2018; Håkansson & Isidorsson, 2012). This is because as shown in the findings, they work as waitresses and waiters. In addition to the complex tasks, knowledge workers usually have a high status as they are part of an exclusive group (Tansley, 2009). In contrast, temporary agency work is known for being of low status (de Gilder, 2014). For example, the interviewees explain that they are given the easiest tasks when working at the clients' sites. These different fundamental characteristics influence the organizational practices of KIFs and temporary agencies. To give an example, we will shortly elaborate on the respective recruitment practices.

Due to the complex tasks and exclusive status of knowledge workers (Tansley, 2009; Watson, 2009), KIFs only hire the best and brightest (Alvesson, 2004). For example, this takes expression through KIFs' way of selecting and employing knowledge workers that are highly competent and knowledgeable (Alvesson, 2004). In comparison, our temporary agency is welcoming everybody to join the organization. More concrete, the findings indicate that the case organization does not take work experience, academical background, or personality characteristics into consideration when hiring new TAWs. Consequently, we can say that even though the temporary agency engages in similar efforts than KIFs, the underlying characteristics and organizational practices are still completely different.

To sum up the discussion, we examined the TAWs' relationship with the temporary agency and showed that they are highly committed. Additionally, we examined the impact of an increase in voluntarily engaged TAWs. Next, we discussed their formal and informal career prospects and took a critical standpoint regarding the case organization's funnel. Furthermore, we elaborated on the temporary agency's efforts to develop the employees on a personal level. Related to this, we raised awareness for the potential interpretation of the case organization as a cult. Lastly, we discussed that the TAWs are committed despite simple tasks and low-status work.

6. Future research

In our research we identified some interesting aspects that are suitable for further investigations. Thus, we will elaborate on several suggestions for future research that can help to gain a more holistic understanding and knowledge about temporary agency work, TAWs, and the TAWs' expressions of organizational commitment within the triangular relationship.

In the discussion, we claimed that an increase in voluntary engagement in temporary agency work could radically change the traditional employer-employee relationship. This is because due to the high turnover rate, the relationship between the temporary agency and its TAWs currently has a short-term focus. However, this focus could change to long-term if more employees are voluntarily engaged in temporary agency work and consequently remain longer in the temporary agencies. Therefore, we believe that it would be interesting to find out more about the organizational practices, their impact on TAWs, and the consequences if temporary agencies adopt a long-term focus.

Additionally, our analysis of the empirical data indicated that both the temporary agency and their TAWs give more than they are formally expected. If we look at this employer-employee relationship in isolation, this does not present a problem. However, temporary agency work is defined as a triangular relationship wherefore the clients need to be considered as well. In the literature review about temporary agency work, we could only find indications about a close relationship between the TAWs and the clients. Consequently, it would be interesting to investigate how a close relationship between the TAWs and the temporary agency impacts the clients.

Related to this, our research showed that the TAWs of our case organization are highly committed to their temporary agency. However, we do not have any information about their organizational commitment to the clients. According to Connelly, Gallagher, and Wilkin (2014), the TAWs' high organizational commitment to the temporary agency would have a positive effect on their organizational commitment to the clients. Therefore, it would be interesting to conduct future research to test Connelly, Gallagher, and Wilkin's (2014) spillover theory.

Another suggestion for future research is related to the impact of organizational efforts on the TAWs' organizational commitment. In this research we identified several commitment-enhancing efforts that the temporary agency exerts. However, due to our research design, we were not able to make any statements about the cause-effect relationship between the commitment-enhancing efforts and TAWs' organizational commitment. Therefore, the temporary agency work literature would benefit from studying if commitment-enhancing efforts have a direct impact on the TAWs' organizational commitment and which other factors affect it.

Most importantly, we suggest future research to further investigate our found phenomenon that TAWs are committed despite simple tasks and low-status work. As shown in the discussion, this is surprising and rather unexpected for this type of work. However, we do not know if our case organization is unique in itself or if the findings are applicable to other temporary agencies. Therefore, another suggestion is to reproduce the research design in order to see whether the organizational commitment of other temporary agencies' TAWs takes similar expressions as in our case organization. This would add to the understanding about organizational commitment within temporary agency work and further enhance the validity of this research.

7. Conclusion

The aim of this research was to investigate the relationship, which is characterized by organizational commitment, between TAWs and their temporary agency. Additionally, our goal was to identify efforts of the temporary agency that influence the TAWs' organizational commitment and the TAWs' interpretation of them. In order to gain a deeper understanding of TAWs, we used a qualitative research approach and a case study design. Thereby, our main sources to collect the empirical data were interviews with the TAWs and observations.

Regarding the TAWs' relationship with their temporary agency, we found that the TAWs are committed despite simple tasks and low-status work. The employees of the case organization expressed this organizational commitment through engaging in extra efforts, such as their willingness to work in case of labor shortage and to support colleagues with personal issues in their free time. Additionally, the TAWs' organizational commitment was shown in their loyalty to the organization and their desire to stay connected to the temporary agency even after leaving it. Another indication for the employees' organizational commitment was their perception that working for the case organization is more than a job.

Despite investigating the TAWs' perceptions of the relationship to their temporary agency, we also identified commitment-enhancing efforts of the case organization. Thereby, we found that the organization engages in efforts that create a sense of belonging. For example, the temporary agency organizes social activities and designed an office space that invites the TAWs to hang out in their free time. Additionally, we discovered that the organization creates a strong in-group feeling that differentiates the organization from competitors. In our opinion, the group dances further contribute to feelings of unity and togetherness between the employees. To conclude, we argued that the case organization exerts these efforts in order to distract the employees from the simple tasks and low-status work.

In this research, we showed that the TAWs have a strong sense of belonging to their temporary agency. Additionally, we found that they have intense feelings of affection towards the case organization. Consequently, we concluded that the employees of the temporary agency interpret the organizational efforts positively.

In addition to efforts that create a sense of belonging, we identified efforts that personally develop the TAWs. Therefore, we found that the temporary agency invites its talents to participate in events that include exercises such as taking an ice bath. Moreover, we discovered that the case organization offers its key employees individual career paths to pursuit personal development aims. To conclude, we claimed that the case organization engages in these efforts in order to compensate the employees for the simple tasks and low-status work.

As stated, the events contained physical exercises such as taking an ice bath, jumping from a tree, and walking over fire. Together with the own dances of the case organization, we claimed that these exercises are rather spiritual than common business practices. Derived from this, we argued that the temporary agency has traits of a cult. Thereby we elaborated on the advantages of the normative control for the case organization with regard to the triangular relationship of temporary agency work. Additionally, we stated that the resulting over-commitment represents a risk for both the temporary agency and the TAWs.

Furthermore, we discussed the limited formal development opportunities of the TAWs and concluded that we perceive them as unattractive. However, we showed that the temporary agency offers informal development possibilities for key employees. As some of the interviewed TAWs pursue a career within the case organization, we conclude that they interpret the development possibilities as positive.

In our opinion, the mentioned efforts of the case organization have a positive impact on the TAWs' organizational commitment to the temporary agency. Nevertheless, in consideration of our research design, we were not able to make any statements about the cause-effect relationship between the commitment-enhancing efforts and the TAWs' organizational commitment. However, we were able to explain the TAWs' organizational commitment with the use of the norm of reciprocity and continuance commitment.

Additionally, we elaborated on the temporary agency's organizational chart which is illustrated as a funnel. This graphical representation was chosen to emphasis the importance of the normal employees, the Jobbers. However, we argued that this funnel is hypocritical from a work-related perspective. In contrast, we interpreted it as justified from a social perspective.

Furthermore, we discussed that the TAWs from our case organization seem to be voluntarily involved in temporary agency work. Related to that, we identified that their motives for being employed by the case organization changed over time. Whereas the decision to work for the temporary agency was mainly driven by economic incentives, we showed that the TAWs were committed to the organization due to personal preference. Derived from this, we claimed that an increase in voluntarily engaged TAWs might radically change the temporary agency work sector. This is because the relationship between the TAWs and their temporary agency could lead to a shift from a short-term to a long-term focus.

This research contributes to the temporary agency work literature because it liberates from the common assumption that high organizational commitment is linked to work that contains complicated tasks and has a high status, such as in knowledge-intensive firms. In contrast, our research has shown highly committed employees in a sector that generally has low committed employees. Additionally, it provides a deepened understanding of the influence of the triangular relationship, and more specifically the temporary agency, on the TAWs' organizational commitment.

Coming back to our initial understanding of temporary agency work…

During the last months, Researcher A became aware of the particularity of the case organization and Researcher B learned that positive relationships between TAWs and temporary agencies exist. Consequently, this research did not only contribute to the temporary agency work literature, but also altered our personal understanding of it.

References

Allen, N. J. and Meyer, J. P. (1990). ‘The Measurement and Antecedents of Affective, Continuance and Normative Commitment to the Organization’. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, Vol. 63, pp. 1-18.

Alvehus, J. (2013). *Skriva Uppsats med Kvalitativ Metod: En Handbok.* Stockholm: Liber AB.

Alvesson, M. (2004). *Knowledge Work and Knowledge-Intensive Firms.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Alvesson, M. and Sköldberg, K. (2009). *Reflexive Methodology. New Vistas for Qualitative Research.* 2nd edition, London: SAGE Publications.

Benson, J. (1998). ‘Dual Commitment: Contract Workers in Australian Manufacturing Enterprises’. *Journal of Management Studies,* Vol. 35(3), pp. 355–375.

Becker, H. S. (1960). ‘Notes on the Concept of Commitment’. *The American Journal of Sociology,* Vol. 66(1), pp. 32-40.

Bergman, M. E. (2006). ‘The Relationship Between Affective and Normative Commitment: Review and Research Agenda’. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, Vol. 27, pp. 645-663.

Biggs, D. and Swailes, S. (2006). ‘Relations, Commitment and Satisfaction in Agency Workers and Permanent Workers’. *Employee Relations*, Vol. 28(2), pp. 130-143.

Blau, P. M. (1964). *Exchange and Power in Social Life.* New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Bryman, A. (2008). *Social Research Methods.* 3rd edition, New York: Oxford University Press.

Bryman, A. and Burgess, R. (1999). *Qualitative Research. Volume II.* Leicester: SAGE Publications.

Bryman, A. and Bell, E. (2003). *Business Research Methods.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Bryson, A. (2012). 'Do Temporary Agency Workers Affect Workplace Performance?'. *Journal of Productivity Analysis*, Vol. 39(2), pp. 131-138.

Bundesagentur für Arbeit. (2019). 'Aktuelle Entwicklungen in der Zeitarbeit'. *Berichte: Blickpunkt Arbeitsmarkt,* pp. 1-24.

Bundesanzeiger. (2019). https://www.bundesanzeiger.de/ebanzwww/wexsservlet?session.sessionid=c17cc727e8d98d425b102d2e9caac242&page.navid=to_start [Retrieved 2019-05-16]

Chambel, M. J. (2014). *Double Employment Relationship in Temporary Agency Work: Psychological Contract with the Client and the Agency.* In Koene, B., Garsten, C. and Galais, N. (eds), *Management and Organization of Temporary Agency Work*. New York: Routledge.

Chew, J. and Chan C. C. A. (2008). 'Human Resource Practices, Organizational Commitment and Intention to Stay'. *International Journal of Manpower,* Vol. 29(6), pp. 503-522.

Connell, J. and Burgess, J. (2002). 'In Search of Flexibility: Implications for Temporary Agency Workers and Human Resource Management'. *Australian Bulletin of Labour*, Vol. 28(4), pp. 272-283.

Connelly, C. E., Gallagher, D. G. and Wilkin C. L. (2014). *The Potential "Spillover" of Temporary Agency Work.* In Koene, B., Garsten, C. and Galais, N. (eds), *Management and Organization of Temporary Agency Work*. New York: Routledge.

de Gilder, D. (2014). *Social Identity and Temporary Work*. In Koene, B., Garsten, C. and Galais, N. (eds), *Management and Organization of Temporary Agency Work*. New York: Routledge.

de Jong, J., de Cuyper, N., de Witte, H., Silla, I. and Bernhard-Oettel, C. (2009). ‘Motives for Accepting Temporary Employment: A Typology’. *International Journal of Manpower*, Vol. 30(3), pp. 237-252.

Dennis, A. (2011). ‘Symbolic Interactionism and Ethnomethodology’. *Symbolic Interaction,* Vol. 34(3), pp. 349-356.

Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. (2005). *Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research.* In Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. (eds), *Handbook of Qualitative Research,* 3rd edition. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Ellingson, J. E., Gruys, M. L. and Sackett, P. R. (1998). ‘Factors Related to the Satisfaction and Performance of Temporary Employees’. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 83(6), pp. 913-921.

Galais, N. and Moser, K. (2009). ‘Organizational Commitment and the Well-Being of Temporary Agency Workers: A Longitudinal Study’. *Human Relations*, Vol. 62(4), pp. 589-620.

Galais, N. and Moser, K. (2018). ‘Temporary Agency Workers Stepping into a Permanent Position: Social Skills Matter’. *Employee Relations,* Vol. 40(1), pp. 124-138.

Galbin, A. (2014). ‘An Introduction to Social Constructionism’. *Social Research Reports,* Vol. 26, pp. 82-92.

George, E., Levenson, A., Finegold, D. and Chattopadhyay, P. (2010). ‘Extra-Role Behaviors Among Temporary Workers: How Firms Create Relational Wealth in the United States of America’. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 21(4), pp. 530–550.

Gergen, K. J. (1985). *Social Constructionist Inquiry: Context and Implications*. In Gergen, K. J. and Davis, K. E. (eds), *The Social Construction of the Person*. New York: Springer.

Gouldner, A. W. (1960). 'The Norm of Reciprocity: A Preliminary Statement'. *American Sociological Review,* Vol. 25(2), pp. 161-178.

Hesse-Biber, S.N. and Leavy, P. (2011). *The Practice of Qualitative Research.* 2nd edition, Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Hislop, D. (2013). *Knowledge Management in Organizations - A Critical Introduction.* 2nd edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Horwitz, F. M., Heng, C. T. and Quazi, H. A. (2003). 'Finders, Keepers? Attracting, Motivating and Retaining Knowledge Workers'. *Human Resource Management Journal,* Vol. 13(4), pp. 23-44.

Håkansson, K. and Isidorsson, T. (2012). 'Work Organizational Outcomes of the Use of Temporary Agency Workers'. *Organization Studies,* Vol. 33(4), pp. 487-505.

Iles, P., Mabey, C. and Robertson, I. (1990). 'HRM Practices and Employee Commitment: Possibilities, Pitfalls and Paradoxes'. *British Journal of Management,* Vol. 1, pp. 147-157.

Irvin, A. (2011). 'Duration, Dominance and Depth in Telephone and Face-to-Face Interviews: A Comparative Exploration'. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, Vol. 20(3), pp. 202–220.

Iverson, R. D. and Buttigieg, D. M. (1999). 'Affective, Normative, and Continuance Commitment: Can the 'Right Kind' of Commitment be Managed?'. *Journal of Management Studies,* Vol. 36(3), pp. 307-333.

Jahn, E. and Bentzen, J. (2012). 'What Drives the Demand for Temporary Agency Workers?'. *LABOUR: Review of Labour Economics & Industrial Relations*, Vol. 26(3), pp. 341-355.

Jiang, J. and Wang, R. (2018). ‘Want Engaged Temporary Agency Workers? Think Beyond the Money’. *Social Behavior and Personality*, Vol. 46(6), pp. 1029-1042.

Johnson, S. A. and Ashforth, B. E. (2008). ‘Externalization of Employment in a Service Environment: The Role of Organizational and Customer Identification’. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, Vol. 29, pp. 287–309.

Johnson, R. E. and Chang, C. (2006). ‘"I" is to Continuance as "We" is to Affective: the Relevance of the Self-Concept for Organizational Commitment’. *Journal of Organizational Behavior,* Vol. 27, pp. 549-570.

Kvale, S. (1996). *InterViews. An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing.* Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Kwon, K., Bae, J. and Lawler, J. J. (2010). ‘High Commitment HR Practices and Top Performers - Impacts on Organizational Commitment’. *Management International Review,* Vol. 50, pp. 57–80.

Mathieu, J. E. and Zajac, D. M. (1990). ‘A Review and Meta-Analysis of the Antecedents, Correlates, and Consequences of Organizational Commitment’. *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 108(2), pp. 171-194.

May, T. (2011). *Social Research: Issues, Methods and Process.* 4th edition, Berkshire: Open University Press.

McClurg, L. N. (1999). ‘Organizational Commitment in the Temporary-Help Service Industry’. *Journal of Applied Management Studies*, Vol. 8(1), pp. 5-26.

McNaughton Nicholls, C., Mills, L. and Kotecha, M. (2013). *Observations.* In Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., McNaughton Nicholls, C. and Ormston, R. (eds), *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers.* London: SAGE Publications.

Mercurio, Z. A. (2015). ‘Affective Commitment as a Core Essence of Organizational Commitment: An Integrative Literature Review’. *Human Resource Development Review 2015,* Vol. 14(4), pp. 389-414.

Meyer, J. P., Stanley, D. J., Herscovitch, L. and Topolnytsky, L. (2002). ‘Affective, Continuance, and Normative Commitment to the Organization: A Meta-Analysis of Antecedents, Correlates, and Consequences’. *Journal of Vocational Behavior,* Vol. 61, pp. 20–52.

Meyer, J. P. and Herscovitch, L. (2001). ‘Commitment in the Workplace. Toward a General Model’. *Human Resource Management Review,* Vol. 11, pp. 299-326.

Miles, M. B. and Huberman, A. M. (1984). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Sourcebook of New Methods.* Beverly Hills: SAGE Publications.

Newell, S. (2009). *Assessment, Selection and Evaluation*. In Leopold, J. and Harris, L. (eds), *The Strategic Managing of Human Resources.* 2nd edition, Harlow: Prentice Hall.

Newell, S., Robertson, M., Scarbrough, H. and Swan, J. (2009). *Managing Knowledge, Work and Innovation*. 2nd edition, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Newton, L. A. (1996). ‘Stiff Competition for Talented Temps’. *HR Magazine*, Vol. 41(5), pp. 91-93.

Perera, T. G. T. N. and Weerakkody, W. A. S. (2017). ‘Agency Contribution in Achieving Temporary Agency Workers’ Organizational Commitment: A Study in ABC (PVT) LTD’. *Eurasian Journal of Business and Management,* Vol. 5(4), pp. 49-59.

Porter, L., Steers, R., Mowday, R. and Boulian, P. (1974). ‘Organizational Commitment, Job Satisfaction, and Turnover Among Psychiatric Technicians’. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* Vol. 59(5), pp. 603-609.

Prasad, P. (2005). *Creating Qualitative Research. Working in the Postpositivist Traditions.* London: Routledge.

Prasad, P. (2018). *Creating Qualitative Research. Working in the Postpositivist Traditions.* 2nd edition, London: Routledge.

Rennstam, J. and Wästerfors, D. (2018). *Analyze! – Crafting your Data in Qualitative Research.* Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Ryen, A. (2004). *Kvalitativ Intervju - Från Vetenskapsteori till Fältstudier.* Malmö: Liber AB.

Sandelowski, M. (2011). 'Reembodying Qualitative Inquiry'. *Qualitative Health Research,* Vol. 12(1), pp. 104-115.

Schaefer, S. M. and Alvesson, M. (2017). 'Epistemic Attitudes and Source Critique in Qualitative Research'. *Journal of Management Inquiry,* Vol. 00(0), pp. 1-13.

Silverman, D. (2010). *Doing Qualitative Research. A Practical Handbook.* 3rd edition, London: SAGE Publications.

Spermann, A. (2011). 'The New Role of Temporary Agency Work in Germany'. *IZA Discussion Paper*, No. 6180, pp. 1-51.

Tansley, C. (2009). *Knowledge Organisations, Strategies and Human Resourcing.* In Leopold, J. and Harris, L. (eds), *The Strategic Managing of Human Resources.* 2nd edition, England: Prentice Hall.

Tan, H. and Tan, C. (2002). 'Temporary Employees in Singapore: What Drives Them?'. *The Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 136(1), pp. 83-102.

Veitch, R. W. D. and Cooper-Thomas, H. D. (2009). 'Tit for Tat? Predictors of Temporary Agency Workers' Commitments'. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources,* Vol. 47(3), pp. 318-337.

Vogl, S. (2013). 'Telephone Versus Face-to-Face Interviews: Mode Effect on Semistructured Interviews with Children'. *Sociological Methodology,* Vol. 43(1), pp. 133-177.

Watson, T. (2009). *Organisations, Strategies and Human Resourcing*. In Leopold, J. and Harris, L. (eds), *The Strategic Managing of Human Resources*. 2nd edition, Harlow: Prentice Hall.

Wiener, Y. (1982). ‘Commitment in Organizations: A Normative View’. *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 7(3), pp. 418-428.

Woldman, N., Wesselink, R., Runhaar, P. and Mulder, M. (2018). ‘Supporting Temporary Agency Workers’ Affective Commitments: Exploring the Role of Opportunities for Competence Development’. *Human Resource Development International*, Vol. 21(3), pp. 254-275.

Wright, P. M. and Kehoe, R. R. (2008). ‘Human Resource Practices and Organizational Commitment: A Deeper Examination’. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources,* Vol. 46(1), pp. 6-20.

Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case Study Research - Design and Methods*. 5th edition. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Appendix A

Interview Guide (First Edition)

First (introduction) phase

Introduce ourselves!

- *Do you approve that we record the interview?*
- *The answers will be treated anonymously.*
- *The interview will take about an hour.*

Tell us about yourself!

F&K related information

Why did you decide to work at F&K? → motives

a. How many hours do you work per week?
b. Do you like working at Forks & Knives? Are you proud to work there?

What has been the most memorable situation/event/day?

a.

Do you mainly work with one client or several ones?

a. If mainly one: Which client of Forks & Knives is it?
    i. Why this client?
b. If several: Who is your favorite client of Forks & Knives?
    i. Why?
    ii. Is it a conscious decision to work with several clients?

Second (in-depth) phase

Temporary work @ F&K and the Clients

What are the first three things that come to your mind when you think of F&K?

If working for several clients: How do you perceive working for different clients?

a. What do you like about it? Or what don't you like about it?

If mainly working for one client: What influenced your decision of only/mainly working for XY?

a. What do you like about it?
b. What don't you like about it?

What are the downsides of being a temporary agency worker?

a. Any problems? Challenges?

What are the advantages of being a temporary agency worker?

How is your relationship with your colleagues from F&K?

a. How do you feel about working with different colleagues at each job?
b. Do you spend your free-time together?

How is your relationship with the colleagues at the job?

a. How do they treat you?
    i. Thankful? Annoyed?
b. Are there differences between different jobs?
c. Closer to some colleagues at the job than to others?

How do you feel when F&K calls you and ask if you want to work?

a. Is it always like that or does it depend on the job?
b. Did your reaction change over time?
    i. Why?

Have you ever been in a situation where the client asked you to do something that is not aligned with the F&K standard?

a. How did you react?
b. How did you feel?
c. Would you do it differently now?
    i. Why?

Would it be hard for you to leave F&K for a better job (higher salary, better position/role etc)?

a. What are the factors that influence your answer? Why?
a. If the client would offer you a job?

Third (concluding) phase

Sum up what the interviewee has said.

Do you want to add something more? Is something important missing?

Have you been able to be yourself throughout the interview?

a. If not, why?
b. What could we have done better in order to get your feeling more confident and 'safe' during the interview?

Appendix B

Interview Guide (Second Edition)

First (introduction) phase

Introduce ourselves!

- *Do you approve that we record the interview?*
- *The answers will be treated anonymously.*
- *The interview will take about an hour.*

Tell us about yourself!

F&K related information

Why did you decide to work at F&K?

a. How many hours do you work per week?
b. Do you like working at Forks & Knives? Are you proud to work there?

Do you mainly work with one client or several ones?

a. If mainly **one**: Which client of Forks & Knives is it?
    i. Why this client?
b. If **several**: Who is your favorite client of Forks & Knives?
    i. Why?
    ii. Is it a conscious decision to work with several clients?

How much in advance do you sign up for jobs?

a. Do you like to have security in regards of how much you are going to work?

Second (in-depth) phase

Personal Development Events

How were the Inspiration days?

a. What did you do?
b. What did you like most?
c. Was there something that irritated you?
    i. Give us a concrete example.

Was it the first time you joined, or have you been participating in similar events before?

a. Did you know other people that joined the event?
b. Is it always the same people participating?

Relationship with F&K and the Colleagues

What are the first three things that come to your mind when you think of F&K?

How is your relationship with your colleagues from F&K?

a. How do you feel about working with different colleagues at each job?
b. Do you spend your free-time together?
c. Did you know them before starting at F&K?

Are you only friends with people on your working level (e.g. only job coaches) or are you friends with people from other levels?

a. Differences when you're partying/hanging out compared to working?

Do you perceive that it is different groups inside of F&K?

a. If so, can you describe it more concrete? How does it take form?
b. Do you perceive that there is an inner circle within F&K?
c. Are you a part of one? Or not?
    i. How do you feel being a part/not being a part of the mentioned group?

Would it be hard for you to leave Forks and Knives for a better job (higher salary, better position/role etc.)?

a. What are the factors that influence your answer? Why?
b. If the client would offer you a job?

Social Activities

Do you go to events organized by F&K?

a. Why? Friends? Meet new people?
b. Who are the people going there?
c. Did that change over time?

Temporary Agency Work-Related Topics

How do you perceive working for different clients?

a. What do you like about it?
b. What don't you like about it?

How is your relationship with the colleagues at the job?

a. How do they treat you?
    i. Thankful?
    ii. Annoyed?
b. Are there differences between different jobs?
c. Closer to some colleagues at the job than to others?

What type of employment option do you prefer to have after graduating? (E.g. temporary, permanent).

a. Why? Which factors influence that?

Third (concluding) phase

Sum up what the interviewee has said.

Do you want to add something more? Is something important missing?

Have you been able to be yourself throughout the interview?

a. If not, why?
b. What could we have done better in order to get your feeling more confident and ‘safe’ during the interview?