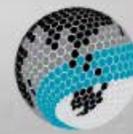


TASA Conference 2018

Precarity, Rights and Resistance



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November 19-22 2018

Deakin University, Burwood Campus

Conference Proceedings

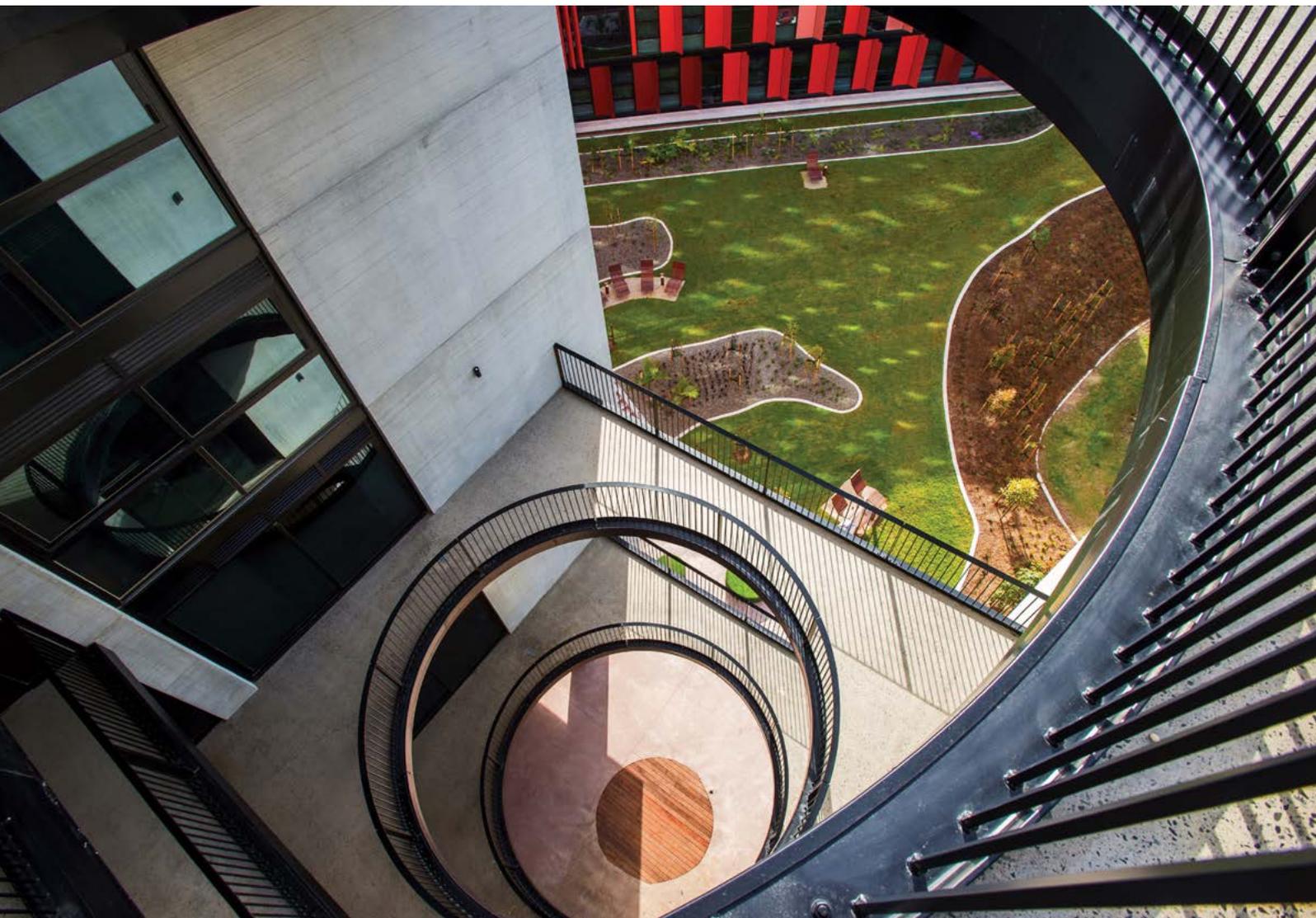
Precarity, Rights and Resistance

Deakin University, Burwood Campus

19-22 November 2018

ISBN: 978-0-6482210-1-2

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Society and Subjectivity: Cornelius Castoriadis and Future Directions

Brent Van Gils

Flinders University

As a Greek-French philosopher and social-theorist, Cornelius Castoriadis (1922-1997) is known for delineating the conditions of collective and individual autonomy and heteronomy in historical and social terms (Karalis 2014: xiv). Additionally, Castoriadis has made significant contributions to conceptualising the *radical imagination* of subjects and the *social imaginary* of societies (Klooger 2009:4), which, as Anthony Elliot argues, induces a 'deep appreciation' of the 'imaginative and creative capacities of human beings in their dealings with the world' (Elliot 2002:141). Placing an emphasis on Castoriadis's approach to subjectivity, this paper investigates dimensions of Castoriadis's social theory that are useful for interpreting the social and political dynamics of contemporary society. Furthermore, it also discusses how dimensions to Castoriadis's account of subjectivity and society can be re-imagined in future directions. Specifically, I summarise Castoriadis's account of the relationship between the human *psyche* and society. I argue that the human *psyche* provides a notion of the self, for Castoriadis, which outlines the anthropological pre-conditions to human beings and forms of subjectivity. I highlight, however, ways that self-interpretative dimensions can be explored in Castoriadis's account of self-creation. Additionally, I summarise Castoriadis's socio-political approach to society, the social individual, and the autonomous subject, which represent autonomous and heteronomous modes of subjectivity, for Castoriadis. I argue, however, that the social individual and autonomous subject can be further elucidated by addressing their corporeality, and the meaning that is placed upon it within social contexts. Furthermore, I discuss how partial forms of autonomy can be used to address the social individual, in contrast to the autonomous subject within the divisions of society.

Subjectivity and Society

Castoriadis situates himself between phenomenological and structuralist approaches to create his account of subjectivity and his conceptualisation of the *psyche* and *society* (Adams 2011:84). Entering from a psychoanalytic perspective, his elucidation of the *psyche* demonstrates that the creative imagination is the basis of subjectivity and of the institution of society (Adams 2011:81). The creative imagination, for Castoriadis, is split into two irreducible poles of the *radical imagination* of the *psyche* and the *social imaginary* of the *social-historical* (Adams 2011:84). The *psyche*, Castoriadis argues, is a representative flux that is characterised by formation (*bildung*) and imagination (*Einbildung*), which 'exists in and through what it forms and how it forms it' (Castoriadis 1987:283). He argues that the *psyche* is an *unlimited* and *unmasterable* representative

flux, whereby its formation and functioning exceeds the minimal requirements of species-reproduction and self-preservation, and it is not determined by biological imperatives (Castoriadis 1987:283; Smith 2014:63-64). This is because the human *psyche* is *defunctionalised*, Castoriadis argues, to the point whereby representational pleasures dominate organ pleasure (Castoriadis 1987:283; Smith 2014:63-64). Furthermore, Castoriadis does not neglect the *somatic*, or *corporeal* elements to the *psyche*. He highlights that there is no real distinction between *psyche* and *soma*, arguing that the body is, in a sense, psychical, and that the *psyche* is, in a sense, the unperceivable dimension of the *soma* (Castoriadis 1997c:379; Smith 2014:64). As Karl Smith (2014:64) summarised, ‘we are discussing an embodied being who takes an intentional stance towards the objects and the subjects that it encounters in the world’. I argue that the human *psyche-soma* provides a notion of the *self* in Castoriadis’s social theory, which, in its relationship to the social imaginary of society, outlines the anthropological pre-conditions to human beings and forms of subjectivity. That is, the radical imagination of the self as a *psyche-soma* and its relationship to the social imaginary of society, are essential characteristics for human being (Castoriadis 1997a:105).

Castoriadis conceptualises each society as a ‘unity of institutions’ that exists in and through an ‘internal cohesion of an immensely complex web of meanings’ that he identifies as *social imaginary significations* (Castoriadis 1987:312; Castoriadis 1997b:7). Significations, for Castoriadis, are meanings that are social in origin and nature, and they contrast to representations, which are self-created images and meanings formed by and constituting the *psyche* (Castoriadis 1987:312; Klooger 2009:121). Castoriadis understands that all societies are self-instituting. He argues that every society continuously creates and re-creates their own social world and reality through the dimensions of *instituting* and *instituted*, where they are the creator and source of their own laws, norms and social customs (Adams 2014:14; Castoriadis 1987:370-371). For Castoriadis, every society is in a constant state of having already instituted itself and in re-instituting itself through its radical social imaginary and its instituted social imaginary significations (Castoriadis 1987:370).

Castoriadis connects the *psyche* and society through his notion of *sublimation* as *socialisation*. Prior to its socialisation, Castoriadis portrays the *psyche* in its originary state as the *psychic monad*, which resembles the *psyche* of the newborn infant (Castoriadis 1991:144; Smith 2005:8). He argues that the *psychic monad* is in a condition of primary narcissism, where they exist in their own mode of self-created reality and are incapable of distinguishing between self and other (Browne 2016:102; Castoriadis 1989:16; Smith 2005:7). It is through a contact with society - via *sublimation* as *socialisation* - that Castoriadis argues that the *psychic monad*’s subjectivity is opened to the social-historical world of society and from which, their social formation takes place (Castoriadis 1991:144). *Sublimation* as *socialisation* encapsulate the moments that societal institutions, like the family, schooling, laws or norms, begin to educate, socialise, develop, and nurture each human being into a *socially fabricated individual* (Straume 2014:143). *Sublimation*, for Castoriadis, is the psychical side of socialisation, whereby infants give up and replace their own private world of meaning to take up social objects that have worth within their historically specific social world (Castoriadis 1987:309-12; Klooger 2009:130; Smith 2005:8).

Castoriadis’s approach to the *psyche* and society demonstrates that the creative imagination is at the centre of the singular *self* – in the form of the radical imagination - and the social-historical of society – in the form of the social imaginary (Adams 2011:84; Castoriadis 1997a:105). Additionally, he broaches the question of how it is possible for a social individual can exist for a self in the first place. He argues that to be a social individual or human being, is to be both *psyche* and society, because the individual, and even the idea of the individual, is created ‘in and through society, its institutions, and the social imaginary significations that render the psyche fit for life’ (Castoriadis 1997a:105). However, whilst Castoriadis’s anthropology of the *self* sees human beings as self-creating via their engagement with social imaginary significations (Castoriadis

1989:27), scholars like Karl Smith (2010:6), for example, have argued that this self-creation has *self-interpretative* dimensions. Smith deduces these self-interpretative dimensions of the self by engaging with the work of Charles Taylor (1989) and the hermeneutic tradition (Smith 2010:6). Taylor's hermeneutic account of the self argues that self-interpretation and self-understanding is central to who human beings are (Browne 2016:109; Taylor 1989:112). Self-interpretation, for Taylor, occurs through an ongoing internal narrative, where each self comes to understand their life as an unfolding story (Taylor 1989:47), and can be used to further explore Castoriadis's account of the self-creation for each self, via their engagement with the social imaginary of society. However, Castoriadis also has a socio-political understanding of society and subjectivity, which I will summarise and now explore.

Autonomous and Heteronomous Societies and Subjectivities

Castoriadis has a socio-political approach to conceptualising the social and political dynamics of society, which he interprets through his political project of autonomy and its antithesis heteronomy. Conceptually, autonomy and heteronomy derive from the Greek terms *auto* and *hetero*, meaning self and other respectively, and *nomos*, meaning laws, norms and social customs (Smith 2014:21). Autonomy, therefore, refers to self-rule while heteronomy means rule-by-other (Castoriadis 1991:164; Lindsey 1986:5; Smith 2014:21). Castoriadis's project of autonomy and its antithesis heteronomy delineate the conditions of collective and individual autonomy and heteronomy in historical and social terms (Karalis 2014:xiv). At its collective level, Castoriadis argues that an autonomous society must recognise that they are the source of their own instituted form and that these forms are not absolute, but can be reflected upon, problematized and replaced within the instituting process (Adams 2014:14). Castoriadis characterises autonomous societies as participatory democracies, which involves the explicit political participation of the social collective self-instituting their own laws and norms, and constantly reflecting upon and re-instituting their laws and norms (Castoriadis 1991:163; Straume 2014:140; Tovar-Restrepo 2013:86). In contrast, Castoriadis argues that a heteronomous society comes to be ruled by its own inherited and instituted form. Accordingly, he uses heteronomy to critique monotheism and the religious formation of traditional societies, who attribute their self-formation and self-institution to an extra social source like God (Castoriadis 1997c:246). Moreover, Castoriadis interprets the representative democracy of contemporary societies as heteronomous. He argues that small groups have the political power over the social collective in representative democracies, who are alienated or separated from participating in politically instituting their social form (Castoriadis 1989:36; Straume 2014:140; Tovar-Restrepo 2013:86). At the social level, however, I interpret Castoriadis's critique of contemporary society as being in a nuanced form of heteronomy.

Castoriadis observes contemporary capitalist society to be dominated by two central social imaginary significations; the first is the social imaginary of *autonomy*, which encourages the freedom of self-institution, self-legislation, self-reflection of instituted meanings, and self-limitation (Castoriadis 1989:33; Straume 2014:146); and the second is the dominant socially imaginary of *rational mastery* (Castoriadis 1981:240). For Castoriadis, the contemporary project of autonomy has been mutually contaminated with the dominant socially imaginary of rational mastery, which, he argues, coincides with the capitalist imaginary, whereby they create a desire by human beings to gain, through technical, productive and scientific knowledge and techniques, a mastery or autonomy over the nature both within and outside of us (Castoriadis 1981:240). Castoriadis critiques the contemporary project of autonomy as being domesticated or enslaved to rational mastery, which can be interpreted as a nuanced form of heteronomy. He summarises this mutual contamination between the project of autonomy and rational mastery as an inherited and often unchallenged understanding that *autonomy for man* can be gained through a *mastery over nature* (Castoriadis [1990]2010:100). In contrast, Castoriadis argues that autonomy can arise

the moment that this unquestioned *desire* for mastery that shapes our social actions and world understanding, is problematized, reflected upon and controlled (Castoriadis [1990]2010:100).

Castoriadis's account of the social individual and the autonomous subject, on the other hand, distinguishes between autonomous and heteronomous modes of social and political being and doing for social selves in society. For Castoriadis, the social individual – or the socially fabricated individual - represents the socialised self who encounters social meanings and social institutions (including other social individuals) and forms a social identity (Castoriadis 1989:23). Castoriadis argues that social individuals are socialised to conform *more or less* to social rules and values, and pursue socially acceptable ends (Castoriadis 1989:23). However, Castoriadis does not explore how social individuals are socialised via the meanings that are placed upon their corporeality by society, that relate to class, sexuality, gender, race or ethnicity, for example (Lennon 2015:84). Despite identifying the self as a *psyche-soma*, or, in other words, as an embodied subject (Castoriadis 1997c:379), the roles and implications of the self's corporeality as a social individual are not pursued by Castoriadis. The question of the individual's corporeality could be broached, I argue, by engaging with Kathleen Lennon's (2015:52) account of *embodied subjectivity* and *bodily imaginaries*. For Lennon, *bodily imaginaries* provide corporeal schemas that shape the ways that individuals experience their own bodies (Lennon 2015:128). It is through the individual's engagement with *bodily imaginaries*, Lennon argues, that their sense of embodiment emerges, which influences the way in which their corporeality takes shape from theirs and other's perspectives (Lennon 2015:124).

Furthermore, it is a contention of this paper that Castoriadis interprets the social individual to be in a heteronomous mode of subjectivity, and therefore to be an implicit *heteronomous social individual*. Castoriadis argues that social individuals are heteronomous, because they are ruled by and subjectively closed within an established and instituted web of meanings and social institutions (Smith 2014:21). He identifies this mode of being as a *state of closure*, arguing that social individuals are closed within an unquestioned mode of thinking and doing that is shaped by their social context (Castoriadis 1992:24; Castoriadis 1997c:145). An important dimension to the heteronomy of the social individual, is that they are not socialised to question or challenge social institutions and meanings, nor their mode of thinking and doing. Hence, Castoriadis argues that whilst social individuals are capable of thinking and acting within their instituted boundaries, they are often incapable of putting themselves or their instituted boundaries into question (Castoriadis 1989:36-37).

In contrast, the autonomous subject is a political subject, for Castoriadis, which is not an attained state, but is an active situation by a subject that aims to modify itself in relation to the socially instituted world (Castoriadis 1987:104; Strauma:1467). Castoriadis combines his understanding of *praxis* - practical actions that open a given situation to new possibilities and the potential for new creations - and psychoanalytic self-questioning, to account for a specific type of political and thoughtful doing for autonomous subjects (Castoriadis 1987:4; Joas & Knöbl 2009:410). When reflection is interpreted as a praxis, Castoriadis imagines a subject who can reflect upon, challenge, and detach themselves from their inherited thought and social-historical context and thereby create the possibility of these being replaced with others (Castoriadis 1992:27; Lennon 2015:88). Moreover, Castoriadis argues that autonomous subjects are socialised via the social imaginary of *autonomy* to challenge and reflect upon society's laws and norms, as well as the reasons and motives that they had previously used to think and act in the world (Castoriadis 1989:33; Castoriadis 1991:165; Straume 2014:146). Castoriadis's approach, therefore, tends to identify the autonomous subject with the participatory democracy of an autonomous society, whereby the entire social collective is involved in the interrogation and institution of their laws, norms and social customs (Adams 2014:17; Castoriadis 1987:107). Despite this, I argue

that the autonomous subject that is engaged in the *project of autonomy* provides a means for observing openings of autonomy, in its singularity, or in small movements, within contemporary heteronomous societies with representative democracies (Nicolacopoulos & Vassilacopoulos 2014:67).

However, Castoriadis has a homogeneous view of society, which sees shared imaginary salience as what holds society together (Lennon 2015:84). The social individual and the autonomous subject, for example, distinguish between the conditions for autonomous and heteronomous modes of subjectivity that are shaped by homogenous social contexts. Hence, where he saw a fragmentation of social imaginaries or collectively held values within contemporary societies, he saw a *crisis of identification* as occurring (Castoriadis 1997c:85; Lennon 2015, p.84). Kathleen Lennon (2015:84), has critiqued Castoriadis's overemphasis on the homogeneity of societies for ignoring their internal divisions, that relate to class, sexuality, gender, race or ethnicity, for example (Lennon 2015:84). Accordingly, Castoriadis's account of subjectivity and society can be elucidated further, by accounting for the social individual and autonomous subject located within these divisions of contemporary society. The social individual, for example, could be explored within these divisions whereby they are required to articulate who they are and where stand toward these divisions and within the broader world. I argue that addressing partial forms of autonomy within Castoriadis's approach to heteronomous subjectivity (Nicolacopoulos & Vassilacopoulos 2014:70; Smith 2010:162), would account for the social individual being able to reflect upon and articulate who they are and where they stand within the divisions and unequal social positions of their social context. This partial form of autonomy for the social individual would still contrast to the autonomous subject, who ceases their engagement with the divisions and social meanings, and instead, begins to problematise these divisions and meanings of society, and reflect upon and challenge their psychological history and social experiences (Adams 2014:17).

Conclusion

This paper addressed dimensions to Castoriadis's theoretical approaches to subjectivity and society that are useful for understanding contemporary society, and outlined three areas that can be explored in future endeavours. Whilst Castoriadis addresses the political, social and creative capacities of social individuals and autonomous subjects in relation to their social world, I argued that they can be further elucidated by addressing their self-interpretative actions (Taylor 1989:36), and the social meanings that are placed upon their corporeality by society, that relate to class or sexuality, for example (Lennon 2015:84). Additionally, I argued that their experiences within the social divisions of society can be expanded upon, suggesting that the social individual can be explored within the divisions of society, by first addressing partial forms of autonomy within Castoriadis's account of heteronomous subjectivity. Addressing partial forms of autonomy for the social individual, I argue, accounts for the individual reflecting upon their self and their social context in their attempt to articulate who they are and where they stand in the world.

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Oppression in the commons: Cautionary notes on Elinor Ostrom's concept of self-governance

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Abstract

Elinor Ostrom's work has established an influential research programme in the study of polycentric, self-organising commons governance communities. In this paper we focus on the normative and political dimension of this research programme - the promise that Ostrom's work holds for the realisation of emancipatory political ideals of local, communitarian self-governance. We argue that, although Ostrom's work offers crucial insights and resources in this area, researchers should be cautious when drawing conclusions about the emancipatory qualities of 'Ostromian' institutions. We discuss passages in Ostrom that emphasise the possibility of oppressive or tyrannical power relations within polycentric self-governance communities. We then argue that Ostrom's own theoretical apparatus is unable easily to analyse these specific forms of institutional coercive power. We argue that researchers hoping to draw on Ostrom's work for emancipatory political ends would benefit from more systematic study of coercive power and conflict within polycentric self-organising commons governance institutions.

Keywords: Elinor Ostrom, commons, governance, freedom, oppression

Introduction

Elinor Ostrom is one of the most important figures in the tradition of 'New Institutional Economics'. In a series of works, most notably her 1990 *Governing the commons*, Ostrom established and made major contributions to a paradigm-shifting research programme on the governance of common pool resources (Ostrom 1990, 2005, 2010). The influence of this research programme has been very broad - Ostrom's work is used in economics, political science, anthropology and sociology. Her work has been drawn on by theorists interested in the foundations of institutional analysis, but also by ethnographers carrying out fieldwork in a broad range of communities. Moreover, Ostrom's work has been received enthusiastically by researchers and advocates across the political spectrum from libertarians to liberals to socialists.

It is this last element of Ostrom's reception that is the focus of this paper - the normative political dimension of Ostrom's work. Although Ostrom is herself cautious and qualified in drawing any necessary political implications from her work, we argue that one driver of her enthusiastic reception is its presentation of an idealised conception of communitarian self-governance. This conception has proven surprisingly polysemic and amenable to appropriation

by scholars representing a wide range of ideological stances. What these appropriations share, however, is the desire to ground, within Ostrom's work, the possibility for a concept of "liberty" that reaches beyond the traditional dichotomy of market and state. In this paper, we argue for the need for greater caution in imputing necessary political consequences - emancipatory or oppressive - to the forms of communitarian self-governance that Ostrom analyses. As Ostrom has herself discussed, no institutional structure serves as a panacea, and local communitarian 'self'-governance can itself potentially take tyrannical forms. If Ostrom's work is to be drawn on for its normative political implications, then, we argue, it is important to also develop the resources to distinguish between emancipatory and oppressive forms of communitarian self-governance.

Markets, hierarchies, commons

Although it ranges widely, Ostrom's work is most centrally focused on the problem of governing common pool resources. Common pool resources are, in the vocabulary of economics, resources which are *rivalrous* - meaning that if they are consumed by one social actor they cannot be consumed by another - and not easily *excludable* - meaning that it is costly to prevent access to the resource. Classic examples of common pool resources include fisheries, forests, pastures, water tables, etc.

In traditional economic theory, Ostrom argues, such resources are seen as extremely vulnerable to the problem of overexploitation by self-interested economic actors - a social dilemma often referred to, following Garrett Hardin (1968) as 'the tragedy of the commons'. Traditional economic theory in turn proposes two categories of institutional solution to this 'tragedy of the commons'. On the one hand, a hierarchical governance institution - paradigmatically a state - can assume control of the resource, and dictate the ways in which the resource is used; on the other hand, the resource or its subcomponents can be privatised, such that private property rights prevent the use or appropriation of the resource by anyone other than the relevant property right holders.

Ostrom's work focuses on a third possibility for common pool resource governance: the governance of the resource by a local community which collectively determines and enforces its own rules of resource exploitation. In a large number of case studies, Ostrom looks at resources where this kind of governance structure has been instituted. Moreover, in a series of theoretical works she proposes a 'grammar of institutions' for their analysis. We will return to Ostrom's theoretical understanding of the 'grammar of institutions' below.

Ostrom's project thus has both an empirical and a theoretical dimension. It also however has two important *normative* dimensions. First, Ostrom is interested in *effective* commons governance institutions, and evaluates commons by how successfully they achieve sustainability in their resource management. This element of Ostrom's work is of interest to scholars and practitioners who are pursuing *sustainable* resource management.

Second, Ostrom is interested in the normative value of governance institutions *in themselves* - the direct political impact of a governance institution on the lives of those governed.

This second, political and normative dimension of Ostrom's work is appealing to scholars and advocates from a broad range of different ideological traditions. It appeals to some liberals because of its emphasis on 'Jeffersonian' democratic localism. It appeals to some libertarians because it proposes a form of resource management that need not require any form of state action or intervention. And it appeals to some socialists because commons governance communities are communal forms of collective ownership without the institution of private property.

Thus, for example, from the right of the political spectrum, Paul Dragos Aligica and Peter Boettke of the Mercatus Center argue that Ostrom's work:

is infused with a profound trust in human creativity, ingenuity, and ability to self-organize as well as with a deep presumption in favor of human freedom (Aligica and Boettke 2011: 47)

More specifically, for Aligica and Boettke Ostrom's work shows:

that it is possible to have systems that are neither markets nor states, and which preserve the autonomy and the freedom of the individual (Aligica and Boettke 2011: 37)

At the same time, from the left of the political spectrum, the ecosocialist Derek Wall has recently argued that:

Ostrom's whole body of research, while focused on the commons, promotes generalised democratic control. (Wall 2018: 63)

For Wall, Ostrom:

was strikingly radical... in her support for deep and, where possible, direct democracy. (Wall 2018: 59)

What unites these varied ideological perspectives, we suggest, is an appeal to the emancipatory possibilities of communitarian local self-governance. For these different political traditions, and for different reasons, the state and the market are both perceived as sites of unfreedom. Ostrom's analysis of commons governance appears to offer a third category of economic governance institution which promises a greater degree of freedom for its members than either markets or hierarchies.

Oppression in the commons

We agree with these and other authors that Ostrom's work offers important insights into the emancipatory possibilities of self-organisation beyond the market-hierarchy dichotomy. However, in this paper we offer a note of caution: although local polycentric self-organisation offers possibilities for emancipatory governance, it also contains potentials for domination and oppression. In the remainder of the paper we discuss some of the political risks associated with 'Ostromian' commons governance, and make the case that Ostrom's theoretical apparatus is insufficiently attuned to these risks. Our overarching claim is that future research within the Ostromian research programme could profitably aim to focus more intensively on forms of *unfreedom* within Ostromian polycentric governance communities.

Ostrom herself is aware of the risk of oppressive forms of communitarian self-organisation. In a number of works she emphasises that one general lesson of her project is the maxim "no panaceas" (Ostrom 2007). For Ostrom, no institutional form is *intrinsically* emancipatory - its strengths and weaknesses must always be analysed contextually.

Moreover, Ostrom has discussed the specific risks associated with local polycentric self-governance. As she writes in *Understanding institutional diversity*:

Not all self-organized resource governance systems will be organized democratically or rely on the input of most appropriators. Some will be dominated by a local leader or a power elite who only change rules that they think will advantage them still further. This problem is accentuated in locations where the cost of exit is particularly high (Ostrom 2005: 282)

Relatedly, Ostrom highlights the possibilities of non-cooperative conflict within commons governance institutions:

All groups face internal conflicts or intergroup conflicts that can destroy the fundamental trust and reciprocity on which so much effective governance is based. (Ostrom 2005: 279)

These passages and others like them indicate that, for Ostrom, it is a mistake to conclude too hastily that local polycentric self-organisation is likely to result in meaningful, or emancipatory, self-governance. As Ostrom discusses, commons governance institutions can involve a greater or lesser degree of *participation* by their members in the formation and transformation of the rules that govern their action. Successful commons governance institutions may, as Ostrom argues, often involve relatively high degrees of participation - nevertheless, a commons governance institution that is successful in its resource management is not necessarily emancipatory from the perspective of those governed. The two normative desiderata of Ostrom's approach - *sustainable* resource management, and *emancipatory* governance structures - do not necessarily coincide.

It is therefore important, we argue, to pay close attention in empirical work studying commons governance institutions to their *political* dimensions - not just to the rules of the game that structure institutions, but also to conflict and contestation around those rules. This attention is compatible with the methodological approach that Ostrom and her colleagues have developed and honed over a series of decades. However, we suggest that attending closely to the potentially oppressive dimensions of Ostromian governance institutions is more challenging than it could be, due to an important shortcoming in Ostrom's theoretical apparatus.

The rules of the Ostromian game

Law (2016) has previously analysed Ostrom's use of game theory in her meta-theoretical analysis of the structure of institutions. We draw on key points from that paper here, to problematise the issue of the normative evaluation of freedom and coercion in Ostromian commons governance institutions.

Ostrom, like many others working within the tradition of New Institutional Economics (e.g. North 1990), defines an institution as the 'rules of the game' that structure a segment of economic life. This concept of the 'rules of the game' covers both explicit rules such as those codified in legal institutions, and also the more tacit norms embodied in social practice.

In her analyses of these 'rules of the game' Ostrom takes both an empirical and theoretical approach. In her empirical and methodological work Ostrom urges researchers to adopt an ethnographic approach to studying the rules that govern specific institutions. In her theoretical and meta-theoretical work Ostrom, with Crawford and others, has developed a 'grammar of institutions', grounded in modal logic and game theory (Crawford and Ostrom 1995). The goal of this theoretical toolkit is to allow researchers to formally map the space of economic practice created by any given institution's rules.

In this theoretical and meta-theoretical work Ostrom argues that any given institution can be understood as a community that shares a consensus around one specific set of structuring rules. In the vocabulary of game theory, the rules of a given institution are, for Ostrom, 'common knowledge' shared by all members. The members of an institution may have different preferences, and they may choose to break the rules of an institution for self-interested gain, but they can - and on Ostrom's definition they must - all agree on what the rules of a given institution are.

This does not mean that for Ostrom the rules of an institution are immutable, or are not open to internal challenge. The members of an institution may choose to change the institution's rules - and if they choose to do so, Ostrom argues, they do so by following a 'higher level' set of rules that dictate how the institution's 'lower level' set of rules can be changed. These 'higher level' rules are themselves likewise 'common knowledge' among members - and so, potentially, are the still higher-level sets of rules for changing these rules in turn. For Ostrom, in other words, an institution can be understood as a nested set of rules, each set of rules determining the principles via which another set of rules can be transformed - with all of these rules enjoying consensus among all members of the institution at any given time.

This meta-theoretical apparatus gives Ostrom considerable resources for formally mapping a very wide variety of institutions. However, we suggest that this framework also has significant shortcomings. Most importantly for the purposes of this paper, the mechanism via which an institution's rules are transformed must, for Ostrom - as an axiomatic or definitional matter - itself enjoy the status of 'common knowledge' among institution members. This means that there can be for Ostrom no disagreement among institution members as to the norms that currently govern institutional transformation. This in turn means that Ostrom's theoretical framework is intrinsically ill-suited to adequately analyse the *coercive imposition* of a set of rules by one set of social actors on another, where some subset of an institution's members do not accept the mechanism via which the institution's rules are imposed.

In other words, there are important categories of institutional coercive action that, we argue, cannot be accommodated by Ostrom's theoretical approach. Ostrom's apparatus can easily analyse institutions that are 'self-governing' in the normatively desirable sense that interests scholars like Aligica, Boettke and Wall. Ostrom's apparatus is however ill-suited to analysing institutions whose governance structures are *imposed* by a local power elite, against the wishes of some subset of the institution's members.

And yet, as Ostrom notes, such institutions are perfectly possible in practice. As we have already noted, in her discussion of the risks of commons governance Ostrom highlights the scenario in which a commons governance institution

will be dominated by a local leader or a power elite who only change rules that they think will advantage them still further. (Ostrom 2005: 282)

In such examples of "[l]ocal tyrannies" (Ostrom 2005: 282), Ostrom's existing grammar of institutions, and thus her analytic framework as a whole, ceases to be adequate to grasping local power relations - and thus the political and normative implications of local self-governance.

Our central claim in this paper is therefore that, although Ostrom's work recognises the possibility for oppression within the commons, her theoretical apparatus is unable to accommodate many of the real-world scenarios in which this kind of oppression can actually occur. To the extent that Ostrom's theoretical apparatus makes it difficult to analyse such categories of commons governance institution, we suggest, researchers making use of Ostromian tools are more likely to overlook or to de-emphasise conflict and oppression taking place within the institutions they analyse. This is, we argue, a problem that the Ostromian research programme should aim to address.

Conclusion

We began this paper by discussing the political value that many researchers and advocates place in Ostrom's work. One source of that value, we suggested, is the promise of commons as emancipatory governance structures, in which individuals can make their own free decisions about the rules that shape their lives. It is this promise that leads figures as politically distant as Aligica and Boettke and Wall to present Ostrom as an advocate of "deep democracy" (Wall 2018: 59) whose work is informed by "a deep presumption in favor of human freedom" (Aligica 2011: 47).

We agree with these authors that Ostrom's work suggests the *possibility* that these political values can be realised in Ostromian commons governance institutions. We also agree on the importance of the Ostromian research programme for those interested in achieving these political ideals. And yet, as we have seen, Ostrom is clear that local polycentric self-governance can itself take tyrannical forms. Local 'self-governance' communities may not in practice be examples of 'self-governance' in Aligica, Boettke or Wall's sense at all - they may instead, or also, be alternative

locations of social domination, in which the governed are coerced or tyrannised by different social actors, via a different category of institutional structure.

If, then, we wish to realise the promise of Ostromian self-governance, we must be alert to this risk. This means several things: we must be attentive in the *empirical* study of local polycentric self-organisation to the possibility of coercive institutional structures, and we must also extend Ostrom's *theoretical* and *meta-theoretical* apparatus, in a way that makes it easier to accommodate the analysis of oppressive institutions. Both of these linked research programmes, we suggest, may help us to develop the resources to more reliably distinguish between *oppressive* and *emancipatory* commons governance institutions. This may in turn help us to better realise the emancipatory promise of Ostrom's work.

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Ricoeur and Castoriadis in Dialogue: Key Themes and Contexts of Action

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This paper focusses on a Radio dialogue between Paul Ricoeur and Cornelius Castoriadis which took place in 1985 on the radio talk show 'Le Bon Plaisir' on *France Culture*. The dialogue was published in French in 2016 under the title *Paul Ricoeur, Cornélius Castoriadis: Dialogue sur l'Histoire et l'Imaginaire Social*. The English translation of the dialogue, *Ricoeur and Castoriadis in Discussion: On Human Creation, Historical Novelty, and the Social Imaginary*, edited by Suzi Adams was published in 2017. This dialogue is intellectually significant as it is the only direct encounter between the two interlocutors. This paper is organised around three sections. In the first section, the background to the dialogue, which is characterised by misunderstandings, is discussed. Moreover, this section looks at what could be contributing to those misunderstandings. In the second part of this paper the key themes of the dialogue are outlined. Just to flag them, the key themes of the dialogue are: first, the *possibility of historical novelty*; second, the difference between the notions of *creation* and *production*; and third, *continuity* and *discontinuity* of meaning through history. In the third section of this essay openings onto contexts of action are reconstructed. Although the notion of action is not explicitly discussed by the two thinkers in this encounter the dialogue is underpinned by a praxeological dimension.

This essay emerged from my master's thesis which looks at Ricoeur's and Castoriadis's respective works and elucidates the *creative* aspect of *social action* through the *social imaginaries* lens. Even though Ricoeur and Castoriadis were never sustained interlocutors their theoretical contributions are seminal to the burgeoning field of *social imaginaries* and the understanding of *action* as being *creative*. As such their only direct encounter bears intellectual significance. The dialogue, however, falls outside of the limits of the chronological periods my master's research is examining. On the one hand, roughly from 1970 to 1980 is the period Ricoeur thought and wrote about the *social* and *cultural imagination*. Specifically, Ricoeur's analysis centred around the tension created between the two poles of the *social* and *cultural imagination* i.e. *ideology* and *utopia*. On the other hand, Castoriadis's earlier work on *social imaginary significations* incorporates *social doing* and is fecund for an elucidation of the *creativity of action* from a *social imaginaries* lens. Although, it can be argued that an understanding of the creative dimension of action has always been in the background of Castoriadis's work, at the time of the dialogue he was more interested in

developing an anthropology of the *creative imagination* and as such *social doing* and *action* were somewhat marginalised.

The dialogue provided a snapshot of Castoriadis's and Ricoeur's philosophical and political projects and revealed the areas which united, as well as separated them. It is worth clarifying a primary difference in the intellectual trajectories of the two interlocutors which will also help contextualise their distinct styles of argumentation and critique. On the one hand, Ricoeur's philosophical arguments do not draw a direct line to a specific political project, rather, he 'pursued a philosophical vocation' (Arnason 2017: xv), anchored in a hermeneutic methodology, and engaged multiple *problématiques*. However, in agreement with Arnason (2017: xv) this should not be the basis of denying the significance of Ricoeur's political thought.

On the other hand, Castoriadis's life was fuelled by a revolutionary zeal and was 'from early on a political activist' (Arnason 2017: xvi). The political and revolutionary project that fuelled his life led Castoriadis to a critique of orthodox Marxist thinking and historical materialism (Arnason 2017: xvi). Castoriadis's put forth a new understanding of history and to do so he questioned traditional horizons of philosophical thought. Castoriadis political and revolutionary project were aligned with his radical philosophy.

The dialogue is characteristic of misunderstandings. Both thinkers have presented seminar series in the years following the dialogue that are unknown to the other. On the one hand, Ricoeur has given two lecture series at the university of Chicago in 1975 (Adams 2017: ix). The first series was specifically on the social imaginary and its two poles of ideology and utopia and was published in 1986 i.e. a year after the dialogue. The second lecture series was on the 'more properly philosophical aspects of the imagination' (Adams 2017: ix) and has not been published yet. Moreover, at the time of the dialogue Ricoeur has been writing the three volumes of *Time and Narrative* and is no longer focussed on social imaginaries. On the other hand, Castoriadis's lectures on ancient Greece given at the EHESS in 1982-1983 were as Adams (2017: ix-x) says 'a significant source for his views in the radio discussion'.

Beyond their circumstantial misunderstandings, both thinkers acknowledge the 'imagination' as a human faculty as well as its form as a 'social imaginary' indicating its social use and its importance for understanding social action. Arnason (2017: xxix) points out that the two thinkers and their overall projects converge on 'three problematics – the precedence of meaning, the question of the subject and the critique of foundations'. Moreover, Amalric (2017: 78-79) notes that both theorists 'fought for *the general rehabilitation of imagination in its practical dimension, whether individual or social*' and they did so in a period that the imagination was discredited by the dominant philosophical tradition. For Castoriadis and Ricoeur the imagination as productive or creative brings forward something new.

As noted earlier there are three key themes that emerge in the dialogue. They are, first, the *possibility of historical novelty* which can be considered as the main theme that crosses over into the subsequent two. The second theme regards the different terms employed by Castoriadis and Ricoeur respectively for describing the emergence of new forms in history i.e. *creation* and *production*. The third key theme which follows organically from the prior two concerns the possibility of *continuity* or *discontinuity* of meaning through history.

In the first key theme of the dialogue both Ricoeur and Castoriadis converge on the possibility of newness arising historically. Castoriadis uses the term *creative imagination* to indicate that the new emerges, but also breaks away, from the social imaginary (Taylor 2017: 34). Ricoeur prefers to use the term *productive imagination* when discussing the new because for him 'the imagination must always proceed by configurations' of what was already there (Taylor 2017: 34). The point of disjunction for the two thinkers lies in the terms 'creation' and 'production'. For Castoriadis

new forms are creations *ex nihilo*; antithetically, Ricoeur uses the term 'production' and refers to a creation through configuration. The argument for Ricoeur is that new forms emerge from something already in the *world*. For Ricoeur (2017: 5) *production* of new forms in history are always in accordance to pre-given rules inherent in the social imaginary specific to a society.

It is in the second key theme of the dialogue that the major difference in Ricoeur and Castoriadis emerges, namely the idea of absolute creation. Ricoeur (2017: 4) argues that the 'new' is always brought about through a breaking with the old: 'absolute novelty is unthinkable'. That which stops Ricoeur from accepting Castoriadis's thesis on absolute novelty can be traced to the hermeneutic tradition (Michel 2017: xxxvi). According to hermeneutic method all understanding derives from a pre-understanding and, as such, in accordance with Michel (2017: xxxvi) the 'hermeneutic primacy of the *pre-*' is that which stops Ricoeur from speaking of historical *creation*. Antithetically, Castoriadis's philosophical project is centred around the idea of 'absolute' and radical creation. Castoriadis (2017: 5) pinpoints that the major problem is that he employs a different view of temporality which sees 'the emergence of levels of being'. Castoriadis does not reject the rules, pre-configurations, elements, or laws that precede and impact the creation of a 'form', however he does not want to say, for example, that the new symphonies created by Wagner could have been predicted either.

The third key theme of the dialogue is interlinked with the previous two themes. The two interlocutors discuss in great detail the problem of 'meaning's' 'continuity' or 'discontinuity' in, and through, history. It is at this part of the encounter that their main agreements and disagreements are brought to the surface. Both thinkers acknowledge the power of the 'social imaginary' to bring forth new *eide* (*forms*). However, their disagreement lies in Castoriadis's use of the word 'creation' and Ricoeur's preference of the word 'production'. The former regards 'forms' as being brought forth in a *magmatic* way which could be characteristic of a rupture in the continuity of a form's meaning. Here, Castoriadis defends the position of discontinuity through the notion of *creation ex nihilo*. New 'forms' can be influenced by instituted social-historical 'forms' but could not be reduced to them. For the latter, there is a continuity in the social-historical realm which plays a definitive role in the bringing forth, or as he would say, the 'production' of new 'forms'. Castoriadis's notion of *creation ex nihilo* is rejected by Ricoeur who argues that forms always come from 'an already existing configuration' (Michel 2017: xxxvi). Ricoeur's thesis is that new forms are *produced* through a reconfiguration of existing configurations and as such there is an evident continuity.

Ricoeur, however, accepts that the possibility of an 'event in thought' can constitute a rupture within a pre-established order and its continuity. Though, the process by which the 'event's' meaning is disseminated throughout the social-historical realm is through 'a dialectic of innovation and sedimentation' (Ricoeur 2017: 5). Ricoeur's (2017: 7) analogy of a 'basso continuo' emphasises again his position that forms are produced from pre-established configurations of forms and never from the formless. Ricoeur makes two points here: first, underlying the ruptures of continuity there is a certain continuity which persists, and which informs them. Second, an inherited tradition is like a continuous rhythm (or a 'basso continuo') characteristic of a social-historical realm which produces alongside its novel forms the unintentional production of that which can only be attributed to its inheritance.

The dialogue 'is animated by a practical, praxeological, political concern' and the problem of praxis is that which 'stirs up' the two interlocutors (Michel 2017: xxxvi). For a reconstruction of contexts of action, I begin with the notion of meaning. The use of 'meaning' in relation to 'social action' echoes the Weberian notion of *Verstehen* sociology and its emphasis on the underlying reasons or 'meanings' which animate 'social doing'. This social doing is, for both thinkers, always understood in relation to a social imaginary and the meaning conveyed by it. In the discussion

about continuity of meaning Ricoeur (2017: 11, 12, 14) mentions a few times the word *retroaction*. With this term Ricoeur attempts to show the continuity of meaning that influences action. The term retroaction is better understood when we relate it to the inherited meaning associated with unrealised potentialities. Coming again from a hermeneutic position, and as Michel (2017: xxxvi) notes, one proceeds 'from interpretations and successive reinterpretations based on an already existing configuration'. With the term retroaction Ricoeur is making an anthropological argument in which he, as Michel (2017: xxxvi) puts it, sees 'living beings as the reservoir of already existing meanings' upon which they act.

For Ricoeur the social imaginary and its two poles ideology and utopia create a tension from which something can emerge from something that is already there, a process of pre-configuration, configuration, and re-configuration. The re-configuration is always a new form. But this form does not come from the formless as Castoriadis would suggest with his *creation ex nihilo* thesis. For Castoriadis one's thoughts and actions inevitably belong 'to history and to society' (Taylor 2017: 42), however, the creative imaginary has the capacity to break from the instituted social imaginary and bring forth new forms which do not rely on, to use Ricoeur's term, any pre-configurations.

This essay looked at the key themes that emerged from the only direct encounter between Ricoeur and Castoriadis which happened in 1985. The encounter between the two theorists bears intellectual significance for the burgeoning field of social imaginaries. The paper was organised around three sections. In the first section, the reasons for the circumstantial misunderstandings between the two theorists were discussed. The second section elucidated the three main themes that emerge. They are, first, the *possibility of historical novelty*; second, the different positions taken by Castoriadis and Ricoeur on what term is more appropriate for discussing new forms in history i.e. *creation* or *production*; and third, is there *continuity* and *discontinuity* of meaning through history. In the third section of the paper is devoted to openings onto contexts of action that can be reconstructed from the dialogue even if the dialogue is not explicitly on action.

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Responding to a precarious world: A sociological exploration of the new benefits of drinking less amongst young people

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Abstract

Current declines in youth drinking across the developed Western world have emerged at the same time as precarious conditions pervade the lives of young people. By looking at these declines as informal social responses to structural changes, this paper attempts to explore several sociological themes that place youth as active negotiators of social precariousness. Namely, themes of delayed transitions, responsibility and risk-management, and distinction are used as theoretical frameworks. These themes highlight a number of salient features of the contemporary 'global generation' of youth, and how navigating economic and social uncertainty encourages future-oriented activities and leisure, self-surveillance, and the departure from traditional monocultures through the development of an individualised and esteemed self. The opportunities and pressures simultaneously placed on young people is thus seen to be key in changes in risky consumption patterns, where the benefits of placing efforts towards non-drinking activities are highly rewarded.

Keywords: Youth; precariousness; alcohol; risk; distinction.

Introduction

The current social world is one characterised by fragmentation and individualisation, where young people are responsible for their own futures. They're challenged with the task of building the skills to adapt and compete in a world characterised by rapid social change. Precariousness, once deemed a class-based phenomenon, now occupies most of modern society (Bauman 2013). Concurrently, we are also seeing change in alcohol consumption patterns amongst young people from their mid-teens to early twenties on an international scale. Namely, a number of developed Western countries have been showing a continuous decline in both prevalence and overall alcohol use since the early 2000s (Bhattacharya 2016; Looze et al. 2015; White & Williams 2016). The international nature of these downward trends has emerged despite different national policies regarding the regulation/liberalisation of alcohol (Pennay, Livingston & MacLean 2015).

Structural changes such as urbanisation, globalisation, economic fluctuations, population shifts, changing norms, and technological advances have all influenced consumption to some degree. Attempting to understand these declines in youth drinking on a global scale is not only

difficult, but risks reductionism of cultural, regional, and micro-level differences. Although global neoliberalism has forced a level of convergence in social and economic policies (Muncie 2006) and globalisation and shared technology have shaped a new 'global generation' (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2009), the diversity of contemporary lifestyles and practises still makes it difficult to apply any grand sociological theories (Furlong & Cartmel 2006).

However, long waves of consumption have historically occurred across countries despite differences in social, cultural, economic, political and environmental factors (Mäkelä et al. 1981). The 1990s and early 2000s have been recognised as a peak for alcohol consumption amongst young people, which was followed by a decline around the turn of the millennium (Claydon et al. 2014; Kraus et al. 2016; Measham 2008). Room et al. (2009) suggest such a downturn in consumption is likely to be linked to informal social responses, as formal institutional responses are reactive and lagging, tending to reinforce trends rather than initiate them. As an issue that intersected several key public concerns of youth, drugs, crime, and danger (Parker, Measham & Aldridge 1998), it's suggested that societal reactions to this peak have played a large role in driving down youth drinking. Yet I argue that it's important to still view young people as actively responding to the precarious social conditions they face. Thus, this piece aims to explore how sociological themes of destandardisation, risk and responsibility, and the desire for distinction can be applied to understand the new benefits of moderate drinking.

Delayed Transitions, Delayed Gratification

Today's youth exist as a generation within a specific socio-historic period, with common social conditions and experiences that work to shape their lives (Mannheim 1952 [1927]). Although intra-generational differences and inequalities (Woodman 2016), globalisation and technology have also given rise to a new global generation (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2009). Contemporary youth share a number of salient features and affinities, allowing us to view them as actors within a 'post-traditional cosmopolitan world' (Beck 2000:211). Being raised in a context of rapid social change has placed a complicated burden of both pressure and opportunity upon this generation of youth.

Côté and Bynner (2008) suggest that young people are categorised by processes of economic exclusion and marginalisation, forcing them to react to structural changes that have undermined social supports. The experience of youth today is one categorised by precariousness, including flexible employment practices, longer time spent in education and living in parental homes, the digital communications boom, and delayed life transitions (Woodman 2016; Wyn & Woodman 2006). However despite precarious economic conditions, young people today have more options, information, and life trajectories than others before them. Heath and Cleaver (2003) propose a model that emphasises both constraint and choice; as young people balance the competing needs of flexible work, education and personal time, they're constrained in terms of both resources and time, but their choices consequently become more valuable. Constraint (limited resources) and choice (opportunities) in the myriad of options available requires young people constantly reflect and justify their choices (Du Bois-Reymond 1998).

With this intensification of time and resources, the need to participate in both present-oriented and future-oriented activities has changed the way young people spend their time. The neoliberal price of pleasure becomes a restriction on consumption and leisure activities (France 2012) whilst present-oriented activities are also often bounded by education, work, and other social responsibilities (Brain 2000). Although leisure activities remain central to constructing social identities (Furlong & Cartmel 2006) there is immense pressure to actively manage complex and uncertain futures.

Life history theory proposes people adapt how fast they develop and invest their time relative to the risk of the environment they're in (Twenge & Park 2017). Despite precarity, greater wealth distribution, health outcomes, access to information, and technological advancements allow today's young to live in the safest ecologies ever known, encouraging slower independence, long-term planning and delayed gratification (Figueredo et al. 2006). Later family formation and parents raising less children also translates into greater parental investment in youth (Bugental, Corpuz & Beaulieu 2014) creating a secure environment that cyclically reinforces the adoption of long-term strategies.

Such strategies encourage 'somatic efforts' – the building of embodied capital through investment in long-term knowledge and skills (Griskevicius et al. 2011). According to Twenge and Park (2017) this "has produced a generation of young people who are taking on the responsibilities and pleasures of adulthood later than their predecessors" (11) where alcohol use, along with sex, dating, driving, and other measures of independence are collectively in steady decline. Leisure and present-centred activities that don't have clear long-term benefits become distractions from somatic efforts. Educational attainment for example, precludes health-damaging behaviours such as drinking, drug use and unhealthy eating (Whitehead et al. 2015). Here, longer periods of alcohol abstinence in particular exemplify delayed gratification in favour of long-term benefits.

Risk and Responsibility

Marked by fragmentation, individualisation, and 'government at a distance' (Rose 2009), contemporary society places the onus of navigating life squarely on the shoulders the individual. In this framework, people are "self-governing and autonomous" (Hultqvist 1998) where failures and deficiencies are indicative of agency, rather than structural differences and precarious situations people find themselves in. This is what Furlong and Cartmel (2006) describe as the 'epistemological fallacy' of late or post-modernity – as structures continue to shape life chances, they become obscured as individualist values intensify. The result of this burden of personal responsibility is that whilst young people have access to more options than ever before, opportunities remain veiled in uncertainty and risk (see Beck 1992).

Risk pervades the lives of young people through economic insecurity and a competitive labour market, where a lack of commitment to education, work or personal responsibilities increases vulnerability to adversity (Furlong & Cartmel 2006). The pervasiveness of risk and strict codes of success have resulted in reflexive 'tightrope' biographies (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002) requiring reflectiveness and constant self-maintenance to navigate precarious conditions. Viewing youth as independent navigators of their own risk symbolises the state's movement from external controls towards internal self-discipline, and draws parallels with Foucault's notion of governmentality (1991). For Foucault, individuals learn to govern themselves through pervasive knowledge on health, education, and security, instilling ideals around appropriateness, civic responsibility, and how subjects 'should' be (Foucault 1991). For example, the cultural power of television, books, magazines, the internet and other digital media contributes in governing everyday life by assessing and guiding behaviour (Ouellette & Hay 2008). Such didactic media flows through to everyday interactions as youth simultaneously learn to govern themselves and others according to imposed social standards, and can be punished or rewarded depending on how correct their behaviours are. These informal sanctions can play a large role in consumption changes – strong social responses and stigma have been cited as a key driver in reducing rates of drunk-driving and public smoking (Room et al. 2009). Public health discourse's focus on avoidable risky behaviour such as drinking compels individuals to take moral responsibility, not only for themselves, but for the broader community (Popkewitz, Olsson & Petersson 2006).

Management of risk through the normalisation of certain leisure cultures and recreational activities is also a key element of governmentality (Miller 2013). As Lupton (2016:166) notes,

population-level health education inevitably employs risk to encourage people to avoid ‘unhealthy’ behaviours and take up ‘healthy’ ones. Encouraging healthy lifestyles is a way to minimise the economic burden of public health costs, and imparting health education and responsibility to parents becomes a key site of generational investment (Widding 2011). Moreover, as “society is governed through the family” (Dahlstedt & Fejes 2013:172), parents are encouraged to develop their children through sport, music, and other activities, restricting their autonomy in favour of ‘concerted cultivation’ (Lareau 2011). Such concerns and expectations of prescribed ‘good parenting’ are advocated through mass media (Assarsson & Aarsand 2011; Dahlstedt & Fejes 2013), transforming parents into social intermediaries charged with minimising risk behaviour and responsabilising youth.

Simultaneously, digital media and technologies enhance the disciplinary dimensions of drinking in novel ways (Lyons et al. 2017). Silcock, Payne and Hocking (2016) propose that new technology and ways of enacting leisure are also tied in to new techniques of governmentality. Technology has become a tool to direct conduct and normalise types of ‘play’; video games and social networking sites as a leading form of media consumption are able to administer governmentality and shape leisure on a global scale through their panoptic nature and heightened awareness of the innate risks of being online (Silcock, Payne & Hocking 2016). New ways of tracking and monitoring health through biomonitoring technology also encourage engagement and self-management of health (Lupton 2016). Moreover, contemporary technology, social media and the internet make discipline and self-surveillance more salient in the lives of young people, who can at any time be not just observed, but captured in moments of incorrect behaviour.

With the shift towards self-governance and self-management, young people are directed to shape their own lives despite precarious conditions. Thus we can understand youth drinking as innately risky, both in terms of health, but also its potential to disrupt self-discipline and social responsibility. Practises and experiences of pleasure (such as consumption) require moderation for the sake of health, reputation and identity (Duff 2004).

Distinction

If we consider the implications of individualisation on self-management, then we should also look at how consumption practises distinguish and identify individuals. One of the characteristics of late-stage capitalism is that consumption and commodities have symbolic associations to demarcate social relationships (Featherstone 2007). Indeed, goods are both symbolic and positional, and are implicit in signifying high and low culture. Ability to consume goods, from the staples of food and drink, towards high culture such as education, art, music and literature are all classifiers of status (Douglas & Isherwood 1996).

However, as Hirsch (1976) notes, such status defining goods are relative, and are required to constantly change and adapt to renew social distance between groups. When oversupply and inflation of these symbolic goods occurs, it threatens the essential logic of consumption. This is problematised by the collective advancements in standards of living and the ‘massification’ of education and training (France 2017). Broadly speaking, democratisation of culture and greater access to goods that were once considered positional and exclusionary has led to the marketization of the social and commodification of cultural. Distinctions between mass and high culture blur, but become all the more important in lifestyle cultivation: “as subjective class affiliations, family ties and ‘traditional’ expectations weaken, consumption and lifestyle become central to the process of identity construction” (Furlong & Cartmel 2006:11). Hence, consumption practises are more than ever a signifier of status and cultural capital (see Bourdieu 1984).

At a time of precariousness, distinction is pivotal more than ever. Du Bois-Reymond (1998) associates improved education rates (particularly amongst women) with a greater range of

choices they have allow youth to treat life as a project, rather than a number of predetermined of transitions. Even though young people remain economically dependent, they're able to express themselves and produce cultural capital through a self-project of choices and adaption. If we understand economic capital as inherently insecure and restricted for young people, managing the choice biography through leisure and free time becomes the new way to cultivate capital and get ahead. Building esteemed lifestyles has the potential to provide social advantage (Furlong & Cartmel 2006), which has resulted in the expansion of innovative countercultures and diverse leisure activities.

In times of precarity and economic uncertainty, engaging in leisure and culture become more marginal (France 2012), central to identity formation (Furlong & Cartmel 2006), and a way of accruing cultural capital in the everyday. Now, with the diversity of lifestyles and leisure activities that they have access to, young people can cultivate experiences, skills, and maintain health as news ways to grow and accumulate cultural capital. The discourse of the digital generation empowers young people to challenge the norms and agendas of their elders (Itō et al. 2010) and construct elaborate public and private selves accordingly (Fine 2004). Aided by digital media and vast webs of connectivity, young people are more than ever able to display and promote their embodied projects, representing a shift towards uncompromising, exemplary, and distinctive lifestyles (Featherstone 2007). This encourages a diversity of activities, lifestyles, and choices that dilute the potential monoculture based on drinking and intoxication.

This also creates an arena for struggle, where the alcohol industry has to now compete with an abundance of messages and opportunities for young people to engage with (Monk & Heim 2017). Just as (non)consumption of any commodity can convey a sense of identity, competing identities based on moderation lend themselves to promotion of health, beliefs and goals (Herring, Bayley & Hurcombe 2014; Nairn et al. 2006; Romo 2012). Here, discipline and distinction also overlap, with recurring themes of moderation as healthy, reputation-forming, and important to identity management (Duff 2004).

Conclusion

By looking at declining drinking rates of young people across the developed West, the theories here take a necessarily cosmopolitanism stance. Cultural and regulatory differences should certainly be acknowledged as influencing changes in consumption at the local level, but approaching this as a global phenomenon requires the incorporation of macro-level theories. Understanding youth consumption as 'wave theory' means understanding it as an informal social response brought on by societal changes. Public health shifts are multi-pronged, and attempts to measure these complex variables risks reductionism and compounding (Chapman 1993). However, recognising the social context and salience of precariousness this generation of youth face provides scope to explore possible drivers through broader sociological themes.

It should be noted that although class affiliations have been suggested to have weakened, notions of middle-class values pervade many of the themes explored. For example, life history theory suggests that amongst those from environments with greater salience of danger and instability (such as low SES environments), there is less of an inclination to be risk-averse and greater temporal discounting (Griskevicius et al. 2011). Such groups are also limited in the leisure activities they can partake in and denied the chance to develop cultural capital and convert it into success, and consumption practises have clear links to class structure (Stewart 2017). Whether the expansion of the middle has also resulted in a consensus towards middle-class values is unclear; however, those blocked out from opportunities represent a segment of the youth population that may not see the benefit in moderate consumption.

In many ways, young people have more choices than the generations before them, but are also very much constrained. The precarious situation that many young people find themselves makes it near impossible to locate guaranteed paths to success and economic security, but also encourages long-term investment in developing embodied capital such as skills and knowledge. Meanwhile, the movement towards responsabilisation and ‘governing at a distance’ (Rose 2009) has been accompanied by a heightened burden of self-responsibility. Recognising the renewed value of risk and responsibility (aversion to negative sanctions) and distinction (desire for positive individuality), we can understand changes in youth consumption as part of broader shift towards fragmentation and market-like conditions that encourage entrepreneurship (Muncie 2006). In a way, many of these sociological themes resemble a utilitarian need to minimise potential risks and maximise potential opportunities in a time of precarity. Hence, declines in youth consumption or the ‘new moderation’ is attractive in contemporary society, wherein the future is uncertain, inherently risky, and constraining on traditional forms of success.

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An Australian Experiment in Transformative Community Organising

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In the wake of rising precariousness and unemployment, and declining union density, alternative forms of working class organisation have attracted greater interest (Magdoff & Foster, 2014; Murray, 2017). Community organising is a popular alternative, particularly in the United States and the United Kingdom (Fisher & Defilippis, 2015; Taylor, 2011). While domestic interest in community organising is growing as these social trends intensify in Australia, the community organising scholarship has focussed on the example of the Sydney Alliance and trade union linkages in recent years (Barnes & Balnave, 2015; Holgate, 2015, 2018a; Tattersall, 2015, 2018). This paper contributes to this embryonic field through a brief examination of a rural Australian experiment in transformative community organising, from the authors' standpoints as embedded researchers and community volunteers.

Background

In 2016, a group of residents opened a shopfront in a disadvantaged part of a regional Australian city. They aimed to provide a space mainly for working class people to gather on an equal footing and on their own terms, regardless of their employment status. The founders sought to experiment with methods of building working class power to address social and environmental justice problems. They also shared understandings of neoliberal capitalism as a common cause of these problems and of the need to build a better social system in which people can flourish in harmony with the wider environment.¹

Class is a contested concept that various theories define with reference to objective and subjective dimensions (Bradley, 2014; Sheppard & Biddle, 2017; Wright, 2015). Recent approaches to class descriptions have drawn on Weberian or Bourdieuan amalgams of economic, social and cultural capital (Warde et al., 2009). In this paper, we use the term to refer to those who have no ownership or control over the means of production, limited social and cultural capital, and self-identify as working class. We are particularly interested in the often overlooked and rarely quantified dimension of political capital.

¹ The organisation's name is not referred to here to protect its identity and the safety of participants in light of recent intimidation tactics aimed at local progressive public figures and groups by a far right-wing clique.

The authors hired space at this venue as a base for our funded community outreach projects on social justice and sustainability issues. A deep synchronicity existed between the goals of our projects and our host. Over time, we also became more involved in the organisation as volunteers.

This analysis focuses on our auto-ethnographic observations and learnings from this community organising experiment, based on regularly recorded field notes and reflective discussions between the authors. Autoethnography is a useful method for sharing first-hand accounts of “moments of everyday experience that cannot be captured through more traditional research methods” (Adams, Ellis, & Jones, 2017, p. 4). Though both authors come from white working class backgrounds and have maintained strong working class family and social circles and sensibilities, we have been privileged to secure middle-class academic occupations for a recent portion of our working lives. This social standpoint shapes our interpretations of the experiment and should be noted in considering the generalisability of our analysis.

Traditional Community Organising

The most well-known community organising model is Saul Alinsky’s Industrial Areas Foundation in the US (Alinsky, 1971). The IAF mission states that its work

... flows directly from a commitment to Judeo Christian and democratic values. This angle of vision has led in turn to the development of organizational relationships that grow the voices of families and communities that have little power over decisions that impact their own lives (2018).

Alinsky’s model aims to win social reforms through cross-class organising and lobbying. Altruistic communities are the fulcrum from which social reforms are anticipated to emanate. Emphasis is placed on paid staff building often top-down organisations of organisations for strategic campaigns (Mcalevey, 2015, p. 217). The model is underpinned by a social democratic ideology and a pluralist theory of social power and social change (Craig, 2016).

The model is vulnerable to some of the well-rehearsed critiques of social democracy and pluralist populism (Craig, 2016). The ideological assumption that capitalism can be humanised by bringing its winners and losers together to fix its worst excesses, rejects alternative understandings that capitalism creates irreconcilable class interests, power inequalities and conflicts (Craig, 2016). The conflicting ideologies that underpin diverse participating organisations are deliberately bracketed out of contention, in principle at least. Williams notes that Alinsky’s approach “discourages organizers and organizations from taking up the ideological tasks necessary to analyse and undermine long-lasting systems of exploitation and oppression” (2015, p. 2). Cross-class politics, structural inequality, and representative democracy are not strategically problematized in the traditional model (O’hadhmaill, 2017; Watkins, 2017). Yet, in practice different organisational cultures, structures and priorities meant that although the Sydney Alliance, for example, “looked strong and united on the outside, there was constant negotiation and frequent tension between partners, including the union partners” (Tattersall, 2018, p. 77). Holgate notes that some unions refused to be involved because it was seen as “too slow, too inward focused and has little to show” (Holgate, 2018a, pp. 326-327). Working for a cross-class ‘common good’ was also seen by some as tangential to more pressing workers concerns. Peripheral working class engagement is perhaps to be expected when the structural causes of their hardships, and the civic institutions that help reproduce them, are treated as strategically and tactically inconsequential (Alberti, 2016, p. 88).

Moreover, some scholars have observed a neoliberalisation of the model under the influence of powerful non-democratic religious, civic and corporate organisations, wealthy philanthropists, and middle-class professional organisers (Brady, Schoeneman, & Sawyer, 2014; Mcalevey, 2015; O’hadhmaill, 2017). For McAlevey, some of the consequences of “Alinsky’s extreme pragmatism and his embrace of ‘ends justify the means’ tactics” have included labour leaders “rationaliz[ing]

accords with big business that stripped workers and their communities of the ability to defend themselves against their employers” (2015, pp. 416-417). Nor is the IAF focus on alliances and capacity building within and across existing organisations overly concerned with their democratic credentials. The irrelevance of a progressive standpoint has been starkly demonstrated by the model’s recent usefulness in the rise of the conservative Tea Party movement. This speaks to the tendency of the model to privilege the participation of institutions and classes with pre-existing resources for organisation building.

Calls to replace representative democracy with participatory democracy have been an increasingly strong feature of recent social movement activity (Della Porta, 2015; Ellner, 2013). Globally, marginalised and disenfranchised people are demanding deeper democracy through occupations, assemblies and workers councils. They insist on practicing people’s democracy as the only authentic way to build genuinely democratic societies. These trends raise questions about the progressiveness of community organising when it is funded or dominated by top-down hierarchical institutions, like churches and peak bodies. Within some unions too, the strength of internal democracy and participation are debatable, especially where member servicing predominates or professional organisers substitute for member activism (Holgate, 2018a, 2018b; Mcalvey, 2015). Many of these criticisms go to the heart of how power inequalities are conceptualised and addressed within traditional organising frameworks.

These various shortcomings have led O’Hadhmaill (2017, p. 124) to ask whether traditional “community organising can create real, longlasting transformations in inequalities in power and resources in capitalist countries or simply creates the illusion of addressing such issues.” Holgate also wonders if the Alinsky model, as exemplified in the Sydney Alliance,

may require a fundamental rethinking of where issues of common concern are to be found and with whom alliances are built to enhance power to challenge the seemingly unstoppable power of employers and the state in this period of neoliberalism (Holgate, 2018a, p. 328).

It may be that organising methods, without a common political understanding, ideology and vision, are inadequate for achieving progressive structural change.

Transformative Community Organising

Transformative, radical or critical community organising is an ideologically-conscious approach with roots in working class elements of the US civil rights era. Its focus is on creating democratic organisations that build distinctively working class power and leadership through a dual process of political and personal development. Williams draws out some of the elements of this approach:

1. Walk with vision; 2. Reach out to listen and learn; 3. Revolutionary edge of reform;
4. Democracy is power; 5. Cultivate leaders; 6. Build strategic alliances; 7. Commit to movement; 8. Extract every lesson, and 9 Personal is political (2015, 3).

Some US organisations that are adopting this approach include: Coalition on Homelessness, POWER (People Organized to Win Employment Rights), Causa Justa: Just Cause, Power U Centre for Social Change, the Vermont Workers Centre, People’s Action and the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement (Williams & Awatramani, 2015, p. 343). This approach adopts an explicitly left-wing analysis of working class struggle as a basis for community organising aimed at structural change (Fisher et al., 2013; Williams, et al., 2015).

The class-conscious origins and values of transformative organising lead to greater emphasis on structural change and the interconnections of personal and political liberation. It openly seeks to replace neoliberal capitalism with participatory democracies and social economies. Mann explains that:

Transformative organizing recruits masses of people to fight militantly for immediate concrete demands ... but always as part of a larger strategy to change structural conditions in the world.... Transformative organizing works to transform the system, transform the consciousness of the people being organized, and, in the process transform the consciousness of the organizer (cited in Fisher, et al., 2013, p. 172).

This orientation draws on the ideas of working class liberationists like Paulo Freire, Antonio Gramsci, Franz Fanon, and Amilcar Cabral. They emphasised the entangled political, economic, cultural and ideological faces of class oppression and the need for counter-hegemonic strategies. These inevitably emerge from the collective struggles of the oppressed to understand, escape from, and replace the systems that enchain their lives. Williams explains that the model entails “supporting people’s individual and collective ability to learn and put into practice different ways of relating to the world, to their communities, to their families (however those are defined), and to themselves” (2015, 3). Transformative organising is about working class people becoming champions or protagonists for the social development of all.

In recent times, transformative organising has been influenced by scholar activists involved in South American class struggles against neoliberal capitalism, such as Marta Harnecker and Michael Lebowitz (Williams, et al., 2015). Drawing on Marxist theory, they assert that those most negatively affected by neoliberal capitalism have the most interest in changing it, and can only look to themselves, as social change leaders, for solutions. They contend that creating a world that supports sustainable social development, necessitates the establishment of instruments of political solidarity (Harnecker, 2010). Without some sort of cross-organisational infrastructure that connects and goes beyond localised and small group efforts, there is no means to collect, share, support and build upon the legacy of these initiatives; hence the knowledge, networks and other resources can be lost. The establishment of cross-organisational infrastructure can also amplify the effectiveness and efficiency of existing organisations and catalyse new ones. It can facilitate sharing of organising costs and resources, impart and assemble diverse experiences and knowledge, foment fresh ideas, nurture personal and organisational learning and development, integrate intersecting public problems, and speak and act as a more united, coordinated and powerful social force. These kinds of instruments, it is argued, are needed to bring together and equip working class organisations to challenge destructive, yet not immutable, social forces.

An Australian Transformative Organising Experiment

As noted, a new community organisation in a regional Australian city has been experimenting with a transformative organising approach wherein working class people are seen as crucial, yet suppressed, collective social leaders. Neoliberal culture can cause working class people to doubt their worldviews and their capacity to take the lead on an alternative value system for a socially just and sustainable world. Hence, the founding collective developed principles to guide their practices and goals, from a working class standpoint. It reads as follows:

In all our endeavours we aim to:

1. Do no harm to people, animals or the environment
2. Prioritise and facilitate the voices and participation of the economically disadvantaged in the life of the community and in creating solutions for our social, economic and environmental problems
3. Build community by deepening political and economic democracy
4. Promote mutual support alongside grassroots community development
5. Pursue participatory, co-operative, life-fulfilling and socially just goals and strategies
6. Practice creative and inclusive decision-making

7. Provide respectful and safe spaces for all community members to gather
8. Maximise use of flat organisational structures and avoid bureaucratisation, to ensure equal participation
9. Promote civil liberties of individuals and collective well-being of all without prejudice, through a secular (non-religious) and non-party political organisation
10. Find ways for everyone to contribute to achieving our goals

The dominant ideology privileges individual self-interest, assertiveness, competition, meritocracy, aspirations and accumulation. In contrast, the above principles prioritise compassion, humility, cooperation, egalitarianism, inclusiveness and sufficiency. Some scholars suggest these values are more strongly represented within the working class given their common experiences of hardship and oppression (Brienza & Grossmann, 2017).

Working class culture and leadership find practical and political expression within this organisation in various ways. The organisation is explained to new visitors as a place for cooperation on practical matters alongside engagement with the structural causes of social harm to people and the planet. People are invited to contribute what they can, to help with the work and to take what they need or could use. Unwanted items are gifted to others instead of the charity sector. Surplus supermarket groceries and backyard harvest are rescued and redistributed. Extra meals are cooked and shared with those who need them. Help is available for practical matters like moving house, mending clothes, lending cars and mowers, and doing odds jobs. Wisdom is shared about handling troubles with landlords, bosses or Centrelink. In dark times, many tears are shed, shoulders leaned upon and couches surfed. Political conversations are savoured over coffee and hot chips. Petitions are signed and personal stories collected as part of an anti-poverty campaign. Weekends are spent talking with market-goers about inequality, joblessness, precariousness, disintegrating public services and corporate malevolence. Voices are raised through letterboxing, newsletters, social media, radio and street marches. Dozens of volunteers have kept the place operating five days a week as thousands of people interact with the organisation each year.

The organisation attracts a rich social diversity of participants because these experiences of hardship cut across gender, culture, age, sexuality and other social identities. While tensions occasionally play out between different social groups, prioritising the leadership and participation of marginalised community members in decision-making processes and operations has actively challenged those stereotypes, stigmas and prejudices. Indigenous people, refugees, people with disabilities and women make up the majority of volunteers and first points of contact. Moreover, these community members have financial power within the organisation through their self-organised crowdfunding efforts. Many other practical steps are initiated by the volunteers and residents to improve the inclusivity of the organisation, including signage and meetings being communicated in multiple languages with the help of community translators. Deliberative democratic mechanisms, like participatory budgeting, are also being applied.

Though most participants are novices to transformative community organising and public action, its principles and practices have evolved largely organically from these kinds of interactions and shared struggles. The unusual nature of the place prompts curiosity and continuous social learning as people seek to better understand its origins, purpose, operations and goals. This results in growing confidence, capacities and knowledge for those regularly involved. These are all personal, political and practical stepping stones towards building class solidarity in fragmented working class neighbourhoods.

The hidden injuries of class throw innumerable obstacles in the path of working class efforts to self-organise (Sennett & Cobb, 1993). These include chronic shortages of space and time to amass and work together, resources for activities, social fragmentation and alienation, self-doubt

and demoralisation. Alongside these hurdles, the fledgling organisation has had to defend itself against external threats. The most regular manifestation is in the form of a bourgeois mindset that presumes it is a place to teach or preach to working class people about how to fix their 'defective' lives. Some middle class and religious visitors have been blind to their own social privileges and prejudices and how they contribute to the structural reproduction of working class oppression. In the face of limited resources, collective self-doubt and disorganised social power, working class organisations can be particularly vulnerable to takeovers by anti-working class elements, but these forays can also strengthen resilience and capacity for class struggle.

Conclusion

The local organisation described here is an attempt to build something new from little more than a collective vision and hope for a better world and a willingness to risk and learn from failures. Participants learnt painfully that community organising methods can be deployed by pro and anti-working class elements. This experience taught them the value of a transformative approach that is situated within an ideologically-conscious working class politics aimed at deeply democratic means and ends. Many pitfalls could have been avoided if structures of solidarity between working class organisations existed; its survival may well depend upon this kind of social innovation.

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Identity resolution within early adulthood and the persistent influences of socio-structural factors

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Abstract

In recent times, researchers have observed a shift within contemporary societies where some milestone events, conventionally associated with adulthood, are being delayed or reconfigured for an increasing number of young people. To gain a greater understanding of these trends this preliminary study empirically examines socio-structural differences in young people's identity resolution (the sense of certainty about who they want to be) during early adulthood. Analysis was conducted using survey data from 2,148 young Queenslanders (aged 19/20) who participated in Wave 4 of the Social Futures and Life Pathways cohort study. Results show that socio-structural influences of socio-economic resources, country of birth, geographic location and religiosity continue to play a significant role in shaping the certainty young people have regarding their future adult identities. This preliminary study expands on the conceptualisation of identity resolution as an important measure to provide insight into young people's construction of their future identities by understanding their level of certainty towards key aspects of their future.

Keywords: Identity resolution, emerging adulthood, milestones, life pathways, socio-structural influences

Introduction

This paper examines socio-structural differences in the degree of certainty young people have about key aspects of their future adult identities. Focusing on a cohort of young Australians, aged 19-20, this will lead to a better understanding of the diverse life pathways experienced by young people. Expanding the conceptualisation of identity resolution as an important measure in exploring young people's construction of their adult identities will add to the sociological literature in this important discussion surrounding the nature of early adulthood in contemporary societies.

Early milestone life events in contemporary Australia

In contemporary Western societies the sequencing, timing and attainment of milestone events traditionally associated with the establishment of one's identity in early adulthood have undergone considerable social change. Over the last few decades events such as marriage (ABS 2016a) or having a child (ABS 2016b) have each experienced a year on year increase to the

median age of attainment among Australians. Norms surrounding the transition to stable or full-time employment has also undergone significant changes (Acemoglu 2002). One reason for such delays has been an increasing emphasis on further education. More Australians are engaged in tertiary study than ever before, with just over three in five individuals aged 15 to 24 (62.86%) enrolled in a course in 2016 (ABS 2016c). Some theorists have interpreted these trends as a 'delaying of adulthood' more generally (Arnett 1997), arguing that there has been a substantive shift in how individuals construct, understand and attain a sense of adulthood. Developmental psychologist Jeffery Arnett was among the first of many to propose that social changes have led to the formation of a new developmental life stage, termed *emerging adulthood* (Arnett 1994, 1997, 2001). Critics of Arnett's formulation insist on a more nuanced understanding of these social changes which acknowledges socio-structural influences on early adulthood (Bynner 2005; Côté 2014; Côté & Bynner 2008; Hendry & Kloep 2007; Eliason, Mortimer & Vuolo 2015). To account for the variability of socio-structural impacts, youth and life course researchers have framed these changes as a diversifying of traditional life pathways, observed in increasingly non-linear and uncertain experiences of these events (Skrbis et al. 2012) and an evident temporal delay in attainment (Weier & Lee 2015; Furlong & Cartmel 2007). To better understand this variability, this paper examines how young people's socio-structural contexts and ascribed characteristics can affect their certainty about the future and the kinds of people they would like to become.

Impacts of social change on future outcomes among young adults

Based on reasonably homogenous samples, Arnett (2001) suggested that the delaying of early milestones associated with adulthood are the result of one's choice to delay adult responsibilities and the freedom to do so. However, others have proposed that an increase of diversity within possible life pathways may not be just a sign of increased freedom and choice, but rather reinforce precarity for some or freedom for others (Côté & Bynner 2008). Researchers have found that socio-structural influences, not often accounted for within the emerging adulthood framework, display persistent affects on the formation of adult identities. For instance, there are significant differences between the lived experiences of young males and females, which may be further reinforced by wider cultural and social processes (Seiter & Nelson 2011). Though pathways are experienced similarly by both genders, the timing of marriage and having children differs for males and females (Oesterle et al. 2010). Considering geographical location, studies of Chinese (Nelson & Chen 2007) and Indian (Seiter & Nelson 2011) young people identified the tendency for rural young people to identify as an adult sooner than their college student or urban counterparts. Walsh et al. (2005) revealed significant differences between young people from immigrant and non-immigrant backgrounds within Israeli communities, finding that immigrant youth displayed a less organised sense of self compared to non-immigrants. Young people's socio-economic status also plays an important role in directing pathways in early adulthood. Bynner (2005) demonstrated that engagement in tertiary education and occupational achievement was most common among the most privileged segments of society, while those with less access to resource showed evident limitations in their possible life pathways. From a psychological perspective, Singh (2014) established that those with high religiosity use more functional strategies to regulate emotions compared to their less religious counterparts. Given that identity resolution is closely correlated with broader aspects of well-being (Schwartz et al. 2013), it is plausible that religiosity affects identity resolution in similar or interrelated ways (Singh 2014).

Based on prior research, the present study seeks to explore the relationship between identity resolution, as a measure of certainty young adults have regarding aspects of their future identities, and five socio-structural influences to establish how they influence the lives of individual's entering early adulthood. This exploration is valuable for two major reasons. Firstly, understanding identity

resolution may shed light on how key socio-structural factors influence well-being outcomes. Secondly, examining these influences is imperative to improving the effectiveness of guidance given to young people within an Australian context as they enter early adulthood. As such, the research question to guide the exploration of this paper will be:

How do socio-structural influences of gender, socio-economic resources, country of birth, geographic location and religiosity affect the certainty a young person has in key aspects of their future adult identity?

Methods

To explore the research question, this project draws on secondary quantitative data from the ARC-funded Discovery Project (DP130101490; 2013-2015), ‘Social Futures and Life Pathways of Young People in Queensland’ (‘Our Lives’ project, or OLP). Beginning in 2006, the Our Lives project (OLP) tracks the developing expectations, aspirations and life trajectories of a large and diverse cohort of young people from Queensland, Australia.

In 2006, the OLP employed a two-stage cluster sampling approach aimed at recruiting all QLD schools (Stage 1) and all Grade 8 students within those schools (Stage 2). The project achieved school-level response rate of 51% (n=208 schools) and a within-school response rate of 34% (n=7,031). This equated to approximately 12% of all QLD grade 8 students (N=57,203) for that year (ABS 2012). Follow-up waves of the study were conducted in 2008 (aged 14-15, n=3,649); 2010 (aged 16-17; n=3,209); 2013 (aged 19-20; n=2,208); and 2015 (aged 21-22; n=2,150). The current research utilised data primarily from Wave 4, when respondents were aged 19 to 20 years old - an age which coincides the onset of emerging adulthood, according to proponents (Amit 2011; Arnett 1998, 2001). This sample included slightly higher participation amongst females and independent school students, which impacts overall representativeness. After excluding participants with missing data (n=60), the final analytic sample contained 2,148 respondents (full details on sample composition in key analytic variables are contained in Appendix 1).

Dependant Variable

Identity resolution was measured using a scale which asked respondents how sure they were about key aspects of their future identity (described in Table 1). The scale ($\mu=3.99$; range 1-5), consisting of 7 items, was found to be highly reliable by Cronbach’s alpha reliability test ($\alpha=.72$).

Table 1 Summary of descriptive statistics: The 7 items in the Identity Resolution Scale

Variables: <i>Sure about...</i>	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
...what kind of relationships I want with my family	2,148	4.38	0.83	1	5
...values	2,148	4.28	0.79	1	5
...what kind of friends I want	2,148	4.19	0.83	1	5
...what kind of person I want to be	2,148	4.17	0.88	1	5
...what kind of partner I want	2,148	3.82	1.09	1	5
...the occupation I want	2,148	3.59	1.21	1	5
...gender roles	2,148	3.49	1.17	1	5

The distribution of IR scores (identity resolution score) revealed a negative skew, suggesting a moderately high level of identity resolution within the sample. However, one assumption of the ordinary least squares regression approach, operationalised in this analysis, is that the dependent variable is normally distributed. Therefore, to ensure that this assumption is met and that the regression estimates are accurate, a cubic data transformation was applied to normalise the IR score distribution.

Independent variables

As per the research question, this research has considered five socio-structural variables to investigate how various factors shape an individual's identity resolution. Socio-structural factors considered for analysis included; gender, country of birth, geographic remoteness, religiosity and highest level of parental education. The reference category was generally chosen based upon the highest number of respondents within the category.

Analytic approach

The analysis consisted of two distinct stages. Stage 1 involved descriptive analysis of the individual identity resolution items and testing for correlations between identity resolution and several measures of well-being. Stage 2 examined differences in young people's identity resolution through a multivariate regression to model the influence of the socio-structural variables.

Results

Identity Resolution Scale

Table 2 shows the distributions of the items within the Identity Resolution Scale, demonstrating how certain young people are in key aspects of their future. Respondents are reportedly most sure about 'the kind of relationship they want to have with their family', with 87% stating this is 'Quite true' or 'Very true'. Respondents also reported high assuredness about 'values (they) believe in' and 'what kind of person (they) want to be', demonstrating a reasonable certainty in these more intrinsic aspects of identity. The more extrinsic aspect of 'the occupation (they) want' reveals lower certainty, with 'gender roles' demonstrating the lowest certainty levels.

Table 2 Distribution table of Identity Resolution Scale items: Proportioned by row

Variables: Sure about...	Not true at all	Slightly True	Somewhat True	Quite True	Very True
...what kind of relationships I want with my family	1% (n=18)	3% (n=54)	10% (n=208)	32% (n=679)	55% (n=1,189)
...the values I believe in	0% (n=8)	3% (n=59)	11% (n=233)	40% (n=862)	46% (n=986)
...what kind of person I want to be	1% (n=23)	3% (n=71)	15% (n=326)	39% (n=829)	42% (n=899)
...what kind of friends I want	1% (n=18)	3% (n=55)	14% (n=299)	42% (n=895)	41% (n=881)
...what kind of person I want as my partner	4% (n=83)	8% (n=167)	23% (n=500)	33% (n=699)	33% (n=699)
...the occupation I want	7% (n=144)	13% (n=269)	24% (n=513)	28% (n=612)	28% (n=610)
...what roles men and women should play	8% (n=178)	9% (n=195)	30% (n=639)	31% (n=658)	22% (n=478)

A pairwise correlation between the IR score, life satisfaction and happiness were also tested to underscore a central assumption that differences in IR scores have significant implications for well-being. Life satisfaction was measured using the Student's Life Satisfaction Scale (Huebner, 1991) and was found to be highly correlated with identity resolution ($r=.36, p<.001$). Similarly, identity resolution was found to align closely with self-rated happiness ($r=.30, p<.001$).

Multivariate regression of socio-structural influences by identity resolution score

Table 3 displays the results of the multivariate regression model which explores the relationship between young people's identity resolution (range 1-5) and the influence of key socio-structural

influences modelled alongside one another. The adjusted R^2 revealed that the socio-structural variables collectively accounted for 5% of the total variation of IR score, with several factors indicating a significant association with IR. Identity resolution varied significantly by all factors, excluding gender.

Table 3 Multivariate regression model of socio-structural influences on identity resolution (1-5)

	β	SE
Gender		
Male (Ref. variable)	0.00	-
Female	0.03	0.04
Country of birth		
Australia (Ref. variable)	0.00	-
Overseas	-0.15*	0.06
Remoteness		
Urban (Ref. variable)	0.00	-
Inner Regional	0.15**	0.05
Outer Regional & Remote	0.24***	0.06
Importance of religion		
Not Religious (Ref. variable)	0.00	-
Mildly religious	0.00	0.04
Moderately religious	0.17**	0.06
Very religious	0.51***	0.06
Highest education level achieved by a parent		
Bachelor's or Higher (Ref. variable)	0.00	-
Less Than Year 12	0.14*	0.07
Year 12	0.26***	0.06
Trade/Cert	0.10*	0.05
Don't Know	0.19**	0.06
Constant	2.93***	
No. of obs.	2148	
Adj. R2	0.06	
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$		

Participants who report religion as very important in their lives recorded IR scores that were substantially higher ($\beta=0.51$, $p < 0.001$) than those who placed no importance at all on religion. Moreover, there was a similar, though smaller, increase ($\beta=0.17$, $p < 0.01$) in identity resolution for respondents who report a moderate level of religiosity. Highest level of education achieved by either parent also remained a significant predictor of identity resolution, with lower levels of parental education associated with higher identity resolution. Compared to participants with either parent completing a bachelor degree or higher, participants of all other parental education categories reported higher IR scores; most notably those with either parent completing year 12 ($\beta=0.26$, $p < 0.001$) and those who did not know their parents' education level ($\beta=0.19$, $p < 0.01$). An individual's geographical remoteness was also linked to an increased IR score. Overall, the further a respondent lived from a major city, the higher their identity resolution tended to be. When compared to participants situated in urban areas, those living in inner regional areas reported a moderate increase ($\beta=0.15$, $p < 0.01$) and those in outer regional & remote areas reported an even greater increase in IR score ($\beta=0.27$, $p < 0.05$). Finally, those born overseas reported significantly lower identity resolution compared to those born in Australia ($\beta=-0.15$, $p < 0.05$).

Discussion

This paper has identified differences in young Australians' levels of identity resolution which are consistent with the diversification of life pathways during early adulthood. The results imply that individuals differ in how and when they become sure about aspects of their future identity and suggests that this level of certainty is contingent on socio-structural factors largely beyond their control. As discussed previously, proponents of emerging adulthood place less emphasis on the socio-structural forces shaping the opportunities and choices of young people (Arnett 1997, 2001). However, the distribution of identity resolution shows that young Australians vary widely in terms of their certainty about who they are and what they want in life. Additionally, the subsequent multivariate regression revealed that country of birth, remoteness, religiosity and highest level of education achieved by either parent, each significantly influence a young person's identity resolution.

The current research supported previous research into challenges in identity formation experienced by immigrant youth (Walsh et al. 2005; Akhtar 1999), by showing that those who were born overseas had significantly lower identity resolution scores. It is likely the case for most respondents born overseas that their parents were also born overseas, which for many implies growing up with inherently different cultural norms to contemporary Australia, particularly regarding what it means to be an adult. As a result it is possible that as a young person moves between spheres of life such as home, school, work or university they are also continuously moving in and out of different languages or cultural codes (Walsh et al. 2005; Nelson et al. 2013). In turn, identity resolution is influenced by the complexities of navigating these additional family and community dynamics through day to day life.

The remoteness of an individual's locale was also found to be a key influencing factor on identity resolution. Findings revealed that the more remote a person lives the higher their identity resolution score. One possible explanation is that many rural young people leave home earlier to relocate to urban areas for work and further education, meaning that they would be required to give earlier thought to career and study goals to justify and motivate such a move (Nelson & Chen 2007). Alternately, those who remain in rural areas are likely choosing from a narrower range of occupational or relationship choices and are potentially less exposed to cosmopolitanism that might engender ambiguity around certain aspects of life. Both pathways present the opportunity to resolve one's adult identity at a younger age than those in urban areas with access to a seemingly greater range of opportunities. This highlights the nuanced nature of identity resolution; though higher identity resolution correlates to higher well-being, such a quick resolution may for some imply disadvantage in terms of limited opportunities and choices.

In a similar vein, high religiosity was a significant predictor of higher identity resolution scores, which suggests religiosity may have a similar effect on identity resolution as it does on well-being, as demonstrated by Singh (2014). To understand the effects of religiosity, it is presumed that an individual who reports high religiosity has internalised particular guiding norms or values that mitigate the need for the identity exploration typically associated with emerging adulthood. Respondents with high religiosity are faced with less moral ambiguity and will likely choose friends, partners and careers that are more consistent with prescribed values. This presents narrower criteria for the kinds of people they would want as their friends (i.e. people who share their values) and could encourage more tangible opportunities to make friends through being involved in religious communities and activities. As a result, evident in the current findings, those with high religiosity have the propensity to resolve their adult identities sooner than their non-religious peers.

The final significant predictor of identity resolution within the current study was the highest education level of either parent. Those with parents who have achieved higher education levels

tended to report lower IR scores compared to those who had either parent complete only high school. Though counterintuitive, as a proxy measure of family socio-economic status, parental education is likely to indicate the level of access a young adult has to material resources and support to assist in their transitional pathways (Bynner 2005). With fewer responsibilities or stresses, in the context of higher socio-economic status, a young person can utilise this support to sustain more open-ended transitional pathways and interim arrangements in which they enjoy greater freedom to experience a wide range of roles, relationships and identities. In other words, if there are risks associated with certain opportunities, having access to greater parental resource can safeguard against these risks, such as leaving home with the ability to move back if things do not work out. This suggests low identity resolution may not be an inherently negative outcome for individuals with sufficient familial support. For many, low identity resolution may be indicative of a temporary need or desire for flexibility or freedom from commitment related to adulthood in order to navigate the less certain interim arrangements.

The current research presents a preliminary exploration of identity resolution in early adulthood by highlighting the correlation of five socio-structural forces with the level of certainty young people have regarding aspects of their future. Results showed that key socio-structural influences continue to play an important role in shaping young adult's identity resolution, suggesting that being born overseas, geographical location, religiosity and family socio-economic status are each significantly correlated to young people's certainty in their future identity within an Australian context. This broad study focus has expanded on the conceptualisation of identity resolution as a measure to provide insight into young people's construction of their future selves by understanding their certainty in key areas of life. Future research would benefit from exploring how identity resolution evolves and fluctuates over time, particularly later in life. This would shed further light on the nuances of identity resolution as well as continue to reveal the impacts of diversifying life pathways on certainty and well-being outcomes. This study has also added to the critique of emerging adulthood, demonstrating the importance of considering the continuing impacts of socio-structural forces on the outcomes individuals experience in early adulthood.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Summary statistics & bivariate regression analysis for key analytic variables

	Proportion	Summary Statistics (By IR score)		Bivariate regression (By IR score)	
		Mean	SD	t	P> t
Gender					
Male (Ref. variable)	37%	3.12	0.90	-	-
Female	63%	3.17	0.87	1.19	0.234
Country of birth					
Australia (Ref. variable)	91%	3.17	0.88	-	-
Overseas	9%	3.01	0.84	-2.48*	-0.013
Remoteness					
Urban (Ref. variable)	73%	3.09	0.88	-	-
Inner Regional	17%	3.28	0.86	3.66***	<0.001
Outer Regional & Remote	10%	3.37	0.87	4.25***	<0.001
Importance of religion					
Not Religious (Ref. variable)	41%	3.07	0.90	-	-
Mildly religious	33%	3.09	0.86	0.51	0.610
Moderately religious	15%	3.23	0.86	2.88**	0.004
Very religious	10%	3.57	0.77	7.78***	<0.001
Highest education level achieved by a parent					
Bachelor's or Higher (Ref. variable)	47%	3.06	0.87	-	-
Less Than Year 12	10%	3.23	0.93	2.56*	0.011
Year 12	12%	3.31	0.90	4.08***	<0.001
Trade/Cert	21%	3.19	0.86	2.61**	0.009
Don't Know	11%	3.25	0.87	3.03**	0.002
*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001					

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Resisting the marginalisation of the non-human: Interdependency, wonder, and humility in Tasmanian forests

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Introduction

“The fate of trees”, Jones and Cloke (2002: 2) argue, “is often emblematic of the wider environment”. For those concerned about the native forests of Tasmania, Australia, precarity reigns – an experience of anxiety reflective of the contemporary (human and non-human) environment at large. This paper – offered in response to The Australian Sociological Association’s 2018 Conference theme ‘Precarity, Rights and Resistance’ – explores the role of Tasmania’s forests as sites of resistance to the reassertion of dominant ideologies to the detriment of the marginalised non-human. Human interactions with the non-human reflect this process (particularly in contemporary Western society), with this ‘marginalisation’ comprising assumptions of human dominance and human ‘separateness’ from the non-human. Giddens (1991) terms this separation the ‘sequestration of nature’.

Underlying late modern living, sequestration is the “‘hiding away’ of ... experiences, relationships, practices, and ideas” of the non-human from the structures of everyday life, particularly those aspects that “remind us of our vulnerability and dependency upon the natural world” (Barry 2012: 26; Giddens 1991). This process facilitates a ‘closing-in’ of the (human) self and a reassertion of human/non-human binaries, in which interdependence is delegitimised. Emotional connections to the non-human, and reactions to its fate, are also maligned. Cunsolo and Ellis (2018: 275) describe “ecological grief [as] a form of ... grief that isn’t publicly or openly acknowledged”, reflecting a broader process of ‘emotional sequestration’ of the non-human.

Drawing from a qualitative research project conducted in Tasmania, this paper proposes that forests act as a site of resistance to this marginalisation. Participants’ experiences of human-forest interdependency, wonder, empowerment and humility undermine assumptions of human dominance, the sequestration of the non-human, and the delegitimising of emotion. I argue that forests therefore provide an opportunity to celebrate interdependence, empathy and gratitude, a ‘service’ provided by forests which is seldom considered in questions of forest management and harvesting. This approach speaks to the discipline’s increasing recognition of relational approaches, emphasising the significance of the interdependency of actors – both human and non-human – in social life (Dépelteau 2018).

Background: Marginalisation and Interdependency

[It has been] argued that our planet has entered a new era – the Anthropocene – since a threshold has been crossed now that a single species has become an earth-changing force. (Lorimer 2012: 593)

If humans are indeed an “earth-changing force” – and environmental crises such as climate change and mass extinctions stand as evidence of this (Moran 2006) – the non-human is to some extent dependent upon humans. Human dependency upon the non-human is a less comfortable notion for many, however. Lorimer (2012: 593) describes the Anthropocene as “a very public challenge” to the assumptions of ‘separateness’ which underpin modernity (Latour 1993; Barry 2012) and, as Barry (2012: 109) states, “a full acknowledgement of humanity’s dependence on the non-human world is, for modern human subjects ... often unsettling and disturbing”. The dichotomisation of humans and non-humans is deeply anchored in Western philosophy (Moran 2006), as are narratives which reinforce human ‘dominance’ over the non-human (White 1967).

There is some acknowledgement of human dependence in Western thinking. Environmental sociology is built upon the acknowledgment and critique of assumed human ‘exemptionalism’ (Dunlap 1980), and the problematic nature of these assumptions informs movements such as deep ecology (Naess 1989) and recognition of ‘more-than-human’ agencies, interactions, and configurations (Panelli 2010). However, ideas that nature is inherently ‘good’ or ‘healthy’ can emphasise the (often physical) benefits of ‘sought-out’ contact, reinforcing the non-human as separate from the human. Valuations of ecosystems also tend to emphasise the role of economic benefit and dependence, to the detriment of non-economic processes (Raymond et al. 2018: 779). Singh (2013: 189), writing in an Indian context, argues that “environmental policy-making continues to treat human beings as rational economic actors ... [relying on] economic incentives to transform human behavior”. This resonates with those familiar with Western environmental management – including Tasmanian forestry. Further, management decisions made on the basis of economics or ‘rationality’ necessarily rely on the sequestration of the environment. Green politics (and thus human-forest connections) are often dismissed as “pessimistic, anti-innovation, romantic conservative-cum-[traditionalism]” (Barry 2012: 23) – that is, dismissed as untenable for necessitating ‘closeness’ to the environment. Ahmed (2004: 3) reminds us that emotional responses have “been viewed as ‘beneath’ the faculties of thought and reason”, a tendency which delegitimises the enjoyment and loving of forests as ‘irrational’. Might then emotional responses to forests operate as a form of resistance to contemporary society’s own resistance to being ‘too close’ to nature? Singh’s (2013: 197) study supports this idea:

... people can come to care for their forest (and love it) through their daily engagement in care activities ... It needs to be recognized that the “self” is not “closed-in” but “opened-out,” formed through active engagement with other human and non-human bodies.

While it is not in the scope of this paper to provide an in-depth grounding of these experiences in the Tasmanian context, the state’s often problematic history of forestry practices has shaped my research, and participants’ forest experiences (see also Krien 2012). Some participants referenced the common rhetoric of ‘locked up’ forests, a phrase used to denote areas which have been supposedly ‘locked away’ from public use and (economic) benefit – as seen in the Tasmanian Liberal Government’s proposed ‘Forestry (Unlocking Production Forests) Bill 2017’ (Tasmanian Government 2017). This discourse is telling, reflecting a common conceptualisation of the state’s forests as areas which are separate from humans, able to be ‘locked away’ or ‘given back’ for the purposes of economic gain.

In light of (and in opposition to) this, I explore participants' engagements with Tasmanian forests as sites of resisting the patterns detailed above and, to use Singh's phrasing, sites of 'opening-out'. I agree with Barry's (2012: 24) argument that there is:

... little to be gained from the continuing atheistic pursuit of the 'malestream' technological fantasy of invulnerability, control, and mastery ... [this] leads not to liberation and emancipation but ... exploitation (of others, including non-human others).

This approach sees vulnerability as "constitutive of what it means to be human" (Barry 2012: 36), celebrating human/non-human interdependence. I am interested in the ways that forest experiences may foster this way of living, and 'living well'. The excerpts below draw from semi-structured interviews conducted in Tasmania, detailing three examples of this process: experiences of interdependence, wonder, and empowerment and humility.

Methodology

27 men (16) and women (11) from across the state participated in the study, self-selecting in response to a call for those who 'care about forests and forest issues'. Advertisement was primarily through Tasmanian environmental organisations, and word-of-mouth. Participants varied widely across age and occupation. All but two participants discussed their enjoyment of 'in-forest' activities such as bushwalking, camping, and rafting. All names used are pseudonyms. The study adopted a conceptual framework based on Giddens' (1991) 'ontological security', exploring the implication of forests in participants' trust in the stability of their surroundings. Emotion, routine, and individuals' understandings of ontology are central aspects of this framework. The thematic coding and analysis of the transcripts – and the core themes explored in this paper – reflect this.

The (lack of strict) definition of 'Tasmanian forests' is a conscious decision. I took my cue from participants, who identified many facets – forest types, ecosystems, wilderness rhetoric ('pristine forest'), and 'Tasmanian-ness' – of what defines a forest. Forests are not 'just trees', and so cannot be replaced by plantations; they are understood as complex systems of interrelated species. As such, Tasmanian forests are not a renewable resource.

Discussion

Interdependence

Implicit in participants' responses was description of what forests 'do' for people. There was a recognition of humanity's literal, physical dependence upon forests. As Peter says:

I don't know where people think oxygen comes from ... to me, it's always been blindingly obvious ... [trees are] the lungs of the earth ... they store water and let it down over summer ... you can't pretend that we can live on a planet with no vegetation.

Many participants conveyed that forests contribute to 'living well', particularly in contrast to the pressures of contemporary, urban living:

There's so much over-stimulation I guess in society these days, with all the technology and all the chemicals and everything all around you ... [but in the forest] the rest of it's forgotten, and you just ... everything else drops away and I love that. (Jack)

[Walking in the forest is] one of the only ways that I can really switch off, and not stress about things ... I have to get out into nature and just... yeah, reconnect with it. (Zoe)

In many cases, this relationship is not transactional but rather, begets compassion. Hay (2002: 161) describes a Heideggerian perspective in which "to care for a place involves more than holding

it merely in affectionate regard; it also involves taking responsibility for that place". Catherine's comments reflect this process:

I feel like I have a love affair with [forests] ... you know you'd do anything to make sure the forests are looked after right.

Participants' responses communicated this concept in various ways. Some described forests as having intrinsic rights; some condemned the "destruction" of forestry practices such as clearfelling; and some expressed outrage that mature trees could be felled for the making of disposable products (such as paper). The common thread in these sentiments is not opposition to industry, but rather respect for forests and for human/non-human interdependence.

Wonder

Participants described emotional experiences of forests, both positive (excitement and love) and negative (anger and fear). Several participants detailed feelings of awe, joy, and fascination:

It's awe, it's response to majesty ... it's just awe and joy and delight. (Ken)

I try not to let emotion get into it, although one can't not be emotional going out there, surrounded by giant trees - it's pretty awe-inspiring. (Desmond)

[There are] the temperate rainforests, all around the West Coast. They're just magnificent. Just magnificent. (Diane)

[I feel] wonder. Joy. Curiosity ... awe. (Hugh)

These experiences encapsulate 'wonder'. Wonder, Ahmed (2004: 179-180) says,

is about seeing the world that one faces and is faced with 'as if' for the first time ... Wonder is about learning to see the world as something that does not have to be, and as something that came to be, over time, and with work.

Ahmed is speaking of the role of wonder in personal journeys of feminism, but there is a similarity here to experiences of becoming and being a lover and defender of the non-human. Wonder supports the reimagining and reshaping of human and non-human relationships. It does not alienate us from the non-human; rather, wonder operates as an embracing of emotion, an 'opening-out' of the individual to celebrate the non-human.

Empowerment and humility

Participants also described experiences of self-empowerment facilitated by journeys with/in Tasmania's landscapes:

[You] look at Mt. Anne and you're like, 'okay, I have to scale that?' ... So it was a bit of a psychological [challenge] ... getting to the top of that was ... satisfying ... just to find yourself out there is just empowering ... a sense of achievement. (Claire)

A particular view or achievement ... or having clambered up a rock-face can suddenly give you a great rush of a sense of achievement. (Matthew)

It's a fantastic feeling to look, to stand on a mountain range and look, in both directions, and think - 'I've walked all that way, and I didn't get any mechanical help in any of that'. I've walked all that way, I've carried my food, I've carried my tent, I can survive out here ... it's a great feeling, to actually think that you can do things without masses of modern technology. (Hugh)

In these descriptions, empowerment does not function as a precursor to assumptions of human dominance. Instead, participants' forest experiences seemed to often involve a sense of humility.

Some participants identified that while they enjoyed their adventures, they knew their survival was contingent upon returning to the urban:

I was standing there for ages, and I thought if I got lost down there, I would die. How long would it take me to die? I couldn't do it, I couldn't get out ... I'm just aware how very, very sensitive and vulnerable and completely over-developed we are. (Jane)

We've evolved to be able to house and feed and keep safe our loved ones all year round, every day, day-in day-out. There's a lot of cleverness involved in that, but we can't [survive in the wild] anymore. We could again if we had to, but we've lost those sort of [skills]. (Don)

Several participants embraced the forest as 'ontologically humbling'; that is, as facilitating a sense of human 'smallness' in relation to the non-human:

[In forests] you have to adapt to what's around you, and have a realisation of how small you are. (Henry)

I mean, you realise you're on this cliff face and you're really... you amount to absolutely nothing. (Leon)

You think about the bigger picture [but] I don't end up with a ... 'I'm so small, this is pointless' kind of feeling. Yeah. It's a good feeling somehow. (Amelia)

Trudgill (2001) argues that 'wilderness' – a problematic term, but colloquially common as 'shorthand' for some forms of forest – is seen as both romantic and threatening; as something to encounter, but also as something to be feared. Interestingly, this study's participants tended to emphasise acceptance of the forests' dangers rather than distress, and were therefore 'opened out' to relationship with the forest, rather than 'closed-off' in fear.

Recognition of interdependence, experiences of wonder, and understandings of empowerment and humility are three brief examples of how participants' forest experiences encouraged generous, empathetic connections between themselves and (human and non-human) others. Forests offer respite from the pressures and assumptions of the contemporary urbanised world, with these experiences undermining sequestration of the non-human, assumptions of human dominance and exemptionalism, and strict human/non-human binaries.

Conclusion

For the study's participants, regular time spent with/in forests seemed to contribute to a sense of living well. As Catherine put it:

... if we can live with nature and look after it and be guardians of it - because you know, it can't speak up - perhaps we can live a fuller, better life.

Such an attitude stands as resistance to sequestration of the non-human, inviting – even celebrating – human and non-human interdependence. It is a fundamentally emotional response which facilitates an 'opening' of the (interdependent but empowered) human to relationship with the (marginalised) non-human. It is an empathetic response and, as Pedwell (2012: 164) argues, through empathy "one can open oneself up to ... new forms of intersubjectivity with the potential to dislodge and rearticulate dominant assumptions, truths and boundaries". While Pedwell is referring to human-to-human relationships, there is an environmental lesson to be learnt here.

The experiences described above suggest that forests provide an effective space in which assumptions, binaries, and sequestration – processes of marginalisation of the non-human – may be resisted. Barry (2012: 109) argues that "it is not easy to find spaces in modern living where we so give thanks for what we receive" from the non-human. When considering the (short- and

long-term) protection of these places, it is pertinent to consider what they are providing that humans do not (or cannot) find easily elsewhere. The contemporary world is one in which many faces of the non-human – including native forests – are facing increasing threats to their survival. Acknowledging the interdependence of humans and non-humans may be crucial to the future of many ecosystems and species. Similarly, many humans' chances to live well may be contingent upon having opportunities to form emotional and ontological connections with these places and beings. This is interdependence in action, and is deserving of celebration.

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Atomized subjects: Understanding constraints to collective solidarity among temporary migrant workers in Australia

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Abstract

Studies have suggested that given temporary migrants' short periods of stay and their unfamiliarity with the receiving countries where they work and live, they are more likely to be exploited. Scholars, NGOs, unions, and governments work hard to promote temporary migrant workers' labour consciousness and collective solidarity. Past studies and advocacy groups have focused on how to remove constraints while neglecting the subjective considerations that underpin why individuals are unwilling to take collective action and create collective solidarity. Focusing on individual (rather than collective) consideration, this article provides research agendas for studying the constraints to collective solidarity among temporary migrant workers in Australia. Two agendas are discussed: analysis of internal friction among temporary migrant workers and different ideas about the most 'efficient' way to achieve justice at work.

Keywords: Australia, collective solidarity, temporary migrant worker, work justice

Reversing the research agenda

There is a consensus that given the short period of stay and unfamiliarity with the receiving countries where they work and live, temporary migrant workers are more likely to be found in non-standard work, performing physical labour and working in lower paid jobs (Berg, 2016; Clibborn, 2015; Faraday, 2014; Reilly, 2012). In reaction to the uncertainties and vulnerabilities of temporary migrant workers, scholars (Hsia, 2009; Lyons, 2009; Piper, 2005; Sim, 2003) have discussed how migrant NGOs promote migrant solidarity¹ and generate campaigns to protect migrant rights. Few studies, however, have explored the subjective considerations that explain why temporary migrant workers DO NOT pursue collective solidarity against poor conditions, nor does research explain how they achieve justice (such as fair wages and associated benefits) at work. To answer this question, the first step is to understand how temporary migrant workers perceive their situation.

¹ Stjernø (2004: 2) defines solidarity as "the preparedness to share resources with others by personal contribution to those in struggle or in need." In this article, I refer to that temporary migrant workers are willing to get together and initiate a larger scope of collective action to fight for their rights and benefits at work.

In my fieldwork examining temporary migrant workers' working conditions in Australia between 2014 and 2016,² for example, I found that collective solidarity is not, contrary to many claims from above literature, the normal response of workers. However, in contrast to studies which suggest migrant workers lack knowledge of their legal rights (Farbenblum and Berg, 2017; Reilly et al., 2017), most temporary migrant workers are aware of the Australian Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO)³ and outlets such as trade unions, migrant NGOs, and the media, where they can seek help when they are being exploited. Most get information either before or soon after they arrive in Australia through online forums or day-to-day conversations with fellow workers (Field notes, 09 Dec 2014).

My fieldwork experiences and interviews suggest that in addition to the considerations of time, money, human capital (e.g., language proficiency and resources), and inefficient legal processes, temporary migrant workers consider how to cope with exploitation (by exploitation I refer to substandard employment conditions including underpayment of wages, excessive hours of work, sub-standard living conditions, and even sexual harassment) in a variety of ways. These different considerations reveal the internal frictions among temporary migrant workers that decrease the likelihood of collective solidarity.

The other important reason for the lack of collective solidarity, is temporary workers prefer to take individual approaches (e.g., taking revenge on or teaching bad bosses a lesson, blacklisting bad employers, or exposing them in major job-finding websites and online forums). These tactics limit follow-up and larger-scale collective solidarity among temporary migrant workers.

Given that solidarity involves getting people together, in the workplace, it is always understood as collective action (Fantasia, 1988; Kavada, 2015). This article provides research agendas that problematize 'individual' considerations in understanding constraints to 'collective' solidarity. I argue there is merit to understand why solidarity is not a common response of temporary migrant workers to exploitation. Individual considerations not only include the costs and benefits of collective solidarity, they also reflect how temporary migrant workers see each other and perceive their own situations.

In the following sections, I will propose two research agendas that can help us understand the potential constraints to collective solidarity among temporary migrant workers. First, we need to pay attention to internal frictions within migrant worker groups, such as job competition between international students, Working Holiday Makers (a temporary visa for young people who can travel and work in Australia for up to a year), and those who stay and work illegally. Second, we need to explore what is the best way to achieve justice in the workplace for temporary migrant workers.

Internal friction and subjective perception

When Wilde (2007) systematically reviewed the concept of solidarity in the political field, he argued that we should take a 'radical humanist approach' and focus on human self-realisation. The debate around the concept of solidarity also accompanies the debate between individualism and communitarianism, as well as concerns about the weakening of social bonds (Putnam, 2000; Stjernø, 2004).

2 From August 2014 to March 2016, I worked in several medium-sized Chinese workplaces including restaurant, supermarket, and warehouse, with temporary migrant workers who came from China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. I also worked with several labour unions and migrant NGOs and conducted interviews with 50 participants who either studied or did working holiday in Australia. I use pseudonyms to maintain respondent anonymity. All the interviews were conducted in Mandarin. I probed my respondents with 'how' and 'why' questions about their experiences of working in Australia and their ways of reacting to exploitation.

3 The main roles of Fair Work Ombudsman are: to promote harmonious, productive and cooperative workplace relations, and to ensure compliance with Australian workplace laws. Details available at: <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/> (Accessed 25 July 2018).

Research on labour and migration studies has sought to identify conditions under which migrant solidarity will develop to consolidate group benefits. Solidarity is thus seen as a collective action, which is closely related to the idea of justice, collective interests, and mobilization (Kavada, 2015; Saab et al., 2015; Wilde, 2007). Such studies tend to argue that under certain circumstances 'individual' interests are subsumed under 'collective' interests. Few studies, however, have systematically discussed how the different motivations divided individuals from each other, even though they can be categorized in the same group (e.g., temporary migrant workers) and may suffer similar unjust situations (e.g., exploitation at work).

Thus, the first proposed research agenda here is to distinguish the motivations and considerations that individuals have for migrating to other countries and choosing to stay there. For example, the reasons international students take (low-paid) cash-in-hand jobs are probably different from those of Working Holiday Makers. To make more money and extend their stay, Working Holiday Makers are less sensitive to whether the salary is above the minimum salary. Instead, it is common for them to take cash-in-hand jobs because such jobs provide them with flexibility, allowing them to do multiple jobs at the same time and to be more free to enter or exit specific jobs. Scholars also note that international students are willing to tolerate underpayment (Clibborn, 2018; Reilly et al., 2017) because they compare themselves to fellow international students. Different experiences and considerations affect an individual's decision to resort to collective solidarity.

Sometimes temporary migrant workers even need to compete against each other for cash-in-hand jobs (field notes, 19 April 2015). This creates the first friction among temporary migrant workers with different visa types. In my interviews some of my employer respondents told me that they prefer to hire certain migrant worker groups (e.g., international students over Working Holiday Makers) because of length of stay, English proficiency, etc.

Another important factor that remains understudied within current literature is how the background and legal status of temporary migrant workers affect the ways they see each other. In my fieldwork, for example, many of my respondents looked down upon those who overstay or purchase fake visas through unofficial means (field notes, 27 November 2014). Many respondents show little empathy for the 'illegals' who get exploited or deported. 'They deserved it' or 'fair exchange is no robbery' are common reactions to the exploitative situations other illegal migrant workers face.

Research has indicated that illegal migrant workers generally dare not complain to the authorities (Farbenblum and Berg, 2017; Piper, 2005), mention the possibility of resorting to collective solidarity, or seek justice at work. Temporary migrants' recognition that their work is 'illegal' is an important factor in showing why collective action is unlikely to occur. From my interviews, I found that temporary migrants feel more comfortable speaking out about their exploitative experiences when they finish their jobs and return to their countries of origin. At the same time, employers may also highlight and reinforce legal consciousness among employees and use legal threats to maintain the subordination of their vulnerable workforce (Abrego, 2011; Clibborn, 2015). The fear of being punished by employers or jeopardising their immigration status undermines motivations for further collective action (Farbenblum and Berg, 2017; Reilly et al., 2017).

Here is an interesting mentality that scholars, either in the fields of social psychology or industrial relations need to examine more deeply. Burawoy (1979) famously describes 'manufacturing consent', which means management uses various strategies to create voluntary compliance among workers. Temporary migrant workers, however, already know (or can anticipate) the hourly rate before choosing to accept a cash-in-hand job and its substandard conditions. Their mentality is developed in such a way that they attribute working in the cash economy and assorted forms of exploitation to their 'individual' decisions (Clibborn, 2018; Farbenblum and Berg, 2017).

Thus, feeling injustice does not necessarily generate motivations for collective solidarity among individuals, which is different than Fantasia's (1988) idea of 'cultures of solidarity'. The experience of individual migrant workers is not always bounded by 'the lived/grouped experiences of workers engaged in collective struggles' (p. 19).

To put it simply, to understand the constraints to collective solidarity, we need to first understand individual perceptions of injustice. Many of my respondents clearly distinguish between 'unjust exploitation' and 'voluntary complaine'. The former means the employers play some tricks, owe employee salary, or provide precarious working conditions for which it is legitimate for workers to complain. On the other hand, if people take cash-in-hand jobs because they lack language skills or because their immigration status is illegal, then there is no foundation to legitimize their vulnerable situations because they 'deserve' the unpleasant outcome. Literature on 'migrant deservingness' has discussed why some migrants deserve or do not deserve entitlements such as medical resources and citizenship (Chauvin et al., 2013; Willen, 2015). In future it would be valuable to connect that literature to how temporary migrant workers perceive their own 'deservingness'.

Migrant mentalities, frictions, competition, and discrimination against specific migrant worker groups, not only creates misunderstandings between each other, they also significantly hinder the emergence of collective solidarity.

The most efficient way to achieve justice at work

Even though there exist foundations for people to unite, what is the best way and how to address it remains debatable. The ways to achieve justice vary, and it is an ongoing task for researchers to find different forms of achieving justice. In my fieldwork, for example, I found that an increasing number of temporary migrant workers disseminate information about bad employers via social media platforms such as job-seeking websites, online forums, Facebook pages, and Yelp and Google reviews (23 January 2016). This method is efficient particularly in the industries that temporary migrant workers work in, such as restaurants and bubble tea stores. Bad reviews are effective in sullyng the reputation of a business and stymying its employee recruitment.

Temporary migrant worker considerations are straightforward: to join a labour union, one must first pay the membership fee. Similarly, even though the Fair Work Ombudsman is probably the most common way that people seek for help when being exploited at work, the FWO is increasingly criticized for being inefficient, for asking applicants to prepare all documents and providing evidence of infractions. Turning to the FWO frequently requires employers and employees to resolve issues themselves as well. Farbenblum and Berg (2017: 318–321) have indicated that temporary migrant workers are reluctant to engage with the FWO. Here I take a further step and argue that the reluctance to seek remedies through the FWO further impedes the possibilities of solidarity.

Not engaging with the FWO cannot be fully understood without exploring individual considerations. In addition to the inefficiency of official means, temporary migrant workers understand that employers can always find workers; creating a blacklist has proven more efficient to teach employers a lesson. It creates a hot discussion topic, and the speed of getting revenge against employers is much faster. Blacklists also encourage everyone, whether job applicants or consumers, to boycott bad employers.⁴ Such action certainly involves anger and resentment at the unjust treatment that bad employers deliver, but whether 'individual revenge', 'feeling injustice', or 'blacklisting bad employers' will develop into collective solidarity is an important issue that requires more research.

4 For example, there is a Facebook group page called: 'Blacklist of Employers during working and holiday in Australia', where thousands of users share various information regarding bad employers and the locations of work.

No one would doubt that digital technologies and social media bring unprecedented opportunities to organize more people together and lower participation costs. However, we need to carefully distinguish between two levels: individual justice vs. collective solidarity. For many temporary migrant workers, targeting 'individual' bad employers now seems to be the usual case. Even some online forums as well as the FWO official website have been encouraging people to share more information and to report bad employers. It is still unclear, however, to what degree online technology influences the formation of a deeper and stronger collective or off-line solidarity. The Internet may atomize individuals and distract efforts of getting people together to reach collective solidarity at work. In other words, online social movements may be broader and more extensive, yet they can also be more loose and superficial.

Indeed, there are many factors influencing why people do or do not get together and create collective solidarity. Whether to resort to collective solidarity or not may be decided case by case; yet, what researchers need to do is more systematically analyse the characteristics of each target group so that we can better understand the constraints to and people's thoughts about collective solidarity.

The reluctant attitude of temporary migrant workers to resort to collective solidarity involves a more practical concern: time and space. International students and Working Holiday Makers, for example, given the short period of their stay in Australia, spend most of their time studying, making money, and travelling. Robertson (2014) points out the importance of temporariness in understanding the migration process of temporary migrant workers and their subjectivities. My fieldwork experiences and interview also suggest that temporary migrant workers are aware of the temporariness so when exploitation happens they prefer to find another job rather than resort to collective actions or engage in lengthy legal processes. To achieve justice, they tend to find the faster and most efficient way to punish bad employers, rather than collect evidence or organize other workers at work. The temporal constraints shape specific choices for temporary migrant workers and limit their incentives to formulate collective solidarity.

Space is definitely another important issue. For example, Working Holiday Makers have to move to regional areas and do farming or fruit-picking jobs if they are seeking extension or applying for a second working holiday visa. When they are in remote areas, it is difficult to access legal services (Berg, 2016; United WHY, 2015). The most efficient way for them, again, is to spread information online. All these institutional constraints could shape specific choices for temporary migrant workers and limit their abilities and incentives to formulate collective solidarity.

Conclusion

Current studies in the field of migration and collective behaviour tend to focus on the limits of resources, socio-economic status, English proficiency, and ethnic/global networks, etc., to explain why collective solidarity in and through work is restricted. Starting from the perspective of individual worker, however, this article provides two research agendas to understand why individual temporary migrant workers in most circumstances act as atomized subjects. The agendas include analyses of frictions within a group (temporary migrant workers) and the best way to achieve justice.

These research agendas point out that to understand the meaning of solidarity, how solidarity can be created, and constraints to solidarity, we need to distinguish between human behaviours at the individual and collective level. Temporary migrant workers, see solidarity in different ways. They care more about efficient revenge than escalating their responses to unfair treatment to collective solidarity. Understanding considerations at the individual level helps explain why there is a lack of opportunity for the emergence of collective solidarity.

The proposed research agendas may not apply just to temporary migrant workers. Other groups such as ethnic minorities, skilled labour, refugees, Muslims, or young precarious workers may face similar situations that restrict further possibilities for solidarity as well. To formulate or encourage further solidarity, future researchers need to examine how individuals subjectively understand their situations. In other words, the potential research agendas this article proposes should generate thoughts and discussions about how to address the 'roots' of collective solidarity. These actions include, but are not limited to: increasing mutual understandings of different groups, providing better access to group solidarity, and removing potential constraints to collective action. With a greater understanding of individual perceptions and considerations, it is more likely that the most efficient actions will emerge.

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Western Sydney University (WSU) is pleased to host the 2019 Australian Sociological Association Conference, a return to Sydney for the first time since 2010. WSU's School of Social Sciences and Psychology and Institute of Culture and Society will hold the conference in Greater Western Sydney (GWS) at our new Parramatta City campus and at other sites nearby.

The region is an ideal place to hold a sociology conference on the theme of *Diversity & Urban Growth*. GWS has one of the fastest growing populations in the country and has the third largest economy in Australia. It is home to nearly 10% of all Australians, with 35% of its almost 2 million residents born overseas. It is also home to the largest single Indigenous community in the country.

The combination of actors and capabilities in these spaces presents both successes and serious challenges for the region. The success of growth begs the questions of what gets expelled in the development and what are the causes of growing inequality. A little over 50 years since the sociologist Henri Lefebvre declared a 'right to the city' (*le droit à la ville*), the theme of *Diversity & Urban Growth* has never been more relevant, and will form the theoretical, conceptual and empirical basis for this TASA conference. We are very pleased to have keynotes/plenaries from extraordinary scholars such as Maggie Walter, Rob Stones, and Deborah Stevenson. We also have a number of innovative features at this year's conference, including sessions with Indigenous peoples and events which seek to engage with the communities and civic structures of the region.

Western Sydney University is committed to being 'an anchor institution and leading advocate and champion for GWS and its people' and 'a research-led university with regional, national and global impact'. Hosting a TASA conference on *Diversity & Urban Growth* will help advance important dialogue about the trajectory of cities extending from Parramatta across the globe.

Further information

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