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General Information

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Editorial:
Special Edition on Work, Community and Citizenship

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This special issue is devoted to discussions of work, community and citizenship, and considers the importance of work for both community engagement and the crafting of individual identities. The collection engages in a variety of ways with an examination of the concepts of work, community and citizenship. From a 'traditional' perspective, the concept of 'citizenship' is a matter of national belonging, social inclusion and the civil rights of national subjects (Wagner, 2004). From a more critical stance, authors have articulated the unstated norms which operate within the constitution of individual citizens. Thus, the most dominant understanding of what an 'active citizen' might look like is one which draws on the adult, independent, able-bodied 'citizen worker' (Lie, Baines, & Wheelock, 1999; Lister, 2003; Lunt, Spoonley, & Mataira, 2002). The global influence of economic discourse in the constitution of the 'citizen worker' represents the individual in quite specific ways. The 'fully employed economic independent citizen' is therefore often held as an ideal, with exceptions created for individuals who occupy particular positions or participate in particular activities, such as children, retired people, disabled people or people on parental leave. Closely connected to notions of citizenship are notions of 'social exclusion' (see, for example, Evans & Harris, 2004; France & Wiles, 1997; Pitts & Hope, 1997; Room, 1999). Within an economic discourse of social exclusion, unemployment, low-income or poverty are produced as risk of economic marginalisation, itself a risk of social exclusion (France & Wiles, 1997; Pitts & Hope, 1997; Room, 1999). Seyfang (2004) further argues that entry into the workforce is represented as the solution to such exclusion, therefore highlighting the importance of work within a dominating notion of full citizenship.

Several researchers have criticised the central role of (fully paid) work in defining the status of the citizen from the perspective of the not (fully) employed citizen (see for example Craig, 2004; McKie, Bowlby, & Gregory, 2001). Such a position has been criticised for devaluing unpaid work such as caring or volunteering, and therefore for being exclusionary, with researchers arguing for the need of alternative, more inclusive definitions of 'citizenship' (Craig, 2004; McKie et al., 2001), or to reconsider what we understand by the notion of 'valuable work' (Seyfang, 2004). From the perspective of research of voluntary work in the community, Seyfang (2004) argues for the need to reassess our dominant understandings of what it means to be 'in work' or 'on welfare' and to work to increase inclusionary practices.

Such inclusions and exclusions have important implications for understandings of 'community' and the fit of the individual within certain communities. The focus of this special issue will be on discussions of work, community and citizenship, considering the importance of work for both community engagement and the crafting of individual identities. In our call, we specifically welcomed an examination of the concepts of work, community and citizenship within a global perspective, and we have been pleased to receive papers from international contributors, articulating with varying approaches to our understandings of work, community and citizenship. Three key approaches therefore are reflective in this special issue: the understanding of work, community and citizenship from a critical perspective, understandings from a professional community psychology position, and reflections from more individual narratives.

The first paper in the collection is by Fryer and Stambe titled "Work and 'the

crafting of individual identities' from a critical standpoint". Drawing on the theoretical position of Michel Foucault and Nik Rose, the paper interrogates what we understand by taken for granted concepts such as 'unemployment' and 'the unemployed person', and the engagement of the psy-complex with these.

The second paper continues with this critical stance and seeks to consider notions of 'real jobs' and 'full citizenship' in the case of people with autism. Bertilsdotter Rosqvist, O'Dell and Brownlow discuss the experiences of people with autism in engaging with the workplace, and hence enabling the achievement of an active citizen within dominant neuro-typical (NT or non-autistic) constructions of adulthood. Discussions in this paper call for the need to develop more inclusive and diverse workspaces that can support the engagement of people with autism in NT workplaces. The importance of critical engagement with notions of work is also a factor in the third paper, but this time with a focus on the involvement of children within the paid workforce. O'Dell, Crafter, Abreu and Cline explored the interactions between the concepts of children, money and work in the transitioning of an individual into adulthood. The paper aims to understand what are considered to be 'appropriate' work activities for children and how these are represented within the contexts within which both the children and their families live.

The focus of the collection then shifts to explore community psychology as a profession and the engagement of such a profession with individuals. Fisher, Lawthom and Kagan's paper titled "Revolting talks of migrant workers and community organisers – a UK community psychology perspective" takes up this theme. The paper explores the importance of work in enabling access to community engagement through drawing on two case examples – migrant workers and trainee community organisers, and calls on the discipline of community psychology to critique the dominant positionings of migrant workers and deprived communities.

The engagement of research with disadvantaged sectors of society is further explored in the paper by Nemiroff, Aubry and Klodawsky who explore the "Economic integration of women who have experienced homelessness". This paper provides a contrast in terms of theoretical approaches of the examination of the questions posed for the special issue, and reports on a longitudinal study exploring the economic integration of homeless women.

The final theme within the collection is that of individual experiences, and the final two papers bring the focus down to more individual experiences of the meanings of work and the role that such meanings play in terms of identity, work and a sense of community. The paper by Crespo and du Preez is titled "Promoting community engagement in an intergenerational program: An exploratory study", and explores the experiences of exchanges with secondary school students of seven elderly people attending a respite centre. The complexities concerning effective intergenerational exchanges are explored and reflected upon.

The final paper in the collection by Bates is titled "Relocation to an area of high amenity: Tree-change euphoria vs homesickness, alienation and loneliness", and explores the experiences of a sample of women moving to a 'tree-change' lifestyle (i.e., a lifestyle that is characterised by a move to an area of high amenity) within Australia. Issues of personal fit within the community and the management of social difficulties in facilitating such fit are explored.

The collection as a whole therefore explores the theme of work, community and citizenship from a range of angles and seeks to interrogate key concepts from a political, critical, professional and individual viewpoint. We hope that on reading the collection questions will be raised concerning what we understand as taken-for-granted knowledges about certain concepts such as 'unemployment', 'ability', 'citizenship' and 'work' and how both societal discourses and individual meaning-making are key in navigating through the complex relationships between work, community and citizenship.

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Work and ‘the crafting of individual identities’ from a critical standpoint

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In this paper we start by critically problematising the argument that employment is important to the crafting of individual identities by drawing on the work of Michel Foucault to trouble taken-for-granted assumptions in psychological research on unemployment and modernist understanding of the ‘individual’ as a unitary and stable subject. We then elaborate our theoretical position and demonstrate how a Foucauldian standpoint can help to rethink how we think about, act upon, and experience unemployment. We then argue that, rather than describing the effect of unemployment, power-knowledge has contributed to the production of neoliberal subjectivity, including neoliberal unemployed subjectivity. More particularly we argue that ‘unemployment’ and ‘mental ill-health’ are not independent phenomena in a cause effect relationship but are, rather, two facets of socially constituted violence which functions to maximise the working of the neoliberal labour market in the interests of employers and shareholders.

“Foucault himself favours the dissolution of identity, rather than its creation or maintenance. He sees identity as a form of subjugation and a way of exercising power over people and preventing them from moving outside fixed boundaries.” (O’Farrell, 2014)

In this paper, we engage with what was positioned in the Special Issue’s call for contributions as ‘work’ by engaging with ‘employment’ through the lens of critical unemployment studies and engage with what was positioned in the call for contributions as ‘the crafting of individual identities’ by engaging with what we, following Michel Foucault, position as the reconstitution of the neoliberal subject. Before we do this, we briefly explicate what we mean by ‘from a critical standpoint’. When we describe our position as a critical standpoint, we are referring, in part, to what Foucault (2003a) describes as ‘critique’. Because this is fundamental to our work in general and this paper in particular we quote him below at length:

The core of critique is basically made of the bundle of relationships that are tied to one another, or one to the two others, power, truth and the subject. And if governmentalisation is indeed this movement through which individuals are subjugated in the reality of a social practice

through mechanisms of power that adhere to a truth, well, then! I will say that critique is the movement by which the subject gives himself [sic] the right to question truth on its effects of power and question power on its discourses of truth (p. 266).

Drawing on this definition of critique we will begin firstly by explicating how our standpoint makes use of Foucault’s work on power, truth and the subject and then focus our attention on the production of the unemployed subject.

Power-Knowledge and the Subject: In Relation to Work(lessness) and (un) Employment

When we use the word ‘truth’ we prefer to use it as a verb; that is, we are interested not in what is ‘true’ but rather which statements have been ‘truthed’ or given the status of truth; how the ‘truthing’ was/is warranted; and whose interests are served by the truthed statements, that is, those statements accorded the status of truth. For us, a knowledge is a system of interconnected statements which has been ‘knowledged’ by this we mean given the status

of knowledge as opposed to opinion. Different knowledges usually serve the interests of different groups in different ways and knowledging is accomplished in different ways within different regimes of truth.

In relation to work(lessness)/(un)employment and the individual, we are thus interested in which statements and knowledges ‘about’ ‘unemployment’ and ‘the unemployed person’ have been truthed (there is a huge international literature spanning over eight decades, for narrative reviews see Eisenberg & Lazarsfeld, 1938; Fryer & Payne, 1986; Hanisch, 1999; Wanberg, 2012), how this truthing was warranted (largely through modernist mainstream psych-science, for example unemployment research in psychology has long been preoccupied with the casual relationship between unemployment and mental well-being, and Winefield (1995) argued that only well designed longitudinal research could test this issue, the underlying assumptions of the issue of causality and research design are here based in modernist/scientific discourse) and whose interests have been served by this truthing (seldom those of the subjects of this research, we would maintain).

Following Foucault, we regard it as impossible in theory as well as in practice to disentangle knowledged systems of statements from power relations. As Foucault put it, both “directly imply one another” (Foucault, 1991, p. 27). For us, as for Foucault (2003a), power-knowledge is an analytical grid that can be employed to rethink the constitution of a system, how it is made acceptable, and what impact it has on people’s lives. Using the grid of power-knowledge enables thinking of power relations as integrally *productive* as much as constraining.

In relation to work(lessness)/(un)employment and the individual, we see knowledge systems ‘about’ ‘unemployment’ and ‘the unemployed person’ as directly implying and being implied by power relations which produce unemployment and unemployed people in ways which both enable and simultaneously constrain what they are and can be.

The constitution and reconstitution of

the unemployed subject can thus be examined using the analytical grid of power-knowledge. Unemployed subjects do not, from our standpoint, exist prior to power-knowledge but rather are constituted by being ‘power-knowledged’ via authorities (like unemployment researchers and other social scientists whose work warrants: theories of unemployment; measurement of unemployed people’s ‘self-esteem’ and ‘mental health’; the accumulation of statistics about the scale of unemployment; and ‘documentation’ of unemployed people’s ‘lived experience’), and by unemployed people coming to know themselves i.e. power-knowledging themselves discursively through the discourses available to them, including those whose constitution is accomplished at least partly through the work of unemployment researchers and other social scientists.

Foucault’s claim that critique is the movement by which subjects give themselves the right to question truth on its effects of power and question power on its discourses of truth means to us that, at a minimum, when engaging in critique we interrogate systems of knowledge statements which have been truthed and uncover how this is related to the constitution of power relations. At the same time this entails interrogating power relations-as-constituted with regard to the sets of statements that construct objects and subject positions which they imply. In relation to unemployment we interrogate statements, power-knowledges and regimes of truth through which work(lessness)/‘unemployment and unemployed subjects’ are constituted by being ‘power-knowledged’ through the work of unemployment researchers, psychologists, economists, bureaucrats, policy makers, politicians and so on.

Power-Knowledge and the Unemployed Subject/Workless Citizen

Definitions can be useful places to begin when utilising this analytical framework. One of the most obvious points about (un)employment is what is consistently left out of discussion. Employment is frequently defined as a contractual relationship of exchange of labour power for income (Fryer, 1995; Fryer & Payne, 1986). To understand

unemployment as being without such a contractual relationship only makes sense through a particular way of ordering the social world (constituting the parties between which contractual relationships are possible) with that ordering legitimated through knowledge claims appealing to certain types of authority. This definition of unemployment assumes an essentially capitalist economic system in which some have labour power to sell and others have capital to set up the means of production and to buy labour in a labour market.

Dominant power-knowledged discursive systems of statements constituting unemployment and unemployed subjects position workers as both ‘human capital’ and entrepreneurs of themselves. This is a manifestation of neoliberalism for whereas neoliberalism is widely regarded and presents itself as a political rationality based in deregulation and absolute non-intervention, neoliberalism – as Foucault (2008a) recognised – is actually thoroughly interventionist, not in relation to the workings of the market but in relation to society “in its fabric and depth” (Foucault, p. 145) which in turn is manifested in re-subjection/resubjection. The ‘entrepreneur of the self’ is a subject position that is the product of dominant systems of neoliberal power-knowledge.

The construction of subject position available within systems of neoliberal power-knowledge can be traced through the truthing done by authorities on unemployment. The most widely used operationalisation of ‘unemployment’ by social scientists, non- and governmental bodies is the International Labour Organisation ([ILO], 1982) definition which positions a person as unemployed if they are of an age to be employed, without employment, ‘want’ employment, are available to be employed, and have *actively sought* employment in the previous four weeks. While there are several consequences of this operationalisation which we have discussed elsewhere (see Fryer, 2013; Fryer & Stambe, 2014) the assumption of an ‘active subject’/‘active society’ is telling with regard to how the unemployed are constituted. To be

sure, the move towards an active society can be located in the definition of unemployment that emphasises the ‘actively looking for work’ rather than the passive unemployed subject. In relation to labour market policies of unemployment the notion of the ‘active society/subject’ can be located in Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) documents (for example, see 1994, 1999) which move away from certain understandings of unemployment requiring demand solutions to understandings of unemployment as requiring supply solutions. Analysing these discursive strategies, Triantafyllou (2011) argues intervention into unemployment has been thus redirected at individuals, developing and maximising their human capital.

The need to be productive in unemployment includes not just looking for work but actively working on the self to increase ‘employability’, job-readiness and active job search (Dean, 1995). This has meant that the locus of intervention has shifted from the economic processes to the unemployed person. Technically this means the unemployed subject must engage in ‘workfare’ practices in order to qualify for welfare. This is not just a case of filling in the correct forms but, as Dean argues, entails the reforming of how people come to understand themselves and work upon themselves to suit the needs of the current labour market: a neoliberal subjectivity.

McDonald and Marsten (2005) have documented how case management in Australian welfare organisations produces the skills, capacities, and attributes congruent with the ethical subject of neoliberalism, one who is, “motivated, confident with good self-esteem, someone willing to take responsibility for their actions, displays good work ethic, takes pride in their appearance, is literate and numerate, who does not use drugs or alcohol, is mentally sound and moderately intelligent” (p. 390). The various technologies endorsed to conduct the conduct of unemployed people include motivation meetings, case management interviews, compliance with Employment Pathway Plans and group training sessions. Training sessions focus on imperatives to recognise personal strengths and weaknesses,

plan strategies, develop job search skills, market oneself, engage consistently in active self-work and acceptance of techniques of the self. If the unemployed are non-compliant with regard to processes resubjectivating them into 'enterprising selves' of neoliberalism then they are labelled deviant, lazy, difficult and 'dependent' (Dean & Taylor-Gooby, 1998).

Brady (2011) reflects that the emphasis on the production of a neoliberal subjectivity forecloses other ways of being. The potential diversity of subject positions that can be performed in the current labour market are not only confined to neoliberalism however as the research by Montenegro and Montenegro (2013) demonstrates the governmentality of social workers with immigrants to Spain reproduced the self within a grid of intelligibility as 'Third world women' whose possibilities for being in the labour market were restricted to stereotypical occupations, which also happened to be low paid and insecure (work like cleaning and service roles).

Psychological expertise when governing the unemployed on welfare has been located not just in the expected sense of expertise regarding 'psychological disorders' and interventions, but also in 'therapeutic' case management, being able to recognise distress as being reflective on 'repressed issues' of clients or engaging in processes of 'confession' enabling them to 'spill their souls' (McDonald & Marsten, 2005). Moreover, devices used to mark out and separate unemployed clients from one another further contribute to the constitution of certain unemployed subjectivities through being power-knowledged. For example the Job Seeker Classification Instrument is an 'evidence based' (Productivity Commission, 2002) system that streams people on the job seeker allowance according to risk and 'work barriers' (e.g. (dis)ability, time unemployed). McDonald, Marsten, and Buckley (2003) argue this classification instrument is productive of the field of possibilities available to jobseekers, limiting what they can say and do, by drawing on discourses relating to the ideal psychological, behavioural and

emotional subject. With this classifying instrument the jobseeker is matched and compared, and a set form of reformation is mapped out; the gaze is fixed upon the body of the unemployed through the, "seamless web around the unemployed, created by a highly integrated form of infocracy, imposes a regime of control and obligation" (McDonald et al., 2003, p. 521).

The Psy-complex, Unemployment and Neoliberal Subjectivity

We hold that any discussion about unemployment and subjectivity requires an examination of the psy-complex, which is "the heterogeneous knowledges, forms of authority and practical techniques that constitute psychological expertise" (Rose, 1999, p. vii). The psy-complex is just one of many 'apparatuses' or systems of relations between "discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions" (Foucault, 1980, p. 194). The psy-complex is an apparatus in that it is a network of systems of truthed statements, theories, techniques, practices etcetera, which together constitute psy (Rose, 1985). The psy-complex is composed not only of psychology but also psychiatry, counselling, therapy and related disciplines and it has increasingly colonised popular media, 'common sense' ways of talking about oneself (Parker, 1997). In relation to unemployment, the psy-complex positions problems of unemployment as 'psychological', constructs and deploy expertise in relation to them and regulates them in part through the (re)construction of subjectivity.

The psychologisation of 'everything', which is a manifestation of the domination of the psy-complex, has brought about a situation in which claims that paid work is important "for both community engagement and the crafting of individual identities" are positioned as 'common sense'. Social inclusion has come to mean labour market inclusion (the importance of 'work' for 'community engagement'). In a speech entitled. "The dignity of work" the then Australian Prime Minister, Julia Gillard (2011) declared, "[a]ll of

them people [the unemployed on welfare] will be better off with work.... In today's economy, inclusion through participation must be our central focus". Of course, this approach does not question whether 'inclusion' will result in an improvement of circumstances. [Cis] women's 'emancipation' has often been tied to inclusion into the labour market, but, as Bacchi (1999) points out, such inclusion can produce other problems of class and colonisation and ignores questions relating to physical and sexual violence, the wage gap and other structural issues facing women in the labour market.

Further, who you are, your 'individual identity' can be conflated with 'what do you do?' as neatly embedded in the title of a career counselling self-help text "Do What You Are: Discover the Perfect Career for you Through the Secrets of Personality Type" (Tieger & Barron, 2007). Indeed psychology has been hugely instrumental in the analysis, categorisation and description of our jobs, in areas such as the meaning of work (Rosso, Dekas, & Wrzesniewski, 2010), leadership (Lord, Hannah, & Jennings, 2011), individual motives and organizational culture (Moon, Quigley, & Marr, 2012), interview and recruitment (Salgado, Viswesvaran, & Ones, 2001) and job analysis (Dunckel, 2001) to name a few. Townley (1993) working from a Foucauldian perspective describes the role of occupational psychology to not just compartmentalise our work but also ourselves as workers. She describes the psychological assessment devices as technologies which simultaneously produce a worker with a modernist understanding of the 'individual' with essential and unchanging personalities, that in itself is definable and can be matched to a job (which itself exists as an object other than as an organisational construct) as well as separating workers from each other, these measurements divide the work within themselves: measuring capacities, skills, traits which can, once rendered technical (and therefore 'de-politicised' see Li, 2007), be governed.

Consider, for example, the focus on moderator variables in psychology of unemployment literature. Paul and Moser

(2009) argue that understanding how some individuals suffer more than others during unemployment can help identify the "living conditions and coping mechanisms of such resilient people to enable us to develop successful interventions against unemployment distress" (p. 266). Unemployed people are here divided into resilient and non-resilient, with the focus on teasing out what the resilient *do* to cope with unemployment in order to develop ways to govern those who are not coping as well. McKee, Song, Wanberg and Kinicki (2005) conducted a meta-analysis of unemployment literature through the lens of McKee-Ryan and Kinick's (2002) life-facet model of coping with job loss, which attempts to explain the variability in the experience of unemployment via a coping-stress framework. The meta-analysis focused on measures relating to work-role centrality, coping resources and strategies, cognitive appraisal, all of these were found to have stronger relationships to mental health than demographic and human capital variables. As well as being individualising, the demographic variables used, for example 'gender', were poorly operationalised and failed to grasp the complexity of the performance of gender (Butler, 1990; for more discussion of the problematic study of gender in unemployment research see Strandh, Hammarström, Nilsson, Nordenmark, & Russel, 2013). In these studies, 'unemployment' itself is left unproblematised just as the examination of the role of psychological expertise in the governmentality literature exposed how the individualising of unemployment as being psychological, behavioural, and emotional rendered the social, political and economic aspects of unemployment invisible.

This brings us to the key function of psychology as a knowledge producing entity in the workplace: with the truth claims of objectivity produced in scientific and modernist discourses, psychology valorises the role of the individual in the workplace (Hollway, 1984) obscuring the political, social and structural effects of power relations. As Cruikshank (1993) argues "there is nothing personal about self-esteem" (p. 328).

We have in the past found the huge body of psychological literature (going back in a

contemporarily recognisable social scientific form at least to the 1930s, but in other forms even before, see Fryer & Payne, 1986) to be rhetorically useful to resist reactionary political statements and practices which positioned the unemployed subject stereotypically as a 'dole bludger' or 'skiver' as is evident in the discourses constructing the welfare policies noted in the governmentality studies considered above. The authors of the psychological literature (for narrative reviews see Eisenberg & Lazarsfeld, 1938; Fryer & Payne, 1986; Winefield, 1995; Wanberg, 2012), with a few provisos, effectively unanimously concluded that unemployment was not only associated with but 'caused' individual mental health problems including anxiety, depression, negative self-esteem, dissatisfaction with life, social isolation, community dysfunction and population morbidity and that the deleterious impact of unemployment went beyond the unemployed individual to spouses, children, non-unemployed people living in unemployed communities, people anticipating unemployment, those who want/need more employment, those insecurely employed suffer similar psychological consequences.

However, we now reject the approach underpinning this literature. This sort of research of psychologists, widely understood as 'into' the relationship between 'unemployment' and 'mental health', now seems to us research which contributes to the constitution of unemployment, the constitution of 'mental health' and the constitution of the relationship between them. It also (re)reproduces bureaucratised, acritical, 'scientific' knowledge-production-and-legitimation methods and re-inscribes modernist notions of separate, individualistic, agentic, subjectivity and contextual social structure. As Cullen and Hodgetts (2001) assert "because unemployment is an inherently social phenomenon arising from inequitable societal structures, approaches that separate the individual from the social are inadequate for encapsulating the complexities surrounding its meaning and impact" (p. 24).

To be clear, we position 'unemployment' and 'mental health' as 'real' but only insofar as they are constituted within problematic dominant discourses within problematic

dominant apparatuses. These discourses are problematic because they are implicated in the constitution of oppressive social orders. It should go without saying that 'oppressive' is used here (in the sense of Iris Marion Young, 1988) without any imputation of individualised intention to be oppressive. Of course, because 'unemployment' and 'mental health' are discursively constituted does not mean they are 'imaginary' in a conventional sense and does not mean they have no material effects and we are emphatically *not* saying that the oppression of people (including their auto-oppression through subjective reconstitution) is illusory or imagined in a conventional acritical sense but it does mean that its existence is contingent on the persistence of the network of interconnected constructed and maintained social elements which produces and maintains it.

A key task in understanding and contesting 'unemployment' is through a set of practices coordinated with a particular regime of truth which mark unemployment (which did not previously exist) out in reality and in particular mark unemployment out in reality through the (re)constitution of unemployed subjectivities. Our contention is that a network of interconnected constructed and maintained social elements, including discourses of unemployment and mental health (and implicated psy-complex constructions like psychological well-being and misery) whose primary function is to control inflation, reduce wage costs, discipline etc. also simultaneously: constructs and 'makes real' a category of 'the unemployed' necessary to make the neoliberal labour market work in the interests of employers and shareholders i.e. capital, a category which is composed of different people on the basis of varying criteria at different times and in different places and which is only meaningful, i.e. only exists, by reference to that network); visits diverse forms of social violence upon and into the members of that category; constitutes and reconstitutes the subjectivity of 'the unemployed' in such ways as to (re)produce the compliant human means of production

required by the employers, shareholders and government within the contemporary version of the neoliberal labour market.

The apparent relationship between ‘unemployment’ and ‘mental health’ is, from this critical standpoint, revealed as not to do with ‘natural’ and inevitable psycho-biological consequences of depriving an unemployed person of employment-related, psychologically necessary, structures nor of frustrating the agentic potential of the individual unemployed person but a set of connected manifestations of social violence necessary to make the neoliberal labour market function optimally in the interests of employers and shareholders.

Conclusion

In this paper we have attempted to illustrate a form of critique of psychological work and employment and unemployment research which draws upon post-structural and post-modern works such as those of Michel Foucault. There are many ways to characterise critique from a Foucauldian standpoint. In an interview in 1981 Foucault (2003b) stated that critique is not about making claims about whether the present is or is not good in its current state but it is about dismantling taken-for-grantedness: “To do criticism is to make harder those acts which are now too easy” (p. 172). Our critique focused on the ways of subjection, how power-knowledge produces a particular subjectivity of unemployment in the ‘active society’, how this is linked in with the discourse of neoliberalism, and how the psycho-complex is integral to this type of governmentality.

Throughout this paper, we have tried to demonstrate how a mode of critique following Foucault provides a way to trouble and rethink enunciations and actions in relation to work and worklessness, employment and unemployment, which are “too easy”. We used the statement that work is important to the crafting of identities as a starting point to excavate the dominant discourses of neoliberalism, political economy and psychology in the constitution of unemployed subjectivities which function to blame the individual at the expense of a serious and thorough critique of the current oppressive labour market.

We have recommended the positioning of the unemployed subject as subjectively and materially (re) constituted as ‘unemployed’, a socially and historically produced identity which is different to a person-in-context’ approach (see Nic Giolla Easpaig, Fryer, Linn, & Humphrey, 2014) moving beyond modernist scientism and drawing inspiration from post-modern social theory.

We believe it is vital researchers in this field give themselves the “right to question” the way power-knowledge is constructed in relation to unemployment in order to find ways to uncover and resist it. However, in closing, it is important to emphasise that although power “is produced from one moment to the next...in every relation from one point to another” (Foucault, 2008b, p. 93) yet it is also “mobile, reversible, and unstable” (Foucault, 2003d, p. 35) opening up “means of escape or possible flight” (Foucault, 2003a, p. 142).

In the spirit of this, we have also tried to provide an example of engaging in what Foucault (2003d) referred to as “hyper and pessimistic activism” (p. 104), a constant critique, that doesn’t just peer outwards but is very reflexive, peering in as well, which seeks to destabilize and reverse dominant power-knowledge in relation to unemployment in ways which facilitate new ways of understanding and indeed new ways of being unemployed.

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The citizen-worker: Ambivalent meanings of ‘real jobs’, ‘full citizenship’ and adulthood in the case of autistic people

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In this paper, we discuss the experiences of autistic people in engaging with the workplace, and hence becoming an active citizen, within dominant constructions of adulthood. We focus on transition into work as a key way in which children become adults in many societies. Such a transition to adulthood is seen to be less straightforward for children with ‘disabilities’, including those with a diagnosis of autism (or self defining as autistic). We draw on data from our previous and ongoing research examining neurodiverse spaces for children and adults with autism, and the importance of such spaces. Issues for neurodiverse spaces are also key in the workplace and the implications for refocusing an examination on transitions into work by autistic people through a lens of neurodiversity are far reaching in terms of how autistic people fashion their own positive citizenship identities, how service providers negotiate opportunities for some, and how workplaces shift in terms of accommodating difference. We argue that there is a need for inclusive and diverse workspaces, where the strengths of some adults with autism can be part of a shared neurodiverse and non-autistic (neurotypical) space. We therefore argue that by attending to the workplace from a neurodiverse perspective community psychologists can work to support a diverse range of young people into working activities, if they choose to participate.

In this paper, we seek to critically explore notions of autism and autistic people in relation to dominating neo-liberal notions of citizenship; namely, through engagement in work. We will do so by discussing non-autistic (neurotypical) meanings of ‘real work’ and ‘full citizenship’ and how autistic people are expected to engage with these arrangements. Our position within this paper is informed by three key perspectives: Community Psychology, Critical Developmental Psychology and Critical Autism Studies. Community Psychology is a discipline with potentially far-reaching influences through its focus on challenging and reframing notions of the family and disadvantage (Fox & Prilleltensky, 1997; Kagan, Burton, Duckett, Lawthom, & Siddiquee, 2011). The focus of community psychology is upon strengths, with a positive focus on education and skills training, an important position from which to begin this paper. Thus intervention is not to change ‘faulty’ or ‘deficient’ individuals but to change systems and communities to allow individuals who are seen to be ‘different’ to have a place within them. Complementary to

this are theoretical insights in the construction of ‘normative’ and ‘non-normative’ childhoods evident within critical approaches to developmental psychology, where boundaries between what is considered ‘normal’ are strongly regulated and prescribed (Burman, 2007; Phoenix, Bauer, Davis-Gill, & McDonald, 2009). Such dominant understandings of (ab)normality are frequently drawn upon when constructing the autistic adult, who is typically presented as impaired in typical social and emotional communicative skills, positioned therefore as *deficient* rather than *different*.

Finally, we draw on a perspective of theorising autism that emphasises issues of *neurodiversity*, which positions autistic people as *different* rather than *deficient*. Our work is therefore informed by the growing movement in critical autism studies (see for example, Davidson & Orsini, 2013), which seeks to question the representation of individuals and the interests best served by such representations and consequent positionings. The terminology that we draw

upon in this paper will therefore include neurodiverse, reflecting the positioning and respect of difference, and neurotypical or *NT*, a term that was coined by autistic self-advocacy movements to refer to non-autistic individuals. In order to reflect the debates surrounding autism within identity politics, we also use the term ‘autistic’ rather than people first-language in order to reflect the inclusion of autism within individual identities rather than as a separate ‘add-on’ to an individual, which can consequently be modified and ‘cured’ through treatment by professionals. Adopting such a position has important implications for our understanding of citizenship and what this means for an individual to be a citizen of a particular community.

The following discussions will focus on what (neuro)typical understandings of citizenship may look like, and what normative representations of full (adult) citizens are produced within these dominant discourses. We then go on to discuss what this might mean for autistic individuals as they transition from ‘childhood’ to ‘adulthood’, sometimes ‘lacking’ the key markers of what is assumed to be necessary to be a full adult citizen. We illustrate the discussion with excerpts from previous projects, one of which analysed articles in a Swedish magazine, *Empowerment*, produced by and aimed at adults with autism. The second consists of English-speaking discussion forums that take place in online communities focused on autism. More detailed analyses of issues of work for individual autistic identity construction in both datasets have been discussed elsewhere (see Bertilsdotter Rosqvist & Keisu, 2012; Brownlow, 2010). We therefore seek to use excerpts from our datasets to illustrate our arguments about the engagement of young adults with autism in working activities, rather than present a full discourse analysis of texts. Through drawing on the neurodiversity discourse informed by critical autism studies and the neurodiversity movement more broadly, we present illustrative examples from our previous research detailing the narratives of autistic people within NT-dominated workplace and

the implications of this for (autistic) citizenship.

Conditional Citizenship, Conditional Adulthood

Traditional concepts of citizenship draw on particular ways of representing individuals, with clear ideas concerning what makes a citizen; such as national and geographical belonging and specific duties and privileges (citizen rights) that are connected to that (see for example Seeleibkaiser, 1995). In contrast, newer forms of citizenship not only draw on geographical and national membership, but also on societal activity (see for example Wagner, 2004). Such alternative framings of citizenship therefore focus on the concept of social, active or ‘full citizenship’ (see for example Blakeley & Evans, 2009; Scourfield, 2007). This is sometimes also referred to as democratic citizenship, and the active citizen. The most dominant notion of active citizenship can be represented as the adult, independent, able-bodied ‘citizen worker’ (Lie, Baines, & Wheelock, 2009; Lister, 2003; Lunt, Spoonley, & Mataira, 2002), which clearly maps the territory in terms of which individuals are eligible for membership. Such membership has clear markers, which draw on several normative markers of adulthood such as engaging in full time work and parenthood (see Blatterer, 2007). These understandings draw heavily on dominant developmental psychology discourses surrounding what constitutes ‘normal’ adult and ‘normal’ adult activities. Where understandings of citizenship draw on engagement in the world of work as a key marker of adulthood, challenges are presented for young autistic individuals making the transition where they need to craft an identity by engaging in work environments that may be difficult for them or of which that they may not wish to be a part.

We argue that notions of ‘full citizenship’ and age/adulthood intersect. The normative construction of childhood sees children and young people as ‘subjects in becoming’ citizens from either a passive or

an active perspective. From a more passive perspective, children and young people are represented as targets of social policy educational interventions related to the promotion and crafting of 'active citizens' (Hall & Coffey, 2007) conscious of both rights and responsibilities that come with citizenship (Hall & Coffey, 2007; Milbourne, 2009; Montero, 2009; Thornberg, 2008; Timmerman, 2009). Young people are positioned in a more active way in their engagement in activities such as youth volunteering which is produced as "one way in which young people can be effectively re-engaged with their communities, and with the political process more broadly" (Brooks, 2007, p. 420). Similarly, France and Wiles (1997) connect a modern conception of citizenship with inclusion in production, and young people participating in work therefore as part of the transition process from childhood to adulthood in a modern society (France & Wiles, 1997; see also Room, 1999). From a more active perspective on children and young people, youth transitions to adulthood are explored by researchers in order to understand citizenship as lived and learned by young people (Cross, 2011; Hall & Coffey, 2007).

The most dominant notion of adult full citizenship is sometimes referred to as the citizen worker. This position is produced through an economic discourse of citizenship including 'fully paid work' (i.e., 'real jobs', see Ridley & Hunter, 2006; Wilson, 2003), the fully employed economic independent citizen. Closely connected to this notion of citizenship are notions of 'social exclusion' (see for example Evans & Harris, 2004; France & Wiles, 1997; Pitts & Hope, 1997; Room, 1999) and age/adulthood (Lister, 2003). Within an economic discourse of social exclusion, unemployment, low-income or poverty are produced as a risk of economic marginalization, itself a risk of social exclusion (see for example France & Wiles, 1997; Pitts & Hope, 1997; Room, 1999). Social exclusion, especially in the context of people from 'minority' or marginalised cultures within society, and young people more generally, is used as an explanation of "social dislocation" - including youth crime,

interpersonal violence, and drug misuse (Pitts & Hope, 1997). Seyfang (2004) describes this as a "hegemonic discourse of social exclusion, namely a liberal individualistic model which sees insertion into the labour market as the solution to exclusion" (p. 49). Several researchers have criticised the central role of fully paid work in defining the status of citizens from the perspective of the not fully employed citizen (see for example Craig, 2004; McKie, Bowlby, & Gregory, 2001). Such a view has been criticised for devaluing unpaid work such as caring or volunteering, and therefore for being exclusionary, arguing for the need of alternative more inclusive definitions of citizenship (Craig, 2004; McKie et al., 2001). Alternatively, Seyfang (2004) among others, has argued for the need to reconsider what is typically taken to be 'valuable work' or expressed by Toft (2010) as 'valuable citizenship activities'. From the perspective of research focusing on voluntary work in the community (Craig, 2004; Seyfang, 2004; Taylorgooby & Lakeman, 1988) or non- or low paid care work (McKie et al., 2001; Toft, 2010), researchers such as Seyfan therefore seek to reconsider dominant ideas of concepts such as 'work' and 'welfare', thereby enhancing possibilities for the social inclusion of a range of understandings of citizenship.

The importance of work in framing understandings of what constitutes an active and engaged citizen is centrally important in discussions in the Swedish magazine *Empowerment*, for example the following extract draws on what such meaningful work might look like:

"Contrary to what some other speakers said, Thomas thinks that a profession is not important to having a sense of community. However, it is important to be involved in club activities if you don't have a job. Thomas thinks that the voluntary work he does now feels more meaningful than the work he did as a paid employee." (contribution to the Swedish magazine *Empowerment*)

We can see that meaningful work forms a central role in the construction of sense of community, and therefore citizenship. However, this example shows a focus on community engagement rather than economic benefits for individuals or organisations as constituting meaningful work.

Transitions into an Autistic Citizenship through Employment

'Real jobs' and 'full citizenship' are powerful examples of markers of adulthood. Such understandings position adulthood as a time of economic independence and engagement in work. In contrast, those individuals who do not engage with activities that would qualify them for membership as a full citizen, may either be seen as excluded or isolated or possibly be accorded 'conditional citizenship' status if they are active members of a community (see Mackay, 2011; McKeever, 2012), for example by active participation in the community. However, we critique the underlying principles of normalization that are inherent in these kinds of actions as well as the consequences of exclusion for people with disabilities who choose to not conform (or may not be able to) with the mainstream expectations of them.

As previously discussed, work is seen as a central process in the transition to adulthood (Holmqvist, 2008). This is particularly complex when considering young people with disabilities who are likely to be more dependent on social interventions, less involved or integrated into society and to therefore find the move into adulthood more challenging (Holmqvist, 2008; Murray, 2007). The transition of young disabled people from statutory schooling has been seen by many as a difficult time in their, and their families', lives (see for example, Adreon & Durocher, 2007; Knapp, Perkins, Beecham, Dhanasiri, & Rustin, 2008). Overall there is a significant difference in employment rates and average earnings for disabled adults in comparison to their non-disabled counterparts (Knapp et al., 2008). Knapp among others (see for example, Caton & Kagan, 2006) suggests that the findings are partially explicable by differential education attainment and lack of support

services. Whilst there is a growing research literature documenting the process of transition for young disabled people in the United Kingdom (Caton & Kagan, 2006), the United States (Smith, 2005) and Australia (Murray, 2007), very little of this has focused on young autistic people (Adreon & Durocher, 2007). Where research has been conducted the findings are similar to those for young people with other forms of intellectual disabilities (see for example Barnard, Harvey, Potter, & Prior, 2001).

Research evidence suggests that transition to adulthood is the beginning of lifelong inequalities and difficulties faced by autistic adults, who are largely operating within NT dominated social and employment domains. Transition for some young autistic people is further complicated because of the often hidden nature of autism (Adreon & Durocher, 2007), both in terms of NT others being able to recognise and respect the difference, and also in terms of the discursive practices which serve to construct the challenges faced by autistic people.

The transition from school occurs during adolescence when these differences are experienced with increasing awareness by both autistic and NT young people. With respect to autistic individuals, many research studies and first person accounts point to a commonly experienced lack in social awareness for autistic people, and Folstein (1999) suggests that a lack of such social abilities can become particularly problematic around adolescence, when autistic people become increasingly aware that they are different to others and do not 'fit in' to the dominant NT ideal constructed within both social and employment settings. Several studies within the growing field of autism and work life have shown that autistic people, despite great potential, have found it difficult to find and keep a job that is commensurate with their abilities due to the additional requirements in terms of managing social relationships in the typically NT dominated workplace (Hendricks, 2010; Smith Myles & Smith, 2007).

Very little is known about how young autistic people move from school and this

transition may be more complex because it may not actually mean moving on in the same way it does for young NT people (Murray, 2007). Young autistic people often have their service needs met through schooling; therefore, transition from school involves a change in service provision (Knapp et al., 2008). They often lose contact with specialist services at this stage (Caton & Kagan, 2006) and move into adult services, which are often less resourced (Murray, 2007). In addition for some young autistic people the transition means moving to adults services, whereas for others with different capabilities the transition is into a different educational environment. There are an increasing number of young autistic people leaving school to go to university (Adreon & Durocher, 2007; Martin, 2007). Madriaga, Goodley, Hodge, and Martin (2007) traced the experiences of young autistic people into Higher Education. A key finding of the study was that young autistic people experienced a lack of support during the transition to Higher Education, which was linked with feelings of isolation on the part of the young people and a lack of autism awareness on the part of staff.

A common discussion which was shared by both online and face-to-face communities in our data was the need to 'fit in' with environments that are dominated by NTs. The ability, and pressure to, 'pass' as an NT is an area of debate for contributors in both datasets. For example:

If you want to tell people about your disability when looking for work, think carefully about how. Talk about your strengths. "Be prepared to be disqualified immediately", Hans warns. Many employers believe that autism/AS means that one cannot handle a job. Opinions differ on whether or not it is best to tell. If you know you need special adaptations to cope with the work, then of course you have to say that you have autism/AS. Otherwise, the employer will not receive a wage subsidy, for example. But if you do not need support, you can gain by not revealing that you have the

disability – or at least by waiting until you have started working and showed that you can do the job. (contribution to the Swedish magazine Empowerment)

Such issues of disclosure and 'passing' are not exclusive to autistic people in the workforce, and similar decisions concerning the decision to disclose or pass are also evident in literature examining other 'hidden disabilities' and their negotiation of the workplace (see for example Werth, 2011). However, the decision to 'pass' as an NT raises some pertinent questions that draw on key debates within autistic identity politics (see for example Bagatell 2007; Bertilsdotter Rosqvist, 2012a, 2012b). The need to adopt an NT style reflects the powerful position accorded to an NT identity both within a workplace specifically and society more broadly. Through adopting a position of *different* not *deficient* an autistic person should be afforded equal rights and privileges as that of an NT position. However, it would seem from the discussions of autistic individuals that the two positions are far from equal, and therefore passing, if it is an option, may be a strategy employed in a bid to negotiate and navigate through NT dominated workplaces in pursuit of active citizenship status.

Caton and Kagan (2006) argue that transition can therefore mean many things such as: transition to employment; to become integrated in the community and a transition to adult services. Caton and Kagan use the concept of transition to adulthood to allow a full consideration of the transition process. In this paper we take a similar view of transition to enable a broad and inclusive consideration of transition in its many versions experienced by young autistic people. This paper seeks to explore the experiences of autistic people in engaging with the workplace, and hence becoming an active citizen within dominant, normative constructions of adulthood. In doing so we draw on illustrative examples from two data sets that highlight the complexities involved in autistic people working in NT dominated workplaces.

The notion of 'difficult workplaces'

was evident in our previous project that explored online communities for autistic people. For example, one contributor to an online forum highlights the importance of social skills in navigating and negotiating a position within a workforce, and the different, and in some cases, inferior abilities of NT colleagues to facilitate this:

With the "New Economy" now sweeping us, the NTs had made a come-back with the "New Age" employment tactics, including making a work place extremely sociable. [...] Some companies have an autocratic boss with a rigid hierarchical structure. While the simplicity and the direct orders may sound nice, but if you had experienced higher mental development the inconsistencies will drive you crazy. (contribution to an online discussion list)

Here autistic people are discussing a type of workplace that is difficult for them. The issues raised in this exchange are in relation to the social environment in some workplaces and also the physical environment. We can further see the implication of a firm focus placed on the importance of social networking abilities in navigating entry to, and management within, the workplace in the following quote:

Always look for a company environment that supports (or at least tolerates) your [autism]. You don't just go for an interview but you have to survey your future work place. You just can't believe that some computers still use primitive computing technology from the 1980s. The furiously blinking monitor, the glare from flickering fluorescent lights and the uncomfortably loud workplace will prove to resemble an endurance test when you join the company. If you can find a company with an AC¹ boss, count your lucky stars. (contribution to an online discussion list)

In this example, also from an individual

contributing to an online discussion list, we can see the importance placed on careful selection of the working environment. What is also evident from the two example quotes above are the dominant NT discourses that serve to shape the social nature of the workplace and the requirements for the worker to navigate through these often implicit social rules. Such workplaces therefore favour dominant NT ideals concerning sociality at the expense of alternative *autistic socialities* (see Ochs & Solomon, 2010; Brownlow, O'Dell, & Bertilsdotter Rosqvist, 2013) failing to invoke the discourse of neurodiversity, which may be more flexible in affording suitable working spaces and practices for autistic people and NTs alike.

Concluding Remarks

In this paper, we have discussed how some autistic people feel that NT dominated workplaces can be a difficult environment to navigate. However, there are some key examples as to how the world of work can be adapted for autistic friendly working practices such as 'Specialsterne' (translated from Danish to English as 'The Specialists') and 'Left is Right'. 'Specialsterne' and 'Left is Right' demonstrate a move towards neurodiverse workspaces, which may serve as an inclusive workplace. This is reflected in the mission statement of Left is Right being to "transform the Swedish employers' views on the concept of "competence"".

Specialisterne, for example, is a software testing company that draws on the skills of autistic people in the successful development of a company model that draws on a principle of neurodiversity. It is a showcase of what could be possible by adapting to the needs of autistic people. It recognises the talents of autistic people and also the barriers to drawing on these talents where there is a heavy emphasis on social networking within the workplace or within the recruitment process. For example it uses complex forms of Lego to assess the abilities of potential employees, rather than the more conventional social interaction of a formal interview which potentially talented

employees may find difficult. A similar approach has been taken more recently in the United States, with Freddie Mac (the large finance company) advertising for paid internships aimed specifically at autistic students or new graduates; "Only by employing people who think differently and spark innovation will SAP be prepared to handle the challenges of the 21st Century," (SAP's board member for human resources, Luisa Delgado).

Individuals such as Ari Ne'eman, president of the Washington DC-based Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN) and a member of the United States' National Council on Disability, are encouraged by the shifts that we are observing within the workforce. Ne'eman argues that such a shift indicates that neurodiversity may be considered in a similar way in the workforce ultimately to diversity standards applied to race, gender and sexual orientation. Such innovative philosophies leading to successful company developments indicate a shift in the thinking in the organisation of some workplaces. However, there may still be reservations from various stakeholders in terms of whether such an inclusive neurodiverse approach is either possible or desired.

If community psychologists are supporting young autistic people in the transition to work, there needs to be consideration of the young person having a variety of differing views about engaging in NT dominated work and to recognise that they may feel a pressure to 'fit in' and on occasion feel under pressure to 'pass' as an NT. More work therefore needs to be done to examine the disabling practices of dominant NT discourses within the workplace specifically and society more broadly in shaping constructions of autistic individuals. This echoes calls from within the autistic advocacy movement to reposition autism within such discourse.

Such repositioning may however present a key challenge for the discipline of community psychology in terms of how does community psychology account for separatism? From the perspective of our data

and the voices of autistic people in other arenas some people may not want to have NT workplaces 'adapted' to their needs and may wish to remain outside of the dominant NT world, preferring instead to engage with an autistic focused environment. We can see, drawing on examples cited above in Specialisterne and Left is Right, that there are possibilities for immersion into the meaningful world of employment for some autistic people, particularly those with specific abilities attractive on the regular NT employment market. However, the challenges and resistance in some workplaces for this to effectively take place are also evident in some of the example situations described in the quotes from our previous research. We therefore call for more emancipatory research paradigms to be invoked that foreground the positions of a range of autistic individuals in seeking to understand the nature of the workforce and the meanings attached to this for shared senses of community, work and citizenship. The question therefore remains as to what role work plays in the according of such citizenship to individuals, both those who identify as NTs and those who identify as autistic. Previous research indicates the key role that paid employment plays in constructing the citizen, and in the absence of this due to barriers faced by individuals, the question remains concerning the construction of such individual citizenship for autistic individuals'. If autistic individuals do not transition into work in the same way that other NTs may, what does this mean for their (and others) sense of their own citizenship?

We argue that the concepts of adulthood, work and citizenship are complexly intertwined, and therefore in order to be considered a productive and active full member of a particular community, more work is required in order to actively engage some autistic people into neurodiverse workplaces in order to enable the construction of an active citizen worker identity.

Note

1. AC is a term used on this particular discussion list a lot to refer to NTs who have

experience of autism and are therefore 'promoted' to a level of AC – so here it is referring to a boss who would understand and be sympathetic to the challenges faced in the workplace by an autistic individual.

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Children, money and work: Transitions to adulthood

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In this paper, we scrutinise how ideas about children's development and obligations in families affect the ways in which we understand the role of money and work in the transition to adult life. We seek to explore ways in which understandings of appropriate activities for young people and the expected obligations of parents towards their children are mediated by the contexts in which the children and their families live. The aim is to understand how young people from a range of backgrounds represent and experience work and the management of money within their families.

As academics based in the United Kingdom (UK), our observation (and that of others) is that in British society and similar countries childhood is assumed to be a time for play, education and socialisation (Crafter, O'Dell, de Abreu, & Cline, 2009; Jans, 2004). From our location, debates about working children centre on a distinction between work and school in which these operate in contrast (Hobbs & Cornwell, 1986), with school attendance being seen as the 'proper' work of childhood and paid employment being associated with adulthood. The assumption is that the move to adulthood and citizenship is accompanied by a gradual increase in engagement in more adult style responsibilities and thus children's involvement with work increases with age (Hobbs & McKechnie, 1997). In this paper we argue that these assumptions and 'normative' constructions of the transitions to adulthood do not adequately account for the experience of children and young people in the increasingly social and cultural diverse British Society.

There is an established body of research concerning child *labour* (e.g., Woodhead, 1999, 2004). However there is little psychological research into the working activities in which children living in British society engage as they move towards adulthood. Furthermore, while there are considerable research and policy initiatives focussed on how families in the UK use

money and teach their children about it, there is very little that focuses on mainstream understandings of how money 'works' in families. British society has been marked by rapid changes as a result of economic policies in the UK, Europe and globally. These have produced new conditions in which children grow to adulthood and an increasing number of ways in which children interact with the world of work and earning money. For many British children there is an increased awareness of their role as consumers, but equally there are an increasing number of British children living in poverty. In addition, increased economic migration and the dispersal of the extended family have created situations in which more children and young people are involved in activities that are outside of those typically expected in mainstream British society. Similarly, changes in social policy and family structures in the UK have created situations in which children and young people are sometimes relied upon to care for a disabled family member (Aldridge & Becker, 1993; O'Dell et al., 2010; Olsen & Parker, 1997). These, and other, changes in British society mean that children and young people are engaging in increasingly complex ways with the world of work. There is little research evidence that children living in the UK work to contribute actively to their family's finances.

Work, particularly 'appropriate work' for children, is tightly defined and, in many

countries, subject to legislative actions. 'Work' is often assumed to be an activity that is paid and takes place outside of the home. Our position is informed by a feminist critique of this definition of work which stresses that many forms of work, such as those in a domestic context are invisible and often unacknowledged. Thus in our research and in this paper we include activities which are often invisible within definitions of work, including cleaning and child care. In our experience many children take part in types of work including activities that are not generally defined as 'work' in that they are normally unpaid and are undertaken for family members or friends within a nexus of obligations negotiated within a family or community.

In this paper, we revisit data from an empirical study of children's engagement in normative and non-normative working activities. We use the data and a discussion of the broader research field to illustrate the range of ways in which young people talk about work and money as part of understandings of dominant constructions of childhood, the move to adulthood and what is seen as appropriate work and appropriate ways of spending money.

Understanding Work and Money as Symbolic Tools in the Transition to Adulthood

We draw on theoretical ideas from critical community psychology (Kagan, Burton, Duckett, Lawthom, & Siddiquee, 2012); critical developmental psychology (Burman, 2008) and sociocultural psychology to examine social practices and how these practices can shape trajectories of development (de Abreu & Hale, 2009). Social practices operate on two levels – at the micro context of practices where specific experiences occur (e.g., in face to face interactions) and in macro contexts where experiences may be shaped by larger socio-cultural influences on representations of what counts as normal child development; representations of acceptable work and money practices. We use the term 'money practices' purposefully to demonstrate our understanding of money as a symbolic cultural tool which serves to mediate

relationships in families and in society.

The way in which money is experienced is not a pure, cognitive, individualised process but one which is socially and culturally situated. The notion of money as an impersonal, neutral tool does not capture the role that money plays in human relationships and in children's development. Money practices and possessions need to be understood within the cultural and historical settings in which young people are living (Yamamoto & Takahashi, 2007). Thus our focus is not solely on the study of the individual, but on how development and meaning unfold and are constructed through participation in communities (Burman 2008; Hatano & Wertsch, 2001; Rogoff, 2003).

Constructions of childhood are bound up with conceptions of what constitutes a 'normative' family, what can be expected of 'normal' parenting and how children are supported to become adult citizens. One element of this in countries such as the UK is the assumption that parents have a role in supporting their children to become engaged in the world of work through a gradual and supported route such as taking on Saturday jobs or newspaper rounds (both very typical jobs for young people in the UK). Growing autonomy in the control and use of money is also an important part of the transition from child to adulthood within British society. The preparation for adult life entails the child being inducted into particular culturally specific ideas about the obligations and responsibilities of family members. Therefore, we argue that how childhood is understood influences how money and 'children's work' is viewed within families. This is most evident in thinking about 'whose money is it?' (Pian et al., 2006) – do family members (including children and young people) work and earn money for themselves as individuals or to support the family as a collective? In some communities the treatment of money can express a collective family culture and so even when it is distributed to family members the responsibility for it and decisions about what to do with it remain collective (Pian et al., 2006). In other communities the treatment of money may symbolically express an

individualised family culture in which family members become responsible for their ‘own’ money. In this case the task of parents is to prepare children so that they can manage their individual financial responsibilities well in the future (Falicov, 2001). It is this second approach that dominates public discourse and policy in the UK.

Mapping Positions in Relation to Work and Money in Families

In the discussion below we examine children’s engagement in work and the use of money as a symbolic resource to investigate diverse ways in which children living in the UK represent appropriate work and ways of contributing within their families. The discussion is illustrated with data selectively drawn from our previous research on young people’s representations of normative and non-normative work (funded by the Economic and Social Research Council in the UK). The project surveyed 1002 young people aged 15-19 in 6 schools and colleges in the South East of England. The institutions were strategically selected to provide a culturally diverse student group. From the survey, a selection of 48 young people were invited to an individual interview. Selection was on the basis of their engagement in particular working activities – young caring, language brokering (translating for family members) as well as engagement in what are considered to be normative jobs for young people in the UK (such as Saturday jobs, newspaper delivery or babysitting). The group of participants included 19 young men and 27 young women; 16 of the group self-identified as ‘White British’ and 30 self-identified as members of an ethnic and/or linguistic minority. In this paper we discuss young people’s talk about normative work and draw on the data produced from all 48 interviews (See Crafter et al., 2009. for details of the project overall and O’Dell et al. 2010 and Cline et al. 2011 for discussions specifically about young carers and language brokers).

The interview used vignettes of 4 characters all aged 14, to explore ideas about what the young people considered to be

normative working activities. A vignette methodology enables young people to engage with the research topic in a number of ways including discussing their personal experiences or speaking about the character of the vignette (“Eduardo would think that..”) or the opinions of a generalised other (“people would think that..”). This approach has been used in previous work on sensitive topics and was considered the most appropriate way of accessing representations of work in this project.

The four vignettes each briefly describing a 14 year old (and therefore slightly younger than our participants) who was involved in particular kinds of work: young caring, language brokering, babysitting and shop work. They were designed to be engaging and provoke reaction and discussion. The focus of this paper is based on the vignettes of Samuel and Mira who undertake part-time work that would be regarded as ‘typical’ for their age group in that society:

Samuel is 14 years old and has a Saturday job. He works in his local corner shop all day. When he gets paid, he uses his money to buy extra clothes, CDs, or computer games. He doesn’t do any jobs around the house for his parents because they feel he should be concentrating on his schoolwork at the moment. They say there will be plenty of time for those responsibilities later, when they hope he goes to university.

Mira is 14 years old. To earn some extra money she does babysitting for some of her parents’ friends at the weekends. She feels it is her responsibility to contribute to the household and when she can, gives some money to her mum to help towards food. The rest she spends on music and going to the cinema with friends. Mira also helps in the house such as the dusting and vacuuming.

Children's Practices in Managing Work and Contributing to Family Finances

The young people who took part in our study largely drew on dominant understandings of childhood and families to make sense of Mira and Samuel's lives, as illustrated in the discussion below. All names of participants are pseudonyms.

Working and Earning Money as a Transgression of Childhood and Parental Responsibilities

As discussed at the beginning of this paper, in the UK and similar societies, the dominant view is that engagement in the adult world of work can disrupt or interfere with the normative course of development if it is not part of a gradual and supervised (by adults) entry into what are seen as 'age appropriate' working activities. Within dominant understandings of childhood invoked by all the participants in our interviews, certain forms of work were viewed as part of the adult world, whereas the work of childhood was seen as education and the work of teenagers is a blend of education and engagement with friends. In our study most participants considered that each of the four vignette characters should not be working. The argument was based upon a dominant construction of child development and age graded entry into working: these vignette characters were seen to be too young to be working:

'Cause they're only fourteen, it's like...really young when you're fourteen. [Interviewer - *So what should they be doing?*]. They should be just going to school and going home and stuff and going out with their friends... Not working. (Maricelle)

She's [Mira] supposed to be enjoying herself at that age and if she was a bit older like I'd give 18 then maybe they would be wise because at that age you have to pay rent as well and everything like that so she's only fourteen she's still young and it should be

like her savings her indulgence. (Shirin)

This participant discusses two 'age-appropriate' ways of using money from work at the age of fourteen. One of those reasons is for personal 'indulgence' so we presume that means items most associated with being a teenage in the UK (e.g., buying consumables). She also mentions savings, which suggests that for this participant at least, there is 'normality' to putting aside earned money for the future.

Many participants recognised that 14 was too young to be working but that by the time young people had finished compulsory schooling (currently at 16 in the UK) work and earning to contribute to the family was acceptable:

I've got a friend who does pay now but which is still quite surprising. Most people in schools don't, in sixth form don't pay but I think at this age it's slightly more understandable. I don't think I'd understand the situation at fourteen really unless they're a really poor family. (Nelson)

In discussions of Mira, there were some instances where participants considered it appropriate for her to be working because she was seen to be 'mature':

I think she's right cos, well she's getting money and at least she's giving some to her parents. I think she's right and quite mature, to give some money to the parents and them to get some from her. (Elena)

By contrast, the character of Samuel was viewed as selfish and immature because he did not take part in domestic work around the house:

I think that if he's got time to have a Saturday job then at least he should have time to, you know, pick up you know, dishes and clean it and help his mum and dad. Even though his parents are saying that he's got plenty of time to get responsibilities later at university he needs to have some kind of training that, when you are living at

university you'll be able to pick up after yourself and wash your dishes and be able to like, you know, do your clothes washing because your mum and dad is not always going to be there. (Damilola)

Undertaking domestic work, or saving money, was perceived by a large proportion of those interviewed as the appropriate and gradual move to adult responsibilities for a teenager. The participants also drew on dominant understandings of the role of parents as providers and children as recipients of care, support and financial assistance. The dominant view of the family is that parents provide for their children, they shouldn't take money from them:

But parents taking money off a fourteen-year-old child, that's not right. (Louise)

It's good that she's helping at home...and like giving her mum money but then she shouldn't have to. but she, she's the child not the parent. (Maricelle)

If I was a parent I wouldn't want her to give it me. [Interviewer – *Why not?*] Because it's just that I'm the one that's meant to be giving her money and looking after her. [*So how do you think it makes her mum feel?*] Bad. Like she's not doing her job. (Jorges)

In discussions focussed on Mira participants attempted to explain her actions in giving money to her family for food. The assumption is that there is something wrong with family if Mira is giving money:

The only curious bit is where she gives money to help towards food because either her mum needs that help and there's a bit of a money situation, so she's trying to help. But I've never heard of that before, people just giving money to their family, especially at fourteen. There must be some sort of situation otherwise she wouldn't give money to her mother, I don't

think anyway. Haven't heard of that before. But she seems to be the model child I would suppose. She does babysitting, gives money to her mum, helps with the dusting and the vacuuming, even if she does go to the cinema and spend on CDs of whatever, music. She still helps where she can, works quite well (Jake)

Young People as Consumers

The vignette character Samuel stimulated a discussion of responsibilities of young people and ownership of the money they earn. The construction of young people as consumers is linked in the UK to arguments that young people should be able to work to pay for material goods but also to concerns about the pressure on parents to provide these goods, often referred to as 'pester power' exerted by children. There is a dominant, and largely negative, construction of young people as avid consumers for whom having the 'right' material objects is linked to identity and social inclusion (Croghan, Griffin, Hunter, & Phoenix, 2006; France & Wiles, 1997). Whilst this is alluded to in the design of the vignette of Samuel it was not picked up by the participants. For many participants, the overwhelming view was that he should be contributing to his family, not through giving money to the family finances, but by helping around the house. In the context of the interview, young people in our research sought to distance themselves from Samuel and his perceived laziness for not helping at home. For example Adesh in discussing Samuel commented:

I don't know most people are like that now. I don't know he seems a bit lazy like he doesn't have any responsibilities and I think his parents should give him more like responsibility so when he's older it won't be that hard for him to. (Adesh)

Whilst there is media concern and a general construction of children in the UK as avid consumers, an alternative view is evident in which children modify demands

and requests because of their understanding of limits and priorities in the family finances (e.g., Edwards & Alldred, 2000). In situations where young people were working and earning, the dominant view of participants was that the money was to provide 'extras' such as CDs, games and engaging in activities with friends rather than to support the family. Thus the money Samuel earned was symbolic of an individualised view of money and individuals in families.

The responses to Samuel illustrate a specific understanding of growing up as a move from dependency to independence in which money enables him to exercise his agency. For example in the excerpt below the talk of 'his money' draws on a dominant cultural understanding of individuals in families rather than a more collective view of the family:

I think it's good like getting a job because then he's got his own money he's earned his own money so then he can spend it on what he wants and he's not relying on his Mum and Dad but then when they say about the responsibilities to come later, later might be too late because when they say later on they mean when he moves out but by then it might be too late he should start getting into a routine now and learn how to do things.
(Lucy)

The participants in the study were recruited from schools and colleges where there was a diverse student body in terms of many factors such as ethnicity and culture, including comparatively high numbers of immigrant families. An area where this was reflected in young people's talk was in links between family practices in the UK and those at 'home'. For example in discussions of the role of money, in contrast to the vignette of Samuel who earns money purely for himself, Ama and Laura discuss their experiences and observations based on life in the UK and elsewhere:

[Interviewer – *Would you say that's quite typical of people that you*

know?]. Yes not the money towards food bit because most people that I know of their parents can afford food cos over here I don't really know if people have to work to be able to help their parents to buy food like in Ghana I did know people but not here so yes everything else yes. (Ama)

I think it depends on the culture personally because for me yeah, I was born in Seychelles which is in Africa and sometimes my culture is different from like an African person's culture. But sometimes it's the same as the Asian because it's all mixed in my country so I can relate myself to different cultures in a way...

[Interviewer – *Do you know many people like Samuel?*]. Like Samuel, no I don't.

[*You think that's not very typical then?*]. No I don't, no I don't.

Because somehow you have to help out around the house it's inevitable. And Mira, I know some of them but it's in my country, so [*So in terms of the money?*]. Yeah. [*So you don't think people in this country..*]. I think it does happen in this country yeah but people try and keep it down, lower it down. But in other countries you know, it's something open, people talk about it freely. [*So if you were in the Seychelles would that be more normal, more acceptable?*]. Yeah, it would be more normal, yeah it would. (Laura)

The views of these two young women are bound up with their direct experiences with cultural contexts where children's position within the nexus of family obligations around work and money are often different from the normative practices among majority communities in the UK.

Appropriate Activities and Family Obligations

Several participants offered a more nuanced explanation of the role of children as economic agents in families. For example, Cian below recognises that the family finances will impact on the children and young people.

I would say that most of the people who I know have jobs just keep it for their own selves and buy things for themselves such as clothes and CDs and things

[*Interviewer – Would you change anything about Mira's life?*]. Um no, probably not cause she seems to be going about her life in the right way, getting a job early and getting some experience at home. Giving money to help towards food so she is getting the idea of the value of money. Dusting and vacuuming she's, yeah, she's getting used to house life and socialising as well so that should all contribute to a good future. (Cian)

Participants recognised the need to contribute to the family. For example, in the extract below Louise talks about her parents borrowing money from her. The distinction between Mira's situation which 'isn't right' and her own situation is their age:

The fact that they're taking money off a fourteen-year-old girl to pay for the food, I don't think that's right, I do not think that's right. My parents they have, they have had financial troubles in the past and they still to an extent have financial troubles and they will borrow off me and my sister but me and my sister, we're eighteen and twenty years old. (Louise)

In the two excerpts below, Su discusses first her response to Mira, and then her own life. She is seeing both Mira and herself as part of a family and in which your contributions can 'take the pressure off' others.

I think that's good 'cause it's

taking the pressure off her mum and when she's got a job like that and she does have money it's good to give some to your parents if they need it, for like food and that so you're not depending on them all the time. It's like, if you're paying some towards food it's feeling like you're getting it yourself. [...] (Su)

'Cause my mum works nights and my dad works during the day so it's like, my mum's like asleep during the day while we're at school or like Saturday morning sometimes when my dad's not at work and cause she [...] she comes and picks me up and then we go home and then she's got to run my brother around sometimes. It's like, I just help around and on Saturday and Sunday I do like the washing and the cleaning and that so the house is tidy. (Su)

Similar to Su in the excerpt above, Sarah, drawing on a discussion of Mira, talks about wanting to help contribute to the family:

It's probably not because her mum's asked her for it, it's probably because she wants to cos sometimes parents do ask, when they have jobs, to ask for rent money from their children. But not at fourteen, no. (Sarah)

Balancing Work and Friends

For many young people in our project working activities and supporting their family in a variety of ways were simply 'normal' and part of their life. The balance of work and friends was the key consideration for many participants in making judgements about the working activities that they participated in or were reflecting on in a discussion of the vignette characters. For example, when considering the vignette character Mira:

[*Interviewer – What do you think about what Mira is doing?*] Brilliant. [*Like just right?*]. Yes.

[*In what way?*] Just she's also playing with her friends and helping out her parents. (Alan)

This is also evident in discussions of the Samuel, where participants picked up on the need for a balance between work and home:

It's good that he's got a Saturday job and that he pays to get his own stuff, but I also think that he should help around the house cos your parents can't do it all the time cause they have, if like they have jobs as well its gonna put more pressure on to them when they do it. So I think he should help around the house more. [...] I think he would still be dependent on his parents to do everything for him, [...] I think he really needs to start doing stuff around the house. (Su)

Developing New Constructions of Childhood, Families and Transition

In summary, the participants articulated a view of money and work that draws on dominant constructions of childhood and family responsibilities. Money is seen as a symbolic resource to foster a sense of agency and individual development as young people move towards adulthood. However, the participants discussed their lives, and those of the vignette characters, in complex ways which illustrate a range of engagement in working activities both within and outside the home. The illustrations provided in this brief paper are drawn from one specific project and thus subject to the limitations inherent in its research methodology and potential sampling issues. Vignette methodology has been widely discussed and critiqued. However we argue that, if designed effectively, they can facilitate an effective investigation of the broad cultural constructions that are dominant in mainstream, culture (see O'Dell et al., 2012). It is clear, from the illustrations we have provided and from a wider research field (see for example, France & Wiles, 1997), that the role of work and money in child development cannot be understood simply by treating children and young people as consumers, or as passive recipients of

parental support.

A critical engagement with developmental norms and assumptions about age graded entry to the world of work is needed to understand young people's lives in the UK. Hence policy and practice could benefit from understanding and working with children from a cultural-developmental perspective which acknowledges that children's lives are not fixed entities but shifting and fluid, depending upon a variety of factors including their cultural, geographical and temporal context as well as specific issues within their families. The transition to adulthood and the world of work is configured through assumptions about what are 'appropriate' activities for children and young people largely dependent on the construction of the child as developing and dependent on adults to support their transition. Implicated within this are taken for granted ideas about what children and their families should do. We argue that these ideas need to be made visible and the broader range of ways in which children are active within their families acknowledged and worked with.

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Revolting talks of migrant workers and community organisers: A UK community psychology perspective

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The United Kingdom's neoliberal agenda has been theorised and commented on widely, notably around the austerity measures, worklessness and the Big Society. We respond to the call of the special issue, in centralising the importance of work for community engagement and individual identities. To explicate this we draw upon two areas of externally funded research undertaken with migrant workers and trainee community organisers to explore how individuals within these communities can be positioned as abject citizens. We engage with Imogen Tyler's (2013) notion of revolting subjects to conceptualise the ways in which the particular positionings of subjects as revolting occurs within an English context. The paper engages explicitly with a critical community psychology stance to reflect on the consequences of the neoliberal agenda on paid and unpaid work within communities. We add to the call for community psychologists to explore, critique and challenge the current neoliberal codes that positions migrant workers and deprived communities as "revolting subjects".

The neoliberal political agenda continues to be the subject of global academic commentary, debate and research, notably in the United Kingdom (UK) around the issues of austerity, citizenship and volunteering (Lister, 2012). Neoliberalism continues to shape the political landscape across the globe, resulting in significant shifts in the ideological foundations of societies (Baillie-Smith & Laurie, 2011). Amin and Thrift (2002) and Massey (2004) argue that this neoliberal agenda is experienced in diverse ways across geographical and cultural divides. In this paper, we seek to explore the consequences of this political agenda on marginalised individuals and communities in England under the current Conservative-led coalition government. We do this through the use of existing research that we were involved in between 2010 and 2012 in the North of England. In drawing on two distinct areas of work, with Chinese migrants and community organisers, we explore this research in the context of existing literature and from a critical community psychology perspective. The literature used in this paper crosses academic disciplines and mirrors our own location as researchers working in an inter-disciplinary space (psychology, critical community psychology, social geography, sociology and social policy).

In writing this article, we centralise Imogen Tyler's (2013) recent monograph "Revolting Subjects", which explores social abjection in neoliberal Britain. In her work, social abjection is theorised as related processes. Exploring the experience of being, is for Tyler (2013), about the way in which life is valued and counted, whereas issues to do with belonging are characterised by political life and participation in it – whether one has a status, or can vote for example. Tyler (2013) weaves together political parables to illustrate ways in which a bottom-up picture of neoliberal Britain impacts on inequality and injustice for communities and individuals. An overall intention of the book is to make "a small contribution to the development of a new political imaginary for these revolting times" (Tyler, 2013, p. 18). Her work is timely for our discussion of Chinese migrants and community organisers, with Tyler's (2013) focus on citizenship, migrant illegality and poverty, as a means of exploring social abjection for those who lives precarious lives. These issues of citizenship, migration and poverty continue to resonate with community psychologists as evidenced by this special issue and a call by Coimbra et al. (2012) to commit to, "[c]ritically reflect on the concept of community...to consider who is being 'othered' by being placed

outside of ‘community’ through our talk, thought and action” (p. 135).

In this article, we respond to the above appeal to community psychologists, through a critical discussion of community, social justice, poverty, citizenship and social abjection, focused on Chinese migrants in the UK and community organisers. We do this within a framework of globalisation and community psychology, and alongside the current UK austerity measures that include the policy narrative of the Big Society. To set the scene, we briefly map globalisation and critical community psychology. We then outline the current UK austerity measures, the Big Society policy agenda, as well as provide an overview of the two areas of work that inform our discussion: Chinese migrants and community organisers. From this, we draw out four areas of discussion that analyse the consequences of the UK political agenda on marginalised communities. The first three themes concern the precarious nature of paid employment, citizenship and voluntary work, the management of citizenship, and they are followed by a discussion of the concept of “cruel optimism” (Wacquant, 2008). Drawing on thinkers outside of community psychology for analysis enables the usage of concepts such as cruel optimism and social abjection, to add different perspectival lens to the work. In the final section of this paper, we draw some conclusions and make argue for continued interest by community psychologists in communities and “revolting subjects” (Tyler, 2013).

We recognise that neoliberalism as a term is commonplace in academic work and can be contested. In this paper, we contextualise it as based on the principle of the central importance of “the market in ordering society and defining value”, and as linked to a political agenda to reducing government spending on health and welfare among other areas (Kagan & Burton, 2005, p. 308). The effects of neoliberalism are being felt across the globe as the invisible elbows of the market become more evident. Market demands in more affluent global North settings often require labour and goods from global South poorer countries. Moving goods

and mobile labour often involve low paid work, separated families, and working in the hidden economy. In short, there are human impacts to global market forces – ones which unfairly fall in the global South. As our use of neoliberalism needs clarification, it is also helpful to define marginalised communities for the purpose of this paper. Using an explicit critical community psychology lens, we see community psychology practice as being rooted in values around stewardship and social justice. In order to share psychology and engage in meaningful practice, we position community psychology as directly working with those who are in some way excluded or diminished by the social, economic and political system. We now turn to a brief overview of community psychology and globalisation as part scaffolding of this paper.

Community Psychology and Globalisation

Community psychology is an approach which differs in practice and tone across the globe. Not only has community psychology sought to understand the person in context, but it also sought to set itself up as a value-laden discipline – in contrast to mainstream psychology that had often set itself up as value neutral. Among the values it commonly sets itself are: valuing diversity, promoting participation, promoting empowerment (choice) and hearing from the ground up (voice). However, since it became formally codified as “community psychology”, some critics have argued that the frame of reference has become the orthodoxy as its stated values have been absorbed by the dominant economic and political systems of neoliberalism and consumer capitalism. This is, for some of us, where the adjunct ‘critical’ has come from. Thus, the term critical community psychology is a less utilised term, although it is evident in particular accounts, notably Kagan, Burton, Duckett, Lawthom, and Siddiquee (2011), Coimbra et al. (2012) and Fryer, Duckett and Pratt (2004). If we take a UK-informed definition of community psychology, it offers a framework for working with those marginalised by the

social system that leads to self-aware social change with an emphasis on value based, participatory work and the forging of alliances. It is a way of working that is pragmatic and reflexive, whilst not wedded to any particular orthodoxy of method. As such, community psychology is one alternative to the dominant individualistic psychology typically taught and practised in the high income countries. It is community psychology because it emphasises a level of analysis and intervention other than the individual and their immediate interpersonal context. It is community psychology because it is nevertheless concerned with how people feel, think, experience and act as they work together, resisting oppression and struggling to create a better world (Burton, Boyle, Harris, & Kagan, 2007).

Whilst there are global variants of community psychology, there is much overlap around the following three issues. Firstly, a concern with social justice centred around access to knowledge and resources, and secondly, a commitment to working with people based on collaboration as opposed to intervention. In addition, there is a focus on valuing others and respecting that everyone brings different knowledge and skills, and transformation rather than amelioration, in other words, a view of long-term sustainability rather than short-term change. We argue that this approach is one, which not only recognises globalisation, but can work successfully in understanding how globalisation operates differently in global spaces.

Furthermore, there are many different ways of conceptualising the concept and processes of globalisation (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, & Perraton, 2005). The International Monetary Fund defines globalisation as “the process through which an increasingly free flow of ideas, people, goods, services and capital leads to the integration of economies and societies (Köhler, 2002, p. 1). Globalisation can be defined as a “compression of time and space never previously experienced” (Kinnvall, 2004, p. 742), with positive consequences on economics, political connections and social

connections. However, it can also be disruptive, and is frequently an adjunct to neoliberalism. These processes of social and economic change have contributed to the increasing global North-South divide in health and mortality, living standards, working conditions, human security, access to justice and human rights protection. In this paper, we heed the work of Raewyn Connell (2007) who has been advocating the utility of Southern Knowledges, those that challenge and reconceptualise implicit social science thinking. Whilst the work we talk about in this paper centres on the global North, we recognise the impetus for migrant work coming from the global North need for southern labour, similarly roots of community activism and conscientisation originate from Latin American contexts (for example, Freire, 1972, Martín Baró, 1994, and Boal, 1979). We advocate the need, as does Connell (2007) to open up thinking between the global North and South, rethinking ways in which family, community or work are conceived. All of these taken for granted terms are highlighted in the research studies utilised below.

Austerity and the Big Society

The establishment of the current UK Coalition government in 2010 has given rise to unprecedented austerity measures that can be traced back to the national and global financial crisis that began in 2007 (Clarke & Newman, 2012). Within the UK, austerity has been politically reframed from an economic issue to a problem that can be blamed on the welfare state and its dependents (Hall & O’Shea, 2013; Lister, 2012). The prevalent solution to the fiscal crisis is a retrenchment of the state, and cuts in welfare, within a neoliberal discourse, and “[a] common thread running through the neoliberal hegemonic project is therefore intact as the new government starts to unveil its approach to resolving the challenge of weak citizenship” (Davies, 2011, p. 21). Cuts in public sector spending, the retrenchment of the state and a narrative of abject others who are dependent on welfare are not unique to the UK, as evidenced by Wiggan (2012).

Walker (2013) argues that psychologists have failed to comprehend the impact of austerity on individuals from a ‘social, economic and political’ position and continue to “medicalise, personalise, and “treat” them regardless of their precursors” (p. 55).

Alongside the austerity measures, has been the introduction of the Big Society. A critical and in-depth analysis of the Big Society and its components is not the main focus of this article. However, it is useful to provide a brief overview. David Cameron (2010, online), Prime Minister of the UK, defined the Big Society as a “guiding philosophy – a society where the leading force for progress is social responsibility, not state control.” The agenda concerns devolution of power to local communities, increases in state accountability, and attempts to re-engage individuals in decision-making and democracy. Volunteering is a central tenet of the Big Society, as the policy seeks to encourage individuals and communities to deliver and run previously led public services. Programmes and policies aligned to the Big Society include the Community Organisers Programme (we return to this later in the article), a Big Society Bank, launch of a ‘Big Society day’, and new funding for neighbourhoods to enable development of groups and enterprises (Cabinet Office, 2010). Taylor (2011) positioned the Big Society as a significant tenet of policy, and according to Lister (2012), the Big Society is concerned with moving previously paid work in the public sector to the unpaid and informal sector, and means “work for free” (p. 331).

Generating social capital and belonging within communities underpins the Big Society ideology, although the emphasis is about an individual’s responsibility, and not that of government to build the Big Society (Westwood, 2011). While the Big Society can signify a changing landscape of civil society, it is important to highlight that the Big Society was introduced alongside significant public spending cuts (Alcock, 2010). Within the context of a significant withdrawal of local government funding by central government, it has been suggested

that the Big Society is a “cover” for the cuts in spending on public services and support for the voluntary and community sector (VCS) (Alcock, 2010). While there was a reference to the Big Society in Prime Minister David Cameron’s Christmas speech in 2013, the Big Society is receding from political discourse (Bunyan, 2013), yet continues to be explored in academic work (Corbett & Walker, 2012; Lister, 2012).

Chinese Migrants and Community Organisers

This paper explores the consequence of the current UK neoliberal agenda on particular marginalised communities and the ways in which communities are positioned through a neoliberal lens of “revolting subjects”. Through the use of our work in two areas, Chinese migrants (Lawthom et al., 2013), and community organising, we draw on previous research that was located in the North of England and took place under the current coalition government. To inform our later discussion, we outline the work in both areas. We recognise that the projects differ in many ways, including the community settings, cultural issues, and funding of the work, however, they exemplify neatly the ways in which work, even unpaid work, is aligned with good citizenship and citizenship depends upon an ability to work. Both projects were undertaken utilising a community psychology perspective. We commence with the Chinese migrant project.

The Chinese migrant project was funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation¹ and developed out of an alliance between a Manchester-based Chinese social enterprise and researchers based at Manchester Metropolitan University, including two authors of this paper, Lawthom and Kagan. Undocumented migrant workers are confronted by a number of issues including forced labour, which was the focus of the research. Forced labour has been defined by the International Labour Organisation ([ILO], 1930, online) as, “[a]ll work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty for which the said person has not offered himself

voluntarily.” The ILO (1930) notes that there are six indicators of forced labour. These are threats or actual harm to the worker, restriction of movement and confinement, debt bondage and denying wages or excessively reducing wages. The final two are withholding passports and other identity documents, and threat of denunciation to authorities. In the work, we adopted a community psychology stance and framed questions of labour around individuals and their networks (family and economic). Using a co-researcher and participatory approach, the project explored the journeys that Chinese migrant workers had made and the agency that facilitated these journeys. Working collaboratively with a Chinese social enterprise, the research, including the thirty-five narratives, analysis and dissemination, provided a legacy of knowledge. As well as exploring work experiences (notably precarious employment and forced labour), the focus of the research moved in line with the organisation’s and participants’ agenda to a discussion of journeys that Chinese migrant workers had made and the agency that facilitated these journeys. This change in direction caused some tensions between funders (concerned with work experiences) and researchers, and different research stories were fore-fronted for separate audiences. Here we do not provide the findings of the research as these will be discussed in later sections. However, the overall findings can be found elsewhere (Lawthom et al., 2013). We now turn to the other area of work that we draw on in this paper, a government funded project of employing and supporting four community organisers.

In 2010, the authors were invited by Locality² to participate in a tender to lead the Community Organisers programme, a central tenet of the Big Society policy initiative (Taylor, 2012). On award of the funding, Manchester Metropolitan University became one of the first eleven hosts of community organisers. The community organisers programme aimed to recruit five hundred trainee community organisers who would in turn engage and support 4,500 volunteer organisers. The over-arching aim of the

programme was to “identify community leaders, bring communities together, help people start their own neighbourhood groups and give communities the help they need to take control and tackle their problems” (Cameron, 2010, online).

As the case with the Chinese migrant workers project, it is not our intention to provide a full description of the project. Warren (2009) and Bunyan (2010) provide a detailed outline and analysis of community organising including its history in the United States. Taylor (2012) and Bunyan (2013) explore some of the challenges and opportunities of the Big Society funded community organising programme. In this article, we draw on our experiences of hosting community organisers in the North West of England between 2011 and 2012, to develop our discussion of the consequences of a political agenda on marginalised communities. The Community Organiser programme as funded by the current Coalition-led UK government is located around the notion that social change can be mobilised from the ground upwards. Following assimilation with the programme and the training (the majority of which was provided by Re-generate Trust³ and based on their model “Root Solutions, Listening Matters”), we recruited four community organisers who were all ex- Manchester Metropolitan University students. The community organisers selected the areas for their work as community organisers and unlike other hosts, we directly employed the community organisers. Hosting the organisers was a learning process and in this paper we draw on our ethnographic research and verbal interactions with all those involved. We acknowledge that the datasets for the two projects that inform this paper are dissimilar in many ways, yet there are commonalities in terms of researchers, location and the centrality of community psychology. Both projects also focus on work – paid, sometimes in the “shadow” economy and volunteering as ways that engender citizenship. We now turn to the four themes for our discussion of the consequences of the UK political agenda on

marginalised communities, beginning with the precarious nature of paid employment.

Precarious Work for 'Abject Others'

According to the New Economics Foundation (2013), precarious employment is increasing and is a central effect of the austerity measures. We use Shildrick, MacDonald, Webster, and Guthwaite's (2012) definition of precarious work in that it is part-time, limited and poorly paid. For the previous New Labour UK government and the current Coalition government, work is considered the main exit from poverty (Shildrick & MacDonald, 2013). However, studies show that employment fails to lift disadvantaged people experiencing social abjection out of poverty (New Economics Foundation, 2013; Shildrick et al., 2012). Throughout Europe, and within a neoliberal agenda, there has been a reduction in minimum wage levels, an increase in zero hours' contracts and public sector employment (Gumbrell-McCormick, 2011). For the Chinese migrant workers, our research found that on the basis of their migration status, they were subject to exploitative work that was not compliant with business or employment regulations. Finding low paid work was not challenging and was in the main, facilitated through social networks (Lawthorn et al., 2013), yet the precarious nature of the work was evident. Some workers were debt bonded or forced at times through housing costs or the need to maintain an income for family members.

Further, mobility was an essential component of keeping employment. The research evidenced a wider political context for Chinese migrant workers of labour flows, familial pressures and political processes, in which they were embedded. Commentators such as Skrivankova (2012) and Dwyer, McCloud, and Hodson (2012) have argued that the conceptual status of individuals and work is very fuzzy. Skrivankova (2012) advocates a continuum that explains the complexity of the exploitative and precarious environment on workers. The continuum maps both experience and possible interventions, forefronting the concept of

decent work as the desired standard. The continuum approach demonstrates that paid work – often held up as a gold standard and one to which all should aspire to- comes in very many different forms with different outcomes for individuals involved. Precarity is very much a way of life for many workers, the abject others, in this rather hidden economy.

Turning to the community organisers, the very nature of their one year projects was precarious. While they are not abject others themselves, their work with individuals in deprived neighbourhoods was with those who could be considered to be abject. The community organisers were employed on a one year contract, and while we acknowledge that we were involved in the pilot stage of the programme, sustainability of role was an issue faced by the community organisers. This impacted on their work with communities and engagement of volunteers, as they were unable to plan for the future. Precarious work continues to be a challenge for community-based positions in the UK due to the austerity measures. Towards the end of the year of hosting community organisers, the UK government allocated funding of £15,000 (around \$27,650 AUD) for another year of employment. However, this was subject to the community organisers finding a match of the same amount from a community organisation. The following section considers the impact of the neoliberal agenda on issues of citizenship for marginalised individuals and communities in the UK.

(Not) Becoming a Citizen

Tyler (2010) asserts that "British citizenship has been designed to fail specific groups and populations" (p. 61) and this is the focus of this section. In her article, Tyler (2010) draws on Butler and Spivak's (2007) discussion of abject others who have become failed citizens. In the UK, the concept of citizenship has endured political changes and continues to form part of government discourse. In the previous section, we discussed volunteering as precarious 'work', and here we continue to frame volunteering

but within the notion of citizenship. As Lie, Baines, and Wheelock (2009) confirm, citizenship continued to be associated with voluntary work and employment. Under the former New Labour Government (1997 – 2010) “active citizenship” was a central aspect of policy framed around community engagement and volunteering, and the rewards of voluntary activity were a central part of the discourse to encourage volunteering. Lie et al. (2009) position citizenship as “practice as well as status” (p. 703) and this is a useful lens for this section. Here, we discuss voluntary community organising as practice, and migrant citizenship as status.

As we stated earlier in this article, community organising partly originated from the United States (US). Dorling (2011) in his discussion of the endurance of inequality in the UK, contrasts public sector spending for the UK with that of the US. It is estimated that by 2016, government spending on public services will be lower than in the US for the first time since at least 1980. However, in 2011, when the Community Organisers programme was launched, the UK’s spending on public services was at least three per cent of Gross Domestic Product higher than that of the United States (Taylor-Gooby & Stoker, 2011). Traditionally, US citizens live in neighbourhoods where there is no safety-net for difficult economic times and individuals are expected to contribute to community services (Putnam, 2000).

Community organising, for Alinsky (1989) and his legacy organisations, was designed to campaign for and provide public services. The landscape has been different in the UK, where we expect to have public services provided for society. Citizenship in the UK has been framed by the current coalition government as a relationship with the state as provider of services within a Big Society that “needs big citizens who are civic minded, neighbourly and prepared to work for the common good” (Sullivan, 2012, p. 145). Furthermore, it is considered by the government and the UK media as connected to formal employment as evidenced by the continuing use of the terms “skivers” and

“strivers” (Williams, 2013). The community organisers we hosted were given targets to strive toward, including numbers of people to talk to, numbers of volunteers to recruit. This passing on of work, here volunteering, was difficult. Community Organisers were working in disadvantaged areas where potential recruits were themselves involved in job searching. Embedded within a political agenda, to combat work-lessness and reduce the cost of welfare, is a focus on volunteering as a means of connecting unemployed individuals to society (Baillie-Smith & Laurie, 2011; Baines & Hardill, 2008). However, this connectivity was difficult to promulgate in asset poor settings. This argument around connection, was a central tenet of the previous New Labour UK government and continues within the discourse of the Big Society (Jensen, 2013).

Migrants need to earn citizenship (Kelly & Byrne, 2007). The ways in which citizenship were talked about in the Chinese project were often ill-informed (Kagan et al., 2013). The newly arrived workers were sometimes coached by snakeheads⁴ around UK entry behaviour, and ways to get in (documentation and identity forgery). From the outset, miscommunication existed around how to obtain status and secure it. In interviews conducted with migrant workers, the interviewer would begin with a very open question – “tell me about your story”, at times to be met with, “which one? The one I tell to authorities?” The poorly understood ideas about getting sponsored, remaining illegal or giving birth as ways of ensuring citizenship, all circulated round the predominantly Chinese speaking community. The work agenda was mobilised by all, in order to pay back debt, and there was a lack of understanding about how processes of asylum and refugee work. Status and the markers of this permeated daily life for these, in practical ways around work, housing and health yet it remained a nebulous concept. In interviews they talked about applying and not hearing back from authorities, taking advice from fellow undocumented migrants and having children as security. The UK was sometimes mooted as a fair place and one

where rights are advocated. The irony of arriving in a country where borders were managed perhaps echoed some of the difficulties they had experienced in China around the hukou system. This allowed a certain proportion of rural workers to enter urban spaces for work. The experience of not becoming a citizen in the UK was a concern for many, although quotidian practices of work and family remained uppermost. Tyler (2013) notes that “citizenship is not simply a description of status, but a productive concept which pivots on a distinction between the ‘deserving’ and the ‘undeserving’ and endlessly produces ‘moral abjects’ at the periphery of the body politic” (p. 191). The Chinese informants wanted to be legally recognised, pay taxes and become citizens, despite the barriers they faced.

Controlling Citizenship

In this theme, we explore the way in which citizenship becomes the way in which people are included in or excluded out of society. The processes of inclusion and exclusion necessarily centre on the idea of borders and marginality- who is allowed to be a citizen and how is citizenship attained? In the Community Organiser project, the trainee organisers were asked to work in disadvantaged communities, with a strong focus on areas of high deprivation and low social capital (Locality, 2011). The explicit aim here was to mobilise people within these identified areas, seen as ‘in need’. Whilst poorer communities are often idealised or vilified (Bunyan, 2012; Tyler 2013), we see elements of both in this approach. The Community Organiser project sought to create a neighbourhood army to solve problems, drawing on ideas of social capital. However, these communities were also positioned as being in need and requiring a structured approach to build community. Trainee community organisers were given targets to listen widely, build community-holding teams through recruiting volunteers and then begin appropriate identified projects. We have explicated some of the tensions in using this approach elsewhere

(Fisher, Gaule, Lawthom, & Kagan, in press).

Utilising a grassroots approach is both participative and enabling, in line with the capacity building approach of community psychology. However, the model of citizenship implicit here is one of unpaid work. Trainee organisers had targets to recruit nine volunteers (unpaid workers), who had to commit time to the project. This proved difficult for trainee organisers we were supporting, and led to organisers feeling as if they were policing or controlling borders of voluntary work. Volunteers often wanted to help but could not commit the time required, due to regimes around looking for work, improving one’s work position, adding to ones’ Curriculum Vitae, caring or studying. In the first round of data collected by the community organisers, the aim was to conduct community listenings with residents in the community. Working in largely urban or semi-urban areas of mixed populations, the trainee organisers noted the nature of the concerns as both trivial and concerning. On the trivial side, there was much disgust with litter and dirt, a finding that resonates with public consciousness around certain deprived neighbourhoods.

On the concerning end, and as fifty of the first cohort of trainee organisers were black and minority ethnic identifying, residents complained about difference, the need for separate schools and places where different groups could meet unfettered by others (meaning not their own). Here abject populations (those construed as different) are seen to threaten the common good. It is plausible that residents in explicating these issues wanted community organisers to exert some “hygienic governmentality” (Berlant, 1997, p. 175). Had community organisers worked on some of these rather difficult issues, they would have been working towards a notion of a good society, marked by separate schools and living areas. The tensions of the community organisers, in building citizenship through stronger communities, capture the problems inherent in the approach of community organising (transplanted to the UK from the US context)

and further, the wider issues of a neoliberal agenda.

For the migrant workers, the issues of becoming citizens were clearly fore-fronted. Work precarity and their position in the economy was compounded by their citizenship status. Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos (2008) note ways in which subjects enact escape routes through subversion. To elude being captured, one strategy is to adopt a more mobile form of life. Irregular migrants need to be clandestine and may burn identity papers, forge papers or documents. This autonomy of migration is about becoming imperceptible. Indeed, this position on the margins was well documented in the accounts obtained in the Chinese migrants worker project. Working in partnership with a Chinese social enterprise, we gave a human face to the research through rich accounts of work, family and precarity – an approach Tyler (2006) calls “close-up technologies” (p. 194). Whilst the strong accounts given were those of resilience and coping, we noted the absence of emotional reporting or discourses of pity (Lawthom et al., 2013). Despite their experiences of being positioned in particular precarious situations, involving engaging in long hours on below minimum pay, living in debt bonded housing, hot-bedding, informants still desired citizenship. The routes to this were uncertain and there was much evidence of inaccurate and outdated information. An alleged route was to have a child born in the UK, a belief that this guaranteed legality for the mother, although of course as Tyler (2012) notes, reproduction does not secure citizenship. The plethora of names for migrant mothers; ‘maternity tourism’, ‘citizenship tourism’, ‘anchor babies’ attests to the beliefs about the ‘uncontrollable and debilitating ‘invasion’ of migrants’ (De Genova, 2007), and presents a picture of the conniving reproductive migrant who perverts citizenship and nationality norms (Lentin, 2004). Some informants who were long staying saw little possibility of becoming citizens and were pinned to a life where remittances to China needed to be sent in order to save face. Remittances enhanced life back in China but did little for the

worker, sometimes providing for distance families with little connection. McClintock (1995) notes that for those excluded, who are “obliged to inhabit the impossible edges of modernity” (p. 172), the border zones are spaces of survival not transgression. This was certainly demonstrated in our accounts where people’s daily struggles were those of mundane routine and remaining below the radar.

Cruel Optimism

In exploring abjection, Wacquant (2008) has noted the ways in which symbolic and material violence that characterize the processes of human waste production: labour precariousness, which produces:

...material deprivation, family hardship, temporal uncertainty and personal anxiety ; the relegation of people to decomposing neighbourhoods in which public and private resources are dwindling; and heightened stigmatization in daily life as well as in public discourse. (pp. 24-25)

The violence can be seen in both projects, although visible in different ways. For the Chinese workers, to be abject in terms of citizenship means not being in possession of the right kind of paperwork, being unable to produce the right kind of evidence, or economic capital to secure leave to remain. Indeed, “migrant illegality operates as a figurative prop in support of the wider theatre of neoliberal governance” (Tyler, 2012, p. 73). This abjection can be linked to what Berlant (2011) terms cruel optimism. Whilst mobility and escape may be desired routes for the affluent, Berlant (2011) juxtaposes this with anchorage. The ways in which stability is created, through conditions such as laying down roots, feeling safe, creating family, and home, and belonging are all desires which are redolent of “cruel optimism”. Informants in the project wanted to belong, to put down roots, to extend families and many of them had managed to do so, despite precariousness of work and status. The UK offered for some the possibility to have more than one child, and

to enable women not to work, men needed to take on more work to pay back increased debt to snakeheads. Tyler (2012) notes that these very desired conditions of stability “feed, fuel and sustain people in precarious survival strategies” (p. 73). Bauman (1998) argues that whilst the rich cosmopolitan minority is able to freely travel across global spaces, the poor majority, to escape the discomforts of their localised existence and the ghettos of their lives, are prepared to take huge risks. The Chinese forced labour project was ostensibly about work, and in particular forced labour although few informants identified as such or fitted neatly into the category. Informants put up with being abject, with being outside the system as it afforded them some relative freedoms and ability to improve family life chances back in China. Working with an explicit community psychology lens we wanted to disrupt the tragic, needy and forced labourer and explore the agency workers showed. We produced a Chinese and English anthology that featured excerpts of accounts of workers in the project - this was left in public spaces in order to raise consciousness and create a legacy for the Chinese partner organization. This exercise worked as part of the dissemination strategy, and in line with the UK impact agenda, which mandates that research should have demonstrable economic or social value. Critics position this impact agenda, as another market driven plank of the neoliberal agenda. The workers accounts, however, exemplify the cruel optimism of being an abject other, the remnants of identity and citizenship are sublimated with a need to remain in the UK.

Tyler (2012) writes of the trafficking (forced and unforced migration) which is largely hidden. She notes the ways in which the industry trades and profits in human misery and desire, and works as a distinctly neoliberal form of state crafting. This is a highly private market where trade and transaction remain hidden, apart from rare moments of rupture, where abject migrants are discerned through whistleblowing, campaigns, and activism. It is hoped that the engagement in partnership working and the

revealing of such stories from this community figure as one such rare moment of rupture (Kagan et al., 2011).

The abjection in the community organiser project is more subtle. Here, organisers were deployed to Wacquant’s (2008) decomposing neighbourhoods to listen, to mobilise and to change. Working in neighbourhoods under the banner of being an unknown entity, a community organiser (indeed a largely unknown term in the UK), trainees were catapulted in areas to persuade people to take control amidst a landscape of cuts, budget restrictions and austerity. There is something of a liberal rhetoric offered by the Big Society whereby democracy is deepened through enhanced or improved citizenship – the allure of working for the good of one’s community to improve the community. This volunteering, and morality occur at just the point when resources are cut and inequality widens (Dorling, 2011). The identified poor who require mobilising are the same people who need to work harder, claim less and now volunteer. The positioning of the poor as undeserving, as Chavs⁵, is of course part of a wider discourse (Jones, 2008). Nussbaum (2004) notes the way in which disgust has been used as a “powerful weapon in social efforts to exclude certain groups and persons” (p. 107). This occurs and is mediated by revolting aesthetics (Ngai, 2005), whereby representation and presentation shape experience. With disabled women in Australia, Soldatic and Meekosha (2013) showed how victim discourse becomes an attack on sloth and undeserving welfare scroungers, and public consent shifts from liberal forms of welfare to disciplinary workfare regimes and heightened stigmatization. In mobilising poorer people to act (albeit in limited forms) can community organisers be seen to be part of a wider disciplinary practice?

Conclusions

In the UK we are now nearing the end of the current Coalition’s term of parliament, and the austerity measures are expected to increase. The New Economics Foundation

(2013) has asserted that the Big Society philosophy and programme have not provided an alternative to state provision of services in economically deprived areas. Through drawing on our involvement as embedded researchers within two externally funded projects, we have explored how people in deprived communities and migrant workers can be problematised within a consideration of the current policy landscape of austerity and neoliberalism. Central to Imogen Tyler's (2013) seminal work that inspired us to write this article is the "question of how states – states of being (human life) and states of belonging (political life) – are made and unmade" (p. 20). Fine (2012) uses the term "revolting times" to describe the current global inequalities, and in this article we have discussed how austerity and the notion of citizenship intersect in a narrative of "revolting subjects" (Tyler, 2013). Baumann (2004) asserts that neoliberal states, are characterised by 'wasted humans', at the borders of these territories. We argued here that migrant workers and community organisers are positioned formerly as wasted humans and latterly as agents to police or model idealised forms of citizenship. The Big Society, is now, in the main, absent from political and societal discussion. As a concept and policy, it relied on available time and financial resources to enable people to volunteer, and yet the austerity measures have reduced people's available resources for social action.

Community psychology positions itself as an approach that works from the ground up to achieve social justice. The two projects that we have drawn on in this paper were informed by a community psychology perspective and the work took place within the everyday of communities. Whilst the focus has been on migrant workers and community organisers, it can be seen that the abjection extends more broadly those who are politically and economically disenfranchised, such as young people, disabled people and asylum seekers. Both examples have shown the ways in which a neoliberal governmentality can regulate people's lives both socially and culturally (Gill, 2008). We

have attempted to attend to issues of social action, community organising and individuals and communities who are "othered". This paper does not consider the detail of the research methodology utilised within the two projects, but responds to a call for a critical consideration of those who live in revolting times as abject others.

Notes

1. A British social policy research and development charity that funds a UK-wide research and development programme.
2. Locality – an organisation based in the UK that involved the merger of the Development Trust Association and the British Association of Settlements and Social Action Centres.
3. For more detailed information concerning 'Root Solutions, Listening Matters' look at the RE-generate Trust website, <http://www.regeneratetrust.org/>
4. A snakehead is a term given to individuals who arrange and facilitate the passage of people from their home country to another country. The travel facilitator arranges journeys and documentation.
5. Chavs is a pejorative term leveled at poor working class or underclass with connotations of poverty, loutish behavior and limited aspirations.

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Economic integration of women who have experienced homelessness

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This longitudinal study, conducted in Ottawa, Canada between October 2002 and October 2005, examined the economic integration of women who were homeless at the study's outset. Participants (N = 101) participated in two in-person interviews. A predictive model identifying factors related to becoming employed or engaged in education was developed from previous empirical research and tested. Having dependent children, having spent a greater proportion of time working, and having been housed for a longer period of time predicted the likelihood of becoming employed or engaged in education at the two-year follow-up. More adult work experience and employment at the initial interview were associated with a longer period of employment reported at follow-up. A lower level of education predicted engagement in full-time studies at follow-up. These findings suggest that housing, and employment and educational assistance, are essential to helping women who have experienced homelessness to become economically integrated into their communities; however, the results point to continuing financial hardship, even among women who succeed in obtaining employment.

Homelessness is a growing problem in Canada, and one that is closely linked to poverty (Gaetz, 2010; Hulchanski, Campinski, Chau, Hwang, & Paradis, 2009). Homelessness in Canada is defined as the situation of an individual or family who lack their own stable and permanent housing combined with a lack of the means and ability to acquire it (Canadian Homelessness Research Network, 2012). Although the Canadian federal government has not endorsed an official measurement of poverty, the three traditional measures of poverty in Canada, namely low income cut-offs and low income measures (i.e., spending 20% more of income on shelter, clothing, and food), basic needs measures (i.e., lacking items to maintain physical well-being), and market basket measures (i.e., lacking disposable income to purchase a "normative" basket of goods and services representing the goods and services deemed to meet the basic needs of the average household (Library of Parliament, 2008) would identify individuals and families experiencing homelessness as living in poverty since they lack the means to afford housing (Hulchanski et al., 2009).

Homeless individuals are often disaffiliated from mainstream society and cut

off from conventional social structures. Disaffiliation, in turn, may cast these individuals in devalued social roles, which are often associated with such experiences as receiving few and poorer quality resources, participating in work others don't want, and being victims of violence, scapegoating, rejection, and exclusion. Occupying devalued social roles then limits access to valued roles, such as that of a worker, parent, or competent person (Thomas & Wolfensberger, 1999).

In contrast, assuming valued social roles means engaging in valued activities and is closely associated with being integrated into one's community. Community integration may take many forms, and involves such activities as participating in community activities (Gracia & Herrero, 2004), adopting multiple social roles (Moen, Dempster-McClain, & Williams, 1989), participating in education and in the workforce (Guest & Stamm, 1993), and having social contact with neighbours (Aubry & Myner, 1996). A core objective of many community psychology interventions is to foster the integration of marginalised populations, such as people who are homeless, in the community (Kloos, Hill,

Thomas, Elias, Wandersman, & Dalton, 2012).

For individuals who have experienced homelessness, a first step towards achieving community integration may be physical integration in their community; that is, obtaining and retaining stable housing (Wong & Solomon, 2002). Individuals may then move on to other forms of community integration, including economic integration as they rejoin the workforce or educational system, and psychological integration as they develop feelings of belonging in their communities. This paper will examine the economic integration of women who have experienced homelessness.

These women encounter many obstacles to re-integration in the community and acquisition of valued roles as workers or students. Many possess low levels of both external and internal resources, including human and social capital. Homeless women report low levels of education, little involvement in the workforce, and poor and distressed family backgrounds (e.g. Shinn et al., 1998).

Few people who are homeless work for pay, and those who do are usually underemployed, working part-time and receiving low pay (Tam, Zlotnick, & Robertson, 2003; Zuvekas, & Hill, 2000). Low levels of education, little work experience, and the lack of job skills (Zlotnick, Robertson, & Lahiff, 1999; Piliavin, Wright, Mare, & Westerfield, 1996) may have a significant effect on women's ability to gain employment or enter educational programs (Crittenden, Kim, Watanabe, & Norr, 2002; Zuvekas & Hill, 2000).

People who are homeless may lack strong social networks and loss of a source of material support is a frequently cited reason for homelessness (Tessler, Rosenheck, & Gamache 2001). People who are homeless may also face obstacles to entering educational programs that can provide the necessary training to enter the workforce. Low levels of social capital may present another obstacle to economic integration; instrumental support from individuals in

one's social network has been associated with becoming employed (Horwitz & Kerker, 2001). Women who are homeless may face different or additional barriers to employment and education than men, given the well-documented evidence of systematic barriers in multiple domains including family life, employment and politics (Crittenden et al., 2002; Froehlich, 2005; Klodawsky, 2006; Staggs & Riger, 2005). The present study examines predictors of economic integration for a sample of women who have experienced homelessness. Economic integration is defined in the study as paid participation in the work force or participation in educational activities.

Employment

Finding work or entering job training may be challenging during or following an episode of homelessness, especially for women with low levels of education and work experience. Wright (1997) found that participants reported that becoming housed often preceded finding employment; conditions such as lack of access to bathing and laundry facilities, not having a correspondence address, and limited access to telephones were cited as important barriers to finding employment while homeless. Bogard, Trillo, Schwarz, and Gerstel (2001) found that among homeless mothers, the amount of time they had previously spent in full-time employment predicted full-time employment status following homelessness. Brown and Mueller (2014) identified being of younger age and having a higher level of social support as being related to homeless women's self-efficacy to secure employment.

Housing can have an important impact on employment, and employment can help individuals exit homelessness. Piliavin and colleagues (1996) found that recent employment and job training were associated with exiting homelessness. Mares and Rosenheck (2006) found that being recently housed was related to having worked a greater number of days over a two-year period.

Insight into the experiences of women may be garnered from American studies

examining the effects of welfare reforms that have emphasised moving people, particularly single mothers, from social assistance to employment. While systemic and social factors such as welfare policy, the local economy, issues of discrimination, and the availability of appropriate childcare have an important influence on women's ability to leave welfare for employment, personal characteristics such as human capital (i.e., level of education and previous work experience) and available social support may also predict the ability to find work (Cheng, 2007). Education has an important impact, with those who have at least a high school education being more likely to find employment (Cheng, 2007; Crittenden et al., 2002; Danziger, Carlson, & Henley, 2001; Horwitz & Kerker, 2001; Pandey & Kim, 2008). Previous work experience, particularly in professional or skilled work, also predicts a return to work (Cheng, 2007; Crittenden et al., 2002).

Social support, in the form of instrumental support, has been associated with becoming employed (Horwitz & Kerker, 2001). Being a single mother and having younger or multiple children may be a barrier to working (Cheng, 2007; Crittenden et al., 2002; Danziger et al., 2001; Felmler, 1993). Women who succeed in leaving social assistance and finding work may not find stable jobs; Harris (1996) found that nearly half of mothers who found work returned to social assistance within two years.

Education Participation

A review of research on education participation by individuals who have experienced homelessness identified only one study focusing on this issue. Bogard et al. (2001) found that homeless women who had lower levels of depressive symptomatology and more full-time work experience were more likely to complete educational or job training programs offered at shelters. A small number of studies were found that examined returns to school for other adults living in disadvantaged circumstances. Social support was found to predict motivation to return to school and to facilitate a return to school in

younger, unemployed adults (Bolam & Sixsmith, 2002; Niessen, 2006). Having children has been shown to increase motivation to return to school in some cases (Bolam & Sixsmith, 2002; Niessen, 2006). However, it may also be an obstacle to returning to school for some women (Astone, Schoen, Ensminger, & Rothert, 2000).

Financial hardship may increase motivation to return to school, (Niessen, 2006), especially if education is seen as a means to improve one's prospects (Bolam & Sixsmith, 2002). However, financial constraints may also present a barrier to pursuing educational activities (Bolam & Sixsmith, 2002). Past educational experiences may have an impact on returns to school as well. Niessen (2006) found that higher levels of past education predicted motivation to engage in education among unemployed adults, while Bolam and Sixsmith (2002) found that a history of negative experiences with education was a barrier to learning. Astone and colleagues (2000) found that having a high-school or equivalent diploma or higher, and past returns to school predicted school re-entry for women.

Model of Economic Integration

This paper presents a two-year longitudinal study that examines predictors of economic integration for women who have experienced homelessness. The model guiding our study is presented in Figure 1.

The model specifies several predictors of economic integration selected based on the literature reviewed above. Specifically it is hypothesised that a lower proportion of time homeless over one's lifetime, more perceived social support, a higher level of mental health functioning, family status (i.e. the presence or absence of dependent children), a higher percentage of time employed as an adult, employment while homeless, a higher level of education, and being housed for a greater amount of time would be predictive of economic integration. Note that no prediction was made as to the direction of the relationship between having dependent children and economic integration

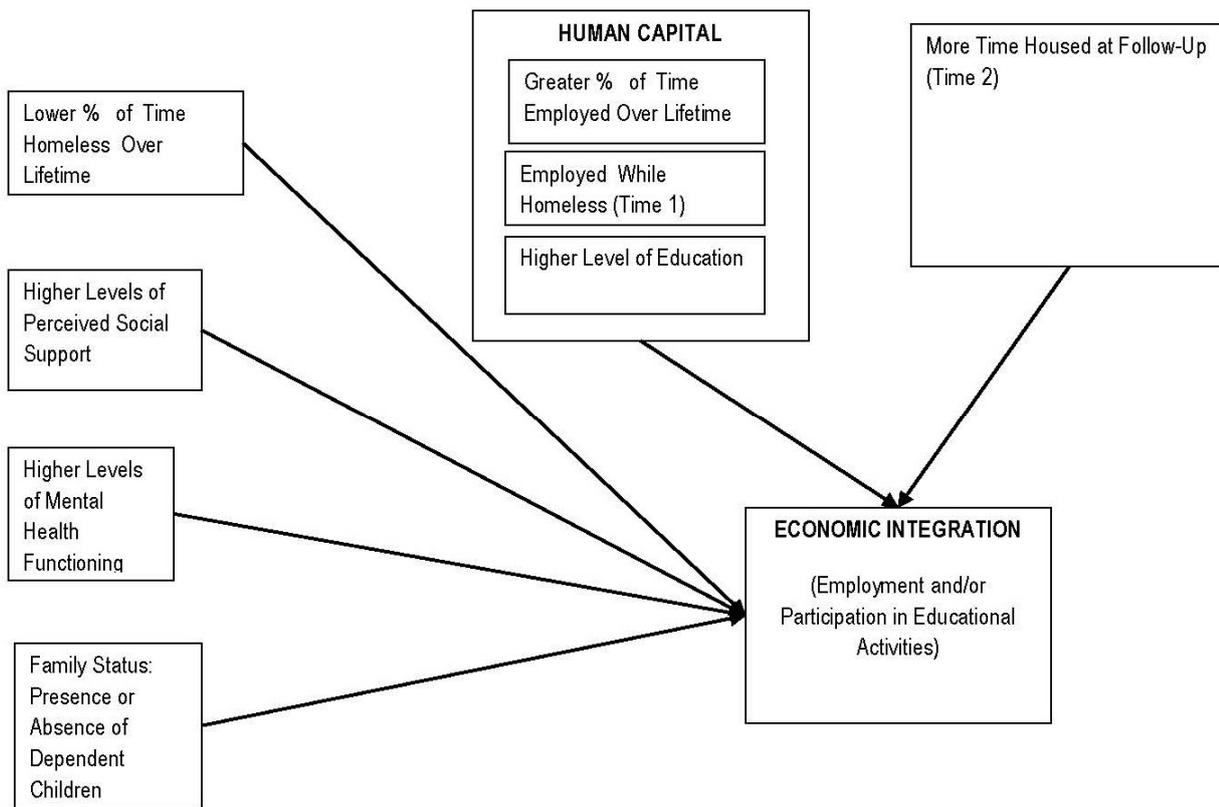


Figure 1. Predictive model of economic integration.

as the literature suggests that having children may be either a barrier (Cheng, 2007; Crittenden et al., 2002) or a motivator (Bolam & Sixsmith, 2002; Niessen, 2006) to attaining employment and education.

Four economic integration outcomes are examined. First, both aspects of economic integration are examined together, with participants being classified as economically integrated if they are either participating in the workforce full or part-time, or participating in education. Next, work stability, defined as the amount of time participants have been working, is examined. Finally, predictors of participation in education are examined. Separate analyses examine participation in any educational program (i.e., either full- or part-time) and participation in full-time education.

In line with a community psychology perspective that adopts an ecological model to conceptualise social problems and develop program and policy responses to address

these problems (Kloos et al., 2012), the study is intended to identify personal and contextual characteristics that contribute to economic integration of women with a history of homelessness.

Method

Participants and Procedure

This research was conducted as part of a larger, longitudinal study on homelessness in Ottawa, Canada, a city with a population of approximately one million in the metropolitan area. Participants were followed for a period of two years (Aubry, Klodawsky, & Hay, 2003; Aubry, Klodawsky, Nemiroff, Birnie, & Bonetta, 2007). The research reported in this paper focused on adult women recruited for the larger study. A stratified sampling strategy based on the population characteristics of women using different emergency shelters was used in order to obtain a representative sample. In Canada, emergency shelters are social service organisations in cities that provide at

minimum a safe place for sleeping overnight. Shelters sampled included two city-run family shelters, a general-purpose women's shelter for women unaccompanied by children, shelters for women fleeing domestic violence, a shelter for newcomers to Canada, and a shelter for Native Canadian women. For women unaccompanied by children, the sample was stratified in terms of length of shelter stay and citizenship (Canadian or other). For women accompanied by children, stratification was based on citizenship status. The number of individuals recruited at each shelter was proportionate to the number of potential participants residing at each shelter. Participants received honoraria of \$10.00 (CAD) for participation in the first interview and \$20.00 (CAD) for the second interview. Honoraria were provided in recognition of the time and inconvenience related to participating in the study. The exchange of a small amount of funding for research participation is a very common practice and considered ethical in the Canadian research community.

In order to facilitate locating participants for follow-up interviews two years after the first interview, participants were asked at Time 1 to provide consent for researchers to contact individuals and/or agencies including friends, family members, service providers, hospitals and shelters, to ask for the participants' up-to-date contact information. They were also asked to provide their personal cell phone numbers and e-mail addresses when available. A brief follow-up was made by phone approximately one year following the initial interview, to maintain contact and update contact information (Aubry, Klodawsky, Hay, Nemiroff, & Hyman, 2004).

Measures

Family status. Participants were asked whether they had any children, the children's ages, and how many of their children normally lived with them at both the Time 1 and Time 2 interviews. Women with dependent children were deemed to be those who lived with dependent children under age 18 at any time during the study period. All

other participants were considered unaccompanied by children.

Mental health functioning. Mental health functioning was assessed at Time 1, using the mental component summary measure (MCS) of the SF-36, Version 2 (Ware, Kosinski, & Gandek, 2002). Ware and colleagues report internal consistency and reliability for group comparisons above .80 for all sub-scales of the SF-36. For the current sample, internal consistency for the MCS was high ($\alpha = .92$).

Perceived social support. Perceived social support was measured at Time 1 using a brief, 5-item version of the S Scale of the Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ) (Sarason, Levine, Basham, & Sarason, 1983). For the current sample, internal consistency of the 5-item version was high, $\alpha = 0.87$.

Lifetime history of homelessness. Number of months spent homeless was measured using the Housing, Income, and Service Timeline (HIST) (Toro et al., 1997). At Time 1, participants were asked their housing history for the past three years. Participants were then asked if they had any additional experiences of homelessness that had not already been recorded, and if so, how long they had been homeless. Further episodes of homelessness between the two interviews were recorded at Time 2. However, the most recent homeless episode before becoming housed was excluded in order to avoid overlap with the amount-of-time-housed variable described below. Toro and colleagues (1999) reported a test-retest correlation of the time homeless variable of the HIST of .73, based on a lifetime version of the HIST in a study of 31 homeless adults.

Amount of time housed. At Time 2, the HIST (Toro et al., 1997) was used to ascertain the number of consecutive days participants had been housed following their last episode of homelessness. Since the length of the follow-up period varied between participants, amount of time housed was standardised for each participant by dividing the number of days consecutively housed at Time 2 by the number of days between interviews.

Percentage of time working as an

adult. Employment history was assessed via an interview question at Time 1: “Since you were 16 years old, approximately how many years have you spent working for pay?” The number of years worked was divided by the number of years since age 16 in order to derive a proportion of adult years spent working.

Work status at Time 1. Work status at Time 1 was assessed via an interview question, “Are you currently working for pay?” Participants were then classified as working or not working at Time 1. Time 1 work status was confirmed on a case-by-case basis using the HIST (Toro et al., 1997).

Level of education. Participants’ level of education was assessed at Time 1 via the question, “What is the highest level of schooling you have ever completed?” Responses were then re-coded into three categories: has not completed high-school (1), has completed high school (2), and has obtained post-secondary certificate/diploma/degree (3).

Economic integration. Participants were considered to be economically integrated if they were working either full- or part-time or engaged in education at the time of the follow-up interview. Work status was assessed via the question, “Are you currently working for pay?” and then confirmed on a case-by-case basis using the HIST (Toro et al., 1997). Participants were considered to be working full-time if they reported working at least 35 hours per week on the HIST. Participants who responded “yes” to the question, “Are you still in school?” were considered to be engaged in education.

Work stability. The number of consecutive months employed at Time 2 was used as a measure of work stability. Work stability was calculated on a case-by-case basis using the HIST (Toro et al., 1997).

Engagement in education. As described above, participants who answered “yes” to the question, “Are you still in school?” at follow-up were considered to be engaged in education.

Engagement in full-time studies. Participation in full-time studies was assessed via the questions, “Are you still in

school?”, “Is it part-time or full-time?” and, “Approximately, how many hours per week are you attending school?” Respondents who reported attending school full-time, or who reported attending school for 20 or more hours per week at Time 2, were considered full-time students.

Results

Sample Characteristics

The study sample consists of the 101 respondents who participated in the Time 2 interview, representing 66% of the women recruited and interviewed at Time 1. Respondents ($n = 101$) at Time 2 were compared to non-respondents (i.e., participants in Time 1 who did not participate at Time 2; $n = 53$) on scores of measures of variables that were measured at Time 1 to determine if there were differences between the two groups. There were no differences between respondents and non-respondents on any of the Time 1 variables used in the economic integration model. As well, no significant differences were found in terms of age, marital status, level of education, whether participants were born in Canada, or immigration status. Respondents had lived in Ottawa for longer on average than non-respondents, $t(152) = 2.28, p < .05$, two-tailed.

The final follow-up sample consisted of approximately equal numbers of women with dependent children ($n = 49$) and women unaccompanied by children ($n = 52$). Participants reported having, on average, 1.6 children under age 18 ($SD = 1.46$). A substantial minority (44%) of women unaccompanied by children reported having at least one child under age 18. At Time 1, the average age of participants was 35.6 years ($SD = 10.5$). The majority (76%) reported being non-partnered (i.e., single, separated, divorced or widowed), while 24% reported being partnered (i.e., married, living with a romantic partner or being in a common-law relationship). Thirty-eight percent ($n = 39$) reported that they were not born in Canada. Of these individuals, 41% reported being Canadian citizens, 31% reported being refugees or refugee claimants, and 21% reported being landed immigrants.

Table 1
Sample Characteristics on Study Variables

Variable	(<i>N</i> = 101) <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>) or %
Economic integration: Either working or attending school at Time 2 (%)	37.6%
Work stability: Amount of time employed at Time 2 (months)	2.49 (6.08)
Engaged in education (full-time or part-time studies) at Time 2 (%)	20.8%
Engaged in full-time studies at Time 2 (%)	8.9%
Family status: % unaccompanied by children	52%
Mental health functioning (SF-36 MCS)	35.60 (12.54)
Perceived social support (SSQ-S)	4.70 (1.37)
Lifetime history of homelessness (months)	18.65 (28.73)
Work status at Time 1 (% working for pay)	7.9%
Employment history (% of time worked since age 16)	42.14 (31.16)
Level of education:	
% with less than high school education	36.6%
% with high school diploma	42.6%
% with postsecondary certificate, diploma or degree	19.8%
Amount of time housed (proportion of time between interviews for which participants were consecutively housed at Time 2)	69.23 (35.99)

Thirty-seven percent of participants reported having less than a high school education. Forty-three percent reported having a high school diploma and 20% reported having a college diploma, trade or technical certificate, or university degree.

Table 1 shows means and standard deviations or percentages for the sample on economic integration model variables.

Eight of the 101 participants (8%) reported that they were working for pay at Time 1. By Time 2, only three of these same individuals were still working; however, the total number of participants working for pay had increased to 22 (22%). A minority reported that they were seeking work at each interview; 21% reported that they were looking for work at Time 1, while 28% reported looking for work at Time 2. A majority of respondents (63%) endorsed a desire to return to school at the Time 1 interview. Twenty-one participants reported that they were attending school at Time 2; of

these, nine participants reported being full-time students.

Of the 22 participants who were employed at follow-up, almost all worked at low-paying jobs, and less than half (45%) were employed full-time (35 or more hours per week). Employment income ranged from \$382.00 (CAD)¹ per month for one individual employed 10 hours per week in a clerical job, to \$5000.00 (CAD) per month for a participant who was employed as a full-time teacher at a community college. The most common types of work were cleaning (27%) and childcare (18%). Other types of employment included clerical work, retail positions, personal care work, and general labour. One individual worked as a computer specialist and one worked for the federal government; however, these were both part-time positions.

The median income of participants at Time 2 was \$900.00 (CAD) per month (mean = \$991.94 (CAD); *SD* = 689.34). Participants

who were working had higher incomes (mean = \$1312.19 [CAD] per month) than those who were not (mean = \$901.61 [CAD] per month), $t(98) = 2.53, p = .01$ (two tailed); however, the difference between groups no longer reached significance with the outlier (i.e. the single participant earning \$5000.00 [CAD] /month) removed from the analysis. Participants who had been housed for at least 90 days ($n = 89; 88\%$) at Time 2 reported spending, on average, 36% of their income on housing. There was no difference between those who were employed and those who were not employed in the proportion of income spent on housing.

Model of Economic Integration

A logistic regression was conducted to predict economic integration (i.e., either working or engaged in education) at follow-up. In order to gain a more detailed understanding of economic integration, three additional regressions were performed. A multiple regression was conducted to identify predictors of work stability (i.e. number of consecutive months employed) at follow-up. Two logistic regressions were conducted to examine factors that predicted any (i.e., part-time or full-time) participation in educational at follow-up and engagement in full-time educational studies at follow-up.

Economic integration. A sequential logistic regression analysis was performed to assess whether the economic integration model would predict participants' membership in one of two categories, Economically Integrated (i.e. either working or attending school) and Not Economically Integrated, at Time 2. Lifetime history of homelessness, perceived social support, mental health functioning and family status, were entered together in the first step, as these variables were based on Time 1 data. The three human capital variables (employment history, work status at Time 1, and level of education), were entered together in the second step in order to examine the impact of these predictors as a group. Finally, amount of time housed, which was based on Time 2 data, was entered alone in the final step.

The model was statistically significant in the first step ($\chi^2(4, N = 100) = 12.17, p < .05$). This suggests that the model was able to distinguish between groups on the basis of the four predictor variables entered in the first step, which accounted for 16% of the variance in economic integration (Nagekerke $R^2 = .16$). The addition of the three human capital variables did not significantly improve the model, however the model approached statistical significance, $\chi^2(3, N = 100) = 7.70, p = .08$, and accounted for a moderate amount of variance in economic integration (Nagekerke $R^2 = .23$). The final step, with the addition of amount of time housed, further improved the model's predictive power ($\chi^2(1, N = 100) = 3.61, p = .05$, and accounted for a moderate amount of variance in economic integration (Nagekerke $R^2 = .27$).

Three significant predictors of economic integration were found. Women with dependent children were more likely to be economically integrated, and higher levels of mental health functioning was predictive of economic integration. Employment history emerged as a significant predictor in the second step, with those who had spent a greater proportion of time since age 16 working being more likely to be economically integrated at Time 2. In the third step, amount of time housed approached significance as a predictor, with a trend toward women who had been housed for longer being more likely to be working or attending school at follow-up.

Work stability. A sequential multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the ability of the economic integration model to predict work stability (i.e. number of months of continuous employment at Time 2). As in the previous analysis, the predictor variables were entered in three blocks.

The model was not statistically significant at the end of the first step, which accounted for only 3% of the variance in work stability ($R^2 = .03$). The predictive power of the model improved significantly with the addition of the three human capital variables in the second step (F change (3, 92) = 4.46, $p < .01$), and accounted for an

additional 12% of the variance in work stability (R^2 change = 0.12). The addition of amount of time housed in the third step did not significantly improve the predictive power of the model, and accounted for an additional 3% of variance in work stability (R^2 change = 0.03). Two of the predictor variables proved to be significant: employment history, with those who had spent a greater proportion of their time working since age 16 having greater work stability at Time 2, and work status at Time 1, with those who were employed at Time 1 having greater work stability than others. In addition, there was a trend toward more stable housing being associated with greater work stability ($p = .08$).

Engagement in education. A sequential logistic regression analysis was performed to assess predictors of participants' membership in one of two categories, Engaged in Education and Not Engaged in Education, at Time 2. As in the previous regressions, three blocks of variables were entered as predictors. The model fit was non-significant at each step, and did not successfully distinguish between the two groups. None of the variables predicted group membership.

Engagement in full-time studies. A sequential logistic regression analysis was performed to assess predictors of participants' membership in one of two categories, Full-time Student and Not Full-time Student, at Time 2. Again three blocks of variables were entered sequentially.

The model fit was non-significant at the first step, and did not successfully distinguish between the two groups on the basis of the four predictor variables entered in the first step. However, the addition of the three human capital variables improved the model, $\chi^2(3, N = 100) = 7.63, p = .05$, and accounted for a moderate amount of variance in economic integration (Nagekerke $R^2 = .23$). The final step, with the addition of amount of time housed, did not reliably improve the model's predictive power. Level of education was the only significant predictor of engagement in full-time studies, with a lower level of education being associated with a greater likelihood of being engaged in full-

time studies at follow-up.

Discussion

This study examined predictors of economic integration in the community for a sample of women who have experienced homelessness. The results presented here suggest that achieving economic integration following homelessness is challenging. Like many people who experience homelessness, the women in this study had relatively low levels of human capital. More than a third (37%) had less than a high school education. Participants had, on average, worked less than half the time (42%) since age 16. A majority (88%) of the women in our sample had been housed for at least 90 days at follow-up; however only a small number were working (22%) or attending some type of educational program (21%). This was an improvement from Time 1, when only 8% were working and 13% were attending school. However, only a small number were attending full-time studies (9%). Three participants were both employed and attending an educational program.

Those who were employed had only been working for only about two and a half months on average. Further, many had only part-time jobs, and most jobs were in unskilled, low-paying sectors. Employment was no guarantee of financial stability; after the income of a single, high-earning participant was removed from the analysis, there was no difference in income between those who were working and those who were not. While the average annual income for women in Ottawa was \$35,325 (CAD) (median = \$27,567 [CAD]) in 2005 (City of Ottawa, 2001-2014), for women in this study, the average annual income was the equivalent of only \$11,903 (CAD). Housing costs continued to be prohibitive; even those who were employed spent, on average, over a third of their income on rent. These results paint a picture of a group of women who continue to struggle with extreme poverty, precarious housing, and underemployment, suggesting they continued to be marginalised and disaffiliated from the mainstream of society. The prevalence of low-paying, part-

time jobs among those who were employed suggests that they continued to struggle to move from devalued to valued social roles.

The model of economic integration presented in this study was partially supported. First, family status emerged as a predictor of economic integration; women accompanied by dependent children were more likely to be economically integrated than those unaccompanied by children. However, family status did not predict work stability or return to school when these outcomes were examined separately. No prediction was made regarding the direction of the relationship between family status and economic integration as no previous research was found that specifically examined differences between women with and without dependent children. It is not clear why women with dependent children were more likely to achieve economic integration. Niessen (2006) found that having children increased participants' motivation to return to school, and the same may be true of returning to work for the women with dependent children in the current sample. Women unaccompanied by children in our sample reported poorer physical and mental health and more substance abuse than women with dependent children (Aubry et al., 2003). A significant number of women unaccompanied by dependent children were, in fact, mothers, but did not have their children in their care. Poor health (physical or mental) and/or substance abuse difficulties may have contributed to these women not having their children in their care and presented obstacles to their economic integration. It is also possible that women with dependent children were more likely to receive services that facilitated integration in the workforce of educational system.

Personal disability, as measured by mental health functioning, was a significant predictor of economic integration. Women with better mental health functioning were more likely to be economically integrated overall; however, mental health functioning did not predict work stability or return to school when these were examined separately. The women in this sample reported low

levels of mental health functioning compared to a normative sample (Aubry et al., 2003). These high levels of distress may have been either a cause or a consequence, at least in part, of the challenges these women face in attaining adequate employment and income or continuing their education. This is consistent with past studies, which have shown that mental illness is a barrier to employment (Mares & Rosenheck, 2006).

Human capital variables were important predictors of economic integration. Employment history predicted both overall economic integration and work stability, with those who had worked for a greater proportion of the time since age 16 being more likely to be economically integrated at Time 2 and to have worked for longer. Participants who were working at Time 1 were also more likely to have greater work stability Time 2. This finding is consistent with past findings that work history predicts employment among people who have experienced homelessness (Bogard et al., 2001) and among mothers who have received social assistance (Cheng 2007; Crittenden et al., 2002).

While one-fifth of participants reported attending an educational program at follow-up (21%), only a small number of participants were attending full-time studies (9%). None of the variables tested in the economic integration model predicted participation in education when engagement in full- and part-time studies were examined together; however, level of education was predictive of participation in full-time studies. In contrast with past research, which has suggested that past academic success predicts school re-entry (Astone et al., 2000; Niessen, 2006), lower levels of education predicted full-time studies in this sample. Two-thirds of the full-time students reported less than a high-school education at Time 1. Social service providers may have encouraged these women to return to school; social benefits recipients are encouraged to return to school, and benefit periods may be extended for those who engage in educational programs (personal communication, City of Ottawa Employment and Financial

Assistance Branch, August 19, 2010). It is also possible that these women recognised the importance of increasing their human capital in order to improve their prospects for future employment as they moved toward greater integration in their communities.

Although past research has suggested a relationship between education and employment among women exiting social assistance (Cheng, 2007; Crittenden et al., 2002; Danziger et al., 2001; Horwitz & Kerker, 2001; Pandey & Kim, 2008), level of education was not related to work stability or overall economic integration in the current sample. One possible explanation for this lies in the types of jobs held by those participants who succeeded in finding work. Of participants who were working, most had been working for only relatively short periods of time, and the majority were in part-time, low-paying jobs that require little education and may be expected to be relatively short-term in many cases.

Amount of time housed at follow-up approached significance as a predictor of economic integration, with a trend toward those who were more stably housed being more likely to be either working or attending school at follow-up. Amount of time housed also approached significance as a predictor of work stability, with a trend toward those who were housed for longer periods of time being employed for longer. Past research has suggested a reciprocal relationship between housing and employment for individuals who have experienced homelessness. Being housed may facilitate finding employment (Wright, 1997) and remaining employed (Mares & Rosenheck, 2006). Conversely, being employed may also assist in exiting homelessness (Piliavin et al., 1996; Shaheen & Rio, 2007). The limited sample size and the relatively large number of predictor variables used in the regression equations resulted in relatively low statistical power in these analyses. Repeating these analyses with larger sample would likely reveal a significant relationship between physical and economic integration.

Perceived social support did not emerge as a significant predictor of economic

integration in this sample. Overall, participants reported relatively high levels of satisfaction with social support. However, it is possible that for a variety of reasons, participants did not call upon their available social supports, or that the support systems of study participants consisted of people who themselves did not have the resources to provide the kind of instrumental or material help participants needed in order to obtain employment or resume their education.

No previous research was found examining the impact of length of time homeless on either employment or education; however it was expected that longer histories of homelessness would represent a greater degree of acculturation to homelessness, and present a barrier to achieving economic integration. However, lifetime history of homelessness did not predict economic integration in this sample.

Limitations

The exclusive reliance on quantitative data and a relatively modest sample were limitations of this study. Coupling the trends noted above with the participants' qualitative responses to open-ended questions about challenges and obstacles to working or attending schools, and their ideas about helpful supports, would have alerted the authors to other possible explanatory factors, such as discrimination associated with racism, sexism, or classism.

In regard to the quantitative analysis, a larger sample would have provided the opportunity to examine the experiences of women with and without dependent children separately, allowing a richer understanding of their efforts at economic integration and challenges of achieving such a goal. A larger sample would also have allowed examination of a wider variety of predictor variables, such as visible minority, sexual orientation or immigration status, thus providing a fuller and more accurate picture of what helps diverse women become integrated in the economy following homelessness.

Another limitation may be the sampling strategy that was used. The sample may not be representative of all homeless women in

Ottawa. Approximately equal groups of women unaccompanied by children and adults with dependent children were recruited for the purposes of this study. As well, all the women in this study resided in shelters at Time 1, which excluded women living in other situations such as on the street, in abandoned buildings, or staying temporarily with friends or family. Since service providers aided in the recruitment of participants, there is the possibility that there may have been some bias in the sample, most likely toward higher functioning individuals. The nature of the employment and housing markets in Ottawa, which may differ from those in other cities, may limit the generalisability of these findings. An additional limitation is that the study relied on self-reported information. Self-report data may be vulnerable to the effects of bias or inaccuracy due to faulty memory, lack of information, or reticence on the part of participants.

Conclusions and Implications

The research presented here represents the first longitudinal study examining employment and educational outcomes in a sample of women living in Canada who have experienced homelessness. The model of economic integration presented was partially supported, with family status, mental health functioning and human capital variables emerging as important predictors of economic integration. There were very limited positive findings: more women reported working or attending full-time studies at follow-up than at the initial interview. About a fifth of participants were working, and another fifth were attending educational programs either full- or part-time. A smaller proportion, consisting primarily of women who had not completed high school, was attending full-time studies. One participant was both working and attending full-time studies, while two others were employed and attending school part-time.

Overall, however, these findings paint a bleak picture of the likelihood of overcoming poverty and becoming fully integrated in the economy after homelessness. Participants

remained largely disaffiliated from conventional social structures, reporting low levels of human capital, continued poverty, and poor work outcomes. Among participants who were working, almost all had low-paying and/or part-time jobs. Service, cleaning, and child-care work may be expected to be relatively short-term and provide little opportunity for advancement, and most women were earning no more through employment than those who were receiving social assistance. These results are sobering reminders of the persistence and negative implications of gender-based occupational segregation among poor women with little education.

Although a majority of the women in this study were housed at follow-up, it appears that re-housing is not sufficient on its own to help women who have experienced homelessness to begin the process of becoming economically integrated in their communities. Participants in this study would clearly benefit from services and supports that would allow them to obtain employment or training that would increase their future employability. Given the relatively small number who were working, and the continuing financial difficulty faced by most participants regardless of whether they were employed, it is imperative that public policy address the stubborn structural problems that leave vulnerable women with very few realistic options to reduce their economic vulnerability (Harris, 1996). It is important to note that our sample included women who were disabled and unable to work. In these cases, adequate income support, rather than training, education, or job search assistance is needed to assist them to attain economic integration.

Shaheen and Rio (2007) argue that rather than taking a "job readiness" approach, it is more effective to help homeless individuals to find work immediately, and to focus on training only after employment has been obtained. They advocate for the provision of supportive services and housing in combination with a wide variety of employment services that can help homeless individuals enter the competitive labour

market. Greater housing stability may, in turn, lead to a greater possibility of finding and retaining employment (Mares & Rosenheck, 2006; Wright, 1997).

Bassuk, Volk, and Olivet (2010) argue for a three-tiered approach to resolving issues of family homelessness, beginning with the provision of housing, then providing support services including employment and education support, as well as assisting people deal with long-term health or substance abuse difficulties. Shier, Jones, and Graham (2012) note that establishing housing stability needs to take precedence over economic integration. These authors argue that factors associated with employment while homeless may actually contribute rather than resolve housing problems. Thus, housing and employment services need to work hand-in-hand to help women exit homelessness to stable housing, and then provide opportunities for employment or education. Ongoing support may be needed to help women who have experienced homelessness cope with personal disability issues and maintain stable housing and employment.

The enduring poverty of women who experience homelessness should be a social problem to which community psychologists in developed countries give priority in their work since these women represent one of the most marginalised groups in the population. Our study joins other previous research in highlighting the need for developing programs and policies that target the lack of economic integration opportunities available to this subgroup of women in the population.

Note

1. \$1.00 CAD (Canadian) = \$0.63 - \$0.83 USD (American) & \$1.07 - \$1.23 AUS (Australian) during the period of the study.

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Promoting community engagement in an intergenerational program: An exploratory study

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The purpose of this qualitative study, conducted with seven elderly people attending a Respite Centre, was to explore the experience of older people who attend a respite centre that is visited by adolescent students from a local secondary school as part of an intergenerational program that has a community engagement focus. Data were collected in semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis yielded three interrelated themes: “Experience of Self and Life” contributes to understanding how the participants perceived themselves and the world around them; “Experience of the Respite Centre” contributes to explaining how the visits to the Centre fit into participants’ lives; “Experience of the intergenerational interaction” describes a positive albeit incomplete encounter with the young people. The overall impression gained was one of a positive and remarkable group of elderly people who defied many ageing stereotypes. It is submitted that the article makes a contribution to theory and practice in community psychology, and specifically addresses the focus areas of the special issue by exploring community engagement and citizenship enhancement in a setting which brings together two cohorts of participants, respectively at the beginning and end of the world of work. Suggestions are made for improving the community engagement aspect of the intergenerational program.

The world is currently facing unprecedented demographic changes. The number of people throughout the world over the age of 60 years will nearly triple in the next 30 years (United National Population Division, 2005) and in contrast, the percentage of those under 14 years of age will decline from 28 per cent to 20 per cent by 2050. These trends are evident too in Australia where life expectancy has increased significantly, from around 57 years in 1900 to 79.5 years for males and 84 years for females in 2009 (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2008). This demographic change is driven mainly by increases in life expectancy and a decreasing fertility rate (Australian Government Treasury, 2010). These changes will have profound implications for society. From an economic perspective, significantly increased burdens will be placed on a diminishing workforce to maintain productivity and pay taxes to fund the greater demand for the Aged Pension and health and aged care spending (Australian Government, 2004). From a social perspective, the increment in the proportion of older people in our society has contributed to make more visible the issue of stereotypes

associated with old age and ageing (Achenbaum, 2005).

The intolerance and prejudice based on a person’s age, or *ageism*, is one of the most enduring and widespread forms of prejudice along with racism and sexism (Packer & Chasteen, 2006), with the important difference that while most people will not change race or gender, many may be on the receiving end of ageism. As old age is often associated with physical decline (because of inevitable gradual biological decay) and perceived social isolation, older age becomes a less attractive or even an unattractive characteristic (Weiss & Freund, 2011). Even though ageist stereotypes of older people vary amongst cultures, these can often involve inaccurate ideas about mental and physical decay, preconceptions about financial and social problems, and the expectation that older people should retire from public and social life (Pain, 2005). It has been argued that children and adolescents have more negative views concerning older persons than other age cohorts of the population (Cottle & Glover, 2007) and that a contributing factor to this lack of understanding seems to be the

absence of contact between younger and older people (Thomas, 2003). Conversely, older adults' mental representations of and judgments about adolescents appear to be neither strongly negative nor strongly positive, but rather neutral and balanced (Matheson, Collins, & Kuehne, 2000; Pinguart, Wenzel, & Sørensen, 2000).

Historically, ties between younger and older age-groups within Western societies were much stronger and positive compared to what they are at present. Current family lifestyles have reduced the opportunities for significant relationships between younger and older generations and this in turn has contributed to the negative attitudes toward older adults that prevail in modern western society (Kessler & Stausinger, 2007). Generations are becoming increasingly separated from one another because of changes in traditional family structures, increased family mobility and frequent changes in living arrangements (Springate, Atkinson, & Martin, 2008). The increasing number of fragmented families and non-traditional family units have decreased the number of opportunities many children have to come into contact with relationships previously offered by contact with extended family (Feldman, Mahoney, & Seedsman, 2001), with a large proportion of young people not having this previously available intergenerational contact within their family. The consequences of these social trends have touched the lives of older and younger people. For older people, there has been a decrease in self-confidence, and a rise in sense of loneliness, and for younger people, there has been a loss of traditional elder/child nurturing, and a rise in the fear of ageing (Achenbaum, 2005). Intergenerational programs can help to deal with the isolation of the elderly and misunderstandings of youth by bringing both generations together (Slaght & Stampely, 2006). Participants not only learn new things about each other but research also suggests that this interchange contributes to participants (particularly older people) experiencing positive outcomes in physical and mental health (MacCallum, Palmer, Wright, Cumming-Potvin, Brooker

& Tero, 2010). Weintraub and Killian (2009) suggest that a number of physical and mental afflictions related to old-age could be reduced by the social interaction, mental stimulation, and increased movement that is created as a result of intergenerational contact. Intergenerational programs are often centred on helping the developmental needs of young people; those programs with a community engagement focus provide opportunities for interaction with older people, and are particularly relevant for students who do not have regular contact with older relatives. Appropriately trained members of the school counselling or pastoral care team may utilise the students' experience to facilitate insight and personal growth of the students. Most of the research on intergenerational contact focuses on the young person and how it can benefit them or how these encounters can change negative stereotypes the young people may have about the elderly in our society (Feldman, 2001; Gray, 2008; Hannon & Gueldner, 2008; Thomas, 2003; Whitworth, 2003).

In contrast to the prevalent focus on the needs of the young, the requirements of the older people are rarely contemplated and their opinions not often heard (Reisig & Fees, 2007). In the call for contributions to the Special Issue on Work, Community and Citizenship, the editors made particular reference to "the importance of work for both community engagement and the crafting of individual identities". The study reported in this paper concerns two cohorts of the population, at either end of active participation in the world of work – older people no longer employed and adolescents who have yet to enter formal employment – but had the aim to explore the experience of older people who attend a respite centre that is visited by younger people from a local secondary school as part of an intergenerational program that has a community engagement focus. Specifically, the intergenerational program recognises the need to create opportunities for students to interact with older people in the community, and goes beyond inviting grandparents and older relatives to attend school functions

(e.g., awards evenings, cultural events, and national celebrations) in promoting community engagement. This is operationalised as students being encouraged and supported in participating in voluntary, service-oriented activities, and providing learning opportunities that address negative stereotypes of the elderly. A useful and aspirational definition of intergenerational programs suggests they should “involve active engagement and participation of multiple generations in activities requiring mutual exchange in a range of formal and informal spaces” (MacCallum et al., 2010, p. 121).

The study reported in this article was conducted from a qualitative and phenomenological perspective, and employed thematic analysis to identify significant patterns in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). From a phenomenological perspective, the investigator tries to look at the way participants see their own world and to try, as much as possible, to explore the participants' experience from their own perspective. Instead of trying to come out with 'neutral' statements about an issue, this approach examines the participants' personal description of the experience and seeks to summarise the characteristics of individual experiences. It is submitted that the article makes a contribution to theory and practice in community psychology, and specifically addresses the focus areas of the special issue by exploring community engagement and citizenship enhancement in a setting which brings together two cohorts of participants, respectively at the beginning and end of the world of work.

Methodology

The study was conducted at a Day Respite Centre that is part of a Senior Citizens Centre in a city on the east coast of Australia. The Respite Centre provides services which allow visitors to benefit from the companionship of other people in a secure and caring setting and offer carers and families some respite. Assistance offered to elderly people from the local area includes transport to and from the centre, morning tea

and lunch, various types of entertainment (including moderate exercise classes), group activities (including craft, bingo and scrabble), theme days, and excursions to local attractions. The Centre also arranges for regular visits by occupational therapists, podiatrists and hairdressers. Additionally, once a month, a group of four to six male students from a local all-boys secondary school visit the Respite Centre as part of a school program that aims to enhance engagement with the local community. These students, drawn from the Year 9 classes and on average 14 years old, volunteer to visit the Respite Centre and attendance earns them credit towards a formal recognition of their commitment to positive citizenship.

By way of orienting the reader, a brief description of the facilities and procedures is offered. On average 20 elderly people attend the Respite Centre on any given day. The Centre comprises a large room with four distinct areas: a fully equipped commercial kitchen where morning tea and lunch are prepared, an eating area with tables and chairs, an office used for administrative work and an area for activities. Arrangements are in place for the elderly people to be collected from their homes to be taken to the Respite Centre where they are served morning tea. By the time the group from the school arrives, the elderly people are sitting in a semi-circle getting ready for the activities of the day. The researcher observed that they all appear to be very happy to be there and there is a clear sense of camaraderie between members of the mostly female group.

The students are briefed by a member of the school's staff prior to them going to the Respite Centre. They are informed that the elderly people attending the Respite Centre are in reasonably good health, and yet appreciate being spoken to loudly and clearly. It is explained that the elderly people look forward to see the boys as they often remind them of their own grandchildren and also of their younger selves. The boys are told that they have to introduce themselves, talk a little bit about their family and where

they come from (some of the students are from country areas as this school has a boarding component to it) and that after that they will probably help with the activities of the day.

This study had ethical approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University to which the authors are affiliated (Approval number H12REA059). The coordinator of the Respite Centre granted permission to recruit participants (aged 60 years and above) and to interview interested individuals who gave their informed consent to participate in the study. It was agreed that the interviews would be recorded.

A total of seven visitors to the Respite Centre consented to participate in the study (five women and two men). Five of the participants agreed to divulge their age which ranged from 76 to 96 years. In the interests of confidentiality and anonymity participants were offered the opportunity to nominate a pseudonym of their choosing; the following pseudonyms are assigned to quotes from the interview transcripts used to illustrate themes identified in the analysis: Alice, Bianca, Esther, Geraldine and Mary (all female); Barry and Nick (male). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants using an interview guide; as agreed interviews were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. The interviews were conducted by the first author during a series of visits, having an average of two interviews per visit.

Results

Although principally adhering to the guide to doing thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), the authors were also influenced by the work of Smith, Jarman, and Osborne (1999) in seeking to understand the experiences of the participants. Instead of making an effort to generate 'objective' accounts about a particular issue, an attempt was made to view individual's own description of the experience and to summarise the quality and texture of individual experiences (Thornhill, Lyons, Nouwen, & Lip, 2008). Interview transcripts were analysed one by one. Each

transcript was read and re-read a number of times, and keywords and points of interest where noted regarding the participant's experience of the Respite Centre. Themes were tentatively organised and then explored in more detail. This process was repeated for each transcript. This iterative process involved numerous returns to each transcript to check meanings. Each theme's relation with other themes was also examined, working toward what Braun and Clarke (2006) refer to as "a thematic 'map' of the analysis" (87). Finally, themes were integrated across transcripts in order to identify shared themes which captured the essence of the participants' experience of interacting with the young people visiting the Centre. These shared themes that came to light from the participants' descriptions were the key focus of the analysis, accepting that individual experience and differences across participants need to be recognised.

Three major themes were identified in the transcripts, and were labelled "the experience of self and life," "the experience of the Respite Centre" and "the experience of the intergenerational interaction". These themes were well represented across the interviews, providing a relatively comprehensive account of participants' experiences in the Respite Centre and in particular in relation to the interaction with the young people at the Respite Centre.

Theme 1: The Experience of Self and Life

Participants were asked in general terms about their life, their previous occupation and their family as part of the interviews. Typical stereotypes of ageing and older people in general include the idea that older people are miserable and lonely most of the time (Kupetz, 1994; Pain, 2005). The research on ageism suggests that older people are not often purposely disliked; instead they are more likely to be the sufferers of paternalistic prejudice which labels them as kind, but incompetent (Packer & Chasteen, 2006), "feeble yet lovable, doddering but dear" (Cuddy & Fiske, 2002, p. 4). The experience of the elderly people interviewed for this research portrayed a

very different picture. Participants were confident, had strong opinions about topical issues like politics and education:

Politicians should be ruling this country, not fighting each other ... they play up to the public and I don't know whether they really put the public first. (Mary)
School is writing, reading, but morality, parents. (Esther)

Adams-Price and Morse (2009) describe dependency and helplessness as one of the most widespread of all the stereotypes used to categorise older people. On the contrary, the participants in the reported study were positive and optimistic in spite of physical difficulties:

There is so much good in the world. All we hear on the TV or anywhere is the negative of people, we don't hear the good people – the goodness of people. (Mary)
We oldies have a wonderful life. It's marvellous. No responsibility and we meet lovely people. If I growl I say to myself: there is no war, there are no storms and you're not in pain, stop whinging Alice! (Alice)

There was a general sense of gratitude, positiveness and optimism throughout the conversations. Similarly to the findings in Kruss Whitbourne's (2005) work, the elderly people interviewed had a positive opinion of themselves. When reminiscing about their past, they were hardly ever bitter or sad, there was, for the majority of the time, a sense of appreciation for the good things that happen to them and even more so for the opportunities they have today:

When I was growing up, it was hard and I appreciate life now. (Alice)
Notwithstanding that participants were encouraged to share their experiences of work during the interview – for example, the interview guide developed for the project included the following prompts: How long have you been retired? How would you describe your role or occupation or job prior to retiring? – they had very little to say in this regard. This aspect of the interview may have

benefitted from more direct questioning, but it appeared that participants were more engaged in the discussion about the Respite Centre.

Theme 2: The Experience of the Respite Centre

The experience of the Respite Centre refers to participants' experiences of the activities, their relationship towards other participants and how the visits to the Respite Centre fit into their lives. All participants spoke with great affection and generally in a very positive way about the Respite Centre. Participants had been attending the Centre for an average of two years and they all planned to continue visiting the centre in the future. Participants described the benefits of visiting the centre with practical and emotional reasons. For example, some of the elderly people visiting the centre have either very little or no family at all. The centre provides a safe space for socialisation. Responding to the question about reasons for coming to the centre some of the participants responded:

Oh, just all the company and the people that are here and I can talk to them, you know, just freely and act the fool. (Nick)

It's an enjoyable day and you meet a lot of nice people. (Geraldine)

The company. It helps me get by living on my own. (Bianca)

Oh well, the socialising.

Socialising, meeting other people, and the staff are lovely. (Mary)

Sims, Levy, Mwendwa, Callender, and Campbell (2011) suggest that social support improves mental and physical health and reduces the risk of disease. Loneliness has also been associated with higher blood pressure in elderly people and is a predictor of depressive symptoms (Victor & Yang, 2012). The Respite Centre can, therefore, fulfil an important role in providing opportunities for socialisation for the elderly people. Practical concerns were commented on in very clear terms:

I get my meals here too, and I get

my hair done and I get my feet done from my podiatrist and my hairdresser. They pick me up and take me home. (Bianca)
Well, it fills in a day for me. (Geraldine)

Both practical and emotive reasons are part of the experience of the elderly people visiting the Respite Centre. Participants identified enjoyment of the activities and the company as well as meeting practical needs like eating a prepared meal and having one's hair done by a hairdresser. All participants reported that they were happy with how things were run at the Respite Centre and had no suggestions for changes to the daily routine.

Theme 3: The Experience of the intergenerational interaction

The third, and perhaps central, theme that came up in the interviews was that of the experience of interacting with the young people visiting the Respite Centre. Participants were unanimous in their view that these visits were a positive addition to the activities they had in the Centre:

I like the boys ... they are nice company. (Bianca)
What do I think? I think they're wonderful! (Alice)
Well, it's [the day] a bit more interesting. A bit of happiness and see the boys happy and we're happy ... just makes you feel better to have young people around. (Nick)
I think it's just two generations mixing and getting to know each other and having conversation. The young and the old getting together, it's wonderful. (Mary)

One of the positive aspects of the boys' visits commented on by the participants was how the elderly people felt treated with respect by the students, a respect that is not always present when they are out in the community:

Well, they are not rude like some young people can be. (Barry)
They're well behaved boys,

they're nice boys and when spoken to they speak nicely to you. (Geraldine)
They're very polite. Some of the other kids around the place here are pretty rough, you know. (Nick)

As much as the boys are liked and their visits appreciated and enjoyed, the boys seem to have a relatively passive role when they attend the Centre:

They help here and there with these other games, with the ten pin bowling and the little golf game, you know? I don't talk much to them. (Nick)
There is a bit of variety in the morning for us really. I don't talk much to the boys. (Geraldine)
They never say anything much. They just take it in their stride. (Alice)
We have games with them, they just do what they are asked to do. (Esther)

Palmore (2005) suggests that for an intergenerational activity to be effective, and not reinforce stereotypes and prejudice, three features should be present: participants should have equal status; it must lead to personal relationships; and activities should be cooperative and not competitive. That any these conditions are met at the Respite Centre cannot be argued with great confidence. The elderly people and the young people are not on even standing, based on the disparity in their respective ages and also because the boys were not familiar with the environment or the routine, and seemed a bit hesitant at times. Although some of the activities (e.g., mini golf, word puzzles, bingo) have a competitive side to it, winning is clearly not a focus as there are no prizes, and it is basically good, fun entertainment. The aspect that was most clearly missing was the experience of a relationship with the students. There is little real relationship between the two groups – ways to improve this situation will be discussed in due course. The routine is quite mechanistic: the boys arrive, the elderly

people are sitting in a circle, the boys introduce themselves to the group and then they help with the different activities. There is no real interaction or opportunity for building relationships. Some of the participants expressed how they would prefer to have things organised so there is a closer encounter with the young people visiting the centre:

Another thing I'd like is to just sit down and have a conversation.

That's the only thing I like. Just to sit and talk but they just organise things you see. You don't get a chance to really know them that well. (Mary)

I wouldn't mind talking to them more. (Bianca)

We always say g'day to them but just to sit down and talk to them, I don't, no. (Nick)

For an intergenerational program to have real benefits, research suggests that a number of encounters between the young and older people were needed to allow time for relationships to grow and that 'one off' contact has less chances of being successful (Springate et al., 2008). Part of the reason there is not a closer relationship between the two groups is due to the way the program is organised. With different boys in each visit there is little chance of sustained interaction between the elderly people and the students; the program does not really contribute in forming a relationship that, in turn, would help to change preconceived ideas of youth (by the elderly people) and of old age (by the students). In spite of their interest in having more contact with the students there was also a degree of hesitation from some of the participants about having more contact with them:

...the only thing is I don't know whether I would have the conversation to interest a younger generation. I don't know if I would have that ... (Mary)

To be quite honest I don't know what I would really talk to them about. (Nick)

Participants also believed these visits were a

positive experience for the boys; responses to the first author asking "Is it good for them?" included the following:

Yes, they learn from older people. (Barry)

I suppose they enjoy it too ... they get to know older people. (Mary)
... and they are getting out of lessons! (Alice – with a very cheeky smile)

Discussion

This qualitative study explored the experiences of elder people who visit an inner-city Respite Centre in an Australian city. As part of their school's community engagement program, groups of boys visit the elderly people once a month. From the interviews with the elderly participants a number of patterns and themes emerged across their accounts and three main themes were identified. These were labelled as the experience of self and life; the experience of the respite centre, and the experience of the intergenerational interaction. While these three themes are presented separately, they were inter-related and created a picture across all the interviews of the experience of the elderly people visiting the Respite Centre.

The interviews challenged a number of stereotypes of elder people. There was no sense of defeat or pessimism in the participants. On the contrary, and despite serious health limitations in some cases, the researcher did not see people complaining, sad or even lonely. They were an interesting group who could be characterised as being "full of life". Participants asked many questions about the researcher's life and this project in "off the record" conversations. It is possible that participants were engaged to a greater extent by the conversations with the researcher than they were generally by the students. This aspect might be readily addressed by a more formal survey of the expectations of the elderly visitors to the Respite Centre, which is to say what level of interaction with the students they would prefer; this in turn could inform the "briefing" that members of the pastoral care

team at the school provide to the students.

Participants were unanimous about how much they enjoyed their visits to the Respite Centre, a place they see mainly as a place to socialise, where they value the efforts of the staff, and are also appreciative of the visits from the students. These visits are, however, currently nothing more than another “activity”; they are one more thing that happens in the Centre, like playing bingo, tenpin bowling or visiting a local sporting club. This is not necessarily a bad thing. However, if these visits were to become more meaningful, and therefore, be more beneficial for the elderly people, it would be important to try to develop a deeper relationship, even in the context of a single visit. This could be easily achieved if the students shared one of the two meals the elderly people have in the Centre. The participants demonstrated that they have excellent conversation skills, they have interesting stories to tell and that they have an interest in other people.

It was noted in the results section that the intergenerational program reported in this study failed to meet Palmore’s (2005) criteria for effectiveness. Whilst it may not be appropriate to expect a situation whereby the adolescent and elderly people had equal status, given their age and circumstance, the relative lack (or at least superficial nature of) personal relationships established between the students and the elderly clearly diminished the “engagement” outcomes of the interactions. This could be remedied by amending the scheduling of repeat visits, while the equally important issue of utilising the interaction between the students and elderly for the purposes of citizenship enhancement for the students could involve a more active role by appropriately trained members of the school counselling or pastoral care team – reflection exercises and coaching could be usefully employed to facilitate insight and personal growth of the students.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. First, the data are from a small sample of older people in a particular setting (i.e., a

Respite Centre in a city in Australia), and hence the findings may not be germane to other contexts. Second, only boys visited the Respite Centre; in order to evaluate whether gender differences were a factor an appropriate school for girls (or girls and boys) would need to be recruited for a follow up study. Third, the interviews tended to be very brief, in part because the participants may have been unfamiliar with the research process and in part because the topics of enquiry were exhausted in the time taken. Data from “off the record” conversations with the first author were not included in the transcripts, and were therefore excluded from the analysis. These methodological issues can be addressed by engaging participants over a longer period, enhancing participants’ familiarity with the researchers and the research process.

Implications

The study has direct implications at the local level. Notwithstanding the limitations outlined above, there is some evidence that the community engagement aspects of the school program are achieving the goal of making students aware of the needs of elderly people in the community. The study highlights a number of easily implemented strategies to improve the program: providing opportunities for each boy to interact with the same elderly person over several visits; introducing structured activities that enhance the sense of worth of the elderly participants (e.g., recording achievements or imparting wisdom); designing reflective exercises for the boys to identify and reinforce the value gained from the volunteering experience. A formal evaluation of the program may yield opportunities for continuous improvement, which may be applied to other settings (e.g., residential aged care facilities).

Conclusion

In an environment where there is an increasing percentage of elderly people in our communities and where younger people have less contact with older people, both groups would benefit from more of the

initiatives taken by the secondary school reported in this study. The experience of visiting the Respite Centre is certainly positive from the point of view of the elderly people. The visits from the boys are currently an additional activity extra; a more meaningful relationship between the two groups could make these interactions more than just that. Implementing a small number of strategies holds promise for realising many of the positive outcomes of intergenerational programs, and evaluating these changes will contribute to the literature.

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Relocation to an area of high amenity: Tree-change euphoria vs. homesickness, alienation and loneliness

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Migration to areas of high amenity is often motivated by lifestyle choices (sometimes referred to as the sea-change or tree-change phenomenon) and can include a desire to exchange the stress of career and work in the city for a slower pace of life. Areas of high amenity are generally non-urban, coastal or rural, with high quality natural landscapes and/or sociocultural environments. Little is known about individuals' experiences after such relocation and there is insufficient research to hypothesise about psychological outcomes. Interpretative phenomenological analysis {Smith, 1995 #236} was used in this preliminary study to analyse data from semi-structured interviews with individuals who had recently moved to Cara (pseudonym), an Australian semi-rural tourist destination known for its scenic, cultural, and social amenity. Analysis produced 4 themes: a) The fit between the individual and the new location; b) Friendship and being a part of something vs. alienation and self-doubt; c) Making sense of social difficulties; and d) Relocation to an area of high amenity as an intense experience. Issues of identity and sense of self arose within almost every theme and employment status impacted in a variety of ways. Such relocation can be intensely positive, or intensely distressing, and avenues for research are identified, including possible interventions.

A relatively modern phenomenon observed throughout the 'developed' world is migration to areas of high amenity (e.g., Benson & O'Reilly, 2009a). These are generally non-urban areas, coastal or rural, with high quality natural landscapes and/or socio-cultural environments (e.g., Burnley & Murphy, 2004). Traditionally, reasons for geographic relocation have often been economic (Barcus, 2004). However, relocation to these regions is often motivated by lifestyle factors, sometimes referred to as the sea-change or tree-change phenomenon (Burnley & Murphy, 2004; Ragusa, 2010). Such migrants are often looking for a slower pace of life and sense of community (prioritising lifestyle over work), and have frequently moved from a city (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009a). Relocation to areas of high amenity can involve the decision to work less hours, the search for employment in areas with limited job opportunities, commuting long distances, using information technology to work from home, or choosing to leave the paid workforce altogether – each perhaps with its own potential challenges. Receiving communities often experience fluctuating populations, and individuals may return to

their previous location due to disappointment and unmet expectations (Lu, 2002; Nelson, 2006).

Amenity migrants can be motivated by the desire for a more meaningful life (e.g., Hoey, 2006), choosing relaxed lifestyles in attractive environments over the pressures of career and/or city life in both Australia (e.g., Burnley & Murphy, 2004) and other nations (Gosnell & Abrams, 2011). The decision to move to an area of high amenity can be part of an intrapersonal journey and even result in (or from) changes in identity, particularly when it involves exchanging a corporate career for what some experience as a more authentic life (e.g., Hoey, 2006). Similarly, Hamilton (2003) in his Australia Institute report on "downshifTERS" (p. vii), described individuals whose lifestyle change involved reduced income and consumption motivated by the search for more fulfilling lives. As early as the 1960s in Australia, as elsewhere, alternative lifestyles (Brinkerhoff & Jacob, 1986) were leaving traditional forms of employment and moving "back to the land", attempting to live sustainably (Halfacree, 2006, p. 1). This movement has grown to include less radical lifestyle migrants in

search of a “rural idyll” (Benson & O’Reilly, 2009b, p. 612). Relocators often expect rural life to be better, simpler, relaxed, and to include a strong sense of community (Benson & O’Reilly, 2009b). This does not always match reality (Halfacree & Rivera, 2012), though limited research of post-relocation experiences has been conducted (Barcus, 2004), particularly in Australia.

Motivations for amenity migration often include the natural environment (Gosnell & Abrams, 2011) and some authors have observed a ‘spiritual’ response to nature, as with relocators to mountainous regions in Canada (Locke, 2006, p. 26). Locke’s (2006) definition of ‘spiritual’ response included “a sense of purpose beyond the acquisition of material comforts or a feeling of belonging that is not dependent on the approbation of other people” (pp. 26-27). However, the natural environment can prove insufficient if other needs are not met. Nelson (2006), interviewing an amenity migrant who intended to leave the area due to lack of *social* amenity despite high *natural* amenity, observed that trust within receiving communities can take time to build.

In addition to the attractions of natural amenity or an alternative lifestyle, social amenity, such as sense of community, is also often a motivating factor (e.g., Casado-Diaz, 2009; Nelson, 2006). Sense of community and social support have both been associated with physical and mental health (e.g., Farrell, Aubry, & Coulombe, 2004; Thoits, 2011), raising questions regarding the well-being of individuals who relocate: Do non-urban communities actually offer a higher sense of community? If so, do newcomers benefit from this and do they get the social support they need?

Some studies have found that individuals in non-urban areas can experience a greater sense of community or belonging than urban residents (e.g., Obst, Smith, & Zinkiewicz, 2002). However, Wilkinson (2008) found no relationship between community size and social cohesion (sense of community combined with attraction-to-neighbourhood and within-neighbourhood

social interaction). Bishop, Coakes, and D’Rozario (2002) compared six rural communities in Western Australia and found sense of community to be slightly lower in the more remote communities (which were also the least established). They also found that the structure and dynamics of community varied between the towns, suggesting that finding a sense of community by relocating might not be straightforward, and context may be important. While all towns were described as friendly and helpful, instrumental support was sometimes more accessible than social support.

Some studies have found that length of residence can be a more important predictor of community sentiments than population size (Kasarda & Janowitz, 1974; see also Theodori & Luloff, 2000). Positive associations have been found between length of residence and feeling at home, sorrow at thoughts of leaving (Theodori & Luloff, 2000), and sense of belonging (Young, Russell & Powers, 2004). This, too, can vary with context (e.g., Hur & Morrow-Jones, 2008).

Some studies have examined the experiences of European lifestyle migrants moving to areas of high natural and cultural amenity such as the Spanish coast, with mixed findings. Some participants had vibrant and satisfying social lives while others experienced isolation and boredom (Huber & O’Reilly, 2004), anxiety, or depression (La Parra & Mateo, 2008). Australians who migrate domestically to areas of high amenity, however, do not face the language barriers or acculturation stress of those who relocate internationally. Insufficient research exists to predict outcomes for this population, though some have examined the experiences of new residents to rural towns in Australia. In the six rural towns discussed above, Bishop et al. (2002) found that new residents often experienced receiving communities as welcoming, however in the older, established communities, they often had to fit into existing, hierarchical social structures, and diversity could be less tolerated. While many

enjoyed a sense of community, this was not always without its negative aspects. Sharing confidences was not always felt to be safe in a small community, and having similar interests to local residents (e.g., sporting clubs, church) could be very important. It also could take time to become accepted.

This study is therefore a preliminary examination of the experience of relocation to an area of high amenity in Australia, from a psychological perspective. It is not known whether sense of community motivates such relocators in Australia as it can elsewhere (though some social issues seem likely), nor even the role of work within such a 'tree-change'. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009) is particularly suitable when little is known about a phenomenon, when it is multi-faceted, complex, and somewhat contextual, as such a relocation is likely to be.

Method

Participants

Three participants were interviewed for this preliminary study, permitting long interviews to go into great depth and detail (totaling six hours of data). This allowed similarities and differences to be examined while maintaining a commitment to idiographic examination of individual experience. IPA uses relatively homogenous, purposive samples; these three participants were all white, partnered, middle-class, home-owning women between the age of 55 and 65 who had moved to the town of Cara between six months and three years prior to the study. All identifying information has been changed to protect confidentiality.

Lorelle was 58 years old and had tried living on the coast and commuting to the city for three years (her initial experiment, a 'sea-change') before deciding to retire inland to Cara (a 'tree-change') 12 months prior to the study. Her partner continued to work in the city, returning home for weekends. Brenda (55 years old) had moved from the city 12 months prior, though she and her husband were still commuting there for work. Brenda had migrated to Australia from another English-speaking country about 20 years

before. Jenny was 65, and had moved to Cara from a city three years prior to this study. She worked locally, spasmodically, but was currently unemployed, and her husband commuted daily to the city.

Location and Context

The town of Cara is a *semi-rural* tourist destination known for its natural (scenic), cultural (the arts), and social (community) amenity. Within driving distance of a city, Cara has a population of approximately 3,000 and a similar number in the surrounding district (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). Cara is located in one of Australia's 'sunbelt' areas experiencing rapid growth and population instability (Burnley & Murphy, 2004) and has a long history of alternative lifestyle in-migration. More recent in-migration has included older retirees (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011).

The Researcher

While I attempted to stay as close as possible to the participants' experiences, my analysis is still a product of my interpretations—my making sense of the participants making sense of their worlds. I am a white, middle-class, 51 year old woman. I live and work as a counsellor in a community similar to Cara. I run social events for new residents to help them integrate into the community, should they wish, reflecting my assumptions that 'settling into a new town' is a real phenomenon that has potential to go well or not go well. It is from this perspective that I approached this research.

Procedure

Ethics approval was obtained from the University of Southern Queensland Human Research Ethics Committee.

Recruitment. Participants were recruited via posters on community noticeboards, and individuals who knew the researcher personally were excluded.

Interviews. I took an empathic, naive approach to conducting semi-structured interviews, aiming to uncover the

participants' own perspectives. Interview questions were largely of a very open nature, allowing participants the freedom to describe aspects that were important to them. An example of an early question was, "If you can cast your mind back to when you first got here, those first few months, what was that like?", allowing issues such as sense of community or work to arise spontaneously if appropriate. Gentle probing encouraged participants to talk in more detail. I allowed participants to lead the substance of the interview, provided they were within the bounds of the research question. Further questions were mostly generated in response to careful listening to the participant, with the aim of understanding the participant's "lifeworld" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 65). Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Analysis of data. Following Smith et al. (2009), the data were analysed manually using IPA, initially approaching each participant's account one at a time. Staying close to the participant's experience and meanings, and immersed in her lifeworld, I identified emerging micro-themes. When one participant's experience appeared similar to my own, I took particular care to check the transcript to make sure I stayed close to her experience and not my own. In keeping with a phenomenological approach, I presented participants' own perspectives, or lay definitions, of concepts they raised (e.g., belonging) that may be defined slightly differently in psychological theory. This study was not testing, or examining, such theory. I created a table of micro-themes for one individual, and repeated the process for each participant.

I then examined all participants' themes together, looking for similarities, differences, and patterns. I identified super-ordinate themes reflecting what could be said about the group as a whole, without losing what I had learned about each individual. When appropriate, this process produced a super-ordinate theme that had opposite poles, with some participants' experiences at one end and others at the opposite end (as per Smith et al., 2009).

Analysis and Discussion

My interpretative phenomenological analysis resulted in four major themes relevant to how these individuals experienced relocation to Cara: a) The fit between the individual and the new location; b) Friendship and being a part of something vs. alienation and self-doubt; c) Making sense of social difficulties; and d) Relocation to an area of high amenity as an intense experience.

Theme 1: The Fit between the Individual and the New Location

Participants all spontaneously talked about the degree of fit between themselves and their new residential location, as a way of making sense of their experience. Areas where fit mattered most were, broadly, the physical environment and the social (including community). Lorelle expressed a successful fit in both areas; Brenda experienced a good fit with the physical environment but less so, socially; and Jenny experienced almost no fit at all in either. Jenny still wanted to return to the city, three years after relocation.

Lorelle's relocation involved a change in lifestyle from working in a city and living by the sea, to retirement on a small rural block close to Cara. She experienced this as a better fit in various ways, for example:

I was working in the corporate world, and I'm not a corporate animal at all. I'm an organic gardener.

Lorelle also described herself as "not hugely a beach person" and "I'm more green hills and trees", language implying an aspect of self known as settlement-identity when referring to residential preferences (Feldman, 1990) and used by all three participants. Lorelle spontaneously described her previous location as not "the right spot for me" and enthusiastically reported the benefits, for her, of finding "what suited" her this time:

... it's flowed, like it's probably not flowed for a long time ... for

many years I moved and travelled because of work commitments, rather than ... going where, what suited me ... it has ... just reinforced for me, um, what a big difference there is between the two.

Lorelle thrived in a scenic environment, enjoying organic gardening and working on her rural block. Many elements reminded her of her place of origin, which made Cara feel “like home”, something she repeated later as contributing to her experience of settling in after relocation.

Brenda, who described herself and her husband as not being “city folk”, also thrived on the physical environment after relocating from the city. She, too, enjoyed the scenery, gardening, and growing food organically. What she described as the quaintness of the small town also suited her, and the fact that many shops were locally owned. Brenda, too, enjoyed living in a location similar to her place of origin, in regards to the environment, country living, and a degree of self-sufficiency. It seems that similarity between the environment and childhood environments can contribute to a good fit, for some. Brenda also reported that the new lifestyle and “being in tune with the Earth” had changed her as a person, helping her clarify what was important to her and bringing “other aspects” of herself to the fore. This is in keeping with Jones (1980) who found that relocation can provide opportunities for new aspects of the self to emerge (see also Oishi, 2010).

Both Lorelle and Brenda experienced the fit between themselves and their new location as contributing to the ‘settling in’ process. For example, Lorelle described her good fit as “like coming home. Just slipped in ... so I’m settled”. Jenny frequently pointed to a lack of fit as an explanation for her considerable difficulties settling into her new location. Jenny thought she would probably always be a city person, explaining, “I couldn’t live in a prettier place, but it doesn’t do it for me.” She preferred “concrete, fumes and screaming sirens”. Jenny reported boredom from a lack of suitable activities and frequent involuntary unemployment. She

missed her busy, responsible work-life, which she described as:

Fabulous. Buzzy. Exciting ... a bunch of people around me.

Goals, goal-setting is what I lost when I came to Cara.

Social fit was important too. Jenny felt a sense of isolation in Cara, which she put down to a lack of fit between her and the people she was meeting, describing herself as “a little bit wilder” than those people and “not a country person” like them. Jenny also felt that some of the retired people she met were in a different life-stage to her. She missed being surrounded by younger people at work, and having friends who were “on the same sort of wavelengths”, finding many of the people she met too “conservative”. This conservatism made people seem older to Jenny. She struggled to maintain her sense of self as she spent time with them:

I sometimes go somewhere and I think, “For this next three hours I have to be someone else.” I have to sort of fit in and say the right thing and not be me.

Brenda had chosen the area because she thought it was a good fit environmentally and socially. She found, however, that some social aspects did not meet her expectations. Brenda expected residents in the country to be very proactive in helping new arrivals to settle in, and was very disappointed when this did not occur. She particularly expected a good fit with one “alternative” sector of the local community, “Living the simple, possibly rural lifestyles”. When those people did not approach her, however, Brenda wondered if she had less in common with them than she had assumed. Like Jenny, Brenda expressed a lack of fit in regards to the number of people she met who were older than they had expected, and retired. She both expressed frustration that social resources for the people they met often seemed to revolve around church activities, or bowls. Brenda believed they had more money than she did, and commuting to work left her less free time to engage in social activities or volunteering, adding, “It doesn’t

fit in with them and their needs because we are a working couple.”

Interestingly, Brenda and Jenny only experienced a lack of fit with the people they were actually *meeting*. They both observed people in the “alternative” (e.g., co-operatively owned) EthiCafe (pseudonym), with whom they expected to have more in common. However, they experienced considerable difficulties in establishing friendships with this sector of the community. Jenny believed that if she had been able to socialise with these individuals, it would have made a “huge amount of difference.”

Lorelle, too, expressed the importance of a good fit socially. She, however, had been very successful in establishing friendships with people who were similar to her (unlike her previous experience living at the coast). This made a considerable contribution to her settling in. Lorelle linked similarity with others to feeling “at home” when she went to the EthiCafe, even if she was alone and didn’t necessarily engage with them:

I see people that I just sense a similarity with ... I feel like I’m in a tribe that fits for me ... I can go there and talk to no one ... and be happy and feel at home.

Finally, Brenda reported that her own experience of relocation was greatly affected by her husband’s lack of fit with their new location and lifestyle. She described the “huge impact” this had on her and found her partner’s unhappiness with Cara more challenging than her own social difficulties:

...the trickiest thing, is the partner not being as happy as me ... So it might not be the actual place, and the tree-change itself. It could be just being where ... the other person is really unsettled.

Interestingly, Lorelle described how she felt more “at home” because her partner also loved the town, and that this also strengthened their relationship.

In summary, the fit between the person and the location can be an important aspect of how individuals relate to the experience of settling in to an area of high amenity.

Participants often attributed unhappiness after relocation to a poor fit or a positive experience to a good fit, raising issues of person-environment congruence. According to Hormuth (1990), people need to maintain continuity of self. They can do this partly through continuity of objects and places (including similarity to childhood environments), and through congruence between the environment and their values or how they see themselves (see Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). Lorelle found such congruence after exchanging a corporate work-life for rural retirement in Cara. Some working individuals, however, may find they have little in common with the retired sector of their new community, and commuting can leave insufficient time to engage with that community. A lack of suitable local employment can contribute to a loss of sense of purpose and identity. Unlike Lorelle and Brenda, Jenny’s new location did not remind her of her childhood, nor was it congruent with her self-concept. Such discrepancies can lead to stress and resistance to change (Hormuth, 1990). It is perhaps not surprising then, that relocators reported that fit with the location was so important. While participants may express a relationship between fit and settling in, this study does not *establish* such relationships, though it certainly raises the issue for future research.

Theme 2: Friendship and Being a Part of Something vs. Alienation and Self-doubt

Making new friends was an important aspect of settling into a new location for the participants in this study. This theme reflects how success in this endeavour can vary between extremes for different individuals in the same town. Participants’ stories about seeking new friendships were inextricably entwined with experiences of perceived inclusion or exclusion, and the desire to be a “part of something”. All illustrated their experience since relocating with stories of the opposite experience in past locations, and the one helps to illuminate the other.

One participant, Lorelle, when asked what her first few months were like, spontaneously referred to her success in

creating a friendship network:

It was actually wonderful. I met some really good people, right up, straight away, that I've formed a wonderful group of friends.

Creating friendships after relocation was important to Jenny, too, however she had found it very difficult. After three years she had only recently begun to form a network which, while still insufficient, was an improvement on the extreme loneliness she had experienced, explaining that she could "go for weeks without actually having a social invitation of any sort." Brenda, too, was disappointed in her lack of friendships. After one year, apart from two new potential friendships, she felt totally reliant still on the one friend that she knew before she moved.

The relationships that Lorelle described as contributing to her successful experience of settling in also involved an element of caring, which included mutual support of a practical, as well as emotional nature. Social support was important to Jenny too, who talked about feeling there would be none available in an emergency, even after three years. Brenda valued a previous location where she had experienced reciprocal support amongst residents, but since relocating a year ago she still lacked relationships that could provide emotional or practical support. Lorelle's success was accompanied by a sense of belonging, mentioned spontaneously:

...a group of friends opening up and a sense of belonging to a, a caring community and uh, and friends, finding more friends that are like me.

When asked to elaborate on this experience of belonging, Lorelle described it as a product, not only of being liked and accepted by people like herself, but also of establishing safe relationships where authenticity could create a sense of connection. And, on "connection":

... feeling safe to be authentic.
Feeling safe to be vulnerable ...
There's a loving feeling. There's safety. There's um ... joy, there's ... warmth.

For Lorelle, these warm, authentic relationships that she associated with her sense of belonging were crucial to successfully settling into a new town.

Conversely, Brenda and Jenny complained of a lack of such authentic, close relationships without which Jenny did not feel at home. Although things had improved recently for Jenny, sharing histories and confidences with new friends, she still very much missed having friendships with long, shared histories that were authentic:

And people you are at ease with.
That you're not watching what you say or think ... Whereas here I feel like I should watch what I say constantly.

Unlike Lorelle, neither Jenny nor Brenda said that they felt a sense of belonging. When asked (towards the end of the interview) if belonging was important, or had any meaning, Jenny replied that it was important. For Jenny, a sense of belonging comes when others make the first approach to her, not her to them. Brenda similarly described a lack of belonging stemming from a perceived lack of interest from others, and related to not mattering to anybody:

with this whole lack of friendship thing ... the non-interest from anybody, anywhere ... no we don't belong. Don't have a ... feeling of belonging ... I don't even feel that I'm terribly important at (volunteer work) ... if I didn't go, no one would notice ... That somebody or some people um, know that you exist in the town, and um, would miss you, or be concerned for you.
Well no one would do that.

Brenda frequently expressed a desire for existing residents to approach her and to take more responsibility for the integration of newcomers (cf. Bishop et al., 2002). Lorelle's satisfying social integration did include being approached by others, which she associated with being "a part of something" and she talked enthusiastically about mattering to a new friend. Similarly, when a friend told Jenny she was glad Jenny

had come along, she felt like she was getting her “old life back a bit.”

It appears then that, as well as social support, belonging can be important to some relocators, and does not always come easily, even after three years. It can be linked with a feeling of mattering and close friendships with similar others where the participants could relax and be themselves (see McMillan, 1996). Being approached and invited by others was often important, and could also contribute to a sense of belonging.

Lorelle’s successful social integration was accompanied by her feeling included and a part of something bigger than herself. However, she also seemed to experience *herself* as being larger, having boundaries beyond her physical body:

That’s community – that’s being bigger than just ... it’s you know, it’s not like I go out to there (hand gestures in front of self) and I “stop”, you know? ... here my boundary extends. I go into town ... I might stop here and talk to this person ... Go into the second hand book shop, and browse. People talk to me ... recognise me, they know me (laughs). Yeah, my boundary is much bigger.

It seems that the place where Lorelle lives, and interacts with others in the street, was, in some ways, becoming an extension of herself. When discussing settling in, she described how her sense of safety (emotional and physical) in this location led not only to this expansion of herself but also to her “putting down roots”—a part of settling in that involved a commitment to stay, and invest in, this community.

Lorelle’s explanation of “putting down roots” involved language that reflected her expressed interest in personal growth and the “spiritual”. She described how her sense of safety in Cara led to her feeling connected, not only to others, but also to herself and to the Earth:

I can feel my connection with the Earth much better when I’m grounded, and, and when I’m

safe. I can let my energy drop, deeply into me.

Interestingly, while Locke’s (2006) ‘spiritual’ response to nature included “a feeling of belonging that is not dependent on the approbation of other people” (p. 27), Lorelle’s “connection with the Earth” was contributed to by social and physical safety, by being accepted and cared for by others in her new community. Lorelle described feeling a “part of a whole” as partially related to what she (spontaneously) described as “the sense of community” that she experienced in Cara. Elaborating on sense of community, “place” became important again, as did similarity to others:

It means that um, you will be able to be more yourself in this place because there are other people ... like yourself ... They want the place to be ... a place of connection. It’s not just ... where you put your head down before you go to work at 6 o’clock in the morning.

Jenny and Brenda also valued “community” and being a part of something, however these were lacking for them in Cara, and such experiences lay in the past:

It was like a bunch of the closest family you could have. Um, all living on each other’s doorsteps. It was stunning. Yeah, I’ve found more community feeling in [the city] with all the talk of Cara and their community.

Jenny believed that the community in Cara would be more likely to provide instrumental support than social support, echoing Bishop et al.’s (2002) findings reviewed earlier. Brenda had been “looking for the tighter community” that she had experienced in another country. There, people (including shopkeepers) knew each other by name, and were all “part of the brethren”. In Cara, she was disappointed when shopkeepers she saw daily treated her as just “another customer”. However, having a good fit with the physical aspects of the location, she reported feeling “a part of Cara... physical Cara” when discussing belonging. She also felt “a part of

it” because many businesses were locally owned, and shopping locally made her part of a “team”. For both Lorelle and Brenda, then, being a part of something can extend beyond close friendship networks to looser relationships in public areas of town, and the environment itself. Jenny’s previous “community feeling” also included meeting people she knew while doing everyday activities in her city neighbourhood.

The participants in this study all talked about inclusion, friendships, and being a “part of something” (either in Cara or a prior location) and often about the exclusion, isolation and alienation they experienced when these did not occur. This theme now turns to the alienation and self-doubt that can accompany a lack of social integration after relocation.

Jenny felt geographically isolated living on a country block with little or no interaction with neighbours and having to drive 15 minutes to speak to somebody. She described this as “horrible”. Her loneliness continued as she felt alienated from most of the people she met. As discussed under theme 1, she felt extremely different, culturally, to many of her new acquaintances. She experienced their behaviour as “foreign” and felt that she had to either pretend or not fit in, all increasing her sense of alienation:

Trying to mimic the majority of people here that “weren’t me”... maybe to make me fit in more. But it didn’t make me fit in. It made me feel weird.

Jenny’s experience of the main street of their small town was vastly different to that described earlier by Lorelle:

I’d look around the street, and there was nobody I knew, and I’d just go home again. ...there were a few people who’d say hello to me, but that’s as far as it went, and they weren’t actually people that, even if they’d said, “Do you want a coffee?” I probably didn’t really want to anyway (Jenny).

Jenny often observed, in two specific venues, people with whom she felt she had more in common. It is notable that she

described “groups” that she wanted to become “a part of”, but felt excluded from. This was a particularly painful aspect of Jenny’s experience of relocation:

... it’s agonising to be on the outside and not be part of the group. Just to watch the group around you being happy but you’re not included in it. And that’s how it felt in Cara. I just felt like a stranger on the street, which I was. And I wasn’t included as part of anything.

Brenda, too, was frustrated at her lack of success at “breaking in” at one of these venues:

If you’re trying to break in to the community of EthiCafe ... if you want it to be part of your little family of, your social family, then you have to qualify to get into that, into that sect.

Brenda frequently talked in terms of breaking into groups with boundaries that she perceived as “closed doors”. Although she did not report this as being quite so painful as Jenny did, she still felt isolated:

I felt very isolated ... you can walk up and down the street, you can walk into the vet, ... and they don’t know you from a bar of soap. And they don’t have to do anything with you, because you’re just a nobody ... They don’t want to be burdened by some new person who’s going ... “Where do I find whatever?”

Note Brenda’s feeling like “a nobody” and a burden. It is also notable that she did not just feel isolated, but felt a challenge to her sense of self:

... and so you feel ... socially isolated and then you also almost lose confidence with your social skills and your, and you as a person.

Lorelle, too, reported such self-doubt as a consequence of alienation in her *previous* (coastal) location, feeling like a “misfit” and wondering, “Is there something wrong with me?” In contrast, her experience in Cara of

friendships with people similar to herself led to her feeling “validated”, which she explained as a “tick” of approval. Jenny did not express such self-doubt. She did, however, find her experience of perceived exclusion, alienation and loneliness very distressing. When, after nearly three years, Jenny finally began to establish a small network, she felt very relieved, believing she had been “sinking into depression.”

In summary, then, creating social networks was a major aspect of settling into Cara, for the participants in this study. When successful, relocators may describe a sense of safety, belonging, and being a part of something bigger than the self. For some individuals this can go beyond immediate friendships to include other, looser ties in the community, and even the place itself. Such a sense of security can entail the individual’s sense of self expanding. Some may experience this as leading to well-being and even personal growth, as well as long term commitment and investment in the local community. It is notable that the *quality* of new relationships can be very important. These participants expressed a need for caring relationships with similar others, where they felt they could be themselves, where they mattered to others, and support was reciprocal. Some relocators can miss relationships with long, shared histories. Being approached by others can be particularly important to some individuals settling into a new town.

For some individuals, integration into the community can progress more slowly than they might expect or hope. Isolation and alienation can be experienced by relocators who feel they have little in common with the people they meet, or feel excluded from friendships with the people they do have something in common with. In this particular context—a small country town with one main street—participants perceived identifiable social groups with their own subcultures. These groups’ boundaries can be experienced as impermeable by some newcomers, even after considerable time, but permeable by others. Failure to establish friendships after relocating can be a challenge to some

individuals’ self-concept, and can be very painful, particularly when experienced as exclusion.

Theme 3: Making Sense of Social Difficulties

When responding to a lack of social integration, the participants in this study appeared to have engaged in considerable attempts to make sense of their experiences (even prior to being invited to participate in this study). Lorelle and Brenda had questioned the meaning of their lack of friendships (after this relocation or a previous one) along the lines of “Is there something wrong with me?” as discussed above. All participants offered information that seemed to act as self-reassurance that this lack of friendships was *not* due to any personal deficits. They expressed relief when they perceived evidence that “it’s not just you” (Brenda) or “it wasn’t all about me” (Lorelle). For example, Brenda stated that she had “hundreds of friends” in the past, and was emotional as she struggled to make sense of her lack of friends in Cara:

When I left [the city], my friends said ... I’m going to get a bit tearful ... “You are such a friendly social, sociable person. You make friends with anybody anywhere. You’ll be fine.”

Jenny spontaneously proposed various contributing factors to her social difficulties. She particularly stressed the lack of fit between her and a country environment as a way of understanding her difficulties, making frequent comparisons with her previous, happier social life in the city. She offered information that supported this explanation, such as friends from [prior city] also pointing out the lack of fit.

Participants talked about the other residents of Cara as a part of making sense of their alienation. Jenny talked at length about the many ways the people she met were very different to her and how this contributed to her alienation. Brenda had tried to “analyse ... to work out the whole community”, to understand their apparent lack of interest in her, including those in the alternative lifestyle sub-culture she saw at

the EthiCafe. She began to think this part of the community might be somewhat cultish, conforming to norms such as dress, way of life, and an alternative religious philosophy, preventing her admission to the group. Brenda's proposed explanation resonates with findings regarding the exclusion that can occur when a group has a strong sense of community that leads to apparently impermeable boundaries (e.g., Miers & Fisher, 2002). Jenny concluded that her lack of friendships in the EthiCafe was due to all the other residents' having known each other for a long time, so "don't need outsiders". While Jenny pointed out that she could be wrong, she shortly returned to this way of making sense of her experience.

Attempts to understand a lack of new friendships often involved such interpretations and assumptions about other people's behaviour. While this study cannot ascertain the accuracy of participants' assumptions, it is important to note that they made assumptions as part of the process of understanding, and perhaps did not let go of these assumptions easily. Their explanations sometimes involved generalisations, seeming to perceive some other residents as a homogenous group. To a lesser degree, participants also sometimes talked about how they may have contributed to their struggles. Jenny mentioned her shyness, for example, and Brenda acknowledged that commuting left her insufficient time to engage with her new community.

In summary, new residents who were unhappy with their progress socially had engaged in considerable attempts to make sense of their experiences. As well as experiencing fears of inadequacy when socially isolated, they also pointed to their past social successes. They often proposed various explanations other than self-blame, and various meanings of other residents' behaviour.

Theme 4: Relocation to an Area of High Amenity as an Intense Experience

The participants in this study sometimes described aspects of their relocation to an area of high amenity in terms

of emotions and thoughts that were strongly positive or strongly negative. Jenny found relocating to Cara a particularly distressing experience and described her new lifestyle as "hideous". She described herself as "Homesick. Very homesick." and "lonely. Really, really lonely." Jenny described feeling like a "shadow" of herself when mixing with people very different to her, and was physically shaking when discussing this loss of identity:

I suddenly get in with a group of 70-year-olds, or even my age who are conservative, and I just suddenly feel that I've died, actually. Look I'm shaking.

The intensity of Jenny's language, involving a part of her dying, was echoed when she described two important new relationships as an "absolute lifesaver".

The experience of such a relocation can also be intense in positive ways, as Lorelle described:

It's been the most magical process for me, coming here. And I'm very grateful for it.

When asked what moving to Cara meant to her, Lorelle replied, "Oh, best thing I ever did". She described her first few months as "wonderful" and was "absolutely delighted" at how well this relocation had gone. The importance of this particular relocation was evident when, after making the decision to move, Lorelle felt:

A lifting of weight off my shoulders at giving myself permission, to do this for me.

Similarly, when Brenda and her husband decided to relocate to Cara, she felt "absolutely ecstatic" that she was "getting the, the ultimate dream", and:

It was the most exciting thing since probably childbirth, and that was 25-odd years ago.

After her relocation, Brenda found that every day she "almost had to pinch" herself, in response to the natural environment. Despite the social challenges that rendered Brenda "a bit tearful" at one point in her interview, she still felt "euphoria" on a daily basis and that "the guilt has hardly worn off the ginger

bread”.

In summary, the participants in this study found that relocating to a place of high natural, social, and cultural amenity could, for them, be an intense experience at times. Strong, positive feelings and thoughts can be experienced in response to changes (or anticipated changes) in lifestyle and environment. However, such a relocation can also be experienced as very distressing, involving feelings such as loneliness and homesickness, and even threats to one’s sense of self.

Summary and Conclusions

My interpretative phenomenological analysis of the data in this study revealed four major themes relevant to how individuals can experience relocation to Cara, a semi-rural area of high natural, social, and cultural amenity in Australia: a) The fit between the individual and the new location; b) Friendship and being a part of something vs. alienation and self-doubt; c) Making sense of social difficulties; and d) Relocation to an area of high amenity as an intense experience. In the lived experiences of these individuals, these themes were closely intertwined. Issues of identity and sense of self arose within almost every theme and employment status impacted in a variety of ways.

The fit between the individual and the new residential environment (both physical and social) can be an important aspect of how some relocators relate to, and make sense of, their experiences of settling in after relocating to an area of high amenity. They may describe positive or negative experiences in terms of a good or bad fit respectively, and may use language suggesting settlement identification (e.g., “city person”) to describe themselves in this process. Important aspects of a good fit included: a love of nature; enjoyment of gardening and growing food; and relationships with people with similar values and interests. A lack of suitable activities, employment, environment, or friendships with similar others, can be experienced as a poor fit. Such a relocation can be an opportunity for new aspects of identity to

emerge and some may experience their new location as idyllic, especially when person-environment congruence is high – as for one participant who enjoyed exchanging a corporate work-life for rural retirement. Some working individuals, however, may find they have little in common with the retired sector of their new community, and commuting can leave insufficient time to engage with that community. A lack of suitable local employment can contribute to a loss of sense of purpose and identity, especially when person-environment congruence is low. Some may find that their new location does not live up to their expectations of life in “the country”. For some individuals, their spouses/partners’ degree of fit and satisfaction with the new location may have a considerable impact on their own experiences.

Participants all stressed the importance of reciprocal instrumental and social support and close, authentic friendships with similar others. They expressed a desire, not always met, for established residents to approach them and to help them settle in socially. It seems that a successful social integration combined with a good fit between the relocater and the physical, cultural, and social amenity of the area can be accompanied by strongly positive thoughts and emotions. These may include feeling “at home”, a sense of community, of belonging, inclusion, connection with others and with nature, a sense of being part of something larger than the self, and an extension of the self beyond the boundaries of one’s body to include physical spaces. This can involve personal investment and commitment to the town, and can happen in less than a year.

Some relocators, however, may experience dissatisfaction socially, at least in the first three years. In the context of a small country town where varying cultural sub-groups can be perceived, relocators may experience a sense of exclusion from a group they perceive as having a good fit for them. It seems that a social venue (or even town) well known for its sense of community can, at times, be perceived as difficult to “break into”. Interestingly, the same sub-group can

be experienced as having impermeable boundaries to some newcomers but not to others. For some individuals, perceived exclusion can be disappointing and even excruciating. When they failed to make friends, participants reported experiencing self-doubt, even a sense of alienation. In an attempt to fit in with people who seem very different, an individual may pretend to be more like other residents. This can be experienced as a loss of, or considerable threat to, identity. This resonates with findings that congruence between an individual's self-concept and the residential environment can be important for maintaining continuity of self (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). After relocating to an area of high amenity, a combination of poor fit with a sense of exclusion and alienation can be a very distressing experience. Even after three years, a relocater may still wish to return to their previous place of residence.

Participants in this study engaged in considerable efforts to make sense of any lack of friendships. As well as wondering if they were at fault, they seemed relieved by evidence to the contrary—including other people experiencing similar problems, and memories of past successful social integration. They searched for explanations of other residents' "unfriendly" behaviour. Their explanations included the belief that other residents had long histories together and did not need "outsiders", or that members of the alternative lifestyle sub-culture were almost a "sect" with impermeable boundaries. Sometimes new participants generalised about other residents, describing them as a homogenous group. This may reflect the meta-contrast principle: when individuals categorise others into groups, they can accentuate inter-group differences and intra-group similarities, reinforcing perceptions of out-group homogeneity (Hamilton & Sherman, 1996; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994). Certainly, newcomers sometimes made assumptions about other residents and at times perceived a homogenous group. One participant also suggested that the established alternative-lifestylers made assumptions

about newcomers who dressed conventionally and appeared somewhat 'mainstream', not realising that they were, in fact, also interested in sustainable lifestyles. This research does not attempt to establish the veracity of participants' explanations, or relationships between outcomes and ways of responding to social challenges. The important finding here is that relocators had made considerable effort to make sense of their experiences when they failed to establish the friendships they desired.

It seems that relocating to an area of high amenity can sometimes be an intense experience, involving strongly positive or strongly negative thoughts and emotions. It can involve changes to identity and sense of self, either positive or negative, and may vary considerably between individuals. This suggests that further investigation is warranted.

Given the small sample size in this preliminary study, findings cannot be generalised and further research would be needed to ascertain whether the themes arising for these participants are part of a larger pattern. A longitudinal study would be useful, as would examining relationships between outcomes and contextual and environmental factors as well as various individual differences (and behaviours). These could include: need to belong; environmental exploratory tendency; settlement identification and other aspects of 'fit'; expectations of rural life; employment status; feeling accepted by the community; time available for creating social networks; and strategies used to create such networks. At a community intervention level, an action research project could usefully study ways to improve the experiences of new residents, however findings could be very particular to the community where the research takes place. At an individual level, the fact that two participants had almost polar opposite experiences suggests there will be no simple formula that helps all new residents, and individual interventions may need to be fairly phenomenological. Future studies could explore whether outcomes improve if relocators are informed about, for example:

how difficult such relocation can be for some; reasons other than personal inadequacy for why social integration can take time; and the importance of fit and person-environment congruence. Realistic expectations regarding relocation to, and life in, an area of high amenity may prevent disappointment and distress.

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Short bio

Theresa (Terri) Bates is a community builder and activist who is passionate about inclusion, participation and citizenship, environmental sustainability, and social justice, particularly in the areas of women, young people, homelessness and people with disabilities as well as other minority groups. She is currently a counsellor, crisis-worker, and vice-president of a community-owned neighbourhood centre. She graduated as a mature-age student with First Class Honours in Psychology. She has an interest in both counselling and research, particularly in the areas of community psychology, health psychology, and identity.

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