JUe

The Journal for Undergraduate Ethnography

EDITORIAL board

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The Twelve-Step Guide to Publishing in the JUE

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Welcome to another edition of *The Journal for Undergraduate Ethnography*. This issue reflects the journal's international scope and wide-ranging subject matter. We explore biomimicry in a fly-breeding factory in South Africa (Drew), discourses of self-care (Adams) and identities of people with vitiligo (Khuld) in the United States of America, post-Soviet youth mobility and identity in the Netherlands (Bostan and Malafei), young Italians' ways of insulting each other (Colzani), and surveillance in commercial spaces in the United Kingdom (Fuller).

All six articles, written by undergraduate students or very recent graduates, went through the same kind of review process as they would in any international peer-reviewed journal. As Editor-in-Chief, I want to explain how this works, not only for the benefit of students who are thinking of submitting work to the JUE, but also for the purpose of giving proper credit to all the authors who persevere to the end of this rigorous—and not always speedy—process.

Note that this review process and the Journal as a whole would simply not be possible without the dedication and generosity of the members of our Senior Editorial Board, named on the previous page and on our website. They each commit to reviewing one article per year. My sincere thanks go to every one of them for the time they put into reading the articles and writing up their thoughtful and constructive comments.

So, what happens as an article progresses from submission to publication? On the next page, I explain how an article gets published in *The Journal for Undergraduate Ethnography* in twelve steps.

1. Author submits article manuscript to *The Journal for Undergraduate Ethnography* (JUE), following the submission guidelines, accompanied by faculty sponsor form and author information sheet.

2. Editor-in-Chief (EiC) acknowledges receipt and asks Author to fill out an online form with details of the submission.

3. EiC checks that article fits overall JUE scope and standards.

   If not, article is rejected ("desk rejection") with explanation and, if appropriate, suggestions of alternate venues. Process ends.

   If so, article is sent to a member of the Senior Editorial Board with suitable expertise for review. Authors' identities are not blinded, but reviewers' usually are.

4. Reviewer returns comments and recommendation to EiC. EiC checks these are reasonable, and if so, sends them to Author, cc'ing the faculty sponsor. (If not, another reviewer is found.) There are three possible recommendations:

   Reject. Article is not suitable for publication in JUE. Process ends.

   Revise and resubmit (R&R). This is the most common recommendation. It means the article is based on appropriate literature and ethnographic material, but has weaknesses in its current form. With some work, these can be fixed.

   Accept with minor revisions. The article is strong and requires only minor stylistic or structural revisions before publication.

5. Author makes revisions (using Microsoft Word's Track Changes or other appropriate highlighting tool) and returns the article to the EiC, with a cover letter explaining how they dealt with the reviewer's recommendations.

   If the verdict was R&R, EiC sends the resubmission to the original reviewer.

   If the verdict was Accept with minor revisions, the EiC usually checks them.

6. Reviewer and/or EiC provide comments and recommendation. Two possible outcomes:

   Further revisions are required. Go back to step 5.

   Article is accepted for publication. Proceed to step 7.

7. Article is copyedited by a member of the editorial team.

8. Copyedited article is sent back to Author, who checks and responds to the edits.

9. Author returns checked copyedited article to EiC. Further copyedits may be required: if so, go back to step 8. Otherwise, proceed to step 10.

10. JUE team format article for publication. A PDF file is sent to Author for proofreading.

11. Author makes any necessary changes using Adobe Acrobat Reader's Comment function and returns article to EiC.

12. Any necessary changes are made to the proofs, and article is published with a Creative Commons license (BY-CC-ND) as part of an open access issue of the JUE at undergraduateethnography.org. Congratulations!

TIMELINE. The 12 steps typically take about a year. An Author who submits for the January 31 deadline will usually see their article published in issue 1 early the following year; for July 31, the article will usually be published in issue 2 in fall of the following year. Exceptionally, publication may be faster or slower than this.

Questions? Contact the Editor-in-Chief at radice@undergraduateethnography.org.

From Maggots to Millions: Biomimicking the Fly to Feed Humanity from its Waste in the 21st Century

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ABSTRACT

'QUIET PLEASE: Flies are breeding'… reads the sign displayed on the factory breeding room. A female black soldier fly (BSF) is laying around 1500 tiny white eggs onto an industrially designed grid. Over 21 days, one kilogram of her eggs will hatch into eight tonnes of larvae, which will initiate a natural process of waste nutrient recycling as they feed on containers of organic consumer waste that would otherwise go to landfill. In a factory in one of Cape Town's rapidly developing post-apartheid townships, larvae are thus recycling some 250 tonnes of 'pre' and 'post' consumer waste every day, transforming negative value waste products into highly valuable insect protein, an alternative to fishmeal – an unsustainably ocean sourced protein. Ethnographic research in this factory explored this biomimically inspired innovation, which uses nature's purification agents – fly larvae – to revalorise a potentially harmful waste product into a critically important food source for the 21st Century. This paper argues that these industrially designed insect farms produce specific technologies and violent acts of reproductive enclosure. By incorporating debates about the role of naturally inspired solutions that use biological labour to accumulate value, it makes plain the ethical implications that emerge from mimicking and enclosing nature in this way. It contends that the ambition of the discipline of biomimicry to reunite human economies with natural ecologies is overshadowed by the logics of capitalism. While the outcomes of biomimicry may indeed be ecologically sustainable, capitalism's drive to privatise and profit from the knowledge and labour of nonhuman life means not only controlling animals and their products, but also controlling the processes of life through a constellation of scientific, bureaucratic and legal techniques.

Keywords: Biomimicry, consumer waste, Black Soldier Fly (BSF), non-human life, enclosure, violence.

I struggle through some beef stew as I sit down for the first lunch break of my research. I manage half of it before heading out into the factory courtyard to empty my leftovers into the nearest food bin. I don't walk far to find industrial silos of consumer waste. After all, I am in the right place.

My leftovers have just joined the first step in a highly innovative process of waste nutrient recycling at the world's largest insect factory in one of Cape Town's rapidly developing post-apartheid townships. It will join the 250 tonnes of mixed waste that flow through this factory each day. This represents a small part of the 1.3 billion tonnes of food waste the world's population sends to landfills daily (FAO, 2016). Whilst one third of human food production is discarded, we face growing demands for protein production threatening to decimate the finite resources of our planet. We need a better solution and perhaps we can learn to look towards nature for it.

Biomimicry involves an act of 'taking nature's lead', to engineer and industrialise production processes that occur naturally, to overturn the tenets of waste production (Johnson, 2010). As I follow the journey of my leftovers through a complex network of industrially engineered processes, I draw upon my ethnographic observations of working in an environment that tries to reproduce nature under industrial conditions. I evaluate the forces, relationships, actors and networks that enable this process to function. Through my interviews and conversations with the factory's pioneers, scientists and investors, I expose and critique this form of biomimicry. Where permitted, I incorporate analysis of factory designs, waste processing data and scientific knowledge to contextualise the processes at work. Some of

Figure 1: Investigating the breeding colony at the world's first insect nutrient recycling plant. Photo: AgriProtein

these processes are summarised in figure 2 below.

This paper investigates the contested discourses about how nature is produced through the temporal, technological and spatial enclosures of the fly factory. It takes up the issue of the entanglement of nature and capitalism, through a critical political economy analysis of market enclosures, whilst exploring the key relationships involved in these captures. It argues that due to its capitalist mode of production, biomimicry does not simply harness, but rather alters and exploits, the evolutionarily derived knowledges of black soldier flies. It casts a critical lens on the forms of entanglement that are produced in an insect factory by putting nonhuman life to work, and argues that this reveals how biomimicry can be misrepresented as a reunification of human and natural processes, at the expense of emphasizing the primarily coercive conditions of capitalism. This continues to place natural processes in a secondary position to human ambitions, which results in the enactment of violence against nonhuman labourers.

Positioning the Research: Biomimicry and Enclosure

This article argues that the interaction of biomimicry, nonhuman labour and enclosure produce a specific and distinctive set of temporal, technological and spatial enclosures in the fly factory. It draws out the distinctions between traditional forms of biomimicry, which rely upon the knowledge embodied with natural ecosystems, and a movement in biotechnology that harnesses organisms as nonhuman agents. This discrepancy develops through the analysis of enclosure, an ongoing process that enables the expansion of capital into the natural world (Braun 2008).

The building blocks of biomimicry lie in a discipline that seeks to repair a nature-society divide, in order to reverse humankind's "unreceptive relationship" with the natural world (Benyus 1997, 287). A number of scholars argue that humanity has forgotten its connection with nature and, as a result, nature is cast as an "abandoned realm" set off from the 'human' (Braun 2008, 667; Smith 1984). The environment has become an abstract sphere, rendered as a mere "receptacle" of natural resources to be exploited for human advance (Braun 2008, 668). The underlying promise of biomimicry is to re-establish our intimacy with the natural world, emulating nature's knowledge and ingenuity to redesign sustainable production systems. Building on nature's "four-billion-year head start," it reimagines ecologically sustainable modes of production that do not seek to "tame or override" nature (Khan 2017, 7). It attempts to reimagine anthropocentric production methods

Figure 2: The phases of the insect nutrient recycling process.

by learning how nature succeeds, as it recognises the "existence proof in naturally occurring physiology" (Johnson 2010, 179).

Harnessing a Nonhuman Workforce

The use of nonhuman organisms as "active labourers within capitalist environments" extends exploitation into the natural realm and marks a departure from the ability to simply learn from nature (Perkins 2008, 1154). This "renders a new (a)symmetry of politics and power" over nonhuman life as a new workforce is conscripted (Perkins 2008, 1159). Under this vision, the world's 30 million species are considered a potential resource of nonhuman labour, expanding the geographies of capitalism as the initial biomimetic vision is left behind (McCarthy 2004; Johnson 2010).

There is a contentious politic around how this shift is affected. By ignoring the role of a nonhuman workforce within the emerging biomimicry discourse, the discipline risks reproducing the problem of making nature secondary and thereby enacting a form of violence upon it. In the analytical discussion that follows, I extend and explore the issue of violence through a specific case of 'biopiracy' that is contextualised by putting nonhuman life to work in the insect factory.

In subjecting new lifeforms to work, "biomimicry draws nonhuman participants into an ongoing process of enclosure" (Johnson and Goldstein 2015, 388). Enclosure can be understood as a capitalist technique and rationality, that appropriates natural processes from the commons as it extends the market apparatus to nonhuman life (Buitrago 2015). Enclosure exerts a "conscious imposition of power over nature" and has arisen as a by-product of the capitalist accumulation system (De Angelis 2004, 77). Traditional forms of biomimicry that acknowledge nature's expertise might initially appear less exploitative. New forms of biomimicry enable capitalism to render biological work and knowledge as a resource to exploit.

Capitalism investigates the diverse forms of knowledge captured within nonhuman life and "reduces it into a divisible, isolatable field of potential intellectual property" that acts in service to primitive accumulation (Goldstein and Johnson 2015, 17). If scholars are to accept

biomimicry's vision of a more sustainable future, they must also recognise the acquisitive power of capital's logic and its historic tendency to subsume natural processes (Braun 2008). These processes of biological enclosure "penetrate into the depths" of the organism, driven by capitalism's perpetual attempt to accumulate and privatise both the knowledge and labour of nonhuman life (Goldstein and Johnson 2015, 13). The enclosure of nature is not independent but can be understood as a force driven by a "hammer that smashes nature for the sake of capital" (De Angelis 2004, 78). Biomimicry allows us to theorise the changing sites and spaces of this fragmentation of nonhuman life.

These spaces have changed irrevocably throughout the history of enclosure and are now orientated towards the micro-commons, which are divided by new technologies that expand into the depths of organisms. These enclosures can represent the "commodification of ever smaller bits of biodiversity" that reach into cellular genomes and DNA (Katz 1998, 51). The efforts undertaken to privatise intellectual property no longer stop at the body of the organism, they extend to almost "impossible subjects of enclosure" (McCarthy 2004, 337). Biotechnology companies and agricultural corporations are seeking to patent and privatise "previously unknown aspects of nature" that include useful genetic traits and environmental conditions (McCarthy 2004, 330). This process of 'bio-prospecting', involves "corporate pirates scouring the natural world" for patentable genetic and environmental property (Smith 2007, 21). These corporations, labelled as "raiders of future nature" are creating new genetic commodities which are dissolving the boundaries between human and nonhuman nature (Smith 2007, 21). These continued attempts to identify and target new micro-subjects of enclosure can be conceptualised through Goldstein's (2010) notion of 'terra economica'. A "persistent logic of expropriation" that envisions the whole earth as a produced nature that is "not-yet but potentially commodified" (Goldstein 2010, 372). Nature's fate is determined by what capital can see and what obscures that vision (Goldstein, 2010). Biomimicry can therefore be understood as a techno-scientific movement that opens up a further field of vision to capital and its processes of enclosure. This review has sought to draw attention to the specific issues of putting nonhuman life to work and the continuous character of enclosure that secures nonhuman labour. In some instances, these literatures pose a contrast to the work of traditional biomimicry and offer a context with which to read the empirical section of this research. This review has begun to anticipate and flag some of the concerns associated with emerging forms of biomimicry and how they might exacerbate the human-nature divide. In the following empirical work, I stitch these core conceptual bodies of work together and - through the study of an insect factory - show how the concepts of biomimicry nonhuman work and enclosure interact.

A 'Multi-Species' Ethnography

The methodology constructed for this research sought to engage with a cross-section of the company's employees across all levels from the directors, scientists and factory workers to the insects themselves. The methodology aims to acknowledge the biomimical technologies that operate in the factory, whilst equally recognising the role of its nonhuman workforce. A multi-species ethnographic approach acknowledges the agency of organisms whose lives are entangled with humans and capitalism. This method is used to analyse how the livelihood of "organisms are shaped by political, economic and cultural forces" (Kirksey and Helmreich 2010, 544). I was attentive to the ways in which the fly co-produces the spaces it is enclosed in, through its rhythms of reproduction and consumption. I followed the BSF through the labyrinth of the insect factory, observing the workers who care for these insects, the entomologists who monitor their behaviour and the engineers who continually improve the technologies that enclose them. To construct my ethnographic research, I tracked my leftovers through the circuitry of the factory, analysing the interaction of human and nonhuman labour that is synchronised around the production process. Working with these insects in their cages, I observed their unique ability to transform waste and their methods of resistance. I became an active participant in each of these environments to gain a sense of the factory as a whole, all the way down to the level of the fly and its biological components.

Making Larvae Lunch

Ticket number 323678 is printed at the weighbridge as the next inbound delivery of waste is electronically recorded. A dump truck from a fruit producer pulls up the ramp and weighs in nine and a half tonnes of pulp residue waste from high-end juice production. A sample of the waste is sent to the laboratory to ensure that the moisture and nutrient content profiles are within the agreed limits for this particular contract. Waste is obtained from a variety of sources including the canteens of large international banks, fast food chains and airlines that serve the city of Cape Town.

Waste is traditionally theorised as a post-consumer externality that represents "the political other of capitalist value", however, for Agriprotein it is an integral production resource (Gidwani and Reddy 2011, 1625). The company is continually scouring the market for low-cost, high protein and carbohydrate rich waste. This morning's inbound deliveries show that AgriProtein has spent a net £140 on sourcing 31 tons of waste from their contractors (see figure 3). For Darren, AgriProtein's feedstock manager (a pseudonym), this is a familiar trend. With the increasing demand for this commodity he expects that waste will become a marginal net cost for the first time in 2018.

As a variety of organic waste streams are combined to feed a hungry insect colony, two divided ecology sets that are concerned with waste can be considered as being: "On the one side a way of life, that churns out growing quantities of waste and on the other, lives that live off this commodity detritus" (Gidwani and Reddy 2011, 1652). The ability to source waste from the urban ecology that produces it is a key determinant for the location and viability of a new factory. The insects who form part of the ecology that depend on the quality and continual availability of this commodity are producing a new economic geography of waste demand in the city of Cape Town. There is a logistical challenge in securing waste seven days a week, as its generating industries typically function around a five-day working week. This complex interaction of human and nonhuman market economics requires AgriProtein's factories to be located close to the ecology that produces waste. AgriProtein's ability to construct factories within the inner-city is due to the process of waste cleansing and purification that takes place in the insect factory. Their factory model seeks to revolutionise the spaces where waste can be repurposed, bringing agricultural production in close proximity to the urban ecology that produces waste. The waste assessment results are positive for the fruit pulp and Agriprotein will receive a £33 gate fee for this load. For WastemMart, a municipal waste disposal contractor in the city of Cape Town, this represents a 30 per cent saving compared to the cost of landfill fees. The truck is given the all clear and it unloads the organic waste into a processing pit before the first stage of production begins.

As Ricardo's team of workers start up the conveyor belt, the industrial revalorisation of waste begins. Revalorisation refers to a process where waste is transformed from a by-product with negative value to a new form of material with considerable economic value. An insect diet manager calculates the nutrient requirements for the factory against the daily waste intake. The morning delivery, including my leftover lunch, is mixed into batches which are then loaded onto the conveyor belt. A team of factory pickers manually remove inorganic material from the line before the waste is shredded into a precise particle size for the larvae to process efficiently. Much of social science's engagement with waste "remains staunchly immaterial" yet waste is "intrinsically and profoundly a matter of materiality" (Gregson and Crang 2010, 1026). In acknowledging the materiality of waste, this commodity can be understood as a product with limitless possibilities for revalorisation

Figure 3: A dump truck empties organic food waste into the processing pit. Photo: AgriProtein.

(Gregson and Crang, 2010). Organic waste from the shredder is pumped into a mixing tank where its consistency is optimised before being delivered to two 30,000 litre storage silos, ready to become the next batch of larvae lunch.

Biomimicking the Environment

Dawn breaks over Cape Town, signalling the start of the next shift in the insect breeding room, a team of five factory workers and I draw in our last breaths of dry cold air before we step through the layers of PVC strip curtains, entering a warm, humid bio-secure environment where 416 insect rearing cages are stacked two high, eight abreast and twenty-six rows deep. I discover that it is permanently dawn in the breeding room; a state that is reproduced through arrays of LED bulbs. The artificial blue light they emit mimics the specific wavelength of light that is refracted over the horizon during the dawn in the summer, stimulating the mating of this American insect species. The replication of this wavelength throughout the fly's breeding cycle increases egg laying efficiency four-fold in comparison to natural light cycles. This patented light cycle represents an integral piece of intellectual property that drives production efficiency in the breeding room.

Biomimicry is guided by capturing the knowledge and practices embodied in ecological systems, redesigning and amplifying natural processes to produce conditions conducive to life (Goldstein and Johnson 2015). By analysing the micro-spaces where the BSF lay in the wild, AgriProtein's scientific team discovered that their physiological strategy is to lay eggs next to a food source rather than the majority of insects who lay their eggs within it. This crucial and unique difference makes the BSF one of the very few insect species conducive to industrial mimicry. "If they were a primary species in the decomposition chain – AgriProtein wouldn't be here today" remarks a process design engineer. "It would make industrial production impossible; you cannot separate eggs from the food source within the breeding cages and prevent the spread of disease". BSF do not spread pathogens because they do not feed during adulthood, it is only their offspring (larvae) that organically decompose waste. Most other fly species that feed during adulthood pick up and distribute bacteria. This crucial difference allows the factory to separate the breeding colony (figure 1) in a bio-secure environment away from the waste processing plant.

Our first task of the morning is servicing the cages. In 80 per cent humidity, Loisa and I navigate the tight aisles, replenishing them with "larvae cologne" (figure 4). This insect perfume emanates from a small gauze tray soaked in a specially created bacterial culture. The tray is attached to a small fan unit that diffuses insect perfume into the laying grids to mimic the availability of a decaying food source. This simple innovation stimulates insects to lay eggs in the belief there is a decomposing waste on which their offspring will survive, without placing a potentially contaminated food source in their cages.

I collect and place the new egg laying grids at one edge of the cage, away from the fluorescent light. When the female insect is ready to lay, she seeks a secure area to oviposit. If she feels with her ovipositor that the distance between the two points is too wide, she will not lay in the belief that her offspring will be exposed. Small curved indentations in the egg laying grids mirror the crevices in which a female fly would lay in the wild. These grids allow egg laying to be accurately controlled within the cages, as the insects are encouraged to lay in perfectly aligned micro-spaces. Here, industrial design is central to the mass production and rearing of insects. Before these intricately engineered processes of biomimicry were introduced, insects displayed considerable resistance to most forms of enclosure. By organising laying around certain spaces of the cage, egg collection efficiency can be maximised in micro-spaces that are pared down into individual elements of the production process. Stages of the insect's lifecycle are fragmented and subsequently aligned into a highly efficient form of production. This nonhuman body is being transformed into an organised form of labour similar to that of the factory labourer, whose conduct is constantly modulated to obtain the maximum effects of utility from the factory floor (Foucault, 1977).

Figure 4: Navigating the tight aisles between cages to service them with 'larvae cologne'. Photo: AgriProtein

When the factory managers and scientists try to enhance natural efficiencies, they turn towards an industrial model of production. Whilst the mathematical spaces of the insect cages mimic nature, they are also producing an anticipatory infrastructure for enclosure. At the moment in which nonhuman life is acknowledged as a source of inspiration, "it is simultaneously circumscribed" as capitalism seeks to confine nature to a finite space of industrial production (Braun 2008, 668). Encircling nature in this way is not random, it depends upon a team of entomologists and industrial engineers who mathematically generate spaces that are conducive to mass insect production. This forges a relationship between economic forces and nonhuman nature that is no longer dialectic, but rather one where capitalist forces act in opposition to a recalcitrant form of nonhuman life (Harvey and Braun 1996). The scientific reasoning that is used to redesign and amplify natural process in the insect factory is premised upon minimising the resistance of nonhuman life rather than simply emulating nature's processes. Insects do everything in their power to resist enclosure, and constantly seek ways of escaping the spaces in which they are confined. This represents a move beyond biomimicry, towards a mimicry that acts in constant service to capital production rather than nature itself.

The company strives to increase survivability across all stages of the insect production process. Whilst drawing upon natural inspiration to design key industrial processes they employ a team of 41 entomologists, researchers and production engineers. The team are constantly searching for further natural variables to mimic and enhance. To process 250 tonnes of waste per day, 7.5kg of daily egg production is required, targets which the biology managers are intent on achieving.

'Lecking' spaces have been incorporated into cage design structures to allow males to territorially display for females, which reduces overcrowding and encourages egg laying. This constant reorganisation and enclosure of the insects' reproductive space represents yet another strategy that drives the accumulation of capital in the factory. For Marx (Dyer-Witheford, 2002) the production of surplus value is conditional upon harnessing human labour power; whilst he does not extend this notion to nonhumans, there is an analogous set of issues at work in the insect factory. There are concerns as to whether the lifeform should earn a 'living wage' as this reproductive workforce is 'bioutilised' in the factory (Fisch 2017). Value is created and harnessed through the reproductive and waste processing capacity of the fly as these unpaid organisms are conscripted. The reorganisation of nature,

impelled by the forces of capital, captures the work of the insect in the factory as these enclosures penetrate into the depth of the reproductive space of the fly (Goldstein and Johnson 2015).

Putting Nonhuman Life to Work

Inside the factory's breeding cages, the world's largest nonhuman workforce (by head count) have been hard at work, laying their microscopic white eggs onto 3076 of these laying grids (AgriProtein 2017). I set about collecting and replacing them, monitoring cage conditions whilst cleaning these luxury mating spaces – a relentless process in the 28-degree (Celsius) heat. As I collect the last of our grids the team assemble around the weighing station; the laying looks particularly encouraging this morning and over 170 million eggs have been collected. Over the last four hours I have performed a rigorous and monotonous act of replacing, ordering and counting egg grids. The ordered and formulaic process of managing an insect colony is unlike the process of a fly laying its eggs on a compost heap, which might seem messy in comparison. Nature in the fly factory is subjected to a host of novel reorganisations driven by the desire to eliminate what humans consider to be 'natural inefficiencies.'

The factory depicts a stark contrast to the vision envisaged by Benyus, the architect of the biomimicry movement. For Benyus (1997), biomimicry represents an opportunity to reimagine the exploitative relationship between human life and the natural world. By drawing upon nature as a mentor, it seeks to reverse understandings of the natural world as an unlimited opportunity for extraction, and instead relies upon nature's expertise as a conduit to more sustainable production processes. Whilst the majority of the biomimicry literature is suggestive of imitating nature and its natural design knowledge "none of the prominent ideas in biomimicry are using organisms, rather the blueprints and recipes from those organisms" (Benyus 2005).

These organisms are mimicked and simultaneously captured as active labourers on the factory floor. Nature in the insect factory is a nonhuman agent that becomes entangled within a very specific logic of enclosure and capital accumulation (Jessop 2005). 8.4 billion insect bodies in one single factory are commodified for their labour power and utility in an industrial process of waste nutrient recovery. Through the biological labour of the larvae, these agents perform a constitutive role, actively "reconfiguring the landscape of capitalism" into the nonhuman world (Braun 2008, 669).

When the inspiration from tubercles on whale flippers was used to radically redesign wind turbines and their aerodynamic efficiencies, the whale was not violently captured to work for humans. However, AgriProtein does not simply harness the intellect of the lifeform, it uses biomimical innovation to commodify and enclose the labour power of its nonhuman agents on an unprecedented scale, both with respect to the sheer number of agents it marshals and the degree of its penetration into non-traditional forms of non-human labour. It is difficult to take issue with biomimicry's underlying intentions and promise, although as nonhuman work is rendered quantifiable it is made "complicit with the structures of dominance over nature that it seeks to overcome" (Fisch 2017, 804). Biological processes under this newly emergent form of biomimicry are not simply "recalcitrant", rather they play an active role in forging new capitalist agents as the insect becomes meshed into new rhythms of industrial production (Braun 2008, 679). As insect labourers are put to work, they require management, synchronisation and training similar to that of any human employee. I do not go into how BSF are trained in this article, but it is another key process in AgriProtein's factories.

Synchronising the Insect with the Pace of Industrial Production

As I push the trolley of insect grids out of the relative calm of the breeding room, I consider the trajectories of the four kilograms of eggs and the larvae that will hatch from these in the coming days. In nature hatching is a stochastic process, one that scientists at the factory cannot predict. However, the temporal synchronisation of nature, machinery and labour is a fundamental factor in ensuring the viability of an industrial insect farming

operation. If larvae hatch over their natural seven-day period and are placed in the waste bins at different ages, it would be impossible to create a standardised feeding density and ensure the efficient bioconversion of waste. The company's engineers have therefore devised an incredibly detailed hatching system, where the larvae that hatch on each individual day are collected beneath the 3076 egg grids. This allows early hatching larvae to be naturally selected and preferentially processed. By selecting insects with shorter lifecycles, the larval stage of AgriProtein's BSF has been reduced from fourteen to nine days. Each managed broodstock cycle reduces the insect's larval period making the conversion of waste into value product more temporally efficient.

As homogenously aged larvae are simultaneously brought into the production stage of the insect rearing process, this allows biological events to be synchronised with the availability of the factory's capital-intensive production assets. The hour-old larvae are collected beneath the hatching system and taken into the 'nursery' before they meet their eventual food source. After five days in the nursery being attended to by a dedicated biology team, the larvae enter a robotically controlled phase of production. Larvae bins are loaded onto a conveyor belt that transports them to the main production area of the factory. I stand next to the operator James, who oversees the integration of the waste supply and nursery larvae. Under his watchful eye, the robot loads moisture rich substrate siphoned from two 30,000 litre silos at the end of the organic waste processing area into a fresh pallet. Wriggling, five-day old nursery reared larvae are ready to start work, they are collected from the conveyor belt by the robot and tipped onto their 'larvae lunch'. As the robot drops the larvae onto their food source the bioconversion of waste is initiated. The ability of this particular colony to efficiently process this volume of waste represents a noteworthy optimisation of nature: *"Just 1g of fly eggs will process and consume 45kg of waste; in the wild due to mortality rates this is under 4kgs"* (AgriProtein 2017). Larvae will consume many thousands of times their weight in 'larvae lunch' (figure 5), as they grow out

under optimal climatic conditions. In under nine days these larvae will transform themselves from tiny eggs, almost invisible to the human eye, into fully grown insect larvae ready for harvesting.

As the larvae continue to mature, they become a valuable source of protein and oil, fed on the waste they decompose. To create a homogenous protein product, harvesting must take place at a scientifically precise life stage. The insects' biological rhythm must be synchronised with the processing ability of this final stage of production. Ninety five per cent of the larvae will be harvested whilst five per cent will follow a separate process to pupate into flies. They will become the breeding stock for the next generation of selectively bred insects.

Nature in the fly factory is constantly being reproduced 'anew', as the reproductive rhythm of the insect is amplified and morphed into an industrial rhythm. All aspects of the insect's life cycle are recreated to enable the amalgamation of waste streams, human work shifts and robotic labour at specific points during the 24-hour operation of the factory. The hatching, feeding and processing requirements of the insect are biologically controlled by altering climatic conditions in the factory. Temperature and humidity control are key variables that enable the development of larvae to be inhibited or advanced. In the grow out area, larvae can be cooled to delay growth and allow processing at particular times to prevent production bottlenecks. These larvae logistics are biologically possible, due to the precise biomimetic control of the BSF that occurs at all stages of the insect rearing process.

A Biomimetic Coming

As AgriProtein's biomimetic technologies artificially reconstruct the insect through material and temporal reorganisations a new nature is produced - one which becomes subject to a regime of private property enclosures. Throughout history, legal constructs have enabled humans to claim rights over nature. These acts, consistent with the law of 'takings', are "intrinsically violent" and produce highly consequential spatial geographies (Blomley 2003, 121). Historically, such acts of

Figure 5. Robotic co-ordination at the twenty-four-hour canteen. Larvae lunch is pumped from two silos in the waste processing plant to meet the larvae recyclers who initiate the bio-conversion process. Photo: Charlie Drew.

material violence used barbed wire to police boundaries around private land (Blomley, 2003). This section will question what it means to police artificially constructed boundaries around nature and analyse the inherently violent act of dispossession and enclosure that seeks to circumscribe the natural world. The act of patenting "confers a temporary monopoly on the holder" subject to that invention being made available in the public domain (Jasanoff 2012, 165). Intellectual property laws, however, were not written with biotechnology in mind; "the assumption under Western legal systems is that nature is the common property of human kind" (Jasanoff, 157).

The enclosure of the insect through the act of patenting its intellectual property "enables the realms of biological reproduction and capital accumulation" to move closer together (Cooper 2008, 3). The privatisation of this genetic strain of the fly signals a new form of 'bio-accumulation' that is premised upon the commodification of nature (McCarthy 2004, 329). Efforts to enclose the fly are not just limited to the synchronisation of the larvae's life cycle, selective breeding or its reproductive manipulation. These enclosures developed in the insect factory seek to uncover and subsequently privatise new territorial domains, as they enter the micro-spaces of the insect's

genome. These enclosures are not initiated by the biology managers, rather they originate from the board room and are driven by a further constellation of capitalist forces.

On the penultimate day of my research in Cape Town I was invited to observe a meeting between company executives and an external patenting consultant. In the emerging insect farming industry, establishing and securing a dominant market position is a fundamental objective for the company's investors. Biotechnology companies can capture considerable value from property patents as artificially constructed barriers to market entry that constrict competition (Labban 2014).

AgriProtein's selectively bred fly has particular beneficial traits for industrial production; the company is now mapping the genome of this insect to prospect for these phenotypes. These observable traits can be directly attributed to a mapped genetic phenotype. This process of 'bio-prospecting' involves proving the causality between genetic DNA expressions and insect attributes, resulting in the "vertical integration of nature into capital" (Smith 2007, 33). This phase of bioaccumulation moves beyond scouring nature for organisms to enclose and towards securing exclusive rights over "the nature of life" (Prudham 2007, 411). If a part of the natural world can be proved to be a "fiction of autonomous invention" it risks producing a humanised nature that is "financialised all the way up" (Smith 2007, 33). Successful approval of international patents will allow AgriProtein to lay claim to their own strain of the BSF and identify genetic ownership of this selectively bred sub-species.

The granting of property rights over new biotechnologies is subject to increasing contestation and critique from social scientists who consider the "alienation of ecological production" as a new form of bioaccumulation that is emerging through "extra-economic means" (Prudham 2007). Patents over "genomic expressions amount to de facto patents over whole organisms" and consolidate private claims to altered organisms as patentable inventions (Prudham, 407). These patents raise important questions about what is considered 'manufactured' or a composition of nature's

intellect. They point towards the construction of a 'socio-nature' driven by neoliberal reconfigurations of nonhuman life (Whatmore 2002). The object of the patent claim is set aside from nature, "corralling a part of it" as it is labelled a product of human invention (Jasanoff 2012, 157). Where these patents are granted and 'genetic reductionism' is legally sanctioned, this has considerable implications for the concept of universal natures (McAfee 2003).

Life patenting legitimises what De Angelis (2004, 81) terms 'biopiracy' as the privatisation of nature's knowledge that has been collectively produced by generations of 'experimenters' over 3.8 billion years is severed from the commons. Whilst the notion of 'biopiracy' is frequently associated with violence towards and the appropriation of knowledge from indigenous communities, this form of oppression can be seen to operate in new directions within the biomimicry discourse. Although the subject of the agent differs, there is a structural analogy between these two realms and expressions of violence. This legally enshrined act of dispossession has a stark temporality to it. Nature's expertise, which has been accumulated over the long term, is appropriated from the natural realm in a very short enactment of legal violence.

AgriProtein's attempt to privatise intellectual property does not stop at the level of the organism that they have genetically selected. The company has also patented the specific wavelength of light that causes mating and its application in mass insect rearing. This represents a move beyond the enclosure of privately constructed organisms towards what McCarthy (2004, 335) labels as the privatisation of "ecosystem services and environmental conditions". Under continual acts of 'bioprospecting' the company is "dispossessing nature" as it orchestrates new methods to scour the natural world for defensible property rights (Smith 2007, 31). The active removal of natural intellect from the domain of nature into the domain of human capitalism increases the divide between these two realms (Jasanoff, 2012). This act of "ontological surgery" legally constructs and demarcates aspects of life which can be owned (Jasanoff, 161). As the gradual legal erosion of nature prevails and the law produces "more definitive ontological

settlements" it is easy to overlook the environmental merits of these technologies in the face of this capitalist onslaught (Jasanoff, 163).

Enclosing the insect through intellectual and legal capture raises considerable ethical concerns over the role nonhuman life plays in facilitating bioaccumulation. However, Labban (2014) emphasises the need to positively acknowledge these contributions to the 'bioeconomy'. Recognising the beneficial "encounter between productive practices and nonhuman organisms" does not negate the political concerns that are associated with these technologies (Labban, 561). Ethical contradictions remain evident on the factory floor. A biomimetic future that subjects the 'pesky fly' to a form of violence may, however, be a considerably more sustainable trajectory than overfishing which currently threatens to eliminate tracts of marine life from our oceans.

As I stand at the processing mill, protein-rich ground larvae flow out of the 'bio-separator' whilst refined 'MagOil™' and 'MagSoil™' are also extracted during the production process. I consider the relative violence of harvesting insects in comparison to traditional forms of protein extraction that pillage the oceans for fishmeal, a protein that is decimating pelagic fish and krill stocks. Insect farming represents a paradigm shift in protein production towards a more sustainable form of urban waste nutrient recycling. Each tonne of MagMeal™ produced prevents three tonnes of fish from being removed from the ocean (AgriProtein 2017). As pelagic fish stocks decline, fishing vessels must trawl further and deeper, consuming double the quantity of diesel whilst using more exploitative nets in order to return the same volume of catch as they did a decade earlier (AgriProtein, 2017). In stark contrast, AgriProtein's technology is giving rise to a more proximal urban production of protein from insect farms that are being integrated into the fabric of the city. The ability to process waste, create protein and biofuel closer to its eventual point of consumption has an estimated environmental cost saving of £1,500 per tonne produced (AgriProtein, 2017). This technology seemingly fits with greater ease into the rhythm of urban ecology in juxtaposition to large scale ocean trawling that drives the competing

economic and environmental geography. Having considered the temporal and spatial rhythms of the insect factory, AgriProtein's technology is driving a considerable and scalable geography that seeks to redefine how urban ecologies are envisaged.

AgriProtein has been commissioned to provide an organic waste solution for NEOM – the new Saudi Arabian megacity to be constructed in the Kingdom's north-western seaboard. Multiple factories will be integrated into the city's unconstrained vision for sustainable urban civilisation. This process will create links between the natural and urban worlds as the processing of waste and the production of protein becomes integral to the structural design of cities. This technology will not stop waste from being produced, rather it includes a system to re-purpose it within new geographies of the urban economy. Biomimical technologies enacted in this way can shift the ontology of a city as they foster more collaborative urban design strategies that integrate with nature (Taylor-Buck, 2012). This ontology can support the planning of urban scale biomimical infrastructures that deliver a "living city" model (Taylor-Buck, 2012, 120). This urban ecosystem model envisages cities as natural entities that are designed and managed to solve urban resource constraints. They produce a closed loop urban ecosystem where all waste is considered as a commodity to be re-purposed and thus re-valorised within the confines of the urban framework.

Conclusion

Vuyo and I load five tonnes of ground packaged MagMeal™ into a delivery truck and begin the short drive across Philippi township to the market leader in South African animal feed. This brief journey allows me to contemplate what this empirical case reveals about changing waste, protein and commodity circuits in the global economy. Somewhere within truckloads like these were the leftovers of my lunch, now measured and packaged for sale. The larvae lunch consumed by AgriProtein's insect colony formed part of the Capetonian's leftovers a couple of weeks ago has now been transitioned into a product that monogastric farmers are scrambling to get their hands on. Khalla meets us at the gate to take delivery of a sustainable

insect feed that his chickens would forage naturally for in the wild. This protein which is made without artificial and anti-biotic additives is the result of many years of investigative and pro-active biomimical application. Whilst this upcycled commodity diverts waste from landfill, it cannot afford to deflect attention away from the underlying ethical concerns with this technology. Like many similar design strategies that draw inspiration from nature, biomimical technologies are forever "troubled by a relationship to an original" (Fisch 2010, 817). This concern arises from a scientific movement, initially inspired by nature, that contorts it into a mimicry predicated upon the securitisation of nonhuman agents for their ability to reproduce and perform functions that serve capital. A biomimetic discipline emerges that is distanced from its imitative relationship with the natural world and produces technologies that are no longer "categorisable as belonging to nature" (Fisch 2010, 818). Benyus' initial vision for the biomimicry discipline included the "total cessation of human dependence on the reproductive capacities of natural organisms" (Fisch 2010, 814). This conception has become thwarted by a technology that presses the boundaries of the biomimicry discourse in new ways. AgriProtein's application of biomimicry is contingent on "producing bio-capital by harnessing the regenerative power of organisms" (Helmriech 2009). This technology 'bio- utilises' nonhuman nature by manipulating the reproductive rhythm of the insect. It subjects the lifeform it encloses to an intrinsically violent technology, whilst seeking to replace an exploitative and environmentally destructive market system that threatens the future of our oceans.

Biomimical technologies are concerned with problem of who has the authoritative power "to issue evaluative judgements" about the relative ethics of each particular application (Fisch 2010, 817). This research highlights that the political and ethical tensions for this particular case of industrial biomimicry remain unresolved and leave us with a challenging set of practical considerations. On the factory floor, the market avoids this tension by overlooking the issues of violence and exploitation, political ecologists however must consider the relative moral coherence of each individual case. Biomimicry's

ethical dilemma can be considered within the following dichotomy. On the one hand this scientific movement produces a "bio-inclusive ethic" through a more morally coherent and sustainable mode of production (Matthews 2011, 380). As humans resituate themselves within the natural realm, to redesign exploitative industrial modes of production, they can be seen to give voice to 'the parliament of species' (Benyus 1997). On the other hand, during this restitution, the collaborative dialogue between humans and nonhumans is superseded by technologies of enclosure that produce a "new nature of our own design" (Matthews 2011, 381). The use of biomimicry with anthropocentric intent wrenches open the boundaries between humans and the natural world that it originally sought to repair, producing a nature that is "exclusively human in its provenance and constituency" (Matthews 2011, 381). As I ponder these potential ethical choice sets our global population continues to produce exponential quantities of potential larvae lunch. This represents an opportunity to reimagine global waste and protein markets – a challenge which AgriProtein's insect colony are buzzing about.

Acknowledgements

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"No Amount of Baths Is Gonna Make You Feel Better": Seeking Balance, Wholeness, and Well-being in Everyday Self-Care

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ABSTRACT

Recently, the concept of "self-care" has shifted from the sphere of biomedicine into popular discourse; rather than indicating the practice of maintaining physical health, the term has come to represent a set of broader and more commonplace practices aimed at achieving balance, wholeness, and overall well-being. Drawing from interviews and participant observation with young adult respondents both in college and recently graduated, this study explores what it means to practice this type of "everyday self-care." Those who practice everyday self-care do so to seek out a holistic sense of happiness and well-being; they value self-care that engages their "whole" self – one conceptualized as made up of both mind and body. They strive for balance in tensions between self-control and indulgence, long-term well-being and immediate gratification, and selfishness and community. Self-care cannot be summed up in a list of activities or practices; rather, it necessitates an ongoing production of moral, economic, and social meanings.

In the medical industry, 'self-care' is defined as "the basic level of health care practiced by members of the public" (Fries 2013, 37). The term's use, however, has spread beyond the context of biomedicine to encompass a vast array of bodily practices and emotion-work aimed not only at managing health but also achieving well-being. Commonplace and seemingly simple activities—like enjoying a good book, going to the spa or gym, creating art, or just taking time to relax—constitute this new conceptualization of 'everyday' self-care. Engaging in these practices can serve varying purposes, from addressing medical or mental health needs to simply relieving daily stress. At the time of writing, little sociological research has been published about this new widespread usage of self-care and the ways in which people engage with it, despite this phenomenon's increasing relevance as an aspect of mainstream Western culture.

I first became aware of this language of self-care in the context of Goucher College, the small liberal arts school I attended during this study. The term has become popular on campus and is used frequently among students and in various activist circles. Some professors even advise students to practice self-care when subject matter is potentially upsetting or when students are going through difficult times. Moreover, 'self-care' and related terminology are explicitly institutionalized at the college: there is a "self-care station" located outside the Health and Counseling Center; during exam weeks, the Office of Student Engagement hosts various self-care activities and "relaxation stations" in the library where students can snack, color, and unwind; the spring semester of 2016 was "mindfulness-themed." Prompted by the proliferation of self-care in the fabric of the college (and, of course, because of my own accessibility to Goucher students), I began to wonder: how do Goucher students define and practice self-care?

Here, I argue that rather than a fixed set of practices or single mode of being, everyday self-care is instead an ongoing process by which people balance various tensions to achieve a sense of wholeness and, ultimately, well-being. People who engage in everyday self-care constantly negotiate and re-negotiate the meaning of self-care, personally and culturally. They grapple with the potential implications— both positive and negative—that practicing self-care can have on their bodies, their relationships, and their overall well-being. To practice self-care is a morally laden choice with both economic and social consequences that extend far beyond the scope of the practice itself.

Scholarly Approaches to Well-being

The social-scientific study of well-being is currently underdeveloped, and everyday self-care is a concept with the potential to expand this scholarly landscape. This study is situated in current sociological and anthropological discussions of well-being – engaging in what Fischer (2014) calls "positive anthropology," which shifts the traditional focus in the social sciences from suffering to flourishing. This research also contributes to wider conversations in the social sciences about health and the body – in particular, discussions about dieting, fitness, cosmetics, and other areas of study that intersect with self-care – and the structural forces that shape how we interact and engage with both physical and mental health.

Striving for Wholeness

A central ontological tenet of the modern Western worldview is that mind and body are two separate entities fundamentally in opposition to one another (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987, 8). Within this paradigm, the mind is thought to control, monitor, and thus transform the body (Thompson and Hirschman 1995, 139). Because the mind is responsible for disciplining the body, the physical state of the body conveys something about the moral character of the mind that resides within it

(Foucault 1978). This ideology derives from the "Calvinist work ethic," wherein physical pleasure is sacrificed for productivity and the acquisition of knowledge, privileging the endeavors of the mind over those of the body and constructing a parallel dualism of rationality versus irrationality (Thompson and Hirschman 1995).

This Cartesian legacy of mind-body dualism in medicine manifests in a "mechanistic" and purely functional conceptualization of the body that lacks psychosomaticism or any connection to the mind (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987). Only in recent history have experts in psychiatry and psychosomatic medicine attempted to reconnect mind and body in clinical fields, although illnesses and afflictions are still most often categorized "as if they were either wholly organic or wholly psychological in origin" (9). Self-care is one such attempt – both in clinical medicine and, more recently, in popular culture – at a more holistic conceptualization of the self that relies on a connection between the mind and body. This study, in part, explores how contemporary self-care is commonly defined, which is often situated in terms of overcoming this dualism (Fries 2013; Schure, J. Christopher, and S. Christopher 2008).

Rejecting Institutionalized Reductionism

The adaptation of self-care from a purely medical term to a more holistic one represents a similar trend of rejecting or challenging normative biomedical practices and medicines in favor of more holistic care practices. Many of these practices take the shape of CAMs, or complementary and alternative medicines. Indeed, the use of CAM therapies is increasing (Fries 2013) and emerges in a consumer context characterized by industries of self-care focused on the body, such as dieting, fitness, cosmetic surgeries, etc. (Thompson and Hirschman 1995). People who engage in CAM therapies do so within "a network of binary oppositions to biomedical treatment," constructing clinical science in opposition to tradition, reductionism in opposition to holism, and control in opposition to naturalism (Fries 2013, 41). Davis, Maurstad, and Dean (2014) criticize the medical field for overlooking a more inclusive definition of CAMs as "folk healing systems situated within the domain of the common people that resist the hierarchical and bureaucratic patterns of biomedicine" (302).

Biomedicine is not the only institution self-care resists or challenges; those who practice contemporary self-care also deviate from the norms of other institutions of care or body work, including fitness, dieting, and cosmetic surgery. Women participate in "fun" or holistic exercise, such as Zumba or Hybrid, that focus on the process itself – integrating emotions and the mind – rather than solely emphasizing the bodily outcomes of dominant exercise practices (Nieri and Hughes 2016; Markula 2004). "Healthy" dieting practices are constructed as positive, empowering choices, and "mindful eating" is advocated as a way to resist conventional norms of restriction and the injunction to attain thinness (Cairns and Johnston 2015; Vogel and Mol 2014). "Body love" is embraced as a rejection of dominant body norms and the industries that perpetuate those norms (Shipley 2015). Like the use of CAMs to reject biomedicine and embrace holism, engaging in these practices of self-care constitute a rejection of "institutionalized reductionism" (Fries 2013, 44). The goal in these practices of self-care is similarly to incorporate a perspective that integrates the "whole" person and the experience of self-care rather than just the physical outcomes and results.

Discipline and Pleasure: The Neoliberal Body Project

In addition to a rejection of traditional institutional reductionism, shifting socioeconomic contexts have also played a part in the increasing popularity of self-care. Neoliberal policies and regulations implemented in the 1980s – including reduced government spending, privatization, and free-market economics – have produced pervasive ideologies of individualism, efficiency, and rationality (Sirna 2016, 231). The "trickle-down effects of neoliberal 'reform'" (Bourgois and Schonberg 2009, 235) force the individual to take accountability for their own health and well-being – shifting the "burden of care" from the state onto individuals and absolving the state of responsibility for the governance of public health (Nash 2016, 220). This individualist approach is limiting in that it neglects social and structural inequalities that factor into either cultivating or constraining individuals' opportunities for exercising agency. Nevertheless, the ethos of "healthism" (Sirna 2016, 231) has become pervasive and has

strengthened the Western societal focus on disciplining and monitoring the body (Thompson and Hirschman 1995).

The moral imperative toward self-control is positioned in fundamental opposition to pleasure; a healthy, successful lifestyle requires that one refrain from excessive indulgence of any kind. This "control vs. excess" paradigm is especially relevant in discourses surrounding dieting and fitness – two major self-care industries, as demonstrated by Thompson and Hirschmnn (1995) and Fries (2013). Those who practice self-care through dieting and fitness must engage in "calibration" – a "balancing act" between the polar extremes of self-control and indulgence (Cairns and Johnston 2015, 154). This tension is gendered as well, as postfeminist values of choice and empowerment have coalesced with neoliberal values of autonomy and agency to create a discourse wherein women must avoid being perceived as out-of-control and overindulgent, but also must steer away from being pathologized as "health nut [s]" (154). These values are inscribed on individuals' bodies, which are coded as either "fat" or "fit," depending on one's ostensible success or failure in negotiating this project (165).

There are obvious connections between the control vs. pleasure paradigm and mind-body dualism, returning to Thompson and Hirschman's (1995) argument that Christian asceticism has informed an ideal of delaying immediate (bodily) gratification and pleasure in order to pursue "rational," productive ends with the promise of a later reward in the afterlife. Pleasure is constructed in direct opposition to capitalist productivity, and stigma is attached to those who pursue "unproductive" indulgence (Foucault 1978). Because of this Western "anti-hedonist" bias, "pleasure can no longer exist for pleasure's sake" (Davis, Maurstad and Dean 2014). In this denial of pleasure, the mind is once again privileged over bodily enterprises. Thus, the goal of contemporary self-care is to remediate the tension between discipline and pleasure in the pursuit of wholeness and mind-body connectedness – avoiding either "extreme" by mindfully engaging in physical pleasure through taking care of the body rather than simply disciplining it. Exploring the extent to which this goal is lived out in the actual practice of self-care – and the ease with which it is accomplished – is a central aim of this study.

There are many obstacles to achieving this desired holistic and authentic definition of self-care. Consumer industries co-opt and sell the rhetoric of self-care and holistic living to advertise products geared at controlling the body (Nash 2016), or practices of self-care that are supposedly liberating but fail to challenge "the dominant ideology that … bodies require modification" (Nieri and Hughes 2016, 143). In reality, various resources are needed to properly embody self-care: knowledge of which choices are "healthy" and "good" for the mind and body; the money to afford yoga classes, face masks, healthy foods, and bath bombs; and the time necessary to take a break and be present to these practices. Despite intentions to fully incorporate the mind and body in a practice that is neither fully discipline nor fully indulgence, those who partake in self-care must constantly grapple with these tensions in navigating their own definitions and practices.

Methods

For this project, I carried out eight semi-structured, in-depth interviews (Esterberg 2002) with six Goucher students and two recent graduates. I used a convenience sample, recruiting interviewees primarily by posting on my own Facebook page as well as various private Facebook groups for Goucher students of which I am a member, such as the Goucher College Class of 2017 page. Interviews were mostly carried out on Goucher's campus, although a few took place at interviewees' off-campus residences. Most interviews were around an hour and fifteen minutes long; I audio-recorded all interviews on my iPhone. During these interviews, I asked participants about their own definitions and practices of self-care, how important these practices are to them, what motivates them to partake in practices of self-care, and the effects that these practices have on their well-being, relationships, and sense of self. I also asked interviewees to free-list self-care practices and words that they feel are associated with self-care. After collecting my data, I transcribed all eight interviews and used open coding, creating

labels and codes from my data that allowed me to find patterns and develop the main themes around which I organized my qualitative analysis (Esterberg 2002).

I also conducted participant observation at a "self-care party" I hosted at my house. Again, participants for this event were recruited through convenience, as I reached out to my close friends and asked them to come and bring friends if they wished. I framed the event as specifically self-care themed (and informed all participants ahead of time and at the event that this would be a part of my research) but left the actual content of the party open, telling participants that they could bring whatever activities, snacks, crafts, or materials they associated with self-care. Eight people came, bringing large sketchpads and markers, coloring books, magazines to make collages, an essential oil diffuser, and various snacks ranging from fruit to hot samosas. We spent one or two hours coloring and drawing with incense and candles burning; some people— myself included—worked on designing their planners or "Bullet Journals," a popular journaling methodology "best described as a mindfulness practice disguised as a productivity system" (Carroll 2019). Other participants worked on homework, sending emails, and other logistical or productive tasks. We also made homemade face masks and bath scrubs with materials I already had, such as coffee beans, almond milk, coconut oil, and Epsom salts. Over the course of this four-hour event, I asked people about the activities they were partaking in and why they considered those things to be self-care, and I took detailed field notes on the lengthy informal discussions that ensued. These field notes were coded along with my interview transcripts.

My sample was small and, although the range of experiences and thoughts expressed by the participants was robust, the population as a whole was not demographically diverse. For example, all my respondents were white. Additionally, although respondents' genders and sexual orientations varied greatly, only one was a cisgender male. No heterosexual, cisgender men responded to my calls for interviewees. Finally, only one interviewee was economically situated below the poverty line.

Although two other respondents had working-class backgrounds, both identified that they led mostly middle-class lifestyles at the time I interviewed them. All other respondents identified themselves as middle-class or upper-middle class. I do not list these demographic factors to reduce the people I interviewed to mere numbers or statistics; rather, I mention this to call attention to the economic privilege necessary to practice self-care "successfully," as well as the gendered and racialized dimensions of self-care.

It is also important to acknowledge my own positionality as not only a researcher but a person who engages in many, if not most, of the self-care practices my participants talked about – and for many of the same reasons they do. My own class background has allowed me bountiful resources to engage in self-care in any way I see fit. I tried not to lose sight of my own personal background and experience with self-care in collecting or analyzing my data because, as with any type of social research, I recognize that my subject position necessarily shapes and informs my interaction with the research. Because of this, I attempted to engage in a dialogue with informants rather than simply conducting one-sided interviews, offering my own analyses and thoughts during the interview process and allowing conversations to unfold organically.

Defining and Negotiating Self-Care

Thriving, Not Just Surviving

Self-care is fundamentally oriented toward the pursuit of well-being. Practicing self-care means more than merely getting through each day: ideally, it means flourishing. Participants talked about self-care in terms of happiness, doing what they want, doing what feels good, and possessing awareness and reflexivity about themselves and their needs; actively thriving was often contrasted to passively surviving. Emily, for example, articulated an important difference between self-care and what she sees as "coping mechanisms." For her, self-care involves an enthusiastic pursuit of creativity, health, and joy – while coping just means doing the bare minimum to survive her depression, anxiety, and the stresses of college life:

And that's more how I perceive self-care, like you can be in an upset mindset but you're more able to do or create in a sense of caring for yourself … you talk to other people, you're more social, you're more happy, whereas coping [is], oh, you're just in your room eating ramen, can't remember how many days it's been since you showered, don't really care, get upset, don't wanna do anything.

Along similar lines, Sage framed self-care in opposition to "self-preservation," which meant having to mask their trans identity for the sake of avoiding discrimination or assault. For them, self-preservation could never be self-care because "it's less about making myself feel happy and more about making myself feel safe." Self-care, on the other hand, meant living fully in their identity, spending time doing their makeup and putting effort into their appearance, receiving validation and support from their peers, and focusing on the things they love to do.

Several people talked about mental illnesses or mental health issues making it difficult for them to do seemingly simple tasks like getting out of bed in the morning or taking a shower. Self-care for them was ensuring that they did those things, which they knew would ultimately make them feel better. Although many of them did partake in therapy or medication, they used self-care as an alternative therapy or CAM to supplement the biomedical care they were receiving (Davis, Maurstad, and Dean 2014). For example, when asked about a time when she felt like she should have practiced self-care but didn't, Katharine talked about how her depression created a cycle where she would often spend the majority of her days off work "kind of being in and out of sleep and feeling really anxious and wanting to get up but not able to somehow." In contrast, when I asked her to tell me about a recent time where she intentionally practiced self-care, she explained that occasionally taking a brisk walk with a roommate in the morning before work—a self-care practice suggested by her therapist—provides an incentive for her to get out of bed. These walks make her feel positive about being active and energized in the morning, compared to just enduring "the usual grogginess" on her way to work.

Rather than relying solely on biomedical solutions, my informants preferred to take a more holistic approach to their well-being (Fries 2013) by engaging in activities that made them feel like they were flourishing rather than just treating or managing a mental illness. Other respondents talked about self-care in terms of feeling free, going outdoors, getting off campus, being more positive, feeling confident/good about themselves, and generally making an active effort to lead an enjoyable life and be happy rather than just passively (or unhappily) existing.

Balancing Mind and Body

Cartesian mind-body dualism (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987) was a pervasive idea interwoven throughout many of my participants' responses. Most respondents expressed that they conceptualize their mind and body as separate in some way – or as two different components of themselves – which was represented not only in the explicit ways some people created distinctions between the two. For example, respondents discussed how certain self-care practices are targeted at alleviating emotional or psychological stress while other practices are predominantly physical. However, even practices that seem entirely geared toward bodily pleasure—taking a bath, for example— also involve relaxing the mind, allowing the mind to rest, de-stressing, or recharging the mind so that it can be more active later. This also applies to other physical activities such as exercise, taking a nap, or, in Katharine's case, cleaning the bathroom:

> I feel really stuck in my head a lot and do struggle with mental health issues, and centering [self-]care activities around a physical action is really helpful for me because it takes me out of that … Even cleaning the bathroom can be meditative for me because I'm focusing on this physical task and everything that comes with that physical experience and not thinking about being stressed about work or something weird that happened with a friend.

Katharine describes a connection between the physical act of cleaning and the mental process of meditating – simultaneously distinguishing the physical and the mental as two separate areas of focus while uniting the mind and the body in one practice of self-care.

Indeed, for many respondents, self-care means achieving balance in caring for both the mind and body, as John stated: "In my self, I have my body, and the mental self that inhabits it. And those are two different things but they're both me... It's like a balance. And when I practice self-care, it's like I'm balancing myself out. Those two different sides." John explained that self-care necessarily involves paying equal attention to the needs of his mind and his body "so that us as a whole can work better together." Similarly, Nellie talked about how an act of self-care needs to encompass both her mind and body:

> It has to be much more holistic – my mind, body, emotions, and all the people I'm around ... people a lot of times think that it's one or the other, like, "I'm just gonna do something that's gonna engage my mind" or "I'm just gonna engage my body" and for me it's kind of all in the same. So there's a lot of acts of self-care that don't impact me when it's only impacting one part of me.

Despite the fact that earlier in the interview Nellie told me she sees her mind and body as "the same," in this quote she still delineates her mind and body as separate "parts" of her. Like John and Katharine, she describes how self-care is ideally "holistic," integrating both components. Almost oxymoronically, respondents took on a view of their mind and body as separate while simultaneously seeking to deconstruct and even transcend mind-body dualism (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987) by linking the "two" parts of themselves in the practice of self-care.

Self-Control Vs. Self-Indulgence

The "control vs. excess" paradigm outlined by Vogel and Mol (2014) is central to how people navigate self-care. For many respondents, self-care means pursuing pleasure of some sort, but some amount of discipline is necessary to avoid overdoing it. During the "self-care party" where my participant observation took place, we had a lengthy discussion about balancing self-care and "indulgence." In particular, Savannah talked about how she fixates on the idea of self-care as a way to "enable" herself and her impulsive tendencies. She explained that she finds it extremely difficult to "not overindulge in something and call it self-care" as a way to make it seem acceptable. Netflix "binging," for example, is an activity that can sometimes help to relieve her anxiety, but which can also be unwise and unproductive when she should be doing her homework instead. Indeed, "binge-watching" TV shows or movies is a subject that came up frequently in my interviews, especially in contrast to watching an episode or two with friends or as a way to take a break and relax. Language is significant here – using the term "binging" explicitly ties the act of watching Netflix to overindulgent or excessive behavior. It also implies addiction, widely perceived as the pinnacle of out-of-control behavior (as in binge-eating or binge-drinking).

This tension between self-control and self-indulgence (Vogel and Mol 2014) applies to a myriad of different behaviors, such as buying things, smoking marijuana or drinking alcohol, and especially eating. Most people debated whether or not a "Treat yo self" mentality – a phrase made popular by the television show Parks and Recreation – qualified as self-care. When asked, many participants' immediate response was that "Treat yo self" was not the same thing as self-care, but that there could be overlap with certain practices. Annie, for example, explained what she sees as the difference between self-care and "Treat yo self":

> I still think that self-care is more intentional. I think a "treat yourself" is more of an instinctual... immediate gratification or impulse. I think they could overlap, like I think if you're really stressed out and like want to take a sec to go have a milkshake and sit outside with it that could be self-care, but I think if you're at the mall and you're like, "Milkshake! Treat yo self!" Like, that's not self-care. That's yummy, but that's not self-care.

For many participants, a particular action—in this case, drinking a milkshake—could be an act of self-care or it could be treating oneself; making this distinction depends on context and intention rather than the nature of the action itself. John outlined a similar difference with snacking in general, contrasting a "good snack" versus a "bad snack." One might expect a good snack to be a typically healthy food and vice versa for a bad snack; however, for John, a good snack could be any type of food as long as it is ingested in moderation. A bad snack, on the other hand, involves snacking mindlessly – like Savannah's description of watching too much Netflix, John invokes the imagery of someone who "binges," or an out-of-control eater. My informants found it necessary to employ discipline (Foucault 1978) and careful calibration (Cairns and Johnston 2015) in everyday self-care, justifying the pleasures that self-care brought them by asserting the self-control that they exerted over those practices.

Taking a Break: Recharging or Avoidance?

Respondents frequently framed self-care in terms of taking a break from the daily realities of life. They emphasized the importance of pausing to take a breath or taking a step back from routine, from specific stressors, from certain people (or people in general), or from bad habits. These breaks were often talked about in terms of recharging, rebooting, recalibrating, or refueling, as in this comment from Emily: "You are a battery. And sometimes, you know, we're not like the Duracell bunny that just keeps going, like you have to recharge." Annie used similar language as well, discussing how sometimes unsuccessfully attempting to be productive could actually end up being less productive than taking a break to practice self-care: "It's like if I feel myself really stressed out but not being productive, that's when I know I need to stop and do something that's gonna like reboot me, sorta."

Indeed, for many respondents, taking a break is most useful when it is framed in such a way that directly links it to productivity. After people are re-fueled by their break, it allows them to re-enter their lives, jobs, school work, or even relationships with a newfound rigor and energy:

With baths and face masks and stuff, they make me feel… you know, like, they clean. And when I get clean and I freshen up, it makes me feel like I have started anew and can now be productive. And unintended consequence of that is kinda like… [I think to myself,] "I've been lying in bed for four hours in my own disgusting sweat and dirt, like, let me go take a bath, watch an episode of Bob's Burgers in the bath, and like get out and do stuff." Whether that happens or not is questionable. But there's usually the intention going in, that after this bath, something's gonna happen. (John)

In the quote above, John clearly illustrates the idea that a break (in this case, to take a bath or apply a face mask) can be productive if it serves as a recharging period. John also expresses a dilemma that many of my interviewees echoed: even if the goal of taking a break is ideally to bounce back recharged and energized, often this goal is not met, and the break becomes a method of procrastination or avoidance of tasks instead.

Again, respondents find themselves balancing or "calibrating" (Cairns and Johnston 2015) self-control and indulgence as they negotiate whether a break serves as a legitimate period of relaxation or just a way to procrastinate. In the following quote, Victoria uses the Netflix example common to my participants as she explains the difficulty in finding this balance: "I use Netflix partially as an escapist method but it's also to make me feel better. But sometimes I feel like the "making me feel better" thing is just protecting me from something I should address." Informants often experienced difficulty determining whether a break was indeed essential for continued productivity later or just an "escapist" excuse to avoid work or other undesirable, but necessary, tasks. In these instances, self-care is fraught with the imperative to discipline one's body and to reject immediate gratification or pleasure in pursuit of the ultimate goal of capitalist productivity (Foucault 1978; Thompson and Hirschmann 1995).

Long-Term Self-Care vs. Immediate Gratification

The imperative amongst respondents to gear their self-care toward productivity and future success was also expressed in the way many people framed self-care in opposition to immediate gratification or short-term pleasure. For most respondents, accomplishing tasks – such as doing their homework, cleaning their dorm room/home, or applying for jobs and internships – is perceived as practicing self-care; or, as John puts it, "doing things that'll improve your life, not just now but in the long run." Similarly, for Avery, self-care itself means "managing my time effectively and getting small tasks done when I can so that I'm not overwhelmed later on."

The act itself does not need to be productive in order to be geared toward the long term, however. Like with taking a break, practicing self-care in any way that prepares one to be productive in the future was a significant theme amongst respondents. Katharine illustrates this point as she talks about the effects of taking a walk in the morning before work:

> My morning was less rushed than usual. I actually made a full meal and sat and ate it instead of taking it to go and I just felt more prepared to go to work. And just like I said, a lot more physically awake than usual which made a huge difference in being able to provide good customer service [laughs]. And I would say I also felt like I needed less caffeine during the day.

Although her tone is sardonic when she indicates that taking a walk allowed her to provide better customer service, she still frames her act of self-care as successful because it allowed her to feel more prepared for work and more energized at her job.

Respondents also talked about long-term, future-oriented self-care that did not necessarily involve productivity or success in academia or the workplace. Nellie talked about long-term self-care in her relationships, explaining that "sometimes self-care is feeling pain to feel better later," and talking about how having difficult conversations with her loved ones could sometimes be a better way of practicing self-care than a temporary fix or simply taking a break: "I don't feel better if I was on my phone in a stressful conversation, took an hour to do a face mask, and then an hour later was in the same situation still." Emily also returned to the idea of an unproductive break, arguing that self-care is often framed in a way that does not include some sort of growth or change:

> I think people have to step out of this idea that you can give yourself a break – short, temporary, and that's it... That's not sustainable. So I think – maybe trying to shift the discussion of self-care away from eating badly for two days and then going back to everything as if nothing happened.

Emily framed self-care in terms of sustainability; if a break means not being accountable to consequences, it is not truly self-care. Whether it be personal development, goals of productivity, or, in Nellie's case, relational growth, self-care necessitates a long-term practice that goes beyond simply stepping away and expecting to come back renewed. Rather than "pleasure for pleasure's sake" (Davis, Maurstad, and Dean 2014), self-care is perceived to be valid only as pleasure for the sake of eventual productivity.

Symbiotic Care and Cycles of Caring

Practicing self-care necessitates a balance between caring for oneself and caring for others. Participants made encouraging statements about embracing a positive type of selfishness and being "all about yourself." Several people mentioned that they often prioritize others above themselves, and that self-care was an important way to remember to prioritize themselves and address their own needs as well. However, respondents were critical of a purely individualist framework for self-care, walking a fine line between self-care and excessive selfishness. Sage discussed this distinction using the example of "blowing friends off," which many other participants also listed as an example of "selfish" self-care:

> I think as long as you can differentiate between what is self-care and what is selfish then I don't think there is a problem with it ... I don't know if I have a

specific example. I guess like consistently blowing people off. Like if you make plans three days in a row, and you just consistently blow it off like, "Oh, I need to take care of myself." And sure, there could be times when you do need to take care of yourself and blowing people off three times in a row is definitely the right thing to do. But if you're… not really doing anything that's like actual self-care, then I think that would be selfish.

Following up after our interview, Sage further elaborated on this tension by forwarding me a viral Facebook post that explained the difference between being selfish, or "putting the wants of yourself over the needs of others," and respecting or taking care of yourself, or "putting the needs of yourself over the wants of others."

In fact, many participants found their own well-being was tied to others' – that they were happier when their friends were happier, as in this statement from Victoria: "I kinda feel like if my friend isn't feeling good then it's like me not feeling good." Other people talked about how sometimes spending time with friends and loved ones was a form of self-care, and how encouragement and support from others allowed them to take better care of themselves. On the other hand, respondents acknowledged that they were better able to treat others well when they were treating themselves well: "I guess to put it simply, if I'm in a good mood I'm a better person to be around. And I think to be in a good mood, I need to be practicing self-care regularly" (Sage). This symbiotic care relationship between the participants and their friends or loved ones was emphasized again and again, and framed as integral to participants' well-being. Some respondents noted that they had to let go of friends who became "toxic" because they did not successfully take care of themselves and thus were unable to engage equitably in this symbiotic relationship.

Symbiotic care relationships exist not only in friendships and interpersonal relationships but also in broader community contexts as well. Several respondents talked about how community spaces such as group therapy, college classes, or activist circles were important aspects of their own self-care and well-being. For example, Emily talked about how being involved in activism meant that she did not feel alone in the struggles that being a queer trans person entails. Elaine went so far as to say that "the only self-care is conspiring for the revolution," which was her tongue-in-cheek way of saying that the most important thing for her own well-being was working toward eradicating the "systems that make us feel the need to practice self-care" in the first place. Victoria was similarly critical of the fact that some large companies offer activities – like yoga in the workplace – that are framed as self-care in order to distract from the fact that employees work too hard to function without such breaks. Katharine brought up the following quote from a talk that Black Lives Matter co-founder, Alicia Garza, gave at Goucher College, on March 30, 2016 (for more on this talk, see Jones, n.d.):

> And one thing that I would just encourage us to think about instead of self-care, which I'm a fan of, but I like collective care because it is about the spaces that we create that either help to rejuvenate us, help to keep us going for another day, or they deplete us even more. So self-care is possible inside of a community that cares … that community itself should nourish you, not deplete you.

Despite the individual nature of the term "self-care," the practice of taking care of oneself is inherently related to those with whom one is in relationship and community. For these respondents, it was critical to take a step back and evaluate the contexts in which self-care is necessary and to ask why.

In these ways, symbiotic care is present and necessary in community settings and spaces – and self-care becomes an important way to be accountable within these communities. When a person attempts to avoid or absolve themselves of their responsibility to this cycle of care, the result is a self-care that benefits no one. To illustrate this, Nellie gave an example of a student who exhibited racism in a classroom setting and then removed themselves from the situation, "using self-care as a way to not deal

with the repercussions of bringing racism into the room." Nellie questioned how that could really be self-care when it meant "refusing to learn from what just happened" and being harmful to the rest of the community. This prompted a lengthy conversation about community accountability and collective care: "If self-care is healing us and we're a part of a community then we're bringing our healing back into the community with us. So if our healing isn't radically honest and committed and long-term, then who is it for?"

The answer to Nellie's question—who is self-care for?—may seem obvious, but, as symbolic interactionists theorize, there is no self that exists without the construction of the other (Schweingruber and Berns 2013). Self-care only exists insofar as the communities and institutions that allow or necessitate it exist, and this is clearly demonstrated in how my respondents situated their own self-care in the context of a broader collective care and in cycles of symbiotic caring.

Conclusion

As my findings have illustrated, everyday self-care is geared toward achieving well-being, bridging the gap between the everyday and the biomedical or even taking the form of a supplemental therapy or CAM (Fries 2013; Davis, Maurstad and Dean2014). Everyday self-care engages both the mind and the body, which are largely conceptualized as two distinct entities fundamentally at odds with one another (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987), which my respondents sought to unite through practicing self-care. These practices also involve a tricky balancing act of "calibration" (Cairns and Johnston 2015) within several dilemmas: self-indulgence versus self-control; recharging versus avoidance; long-term self-care versus short-term gratification; and being selfish versus caring for others or for a larger community—all of which were described using a postfeminist lens that celebrates ownership over one's actions while still employing the Calvinist ideology that one's body is made to be controlled and disciplined by the mind (Thompson and Hirschmann 1995; Foucault 1978).

Clearly, everyday self-care is not so simple as taking a bath to feel better. It involves meticulously weighing one's options, values, and time – it is a process of continuously negotiating and navigating, balancing, and striving for wholeness. There is no static definition or set of practices that can encompass what self-care means to my participants. Indeed, the process of defining everyday self-care is highly individual, contextual, and elusive. In fact, respondents had trouble deciding what exactly does or does not qualify as self-care, and often avoided making definitive statements one way or another. Rarely did anyone draw an explicit line between which self-care practices were categorically good or bad, successful or unsuccessful. Informants followed nearly every value statement about self-care with a qualification such as "but it's different for everyone," or "but that's just my definition." However, moral codes and values –particularly surrounding productivity, health, and community – were nonetheless implicitly and explicitly embedded in informants' responses.

It was taken for granted by most everyone that productivity is a good thing, and that being productive is a necessary component of well-being. As such, self-care that is not in some way geared toward productivity, or productive in and of itself, seems to be a marker of laziness or moral laxity - a reflection of the widespread Western notion that any action which is productive in a capitalist sense is morally superior (Thompson and Hirschmann 1995; Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987). While informants did express that this is context-dependent and individual, it is clear they still value productive self-care over unproductive self-care. Similarly, self-care that meets "healthy" standards is privileged over-indulgence in unhealthy foods or being inactive. Again, when articulating their own practices of self-care, informants clearly strive for self-care that is more health-oriented, despite claims that this is not necessarily the case across the board. This is reflective of the moral constraints that shape what it means to successfully embody health and well-being (Vogel and Mol 2014).

The ideals of self-care articulated by my respondents reproduce and legitimize the neoliberal rhetoric of discipline that operates within the postfeminist framework of choice and agency (Cairns and Johnston 2015). My respondents saw themselves as fully responsible for their own care, accountable both to themselves and to their respective communities for maintaining mental and physical health and well-being. Grappling with the dilemmas and complexities of self-care, informants revealed the extent to which ingrained capitalist ideals of productivity and self-control dictate their behavior in the social world and their embodied sense of moral success (Foucault 1978).

Of course, the implications for "successful" self-care are raced, classed, and gendered. Because this research was largely exploratory (and because of limitations in terms of time and sample), I am not able to fully analyze or capture the privilege and accessibility that shape who is able to practice self-care in the ways my participants described. Continued research on everyday self-care should integrate current scholarly literature on male embodiment and health, the socioeconomic limitations imposed on those who engage in self-care and self-care industries, and the implications of self-care as radical healing or as activist and community work that seeks to remediate historical trauma, especially within communities of color. As social actors operating within the confines of these structural and institutional elements, my respondents did necessarily engage with these intersections, but a more fully developed analysis of these elements is essential moving forward.

The intersections and interactions between these dimensions are succinctly summed up by Katharine, who spent several minutes of our interview describing "Instagram Girl," a fictional person who represents popular portrayals of self-care that are prevalent on social media and ingrained in the collective imaginary of what self-care looks like; Instagram Girl is a fit, white, upper-middle-class woman who eats chia bowls and does yoga on a mountain every morning, all the while documenting each action with photographs taken on her rose-gold iPhone and subsequently posted on the app Instagram.

This ideal "pinnacle" of self-care, despite being a carefully crafted and largely unattainable image, was pervasive in the ways that many of my respondents spoke about and wrestled with their own definitions of self-care as compared to more mainstream conceptualizations of self-care. Further research should more closely examine the ways that self-care is depicted in mainstream and social media, and the real-life implications of these taken-for-granted narratives.

My analysis of everyday self-care demonstrates that pervasive cultural conceptions of healthism and moral deservingness shape the way individuals frame self-care and well-being. Additionally, it calls into question the cultural contexts that create the need for everyday self-care and breed the rhetoric of self-care and wellness. Although my informants saw their definitions of self-care as highly personal, a solely individual framework of self-care is problematic, as is evidenced in the way that respondents advocated for a model of self-care that takes into account the needs of others and the effect that self-care has on collective and community care. Thus, it is imperative to not only interrogate the systems that create the need for self-care in the first place, but also the broader socioeconomic factors that shape how we conceptualize this type of care.

Does self-care only exist in relation to the destructive systems and institutions that take such a toll on us we cannot respond in any way except to focus on healing? What would self-care look like if we only existed in communities that nurtured us, as Alicia Garza suggested? How can we imagine self-care outside of the institutional barriers of neoliberalism or capitalism – would it even be possible or necessary to practice self-care in such a context? These are all questions to consider if we are to critically examine self-care from a sociological standpoint. This project seeks to add nuance to the way everyday self-care is understood as lived, experienced, and embodied, and these questions are necessary to consider not only in an academic framework, but also as we (my informants, readers, and myself) all move through the world, caring for ourselves and others every day whether we term it "self-care" or not.

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Vitiligo: Challenging Cultural Assumptions and Shaping Identity

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ABSTRACT

Vitiligo is a skin condition where pigmentation stops developing, leaving people with white spots on their bodies. Vitiligo is likely caused by gene mutation and is hereditary, but it can happen to anyone. From a medical standpoint, it is a physically harmless condition but it has vast socio-cultural impact. This study was conducted at the Annual World Vitiligo Conference in Detroit, Michigan and on the internet (Instagram and Facebook), through participant-observation at the event, textual analysis of blog posts, and interviews online and in-person, respectively. Through these methods, three discourses emerged: 1) Feeling outcast, 2) Vitiligo as beautiful, and 3) Solidarity. I documented the way cultural assumptions about conditions and disabilities shape the identity of those who have it. These interviews suggest that vitiligo is as much a cultural condition as it is a medical condition. Although more research is needed, people living with vitiligo stated that greater representation of individuals with the condition is needed in the media and pop culture to enlighten the public about vitiligo and improve the day to day interactions of individuals with the condition.

Keywords: vitiligo, race, gender, normalization, animalization, stigma, United States

Getting on the bus after a busy day of university classes, a young lady named Jasmine looked around to see if there was an available space to sit. She approached a follow passenger and asked, "Excuse me, is this seat taken?" pointing at the seat next to the man. The passenger looked at her for a while, and then pushed his belongings next to the window to his side and scooted away from her. Jasmine remained quiet and took her seat, trying hard not to show this interaction was impacting her, even when the man continued to glance at her. She knew why her fellow passenger acted the way he did: it was due to the white patches adorning her mocha skin. The man was looking at her vitiligo and contemplating if it was contagious.

Jasmine's experience was not unique. Throughout my research, participants have shared similar instances of daily life with vitiligo. They shared stories of overcoming stigma they are culturally subjected to, forming communities through various online and face-to-face platforms, and eventually learning to accept, identify with, and embrace their condition.

Medical Treatment

Though vitiligo has no cure, clinicians offer a handful of medical treatments consisting of Steroid cream, ultraviolet laser therapy (UVB), and makeup, which is classified as a solution. Despite the wealth of products for sale to treat the condition, very little, if any, research suggests that these treatments are effective in minimizing the presence of spots, let alone prevent future de-pigmentation. Furthermore, some individuals have utilized ultraviolet therapy (UVB), but many fear it might harm their skin due to the lack of melanin and inevitably stop the treatment. Even if these medical treatments prove effective, treatment is pricey and most individuals cannot afford it or their insurance will not cover the cost for it.

Background: The Cultural Life of Vitiligo

Even though vitiligo is a medical condition and can be examined as such, this paper focuses on the sociocultural aspects of the condition as a disability, and examines the social stigma, ostracization, animalization, and other barriers faced by individuals with vitiligo.
In the United States and across other cultures, the implications of changes to skin pigmentation have repercussions for both personal identity and group inclusion vis-à-vis race and ethnicity. Furthermore, because the skin is a highly visible symbol of identity and well-being, changes to it can raise concerns about the unknown, including fears of witchcraft and contagion. Many individuals fall victim to harsh comments, antagonism, and ostracization, which leads to the development of anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem (Parsad, Dogra, and Kanwar 2003, 54).

Vitiligo is a unique condition, in that the outward skin condition can disrupt racial identity through loss of pigmentation. While it may seem anachronistic in 2018 that people would be ostracized, shunned, or evicted from their communities, churches, or homes as a result of skin depigmentation, the stigma surrounding the condition in the United States persists. According to Porter and Buef (1991), people of color who develop vitiligo feel they are losing their racial identity; thus, they are faced with exclusion by communities and family because they are considered an "other." As presented by Porter and Buef (1991), black individuals with vitiligo are more severely affected by stigma than their white counterparts and prone to lose their "master status" such as race, age, and gender (194). Instead, disability becomes their master status. Vitiligo affects black individuals more negatively than white individuals because the depigmentation is highly visible on darker skin and is much more difficult to hide through available cosmetics. Goffman (1963) pioneered the idea of stigma as a "spoiled identity," which has been used above to explain how lightning

skin can be understood as a threat to racial identity, but also how people themselves internalize cultural norms about themselves (140). This is sometimes referred to as "internalized ableism" (Campbell 2008, 153). The importance of appearance may be less critical for black men compared to black women because of gender roles and norms. My research suggests that high levels of perceived stigma could be related to distress, the importance placed on a cure, labeling vitiligo as a disability, and the visibility of depigmentation. In addition, for both youths and for women, disfigured appearance may be socially stigmatized more heavily because appearance is a central feature of role expectations for these statuses.

This is evident in the United States, where individuals of certain races and ethnic groups do not face the same amount of stigmatization because of their complexion. For example, darker skin results in more stigma while lighter skin receives less stigma. Individuals with darker skin are more inclined to be questioned and stared at as a result of their vitiligo. Thereby illustrating that vitiligo is a cultural construction that causes individuals to be judged or stigmatized.

Methods

Presented below are first-person narratives of living with vitiligo. As a participant at the 2017 Annual World Vitiligo Conference in Detroit, Michigan, I utilized participation-observation (attended workshops, listened to speakers, and gathered information from tablings) and I conducted informal interviews at the site and via online platforms (Instagram and Facebook). Through these methods, I discovered recurring issues in in-person interviews and online platforms that consisted of stigma and ostracization, where individuals are thought of as "freaks/different/others." I listened to presenters speak about their experiences with vitiligo and the hardships they faced in accepting the condition and bringing attention to it. I observed the language being used in defining vitiligo and the audience's response to the specific details that were shared by the presenters. During the 15 to 30 minute intermissions I approached the attendees and

conveyed to them that I was interested in interviewing them. I provided the potential participants with my contact information and asked them to reach out to me if they were interested in participating.

The conference was attended by a variety of people. Not everyone had vitiligo; there were family members and friends there, just like myself. I do not have vitiligo but a few members of my nuclear family do. I was not excluded from the event. Instead, individuals were very open about sharing their experiences when I asked them if they would like to participate in my research. I would like to note that all participants' names are pseudonyms unless otherwise requested (e.g., they are known on Instagram and want to be recognized, so they preferred their real name be used.)

In the following weeks, seven participants ranging in age from their early 20s to late 40s from diverse backgrounds reached out to me to set up time for an interview. They were eager to speak about their experiences with vitiligo. I wanted to interview people from various backgrounds because they had different experiences, impacted by the color of their skin, age, and gender. Participants were incredibly forthcoming in in-person interviews; they were already at least somewhat comfortable in their own skin, but they did not seem to hold back in sharing personal details, nor did I seem to make them uncomfortable by talking about what might otherwise be personal issues.

Additionally, I checked support sites, blogs, and social media sites (Facebook and Instagram) to see how individuals with vitiligo connected online over their condition, especially since a few participants alluded to having started hashtags such as; #VitiligoPride, #DopplerBodies, and #SpottedBeauty. Through these hashtags, pictures, and blogs I saw various comments and posts illustrating that many individuals accepted their condition and formed a community where people shared their journeys and supported and complemented each other's vitiligo.

Furthermore, I wanted to comment on the differences between in-person interviews and informants from online platforms (Facebook and Instagram). These methods addressed

issues of stigma and exclusion, acceptance of the condition, and solidarity. These online platforms, which are highly visual, exhibit a wider network of people with the condition, and not only create visibility and solidarity for the community but also promote discussion. The platforms function like group interviews, where individuals share their experiences through various formats, such as pictures of their vitiligo on parts of the body or of tattoos commemorating the condition, or stories and discussions of stigma, ostracization, animalization, treatments, and acceptance. I noticed no difference in the quality or amount of data I received from the different sources– in-person interviews revealed just as much sensitive information as online chats. My presence did not seem to make people uncomfortable or reticent to reveal sensitive information, which I initially expected might be easier to gather online where people have more privacy.

Theoretical Framework

My participants' experiences have informed the theoretical approach I take to vitiligo. Specifically, the notions of stigma, normalcy, and disability illuminate the skin condition as cultural, not just a medical issue. Many lay people conceptualize "stigma" as a harmless consequence, a relatively insignificant effect they need to put up with or even as a normal part of life in American culture. That could not be farther from the truth. Stigma, according to the clinical literature by Koo and Lee (2003, 358-9), has been shown to lead to low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, and even an increase in psychiatric morbidity. Koo and Lee (2003) mentioned a study carried out in the U.S. with patients of vitiligo. The study compared how people with vitiligo deal with their skin condition compared to patients with psoriasis and other pigment skin disorders (hypo or hypermelanosis) in social stigma. It was found that participants with vitiligo had lower self-esteem than those without skin diseases, but maintained the same psychosocial effects as others with skin conditions. However, patients with vitiligo exhibited better adjustment to their condition and experienced less social discrimination than their more prominent skin condition counterparts (358). In Koo and Lee's

(2003) study, they find that individuals with skin conditions such as vitiligo express feelings of stress, embarrassment, or self-consciousness when in casual contact with strangers, which leads to low self-esteem and difficulty maintaining relationships. The psychological impact can be of paramount importance in deeply pigmented races, in whom the contrast between normal and affected skin is marked, and the disease can carry a severe social stigma (358). Goffman (1963) explained there are different types of stigma that categorize "abominations" of the body, which include various physical deformities; this is the type of stigma endured by individuals with vitiligo, where the body is loathed by society (as cited in Davis 2006, 132). Goffman (1963) further reveals that "disparaging reactions from other services to invalidate the disabled person as less than "normal" if not less than "human" beings" (as cited in Berger 2013, 9). This type of stigma is understood as a key characteristic attached to a person that "reduces [the individual] in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted discounted one" (Goffman 1963, 35). Stigma prompts the public to see the individual with the disability or condition as a faulted person, identified only by his or her impairment, considering it the individual's "master status" (Goffman 1963, 35).

The theory of normalcy also pertains to people with disabilities and the discrimination and the disadvantages they face. Davis (2006) redefined the concept of the "normal" in relation to the general population, coming up with three variations. First, the application of the idea of a norm applied to the human body creates the idea of deviance or a "deviant" body. Second, the idea of norms pushes the normal variation of the body through a stricter template guiding the way the body "should" be. Finally, the revision of the "normal curve of distribution" into quartiles can be ranked in order, to create a new kind of ideal (Davis 2006, 8). The normal curve of distribution was developed to introduce a precise way of speaking of the typical, or the average, or the mean, thus providing a descriptive and objective aspect. According to Parens (2006), "The statistical norm provides a representation of what is – as in the typical, or the average, or the mean...[the] average seems to be distant

from the ideal…[therefore] the average can become an ideal" (94). The normal curve of distribution epitomizes a statistical understanding of "normal," where the ideal body shifts based on the presumed descriptive norm of normal, a prescriptive force (as cited in Parens 2006, 94). Because of the normal curve of distribution people with disabilities and conditions are outcast by the larger society of fear of being different or contagious. Goffman (1963) illustrated that normalcy is a standpoint that does not obtrude but rather allows for the recognition of whom or what is stigmatized (as cited in Titchkosky & Michalko 2009, 43).

Normalcy also contributed to the establishment of the "Ugly Law," which stipulated that it was illegal to appear in public if one's physical appearance offends others in the general public. This law was enacted in various cities across the United States, resulting in barring or preventing people with disabilities and conditions from appearing in public. According to Berger (2013), the city of Chicago passed an ordinance instituting the Ugly Law in 1881 and only repealed it in 1973. The government officials wrote in regard to the law:

> Any person who is diseased, maimed, mutilated, or in any way deformed, so as to be an unsightly or disgusting object or an improper person to be allowed in or on the streets, highways, thoroughfares, or public places in this city, shall not therein or thereon expose himself to public view under the penalty of a fine of $1 (about $20 today) for each offense (7).

This effectively made people with disabilities outcasts because they did not fit into the norm. Even though this law is no longer enacted, for many individuals with disabilities and conditions the effects are still felt. Lucy Grealy, whose face was disfigured due to surgery for facial bone cancer, recalled with "great pain the cruel stares and laughter she encountered and state[ed] "I was my face, I was ugliness''(Beger 2013, 8). Grealy's words illustrate how people with disabilities often experience prejudice and discrimination leading to marginalization and disadvantages comparable to what is experienced by people of color and other minority populations. This sadly remains true, and bodies that are different from "a society's conception of a 'normal' or acceptable body," even when it causes "little or no functional or physical difficulty for the person who has them, constitute major social disabilities" (Berger 2013, 8). This discrimination faced by individuals is reflective of the normal distribution curve, where individuals with abnormalities, including skin conditions like vitiligo, are outcast and othered by the general public because they do not fit into the ideal acceptable body.

Compared to normalcy, animalization is used to separate, dehumanize, and objectify people through animal comparisons and slurs. Taylor (2017) explains that animalization faced by people with disabilities is not only insulting – it poses the risk of the loss of their personhood since the slurs remove them from "humanity" and places them in the category of animals (105). This is further illustrated by Clare (2017), who showed how black schizophrenic patients were institutionalized and categorized as defective when animal slurs were used to describe them/their behaviors, specifically linking their disability and identity to racism and animalization (122). Taylor (2017) recounts how as a child, she was excluded from joining other children in games and activities because she walked "like a monkey" – one of many instances in which she is compared to an animal because of her disability (104). This is similar to how individuals with vitiligo are not only compared to animals but also excluded from activities.

The practice of stigmatization is an important factor and central to the treatment and labeling of individuals with disabilities and conditions. These labels are used to make them outcasts. One such comparison is of Taylor (2017) and Clare (2017) who were both compared to monkeys because of their disability. In my research, I found that these labels occur because of stigma, and with vitiligo, individuals are subjected to slurs and animalization. But there is another problem that arises with stigmatization and labeling, and that is whether vitiligo should be considered a disability or condition and the treatment one should experience. The categorization of vitiligo as a disability or condition by medical science

poses problems of ambiguity, since dermatologists and individuals with vitiligo do not agree on how to categorize it themselves. Research done by Murray (1996) under the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) tried to find classifications to qualify vitiligo as a disability. Murray's (1996) classifications measured disability weights for nonfatal health states on a scale from 0 (no disability - perfect health) to 1 (complete disability-death) (as cited in Carmichael 2016, 207). The finding acknowledges vitiligo on the face causes social exclusion from group interactions due to one not being physically attractive because of their vitiligo. But other than that, vitiligo is categorized as nothing serious, ranging from 0.00 to 0.02 (Carmichael 2016, 207). Murray (1996) does take into account that in certain cultures vitiligo can be mistaken for leprosy, which causes it to be considered contagious by the culture and hence, prone to be categorized as a disease (as cited in Fewtrel & Bartram 2001, 47).

Individuals with vitiligo themselves debate with each other on whether to call vitiligo a condition or a disease. During the conference, there was a panel where participants spoke about cultivating relationships, but this topic gave way to the debate on disease or condition. Alice, a white woman who had developed vitiligo at a young age, spoke of how she wants vitiligo to be called a disease, so it can gain recognition, as other conditions such as eczema. Alice's point of view was met with agreement from a few audience members, who shared that calling vitiligo a condition makes it sound like a non-issue and medical practitioners would, therefore, pay it no mind. This perspective was also met with disagreements. One audience member, a man in his 30s, compared vitiligo as a disease to a car. He stated "Calling vitiligo a disease means there something very wrong with the person. To me, it's like a car's parts – if there is something wrong with the car, it needs to be replaced or else it doesn't perform the way it should. By calling vitiligo a disease makes it sound as if we have a disease comparable to AIDS or cancer." The words of both Alice and the man at the conference show that individuals with vitiligo struggle to categorize vitiligo.

Struggling to identify vitiligo as a condition or disease suggests real-world consequences. Calling vitiligo a disease prompts medical practitioners to pay attention to it, whereas calling it a condition leads to it being considered an 'orphan condition', a rare condition that is under researched because it does not create a market large enough to warrant attention and the development of treatments. Categorizing vitiligo as a disease inclines doctors to work on a cure which would lead to understanding it as a serious medical issue. However, identifying vitiligo as a disease would lead people with it to experience more stigma, prompting animalization and ostracization. On online platforms such as Reddit, some users of the site held discussions where they referred to vitiligo as a disease, specifically calling it Michael Jackson disease. Describing vitiligo as a disease and identifying it with a celebrity gives it validation and a face that the general public can notice and recognize. This, of course, brings awareness and illustrates that it is not a non-issue; rather vitiligo is a serious condition, leading to hardships such as loss of master status. It can affect anyone, even well-known celebrities. On Instagram, I saw posts mainly consisting of how to deal with vitiligo and individuals sharing thoughts and feelings concerning the condition. These posts prompt discussions that have a similar format as support sites. To answer the question concerning if vitiligo is a disease or a condition mainly reflects on whom one asks and how the individual chooses to identify it as. Yet, we need to bear in mind that either category has real-world consequences associated with it; vitiligo as a disease means it is contagious and life-threatening, but instead allows more recognition in the medical community, whereas, referring to vitiligo as a condition would lead it to be considered a non-threatening skin condition and lead to less recognition in the medical community.

The perception that a cure results in devaluing the current self makes people with disabilities believe that in their current state they do not fit into a distinct model of normal; thus, society would not accept them (Clare 2017, 55). In the documentary *Fixed: The Science/Fiction of Human Enhancement* (2013), participants with disabilities shared that they

would rather not have a cure for their disability but have solutions to help them get around the barriers those disabilities create in their lives, such as stairs by installing wheelchair ramps or developing automatic wheelchairs with longer battery life, thus, making it easier for individuals with disabilities to be accepted within the larger culture. Similarly, I asked my participants if a cure for vitiligo was developed would they take it, to which many replied they would not. When I inquired as to why not, they exclaimed their vitiligo is a part of them and if it was to disappear they would lose an important part of their identity. According to Richard, "This condition has given me life experiences I would not have had. I got to know people for who they really are due to this condition, and I'm grateful for that." Therefore, having vitiligo has made individuals with it understand people better because they know if a person around them genuinely appreciate them and does not feel embarrassed by their condition. As noted by Erika, "This is the only skin I know, and it took a lot to finally accept it and I would not trade that for the world." This shows how, for many, vitiligo is an experience that has given them hardships, but they are able to overcome those hardships and accept themselves. In some cases, people are happy that they have vitiligo and they experience the world differently and they would not change that because it makes them who they are.

Findings: Vitiligo Discourses

Using participation observation, social media, and informational interviews, I uncovered three discourses or themes that kept recurring. These discourses were: 1) Feeling Outcast, 2) Vitiligo as beautiful, and 3) Solidarity.

Feeling Outcast

People with vitiligo are often compared to animals and called names; subsequently, individuals are asked if the condition is contagious. Individuals with vitiligo are bullied, stigmatized, and experience verbal slights and overall, they are often ignored. At the conference, Thomas, one of the presenters, stated how individuals with vitiligo are compared to cows or Dalmatians, and then alluded to Erika, a fellow presenter, who had stated she was called an Appaloosa (Spotted Horse) by a close friend. These common animal comparisons prompted the audience to call out

or talk among themselves about the animalization they endured.

During my interviews, a few participants spoke about feeling like outcasts, either by not being invited to events or as a result of friends pretending not to know them outside of school or the workplace. One of my interviewees, Richard, who is in his late 30s, reminisced about his friend not inviting him to his birthday party when he was in elementary school; When Richard inquired as to why he was not invited, the friend answered, "My mom thinks that what you have will spread to the others." Through this experience, Richard fully understood he was different from others. Other interviewees shared similar experiences. Another presenter at the conference, Jasmine, shared two instances in which she experienced discrimination while on a public bus. The first was recounted in the introduction. In the second, when Jasmine got on a bus, a passenger seated across from her kept staring at her, leading her to switch her seat, which led more passengers to stare. After Jasmine moved to the back of the bus, she noticed the man still staring at her. She stated, "I felt embarrassed being stared at. It's not as if I'm not used to these stares; it's just at this time in our history. I think people should be used to seeing vitiligo or any condition. By being stared at, it made me feel like I wasn't allowed on the bus."

This notion of staring or often feeling uncomfortable or even fearful around people with disabilities, as if the disabling condition is contagious, results in individuals with it being othered. As presented by Murphy (1987), "...all too many non-disabled people view people with disabilities as a "fearsome possibility"" (as cited in Beger 2013, 8); therefore, the disabled person becomes the "other – a living symbol of failure or frailty...a counterpoint to normality; a figure whose humanity is questioned" (Beger 2013, 8). This display of fear of the impairment's contagiousness could be seen in Jasmine's fellow passengers, where they questioned if they too could develop vitiligo and if she was "normal." At the conference, when the topic of feelings of isolation came up, a young lady, Nita, noticed that she was "apologizing" for her condition because of the way many people reacted to it. But, as she put it, vitiligo is a part of her; thus, she should not apologize for it.

Participants shared that they feel ignored by people they knew. Richard mentioned that, as a teenager, when he saw his friends on the streets and approached them they pretended they did not know him. With this, Richard went on to share another experience of rejection from a girl he liked because of his condition. He recounted asking her to the school dance, to which she replied she would be embarrassed to go with him because of his vitiligo. Being rejected based on their appearance was an experience shared by other participants; Jasmine shared that a man she did not know stated, "It must be hard to look at yourself in the mirror." While Alice spoke about growing up with vitiligo, she was considered different by others in her community, even though she is white and her vitiligo is barely noticeable. Yet, her peers would point out her condition and treated her as an outsider. Alice's case is similar to Berger's (2013) concept of individuals whose bodies are different from "a society's conception of a 'normal' or acceptable body," and how, even when this causes "little or no functional or physical difficulty for the person who has them, [it] constitutes [as] major social [disability]" (8). In the case of facial scars or disfigurements, such a disability of appearance is only constructed by stigma and cultural meanings (Berger 2013, 8). Melody, on the other hand, expressed that she has not faced any negative acknowledgment from the community around her, but she does feel her family tends to see the condition negatively due to Melody being the only one in her family to have vitiligo. It is to be noted, other participants shared that they have family members who have vitiligo and face some or no negative reactions from family. Melody explains there are times at family gatherings when she leaves the room to use the bathroom and stares at herself in the mirror, wondering how her sisters and parents perceive her with vitiligo. Furthermore, Melody shared that during these times she contemplates how her life would be different if she did not have this condition. These findings indicate that each of my participants had faced/dealt with negative emotions due to their vitiligo. Individuals reported feeling isolated, stigmatized, animalized, and overall, feeling they were excluded from the community.

Vitiligo as Beautiful

Many participants at the conference perceived their vitiligo as nothing, passing it off as "just a skin condition" that did not put their lives at risk – most considered vitiligo as unique and beautiful. However, understanding vitiligo in such manner did not come easy. Participants shared negative experiences such as animalization or ostracization. Some attendees also indicated that they came to the event to learn about medical advancements, but at the end of the event, they left learning their condition grants them a uniqueness. A compilation of pictures of individuals with vitiligo, presented by Jasmine, displayed the various faces of the condition and exhibited the beauty vitiligo has, categorizing the condition as art on the body. In the collection, one picture captured my attention, a black and white picture which depicted a young African-American girl who looked to be in her late teens in a white dress and her vitiligo was covering her eyes, making it appear as she was wearing a mask. This picture revealed to me that vitiligo was more than just a skin condition; it was art on the body and represented people's identities, which I did not consider until this moment.

However, before individuals are able to accept themselves, they must overcome barriers associated with changes in skin color. According to Erika, "It's hard to love your spots, and I'm not sure if I will ever love or like them, but I need to own them and live my life and make the choice to be happy with my vitiligo." What Erika mentioned is what many people struggle with when vitiligo develops or spreads. Many of the participants questioned why this was happening to them, if it was a transformation for the good, or if they would be "normal" again. Jasmine mentioned her friends defined her vitiligo as art on her body, which pushed her to consider her vitiligo as a transformation into a new her. However, two of my interviewees, Melody and Rachel, expressed periodically missing their old face. Melody said, "I used to be impacted by this condition in the morning and missed my former face, but there is nothing I can do about it now, so I live with what I got." Rachel spoke of how her pale white skin becomes tan during the summer causing her vitiligo to be noticeable, leading her to not

recognize her own hands. But once individuals overcome the barrier of stigma and ostracization, they accept their vitiligo.

Perceiving the condition as art is empowering. Dawn, an interviewee, and model for the vitiligo community reminisced about when she stopped covering up her face. Dawn shared that one day, someone pointed out she has a "heart on her face" and this statement took her by surprise, stating she lived with this face for years, covering it up with makeup. This example exhibited how it was hard for her to come to terms with her vitiligo, but after this statement was uttered, it resonated with her coming to terms with her condition and prompted her to stop covering up her face. Upon sharing this information, Dawn showed me pictures of herself with makeup and mentioned she was not smiling and not happy because she had not accepted herself. This was evident in her pictures; Dawn appeared stone-faced compared to pictures without makeup, displaying her vitiligo with pride. While showing me these pictures, she stated vitiligo gave her a uniqueness that very few individuals possess, and it prompted her to finally embrace her condition. Dawn further shared her original skin color is coming back on her eyelids. She noted when washing her face, she noticed brown specks on her eyelids, initially assessing it was dirt and tried rubbing it off, but when it did not come off, she realized it was her original skin color. Dawn mentioned she does not like how her skin color is changing back to its original color since it took her a long time to come to terms with her vitiligo and finally accept herself and the condition. If she gets her original skin color back, she feels she will lose herself again. Through Dawn's experience, it is evident that even people with vitiligo do not see the condition as a uniqueness at first, but as they accept it, it becomes a part of their identity.

During Thomas's presentation, women spoke out about feeling beautiful because of their condition and noticed more people approaching them, especially men. Nita chimed in about her partner finding her confidence in her vitiligo attractive. Thomas too shared an instance of a young woman adorned in tattoos approaching him and tracing her finger to his cheek, notably on his vitiligo, prompting her to

ask, "Where did you get it done from?" to which Thomas replied, "It was free." This anecdote displayed how the condition can be viewed as beautiful, even though the young lady confused Thomas's vitiligo for a tattoo. This raises the question of whether the young lady would have still considered vitiligo beautiful upon learning it is a skin condition. Perhaps she might have still perceived the condition as beautiful, but the label of 'condition' may also have changed her perspective.

Although most of the individuals I interviewed maintained that they felt confident with their vitiligo, many of them admitted that negative feedback from people could wear on them. The concept of the gaze can be used to understand how the public can stigmatize and ostracize individuals with vitiligo. As presented in Garland-Thomson's (2005) research on the historical context of the word "freak", the idea of the gaze provides insight as to how individuals with abnormalities can be socially 'othered' by people stigmatizing, ostracizing, and animalizing them. During her research, Garland-Thomson (2005) discovered in the 1960s a freak show called the Spotted Boys, which provides insight as to how individuals with vitiligo were portrayed as exhibits and subjected to the gaze of spectators (1-2). These individuals were considered spectacles to mesmerize and evoke curiosity or fear of the unknown to the public. The gaze represented by the spectators is a form of oppression that carries complex cultural and historical meanings which are often found in current discussions of the "male gaze" (Garland-Thomson 2005, 2). At the conference, women with vitiligo shared experiences where they were subjects to the male gaze due to their condition and their gender. Many women were victims of slurs utilizing animal references designed to shame them as both women and a person with vitiligo. An example would be comparing a woman to a cow because of her vitiligo also references her body size. Moreover, Garland-Thomson's (2005) research introduces the concept of the medical gaze designed to pathologize the bodies of individuals with vitiligo. The medical gaze observes the condition as if to determine a diagnosis rather than distinguishing it as revolting or transforming, as considered by the general

public (Garland-Thomson 2005, 3). Through this perspective, individuals with vitiligo are characterized as sick, which can evoke fear of contagion. The male gaze is utilized on individuals with vitiligo, where they might be considered less attractive because they have white patches on their skin. From my research, I found that women had endured this challenge of being othered and learned to accept their vitiligo as a part of themselves (further discussed below).

These "freak shows" allowed spectators to become spectacles as described by Berger (2013). He illustrates that people with disabilities and impairments who were exhibited at such shows were allowed to stare back at those non-disabled individuals who stared at them (Berger 2013, 3). This turned society's gaze back onto itself to show non-disabled individuals that their "normal" is not "normal" in the eyes of individuals with disabilities. As illustrated by Davis (1997), non-disabled people "see themselves as living in a mirage of being normal" (As cited in Berger 2013, 3). What Davis (1997) is inferring is that non-disabled people live out their lives thinking that they would not be affected by disability that they are "normal" and will be normal until the end. But people without disabilities need to understand disability as a social phenomenon that helps us all to see how interconnected human beings are and how very much it diminishes us to assume that any life is without value.

Individuals with vitiligo share that accepting and loving one's vitiligo is a journey that is filled with heartache – that starts with learning there is no cure, being stigmatized and ostracized by friends, family, and community, and feeling alone. However, as they live their day to day life with vitiligo, overcoming barriers, people with vitiligo start to see the condition as a part of themselves. Some feel empowered by the condition and calling it art on their skin, and making it an integral part of their identity.

Solidarity

At the event, I noticed attendees running up to other attendees who entered the hall and pulling those individuals into a hug. Initially, I thought this was done because the attendees were friends or acquaintances who had not seen each other in a while, or had met at previous conferences. But as I continued to observe, the individuals pulled away to introduced themselves and proceeded to ask the others' names, where they were from, and communicate how great it was for them to be a part of the event. This indicated individuals with vitiligo have social solidarity, as mentioned by Jasmine. Social solidarity at the conference illustrated that two people with vitiligo, who were from different walks of life, were able to have a mutual understanding of what the other person might have gone through: the trials and tribulations of having vitiligo.

The concept of social solidarity, or an unspoken bond, was evident throughout my research, as I observed how individuals spoke or joked about their condition. I recall a moment at the conference where I stood with Dawn and her close friend Michelle whom she met through these annual conferences; they were talking about their vitiligo, specifically on how it has spread. Dawn indicated her vitiligo has not spread but she has noticed brown specks (her original skin) coming back, to which Michelle replied that her vitiligo had not changed and jokingly compared the white streaks in her hair caused by vitiligo to a skunk's tail; as a result, Michelle covers up the top of her head with a bandana. As Dawn and Michelle's interaction took place, I saw how both ladies were open to talking about their vitiligo – where they joked and shared concerns they had regarding the condition. This is a display of social solidarity, where two individuals formed solidarity around a condition by sharing concerns that they knew only a person with vitiligo could understand. Even Michelle's comparison of her hair having white streaks like a skunk's tail illustrated her creating solidarity with Dawn by referring to the animalization people with vitiligo are subjected to – being called a cow, Dalmatian, or appaloosa.

Social media accounts on platforms such as Instagram and Facebook are dedicated to vitiligo. This assists in connecting individuals to others with the condition, forming communities around common experiences, and developing support outlets. The Instagram account called Vitiligo-Beauties hosts pictures submitted by

people with vitiligo to the user of the account to showcase the pride people have in their condition. Through this account, there is immense vitiligo pride on display, and in the comment section, users of the site find support and share stories of their experiences with the condition. People with vitiligo not only display pride in their condition but also find common ground and formulate social solidarity. This practice of pride is similar to LGBTQ and Disability pride, where individuals are claiming the word vitiligo as their identity, not as an unfamiliar entity on their skin. In comparison to LGBTQ pride, the word "queer" is used within the group to create solidarity with one another, whereas Disability pride utilizes "Crip" in the same sense (Taylor 2017, 132). These words were once utilized by the general public to "other" those with disabilities or non-heteronormative sexual orientations. But now individuals from these communities have claimed these words to highlight their sexuality or disability as an affirmative identity and show the common cause of a particular political constituency (Berger 2013, 5).

Solidarity and acceptance of the condition is not only done through reclaiming words such as vitiligo to formulate one's identity. While on the Instagram page of Vitiligo-Beauties, I found two images that stood out to me. The first one depicted the back of a hand with vitiligo and in the middle of the hand is a tattoo of a cow. This image portrays how the individual associated their condition with the animal that is famous for its white patches. The individual displayed and embraced their vitiligo and the connotation of being called a cow. The comments on the image read it is an inspirational tattoo, in the sense that cows are used in animalizing people with vitiligo; thus, only individuals with vitiligo understand its significance. Some commenters also shared their wish to acquire a similar tattoo to display their vitiligo pride. In the second image, there was another hand, but the vitiligo was outlined by markers of various colors. This image caught my attention since Erika shared an experience where her friends colored in her vitiligo with gel-pens, and she did not like how the colors defined her spots. But in the comments section, many users shared that they color in their spots with only one color, while others shared an interest in wanting to

color in their spots with multiple hues, and some found the image pleasing. With this noted there were times individuals shared stories and requested that each other exchange email addresses to be better acquainted. Displaying how individuals form communities utilizing social media, how they connect over pictures, share their experiences, and reclaim the word vitiligo and the animals used to other them to formulate an identity makes people with the condition feel empowered.

Jasmine and Erika shared during the conference that they have established platforms for individuals with vitiligo. Jasmine mentioned she connects with people through Instagram, where she posts pictures of her vitiligo and of people with the condition she meets in her daily life. By building support from social media, people with vitiligo assist one another to come to terms with their condition and see the beauty and uniqueness their spots have to offer. Jasmine has organized a support group called "Tough Skin," dedicated to not only help individuals with vitiligo but also people with cerebral palsy or depression and various other conditions, providing them with a support group where they can form communities around common experiences. Similarly, Erika is the co-founder of "Living-Dapple," a blog where individuals document, share and support each other on their journey with vitiligo. The website hosts tips to build confidence, accept one's vitiligo, and overall, to advocate for the condition. Living-Dapple also has an Instagram account dedicated to inspirational quotes, artsy/artistic and aesthetic pictures, and dialogue on individuals' experiences with the condition (from asking questions about how one feels when finding a new spot to dating and relationships). These women, like many others, are working to build awareness for vitiligo by connecting people with the condition to others like themselves, to reduce the impact of stigma and isolation and have a community where they belong too.

In addition to online support, support organizations such as VIT-Friends and V-Strong establish a sense of family, where individuals bond over their condition and share their experiences face to face. These sorts of organizations are located across the country.

VIT-Friends is located in NYC and wishes to connect all vitiligo chapters under its umbrella. V-Strong is based in Michigan and has recently partnered with VIT-Friends, becoming one of its chapters, and in addition hosted the 2017 conference. Through these forms of connection, individuals with vitiligo have a place where people understand their struggles, connect on common experiences, and get help with accepting the condition. This harkens back to Erika's sentiment about the necessity of coming to terms with vitiligo. It is hard for people with vitiligo to love their spots but in the end, identify with them allowing them to be a happier person.

Vitiligo has provided people not only with negative experiences and emotions but also with positive ones. My informants alluded that they experienced loss of self when they first developed vitiligo. But as they lived with their vitiligo, they learned to accept it and own it as a part of their identity. Through this condition, they were able to create solidarity with others with similar experiences regarding stigma, ostracization, and animalization.

Analysis: Beyond the Words

While participants in my study referred to vitiligo as "nothing," the emotional and personal stories I heard at the conference and through interviews suggested that the condition was anything but. Vitiligo is extremely consequential in terms of individuals developing depression or feelings of isolation. Participants walked a fine line between distress and pride, which was evident in their stories. Jasmine was a model when she developed vitiligo; she felt alone, depressed, and she constantly asked why she had developed the condition. Erika shared similar experiences, where she hated the way she looked. She thus held onto hope that one day there would be a treatment; she would be "normal" and would not have to hide her spots. But as time passed, she realized there was no cure and that she would have to live with these spots for the rest of her life, leading her to cry for long periods of time.

No two people see their vitiligo in the same way. For some individuals, vitiligo is beneficial because the general public can see beyond it and not outcast them for it; for others, it is a major problem because they experienced stigma and isolation, which they wouldn't otherwise. Aside from feeling isolated, women at the conference also expressed that their vitiligo was alluring. A few women during a panel stated they noticed attracting the attention of men who would show romantic interest in them. As Nita shared, her boyfriend was interested in developing a relationship with her because she carried herself with confidence. By this, he meant the confidence Nita had in her vitiligo because she owned the condition as a part of herself. This touched her and assisted her in fostering their relationship. Similarly, Melody also shared that she developed vitiligo before she started dating her now fiancé, and he said her vitiligo makes her memorable. By contrast, when I was chatting with Dawn and Michelle, they spoke about the negatives of vitiligo and how hard it is to hide it when finding a partner or interviewing for a job. They mentioned covering vitiligo with makeup was not useful since the makeup would not last all day, especially when you have vitiligo on your hands. In general, the informants said when they put makeup on their hands, it got washed off and then people stared at their hands. While some women feel vitiligo is as an asset, my male informants' spoke of how it is hard to find a partner. They spoke about the hardship of hiding their vitiligo with makeup for fear of facing backlash from society. Richard started having difficulty formulating relationships because he did not want to inconvenience his partner with the stares he received over his vitiligo. As illustrated by my informants, vitiligo is experienced differently by everyone. For some it is alluring or an asset while for others it is an inconvenience.

The concept of black individuals with vitiligo being affected more severely by stigma compared to their white counterparts was explored in Porter and Beuf's (1991) research, and my study reinforces this finding. When I was at the conference and approached potential informants, I found that white or light-skinned attendees often said: "I am not sure how my experience would be beneficial to the study." They further stated that they were not affected with too much stigma or did not have the overwhelming experience of losing their racial identity, as people of color encounter.

Individuals who identified as white or fair skinned mentioned their spots were only prominent during the summer when they were tan, and this is when they would foster stares. They also shared that most times the public could not notice their vitiligo, due to it not being prominent, and when they did notice, they considered it as light discoloration. However, my non-white informants mentioned facing the issue of losing their master status and oftentimes feeling they no longer belong or are a part of their racial group. People of color are often faced with questions regarding what vitiligo is, how they developed it, and subjected to personal questions on where on their body these spots are prevalent, in comparison to their white counterparts. It is important to note that there is more stigma around vitiligo for people of color because the condition is more prominent on their skin in comparison to fair-skinned individuals. Therefore, many people of color are subjected to ostracization from their racial groups, losing their racial identity and a sense of who they are.

Lastly, vitiligo is not inherently an issue but becomes one through social stigma resulting from depigmentation of the skin that raises concerns about the unknown from the public. Individuals across the country and sometimes across the world gather to hold a yearly conference around it. They have established support groups and sites dedicated to documenting individual's journeys and aiding others in coming to terms with their vitiligo. The idea of how vitiligo is a non-issue comes from calling it "nothing," which was discussed at length in my research and in the research of Berger (2013) in regard to disability. But as I have argued, vitiligo is anything but a non-issue. Based on the research summarized in this paper and the work of other scholars, it is proven that vitiligo is a series of multidimensional issues that not only affect the physical self, but the emotional and psychological self too. Vitiligo as a condition is very much an issue to the people who have it and it plays a critical role in their lives. These individuals experience stigmatization and ostracization, and from these occurrences they build on how they identify with the condition, thus owning it. While vitiligo is considered beautiful by many who have it, it is a complex condition that leads to stigma and exclusion.

Conclusion

Though they might face negative reactions due to their condition, my participants indicated the mentality surrounding vitiligo is changing. In my research, I noticed a recurring theme: "It is a skin condition, which is hard to love at first, but it makes one memorable and beautiful." This statement was uttered throughout the conference; participants felt proud of their condition. When I was interviewing Jasmine, she recounted to a time when she was younger and saw a woman of East Asian origin who had vitiligo on the side of her face and, because of the vitiligo, some of her hair had turned white, as Jasmine described. She went on to state she found this unknown lady beautiful and, fifteen years later, she developed vitiligo herself. Jasmine shared that the general public's perception of vitiligo is changing due to fashion icon Winnie Harlow, who has brought light to the matter. Dawn and Michelle mentioned that years ago, they never thought people like them, with vitiligo, would have the chance to be models. Winnie Harlow gracing the covers of magazines and billboards has aided in changing beauty norms, despite the preconception that models should conform to a certain body image.

In fact, models with vitiligo are now the face of diversity. Because they have a range of skin tones within just one body, they can be utilized to show the face of vitiligo, as in the recent Cover Girl ad. Rather than choosing one shade for her face, and covering up the lighter skin patches that mark the vitiligo, new Cover Girl, Amy Deanna chooses two different foundations, claiming, "Why try to blend in when you can choose how to stand out?"[1] This ad campaign highlights that cultural norms are changing and reinforces my claim that people with vitiligo learn to love their difference and feel valued for it. Further, ads like these make it possible for other individuals with vitiligo to feel empowered and understand their condition does not define them but is a part of them.

Consequently, this research is timely in that it resonates with our current cultural climate, due to the key issues regarding race and stigma, as well as, gender, identity, and acceptance or opportunities that are

experienced by individuals with vitiligo. We see that more and more individuals are changing the public's perception of vitiligo from a stigmatizing condition to a condition that is unique and celebrated. We see this occurring especially in the entertainment industry, where individuals such as Winnie Harlow from America's Next Top Model, Amy Deanna as the Covergirl model of 2018, and Zazie Beetz as Domino from Deadpool 2, are overcoming stigma and changing our perception of the condition and creating an identity around vitiligo. Through this, individuals are empowered and bring awareness to the condition.

With only 1 percent of the world's population affected by vitiligo, it may be tempting to overlook it as a social or medical issue. However, my participants' stories showcased how individuals are stigmatized and ostracized by their communities. While some of the participants felt that society negatively impacted their perceptions of themselves and their vitiligo, those negative feelings were not freely expressed by participants, who only spoke of them when they were prompted to elaborate on their experiences. Through vitiligo, individuals overcome these hardships and come to terms with the condition, viewing it as a fragment of their being. Many participants shared experiences and posted pictures on the condition online; thereby forming a community and assisting others in accepting the condition and becoming comfortable with it themselves. Ultimately, additional research is needed on the topic and its effects on transforming people's lives.

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Endnotes

1. Similarly, a new commercial from CoverGirl for its #IAmWhatIMakeUp truBlend Foundation features Amy Deanna, the first model with vitiligo that the company has used in their advertising. http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-5511449/Amy-Deanna-CoverGirls-model-vitiligo-talks-campaign.html

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"The Soviet Union is Inside Me": Post-Soviet Youth in Transition

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ABSTRACT

The USSR ceased to exist 28 years ago, and there are generations of young people who were born after the dissolution. Mobility opportunities are now abundant and easily available to them. Yet the Soviet past still shapes the post-Soviet present for citizens of countries of the former USSR. We interviewed eight young people from Belarus and Moldova who currently reside in the Netherlands and utilised grounded theory methodology to understand how they make sense of the Soviet past of their countries and how it influences them. While the post-Soviet young adults possess an internalised experience of reminiscences of Soviet times and have inherited certain patterns of thinking, communicating, and behaving, they are detached from Sovietness and express neither love nor hatred towards it. They locate themselves in a symbolic middle position in which they are critical both towards the Soviet legacy and 'the Western' alternatives, and the very transitional character of their position becomes the essence of it. The findings contribute to the body of scholarship on young adults' experiences in post-Soviet countries, and the evaluation and understanding of the Soviet experience. Furthermore, they assist in understanding current events as well as the trends and the mobility trajectories of post-Soviet young adults.

Keywords: Post-Soviet, mobility, young adults, transition, Moldova, Belarus

Firstly, we discuss previous academic work on post-Soviet transitions and processes of identification to contextualise our research. Secondly, we describe the development of the research. Lastly, we elaborate on our findings through the themes of cross-border mobility, balanced perspective on the USSR, imposed social norms, hard life at home, and language and communication strategies, and we draw conclusions.

Transformations in post-Soviet identification: From euphoria-nostalgia to the cosmopolitan home

The majority of the studies on Soviet cultural memory and its impact on post-Soviet young adults pay close attention to the issues of rethinking national identities of the former Soviet states (Chafetz 1997; Thelen and Honeycutt 2004; Robinson et al. 1993; Denison 2009). While most of them focus on the larger and central former Soviet republics, there is a rising number of articles addressing the implications of the transition of the peripheral and smaller states from the USSR to independence.

The study most closely related to our research is the one by Keshishian and Harutyunyan (2013). They conducted semi-structured interviews with three groups of Armenians – those who lived under the Soviet system, those who grew up in it and lived in post-Soviet Armenia, and those who were children under the Soviet system or were born after its dissolution – to compare their values, beliefs, and attitudes. The research demonstrates that interviews with the third group, which is similar to the population of our research, gave rise to the theme of 'euphoria-nostalgia' (Keshishian and Harutyunyan 2013, 369). The authors claim that even though a certain level of euphoria about the independent present of the country is observed, there is also nostalgia about the Soviet past. This nostalgia is transmitted to the generations of young adults growing up in post-Soviet times mainly through the narratives of their older relatives about the everyday aspects of their lives. These narratives have played an important role in the formation of the young people's value orientation. While

"Starting with the October revolution until the dissolution… It is such a short period of time but it is so full of different things," says Marina. We notice how she is genuinely impressed as she says this, and how her mind appears to be full of thoughts. We are talking with her in an empty classroom of an international school. The walls are full of posters of different writers and books. Only later on in the interview does it become clear how this diversity of the posters is symbolic of the changes she went through when she moved away from home, and how she managed to get out of the box represented by her home country. She was exposed to an unusual diversity of opinions that at first was hard to grasp. Moreover, like every other interviewee, she stresses the fact that the interview is important to her. The Soviet Union ceased to exist 28 years ago, but it keeps exerting influence even on younger generations, and this influence does not seem to be completely rationalised. As researchers from similar backgrounds, we wanted to find out what the Soviet past means to young people. We did not set out with particular expectations. Even after doing the literature review it was hard to get any precise idea of what was awaiting us in the field.

We interviewed eight young people, all of whom were born after the fall of the Soviet Union, who are highly mobile in that they are studying abroad in the Netherlands. They have taken up the opportunities provided to them by the globalised world. However, there is a part of them that seems to belong to the USSR. In this paper we explore the following research question: *how do Moldovan and Belarusian mobile young adults, residing in the Netherlands, make sense of the Soviet past of their countries and how does it influence them?*

the study is relevant, it focuses on the economic and political aspects while leaving out the role of culture.

A topic often encountered in the literature on post-Soviet countries is the issue of the national language, for example, in William Beeman's (1999) analysis of the formation of group understanding in post-Soviet Tajikistan. The nation-building journey for Tajikistan involved dilemmas on various levels. Like Moldova and Belarus, Tajikistan is a relatively small country with difficult economic perspectives, which made the country vulnerable to the power of the Soviet authority (Beeman 1999). In this context, the USSR not only made its presence felt in the political and economic life of Tajikistan but also influenced its cultural and national positioning (Beeman 1999). Language was one of the aspects that raised much debate both in the public and private sphere: from a national perspective, after the fall of the Soviet Union, the Tajik government encouraged the use of the Tajik language (Beeman 1999). However, as Beeman argues, the implementation of a national linguistic ideal became more complex in practice since in post-Soviet Tajikistan many people still did not possess sufficient knowledge of the Tajik language to be able to use it as the language of instruction in schools or in private life (Beeman 1999). These findings are significant for our research due to the analogy that can be drawn between Tajikistan, Belarus, and Moldova: in all countries language played a crucial role in defining the cultural belongingness of individuals in the process of cultural reformulation.

In order to refer to the changes that occur at the level of social and personal identity among young adults from the post-Soviet space, we will use the terms of self-understanding, identification, and groupness. Despite the concept of identity being widely applied in studies similar to ours, we refrain from using it due to its ambiguity. Brubaker and Cooper (2000) explain that the notion of identity is often used in distinct frameworks, making it too ambiguous. The authors provide five common uses of the term: (1) as a base for social and political action, (2) as a group phenomenon driven by the common features among group members, (3) as a deep, defining aspect of the self, (4) as the outcome of social and political action, specifically in the context of social movements, and (5) as a notion underpinning the fluid and unstable nature of the "self" in contemporary societies (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 8). Consequently, we decided to use the alternatives provided by the authors. Firstly, we will use the term *identification*, referring to the active process of identifying and categorizing oneself by oneself as well as by others. In this context, we can distinguish between relational identification as positioning the one who is identified in a "relational web" (e.g. kinship, friendship, etc.), and categorical identification, understood as one's belongingness to a group with which one shares certain categorical characteristics (e.g. race, sexuality, gender, etc.) (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 15). Additionally, we will use the notion of *self-understanding* when talking about the subjective sense of one's self and social location. Self-understanding needs to be comprehended as an auto-referential term, excluding the external identifications or categorizations of others of the individual. Lastly, we will use the term *groupness* when speaking of the collective affiliation of individuals with a group, based on a feeling of belonging to a specific collective.

Taking into account that our research intends to present an analysis of Moldovan and Belarusian highly mobile young adults, an important aspect to explore is the process of transnational movement and the implications of mobility in the lives of our respondents. The concepts of *Europeanization* and *cosmopolitanism* provide a suitable framework for exploring the ways in which cross-border mobility contributes to a change in the self-understanding of individuals. Delanty (2005) explains that the notion of Europeanization manifests itself as a social reality which facilitates a re-articulation of the physical space. In other words, cross-border interactions (e.g. for work, tourism, sports) play a major role in expanding the borderof nation states and increasing the overall mobility of individuals. In this sense, the author argues, mobility for the purpose of education, especially higher education, has become a distinct social reality of "Europe as a knowledge society" (Delanty 2005, 410). This aspect is relevant for our

research in that the mobility of our interviewees is primarily motivated by their higher education aspirations.

Additionally, the process of Europeanization, as explained by Delanty (2005), proposes a cosmopolitan cultural model. Gunesch (2004) complements this idea by operating with Hanenerz's conception of cosmopolitanism as entailing a genuine multicultural understanding of the world and a certain willingness to "engage with the Other" in an accepting manner (as cited in Gunesch 2004, 256). In this regard, cosmopolitanism can be perceived as providing occasions for the social to be constructed beyond the national borders of societies, offering a platform that facilitates change, besides improved mobility and higher transnational connectivity (Delanty 2005). Moreover, Gunesch (2004) accentuates the role of physical mobility in shaping the identification of cosmopolitan individuals and their relation to the physical space. For cosmopolitans, the author argues, home is not the opposite of being mobile but is situated anywhere in the local or the global sphere. The cosmopolitan home often provides personal meaning, encouraging a certain level of autonomy, which allows the individuals to navigate the space between a new culture and their culture of origin (Gunesch 2004). That said, home can also remind individuals of their lives prior to mobility, articulating a nostalgic feeling for the past and for the familiarity of a certain physical place. The question of home is, thus, attributed multiple connotations in cosmopolitanism, leaving it open to the conceptualization of the individual. We sought to explore this aspect with our interviewees as well, as we will discuss in the findings section.

The context: Challenges and opportunities in the post-Soviet transition

Moldova and Belarus were two of the 15 constituent countries of the USSR that regained their independence in 1991 (Abbott 2007). The period of transition following the breakup of the Soviet Union was accompanied by radical changes for the citizens of the former Soviet states in various dimensions of their lives. As Abbott (2007) claims, the countries were facing a period of creation of nation-states, a shift in political systems from totalitarianism to democracy, and the transition to a market economy. These changes resulted in increased economic inequality and unemployment rates and reduced state spending, all of which led to the loss of social security and welfare benefits for the citizens.

Our choice to analyse post-Soviet young adults' experiences of their past in Moldova and Belarus was driven by several factors. Abbott (2007) argues that both countries are relatively small, situated on the periphery of the former USSR, "sharing the status of being outsider states," with a territorial position between the European Union and the Russian Federation (220). While Belarus has undergone minor political and economic changes, maintaining the command economy system and an authoritarian regime, Moldova had attempts to establish a democracy, which proved to be unsuccessful after the Communist Party reinforced their influence by winning the general elections in 2001 and 2004 (Abbott 2007). As claimed by Abbott (2007), even though the transition from a command economy was initiated in Moldova, the current situation can be described as "distorted market economy", not concerned with the welfare of the citizens, resulting in decreased levels of trust and civic engagement among the population (Abbott 2007, 220). In the case of Moldova, there is also persistent "ethnic tension between the Russian and Romanian populations", which impacts country's struggle for a national identity (Abbott 2007, 220).

As Roberts (2003) points out, the economic, political, and social changes that followed the fall of the USSR had significant implications for young people. The rapid changes and social turmoil in the newly independent states directly influenced young adults' perspectives on life, allowing them to combine their existing world perception with aspects of Western values and lifestyles (Roberts 2003). In addition, substantial emigration led to a major decrease in the number of young citizens in the post-Soviet countries (Abbott 2007). This is confirmed by Shevtsova (1992), who argues that in post-Soviet countries young people between 20 and 35 years old are most likely to seek emigration.

The relevance of our research can be derived from the abovementioned processes occurring in post-Soviet Moldova and Belarus. Tied between Russia and the recent openness for European Union, young people in both countries seek to find a middle ground between the Soviet past and the new opportunities they are exposed to. The goal of this research is to find out whether the decades that have passed after the fall of the Soviet Union caused a certain detachment from the elements characteristic to the Soviet era and an increased interest for the West, or vice versa.

Methodology

We conducted our research in an interpretivist paradigm. We assumed that reality is constructed intersubjectively through meanings that arise in the process of social interaction (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2006). We emphasise the dialogical rather than monological character of research (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2006). The participants in our ethnographic research consisted of eight young people: four from Moldova and four from Belarus (see Table 1). All the participants were born after the fall of the USSR and currently reside in the Netherlands. They had moved away from their homes from six months to two years before the time the research was conducted. Our personal contacts played an important role in recruiting participants. All of them were people with whom we had been acquainted prior to the research. We contacted people directly and also reached out to the student communities of the nationalities needed for our research. Thus, when the interviewing process started, some rapport had already been established with the participants.

It is important to note our personal position in relation to the topic. Ilya was born in Belarus, and Olga was born in Moldova, and we spent most of our lives in these countries. The research was born out of our genuine personal interest in the topic, while also driven by the identification of a gap in the academic literature. While we realise that our interpretation is an essential part of our research, we tried to emphasise our interviewees' experiences. On the one hand, the internalised knowledge about the social reality we were researching assisted us in entering the field and allowed for easier communication with the interviewees and deeper understanding of their stories. On the other hand, our preconceptions might have interfered with the research findings and some assumptions taken for granted might have been overlooked. In order to counteract this potential limitation, we made sure to establish good communication with each other. We made an attempt to thoroughly discuss interviews, findings, and interpretations, and this helped us not take elements of data for granted and avoid overly personal interpretations.

In preparation for the interviews, we created an interview guide to make sure that we received the information from the participants that we needed and also to have some degree of comparability between the interviews. At the same time, we realised that following the interview guide too closely could lead to missing significant parts of the interviewees' stories. Therefore, the interviews were semi-structured, and the guide served as a general framework of the interview, allowing flexibility and extensive probing. The guide was developed collaboratively and was structured around the intersection between the literature and our research question. It consisted of three thematic blocks relating to the main ideas underlying this research. First, we attempted to find common ground with interviewees by asking them about their ideas of what constitutes the culture of the USSR and their experience of interaction with it. The second block was on the interviewees' identification of and their positioning of themselves in relation to the USSR and their new nation-state. The third block, inspired by Gunesch's (2004) emphasis on the importance of mobility for personal identification, dealt with the interviewees' experiences and perceptions of transition from their countries of origin to the Netherlands as well as their identification in the framework of this transition.

Additionally, we conducted the interviews in the language that each interviewee preferred, since it suited the topic and ensured that no information was missing due to speaking in a second language. In the end, three interviews with the Belarusians were conducted in Russian

Pseudo-nym	Age	Gender	Country of origin	Grew up in...
Lena	21	Female	Moldova	capital city
Tanya	23	Female	Moldova	capital city
Dima	20	Male	Moldova	capital city
Kiril	22	Male	Moldova	rural area
Vika	18	Female	Belarus	rural area
Sveta	24	Female	Belarus	capital city
Marina	18	Female	Belarus	capital city
Katya	19	Female	Belarus	capital city

and one in Belarusian, while all four of the interviews with the Moldovans were conducted in Romanian. The interviews were rather informal, highly autobiographical, and in-depth. The interviews lasted from 30 minutes to 2.5 hours, and they were audio-recorded. We also made brief reflexive notes during interviews to assist us in the analysis by marking the parts that seemed important, stood out, or helped during the interview. As soon as possible, the interviews were transcribed and the interview guide was adjusted accounting for the experience of the interviews. We used the website otranscribe.com to make transcriptions. Alongside transcribing, summaries of the interviews in English were made to acquaint each other with the interviews, do initial coding, and prepare preliminary results in the form of analytical memos.

The overall approach to data analysis was grounded theory. After the transcriptions were finished, we started open coding in the program Atlas.ti. By using open coding, we made sure that we take into account all the relevant information and did not miss anything. After that, the codes were amended and the transcriptions were analysed for the second time according to the codes generated. Then,

some codes were deleted and some amended again. When the coding was finished, we clustered the codes, and from these clusters we developed themes that served the basis for our theory.

The outlined methodology is most suitable for the research question because it required an in-depth inquiry into the interviewees' perception of Soviet times. Detailed semi-structured interviews generated comprehensive data and discussions of the themes that interviewees themselves found significant. It helped develop solid accounts of interviewees' experiences. Furthermore, it ensured that the researchers did not dominate in the interview and that a more equal reciprocal relationship was established.

Ethical Considerations and Limitations

Most of the interviews included discussion of the interviewees' memories, families, and political views. Therefore, some of the data that we have gathered is sensitive. In order to protect participants' privacy, we asked them to sign consent forms where we explained the particulars of the research and changed their names in the final report.

Likewise, it is important to mention a few limitations of our research. First, the interviewees are students of an international school and university. This factor represents a limitation for our findings because young adults striving to achieve higher education might have a more critical perspective on reality, influencing the way they relate to their past and make sense of their post-Soviet experiences. However, since our intention was to develop analytical themes grounded in the data rather than to generalize the outcomes, this limitation is not significant. Second, we conducted the interviews in the native languages of the participants. Even though we believe that our research has benefited from it greatly since we obtained the data that otherwise would not be available, it posed problems for analysis. Since Ilya could not read the interviews in Romanian and Olga possesses limited knowledge of Russian, the data we obtained was communicated between us through summaries in English, and the primary analysis was conducted by one person who possesses the necessary language skills. Thus, we realise that

some data might have been missed or miscommunicated. Nonetheless, we strived to ensure clarity in communication, we discussed our findings on a daily basis, asked for clarifications and explanations, and we are convinced that our gains outweigh our losses.

Findings

As mentioned before, our eight interviews allowed us to gather rich qualitative data and develop five themes after a thorough analysis and refinement. In the following section, we elaborate on each of these themes in turn.

Young adults' cross-border mobility

Mobility opportunities, as we had expected, exerted influence on the way the interviewees perceive themselves, their home countries, and the USSR. In each interview conducted with Moldovan participants, travelling was mentioned as one of the crucial aspects in shaping their self-understanding. The significance of mobility opportunities for post-Soviet youth can be sensed in Lena's words.

> Lena (21, Moldova, grew up in the capital city): After I turned 16, I started travelling, attending international projects. This had a great impact on me, I decided I want to do something different with my life. I started detaching myself from everything related to Moldova and of all this culture… ehm… it is then when I started transforming and becoming who I really want to be.

We can observe that not only is travelling important for our participants, but they also perceive mobility opportunities such as study abroad programs, international exchanges, and travelling as adding a positive dimension to their lives, creating an awareness of their cultural belonging to their home country, while also empowering them to change their perception on reality and on themselves. Mobility, in other words, is as Delanty (2005) identifies a catalyst for reshaping the social reality. Additionally, we can confirm that cross-border mobility for educational purposes helps articulate a new European sphere which focuses on knowledge, exposing the individuals to a redefined social space. Tanya from Moldova tells us that ever since she was seven

years old, her parents took her travelling around Western Europe. She considers herself lucky to have had this opportunity since she claims that it provided her with the necessary tools to build her own understanding of the past and present times. Moreover, she mentions that only through travelling was she able to detach herself from the political divisions within the country, escaping the "West vs. East" divide by identifying herself as a "child of the world". In this case, we can observe that Tanya (23, Moldova, grew up in the capital city) has adopted the cosmopolitan cultural model which facilitates her multicultural interactions and creates a social sphere for her outside the national borders, as explained by Gunesch (2004).

While in the interviews with Belarusian participants the aspect of mobility also proved to be significant, it manifested itself in a different fashion.

> Vika (18, Belarus, grew up in a rural area): Even though I can say that you can vaguely say that there is post-Soviet East and there is West, when you zoom in… You know, inside of these… So to say, circles there are still many differences, and I realised it when I came here [to the Netherlands].

As a result of the high level mobility, young adults also realise the problematic and unproductive character of the "West vs. East" divide. However, when they navigate in the symbolic space, they still put themselves on the Eastern side of the spectrum. Some say that they "found home" back in Belarus. However, Sveta's (24, Belarus, grew up in the capital city) account of this was different, and somewhat similar to the one that the Moldovans exhibited, that is, she has adopted the cosmopolitan cultural model and avoided close identification with Belarus. What is most significant to understand here is that our interviewees are disillusioned with the bipolar division of Europe and their mobility has heavily contributed to their perception of this division.

Balanced perspective

An aspect frequently encountered throughout the interviews is the acknowledgement of the controversy of the USSR. On the one hand, the

recollection of negative aspects of the USSR was prominent in all of the interviews. As Vika (18, Belarus, grew up in a rural area) said, "My first associations with all this [Soviet culture] are bad. A part of the family, to which I was very close, suffered greatly in those times." Repressions, mass killings, poverty, deficit of consumer goods – all these factors among others are pieces that form the negative picture for the interviewees. Bearing in mind that data about such conditions started being widely discussed only in the 1980s, our interviewees were among those who had access to this kind of information when they were growing up.

On the other hand, the interviewees stressed their realisation that there were positive aspects to the USSR. Particularly, they mention social security benefits that the state provided. "My grandma 'was given' a flat, and we still live there" (Sveta, 24, Belarus, grew up in the capital). In a survey conducted in 2008 in Russia and Ukraine, Nikolayenko (2008) observed a similar pattern of coexisting positive and negative attitudes towards USSR among adolescents. The general prevailing perception of the USSR is formed and then shaped for the interviewees by the stories told to them by their families. The absence of direct contact with the era of which they vaguely see themselves a certain part makes them rely fully on the experience of the relatives who did have direct experience of the Soviet time or the aspects they wish to highlight, through movies, for instance. Our interviewees believe that almost every family suffered from the Soviet rule, though some people were devoted to the idea behind the Soviet ideology regardless. Thus, we can see how there are two contrasting images of the past that are transmitted to the interviewees.

Our interviewees reject thinking in terms of two extremes and acknowledge the multidimensionality of the era. They admit to having internalised Soviet culture, and they clearly realise that they have lived in the trenches of the enduring Sovietness. As Vika (18, Belarus, grew up in a rural area) put it: "The Soviet Union is inside me." At the same time, they experience "stagnation", as Marina (18, Belarus, grew up in the capital city) calls it, being stuck in that era is alien to them. They are disillusioned with the Soviet ideology, while

their older relatives, they admit, often are not. Young people refuse a similar ideological brand offered by contemporary political powers. Thus, this theme is not only about the past and the perception of the past as such. One particular instance of this influence is the current political orientation. Tanya (23, Moldova, grew up in the capital) notes, "The divide can be observed even now... Uhm, you can even see how they vote in the elections." She admits the influence of the past experiences on the political orientation of her family members.

In its turn, their political orientation influences the way she herself orients in politics. Her observation of the two possible extremes, pro-Soviet and anti-Soviet as transformed into pro-Russian and pro-European stances respectively, balanced her political view, and she sees herself as positioned in-between. In contrast, Vika (18, Belarus, grew up in a rural area) had a primarily negative idea of the USSR transmitted to her. However, she has come to the realisation that the Soviet part of her family history plays a crucial role in her personality. The details of Vika's story are different from Sveta's (24, Belarus, grew up in the capital city), whose family felt provided for by the Soviet state. However, both stories demonstrate to us how the controversial character of the USSR is mediated through family members' experience and is critically thought through by the younger generation, which then influences their political and personal identification. The interviewees do not position themselves in the 'pro-Soviet' camp while they are also not inclined to see themselves as unconditionally pro-European. They generally are not inclined to use the notion of 'the West' as a coherent whole, and when asked they exhibit some level of scepticism towards it too.

Normativity and imposed social norms

Another important topic mentioned by our interviewees is the need to conform to certain normative standards in their home countries perceived as negatively shaping one's creativity and reasoning. What was identified as necessary in such living conditions was the need to obey the rules, otherwise one is perceived as different and is, thus, treated differently.

Marina (18, Belarus, grew up in the capital): At school in an essay […] I wrote that I did not like the book… I wrote why I did not like the character, the language of Dostoyevsky was too hard for me. […] I answered the question. But I was told '[Marina], you shouldn't write things like this'. […] You cannot have an alternative point of view, fullstop. The system […] has chosen for you that you like the book, and you can only explain why you like it following templates.

As can be seen above, participants conveyed that this need to fit into certain structures is institutionalized. They state that creativity was not encouraged in schools, you could not argue with the teachers or you would get in trouble. All of this, as Sveta (24, Belarus, grew up in the capital city) says, shapes "a cult of narrow-mindedness" that is inherited from the USSR. More than this, these normative standards are present in every aspect of life. "There are a lot of things that are expected to be the same… From, uhm, buildings to ways of thinking" (Lena, 21, Moldova, grew up in the capital). Lena summarises how conforming to the spoken and unspoken rules is expected. Moreover, she recalls architecture and hints at the mass apartment building projects in the USSR, the *khrushchevka* – standardised low-rise flat blocks that were built under the rule of Khrushchev (Luhn 2017). By mentioning this, she establishes a connection between the imposed standards ranging from the material sphere to the realm of thinking, suggesting the twofold character of this association.

Similar informal normativity is witnessed in cultural products spread around all post-Soviet countries. Many of the interviewees were nostalgic about Soviet movies. Others, like Sveta, mentioned that they feel how people from their home countries like these movies. This demonstrates that the expectations of sameness are high. By virtue of growing up in a certain place, one is expected to know certain products of the culture of a state that does not exist anymore. If one exhibits a lack of knowledge of a famous movie from the Soviet times, one will have to face surprise and condemnation. The strength of the influence the old state exerts can be felt in Sveta's words.

Sveta (24, Belarus, grew up in the capital): When I moved [to the Netherlands], I understood that when you live in a friendly environment, you do not need to conform. I thought that that [conformity] was my inherent trait, you know, but I realized here that it is not when some people started giving me weird looks and told me about this.

Before moving to the Netherlands, Sveta perceived the urge to conform as her inherent trait. She was made to think so by the circumstances and people's attitudes. She continued behaving in the way she was used to when she arrived in the Netherlands, but people around made her realise that she could behave more as she pleased without the need to conform. What we can observe here is that horizontal Europeanization facilitated Sveta's implementation of behaviors witnessed in another European state, changing her personal self-understanding (Brüggemann and Kleinen von Königslöw 2007).

Previous research identified these normative patterns followed by most inhabitants of post-Soviet countries as factors that facilitate the creation of a certain type. Novikova (2015, 188) refers to this "type of personality" as "Homo Sovieticus". She argues that the Soviet man is significantly influenced by utterly ideological Soviet education and propaganda. Moreover, the author explains the Soviet people as "the product of an unstable sociopolitical system", "de-individualized, opposed to everything elite and idiosyncratic, transparent" (Novikova 2015, 189). Novikova (2015) argues that freedom of initiative and freedom of spirit was not a part of the Soviet project and was replaced with conformism, inflexibility, and traditionalist views on life. These views are understood as a social expectation projected onto others, creating what Brubaker and Cooper (2000) define as groupness, a sense of affiliation and commonness with the typology of the 'Soviet individual'. The same ideas were observed in our participants' stories: institutionalized normativity which was taught to them at school, strict gender expectations which, when not obeyed, led to marginalization and exclusion, and other significant aspects of 'Soviet education' were identified as limiting factors in our participants' personality development.

Hard Life at Home

Another significant finding of our research is that post-Soviet young adults perceives the hard living conditions in their home countries as a factor which shapes their characters, understanding the difficult lives they face as a reminiscence of the Soviet Union. As stated in Nikolayenko's (2008) study on the effects of Soviet nostalgia on the historic memory of a nation, the low levels of economic development of post-Soviet states and the uncertainty that occurred after the dissolution of the Soviet Union influences the way young adults perceive the past and relate to the idea of 'Soviet nostalgia", often referred to in post-Soviet countries. In other words, the poverty and difficult life conditions post-Soviet younger generation faces in their home countries was shown to create resentment towards the past, often being perceived as a negative outcome of the USSR. Our interviewees confirm these views. As stated by three of our participants, in their home country they live a continuous battle, a state where they know they have to work hard if they want to escape poverty and achieve good living standards and in most cases, this can only be done through the means of mobility.

> Lena (21, Moldova, grew up in the capital) confirms this: Look at any person from Western countries. For the majority of them there is no need to get out of it, to leave, to go away somewhere. They are born and raised in good living conditions. Look at us, we have to get out of there. There is that feeling that you have to get out of this shit. You have to work to get out of it, you have to go somewhere and make it there, but not home.

Growing up in this environment shaped the resilience of our participants, making them aware of the hardships of life. Vika (18, Belarus, grew up in a rural area) talks about the feeling of reality and pain that she experiences, tracing it back to the Soviet times and the stories she heard ever since she was a child. Marina from Belarus explains that the fact that she grew up in a post-Soviet country prepared her for life, helped her perceive the life in a very real, authentic way and added a certain simplicity to her existence.

> Marina (18, Belarus, grew up in the capital): I have the impression that I have already done everything in this life. To such an extent that I can communicate in an 'elite society' [...], but at the same time I can collect blueberries [...] and sell them on the highway. [I never had] rose-tinted glasses on. I grew up in poverty among various people and went through various situations. I saw a lot of things already.

The Role of Language and Communication Strategies

Language facilitates the transmission of the memory between generations. While language certainly is a means of communication, it also carries a mark of past societal processes. In the case of Moldova and Belarus, the language issue was significant. Wide-scale processes of Russification were set in place during the times of the USSR in these countries (Ioffe 2003; Ciscel 2006). Thus, the role of the Russian language was growing while the role of the national languages was diminishing. While in Moldova, the Romanian language became a symbol and a means of achieving independence from the Soviet legacy, in Belarus, the Belarusian language occupies a secondary place. The fact that three out of four interviews with Belarusians were conducted in Russian is telling. Still, Russian has prevailed in both countries, has carried certain meanings from the USSR, and continues to connect youth to the Soviet past. The interviews demonstrate the influence of the USSR on the language situations of the interviewees.

> Tanya (23, Moldova, grew up in the capital): It's so funny... If I find a Moldovan Russian speaker outside Moldova I would immediately start speaking Russian to him. No hesitation... Even though my Russian is not that good... In Moldova, ehm, I would not do that. I would expect him to speak Romanian.

Tanya's words convey that language creates a sense of groupness among Moldovans, even though it might not be their mother tongue, through the common and Russian-speaking Soviet past. Many elements of the Soviet times, cultural and social, are forgotten and/or

rethought. Even though Romanian is the official language of Moldova, Russian used to serve as a universal language of communication within Soviet republics and persisted as such even after the fall of the USSR. Being transmitted from the older generations to the younger ones as a universal means of communication, the Russian language still represents a unifying element for the Moldovans abroad. It serves as a marker of sameness in the environment where the Moldovan is a foreigner. Tanya finds it funny and seems not to fully comprehend why it is so, which is telling for how some influences are not fully acknowledged and how everyday practices of the younger generations are affected by the Soviet order of things only subtly.

> Vika (18, Belarus, grew up in the capital): My father [who is a poet] and his friends [...], poets, singers... The majority of them work in Russian, but this is because no one speaks Belarusian, which brings us back to the fact that [...] there is something left [from the Soviet Union].

While Vika's words should not be taken literally, since there are people who speak Belarusian, they demonstrate how even in the sphere of culture people prefer to stick to the Russian language, which thus remains in the country. This links back to Beeman's (1999) discussion of Tajikistan, where people were unwilling or unable to speak the Tajik language in light of the prevalence of Russian.

Our discussion does not account for the variety of social, economic, and cultural reasons for these language conditions, but rather emphasises the role of the language as legacy from the Soviet Union, especially on the level of micro-narratives of one's own life. We found that our interviewees' perception of the communication strategies used by their fellow nationals represents a distinct attribute which, in their mind, reflects an internalized Soviet legacy.

> Lena (21, Moldova, grew up in the capital): I think I have a different way in which I see the world. For instance, here [in the Netherlands] they often have principles that are useless or just exist for the sake of principles. It was a huge adventure to get into the library when I forgot my student card.

Here Lena continued to tell the story about how she could not negotiate her entrance to the library with its guard when she did not carry her student card – an attribute that is required by the rules. At a glance, her lack of understanding in this situation is confusing. However, in this situation she exhibits what Novikova (2015, 188) calls "informal networking". According to her, this strategy of negotiating one's way somewhere while one does not fulfill the necessary conditions is widely present in the post-Soviet space as its legacy. Thus, it is an indicator that there are communicative strategies that result from young people's post-Soviet socialisation that makes them different from their peers.

Another communicative pattern is described by Sveta from Belarus.

> Sveta (24, Belarus, grew up in the capital): With the Russian language... It's so important to me, and I am... very aware of it. And there is a certain type of language in Soviet movies. Intonation, style. And when I hear these patterns in the real life... There are no more people who speak like this in my surroundings now (laughs).

This quote also demonstrates how everyday practices and decisions are affected by the Soviet past mediated through the language, but in a different way. The creation of a 'new person' (Gerovitch 2007), a Soviet citizen, also required the creation of a new language. This kind of language has been preserved in Soviet movies. What Sveta says about vocabulary, speech structure, and intonations can be interpreted as elements that served the state ideology, transmitted through the medium of cinematography. Combined with the negative experience of her family in the USSR and also the experiences that she had with her family, Sveta develops resistance to such language and builds her social network avoiding the people who have elements of such "Soviet speech" in the way they communicate.

Conclusion

> Unfortunately, 28 years after we got our independence... we were never independent. There were always either Russian or Romanian values imposed on us [...]. In Moldova, the influence is not West vs. East, but Russia vs. Romania. We were never independent in our brain, we were always taught that there are two sides but no middle. Everyone wiped their feet on our country, on our independent Moldova. You're either Russian or Romanian, but there is no middle. It's an ideological battle and it's such a pity... (Dima, Moldova)

When we finalised the research process, we realised that this quote seems to be voicing the grievances of many of the interviewees, and ours too. For many years the state that is called the USSR has not existed, yet it has been exerting its influence. After the fall of the USSR, many people were happy. They hoped for independence, a new, better life and, most importantly, freedom. However, they did not necessarily know what to do with the freedom, nor how it worked. New forces and dynamics immediately activated that influenced post-Soviet people on the level of the everyday life, too. A significant change was observed concerning the identity of the participants.

As previously explained, we chose to substitute the term identity with three alternative concepts. Firstly, at the level of identification, the interviewees exhibited awareness that mobility had changed the way they identify themselves and are identified by others, situated in a position of in-betweenness in relation to their home country and host society. Secondly, their self-understanding is primarily impacted by the transition to the Dutch society and the exposure to different social norms than in their home countries, affecting the way they behave and relate to themselves (e.g. the disappearance of the need to conform to certain normative standards while abroad). Lastly, the students' sense of groupness is shaped by their increased mobility as well, influencing the ways in which they identify to a group by reconciling their symbolic belongingness to their home country and simultaneous identification as cosmopolitans. Now that post-Soviet generations enter adulthood, having lived after the fall of the USSR and having been exposed to cross-border mobility opportunities, they utilise their structural position of 'transitionality' to form a particular angle from which they see the world and to negotiate a symbolic space for themselves in which they can feel at home.

Post-Soviet Moldovan and Belarusian young adults have an internalised experience of the reminiscences of Soviet times. This has been acquired in various ways through Soviet cultural products, conversations with their relatives, and simply elements of their day to day lives that are connected to the Soviet past. Overall, this experience has had a certain influence on their personalities such as the way they communicate or behave. Nonetheless, they exhibit detachment from Sovietness, which leads to a balanced perception of Soviet times, as they place themselves in a middle position that is neither nostalgic romantic love nor hatred and denial. The societies that the young adults are coming from are still in the processes of social and cultural transformation, which means that these processes have been taking place for the entire lives of the interviewees. Furthermore, at a certain stage of their lives, the interviewees became actively mobile which added a transnational dimension to the transitional aspect of their lives. This multi-dimensional transitionality in turn conditions the young adults' middle position in relation to two extreme stances: West versus East. It also allows them to maintain a critical distance from which they observe the Soviet times, their countries, and 'the West'. However, having inherited certain modes of thinking, communicating, and behaving, post-Soviet young adults still relate to elements of the Soviet past, which makes them feel different in a foreign country.

We have also identified the need for further research in the area. It would be beneficial to interview mobile young adults from other countries than Belarus and Moldova, which are located at the borders of the former USSR, as well as young adults from these countries who reside in countries other than the Netherlands. Potentially, it might yield different or complementary results since we found out that

there are variations between the perceptions of Belarusians and Moldovans and that the aspect of mobility is crucial for the interviewees' self-understanding. What is more, the young adults who still reside in Belarus and Moldova remain under-researched and their perspective would add greatly to the research of issues in question.

Acknowledgements

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"Don't Be a Son of a Bitch, Stand Up and Get What You Need": Understanding Italian Young Adults' Identity through Insults

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study, grounded in the ethnography of communication, aims to describe how Italian young adults construct their individual and group identity through the use of insults. The existing literature has extensively investigated the communicative practice of insults, but no research has been done so far on insults in relation to the construction of identity in Italy. Therefore, this study enriches the literature, taking a linguistic, communicative, and pragmatic approach to the topic. In order to collect data, I conducted participant observation, one focus group, and three individual interviews. I applied thematic analysis to analyze the data. By interpreting members' meanings, I identified four main functions of insults: construction of identity through gender; construction of identity depending on social context; construction of identity through the light use of insults; and construction of identity through the offensive use of insults.

Insults are a fundamental part of many world languages. As a matter of fact, Charles Flynn (1976) argued for the "universality" of certain kinds of insults, underlying the historical and geographical extent to which they are commonly used (3). As with every other component of speech, insults are subject to the influence of culture and context. Because of this influence, they are used in many different instances, in a huge variety of ways, and with countless different meanings. The habit that people have developed to hear and perhaps use insults on a regular basis should not lead to the assumption that insults are not worth examining. On the contrary, the ubiquity of insults across so many cultures and communities should provoke a spark of curiosity towards understanding the processes underlying their application, and their relative meanings in a specific cultural context.

The existing literature provides a comprehensive account of the use and nature of insults, describing and analyzing a variety of cultural settings and approaches, among them the ethnography of communication, content analysis, textual analysis and linguistic studies. Even though the existing studies provide undoubtedly a substantial contribution, no study has been conducted so far on the native perspective on the use of insults in Italy, and, more specifically, on the impact of insults on Italians' identity. In order to enrich the existing literature, the aim of this study is to analyze from the natives' point of view how the perception and evaluation of insults construct both individual and group identity among Italian young adults. Moreover, this study represents a guide for non-natives of the Italian speech community to understand the underlying meaning of insults and their relation to personal and communal identities. The research question that the study aims to

answer is: How do Italian young adults construct and perform their own individual identity and their group identity through the interpretation and evaluation of insults?

In order to be able to answer it from the participants' points of view, this study is grounded in the ethnography of communication (EoC). This theoretical framework calls for the understanding of communicative phenomena exclusively from the natives' points of view. The data was gathered through interviews, participant observations and one focus group. The process of data analysis relied on the method of thematic analysis. More specifically, I constructed the analysis around Hymes' SPEAKING model, guided by symbolic interactionism as a sensitizing theory. From the data collected and analyzed through thematic analysis, four themes that describe how identity is constructed through the use of insults emerged: constructed depending on gender identity, constructed depending on social context, constructed through the light use of insults, and constructed through the offensive use of insults. The article concludes by summarizing and contextualizing these findings within the existing literature.

Literature Review: Insults and Identity

Numerous studies have already been conducted on the use of insults in different cultural settings, such as smaller, local speech communities (Murray 1979; Alderete et al. 2012), and larger, more general speech communities (Flynn 1976; Samarin 1969; Tartamella 2016). The existing literature provides an initial framework for studying the nature of insults in the field of communication studies, and has presented both quantitative and qualitative studies on the matter. Tartamella (2016)'s quantitative study analyzes the frequency of use of insults and the popularity of specific ones. Some qualitative studies focus on the use of insults through the lenses of linguistics, while others apply an ethnographic lens, looking at the association of insults to behavior and concepts. Generally speaking, the underlying theme of identity through the existing literature is apparent, if not explicitly specified.

Vito Tartamella, an Italian scholar and journalist, has conducted various studies on the use of swearwords in Italian. In his book *Parolacce* (2016), he identifies 301 main swearwords that are commonly used in the country. However, in an online article, he points out that it is impossible to give a specific number that precisely clarifies the amount of swearwords that exist in the Italian dictionary, "both because new swearwords are continuously appearing (from slang, for instance), and because every word could become a swearword, if one gives it a derogatory meaning" (Tartamella 2011, n.p., my translation; unless otherwise noted, all translations from Italian are my own). In his long-term and extensive research, he identifies five main categories in which he divides the 301 most-used swearwords by type: sexual (39.2%), religious (19.7%), emphatic (14.9%), insults (14.4%), and excrement-related (11.6%) (Tartamella 2016). The contribution of these quantitative studies, however, is limited, as it does not speak to the use and relative consequences of these terms. On the contrary, other studies, which were not conducted in the Italian context, opted for a qualitative approach, investigating the members' meanings in various defined speech communities.

Numerous studies have tried to define the nature of insults used in relation to a certain behavior or concept. An example is provided by Alderete et al.'s (2012) research on racial insults and the practice of smoking in Jujuy, Argentina. The most common relation analyzed in the literature is, however, that between insults and sexuality (Flynn 1976; Murray 1979; Samarin 1969). Previous research has approached this connection from various angles, giving the impression that the topic has been adequately explored. A common variable among all these studies is the focus on, or awareness of, the existence of cultural differences, and the impact of these differences on the use, interpretation, and actual meanings of insults. Flynn (1976) focuses on the types, the universality, and the diverse grounds for sex-related insults; Murray (1979) carries out a comparative study between the Black speech community and the gay community on the art of insulting, with an emphasis on ritual insults; and Samarin (1969) presents a comprehensive ethnographic study

on the use of insults among the Gbeya, a tribe from Central African Republic. The completion of these works led to the relevant conclusion that there is a close relation between insults and "a person's physical characteristics" (Samarin 1969, 324), more specifically "direct or indirect references to genitals" (Flynn 1976, 3). Moreover, Flynn's study, which is more general in nature, lists several sex-related situations which are either considered insulting in themselves, or are motives to provoke insults, such as adultery and incest. Some of these reasons overlap with Murray's study (1979) focused on gay communities, among whom sex seems to be pivotal "in the corpus of gay ritual insults" (216). Another pattern that emerges from the existing literature is research on the way insults are used, always in relation to specific contexts. Among the various identified characteristics, expression of feelings, judgement, and retort were the most relevant ones. Nonetheless, the literature points out that insults have experienced a historical change in both meaning and usage (Flynn 1976; Kegl 1994; Murray 1979).

The literature connects the concept of insults to that of identity both implicitly, focusing more on the behavioral premises and consequences linked to the use of insults, and explicitly, by investigating how the use of insults constructs and performs identity meanings typical of a defined speech community. In Rosemary Kegl's textual analysis (1994), for instance, insults, or "abominable terms" are used as lenses to understand the political structure and underlying identity of Windsor's middle class (274). From a more ethnographic perspective, Alderete et al. (2012) study the effect of racial insults and ethnic discrimination on the integrity of identity among indigenous youths in Argentina, and its relation to their tendency to smoke. For these researchers, the integrity of identity refers to different factors that build up one's true and unique self, and that are threatened by external discrimination. The relation between identity and insults could equally well be understood in connection to sexuality. As for gay communities, sexual orientation is a huge part of their individual and group identity. Insulting a person's sexual orientation or anything related to it would be

considered a direct threat to their identity and the group's identity. However, Murray (1979) suggests that "younger, liberationist-influenced gay men generally refrain from making insults about sexual activity and sexual identity," concentrating instead on "'tackiness', 'piss elegance' and closetry" (218). As for the sex-related grounds for insults identified by Flynn (1976), *illegitimacy* – by which he means a rupture in the social construction of legitimacy – is clearly connected to the concept of identity. As claimed in the study, "the questioning of someone's legitimacy is akin to questioning the basic sources of identity" (8-9). The link between identity and insults is therefore unquestionable.

Context and identity construct and, in turn, are constructed by the use of insults, where insults are understood as a communicative practice. According to Witteborn and Huang (2017), "analyzing and comparing communicative practices, which are always culturally situated, is essential for understanding social and political life in a particular locale" (142). Therefore, context and identity are, in turn, connected to the concept of culture, which, according to Philipsen (1992), "refers to a socially constructed and historically transmitted pattern of symbols, meaning, premises, and rules" about communicative conduct (7). Culture is a code of communication. It follows, then, that insults, as communicative practice and conduct, are characterized by a specific set of rules, norms, and premises which are highly dependent on the specific context in which they are used, and are worth analyzing to understand the social construction of the particular speech community that uses them.

Conceptual Framework

This study is grounded in the theoretical framework of the ethnography of communication, which aims to understand each particular communicative phenomenon exclusively from the natives' points of view. Initially developed by Dell Hymes in the 1960s, the ethnography of communication was formerly called the ethnography of speaking. Despite the different titles, "both expressions seem to refer to the same approach and body of work" in numerous studies (Philipsen and Couto 2005, 356). This study understands the

EoC to include both verbal and non-verbal communication. The EoC approach views "speaking as a culturally distinctive activity," and, therefore, worth analyzing (Tracy 2013, 53). It focuses on "the use of language in all its modes," meaning verbal and non-verbal forms of communication, situated "in the social life and the cultural system of particular speech communities" (Philipsen and Couto 2005, 355). The specific culture of the studied speech community must be, if not directly understood, at least acknowledged by the researcher, as "the terms for talk that reside within any one speech community are often culture-specific" (Wilkins 2009, 64). Acknowledging the importance of culture, EoC applies the SPEAKING model, devoted to the analysis of discourse understood as a series of speech acts in cultural context (Hymes 1972). It is an acronym that stands for:

- Scene and Setting, referring to time and space;

- Participants, referring to whoever is involved in the speech act;

- Ends, meaning the ultimate purpose of the act;

- Act Sequence, including form and content;

- Key, also known as the tone and seriousness;

- Instrumentalities, which refers to the style;

- Norms, related to the rules that affect the speech act; and

- Genre, commonly understood as the type of speech.

EoC underlines the importance of the cultural and situational context of a given communicative event when attempting to analyze it. In fact, as Witteborn and Huang (2017) effectively summarize, "EoC attempts to understand locally situated and culturally meaningful communicative practices through which people organize social life" (144).

Drawing from EoC, this study aims to analyze the meanings attributed by Italian young adults to the use of insults (means of speaking) in specific cultural, communicative events. In order to achieve an understanding of the

members' meanings, which are "interpretative constructions assembled and conveyed by the ethnographer" (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2011, 129), In this study, I employed symbolic interactionism as a sensitizing theoretical framework around which I organized both research and analysis (Tracy 2013). As part of its foundation, symbolic interactionism complements EoC, functioning therefore as a useful sensitizing theory in the context of this study. Symbolic interactionism, developed by George H. Mead and Hebert Blumer, "focuses on the symbolic dimensions of human communication," trying to understand "how meaning and identity are co-created through interaction" (Tracy 2013, 51).

Methods

This study aims to describe, through participants' meanings, how the use of insults as terms of address among Italian young adults constructs their group and individual identities. In this research, the process of data analysis relies on the method of thematic analysis, which aims for the identification of themes and patterns in the data. This method represents the best choice in this study, not only because it offers "a more accessible form of analysis," but also because it "works both to reflect reality and to unravel the surface of 'reality'" (Braun and Clarke 2006, 81). In order to understand the meanings that natives attribute to insults in order to construct their identities, the researcher must be able to go beyond the surface of the discourse produced by participants. Thematic analysis allows for this necessary process. In the following sections, all the applied methods to collect data are presented in detail; then, the data analysis is extensively described.

Participant Observation

Participant observation allows the researcher to gain important data through the observation of and, in certain cases, direct interaction with participants. As Tracy (2013) states, "participant observation is valuable precisely because it reveals the multi-faceted nature of the scene" (76). The few interactions that I was able to observe resulted in primary sources of examples of *in vivo* terms and native uses, which I would not have been able to observe otherwise. Mainly, these interactions were

conversations among Italians picked up on the street or observed in bars in Madrid. I did not always know the participants in these conversations, limiting the background data available on them. An important exception is represented by a participant observation session conducted with a group of four male Italian young adults, aging 21 to 24, during a night out in Madrid. This observation lasted for several hours, providing sufficient demographic and background information. Moreover, since I was an insider to the culture, I was able to provide my own insights and guide my observations in an effective way. As Tracy (2013) cautions us, an insider to a culture runs the risk of *going native* and losing track of the research purpose. During the data collection process, I did my best to keep the study's research questions in mind and to focus on trying to answer them from my participants' points of view. Another limitation that may have affected the study is the impossibility of filming the interviews conducted in order to record the exact words, voice tone, and body language expressed by the participants. Rather, for most of the interviews I recorded only the audio, and managed to write down notes only at a later time. Tracy (2013) argues that "memories can still serve as useful data" (116). Therefore, I made a conscious effort to be as accurate and thorough as possible when recording my thoughts and memories of the interactions observed.

Individual interviews

Individual interviews are an incredibly fruitful method of gaining meaningful data from a study's participants. Defined as "guided question-answer conversations," interviews allow for a mutual exchange of ideas, due to their intimate and flexible nature (Tracy 2013, 131). In fact, as Tracy (2013) exemplifies, "interviewer and interviewee are, in many ways, conversational partners" (132). The friendly atmosphere granted by interview sessions allows the researcher to acquire data that would be otherwise hard to access with different methods.

The choice of an appropriate sampling strategy is pivotal for the ultimate efficacy of this method, as it "is integral to answering the research questions" (Tracy 2013, 152). For this study, I conducted 3 individual interviews,

which lasted 20 to 30 minutes each. In order to effectively choose the appropriate participants for this study, I combined two sampling plans described by Tracy (2013): convenience sampling and typical instance sampling. I interviewed 3 Italian young adults: Stefano, male, age 24, college student; Luca, male, age 24, full-time personal trainer; and Giulia, female, age 23, college student. I conducted the interviews in Italian. I opted for unstructured interviews, which resulted in the acquisition of unexpected data because the interviewees were mostly in control of the conversation. All the individual interviews were conducted through Skype calls, due to the geographic limitation. Being a talkative couple, the participants were able to carry on naturally occurring discussions among themselves with little need for me to moderate them. Unfortunately, mediated interviews suffer a number of disadvantages, among them the presentation of "mediocre embodied and non-verbal data" (Tracy 2013, 165). However, despite these potential limitations, the data that I elicited from my participants via Skype was rich and useful to answer my research question, after I triangulated it with other data sets. I also conducted a face-to-face interview with two participants, a married young couple: Serena, female, age 30, beautician; and Marco, male, age 32, metalworker. The dynamic of the focus group, despite the limitation imposed by the limited number of participants, was more than satisfying.

Data Analysis

This study relies on thematic analysis to analyze the collected data. Thematic analysis is a widely used method "for identifying, analyzing, and reporting themes within data" (Braun and Clarke 2006, 79). After collecting data, I proceeded through the method's six phases of analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006): (i) familiarizing with the data, (ii) generating initial codes, (iii) searching for themes, (iv) reviewing themes, (v) defining and naming themes, and (vi) producing the report (87). Respecting the "recursive process" of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006, 86), the primary codes generated during the second phase have been revised multiple times, as well as the themes identified in the following phase. The primary coding process resulted in 33 initial

codes. Once repeated for the sake of clarity, the same coding process resulted in 55 different codes. The first two phases of the analysis were conducted in Italian, which was easier and less confusing. Once the coding process was brought to an end, the whole set of data was translated into English. In the end, five potential themes were identified (see table 1 in the Appendix). Each of these potential themes included multiple initial codes. For instance, the theme *depends on* included codes such as: *technical college (istituto tecnico), high school (liceo), boss, subordinates,* and *friends*. The huge disparity among the codes made it necessary to create sub-themes, which would help organize the codes into more meaningful groups (see Table 1 and Table 2 in the Appendix).

At the end of the analysis process, four main themes were identified (see Table 2 in the Appendix), concluding phase (v): 1. construction of identity through gender; 2. construction of identity depending on social context; 3. construction of identity through the light use of insults; and 4. construction of identity through the offensive use of insults. These themes, constructed through the interpretation of members' meanings, provide an answer to the study's research question. In the following sections, all the patterns are described through the use of exemplars.

Construction of Identity through Gender

Throughout the interviews, various participants underlined the connection between the use of insults and gender identity. While Flynn's study (1976) focused on insults in relation to "sexual non-conformity," "adultery," "illegitimacy," and "homosexuality" (4-9), the data collected in this study uncover another sphere of the world of insults and sexuality/gender. As recent work has argued, gender identities are not a given, but are constructed through different types of communication. As Kiesling (2001) points out, "gender should [..] be thought of as [..] a fluid, cultural construction by social actors who use language to 'do gender'" (250). A clear distinction emerges from the data between how the use of insults constructs individual identity and group identity. The use of insults at

the personal level performs, and is proper of, masculine identity. As Marco, male, explained in the focus group (and I have translated all participants' quotes from Italian to English): "I think that the use of insults is only a men thing. I mean, it's not that only the men say 'bitch' or 'asshole' or whatever. But I would expect more a man saying words like that than a woman."

Reasoning on "participants" – in the sense that Hymes (1972) uses the term in his model – the interviewee explicitly links the use of insults to the concept of gender. He establishes a division between men and women when it comes to the use of insults: insults construct an identity typical of males, namely masculinity, and while women can use insults, Marco explains that they are not expected to. Individuals characterized by a masculine identity, therefore, are the only acceptable "participants" in communication acts that involve insults. From this premise, it follows that the use of insults is a means of performing masculine identity, and accordingly, they construct it. On the contrary, feminine identity is performed through the non-use of insults. Insults can, therefore, be considered as a linguistic strategy implemented by people to create and define different identities. As Stefano, male, elaborated in his interview: "A woman must be delicate like a flower. A woman is a flower. Delicate and impeccable. Insults are the opposite of this. Who the hell would hear something like, 'Yo bitch, what's up', and be like 'She is so delicate'. Come on."

The interviewee implies that insults are not an appropriate means of speaking to construct feminine identity. On the contrary, the intrinsic characteristics of insults are oppositional to those of the fairer sex. Looking at Marco's and Stefano's comments, it seems to be the case that the use of insults constructs a masculine identity on the basis of perceived strength and confidence. Another interviewee, Serena, female, reinforces this point of view stating that "insults are typical of men. I rarely use them in conversation. It doesn't feel right." Serena reinforces Stefano's point of view, which implies that feminine identities are constructed through the non-use of insults, giving a sense of aesthetic perfection, fragility, and elegance that insults would take away. As someone with a

feminine identity, Serena rejects the use of insults, even though she acknowledges that she also uses them, although rarely. Therefore, two distinct identities constructed by the use of insults, or lack thereof, are recognized: masculine identity, where strength and confidence are communicated through the use of insults, and feminine identity, where fragility and elegance are expressed through the non-use of insults. Despite of this premise, however, some participants gave examples of women also using insults. Giulia's words during an interview illustrate this claim: "To me, insults are not connected to the gender of the person who's talking. If a guy says 'son of a bitch' it's the same as if a girl says it. Nothing changes to me. Maybe in the past people would have said that the girl was too *sboccata* (foul-mouthed), but today that's not the case anymore."

Giulia's comment illustrates a different norm that regulates the use of insults: a norm that appears to contradict the use of insults as a means to construct masculinity. Interestingly enough, Giulia said that "in the past" people would have supported Stefano's and Marco's perspective. The term *sboccata* clearly supports the past division between masculine and feminine identity, as it is used only when referring to women that inappropriately use insults. In the past, "gender performances [were] thus understood within a particular interpretive frame [..] about what kinds of interaction are typical of members with culturally relevant identities" (Kiesling 2001, 251). In this case, in the past it was believed that men had to carry out a masculine identity, and women had to carry out a feminine identity only. Gender identities were, therefore, already given.

Not only does the use of insults construct one's individual identity, but also one's individual identity contributes to determining the overall identity of the group of people in which one is interacting. These data analyses illustrate that within a specific speech community there may be multiple ways of speaking that compete with each other. As Hymes (1974) explains, a speech community is an "organization of diversity" (433), and accordingly, these contradictory norms for the use of insults are part and parcel of social life.

On one hand, a community may value gender identities in a traditional way, understanding them in a frame where men have to carry out a masculine identity and women a feminine identity only. On the other hand, a community may be more progressive, believing that men and women are no longer characterized respectively by masculine and feminine identities. The following example applies to the former case.

If a man that genuinely believes in respecting traditional gender identities is having a conversation with a woman that rejects this social and communicative construct, he would feel uncomfortable carrying on a conversation in which insults are used. In order to exemplify this meaning, I constructed a "vignette" using data that I collected and pieced together (Tracy 2013, 208). In the vignette, M is the man that follows a traditional social construction of gender identities, and F is the woman who does not. M and F are friends, and they just met by chance in the mall. After going to a party together the previous Saturday, M asks what happened after he left, as he heard bad news about something David did that night.

> M: Hi, F! How is it going? What happened Saturday by the way?

> F: Hey, M! Don't even ask. That asshole, David, ruined the party. What a fucking idiot.

> M: Is it necessary to use that kind of language? But yeah, I heard. I'm sorry about that!

> F: He deserves what he deserves.

In this communicative "scene," the man points out that the woman should not use this kind of language, clearly referring to insults. This study interprets that this is due to the conflicting way gender identities are perceived. Through the conservative masculine identity to which he subscribes, M perceives F's use of insults as a violation of the social norm that regulates interactions between masculine and feminine identities. As woman, F should not have used insults, as it is not *allowed* in the already-given feminine identity. When looking for the social norm that guides a particular speech community, one must keep in mind that "while gender is in theory infinitely fluid, in the practice of most people's lives, it is constrained by cultural models" (Kiesling 2001, 267).

Construction of Identity depending on Social Context

The data present a clear pattern for insults to be dependent on different social contexts when it comes to their use. Not only individual gender identity is constructed through the use of insults, but also other factors, in relation to insults, appears to be pivotal in the process of shaping individual identities according to participants' perceptions: age, context, level of education, and workplace environment.

Age

Despite the relatively young age of this study's participants, a pattern emerged relating to the differences in using and interpreting insults as a younger teenager and as a young adult. For the sake of clarity, I estimate that the age that differentiates young adults and teenagers is 20, while the teenage period goes from 15 to 20 years old. Participants associated these different age groups with different feelings and meanings motivating the use of insults. The young adults who were interviewed for this research hinted at the fact that a teenager's use of insults leads to, and aims at, two identity-related outcomes: feeling older and feeling more secure. As Giulia, 23, reported in her interview:

> The *giovani* (young people) between 15 and 20 years old use insults way too much, both in a light way and in an offensive way. When you are younger, the use of an insult could make you feel older and securer than just being polite and lovely. I'm not sure why, but that's the sensation that it [the use of insults] gives you.

Both the identity-related outcomes are clearly mentioned in Giulia's comment. These are not, however, final, tangible outcomes. They affect identity as sensations, abstract influences that seem to be volatile and highly situational. Youths' usage of insults to enhance their self-confidence implies that they have a strong desire for self-confirmation and imposition. In a way, this practice could aim to reduce the difference in maturity and reliability that characterizes the two age groups through teenagers' speech practices. The purpose, then, of the use of insults among younger teenagers is to feel older, more mature, and, therefore, more confident. Moreover, according to Giuia's

interpretation of the youth's speech community, the use of insults allows its "participants" to create a performative identity based on feeling more adult. Giulia does not clarify, however, what kind of identity the use of insults would construct among adults. Given the differentiation she makes between the two speech communities, it could be interpreted that adults' creative use of insults would say something different about their status and identities.

Context

From my participants' stories and opinions, it emerged that the outcomes of the use of insults is highly situational, and both their proper and improper use in certain situations constructs group identity. As Samarin (1969) wrote, quoting Hymes (1964): "it is indeed 'not the case that anyone can say anything, by any means, in any manner, to anyone else, or any occasion, and to any purpose'" (323). In particular, two meaningful social contexts emerged from the data: *kind of academic education* and *workplace*. From this analysis, it emerges that participants believe in the existence of a correlation between given identities, such as technical school student or manual worker, and the use of insults.

Academic Education

Participants underlined how through the subconscious analysis and interpretation of other people's insult-using practices, one shapes his or her own perceptions of the other people's social status. As Luca pointed out:

> I think education has a saying in this [use of insults]. I mean, not what you study, but where. For example, when you go to a high school, you don't hear as many insults. But if you go to a technical school, they use so many insults and swearwords, without even a reason. Without thinking.

The identities and social statuses of hypothetical interlocutors are shaped in the participant's mind by their speech practices, namely the recurrence of insults in their speech. Their continuous use locates the interlocutor in a lower and less educated social group ("technical school students"), while seldom and responsible use grants the interlocutor a place in a higher and more educated social group ("high school students"). "Scene and setting" seem to play a fundamental role in the participant's reasoning, influencing the "key" as well. Regardless of the distinction between these two kinds of schools, which does not pertain to this study, it is remarkable that Luca believes that two speech communities exist, and they have different norms when it comes to the use of insults. This point is supported by Serena, who went to a vocational school. She thinks that "It [use of insults] is also related to education." Again, the use of insults in interactions influences the perceived identities of all interlocutors, especially the perceived social status.

Insults in the Workplace

In the same way social statuses are actively shaped by insult-use in interactions, the perceived social importance of interlocutors is also actively constructed by the use of insults. An important premise about the "scene and setting" is given by Marco, a metalworker, which mentioned that "the use of insults depends also on the job that you have." This is echoed by Giulia, who used to work in primary schools. She said that "In the education field, no one uses insults [...] Every context has its way of being." This is already indicative of group identity. Once again, different speech communities have different speech codes, and in order to be part of those, one has to share and use them; otherwise, the group's identity would be threatened. Another pattern that emerged in this context is that of how insults shape identities in the workplace hierarchy. As Marco said: "I call my colleague 'asshole, come here!' I mean, we are used to this. It's not offensive, it's more like a nickname, but not really. However, I don't do this with everyone. I wouldn't do this for sure with my boss. But with your subordinates it's fine."

"Scene," "setting," and "key" clearly influence the way insults construct identities in this context. The hierarchy is clearly stated by the participant: boss, me, and my subordinates. The use of insults is regulated by strict "norms" in this context, and breaking them would be a direct threat to the worker's identity and the group identity. The boss can use insults, but not receive them. The subordinates cannot insult their superiors, but they can insult each other.

Therefore, one can assume that the use of insults not only shapes individual identities, but also it influences the dynamics of group identities: the unpunished use of insults is possible only among peers and subordinates, while the same communicative behavior with people in a higher position bears potentially negative consequences.

Construction of Identity through Light Use of Insults

A division between light and offensive insult use emerged almost instantaneously from the data collected. The different use of insults relates, according to my participants' interpretations, to two different ways of constructing identity. In order to proceed with the interpretative description of the data, it is fundamental to report the participants' distinction between *light* insults and *offensive* insults. Specifically, as Marco pointed out, "there are different levels of insults, and some are more delicate then others." Marco is referring to what Hymes (1972) named "key" in his model. According to the collected data, insults such as *scema* (foolish), *stupida* (stupid), and *cretino* (idiotic) are considered light insults, while *figlio di puttana* (son of a bitch) and *troia* (whore) are viewed as offensive insults. As already encountered previously, the "key" together with "scene and setting" appear to be fundamental in the understanding of the use of insults, its outcomes, and its "norms." An example that Serena provided is that she "would never say *tonta* (very dumb) to a friend of mine. I rarely use insults, but I would maybe say *scema*." The use of an insult belonging to the inappropriate level in a certain context would, in fact, threaten both the individual and group identity, as it disrupts the commonly intelligible "norm."

The light use of insults appears to be acceptable in interpersonal communication, to the extent that Marco defines it as "a habit", and Luca claims that "in a friendly manner it is more than accepted." There are, however, some rules that regulate this specific use. Marco explains this by saying: "You don't use insults with everyone. You do it with friends, or with people that at least you know more or less well. Especially if you do it jokingly, you need to have *confidenza* (to be close to someone) with that

person." This interpretation sheds light on the "key" (jokingly), the "participants" (friends), and the premises (*confidenza*) shaping the "norms" in this communicative "genre." Therefore, the use of light insults, if carried out properly, constructs a friendly group identity. In other words, friendship is performed through the light use of insults. It follows that in this realm insults do not have an intrinsically bad meaning. Among friends, the use of insults represents a validation and a consolidation of the already existing connection between the people involved. As Luca confirms, "if an insult is used jokingly by a loved one, I take it with a smile." The reaction to being addressed with an insult, therefore, is not understood as hateful communication, with which insults are widely associated, but as a term proper to the speech community that performs the overall identity. An interesting exception is pointed out by Luca, who says that "son of a bitch remains a serious insult." The other participants, however, did not mention whether this or other offensive insults are accepted within the context of light use of insults.

However, a striking contradiction within the data is to be noted. The fact that some contradictions figure among the data is not surprising or alarming. In fact, As Philipsen and Coutu (2005) point out, "many types of means and meanings can be found in a given community" (369). Therefore, contradictions are, if not a given, absolutely normal. During our interview, Marco declared at different times both that using insults does not constitute a habitual practice for him, as was mentioned, but also that their light use is "a habit." Some possible explanations for this disparity in his comments are the context of use, namely "scene and setting", the people involved in the conversation, namely "participants", i.e. friends or non-friends, and the intended meaning behind the insult, namely "end" and "instrumentalities", e.g. joke, negative judgement, defensive reaction, or friendly response.

Overall, in the context of the light use of insults, the data derived from participant observation seem to support the claim that the appropriate light use of insults is a habitual practice, and it performs a friendly group

identity. The data that follow were recorded during a night-out in a bar ("scene and setting") between five friends ("participants"). When, during that evening, a man named Giacomo realized that he forgot his tobacco at the hotel, and therefore that he would be forced to ask around for cigarettes the whole night as he does not like his friends' tobacco brands, he insulted himself. Another friend, Stefano, soon noticed, however, that a man standing close to their group of friends had the same brand of tobacco Giacomo smokes. Not being able to speak English well, Giacomo asked his friends to go and ask him for some tobacco. Elia and Stefano reacted to this request with two different forms of insults:

G: Shit, I left my kit at home. I'm such an idiot.

E: Well, take some of mine then.

G: No fucking way! That shit sucks.

S: That man smokes your same kind of tobacco. Go and ask for some.

G: (Tempted but insecure expression).

E: What now?

G: I am ashamed of my English, you know that! Why don't you ask?

E: Don't be the son of a bitch (*figlio di puttana*) like you always do. If you want it, you stand up and go ask for it. (Jokingly irritated).

S: You are such a jerk (*coglione*) when you act like this! (Laughing).

G: Whatever.

Elia used the term *son of a bitch*, while Stefano addressed Giacomo as a *jerk*. Despite these terms seeming to appear more offensive than other kinds of insults, they are undeniably implemented in a friendly environment without negative consequences to the harmony of the group. The habit of use is underlined by the fact that when Giacomo first insulted himself for the mistake he had made, no one reacted by trying to console him. The situation was, in fact, perceived as a normal one, and not a tragic or exceptional one. Moreover, the degree of friendship shared among the five friends is showed by how the insults are applied as

buffers on Giacomo's situation. The speech code of the group was not threatened by the use of these insults, as the use complied with the group's norms. Insults were, therefore, used in an appropriate way, constructing and performing a friendly group identity.

Construction of Identity through the Offensive Use of Insults

Most notably, insults are not only used in a light way, but also in an offensive way. The offensive use of insult is perceived to be radically different from a light one by the study's participants. As previously mentioned, the light use of insults helps construct relationships such as friendship, enhancing the group's identity. The offensive use of insults, on the contrary, leads to the construction and performance of an oppositional identity, in contrast with the other speaker during an interaction. Luca, for instance, gave this specific example:

This happened last week, more or less, during a soccer match. There was a face-off between me and an opponent, and he pushed me down. Then, he looked at me and said 'Stand up pussy'. I snapped back at him right away something like 'Shitty asshole, shut up that you cannot handle this anymore.'

The use of insults in this example is undoubtedly offensive. The aim, however, is not limited to offence. The use of "pussy" and "shitty asshole" seem to aim to distance one person from the other. There is nothing that associates the two men interacting. They both want to make this clear by underlying the weaknesses or negative characteristics of the others that they do not share. This way of using insults constructs, therefore, an oppositional identity. It can also be considered as a defense mechanism. This interpretation is also supported by Serena, who commented that "I use insults when I am talking about someone that did something wrong to me, like 'what a bitch'." In her words, the underlying meaning is related to creating a distance between her and the other person by insulting her. The group identity constructed through this use of insults, therefore, is a negative, oppositional, and defensive one.

Conclusion

Generally speaking, identity and communication are directly related (Littlejohn, Foss, and Oetzel 2016). Through the analysis of the data collected by giving "close attention to the terms or phrases that members regularly use" (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2011, 142), I found that this statement also holds true when identity is linked to insults. Identity is, in fact, constructed and performed through the use of insults in various ways, all of which are highly dependent on context. The members' meanings investigated during this study suggest four different ways in which identity is constructed through the use of insults. First of all, identity is built depending on gender. The interpretation of the use of insults constructs and leads to the performance of both masculine and feminine identities, which are extremely oppositional to each other. When insults are taken to be an acceptable communicative practice, a more masculine identity is shaped. In fact, those embodying masculine identities can use insults; they are almost expected to do so. On the contrary, feminine identities are shaped by the non-use of insults. This perceived identity at the individual level also constructs group identities. For instance, when a man with a masculine identity interacts with a woman that rejects feminine identity, their perspectives would be at clash. On the contrary, when two women who reject feminine identity communicate, they would not clash, enhancing the group identity. For outsiders, it is fundamental to understand the existence and the difference between these two identities in order to recognize it and respect it.

Identity is constructed depending on the social context. Three sub-themes were identified: age, education and social status, and workplace and social importance. The use of insults varies according to the age group to which a person belongs: youths of 15-20 years old or young adults aged 20-35. The data collected allowed the construction of the meaning of the young adults' perspectives of how youths use insults. According to my participants' perspectives, youths use insults to shape their individual identity towards feeling older and more secure. Participants also hinted that, through the subconscious analysis and interpretation of other people's insult-using practices, one shapes his or her own perceptions of the other people's social statuses. This was applied to the field of education, meaning that a more frequent and irresponsible use of insult shapes a lower social status. Last but not least, a relation between identity, insults, and perceived social importance emerged during the study. The use of insults, in fact, both constructs and is constructed by the hierarchy of a specific workplace. The relation between speech code norms and solid group identity is undeniable. This study tries to unveil these norms in order to provide a description of how these affect the strength and dynamic of the group's identity.

In addition, identity through the use of insults is constructed specifically through the light use of insults and offensive use of insults, which lead to oppositional outcomes. The light use of insults is a habitual and potentially harmless practice if conducted properly. It underlines closeness between individuals. Understanding the non-offensive feature of insults in an interaction is a consequence of being part of a speech community. Moreover, group identity is enhanced by this shared communicative behavior through the practice of joking. The offensive use of insults, on the contrary, can lead to the development of oppositional identities. Two people offensively insulting each other each underline negative characteristics of the other, in order to distance each person's own identity from the other oppositional one that deserves to be insulted. For an outsider to the speech community of Italian young adults, these uses and their meanings might not be self-evident. Therefore, this study provides an overview of them.

These findings are a product of ethnography and are the result of samples and data derived from participant observations and interviews. They are constructed to be representative of my participants' points of view, as the theoretical framework, EoC, requires. To enhance the dependability of the study, all the steps taken in the process of this study have been properly documented, including initial notes and coding which are not included extensively in this document. The dependability of a qualitative study is guaranteed when anybody can keep track of the steps followed by

the ethnographer and thus understand how the study was executed from beginning to end (Shenton 2004).

The study, however, suffered some limitations. The number of participants is relatively small to be able to claim that its results are generalizable. The fact that this study has been conducted in Madrid, Spain, and not in Italy definitely influenced the potential number of interviewees and direct observations and also the fact that the use of insults by Italians in Spain may be different compared to the use of insults by Italians in Italy. However, my background as an Italian and my regular visits to Italy allowed me to confirm that there were no apparent differences in the use of insults by Italians in both countries.

The study cannot be compared to any other study on the same topic, as there are none. However, future research can be conducted on similar or related topics. For instance, it would be interesting to further investigate Giulia's contradicting point of view on gender identities. In addition, a similar study conducted on youth would enrich the literature even more, as it seems like the use of insults is a communicative behavior more typical in this age group.

Appendix

Table 1 – Initial and potential themes

These themes were identified by "sorting the different codes … and collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes" (Braun and Clarke 2006, 89). Some related codes out of the 55 identified are listed as well.

Potential/Initial Themes	Related Codes
1) Insults are for men;	a. In the past;
	b. Lady;
	c. Manly.
2) Depends on;	a. Family and School;
	b. Manual job;
	c. Persons (boss, friends, subordinates, unknown people, etc.);
	d. Geographical Area.
3) Habit / Routine;	a. Frequent;
	b. Habit.
4) Use;	a. Light (nickname, joke, friendly, etc.);
	b. Offensive (to offend, reaction, not belonging, etc.).
5) Identity.	a. Young age;
	b. Regret;
	c. Meanings.

Table 2 – Final themes and sub-themes identified through the analysis.

The sub-themes listed in this table are not the only one identified in the analysis, but they are the most relevant and pivotal in understanding the value of the four main themes.

Final themes	Sub-themes
Depending on Gender	a. Masculine Identity;
Depending on Social Context	a. Age;
	b. Education;
	c. Workplace.
Through the Light Use of Insults	a. *Confidenza*.
Through the Offensive Use of Insults	a. Oppositional Identity.

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Blurred Boundaries and Strategic Surveillance: Regulating Behaviour in Bristol's Commercialised Spaces

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ABSTRACT

This article explores how models of architecture, surveillance, and ownership define commercialised spaces, and in turn dictate how these spaces are experienced – not only by their users but also by the ethnographer. I argue that the supposedly inclusive and open design of Cabot Circus in the city centre of Bristol, UK, has resulted in a privatised, impersonal and exclusionary shopping centre. Its mode of operation and regulation threatens to encroach on the adjacent publicly accessible commercial area of Broadmead, through events like the Christmas market, which blurs the boundaries between the two environments. By reflecting on the difficulties I faced as an ethnographer when attempting to conform to my expected role in the space as an active and visible participant, I suggest that power has become so deeply embedded in the contemporary shopping centre that an innovative and reflexive methodological approach is necessary to capture the true machinations of the privatisation of urban public space. By directing attention towards recent efforts to privatise law enforcement and regulate visitor behaviour in these reconfigured commercialised spaces, this research also raises more 'fundamental questions about how urban citizenship and social exclusion are defined', simultaneously exposing the 'importance of consumption... to daily urban life' (Flint, 2002: 66).

Keywords: public space, urban regeneration, privatisation, surveillance, consumption

This research critically compares two commercialised spaces in Bristol's city centre, namely the privatised Cabot Circus and the publicly accessible Broadmead. Influenced by the writings of Bauman (2000) and Foucault (1995), this article empirically explores the ways in which distinctive architectures operate alongside differing surveillance strategies to facilitate the constant maintenance of two regulated yet visually contrasting shopping environments. By focussing specifically on the dichotomy between the largely discreet surveillance present within Cabot Circus, on the one hand, and the ways in which the social and cultural authenticity of Broadmead becomes increasingly subjected to visible regulation upon the arrival of Bristol's Christmas market, on the other, it is suggested that the boundaries between the two commercialised spaces have become increasingly 'fluid, fought over and negotiated, requiring them to be continually sustained and controlled' (Phillips 2010, 279). This ultimately results in a contemporary city centre shopping district where power and regulation have become deeply embedded within the space itself (Allen 2006, 442), posing challenges for researchers attempting to conduct fieldwork in an environment that is not conducive to the immersive, interactive participation in a social context that ethnography normally involves. Drawing on my field observations, I suggest that a combination of design, location and intended purpose 'contribute to determining whether surveillance works to "open"... or to "close"' (Koskela 2000, 261) such commercialised spaces, simultaneously dictating 'our relation to the space, our relationships in the space, and importantly – our desire or ability to even use the space' (Levy and Church, 2012: 3).

This article begins with a discussion of the key theoretical debates surrounding the relationship between architectural design and human surveillance methods in the creation and usage of contemporary commercial spaces, highlighting the case study of Bristol's Cabot Circus shopping centre development. The article then turns to consider my methodology, reflecting on the influence that this distinctively impersonal commercialised space had on the observational approach that I adopted. From this, I draw upon visual observations and photographs to outline the key findings of my comparative analysis, beginning with Cabot Circus, before moving onto consider the ways in which the authenticity of Broadmead has been adversely affected by the pursuit of power, privatisation and profit.

Architecture and surveillance

Much of the sociological literature surrounding the design and usage of shopping centres has applied Foucault's (1995) notion of the panopticon in order to emphasise the relationship between architectural design and human surveillance methods. This relationship is used strategically as a way to encourage self-regulation and 'seduce shoppers into spending money' (Stillerman and Salcedo 2012, 310), thus facilitating the ongoing 'maintenance of normality among the already normal' (Koskela 2000, 253). Here, Allen (2006, 442) has suggested that 'power no longer needs to be confrontational or marked out physically to be effective'. Meanwhile, other scholars have noted that, in order to maximise visitors' consumption, architectural design continues to be widely employed in conjunction with modern surveillance methods, such as CCTV, as a means for enabling the successful 'technologization of space' (Koskela 2000, 251). Moreover, it has more recently become possible to exercise, embed and conceal the power of such mechanisms of social control within the architectural design and spatial arrangement of commercialised spaces themselves (Allen 2006, 454). This has led shopping centres to become highly disciplined and digitalised power-spaces, replicating the structure and logic of the panopticon by inducing in the prisoner, or shopper, 'a state of

conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power' (Foucault 1995, 201). Here, sociological research into modern retail developments, such as Bristol's Cabot Circus (Flint 2002; Phillips 2010), has drawn on Bauman (2000) in order to propose that modern shopping centres can therefore be conceptualised as temples of postmodern consumption. They successfully operate as spectacles that induce visitors from far and wide to consume, by manufacturing a highly artificial environment that reassures those who visit that they are surrounded only by those 'lured by the same attractions' and 'guided by the same motives' (Bauman 2000, 100).

Quasi-public spaces

Modern shopping centres may appear to offer an unrestricted and inclusive space for all members of the community to enjoy. However, some critics have refuted such suggestions, instead proposing that this is merely a superficial façade or strategic attempt to gain legitimacy (Phillips 2010), in that these ultimately highly privatised shopping spaces are often only achieved through the destruction of formerly fully public places (Koskela 2000). If they are not totally destroyed, such public spaces are fundamentally transformed, in that they often become 'more intensely surveilled; more meticulously managed; more explicitly experiential, cosmopolitan, commercial, and commodified' (Madden 2010, 187). Here, Madden's research has directed attention towards the resulting lived experience of these newly configured urban spaces, advocating that they come to exemplify 'publicity without democracy' (2010, 213), offering a seemingly open environment that is, in reality, deeply immersed in, rather than totally detached from, the wider social divides and 'larger spatial politics within which it is located' (Madden 2010, 191).

Consequently, whilst such shopping centres may be experienced as open and accessible public spaces, it has been suggested that this 'illusion of a harmonious world' (Kohn 2001, 76) is a privilege that is afforded only to a very carefully defined socio-economic 'community' who are favoured due to their apparent ability to consume and thus conform to the particular

and selective rules that govern behaviour within these spaces (Phillips 2010, 260; Stillerman and Salcedo 2012, 312). Therefore, whilst an aesthetically appealing world provides a constant though distorted distraction for the eye of the valued customer, it is those deemed to be the illegitimate users, 'flawed consumers' or undesirable 'objects out of place' (McCahill 1998; Davis 1990; White 2001 in Flint 2002, 54) who come to experience the harsh exclusionary realities of this law enforcement and spatial control, in both its explicit and more implicit forms (Layard 2010; Allen 2006). As a result of this, scholars often conclude that, rather than encouraging the development of truly open and accessible public spaces (Koskela 2000), shopping centres in fact pose a wider threat to the spontaneity of the surrounding cities and public spaces by continuing to limit freedoms (Stillerman and Salcedo 2012) and impose intentionally selective 'definitions of acceptable behaviour' (Flint 2002, 55). The construction and operation of shopping centres not only serves effectively to displace local social problems and further entrench social divisions (Madden 2010; Clement 2007), but it also heightens feelings of distrust and thus ultimately increases the possible risk of social conflict (Koskela 2000). This harsh reality is, however, largely concealed and made invisible to the eye of the visiting tourist or valued consumer, who rarely become immersed in the historical and contemporary realities of the surrounding city centres that remain outside of the walls safeguarding these temples of consumption (Bauman 2000). A case in point is the Cabot Circus shopping centre, located close to Bristol's existing inner-city shopping district.

Bristol: The Circus comes to town

Bristol is a large city in the South West of England whose prosperity is deeply rooted in the history of the slave trade. Bristol's city centre today includes a sprawling pedestrianised shopping district, comprised of national and international high street brands, express supermarkets and fast food establishments. At the turn of the century, Bristol's City Council ran a competition to 'determine which private developer would be given the contract to redevelop... [this] city centre', with two London firms, Land Securities

'Bristol Alliance' (Layard 2010, 417). After plans were approved, Bristol Alliance's £500 million 'privately financed re-development scheme' (Phillips 2010, 262) soon got under away, and groundwork began on the construction of Bristol's latest shopping destination. Located next to the existing Broadmead shopping district, and opening to visitors on September 25, 2008, Cabot Circus was the final product of this multimillion-pound redevelopment scheme. Encompassing over 100 stores and restaurants, a cinema, a hotel, offices, accommodation and a carpark within its 36 acres (BBC Bristol 2008), Cabot Circus was said to offer a 'solution' 'based on principles of open architecture' to a perceived crisis of the city centre (Phillips 2010, 278).

Such an architectural 'solution' was not, however, achieved without much local resistance. Initially due to be named Merchants' Quarter, the developers faced significant backlash from local opponents who campaigned that such a name would glorify 'connotations with the city's slave trading past' (BBC News 2007). Despite the Bristol Alliance later opting to change the name, adding the 'Circus' suffix to reflect how the shopping centre would offer an exciting destination within the city, much like how 'a circus is a pivotal place where people gather' (BBC News 2007), objections to the socially and geographically exclusionary nature of the proposed design had already begun mounting (Clement 2007). Even during the initial design phase, concerns were raised that the relatively impoverished local communities had not been properly consulted, resulting in a proposed shopping centre that would ultimately only serve as a destination for visitors and the wealthy, whilst 'literally turn [ing]... its back upon St Paul's and St Jude's', which would soon 'become new road conduits and car park overspills' (Clement 2007, 104).

Moreover, it was also feared that Cabot Circus would come to inflict damage upon other neighbouring areas, in that whilst it may be located 'in the city centre, it will not be part of it' (Phillips 2010, 278). Therefore, local scholars argued that, rather than contributing to the diversity of the city and its public spaces, the introduction of Cabot Circus would instead ultimately serve to encroach upon and divide these former public domains (Clement 2007), specifically disrupting the 'meaning and function of Quakers Friars, Broadmead, Nelson Street and Castle Park by both appropriating and excluding them' (Phillips 2010, 278). Having been deemed unsafe, unattractive and rundown spaces (Tallon 2007 in Phillips 2010), the immediate environments of Broadmead, much of which was redeveloped following World War II bombing, and Quakers Friars, a largely concealed yet deeply historical and protected site (Layard 2010), were considered to be most at risk. The future was deemed to be especially bleak for Broadmead, whose ability to 'retain some connection to the "real" experience of city life as messy and disorganised' (Phillips 2010, 278) was very much threatened by future Cabot Circus expansion. Broadmead was ultimately destined to become redefined as a wasteland of very little significance, finding itself gradually reduced to a perimeter that would exist only to house those deemed unworthy of enjoying the new affluent shopping centre (Bauman 2000).

Since this time, however, there has been a lack of research into Cabot Circus and Broadmead that has investigated these claims empirically, with a notable absence of ethnographic research into the lived experiences of these reconfigured commercialised spaces. This research project seeks to address this gap, forming the fieldwork aspect of an undergraduate sociology unit that required students to conduct ethnographic research over a period of five weeks in an urban environment in Bristol. Having selected Bristol's inner-city shopping district as my desired setting, I approached the fieldsite with an interest in the privatisation of public space and the following key research questions: How do the structural designs and intended purposes of Cabot Circus and Broadmead differ? What is the link between architecture, ownership and surveillance in these commercialised spaces? In what ways has the existing development of Cabot Circus affected how Broadmead is defined, used and experienced?

Methods

In order to address my key research questions, I developed and adopted a digital methodological approach. In response to the initial difficulties that I faced upon arriving at my fieldsite, I came to reconsider the basis of my participation and question ethnographic conventions, alternatively using my mobile phone and other digital technologies as a way to observe yet remain concealed within the distinctively impersonal and subtly regulated environment of the modern shopping centre.

Using digital methods to capture a digital space

Upon arriving at Cabot Circus for the first time in the capacity of a social researcher, I sat with a small red notebook in a restaurant on the top floor overlooking the shopping centre. It immediately became apparent that this was not somewhere to loiter or seek interaction, as people 'do not flock to these temples in order to talk and sociate' (Bauman 2000, 98). I watched attentively as customers clutched their phones in their hands and quickly made their way from one store to the next, whilst centre staff overlooked this movement, occupying themselves and listening attentively to their earpieces. Consequently, after paying the bill, I found myself attempting to mimic the behaviour of customers, establishing a repeated cycle of observing from one location for a short period before moving elsewhere to pause and 'jot notes at inconspicuous moments' (Fielding 2008, 274).

However, becoming increasingly aware of the central importance of digital technologies in Cabot Circus as I navigated my way around its various walkways, I soon found myself attempting to use digital methods of my own to capture and document the relationship between structure and surveillance within the field. Initially, this only involved using my phone as a digital notebook. However, recognising suggestions that 'the inclusion of audio or visual material… has been little more than 'eye candy' or 'background listening' to the ethnographic text' (Back 2012, 27), using my mobile phone gradually provided an innovative opportunity to use photographs to complement my own fieldnotes and illustrate my findings. By the time that I had spent ten hours at the fieldsite, my small red notebook was put away and my mobile phone was firmly clasped in my hand, serving as a medium that enabled me to document, capture and move easily between Cabot Circus and Broadmead. Approaching Broadmead with a similar research design, I collated, analysed and reflected on my digital fieldnotes and photographs throughout the fieldwork period, identifying key differences between the two commercialised spaces and any possible commonalities with existing sociological literature on shopping centres and malls. Contradictions between the written commentary on the intended design of Cabot Circus and the empirical reality of the shopping centre today formed the basis of the thematic analysis, with short repeated visits to the fieldsite providing valuable opportunities to observe evidence to support or refute emerging analytical hypotheses.

Whilst digital methods perhaps offer a largely discreet method by which to bridge the alleged gap between the presentation of culture through ethnographic writing and the 'fieldwork on which it is based (how culture is known)' (Marcus 1980 in Van Maanen 2011, 4), the use of digital methods was not totally unproblematic. Given ethical concerns that '[a]nonymity can also be compromised by the use of photographs' (BSA 2017, 6), I made an active and conscious effort to focus on capturing the architecture and surroundings of both Cabot Circus and Broadmead, rather than the people present or occupying the commercialised spaces. On a more practical level, the use of digital methods also meant that I was largely bound by the battery life of my mobile phone, whilst also feeling at a constant risk of becoming distracted by incoming messages and so missing potentially significant observations. Not only this, but my concern with the use of subtle surveillance methods within the environment of the contemporary shopping centre also led a heightened self-awareness of my role and position within Cabot Circus, leading me to spend a greater proportion of my time in Broadmead, where I felt able to stop and use my mobile phone without judgement. When I was conducting research in Cabot Circus, I feared that using my mobile phone within the fieldsite boundaries could be

perceived as an unwelcome surveillance method that may become regulated or attract unwanted attention. This, for example, made it particularly time consuming to take good quality photographs, on one occasion resulting in somebody wrongfully presuming that I was loitering and looking puzzled at my phone because I was lost and in need of directions. Experiences such as this served only to further discourage me from approaching visitors or attempting to engage with staff members who might have been able to offer potentially valuable contributions to my research project.

Becoming an active participant

As a result of this heightened self-awareness, I came also to realise the central importance 'of the positioning, visibility and performance of [my]... own embodied self' (Coffey 1999, 59) as a social researcher. My attempts to simultaneously monitor and mirror the behaviour of other visitors, who may have paused but rarely loitered, and glanced but never stared, resulted in my digital fieldnotes coming to increasingly document the ways in which I felt a pressure to somehow straddle the roles of both observer and active 'participating body' (Coffey 1999, 70) in order alleviate my own awkwardness. However, on reflection, this was perhaps not simply a feeling that materialised from my initial engagements with the fieldsite, but was instead an underlying preconception that I had already constructed when I decided to invite friends to accompany me to a restaurant in Cabot Circus. Moreover, whilst I felt comfortable loitering for extended periods in Broadmead, upon returning to Cabot Circus, I often came to rely on the consumption of food as a way to facilitate and rationalise my need to remain stationary in an area characterised by constant movement. This enabled me to feel as if I was blending in with the people surrounding me, and thus attracting less attention. As a result, these reflexive attempts to mirror the behaviour of others, or to conform to the underlying expectation that one visits Cabot Circus solely for the purposes of consumption, became an ongoing participation strategy that I utilised with relative ease throughout my research, resulting in my digital fieldnotes becoming increasingly 'scattered with implicit and explicit references to the body' (Coffey 1999, 59).

Remaining an invisible ethnographer

This ease of participation could perhaps reflect my familiarity with this particular urban fieldsite, in that unlike many other ethnographers undertaking research, I was not required to turn my hand to previously untried tasks (Okely 2012) or to build relationships in order to gain access (Perez-Y-Perez and Stanley 2011). Moreover, this ease of access and familiarity with the fieldsite also highlighted the ways in which I, as an undergraduate university student, am also 'immersed in other communities' (Crang and Cook 2007, 38) outside of the field that afford me certain statuses and privileges. As a result of this, although I felt I was actively participating, I was perhaps only partially participating, simply experiencing and replicating the dominant and largely familiar lifeworld of the consumer (Okely 2012), whilst also using digital technologies as a strategy to position myself as both 'part of the researched group and simultaneously distanced from it' (Colic-Peisker 2004, 93). However, in another sense, the extent to which it was even necessary to be visible or active in order to experience a digitally commercialised and 'totally constructed visual experience' (Mirzoeff 1998 in Rose 2012, 4) such as Cabot Circus could be brought into question. Given that I was, for example, able to digitally experience and capture the Cabot Circus Christmas lights switch on event by watching an online livestream without needing to be physically present in person, it is possible that no amount of visible, active or sustained human participation would have enabled me to fully experience these digitally mediated aspects of Cabot Circus. Instead, the impersonal nature, design, location and intended purpose of my fieldsite meant that I was ultimately bound to adopt the role of a mere observer or silent ethnographer, lost in a crowd of distracted consumers.

Cabot Circus

Through strategic architectural design, Cabot Circus initially appears to offer visitors an open and publicly accessible shopping centre. However, closer examination reveals that it is a highly privatised, mediated and digital space in which power, regulation and surveillance have been carefully concealed.

Strategic design and architecture

Figure 1: Cabot Circus roof [Photo by author]

Figure 2: Cabot Circus shop floors and walkways

As argued by Allen (2006, 443), it is now possible to control and 'stage the public character of privatised spaces,' and indeed, through its architectural design, Cabot Circus is visually presented as an open space. There are no entrance doors or barriers that one must pass in order to enter, simply metal bollards marking out where no vehicles are permitted. The city air ventilates the shopping centre, whilst the uniquely suspended floating glass roof exposes the skies overhead (see figure 1), creating 'a series of interlocking and floating forms that choreograph the streets and buildings' (Phillips 2010, 278). The intermittent sounds of sirens echo throughout the shopping

centre, but the sources are often difficult to identify, creating a feeling of disorientation. It is as if you are 'elsewhere' (Bauman 2000, 98), yet still surrounded by a moving city that you can sense but no longer visualise. Within the shopping centre, escalators and open glass walkways on each floor facilitate constant visitor flow (see figure 2), with visitors navigating familiar and predictable paths, moving as if they are 'responding to the invitations and suggestions inscribed in the design and layout' (Allen 2006, 452). Reinforcing Coffey's (1999, 75) suggestion that ethnographic research involves 'observing, interpreting and analysing the bodies and body perspectives of others' it was particularly noticeable that any closure of these regulated paths, even if only temporarily, created notable disruption within the shopping centre, forcing visitors to use their initiative and attempt to navigate their own pathways. These walkways also house the shopping centre's intentionally unconventional and uncomfortable seating arrangements, designed and positioned strategically in order to discourage loitering and so facilitate the constant visibility and surveillance of customers as they make only short and regulated pauses during their movement around the floors below (Foucault 1995, 187).

Impersonal and artificial space

As one walks around the shopping centre, it is very easy to fail to notice that one is in fact passing between different streets, which are given supposedly distinctive, meaningful and authentic personalities such as 'George White Street' and 'Brigstowe Street' (names which do not seem to predate the shopping centre, though they may reference points of local historical significance). This is because the overall brand image of Cabot Circus is highly commercialised, with only a few concealed signs of locality to 'remind… shoppers that they actually are in Bristol' (Minton 2012, xv). In contrast, capitalist markers of consumption are given centre stage in what becomes a distinctively 'postmodern spatial performance' (Shields 1992, 7), taking place within a highly artificial environment. Of crucial importance to this performative space is the central area on the ground floor (see figure 3) which, from early November, showcases an

screen attached to its front, whilst also using visual and audio displays to promote seductive and tempting products, ranging from confectionary to sports cars (Bauman 2000). Overshadowing this is a large LED advertisement screen affixed to the side of the shopping centre lifts that rotates through a silent catalogue of various brands located within Cabot Circus, successfully captivating and arguably regulating the eyes of the consumer by manufacturing a highly individualised (Bauman 2000, 97) environment, where people learn to 'not look at each other but make themselves busy' (du Gay 2004 in Cochoy 2007, 115). One advert even cleverly plays on this logic, using 'we saw you looking' as a satirical strapline to perplex viewers, whilst perhaps also subconsciously reminding them to remain fixated on the immediate commercial distractions available directly in front of them.

Figure 3: Central area on the Cabot Circus ground floor. Foreground: Christmas tree. Background: Advertisement board [Photo by author]

Whilst this central area provides a constant focal point within the commercialised space, at the time of my fieldwork Cabot Circus was elsewhere undergoing a phase of change and rebranding throughout all publicly accessible areas of the shopping centre. The largely outdated information podiums were being replaced with new sleek metallic illuminated store directories (see figure 4). These store directories would arrive tightly secured in bubble wrap, before being quickly hidden away using blacked out metal fencing. Suggesting

that visitors should come to expect a certain appearance when visiting the shopping centre, whilst also reinforcing a very particular conception of beauty, these temporary fences would then be branded with the Cabot Circus logo and slogan, alongside an apologetic message addressed to customers: *'So sorry we're not looking our best, we will be back and beautiful as soon as we can.'*

Figure 4: New store directory on the top floor of Cabot Circus [Photo by author]

By reducing the need for human interaction and directing the apologetic message directly to customers, this installation process appears to suggest not only that maintaining a certain appearance is a priority of upmost importance within Cabot Circus, but also that this appearance is maintained for a very specific demographic of possible consumers who come to be considered welcome, worthy and valued citizens in the shopping centre (Voyce 2006 in Layard 2010). Consequently, although Cabot Circus may initially appear to be an open and

thus public space, I argue that in reality it 'is in fact carefully exclusive' (Marcuse 1997, 107), in that is very clear that 'nothing must stop, distract or harass visitors... from their original intention' of consumption (Cork 2017a). In order to further facilitate this, there are also signs located around the centre detailing how any behaviours perceived to pose a potential threat to these obedient shoppers are universally prohibited within the shopping centre (Layard 2010). Those behaviours listed include smoking, dog walking or cycling. Closer examination, however, reveals that these appear to be rules that are only symbolically displayed and selectively enforced.

Symbolic control and performative surveillance

Despite being easily identifiable in their high visibility jackets, Cabot Circus' cleaning and security staff seem to perform a largely symbolic and performative role within the shopping centre. Rather than welcoming and interacting with visitors, security staff can often be found observing and overlooking the floors below from a stationary position on one of the shopping centre's glass walkways, or alternatively accompanying cleaning staff as they complete routine housekeeping tasks in a robotic manner, operating around the predictable movement of customers, but rarely engaging or communicating with them. Additionally, although one may witness others contravening the intended use of the shopping space, whether that be smoking, littering, walking a dog or riding a bicycle across the busy central area, such rule-breaking behaviour is very rarely countered by an active intervention made by the Cabot Circus staff themselves. The few exceptions to this rule witnessed during this fieldwork tended to involve youths, especially teenage boys, whose mere presence within Cabot Circus was often enough to warrant the attention and movement of security staff, who read it as potential to disrupt the rhythm of the shopping centre. The staff also appeared willing to approach individuals who sought to challenge such mechanisms of social control, using face-to-face confrontation as a precautionary measure to minimise possible disturbance of Cabot Circus' prevailing social order. However, unlike those behaviours explicitly prohibited on signage displayed

around Cabot Circus, these situations tended to involve more indirect forms of deviant behaviour, with loud, loitering or seemingly unruly large groups of teenagers the most likely demographic to find themselves in confrontation with Cabot Circus' security staff.

This selective rule enforcement reflects the way in which Cabot Circus attempts, and largely succeeds, in exercising its invisible disciplinary power (Foucault 1995, 187) in order to encourage the self-regulation of behaviour through the constant use of more discreet surveillance methods that are embedded in the 'ambient qualities of the space' (Allen 2006, 441). Staff, for example, are guided to deal only with select individuals and groups through a visible radio and earpiece, whilst their own behaviour is also tracked through internal surveillance systems. Similarly, visitors to the shopping centre are periodically reminded that '*Cabot Circus is a no smoking area*' through echoed overhead announcements, whilst remaining largely unaware that their personal mobile phones and every movements are in fact being tracked (Cork 2017a). This surveillance-based approach results in a shopping centre where the experience of the commercialised space itself becomes an 'expression of power' (Allen 2006, 441).

Broadmead

This experience quickly begins to change as one exits Cabot Circus and is immediately greeted by the noise and diversity of the neighbouring Broadmead shopping district (see figure 5). However, whilst remaining publicly accessible, the arrival of the Christmas market noticeably disrupts these realities of city life, resulting in Broadmead becoming a complex commercialised space characterised by a competition for ownership, authority and control.

The realities of city life

Unlike Cabot Circus, it is here in the seemingly unregulated outdoors that one may witness 'people, perhaps with alcohol issues, shouting from benches' or 'people with moral sensitivity issues shouting with special preaching books in their hands' (Cork 2017b). Not only this, but a walk through Broadmead is rarely without interaction, whether this be initiated by street

performers playing their musical instruments, arts and craft stalls selling their wares, or apparently homeless people who line the walkways right up to the entrances of Cabot Circus. Therefore, unlike the artificially constructed demographic of Cabot Circus, Broadmead could be said to represent the messy and plural realities of Bristol's inner-city life, encompassing many differing individuals and unregulated behaviours, and thus largely operating as 'a space in which activity detrimental to consumption and with disruptive potential' can still erupt (Phillips 2010, 268).

Figure 5: View of Broadmead and Christmas Market from Cabot Circus [Photo by author]

Blurred boundaries between public and private

However, although it is still officially public city centre land, this authentic feel of Broadmead quickly begins to change with the arrival of the Christmas market. This stretches the length of the pedestrianised shopping area, resulting in increased footfall, the displacement of street furnishings and an attempt to reinvent Broadmead as a visitor destination in its own right. Much like any city centre Christmas market, Bristol's comprises numerous wooden huts, each occupied by a different vendor selling Christmas gifts or serving traditional food, with the central circular area of Broadmead becoming an outdoor bar that serves alcohol until the early hours (see figure 5). However, unlike others, Bristol's Christmas market has recently become owned and operated by Cabot Circus, who have begun to establish a visible presence in Broadmead, which is therefore increasingly encroached upon by the rules, 'rhythm and tenor' (Bauman

2000, 98) of Cabot Circus. The many street performers, sellers and apparently homeless individuals, for example, find themselves forced to relocate, whilst consumption and those facilitating it, such as Cabot Circus security staff and market stall holders, are immediately given top priority. Here it appears that, despite attempts to separate and enclose its private and homogenised shopping centre from the messiness of Broadmead, the prioritisation of the maximisation of the profit motive has resulted in Cabot Circus ultimately colliding 'with the more heterogeneous and diverse public places outside' (Layard 2010, 429).

Competition for authority

This gradual intrusion of the surveillance strategies advocated by Cabot Circus security staff has led Broadmead to become a visually messy shopping environment, unclear in its identity, purpose, and boundaries. Whilst Cabot Circus may be characterised by a permanent state of stability and cleanliness, Broadmead appears to resist this. Similarly, whilst there may be rules that explicitly state who should be using Cabot Circus and for what purposes, this authority remains much more implicit and thus open to contestation in Broadmead. This confusion came to a head during fieldwork when Bristol City Council introduced externally employed enforcement officers to impose explicit rules and selective regulations upon Broadmead during the Christmas period. They issued fines to anyone that they saw committing 'environmental crimes, such as spitting or dropping litter, chewing gum or cigarette buts on the public street' (Bristol City Council 2017). When observing the behaviours of passers-by, these plain uniformed officers would often conceal themselves in shop doorways before stepping out into the public walkway and issuing a fine, seemingly using their authority to make a symbolic claim of ownership of this public space. In other cases, issuing such a fine may have been the result of the enforcement officers initially identifying a possible 'suspect' or 'victim' walking the streets of Broadmead, such as a person smoking or walking a dog without a lead, and then following them until their authoritative powers could be activated, for example, when a cigarette was dropped, or the dog became uncontrolled.

However, unlike the largely symbolic and unchallenged ongoing surveillance employed by Cabot Circus security staff, the active, situational and noticeably disruptive policing strategy deployed by Bristol City Council's litter enforcement officers was met with many acts of resistance within Broadmead, with individuals attempting to continue to exercise their right to use this public space in whatever way they desire. For example, backlash emerged from angry members of the public and resentful Christmas market traders, who swiftly took to social media and local newspapers to argue that such 'intimidating behaviour' made 'passers-by feel uneasy', and thus hindered possible trade during the festive period (Smith 2017).

Beyond this, although there may have initially been some potential for the contrasting modes of regulation advocated by Cabot Circus' security staff and Broadmead's enforcement officers to co-exist, it became clear that Cabot Circus' security staff themselves were also keen to assert their dominance over Bristol's city centre. They maintained a visible presence at the invisible boundary lines separating Cabot Circus from Broadmead, whilst also exercising their right to inform Bristol City Council enforcement officers, whose surveillance strategies are yet to receive similar levels of technological and architectural support (Koskela 2000), that they do not 'have the authority to issue fines on private land' (Wood 2017). This struggle for primary ownership and control over Bristol's city centre suggests that, although urban planners may seek to design architecturally distinctive and spatially separated commercialised spaces, these will inevitably come to 'intersect with other worlds, with their boundaries neither fixed nor always clear to insiders or outsiders' (Pink et al. 2016, 102). However, whilst it may be clear that Broadmead's remaining lifespan as a publicly accessible commercialised space is relatively short, it remains to be seen whether Bristol City Council will, in the face of opposition, seek to continue to reap the financial rewards (in the form of fines) of its own rival surveillance efforts, or alternatively concede to the potentially larger and more lucrative commercial opportunities offered by supporting the Bristol Alliance to deliver their plans for a redeveloped Broadmead that formally extends the boundaries of Bristol's privatised commercial spaces.

Conclusion

From this comparative analysis of Cabot Circus and Broadmead during the festive season, it can ultimately be concluded that a combination of differing structural designs and architectures on the one hand, and a blurring of two formally opposed models of surveillance and ownership on the other, has resulted in two visually distinct yet increasingly overlapping commercialised spaces. Continual and largely discreet surveillance successfully operates in Cabot Circus, with power being 'represented not through its visibility but rather through its invisibility' (Foucault 1977 in Koskela 2000, 249). However, this is not the case in Broadmead, where recent attempts to introduce visible and privatised surveillance have been met with much resistance, with objectors claiming that it poses a threat to the openness and diversity of Bristol's public spaces. Given this, it appears that whilst the developers of Cabot Circus may have originally claimed to be preserving valuable yet underused spaces, it is now evident that this has ultimately only benefitted a select community of obedient and conforming shoppers who have the luxury of being able and invited to consume within this newly privatised space (Phillips 2010, 276).

Moreover, I suggest that it is ultimately due to its own attempts to 'be both like and unlike a traditional high street and both enclosed and outside' (Phillips 2010, 278) that Cabot Circus has disrupted the complexities of Bristol's inner city and challenged the once democratised basis of public space (Madden 2010). It is also as a result of its developers' own expansion plans that Cabot Circus has found itself accused of attempting to conceal yet extend its ambient power (Allen 2006), by distorting neighbouring spaces into artificial yet seemingly authentic environments (Bauman 2000) where 'the surveillance and exclusion of particular individuals' becomes 'directly linked to facilitating the access of others' (Flint 2002, 64). This surveillance is facilitated by the disproportionate and architecturally enabled emphasis placed on the policing of 'the performance and management of the body' of

those individuals or groups branded as external to the strategically redefined 'public' that are welcomed in the highly manufactured shopping environment (Madden, 2010). Those deemed to be undesirable are ultimately excluded due to their inability to regulate their behaviour and appropriately mirror the passive bodily movements of the conforming consumer (Coffey 1999, 59). When considered alongside Bristol City Council's litter enforcement officers' recent attempts to also define the boundaries of acceptable behaviour within the once seemingly disordered and uncontrollable Broadmead shopping district, I argue that the case study of Bristol's commercialised spaces illustrates how the once clear-cut divisions between public and private inner-city spaces have become increasingly blurred, with 'subtle, but no less insidious, registers of power... [now] increasingly part of the urban fabric' (Allen 2006, 454).

It is also worth reflecting on the influence that these surveillance methods had upon my role and subsequent behaviour in the field. By experiencing feelings of being both a powerful yet somewhat vulnerable researcher in a relatively familiar contemporary urban fieldsite, I was exposed to the ways in which the 'image of the heroic ethnographer confronting an alien culture is now untenable and fails to reflect much of what ethnographers do' (Coffey 1999, 22). By rejecting the traditional importance assigned to interviews 'as the prime technology for generating 'data'' (Back 2012, 27) and alternatively recognising the plurality of possible ethnographic styles and representations, I sought to consider in this fieldwork how empirical and sociological knowledge can be developed through the use of observations, senses and 'a relatively artistic, improvised, and situated model of social research' (Rhys-Taylor 2013, 393). In addition to this, rather than allowing an absence of participants' voices to necessarily hinder my fieldwork, I was able to alternatively opt to make my own observations of the structure, power and internal voice of the shopping environment itself the central focus of my fieldwork. The largely anonymous nature of such commercialised spaces meant that a heightened awareness of my own internal feelings came to form the basis of my participation. To a degree, it may have appeared that I was simply uncomfortably loitering in a shopping centre, and this was in fact largely true. However, it was only through an ongoing reflexive awareness of my own positioning in this space (Berg and Lune 2014) that this feeling of uncomfortableness became something that I learnt to question and fundamentally reconsider.

Acknowledgements

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