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Precarious leisure: (re)imagining youth, transitions and temporality

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ABSTRACT

The precarity of young people's transitions to work has been a longstanding focus in youth studies. As Furlong and others have demonstrated, processes of social, political and economic restructuring have led to a pronounced instability for young people entering the labour market. While the notion of labour market precarity has gained attention, the 'contamination' of precarity into other spheres of life such as leisure has been less developed. This article seeks to extend these debates through interrogation of the concept of 'leisure precarity'. Drawing on a qualitative study of youth leisure in Glasgow, it argues that temporal anxieties have reframed young people's experiences and understandings of leisure such that young people have come to fear 'empty' or unproductive time. The pressures of juggling work and study, or looking for work, meant that most participants in our research had limited time free for leisure, and temporal rhythms became fragmented between past, present and future. The paper argues that these multiple and contradictory leisure dispositions reveal new forms of individualisation and uncertainty, as well as traditional patterns of inequality, thereby bringing youth transitions into dialogue with the study of precarity in the twenty-first century.

Introduction

Andy Furlong's contribution to the field of youth studies is wide-ranging, but derives primarily from his empirical work on the youth labour market, mass higher education, and changing patterns and perceptions of youth transitions (c.f. Forsyth and Furlong 2003a, 2003b; Furlong 1992, 2009; Furlong and Cartmel 2004, 2005, 2009a, 2009b; Furlong et al. 2003, 2016). With Fred Cartmel in the classic text, *Young People and Social Change* (1997, 2007) he charted key changes and continuities in processes of social reproduction among young people, emphasising the continuing impact of class and other social divisions, alongside contemporary processes of individualisation and risk which were fundamentally changing the ways in which young people made sense of their increasingly

complex and protracted transitions from school to work. His most recent work focused on neoliberal changes to youth labour market conditions, specifically the rise of various forms of insecure, flexible, and contingent employment (Furlong 2015; Furlong et al. 2016). This latest scholarship demonstrated that, whilst precarious conditions extend beyond working-class young people to include university graduates, most precarious work is concentrated amongst younger and less-educated workers. Taken together, these contributions constitute a remarkable legacy and resource for scholars, forming a critical foundation upon which to build an understanding of the contemporary dynamics of youth.

While Furlong's primary focus was on issues of youth employment, unemployment and education, he demonstrated an abiding interest in the totality of young people's lives and lifestyles. Throughout his wide and varied publishing career, the issue of youth leisure surfaced frequently, with an emphasis on the importance of understanding differentiated patterns of participation (c.f. Furlong, Campbell, and Roberts 1990). In *Young People and Social Change*, youth leisure was presented as an exemplar of the 'epistemological fallacy' of late modernity, under which long-standing social divisions become increasingly obscured via a consumerist ideology of choice (Furlong and Cartmel 2007). These divisions have intensified in the context of fractured working lives. As other researchers have noted, labour market precarity not only impacts on young people's experience of work but 'contaminates' other spheres of their lives (Carmo, Cantante, and de Almeida Alves 2014), making it difficult to plan for all but the near term (Leccardi 2005, 2012). In particular, non-standard work schedules and irregular hours impact on young people's ability to coordinate shared time with significant others, often with negative effects on the sustainability of relationships (Whillans 2014; Woodman 2011, 2012, 2013). As 'young people find it difficult to synchronise their lives with those of their friends and relatives' (Furlong 2015, 5–6), leisure becomes yet another precarious arena of social life to be managed.

In this paper, we build on these foundations to introduce the notion of 'leisure precarity' as a heuristic tool for investigating the overlapping fragmentations and temporal anxieties that organise young people's 'free' time. Drawing on a qualitative study in the East End of Glasgow, we argue that precarious working conditions have impacted on the temporal structures of young people's everyday lives, with the result of a fragmentation of past, present and future. Across participants' accounts, there were three prevalent responses to temporal anxiety: a past-orientated approach, involving recourse to traditional leisure practices as a source of collective identity; a present-orientated approach to leisure, focusing on immediate pleasure, relaxation, release and escape; and, finally, a future-orientated approach, where leisure activities were approached more purposively, as means to secure future wellbeing. In most cases individual participants expressed a mixture of temporal leisure orientations, although some groups of participants were more weighted more towards one than others. The paper argues that these multiple and contradictory leisure dispositions reveal new forms of individualisation and uncertainty, as well as traditional patterns of inequality, bringing hallmark debates in the field of youth transitions into dialogue with the study of youth precarity in the twenty-first century.

Youth precarity, temporality and leisure

The concept of precarity has become a byword for labour market insecurity in the twenty-first century. Neoliberal deregulation of labour markets has led to a rise in short-term, part-

time and unstable jobs across Europe – with employment contracts that do not guarantee a minimum number of hours becoming increasingly common (Standing 2011). This shift has disproportionately impacted women, young workers and individuals living in deprived communities (MacDonald and Marsh 2005; ONS 2018). For some, the flexibility of such work might be considered an advantage, for example, university students who combine shift-based work with their studies and use casual jobs as a 'stepping stone' to more stable forms of employment (Furlong and Cartmel 2007). For others, however, it becomes a trap, ensnaring them in a liminal 'twilight zone', neither fully in or fully out of the job market, with little control over their time, their income or their future life trajectory (Standing 2011).

As Furlong and colleagues (2003, 2016) have demonstrated, for young adults living in deprived communities the predominant experience is often one of 'churning' between low-paid, insecure 'poor work', poor quality training, and periods of unemployment (see also: Johnston et al. 2000; MacDonald and Marsh 2005; Shildrick et al. 2012). While these forms of job insecurity are not new (Furlong 2016), the consequences are of a state of temporal flux that colonises both the present and the future. As Hardt and Negri note, it imposes 'a new regime of time, with respect to both the working day and the working career … destroying the division between work time and nonwork time, requiring workers not to work all the time but to be constantly available for work' (Hardt and Negri 2009, 146). Furthermore, 'workers are forced to move among multiple jobs, both over the course of a working career and in the course of a working day' (Hardt and Negri 2009). Within this context, mastery over time becomes central to the way in which people perform, and hence constitute, their identities (Fullagar and Brown 2003; Wacjman 2015).

As more young people move into further and higher education, combining work with study, everyday schedules have become increasingly variable and individual (Forsyth and Furlong 2003a, 2003b; Furlong and Cartmel 2009a, 2009b), with significant repercussions in terms of time available for leisure. Woodman (2011, 2012, 2013) has published widely on the challenges that young Australians face in terms of interpersonal synchronisation with friends and significant others in the context of post-school study and non-standard work patterns. Participants in his longitudinal study reported a lack of control over their study and employment hours and, as a result, a lack of regular, shared 'free time' to spend together with the same group of people. Finding time for collective cultural practices, such as playing a team sport or going to a gig, were said to involve significant planning and co-ordination (see also Whillans 2014). Whilst communicative technologies such as mobile phones and social media platforms such as Facebook or WhatsApp facilitate scheduling and asynchronous sociality amongst young people, a range of research indicates that they do not regard online networks as an adequate alternative to physical, synchronous presence (c.f. boyd 2014; Robards and Bennett 2011). Where quantity of time together is in short supply, young people may seek out shared experiences that are more intense or out of the ordinary, for example 'drinking and partying' or engaging in physical activities, including violence. These experiences, Woodman (2013, 426) argues, afford 'a qualitatively different sense of time' and in doing so offer young people a sense of release and escape.

Where leisure was once conceived as the antidote to work, the balance has reversed, with work viewed instrumentally as a way of attaining funds for leisure (Winlow and

Hall 2006). As Rojek notes, 'most workers relate to paid labour as the means to finance leisure activities rather than the means to forge self-worth, distinction and the pursuit of power' (Rojek 2005, 315). When considering leisure as 'free time', then, we must bear in mind that concepts of 'freedom' and 'choice' are 'qualities of citizenship that are enmeshed with complex codes and representations that render them as attractive and desired characteristics in the conduct of life' (Rojek 2010, 19). As Bauman (1998, 24–29) notes, neoliberal consumer societies are characterised by the 'absence of routine and the state of constant choice', where 'identities just like consumer goods are to be appropriated and possessed'. Individuals must therefore 'accumulate, monitor and refine considerable emotional intelligence and expend significant emotional labour' in constructing themselves as reflexive, enterprising choice-makers (Rojek 2010, 19). This mode of life has little to do with real choice or real freedom. So-called 'free time' becomes suffused with a sense of anxiety, as individuals are responsibilized to adopt a more practical and instrumental orientation to their leisure pursuits (Frayne 2015).

Drawing upon focus group and interview data from a study of youth leisure in Glasgow, Scotland, the remainder of this article considers how conditions of leisure precarity, alongside contrasting temporalities of youth transitions, play a powerful role in shaping young people's experiences and understandings of leisure. Leisure offered a potential 'time out' from the pressures of academic study, the demands of juggling work and study, or the boredom and frustrations associated with looking for work. However, most participants characterised their present life stage as a period in which they had limited 'free time' from the obligations of work, often resulting in a merging of work and leisure – e.g. through participation in 'CV-building' activities geared towards future employability.

(Re)imagining youth in Glasgow's east end

The research reported here was undertaken as part of a wider, comparative study of youth leisure in Glasgow and Hong Kong. Adopting a qualitative case study approach, the *(Re)Imagining Youth* project sought to explore the leisure values, attitudes and habits of young people in these two geographically disparate cities in order to interrogate contemporary debates relating to youth, globalisation and social change (Fraser et al. 2017). Andy Furlong was an enthusiastic supporter of the project, initially commenting on the research proposal and then assisting in an advisory capacity on the research steering group.

The data presented here is drawn from the Glasgow fieldsite, Dennistoun, a residential neighbourhood located in the East End of the city. Typical of many post-industrial areas in the UK, the area is known largely for its high rates of poverty and unemployment, poor health and high mortality, and is often stigmatised as a breeding ground for welfare dependency and violent gang culture (Fraser 2015; Gray and Mooney 2011; Mooney, McCall, and Paton 2015). Much of the district falls within the 15% 'most deprived' data zones in Scotland (Scottish Government 2012), containing high levels of vacant or derelict land and deteriorating social housing (Clark and Kearns 2013). Dennistoun itself, however, is more socioeconomically mixed, incorporating pockets of severe deprivation (Scottish Government 2012), high levels of child poverty (HMRC 2018) and young people not in education, employment or training (Scottish Government 2012) alongside a growing population of middle-class students and artists, attracted to the relatively affordable housing market and proximity to Glasgow city centre (Batchelor et al. 2017).

Data collection in Dennistoun took place over 21 months, from October 2013 to June 2015, and included: targeted ethnographic observations, interviews with local community representatives, focus groups and interviews with young people, and an online survey of young people. The empirical material presented in this chapter is drawn from eight focus groups with 42 young people and 22 interviews with 23 young people,[1] the majority of which were aged between 16 and 25 years. Young people were accessed via local youth organisations, schools and colleges, as well as via employers and employment agencies, criminal justice agencies and social work. These access points were chosen to try to ensure coverage and diversity across key variables, including age, gender and work/study status. Whilst the resultant sample came from a variety of social and economic backgrounds, the majority could broadly be described as 'working class'. Other key characteristics of the focus group and the interview samples are indicated in Tables 1 and 2, below.

Eighteen of the young people in the focus group sample were secondary school students, five were attending college, eleven were working and eight were unemployed.

In the interview sample ($n = 23$), one participant was still at school, nine were attending college, six were at university, four were in employment (all on fixed-term contracts) and three were currently looking for work.

Whilst, as a group, our sample do not represent the most socially deprived or excluded young people, insofar as a majority were engaged in some form of education or employment, their lives were constrained in various ways by their precarious labour market position. Glasgow currently has the highest rate of youth unemployment in Scotland, and one of the highest figures in the UK for young people 'not in employment, education or training' in the UK (Hudson, Liddell, and Nicol 2012). Yet unemployment is not the only – or indeed the main – problem that young people in Glasgow face. The shift to a service-based economy has been accompanied by a decline in full-time work (Cumbers, Helms, and Keenan 2009) and many of our participants were employed via part-time and/or zero-hours contracts. Difficulties brought on by unemployment and underemployment were a prominent theme in our discussions, as were difficulties of combining full-time

Table 1. Focus group sample ($N = 42$).

	Age				
	15 and under	16–19	20–25	26 and over	Total
Female	4	9	1	–	14
	9.5%	21.4%	2.4%		33.3%
Male	2	18	7	1	28
	4.8%	42.9%	16.7%	2.4%	66.7%
Total	6	27	8	1	42
	14.3%	64.3%	19.0%	2.4%	100.0%

Table 2. Interview sample ($N = 23$).

	Age				
	15 and under	16–19	20–25	26 and over	Total
Female	–	6 (26.1%)	5 (21.7%)	1 (4.3%)	12 (52.2%)
Male	–	4 (17.4%)	6 (26.1%)	1 (4.3%)	11 (47.8%)
Total	–	10 (43.5%)	11 (47.8%)	2 (8.7%)	23 (100%)

study with part-time work. These patterns had clear consequences for young people's leisure, both in terms of financial constraints, but also in terms of temporal (and spatial) constraints. For some participants, 'free time' was viewed as something of a curse – spent in a constant round of job centre appointments and searches for work. For others, the difficulty was lack of 'free' time, due to combination of coursework commitments, antisocial hours, long commutes to work or university, and the blurring boundaries between work and leisure.

Insecurity, desynchronicity and leisure precarity

Consistent with the literature on job insecurity, a majority of participants had experienced irregular working patterns and lack of control over educational timetables, job centre appointments or mandated training. All of the university students combined full-time education with part-time employment, usually in the service sector, as did two thirds of the college students. All of the employed young people worked in entry-level, low-paid, insecure jobs, despite having completed college diplomas or university degrees. Two-thirds of the young people currently looking for work were college or university graduates. As a result, participants commonly characterised their present stage of life as a period in which they had limited 'free time' for leisure. For example, secondary school pupil Clair reported that she didn't allow herself any 'time off' during term, due to the demands of studying, and that this caused her 'a lot of stress'. Young people on short-term and casual contracts also characterised their leisure experiences as marred by anxieties and insecurities. As atypical worker Pat explained:

> I've become used to this very flexible working life. I can work at night if I want to, spend my days doing whatever I like … But the downside is that you are always looking for more work, so anytime you've got free time it's not time you can relax. It's like, 'This isn't tenable', so you don't end up enjoying it.

Likewise, Oliver said: 'My leisure time right now is not proper leisure time because I'm sitting worrying about deadlines. Sometimes I feel pushed even to play football for an hour'. For Oliver it was not actual lack of time that provided a barrier to leisure – technically he could spend one hour a week playing football – but rather it was the *sense* that he had other things hanging over him and that he *should* be using his time 'productively', 'getting stuff done'. This implies a concern about 'wasting time', that was common across the sample. It also reflects a common understanding of leisure as time free from constraints, including concerns about essay deadlines, or finding a job. In Oliver's words, 'Leisure time, in the purest sense of the word, is time when I don't have to worry, about anything'.

 Young people's activities were also constrained by temporal desynchronisation, as Rebecca explained: 'when you do have the time, it's hard to find someone else that has the same time as you'. Consistent with other studies (c.f. Woodman 2013; Whillans 2014), participants put considerable emphasis on the importance of shared leisure activities, but found that their irregular and antisocial work patterns made the scheduling of such activities difficult:

> [When I worked in the bakery, in the summer holidays] We only got our shifts like a week in advance, not even that sometimes, sometimes a weekend in advance. I used to start work from half six every day until two o'clock, sometimes six o' clock. Some weeks I'd only get a

couple of shifts, like 16 hours. Other weeks I'd get like up to 30. The thing is, I always knew that I would never be working after six o'clock each night. I would always have after six o'clock, so if I wanted to go out with anyone or if I was meeting anyone it would be after that. [Since I started uni and got a job working in the pub], I've been getting home at like 12 at night and I've been getting up at like, you know, nine in the morning. So it is hard to find time to sort of arrange things. (Rebecca)

As indicated in the excerpt, the overall impression given was that, once they had left school, most participants found it difficult to schedule regular periods of time together with friends, especially during university or college term-time. Those who did maintain regular face-to-face contact said that they had to be proactive about doing so, but even then they tended to see friends individually rather than as a group.

Whilst the young people in our study varied in terms of their knowledge and understanding of the various economic, political, and cultural shifts affecting their everyday experience, they generally had a keen sense of the current labour market conditions and, in line with other contemporary studies of youth, expressed feelings of 'temporal anxiety' (Leccardi 2012) or precarity (Woodman 2011). For those still in education, time was regarded as a finite resource, whereas for those in the labour market (both jobseekers and precarious workers) it was generally considered a burden. As we shall see below, both groups tended to justify their leisure activities as performing some sort of productive function, whether this is reducing stress or planning for the future.

Reaching for the past

In the context of these temporal anxieties, young people's narratives about leisure were often marked by a focus on the past. As in previous research, young people displayed a strong identification with the local area, often as a result of close-knit family connections. When asked to describe the area of Dennistoun in which he grew up, for example, Peter replied, 'It was really close-knit, because everybody's been there for like a number of years, they all knew each other'. Likewise, Diane commented that 'Everyone knows everyone […] When we were growing up all my cousins were there and that was all my pals. I didn't need any pals because I had my cousins'. A more recent resident in Dennistoun, Chloe, linked this strong sense of collective identity to the cultural heritage of the area: 'More than anywhere else I've lived, there's more of a sense of community. Everyone knows each other and everyone supports each other […] There is a lot of history and people are proud to be from here'.

According to Furlong and Cartmel (2007, 60), one of the features of late modernity is the 'disembedding' or 'de-centring' of identities, a process which 'creates the preconditions for an epistemological fallacy through the decoupling of subjectivity from its traditional grounding in economic life'. In this context, it is well established that leisure plays an important role in identity formation, not only of people but of places (Pain et al. 2014). As discussed in the methods section above, the East End of Glasgow is often popularly (and politically) characterised as a place marred by territorial violence and indeed this was a theme raised repeatedly by participants, who often opened their discussions of youth leisure in the local community by reference to incidents of gang fighting and knife crime. In response to a question about what activities there were, locally, for young people to do when he was growing up, Pedro said: 'It was just like, gangs … just,

fighting … it was like, whatever area you were fae … it was just gangs everywhere … hundreds of wee boys standing throwing bricks'. All of the older participants who had lived in the East End as teenagers identified 'gangs' as having been a problem at their school, and some recounted stories of serious incidents of 'gang-related' violence in the local area, but only a few young people had witnessed these directly. Mhairi, for example, recounted an incident from school where a boy from a neighbouring area was stabbed in the canteen and Pedro, who had himself been convicted of gang-related violence, described an incident where he had been jumped by a rival group of youths carrying a machete. Most of these participants regarded territorial violence as a 'normal' and enduring feature of life in the East End of the city and as such, it formed an important part of how participants understood the identity of the area – and therefore themselves.

The sharing of stories about gang activities played an important role here, both within and across generations. As Mhairi noted, 'People would always talk about it in school. Historical fights and stuff. And stuff that happened at the weekend, people would tell stories, and stuff'. Many of our participants also drew attention to the intergenerational aspect of gang identification, again highlighting the centrality of storytelling as a means of passing down a sense of shared history and thus identity. Peter's account is indicative here:

> I've never once took an interest in the whole top end and bottom end [gang territories] rubbish. Like, even growing up in school, that's what you got, a few of them just because of what they've heard off their relatives and whatever else, and they kinda carry it on […] Just, just over, over territory, it's- It's crazy! Absolutely crazy. There's been a few incidents like that. Just because o' a few streets, and because o' the older generation started it through nothing, and it's just been passed down and passed down. (Peter)

This sense of tradition being handed down through the generations is discussed by Fraser, in his recent ethnography (2015, 204–205): 'For certain groups of boys and young men growing up in Glasgow – bored, with limited leisure opportunities, in search of identity and transgressive activity – gang identity is learned … Like a hand-me-down'. What is notable about Peter's account is that he is at pains to distinguish himself from those 'other' young people who get involved with gangs and whom he regards as 'stuck in the past'. This indicates the role that gang identities and activities play in the lives of all young people growing up in the area, regardless of personal involvement or identification.

Another key leisure site in which the cultural heritage of the area is re-enacted (and reconfigured) is football fandom. The East End of Glasgow is well known for its historical rivalry between two teams (Celtic and Rangers) and football remains deeply embedded in the daily lives of participants. It was the most frequently cited leisure activity across the sample – especially if one considers its multiple forms, i.e. including playing football as part of an organised team, playing 'five-a-side' and/or recreational football, attending football matches as a spectator, watching football on television, or playing football on a computer games console:

> Ma Papa, he used to play football, do you know what I mean, so. He played *everywhere*. And it's like, fae ma Papa taking me up to the park, to ma Dad, to ma big brother, do you know what mean, so it was just like fitball every day for me. Now I'm older, I'm playing football computer games, football on the laptop, football manager games. Once a week, Monday, we play fives. When Celtic are playing, I'm going to Parkhead; when they're playing away, wherever. It could be Dundee, do you know what I mean? […] At the weekends you're looking forward to going

out with your mates. Whether that's going to the pub watching football, or going to the football, it's- I look forward to going wi' ma mates. (Allan)

Again, this passion for football was often explicitly linked to family ties and connections of place, carrying prized memories of embodied shared experience and celebrated historical identities.

Living in the moment

The pleasure of 'losing yourself in the moment' was also prominent in our participants' narratives, in keeping with their conceptualisation of 'pure' leisure as time free from worry, and tended to be associated with embodied activities, including sports and exercise, but was also discussed in relation to mediated activities, such as computer gaming, browsing the internet or watching films on Netflix. The most oft-cited experience, however, was drunken sociality. All of our participants identified alcohol consumption as a central part of youthful socialising. Amongst the younger, school-aged participants (aged 16–17 years), drinking was described as a means of counteracting boredom, a way 'to pass the time' when hanging out with friends, either in public spaces or private homes. Older participants (especially those aged 21 and over) were more likely to emphasise 'the social aspect' of drinking, referring to nights out in pubs and clubs as their prime opportunity to 'catch up' and spend 'shared time' with their friendship group. Drinking to get drunk, however, was prominent across the age range and those who did drink tended to characterise themselves as 'binge drinkers'. For example, as Ross remarked 'I don't drink through the week and I don't tend to drink in the house … but when I go out- Like, me and my mates are all very similar in that we don't drink much, but when we drink we really drink'. This pattern of heavy episodic drinking was seen as central to youth peer group identity – for instance, Joe described it as 'part of student life' – and could make socialising difficult for those young people who did not drink, or who did not drink to drunkenness. The significance of shared experiences of intoxication was particularly apparent in focus group discussions, where young people engaged in high-spirited banter with one another about past drunken exploits, in doing so affirming their shared history and shared identity.

Beyond 'losing yourself in the moment', the pleasures of intoxication were also described as a way of 'forgetting your worries'. Peter, for example, talked about alcohol relieving the stress and anxiety in his life and referred to getting drunk as 'a release'. As Catriona explained, 'it gives your brain a rest. Like, obviously, when I've got the wean and college it's just constant but when you go out you can just relax and have a laugh'. Amongst the drinkers, a good night out was commonly characterised by 'drunken antics' or 'mayhem', where the emphasis was on fun, novelty, and playfulness. In Stuart's words:

> It's got to be kind of unexpected. It's just like a chance thing. Something's going to happen, whatever that may be. […] It's just that kind of really strange childlike thing that it brings up in you, that kind of hyperness- Aye, for me it's just being really stupid and childlike and everything being unexpected, that's a good night out for me. […] It's like a pure in the moment thing, and just time seems to just fly away from you.

These excerpts highlight the centrality of time to the experience of drunkenness. Drinking and drunkenness are ways to share time, to stop time, to subvert time, and to allow time to

be experienced 'in the moment'. As such, they resonate with contemporary discussions of young people's risk-seeking behaviour being in part a response to the uncertainties and risks in late modern society (Hayward and Hobbs 2007). As the literature on precarity emphasises, uncertainty foreshortens the temporal horizons in which the subject can act. Lack of control over time contributes to what Standing (2014, 23) refers to as the 'pre-caritized mind', 'a feeling of having too much to do at almost all times … leaving people fatigued, stressed, frustrated and incapable of coherent action'. The present becomes the temporal mode of preoccupation, 'in part because just getting by demands all one's energies but also because a sometime/sometime else has been shut off' (Allison 2016).

Whilst participants' desire for 'determined drunkenness' (Measham and Brain 2005; Measham 2008) can be read as means of self-expression and self-actualisation, and sociality and solidarity, it would be disingenuous to present their drinking practices as an example of agentic freedom or transgressive liminality. For one, their attempts to rid themselves from the pressures of time through intoxication tended to be conducted within the temporal confines of the 'night out' and the commercial context of the night-time economy. In other words, participants engaged in what Measham (2004) refers to as 'a controlled loss of control', tailoring their experiences of excessive alcohol consumption to fit within particular constraints. For example, a number of the participants mentioned 'pre-drinking' – drinking at home prior to going out – in order to achieve the desired level of intoxication without having to spend too much money on expensive drinks at commercial venues. For example, Ross told us that 'people always go for pre-drinks now so you're going out drunk, that's quite a popular thing to do. I do it myself, we go to someone's house and drink before we go out'. Beyond the price disparities between alcohol sold in supermarkets and city centre pubs and clubs, motivations for pre-drinking included: getting the chance to catch-up with friends in a quieter, more intimate environment; loosening up before going out; and extending the night out. As Mhairi explained, 'It's cheaper to drink in the house. And you can talk and stuff, and just relax more'. When asked to clarify how drunk she and her friends would get at home, before heading out to a club, she replied 'Quite drunk, but not too drunk. If you're too drunk, they won't let you in, so you have to be careful of that'. Participants also exhibited a degree of organisation in the ways in which they planned out their drinks once they were in a pub or club. Stuart's narrative is insightful in this respect:

> I went to the West End last week and it was pure shoestring budget stuff. It was still a good night, but it was like, actually going down to the last 20 pounds in my bank account and it was like Mission Impossible, burning the fuse […] It's like, you know, that whole kind of 30 chews to one bite? So, like, if you're trying to tell your brain that you are full up, you'll just chew it and chew it and chew it. And it's like that when you're drinking. That's what it was like that night, we were planning our drinks out, like 'At quarter to, we'll get … and then like at this time … and then this time … '.

Whilst all of these excerpts illustrate creativity on the part of participants, in their efforts to overcome financial constraints, they also emphasise the commercial context of the night-time economy. As Chatterton and Hollands (2003, 8) note, 'wider processes of capital accumulation and restructuring, especially through the globalisation and corporatisation of the cultural industries, enduring social inequalities, and the changing role of the state, are all extremely influential in shaping modern-day night-life experiences'.

Significant consumption divides exist amongst young people (Furlong and Cartmel 1997), and were apparent within our sample – for example between those in higher education and those who were un(der)employed. Also apparent were examples of young people's exclusion from commercially-driven leisure spaces – especially city-center pubs, clubs, and shopping centres (see also: Hayward and Yar 2006; Nayak 2006) – contributing to an apparent increase in home-based and online leisure.

Bringing the future into play

The final orientation we identified conceptualised leisure as a means of developing the knowledge, skills and experience to be successful in a precarious labour market. Mhairi, for example, was involved in a range of voluntary activities, including helping out once a week at a local Rainbows group and membership of Community Council. Whilst she was unsure as to whether these activities were strictly 'leisurely', she included them in her discussion because of the element of 'choice' involved in participation. When asked whether she enjoyed these activities, however, she said that she didn't, because they 'were hard work. And you have to put a lot of time into it, even when you don't want to […] To be honest, it's just to get more stuff on my CV, so that when I leave uni, I'll have more of a chance to do something that I want'. Certain pursuits were seen as more CV-enhancing the others. Alongside volunteering, competitive sports and cultural activities were thought to 'look good' – but these were acknowledged to be more accessible to certain groups of young people than others. Within our predominantly working-class sample, they key distinction that emerged was between: (i) school and university students, and (ii) other groups of young people.

School and university students were also much more likely to refer to 'CV building' skills than other groups, perhaps with the exception of young people who were unemployed, reflecting the emphasis placed upon personal development planning in secondary and university education (and employability training schemes). Relatively few of our school- and university-based participants expressed well-developed career ideas or identities, however – and therefore the emphasis was on generic employability skills as opposed to specific professional competencies. As Mhairi noted, 'I don't really think I want to work with children. I don't know why I picked that. It's just, like, good experience. Leadership, and stuff. I think would be good on my CV'. Likewise, Oliver, who was undertaking an internship at his university, conducting a piece of social research, emphasised that he didn't want to go on to do that as a career, but rather had done it 'for the experience' and to 'look good' on his CV. Distinguishing his recent travels from the previous holidays he had gone on with his parents, he emphasised the 'developmental' and experiential aspect of the trip: 'I thought I might as well get out and do something, see a bit of the world, see something new, so I went to Spain for four weeks and worked on a farm and lived with a family there. It was a great experience. I did that myself. Then I went to Russia for a week with a friend'. Orientated towards the future, this group of participants generally had high cultural capital and recognised the skills developed through their leisure activities. However, they were also the group most likely to complain about lack of 'free' time and express anxiety about what they were going to do after leaving education.

In general, the college students within our sample had a more developed sense of career identity, if not career trajectory, thanks in large part to the vocational nature of most of their courses. Within this group, a clear distinction emerged between those following more traditional occupational routes, for example in construction or childcare, and those pursuing studies in new industries, including digital media or computer games design. Those in the former category made a sharp distinction between work and leisure, often living for the weekend in the manner described by Winlow and Hall (2006). For students in the latter category, the relationship between work and leisure was much more blurred, often because they were 'following their passion', or in Joe's words trying to 'make a job out of what I enjoy'. The future played more of a prominent role in these young people's narratives, but their plans tended to be relatively short-term. For example, Joe (who was studying design) said 'I'm just trying to get through my college course, upgrade my art skills so I can finally do what I want to do'. When asked about his plans after college, i.e. how he was going to secure a job in his chosen field, Joe repeated 'Well, my plan is upgrade my art skills'. Another participant, Stuart, enjoyed taking photographs as a leisure activity, making short films, as well as writing and illustrating his own comic books – all of which he shared on various social media platforms. Like the young people observed by Lange and Ito (2010, 288), he saw his creative production as a means to 'improve technical skills, gain visibility and reputation, and develop relevant contacts', but not as reducible to employability. In other words, his leisure pursuits had multiple meanings, one of which was orientated towards future employment.

Conclusion

Andy Furlong dedicated his career to understanding the impact of social inequalities on young people, with a particular focus on changing labour market transitions. In doing so, he demonstrated how diversification in the educational and employment routes for young people contributed to a *perception* of increased opportunity and greater scope for individual agency, but that underlying structural inequalities persisted – with outcomes strongly conditioned by gender and social class. These empirical and theoretical insights provide the foundation for a range of contemporary youth research, especially scholarship which interrogates the utility of precarity as a concept for understanding young people's experiences in the labour market. The current paper has sought to extend these debates by introducing the notion of 'leisure precarity' as a means of investigating the impact of wider educational and labour market changes on young people's experiences and understandings of 'free time'. Drawing on a qualitative study of youth leisure in Glasgow, it demonstrates how precarious working conditions – alongside neoliberal educational policies and practices promoting the entrepreneurial self – have impacted on the temporal structures of young people's everyday lives.

Somewhat contrary to our expectations, young people participating in the *(Re)Imagining Youth* research often characterised their present stage of life as one in which they had limited time for leisure. This was linked to real 'time pressures' related to the changing educational patterns and employment conditions described by Furlong and colleagues, but also related to dominant discourses and socio-cultural practices in which 'busyness' is construed as a marker of status and success (Levine 2005; Wacjman 2015). Whereas a century ago, conspicuous consumption of leisure was a signifier of social status (Veblen 1899),

today prestige accords to those who work long hours and are busiest at work (Gershuny 2000, 2005). Within this context, young people have come to internalise fear of empty time – and as a result tend to portray 'pure' leisure as a 'waste of time', attempting to fill their schedules with a multiplicity of simultaneous activities, intentional and organised pursuits, in an effort to 'keep active' and 'do something productive'.

These findings reveal the analytical importance of precarity for understanding young people's understandings and experience of contemporary life. Whilst young people's leisure *activities* have changed surprisingly little over recent decades (Batchelor et al. 2017), their leisure *orientations*, the ways in which they interpret and justify these activities, are strongly conditioned by contemporary conditions. Within our sample, we identified three predominant positions: a past-orientated approach, involving recourse to traditional leisure practices as a source of collective identity; a present-orientated approach to leisure, focusing on immediate pleasure, relaxation, release and escape; and a future-orientated approach, where leisure activities were approached more purposively, as means to secure future wellbeing.

For many participants in the study, almost the entire time of life was 'put to work': spent pursuing educational qualifications, developing transferable skills, undertaking employ-ability training, producing and uploading content to social media platforms, and/or searching for employment. University students in particular tended to present themselves as time poor, but proficient in a range of individualised strategies for self-management, for example emphasising their involvement 'CV-enhancing' forms of leisure participation. Even socialising with friends was referred to amongst this group in terms of 'building net-works' or as evidence of 'good time management'. Students enrolled on more traditional, vocational college courses tended to present themselves as having more residual time for leisure, as well as more synchronicity in their everyday routines and more resources to engage in commercial leisure pursuits (principally drunken sociality). As a result, they espoused a more conventional understanding of leisure, as a temporary release from the drudgery of (training for) work. The line between work and leisure was more blurred for those pursuing careers in the creative industries, however. This group of participants portrayed work as a form of passionate labour – that is, a means of self-fulfilment and a source of pleasure and fun. Of course, passion for one's work often went hand in hand with low pay and precarious working conditions, with 'free time' often becoming 'free labour'.

These examples underscore the 'unfreedom' of leisure within neoliberal capitalism. As Brown (2012, 177) notes, 'with capital accumulation no longer limited to the factory, much of our leisure time is spent creating cultural or linguistic products that are in turn commodified and sold back to us. Even spending time with friends on social networking sites may be exploited by marketers and made productive of cultural capital'. This suggests that, rather than conceptualising leisure as 'free' time – that is, time left over from work – we must reimagine it a space for self-expression, but one which is heavily influenced by the dominant economic, political and cultural forces of the period. Leisure, as Rojek (2010) notes, is shaped by history and therefore there can be no 'timeless' theory of leisure. The current epoch is one characterised by individualised experiences of insecurity and the de-differentiation of work/leisure and production/consumption, where the logic of neoliberal consumer capitalism has worked to diminish leisure in a variety of ways. As opportunities for synchronous leisure and time 'free' from the concerns of work have

diminished, so the meaning of leisure has shifted, becoming something far more serious than mere respite or release.

Note

1. One interview included two interviewees, who requested to be interviewed together.

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