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Acknowledgments

Editors' Note

Welcome to the eleventh issue of *Under Construction*. In this issue we have yet another fascinating range of articles to share with you, all original work produced by our postgraduates at Keele University. As editors, we have enjoyed the opportunity to read such an eclectic and stimulating range of pieces.

Louise Jones' article 'Conflict Images' analyses whether still or moving images make more of a difference to our understanding of war and conflict, focusing in particular on three case studies: Ukraine, Syrian refugees and Bolan Market. It argues whilst still and moving images hold a 'privileged status' in the reporting on war and conflicts, images alone are still not enough to address ambiguities, or, provide a greater difference in overall understandings of war and conflicts.

Nicholas Sheldon's historiographical account in 'Pherecydes: The First Philosopher?' asserts that Pherecydes was the first philosopher, instead of Thales, as commonly suggested in previous works on the history of philosophy. Meanwhile, In 'Coffee-house Culture: 1770-1795' Edward Hardiman examines the culture generated both by and within eighteenth-century coffee-houses, showing how the coffee-house developed from a place of seditious, often political, activity, into a space of polite sociability.

Through an analysis of *The Town and Country Magazine*'s column 'The Coffee-house", this article encourages us to consider often-overlooked aspects of coffee-house culture and its wider connection to sociability and polite society in the period.

Finally, Scarlett Hunt's 'Post-graduation wellbeing and the impact of social media' aims to qualitatively explore how graduating from university can negatively impact students' mental wellbeing, whilst also considering how social media usage can contribute towards this. The piece argues that, stemming from the effects upon mental wellbeing its sociological fieldwork provisionally identifies and documents,students would benefit from further support relating to career choice, plans for after graduation, and follow-up consultations to check-in with graduates.

The Editorial Board for *Under Construction @Keele*

Rosa Morahan· Amy Blaney· Mohammed Hanif Khan ·

Aysha Mazhar · Nacera Haouche

Editorial

Welcome to Issue 11 of *Under Construction @ Keele,* my second as Editor in Chief, and the second produced in the midst of the Covid-19 crisis. This issue saw further staff changes and I want to repeat the Editorial Board's welcome to all our new committee members. The fresh ideas and enthusiasm they brought along has, I think, had a positive impact on this issue. The challenges of postgraduate study are many, and the fact that so many people are always willing to take up the challenge of helping *Under Construction* continue and thrive shows the enthusiasm and dedication across Keele's postgraduate networks.

As discussed within the previous issue, each Editor in Chief brings a specific approach to their issue: what I have hoped to convey, in conjunction with the team around selection and development of these articles, is the plurality and continuous heterogeneity of our postgraduate community's intellectual contributions, as well as the range of issues facing the academy, local area and society in the present. I am delighted that we are able to showcase such wide ranging work. This issue deals: with the role of images and representation upon public consciousness in their technical, political and ethical dimensions: British history and the development of coffee house cultures in relation to radical politics; the birth of philosophy and the foundational issues surrounding our relationship to enquiry and the Absolute; and the day-to-day effects of social media and communication networks as these relate to student health and policy responsibilities.

In commissioning and developing these pieces, articles have emerged out of the Keele HUMSS network of research forums and blogs, supported as ever by Keele's own KPA: in conception and theme they reflect the quest for Social Inclusion (and, in turn, the Institute for Social Inclusion) on campus, at home and in the world.

As well as the Editorial staff, credit must go to Yaar Peretz's sterling communication and peer review liaison work in recruiting peer reviewers as well as supporting contributors, to Ellie Yates for her online promotion of the magazine and recruitment opportunities, and to Ashley Yang for her fine work around designing promotional brochures and the current issue.

Once again, the journal faces an uncertain climate but can look forward with optimism as it expands its remit, as new editors and designers join whilst core knowledge is retained through team members staying on: although due to step down as E-I-C I hope to continue my association with the journal in the future as writer and peer reviewer.

Make sure you keep an eye out for our Call for Papers and Call for New Members. Either as authors of articles within these pages, or as part of the *Under Construction* team, this journal is sustained and created for, and by, the postgraduate community at Keele.

Martin Goodhead

Editor-in-Chief

Conflict Images

Louise Jones

(PhD in Media, Keele University)

Abstract

This article analyses whether still or moving images make more of a difference to our understanding of war and conflict, focusing in particular on three case studies: i) photographic images from the Ukrainian demonstrations, 'Leninfall'; ii) the photographic image of Alun Kurdi, a Syrian refugee child who drowned in the Mediterranean Sea, whilst he and his family were trying to get to the Greek coast of Kos; and iii) the moving image of 'Bolan Market', film footage of British troops travelling through an Afghan Market-town. Now more than ever, the idea of what "we" see, and the value placed on visuals in News Media, is at its most prominent, as images are being routinely used to legitimise the stories that are being told. Yet, the images selected fall against a backdrop marked by a set of highly contested recent wars and conflicts, notably Euromaidan - a wave of demonstrations and civil unrest in the Ukraine between November 2013 and February 2014, the ongoing

Syrian Refugee crisis, and the ongoing Afghanistan War. Taking media as
journalistic resource for informed citizenship, analysis of imaging from news stories,
demonstrates that audiences are offered varied and often nuanced meanings, as the
perceptions of the selected image alters due to how they are interpreted by the
individual gazer. Following Hoskins and O'Loughlin, I argue that even though there is
no doubt still and moving images hold a 'privileged status' 1 in the reporting on war
and conflicts, images alone are still not enough to address ambiguities, or, provide a
greater difference in overall understandings of war and conflicts.

Keywords: Images, War, Conflict, News Media, Ukraine, Syria, Afghanistan, Media Studies

Introduction

Still and moving images hold a 'privileged status' in reporting on war and conflicts[1]. The
deconstruction of images presenting conflicts is a nuanced issue. As in the analysis of the
visual, the problems of gaining information from images, such as favouring one perspective over
another, are highlighted. 'Conflict' as defined by scholars Andrew Hoskins and Ben O'Loughlin
is 'the exercise of kinetic and symbolic power to defeat an enemy'[2] , suggesting the idea of
symbolisation used as a method to consolidate power. The said concept, that an individual's
understanding of 'conflicts' is propelled by images, is not just manufactured by an external
agency, the image itself, but by the very fact that an image alone can be allowed to dictate
opinion. It is an area of communication that holds potential dangers which this article explores,
dangers that necessitate analysis of the symbolic power of the images of conflict. These
potential dangers can include public political manipulation which are frangible discussions to
begin with.

Firstly, this essay will discuss the importance of human empathy as a response to
images with regards to three key case studies which are as follows: 1) The Ukrainian
demonstrations, 'Leninfall', from 2013-2014, 2) The photograph of Alan Kurdi, a Syrian refugee

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[1] Hoskins A and O'Loughlin B, *War and Media: The Emergence of Diffused War* (Malden: Polity Press, 2010), p.23

[2] Ibid, p.13.

child, and 3) War artist's Mark Neville's moving visual of 'Bolan Market'[3], in line with the 'most different' design when a case study is N = 2 or 3. This design is used to highlight how 'opinions and abilities may, at first glance, seem to be quite different things, [but,] there is a close functional tie between them' (Festinger, 1954, p.116)[4]. Furthermore, the three case studies will be compared against 'actor network theory' [ANT] which is the argument that an inanimate object, can be its own agent that possesses its own power (Michael, 2017). Although many have framed 'ANT' as something of a crude concept in discussing images potentially making more of a difference to 'human' understanding, it is nevertheless helpful to understand how images are produced, the social dynamics at play, and how power is formed. Moreover, an image possesses agency because they can be used as tools by those capturing the images and those seeing the image as a path of exploration, passports to inner sanctums, and perhaps most importantly, instruments for change. It is in the incitement of change, which is so crucial to this essay, as the selected case studies can be considered catalysts for change in their own right as they each evoke responses which will be discussed further. If images are considered "instruments of change" , this suggests that they do hold a certain degree of power and ANT theory cannot be dismissed. In the literature on '*Cultural Governance and Pictorial Resistance*' (Campbell, 2003), David Campbell argues that an image itself can have agency. The individual who looks upon it can suggest and manipulate the image to imply whatever they want to read from it, especially in the ever-increasing digital age where the use of images over digital platforms has had an 'important impact on contemporary debates'[5].

Secondly, I will consider whether the images used within all three cases work to the detriment of 'our' understanding or on whether the images have had any positive impact to change the plight of the individuals in the images. Interlaced within these images, a question of ethics arises as to what extent the documentation of conflict can through still and moving images employ what is termed 'peaceful journalism', especially if the subject of the image is in apparent harm. Peaceful Journalism is the research which indicates that the news disseminated about conflicts often has a value bias towards violence. Peace journalism aims to allow opportunities for society at large to consider and evaluate non-violent responses to conflict. It is

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[3] Mark Neville, "*Afghan Life in Wartime: Bolan market*". The Guardian, July 16, 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/video/2014/jul/16/afghanistan-life-bolan-market-helmand-mark-neville-war-artist-iwm-video [Accessed 1.8.2020].
[4] *ibid*
[5] David Campbell, "Cultural governance and pictorial resistance: reflections on the imaging of war", *Review of International Studies*, 29(S1) (2003): 65, accessed [Accessed 1.8.2020], https://doi-org.ezproxy01.rhul.ac.uk/10.1017/S0260210503005977

beneficial to this essay to display and discuss a non-violent example, (such as Neville's Bolan Market) in relation to violent and more disturbing case studies (such as the images of "Lenin Fall" and the image of Alun Kurdi), as it gives a broader depth of potential reactions and responses to images of conflicts from audiences. Additionally, it is also in keeping with the most different design as n=3, as two violent still images (Lenin-Fall and Alun Kurdi) are discussed in comparison with a non-violent moving image (Neville's Bolan Market).

Although images can effectively catalyse empathetic responses to their subject matter, policy has not evolved correspondingly to the degree that conflicts of a similar nature are not repeated. Furthermore, as this essay will also examine sometimes images alone sometimes do not add to "our" understanding of conflicts, with ambiguities remaining present. Yet, despite the aforementioned tensions and irresolutions, this essay will ultimately demonstrate that images possess agency and power in respect of individual understandings around conflict. It will be argued that images do have a purpose and an effect (if not a direct activist effect) because if they did not, they would not be used by politicians, journalists, and artists. Likewise, it will also exemplify how images indubitably go some way in documenting and explaining the world to an audience.

Reframing the symbols of 1917 Bolshevik Russia in the Ukraine was never going to be an easy task for any individual: nevertheless, 2013 saw active insurgency on the part of activists

around issues such as anti-government corruption and anti-Russian feeling in the Ukraine, leading to the destruction of the Lenin monuments . 'Leninfall' was the destruction of the

Russian Revolution leader Vladimir Lenin's statue in the Ukraine (Figure 1). It was a movement catalysed on the 8th December in Kiev, when a group toppled the statue erected in the city's main street, Khreshchatyk. The magnitude of the issue was highlighted in the statistics showing how many monuments of Lenin were left in Ukraine by 2014. It was estimated there were originally 5,500 monuments of Lenin in 1991; by December 2013 there were 2,178, and by the following year, around 100 statues fewer. Attacking the semiotics in the country was a way of reflecting civilian anger against the establishment. It was certainly effective as 'previous attempts to clear the square with force [only] increased the protest mood, [and saw] police withdr[aw] from the city centre'[6]. The Ukrainian activists wished to disassociate their nation from the Lenin statues, the iconography of the Soviet Union, and the meanings attached to them. Their pro-Europe protest was a direct response to the circulated rumours that the incumbent Russian and Ukrainian presidents' Vladimir Putin and the Viktor Yanukovych respectively had met to discuss the Ukraine joining the 'Russian Customs Union' [7]. As historian Victorian Bonnell discusses post-revolution Russia, the similarities to the unrest in Ukraine in 2013 seemed uncanny[8], especially when she stated that by, ''creating new symbols, rituals, [and] visual imagery…The aim was nothing less than 'the redefinition of all social-values, designed to liberate, but also create a new mystique''(Hosbawm,1983, cited in, Bonnell, 1997, pp.1-2.)[9]. This implies that it was what others interpreted the statue's meaning to be, which triggered such anti-establishment attitude from the offset, but also in the physicality of the image of the statue falling. It illuminated a new national order. The still images of the event created an ironic paradox, for the original premise was to utilise the 'Lenin symbol' with regards to 'liberating the people'. Although the people were indeed liberated, it was at the expense of the visual image of Lenin being destroyed. The photograph, however, was able to 'communicate… [and] able to reinforce [and…] transgress…social convention (visual codes of …architecture, objects…etc) … employed in the 'lived world' (Lister and Wells, 2001, cited in Andén-Papadopoulos, 2008, p.6). Such semiotic readings substantiate the hypothesis stated earlier that images assumed substantial importance in directly communicating, and allowing for an analysis of what was

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[6] Simon Walker, "Ukraine protesters topple Lenin statue in Kiev", *The Guardian,* December 8, 2013, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/08/ukraine-opposition-viktor-yanukovych-european-integration [Accessed 1.8.2020],

[7] David Stern, "Ukraine's capital Kiev gripped Huge pro-EU rally grips Ukraine," *BBC News*, December 8, 2013 [Accessed 1.8.2020] http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-25290959
[8] Freud Sigmund, *The uncanny*. (London: Penguin, 2003), p.11
[9] Victoria Bonnell. *Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters under Lenin and Stalin. (*Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), pp. 1-2.

happening in the Ukraine. Such importance applied to the protesters who were taking part in "Lenin-Fall" but also to domestic and international spectators. It was through the corporeality of the cause that the understanding of conflict could go beyond the normal traction of something like the aural or written word. There were human emotions on display whose physical actions were captured through the 'toolkit the actor-network theory' (Law, 2007, p.142) provided in the image. This can primarily be seen as depicted within figure1 which illustrates the sheer volume of people who have turned up to watch and partake in forcibly removing the statue of Lenin. Likewise, the fire at the foot of the statue is important to the symbolic power of the image. It is important, because it enhances the likelihood of empathy on part of the audience of the image, as the fire has connotations of being in a hostile environment. The overall aesthetic of the picture is one that looks dangerous and as a spectator you can empathise with the position in which the demonstrators are putting themselves in.

The debate on whether 'Lenin' was figuratively still with the people or not was met with despondence. Arguably, Ukraine was still not 'freed from the monuments' both in the landscape and in the national discourse. Although, it was in this assertion of national identity which questioned if the development of national identity and national culture was but another 'decommunization' task. This produced an ambiguity around the symbols used within the country with regards to what they actually meant, which was then reflected within the still images of those symbols - the photographs of the fallen Lenin statues. The protestors came

across more interested in tearing symbols down as opposed to demonstrating for reform. Nonetheless, the symbols may not have been the singular problem per se but it was more to do with where they were physically presented. Did it matter if everyone agreed on the same symbols to be a fully functional country, or, was this more of an issue of defining what a public space was? Irrespective, 'Leninfall' evidently proved how intangible the conflict had become. This exposed confusion leaked its way into the framing of the national discourse, for if there was no symbolic figure like Lenin presiding from a height, and there was nothing to replace the symbol on the pedestal, what were the Ukrainian people for? Political scientist, Kari Andén-Papadopoulos argued, 'photographs in the press […] are constructed as generic symbols that serve to support dominant news discourse' [10], but if there were no 'generic symbols' in the Ukraine in relation to tearing down the statues of Lenin, such a hypothesis could not support the efficacy of any discourse of any sort.

Figure 3 ARABIC 4. A Turkish police officer discovers the body of Alan Kurdi (The New York Times, 2018).

On the 2nd September 2015, a still image of a three-year-old Syrian boy washed ashore on the Greek coast, later identified as Alan Kurdi, made global headlines. Whilst he and his family were trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe, in the hope of seeking refuge from the on-going conflict in Syria, Kurdi, lost his life by drowning. The photograph ignited colossal international response and became one of the most memorable images of the

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[10] K Andén-Papadopoulos. "The Abu Ghraib torture photographs". Journalism: Theory, Practice & Criticism,9(1),(2008): 8. [Accessed 1.8.2020] :
https://doi-org.ezproxy01.rhul.ac.uk/10.1177/1464884907084337

millennium, where *The Guardian* reported, it was these 'pictures [which] came to encapsulate the horrific toll of Syria's civil war'[11]. The journalist who took the image, Nilüfer Demir, said she felt 'paralysed' (Vice, 2018) upon seeing the corpse of the child. Demir discussed how she took the picture in the moment by way of documenting her feelings, that what she had witnessed was horrific and unacceptable in a 'so-called' civilised society. Therefore, the image documented the victimisation of an innocent child and that this particular image has the *potential* to incite empathy for the refugees and outrage at the crisis.

In the ruminations of human suffering as seen in the image of Alan Kurdi, academic Susan Sontag argues how it is 'the gruesome [which] invites us to be either spectators or cowards, unable to look. Those with the stomach to look are playing a role authorised by many glorious depictions of suffering'[12]. The lexical selection of 'authorised' attributes power to the image, and what the image elects to disseminate to its audience. Sontag is saying that there is a history of depictions of suffering that makes suffering seem heroic or glorious (especially in something like war), and therefore make suffering something that we can ethically consume in images. She is of course criticising this, saying that suffering is not glorious, and consuming it uncritically as spectacle is obscene and makes us voyeurs. Both the Alan Kurdi and the 'Leninfall' case study demonstrate the idea of an image having sole governance in approving who gazes at its subject, and what it determines its subject to be. This evidences how the discourse individuals are fed can be guided by still images, ultimately attesting 'actor-network theory' as a genuine consideration with regards to images being a sincere voice in the understanding of conflicts. Nonetheless, Sontag did not go further to discuss what happens when images of conflict, like 'Leninfall', do not measure up to the scale of 'gruesomeness' (in contrast image of Alan Kurdi), as it is impossible for any two persons to define 'gruesome' in the same way. Likewise, the categories of 'spectator' or 'coward', rather limits the number of people able to look at an image (figure 3) in the first place, for if there are only two categories, this allows very little perspective from other agencies.

A symbiotic cycle was formed where individuals were reliant on a picture to ignite something within them to determine change, which is what happened in the aftermath of the release of Kurdi's image, as the picture seemingly shifted an understanding within the political

[11] Elle Hunt. "Boy in the ambulance: shocking image emerges of Syrian child pulled from Aleppo rubble". *the Guardian*. (2018). [Accessed 1.8.2020] : https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/18/boy-in-the-ambulance-image-emerges-syrian-child-aleppo-rubble

[12] S Sontag, *Regarding the pain of others* (London: Penguin Books: 2005), p.38.

discourse about the Syrian refugee crisis. Although a positive move, it was somewhat bittersweet in that the image came too late for most refugees, as the death of innocent victims resulting from the refugee crisis was tragically all too familiar. It could be suggested there was widespread 'compassion fatigue'[13]. This was partially to do with the lack of engagement in both the public and political sphere, specifically trying to drive change in relieving some pressure of European borders, by welcoming refugees from the Syrian crisis into countries like the United Kingdom, but even after the image had been published, as Kurdi's father Abdullah Kurdi claimed, 'nothing ha[d] changed'[14]. It was reported that a staggering statistic of '8,500 people'[15] died whilst trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea the following year, with the United Nations Human Rights Agency declaring 2016 as 'the deadliest year yet', regarding the increased death toll (UNHCR staff, 2018). Once more, Susan Sontag contributed to the argument by stating images make no difference. By having similar images of the same horrific nature repeating themselves, they lose their primary impact; 'photographs furnish evidence'.[16] Therefore, the notion that images make a difference to "our" understanding of conflict loses some momentum in this case, when "we" as a collective failed to put effective measures in place to alleviate the situation despite being so 'traumatised' after the revelation of Alan Kurdi's death.

Within the media ecologies [17] depicted by the 'Leninfall' and Alan Kurdi images, their portrayal of conflict certainly delivers an immersive experience, creating a paradigm in which "our" understanding of conflicts may develop. Artists serving as witnesses, as opposed to journalists, also add to this immersive quality in their work via a different perspective resultant of the fact that the purpose of their delivered image is to tell the story, like journalists, but they do not have the same editorial obligations to fulfil. War artist, Mark Neville, produced a moving image of Bolan Market in an 'Afghan town'[18] during 2014, videoing normal everyday people

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[13] B Höijer, "The Discourse of Global Compassion and the Media," *Nordicom Review* 24(2) (2003): 19.

[14] Josie Ensor, "Photo of my dead son has changed nothing', says father of drowned Syrian refugee boy Alan Kurdi," *The Telegraph*, September 3, 2016 [1.8.2020] :
https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/09/01/photo-of-my-dead-son-has-changed-nothing-says-father-of-drowned/

[15] Saeed Dehghan, *"8,500 people lost in Mediterranean since death of three-year-old Alan Kurdi"*, *The Guardian*, September 1,2017. [1.8.20] :
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/01/alan-kurdi-khaled-hosseini-mediterranean-refugees-sea-prayer

[16] S Sontag, *On photography* (London: Penguin Books, 2008): 5.

[17] M Fuller, *Media ecologies*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

[18] Mark Neville, "Afghan Life in Wartime: Bolan market" ,*The Guardian*, July 16, 2014, [Accessed 1.8.2020]:
https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/video/2014/jul/16/afghanistan-life-bolan-market-helmand-mark-neville-war-artist-iwm-video

going about their mundane tasks from the back of an 'occupying force's' jeep'. It was in the mundane though, that a feeling of sheer visceral hate directed towards Neville and his camera lens was captured, as the jeep he was in became emblematic, if not symbolic, of the violence 'the West' had caused the civilians in Afghanistan. The footage was highly disconcerting as, 'while some [were] warm in their reaction to my camera … others [were] clearly deeply uncomfortable, disturbed or angered … this piece show[ed] the gulf between myself as a war artist, hosted by an occupying force, and local people ravaged by poverty and war' (*The Guardian, 2018*)[19]. Neville's quote about his own piece of work presents a moving image which demonstrates varying attitudes prevalent at the marketplace, ranging from his own, to the people in which this ongoing conflict with Afghanistan has directly affected, arguably giving a more subjective account than what any singular still image could achieve. Moreover, in his own phraseology 'ravaged by poverty and war', this bestial quality spurred on by the word choice of 'ravaged' implied the absolute devastation the people of this conflict faced. By looking through Neville's own perspective, he mobilised the proxemics between himself and the subject to deliver a 3rd, even 4th dimension to his work, highlighting perhaps the limitations of what a still image alone could present.

The film footage clearly divides those in the jeep, including Neville from the civilians, as it was the lack of interaction with each other that became so problematic. Neville's own quote shows how in reality nothing can really be, as academic Mitchell contests, 'habitually called 'purely optical', exemplifying a purely visual use of the medium'[20]. As demonstrated by this case study, there is a necessity to run alongside or at the very least explain, the present emotions in the image before anyone has viewed it. Moreover, whilst the image possesses agency, the lack of detail surrounding it does little to add more to an understanding of this particular conflict. The image alone is not enough to satisfy the knowledge of what is going on in a selected circumstance. Nonetheless, with that said, in capturing the mundane, Neville captures an incredibly tense piece of footage: It is tense because it is silent, and the civilians return the gaze of the camera. Likewise, it stretches time by using slow-motion implying the long-haul suffering of the Afghani people at the hands of occupying forces. In reflection, the film has much more to impart to the audience than Neville's comments alone, as it is what is implied in the moving image that the real agency of the film can be revealed. Although, questions cannot be dismissed

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[19] Ibid

[20] W Mitchell, "There Are No Visual Media," *Journal of Visual Culture,* 257 (4), (2005): 259. [Accessed 1.8.2020] https://doi-org.ezproxy01.rhul.ac.uk/10.1177/1470412905054673

about whether taking this video was an ethically minded decision, as the artist appears to create more harm than good, demonstrated by the clear anger about the film being taken on part of some of the Afghani people.

The issue of whether still and moving images make a difference to "our" understanding of conflicts has been highlighted as a problematic issue. Nonetheless, in their nuanced meanings, the selected image alters due to how they are interpreted by the individual gazer. Despite the still images of 'Leninfall' and Alan Kurdi being selected under the provision of the 'most different' design both demonstrated how an image can wield considerable power. In comparison, Neville's 'Bolan Market' presented a persuasive message, but lacked the same powerful agency the two still images depicted, as there was a need for the written word to accompany the video link, which undermined the strength of the video's message on its own merit. There can be no denying all three images were able to convey an emotional message to those who were granted 'authority' to look at them. It was in the revelling of hopelessness that demonstrated power, as on a personal level, people who looked at these images had potentially, in the moment, invoked within themselves the inclination to act, although the use of images in this way does not guarantee that traumatic incidents will never happen again, displayed in the exemplar of Alan Kurdi. This repetitive nature is frustrating because even with visual knowledge of how bad a given situation is, like the Syrian Crisis, or the Ukrainian unrest, or the devastation in Afghanistan, "we" become desensitised to what "we" see. Furthermore, as evidenced by the images of 'Leninfall', they show how overall conflict is an intangible subject. If these ambiguities are present, then "our" understanding of conflicts cannot be furthered because there is still a genuine puzzlement about what is going on. It matters in the realm of international relations that images are questioned as to how much they add to understanding conflicts, as individual reliance on the non-verbal can be considered a crucial method of conveying relevant information. However, this interpretive quality still leaves ambiguities present and there are seemingly more unanswered questions than not. In conclusion, although images alone may not always be relied upon to bring a greater understanding to different conflicts or address ambiguities, they at least make visible what conflict is, who is involved, and how the conflict is being fought. Even if images are not always catalysts for particular emotional responses or catalysts for activism and change, they provide a certain agency to challenge what is happening in a given conflict, which other forms of media and just text simply cannot provide.

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'Once the Receptacles of Malcontents':
Coffee-House Culture in the 1780s.

Edward Hardiman

(Phd in History, Keele University)

Abstract

This article is born out of my thesis research, which looks at sociability in Britain between 1770-1795. More specifically, it looks at the print culture surrounding the late eighteenth-century coffee-house, and how this print culture acts as an important medium for understanding the coffee-house as a space in which conceptions of privacy, politeness, and sociability are all deeply contested. The coffee-house also serves as a microcosm of larger cultural conflicts within eighteenth-century society and how they changed throughout time. The coffee-house was by no means the polite and enlightened spaces that many social commentators of the early eighteenth century had hoped it would become. However, there was still a broad cultural understanding that the coffee-house was able to accommodate intellectual conversation, more so than other public spaces. The coffee-house offered a sober alternative to a society that had just seen an end to the gin-crazed decades of the mid eighteenth century. Moreover, the increasing number of private rooms allowed intellectual societies and debating clubs to establish semi-permanent spaces which further supported this image of the coffee-house as a space for sober, rational discussion. However, as the French Revolution took an increasingly radical turn,

the support for similarly radical politics grew within Britain. Clubs and societies advocating for radical reform utilised the space of the coffee-house and the anxiety for radical insurrection was reflected within print. Much of the historiography surrounding coffee-house culture has focused its rising popularity and prominence within British society during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Therefore, part of my thesis and by extension this essay will deal with the underexplored coffee-house culture of the late eighteenth century and how the political machinations of the French Revolution affected that culture.

Key words: Coffee Houses; 18th Century British Culture; Sociability; 18th Century British Politics; 18th Century Periodical Culture

Introduction

The coffee-house is a strange concept to unpack, particularly because its presumed connections with the modern-day café lead to some misconceptions surrounding its nature. Coffee was a staple of these establishments, yet alcohol, chocolate, and tea were also readily available. These novel beverages provided a stimulating alternative to the intoxicating effects of alcohol. Moreover, these spaces often fostered social interactions between strangers. Most establishments were furnished with large tables, often located in the centre of rooms.[21] This did not always foster a convivial atmosphere. During the English Civil War and the Glorious Revolution, the coffee-house became renowned in print and in government for seditious talk and activity. To combat this, the Restoration Era saw efforts to forge a new, and altogether more polite, identity for the coffee-house as a space of sociability.[22] These efforts to control and **civilise** the coffee-house had come through print which was disseminated through newspapers and periodicals into the coffee-houses directly. Theoretically, such print culture would serve to shift conversation away from sedition or salacious gossip to the subjects of politeness and manners.[23] Historiography surrounding coffee-house culture has overwhelmingly focused on the late 17th and early 18th centuries which is widely considered to be the zenith of its popularity and cultural dominance within Britain. The work of Jürgen Habermas highlights the period between 1680 and 1730 as a period where the coffee-house acted as a space in which egalitarian public

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[21] Brian Cowan, "Publicity and Privacy in the History of the British Coffee-house," *History Compass* 5/4 (2007):1194-5.
[22] Brian Cowan, *The Social Life of Coffee: The Emergence of the British Coffeehouse* (London: Yale University Press, 2005): Chapter 6-8.
[23] Cowan, *The Social Life of Coffee,* 225-33.

discourse could occur and polite conduct could be developed.[24] Helen Berry's work on the print culture surrounding King's Coffee-house in the early 18th century highlights a very different image of the coffee-house. Berry focused not just on the polite, but the vulgar aspects of the coffee-house. This ranged from the use of profane slang to the association of certain establishments with prostitution.[25] Simply because seditious behaviour was no longer associated with the coffee-house, did not mean that it was a space of polite, egalitarian sociability.

Subsequent historiography sought to further convey the complexities and less egalitarian aspects of coffee-house culture. Brian Cowan has dedicated numerous publications to discussing the rise of the coffee-house in the metropolis.[26] Cowan suggests that by the mid eighteenth century, coffee-house sociability had become more private. For instance, booths and hireable rooms had become commonplace.[27] Markman Ellis reaches similar conclusions, with much of his research focusing on the increase in private reading rather over group discussion and sociability within the coffee-house[28]. However, the 1790s saw another shift within coffee-house culture. The growing enthusiasm for the French Revolution had fostered the creation of several radical political societies, many of which used the coffee-house to congregate and converse.[29] The same anxieties of sedition within the coffee-house that were present in the 17th century had seemingly resurfaced. This article will, therefore, explore the print culture surrounding the coffee-house in the 1780s. This decade has received little attention from scholars, yet there is a wealth of source material to address. Printed periodicals provide interesting insights into coffee-house culture as they frequently published letters from readers and correspondents, as well as traditional articles or essays. The medium allows for a written dialogue between editors and readers where certain aspects of coffee-house culture can be developed and debated. As this article will show this dialogue could be both lively, but also productive in fostering polite sociability.

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[24] Jügren Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* translated by Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1991).

[25] Helen Berry, "Rethinking Politeness in Eighteenth-Century England: Moll King's Coffee-House and the Significance of 'Flash Talk'" *Transaction of the Royal Historical Society* Vol. 11 (2001): 65-81.

[26] Cowan, *The Social Life of Coffee*. Markman Ellis, *The Coffee House: A Cultural House,* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 2004).

[27] Cowan, "Publicity and Privacy," 1194.

[28] Ellis, "Coffee-house Libraries in Mid-Eighteenth-Century London," *The Library* 7th series, vol. 10, no. 1 (2009): 31-36.

[29] Jon Mee. *Print, Publicity and Radicalism in the 1790s: The Laurel of Liberty* (Cambridge University Press, 2016): 45, 48-9.

During the expansion of newspapers and periodicals, *The Town and Country Magazine* (1763–1795) began to publish a column titled "The Coffee-house" (1781- 1786), which ranged from short essays to published letters on the topic of coffee-house culture. The format was reminiscent of Joseph Addison and Richard Steele's periodical prose essays published in the early 18th century. The subject of these columns encompassed a variety of coffee-house culture from essays on politeness to amusing anecdotes. Where the tone and format of the column had conformed to traditional print culture, it differed in its lack of a unifying authorial voice. Letters and essays were published if they were interesting or entertaining, rather than if they were authored by a particular person. This column was touted as an important forum for printed discussion: a letter published in 1781 described it as a space within itself, a 'Universal Coffee-house for universal reading'.[30] The first issue of the column describes the coffee-house as a place filled with interesting characters. It was a space that embodied the aesthetic quality of novelty[31] which is found within the 'characters' of the coffee-house. All coffee-houses are filled with an array of individuals from the 'vociferous lawyer, the sonorous pedant' to the 'profound politician, and the eternal lounger.'[32] These characters often display a 'diversity of sentiments' and are not just humorous or entertaining, but satirical, informative, and wise.[33] Here the coffee-house is not presented as a space of ideal politeness, but of diversity and novelty. This should not be confused with equality or egalitarianism, but it certainly indicates that the coffee-house was an interesting and complex space that captured the interest of many readers.

Within the first issues of "The Coffee-house", the author refers to the character of the 'eternal lounger' who is lauded as one of the most populous characters within any coffee-house throughout London. They would 'breakfast, dine, and sup in public, and many of them take up their constant residence there.'[34] The word lounger was used both as a character or stereotype, but also as a noun to describe particular individuals. Loungers are generally depicted as men who possessed some degree of wealth, which enabled them to spend much of their time within the coffee-house. Their leisurely approach to life was often the subject of satire within plays and periodicals, yet there was by no means a unified approach to doing so. Issue one presents the

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[30] D. L., "The COFFEE-HOUSE," *The Town and Country Magazine, Or, Universal Repository of Knowledge, Instruction, and Entertainment* no. 13 (08, 1781): 432, https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.keele.ac.uk/docview/6346348?accountid=11814.

[31] "The COFFEE-HOUSE," *The Town and Country Magazine, Or, Universal Repository of Knowledge, Instruction, and Entertainment* no. 13 (01, 1781): 23, https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.keele.ac.uk/docview/6269777?accountid=11814.

[32] Ibid., 23.

[33] Ibid., 23-4.

[34] Ibid., 23.

lounger as a harmless observer, whose only crime is occasionally making 'injudicious observations' which are recorded within his common-place book that he carries around his person.[35] The lounger is also presented as being obsessed by the pursuit of novelty, whether it be through reading newspapers or conversing about a trend in fashion. The lounger could even be portrayed with a certain fondness – an article within *The Monthly Ledger* (1773) describes the coffee-house lounger as a 'whimsical creature', so caught up within themselves that they do not realise their own ridiculousness. [36] The lounger was for many, a harmless but amusing addition to any coffee-house.

Other periodicals were not quite so neutral on the position of the lounger. In fact, the second issue of "The Coffee-house" (1781) published a letter that sought to dismiss any fondness for individuals 'born to a title or a good estate'.[37] Members of the gentry, as well as loungers, actively detracted from the coffee-house as a space of polite sociability.[38] They frequently used their privileges, particularly within the coffee-house, to undermine those who possessed genuine wisdom and insight. To demonstrate this, the letter relays a conversation overheard between a doctor, 'much respected for his learning' and a certain lord who rudely interrupts the doctor during a conversation on Hippocrates and Boerhaave. So insulted is the lord that he chases the doctor from the coffee-house with a cane.[39] This bizarre anecdote serves to paint the lounger as reprehensible and anti-intellectual, rather than as a keen observer ready to absorb knowledge from the coffee-house environment. The very validity of these titles and estates are also questioned, as the essay even suggests that the origin of their privileges derive from a 'great-grand-mother having been a royal prostitute, or their father a political pimp and venal parasite.'[40] Few critiques of coffee-house loungers went quite so far as this, most were only concerned with their disruptive potential. An essay written by the 'Anti-Lounger', asserted that all loungers should sequester themselves into their own 'coffee-house which, to prevent strangers intruding amongst them, should be inscribed 'The Loungers Coffee-House.'[41] Loungers are: portrayed as superficial rakes looking at their 'sweet

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[35] Ibid., 23. The conversations that are printed within the first issue of 'The Coffee-house' derive from the common-place notebook of Jack Dale, a 'professed lounger', who misplaces his notebook which is subsequently picked up by the author of the article.

[36] "The Character of a Coffee-House Lounger," *The Monthly Ledger : Or, Literary Repository* 1 (05, 1773): 257, https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.keele.ac.uk/docview/3728290?accountid=11814.

[37] "The COFFEE-HOUSE," *The Town and Country Magazine, Or, Universal Repository of Knowledge, Instruction, and Entertainment* no. 13 (02, 1781): 76, https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.keele.ac.uk/docview/6342773?accountid=11814.

[38] Ibid., 76-77.

[39] Ibid., 76-77.

[40] Ibid., 76.

person' in the reflection of a window; dressed 'genteelly' with snuff or coffee in their hand; and 'ogling any woman that passed.'[42] Even amongst figures so commonplace as loungers, discussion varied wildly and often in rather stark contrast to one another.

Another character that rarely received anything but satire was that of the 'coffee-house politician'. A staple of criticism since the early 18th century, the coffee-house politician is perhaps best described as an individual so 'immethodical in the arrangement of their words, as they are bold in the delivery of their sentiments' and 'who pretend to talk decisively about the English nation, though they are very little acquainted with the English language.' [43] Similar to the lounger, they are obsessed with novelty; however, for the politician it is the novelty of salacious political gossip and drama. For instance, the execution of the French spy François Henri de la Motte in 1781 sparked 'the curiosity of Coffee house politicians in all parts of the town'.[44] Such dramatic news was often assumed to lead to frivolous conversation, in fact, the article that details this news spends the majority of the article imagining a conversation between a coffee-house politician and a group of unfortunate strangers.[45] This conversation would often disturb the decorum of the coffee-house threatening the ideal of the quiet, industrious English coffee-house that had been the talk of many foreign observers.[46] Late 18th-century periodicals were seemingly less focused upon the political nature of conversations. Instead they were concerned with the inherent selfishness of the coffee-house politician.

To combat these disruptive characters, many attempts were made to codify polite coffee-house conduct. These efforts were not just mimicking the seminal texts of Joseph Addison (1672-1719) and Richard Steele (1672-1729) – whose work was reprinted numerous times throughout the 18th century – who had sought to formalise politeness and bring its practices into greater circulation.[47] The coffee-house had become marred by 'infractions upon

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[41] Anti-Lounger, "To the Printer of the Town and Country Magazine," *The Town and country magazine, or, Universal repository of Knowledge Instruction and Entertainment* vol.4 (1772): 525, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=inu.30000080760386&view=1up&seq=9

[42] Ibid., 524. John Brewer describes the rake as using exterior forms of politeness for their own ends, either sex or money see, John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997): 122. The use of politeness and flattery for sex is also mentioned in "To the Printer of the Town and Country Magazine", 525.

[43] Edward Freeman, "The Folly of Coffee-House Politicians," *The Weekly Magazine, Or, Edinburgh Amusement, 1768-1779* 10, (Oct 11, 1770): 47, https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.keele.ac.uk/docview/5619912?accountid=11814.

[44] "The COFFEE-HOUSE," *The Town and Country Magazine, Or, Universal Repository of Knowledge, Instruction, and Entertainment* no. 13 (07, 1781): 340, https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.keele.ac.uk/docview/6279292?accountid=11814.

[45] Ibid., 341.

[46] Johann Wilhelm von Archenholz, *A Picture of England containing a description of the laws, customs and manners of England* (Dublin: P. Byrne, 1791), 200, https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/007650470

decency and politeness' as well as subject to an infestation of 'ignorance and ill-bred men'.[48] A letter submitted to the *Town and Country Magazine* (1781) suggested that an association needed to be formed in order to regulate these spaces. As an immediate solution to the problem the letter suggests six practical rules to limit impolite behaviour within coffee-houses.[49] These rules centred largely upon the control of the space and property of an establishment. Newspapers were to be handed out and rotated amongst customers, candles were to be kept in the centre of tables and not occupied by one person. Rule three, which seems particularly pointed at curtailing newsmongers and coffee-house politicians, suggests preventing any individual from sitting near the door in order to snatch the first newspapers of the day [50]. Thus, space and property shared a symbiotic relationship within the coffee-house.

The minute details of managing the resources and space of the coffee-house were evidently important to maintaining polite sociability. However, what is most striking about these rules is the use of social shaming in order to ensure they were not violated. For example, those who took candles from the table to use for themselves were to be 'pronounced no gentleman, and may be treated accordingly', and any person who stole a candle would be 'pronounced a blackguard and kicked out of company'.[51] In a more serious example, those that whistle or hum were deemed so 'contemptible epicene wretches, that they are almost beneath chastisement, lest their fine slender limbs should be broken in performing the ceremony.'[52] The violence of the language used may well be sarcasm or hyperbole, but such an expression highlights the level of impoliteness attributed to those particular acts. The willingness to utilise such language gives an impression of the importance of maintaining polite sociability. The letter had called upon readers to enforce these rules and regulations, therefore their maintenance relied upon an acceptance of these rules as social norms.

Assessing the impact of these calls for reformation within the coffee-house can be difficult to quantify. However, there does seem to be some agreement and adherence to the rules outlined within "The Coffee-house" column. The following issue notes that one

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[47] See A New Correspondent, "To the EDITOR of the COFFEE-HOUSE," *The Town and Country Magazine, Or, Universal Repository of Knowledge, Instruction, and Entertainment* no. 14 (09, 1782): 461-462, https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.keele.ac.uk/docview/6369146?accountid=11814.

[48] AMBULATOR, "To the AUTHOR of the COFFEE HOUSE," *The Town and Country Magazine, Or, Universal Repository of Knowledge, Instruction, and Entertainment* no. 13 (12, 1781): 634-636, https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.keele.ac.uk/docview/6341767?accountid=11814

[49] Ibid., 634-5.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid., 635.

[52] Ibid., 635.

coffee-house imposed all of the rules suggested, the 'candles at night keep their proper station, and the evening papers are distributed by rotation.'[53] So effective were these rules and regulations that a number of patrons – presumably ones who often broke these rules – no longer visited that particular establishment.[54] Whether the vast majority of readers shared such venom for candle thieves and whistlers, is hard to discern. General overviews of the coffee-houses of London in 1786 stated that they were 'once the receptacles of malcontents or the shops of sedition' and are now 'only frequented by men of pleasure, who prefer the joys of the table and convivial hilarity.'[55] Whether or not this convivial hilarity was too disruptive for the many contributors of "The Coffee-house" is unclear, but it certainly demonstrates a richness of social interaction.

With the end of "The Coffee-house" column and the growing anxiety over British radicalism during the 1790s, coffee-house print culture seemingly shifted back to the highly politicised space that had been characteristic of the Restoration Era. However, the domestic tumult and treason trials of the 1790s did not disallow for the discussion of politeness and sociability within the coffee-house. Other periodicals continued to discuss and codify polite behaviour both within the specific confines of the coffee-house and in the metropolis in general. A decade after the letter of the 'Ambulator' was published, the *Town and Country magazine* published an essay entitled 'Improvements much wanted in the metropolis'.[56] The essay takes on a rather different, and far more sarcastic tone, suggesting that a gentleman should be as rude and impolite as possible.[57] Although this essay was published long after "the Coffee-house" column had ceased appearing, its tone reflects an awareness of its existence within the same magazine. Regardless, the print culture of the 1780s, when contrasted against the following decade, presents a rather calm period within coffee-house sociability and print culture. However, when considered as part of a continued effort to enforce politeness as common

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[53] D. L., "To the EDITOR of the COFFEE-HOUSE," *The Town and Country Magazine, Or, Universal Repository of Knowledge, Instruction, and Entertainment* no. 13 (12, 1781): 693, https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.keele.ac.uk/docview/6272386?accountid=11814.
[54] Ibid, 693.
[55] "NATIONAL AFFAIRS," *English Review, Or, an Abstract of English and Foreign Literature, 1783-1795* 6, (04, 1786): 314-320, https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.keele.ac.uk/docview/6316794?accountid=11814.
[56] "IMPROVEMENTS MUCH WANTED IN THE METROPOLIS; with a Few Useful Hints to such Gentlemen as Walk the Streets, Frequent the Theatres, Or Go to Coffee-Houses," *The Town and Country Magazine, Or, Universal Repository of Knowledge, Instruction, and Entertainment* no. 25 (08, 1793): 368-369, https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.keele.ac.uk/docview/6350880?accountid=11814
[57] Ibid., 368-369.

practice, it seems far more frustrated. To many there were great inequalities still afforded to men of status and privilege, so much so that they could reject polite practice and act as they desired. This period highlights the importance of context when considering any period of history, but also the importance of its minute details.

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Pherecydes: The First Philosopher?

Nicholas Seldon

(Phd Philosophy, Keele University)

Abstract

Consult any book on the history of philosophy, and whether it is an academic text or popular work, the first entry will in almost every case be the Milesian philosopher, Thales. The proposed paper, emerging from my work on the philosophical underpinning to the religion known as Christian Science, disputes this almost universally held idea, and instead argues for Pherecydes as the true holder of this epithet, a figure from antiquity previously dismissed as a mere mythologist and also having post-dated Thales.In researching the work of Mary Baker Eddy, the originator of Christian Science, I have sought to demonstrate that she was not an amateur theologian on the fringes of Christianity, but a metaphysical idealist philosopher of the first rank. In doing so, I have needed to demonstrate that her work echoed that of established academic philosophers from throughout history, and that she went beyond this previously published work, either in character or in degree. As part of the background reading necessary for this task, I came across an obscure reference to a rare work on philosophy published in the eighteenth century, which, amongst much else, gave an unambiguous dating method regarding when Pherecydes was active as a philosopher – before Thales.Other works which I have found since

making this discovery have also cast doubt on Pherecydes being a mythologist, as much of what is attributed to him is similar the work of Thales; if Pherecydes predated Thales, then he may have been the source for ideas wrongly attributed to Thales for 2500 years. History records that Pythagoras borrowed from Pherecydes; I argue that Thales did too.

Key words: Pythagoras; Pre-Socratic Philosophy; History of Philosophy; Pherecydes;

Introduction

Consult any book on the history of philosophy, and whether it is an academic text or a popular work, the first entry in almost every case will be the Milesian philosopher, Thales[58]. Emerging from work on the philosophical underpinning to the religion known as Christian Science, however, is evidence which disputes this almost universally held idea, and instead argues for Pherecydes as the true holder of this epithet, a figure from antiquity previously dismissed as both a mere mythologist *and* to have post-dated Thales.

In an obscure reference to a rare work on philosophy published at the end of the eighteenth century[59], there is, amongst much else, an absolutely unambiguous date for when Pherecydes was active as a philosopher, using the ordinal number of a specific Olympiad[60]. Translating this date into the familiar form (the method for which is explained later) gave the figure of 600 BCE, and given that Pherecydes lived to 85 years of age[61], a plausible estimate regarding the year of his birth would be approximately 640 BCE; Pherecydes was therefore likely to have been a professional philosopher before Thales had even been born.

Many other works also cast doubt on Pherecydes as being a mythologist, as much of what is attributed to him is similar to the work of Thales. If Pherecydes predated Thales, then he may have been the source for ideas wrongly attributed to Thales for 2500 years. History records that Pythagoras borrowed from Pherecydes; I argue that Thales did too.

Before embarking on a description of Pherecydes' life and work, a little contextualisation is needed. The group of philosophers which includes Thales is known as the Presocratics, and although, as one would expect, most members of the group lived before Socrates (b. 469BCE - d. 399BCE), somewhat counterintuitively, several were contemporaneous with him. Taken as a

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[58] e.g. Guthrie 1962, p.40
[59] Enfield 1792
[60] Ibid. p.385
[61] Ibid. p.386

whole, they form the first philosophical grouping[62], although decidedly not a single philosophical school, as there are very great differences in their systems of thought, even to the point of being diametrical opposites on individual topics[63]. A further difference is that their foci of interests varied greatly, and geographically they were also disparate, extending from Miletus, in the east, in what is now Turkey, to Iona, on the coast of modern Italy, in the west.

Despite coming to very different conclusions to each other, there are nevertheless clearly defined themes in common. All were interested in the ultimate nature of matter, and most were intrigued by the possibility that some of what we see – perhaps all of it - may be an illusion. Another shared theme is an interest in cosmology, i.e. the origin and development of the universe, which has only been considered part of physics since around the beginning of the twentieth century.

Thales lived and worked in Miletus around the first half of the Sixth Century BCE. In common with Anaximander and Anaximenes, his focus of professional interest were questions concerning the processes by which matter appears to change its properties, whether there is a 'foundational' state of matter from which all other forms result, and, if so, the nature of this fundamental material.

For Thales, water is the original substance. This may seem odd to Twenty-first century minds living in an era of nuclear physics, but it is not as strange as it at first appears. Water as ice is solid, melts to form a liquid, and this turns to a gas – steam – when heated further, thus representing the three familiar forms of matter – solid, liquid and gas - central to modern physical sciences. The fourth state of matter here – plasma – was of course unknown at that time.

Pythagoras was also a Presocratic philosopher: based initially in Samos (in what is now Turkey), he later practised in Croton, now part of southern Italy. He concurred with Thales regarding the fundamental nature of water. Although far better known than most of the Presocratics, it is nevertheless true that Pythagoras left no written record of his work, and crucially, neither did a *succession* of his followers. Consequently, although little of Thales' and Pherecydes' work has survived, what information we have is far more reliable and, relatively speaking, a very much greater quantity. For example, in the case of Pherecydes, around 100

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[62]Waterfield 2000, p. xii
[63] Sambursky 1956, p.4

text fragments of his books have reached the Twenty-first century, even as this may not seem very many to those not versed in works of this great age.

Pherecydes was born in Syros in what is now a Greek island in the Cyclades. History records him as having been one of the Seven Wise Men of Ancient Greece, that he had studied in Egypt and had acquired some of his knowledge from the Phoenicians[64]. Although little is known regarding his life, fortunately his ideas are better documented. First to write in prose rather than verse, he taught on the origin of the world, the immortality of the soul and its transmigration, and on the fundamental nature of matter[65].

In order to present Pherecydes as the first philosopher, two changes to his modal historical representation are needed. Firstly, and most obviously, it is necessary to demonstrate that he predated Thales. Secondly, his status as a mythologist, or at best a quasi-philosopher, must be replaced with his true historical identity as a philosopher.

For the first of these tasks, attempting to establish a date for Pherecydes' birth, the work published in 1792 by Enfield is extremely helpful[66]. Entitled *The History of Philosophy from the Earliest Period*, it presents a remarkably detailed overview of the entire history of philosophy up to that date in a little under 700 pages. Regarding Pherecydes, Enfield states that he 'flourished' in the first year of the 45th Olympiad[67], which, translated into the more familiar form for the year, places him in 600 BCE. This is based upon the first Olympiad having taken place in 776 BCE, and 44 periods of four years having elapsed between the first and 45th Olympiads, making 176 years. Subtracting 176 from 776 BCE gives the date 600 BCE. If we make the reasonable assumption that this was at the mid-point of his 85-year life[68], then the date of his birth would be approximately 642 BCE.

Turning to the second task, in order to demonstrate that Pherecydes was a philosopher (and also one of sufficient merit for Thales and Pythagoras to have 'borrowed' his work) it is necessary to recognise both that he used the 'symbolical' method of teaching and to fully understand its meaning in this context. In describing abstract principles and fundamental aspects of time and matter, Pherecydes, in common with others of the same era, used the names of gods as personifications of the concepts he wished to communicate. Burnet's *Early Greek Philosophy* [69] was for many years the most influential text on Presocratic philosophy in

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[64] Guthrie p.31
[65] Ibid. p.10
[66] Enfield 1792
[67] Ibid. p.385
[68] Ibid. p.386

the English language. In this highly respected work, Burnet explained that the term 'god' was used by the Presocratics in a way which modern individuals would not immediately recognise. Instead of a literal use, they are employed as representational personifications of abstract concepts and of natural phenomena.

Pherecydes clearly impressed those who were contemporaneous with him[70]. Many stories of remarkable exploits are attributed to him, such as predicting the sinking of a ship despite calm weather, and the prediction of an earthquake three days before its occurrence[71].

Aristotle made the statement that 'Pherecydes does not say everything in myths', and Jaeger concurs with Burnet in his assertion that deities in Pherecydes' work 'are merely a transparent archaistic veil which by no means obscures their purely speculative character.'[72]

As well as being the first to write in prose and the first to write philosophically, Pherecydes was also the first to find a solution to the cosmological problem of *creation ex nihilo.* i.e. creation out of nothing. In his major treatise, *Heptamychia,* he proposed three fundamental principles of the cosmos which have existed for all eternity[73].

Pherecydes was also the first to suggest the immortality of the soul, and the concept that souls can migrate from individual to individual, a process known as metempsychosis.[74]

Helena Blavatsky, the originator of the modern form of theosophy, made an important point concerning the misrepresentation of Pherecydes. She stated that 'Modern encyclopaedists have considered Pherecydes to be other than a philosopher on the spurious grounds that he lived at a time at which men […] had hardly begun the study of philosophy.'[75] This statement supports both Pherecydes as being a philosopher and his position in history being a very early one.

Vlastos explained that 'To set the contribution of Presocratic philosophy to the concept of the soul in its just historical context, we must see how here, as in its concept of god, it is its peculiar genius to transpose a religious idea into the medium of natural inquiry, transforming, but not destroying, its associated religious values.' Vlastos also clearly distinguishes between Hesiod's writing and that of Pherecydes, both in style and content, claiming that Hesiod's 'mode

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[69] Burnet 1920

[70] Kirk and Raven, p.48-72

[71] Ibid p.48-72

[72] Aristotle and Jaeger quoted in Vlastos 1952, p.105-107

[73] Vlastos 1947, p.109

[74] Enfield 1792, p.386

[75] Blavatsky 1920, p.283-285

of thought is mythical and his rationality primitive', whereas he saw 'the divinity of the *Physiologoi* [in Pherecydes' work] is independent of the cult-gods.'[76]

In his major work, the *Heptamychos* (also known as the *Theogonia* and the *Theocrasia*), Pherecydes set forth a number of principles. Firstly, he asserted the 'everlastingness' of time, which he termed 'Chronos', describing it as a 'self-creating principle of the universe.' Secondly, he taught that there exists a duality of heavenly and earthly elements in the soul. These, he claimed, connect with the 'original dualism' of two other basic principles, which he termed 'Zeus' (or 'Zas') and 'Chthonie'[77]. It is the obscure and symbolic nature of these terms which has contributed to history failing to recognise Pherecydes' true significance until now[78].

Pythagoras also maintained a belief in the transmigration of souls and in a dualistic concept of the universe. Given that Pherecydes is almost universally acknowledged as having been Pythagoras' teacher, it is difficult to argue against Pherecydes being his source for this idea.

Despite his notoriety, the information we have regarding Pythagoras is unreliable, and what little there is has a distinctly peculiar character. For example, Pythagoras held that everything is 'made of numbers', condemned anyone who ate beans and founded a religious sect. Pherecydes, therefore, emerges as better documented, more rational and, above all, more focussed than those who immediately followed him.

Moving forward briefly to the Nineteenth Century, Mary Baker Eddy's creation, the religion known as Christian Science, is based upon the fundamental principle that if God is wholly good and God is infinite in the sense that he/she is unlimited, then everything, without exception, must be good. Illness, pain and death must therefore be illusions. In researching this idea, the Presocratic philosophers Parmenides and Zeno emerged as of great significance.

Parmenides is famous for his argument that all we believe we see must be illusory. Beginning with the idea that a vacuum logically cannot exist on the logical and etymological basis that it is 'no thing', it follows that there are no gaps in the physical universe. The importance of this seemingly prosaic fact is very great indeed, as if an object – any object – is to move, the physical location of the place into which it is to move must first be vacated of the object currently present. This, in turn, necessitates the next space must be emptied for this new

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[76] Vlastos 1952, p.110,111
[77] Stamatellos 1997-2006
[78] Ibid. p.121,122

object to move. This process therefore occurs as an infinite sequence, which must be completed in order for the first object to move. As the 'last' object in any sequence has nowhere into which it can translate, it follows that the entire sequence of movements cannot take place, and therefore the first object cannot move. As this applies to all physical objects, it implies that movement must be an illusion, and that, according to Parmenides, we therefore cannot rely on our physical senses.

Although arguing from entirely different first principles, Eddy came to the same conclusions regarding the true nature of our physical senses, which, in her words, are merely 'generators of error' and of 'false beliefs.'

Other Presocratic philosophers also offered arguments supporting the idea that our senses are misleading. Zeno, the most well-known, was the originator of a number of famous paradoxes, which although interesting in and of themselves, are designed for a very specific purpose, namely, that at the very least we should treat our sense-data with caution.

The most famous of Zeno's paradoxes concerns Achilles and a tortoise. Achilles was famed for his running speed, and so in a race with a tortoise he gave the animal a generous head start. One might assume that despite this, Achilles would swiftly overtake the creature, but Zeno presented an ingenious argument that this could not actually take place. He explained that when Achilles caught up with the starting position of the tortoise, it would have moved forwards. No matter how little the amount, the point is that the tortoise would still be ahead in what we will call Position 2. The paradox becomes apparent when, a little later, Achilles reaches Position 2; the tortoise, of course, has moved a little further still, in other words, to Position 3. It is now possible to see the problem Achilles faces in Zeno's paradox: every time he catches up with the tortoise at a given position, it has advanced a little further; it appears from the argument that he can never catch up with the tortoise, let alone overtake it. This is completely at odds with our senses, which seem to communicate the visual impression of Achilles rapidly overtaking his competitor and winning the race. Zeno therefore argued that our senses must be in some way mistaken.

Other Presocratics were more focussed on the nature of the physical world. In a similar manner to Pherecydes, each concluded that there is a fundamental form of matter from which all other types are created by the actions of natural processes. This foundational substance, however, differed from philosopher to philosopher. For example, Anaximander considered it to

be an unknown substance, quintessential to the 'four elements', whereas Anaximenes held it to be air. Along with Pherecydes, Thales and Pythagoras concurred that it is water.

The only significant work written in English on Pherecydes in the whole of the twentieth century is that of Schibli[79]. Despite his wide reading, or perhaps because of its sheer volume, Schibli occasionally has what initially appear to be simply minor misunderstandings, but which in reality have major consequences for Pherecydes' reputation. For example, he claims that Plotinus is 'obviously mistaken' in connecting his three hypostases with Pherecydes' trinity of Zas, Chronos and Chthonie, but wrongly cites V.1.9.27-32[80] as Plotinus' source for this identification. Instead, V.1.9.27-32 is a direct reference to Pherecydes' name alongside that of Pythagoras, recognised by Diels as a testimony of Pherecydes from Plotinus.

In a remarkable demonstration of how synchronicity occurs even in the fields of philosophy and theology, the Russian author Helena Blavatsky published her first work on theosophy, the 1400-page *Isis Unveiled*[81] (which has no connection with the 21st Century use of the word) within two weeks of the first publication of Mary Baker Eddy's *Science and Health*[82], despite the fact that neither knew of the other's work. Blavatsky's theosophy draws on Neoplatonism, Hinduism and Buddhism, presenting the idea that there was once a worldwide, ancient religion and that it will one day be re-established. Theosophy asserts the existence of a single, divine 'Absolute', and that the universe is an emanation of this Absolute. Souls, therefore, as an emanation of the eternal infinite, are maintained after bodily death.

Even more intriguingly, despite arguing from completely different premises, and employing very dissimilar forms of argument, both Blavatsky and Eddy concluded that much of what we believe to be true of our universe must be illusory. Mary Baker Eddy went on to publish an astonishing total of 432 editions of her main work (which members of her religion were strongly encouraged to purchase), and over a dozen other titles in addition. Blavatsky followed up her initial publication with a further 1400-page, two-volume work entitled *The Secret Doctrine*[83], which continued the presentation of a variety of Eastern beliefs – mainly but not entirely Hindu – relating to the fundamental character of the universe.

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[79] Schibli 1990
[80] Stamatellos 2007, p.41
[81] Blavatsky 1875
[82] Eddy 1875
[83] Blavatsky 1877

For the purposes of this paper, many and, most importantly, highly varied sources have been consulted, and an overwhelmingly convincing case for Pherecydes having been the first Presocratic philosopher. Although this will may stimulate a considerable backlash from those seeking to reassert Thales as being in this position, the compelling, well-referenced argument herein suggests that the focus moves on to the consequences of Pherecydes being the first philosopher.

First and foremost, this paper shifts the beginning of philosophy back by several decades, well into the 7th Century BCE. This, in and of itself, is somewhat controversial, but asserting that Pherecydes was the first philosopher is likely to be the greater controversy. The wealth of evidence, however, in terms of its breadth of originators and its depth in history, is incontrovertible. Pherecydes was the first of the Presocratics, and if the Presocratics were the first philosophers, also the first philosopher of all.

2500 years is a long time to wait for justice. If this paper serves to prompt others into researching Pherecydes' work, and, of course, cementing his true place in history, then it will have served its purpose.

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Post-graduation wellbeing and the impact of social media:

A qualitative exploration using students from Keele University and Staffordshire University.

Scarlett Hunt

(MRes Social Sciences, Keele University)

Abstract

Graduating from university can be stressful for many students: uncertainty and stress surrounding career choice, financial status, and living arrangements are just some of the factors that can potentially pose mental challenges for graduates. Whilst the topic has been addressed quantitatively by academics, there is little research that looks into this topic in-depth. Therefore, this article aims to qualitatively explore how graduating from university can negatively impact students' mental wellbeing, whilst also considering how social media usage can contribute towards this. One-hour semi-structured interviews were conducted with a total of 9 graduates (M = 3, F = 6) aged 21 – 25 from two university institutions within North Staffordshire, United Kingdom. Participants were asked open-ended questions relating to their university experience, plans for graduation, how their university supported them after graduation, and their social media usage. Participants were recruited via a purposive sampling technique. Although this was a small-scale study, all participants shared similar experiences and thus, data saturation was reached. To generalise the findings to the wider UK student population, more research would be

needed with graduates nation-wide. After thematically analysing the data, results highlighted that 1) almost all of the participants did not feel supported by their university after graduation; 2) social media posts pressurise graduates to succeed; and 3) participants thought that universities needed to better support graduates with their next steps. The results demonstrate that many students suffer from poor mental wellbeing following graduation and many would benefit from further support relating to career choice, plans for after graduation, and follow-up consultations to check-in with graduates.

Key words: students; mental wellbeing; graduation; university; young adulthood; social media

The declining mental wellbeing of graduates

The declining mental wellbeing of students has become a prominent part of the recent political agenda over the last few years, with 15,395 UK first-year university students declaring mental health issues in 2015/16 – almost five times that reported in 2006/07.[84] A report produced by the Mental Health charity Student Minds , from a survey of 300 recent graduates, stated that 49% of graduates felt that their mental wellbeing had declined since leaving university and 44% felt that their friends were doing better than them.[85] The report urges universities to do more to better prepare students for the transitions that follow on from graduating from university, specifically in regard to entering the workplace.[86]

The World Health Organisation defines health as 'a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community'.[87] There are several dimensions to mental wellbeing, including self-esteem, anxiety, depression and life satisfaction.[88] Positive mental wellbeing can be crucial to helping young people succeed in the workplace, in order to aid them in developing positive relationships and maintaining good physical health.[89]

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[84] Craig Thorley. *Not by Degrees: Improving Student Mental Health in the UK's Universities*. (London: Institute for Public Policy Research, 2017), 4-14.

[85] Nicola Byrom and Vicky Reino. *Graduate Mental Wellbeing in the Workplace.* (London: Student Minds, 2017), 16-18.

[86] Byrom and Reino, *Graduate Mental Wellbeing in the Workplace,* 4.

[87] World Health Organisation, *Promoting mental health: concepts, emerging evidence, practice: summary report* (Geneva, 2014) 10.

[88] Clare Hawker, ''Physical activity and mental well-being in student nurses.' *Nurse Education Today* 32, no. 3 (2012): 325-331.

Not knowing what to do next, being unsuccessful in job applications, moving back home to parents, living with debt, losing touch with friends, and financial instability are just some of the factors that can engender poor mental wellbeing amongst graduates.[90] Many graduates feel a pressure to succeed after they leave university and secure a well-paid job, however, for those students who are yet to gain experience in the workplace, they can begin to feel hopeless and dissatisfied.[91] A survey of 374 undergraduate students, found that the top three concerns affecting students were pressure to succeed, academic performance and post-graduation plans.[92] This research recommended that universities do more to tailor their programmes to suit the needs of students in order to better prepare them for the future.[93]

Social media impact

Social media is known to take its toll upon students' (and young people's) mental wellbeing, with regard to anxiety, depression, 'FoMO' (fear of missing out), and poor self-esteem.[94] It is a platform where some users continuously post the 'best parts' of their lives, presenting a superficial image of themselves that would come across as desirable to their followers.[95] Research, for instance Vogel *et al.*(2016), suggests that the more time an individual spends on social media, the more at risk they are in terms of developing negative self-esteem through defining their image and ensuing self-worth in relation to others.[96] Young people are likely to adopt a 'compare and despair' attitude online, and this can lead users to believe that other individuals' lives are better than their own.[97] In relation to post-graduation wellbeing, this can be problematic as graduates may feel that everyone else has their lives 'figured out', which is not

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[89] Ivan Robertson and Cary Cooper, *Well-being: Productivity and happiness at work* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 3 – 13.

[90] Oliver Robinson, 'A Longitudinal Mixed-Methods Case Study of Quarter-Life Crisis During the Post-university Transition: Locked-Out and Locked-In Forms in Combination,' *Emerging Adulthood* 7, no.3 (2019): 167-179.

[91] Byrom and Reino, *Graduate Mental Wellbeing in the Workplace,* 27-29.

[92] Rebecca Beiter *et al*. 'The prevalence and correlates of depression, anxiety, and stress in a sample of college students,' *Journal of affective disorders* 173, (2015): 90-96.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Shirley Cramer and Becky Inkster. *#StatusOfMind: Social media and young people's mental health and well-being.* (London: Royal Society of Public Health, 2020), 8-12.

[95] Howard Gardner and Katie Davis, *The app generation: how today's youth navigate identity, intimacy and imagination in a digital world* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 190-180

[96] Erin Vogel et al. 'Social comparison, social media, and self-esteem,' *Psychology of Popular Media Culture* 3, no. 4 (2014): 206.

[97] Edward Noon. 'Compare and despair or compare and explore? Instagram social comparisons of ability and opinion predict adolescent identity development.' *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace* 14, no. 2 (2020).

always the case. Some individuals may use their peers' social media posts as a measure of success for their own lives.[98]

Methodology

Research Question

How does graduating from university impact students' mental wellbeing and how does social media contribute towards this?

Research Aims

To qualitatively explore how graduation can impact students' mental wellbeing and how social media can contribute to this.

Research Objectives

1) To explore how student's experience pre- and post-graduation.
2) To uncover the impact that social media may have on the mental wellbeing of graduates and how they navigate life post-graduation.
3) To understand how universities can better support students into their post-university career.

Semi-structured interviews were employed for this study as they allowed for the qualitative exploration of attitudes, values and beliefs of participants.[99] Open-ended questions were used to explore participants' thoughts and experiences relating to their university experience, plans for graduation, university support and their social media usage.

Participants for this study were recruited from Keele University and Staffordshire University. Participants were recruited through a purposive sampling technique, this being, using my own judgement to select those who I felt would provide me with the most insight into the topic being studied (Wallen and Fraenkel, 2001; Tongco, 2007). Participants were either graduates of Keele or Staffordshire University, or postgraduate students studying at either institution. Participants came from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds, including Psychology,

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[98] 'Social media and young people's mental health,' Mental Health Foundation, accessed 19 June, 2020, https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/blog/social-media-and-young-peoples-mental-health

[99] Elaine Wethington and Meghan McDarby, 'Interview methods (structured, semistructured, unstructured),' *The Encyclopedia of Adulthood and Aging.* (2015): 1-5.

Criminology, Sociology, Economics and Finance, International Politics, Policing and Business Enterprise. In total, 9 participants, aged 21 – 25, took part in this study (M = 3, F = 6).

The study is limited in its design by scale, as the student sample was restricted to 9 participants from two institutions in North Staffordshire'; as such, wider generalisations to the entire UK student population cannot be made. However, all participants shared similar experiences in relation to their mental wellbeing after university, including in terms of how social media affected their wellbeing, and how they thought their universities could have better supported them, therefore, data saturation was reached.[100]

To analyse the interview data, I used a thematic analysis (TA) approach. TA enables the researcher to identify patterns within and across data in relation to participants' lived experience, views, perspectives, behaviour, and practices.[101] I followed Braun and Clarke's six-step guide for thematic analysis, this included:

- Step 1: Become familiar with the data
- Step 2: Generate initial codes
- Step 3: Search for themes
- Step 4: Review themes
- Step 5: Define themes
- Step 6: Write-up.[102]

Findings and Discussion

<u>Career Planning</u>

Results highlighted that graduates who had a clear idea of the career they wanted to pursue suffered less from poor mental wellbeing than graduates who were uncertain. Out of the four participants who were not sure what they wanted to do after graduation, two went on to postgraduate study and two gained employment in an 'unsatisfying' job role.

Many participants felt underwhelmed when they graduated, due to feeling that their degree did not qualify them for a specific job role or industry'. Concerns were raised regarding

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[100] Patricia Fusch and Lawrence Ness. 'Are we there yet? Data saturation in qualitative research.' *The qualitative report* 20, no. 9 (2015): 1408.

[101] Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke. 'Using thematic analysis in psychology.' *Qualitative research in psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77-101.

[102] Ibid.

'broader' disciplinary programs, such as Sociology, Criminology, Psychology, and English, as they do not qualify you for a particular profession, unlike programs in Policing or Midwifery.

> 'I was questioning my degree choice because I didn't feel qualified as anything at an undergraduate level. People who go to university to study midwifery graduate and are qualified as a midwife, they have gained theoretical and practical skills. People who go to university to study psychology and criminology at an undergraduate level don't have a direct field to go into, they aren't particularly qualified to do anything at undergraduate level, this is definitely something I found daunting.'
>
> *Staffordshire University Psychology and Criminology Graduate*

It is possible to at least provisionally infer from this that students who are studying programs considered 'broader' would perhaps benefit from gaining a work experience placement or a placement year during their studies. This would allow students to gain some skills outside of academia and give them experience of the workplace – better preparing them for the job search after graduation. Indeed, many HUMSS courses (including those offered at Keele) offer placement programmes for precisely this reason. It is also worth noting the value of the transferable skills potentially gained through, or constituting   part of the official 'offer' around, these programmes.

Mental Wellbeing

The majority of participants within this study stated that they suffered from poor mental wellbeing after graduating from university. Factors contributing towards poor mental wellbeing included unsuccessful job applications, changes in living arrangements, financial instability, comparisons made via social media, and uncertainty surrounding future career prospects.

Unemployment and job insecurity were common factors affecting most participants' mental wellbeing. Being unsuccessful in job applications led some participants to feel that their degree was 'worthless'. Others, who went on to pursue postgraduate study, worried about the availability of employment opportunities once they finished their degree, and wondered whether they would be good enough to pursue professional careers within fields relating to their discipline or through more generalised graduate schemes.

'I have my heart set on getting an academic research job [...] but I'm constantly worried that I'm not good enough [...]I know I have the skillset and I know I'm capable of it, but I still don't feel like I'm good enough.'

Staffordshire University Sociology Graduate

'Even though I did really well in my degree and got a First, I still think what if I'm not very good at the job, or what if I don't enjoy it.'

Keele University Economics and Finance Graduate

Moving back home to parents, changes in financial status and losing touch with friends also seemed to play a big part in the deterioration of graduates' mental wellbeing. As one Graduate put it:

'When I graduated, a few months after that, I was probably the most depressed I've been for good long while [...] I'd gone back from living independently to living with my parents which is always a rough transition. I had no income, because when I left University, I left my jobs. I was applying for hundreds of jobs, but never hearing anything back. You know, you don't get your loan anymore, so you don't know when the next bit of money's coming in. You've left all your friends; you've left your routine.'

Staffordshire University Criminology Graduate

Social media also negatively impacted participants' mental wellbeing to a degree. Many participants stated that seeing peers post their achievements on social media, such as securing a job, buying a house, or travelling, made graduates feel negatively about themselves. From these findings, acknowledging in advance their limited scope, it is possible to surmise that graduates are more likely than not predisposed to adopt a 'compare and despair' attitude when using social media and may use their peers' posts as a measure of success for their own achievements[103.]. In the words of one Keele Graduate:

'I think that seeing how successful some people have been after graduating from university, such as getting a post-graduate job, can negatively affect some people who

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[103] Noon, 'Compare and despair or compare and explore? Instagram social comparisons of ability and opinion predict adolescent identity development.'

may have been applying for a post-graduate job for some time. I think this can lead to low self-esteem, and anxiety.'

Keele University Psychology Graduate

Despite this, many participants vocalised that social media can be used positively. For example, Noon's suggests that social media allows young people to communicate and easily stay connected with peers, family and friends online, which could be argued to decrease the loneliness felt by graduates after moving back in with parents.[104] Social media is also a source for information as well as a platform where graduates can seek help and advice from peers and specialist services as well as potential employers. Many participants suggested that universities could utilise social media to minimise the issue of post-graduation wellbeing by promoting careers advice, signposting to services, and using social media as a platform for students to get in touch. Responses such as the one below illustrate this tendency:

'I think social media can always be used positively. There are already so many pages promoting health and wellbeing. But if this is something that is promoted through the university's social media accounts then perhaps it is more likely that students will feel that it's tailored towards them.'

Keele University Economics and Finance Graduate

<u>University Support</u>

Results showed that the vast majority of participants did not feel that their university supported them during the transitions that follow leaving university. Many participants felt that there was 'no real follow-up' after graduation and students were left to figure things out for themselves. Additional research into the strengths and challenges of universities completing a post-graduation follow-up would be beneficial for future research into this topic.

'It was like you handed in your assignments, you get your graduation, you get your certificate and then that's that. There's no real follow up.'

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[104] Gwenn O'Keefe, and Kathleen Clarke-Pearson. 'The impact of social media on children, adolescents, and families.' *Pediatrics* 127, no. 4 (2011): 800-804.

Staffordshire University Criminology Graduate

Numerous students felt unprepared for the world outside of university and felt that, whilst they had gained academic skills from their course, they lacked the practical experience and skills needed for many professions. Results corresponded with ideas discussed in the literature from larger-scale studies, such as that pressure to succeed and post-graduation plans were among three of the top concerns affecting graduates.[105] Participants felt that their universities could have supported them more in regard to gaining work experience, planning for the future and support gaining employment:

'I don't feel like universities prepare us for the outside world so maybe there could be more support in terms of planning for the future. This could include careers advice, career fairs, more professional networking events, etc.'

Staffordshire University Sociology Graduate

'I didn't expect to still be in a job I saw as temporary almost 10 months later. I feel as though I have gained a first-class university degree to just return to my college job, a job that I don't need qualifications for and a job that I am not benefitting from in terms of gaining relevant work experience.'

Staffordshire University Psychology and Criminology Graduate

Participants felt that universities needed to be more transparent about the realities of life after graduation. Some participants stated that the content universities share on their social media pages, such as alumni success stories, can make graduates feel worse about themselves if they have not achieved similar success. Participants felt that universities needed to show the realities of life after graduation and share stories from graduates who took longer to secure their ideal position and how they got to that point:

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[105] Beiter et al, 'The prevalence and correlates of depression, anxiety, and stress in a sample of college students', 90.

'I think universities should make students aware that they aren't necessarily going to graduate and walk straight into their dream job and that's ok. I think they should also focus on what skills and experiences they have gained outside of their academic studies and how these life experiences can be used in their careers.'

Staffordshire University Psychology and Criminology Graduate

Most participants felt that a simple welfare check from universities once students had graduated would have been extremely beneficial. Previous research states that universities need to do more to support students with the transition out of university.[106] A welfare check which aims to check-in on students regarding their health, wellbeing and graduation plans could improve post-graduation wellbeing by informing graduates of the services that are available to them and where they can seek help. As one Graduate articulated it:

'I think even things as little as an email from universities just asking if you're ok would go such a long way. I don't think support from student services should just stop as soon as you graduate [...] universities should definitely have a responsibility to check on their alumni.'

Keele University Economics and Finance Graduate

Conclusion

As a result of the completion of the literature review and empirical research with 9 recent graduates, it is evident that graduating from university can considerably affect graduates' mental wellbeing and social media plays a significant role in this. Graduating from university affected participants' mental wellbeing due to a number of factors, including job insecurity, lack of work experience, social media comparisons (compare and despair attitudes), changes in living arrangements, financial instability, and career choice.

Whilst previous research states that universities need to do more to better support their students, this research is unclear as to what exact support is needed.[107]Findings from this study contribute to knowledge regarding what support students would like to receive from their university, such as,

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[106] Byrom and Reino, Graduate Mental Wellbeing in the Workplace, p.4.
[107] Ibid.

1. Positive use of social media to support graduates, perhaps in regard to career planning, where to seek support and more transparency about life post-university.
2. Welfare checks with graduates post-university to check-in with them regarding their transition into the workplace and/or whether they need any additional support.
3. Opportunities for work experience during university studies to enhance employability skills and work readiness. This would also potentially benefit young people's mental wellbeing regarding entering the workplace.

This research has highlighted the prevalence of the issue of poor mental wellbeing after graduating from university and how social media has contributed towards this. As this study was conducted with only 9 graduates from two universities in North Staffordshire, the findings on their own cannot be fully generalised to the wider North Staffordshire student population, let alone the UK student population. A larger-scale study with more participants from universities across the UK would enable the findings to be generalisable to the UK student population and would allow for a greater insight into the issue. A longitudinal study would also be beneficial as it would allow the researcher to assess how different students navigate their life after graduation, taking into consideration both personal and social factors.

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Notes on Contributors

NICHOLAS SELDEN is a fourth-year F/T PhD in Philosophy researching the metaphysical idealism of Mary Baker Eddy.He is the holder of five degrees so far, spanning eight subjects: computer science, electronics, pure mathematics, psychology, sociology, religious studies and philosophy, and worked as a scientist, mathematician and social scientist until before he realised that only philosophy could tackle the really interesting questions. This is Nicholas' second *Under Construction* article.

SCARLETT HUNT is a Master of Research (social sciences) student at Keele University. She has recently completed her undergraduate degree at Staffordshire University in Sociology. Her research interests are surrounding student mental wellbeing and how educational institutions can better support their students in relation to a range of issues. She has previously conducted and assisted with various research projects and have worked with a range of individuals, including young people, substance misusers, offenders and members of the local community. After my degree, Scarlett hopes to pursue a career that will allow me to support students in an educational setting.

EDWARD HARDIMAN is a first year history PhD student at Keele being supervised by Dr Nicholas Seager, Professor Alannah Tomkins, and Robert Baxter head archivist at Carlisle Archives. He has a BA in history from the University of Hull and an MA in Early Modern History from The University of York. His PhD focuses on the private coded diaries of the barrister Andrew Hudleston (1734-1822). Hudleston spends much of his time writing about his life and experiences both in London and Cumbria, therefore the thesis will focus on sociability in Britain between 1770-1795.

LOUISE JONES (BA Hons, MSc) is a PhD candidate at Keele University researching in Media and Culture. Her most recent work is on Conflict Images and 'privileged status' of various media forms in reporting on war and conflicts.

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