Who will I be when I retire? Introducing a Lacanian typology at the intersection of present identity work and future narratives of the retired self

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Abstract

The study introduces a framework by which insights from Lacanian psychoanalysis can be employed to offer a more nuanced understanding of how retirement is currently being reinvented. Building on an analysis of 49 stories in which early-career employees describe their retirement aspirations, the study explores the complexities of how individuals draw on retirement discourse to articulate who they are and what they want. The analysis suggests that the narrative construction of retirement is not only a space for becoming further attached to fantasies that align identity with existing power structures but also a space in which to work through such attachments and open up identity in transformative ways. The study contributes novel perspectives on the effects of the contradictions in current retirement discourse at the interstice of identity, discourse and power, offering new avenues for research on retirement and identity.

Keywords

Identity, Lacan, narratives, psychoanalysis, retirement

Introduction

Retirement, as the traditional end to and reward for a lifetime of working, is increasingly rare (Phillipson, 2012). Many employees do not retire at all and/or work in different arrangements, spanning full and part-time employment (Sargent et al., 2012: 8). Retirement is now dominated by a number of master narratives that stress the importance of economic value creation and the benefits of retaining a producer identity, as someone who derives status and self-esteem from contributing economic value to society (Sargent et al., 2012; Smith and Dougherty, 2012). Master narratives are themes identified in research on how individuals narrate their retirement that are repeated and shared by many individuals (Smith and Dougherty, 2012). These master narratives seem to promote the idea that retiring from work leads to social marginalization, which can only be avoided if one stays engaged in work, remaining a contributing member of society (Smith and Dougherty, 2012). Traditional retirement, as a leisurely and financially-secured time of life, is instead relegated to inducing a consumer identity, as someone who derives status and self-esteem from being able to purchase goods and services. The latter may be enjoyed but is also risky as it leads to purposelessness and physical decline (Sargent et al., 2012). Such changing meanings of retirement come alongside the general erosion of working conditions, including declining wages and benefits, increasing financial pressures and precarious employment arrangements (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler, 2000: 904). As more individuals compete for fewer jobs chasing the elusive state of being employable (Cremin, 2009), the desirability of a producer identity is further enhanced.

The research question inspiring the present investigation is whether individuals, for all these reasons, now no longer desire retirement or construct it exclusively to center on work. The aim is to investigate what fantasmatic scenarios are created about retirement by individuals for

whom retirement is still very distant, and how, both consciously and unconsciously, individuals respond to the pressure to adopt a producer identity. Based on a Lacanian approach, significant for understanding the complexities of subjectivity in organizations (Ekman, 2013; Stavrakakis, 2008), the goal is to obtain further insight into how retirement discourse connects with identity work, and what role fantasies might play in the process. The idea of a fundamental fantasy, a key concept in Lacanian work, refers to a general expectation about finding what one is looking for in life, a dream of complete fulfillment impossible to realize (Muhr and Kirkegaard, 2013: 117), often articulated in a number of specific fantasmatic scenarios (Glynos, 2010: 29).

An analysis of 49 stories, in which early-career employees describe their dreams and fears of retirement, reveals that how narrators draw on the resources offered by retirement discourse is a great deal more complex than might be expected, and by no means as straightforward as confining everyone to a producer identity. Indeed, when exploring the narratives through various layers of a Lacanian typology, it emerges that there are several stances to be taken toward who one might be when it comes to retirement. Moreover, there is space to contest identities promoted by dominant discourses, or master narratives, and to use the narration of retirement as an exercise of working through fantasies that might tie individuals further to such discourses while opening up identity work in transformative ways (Ekman, 2013: 1161).

In developing this perspective, the present study hopes to make contributions to retirement as well as identity research. First, it seeks to offer insights into how the changing nature of retirement is subjectively experienced by specific individuals, which has not been explored widely in prior retirement research (for an exception see Smith and Dougherty, 2012). Second, it explores how retirement discourse informs identity work, especially in view of less conscious dynamics, which prior research has not taken into consideration (e.g. Smith and Dougherty, 2012). Third, it

introduces a Lacanian typology which elucidates how retirement discourse is mapped on to struggles with unconscious dimensions of the self and how power operates in and through them. Finally, the study hopes to outline the implications of this approach and how the typology might be used in future research on retirement and identity.

The changing nature of retirement

Retirement is a social construct “shaped throughout the life course” (Post et al., 2012: 88) and important to how individuals construct their identities prior to and after their working lives (Smith and Dougherty, 2012: 459). While, since the 19th century, retirement has been conceived of as a way to terminate paid work while having an income, this now applies only to about half of today’s employees and is expected to continue to be less prevalent (Phillipson, 2012). For a period, governmental policies in wealthier industrialized nations, traditional retirement, now also known as gateway retirement (Phillipson, 2012), was even encouraged at increasingly earlier ages, and was promoted as not only a well-deserved reward for a lifetime of work but also with promises and aspirational visions about a wonderful and active retirement (Moulaert and Biggs, 2012). Yet, today such promises are being retracted, replaced by governmental policies aimed at further extending working lives (Moulaert and Biggs, 2012; Phillipson, 2012).

All of this has “challenged individuals’ conceptions of what retirement is” (Sargent et al., 2012: 8). As part of what some have called a “fundamental reinvention of retirement” (Sargent et al., 2012: 15) individuals now struggle with a number of tensions and uncertainties about “whether they want to or can afford to retire, and if they do, how they want to spend the remaining time they have in life” (Sargent et al., 2012: 8). While some have noted on a more critical note that employees are now facing a return to pre-19th century conditions having to work until they “drop” (Simpson

et al., 2012: 433), others describe this in a more positive light as promoting more individual choices and active ageing (Moulaert and Biggs, 2012). In any event, the term retirement now includes a continuum of circumstances from retirement as just another stage of one's career (Lytle, Foley and Cotter, 2015: 185) to a number of more or less full-time, flexible, transitional or permanent work arrangements (Sargent et al., 2012: 8), reflecting a complex interplay of structural conditions and individual choices (Phillipson, 2012: 146).

Consequently, narratively constructing retirement involves the complex interplay of a number of contradictory discourses, which has implications for power relations in society (Smith and Dougherty, 2012: 458). Employees face increasing pressures to extend their working lives (Moulaert and Biggs, 2012: 24) and dominant discourses that encourage them to assume a producer identity (Sargent et al., 2012). The latter stresses being active and purposeful through work and doing everything possible to remain an attractive labor commodity. It also suggests that through work individuals can avoid financial insecurity and physical decline, and the resulting loss of status and social marginalization. Moreover, by having a producer identity, individuals can avoid experiencing boredom and loss of purpose and therefore live a happier and healthier life. More traditional notions of retirement, in turn, are associated with a less-valued consumer identity in which one enjoys freedom and autonomy, being financially independent, having time for family, leisure, hobbies and travel (Sargent et al., 2012). Such discourses seem to promote the continuation of work as a path to self-fulfillment and impose cultural norms on local narratives that homogenize and oversimplify social reality (Smith and Dougherty, 2012: 458).

They may also obscure a common reality for older workers relegated to low-pay/low-skill jobs that seem rather less fulfilling (Riach, 2007: 1718) and simultaneously instrumentalize and idealize the self (Simpson et al., 2012: 439) in that economic value creation becomes the highest

good for self-construction and work the only path to fulfillment. This may align the self with a neo-liberal rationality (Moulaert and Biggs, 2012: 25) and existing ideologies and structural conditions privileging economic value creation (Loretto and Vickerstaff, 2012: 80). Therefore, discourses of retirement are said to have a hegemonic, or dominating, effect on individuals (Moulaert and Biggs, 2012: 35) promoting the empty promise that we have to continue to find meaning and purpose in work while submitting to capitalist objectives (Hoedemakers, 2009).

But there may also be space for resistance (Ekman, 2013: 1161) in the sense that dominant discourses can be contested and unsettled (Smith and Dougherty, 2012: 472). Specifically, retirement may also be conceived of as a space to discover new meanings and purposes (Lytle et al., 2015: 192) as well as “new life course patterns reflecting individualized identities” (Martin and Lee, 2015: 23). While it seems clear that all of this has an impact on identity and relations of power in society (Smith and Dougherty, 2012: 458), it is currently less clear just exactly how this happens, what such complexities mean and how they may be experienced subjectively. To get a better sense of this, I now turn to a body of work that offers more purchase on the nuances of identity work in the context of discourse, power and the less conscious dynamics of subjectivity (Ekman, 2013: 1163).

A Lacanian typology

Lacanian psychoanalysis has been advanced as a perspective that helps to untangle the complexities of identity work (Knights and Clarke, 2014: 350). It has also been highlighted as crucial for investigating the complexities “of our political projects and social choices” (Stavrakakis, 2008: 1054). Specifically, the role of unconscious processes and fantasies has been underlined as significant for understanding why we may comply with certain discourses and power

relations, but also how there is a “margin of freedom” (Stavrakakis, 2008: 1041) in which we can recognize complicity in doing so. While Lacanian ideas are intentionally left to be ambiguous (Bowie, 1991), I will attempt to offer an overview that is as accessible as possible in introducing key concepts for a typology and a more nuanced analysis of the empirical material.

From a Lacanian perspective, identity work can be understood as a defense against a foundational sense of incompleteness (West et al., 2016: 7). As individuals articulate who they are and what they want, they are merely expressing an illusion (Fink, 1995: 7), or a construction in the imaginary order (Lacan, 1977a: 236). This order is imaginary because self-constructions are always taking place within language, or what Lacan calls the symbolic order (Lacan, 1977a: 206). The latter represents the social order and conventions that are not of our own making and routinely fail to articulate in any real way who we are and what we want (Vidaillet and Gamot, 2015: 991). The symbolic order is always missing the real (Lacan, 1988: 219). The real, or what we might want to get to, is linked to a more immediate experience of the world we had prior to language acquisition, buried in our unconscious to which we do not have access (Byrne and Healy, 2006: 243). Consequently, we are using language to chase something that is outside of it, giving rise to imaginary constructions in which we cling to the illusion that we can get to the real if we just try hard enough (Stavrakakis, 2008: 1041). This is also known as the fundamental fantasy that we can return to the real and feel fulfilled (Byrne and Healy, 2006: 243).

This fantasy is a general expectation about what we can hope for in life, rather than a specific fantasmatic scenario, through which it might be articulated (Glynos, 2010: 29). It is maintained when we continue to gloss over that we never get “it” or what we really want (Lacan, 1977b: 268) and we continue, instead, to feel a sense of incompleteness (Muhr and Kirkegaard, 2013), or what Lacan refers to as fundamental lack (Lacan, 1977a: 218). Identity work is a response

to this lack (Vidaillet and Gamot, 2015: 991, which appears all the time in our narrations, in the many contradictions and gaps of conscious speech (Benvenuto and Kennedy, 1986: 13) and our all-too-common experience that what we thought would make us fulfilled fails to do so (Byrne and Healy, 2006: 243).

This lack of fulfillment also makes us vulnerable to control by others (Roberts, 2005) as we latch on to discourses that seem to cover our underlying lack (Byrne and Healy, 2006: 243). Whether they are actually enjoyable or not, we use discursive resources (Clarke, Brown and Hope Hailey, 2009) to maintain the fantasy that we can get to the real and become a whole, non-lacking person. For instance, we might latch onto discourses of fulfillment through work even if we routinely experience this as an empty promise (Hoedemakers, 2009). As a result, we might work ever harder to meet other-imposed, for example managerial, ideals defining who we should be and what we should want, to maintain the fantasy that eventually we will find what we are looking for. Or we might construct visions of an authentic self doing something beyond working only to maintain behavior leaving us completely absorbed by work (Muhr and Kirkegaard, 2013). We become more vulnerable to being dominated by discourses because we fail to acknowledge their contradictions in order to cover over our lack (Byrne and Healy, 2006: 243).

The latter has been identified as an imaginary stance toward lack, or the continuous striving to use imaginary constructions of the self to cover lack over (Vanheule, Lievrouw and Verhaeghe, 2003). This often involves an ideological logic in which disappointments, or the surfacing of lack, are always covered over by fantasmatic scenarios, so that, as one fantasmatic hope is dashed, it is replaced quickly by another (Ekman, 2013: 1178). However, this process is not inevitable and there is another stance one can take. The latter stance has been identified as an ethical logic (Ekman, 2013: 1178) in which lack is not immediately covered over, but rather imaginary failures

and disappointments are used to work through the impossibility of maintaining the fundamental fantasy of wholeness (Fink, 2004: 156). The latter is also known as a symbolic stance, where the surfacing of lack as contradictions, in who we say we are or what we want, can creatively transform how we relate to ourselves and others (Vanheule et al., 2003).

In an imaginary stance we seek to fix our identity and therefore seem locked into certain patterns by which others validate this identity. Whereas in a symbolic stance we can recognize that our inability to fix who we are, what we want and how others relate to us, are not only necessary byproducts of the missing real in the symbolic but also not personal shortcomings we can overcome. Identity narratives that are not fixed to certain potentially other-imposed ideals, or prescribed ways for how we should be (Thompson and Willmott, 2015: 487), also allow us to recognize the creative potential of disappointment, as a reminder that we may not get what we want but can enjoy the experiences and energy generated along the way (Lacan, 1988: 210). Therefore, a symbolic stance and an ethical logic do not free us from the imaginary, as this is structurally impossible (Lacan, 1977a: 218). But they do allow us to explore the contradictions in every discourse as a “margin of freedom” (Stavarakakis, 2008: 1055) in which we can continue the process, which may never finish, of working through our fantasy that we can arrive at self-completion and fulfillment (Hoedemakers, 2009: 194).

It is from this perspective, that retirement discourse can be explored as not only relevant for how individuals construct identities but also what positions may be taken with regard to their contradictions. As we have seen, retirement discourse contains a number of contradictions as to what future life is envisioned and how individuals should strive to be. From consumer to producer identities, to being carefree while still being a valued and contributing member of society, retirement discourse seems to contain a number of fissures in which to both maintain and work

through the fantasy that a complete self can be attained. Some have argued that this necessarily imposes a more hegemonic logic on individuals by which a producer identity and economic value creation are more valued than a consumer identity. The present study investigates whether this is so, but also whether there is a space in which some of these contradictions can inspire different discursive movements, such as from an ideological, more imaginary stance toward an ethical, more symbolic stance.

To accomplish this, I will follow a Lacanian typology moving into interrelated and progressively deeper layers of exploration, Table 1. Along this typology I will explore how retirement discourse is drawn on to construct imaginary selves and specific fantasmatic scenarios; how these surface underlying lack; and what positions may be taken toward it. I will also examine how identities are consciously constructed from retirement discourse and how unconscious dynamics affect this process. Finally, I analyze how power operates through these discourses in light of unconscious dynamics and positions taken toward fundamental fantasies.

Insert Table 1 about here

Empirical material and interpretation

As the aim of the study is to examine how constructions of a future retired self furnish discursive resources for identity work in the present, I employed purposeful sampling (Glaser, 1978) to find individuals for whom retirement is well in the future, as an anticipatory group (Smith and Dougherty, 2012: 462). Specifically, I chose to focus on early-career employees because I

wanted retirement to be a future aspiration more than a plannable reality. I was interested in imaginings and dreams of retirement to see if they had any relevance for identity work, not as a specific action plan, but a wide-open space in which to play with different self-constructions. This is why, I also employed storytelling to engage with respondents as a common type of qualitative research (Ollerenshaw and Creswell, 2002: 329) used effectively to crystallize psychoanalytically-informed themes (Gabriel, 1997: 318; Vince and Mazen, 2014: 198). The term story is used here interchangeably with narrative as a way to access “human territory” (Gabriel, 1991: 873) in view of less conscious dynamics and “the rights of desire and fantasy” (Gabriel, 1995: 498).

I began with alumni from my US institution, many of whom were recent graduates working in the energy sector, and then, in snowball fashion (Pole and Lampard, 2002), used contacts created through this network to find other participants who self-identify as early-career employees across a number of industries. While this starting point may have affected the data, the goal was to connect to self-identified early-career employees without focusing on any particular industry with particular retirement practices or expectations. The only criteria used were that respondents self-identify as being in their early careers, currently working and interested in sharing their thoughts on retirement. Respondents were intentionally not chosen just from one organization or profession, as I was interested in a broad picture of various retirement stories. They were however chosen from one particular context, namely the US, which reflects well the often-contradictory discourses and master narratives identified in prior research (Smith and Dougherty, 2012). In the US, there are increasing insecurities about employment and retirement with major economic and policy changes promoting both the expectation of retirement, as part of the American Dream to get rewarded for one’s achievements, as well as pressures to delay retirement encouraging older

workers to re-enter the workforce (Phillipson, 2012; Post et al., 2012; Riach, 2007; Sargent et al., 2012; Smith and Dougherty, 2012).

In view of such complexities, I tried to be a “fellow traveler” (Gabriel, 1995: 481) to participants to benefit from the reflective potential of stories in light of unconscious dynamics (Gabriel, 1995: 483). I signaled my interest in subjective meaning making (Gabriel, 1991: 871) and did not ask narrators specific questions or provide any definitions. Instead, narrators were asked to share any narrative about how they envisioned their retirement. Forty-nine stories written by participants were collected via email. Self-written stories have been used in prior research to tease out less conscious dynamics (Gabriel, 2000) and electronic collection, in general (Kiewitz et al., 2009: 811), and email collection in particular (Driver, 2017), have been found to be an effective way to obtain data. While this method may limit the study to obtaining insights about individuals comfortable communicating via this medium, the goal, as I will explain further below, was not to provide generalizable findings but rather a snapshot of particular narratives. Thirty-five narrators are male, fourteen female. Positions held cross a wide sector of industries such as hospitality, financial services, energy, consulting, transportation, manufacturing, healthcare, and public services. Identifying information has been removed from the narratives, cited by numbers from 1 to 49.

Qualitative narrative inquiry (Morison and Macleod, 2013; Ollerenshaw and Creswell, 2002; Sermijn, Devlieger and Loots, 2008; Rogan and De Kock, 2005) was employed, as a broad framework, to analyze the narratives. This framework is well suited to working with texts from a Lacanian perspective (Parker, 2005) as it offers space to explore how subjectivity is constructed (Wolgemuth and Donohue, 2006) while avoiding objectification (Tuck and Yang, 2014: 814). The analysis proceeded in iterative fashion and from different perspectives (Alvesson and Skoldberg,

2000: 289) going back and forth between the narratives and relevant literature (Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Eisenhardt, 1989). I moved reflexively from an empirical approach focused on “descriptive coding” (Lilius et al., 2011: 878) in which I identified respondents’ gender and industry, to a more hermeneutic approach focused on “broader interpretive questions” (Lilius et al., 2011: 878), such as what aspirations respondents were describing, toward a more critical approach focusing on how narrators more or less comply with master narratives of retirement. This was followed by a postmodern approach (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000: 289) underlining identity work as fragmented and malleable (Wolgemuth and Donohue, 2006). This included exploring the narratives from a Lacanian perspective focusing on imaginary constructions and fantasies (Parker, 2005). The analysis concluded by reviewing “results from the application of all the analytical methods” (Rogan and De Kock, 2005: 643) and summarizing them into key themes (Rogan and De Kock, 2005: 643).

While the analysis aims at offering interesting new arguments in the ongoing debate (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000: 276) to better understand retirement discourse in the context of identity work (Smith and Dougherty, 2012: 474), it is constrained by being an “incomplete, contingent and corrigible activity” (Parker, 2005: 176). Therefore, it has to confine itself to being a “creative endeavor” (Ybema, Keenoy and Oswick, 2009: 316) underlining that the following reading of the narratives is only one among many possibilities (Vince and Mazen, 2014: 197). The goal is to engage with the narratives as linguistic struggles (Hoedemaekers and Keegan, 2010: 1028), not to reveal the real, but highlight how subjects organize signifiers in fascinating ways (Parker, 2005: 167). Consequently, the excerpts I analyze here were not chosen to convey a generalizable truth and to reduce the subjectivity of respondents to objective findings (Tuck and Yang, 2014). Rather they were chosen to illustrate key points of a Lacanian approach. Specifically,

I would like to use the following excerpts to illustrate a Lacanian typology that can be used to explore how discursive resources, drawn from retirement discourse for instance, are employed in identity work, and how this in turn informs relations of power. This typology involves firstly how identity is constructed within the triad of the imaginary, the symbolic and the real (Bowie, 1991: 98); secondly, how fantasy is maintained in the face of lack and, finally, how power therefore operates through discourse via different kinds of identity work.

The Imaginary, the symbolic and the real

I begin by exploring the narratives with regard to how the imaginary self may be constructed from discursive resources as a way to respond to the missing real in the symbolic. The latter may be illustrated in Linda's story who works as a retail employee and makes her own jewelry to sell in the store as well:

“Retirement is something I looked forward to when I was younger before I knew what I wanted to do for a career. Now that I have decided what I want to do, I do not think I will ever be retiring...If I ever were to retire from my job it would be because I was physically unable to continue doing it...Jewelry making has been part of my life plan since I was twelve years old. It has become part of who I am. I feel like retiring would be leaving a part of me behind. I honestly cannot see myself being happy if I retired. I would always feel a little like I'm missing a part of myself (16).”

Here we see the narrator constructing an imaginary self from retirement discourse. Retirement is articulated in the traditional sense as the end of a career and no longer working. This,

Linda says, is something she used to think was desirable, but now is less desirable as her career has begun. Although, she is in jewelry retail and presumably makes jewelry only as one part of this, this contradiction pointing perhaps to a missing real is not acknowledged. Instead, retirement becomes a way to ascertain that Linda is not experiencing any missing real. Indeed, retirement discourse provides resources to cover over any potential lack of finding what she may be looking for. Retirement discourse allows her to emphasize that she has already found the real. She has found who she is, a jewelry-maker, and what she wants, and this also makes her happy. Even though she says that by retiring she would be missing only a part of herself, potentially implying that other parts of herself might be quite happy without jewelry making, this gap is also covered over. In Linda's imaginary construction, retirement discourse provides a symbolic order in which nothing is missing. She can articulate who she is and obtain precisely what she wants.

A similar dynamic comes into view in the next narrative. Adam is an entry-level employee in the manufacturing sector:

"I imagine retirement will be fairly boring if I can't find something to occupy my time...One of my fantasies about retirement is owning at least three cars...Some of my concerns about retirement involve being too old to truly enjoy the things that I've worked so long to be able to do. I hope in my retirement I can still participate in some of the activities that I do now. Another of my concerns for retirement involves how I will be perceived and I will perceive myself as a member of society that does not work...I have a strong propensity for being hard on myself for ridiculous reasons...I imagine retirement to be very much about finding something that still makes you feel important and relevant...I

will ideally pursue the same lifestyle as I did when I was working, just without the work (35).”

Here we see the narrator again draw on retirement discourse to construct an imaginary self but extracting slightly different resources because Adam, unlike Linda, wishes to retire. Yet, like Linda, it does furnish him resources to define who he is and what he wants. Adam is a person who believes himself to be, and is ostensibly perceived by other members of society as, important and relevant, with high demands on himself and a lifestyle filled with activities that he truly enjoys. Adam articulates retirement as a way to underline that this is really who he is because, while he will change what he does from working to being retired, who he is will continue to be the same. This also means that he can underline that he has found the missing real in the symbolic as he not only knows who he is but also has found what he wants, such as being busy with enjoyable activities and important enough to meet his own and others’ expectations. The acknowledgement that there might be something missing, at least in retirement, such as that he gets bored or too old to enjoy himself, only strengthens his imaginary certainty that he knows too well who he is and what he wants.

A similar dynamic unfolds in the next narrative by Marcus, an energy sector employee:

“When I retire, I want to...run a dude-ranch with fishing/hunting guide services. I know I will have to work quite a lot in this version of retirement but no matter how old I am, I never want to stop working...I never want to stop leading my life with a purpose greater than today...Once I am retired I would like to keep a lot of the same attributes as when I was in my career. However, I want to be seen as more laid back and easier-going...I hope

that others will see me as a success story; as someone who worked hard and dedicated themselves to their career...However, I do not want my retirement to be viewed as the end or a settle-down point. I want people to see me in my retirement as the beginning of a new chapter in life (8).”

Here different resources are extracted from retirement discourse. While Linda rejected retirement entirely and Adam wanted to retire completely, Marcus wants to retire by doing a different kind of work. As he says, he never wishes to stop working, but apparently retirement is important as a resource to define that he can be free to do a different, if harder, work at that point in his life. In this way, Adam constructs an imaginary self who knows who he is because he has attributes that are there now and will continue beyond his career, such as being dedicated and successful. And he has also found what he wants and will continue to find it, such as a life with a purpose and always on the move, not settled or even ending. In this way, the symbolic does not miss anything real, perhaps not even death, as there is simply no end to his fulfillment, which will always be greater than today.

Fantasy and lack

I now delve more deeply into the Lacanian typology and explore how retirement discourse does not only offer resources to construct imaginary selves as a response to the missing real in the symbolic, but also the construction of fantasmatic scenarios that variously strengthen the fundamental fantasy that underlying lack can be overcome. We got some sense of this already in the previous narratives, especially the last one by Marcus. As Marcus covered over the missing real in the symbolic by asserting that he has found all he is looking for and will continue to do so

by continuing to work, even though he refers to his retirement as a new chapter in life, retirement comes into view as a specific fantasmatic scenario, here one of owning a dude ranch, that points to a more general fantasmatic scenario, namely that work is the guarantor of the narrator's fulfillment. In turn, this points to how these scenarios therefore maintain a fundamental fantasy that being whole and complete is possible. Whether it is through working in his career or working on his ranch, Marcus asserts that he can work hard enough to live a life with ever greater purpose and continued success.

We see a similar dynamic in the next narrative by Kyle, a public service employee:

“Retirement is going to be an important goal in my life and I am going to make sure I am always working towards and considering my retirement. When I retire I am going to take some time off to travel around and see the world. I also have a feeling I will get bored after a while so when I retire I am also going to work a part time job...I will be working a laidback job doing something I love while taking time off to do the things I want to do...I believe retirement is a time to change your life and start focusing on yourself and do everything you want to do (29).”

Like Marcus, Kyle wants to retire and still work, but he is more interested in part-time work than a full-time job and seems to draw on retirement discourse to construct retirement as a fantasmatic scenario of getting the best of two worlds, both doing something he loves while also changing his life to enjoy non-work pleasures. Work here is not the only guarantor of fulfillment but there are always guarantors of this so that Kyle gets everything he wants, perhaps not at present but in future. This again maintains the fundamental fantasy that lack can be overcome whatever

the specific fantasmatic scenario may be. Sooner or later wholeness is attainable. Both of these narrators, and perhaps all narrators introduced so far, therefore can be said to take a more imaginary stance toward underlying lack in that they remain fixed on maintaining imaginary self-constructions, the specifics of which may change, but that overarchingly maintain the fantasy that the real is attainable, lack can be overcome, and completion is possible.

This may characterize the narratives reviewed so far, but in other narratives different dynamics come to light, such as in the narrative by Erica, an early-career consultant:

“I would retire tomorrow if I could. That’s the dream: no obligations, no one to answer to, and nowhere to be...At this point, retirement is more a dream than anything I can really wrap my mind around. In reality, the kind of lifestyle I imagine will not be easy to achieve. As in the game of Life™, not everyone ends up in Millionaire Estates, and I fear that even if I work hard all my life, I may still struggle financially and never realize my dream of seeing the world...I need to be prudent in saving throughout my career, and while it seems crazy to think of here and now, it is the time to stop spending frivolously and begin to think about attaining my lifelong goals. So, when I think of retirement, I think of money and happiness and how in the world I’m going to get there (31).”

While Erica, like prior narrators draws on retirement discourse to construct specific fantasmatic scenarios that might make her happy, such as having a lavish lifestyle, traveling and being worry-free, she seems rather less certain that this is attainable. Hard work is questioned as a guarantor of happiness, even future happiness in retirement, and she seems more aware of underlying lack in the way she articulates her doubts and fears. She also refers to retirement as a

distant dream and is both afraid to think of it at present and to underestimate the importance of preparing for it. The lack that surfaces in this narrative seems to be less successfully covered over. It is more as if Erica was circling this lack in different ways while trying out different positions toward it. She concludes with a question as to how she might ever get there.

In this way, Erica is perhaps not only struggling with tensions and doubt but also in some way working through the fundamental fantasy as something that might not be realizable. Erica does not seem to take an imaginary stance here but rather moves more toward a symbolic one in which the surfacing of underlying lack becomes an opportunity to rethink her dreams and expectations. She mentions a board game embodying common promises that through hard work everyone will be a winner and able to realize their dreams but also questions its veracity in her life. She struggles openly with the desire to realize the dream of retirement and the possibility that even after a lifetime of working toward this dream, it might never come true. Therefore, what comes through as a symbolic stance, is that Erica is unsettling the very idea not only that she can find completion but that failing to do so is a personal problem. She is pointing to the impossibility of maintaining the fundamental fantasy as a structural issue, articulated here perhaps in the allusion to life as a board game that is not winnable for her from the start.

Identity, discourse and power

So far, I have illustrated how narrators draw on the discourses of retirement to construct an imaginary self more or less attached to the fantasy that wholeness and completion are possible. As the third part of the typology, I now explore how self-constructions in the triad of the imaginary, symbolic and real, imaginary versus symbolic stances toward underlying lack, and the strengthening or unsettling of fundamental fantasies inform the doing of identity work and,

importantly, how power works in and through this (Knights and Clarke, 2014: 337). Identity work is the process of forming, maintaining, solidifying and revising a sense of self (Alvesson, 2010: 201) and is foundational to understanding relations of power as individuals are disciplined by discursive practices but may also contest them (Kornberger and Brown, 2007: 500) by increasing awareness of their complicity (Thompson and Willmott, 2015: 500) and engaging in micro-practices of resistance, as articulations that unsettle dominant discourse (Thomas and Davies, 2005).

If we recall Linda's narrative, we saw that she constructed an imaginary self as a jewelry-maker for whom work is so central that she articulated retirement as essentially having to give up who she is and what makes her happy. This meant that Linda not only had an imaginary stance to underlying lack, she also seems rather wedded to work as a particular fantasmatic scenario that maintains her fundamental fantasy that wholeness is possible. Linda is complete as a jewelry-maker. This then articulates identity, as a conscious expression of who she is, in a way that is fixed. Put differently, she draws on retirement discourse to fix her identity, which in turn locks her into a certain position. As prior research has shown, fixed identities are often maintained at a great price to the individual who may be unable to adapt to changing working conditions in potentially beneficial ways (Fraher and Gabriel, 2014: 940).

This fixing also locks the narrator in an ideological logic by which, as we have seen, one fantasmatic scenario has to be replaced by another to maintain the underlying fantasy of completion, which has been associated with being more vulnerable to domination by existing power structures (Ekman, 2013: 1178). It is fairly easy to envision that Linda might be more attracted to promises that employers make about the benefits of work and how fulfilling it can be as long as she is motivated in line with managerial objectives (Hoedemakers). We can also envision

Linda being more prone to adopting hegemonic discourses of retirement in which this same promise is maintained by equating the worth of a person with economic value-creation (Moulaert and Biggs, 2012; Smith and Dougherty, 2012). In this sense, Linda would be more likely to be dominated by discourses that prompt her “to choose a life that is compatible with the injunctions of liberal capitalism” (Cremin, 2009: 137).

All this then offers a glimpse of how struggles with the missing real in the symbolic, a more imaginary stance toward lack and the maintenance of fundamental fantasies inform how discourses are drawn on to narratively construct identities and, in turn, how individuals may therefore comply with rather than contest existing relations of power. But we also see this typology unfold somewhat differently in Seth’s narrative who works as an entry-level employee in information technology:

“For most people, the key to a happy and fulfilling retirement is simple: stay busy. Unfortunately, when planning for retirement, a lot of folks focus only on finances and fail to think about, or plan for, how they will spend their time...Doing things you enjoy is a major key to happiness and not falling into depression after work life. I think I will not only be a happier individual knowing there’s nothing to worry about but I will also improve my relationships with my friends and family...giving back to people who gave to me when I was in need and spreading love by repaying karmic debts...You don’t have too many years left on the earth after retirement...[and] retirement is a great time to sit and think about your life from another perspective (49).”

Seth draws on retirement discourse to construct an imaginary self for whom work is less central and retirement is not a continuation of work. This fantasmatic scenario still embodies an imaginary stance to underlying lack as he maintains the fundamental fantasy that he will find fulfillment, but it does allow for a somewhat less fixed identity. Seth at least circles lack in his acknowledgment of death and keeps his future identity more open to “another perspective”. By drawing on a more marginalized discourse of retirement as a time for doing existential work (Moulaert and Biggs, 2012: 38), Seth seems less vulnerable to being dominated by more hegemonic discourses. Moreover, by questioning a focus on financial gains and a potential over-investment in work (Muhr and Kirkegaard, 2013: 117), perhaps he also engages in identity work that is more open and readily adaptable (Fraher and Gabriel, 2014: 940).

Therefore, Seth’s narrative offers a glimpse of how a wider space may be created in which existing power relations may at least not be strengthened and can be resisted if only by becoming more aware of the potential complicity by which they are supported through identity work (Thompson and Willmott, 2015: 500). The latter also introduces different narratives as micro-practices of resistance that might unsettle dominant discourses (Thomas and Davies, 2005). In this way, we see how Seth draws on the resources offered by retirement discourse to not only move more toward a symbolic stance but also a more ethical logic. This logic offers the opportunity to question some of his fantasmatic scenarios and, where work is concerned, begin to work through the underlying fantasy that completion is possible.

We see a similar unfolding again, but this time more forcefully toward a symbolic stance and an ethical logic, in the narrative by Michael who works in the energy sector:

“All of my life I have heard tales and stories of the wonders and the horrors of retirement...My hopes during retirement are that I will have enough money left over to enjoy myself doing what I love during the second half of my life. Some of my concerns...are; will I be able to retire? Will I have enough money left over when I retire? Will retirement give me too much free time?...I think of retirement as something you experience before you enter the workforce, as well as after. Retirement is your time to be able to do and explore things you never had the chance to...But not everybody gets to retire and do what they love at the end of their career, which makes me truly think more of what I would like to do with my life now (42).”

Michael arrives at a more symbolic stance by drawing on retirement discourse to foreground the significance of the present moment and the life he lives now. But he also arrives at such a stance in the way the entire typology unfolds. It begins by him not constructing an imaginary self that is defined and able to obtain what is wanted. He seems to acknowledge this even in the way he draws on retirement discourse. He speaks of its wonders and horrors but seems unable or unwilling to adopt either as a master narrative. But he also acknowledges the power of such narratives, which he has heard all of his life and that shape the experience of retirement even prior to working. This points to the inevitability of being confined to articulating who we are through a symbolic order not of our choosing. It also underlines the inevitability, but also futility, of covering this up with imaginary self-constructions.

All that Michael gets to are questions about who he might be and what he might want, but there seem to be few answers. Michael also circles rather than covers over underlying lack. As we saw in Erica’s narrative, he seems to actively work through the fantasy that completion is possible

by not taking this as a personal failing but highlighting it as a structural problem. Like Erica's allusion to a board game, Michael stresses that not everyone gets to be a winner. As Erica took this to underline perhaps an acceptance of disappointment, Michael seems to take this a step further toward an ethical logic. This logic turns the attachment to the fantasy of completion into an appreciation for that which remains when it is no longer demanded (Fink, 2004: 157). This is then precisely what allows him to regain an appreciation for the experience of life in the present.

The latter stance creates a space in which to open up identity work in transformative ways and to not simply adopt dominant discourses in supplication to existing power relations but also to unsettle them more actively (Thompson and Willmott, 2015: 500). In Michael's narrative we see resistance to the promises of work and employment as he refers to the potential for doing what he loves only in the second half of his life, presumably when no longer working at all. We also see him rejecting versions of retirement as joyful times of having freedom, which he wonders about having too much of. And we see him rejecting narratives of retirement as the guaranteed reward for working, or even the guaranteed promise of enjoying doing what one did not do before. Finally, he seems to reject the very notion that retirement is even a definable time period or concept as it unfolds over one's lifetime and exists in one's changing experience. In articulating all this, Michael may unsettle existing relations of power in which retirement is to strengthen a dominant capitalist logic (Loretto and Vickerstaff, 2012: 80).

Discussion

So far, I have illustrated how a Lacanian typology can be used to offer a more nuanced understanding of how retirement discourse is drawn on in the doing of identity work. Specifically, I have used a Lacanian typology to illustrate how particular dynamics emerge when moving

progressively deeper from a first layer of exploring articulations of the self within the triad of the imaginary, symbolic and real, to a second layer of examining particular fanstasmatic scenarios as articulations of underlying fundamental fantasies of completion and imaginary and symbolic stances taken toward them and underlying lack. Finally, I moved to a third layer of exploring how this informs how discourse is drawn on to construct more or less fixed identities following ideological or ethical logics, which provide for more or less space to comply with or contest existing relations of power. The layers of the typology are interrelated and shed light on how individuals not only struggle with an inability to articulate the real as a general impediment in any discourse but also how, when this struggle is pursued in greater depth, it results in particular positions toward underlying lack and the unique opportunities such positions offer for more or less liberating identity work. In this sense, the layers of the typology offer varying but interrelated glimpses of how subjects organize signifiers, and how this process is fascinating (Parker, 2005: 167) as an ever-changing lived experience of how we all obtain a sense of self in an ongoing struggle with what we cannot obtain.

In offering such glimpses, the study provides new perspectives on how discourses function at the interstice of conscious and unconscious dynamics of identity. For instance, with regard to retirement discourse, a more nuanced understanding emerges of how it is subjectively experienced by early-career individuals that retirement is being reinvented (Sargent et al., 2012) and its meanings are becoming more contested (Moulaert and Biggs, 2012). As we saw, narrators attach a variety of meanings to retirement ranging from not retiring at all to a number of more or less full-time work arrangements (Sargent et al., 2012: 8). In the process, they express their hopes, fears and desires, in the face of changing economic and societal constraints (Loretto and Vickerstaff, 2012: 80). They articulate their insecurities in view of eroding retirement benefits,

fears about physical decline, hopes for an active retirement and the desire to maintain a socially acceptable status (Moulaert and Biggs, 2012: 24). By exploring closely how narrators navigate the imaginary, symbolic and real, we are able to get a sense of how this offers them opportunities to construct imaginary selves and how they struggle to find a connection to the missing real in the symbolic. Some of the narrators work hard to cover over the contradictions that now mark so much of what retirement means today. They speak of dreams for rewarding post-retirement work, even though this often turns out to be rather disappointing (Riach, 2007: 1718). They also speak of ways by which they would either obtain the financial means to retire or simply avoid this question altogether by continuing to work. Additionally, they point to maintaining the respect and admiration that come from having a successful career and how they both want to enjoy less structure in retirement while also avoiding boredom.

In exploring such articulations in the triad of the imaginary, symbolic and real, a deeper struggle emerges with regard to knowing who one is and obtaining what one wants. As we saw, one way to respond to the impossibility to articulate the real is to take it on as a personal failing. We saw many narrators do just that trying to come up with the best vision for retirement that would be authentic to them and fulfill what they really want. This then becomes an ideological stance in which the contradictions are covered over with a series of fantasmatic scenarios designed to maintain a fantasy of ultimate fulfillment. This process, in turn, elucidates how identity work becomes constrained with dominant discourses, or master narratives, of retirement being adopted to validate this identity, such as by adopting a producer identity aligned with narratives promoting economic value creation (Moulaert and Biggs, 2012: 25). It also makes it easier to see how discourses might become master narratives that are adopted to sustain a certain identity and underlying fantasy providing the affective attachment needed to sustain them (Stavrakakis, 2008).

But in understanding the complexities of such a process, we can also see how there is space for different dynamics and discursive movements. Some narrators draw on different resources from retirement discourse and navigate the triad in such a way as to amplify rather than cover over the contradictions, engaging in an ethical logic in which they can reflect on these contradictions without turning them into personal shortcomings. Not doing so allows for alternative identities and potentially transformative narratives.

Consequently, by investigating more closely how retirement discourse becomes a resource for struggling with fantasies and lack, we can see how power relations are not only strengthened by identity work but also how they can be contested. Neither is a foregone conclusion but depends on how particular narrators navigate the imaginary, symbolic and real in specific situations. As such, the more contested nature of retirement today turns out to be both an opportunity for compliance as well as for contestation and, importantly, to strengthen underlying fantasies as well as to work through them (Hoedemakers, 2009). Viewing retirement from this perspective offers new insights on why retirement discourse is relevant to how individuals construct their identities, prior to and during retirement (Smith and Dougherty, 2012: 459) and how it is “shaped throughout the life course” (Post et al., 2012: 88).

Retirement discourse offers resources to engage with the struggle, that everyone faces, to articulate who they are and what they want and to do continuously varied work that allows individuals to experiment with different stances. Even if retirement is a long way away, this offers opportunities that can be realized now. As we saw, the early-career narrators experiment with different stances that inform how they see themselves and their work in the present. Some conclude they need to work harder; some conclude they need to focus on enjoying themselves more now; and yet others conclude that they need to find work that is more enjoyable; while still others think

they might trade off enjoyable for better paying work. Either way, it informs how they articulate themselves in the present, underlining the significance of retirement discourse for identity work across time (Costas and Grey, 2014).

In view of this temporal component, the Lacanian typology also allows us to get a more nuanced understanding of identity and power across time. Power has effects over time, such as when employees align what they imagine their future selves to be with their employer's ideals, but it can also be contested by questioning such alignments (Costas and Grey, 2014: 910). Additionally, it can be contested by questioning the need to continue to work on the self as an important project that employers so commonly demand (Alvesson and Robertson, 2016: 31). As some narrators conclude that they no longer wish to think about retirement and focus more on how to enjoy their lives in the present, we can see a glimpse of how contestation might happen. Wondering who we will be in retirement is an identity project in which we can struggle to maintain what is expected from us. Rejecting the notion that we need to continue to work on ourselves, may be one way of unsettling this temporality of power, i.e. that domination of certain discourses can affect not only who we are in the present but who we see ourselves as being in future (Costas and Grey, 2014).

Conclusion

The research question that inspired the present investigation was whether individuals, in the face of the current reinvention of retirement which seems to incentivize (Endrissat, Kaerreman and Noppney, 2017: 509) the adoption of a producer-identity, no longer desire retirement or construct retirement predominantly in ways that center on work. In investigating the dreams, fears and hopes early-career employees have about retirement, and employing a Lacanian typology to

examine specific fantasmatic scenarios and less conscious aspects of self-constructions, it emerged that many narrators seem to still desire retirement but construct it around work-related ideals. In this sense, there seems to be rather less space to contest the centrality of work and the adoption of a producer-identity.

However, this space is always already contested and unsettled in the way that the narration of retirement becomes mapped on to struggles with less conscious aspects of the self. In the manner that retirement discourse furnishes resources to construct fantasmatic scenarios that repeatedly fail to connect to the missing real and to cover over the impossibility of completion, there is space created. This space can be filled by an ideological logic becoming a further “oppressive force” (Knights and Clarke, 2014: 349). That is, the desire to retire in this sense strengthens the desire to work (Muhr and Kiregaard, 2013: 120). But this space can also be filled by an ethical logic in which the desire to work and the adoption of a producer identity can be questioned. It can also offer opportunities to work through the possibility of a successful identity project and the maintenance of the fantasy of completion (Costas and Grey, 2014: 911; Hoedemakers, 2009: 190; Knights and Clarke, 2014: 348).

This means that the narration of retirement may be an important and, hereto under-researched, space in which to “subvert the future-oriented temporality” (Costas and Grey, 2014: 911) of power in society. According to Lacan, temporality plays an important role in the construction of the self as from an imaginary position we always attempt to have the self be stable across time. But we can also articulate a more symbolic stance in which we pay more attention to “the process of becoming” (Lacan, 1977b: 86). From this perspective, the narration of retirement can be a space in which to reflect on and take different positions toward the continuation of a producer identity, and, indeed any fixed identity project across time. It is easy to miss this space

when simply looking at how strongly retirement discourse now incentivizes a producer identity and the continuation of identity as an endless project driven on by ever-increasing insecurities (Knights and Clarke, 2014).

Contributing to research exploring the role of fantasy as a key lever for how power works through identity constructions (e.g. Ekman, 2013; Landen, 2012; West et al., 201), the present study highlights the import of examining not only what discourses are available but how they become resources for specific fantasmatic attachments that can be worked through as acts of micro-resistance (Thomas and Davies, 2005) that permeate ordinary speech, which are easily missed when we look for more radical expressions (Vidaillet and Gamot, 2015: 992). A Lacanian typology highlights that the narration of retirement is a space in which to better manage the inevitable disappointments to be experienced when the underlying fantasy of completion remains unfulfilled (Knights and Clarke, 2014: 349). In offering opportunities to articulate such disappointments as a structural rather than a personal condition, there is perhaps some “insulation” (Thompson and Willmott, 2016: 500) from the pain that is associated with comparing every experience in life to what the fantasy promises and finding it wanting (Fink, 2004: 156). This may be relevant for how work is experienced in the present as well as how retirement is experienced in the future.

The study also contributes further avenues for exploring retirement discourse as an important area for understanding the “politics of affect” (Thompson and Willmott, 2016: 500) and how power operates in and through identity work. Current retirement research seems to highlight a rather narrow view of such politics that foregrounds economic value creation (Moulaert and Biggs, 2012: 25) as holding a “monopoly over deciding which identity incentives currently hold sway” (Endrissat et al., 2017: 509). While alternatives for non-producer identities and identity transformation are mentioned, these seem marginalized and under-explored in terms of how they

may come about (e.g. Lytle et al., 2015; Martin and Lee, 2015). The present study offers new avenues for exploring them and examining in greater detail how they may be constructed. By investigating specific narratives of retirement in the context of a Lacanian typology a more nuanced picture emerges of why and how such alternatives are constructed and in what regard they may present alternatives. Whether the centrality of work, a producer identity or the continuation of identity projects in general are being contested (Alvesson and Robertson, 2016: 31), there seem to be several ways in which alternatives can arise.

Future research could investigate still other alternatives, such as other fantasmatic scenarios of meanings and purposes of retirement (Lytle et al., 2015: 192) and transformative identities (Martin and Lee, 2015: 23) and their impact on existing relations of power (Smither and Dougherty, 2012: 458). The present research focused on the narratives and fantasmatic scenarios of early-career employees but, as retirement is constructed “throughout the life course” (Post et al., 2012: 88), it is relevant to examine the construction of retirement in relation to other life and career stages. Perhaps the latter reveal not only alternative imaginary self-constructions and specific fantasmatic scenarios, but also different stances toward underlying lack and opportunities to work through the fundamental fantasy of completion (Hoedemakers, 2009).

The present study also offers novel avenues for exploring how identity incentives “reflect broader socio-economic and political changes” (Endrissat et al., 2017: 509). By applying a Lacanian typology to how retirement is narrated by specific individuals, a complex picture emerges as to how such changes may offer not only opportunities to further cement the hegemony of certain dominant discourses, such as the promotion of economic value creation, but also how these can be contested and unsettled. Such contestations go further than conscious articulations of micro-practices of resistance (Thomas and Davies, 2005) illustrated by narrators who described

specific retirement plans, for instance, in which they would no longer work. Rather, these contestations go to the heart of how power operates through identity work (Thompson and Willmott, 2016: 500). As we have seen, retirement discourse offers resources to work through underlying fantasies and engage in a more ethical logic as a discursive movement in particular narratives that amplifies rather than covers over lack. The latter is an important means by which subjects engage in work as subjects of the unconscious (Arnaud, 2007). It happens more intentionally in the course of Lacanian psychoanalysis (Lacan, 1988: 241) but can occur in ordinary, non-clinical articulations of the self (Benvenuto and Kennedy, 1986: 13).

The insights developed here underline the opportunities that might be realized when studying retirement in particular, and “processes of identity construction” (Clarke et al., 2009: 324) more generally, from a Lacanian perspective. The most important aspect of retirement may not only be how it is currently being reinvented (Sargent et al., 2012: 15), but how this has made the discourse of retirement more prevalent as a resource for identity work across life and career stages. The more contested this discourse becomes, the more it becomes available to be mapped on to the many insecurities that already fuel the struggle with identity projects (Alvesson and Robertson, 2016: 31). In using a Lacanian typology, we can examine this more carefully and understand that contestation arises not only in what specific plans we make for retirement but in how we respond to them as inevitably failing fantasmatic scenarios.

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Table 1: A Lacanian typology

Layer of the typology	Positions available	Sample narrative excerpt
Imaginary/symbolic/real	Imaginary self-constructions as a response the missing real in the symbolic	“I honestly cannot see myself being happy if I retired. I would always feel a little like I’m missing a part of myself(16).”
Fantasy and lack	Imaginary Stance	“I imagine retirement to be very much about finding something that still makes you feel important and relevant...I will ideally pursue the same lifestyle as I did when I was working, just without the work (35).”
	Symbolic Stance	“As in the game of Life™, not everyone ends up in Millionaire Estates, and I fear that even if I work hard all my life, I may...never realize my dream...So when I think of retirement, I think of money and happiness and how in the world I’m going to get there (31).”
Identity/discourse/power	Fixed identity and an ideological logic supporting existing power relations	“Retirement is something I looked forward to when I was younger before I knew what I wanted to do for a career. Now that I have decided what I want to do, I do not think I will ever be retiring (16).”
	Open identity and an ethical logic unsettling existing power relations	“I think of retirement as something you experience before you enter the workforce, as well as after...But not everybody gets to retire and do what they love at the end of their career, which makes me truly think more of what I would like to do with my life now (42).”

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