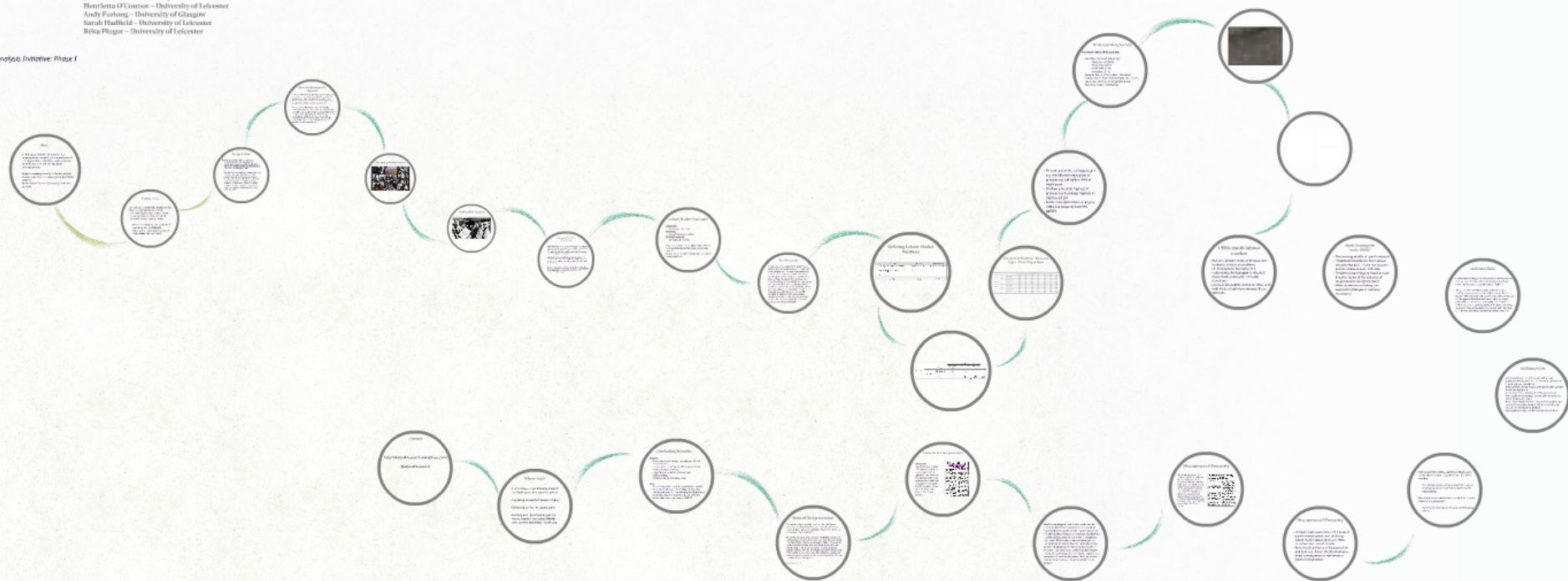


The making of the 'precariat': unemployment, insecurity and work-poor young adults in harsh economic conditions.

John Gassidts - University of Leicester
Barbista O'Connor - University of Leicester
Andy Farling - University of Glasgow
Sarah Halliwell - University of Leicester
Rita Plagge - University of Leicester

Secondary Data Analysis Initiative: Phase I



The making of the 'precariat': unemployment, insecurity and work-poor young adults in harsh economic conditions.

John Goodwin – University of Leicester
Henrietta O'Connor – University of Leicester
Andy Furlong – University of Glasgow
Sarah Hadfield – University of Leicester
Réka Plugor – University of Leicester



Secondary Data Analysis Initiative: Phase I

Aims

- In this session we will reflect upon our ongoing work in exploring the experiences of 18–24 year-olds in the 1980s and c2010 (two periods characterised by high youth unemployment)
- Begin to explore precarity in the two periods
- Present data from our reanalysis of two 1980s projects
- Reflect on discourses of precarity in the two periods

Project Aims

- The project is a secondary analysis of data from a contemporary UK dataset, Understanding Society, combined with secondary analysis of two 'historical' datasets from the UK in the 1980s:
 - Ashton and Maguire: Young Adults in the Labour Market (1982-83)
 - Roberts et al.: Changing Structure of Youth Labour Markets (1985)

Project Aims

The research aims to answer the question:

In what ways have the experiences of unemployed, insecure and vulnerable 18-25 year-olds changed between two key periods of economic instability in the UK?

- Map the nature and extent of unemployment and precarious working in the 1980s and c2010
- Compare the distribution of various groups of young people between different components of the precarious zone in the 1980s and in c2010.
- Develop an understanding of the ways in which positive and negative outcomes occur and are influenced by policy interventions occurring in both time periods.

Value of a Retrospective Approach

- ...the immediate present into which [we] are retreating... constitutes just one small momentary phase within the vast stream of humanity's development, which, coming from the past, debouches into the present and thrusts ahead toward possible futures. (Elias 1987: 224)
- The 'fetishism of the present' – youth as a concept prompts researchers to often focus only on the 'here and now' rather than taking a longer-term process view. There is a self evident need for youth studies scholars to revisit past discussions of youth in order that they may re-assess/re-use, via contemporary lens. Only through a retrospective approach can we fully understand the experiences of young people today.

The Young Worker Project



Making the Precariat



Making the Precariat: Methodology

- **Young Adults (YA)** face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with a sample of 1786 18-24 year-olds carried out in four contrasting labour markets in 1982/83. The four areas, Leicester, Sunderland, St. Albans and Stafford, were selected to represent a range of employment conditions
- **Changing Structure of Youth Labour Markets (CSYLM)** face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with 854 individuals aged 17-18 in 1985 in three contrasting labour markets: Liverpool, Walsall and Chelmsford
- We have categorised these labour markets into three broad groupings: **chronically depressed, declining** and **economically stable/prosperous** as *starting points* for analysis of Understanding Society (US)

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Labour Market Typologies

Depressed

- Sunderland, Liverpool

Declining

- Walsall, Leicester, Stafford

Stable/Prosperous

- St Albans, Chelmsford

Roberts selected areas to *'offer insights into the main variations behind the prevailing national picture'*.

Ashton *'chosen to represent different local labour market conditions'*.

The Precariat

The practice of conceptualizing labour market position as a dichotomy between employment and unemployment has been superseded and there is now a far greater appreciation of the 'shades of grey' increasingly occupied by young people. These 'shades of grey', perhaps better thought of as zones of precarity, have opened up partly as a result of industrial change and new patterns of demand for youth labour (frequently part-time, often temporary and/or insecure), but have also been affected by tighter benefit regulations, more aggressive approaches towards claimants, as well as by an increased demand for part-time employment from the enlarged pool of student labour.

Defining Labour Market Positions

Deep Precariat	Shallow Precariat	Traditional Employees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ unemployed (unemployed, but working + registered unemployed + unemployed, but not registered) ▪ workless (full time students, maternity leave, looking after someone at home, long term sick/disabled) ▪ part time work: ≤ 10 hours pw ▪ fill in work ▪ government scheme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ part time work: >10 hours pw ▪ self-employed ▪ temporary / insecure full time work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ permanent / secure full time work
$n_1 = 783$	$n_1 = 236$	$n_1 = 707$
$n_2 = 343$	$n_2 = 69$	$n_2 = 476$
$N = 1126$	$N = 305$	$N = 1183$

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		Precariat			Total	
		Traditional employee	Shallow precariat	Deep precariat		
Labour markets	Prosperous LM	Count	519	128	225	872
		% within Precariat	43.8%	41.8%	20.0%	33.3%
	Declining LM	Count	399	96	375	870
		% within Precariat	33.7%	31.4%	33.3%	33.2%
	Depressed LM	Count	266	82	527	875
		% within Precariat	22.5%	26.8%	46.8%	33.4%
Total	Count	1184	306	1127	2617	
	% within Precariat	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Current LM Position - Precariat types - First LM position

Labour markets		First LM status						Total	
		Employed	Gov. Scheme	Unemployed	Education	OLF	Other		
Prosperous LM	Precariat	Traditional employee	56.1%	58.0%	67.1%	62.8%	68.4%	56.2%	59.4%
		Shallow precariat	16.5%	14.5%	6.8%	15.5%	5.3%	28.1%	14.8%
		Deep precariat	27.3%	27.5%	26.0%	21.7%	26.3%	15.6%	25.8%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Declining LM	Precariat	Traditional employee	49.3%	50.0%	36.9%	43.9%	54.7%	48.3%	46.1%
		Shallow precariat	12.9%	1.8%	9.0%	8.8%	15.6%	27.6%	10.9%
		Deep precariat	37.7%	48.2%	54.1%	47.4%	29.7%	24.1%	43.1%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Depressed LM	Precariat	Traditional employee	44.6%	22.1%	26.6%	41.7%	11.1%	10.0%	30.0%
		Shallow precariat	9.6%	6.6%	9.1%	10.0%	16.7%	35.0%	9.6%
		Deep precariat	45.8%	71.3%	64.3%	48.3%	72.2%	55.0%	60.4%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total	Precariat	Traditional employee	51.7%	39.7%	36.8%	53.3%	49.5%	42.0%	45.2%
		Shallow precariat	14.0%	6.7%	8.7%	12.6%	13.9%	29.6%	11.8%
		Deep precariat	34.3%	53.7%	54.6%	34.1%	36.6%	28.4%	43.0%
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

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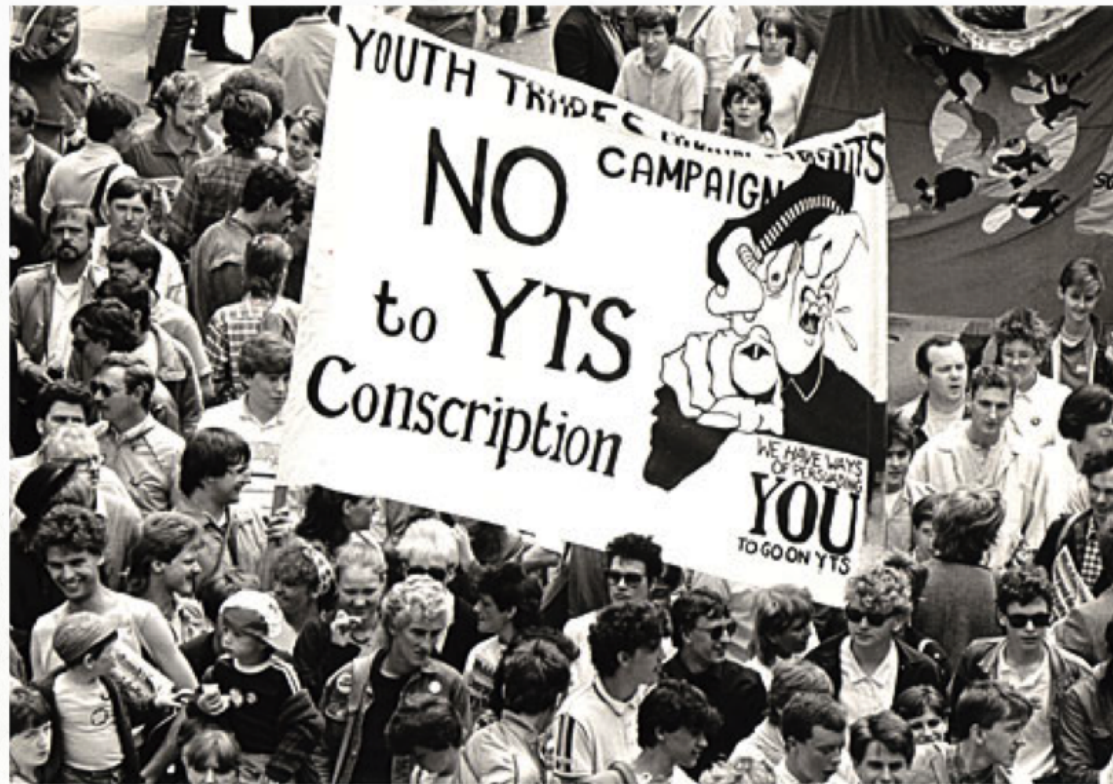
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- Trends across the LM typologies
e.g. traditional employees in
prosperous LM 55% v. 44% in
depressed
- Shallow precariat highest in
prosperous but deep highest in
depressed LM
- Further analysis/shades of grey
- Attitudes towards YOP/YTS
(WEEP)

Understanding Society

First wave (2010) 18-25 year olds

- Identified 'zones of (in)security'
 - Marginalised (36%)
 - Precarious (21%)
 - Vulnerable (19%)
 - Protected (24%)
- Marginalised and Precarious = Precariat?
- Labour Market Type remains important, e.g. in depressed LM more in marginalised zone
- Additional data on well-being



Date begun	Activity	Dated ended	Reason for Leaving
May 1983 ↓ August 1983	left school. unemployed, but ineligible to claim benefit		
August 1983	YTS Scheme: - Oct 83. Trainee Secretary/ clerical computing. 12 month Scheme at: - KBS computers Dale St Liverpool. 20 YTS trained 50 staff altogether. computer services agencies. 1 Placement: - ① Stanley Rasing Bookmakers lyneal cricket School. full time 20 employees.	Oct 83 2	Didn't like Scheme - it was O.K. at KBS. But placements No good - using reference for National books mostly - making tea. Not much to do with training (computers) - used for posting letters etc.
Oct 1983 ↓ Nov 1983	- unemployed		
Nov 11th 83	12 month Scheme YTS Scheme Trainee computer programmer 2 weeks in a cover in Oxford. + Book release. Placement: ① Concor Discourse 10 employees.	July 1984	Concor Discourse - Moved too far for responsible to travel.

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Didn't like Scheme
 - it was o.k at
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 No good - using
 independence for
 manual tasks mostly
 - making tea. - Not
 much to do with
 training (computers)
 - used for posing
 webinars etc.



July 85



unemployed.

Beginning December

Beginning December :-
83

Employed as
sales assistant
Karyons Shoe Market
Clayton Square.
full time.
12 employees.



2nd February 1985 - made redundant.
temporary job.

2nd February



6th February - unemployed

2. Totally different training to YTS

3. Introductory training for new work place

4. No training

Ask all respondents, whether or not they have been on the scheme,

119. What are your views on the YTS?

119.

Allow open response.

Probe to find out, if applicable - reasons for changing schemes; reasons for leaving early; why refusing YTS; usefulness of YTS in obtaining employment.

load of rubbish. (P) I don't think they help you at all + I think the money is disgusting for what you have to do. (P) the experience hasn't been any use to me (P) I wouldn't do YTS again.

1. Pro

2. Ambivalent

3. Anti

4. DK

Section 7. Unemployment and Working Life

If ever unemployed. On the most recent occasion when you were unemployed (on the present occasion, if unemployed when interviewed):



1980s youth labour market

- Risk of a 'skewed' vision of the past and tendency to focus on problems
- Unemployment, insecurity, YTS, redundancy, limited opportunities but many made 'successful', one-step transitions
- Levels of job stability similar to 1960s and high levels of optimism amongst those with jobs

Myth-busting the early 1980s?

- The 'missing middle' of youth research
- 'Traditional transitions, from school straight into jobs ... have not become extinct' (Roberts *et al.*, 1986:96).
- Tendency to privilege or focus on non-linear/complex at the expense of unspectacular/straightforward
- What do we miss in taking this approach? Changes in ordinary transitions?

Ordinary Kids

- Phil Brown's *Ordinary Kids* 'who neither left their names engraved on the school honours board, nor gouged them into the top of classroom desks' (1987:1)
- The girls [in this study] are quite ordinary people, distinguished by no one characteristic except that in March 1945 they were well over 17 and under 21. Typical is a dangerous label; but to a casual observer these particular girls seem to bear a family likeness to their million and a half contemporaries in England and Wales, and seem more or less birds of a feather with the other girls of their immediate localities (Jephcott 1948: 19).

Ordinary Girls

- Left school in June 1979 at 16 with with 6 CSEs
- Applied for two jobs that she had heard about through friends and was offered both
- Employed full-time by August and had not been worried about unemployment
- At the time of the interview, in 1983, she had been working for the same electrical components company for three and a half years.
- Worked her way up from clerk/typist to a bought ledger clerk which she found to be a 'dull and not taxing' job that she neither liked nor disliked.
- Envisaged returning to work once she had children

- Left school with 5 CSEs, applied for 30 jobs and accepted job as a poultry worker but left after 6 months:

'the chickens smelt, ammonia made me sick, too much work, too much pressure and too much responsibility'

- Found job as an animal technician with better pay, training and prospects:

'universities never go up the spout and I'm pretty settled'

Discourses of Precarity

- Compare representations of the issue of youth unemployment and declining labour market opportunities in 1980s recession and current climate
- Remarkable similarity of discourse then and now, e.g. threat of civil unrest as a direct consequence of high levels of youth unemployment

Discourses of Precarity

' [The] riots would seem like a "kiddies' tea party" in contrast to what would happen unless immediate action was taken to tackle youth unemployment. The Labour group's spokesman on Education repeated a warning that Britain was sitting on a timebomb; companies were closing, jobs were disappearing and the young unemployed were turning to drink, drugs, theft and violent crime'. The Times, 12/7/80

'Flashpoint' warning on young jobless

From Our Education Correspondent
Solihull

The Bristol riots would seem like a "kiddies' tea party" in contrast to what would happen unless immediate action was taken to tackle youth unemployment, the Council of Local Education Authorities was told at its annual meeting in Solihull yesterday.

Mr Geoffrey Hall, the Labour group's spokesman on Education in Calderdale, West Yorkshire, repeated a warning that Britain was sitting on a timebomb; companies were closing, jobs were disappearing and the young unemployed were turning to drink, drugs, theft and violent crime.

Councillor Geoffrey Smith, of Liverpool, said that in his area only 11 jobs were registered as available for young people, yet there were 9,000 young unemployed and they would soon be

joined by 8,000 school-leavers. Mrs D. Birdsall, chairman of Bradford education committee, said that it was not a question of the young not wanting to work. She had heard of teenagers weeping in careers offices because they could not get a job.

Councillor John Mernagh, of Kirklees, said that it was no good people in the South-east sitting in their lush pastures. "The flash that is going to come about through the unemployment of these young people is going to reverberate throughout the country".

Councillor Alistair Lawton, of Kent, said that there were towns in the South-east where youth unemployment was as high as on Merseyside.

Councillor Neil Scrimshaw, Conservative spokesman on education in Birmingham, blamed trade unions for causing firms to close. "In some cases parents are creating unemployment for their own sons and daughters", he said.

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Youth unemployment will fuel disorder on the streets as disaffected teenagers are starved of hope for the future, the former Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Lord Stevens, has warned. "Looking ahead, you can see there is disquiet on the streets [I'm] really concerned about youth unemployment, unemployment generally; really concerned about signs of an increase in crime,"... He said it had been "absolutely essential" to give the youth "some hope for the future", especially as many were from families where three generations had been unemployed. *Daily Telegraph Online*, 6/12/11

Discourse of a 'lost generation'

'Long-term unemployment among a 'forgotten generation' is pointing to a wide gap in the provisions of the Manpower Services Commission. More than 410,000 of those aged 18-25 have been out of work for more than a year...'. The Times, 21/7/83

Job gap widens for 'lost generation'

By Barrie Clement, Labour Reporter

Long-term unemployment among a "forgotten generation" is pointing to a wide gap in the provisions of the Manpower Services Commission.

More than 410,000 of those aged 18 to 25 have been out of work for more than a year, the commission's report for 1982/83 published yesterday says.

That represents nearly 45 per cent of the 940,000 jobless in the age group and the commission officials are worried that the Community Programme will not be able to cope.

The programme aims at providing full and part-time temporary jobs for people aged 25 and over who have been unemployed for at least 12 of the past 15 months and for those between 18 and 24 who have been out of work for at least six of the past nine months.

It is biased relatively towards the "forgotten" age group who will fill just more than half the 130,000 places expected by October. But Mr David Young, the commission chairman, and other commission officials, are thought to consider the provision seriously inadequate. They are likely to press for more cash aid from the Government.

The report also discloses that only 25,000 places were provided under the Training for

Skills programme out of a target of 35,000.

The commissioners were disappointed with the support from industry which was reluctant to offer places because of the recession and because of pessimism about the need for skilled labour.

Recurrent spells of unemployment are a serious difficulty for a significant group among the unemployed, the report says. A study funded by the commission of those who became unemployed in May, 1980, shows that although 60 per cent had obtained a job after 10 months, over one third of these were without jobs again a year later.

Youth unemployment rates reached a peak of 25 per cent in October, 1982, in spite of the expansion of the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP), without which, the report says a further 750,000 young people might have been unemployed.

In a section of the report on the labour market, the compilers detected the first signs of a slow economic recovery in 1982, but the numbers employed continued to decline sharply, falling by 640,000, compared with a 790,000 drop in 1981.

More than 500,000 school leavers gained training and work experience through the Youth Opportunities Programme over the same period.

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Fears of 'lost generation'

'The number of young people searching for a job almost reached the 1 million mark in November as official figures showed Britain's worsening economic situation was in danger of creating a "lost generation".

The number of adults under 25 out of work jumped by 32,000 to 951,000, pushing the youth unemployment rate up to 20.3% – the highest level since records began in 1992. A slowdown in growth since last summer and uncertainty about the future were blamed for the refusal of many employers to recruit younger workers. The figures revealed a particularly sharp rise in the number of 16- and 17-year-olds classed as unemployed, rather than in employment or education, rising to 204,000 from 177,000 in the previous quarter.

Guardian, 19/1/11

Concluding Remarks

Debates

- The importance of comparing earlier period with current debates
- Lessons to be learnt from past? (policy, academic debate, methods, context)
- Importance of contextual interventions/ understandings
- Myth-busting the 'lost generations'

Data

- The 'missing middle' of youth (employment) studies
- Value (and challenges) of revisiting existing data
- Rich qualitative data – @annikacoughlin 'do qual and quant data sets on the same cohort tell different stories about the same people? #RMF14'

Where Next?

- Continuing our preliminary analysis and linking up data over the period
- Exploring concept of 'shades of grey'
- Following up the 'lost generation'
- Furlong et al. (forthcoming 2015)
Young People in the Labour Market: past, present and future, Routledge.

Contact

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