Collegiality as collective affect: who carries the burden of the labour of attunement?

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Collegiality is at the heart of the academy's collective endeavour. It is central to how we think about academic governance structures, academic cultures, as well as the norms guiding academic work. This paper examines the less-explored affective dimensions of collegiality, probing the relationship between the collegial affect and the power and hierarchy in modern corporate universities. Three interview accounts describing academic practices in Australian universities are analysed to examine collegiality as academics' capacity to attune to certain collective affects. This analysis demonstrates how collegial relations can reproduce exclusion in universities. Alternative types of relations that are attentive to differences are then examined, charting possible new directions for a more inclusive academy.

Keywords: collegiality; academic practice; affect; attunement; difference; exclusion

Introduction

Collegiality is at the heart of the academy's collective endeavour. It is central to how we think about academic governance structures, academic cultures, as well as the norms guiding academic work (Alleman et al., 2017; Burnes et al., 2013; Macfarlane, 2016). Collegiality continues to be viewed as 'one of the most basic features of academic identity' (Di Leo, 2005, p. 5) that shapes how academics think about themselves and others in universities. Collegiality is 'wanted, valued, expected or […] promote[d]' (Spiller, 2010, p. 682), and it is seen as having a potential to 'profoundly affect atmosphere, morale, communications, efficiency, adaptiveness and innovativeness within an institution' (Handy, as cited in Land,

2004, p. 164).

There is no single agreed upon definition of collegiality. Despite its historical roots in the governance of medieval collegiate universities in Europe and the UK (Clark, 2008; Tapper & Palfreyman, 2010), over time, collegiality has gained many additional meanings and interpretations (Kligyte, 2021). Today, collegiality is associated with academic structures, cultures, ideals, values and norms, and characteristics of an individual, which makes collegiality 'a difficult word to use with any precision' (Caesar, 2005, p. 8). It is argued elsewhere that the tendency to conflate the various meanings and practices of collegiality in our thinking and writing (Kligyte, 2021; Kligyte & Barrie, 2014) results in problematic conceptualisations of collegiality as a 'good thing' – an egalitarian principle of academics' participation in decision-making in universities (Anderson et al., 2002), which is also linked to 'an atmosphere of harmony and intellectual collaboration' (Spiller, 2010, p. 680).

The relationship between the organisational and affective aspects of collegiality is tenuous and not well-understood. For instance, while the virtues of collegiality are extensively discussed in higher education literature (see Rowlands, 2013; Rowland 2008; Macfarlane, 2005; Marginson & Considine, 2000), the ways that historical notions of collegial relations structure contemporary academic practices receive less scholarly attention. In one of the few studies examining collegiality (or rather the lack of it) experienced by non-tenure track academics, Alleman and Haviland (2016) point out that whilst collegial participation affords individuals in full-time academic tenure-track positions mutual respect and autonomy, as equals, those in more precarious academic positions regularly report a lack of social engagement, agency, inclusion and acknowledgement of their individual worth. Collegiality appears to be simply unavailable to the growing numbers of adjunct or casual academic staff seeking a 'foothold', 'a stable place on the academic rock face' (Charteris et

al., 2016, p. 37). Given the porous boundaries of increasingly diverse universities today, there is a pressing need to question the valorised notions of collegiality, so we can begin advancing academic relations that have the potential of creating fairer and more inclusive academic workplaces.

This paper draws on the concept of *attunement* (Ahmed, 2014) to interrogate the link between the well-known structural aspects and less-explored affective dimensions of collegiality. Attunement can be defined as a form of sociality, requiring individuals to align with certain affects that dominate or are seen as desirable in a specific context in order to fully participate (Ahmed, 2014). These social atmospheres can have lasting effects through inscribing the existing informal and formal power relations into organisational affective infrastructures (Guschke et al., 2022). By examining the mechanisms that produce the sense of collegiality in academic contexts through the lens of attunement, this paper seeks to scrutinise the relationship between the collegial affect and the power and hierarchy in modern corporate universities. First, a brief overview of the existing understandings of collegiality is given, followed by a brief sketch of the theoretical concepts informing the analysis. Three interview accounts describing academic practices in two Australian universities are then examined to trace the affective dimensions of collegial relations as they unfold on the ground. By so doing, seemingly harmonious collegial relations are shown to reproduce exclusion in universities. Alternative types of relations that chart possible new directions for a more inclusive academy are then examined. By offering this different reading of collegiality, the paper makes a theoretical contribution to discussions about the nature of academic work, in the broader context of university transformation.

The uneven attachments to collegiality

In the higher education literature, collegiality is discussed in four main ways: as governance

structure, culture, behavioural norm and allegiance to disciplinary communities. First, the

historical notion of collegiality as belonging to a *collegium* – community, society, guild – is

embedded in contemporary university governance structures such as Senates and Academic

Boards (Bess, 1988; Marginson & Considine, 2000; Rowlands, 2013). Through formal

collegial participation processes, these governance bodies enable academics to influence their

institutions and, in turn, legitimise university decision-making. Second, collegiality is often

considered to be a part of academic workplace culture creating positive workplace climates

conducive to academic work (Bode, 1999; Macfarlane, 2005). Collegial cultures are seen as

central to enhancing opportunities for professional development and supporting the

enculturation of new academics into the academy. Third, collegiality is often conceptualised

as a behavioural norm in academic workplaces (Bode, 1999; Urgo, 2005). Through the

expectation for social and intellectual engagement with others in working towards common

goals, collegiality is seen as helping individuals to synchronise their goals and activities in an

otherwise fragmented university system (Aleman et al., 2017; Macfarlane, 2005). Finally,

collegial deliberation is often seen as a fundamental principle of advancing scholarly

knowledge (Rowland, 2008; Tapper & Palfreyman, 2010). This form of collegiality

underpins longstanding academic practices such as peer review and academic seminars where

ideas are debated (Clark, 2008). Whilst disciplinary collegiality does not always entail

harmonious collaboration, collegial disagreements are accepted as a necessary and valuable

part of knowledge work (Alleman et al., 2017; Readings, 1996).

These multiple conceptions of collegiality refer to both the *action* of being collegial –

'prosocial, supportive, and respectful behaviour that promotes collective identity and goals'

(Alleman et al., 2017, p. 21), and a *status* of a colleague denoting a membership and

belonging to an academic grouping. Some scholars argue that formal collegial structures

often function as a mechanism for achieving 'status closure' in universities (Waters, 1989, p.

964), by perpetuating the interests of the existing members through the differentiated academic status of a peer. For example, the presumably meritocratic emphasis on individual expertise, scholarship and research achievements is in fact normative, since it can disadvantage women and minority groups, who either do not come from the 'right' backgrounds or do not have sufficient opportunities to develop the required expertise through the 'right' kinds of education and academic employment to be successful (Alleman et al., 2017). In addition to the structural pre-conditions for collegial membership, Berlant (1998) questions the viability of intellectual collegiality for new scholars in contexts with pre-existent prestige structures associated with a lineage of ideas. Indeed, whilst the right to collegial deliberation and dissensus might be unproblematically afforded to some members of a collegial community, collegiality can equally be yielded by the dominant groups 'as both a "reified" and an "elusive" standard' (p. 13) that can be used 'to discipline untenured faculty' (Caesar, 2005, p. 13).

The normative effects of the collegial participation ideal have not been sufficiently scrutinised against the needs and aspirations of a significantly diversified academic workforce. Alleman et al. (2017) propose that collegiality should be taken apart and reassembled differently to serve those working in the contemporary academy better – 'if the nature of the academic profession is in flux, then so too will be the nature of the *collegium* and collegiality' (p. 89). Recognising the resilience of the idea of collegiality, this paper seeks to reimagine collegiality as a 'morality of the present' (Ylijöki, 2005, p. 573). By examining how the structural and affective dimensions of collegiality are intertwined with power in contemporary universities, opportunities to create academic environments that are more inclusive of difference are highlighted, contributing to a vision of a reconfigured modern academy.

The next section outlines the notion of attunement, which is used in this paper to open up new, more generative readings of collegiality.

The concept of *attunement*

The concept of *attunement* (Ahmed, 2014) is used to explore the affective dimensions of collegiality in this paper. Adopting the notion of *affect* as a pre-personal, pre-subjective and pre-discursive body's capacity to affect and be affected (Massumi, 2002), collegiality can be understood as a differentiated collective affect in academic environments. These types of collective affects are also referred to as 'moods', 'structures of feeling' or 'atmospheres' (Anderson, 2006, p. 103). Whilst seemingly being ephemeral, social atmospheres form a part of organisational affective infrastructures that place a tacit requirement for individuals to embody or express a certain set of emotions and behaviours (Guschke et al., 2022, p. 14). Ahmed (2014) defines attunement as the capacity of individuals to connect to these types of surrounding collective affects or 'resonate' with their environments.

Importantly, collective affects are normative, due to the expectation that individuals will attune to the social atmospheres surrounding them in the right way – 'not only as being with, but being with in a similar way' (Ahmed, 2014, p. 16). This highlights how the existing informal and formal organisational power relations are inscribed and reproduced in organisations not only through formal structural arrangements but also through ongoing reciprocal affective interactions. Collegiality can be understood as this type of a collective affect – 'a way of being for, as well as being with others' (Ahmed, 2014, p. 18). It could be argued that to experience collegiality, individuals in academic communities must be affectively aligned and positively attuned to their academic contexts and each other.

The concept of attunement provides a useful lens for examining how collegiality as collective affect positions bodies differently within the academy. In particular, it provides a novel way of examining how some academic bodies are afforded more capacity to affect and

be affected than others, reproducing historical inequalities in the academy. The paper proceeds to interrogate the affective dimensions of collegiality, by applying the theoretical lens of attunement to examine empirical accounts of everyday academic practices.

Affective dimensions of collegiality

This paper is part of an extended study on collegiality undertaken between 2014-2018 in Australian and Aotearoa/New Zealand universities (Kligyte, 2021; Kligyte & Barrie, 2014). To collect empirical accounts of academic practices, the invitation to participate in research on collegiality was sent to individuals, whose commitment to collegiality was publicly known or formally recognised, for example, through teaching or research awards, leadership roles in research mentoring schemes and so on. One interview with a casual staff member resulted from a broader call for participation that was circulated via a learning and teaching-oriented staff mailing list at one university. The semi-structured interview questions probed different aspects of collegial practices, behaviours and structures, observed or experienced by participants. All practices that characterised academic work as a collective endeavour were deemed to be relevant to this study, even if research participants themselves did not use the word collegiality to describe them.

This paper draws on a subset of interviews with three individuals working in two Australian universities. The specific interviews examined in this paper were chosen because they offered rich detail on the affective dimensions of collegiality in their accounts. These interviews include two female Professors, Alex and Michelle, and one casual tutor, Robert. Alex, a successful Professor, has forged her academic career in Science, relying on large data sets assembled through extensive global collaborations. Robert is a male casual academic who joined a female-dominated Health department after a long career in defence training and high school teaching. Michelle works in a sustainability-related field, where she frequently

leads collaborative projects involving multiple sectors: governments, communities, universities and industry partners. These interview accounts are examined by drawing on Ahmed's (2014) theorising of attunement to explore the relational configurations of collegiality. The analysis adopted the literary approach of 'critical reading' or 'close reading' of the interview accounts (Kelly, 2013, p. 72), which entailed multiple readings and re-readings of interview transcripts against the theoretical texts to discern the relational patterns in participants' accounts. An integrative analytic writing strategy was then used to weave together the theoretical and analytical components with research participant statements to produce an interpretive narrative resembling flowing prose (Emerson et al., 1995). The analysis begins by scrutinising seemingly unproblematic collegial affects, followed by instances where collegial attunement is not achieved. Alternative relational configurations are then examined seeking to reassemble collegiality differently.

Collegiality as attunement to collective affects

Invited to speak about collegiality in her practice, Professor Alex offers multiple examples of mobilising her collegial networks to assemble 'fun' research projects. She talks about curiosity, pleasure and thrill driving her scientific work with others.

> I'm a scientist. I love the science. I just love finding out the answers to new questions. That's absolutely what drives me. [...] My favourite part is where you see the graph of the results for the first time, and you're like oh. Yeah, that's what drives me (Alex).

Alex connects and relates to her scientist colleagues through this shared affective state, and science is easy from there. Explaining how she began one of her collaborations, Alex says that she 'just wrote to all of [her] old buddies up and down the east coast of Australia', whom she knew 'just because it's a small world'. By conducting large-scale global research projects early on in her career, she has become well-connected; 'it was really easy from then on':

'that's a part of how science is, to be connected well'. In her account of collegiality, Alex appears to be attuned to the *right kind of being together* within the academy – she tunes into the *right things* and in the *right ways*.

Ahmed (2014) points out that attunement to these types of positive collective affects does not just happen naturally. Individuals are trained to express their emotions and attachments to align them with the surrounding collective affects; it requires affective labour. Indeed, a close reading of Alex's account shows that she instinctively strives to be this way, to feel and express the right kinds of passions that tune into the affective register of collegial togetherness. Alex demonstrates an acute perception of the academic system, which provides her with clues about how to be and act in *the right way*. To effectively function in the academy, among other things, Alex needs to attune to collegiality as *the right kind* of togetherness.

However, this labour of adjustment to achieve collegial attunements is barely perceptible in Alex's account. In the interview, collegiality is simply presented as part of what she does and how she is. Alex's academic environment seems to amplify her personal aspirations, in tune with what is required or expected of her. She asks interesting scientific questions and the world yields – everything falls into place just so. Yet in her work, Alex seems to follow some unwritten rules. She is on the lookout for collaboration opportunities; she makes herself available to colleagues through conferences, seminars or social media; she has interesting research ideas or questions; accepts invitations; and reliably delivers what is required to progress projects. The labour involved in manipulating and arranging the environment around her for collaborations has become so seamless and smooth that it is glossed over, almost unnoticeable. Alex simply appears in the right contexts, says the right things, finds out about the right opportunities, offers the right things to her networks and, perhaps not surprisingly, gets positive responses.

Collegiality is presented in Alex's account as a sort of affective infrastructure through which positive feelings of togetherness flow, enabling new ideas and discoveries to emerge. Once this affective togetherness is achieved, collegiality is just assumed to be there, to be relied upon, tapped into without any particular effort. It is important to note that this description of 'easy' collegiality was offered by Alex after being invited to participate in research as a 'publicly known' effective research collaborator. Thus, the picture of effortless collegiality presented in an interview might communicate Alex's perception of how collegiality must be 'done' by a successful academic, whether as part of a tightly managed strategic performance or a genuine attempt to articulate aspects of her practice.

Collegiality as being together in a similar way

Ahmed (2014) notes that attunement as being *for* and *with* others 'is understood not only as *being with*, but *being with in a similar way*' (p. 16). Indeed, we do not attune to everything or not always in the right way – particular worlds are not *worlds for* everybody (or every body). The following section presents an exploration of collegial mis-attunement or non-attunement, through an analysis of interview with Robert, who is a casual teaching staff member in a Health department. Whilst a casual teaching role is markedly different in status and institutional positioning from a research Professor, the paper does not explain away the particular dynamics that unfold in this case simply by referring to Robert's status as a casual member of staff. Instead, a different argument is advanced, by tracing the relational configurations Robert encounters as he becomes a part of the academic context.

Robert describes how in this Health department casual academics appear to be 'dumped' with teaching tasks and are not seen as worthy of developing relationships with. There are no formal opportunities for discussion, and tutors' past experience is not recognised. In the absence of any obvious way to connect with others, Robert approaches

other tutors to discuss some problems in certain classes he had encountered. Yet this attempt of a collegial conversation is taken 'like it was a professional affront' – 'almost like, well you just should have managed it or something like that'. In this unwelcoming environment, Robert does what he knows and what has worked in the past in defence contexts and implements a 'continuous improvement' approach. Not satisfied with the teaching materials, Robert prepares his own slides and tutorial activities. Encouraged by positive student responses, he even begins accepting students from other tutorial groups into his class:

> I knew damn well that they weren't teaching particularly well because I had students coming to me from their tutorials saying, please can we join yours because we're not learning anything next door. So at the end of the semester, I ended up with 40 or 50 kids in my lab and next door was virtually empty (Robert).

Robert devises spreadsheets to make marking more efficient: 'I had little drop-down boxes in my things, so bump, bump, all calculated all the marks, bump, got through my thing'. Instead of appreciating his efforts, the subject coordinator suggests that since he was 'not taking all the time that everybody else was', his marking must be of inferior quality. Robert's initiative is interpreted as being non-compliant, likely trespassing into the domain of the coordinator's duties. Being cut off from conversations with colleagues, he does not appear to be sensing the clues about the *right way* of relating to others in this environment. Indeed, Robert's interaction strategies and ways of being tried and tested in the context of defence are interpreted as mis-attunement to this academic environment.

Ahmed (2014) discusses how individuals 'enter the room with certain leanings' (p. 17-18). Shaped by their past experiences, individuals arrive to new contexts with their histories, which is 'how [they] come to lean this way or that' (Ahmed, 2014, p. 18). Thus, individuals can be in the world in a non-responsive relationship with others, with 'bodies that lean another way' even being screened out from the collective awareness (Ahmed, 2014, p.

18). Although the university system remains opaque and inattentive to Robert, his account indicates that others have achieved collegial attunement in this Health department. Robert notes that to fit this academic context one should 'probably be more interested in dealing with your colleagues than working for your students'. He passes judgement on the conviviality he observes among colleagues as being pointless and unprofessional: 'You need to spend much more time flirting and being around, bringing in cakes and that sort of stuff rather than working for your students'. Robert describes sitting on the junior academics' floor one day marking exams, whilst his colleagues were 'all running around [as if] having a party without the mum and dad knowing downstairs'. Everything he observes appears so foreign and irrational to him. Indeed, Robert jokes that he does not fit in, even in terms of how his body appears in this environment: 'I don't know whether there is a place for a middle-aged overweight heterosexual male in the Health faculty'.

Ahmed (2014) suggests that to achieve attunement 'some bodies have to become attuned to others, those who are already, as it were, "in the room"' (p. 22), highlighting the unequal ways that the labour of attunement is distributed across different bodies. For instance, Robert starts with high aspirations and a lot of enthusiasm. Yet, due to his inability (or refusal) to be together in *the right and similar way*, he fails to attune to the existing collective affect in this department. Robert's confusion is positioned as his personal struggle – it is his duty to attune to 'those who are already' there (Ahmed, 2014, p. 22), while the academic department itself appears to continue along with its existing relationships and practices.

While Robert does not provide a great deal of detail about it in the interview, he alludes to the disturbances he might have caused in this academic department. For example, he describes interactions with a coordinator who is 'totally dishevelled, disorganised'; he sees another's subject as being in 'shambles'; he sarcastically rejects the cheerfulness of

communal situations he encounters. As a result, he 'become[s] registered as what or who causes the loss of attunement' (Ahmed, 2014, p. 18) – perhaps as a reminder of masculine arrogance more generally. Identified as a 'stranger' (p. 18) whose values and loyalty seem to be in all the wrong places, Robert is recognised as 'not leaning that way', someone who is 'not being with' (Ahmed, 2014, p. 18).

> The labour of attunement is unevenly distributed because bodies do not arrive at the same time. For those who come after, […] attunement becomes work. Simply put: some have to work to become attuned to others. Attunement is thus a matter of precedence (Ahmed, 2014, p. 19).

Collegiality experienced as affective attunement to particular academic configurations, therefore, can be exclusionary. Those who 'arrive' (p. 21) later must carry the burden of the labour of attuning to an existing harmonious togetherness. The successful labour of attunement 'disappears as labour' (p. 21), which can be seen in the effortless collegiality described by Alex. 'The smoothness of attunement might even require the disappearance of labour' (Ahmed, 2014, p. 21).

An alternative interpretation of Robert's story might be that perhaps he simply had an abrasive personality or was extraordinarily oblivious to the world around him. However, Robert's account suggests it might not be that case. Despite being sidelined by academic colleagues, Robert forms good relationships with the administrative staff, who like him because he is reliable and easy to deal with. Students love him too. Robert gets emails from them 'all the time saying, thanks for going the extra mile, thanks for doing this, I really learnt something, I had to wait three years to actually learn something in this degree'. Appreciation by students helps Robert to maintain his poise and a sense of purpose – these emails 'make [him] tick'. However, the connections Robert forms do not seem to matter in the big scheme

of things. A couple of months after the interview, Robert emails me to let me know that his contract was not renewed.

While Robert's status as a casual teaching staff member should not preclude alternative explanations, the positioning of such new 'arrivals' does play a significant role. The plight of casual academic staff battling precarity in neoliberal universities is well documented (for example, see Charteris et al., 2016; Crimmins, 2016). By focusing on the affective dimension of academic relations, it becomes clear that in addition to structurally positioning casual academics in the periphery of academic formations, the differentiated two-tier academic system is also enacted through everyday academic interactions. Robert's and Alex's cases seem to suggest that academics' career advancement might also depend on an individuals' ability to engender the *right feeling* in a particular academic context. The importance of this affective dimension sheds some new light on the mechanisms of power and hierarchy in contemporary universities. For instance, Robert's situation could easily be inverted, to imagine how female academics might be marginalised (see, for example, Bogle (2017)) on the basis of non-attunement to the non-transparent non-accountable affective registers of *being together in the right way and in a similar way* in male-dominated academic environments.

Productively summoning collegial relations

While attunement to the affective register of collegial relationships might be necessary for individuals to effectively participate in academic networks in the present, collegiality can also be seen as relationality that holds a future *potential* to be productive. Collegiality binds the affective atmospheres with sociomaterial structures that are (or become) associated with certain kinds of academic formations which, in turn, enable access to resources: data, funding, supportive institutional infrastructures and so on. Indeed, to establish and sustain

positive collegial relations, individuals have to be beneficially situated in academic networks and have the ability to mobilise institutional resources.

In the examples of collegiality given by Alex, it is clear that these relationships depend on her embeddedness and relative positioning within her academic networks, particularly in regard to what she can offer – materially or otherwise – to advance shared projects or initiatives. For instance, Alex writes well and quickly; and she has a good track record of winning grants, which continues to bring tangible material benefits to her research collaborations. As is common in her discipline, Alex's collegial networks are also sustained by 'taking little data sets from all over the world and putting them together' into global data sets, to answer the 'big picture' scientific questions about global patterns in her discipline. She routinely spends months, if not years, assembling and meticulously cleaning up these data sets, approaching colleagues who have the data she needs, and offering them authorship on manuscripts in exchange. Indeed, participation in productive collegial relationships requires Alex to not only mobilise collegial relations; it also demands a capacity to contribute time, expertise and skilful use of resources to ensure that such relations are sustained.

In contrast, Robert does not have access to resources that would be deemed valuable by others in his academic department, in part due to his casual academic status. Despite this, in his attempts to establish collegial relations, he offers various 'goods' to colleagues: for example, he shares his teaching materials and marking sheets with others, arranges meetings with research academics in the department to offer his expertise as an industry trainer, and spends time in shared staff spaces hoping for fruitful conversations. Yet, he is not in a position to mobilise further resources or networks – a connection with him does not present a promise or future potentiality. Indeed, Robert's status of a casual staff member does not simply signify a type of contract. It is an indication of the kind of resources he has at his disposal. This suggests that casual academics may be excluded from collegial relations, not

only because they are not afforded sufficient space and time to participate in daily academic processes as argued by Alleman and Haviland (2016), but also because they are unable to summon the relationships or desirable material resources that are necessary to support affective collegiality.

Forging collegial relations across differences

So far, in this paper, collegial relations have been explored as being reliant on similarity of academics' status and experience. Yet in contemporary universities, differences in positioning in academic relations are sometimes intentionally sought out; for example, where it is anticipated that unusual configurations of different types of knowledges might generate new insights (as in interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary collaborations) (Kligyte, 2021; Kligyte et al., 2022). For example, Professor Michelle's account features numerous examples of extensive and deliberate efforts to forge collegial relations in her transdisciplinary collaborations. Much of her work takes place in developing countries, with and for unprivileged communities, exploring ways for such communities to sustain basic infrastructures. Michelle works with governments and industries, as well as academic colleagues, to generate new knowledge that benefits these communities.

Michelle is mindful that in her work she is creating new relational configurations that previously did not exist. The way Michelle sees it, part of her role as an academic and a project leader is to carefully piece together a new web of relationships, so that a context for investigation can be established. She talks about her projects as 'weav[ing] from the communities, through local government, up to national government and back down again in order to have influence at all those levels'. In Michelle's view, these projects 'work much better if [she] can bring people to a point of having a degree of openness to other ways of viewing the world and respect for others' views'. She actively works on cultivating this

stance in her projects, starting by listening to different perspectives – to learn from, and be affected by, what is encountered.

Michelle selects her collaborators not only on the basis of their academic expertise, but also on her judgement of who has access to resources or is already working in this space and who has a stake in the matter. The stakeholders and external partners that Michelle engages with on these projects must also see some value in a collaboration. Therefore, Michelle works hard to navigate their expectations to keep her projects going – everyone must be willing to spend time and effort on these collaborations.

In one of her recent projects, Michelle chose to work with a particular non-governmental organisation (NGO). While being promising, this collaboration has had its own challenges. The NGO was 'mostly engineers', not quite on board with the case study approach that Michelle was proposing, to the point where they nearly withdrew from the project. Rather than sidestepping the issues or abandoning the relationship, Michelle went for 'a very long, quite repetitive, walk with a key person in the NGO', which enabled them to 'air out' the issues and 'work out a different path forward'. As a result, Michelle's contribution went from 'being of no value in this project whatsoever' to becoming an integral part of a global training program for the NGO staff.

This example shows that the collaborative connections that Michelle forges are risky. Michelle does not always have the opportunity to work with people she knows or go into safe territories she is familiar with. Michelle accepts the volatility implicit in these atypical collegial relations. Her collaborations can go either way: they might lead to unanticipated gains or result in wastage of time, resources and effort. When projects get 'bogged down', Michelle works around the roadblocks – she pulls some strings, establishes new relationships and finds new pathways forward. In Michelle's account, collegial relationships are not presented as a given and they are not always easy or smooth. She describes working through

fallouts and projects that are nearly breaking, as well as setbacks due to international issues beyond her control. She actively tries to keep the collaborations together. Part of Michelle's mission is to educate the sector. She does not necessarily seek easy collaborations.

In contrast, Alex's work revolves around scientific questions and the integrity of data sets that she assembles. She collaborates with people in various locations, but her focus is on collecting the data – not on understanding the needs of her collaborators. In the first large global collaboration she has led, Alex travelled around the world to train the local staff in the protocols of data collection by showing them how to do it in person – 'otherwise people tend to go, oh but I'll do it this way, it makes more sense here. You just can't'. The relationships Alex was able to establish (or not) affected where her data was collected. For instance, she was not able to find many collaborators in Africa, and therefore her project had relatively few sites there. Alex also describes some difficult relational dynamics she encountered with one older male collaborator in China, who was used to more hierarchical ways of working and 'really hated being told what to do'. Alex had to insist on doing things 'her way' because it was the standard project methodology, yet that 'really offended him'. It was 'too awkward' for Alex and she 'just wouldn't set up another collaboration with him' again.

It is important to acknowledge that Alex's and Michelle's commitments to academic projects are different in many respects. In order to contribute to the discipline of Science, Alex is dedicated to the integrity of the data and scientific method, whereas Michelle is driven by the overall aspirational moral purpose of her work, helping her to produce site-specific knowledge. Moreover, Michelle's collaborative networks depend on her ability to mobilise grant funding, so that projects can be carried out. In her project-dependent work, relevance to stakeholders, funding bodies and governments is of prime importance. It requires Michelle to constantly work on the balance between her research interests and outcomes, and the tangible deliverables for communities or stakeholders she is engaged with.

While it might be entirely appropriate for Alex to 'drop' difficult people or non-responsive sites from her data sets, it is interesting to consider how the ability of individuals to establish and carry out collegial relationships might affect the kind of knowledge that is possible to produce, even in scientific contexts. Whereas Alex treats the relational difficulties she encounters as 'glitches' or 'errors' that can be 'dropped' and need not be revisited, Michelle just assumes that working through conflict or disagreement in her collaborations is part of the academic work she does, in order to produce the outcomes that are of value to communities she engages with. Attunement in Michelle's project is 'an effect of work' (p. 21), yet for her the 'labour to be in tune with others' (Ahmed, 2014, p. 21) does not appear to be arduous or demeaning. Returning to Ahmed's (2014) suggestion that attunement, and thus collegiality, is a matter of precedence, it is clear that by situating openness to others' perspectives at the centre of her collaborations, Michelle consciously works to remove a sense of precedence in her projects. By reducing the expectation that others will need to attune to an existing relational configuration, Michelle creates a space where the labour of attunement is more evenly distributed and can be achieved through dialogue and negotiation.

Concluding reflections

This paper argues that collegiality emerges as affective relations between individuals attuned to their sociomaterial academic environments. These collegial relations are typically established on the basis of affinity, building on the types of relationships that have already been experienced, along the lines of sameness or similarity. Further, collegiality as an affective infrastructure depends on academics' capacity to mobilise material or relational resources for it to be productively realised, connecting collegial relations to the mechanisms of power and hierarchy in contemporary universities.

On the basis of this analysis, we can consider how inequalities are entangled with the idealised notions of academic work, including expectations for collegiality that require others to attune to the affective register *in the right way*. This paper shows that exclusion does not only arise from structural arrangements in universities; it is also enacted by a multiplicity of unwitting actors through everyday academic practices. It becomes apparent that seemingly neutral or convivial academic practices are also implicated in propagating historical injustices. If career advancement in the academy demands certain types of performances of affective collegiality, some academic dispositions are inevitably privileged, disadvantaging others who differ from the academic norm. Thus, exclusion functions not only by denying access to collegial circles, as discussed by Alleman et al. (2017) and Waters (1989), but also through enactment of the less tangible affective aspects of academic work.

This raises some questions about the ways we conceptualise academic work today. If effortless attunement is positioned as an ideal collegial relation, as exemplified by Alex's account, forging relationships across differences might feel tedious or stifling. Unconventional collaborations necessarily require the labour of attunement that can be seen as undesirable or even unnecessary. Yet, Michelle's case demonstrates that such labour can be more evenly distributed and rendered meaningful, by shifting the attention away from the fun, ease or productivity of academic relations to the responsibility and purpose of academic work as it relates to the broader society and the world.

This reading of collegiality draws our attention to the types of academic relationality that might be more appropriate in contemporary universities. In increasingly casualised and diverse universities today, modes of togetherness that rely on affinity and similarity need closer scrutiny. We must ask who carries the burden of the labour of attunement, and whether the demand for effortless affective collegiality is justifiable. Further, collegiality conceived only in terms of relationships within the academic class might be inadequate in universities

whose boundaries with society are becoming increasingly permeable. In universities that are

embedded in and entwined with societal issues, concerns and hopes, new modes of

togetherness that enable us to forge and sustain productive relationships across differences

might be needed (Kligyte et al., 2022).

By shifting away from the analysis of structural forces to the affective dimensions of

everyday academic practices, this paper offers a new reading of the exclusionary effects of

collegiality. The alternative types of academic relations that are attentive to difference

examined in this study open up possibilities for new configurations of collegiality and chart

new directions for a more inclusive academy.

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