



The logics of collegial practices: Australian and New Zealand/Aotearoa perspectives

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Abstract

Despite decades of managerial university reforms, collegiality emerges as an idea that unites academics, and that both symbolises and legitimises the collective aspirations of the academy. Typically, collegiality is positioned as an unquestionably “good thing”—an unproblematic academic ideal or an academic structure—obscuring the contingency of social arrangements in universities. This paper investigates the plurality of collegial practices that unfold “on the ground” in the context of university reforms and the diversification of the academic workforce over recent decades. The paper presents a qualitative and exploratory study of collegial practices in seven contemporary Australian and New Zealand/Aotearoa universities, employing a social cartographic analysis. Eleven types of logics underpinning collegial practices are identified and described in detail, by drawing on examples of collegial practices offered by fifteen research participants. A reconfigured picture of academic relations is presented, revealing the range of collegial practices that tend to be subsumed under a generic notion of collegiality. The effects of different types of collegial practices are examined, contesting exclusionary collegial relations and highlighting practices that have the potential to produce a more inclusive and socially just academy.

Keywords Collegiality · Academic work · Higher education · Academic practices

Introduction

Internationally, despite decades of managerial university reforms collegiality emerges as an idea that unites academics, and that both symbolises and legitimises the collective aspirations of the academy beyond managerial understandings of academic work (Alleman et al. 2017; Macfarlane 2005; Taylor 2008; Watt 2005). There is a pervasive perception among academics of a shared tradition of collegial collaboration - collegiality is “wanted, valued, expected or

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[...] promote[d]” (Spiller 2010, p. 682), and it is frequently associated with higher work satisfaction for individuals and positive outcomes for academic departments (Alleman et al. 2017; Bode 1999; Boice 1991; Burnes et al. 2013; Connell and Savage 2001; Di Leo 2005a; Johnston et al. 2012; Macfarlane 2016; Su and Baird 2017). Collegiality continues to prominently feature in many university missions and statements of academic codes of conduct, and numerous recent studies reveal that collegiality matters to academics (Alleman and Haviland 2016; Macfarlane 2016; Spiller 2010; Anderson et al. 2002; Scott et al. 2008).

There is no single agreed upon definition of collegiality. Typically, collegiality is understood as the principle of academics’ participation in decision-making in universities (Anderson et al. 2002), that “also evokes an atmosphere of harmony and intellectual collaboration” (Spiller 2010, p.680). There is an urgency to understand collegiality better, if we are to continue to draw upon it as a key organizing principle of the academy. While changes to formal collegial structures over the last decades have been extensively scrutinised in the higher education literature (see Marginson and Considine 2000; Rowlands 2013), the multiplicity of enactments of collegial practices by academics ‘on the ground’ have not been sufficiently explored.

It is argued elsewhere that in the higher education literature collegiality tends to be positioned as an unquestionably “good thing”—an unproblematic academic ideal or a self-evident academic structure—obscuring the contingency of social arrangements in universities (Kligyte and Barrie 2014). Some scholars highlight the implicit normative ideal for collegial participation as being that of a full-time white male academic on a permanent contract (Alleman et al. 2017). With a significant diversification of the academic workforce over recent decades internationally, it is important to examine the plurality of collegial practices at play in contemporary universities. By examining collegial practices enacted by a multiplicity of variously positioned players, the exclusionary understandings of collegial relations can be contested.

The paper presents a qualitative and exploratory study of collegial practices in seven contemporary Australian and New Zealand/Aotearoa universities. Despite being limited by the geographical location, the insights arising through this study speak to the broader concerns about transformations of academic work worldwide. The article begins by briefly outlining existing conceptions of collegiality in the higher education literature, revealing the limitations of framing it as a universal ideal. The methodology of the study utilizing Glynos and Howarth’s (2007) logics framework is then explained, including the social cartographic analytic process undertaken. Eleven types of logics of collegial practices are identified and described in detail, by drawing on examples of collegial practices offered by fifteen research participants. A reconfigured picture of academic relations is produced, highlighting the many forms of collegial practices that tend to be obscured by the generic notion of collegiality. The effects of different types of collegial practices are examined, emphasizing practices that have the potential to produce a more inclusive and just academy. Through this, the study contributes a new perspective to the growing literature about university cultures and the changing landscape of academic work.

Collegiality in higher education

In the higher education literature, collegiality is seen as “one of the most basic features of academic identity” (Di Leo 2005a, p. 5) that structures academic practices and the ways academics think about themselves and others within the academy. As “a plea for community” (Urgo 2005, p. 41) in an otherwise lonely scholarly endeavour, collegiality embodies a

commitment to the collective purpose of the academy. Collegiality is not exclusive to higher education. It is also a feature of legal (Herron 1990), medical (McDonald et al. 2009) and school teaching professions (Hargreaves 1991). In all cases, collegiality involves “a group—or collective—“accepting a self-definition, common purpose [and] standards” (Petro 1992, p. 286), determining the rules for inclusion and exclusion from this formation. Collegiality is seen as socializing members of a group “into an attitude of loyalty to colleagues” (McDonald et al. 2009, p. 1199) as well as projecting an image of expertise to those outside the profession (Petro 1992; Waters 1989). Similarly, in higher education, as implied by its etymology, collegiality is about belonging to a *collegium*—community, society, guild— including the ability for its members to self-determine the criteria for acceptance into such a grouping (Alleman et al. 2017). Indeed, academics’ claim to expertise, autonomy and equal status as peers, depends on their acceptance to a *collegium*.

In the higher education literature, collegiality tends to be examined across four categories: governance structure, culture, behavioural norm and intellectual affinity. First, a *collegium* is enacted through formal collegial governance bodies. For example, university Senates and Academic Boards function as the symbols of collegial participation in university governance (Marginson and Considine 2000), enabling academics to influence institutions. Although in practice, academics might choose not to (or are not able to) exercise these rights, collegial governance is seen as ensuring the internal and external legitimacy of university decision-making (Bess 1988; Marginson and Considine 2000; Rowlands 2013).

Second, collegiality is frequently understood as a culture—“a tacit shared understanding of what is considered to be of value” (Spiller 2010, p. 682)—helping individuals feel more committed to the goals of the institution or a profession. In the higher education literature, collegial cultures are often explored as positive workplace climates that are conducive to academic work. Indeed, the culture of collegiality is often linked to enhanced opportunities for professional development; it is also seen as the main conduit for values and practices that enable the enculturation of newcomers into the academy (Bode 1999; Boice 1991; Macfarlane 2007).

Third, collegiality as a behavioural norm is understood as an individual’s ability to socially and intellectually engage with others in work towards common goals (Bode 1999; Urgo 2005). The norm of collegiality underpins fundamentally decentralised university organisational structures—it is inferred that academic staff can be trusted to do their work with minimal supervision (Burnes et al. 2013). In what is otherwise a rather atomised and fragmented university system, collegiality functions as a mechanism for synchronising the multiplicity of individual goals and activities (Alleman et al. 2017; Macfarlane 2005).

Finally, collegiality is also conceptualised as intellectual affinity within disciplinary communities (Rowland 2008; Tapper and Palfreyman 2010). By elevating the status of academic expertise through “research, peer-review, specialization, and international reputation-building” (Alleman et al. 2017, p. 25), disciplinary collegiality enables academics to exercise relative autonomy from their institutions. While concerns about academics’ ability to act as free-floating agents without committing or contributing to their institution are sometimes expressed (Macfarlane 2005; Delanty 2008; Malcolm and Zukas 2009), disciplinary collegiality tends to be taken as a given and seen as an unproblematic basis upon which disciplinary knowledge is produced.

Over the recent decades, collegiality in higher education has become imbued with an additional moral dimension. Many scholars writing about university reforms argue that with the introduction of new public management practices, collegiality is under threat. They point out that collegial governance is being methodically dismantled or marginalised in

contemporary universities (Rowlands 2013; Marginson and Considine 2000). There is also a concern that academic relations and subjectivities are being transformed through managerial audit and accountability techniques which circumscribe academic work in terms of targets and measurable outcomes (Shore 2008; Strathern 2003). Multiple authors document how the introduction of academic performance regimes has increased competition in academic contexts, driving individualised, rather than collective, behaviours among academics (Leisyte and Dee 2012; Di Leo 2005b; Rowland 2008). In these contemporary institutional climates, it is feared that academics shed their “collegiate skins” to take on “more corporate customer-focused suits” (Winter 2009, p. 123). Despite this demise, collegiality is also perceived to provide the grounds for resistance against university reforms (Rowland 2008). As a “unifying conception” (p. 358) at the centre of academic endeavour, it is argued, collegiality can increase “trust, openness, collaborative debate and a commitment to knowledge” (Rowland 2008, p. 358) in universities. Many higher education scholars ask how collegiality can be preserved, defended or strengthened in academic contexts in transformation.

In much of published higher education research, these multiple conceptions and expressions of collective aspects of academic work are subsumed under a single notion of collegiality (Kligyte and Barrie 2014). Collegiality is “presumed to be understood, foundational, already in place” (Caesar 2005, p. 7), with the dominant narrative being that of its erosion as a result of the rise of managerial regimes in universities. This study seeks to examine collegiality differently by accommodating, legitimising and interrogating the multiplicity of formal and informal meanings and enactments of collegiality as they unfold in practical contexts. The following sections of the paper explain the theoretical underpinnings and the methodology used in this study.

The study: theorising collegial practices

The study is conducted with a postfoundational theoretical sensibility, drawing on discourse theory initially developed by Laclau and Mouffe (2001). In this paradigm, discourse is considered to be an ontological category, with social reality being constructed through ongoing relational practices of “categorising the world” (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, p. 5). Thought about in this way, discourse encompasses “all dimensions of social reality and not just the usual practices of speaking, writing, and communicating.” (Howarth 2000, p. 265). From this perspective, collegiality is conceptualised as a discursive category that is available to individuals to draw on in the production of meanings about academic work. However, collegiality does not exist as an independent concept separate from its enactments in empirical worlds—individuals do not act by attaching an external meaning of collegiality to their academic practice (Vannini 2012). Instead, collegiality emerges from academic practices and empirical realities, while simultaneously shaping them (Kligyte 2019).

Whereas the existing studies of collegiality tend to coalesce around categories and definitions representing structural arrangements in the academy (such as collegial governance, culture or behavioural norms), this paper turns to collegial practices as the object of enquiry. In this study, practices are conceptualised as an element of discourse within which all aspects of academic work—individual actions, meanings, material arrangements—are articulated. Practices are thought about in a specific sense as the “ongoing, routinised forms of human and societal reproduction” that are “largely repetitive” and do not typically entail a strong notion of self-reflexivity” (Glynos and Howarth 2007, p. 104). Importantly, practices are not only iterative, but also “articulatory” (Glynos

and Howarth 2007, p. 104). While routine performances of collegial practices can be seen as, in part, reproducing social realities in universities, these enactments require “minor adjustments and modifications in [their] accomplishment” (Glynos and Howarth 2007, p. 105). Thus, collegiality can be seen as being dynamically articulated and rearticulated through continual enactment of routine academic practices. Opportunities for contestation and negotiation of sedimented meanings of collegiality can open up as a result of individuals acting differently when facing *dislocation*—“a moment when the subject’s mode of being is experienced as disrupted” (Glynos and Howarth 2007, p. 110).

Glynos and Howarth (2007) offer a spatial representation of the four dimensions of social practices to consider the range of alternative responses to dislocation (see Fig. 1).

On the vertical axis, Glynos and Howarth (2007) situate the political and social dimensions of practices. The political dimension involves a public contestation of social norms, in which taken-for-granted truths about social practices are publicly called into question, whereas the social dimension is foregrounded through routinised everyday practices that actively absorb or prevent such public contestation (Glynos and Howarth 2007 p. 111). The ideological and ethical dimensions of social relations are situated on the horizontal axis. Ethical responses to dislocatory experiences demonstrate “generalised sensitivity or attentiveness to the always-already dislocated character of existing social relations” (Glynos and Howarth 2007 p. 110). In contrast, ideological responses aim to produce obviousness, normality and closure by active forgetting or complicity in concealing the contingency of social relations (Glynos and Howarth 2007). This spatial representation forms the basis of the social cartographic analytic approach adopted in this paper.

Methods

Participants

In this paper, I draw on interviews with fifteen participants from six Australian and one New Zealand university. The participants were recruited using a targeted approach seeking

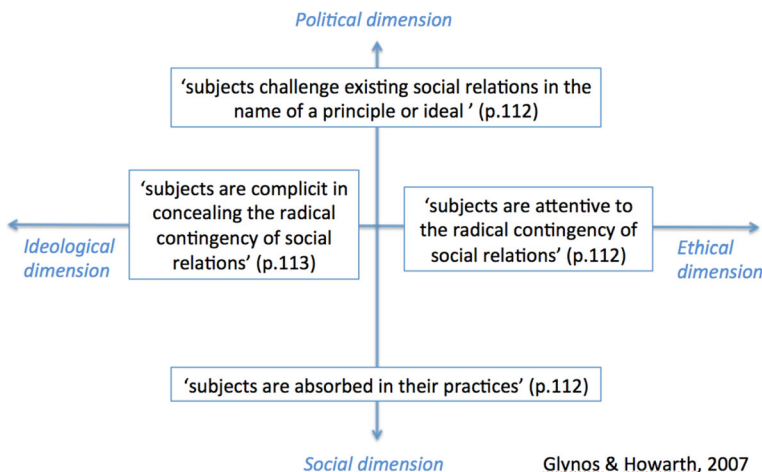


Fig. 1 Four dimensions of social practices

perspectives from across academic disciplines and institutional hierarchies. The purpose of assembling a diverse sample of participants was not to represent a specific composition of the academy, but to generate a rich collection of situated collegial practices and meanings, conceptualised and enacted in a range of ways. Specifically, I approached individuals, whose commitment to collegial practices was publicly known, for example, through their engagement in national initiatives, reputation of collaborative achievements or an institutional positioning requiring an intense engagement with collegial structures. I anticipated that a focus on specific initiatives linked with collegiality would help me elicit rich examples of collegial practices, steering away from abstract conversations about collegiality as a “good thing”.

Table 1 outlines the level of participants’ academic appointment and the domain of academic work within which their publicly recognised collegial practices were situated.

Accounts of collegial practices

Participants offered their accounts of collegial practices through audio-recorded semi-structured individual interviews which were then transcribed through a transcription service. The interviews started with discussing the collegial initiative for which the participants were known. Identified through the literature review, further interview questions probed different aspects of collegial practices observed or experienced by participants in universities more generally. As elements of discourse, collegial practices are considered to be inaccessible to researchers as an unmediated empirical reality. To become intelligible, they require “some reference to—or passage through—the self-interpretations of subjects” (Glynos and Howarth 2007, p. 172). Semi-structured interviews were deemed to be a suitable and familiar method for probing collegial practices, enabling the participants to describe examples of collegial practices and offer interpretations of their actions. Collegial practices were considered in the broadest sense as both institutional and disciplinary practices that attribute significance to the collective aspects of academic work, even if research participants chose (sometimes deliberately so) to talk about collaborations or partnerships instead. In the absence of a single definition of collegiality, all the accounts of collegial practices evoked by my questions were considered, including experiences of the lack of collegiality.

In postfoundational framing, a researcher’s perspective forms an integral part of the enquiry—data is seen as being produced rather than collected through research, with researchers unable to bracket ourselves from the empirical reality being investigated (Jackson and Mazzei 2012; Petersen 2013). Instead, a crucial task of a researcher is to connect and gather together the various components of discourses, materialities and theoretical perspectives to articulate collegiality as an object for investigation (Glynos and Howarth 2007). In this

Table 1 Overview of interview participants

Level of appointment	Teaching	Research	Academic governance	Community engagement	Total
Casual staff/Lecturer/Senior lecturer	2	1			3
Associate Professor/Professor	2	3	3	2	10
Non-academic ¹	1		1		2
Total	5	4	4	2	15

¹ Includes an academic librarian and a student representative

study, interviews are conceptualised as a genre of dialogue between a researcher and a research participant that enables a reciprocal and discursive construction of meaning, rather than seeing them as a one-way extraction of pre-existing or preformed ‘truths’ about collegiality (Clegg and Stevenson 2013). The impossibility of creating a distance between our perceptions as researchers and the production of data is discussed at length in key postfoundational theory texts (see Jackson and Mazzei 2012; Lather 2006; MacLure 2013). Rather than seeking objectivity or generalisability, Glynos and Howarth (2007) highlight the importance of persuasion in this type of research—“the ultimate ‘proof of the pudding’ consists in the production of persuasive narratives that better explain problematised phenomena” (p. 191).

Mapping collegial practices

Paulston and Liebman’s (1996) social cartography approach and Glynos and Howarth’s (2007) logics framework were adopted as the main analytic approaches in this study. The logics framework highlights how seemingly diverse practices can be governed by similar rules or logics. Logics is what “makes [a] practice ‘work’ or ‘tick’” (Glynos 2008, p. 277)—they are “the rules or grammar of the practice” (Glynos and Howarth 2007, p. 136). Logics is an analytic device that enables us to describe, characterise and articulate practices in relation to other components within discourses (Glynos and Howarth 2007). A focus on logics directs the researcher’s analytical gaze to the implications of practices, away from superficial thematic similarities or static “meanings, patterns, [or] codes” (MacLure 2013, p. 228).

The social cartographic method was used as the main analytic device for articulating the logics underpinning various collegial practices. I began the analysis with the spatial arrangement of four dimensions of practices introduced by Glynos and Howarth (2007) (see Fig. 1). I then read through the interview transcripts and wrote down the examples of collegial practices described by participants on small post-it notes. Using a large sheet of paper, I plotted these examples along the two axes: ‘social-political’ and ‘ideological-ethical’. Then, I began clustering examples of practices in a to-and-fro process of spatially arranging and reorganizing seeking to discern a set of logics governing these practices. By so doing, I was engaging in a process of “articulation” (Glynos and Howarth 2007, p. 184)—a practice of critical analysis; repeatedly linking the elements together, similar to a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967). The process was iterative, with multiple versions of different logics identified and different versions of maps and clusters produced and tested with peers and colleagues and in conferences.

The result of the social cartographic analysis revealing the interrelatedness of competing conceptions and enactments of collegiality is presented in Fig. 2. Through this analysis, I was able to differentiate between collegial practices that tended to reproduce the existing social realities in universities (“social-ideological” quadrant) and those that challenged the prevailing arrangements and norms (“political-ethical” quadrant). The resulting reconfigured picture of academic relations accommodates “seeming incommensurables” (Paulston and Liebman 1996, p. 23), without subsuming the multiplicity of collegial practices under a single notion of collegiality as a “good thing”.

Importantly, the map presented in Fig. 2 is one possible reading of a complex terrain of collegial practices. It is necessarily provisional and open for reinterpretation and redrawing. de Oliveira Andreotti et al. (2016) argue that the purpose of a social cartographic approach is to raise questions about a phenomenon under investigation rather than to represent the truths about it. In the same vein, the map of the logics of collegial practices presented below is an

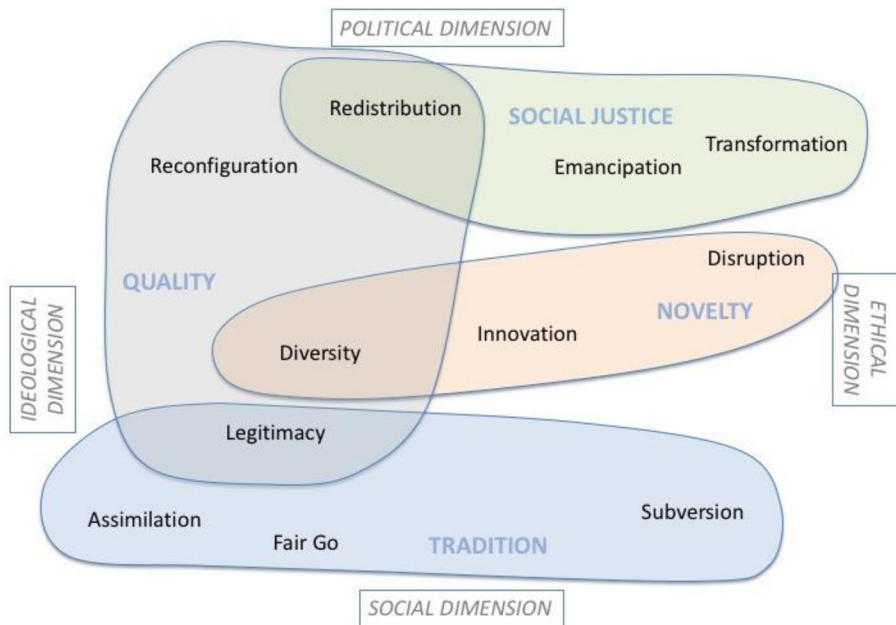


Fig. 2 Social cartographic map of the logics of collegial practices

invitation to begin a dialogue about the role of collegiality in academic work, rather than a conclusion about what collegiality is or what it does in universities today.

The logics of collegial practices

The map in Fig. 2 presents eleven types of logics guiding collegial practices: *assimilation*, *legitimacy*, *fair go*, *subversion*, *diversity*, *reconfiguration*, *redistribution*, *innovation*, *disruption*, *emancipation* and *transformation*. In addition to these logics, I discern four groupings of collegiality logics associated with four attractors¹: *tradition*, *quality*, *novelty* and *social justice*. In the following sections of the paper, I draw on the interview accounts to narrate the logics of collegial practices. In so doing, I overlay participants' examples of collegial practices and my reading of these practices informed by the literature on collegiality to construct a composite picture of collective academic practices and relationships (Jarzabkowski et al. 2014; Petersen 2013). In line with the postfoundational stance taken in this study, the purpose of these descriptions is to examine the participants' accounts "as a set of relationships" (Ringer, as cited in Paulston and Liebman 1996, p. 10) rather than to represent the truths about collegiality.

¹ Originating in complexity and systems theory, the notion of *attractor* is defined as "a trajectory of a pattern or activity in time in a region of space that 'appears' to draw the energy of a system to it" (Mennin 2010, p. 838). Acknowledging the mathematical origins of complexity theory and without adopting the theory itself in my analysis, I am borrowing the notion of *attractors* as a helpful metaphor to describe the apparent, yet not necessarily causal, directionality of 'movements of concern' associated with collegial practices and discourses.

Logic of assimilation

The logic of *assimilation* characterises informal and self-organised collegial practices in academic departments and workgroups as the enculturation of newcomers or outsiders into the traditional academy. Through collegial practices, novices and those currently outside of the traditional realm of the academy are able to be brought in, on the insiders' terms.

Collegial practices governed by the assimilation logic typically involve a senior colleague, a paternal or maternal figure, who takes on the role of a “nice guy”, a mentor, a coach or even a therapist. He or she guides junior colleagues through the intricacies of the university system, explaining the rules of the game, making connections and alerting them to opportunities for advancing their academic careers. These powerful individuals are able to informally create a positive and supportive atmosphere in academic workplaces through collegial practices that allow everyone to flourish.

The people we do have, like the [Head of Department], for instance, he's like the strongest feminist in the place and is always making sure that the younger researchers are getting everything they need, and being promoted and this and that. He's the person who's nominated me for every prize I've ever won. So, our high-powered influential people aren't using it to be selfish and nasty. They're using it to make the place better, and it's just been so good (Alex, Prof).

While frequently practised in ad hoc ways, assimilative collegial practices can take a more structured and collective form, including attempts to foster a departmental or workgroup collegial culture through informal shared lunches, drinks and celebrations. Despite there being no formal goals, it is often believed that these convivial activities support the development of trust, encourage information flow, and advance a general harmonious feeling of collegiality among academics. As a result of engaging with their colleagues on a personal level, academics are more inclined to work together and help each other, rather than “pettily fight over resources or whatever” (Alex, Prof).

These kinds of collegial practices are seen as inherently informal and self-organising, and therefore imagined as free from institutional gaze or scrutiny. Yet the structural arrangements of the academy and the potentially unjust biases built into the system are either unquestioned or, if noticed at all, positioned as part of a game to be played to situate themselves profitably within it. Secure employment and steady progress through academic ranks are positioned as universal career goals. The existing social arrangements are considered to be adequate and stable, with collegial relations carving out more pleasant and sheltered spaces in sometimes harsh institutional climates. Supported by collegial practices governed by the assimilation logic academics can move from the periphery to the centre of the academic enterprise—through a multiplicity of pathways, yet to a single destination.

Logic of fair go

The logic of *fair go* characterises collegial practices formalised at an academic department or workgroup-level as relations between peers who are afforded equal opportunities and obligations in their work. As colleagues, academics are assumed to be equal and similar, and thus interchangeable in terms of the contributions they make to institutionally defined duties. The logic of fair go works to guarantee fairness in collegial decision-making and equitable distribution of institutional responsibilities.

A prevalent practice governed by the logic of fair go is academic workload allocation. In Claire, Senior Lecturer's, department, for example, everyone teaches and pulls their weight—the same workload formula is applied equally to every academic. Academics are construed as identical, in many ways, with no differentiation between individual strengths or weaknesses. This uniformity in equal treatment of colleagues can be seen as a positive: “even if somebody does a bad job, they won't reduce their teaching load, because, well, then everybody will try and do a bad job because nobody wants to teach” (Claire, Senior Lecturer). The importance of alleviating distrust among colleagues through fair distribution of work is echoed by Thomas, Professor, who describes the elaborate workload distribution scheme in his department:

We have a transparent workload formula as well and that's part of your collegiality is that [...] everybody can see how their individual pie chart looks and everybody can see how the points are allocated.

While ensuring transparency and fairness, such schemes seem to mainly shelter individuals from being taken advantage of by their colleagues, rather than advancing high collegial ideals. The focus on fairness and the everyday running of the academy in these collegial practices does little to encourage individuals to raise big questions about the purpose or conditions of academic work. With the emphasis on equitable allocation of workloads, the question about the volume of work encoded in academic workloads, for example, is not considered.

Logic of legitimacy

Collegial practices guided by the logic of *legitimacy* are commonly enacted through formal university governance and decision-making bodies, such as Academic Boards and Senates. These practices are also exercised in more informal decision-making settings, such as committees, working parties and academic department meetings. Legitimising collegial practices are characterised by consensus-seeking deliberation of issues in public arenas. During decision-making, academics are assumed to be able to put aside their personal agendas, ideological leanings or disciplinary affiliations and draw on various perspectives to make decisions for the greater good of the university. Once a collegial deliberation process is completed, the outcomes are deemed to be representative of the academic community views and, therefore, legitimate.

Collegial practices functioning under the logic of legitimacy are thoroughly documented in the higher education literature (see Rowlands 2013; Bess 1988; Alleman et al. 2017). Although in the higher education literature typically these practices are seen in a positive light, the assumption that these collegial deliberation processes are neutral is problematic. In abstract terms, Anne, Professor, speaking from the position of ex-Chair of an Academic Board, sees no alternative to collegial governance if we are to “embrace the views of the constituents”. However, she is at a loss to explain how this consideration of diverse perspectives actually happens: “somehow embracing those views, that's the key. How does that happen? I don't know”.

Drawing on the legitimacy arising through collegial decision-making, similar practices are often brought into play by the university executive seeking the academic community's endorsement of management decisions. By foregrounding opportunities for academics' participation and input in these instances of legitimacy-seeking consultation, the actual processes of decision-making, and the power plays embedded within them, are glossed over. Similar to the logic of fair go, through the focus on procedural aspects of transacting university's business and ensuring the legitimacy of the decisions made, these collegial practices tend to be concerned with the habitual maintenance of existing academic processes.

Logic of subversion

Collegial practices governed by the logic of *subversion* are informal practices typically enacted in academic departments and workgroups encompassing academics' collective attempts to work against the individualising managerial regimes within the academy. Driven by the desire to revive solidarity within the academic class, these practices position collective endeavour as a fundamental aspect of academic work. Collegiality, under the logic of subversion, is practised through prioritising positive outcomes for colleagues and local workplace contexts rather than institutional goals, while still appearing to be playing by the formal rules. Such practices are seen as counteracting the unfairness implicit in the contemporary academic systems.

For example, Emily, a Professor, describes a “pact” she made with a group of three colleagues to take turns to go for academic promotion. Emily explains how colleagues working on the joint project have recognised that they can “collectively support” each other. Recently promoted to Professor, Emily knows that it is her turn now to put the “collective energy” towards supporting the colleague who is a Senior Lecturer. To “help her get her promotion”, the group of colleagues will now “make sure her name’s going first on papers [they’re] writing, or she’s first named on grants”. In this way, Emily and her colleagues advance their individual careers by satisfying the institutional requirements, yet at the same time refusing to buy into the competition discourse.

Similarly, in the research centre led by Michelle, also a Professor, collegiality serves to “make things a bit more equitable across the organisation”. She is proud that academics within her centre have “made a habit of flipping the funding models and hiring practices on their head”. “From the earliest days” they have made a decision to hire junior staff to permanent positions, while placing senior staff on fixed-term contracts. By rejecting the widely practised approach of “buying research” to meet institutional research targets, Michelle’s centre embeds the collegial practices of mentoring and support into practical and systematic approaches that provide structured developmental career paths for junior researchers. Similar to Emily’s example of taking turns in academic promotion, this inventive collegial practice, Michelle notes, still works “within the university HR system”.

Through these practices, efforts are made to build collegial structures that challenge the illusion that academic success arises from sheer individual brilliance. Subversive collegial practices replace the imagined motivations underpinning the competitive academic systems with practices that recognise the humanity and vulnerability of its participants. Through such supportive collegial micro-networks, the overall institutional climate can feel less severe or punishing and, as in Michelle’s example, employment arrangements can be reconfigured to make university systems more equitable in real terms.

Subversive collegial practices do not tackle the unjust academic system head-on, preferring instead to slip under the institutional radar and benefit from the competitive academic rewards system, without buying into the individualising logic that underpins it. As with assimilative collegial practices, academic career progression is situated as a goal universally shared by all academics, and collegial practices are constructed to create equal opportunities for individuals to progress through the academic ranks.

Logic of diversity

Collegial practices functioning under the logic of *diversity* tend to be formalised and enacted at a whole-of-institution level. These practices position plurality of perspectives as an asset that

can be deployed to achieve institutional goals by minimising bias, avoiding groupthink and helping the institution grasp a fuller picture of the issues it faces.

For Rose, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, diversity brings cognitive benefits to the collective. In her leadership role, Rose is very aware of the enormous challenges facing universities:

The idea that any individual, these days, can hold, for even a moment let alone sustain, the kind of range of expertise and capabilities that we need is just utterly unrealistic.

Therefore, difference in perspectives (status and disciplinary positionings) is intentionally sought—in fact, it is seen as an imperative “not just a luxury or something that’s nice to do” (Rose, DVC).

Collegial practices functioning under the logic of diversity are frequently enacted in decision-making contexts. For example, John, Chair of Academic Board, seeks diverse collegial input into the governance processes “to make sure that [...] we’re doing [it] in the best possible way that we can”. What is derived through such collegial engagement is not fairness or the legitimacy of decisions made, as with practices guided by the logics of fair go and legitimacy, but a form of institutional quality. Similar to the logic of legitimacy, contributions to institutional processes are imagined to be considered on their merit, irrespective of the status of the individual voicing them or the position from which it is spoken. While diversity of disciplinary, institutional or gender perspectives are regularly pursued, questions are rarely asked about how a particular composition of categories has been arrived at, institutionally or historically.

Logic of reconfiguration

Collegial practices governed by the logic of *reconfiguration* are primarily formalised and focused on enacting institutional enhancement agendas. Under this logic, collegial practices do not occur naturally; they are deliberately instantiated and instrumentally exercised towards institutionally prescribed ends. Collegiality is seen as contributing to the quality and effectiveness of institutional processes, but also as mobilising academics’ commitment to the institutional ‘excellence’ agenda more generally. Collegial practices are imagined as vehicles for efficiency and an effective division of labour, allowing individuals to build on each other’s expertise to harmoniously work towards the (presumably) shared goal.

Rose, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, explains her effort to compose strategic collaboration initiatives going beyond and across the traditional boundaries of academic roles and organisational structures:

In a leadership role [I have been able] to get that bird’s-eye view of the potential of breaking through those traditional boundaries. That’s not just with academic staff in different divisions or departments working together, but it’s with different sorts of third space professional staff, like learning designers for example, working in collegial, respectful ways [...] to achieve the things that we know we have to achieve. So we are increasingly encouraging and investing in and trying to enable people to learn and practise together in meaningful teams or networks or communities.

Rose considers academic roles in terms of their functions and sees ways to reconfigure them more effectively. She is mindful that university transformation is not only about “rolling out” quality enhancement projects, it is also about establishing new relationships and adjusting current practices. Appealing to collegiality, Rose supposes, is one way to smooth over

institutional discontinuities and integrate quality enhancement projects with traditional academic practices. Because collegial practices are presumed to exist in current academic configurations, it is assumed that they will form the basis for the new relationships devised according to the parameters set by the institution.

However, the rules of engagement for these new institutional relationships are generally not well-established and must be renegotiated in each instance. Those in the new expert roles frequently find that academics need to be courted, coaxed and convinced to participate in institutional projects. Charged with strategic institutional responsibilities, experts like Elise, a librarian, work to cover the ground and establish relationships with all academics within the whole institution. Elise talks about “chasing partnerships”, whereas she imagines that collegiality between academics is “like a natural thing that happens and is part and parcel of being an academic”.

Although allocating aspects of academic functions across a team of experts is now a widespread practice, the university administrations are still grappling with the mechanisms that can support such a complex reconfiguration of academic labour.

Logic of redistribution

Collegial practices governed by the logic of *redistribution* tend to be small-scale and short-term initiatives that seek to be formalised in order to scale-up and have a greater influence on the institution. Similar to the logic of diversity, these practices regard difference of perspectives as a source of productive tension and inspiration. However, redistributive collegial practices are more attentive to organisational power differentials. They are open to discomfort and the potential for conflict that arises from inclusion of varying perspectives. Striving for a more inclusive and socially just academy, these collegial practices turn to marginalised university constituent groups—students, tutors or external communities—for fresh insights about university life.

Collegial practices guided by the logic of redistribution are often associated with university governance structures that involve student representatives, and the increasingly popular movement called Students as Partners (Matthews et al. 2018). Anne, Professor, and Rebecca, a student representative, provide multiple examples of practices that seek to involve students in university governance on more equitable terms. However, the scale of influence appears to be still tipped towards the institution and its established ways of functioning. Students are frequently positioned as lacking in institutional knowledge and needing “proper training”, in Anne’s terms, to effectively influence the university. Thus, despite being driven by democratic aspirations, redistributive collegial practices appear to be similar to assimilative practices, aiming to school the differently positioned (and less privileged) party to become more similar to the powerful one.

Importantly, by connecting students more directly to higher echelons of the university, distributive collegial practices also destabilise traditional power relationships in universities. For example, Rebecca claims that a student representative position allows her to manipulate institutional matters to achieve her desired outcomes. While she admits that she cannot “outsmart” the Vice-Chancellor, Rebecca feels that she can strategically “change his mind however [she] need[s him] to”—positioning herself squarely on equal terms with the highest institutional powers.

By introducing traditionally marginalised perspectives into situations where power is brokered and major decisions are made, redistributive collegial practices weaken the position of academics as experts in all academic matters. Although many academics would find it

difficult to object to the social justice ideal, redistributive collegial practices do not always have a broad appeal to an academic constituency. In the face of strengthening executive powers of university management, many academics might prefer the traditional decision-making configurations, such as collegial academic governance practices guided by the logic of legitimation.

Logic of innovation

Collegial practices operating under the logic of *innovation* tend to occur within and across institutional or disciplinary formations. Similar to the logic of legitimation and diversity, these practices are underpinned by the belief that dialogue between those coming from different perspectives can enrich the outcomes of academic work. Yet, collegial practices governed by the logic of innovation tend to be more open-ended, often aimed at creating new groupings across (mainly disciplinary) differences. Rather than being guided by a clear purpose, issue or outcome in mind, these collegial practices seek to create collegial relations that hold a future potential to generate novelty and productive outcomes.

Collegial practices associated with the logic of innovation tend to arise from informal connections, yet they are frequently endorsed by institutions. According to Emily, Professor, these practices are only possible if they are initiated by academics themselves and are not institutionally mandated. The academic group that Emily is part of is “self-chosen”, not “imposed”, yet it is supported by the institution which “wants collaboration” to help academics “achieve things”. Telling academics what to do top down is “never going to work”, Thomas concurs. As a Head of Department, he emphasises that it is neither the job of the senior university management nor his to “manage research” of his staff or “force collaborations”. Instead, he attempts to “foster” them in his Department through “the normal things like seminars, just getting staff together and talking”. The open-endedness of such collegial relations and the self-organised nature of academic groupings is precisely “the point” of such collaborations, according to Emily. She contends that institutions tend to “lose touch with the reality”. Enterprising academics are needed to fill the gaps and enable institutions to succeed.

Driven by the necessity to produce measurable outcomes, collegial practices under the logic of innovation seem to serve the needs of, and derive benefits for, individuals, institutions and disciplinary fields. Although superficially appearing to be similar to assimilative collegial practices, collegial practices guided by the logic of innovation are more generative. They are focused on the outcomes of collegial relations, rather than harmonious workplace climates, and tolerance for (or even interest in) productive differences. As such, these practices are linked to the attractor of novelty rather than that of tradition.

Logic of disruption

Collegial practices aligned with the logic of *disruption* are also exercised with the purpose of generating novelty, but in contrast to practices associated with the logic of innovation, they tend to transcend the boundaries of the academy. Informal collegial relations are formed with those who can contribute an interesting perspective, regardless of their academic status or institutional affiliation. Indeed, the academic establishment itself is questioned; its structures and institutional imperatives are deemed to be irrelevant, unreasonable and stifling. Personal curiosity and commitment to discovery are positioned as the drivers of collegial practices, with academic appointments seen as largely providing the convenience and financial stability needed to carry out the work.

Nicholas, Associate Professor's, practices are underpinned by the belief that the boundaries of the academy are (or should be) permeable. By disregarding institutional structures and imperatives, Nicholas pursues his curiosity through open, potentially unproductive collaborations. Such institution- or discipline-defying collegial formations do not always have appropriate avenues for their outcomes to be recognised. Nicholas describes how his scholarly network initially emerged in response to “the inadequate ability of the academy to deal with what people were doing”; in particular, to what he saw as “hostility to theory” in his discipline and difficulty in accepting political activism in universities at the time. His collegial network was formed outside of the academic establishment, to accommodate different ways of working, thinking and theorising. The people in the early network have now been folded back into the academy and have “become big academics” who “get lots of grants and get on to the various bodies that make all the decisions”. Thus, the radical work done across and beyond the boundaries of the academy has now become recognised as part of academic canon.

Cultivating disruptive collegial practices in marginalised and self-sustained communities of scholars, artists and activists—outside of the academy—seems to offer an alternative to institutional lines of organising, presenting one way to rejuvenate the academy.

Logic of emancipation

Collegial practices governed by the logic of *emancipation* are based on informal networks within and between universities. They emerge in response to injustices that are built into the academic system. These practices involve the intentional and incremental work of creating spaces and support structures in universities to accommodate previously excluded academic subjectivities. By broadening the academic constituency, emancipatory collegial practices aim to redraw the lines between the privileged and marginalised academic positionings. They hinge on the assumption that, through a recognition and inclusion of difference, the academy will gradually be transformed towards a more inclusive and just institution. These collegial practices are different from those functioning under the logic of subversion—whereas subversive collegial practices support individuals to fit in to the existing system, emancipatory practices aim to build alternative or parallel structures instead.

Indeed, these types of collegial practices seek to create a new unity within the academy, along lines that are different from the single organising principle of white male privilege (see Alleman et al. 2017). A collective strength (or “alternative sameness”) emerges through these practices by associating with the “same difference”; for example, gender, race, academic precarity and so on—the types of academic subjectivities which typically have been excluded from the academic establishment. Isabelle, Associate Professor, talks about her women's network:

If you engage with the university in the most kind of ideal liberal sense, [...] ‘I refine my intellect, I produce good knowledge, I help others refining it’, it leaves a lot of stuff at the door that scholars like me can't leave at the door. [...] We're women with children. So we're literally not that kind of scholar in our bodies and we're also not that kind of scholar in epistemology either.

Recognising that assimilative collegial practices fail to accommodate such differences, emancipatory collegial practices work to provide alternative support structures:

We've had lots of discussions here in years gone by about deliberately having a women's network that was a counterpoint to that network [of the 'old boys club'], acknowledging that's how men work and laughing about the fact that we've got our own versions of these networks now. They're not the same kind of network. They won't work in the same kind of way but they do kind of work (Isabelle, A/Prof).

Emancipatory collegial practices are about growing, expanding and nurturing different perspectives, aiming for a gradual transformation of the academy. In contrast to collegial practices governed by the logic of disruption, there is a less defeatist stance with regard to what is imagined to be possible within universities as institutions. In these types of collegial practices, it is not a question of whether difference is beneficial for the institution (as in the logics of diversity or legitimacy), or the discipline (as with the logics of innovation); difference is a given and, therefore, it is seen as academics' moral duty to work towards creating a space for it in the academy.

Logic of transformation

Collegial practices that are governed by the logic of *transformation* advance a more radical proposition than simply opening up new pathways for those coming from less privileged positionings. These practices involve work with groups that are not traditionally academic to construct a new purpose for the academy as a socially engaged institution.

These collegial practices tend to be formalised through project work and exercised in contexts that are assembled together for the purpose of collaboration around a shared goal. As a result, such formations do not necessarily have a common history or pre-existing “rules of engagement”—the playing field itself often comes into being through the process of collaboration. In the absence of an existing social configuration with central norms and ways of going about things, relations within such projects are forged based on who is at, and what is on, the table. Indeed, in many instances such groupings are only partly academic; a multiplicity of differently positioned stakeholders—governments, communities, industries—are often involved on equitable if not equal terms. Academic collegiality, therefore, is not the basis upon which such collaborations are built. Instead, these practices depend on academics' ability to bring collaborators together, so that projects generate new academic knowledge, and benefit partners.

Michelle's, Professor, work takes place in developing countries exploring ways for local communities to sustain basic infrastructures. She argues that openness to other ways of thinking is necessary to forge effective relations in these projects. Rather than starting from the position of expertise, Michelle deliberately tries to learn from, and with, the communities she is working with. She spends time with people exploring the issue before suggesting a direction, so that there is more of a chance to “do something that is more useful” for the community. From her experience, collaborations are more valuable if a shared direction and desirable outcomes emerge through the process of collaboration. The pathways for establishing cohesive projects are not simple. Michelle often has to step in to help her collaborators work through conflicts and disagreements, consolidating divergent perspectives to find a workable way forward. The relations that emerge through such collaborations are not underpinned by collegiality as an affinity based on similarity. Instead, they are driven by a shared purpose of bringing about a positive change in the world.

The four attractors of collegial practices

Attractor of tradition

Collegial practices governed by the logics of assimilation, fair go, legitimacy and subversion can be described as part of academic ethos of *tradition*. The purpose of collegial practices in this grouping is to maintain or rejuvenate the existing academic system. Such practices are predominantly concerned with individuals' collegial behaviours and relationships that, practised *en masse*, create a positive collegial climate in academic contexts. The key enactors and beneficiaries of collegial practices are academics in traditional academic roles as peers and equals. A level of similarity between various players is assumed. Where differences are apparent, collegial practices work to diminish them, by either enculturating novices or sheltering individuals from external (or institutional) influences through collegial practices. These types of collegial practices are positioned at the “social” end of the “social-political” continuum (see Fig. 1), as in principle, their main purpose is to reproduce the existing social arrangements in universities.

Attractor of quality

Collegial practices oriented towards the attractor of *quality* are characterised by their focus on institutional contexts and goals. The logics of appropriation, redistribution, diversity and legitimacy can be seen as underpinning such collegial practices. Collegial arrangements privileging traditional academic roles are seen as outdated and in need of reform, so that institutions can adequately respond to the contemporary challenges of mass higher education. As a result, institutional collegial configurations are intentionally diversified to work across differences in roles, expertise and status positions. However, there is little regard to institution-transcending framings of academic work or academics' aspirations outside of the institutional frame. Since institutionally predetermined ends of collegial practices are prioritised, these types of collegial practices are placed closer to the “ideological” domain of the “ideological-ethical” continuum (see Fig. 1).

Attractor of novelty

A major aspect of academic work, particularly in terms of disciplinary research, is about pushing the knowledge frontiers. Certain collegial practices are therefore specifically positioned to stimulate the collective ability of academics to generate *novelty* in their work. In these practices, collegial relations are established and maintained as the base upon which originality and innovation might emerge, often without predetermined outcomes in mind. Difference in collegial practices associated with the attractor of *novelty* is seen as generative, although it tends to be conceived in terms of expertise held by similarly positioned equals, in equally valued knowledge domains. Despite their open-endedness, these collegial practices can also be harnessed towards institutional ends, through the production of measurable outcomes. The logics of collegial practices oriented towards the attractor of novelty are innovation, disruption and diversity. These types of practices are spread out along the “ideological-ethical” axis in acknowledgement that both institutional and emergent goals play a role in how these novelty-seeking practices come together (see Fig. 1).

Attractor of social justice

Collegial practices that are centred on advancing *social justice* aim to challenge the traditional boundaries between universities and the broader society. Both institutional quality and self-preservation of an academic class are questioned as worthy academic goals. Instead, collegial practices that are governed by emancipation, transformation and redistribution logics invite academics to avert their gaze from inward-facing concerns, to consider how the academy engages with the society and the world. Questions about the power imbalances perpetuated by the traditional academic system, as well as the injustices arising from the managerial structuring of academic work, give rise to collegial practices that consider embracing difference as a moral responsibility. The academy is imagined as a microcosm of the society and, as such, the principles of fairness and inclusivity are foregrounded over similarity, affinity and tradition. Collegiality is extended to those in marginal positionings in universities and communities outside of the academy. Due to their openness to difference and the desire to redraw the existing categories, these collegial practices are clustered towards the “political-ethical” quadrant represented in Fig. 1.

The reconfigured picture of academic relations

Through this analysis, it becomes apparent that in the higher education literature, collegiality tends to be primarily associated with the attractor of tradition and the logics of assimilation, fair go, legitimacy and subversion. These conceptions of collegiality are frequently evoked to mobilise academics against managerial regimes (for example, see Rowland 2008). Yet, these practices are primarily concerned with reproducing existing social relations in universities. They cannot be seen as unproblematically “good” or universally desirable. For instance, practices operating under the logic of assimilation might reproduce historical privilege, if the academy is envisaged as “a genteel and gentlemanly place” (Berlant 1998, p. 108). The logic of fair go can be seen as perpetuating a “live and let live attitude” (Downing 2005, p. 57) or narrow departmentalism (Macfarlane 2005). Finally, the logic of legitimacy requires academics to possess a status as peers and equals to participate in academic governance, which can be interpreted as reproducing centuries-old exclusion too (Alleman et al. 2017).

Collegial practices associated with the attractor of quality and the logics of appropriation, legitimacy, diversity and redistribution are another large and well-explored area in the higher education research literature. As an attempt to reimagine ways of working in universities, these practices seek to respond to contemporary pressures in higher education. New types of collegial relations are established across differences and status categories, including non-academic experts—“third space professionals” (Whitchurch 2012, p. 42)—and non-experts, such as students, to transform universities into agile institutions that are more in tune with the times. The vision for the reformed academy advanced through such collegial practices contests the exclusionary notions of the traditional academy. However, the outcomes of these new collegial relations are aimed at efficiency, effectiveness and quality of academic work fixed to institutional ends. As a result, these types of collegial practices are often deemed to be too instrumental and seem to inadequately express the ‘authentic’ aspects of academic collegiality.

Practices grouped around the attractor of novelty—the logics of innovation, diversity and disruption—guide collegial practices that support scholarly work. At the heart of these practices is the recognition of the role that social relations play in the production of knowledge.

While institutions generally support these types of collegial relations, they are established and maintained by academics themselves. Negotiations about these collegial practices are mainly carried out in disciplinary communities and decisions about their configuration are made on the basis of epistemology and the purpose of research, rather than being institutionally determined.

Collegial practices linked with the attractor of social justice, and governed by the logics of emancipation, transformation and redistribution, are relatively less explored (or at least not explicitly associated with collegiality) by higher education researchers. These practices are attentive to the contingency of social relations in the academy and challenge the injustices that are built into academic structures in practical ways. I argue that these practices seem to hold the potential for advancing the university as a more inclusive and socially just institution and, therefore, require further attention by the higher education research community.

Closing reflections

The reconstructed picture of academic relations presented in this paper highlights practices that tend to be overlooked in our thinking and writing on collegiality. Troubling the idealised notions of collegiality, I point out that academic collegiality is dependent on the similarity of its constituent members as academic experts and peers. This similarity is enacted through systems in which academics are conceptualised as equal and interchangeable, with collegial discourses and practices working to smooth over differences so that harmonious relations prevail.

Connecting the insights arising from this study to the shifts in the higher education landscape, I argue that a consideration of difference in academic work is becoming increasingly important. There are several major trends influencing this change. Firstly, conceptions of expertise in universities are shifting. With pressures for universities to improve and streamline their ‘services’ in order to stay competitive in the global higher education marketplace, the importance of non-academic specialists in auxiliary roles is likely to increase. The inclusion of various types of expertise has the potential to make disciplinary boundaries more permeable and expand the diversity of knowledges in circulation in the academy. It can also legitimise forms of knowledge production other than disciplinary research. Further work might well be conducted to explore the new possibilities opened up by these shifts, extending the existing research on “third space professionals” (Whitchurch 2012, p. 42).

Secondly, being mindful of the requirement for universities to demonstrate social impact and engagement in research assessment exercises as in the UK and Australian contexts, higher education institutions are beginning to recognise the value of knowledge that is collaborative, pragmatic, driven by social and economic concerns and developed in the contexts of application (Polk 2015). In this climate, the ongoing reliance on collegial similarity between academics as peers and equals seems problematic. Assuming that working across differences will become more highly valued in universities, including communities outside universities, further research is needed that can interrogate the forms of togetherness, other than academic collegiality, required to facilitate productive relations across differences.

Finally, the questions about similarity and difference that I have raised speak to concerns about the casualisation of the academic workforce—another pervasive trend in contemporary universities. The way that the academic system systematically excludes categories of staff from collegial participation is only a minor sub-theme in literature on collegiality. Alleman et al.’s (2017) definition of collegiality as belonging to the *collegium* highlights that access to collegial

rights and responsibilities tends to be granted on the basis of the formal status of academics determined by an employment contract. As Alleman et al. (2017) suggest, we should ask ourselves whether we are satisfied with granting collegial rights and responsibilities only to a subset of academics (those in permanent full-time positions), especially given the porous boundaries of universities today. As this study demonstrates, new relational configurations (albeit transient ones) are already emerging as an alternative to traditionally exclusionary collegial practices. Additional research is needed to more fully investigate collegial practices that do not rely on the similarity of status in collegial relations (or deliberately work against such similarity), in order to explore whether and how they could work against the tide of casualisation.

This study aimed to stimulate more fluid conceptions of collegiality. By moving away from the familiar explanations of social relations in the contemporary academy, the paper invites the reader to reconsider “what possibilities are excluded by the social logics that are currently operative” in universities (Glynos and Howarth 2007, p. 187). By showing how “these logics comprise elements which could be reagggregated and named differently, or which could be gathered together as a counter-logic” (Glynos and Howarth 2007, p. 187), this study demonstrates how “conjur[ing] alternative names and accompanying socio-political visions” (Glynos and Howarth 2007, p. 194–95) for collegial practices might produce a more inclusive and just academy.

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