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## Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood

Shamus Rahman Khan

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down the federation's four labor institutes in Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America and opened up a new organization called the American Center for International Labor Solidarity (or the "Solidarity Center"), generated significant controversy because it indicated that labor had still not completely shed its old skin. And yet, aside from this important example, the Solidarity Center, particularly in countries such as Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic, has played a crucial role in the formation of labor unions in the garment industry over the past fifteen years, a point that Scipes completely overlooks (Armbruster-Sandoval 2005; Ross 2004). In his rush to categorically condemn the AFL-CIO, Scipes, for example, singles out the Solidarity Center's Jeff Hermanson for attending a meeting with a "very controversial labor organization" in Haiti in 2004, while ignoring the important work that Hermanson did in the aforementioned countries. Moreover, since when does attending a single documented meeting constitute something nefarious? Scipes should know better; during the Red Scare in the 1950s, people who attended various meetings of relief-oriented organizations were mistakenly called "communists," even though many were not party members. Such guilt-by-association, McCarthy-like allegations are unfair and malign the vital work that Hermanson and other Solidarity Center staffers have done and are still doing. Aside from the Center's highly questionable and unethical role in the failed coup against Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, there is little evidence to show that the Solidarity Center and hence, the AFL-CIO, is still involved in a "secret war" against developing country workers. Such a war may still be taking place, but to substantiate such an argument one needs more empirical evidence, which is not provided in this volume.

Thus, while I find the book's historical analysis of the AFL and the AFL-CIO's activities (particularly in Latin America) thoroughly documented with ample evidence from primary and secondary sources, it is much weaker on the federation's contemporary policies. Other than Venezuela, what other "smoking guns" are out there? I agree with Scipes that the AFL-CIO should embrace "social justice" or "social

movement unionism," but wish that he had recognized that there are some within the federation and Solidarity Center who are, in fact, trying to do just that. That is, they are attempting, as Flora Tristan, Marx, and Engels called for, to unite the world's workers from Wal-Mart, Nike, and many other corporations. Such efforts will take time and warrant our critical support, not unsubstantiated allegations and innuendo. We simply need more hard data to show that the AFL-CIO's "secret war" is still on-going; that said, the struggle for "another labor movement" and "another world" continues.

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*Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood*, by **Christian Smith**; with **Kari Christoffersen**, **Hilary Davidson**, and **Patricia Snell Herzog**. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011. 284pp. \$27.95 cloth. ISBN: 9780199828029.

SHAMUS RAHMAN KHAN  
Columbia University  
Sk2905@columbia.edu

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Were Christian Smith and his coauthors savvy, they might have begun their book, *Lost in Transition* with the second chapter. It provides copious evidence that kids these days are corrupted by consumerism. Materialism is their mantra; young people, many of whom sit in our classrooms, simply love to shop. You can imagine heads nodding.

But you will have to imagine it, because most sociologists will not get to the second chapter of this book. Few will get past the introduction, which may trigger that uncomfortable feeling among sociologists that they are about to read something “conservative.” The authors are distinctly Durkheimian, outlining a value-laden sociology. They argue that it is good for people to be able to articulate moral positions, to have values and purposes that transcend mass-consumerism, to avoid routine intoxication, to have sexual contact within the boundaries of a relationship, and to care about the larger social, political, and cultural world around them. Such moralizing is exactly what many do not want to see in their discipline. Ironically, the same morality is what most hope to instill in their own children.

All this is to say that many people will disagree with this book on principle, which is a pity. Smith and his colleagues have taken on important concerns—ones that we must care about and take care to understand. My problem with this book is not with its morality—it is refreshing to see authors clearly state where they stand—instead, it is with its data and argument.

The data are not bad. Smith uses the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR), a longitudinal study of American youths that began surveying a panel in 2002. *Lost in Transition* draws upon 230 in-depth in-person interviews among these youths; the interviews were conducted in 2008 as part of the third wave of this study. The young people were between the ages of 18 and 23 at the time of their interviews. Although there is no reason to believe that the interviews were anything but expertly done, the problem is how they are used. Smith takes verbal accounts as proxies of activity and does not place the data in the context of “the dark side of emerging adulthood.”

“I don’t think it’s anyone’s place to judge anyone else,” says one of Smith’s subjects (p. 24). We are given enough data to support Smith’s claim that young adults, “avoid all assessment, evaluation, and criticism of every moral belief and behavior” (ibid). Kids do not judge, it seems, because they do not have the moral tools to make judgments. But we cannot take the fact that youths say

they do not make judgments as evidence that they do not. The authors should spend some time with people between the ages of 18–23 and then argue that such young people do not make moral judgments about one another. What people say is rarely a good predictor of what they do. In fact, using interview data from the NSYR, one of Smith’s former students has shown how interview data is a poor predictor of activity (Vaisey 2009). Youths may not be able to articulate their moral judgments, but that does not mean they are not navigating the world on the basis of their morality (and holding others to account).

Sensitive to this, Smith and his colleagues therefore argue that being able to articulate a coherent moral framework is nonetheless important. Yet this strikes me as an impossible standard. After criticizing one of their research subjects for using consequentialist moral reasoning (p. 33), the authors deploy consequentialist moral reasoning against drug use (p. 66). Coherent moral reasoning is sufficiently hard, it seems, that experts in morality are unable to use consistent moral argumentation in their own work. How, then, can we expect better of young adults when speaking spontaneously in interviews?

The second problem is that we have no sense of the activity of youths before Smith’s study. To be fair, Smith and his colleagues acknowledge this. But that does not make the problem go away. How have youths talked about morality, consumerism, intoxication, sex, and civic engagement before? If Daniel Bell’s *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* is any indication, the problems of consumerism date back to at least 1976; if we read Alan Bloom’s *The Closing of the American Mind* we might identify the lack of moral coherence in the 1960s; if we were to take up Christopher Lasch’s *The Culture of Narcissism*, we might identify the nineteenth century as the source of indulgent individualism. We could play this game all day; humans and their children have been disappointing for thousands of years.

You need not go back to Plato on the amorality of youth (though you could). I simply wish Smith had taken more care to engage with such ideas. We have a hint of Lasch here and there. But hidden is a conversation that matters (and Smith may be far better

equipped to have this conversation than others)—that with Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* or Charles Taylor's *The Ethics of Authenticity*. Instead, we are told "what the data say," ignoring the fact that verbal accounts do not really tell us about what people do, and absent the necessary historicizing of moral alarms when ringing the bell of "the dark side of emerging adulthood."

There is much to engage with in this book, and in my case it was worth the time to read, think about, and disagree with. I hope other sociologists will do the same.

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*America's Water and Wastewater Crisis: The Role of Private Enterprise*, by **Lewis D. Solomon**. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2012. 234pp. \$24.95 paper. ISBN: 9781412849500.

KATHRYN FURLONG  
*Université de Montréal*  
*kathryn.furlong@umontreal.ca*

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Lewis D. Solomon's latest book seeks to establish the privileged role of "private enterprise" in resolving what he describes as a water and wastewater crisis in the United States. Rather conventionally, his analysis pits the public and private sectors in opposition to one another, reasoning that private enterprise will reverse public failures by investing in the development of water efficiency technologies as well as in municipal infrastructure systems. Unfortunately, there are several problems with the thesis and how it is supported. First, the analysis of the water and wastewater crisis is weak and ignores root causes. Second, in ignoring root causes, the book proposes solutions whose simplicity has been widely discounted in the literature on water supply. Indeed, even the operators of large water multinationals have questioned the ability of the private sector to resolve persistent water problems

simply through the application of their business acumen. More importantly, the book misses the opportunity to advance a more complex and integrated understanding of public and private activities for water management. This goes against recent literature, which exposes the unhelpful nature of the public/private binary.

*America's Water and Wastewater Crisis* is divided into three parts, with a total of nine chapters. Part I provides an historical overview of water and wastewater systems in the United States, including the evolution of investment and government regulation. This chapter is very interesting, informative, and well documented. The problems with the book begin in Part II. There, Solomon seeks to build the argument that water scarcity is the impending water and wastewater crisis in the United States. This is done in two chapters. The first focuses on climate change and "public sector conservation efforts," while the second tries to make the case for private enterprise as the motor of innovation in technologies for water efficiency. The analysis of the impending crisis is not convincing. Climate change and water scarcity will be of varying importance across the United States rather than a homogeneous issue requiring a one size fits all solution. Moreover, it is hard to see how private innovation on water efficiency, as opposed to broader governmental initiatives to address climate change (which may include private innovation on efficiency), will prove adequate to address the magnitude of the issue.

Part III seeks to make the case for private sector operation and management of water and wastewater services in five chapters. In the first of the five, Solomon surveys different types of private sector involvement in water supply. Although his book discusses "privatization," he is really promoting the breadth of options for private sector participation (PSP). In Chapter Six, he seeks to establish the fact that municipalities are in a financial crisis, causing limited investment in water supply. The private sector is promoted as able to provide financing, increase efficiency, reduce costs, and further environmental compliance. In Chapter Seven, he surveys the literature on privatization experiences to support his arguments for PSP. He concludes in Chapter Eight with two more detailed case studies