



The Changing Value of Ordinariness in Contemporary Society: Individuality, Achievement, and Social Recognition

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Abstract

Ordinariness, understood sociologically as the unremarkable and statistically typical condition of everyday life, has historically functioned as the stable background against which exceptional achievement was measured and rendered meaningful. This paper argues that ordinariness has progressively ceased to operate as a socially tolerable identity in contemporary society and has instead been reconstituted as a deficit requiring continuous correction through individuation, visible achievement, and public recognition. Drawing on the theoretical traditions of Durkheim, Goffman, Beck, Bauman, Lasch, Sennett, Bourdieu, and Han, the paper traces the passage from ascribed, collectively anchored identity toward a mandatory reflexive selfhood in which the failure to distinguish oneself is experienced as personal inadequacy rather than as an ordinary statistical outcome. It examines how post-industrial labour markets, credential inflation, and platform-mediated visibility economies have converted attention and narrative distinctiveness into forms of capital comparable to Bourdieu's cultural capital, while imposing psychological costs consistent with what Byung-Chul Han terms the achievement society. The paper further surveys emergent counter currents, including slow-living and anti-productivity movements, that attempt to re-legitimize ordinary life, while noting the structural limits of such movements. It concludes that

ordinariness has not disappeared but has been repositioned as a scarce and increasingly contested social category, with consequences for solidarity, mental health, and stratification that merit continued sociological attention.

Keywords: ordinariness, individualization, achievement society, social recognition, stratification, late modernity

Introduction

In most of recorded history, most people lived, worked and died in the realm of the ordinary. Ordinariness in this sense was not something negative, but rather a demographic reality that the majority of people experienced in the agrarian class, in kinship obligations, and in localised communities as a way of life, and distinction as a privilege enjoyed by a small group of rulers, clergy, and hereditary elites. The ordinary, by contrast, was not an inferior mode of sociality, but rather the point of reference for social existence, its normal mode, its normative floor. Ordinary sociality made possible collective identity, mutual recognition, and the continuity of institutions. Today, a rather different arrangement exists. Ordinary life has become a sign of a lack of ambition, a lack of personal realisation, a failure of life, a lack of achievement; it is no longer a fact of life but a sign of its possibility of being lived differently by someone else. As mass higher education has expanded, credentialing proliferated, entrepreneurial and self-branding narratives have become more common, and platform cultures have emerged, the commonplace has become provisional, a starting point that is meant to be exceeded rather than a place to be lived. This paper has one main research question and four sub-questions. The primary research question is: How has the value and perception of ordinariness shifted in modern society, and how do individuality, achievement and social recognition fit into this shift? This question is specifically addressed in four sub-questions: 1. How is ordinariness redefined and valued in contemporary society, 2. How are individuality and uniqueness socially constructed, and how is their sense of ordinariness seen, 3. How is individual value measured by achievement and social recognition, and 4. Can one understand ordinary life as meaningful and socially valuable beyond exceptional achievement and social recognition? These questions are addressed in this paper by an integrative



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reading of classical and contemporary sociological theory, not through primary empirical work, but on the assumption that the phenomenon in question is most productively approached as a long-run structural transformation, and that theory is well suited to shed light on this. There are multiple stages to the argument. The theoretical framework is set out in Section two, which is used throughout to answer all four sub-questions. The second sub-question is taken up in Section Three, which looks at the redefinition of ordinary life from agrarian and industrial society to the post-industrial present. The second sub-question concerning individuality and uniqueness is explored in section four. The third sub-question is explored in both sections five and six, first about the achievement culture and then about the digitally mediated social recognition of individual value. The social and psychological price of this metamorphosis is explored in section seven, and the fourth sub-question in section eight is explored by surveying the counter currents which try to assert the meaning and value of ordinary life. This paper ends with a synthesizing discussion which integrates the solutions to all four sub-questions with the main research question, as well as suggestions for further research.

Theoretical Framework

The first sociological grammar of the interaction between individuality and social cohesion comes from Emile Durkheim's description of the shift from mechanical to organic solidarity (Durkheim, 1893/1984). In societies with mechanical solidarity, the people who make up the society are very similar in their beliefs, occupation, and way of life; and this similarity is the basis of social cohesion; ordinariness is tolerated in such societies, but it is also an essential part of the collective conscience. As the division of labour becomes more pronounced, Durkheim suggested, social cohesion is now supplanted by a functional interdependence of differentiated individuals, which is both allowed and demanded to increase individuality. But, more importantly, Durkheim believed that this individuation was limited by the ability of institutions to regulate aspiration; anomie, the pathological state of normlessness, occurs when the ability of institutions to regulate aspiration fails to keep up with that of individuation. This paper sees the current "undervaluing" of ordinariness as, in part, a Durkheimian problem of individuation moving toward the speed of change, in a context of decreasing institutional control. A second key resource is Erving Goffman's

dramaturgical sociology. Goffman (1959) talked about social life as a set of dramas performed for an audience, in which actors must control their impressions in the front stage and in the backstage, to maintain a consistent socially credible social image. Goffman's framework suggests that the normal self, which is a self that does not put claims on its audience, has always needed some manner of impression-management to be socially viable. This paper posits that what sets apart the contemporary is the absence of any stable back-stage area where the unperformed, ordinary self could be allowed to be. The spread of continuous, platform-mediated visibility discussed in section six accompanies this, this paper argues, the absence of any stable back-stage area where the unperformed, ordinary self could be allowed to exist. The idea of individualisation (Beck, 1992) - the isolation of an individual from the traditional notions of class, family and locally determined biography - and the new conception of the 'do-it-yourself biography' - in which the life course must be constructed by the individual himself or herself - are introduced. What is particularly significant is that Beck insisted on this individualisation not being something of choice but a structural phenomenon of late-modern institutions like the labour market, welfare systems or educational credentialing that satisfy their needs to individuals instead of collectives. This argument is developed by Zygmunt Bauman, who believes that liquid modernity is another way of describing identity as unfinished and still in the process of continuous revision in the context in which social forms are continually being dissolved and never becoming fixed into a stable pattern (Bauman, 2000). Christopher Lasch (1979) and Richard Sennett (1998) each provide a critical register to this framework. Lasch followed the development of a narcissistic personality structure that was cultivated by therapeutic and consumer culture, where the self is maintained less by inner conviction than by image and validation. Sennett, in his discussion of 'flexible capitalism' and how this impacts personal narrative, made the point that long-term, stable jobs erode the ability to maintain a coherent life story, and replace 'character' with 'episodic performance'. This paper builds on Pierre Bourdieu's distinction (1984), which brings in the insight that taste, cultural Competence and self-presentation are forms of capital that can be turned into social advantage, which this paper extends to the visibility and narrative capital being exchanged within digital public life. Finally, by the achievement society (Han, 2015) I mean a transition from a disciplinary society based on prohibition to a disciplinary society based on the command to be capable. These

frameworks collectively suggest that the devaluation of ‘ordinariness’ is not just a cultural fad or a purely economic imposition, nor is it simply an individual response to a context of structural individualisation, but a combined result of the performance demands of interaction and a normative economy, in which achievement has become the main currency of social value. These eight positions are not necessarily monolithic, but rather there are important differences and conflicts between them, especially between the theorists who emphasise the regulatory forces, such as Durkheim, and those who emphasise the critical and conflictual aspects, such as Lasch, Sennett and Han. Yet, taken together, they lead to a unified diagnostic claim, which guides the rest of the present paper: The ordinary/exceptional divide is not a natural or fixed socio-structural property of social life but an historically variable one, in the sense that it is produced and reproduced in institutional arrangements, interactional norms, and cultural narratives of worth, and hence is open to being reconstructed differently in different structural conditions.

How Has Contemporary Society Redefined the Meaning and Value of Ordinary Life?

In an agrarian and early industrial society, social position was virtually all ascribed, not achieved. The ordinary life course had the backing of custom and communal recognition, and occupation, marriage prospects, and social standing were significantly shaped by birth. This is the typical state of mechanical solidarity, according to Durkheim, a social order based on similarity of beliefs and resemblance, in which the common person does not have to meet an idealised standard of exceptional achievement, but is instead bound into a social whole through ritual, work, and kinship ties. The initial tension in this setup was created by the process of industrialisation, which increased the division of labour and hence occupational differentiation. However, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, such differentiation was internalised within durable institutions, such as the single-employer career track, the trade union and the extended family, that remained to provide stable identities despite the increased variety of roles. In this second social form, the mid-twentieth century organizational career—the employment characterised by the sense of a long tenure and hierarchy, and in which people can develop a cohesive narrative identity over a working life without having to be clearly distinguished in public, community, or civic life—competence and loyalty within an institution became the means of measuring their social worth. This balance was

significantly disrupted in the last third of the twentieth century by a shift to post-industrial and then to neoliberal economic systems. As organisations reduced their long-term employment and the number of projects increased, the nature of work changed to become more precarious, and the marketisation of public services turned economic security away from institutions to individuals, which Sennett (1998) connects with the erosion of character, as workers are unlikely to develop a stable, narratable self when working on short-term, project-based, and often precarious gigs. At the same time, as mass education expanded, there was a corresponding credential inflation process, where educational credentials once associated with a distinct advantage became standard requirements for common jobs, leading to a process of further education, specialisation, and concrete accomplishments to maintain eligibility for a job that required a credential earlier. This larger trend is described by Beck (1992) as institutionalised individualisation – the systematic transfer of risks and responsibilities from collective institutions onto a biography of the single individual, who is now tasked with planning, justifying, and constantly adjusting his or her trajectory without the guarantees previously provided by class position, stable employment, and extended family structures. The first sub-question is directly answered by redefining “ordinary” life in contemporary society, which has turned it into a provisional, provisioned, and mostly devalued beginning. Once the precondition for ordinariness was conferred on an individual by ascribed status, durable institutions and shared communal belief, it is now earned through ongoing credentialing, career differentiation, and biographical planning by the individual, in a redefinition that is shaped by both the erosion of collective institutions and the reconfiguration of the responsibility for security to the individual.

How Do Social Expectations of Individuality and Uniqueness Influence the Perception of Ordinariness?

One of the central paradoxes found by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's individualisation thesis is that individualisation is not achieved through a conscious choice but rather as a requirement of the structure of late modern society (Beck, 1992). Educational, labour market, and welfare institutions respond directly to their needs, demanding personal rationalisation of decisions, ongoing self-

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surveillance, and reflexive planning of a life trajectory no longer subject to class, gender or local scripts. A product of the do-it-yourself biography is a sort of emancipation from the traditional constraint, and at the same time the accumulation of considerable psychological burden – the person is now personally responsible for the results that were previously considered as a consequence of structural position.

Further exploring this theme, Bauman (2000) theorises liquid modernity, in which identity is no longer a finished product but instead is ever in process. In contrast to the earlier era of solid modern institutions which provided the self with life-long "homes," the liquid modern era demands that the self be constantly remade and remoulded to meet the changing demands of the labour market, relationships and technology. The ordinary is problematic to hold in these circumstances, for stability is culturally coded as an ordinary, even unremarkable, identity, and ordinary is an identity that is not unsettled, that is not being claimed. The sense of an imperative to individuate is a sense of constant obligation rather than an opportunity for self-realisation, to differentiate oneself from an undifferentiated mass, which is itself becoming a sign of failure or lack of ambition.

In another significant sense, this structural prescription for individuality meshes with Bourdieu's theory of distinction (1984). By defining taste and cultural competence as a class position acquired by habitus, the contemporary trend to make mandatory individuality applies the same principle to personality itself, which is now formed and differentiated as a competitive force within education, employment, and social life. The ordinary personality, like the ordinary career, becomes a liability to be corrected by demonstrating to others through any or all of the following: special skills, unique personal stories, or certain marked lifestyle indicators, all of which equate to capital that can be converted into social and economic gain.

As a response to the second sub-question, the expectation of individuality and uniqueness in society degrades a neutral condition of being normal into a perceived personal deficit. Whereas institutions are increasingly talking to individuals, and personality and lifestyle have become places of competitive distinction, the ordinary self is now seen not as one of many possibilities but

as an unmarked failure to individuate, in a manner that is made worse as it is now required for one to be different in work—and increasingly, in personal identity.

Part I: Achievement as a Measure of Individual Worth

The intensification of achievement as a cultural imperative is most directly captured in the writings of Byung-Chul Han, in his book on the achievement society (2015). Han compares the disciplinary society, based on external prohibitions and the negative injunction should not, with the achievement society of the twenty first century, based on external possibilities and the positive injunction can. This seeming freedom, Han argues, leaves behind a unique and more insidious form of self-exploitation, as the achievement subject internalises the demand for productivity into a psychic economy: it produces itself as the exploited subject, and it is itself the one who is exploited. The outcome is not repression, but rather exhaustion; it can be seen as a characteristic pathology of the present age in the form of burnout and related syndromes.

This achievement imperative is evident in many aspects of modern life. In the educational context, credentialization has continued to grow beyond the granting of a single credentialing event (the completion of a qualifying degree) to a continual accumulation of credentials, certifications, and tangible evidence of extracurricular success, stemming from the increasing desperation to find a few desirable jobs. In employment, the widespread adoption of metrics for productivity, KPIs, and self-tracking tools, for example, has proliferated managerial logics of measurement that are not only applied to organisations but also to the individual, and has introduced practices of self-quantification in which sleep, exercise, and play are now viewed as measurable domains of performance rather than restorative activities that are not subject to measurement. At the cultural level, the achievement imperative is manifested in popular notions of hustle culture, which glorify constant productive activity, and equate the idea of rest with moral weakness.

In the meritocratic ideology that legitimises this achievement culture, the ability to achieve social position is – or should be – based on demonstrated effort and ability, rather than on inheritance. From a sociological perspective, social mobility has long been found to be significantly limited by

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class origin, access to education or social capital, and so the notion of merit can often mask and deepen social inequality. The internalisation of the meritocratic belief has substantial implications for self-perception because when people don't get results they would like to see, they are pushed to assume that it is their own lack of effort or ability, rather than a predictable statistical occurrence of a competitive system, in which, by definition, only a small number of people can win out in remarkable ways.

One must remember that the achievement culture studied here is different from the typical skill or performance attaining culture that has been common in human societies throughout history. The hallmark of the new achievement culture is that the ability to do things well, rather than the ability to do things badly, is no longer enough for basic social and economic security; as a consequence, the demands for displays of exceptional achievement have become increasingly widespread across a growing number of institutional settings, from competitive university admission to entry-level jobs, that once required only adequate, competent, and unremarkable performance.

Part II: Social Recognition as a Measure of Individual Worth

Because the networked digital platforms are growing and affecting the ways in which social recognition is sought and awarded, it has extended the application of Goffman's dramaturgical theory into a world of constant, technologically mediated social visibility. Unlike Goffman's conception of a backstage area to which he could retreat and recharge himself after a performance, today's social media-based frontstages are effectively without end, during which one's self-presentation is captured, shared, "liked," counted, and constantly judged by others. This condition has inspired what thinkers of digital culture call micro-celebrity: an image-building strategy that involves people who are not public figures, but who use techniques of strategic self-branding, audience cultivation and personal narrative curation.

In this sense, the engagement metrics act as a new type of symbolic capital similar to the cultural capital explained by Bourdieu (1984), which can be transformed into social status, economic possibilities and psychological recognition. The ordinary moment of day-to-day life is structurally disadvantaged within the attention economy, compared to curated or exceptional content, and in

this way, the standard, everyday experience is incentivised to be more unusual, more emotionally charged, or more aesthetically pleasing than it is to be lived. This creates a widely documented social comparison dynamic that sees people compare their normal lives with the most unusual moments of a random and unrepresentative sample of other people, and feel as though their lives are a little less than normal because of it.

This digital public space is, additionally, unevenly recognized. The visibility economy doesn't equally distribute access to the technical expertise, free time, and cultural capital needed to build an effective personal brand, and it often results in new versions of social inequality reinforced, if not amplified, with a different gloss and register of terms: attention, engagement, and influence. In this context, ordinariness is not just undervalued but actively penalized by systems of algorithmic curation that value distinctiveness, creating a structural pressure towards constant self-differentiation that affects not only education and employment, but also other areas of life.

These two forces directly answer the third sub-question: achievement and social recognition have now become indicators of individual value, through two mechanisms: the first is the internalization of a meritocratic practice of achievement, which provides the yardstick by which the self is measured; the second is the quantification of achievement and its external confirmation through digital means, which creates the constant, visible, public surveillance of the self that it has achieved. Where there is nothing extraordinary or amplified in the way of achievement or visibility, there is, accordingly, something ordinary in both mechanisms' readings: an absence of some achievement or amplified visibility, not an ordinary and socially unremarkable outcome.

Consequences of the Achievement-Recognition Nexus

All the changes outlined in the previous sections result in a large shift of social and psychological costs to the individual. As a result of his diagnosis of the achievement society (2015), burnout, depression and exhaustion diseases are identified as the typical pathologies of a society organised around unlimited positive achievement; as the achievement subject is excluded from the possibility of opposition, he is directing the frustrations toward himself. It's a narrative that dovetails with Lasch's earlier comment (1979), that a culture driven by external image and validation engenders

a narcissistic personality structure characterised by a weak sense of self-worth, which is deeply rooted in a need for constant external validation, and thus psychologically fragile to the ebb and flow of social validation described in section six.

Structural costs at the social stratification level are added to these psychological costs. Unlike the more inherited forms of social capital (Bourdieu's cultural capital), the visible and storytelling capital needed to be recognised socially comes with constant, unpaid, and unsustainable work of self-presentation, which is a struggle against other activities that consume time and resources, and is not equally shared. This creates a form of recognition precarity, a precarity where the value of a person's social worth is never guaranteed but must be continually re-earned through visible accomplishments and an external confirmation of worth, a condition structurally analogous to employment precarity, as Sennett (1998) describes it, but applied to the domain of personal identity.

Less explored in the literature is a second cost, which is related to social cohesion. The concept of mechanical solidarity (Durkheim, 1893/1984) implies that there has, in the past, been a mutual recognition and a sense of collective belonging in the context of shared ordinariness. With ordinariness being treated more and more as a failing state than as a fact of society, the binding force for this type of mutual recognition is also weakened, which has more than psychological consequences for civic trust and collective solidarity—consequences that are also likely to impact strangers who occupy structurally similar, non-exciting roles.

The costs are not randomly allocated, but rather more likely to be borne by groups already facing disadvantage on other dimensions of social inequality, including by younger generations first entering into the labour market amid growing credential competition, and by workers in jobs most vulnerable to platform-based reputation systems, like service and gig-economy workers for whom income is increasingly dependent on consumer ratings as an additional layer of the recognition economy outlined in section six. In other groups, where constant assessment, academic, professional or algorithmic, may not be so much a cultural worry as an ordinary one, the inability to escape it makes what may be a cultural anxiety for them a real, material economic vulnerability.

Can Ordinary Life Be Meaningful and Socially Valuable Beyond Exceptional Achievement and Recognition?

This strengthening of achievement culture hasn't been without controversy. There have been several cultural currents that can be loosely categorized as slow living, digital minimalism, and anti-productivity discourse that have appeared in response to the push to continuously self-optimize and stand out in the crowd. They tend to glorify the deliberate rejection of competitive success measures, the voluntary reduction of online presence, and the conscious re-legitimation of everyday activity as a successful goal in and of itself, which doesn't need to be backed up by additional productivity or public acclaim.

Variants of this countercurrent at the workplace, sometimes referred to as quiet quitting, are also expressions of an attempt to make ordinary, contractually restricted involvement in work feel legitimate in the face of the promise of continuous discretionary overachievement. Such practices can be seen as a way to bring back a familiar, confined account of work in resistance to the disruptive forces of performance expectations that are open-ended in flexible capitalism, as Sennett describes (1998).

Even though these countercurrents also have definite structural deficiencies. Slow living, or digital withdrawal, usually assumes a certain economic stability and freedom from the material impacts of reduced visibility or competitive disengagement to allow for these practices to be more easily experienced by already privileged social groups. Furthermore, as sociologists of consumer culture have commented, gestures of resistance to commercial and competitive imperatives often get commercialised (as in minimalism, slow living, and digital detoxing, which are all now sold as high-end products). Bourdieu's larger point (1984) is that even attempts to mark opposition to dominant taste hierarchies can be new markers of distinction. The countercurrent is not so much a solution to the devaluation of ordinariness that appears throughout this paper as a complicating factor, as it often restores the very logic of distinctive self-presentation it is meant to challenge.

In both commercial and non-commercial sense, a further (less commercial, but not less real) countercurrent is the renewed academic and civic interest in the sociology of everyday life, which chooses to foreground the routine, the unremarkable as a category of its own, rather than as a residual category defined solely by the absence of achievement. Such a position of scholarship speaks against the value hierarchy, which has been explored in this paper as a product of achievement, in that the texture of ordinary daily life, with its habit of routine, its unregarded labours, its mundane sociability, is the substantive content of social life for the vast majority of people, and thus is worthy of sustained sociological attention, without needing to be related to exceptional achievement or public recognition.

To the fourth sub-question, ordinary life is no longer understood to be important and socially valuable merely because it is exceptional or acknowledged publicly but must now be actively claimed. While the partial commercialization and differential saliences of this reclaiming of meaning indicate that this valuation of ordinary life is not yet the predominant one, the existence of counter currents like slow living, quiet quitting, and a renewed scholarly engagement with everyday life point to a social availability of alternative valuations of ordinary life.

7. Discussion

In brief, as the thread of the main research question runs through the four previous sections, it shows that the value and perception of ordinariness has shifted as a result of the converging action of individuality, achievement, and social recognition, each of which operates as a distinct mechanism for making the ordinary seem deficient, not just different. Individuality and uniqueness (examined in response to the second sub-question) provide the norm which requires the self to be active in the process of differentiation; achievement and social recognition (examined in response to the third sub-question) provide the standards and the tangible confirmation against which this differentiation is measured; and the historical redefinition traced in response to the first sub-question provides the institutional conditions within which these expectations became generalized across the population rather than limited to a narrow elite.

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The foregoing analysis indicates that the ordinariness of social identity is no longer just absent from social life today but is also repositioned; from a secure and dominant social identity which is established in the continuity of institutions, to a less common and less legitimate social identity whose legitimacy must be actively fought against the pressures of the institutions towards individuation, achievement, and visibility. This re-positioning is best seen less as the result of any single cause and more as the cumulative result of various processes of social organization happening on different levels: intensification of individuation under the conditions of diminished institutional regulation (Durkheimian), the structural mandate towards reflexive biography (Beckian), the Bourdieusian extension of distinction logics to personality and lifestyle, and the platform-driven reorganisation of recognition described by contemporary digital culture research.

A significant conclusion from this analysis is that these pressures will be distributed unevenly throughout the social structure. The devaluation of ordinariness does not affect all social groups equally because it requires a certain amount of economic, cultural, and social capital that is not always available to everyone. Those who have the least access to self-differentiation resources are also most vulnerable to the structural precarity of Sennett and least able to shift to the countercurrent practices outlined in section eight, indicating that the value of “ordinariness” is an additional dimension of social stratification that is superimposed on, and not distinct from, other disparities of class and cultural capital.

Another implication is with respect to social cohesion. As Durkheim has said before, if shared ordinariness is at the base of some forms of mutual recognition among structurally similar individuals, the systematic undermining of this shared condition could erode the very forms of civic and communal trust that classical sociology saw as essential foundations of stable collective life. Comparative and empirical study of these processes in different national and cultural settings would be an advantageous follow-up to the present research, as the levels of achievement culture and visibility through platforms can differ considerably between societies with various welfare systems, educational systems, and digital media ecologies.

Finally, it should be stressed that individuality, achievement and public recognition are not evil in themselves, as explored in this paper. Historically, each has been an appropriate instrument for the expansion of individual autonomy, for the recognition of real achievement, or for public display that previous generations were unable to achieve. The issue raised in this paper is not these goods, but their generalisation to the unconditional requirement of the masses as a whole, and their application indiscriminately to everyone who cannot be a super-nominal subject, the majority who will not be exceptional. It is not these goods, but their generalisation as a universal requirement applied indiscriminately across the population, such that the statistically inevitable majority of the population who cannot occupy this exceptional position is left with no socially legitimate account of their own normal lives. The sociological question, then, is not to abandon individuality and achievement but to contemplate the possibility of institutions providing some other forms of collective belonging that do not require constant individual distinction as a condition of belonging.

Conclusion

The paper has claimed that the stable statistical and moral norms of social life have been increasingly refabricated and reconstituted in modern society as a failing that must be remedied by ongoing processes of individuation, visible accomplishment and public display. This shift is not solely cultural, not solely economic, but is a product of a combination of processes that have occurred in the long run, including the weakening of institutional control over individuation, identified by Durkheim; the structural call for reflexive biography, identified by Beck and Bauman; the corrosive effects of flexible capitalism on narrative identity, identified by Sennett; the extension of distinction logics into the personality and digital self-presentation, identified by Bourdieu and the contemporary platform research, as well as the self-exploiting dynamics of the achievement society identified by Han.

The implications of this reconfiguration are not uniform, or obvious, and certainly not without consequence. These range from a confirmed increase in psychological disorders resulting from fatigue to a shift of stratifying advantage to those who can sustain self-differentiation, to a possible reduction in the inter-personal mutual recognition that classical sociology saw as the basis of social

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cohesion. Simultaneously, the devaluation of ordinariness is not complete or unchallenged given the appearance of counter currents that aim to re-legitimise ordinary living. In conclusion, ordinariness is not a thing of the past in today's society, but rather a rare and increasingly politic category that will be shaped by the ability of social institutions to re-establish collective forms of belonging that are not based on ongoing differentiation between individuals. Ongoing empirical and comparative research on this trend is an essential future research challenge for sociological research.

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