Recreating a Plausible Future:
Combining Cultural Repertoires in Unsettled Times

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Abstract

This paper analyzes how young adults draw on cultural resources to understand their identities, aspirations, and goals when taken-for-granted scripts of success are perceived as less desirable or achievable. Drawing on pragmatism, we propose the concept of "plausible futures" to capture how people rearrange elements within cultural repertoires as a practical and moral project to define their identities, aspirations and goals. We draw on interviews with 80 college students concerning how they understand their future aspirations, including how they define personal success and broader social goals, when they face unpredictability in, and dissatisfaction with, achieving dominant meritocratic and socioeconomic ideals. We find that respondents combine elements from four cultural repertoires to work towards and envision their future: the American Dream and neoliberalism, the therapeutic culture, ordinary cosmopolitanisms, and a "Gen Z" cohort narrative. The combining of elements from each repertoire enables a hybrid set of cultural tools that hold to tenets of hard work and self-reliance, while accommodating the quest for greater recognition and inclusion. We show that respondents combine cultural elements based on their ability to connect elements to futures perceived as viable and valuable.

In the current decade, the transition to adulthood for young Americans is affected by the combined effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, an unequal economy, precarious labor market, a crisis of democracy, unrest over racial injustice and concerns over climate change. Furthermore, after the 2008 recession, many young people doubt their ability to follow the same pathways of success or achieve upward mobility experienced by their parents (Kalleberg 2018). While this stage of the life cycle is always associated with uncertainty, young adults today experience tremendous difficulty projecting themselves into a possible and desirable future in a period of instability (Bauman 2007). Many report increasingly levels of anxiety (Higher Education Research Institute 2021), partially associated with uncertainty in their life paths (Cech 2021; Smith and Snell 2009).

This paper contributes a theory about how young adults draw on cultural resources to envision and work towards what may lie ahead when faced with doubts in their ability to achieve and the desirability of scripts of success for their future. We draw on 80 interviews with college students living in the American Northeast and Midwest. When probed about how they imagine and work toward their future, we find that respondents combine elements from four cultural repertoires: the American dream and neoliberalism, the therapeutic culture, ordinary cosmopolitanism and a "Gen Z" cohort narrative. By combining elements from each repertoire, they create a hybrid version of cultural tools that incorporate tenets of hard work and personal responsibility with commitments to recognition and inclusion.

Importantly, we specify which cultural elements respondents hold on to or reject by combining research on change in cultural repertoires and imagined futures. Periods of uncertainty have been shown to provide opportunities for creative action as people draw on cultural tools in new ways (Joas 1996; Swidler 1986). However, scholars emphasize the habitual

and stable aspects of cultural repertoires over processes of creativity (Gold 2022; Silber 2003). To explain the creative ways in which our respondents draw on cultural elements we propose the concept of "plausible futures." The concept builds on theories of pragmatic action, emphasizing the achievability of scripts of success and maintaining moral worth as a specific type of problem-situation that prompts creativity (Gross 2009). By highlighting the problem-solving (McDonnell, Bail, and Tavory 2017) and moral motivations for action (Warikoo 2020), the concept can explain which cultural elements are reproduced or rejected through creative processes. Our respondents combine elements based on their ability to connect cultural tools to plausible futures, or futures perceived as viable and valuable (Beckert 2013; Frye 2012; Mische 2009). They embrace elements that allow them to create and work towards a future that they believe they can achieve and that will validate their sense of self. They abandon elements in which they experience a mismatch between anticipatory outcomes, lived experience and desired result. Through this process, they rearrange cultural tools to define their identities, aspirations and goals which results in altering the use and contents of cultural toolkits.

Cultural Change and Plausible Futures

Cultural Repertoires, Scripts of Success and Unsettledness

Cultural repertoires, defined as a set of knowledge, skills and symbols which provide the materials from which individuals and groups construct strategies of action, compose a "cultural toolkit" that people mobilize to inform their behaviors (Swidler 1986). Cultural repertoires provide individuals with resources to make sense of their lives and coordinate action (Berger and Luckman 1964; Boltanski and Thevenot 1999; Tavory and Eliasoph 2013). People draw on cultural tools to construct their goals and anticipate the outcome of behaviors in working towards

those ends. Within repertoire theory, the ability to predict and imagine the future motivates theories of action (Berger 1990; Husserl 1983; Schutz, Walsh, and Lehnert 1972).[1]

Cultural repertoires are embedded in the institutional environment to define hegemonic ideals and contribute to structuring goals and pathways of action. For instance, institutions like employers define scripts of the ideal worker as those who subordinate family and children to work priorities (Blair-Loy 2005). Central to American individualism and exacerbated by neoliberalism, virtues of hard-work, competition, self-reliance, entrepreneurialism, and socio-economic success have become dominant ways of defining achievement (Hall and Lamont 2009; Lamont 2019; Silva 2012). Ideals from the American dream embed in a democratic framework so that values such as meritocracy and hard-work appear to uphold social equality and justice (Lamont 2000; Mijs 2016). Table 1 provides an overview of the four most dominant cultural repertoires and the accompanying ideals referred to in this study. These repertoires were identified abductively throughout the study by analyzing prominent interview themes in light of sociological literature on cultural repertoires (Timmermans and Tavory 2012).

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

For youth, educational institutions serve as key sites that promote institutionalized cultural repertoires, such as ideals of mobility, meritocracy and competition (Dhingra 2020; Frank and Meyer 2020). Particularly college-educated youth carry high expectations of achieving meritocratic, socioeconomic and individual scripts of success (Demerath 2009; Silva and Snellman 2018; Warikoo 2016). However, especially since the 2008 recession, ideals of mobility

[1] For a review of research on futures and action see Beckert and Suckert 2020.

and socioeconomic achievement are becoming out of reach even for college educated youth, putting into question the achievability and desirability of models of the future embedded in dominant repertoires (Kalleberg 2018). Young adults with college educations face employment precarity and obstacles to socioeconomic advancement (Ayala-Hurtado 2021). Middle-class youth fear downward mobility, exacerbated by hyper-competition, which has contributed to a generational mental health crisis (Bloemraad et al. 2019). Survey research reveals that post-2008, college youth express heightened financial concerns and declines in their sense of self-worth and confidence (Park, Twenge, and Greenfield 2017; Pryor et al. 2009; Schoon and Mortimer 2017). Furthermore, ideals of diversity, inclusion and belonging, prominent in recent social movement and university discourses, seek to promote communal ideas alongside individualism (Berrey 2015; Lamont 2023; Warikoo 2016).

Given challenges to their ability to achieve and the desirability of scripts of success embedded in dominant cultural repertoires, college youth experience instability in how they define and work towards their aspirations and goals, including personal and social projects (Baillergeau and Duyvendak 2019). They experience a form of unsettledness defined as contradiction from exposure to or internalization of competing values (e.g., individualism versus communalism) (Swidler 1986) and/or a mismatch between ideas and available opportunities (e.g., blocked pathways for social mobility) (Strand and Lizardo 2017). Uncertainty in the achievability and desirability of models for their future disrupts the tacit ways in which they use cultural tools to envision and work towards anticipated ends (Beck, Giddens, and Lash 1994).

Scholars argue that periods of unsettledness can drive cultural change by spurring creative action. To explain cultural change through creative action, we build on sociology's

affinity with pragmatism (Gross 2009; Gross, Reed, and Winship 2022).[2] Pragmatism argues that when habits or pre-existing cultural resources prove insufficient for actors to make sense of experiences, organize actions and work towards and achieve an anticipated future, actors confront a problem. Problems prompt actors to reevaluate their goals, assumptions and routines, spurring creativity as a form of innovation (Clemens 1993; Sewell 1996) and problem-solving (Gross 2009, 2018; Joas 1996). Cultural change occurs as people select and use cultural tools to work towards new ends in response to the problems they confront in changing contexts (Oleschuk et al. 2019; Skrbis and Woodward 2007; Swidler 2001).

While the literature notes the possibility for actors to draw creatively on heterogeneous cultural tools, three questions remain unaddressed:

A) The literature on cultural repertoires emphasizes the routine aspects of cultural tools over processes of creativity (Gold 2022; Silber 2003), which remain empirically unspecified. It remains unclear if people draw on diverse cultural elements within repertoires or adopt entire competing repertoires in creative ways. A focus on picking and choosing entire repertoires emphasizes the role of institutions in defining scripts of success and appropriate cultural tools (Swidler 1986). In contrast, we argue that actors also participate in bottom-up processes of arranging and devising cultural repertoires that help them redefine success, make sense of their environment and determine how to act.

B) By not accounting for the ways in which people draw on cultural elements from multiple repertoires in combination, past work overstates motivations for ideological coherence (Lizardo and Strand 2010; Swidler 1986). Instead, we focus on what enables people to draw on

[2] Related concepts elaborating on creative action and cultural change include hysteresis (Bourdieu 1990), Type II thinking (Strand and Lizardo 2017), writing on hybridity from the institutional logics literature (Greenwood 2008) and post-colonial studies (Werbner and Bhabha 2015), and the concept of cultural bricolage (Lévi-Strauss 2000).

or reject select elements within repertoires, leading to loosely articulated models of their future with continuing contradictions.

C) Scholarship leaves unaddressed which cultural elements get rejected or reproduced through creative processes. Literature on pragmatic action has tackled related questions (Gold 2022; McDonnell et al. 2017), with an emphasis on the problem-solving nature of cultural tools which determines their rejection or reproduction. Problem-situations arise in diverse domains (Flores and Gross 2022; Gross 2009; Tavory and Timmermans 2022). Empirical examples have ranged from political disenfranchisement (Tilly 2016) to maintaining a consistent identity (Miles 2014). Such works connect cultural change to the political-opportunity structure or the social-psychology of ideas about the self. We build on pragmatic theories of action by identifying a problem-situation defined by a crisis of self-worth and the inability to achieve dominant scripts of success. In our case, the reproduction or rejection of cultural tools can only be explained by considering the achievability of ideas about success and self-worth enabled and constraint by salient cultural repertoires. Attention to morality as a part of problem-solving recognizes the importance of scripts of success and ideas about worthiness in defining desirable goals, determining pathways of action and change in cultural repertoires.

Imagined Futures and Creative Action in Unsettled Times

To understand how young adults draw on cultural tools to imagine and work towards their future in the context of destabilized scripts of success, we combine research on change in cultural repertoires and imagined futures. Imagining futures is a critical component of creative action, in which "received structures of thought and action may be creatively reconfigured in relation to the actor's hopes, fears, and desires for the future" (Emirbayer and Mische 1998:971).

We argue that interactions between cultural tools and the institutional environment shape perceptions of imagined futures as *viable* and/or *valuable* projects to make them *plausible*, which informs how people evaluate and use elements within toolkits to define and work towards anticipated ends (Figure 1). Plausible futures are based on perceptions of the viability and value of pathways of action. We unpack the definition of plausible futures to explain the importance of futures being viable and valuable to explain change in cultural repertoires.

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

First, to inform creative action, imagined futures must be seen as *viable* or able to materialize. Actors construct strategies of action based on expectations derived from the outcome of past experiences, assessment of future likelihoods and learned conceptions about the outcome of action (Bourdieu 2000; Strand and Lizardo 2022). For example, Young (2011) shows how poverty-stricken Black men draw lessons about their possible futures through experiences of racism, discrimination and barriers to employment, which dilute beliefs in achieving ideals of "success." Instead, the men strive for a safe community, material sustenance and hopes of mobility for their children. Futures become *plausible* by drawing on experiences with institutions that propel or hinder the realization of cultural ideals (Brown 2016).[3] Structural and cultural conditions set constraints on what is perceived as a likely future, rather than the future existing as a limitless possibility (Beckert 2013; Husserl 1983). Concrete experiences impact how actors use

[3]The construction of plausible courses of action are also determined by "tests" in French Pragmatist theories, in which accepted norms, behaviors and beliefs are evaluated based on their correspondence with institutionalized principles (Boltanski and Thevenot 1999).

and interpret cultural tools based on perceptions of the likelihood that actions will contribute to the realization of specific futures.

Secondly, imagined futures must be interpreted as *valuable* to inspire action towards their promises. Imagined futures can assert moral worth in relation to creating an identity that aligns with cultural ideals (Bandelj and Lanuza 2018; Joas 2000; Silva 2012). In her study of the educational aspirations of female adolescents in Malawi, Frye (2012) shows that young women imagine futures of educational success because these goals are supported by educational and non-profit institutions that frame education as a personal virtue. These women devote themselves to educational attainment as a moral project of realizing a virtuous identity. Similarly, Ayala-Hurtado (2021) shows that young adults hold onto "achievement narratives," because they treat that future as the most *valuable*. The perception of certain futures as morally worthy shapes how people construct their goals and identity.

The concept of plausible futures combines perceptions about the likelihood of realizing imagined futures and perceptions about the worthiness of the self in that world. Motivations for futures to be both viable and valuable are important to understand cultural change in the context of the destabilization of cultural ideals and scripts of success (Lamont 2019). How actors draw on cultural tools to restructure their goals, objectives and aspirations when dominant ideals are challenged requires a theory that combines assessments of both the viability and the value of action and anticipated outcomes. People reevaluate how they can achieve their goals, as well as how they can maintain a sense of self-worth in that future world (Liang 2022; Warikoo 2020).

Plausible futures help explain which elements within cultural repertoires are reproduced or rejected through creative processes when scripts of success are destabilized.[4] Actors hold on

[4] We would expect imagined futures that lack viability or value to connect to social processes and conditions other than creatively organizing action such as anomie (no value in the future) or fantasy (no viability of the future).

to or reject cultural elements based on the ways in which they can connect cultural elements to perceptions of plausibility that create more viable scripts of success that still denote worthiness. To explain patterns of change in cultural repertoires, models must consider the pragmatic problem of viable action and the ability to define a worthy self in relation to the salient cultural resources available in the environment (Frye 2012; Lamont 2000; Silva 2012).

To summarize, past models of change in cultural repertoires show that unsettledness can prompt creative action. We extend this research by illustrating the bottom-up process of actors creatively combining elements of cultural repertoires to redefine scripts of success and create and work towards new futures. We specify the conditions in which people hold on to or reject cultural elements by combining research on change in cultural repertoires and imagined futures. Respondents embrace and adapt cultural elements that allow them to create and work towards plausible futures perceived as viable and valuable (i.e., able to materialize *and* denote self-worth). Incorporating imagined futures in models of change in cultural repertoires emphasizes the problem-solving and moral motivations that help explain patterns of cultural change.

Research Design

Case Selection

We focus on college-aged youth born after 1997. This group is formed by particular historical and sociological processes, shared experiences, challenges and their subsequent "generational styles" (Mannheim 1952). The media, marketing specialists and survey researchers dub this group "Gen Zs" (e.g., Pew 2019). Demographers criticize generational labels, including the challenge of distinguishing age, cohort and period effects (Fosse and Winship 2019). We share this concern, yet we use the label in quotes because we find that it has become an

intersubjective reality for many members of the group who appropriate it as part of their social and political identity.

The life stage of this age group is significant. Their experiences are critical for identity formation and political socialization (Schuman and Scott 1989). As "emerging adults," their futures may be more open-ended and unpredictable as they experience many transitions (Keniston 1965; Smith and Snell 2009). Recent experiences for youth produce multidimensional challenges related to long-term social ideals, such as inequality, as well as short term routines and relationships, such as Covid-19 (Sanchez, Lamont, and Zilberstein 2022). We study unsettledness as a challenge in actors' ability to rely on existing cultural structures to plan for and achieve desirable futures in the wake of growing inequality and financial precarity following the 2018 recession.[5] Desirable futures can include both the realization of ideals of personal success, such as meritocracy and upward mobility, as well as the realization of visions of collective success, such equality and justice (Baillergeau and Duyvendak 2019). Survey research suggests that the 2008 financial recession generated changes in college students' attitudes, in particular related to feelings of self-worth and confidence, as well as values of communitarianism, materialism and social relationships (Park et al. 2017; Pryor et al. 2009; Schoon and Mortimer 2017). The study allows us to investigate how attitudinal changes relate to cultural structures and resources.

This paper focuses on youth who attend college at a range of institutions. College students compose roughly 50% of this cohort in the United States.[6] We study college students

[5] While this is not a longitudinal and comparative study, there is some evidence that indicates that in other time periods, youth showed more conformist, stable or withdrawn outlooks. By comparing our interviewees' worldviews with other 18 to 22-year-olds across decades (e.g., Keniston 1965, Smith and Snell 2009 and Smith et al. 2012), we find the perspectives in our sample to be unique.

[6] https://www.statista.com/statistics/236093/higher-education-enrollment-rates-by-a ge-group-us/ and https://educationdata.org/college-enrollment-statistics

given the institutionalization of middle class norms centered on professional and material success and individual agency (Silva and Corse 2018) Educational institutions promote institutionalized cultural repertoires, such as ideals of mobility, meritocracy and competition (Dhingra 2020; Frank and Meyer 2020). College youth typically have expectations of success given parental resources, pressures to improve their class position and the historic role of higher education in class mobility (Demerath 2009; Silva and Snellman 2018; Warikoo 2016). Colleges also socialize students with models for social engagement and reinforce a sense of agency in political processes (Bastedo 2014; Klemenčič and Park 2018). Lastly, institutions of higher education increasingly support narratives of diversity, inclusion and self-development, incorporating new scripts to structure young people's ideals and goals (Cech 2021; Warikoo 2016). Our college-aged sample experiences uncertainties caused by the breakdown of the conditions essential for realizing traditional scripts of success, especially after the 2008 recession, as well as structured messages about the possibilities for their future selves and societies. While challenges and ideals vary based on social position (see Sanchez et al. 2022 for class/race comparisons in the sample), the salience of youth culture, college experience and unsettledness in scripts of success profoundly shape all interviewees' perspectives (Goldstein 1974; Keniston 1965). In the conclusion, we discuss slight modifications based on social class, but general patterns in how respondents related to the four prominent repertoires hold. We would expect larger differences to emerge between the experiences of college and non-college youth, however this is beyond the focus of the paper and requires complementary research.

Interviews and Sample

We conducted in-depth interviews with vignettes between September 2019 and February 2020. We used interviews to capture how individuals represent and make sense of their worlds and to gain access to their descriptions of reality (Gerson and Damaske 2020; Pugh 2013). Questions explored respondents' identities, values and formative experiences and future objectives, goals, and dreams. We also asked questions about American society, including perceptions of the American dream, challenges facing American society, possible responses, and hopes for the future.

Our goal was to create a theoretical sample (Small 2009) that enables us to study processes by which people draw on cultural tools to develop and work towards their goals when dominant scripts of success are destabilized. The study does not represent the viewpoints of all youth but exemplifies how a subset of young people use cultural tools to respond to uncertainty in their futures. Respondents were recruited using snowball sampling from multiple points of entry at colleges in the Midwest and the Northeast (see online supplement). Interviewees are between 18 and 23 years of age. The Northeast sample includes more upper-middle-class and middle-class youth, whereas the Midwest sample includes more youth from working-class backgrounds (Sanchez et al. 2022 for a class analysis). Younger cohorts in America are particularly ethno-racially diverse (Parker and Igielnik 2020). Just over half of the sample belong to racialized groups (58% people of color) (see Sanchez, Lamont, and Zilberstein 2022 for comparative analysis). Finally, the political distribution of our respondents broadly corresponds to the political leanings of this demographic.[7]

[7] The political orientations of our interviews do not appear to be different from those of most Gen Zs at the progressive/liberal end. A January 2020 Pew Research Center survey found that 61% of Gen Z voters (ages 18 to 23) said they were definitely or probably going to vote for the Democratic candidate for president in the 2020 election. However, we have fewer conservative Gen Z voters than are found in the population, perhaps because we only interview college students. We have only 8 self-identified conservative students while a quarter (22%) of the national sample said they were planning to vote for Trump. See https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2020/05/14/on-the-cusp-of-adulthood-and-facing-an-uncertain-future-what-we-know-about-gen-z-so-far-2/

The study is part of a larger project on the impact of the decline of the American dream on perceptions of the future and efforts to redefine criteria of worth as aspects of equality and justice (Lamont 2023). In the interviews, we queried about the American dream repertoire and respondents' visions of their future. Within our analysis we inductively found that respondents refer to themes from the other three repertoires prominently. We tie respondents' narratives to institutionalized and prominent repertoires that are described in the sociological literature (Table 1) and which they combine. For example, in response to questions about what respondents do in their free time, many mentioned self-care activities, such as exercising, journaling or talking to friends on the phone, all activities part of the "therapeutic culture" (Illouz 2008). Other repertoires were present -- for instance, concerning gender scripts – however we focus on the repertoires prevalent for the whole group and which were referred to consistently across respondents and topics. We coded interviews using NVivo.[8] The coding scheme captured 1) how respondents describe their identities, goals, challenges and resources, 2) their perspectives on the greatest challenges, strengths and possibilities for their peers and American society; and 3) their hopes, perspectives and inspirations for the future.

Cultural Change through Creative Combination

We find that respondents combine elements from four distinct cultural repertoires to develop their identities, aspirations and goals amidst challenges to several institutions and traditional ideals that unsettle their ability to achieve and the desirability of dominant scripts of success. They retain or reject cultural elements based on their ability to connect elements to

[8] Ten percent of the interviews were double coded for intercoder-reliability with a score of 99%.

futures perceived as plausible, or viable and valuable. Figure 2 captures the four most salient cultural repertoires and themes respondents refer to in their interview.

The first row of Figure 2 details the themes from the cultural repertoires that respondents draw on to create and work toward plausible futures. These include virtues associated with the American dream and neoliberal scripts of self: values of hard work and perseverance, a belief in individual action as a tool for progress and personal initiative as a moral virtue. Borrowing from the therapeutic culture, they emphasize the importance of balance to promote well-being and engagement with their communities and "finding your passion." From ordinary cosmopolitanism, they borrow ideas about the interconnection of human beings, the unique value and potential contributions of all people, and intrinsic goodness and morality that ground universality. Finally, from mediatized narratives about Gen Zs, they emphasize activism as a worthy pursuit, and value diversity and inclusion, as well as goals of social justice and recognition. Respondents incorporate these elements as viable and valuable tools to define their identities, aspirations and goals.

The middle section of Figure 2 describes the elements of these cultural repertoires that interviewees reject as not viable or valuable for a current or future world. From the American dream and neoliberalism, interviewees reject belief in the possibility of social mobility, socioeconomic success, competition, and the American dream as a universal goal. From the therapeutic culture, they abandon an exclusive focus on the individual over the collective, perfectionism to be "your best self" and unrealistic optimism. From ordinary cosmopolitanism, they view the focus on equality as insufficient and unrealistic without radical change and express dissatisfaction with mainstream political parties and polarization that detract from unity and progress. Lastly, drawing on the Gen Z cohort narrative, they express skepticism about the

empowerment of their generation, the power of activism and critique pressures and performative engagements on social media. These elements feel unviable, out of reach or contradict respondent's values and hopes for their futures.

The final row of Figure 2 provides evidence of how respondents combine elements from multiple repertoires to create cultural tools around three themes that can construct and work towards new plausible futures: 1) diversifying the American dream; 2) prioritizing career goals with a social impact; 3) expressing political objectives grounded in authentic interpersonal relations and empathy. These themes transform how respondents construct their identities and personal and political projects to align with plausible futures.

INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE

An Obsolete Status Quo

In this section we describe respondents' critiques of elements within existing cultural repertoires that create implausible models of achievement and success and cannot produce viable and/or valuable futures.

American Dream and Neoliberalism

Since we asked about the American dream, all respondents refer to it and view it as a source of strength for American society. However most believe that the traditional American dream does not and will not deliver on its promises, making it unviable. Two-thirds of interviewees lament growing inequality as a barrier to achievement. Respondents criticize the

American dream as unattainable given systemic barriers for poor and racialized groups. Ashlyn, from the Midwest, states: “I would describe [the American dream] as a distorted idea...Minorities in this nation don’t have that equal chance due to discrimination.”

Even respondents from self-described privileged class backgrounds critique their ability to achieve the American dream given precarious economic opportunities. Iris, a child of immigrants who attends an elite institution, echoes this concern: “I associate being upper middle class with this pressure to maintain your class status [but] a lot of my friends have expressed being afraid of achieving less than their parents or having negative mobility.” Fears of downward mobility contradict the promise of upward mobility intrinsic to the American dream.

Respondents feel exhausted by pressures to achieve narrow definitions of economic success and embody the glorified competitive attitude associated with it, making the dream less valuable. In half of the interviews, respondents explicitly describe themselves as “antimaterialist” in contrast to associating material gain with achievement. William, a student from the Northeast, claims: “I really don’t like buying things. I only buy necessities.” Furthermore, students like Katherine, from Massachusetts, describe how a focus on career and economic success creates insecurity:

> Our generation faces a lot of pressure and competition... a feeling of competition constantly is exhausting. You're competing with everyone over internships over this, over that and you're worried am I going to be able to get that, am I going to be able to do this or is somebody else going to get it?

Traditional milestones and goals of economic status feel unattainable and stressful to respondents which reduces their sense of self-worth.

Lastly, respondents recognize tension between the universal ideals associated with the American dream and growing cultural and ethnoracial diversity. Elaina, a Latinx student from New York rejects the singular ideal of the American dream:

> When you say the American dream you see a picket fence, you see a suburban house, you see one boy, one girl and two parents, you see all these things. And all the pictures are of white families, and sweaters and crewnecks and that's just not our culture.

In the context of growing inequality and demographic diversity, respondents perceive a mismatch between the ideals promised by the American dream and neoliberalism and the realities they experience and envision for their future. The traditional American dream no longer feels like a viable pathway to achieve a future in which respondents find value.

Therapeutic Culture

Respondents critique the individualistic focus of the therapeutic culture centered on self-actualization at the expense of collective goals. Samantha, a Midwestern respondent, critiques the "problem of the self:"

> You have to take care of yourself and make sure you're healthy and your well-being is good...I think that it can be dangerous if you start to overdo it by thinking of yourself. There can be a lot of selfishness and it affects relationships. It affects generosity.

Respondents commonly describe people they dislike as “selfish,” “self-absorbed,” or “self-centered,” focused only on achieving a “personal goal” (Karen, Northeast). A prioritization of the self deters from other valuable or communal goals.

Furthermore, respondents feel that the therapeutic culture can strain wellbeing and reduce their sense of value. Danae describes how she feels stress from the goal of self-actualization:

> I always try to stay humble, but maybe that also comes at a cost for my mental health...I really am hard on myself and I put a lot of pressure on myself to be the best person I can be. I can easily beat myself up about small things.

Social media exacerbates pressure to display “your best self” through performances of wellbeing. Jaime, from the Northeast, describes how expressing “your best self” on social media detracts from “authenticity,” another central component of the therapeutic culture and part of their cohort narrative.

> Authenticity is... getting more and more scarce with social media. It's hard for people to feel like they can genuinely just be themselves when everybody's posting the best version of themselves online.

Social media interactions make it taxing for respondents to uphold a positive display, as well as detract and make it unviable to realize ideals of authenticity.

Lastly, while respondents express "hope" in the future, many find the existential nature of contemporary challenges, such as climate change and inequality, too great to maintain the active positivity promoted by the therapeutic culture. Dani from New York describes her "realist" stance towards the future:

> I have found myself being really pessimistic... nothing is going to change, this is the end basically and there is nothing that can really change but [I've] gotten more hopeful... I'm a realist.

Respondents view the therapeutic culture as unviable and insufficient for maintaining a valued, authentic and positive attitude toward the future.

Ordinary Cosmopolitanisms

Respondents value central themes of ordinary cosmopolitanisms, such as equality, inclusion, and egalitarianism to create a future world. They state that "humans are humans" (Griffin, Midwest), "everyone is a child of God" (Ian, Midwest) and "everyone is made from the same DNA" (Camila, Northeast). The idea that all people "have the potential to be better and to do great" (Frank, Midwest) to "bring something different to the table" (William, Northeast), ground universality and serve as a basis for goals of equality. However, while respondents espouse these values, they are skeptical concerning the achievability of these virtues in the present social and political context.

Respondents critique the idea of "equality" in favor of "equity" and more radical change. Elaina, a student from New York, describes:

> The society we live in has so many factors that allow for inequality. The way to fix inequality isn't equality, it's equity...If you want to fix the wage gap, you don't raise the wage by $1 because then men will still be making $0.70 more. You have to have equity. You have to give women $0.30 more because they deserve the same.

Respondents did not think that the notion of equality captured the full magnitude of injustices they identified such as "white supremacy embedded in our systems" (Frank, Midwest) and "the prison industrial complex" (Sofi, Northeast).

Furthermore, respondents express concern about the structure of US institutions and politics, which present obstacles to ideals such as equality and recognition. Instead, respondents describe current political parties and institutions as promoting polarization. David, a moderate Northeast student, describes the challenge of "two very different thought processes based on both the left and right side." Over a third of respondents explicitly express frustrations with organized politics for not uniting to effectively govern. Political polarization also creates dismay in hopes of unity and universal respect. Ashley, from Massachusetts, says: "[America is] divided in the sense that I feel like everyone's political views will grow to become more of the determining factor as to whether or not people are...open to having conversations and getting to know other people." Respondents feel frustrated that political avenues do not seem able to work towards and realize social goals and values embedded within ordinary cosmopolitanism. Values such as equality and unity do not seem viable or valuable to inform their own identities, aspirations and goals to bring about a plausible future.

"Gen Z" Cohort Narrative

Respondents view their generation as progressive and inclusive, which helps define worthy paths to which they dedicated themselves. However, they experience tension in how others interpret these values. Enrique from the Midwest compares his generation's viewpoints to previous generations: "We're a lot more open-minded for issues like equality...a little more realistic and we've caught flaws whereas other generations didn't catch them or think about them." While more than three-quarters of respondents believe that their generation is more open to diversity and inclusion, they feel a disconnect between their interpretation of those values and discourses promoted by other generations and institutions. Sasha, a student from the Northeast, explains: "I feel like the older generations care more about economics…now it's more about [inclusion] socially…in terms of involving people of color or queer people." Inclusion associates with practicing values of open-mindedness and respect, however, respondents feel as if pro-diversity and affirmative action policies "single people out" and "are not the most beneficial" (Kate, Northeast). Such policies are seen as instrumentalizing difference, rather than promoting cohesion. Without providing genuine recognition, interviewees feel frustrated with the viability and value of ideals of diversity and inclusion.

Respondents feel varying levels of empowerment to enact their cohort ideals, expressing skepticism in the power of their generation if devoid of institutional and intergenerational support. Joe, a Northeast student, describes his uncertainty that young people can create change: "we're still very young...it's not like we're in a real position of power." Sylvanna, from the Midwest, describes her generations' feeling of disenfranchisement: "We have the issue of feeling unheard… not acknowledged. [The government] either just doesn't agree or care enough... It's a lack of respect." Others critique the ways that their peers enact their cohort values, especially on

social media, which promotes shallow engagement and discourages genuine connections that could create collective action. Jaime from the Northeast says: “people post stuff on Instagram, but nobody does anything about it…that's not okay.” While our interviewees hold to ideals expressed in their cohort narrative, they do not see these values supported or able to be effective and viable tools.

Creating New Cultural Tools

We find that our interviewees combine elements from distinct repertoires that allow them to construct new visions of viable and valuable, or plausible, paths forward. Through creative combination, they imagine alternative future arrangements, as well as connect everyday meaning-making to realizing those goals.

Diverse American Dreams

Given critiques of the American dream as unattainable, materialist and narrow considering the diversity of American society, interviewees redefine the American dream to include a multiplicity of goals. Respondents’ definitions of the American dream disconnect from upward mobility to imagine a future perceived as more viable and valuable. Nearly all our respondents express the view that “we all have our own American dream.” Influenced by the inclusiveness of ordinary cosmopolitanism and the therapeutic culture, some proclaim that the American dream can be “anything that makes you happy” or “fulfilled.” Elaina, from the Northeast, explains:

> The whole point of America is to have different diverse backgrounds, different diverse religions, different diverse freedoms that were otherwise not given to you. That's what

> America is about. That's what the American dream should be about. It shouldn't be about everyone achieving the same thing and abandoning their culture to go play golf on a Sunday or go to a Christian Church.

Similarly, Ryan, a Midwesterner, states:

> I have mixed feelings about [the American dream] …. It's kind of "ableist" … It should be about "feeling fulfilled in your life." Everyone has a right to do what they want to do in their life…The focus of the American dream is usually on career, and I would like to see it be more on fulfillment and what feeling successful means to you. I feel that everyone should be able to have that – be fulfilled and happy with your life.

For Ryan, belonging and achievement still require active participation and striving, themes central to the original American dream, but applied to an expanded array of projects. Striving for abstract goals, such as "what feeling successful means to you," makes these goals viable, regardless of the availability of material resources. Kit concurs: "I think it's very likely [that people can achieve their American dream] because everyone has their own version of what it is and what it means to them."

Most respondents describe their dreams as being geared towards "passionate" life projects. Sylvana, a student from the Midwest, discusses passion as a basis for determining the value of one's pursuits:

> Go do what you love and you can do without a degree and you can do it well because you're passionate about it and you're dedicating yourself and you're working hard. Don't go to college... that stupid certificate is not going to be a barrier as long as you can prove yourself.

Viewing "working hard" as a condition to "live your passion" associates worthiness with values central to the American dream and neoliberalism, as well as the therapeutic culture, and is seen as available to all in line with ordinary cosmopolitanism.

By redefining the American dream to be less associated with material achievement, our respondents show more egalitarian objectives, in line with ordinary cosmopolitanism. They embrace a broader palette of life projects, in line with the ideals of diversity and inclusion central to their cohort narrative and the theme of self-actualization from the therapeutic culture. An expanded and personalized definition of the American dream provides more plausible goals given a possible lack of material resources in a context of economic precarity.

Career Goals with a Social Impact

When discussing their career paths and goals, respondents strive for work that allows them to make a social contribution, rather than focus primarily on maximizing income or status. When discussing her ideal job, Camila, an Ivy League student, says that she is driven by "what am I going to be giving out," rather than "what I am going to be getting from the world." Similarly, Ashley, who attends a public university on the Northeast, discusses the primacy of contributing to society in envisioning her future:

> What most people think is useful is money… but there are so many other things you can use to gauge or add value… Does that person have talents or do they have certain skills that they can offer or share and teach and spread...how much they're able to contribute their time and volunteer… contribute in other ways to a community.

Respondents feel as if they can more reliably contribute resources such as time and community service, making those qualities critical to forging a meaningful, valuable path. Shelby from the Midwest agrees: “I have opportunities that people don’t get... I can use what I’ve been given to give back...to build up communities...I feel a sense of purpose from that, that I’m doing something valuable and important.”

Money and materialism remain valued resources because they contribute to financial security and stability or one’s ability to work towards other goals, such as “afford[ing] to help [other] people" (Ariel, Northeast) or “giv[ing] back to my parents” (Dean, Northeast). Even prestigious and lucrative careers are couched as valuable because they create the opportunity to help others. Griffin, a Midwest student, explains: “I hope to be a future doctor and I will be saving lives and showing kindness to patients and families...I think those who are shown kindness will also show kindness.” Interviewees bring together communitarian orientations with traditional values of work and achievement to amplify social contribution as a plausible pursuit.

When describing their future lives, more than three-quarters of respondents explicitly discuss their value of “balance” between their personal commitments and dedication to others. In response to a description of a student who devotes most of his time to academic work, Dean, a Northeast student, warns: “he’s investing too much time in his work instead of investing time with friends and his community.” “Balance” incorporates connecting with others as human

beings (a theme from ordinary cosmopolitanism), as well as contributing to respondents' feelings of self-care (therapeutic culture), while still prioritizing a work orientation (virtues central to neoliberalism) as a viable pathway to feel self-worth in relation to personal success and communal recognition.

Stemming from the traditional American dream, hard work remains a critical pillar for students to reach their goals: respondents explicitly state that hard work serves as a pathway to achieve their goals, find the idea of hard work hopeful and mention hard work as a key value. Enrique, a Midwest student describes how hard work can combat uncertainty: "life just happens. There are things that happen that are out of your control… putting yourself through school, working hard and saving money… those are things that you can do personally to...take control of your own life." Respondents perceive hard work as a continued viable way to achieve anticipated ends, associating moral esteem with those that show dedication and perseverance towards achieving their goals. By emphasizing both hard work and participation in collectively oriented and anti-materialist tasks, respondents feel more certainty that their actions and behaviors can contribute to a plausible world.

Political Objectives, Empathy, Interaction, and Activism

Our interviewees define political involvement in social change as a worthy and viable pursuit. They combine values from multiple repertoires, including a recognition of commonality (central to ordinary cosmopolitanism), a celebration of diversity (an element of their cohort narrative) and an agentic stance (central to the American dream) to uphold goals of broadening recognition and fostering empathy. Respondents discuss ideas such as "learning from difference," and "having shared experiences" as pathways for social change. Such

experiences promote mutual understanding and unity, while still prioritizing individuals as focal agents of change.

By breaking down social change to the level of interpersonal interactions, respondents connect everyday actions to plausible, changed futures. Joe explains: "I think this change could be something as small as having a conversation with one person...I try to have those kinds of conversations that help make people aware, help make people care about things, that influence people to action." Mia, from the Midwest, concurs: "Being nice and lending a hand and being respectful of everyone – that's a start. It's a domino effect." Bringing about a viable and valuable alternative imagined future requires an active social contribution at all levels. This position draws on the activism of the Gen Z cohort narrative, the entrepreneurialism central to the American dream, the valuing of interpersonal interactions central to the therapeutic culture and a vision of human interconnectivity central to ordinary cosmopolitanism.

Notably, over two-thirds of respondents describe the social contribution of others as a source of hope and inspiration. Camila, from an east coast college, describes how genuine connection with peers gives her hope:

> Talking to people around me and seeing what they want, their goals and what things that they want to achieve, the lives that they want to change, that gives me a lot of hope…. The people that I interact with [directly], I know, their intentions and I know who they really are, I know that they're actually wanting to do good.

Respondents were particularly inspired by social justice visions of their peers. Activism by peers was seen as inspiring because it is a sign of "taking control of it all" (Jaime, Northeast).

However, the imperative to demonstrate initiative and involvement, taken from the American dream and neoliberalism, applied to ideals of activism and engagement contributes to hyper-politicized pressures in which all aspects of identity and expression connect with social goals. Respondents note the pressures of hyper-politicization, particularly reinforced by constant publicity on social media. By connecting everyday interaction, discussion and expression to activism, interviewees feel connected to and able to participate in realizing plausible changed futures, as well as pressure to do so.

Conclusion

In response to the destabilization of the achievability and desirability of dominant scripts of success, we find that our sample of college youth distance themselves from elements of cultural repertoires that they view as obsolete. They reject narrow economic standards of success, hyper-competition, individualism, consumerism, institutionalized discourses of equality and shallow political activism as unviable and not valuable for a current and future world. Instead, they combine elements of distinct repertoires to build and work towards a future they perceive as more achievable and able to validate their sense of self. They embrace a worldview that incorporates a focus on the collective, the necessity of social contribution and impact, diversity, wide ranging aspirations and political objectives grounded in interpersonal interaction as tools to work towards social change as a worthy and necessary pursuit.

By focusing on the ways in which actors combine elements from diverse cultural repertoires we show how they contribute to bottom-up creative processes to change cultural repertoires and redefine scripts of success. We find that respondents reject or maintain cultural elements depending on their perceived viability to bring about visions of a shared, possible world

and that create pathways to construct a valued identity as part of that future. Our respondents retain values such as hard work and a disciplined self, which feel viable and worthy despite uncertainty in traditional benchmarks of achievement (Franceschelli and Keating 2018). This leads to adapted scripts such as the narrative of working hard towards one's passion or the diversification of the American dream. Rejected elements involve a mismatch between cultural ideals of valuable pursuits and what respondents perceive as viable given economic, social, and cultural constraints. This mismatch leaves young people frustrated in, for example, the promise of socioeconomic mobility or the vision of a "perfect self." Rejected elements become sites of boundary-making, defining those who are overly individualistic in pursuit of success or deemed "passive" as immoral compared to those who espouse values of collective impact. Through the concept of plausible futures, we emphasize the importance of morality as a site of and motivation for pragmatic problem solving that can explain patterns of change in cultural repertoires (Gold 2022; Gross 2009; Swidler 1986). Additionally, by integrating imagined futures into processes of change in cultural repertoires, we show the cultural and structural constrains on imagined futures as actors assess their value and viability to inspire creative action.

Our analysis highlights how people create a loose set of cultural tools by drawing on elements from distinct repertoires to restructure their goals and futures in contrast to motivations for ideological coherence (Swidler 1986; 2001). In unsettled times, we may expect to see creativity and discursive heterogeneity, rather than simplification or radicalization. As a result, many respondents feel tension from balancing contradictory elements from multiple repertoires. Respondents note contradiction between individualism, drawn from the American dream, neoliberalism and the therapeutic ethos, and community and belonging, tenets of ordinary cosmopolitanism and their cohort narrative. Furthermore, respondents grapple with tensions

between the desire for large-scale transformation and a focus on interpersonal and individual actions as sites of accessible politics, as well as experience discordance between broadening definitions of achievement and success, while still requiring hard work and persistent contribution to denote worth. While changes in cultural narratives are aspects of addressing inequality (Lamont 2018), the continual focus on neoliberal values of personal initiative, worthiness and action may reproduce many types of inequality respondents aim to contest and undermine the realization of their plausible futures.

The objectives of this paper are not to construct a comparative analysis and we find that at the level of cultural repertoires and ideals, our findings hold across the sample, however social position influences the enactments of themes. For example, both upper-middle class and lower-middle and working-class respondents embrace and reject elements from the American dream and adopt diverse American dreams. However, understandings of why the original repertoire is not viable or valuable differ. Privileged respondents more commonly reject the American Dream due to the financial crisis and labor market competition, which hamper beliefs in class reproduction and mobility. In contrast, less privileged respondents reject the American Dream due to inequality and the belief that hard work may not be enough to get ahead. Similarly, while both groups adopt career goals with a social impact, the less privileged understand social impact as a way of giving back to their immediate families and communities, while the privileged are more likely to refer to expansive and abstract impacts. Lastly, while both groups adopt an agentic stance towards broadening recognition through interpersonal interactions, the less privileged are more likely to focus on micro-conflicts like “calling out” as part of social change, while the privileged more-so focus on kindness and inclusion. As these examples show, both groups adopt

similar elements from each cultural repertoire, but may mobilize and enact the cultural tools differently.

Our model can be extended beyond the particularities of this group and case study to understand how different groups draw on and combine cultural elements in line with plausible imaginings for the future. The adoption of viable and valuable cultural tools can help to understand working-class populism and why some workers support policies that weaken their economic positions. Contradictions between white working class ideals and changing social, political and economic contexts of the US lead to the combing of ideas of (white American) worthiness from the American dream with anti-elitist and anti-institutional scripts at the expense of protective economic and environmental policy (Hochschild 2016). Similarly, plausible futures can help explain the "diversity paradox." Ideals of diversity and inclusion combine with contradictory values of meritocracy to produce abstract support for inclusive policies when they lend to "diverse learning environments," but not when they rearrange access to resources and opportunities that could more radically impact plausible futures for the white majority (Berrey 2015; Warikoo 2016). A focus on the practical problem-solving and moral motivations for action is critical to explain cultural change when people must restructure their goals to define new scripts of success that are both achievable and able to denote worth.

We study change in cultural repertoires in a particular historical moment, one marked by destabilization in scripts of success. Longitudinal and comparative work can investigate if and how combing elements from distinct cultural repertoires work in contexts with different types of unsettledness. We expect the balance of viability and value in constructing plausible futures to vary with groups facing different conditions of unsettledness. Furthermore, our respondents represent a slice of a cohort of young people and Americans. Future work should compare our

sample to those from other regions, class backgrounds, demographics, and nations, who access varying repertoires and face different challenges. The framing of futures as plausible remains an important resource for political and social movements to galvanize action and spur hope in their goals. This requires attention to undercover the strategies that frame futures as more or less likely. Plausible futures can also be put into conversation with research on resonance to understand how and why certain groups are drawn to, repurpose and believe cultural strands (McDonnell et al. 2017). The distinctive patterns and political orientations of college students should not be generalized to all groups. Future work should consider group-specific patterns of action and imaginings of desirable and possible worlds, as well as how institutions reinforce and capitalize on group attraction to narratives and visions.

Finally, future research should investigate the relationship between different levels of cultural production and change. We focus on how individuals modify cultural repertoires through everyday processes of meaning-making, leaving unaddressed their relationship with institutional processes of cultural diffusion and adaptation. As scripts of diversity, recognition and equality become salient within institutions, novel opportunities for creative combination present. Understanding how new scripts are appropriated by institutions and the implications for access to material resources requires continuing attention. We provide a framework to understand how collectives creatively envision, hope for and work towards a changed world, while also considering how truly transformative are the visions for the worlds that they aim to create.

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Table 1: Key Cultural Repertoires

Repertoire	Tenants	Exemplary Text
American Dream and Neoliberalism	Individualism Hard-work Self-reliance Entrepreneurship Socio-economic success Success as virtuous Meritocracy Equality of opportunity	Block and Somers 2016; Boltanski and Chiapello 2018; Cech 2021; Evans and Sewell 2013; Lamont 2019; Mijs 2019
Therapeutic Culture	Self-care Positive thinking Personal balance Self-actualization Maximize well-being Authenticity Passion Essentialized inner self	Brekhus 2020; Cabanas and Illouz 2019; Illouz 2008; Nolan, Jr. 1998
Ordinary Cosmopolitanisms	Inclusion Equality Recognition Moral commitment to universalism Shared humanity	Calhoun 2008; Lamont and Aksartova 2002; Lamont, Morning, and Mooney 2002; Nussbaum 2019; Skrbis and Woodward 2007
Gen Z Cohort Narrative	Change-makers Progressive activist Embrace social justice, authenticity and social justice Politically engaged Tech natives	Filipovic 2020; Jackson and Foucault Welles 2016; Mannheim 1952; Milkman 2017; Rasmussen 2018; Small 2002

Figure 1: Constructing Plausible Futures

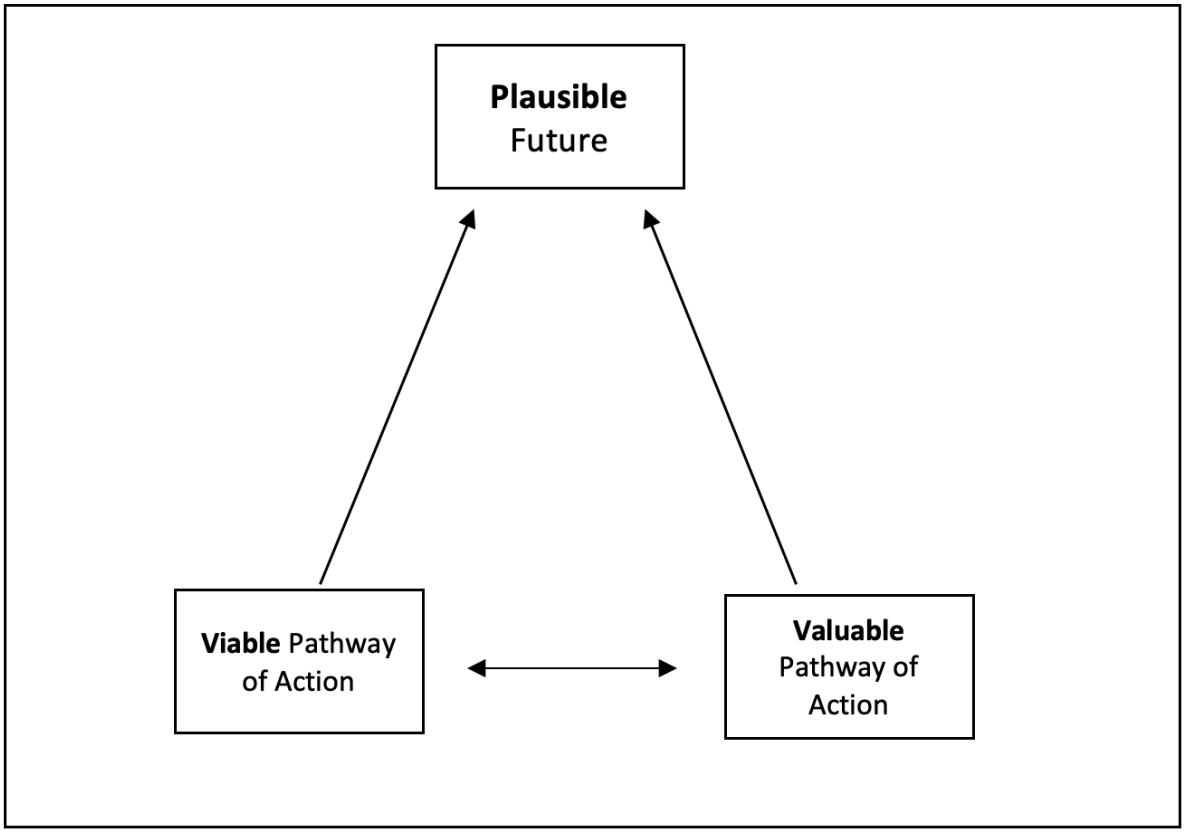

Figure 2: Embraced, Rejected and Combined Cultural Elements

	AMERICAN DREAM AND NEOLIBERALISM	THERAPEUTIC CULTURE	ORDINARY COSMOPOLITANISMS	GEN Z COHORT NARRATIVE
EMBRACED ELEMENTS	Value hard work & perseverance Individual action associated with progress Demonstration of personal initiative as moral virtue	Prioritize balance of relationships and qualities Finding your passion	Interconnection of all human beings Everyone is valuable, unique and has potential to contribute Intrinsic goodness and morality ground human universality	Activism as a worthy pursuit Value of diversity & inclusion Goal of social justice and recognition
REJECTED ELEMENTS	Belief in the accessibility of social mobility Socioeconomic success Competition American dream as universal goal	Exclusive focus on the individual over the collective Pressure to perform "your best self" Unrealistic optimism	Equality as unrealistic and insufficient without radical change Dissatisfaction with mainstream politics that contribute to polarization and stagnation	Skepticism about the power of their generation Disempowered due to disconnect between values and older generations and institutions Peer pressure and performativity on social media
COMBINED ELEMENTS	Diverse American dreams Career Goals with a Social Impact Political Objectives Grounded in Authentic Interpersonal Relations and Empathy			

Supplement: Sample Description

TABLE 1: Northeast and Midwest college students[a] aged 18-23 by gender, race[b], and type of higher education institution attended[c]

	NORTHEAST	**MIDWEST**	**Total**
Gender and Race			
Male white	9	7	16
Female white	11	7	18
Subtotal white	20 (39%)	14 (48%)	34
Male POC	8	7	15
Female POC	23	8	31
Subtotal POC	31 (61%)[b]	15 (52%)[b]	46
Total	51 (63%)	29 (36%)	80
Type of Education Institution			
Ivy-League	9	0	9 (11%)
Private Research	7	3	10 (13%)
Public Research	25	9	34 (43%)
Liberal Arts College	10	14	24 (30%)
Community College	0	3	3 (4%)
Total	51	29	80

a) Classified based on their region of origin (Northeast residents come primarily from Massachusetts and New York; Midwest residents come primarily from Illinois and Indiana)

b) POC stands for "person of color." For the Northeast, this includes 15 East/South Asians, 11 African Americans and 5 Latinx (with 4 self-identified as biracial). For the Midwest, this includes 2 East/South Asians, 6 African Americans, 6 Latinx and 2 Middle Easterners (with 2 self-identified as biracial).

*** Categories: 1) Ivy (e.g., Harvard, Dartmouth, Cornell, Columbia); 2) Public research (e.g., UMass-Amherst, U of Illinois at Chicago, U of Illinois at Urbana-Champagne, University of Louisville, U of Wisconsin at Whitewater); c) Private research (e.g., Boston University, Vanderbilt, U of Rochester, Bradley, DePaul, Illinois Institute of Technology, Georgetown); 4) Liberal arts college (e.g., Kenyon, Middlebury, Union, North Park University, Elmhurst College, College of St. Scholastica, Wheaton, St. Mary's); 5) Community college (e.g., Oakton, Kankakee, Truman)

TABLE 2: Northeast and Midwest college students aged 18-23 by current family composition and parental occupations

		NORTHEAST				**MIDWEST**	
Single parent family			3 (5%)				4 (7%)
Two parent family			48 (94%)				25 (86%)
Total			51 (100%)				29 (100%)
	Parent 1	Parent 2	Total		Parent 1	Parent 2	Total
College-educated professionals, managers, and business owners	31	23	54 (54%)		14	10	24 (44%)
Semi-professionals (some college or college degree)	11	12	23 (23%)		1	6	7 (13%)
Low status white-collar workers and blue-collar workers (some college or HS degree)	6	8	14 (14%)		12	8	20 (37%)
Not working	4	4	8 (8%)		2	1	3 (6%)
Total	52	47	99		29	25	54