

Managing liminal time in the fly-in fly-out work camp

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human relations
2022, Vol. 75(4) 681–704
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DOI: 10.1177/0018726721989792
journals.sagepub.com/home/hum



Abstract

Fly-in fly-out (FIFO) work camps are built and organized to ensure that long-distance rotational workers are fed, housed, and mobilized in sync with the pressing yet unpredictable rhythms of resource extraction. Positioned thus ‘betwixt and between’ the complex relations of work and life (Johnsen and Sørensen, 2015), the work camp is a generative yet hitherto neglected example of the temporal operations of permanent liminality (Bamber et al., 2017). But what does this mean for workers? If camp does the liminal work of managing the temporal challenges of the resource-based mobility regime, how do FIFO workers experience and respond to its inevitable lived consequences? Drawing on rare qualitative fieldwork in Canada’s Athabasca Oil Sands, we explain the effects of camp time—disorientation, monotony, and entrapment—and examine the temporal tactics workers deploy to manage those effects, from embracing and disrupting internal camp routines to aligning and syncing with outside and future-oriented temporalities. We argue that workers’ tactics make them ‘competent liminars’ (Borg and Söderlund, 2015) of camp time, which is, in turn, crucial to the latter’s disciplining function within the FIFO mobility regime. Our findings invite renewed attention to the temporal mediation accomplished by liminal people and places, especially in organizational contexts aimed at institutionally harnessing social time to productive imperatives.

Keywords

FIFO, liminal time, mobility regime, permanent liminality, resource extraction, work camp

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Introduction

The line of men at the front desk snakes back toward the camp door. Dressed in coveralls, jeans, saggy socks, and hooded sweatshirts or t-shirts, they look tired. As each approaches the front desk, the woman seated behind it asks, 'Shower room?' Invariably they say yes, receive a towel and a plastic swipe card, and sign the Shower Room Sheet to ensure proper billing of their respective employers. (Camp field notes, February 2015)

The ritual described here is part of what the staff at a work camp in the 140,000 square km Athabasca Oil Sands region of northern Alberta, Canada dub 'Freaky Friday': the compressed hours when outgoing and incoming rotations of oil workers coincide. The outgoing workers—often dozens, sometimes hundreds—need to get a quick shower before they are bused to the airport or airstrip to start their long commuting journeys home after a one- or two-week (or longer) rotation at a nearby oil project. At the same time, the incoming slate of workers needs clean rooms and bathrooms when they arrive later that same afternoon to start a new rotation. This transitioning of workers between camp and the far-flung places they call home is part and parcel of the daily and weekly cycles of cleaning, dining, sleeping, and turnover of workers that occur in camp. These cycles not only intersect with, but also *mediate* a range of other temporalities: the circuits of planes and trucks shuttling workers back and forth on their rotations, the embodied social rhythms of workers and their faraway families, the scheduled flows of buses shuttling workers back and forth to work sites each day and night, the 24/7 demands and disruptions of oil projects, and the seasonal and boom-and-bust cycles of resource extraction.

This temporal web illuminates the work camp as a crucial organizational lever in the FIFO (fly-in fly-out, but also drive-in drive-out and bus-in bus-out) mobility regime, a semi-permanent and flexible system of housing, transportation, security, and scheduling logistics that systematizes the rotation of workers from distant home bases, and which has largely replaced the company town model in resource production zones globally (Barber, 2018; Storey, 2016). The FIFO regime ensures a regular flow of workers to the fixed and often remote geographical locations of resource extraction (Ellem, 2004; Manky, 2017; Phelps et al., 2015; Saxinger, 2016), and allows a 'FIFO faucet' (Peck, 2013: 250) that flexibly adjusts to variations in quantities and types of desired labor over time, e.g., across changing project needs, maintenance periods, and boom and bust. It is thus responsive to the 'distinctive temporalities' including increasing volatilities in acceleration and deceleration, that accompany the organizational demands for both adaptability and stability in resource production, including oil (Rogers, 2015). If the temporal demands of resource production inscribe particular teleologies and affects onto lived experiences and understandings of time (Ferry and Limbert, 2008: 4), the FIFO regime extends and intensifies the reach of those effects beyond the times and spaces of production into nearby work camps, transportation networks, and faraway homes (Neis et al., 2018; Straughan et al., 2020).

The outsourcing and marketization of the social reproduction of FIFO workers through the mechanism of camp is core to sustaining the FIFO regime and thus to lowering costs and managing efficiencies for resource industries (Dorow and Mandizadza,

2018; Peck, 2013; Rainnie et al., 2014). Its importance to the latter's 'shifting profitability frontier' (Hendriks, 2015: 155) is evident in the contractual, regulatory, and securitized links between camp stays and industry employment (Cake, 2016; Siqueira Cassiano, 2019) and in the direct operation of camps by some resource companies. For the most part, however, camp is a temporary entity that is not formally the workplace, and camp time is not formally paid work time.

This makes the work camp a curious kind of organization—what we dub a para-productive liminal entity. It is para-productive in that it is not formally productive work, yet is organizationally integrated in service of productive demands (as Sekine, 1997, argued with regard to transportation and storage). It is liminal, and more precisely *permanently liminal*, in that it is 'an oscillation between states, whether of necessity or choice' (Bamber et al., 2017: 1518), where work and life spheres can be ambiguous and states of transition across them are institutionalized (p. 1515). As 'Freaky Friday' illustrates, the work camp performs a liminal role in regularly (and sometimes irregularly) cycling workers between work shift and work shift, and work and home, ensuring a continuous, recurring transition into the state of 'worker.' It thus plays a distinctive role in the FIFO version of permanent liminality: to institutionally harness life beyond work to the 'times, spaces, rhythms, purposes, and values' (Weeks, 2011: 8) of resource capital.

Research on time in work-related liminal spaces is sorely lacking (Bamber et al., 2017; Söderlund and Borg, 2018). Additionally, time is almost always used descriptively—i.e., liminality is of temporary duration—rather than being treated as an aspect of liminality worthy of focused exploration and explanation. The FIFO work camp is a unique and generative case for putting forward more sophisticated analyses of liminal time. It is organized to cyclically reproduce workers in keeping with the pressing but unpredictable temporal demands of resource production, yet meeting such demands is a constant challenge precisely because the camp is a liminal place through which flow multiple and sometimes clashing rhythms emanating not only from industry and work but also from homes, bodies, and social being. This explains why camps rely on heavily routinized 'dressage rhythms' (Straughan et al., 2020) to maintain temporal order. At the same time, the complex and conflicting 'fragile synchronicities' of work and life that ensue (Neis et al., 2018; see also Collinson, 1998; Mayes, 2020; Straughan et al., 2020) cannot necessarily or always be neatly contained, and what's more, managing them produces its own temporal challenges. Liminality scholars urge us to ask what this means for workers (Söderlund and Borg, 2018).

Our research specifically examines how workers actively negotiate, adjust to, succumb to, resist, and re-imagine the temporal complexities (Beech, 2011; Bunzel, 2002; Edensor, 2010; Stasik, 2017) of a liminal organization that is neither work nor life, and yet is both work and life (Johnsen and Sørensen, 2015). We show how liminal temporality is intersubjectively accomplished (Bunzel, 2002), and with what kinds of effect on workers. If camp is to serve as a cyclical 'decompression chamber' (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2003: 5), then workers are not just subject to its dressage rhythms but are necessary actors in managing its temporal effects. They (must) learn 'liminality competence' (Borg and Söderlund, 2015) around time, becoming subjects who manage and absorb the temporal excesses of the intensive, multivalent temporalities of work and life that intersect in this unique para-productive space. And what's more, such temporal competence

is crucial to sustaining the permanent liminal role of the work camp in harnessing the daily reproduction of workers to larger productive imperatives across projects, seasons, and both short- and long-term commodity market fluctuations.

Our research draws on rare qualitative interviews and participant observations conducted in five work camps in the Athabasca Oil Sands region, where reliance on a FIFO mobility regime grew in response to exponential growth in the extraction and processing of bitumen (a sticky mix of sand, water, and oil) in the first decade-plus of the 21st century. Increasingly, the sprawling physical infrastructure of mining pits, trucking roads, pipelines, upgraders, and tailings ponds cut out of the boreal forest was joined by small aerodromes and work camps. From 2000 to 2014, the mobile labor force grew nearly ten-fold to a height of more than 50,000 rotational workers housed in more than 100 camps (Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, 2015) established anywhere from 20 to 100 or more kilometers from the nearest population center, with some clustered around a nearby airstrip. While these numbers have decreased since the downturn in oil that began in late 2014, a FIFO workforce many thousands strong remains core to the sustained operations and maintenance of established oil sands facilities (Nichols Applied Management, 2018; Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, 2018). Workers come from 100 to 5000 km away for rotational stints of one, two, or more weeks; during those rotations they are housed and fed in camp, from where they travel back and forth each day for their 10- or 12-hour shifts at nearby oil sites. As we show below, rotations, shifts, distances traveled, and other temporal durations and pressures have been reconfigured by the oil bust, with ongoing implications for camp time. The vast majority of the workers are men (Nichols Applied Management, 2018), echoing the gendered segmentation of the construction trades and the oil industry more generally. This is more than a statistic, as it points to the masculinized culture of resource extraction that pervades not only worksites but also identities and relationships across work, camp, and home (Dorow and Mandizadza, 2018; Kelly, 2020; Miller, 2004), raising important questions about gender and time.

In what follows, we situate our study of camp temporalities in extant literatures on liminality, mobility regimes, and camps, and provide a brief overview of our methods. This leads to a presentation of our findings in two core sections. The first describes the rhythms of camp and workers' lived experiences of them—disorientation, monotony, and entrapment—and the second fleshes out our main findings on the four temporal tactics by which workers navigate the effects and excesses of the 'in between' of para-productive liminal time. Camp dwellers' efforts to embrace and disrupt internal camp routines and to balance and align with outside and future-oriented temporalities variously blend and delimit the times of work and life (Stein et al., 2015), even if primarily driven by the demands of the former. Our conclusion considers how workers' self-disciplining temporal tactics absorb the intensities and disjunctures of FIFO rhythms and timelines, which not only allows them to retain employment but also contributes to sustaining the FIFO regime and meeting the normative productive obligations of resource extraction. These findings have implications for understanding other liminal sites that enfold social time into productive work time, and, at a broader level, for re-imagining permanent liminality as a site where intersecting and colliding temporal vectors are managed and mediated.

Theorizing camp time

The small but growing literature on human relations in FIFO regimes tends to favor spatial over temporal relations, with a growing emphasis on worker experiences of multi-local being and mobility (Barber, 2018; Gorman-Murray and Bissell, 2018; Jones and Southcott, 2015; Saxinger, 2016) and gendered experiences of work and family across the sites of work and home (Barber, 2016; Dorow and Mandizadza, 2018; Jean, 2019; Mayes, 2020; Saxinger, 2016). As Hughes and Silver (2020) point out, this attention to spatial mobility provides an important corrective to work–family studies’ emphasis on time. However, organizational studies, FIFO research (and mobility studies more generally—see Sheller, 2019), and scholarship on the ‘time of oil’ have largely neglected the work camp as a specific kind of organization with distinctive temporalities (see Straughan et al., 2020 for one recent exception). This absence is surprising, given the significance of the work camp to the FIFO regime and the resource industry.

There is, of course, a long-standing engagement in organizational studies with the role of time and rhythm in relations of work (Dawson, 2014; Hassard, 1999), where temporality is ‘embedded in and interrelate[d] with disciplinary power regimes’ (Costas and Grey, 2014: 914) and central to the construction of subjectivity and identity (Daskalaki and Simosi, 2018; Jack et al., 2019). Organizational scholars explore a generative range of questions, including the fluidity of resources available to working subjects across time and space (Halford and Leonard, 2006), the meaning that workers make within complex and changing temporal environments (Bailey and Madden, 2017; Cunliffe et al., 2004), and the different strategies workers use to manage multiple and conflicting rhythmic demands (Jack et al., 2019; Perrons et al., 2005). Of particular interest in the latter stream of scholarship are the multiplying scales and rhythms of paid work, unpaid work, social (family, leisure, home) life, and bodies, and the variable and sometimes indistinct temporal boundaries among them.

The concept of liminality is an under-utilized yet promising concept in the study of such work–life dynamics (Johnsen and Sørensen, 2015), especially in places of production (Sweeney, 2009: 571). Liminality ‘connotes a transitional state, usually bounded in space and time, and is therefore often described as a period of “in-betweenness”, ambiguity and uncertainty’ (Bamber et al., 2017: 1515). Its original formulation by van Gennep (1960[1909]))] mostly treats time as duration, i.e., where liminality is a temporary phase between two different states. More recently, however, organizational scholars have extended the concept to include permanent senses or sites of in-betweenness, including and especially as organizational life is increasingly marked by ‘institutional contingency’ (Bamber et al., 2017; Thomassen, 2015: 39); these approaches open the door to more nuanced theorization of liminal time.

Two recent reviews of the concept confirm a proliferation of interest in the potential explanatory power of liminality and its temporalities in studies of organizations and human relations. Söderlund and Borg (2018) call for more comparative research on liminality as process, position, or place, foregrounding the need to focus on temporality and on workers’ perceptions and responses to it. Their review builds on earlier work (Borg and Söderlund) in which they examined the competencies workers ‘develop in connection with their liminality situation’ (Borg and Söderlund, 2015: 266) but did not

explicitly theorize liminal time. The second review piece, by Bamber et al. (2017), also highlights the need for more precise treatments of time in studies of work-related liminality by distinguishing several types. Transitional liminality 'relates to an individual shifting from one state to another' (and not back again); permanent liminality, by contrast, refers 'to an oscillation between states, whether of necessity or choice' (Bamber et al., 2017: 1518), a kind of 'revolving doorway, rather than a threshold' (p. 1520, citing Rottenburg, 2000). The FIFO work camp is a version of the latter, in that it regularly and repeatedly manages the movement of workers in and out of the state of paid employee, and what's more, creates for workers 'a more permanent sense of being neither-X-nor-Y or both-X-and-Y' (Ybema et al., 2011: 28).

This literature still tends to treat time as a descriptive characteristic of liminality—i.e., as duration—rather than as an aspect of liminality to explore. As neither work nor life, and yet both work and life (Johnsen and Sørensen, 2015), the FIFO work camp helps to animate this underdeveloped understanding of time. It demands that we view liminality as a busy temporal zone where multiple commingling temporalities not only meet up (Stein et al., 2015) but are also managed and mediated, both individually and collectively, in service of the temporal imperatives of production. Sturdy et al. (2006) have perhaps come closest to thus analyzing the internal temporal dynamics of liminality; they conceptualize business meals as betwixt work and leisure time and public and private space, where regular routines and rules of work are 'suspended' but replaced and augmented with other 'in-between' routines and rules (Sturdy et al., 2006: 931) that nonetheless feed formal organizational needs.

Though it does not usually deploy the concept of liminality, a small extant body of research on formal work camps and dormitories does go some way toward theorizing their institutionalized liminal role. Sweeney (2009: 575), for example, conceives of the tree-planting camp as 'marked by homelife and worklife, yet dominated by neither.' Hendriks' (2015) study of logging camps in the Congo notes the affective making of home and self at the dialectic interface of mobility and immobility. Other studies, and especially those focused on less ephemeral facilities, emphasize their disciplinary function in harnessing social reproduction to productive imperatives, i.e., what we call para-productive. Ngai and Smith find that the spatial proximity of the dormitory to the factory contributes to employers' ability to lengthen working hours and readily access workers for flexible just-in-time production in southern China, centering 'daily reproduction, as how workers are attached to the company through a dormitory labor regime' as an extension of the production process (Ngai and Smith, 2007: 42). Similarly, Kathiravelu argues that labor camps housing low-wage migrants in Dubai strip workers of control over daily movements and rhythms, creating a 'machine life' with 'no time or self outside of those configurations' (Kathiravelu, 2016: 105–106).

FIFO scholars are beginning to train their sights on how workers and their spouses are interpolated into FIFO times and rhythms, including in deeply gendered ways (Mayes, 2020). Straughan et al. (2020) offer a rare analysis of the 'dressage' rhythms of the resource sector as these socialize (and exhaust) the bodies of workers and their families (see Collinson, 1998 for an earlier treatment of these themes in offshore oil rigs). However, this literature focuses on the temporal and kinetic spillover from work to

home, rather than on the ‘in-between’ organizational life of the work camp itself, its multiple temporalities, and how workers navigate those effects.

We are interested in how para-productive liminal organizations such as work camps ‘organize, and are subjected to, temporal demands and routines which can create multiple timescales and different dimensions for employees’ (Halford and Leonard, 2006: 661) *and* in how the latter engage with those temporal demands (Beech, 2011; Bunzel, 2002; Edensor, 2010; Stasik, 2017). Paolucci asserted more than twenty years ago that ‘in the sphere of production as in other areas of social life, what counts more and more is the agility to master fluid and flexible temporal regimes and to handle their relationships with each other’ (Paolucci, 1996: 147). As described below, workers experience camp as somewhere between a hotel and a prison—a kind of ‘zone of indistinction’ (Ramadan, 2013) that is ‘under others’ control . . . and something to *be* endured’ (Mortland, 1987: 396; see also Minca, 2015). At the same time, they are still very much actors engaged in the intersubjective production of time; they develop competencies for surviving, managing, and absorbing the temporal excesses of this liminal zone, blending and delimiting times of work and leisure, camp and home (Borg and Söderlund, 2015; Stein et al., 2015).

Not all experiences of, or responses to, liminality are constituted equally, yet organizational studies have paid only limited attention to how ‘gender, race, sexuality and embodiment all combine to constrain or empower our every experience and perception’ of liminal places (Pritchard and Morgan, 2006: 765), let alone times. We can expect the oil sands and similar resource-based industries to exhibit a masculinized work culture, where masculine identities are performed and reproduced (Dorow and Mandizadza, 2018; Kelly, 2020; Miller, 2004; Sweeney (2009) and where traditional gendered divisions of labor across work and home are reinforced (Barber, 2016; Straughan et al., 2020). It is less obvious how this might play out in camp among men navigating ‘betwixt and between’ work and not-work in a segmented and masculinized culture. Our work thus has potential to shed light on the ways that gendered practices and subjectivities form, and are formed by, the liminal ambiguities and interstices (Sturdy et al., 2006) of multivalent work–life temporalities, especially in contexts over-determined by productive demands.

Our fieldwork

This morning I woke up again at 4:23 am, almost exactly the same time I woke up yesterday. And this morning, like the morning before, I woke up one minute before the alarm rang. That doesn’t happen at home. One wonders at the speed with which camp seems to create an internal regulatory clock. (Author field notes, February 2016)

This research was part of a major interdisciplinary project in Canada that sought to both identify and conceptualize the impacts of employment-related geographical mobility on workers, families, workplaces, and communities. Along with a team of research assistants, we conducted rare qualitative fieldwork in five different oil sands work camps between late 2014 and early 2016. The logistics of this research entailed communicating back and forth with camp operators and camp managers to gain access and plan our

stays, juggling research across multiple camps and types of workers, and coordinating travel from two different provinces in Canada. We were pleasantly surprised by the openness of individual camp managers to the research. Though they did not have a direct hand in recruiting oil worker participation, managers allowed us to put up posters and flyers, and in some cases agreed to participate in interviews themselves. Reception to our research might have been quite different in 'closed' camps operated by oil companies for the direct employees on a specific project (PetroLMI/Enform, 2015), had we even gotten access (and today, just a few years later, we might not get any access at all given increased skittishness about outside scrutiny). As it was, all of the camps we visited were 'open,' i.e., they were operated somewhat like a hotel by third parties, and thus housed a mix of contractors and direct employees, and both short- and long-term oil workers.

Each of our visits to camp lasted several days, during which time we immersed ourselves in camp life and conducted semi-structured interviews with construction, operations, and maintenance workers on the labor-, capital-, and time-intensive mining side of the oil sands industry. Interviews came about through responses to flyers or posters, or through informal introductions and communications with individuals that we encountered in camp common spaces. Given the tight timelines in camp, we focused our recruitment on periods of the day when workers would likely be available in places such as the entryway, dining hall, or recreation areas. As a result, some interviews happened informally on the spot, and others were scheduled for later. Informal interviews often occurred in sit-downs with individual or small groups of oil workers during 5:30 am breakfast or 6:30 pm dinner periods, and were (with permission) later written up as field notes. Scheduled interviews were more likely to be recorded. In addition, a handful of participants gave phone interviews from home or while making their long commute to or from the oil sands. In total we gathered and analyzed interviews with some 60 oil workers.

We deliberately tried to capture a wide sample of workers by approaching people of different ages, ethnicities and genders, and by recruiting during changeover periods for both day- and night-shift workers; under the constraints of FIFO work and camp living, however, we were pleased to include whoever agreed to participate. In the end, the demographics of our participants reflected those reported in the larger population of oil sands work camps (Nichols Applied Management, 2018; Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, 2015). Most were white male Canadian citizens from Alberta and five other provinces across the country, but about 10% were recent immigrants or temporary foreign workers and about 5% were female. They ranged in age from their mid-20s to their mid-60s, but the majority were in their 40s and 50s. Though we did not consistently track participants' family situations, more than half indicated they had a spouse, ex-spouse, and/or children. We also individually kept field notes about camp spaces and routines, workers' interactions and activities, and our own experience of staying in camp. Our combined field notes reached some 225 pages. The project also included interviews with camp staff, which contributed to understanding camp time's mediation of extractive temporalities and oil workers' rhythms; we selectively draw on some of these interviews to enhance our analyses.

Though we did not initially set out to focus on time, our attunement to the experience and social organization of mobile work (see also Büscher et al., 2010) kept leading us

back to time's almost palpable situational pull. 'In order to grasp a rhythm,' as Lefebvre (2004: 88) puts it, 'one must have been grasped by it.' Indeed, our very practice of field-work in camp was deeply shaped by camp time, as we adjusted research activities to workers' realities of day and night shifts, dining and laundry schedules, differing time zones, long working hours, point in rotation, and commuting transitions, and as we personally experienced temporal synchronicities and clashes (Reinecke and Ansari, 2016). At a broader temporal scale, we had to re-calibrate our questions partway through the research project as the oil sands economy went from boom to bust in late 2014 and early 2015; we learned, for example, to pay particular attention to new and lasting changes in rotation schedules and travel coverage, both of which had impacts on experiences of time.

With ethics approval from our respective institutions, and with all participants assigned pseudonyms, we separately transcribed and conducted initial thematic coding of the data. We then pooled our interviews and field notes and together analyzed the data around temporal themes such as rhythm, routine, rotation, and disruption. Through this process we identified the key categories of temporal effects and temporal tactics and grappled with their inescapable relationship to the multiple temporalities of the resource-based FIFO regime that course through camp.

Camp time

The work camp is a liminal organization with its own internal routines, rhythms, and rules. These are in the first instance responsive to the temporalities of oil—'dictated by the client,' as one camp housekeeper put it—and secondarily to the rhythms of workers' lives. As suggested above, this makes for a complex liminal temporal zone: simple routines embedded in multiple temporal scales, cyclical repetition alongside disruptive or uncertain events, and reproductive bodily rhythms tightly tethered to, yet technically outside of, work schedules and timelines. Camp time channels these toward the cyclical return of the worker to the next day's shift, and toward ensuring transitions between work and elsewhere, such as at the end of a rotation (see Freaky Friday), with the unexpected opening or closure of a project, when a worker is laid off for an infraction, or as time in camp gets extended by new downturn-imposed rotational schedules. Oil workers sign up for these conditions as part of their employment contract in the oil sands, thus quasi-voluntarily entering a life world whose temporality is only marginally on their own terms. In this section we describe these unfolding daily camp rhythms and the lived temporal effects they have on workers in order to set the stage for our subsequent analysis of workers' temporal tactics for managing their effects.

Daily rhythms in camp

The spatial features of camp as liminal place are concomitant to the conditions and experiences of time, and so we begin with a quick physical sketch. Work camps in the oil sands region are constructed of pre-fabricated modules articulated to each other to create long hallways of individual (or, less often, shared) rooms and larger common areas. Quite commonly, the entryway funnels workers into the front 'boot room' and reception

area, behind which are the camp offices and security room; from there, hallways lead to the dining hall and other common spaces, beyond which are the long hallways of individual rooms, sometimes in modules stacked two or three stories high. Larger camps might include a coffee shop, a theater, hockey and basketball gyms, or even a meditation room or a bar (although camps are increasingly dry), whereas smaller ones might only have a trailer with a few pieces of recreational or workout equipment. Workers stay in small dorm-like rooms featuring beds, desks, and televisions. Walls are thin. Bathroom styles range from individual to Jack-and-Jill (shared between two rooms) to ‘gang’ wash-rooms down the hall.

The camp awakes around 3 am while staff workers prepare everything for the 5–6 am rush, when day-shift oil workers surge into the dining room to eat a quick breakfast, pick up a brown-bag lunch, and roll through the entryway to grab boots and protective equipment. Shuttle buses and pickup trucks then depart to nearby oil projects. As the last workers leave, a significant deceleration is noticeable while staff clean and get ready for the smaller influx of night-shift workers who will wake up later in the afternoon. There begin several quieter daytime hours between day and night shift—a period that only oil workers who are ill or staying in camp between rotations will experience. The cycle picks up again later as night-shift oil workers ‘start their day,’ and as exhausted and hungry workers file into the dining room to eat dinner after their 10–12-hour day shifts. Most will return to their rooms within an hour to shower, squeeze in a phone call, or watch TV.

Camp dwellers’ routines of ‘eat, shit, work, sleep,’ as many of them put it, flow through camp spaces (mostly) like clockwork, carried by a ‘self-contained institutional momentum’ (Brown, 1998: 101). Barry, a construction manager, captured this in his description of the series of line-ups that propel him through, and in and out of, the daily cycle of camp:

What I’ve learned basically is that you, you leave your room at a certain time, according to your [work] schedule, to stand in a line-up to eat your meal, to stand in another line-up to get your next meal for lunch, to leave . . . And then by the buses you stand in another line-up to get on the bus in the morning, [and after arriving at the worksite] go get in another line-up to get your coveralls, and once you get those you get in another line-up to be able to go get your gloves and your wristlets and your headbands and any other, um, personal protective equipment. So you go from one line-up to another to another.

These routinized ‘dressage’ rhythms of camp (Straughan et al., 2020) co-mingle with temporal disruptions and uncertainties. The rotational movements, connections, and disruptions between work and home—what Saxinger (2016) calls the trio of home–journey–on duty—constitute one such ambiguity, but so does the presence of ‘outside’ social and family time, which does not stop at the camp doors. There are also exigencies on a daily basis in camp: changing bus schedules, late shipments of food, weather (is the ground frozen, or too muddy for trucks to run?), and hungry bears in the surrounding boreal forest require that the camp staff be daily prepared for minimizing disruptions to the ongoing labor needs of industry. The regimented but adaptable schedule of camp life serves these demands by providing, and providing for, a workforce ready to be intensively and flexibly engaged in nearby productive work. It is no wonder, then, that former military personnel are recruited as work camp managers, and that surveillance and

security are integral to camp infrastructure; contractual regulations about camp behavior, built-in surveillance technologies, regular security personnel, and the informal scrutiny of staff (cf. Pritchard and Morgan, 2006) all contribute to enfolding *both* routine and disruption into the temporal regimentation of camp (Siqueira Cassiano, 2019), and thereby into the service of accumulation in the oil sands.

Importantly, this liminal activity is crisscrossed and indeed constituted by inequalities and differences of gender, race, and class. Workers' drilling, digging, testing, repairing, and hauling (done mostly by white men) are made possible by dozens of camp staff (done mostly by women, and men of color) cleaning and cooking in this continuous but adaptive 24/7 cycle (Dorow and Mandizadza, 2018). Taking up FIFO work in the first place is always already more difficult for women, especially if they have children. And when women do enter the oil workforce, manifestations of the masculinist culture of the oil sands in camp life make navigating its line-ups and spaces more fraught (Kelly, 2020).

As is apparent in the findings discussed below, daily on-the-ground practices of synchronizing work time and non-work time are made all the more complex by the broader web of temporalities intersecting in camp. One of these is the volatile rhythms and uncertain time horizons of accumulation in the resource economy, with boom-and-bust as a powerful force. During our 2015 and 2016 camp visits, which came during a sustained downturn in oil prices, there was a new testiness in the air as budget cuts meant everything from fewer camp amenities to impending job losses. A camp we visited in early 2015 was closed by the time of our next trip one year later. In another camp, an oil worker described the scene when construction of a new project was abruptly cancelled: workers were woken up early in the morning and told they had an hour to pack their bags, with extra security personnel lined up in camp hallways to ensure a prompt and peaceable exit. By 2016, as the downturn 'normalized,' so did new camp routines such as reduced cleaning schedules, fewer dining hours and choices, or more workers hanging around camp (rather than going home) during shorter off-rotation days.

Keeping in mind this context—a cyclical liminality situated between work shifts, work, and home, and the ups and downs of industrial rhythms—we turn first to the effects of camp time on workers, then to the tactics that workers use to navigate the effects of this para-productive web of liminal time.

Temporal effects on workers

Our research shows three main effects of the above on workers' temporal experiences of camp: disorientation, monotony, and entrapment. These effects reflect the 'in-between-ness' of camp time as workers are cycled through daily and rotational routines, and as they navigate multiple bodily, work, and home rhythms.

Monotony

Monotony and boredom are a key aspect of the experience of camp time. Long days of paid labor combined with the regularized (and sometimes relentless) temporal and physical demands of FIFO and camp routines can leave the effect of an entrenched monotony. John, a pipefitter who had worked in the region for almost ten years, put it this way when

asked to describe his routine in camp: 'Eat, work, shit, sleep . . . You lose track of time in here.' As time stands still, a sense of becoming across a temporal trajectory of past, present, and future can be elusive (Brown, 1998; Costas and Grey, 2014). The very fact that workers described laundry day or steak night—or an interview!—as an 'event' speaks to the monotonous repeated routine of camp. We found that oil workers would often agree to an interview as a welcome change to the routine, even as interviews were often foreshortened by the realities of the daily time squeeze.

For those working with a regular crew on an oil project, monotony of routine can leave a heavy sameness of people across work and life. Ronnie, a scaffolder, found that 'You get up, you go eat. Eat with the same person that you work with all day, then you get home [to camp] and you see that person out in the smoke pit.' One group of workers lamented as we talked over breakfast that, even with a variety of choices, the food felt the same each day. For people who enjoyed their work, camp represented the boring bridge to the fulfilling challenge of the next day. For those less enamored of their jobs, work and camp time tended to merge into one endless monotonous cycle. Either way, this was a test of endurance.

Disorientation

Disorientation is a temporal cousin to monotony. 'At first it's very hard for everybody—I mean, depending where you're going to, to what camp, depending on how big the camp is, because all camps are different sizes.' This is how a head camp attendant who had worked in several work camps around Alberta summarized the confusion and bewilderment she observed among oil workers as they entered a camp the first couple of times. Bob, a pipefitter working on contract, described how this feeling extended across camp and worksite: 'It's like walking into a room full of 500 people you don't know. It's never the same. And it's never the same pipe.' Such disorientation might be experienced anew, if not as deeply, with each work rotation: workers must adjust not only to the return from a week or two back home (or even months, if working maintenance shutdowns), but also to the particular package of camp routines and rhythms, the spatial configuration of facilities, and the schedules and demands of a particular work project. Even tradespeople working on the same project and staying in camp with the same crew over a long period sometimes described a jarring forgetfulness, including of work mates' names, between rotations.

The depth and quality of disorientation depend in part on the type and duration of shift schedule and rotation, and on the price of oil. It was not uncommon for night-shift workers to say a passing 'good night' and then catch and correct themselves as they headed back to their rooms at 6 am. And workers often felt increasingly out of sorts the deeper into a rotation they were. Deke, a millwright from British Columbia, described what happened by Day 14: 'I make 15 trips back to my room in the morning just to get everything. Uh, swipe card, uh, coffee mug, uh . . . you just start, you know you start forgetting everything.' One maintenance supervisor explained that during intensive six- to eight-week maintenance periods at large production sites (shutdowns), by week four he worried about the effects of the 'brain scramble' on workers' judgement both on site and in camp. Industry downturns, and the accompanying project cancellations, shifting work and travel schedules, and new routines on site and in camp, seemed to instill a sustained sense of disorientation.

Entrapment

Workers described camp in different ways, sometimes likening it to a hotel or a dormitory; but the most telling comparison was to prison. This analogy has clear spatial components—the size of the rooms, the remoteness and isolation of camp, and the limited opportunities to leave—but these are inseparable from the ‘enclosure’ of oil-driven routinized rhythms. Brad, a trucker, described how the duration of his work shift affected his camp schedule: as soon as he got off work, exhausted after a twelve-hour day, he would retreat into his camp room until the next morning. This kind of retreat was commonly reported. Dining halls might be open 24/7, but in practice are mostly unoccupied outside of the mealtimes slotted in right before or after a shift. The same can be true of the gym, as construction worker Kevin explained: ‘Seven [days on] and seven [days off] is a long shift on your feet, okay? So, do you think that person is going to come back [to camp] and go to the gym? No.’ To bring the point home, Kevin indicated that he had overheard a manager describe them as a ‘captive workforce.’

The sense of ‘stuckedness’ (Missbach, 2015) includes a lack of control over routines and schedules. Workers described the frustration of missed opportunities: not reaching the line for laundry in time to fit a load in before bed, not being able to eat when hungry, or not enjoying a preferred dinner option or a chance to call home because the shuttle from the worksite was delayed. Budget cuts in the wake of the 2015 oil downturn deepened not only the sense of temporal disorientation, but also the sense of stuckedness in camp. As one worker puts it, ‘Taking away the [daily shuttle into town], that’s putting a lot of mental stress on people in camp. Everybody feels like they’re trapped again.’ Changes in rotations and schedules over which workers already felt they had little control exacerbated this effect. Ricky’s employer, like many others, had changed to a ten and four schedule (ten days on, four days off) without providing travel coverage. This meant he was staying in camp for months at a time, unsure of when he could afford to go home to Newfoundland and still count on having a job to return to.

Navigating camp time: workers’ temporal tactics

As the work camp organizationally ‘decompresses’ the multiple work–life temporalities of the FIFO regime in accordance with the needs of industry, temporal excesses and pressures ensue. Ricky described this as going ‘shack wacky.’ The daily grind of monotony, disorientation, and entrapment, as well as the deeper unnerving and depressing effects on well-being they incur, require temporal ‘liminality work’ (Stein et al., 2015) on the part of camp dwellers. As we show here, workers deploy four key temporal tactics: routinizing, disrupting (re-routinizing), syncing (claiming the present), and future orienting. These tactics work both with and against the ‘pressuring’ temporal organization (Straughan et al., 2020) of regimentation and disruption in camp. They are also not mutually exclusive, being variably used by the same or different workers across time and space. As a group, they fall mostly within what Rubin (2017) calls a continuum of secondary adjustments, i.e., they involve frictions and micro-resistances that are enabled and shaped by the particular ways that temporal routines structure camp.

Routinizing

One regular strategy for managing camp time is to fully embrace its rhythms by consciously losing oneself in monotony and regimentation. Maria, a camp customer service worker with years of experience observing and managing problems that arise for oil workers in camp, referred to this strategy as *routinizing*:

You do have to routinize yourself. If you're at work, you're at work. If you're in camp, you're in camp. Your life outside of that is not existing. You simply go to work, you get up, you have your breakfast, you go to work, you do your thing, you come out of work . . .

Routinizing is about consistently sticking to routines across work and camp, and then also within camp, with the goal of delimiting the temporal crossover of work and not-work.

Oil workers who self-described as 'a routine-kinda-guy' seemed ready made for the military-like precision of camp time, but for many others *routinizing* was not, in fact, routine; it took deliberate and often painstaking daily effort and personal discipline. Sometimes this meant consciously avoiding distractions or creating new habits, such as marking each day on a calendar or counting down the days (see also Wahidin, 2006, on prison time). These conscious efforts to embody the regular rhythm of routine seemed especially necessary at the beginning of a new rotation or project, as workers navigated the disruptive threshold between home and work. Harold put it this way: 'Within a week to two weeks you get back into routine. But it takes a while to do that . . . and I've been doing it for five years.' Stuart, a young safety officer, described his habit of walking the layout of any new camp very soon after arrival in order to get a handle on its particular spatio-temporal rhythmic organization: bus stop, dining room, laundry, rec room. 'You have to have a structure so you can manage the structure,' said Stuart.

What does *routinizing* accomplish? At one level, it keeps bodily and mental rhythms intact amidst demanding work. Bryson, an equipment operator from British Columbia, commented,

If you screw your routine up, then I always find that you're screwed up for two or three days . . . You only need six hours' sleep, and then if you screw your routine up, I feel like you could get ten hours of sleep and you're just bag tired.

More generally, 'programming yourself' to keep a regular routine is crucial to staying out of trouble, keeping your head straight, and ultimately keeping your job. Being busy helps. A number of workers told us they strived to be busy within their routine so as not to dwell on the depressing distance from family and social life, or, in some instances, so as not to let outside life distract them from 'work mode.' At the same time, however, motivation for keeping one's head in the routine depended on regular reminders of why one was here: 'to make a life' for family and self, now and into the future.

Illuminated here is the complex liminal work of temporal blending and delimitation. Workers' self-imposed *routinization* contributes to camp's liminal role in reproducing them as workers, even as it can also contribute to making tentative connections to other places and times. Managing a demanding and repetitive temporal regime becomes a self-disciplining project of micro-resistance to what that regime might otherwise do to you,

and by extension, to your life with and for others. Gendered relations and identities underpin such routinizing, from the masculinized notions of ‘being provider’ that motivate it to the feminized care work done by camp staff like Maria who enable it (Dorow and Mandizadza, 2018). The downturn only upped the ante on a competitive, masculinized imperative to manage routine, as keeping your job required demonstrating to bosses that you were available, focused, and at the top of your game.

Disrupting

A second temporal tactic rebels against regimentation, and thus lives in some tension alongside the imperative to routinize. Two mechanics interviewed together, Adam and Zeke, laughed about the two respective models of adaptive endurance they seemed to represent: hermit and live-and-let-live. Adam said he survived camp through consistently keeping his head down in the routine, while for Zeke, ‘Every day is a new party!’ Yet in practice, these two tactics intermingle. Disrupting camp rhythms and routines is sometimes welcome even among creatures of habit, if only in simple ways. Kevin, a self-described routinizer with years of FIFO experience, explained:

So, when you go into camp, you really have to play tricks with your brain. Don’t keep everything the same . . . Like, I might even not eat breakfast, I might just pack a lunch and go on over [to the work site]. And then when I come back [to camp] I’ll take a different approach altogether, in how to get to supper in the evening. Even though it might seem insignificant, you’ve got to do it. It’s a learning process.

Learning to make even minor changes to the ways in which routine links work and not-work is key, Kevin suggested, to decompressing amidst the monotonous imperatives of camp’s repeated daily cycle. Put another way, disruption is one kind of temporal structure for ‘managing the structure.’

Not all acts of disruption are minor, of course. Transgressions such as drinking, drugs, fights, and other overt actions that can readily get people expelled from camp are common enough, and often involve masculinized performances (Kelly, 2020; Sweeney, 2006). Julia, a veteran camp bartender who vowed she had ‘seen it all,’ was particularly worried about young male oil workers trying to show off or let off steam through heavy drinking contests, and about young female oil workers who became more vulnerable to harassment as a night of drinking wore on. Julia saw herself in a position to help slow down extreme reactions to the spatio-temporal demands of FIFO work, especially as the bar is an escape from the oppressive domination of routine and monotony experienced by workers—a kind of transgressive sub-zone of camp that allows for what Hendriks (2015: 167) dubs ‘heterochronic escapes that artificially [speed] up boring camp time.’ ‘I’m the zookeeper, and I take that very seriously,’ said Julia.

Escaping camp for a few hours after shift is another important and deliberate way to disrupt its otherworldly temporal hold, even if it means shortening precious nights of sleep. As one worker put it:

Even though it might take you an hour to get [into the town of Fort McMurray], an hour to get back, it’s just the fact of getting off site . . . Seeing a little bit of the real world, for maybe even

half an hour, you know? That's what I call it out there, real world. This [camp] isn't a real world!

To travel out of camp space is thus also to travel out of camp time, to encounter a set of new rhythms that disrupt the lulling effect of work-driven camp rhythms. But stretching the 'not-work' side of camp's in-between temporality in this manner also poses risks. Ricky explained that the temporary idleness, combined with the sight of intact families eating together, could make his loneliness unbearable, so he tried to carefully time-manage his occasional trips to the coffee shop in the town of Fort McMurray. Kelly (2020) finds that women workers face additional kinds of personal and professional risks when going into town with 'the guys.' Again, workers must manage a temporal contradiction—a trade-off between the relief of temporary rhythmic disruption and longer-term self-preservation of their status as worker. And at a broader level, the fluctuating 'time of oil' impacts the opportunity to escape from camp time. As the downturn in oil prices took hold in 2015 and 2016, and oil companies re-negotiated agreements with camp providers, workers lamented not only the cancellation of the shuttles into town but also the disappearance of bars as camps went dry.

Syncing with 'outside' time

If routinizing synchronizes with camp rhythms, and disrupting desynchronizes with them (if only temporarily), a third kind of temporal tactic labors to synchronize with external rhythms, thus cautiously suturing the spatio-temporal fragmentation of work and life engendered by the FIFO regime (Dorow and Mandizadza, 2018; Mayes, 2020; Neis et al., 2018). Calling, texting, or video chatting with people at home is one such mundane but important practice. Whether workers did so like clockwork at the same time each day, or grabbed whatever small opportunities presented themselves, these points of connection provided some semblance of keeping up with events and decisions on the home front in real time. As Alfred put it, 'I would text and talk to my wife four or five times a day. We talked for half an hour in the morning, and then at lunch time, and then for one hour at night as well.' Workers with spouses often saw laboring toward temporal synchronicity as the basic minimum needed to keep relationships intact across the parallel universes of work and home rhythms.

Connecting to 'outside time' means crossing a kind of mini-threshold between the tightly-in-sync 'dressage' rhythms of work and camp and the out-of-sync rhythms of family (Neis et al., 2018; Straughan et al., 2020), and thus takes concerted and deliberate effort. When asked outside the camp dining hall at 7 pm if he would be interested in a short interview, one worker responded, 'I would like to, but I have to eat, and then I must call my girlfriend.' Even a simple phone call often took extra effort, as workers managed tight schedules across several time zones, called despite the depression that could follow, or comforted or fought with a stressed partner or child or parent. This was sometimes bound up with provider–father identities; male workers often expressed frustration at the inability to 'take care of things at home,' such as a broken washing machine or a disgruntled teenager, as they arose in real time. As the downturn trapped some people in camp for longer periods of time, sustaining the effort to connect to family rhythms became both all the more important and all the more difficult.

Such efforts to connect to outside social time are often intensified as workers with families anticipate and adjust to traveling and transitioning between the time spaces of on- and off- rotation. While extant research foregrounds the gendered character of relations between work and home and the cyclical spillover of FIFO time into ‘out of kilter’ household rhythms (Mayes, 2020; see also Straughan et al., 2020), this spillover is already present in camp, where male workers employ tactics to anticipate and manage the transition to rhythms away from and outside of work-and-camp. Some workers actively shortened these transitions to make the most of their time back home. Tom, for example, explained in detail how he parked his truck near the camp gate and stashed his bag in the closest building so that he could beat the rush of exiting buses and vehicles at the end of his fourteen-day rotation period, even if he was transitioning from a night shift to an all-day drive. Almost equally prevalent were temporal tactics aimed at mental code switching in anticipation of the return to rhythmic demands back home, where many averred feeling like ‘a stranger.’ Some drank in the airport bar during a commuting stopover to de-program themselves from a week or more of work-intensive compressed timelines. Others put on their headphones, listened to music, and began to imagine the days ahead of capitulating to the rhythms of family and friends, ‘daddy time,’ or providing care relief for tired spouses or siblings (see also Dorow and Mandizadza, 2018; Jean, 2019).

Orienting to the future

A fourth temporal tactic positions camp time and its inextricable relations to the time of oil within a goal-oriented trajectory, where the future helps to make sense of the present (Costas and Grey, 2014; Reinecke and Ansari, 2016). We might think of this as a liminal fantasy of converting the current temporal losses and pressures of the FIFO regime into future social and personal temporal gains. This was also for some a fulfillment of a male worker-provider identity. Future-oriented goals such as longer-term financial security, sending children to university, early retirement, starting one’s own business, and the freedom to travel or live somewhere desirable promised payoffs for the immediate lived sacrifices of family time, community time, and personal time, including their embodied impacts on well-being (see also Ajslev et al., 2017).

This orientation often included fantasies of a volitional future exit after which time would become one’s own again and where, as Barry suggested, work and life times would ‘accord’:

To put it in a nutshell, it’s the means to an end. I knew what I was getting into when I left New Brunswick. And then I knew that the ultimate goal was to get a high paying job [back home] working a regular schedule with a regular income and then live your life accordingly.

Workers sometimes actively spent liminal time imagining these plans for transition. We encountered a married couple in camp—one an oil worker, the other a camp staffer—who used their precious coinciding one or two hours of off-time each day to jointly plan when and how to start their own business. Another worker described ‘killing time’ during his long commute by imagining the individual welding business that would free him from the interminable and stultifying combination of camp, commute, and employer-driven temporalities.

Such exits, especially on one's own terms, are more easily imagined than accomplished. Workers repeatedly averred that 'this [FIFO life] isn't for everyone' because of the conscious and sometimes monumental effort required to plan against the gravitational weight of repetition and uncertainty. Many described a constant fight against instant gratification—the temptation to immediately convert large, hard-earned paychecks into a new truck or boat, or into partying, drugs and alcohol. This readily became a temporal trap: a vicious repeated cycle of work hard, play hard and thus of debt. Julia, the camp bartender, was continually dismayed that men who pocketed \$2000 a week could not seem to hang onto their money: 'I see it every single night! They say "Wait, before you open that beer, see if my card will go through."' "

The boom-and-bust availability of work paradoxically deepens both the immediacy and the open-endedness of the narrative of future exit. During boom times, workers experience the 'golden handcuffs' of good schedules, high overtime pay, and employer-paid transportation costs. With downturns, as many workers expressed to us after 2015, 'You can be laid off tomorrow' or 'You're just waiting for the axe to fall.' Boom-and-bust requires doubling down on liminal efforts to manage the multiplicity of the temporal 'in between' of camp and the FIFO regime. The imagined exit becomes a solace amid the isolation and monotony of the camp or the commute, yet becomes all the more elusive—out of one's control—amidst the temporal conditioning of oil.

Discussion and conclusion

The work camp is a crucial lever in mediating and ordering the organizational challenges of work and life engendered by the FIFO regime. More specifically, camp is a para-productive entity whose permanent liminality helps to meet the productive imperatives of the oil industry by ensuring a return to the state of 'worker' for each daily/nightly cycle of shifts and for each rotational cycle, and by doing so in accordance with the rhythmic demands of resource extraction. Given the complex temporal convergences, clashes, and disconnects of work and life engendered by the resource-based FIFO regime—boom and bust, project deadlines and disruptions, 24/7 operations, rotation schedules, daily/nightly shifts, tired bodies, and backs-and-forths with home—camp time relies heavily on both routinized 'dressage rhythms' and flexible temporal adjustments to carry out this crucial liminal role, even as it cannot possibly order and contain all of the temporal complexities involved. As we have seen, this has intense and visceral spillover effects on camp dwellers, for whom time is lost or stilled in cycles of repetition and is uncertain and fragmented in its durations and disruptions. With the sustained downturn, for example, came both disruption and the normalization of new schedules and rhythms.

Though it might act as a temporal 'decompression chamber' (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2003) for industry, camp life leaves 'scant opportunities for decompression' (Straughan et al., 2020: 207) among its inhabitants. As liminal time is disciplined, so is the 'being in [it]' of participants (Purdeková, 2011). But this is a two-sided coin. Workers are active subjects of para-productive liminal time whose ongoing efforts to develop temporal liminal competencies enable the organizational continuation of the FIFO regime and flexibly contribute to profitability in resource production. In other words, camp's liminal management of the complexities of FIFO temporalities in service of oil requires, in turn, the

varied and repeated efforts of camp dwellers to manage the residual temporal effects. Workers become self-disciplining agents of the '(collective) accomplishment' (Bunzel, 2002: 180) of FIFO-based productive time. Their adaptive endurance is a specific kind of liminality work, and a generative one at that.

At a broader level, our analysis foregrounds the importance of time and temporal experience to the study of what liminality is and does. Workers' experiences of camp make visible the multiple types and durations of temporality that animate permanent liminality. As these various rhythms intersect, liminality takes on its own particular temporal character in and through efforts—both organizational and individual—to manage and mediate their pressures and conflicts. These insights about camp open up several intriguing lines of inquiry. One of these is further study of other sites of liminality with para-productive characteristics, where a complex web of informal social and embodied rhythms on the one hand, and formal work and organizational temporalities on the other, is institutionally managed on a daily basis in the service of the imperatives of paid employment. In addition to the camps and dormitories discussed above, we might think of temporary foreign workers housed in the hotels where they work, or even of military barracks and compounds. Of particular interest here are instances where workers are 'oscillated' between states of work and life, the particular temporal competencies they develop, and how this temporal work is enlisted in the liminal accomplishment of organizational demands, including and especially across periods of economic fluctuation. How such self-disciplining temporal tactics are intertwined with the ordering or disruption of liminal surveillance and security (Pritchard and Morgan, 2006; Purdeková, 2011) is also an important question.

Finally, the temporal dynamics of para-productive liminality are not experienced the same by all, and not least because of the gendered segmentation of work in the resource industry and the FIFO regime. The temporal experiences of camp staff, many of whom are also rotational long-distance commuters and more of whom are female and people of color, differ from oil workers because of how they are differentially positioned within the liminality of camp: they are put on longer rotations, stay in the same place where they work, and are directly engaged in the gendered reproductive work of transitioning oil workers from shift to shift, rotation to rotation, and boom to bust (Dorow and Mandizadza, 2018). In addition, female oil workers seem to manage camp time in some distinctive ways, including in how they navigate camp routines and use temporal tactics in response to the male gaze (Kelly, 2020). As we have seen, some of the temporal tactics of men, such as looking at paychecks as a reminder of their family 'provider' role or acting out at the camp bar, take masculinized form. These findings suggest the need to better understand the gendered dynamics of liminal time, nuancing the 'both' and 'neither' of liminal sites between work and life (Johnsen and Sørensen, 2015).

Across the board, it is clear that participation in the FIFO regime has psychological and physical costs, from mental exhaustion to anxiety and disorientation. This is in part the consequence of spending an extended period of time in a liminal state (Beech, 2011), albeit of the 'revolving door' variety. Importantly, however, it is also a result of the *temporal character* of liminality—in this case, an intensive and jarring blending and delimiting of the times of life and work, harnessed to the latter, that leads to new temporal challenges—and the resulting need for liminars to temporally cope and adjust. If the

particular contextual experience of liminality has consequences for workers' well-being and performance (Söderlund and Borg, 2018), then we must attend to the character of liminal *time* and its consequences for liminars.

In the case of the Athabasca Oil Sands, the temporal work required is shaped by the complexities of the spatio-temporal distances and disruptions of the FIFO regime as highlighted herein, but is also intensified by contractual and regulatory arrangements (Cake, 2016; Siqueira Cassiano, 2019). Many FIFO workers are subcontracted within the oil sands industry, and all are embedded in an extensive set of institutionally dispersed labor practices and regulations. Any resolution to the burdens of camp time and of the FIFO regime thus requires attention not only to multi-scalar temporal issues such as rotational schedules and project timelines but also to multi-scalar spatial factors (Taylor and Spicer, 2007) such as uneven organizational relations between oil companies and contractors, regulatory apparatuses that link and de-link geographically dispersed facets of the FIFO regime, and human resource systems and labor practices that remain ill equipped to act nimbly in accordance with mobile work across jurisdictions (Ryser et al., 2020). Attention to these issues requires, in turn, more longitudinal, multi-local, and comparative studies of the temporal experiences and activities of workers who cycle through, endure, and manage para-productive liminalities.

Acknowledgements

Marcella Siqueira Cassiano conducted many of the interviews and contributed fieldnotes; she and Erika Steeves conducted initial coding and provided analytical assistance. Chad Doerksen, Shingirai Mandizadza, Jasmine Thomas, and Bozhin Traykov also contributed research assistance. We would like to thank the three anonymous reviewers as well as the editorial team at *Human Relations* for careful and insightful comments and suggestions.

Funding

The authors disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This research was part of the On the Move Partnership: Employment-Related Geographical Mobility in the Canadian Context (www.onthemovepartnership.ca), a project of the SafetyNet Centre for Occupational Health & Safety Research at Memorial University, and was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada through its Partnership Grants funding opportunity [grant number 895-2011-1019].

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