OVERLAPPING IDENTITIES IN PRE-WWII SOUTH AUSTRALIA: LESSONS FOR 21ST CENTURY AUSTRALIA

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Many people believe that prior to the post-WWII mass immigration Australia's population was almost entirely of British origin. They also believe that post-war immigration lead to a significant change in the ethnic composition of the non-indigenous population of Australia, necessitating the policy of multiculturalism to manage such increased diversity. However evidence from South Australia suggests that non-British immigration was surprisingly common before 1945, particularly before 1901, and that the assumed homogenous British origin population at 1901 and 1945 hid a greater proportion of non-British ancestry than has commonly been assumed. Evidence of inter-ethnic families and marriages suggests that much of this integration was peaceable in the absence of formal policies to manage interethnic relationships.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the paper is to revisit pre-1900 South Australia in order to re-approach Australian multiculturalism. The traditional view on which Australian multiculturalism is based is that prior to WWII the Australian population was pre-dominately 'Anglo-Australian', that is born in either Britain or Australia, of British origin.[1] This is seen as having been the result of two core policy processes: on the one hand a favouring of British migrants through processes of supporting their migration to Australia, and on the other hand exclusionary policies that barred non-British people. Post-federation legislation enshrined these notions in what has come to be known as the White Australia policy. Within this framework of understanding some observers believe that post WWII non-British migration, and the policy of Australian multiculturalism, has led to Australia becoming the peaceable, multicultural nation that it is today.[2]

This paper presents data that challenge the notion of a homogenous white Anglo-Australia, both at federation in 1901, and in later years up to 1945. The paper critiques the polarities that came to characterise Australian multiculturalism. This offers us the chance to understand both the origins of Australia in the early 21st century and

the ways in which a revised perspective on our history can present new approaches in this post-September 11 era of heightened ethnic, religious and cultural divisiveness.

The findings presented in this paper have emerged out of an ethnographic PhD focusing on the impacts of migration on older men of British origin. This focus had its origins in curiosity about the manner in which post-WWII British migration to Australia has become forgotten[3] as migration *per se*. It is possible to postulate that a core reason for this process has been the conceptualising of Australian multiculturalism, whereby the term 'migrant' has defaulted to referring to those migrants who have come from countries where English is not their first language.[4] As part of constructing an ethnographic approach to this topic, we chose to explore the South Australian context that these men entered. The commonly used data boundary (as per Churchman)[5] that has been used to frame Australian multiculturalism has been census data collected since the federation of Australia in 1901, after the first national census was undertaken.[6] However all the colonies collected data on their populations prior to this and the South Australian data prior to 1901 form a core component of the reanalysis presented here.

The paper is structured into three

sections. The first half of this paper will outline and explore place-of-birth data from South Australia between 1861 and 1981, to suggest a new perspective on 'White South Australia' as at 1901. A second brief section will consider the implications of the previous discussion on the period of 1901 to 1945, traditionally known as core 'White Australia' years. The final section of this paper will extend the state-based focus of the data to considering the possible implications of this historical (albeit state-based) review for Australia in the early 21st century.

South Australian place-of-birth data 1861 to 1981

Figure 1 presents data from South Australia on the place of birth of people residing in South Australia between 1861 and 1981, who were not born in Australia or Britain. As can be seen only 3.7 per cent of census respondents can be identified as neither born in the UK or Australia in 1901, and

by 1947 this percentage was even lower at 1.7 per cent. But between 1975 and 1981 when the policy of multiculturalism was becoming well established, the proportion of South Australians who identified as being neither British nor Australian-born hovered around 11 per cent.

The surprising data, however, are pre-1901. In the 40 years prior to 1901 the proportion of census respondents who are identified as neither British nor Australian-born is between 8.2 per cent in 1861, and 5.6 per cent in 1891, being at its lowest in 1876 at five per cent. The obvious suggestion presented by this statistical picture is that if proportions of 11 per cent can be interpreted as having a significant impact on the culture and identity of Australianess in the mid to late 20th century, surely similar percentages, within a smaller population base one hundred years prior would be significant as well. Indeed, while it is important to keep in mind Richards' caution that colonial data on the

Figure 1: Percentage of South Australian population not born in Australia or Britain, 1861 to 1981
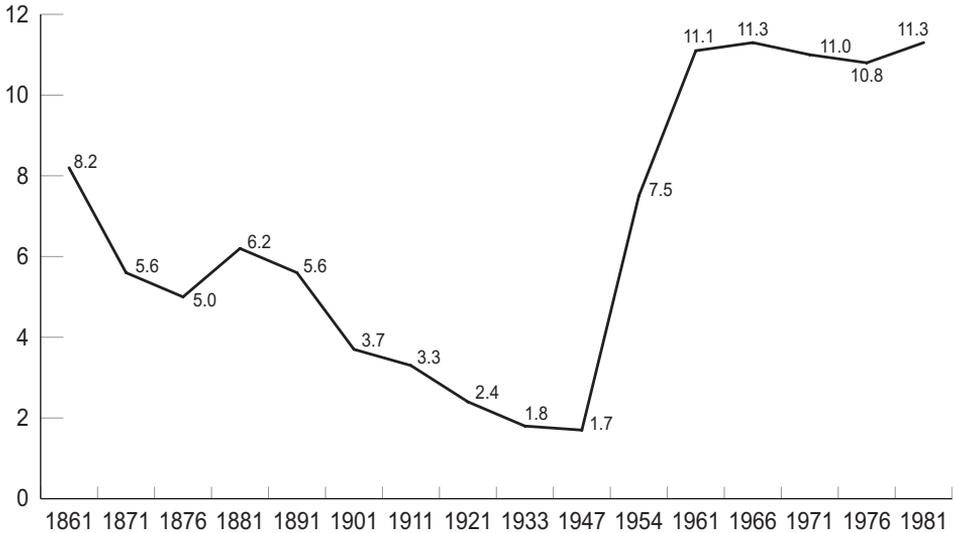
Source: Data drawn from Australian Historical Population Statistics (Tables 69–82), Catalogue no. 3105.0.65.001, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, 2006

population of South Australia can be unreliable,[7] it seems reasonable to suspect that the proportions of non-Australian or British census respondents at this time were more likely to be under-reported (due for example to language barriers).

However rather than just leap to conclusions it seemed prudent to explore some basic questions in regard to this surprising statistical picture. Who were these pre-federation non-Anglo South Australians, where did they go, and what impact have they made on what has been considered a predominately Anglo South Australia?

Places of birth (South Australia 1881 and 1891)

Table 1 shows the place of birth for people not born in Australia or Britain in South Australia in 1881 and 1891. As can be seen Germany-born residents form the largest single group with around 8000 people. The second largest group comprises the Chinese with around half that number. In contrast, most other nationalities have fewer than 500 persons identified, with some very small numbers such as 17 Portuguese in 1891 and 26 Spanish in 1881.

Of the two large nationality groups identified above the Germans have a significant and well known place in South Australian history. Places like the Barossa Valley and Hahndorf in the Adelaide Hills reflect this pre-1900 German migration and its impact can be seen in the broader community in such things as subtle language distinctions between South Australia and other states (for example South Australians use the Germanic terms of 'delicatessens' and 'fritz' rather than 'milk bar' and 'devon' as in Victoria). However Germans only form half of this non-British or Australian-born segment of the population. This begs the question of what became of the individuals from the other nationalities identified here.

Table 2 provides some insights into this question. It shows the gender breakdown for the groups identified in Table 1 in 1881.

It is evident that few of the national groups had gender balance within them. Even the Germany-born population shows substantial imbalance. As far as the Portugal-born are concerned, 28 are male with just one female. Perhaps the most striking imbalance is in the Chinese population with over 4000 men and only five women.

This demonstrates that very few migrants within these nationality groups

Table 1: Place of birth (excluding UK- and Australia-born) South Australia

Country of birth	1881	1891
Germany	8801	8553
France	293	400
Russia	91	189
Poland	133	—
Austria	180	—
Hungary	26	—
Austria-Hungary	—	185
Spain	26	29
Portugal	28	17
Switzerland	194	142
Holland	76	82
Belgium	41	51
Denmark	264	276
Sweden and Norway	765	1157
Italy	141	186
China	4151	3997
USA	—	386
Other foreign country	901	535
Country not stated	597	1268
Total SA population	279,865	320,431

Source: Derived from *Population, sex and country of birth, SA, census years, 1861–1891, Australian Historical Population Statistics* (Table 69), Catalogue no. 3105.0.65.001, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, 2006

had the potential to intermarry and create closed ethnic groupings in South Australia. Any procreation emanating from these individuals would by and large be across national identities, usually one would assume, with women of British origin. The chance to create multiple generation ethnic communities, as has occurred in twentieth century multicultural Australia (including South Australia) had a limited possibility of occurring in pre-federation South Australia.

Evidence of inter-ethnic marriages in South Australia in the pre-federation era can be found. Using the simplest criterion of possible surname origin, the following examples were found in perusing the lists of marriage registrations in South Australia for this era.[8] For example on 10 May 1887 one Ah Chomg (Chinese?) married Matilda Broad; Raphael Cilento (Italian?) married Frances West on 25 February 1891; Constan De Boar (French? Or Dutch?) married Mary Clark on 8 March 1873; and Duck Chin (Chinese?) married Angelina Best on 11 March 1884. In a list of couples married in St. Pauls, Port Adelaide, in the same period,[9] of 16 marriages where the groom's surname indicates Danish, Norwegian or German origin, the brides all have Anglo-sounding surnames.

Scope exists for much more detailed research of pre-federation inter-ethnic marriages. However, for the purposes of this paper, we argue that the data show that the assumed ethnic homogeneity[10] of the South Australian population at federation can be questioned. The need to search for such mixed marriages perhaps reflects two factors. First there is the ethnic community focus that multiculturalism has had in Australia, and second, as noted by Blunt,[11] a lack of research in regard to people of mixed ethnic descent—perhaps because this does not fit compartmental understandings of race and ethnicity. One well researched example of a pre-federation inter-ethnic mixing is the De Souza family of Port Adelaide.[12] Their surname originates with one Antonio De Souza who arrived in South Australia in 1865 and married Caroline Hill, who had arrived in South Australia from England in 1853 aged one. Their descendants form part of the base Anglo-Australian population at both federation and in 1945 (57 direct descendants were alive in this year). Yet, there has been no recognition that there were any Portuguese origin people living in South Australia until the 1920s.[13]

Questions can be raised as to how many of these non-British or non-Australia-born individuals remained in South Australia or even Australia. The entry of Chinese

Table 2: Place of birth (excluding UK- and Australia-born) South Australia by gender, 1881

Place of birth	Males	Females
Germany	5234	3567
France	213	80
Russia	76	15
Poland	83	50
Austria	134	46
Hungary	24	2
Spain	19	7
Portugal	27	1
Switzerland	153	41
Holland	66	10
Belgium	32	9
Denmark	237	27
Sweden and Norway	740	25
Italy	133	8
China	4146	5
Total SA population	149,530	130,335

Drawn from: *Population, sex and country of birth, SA, census years, 1861–1891*, *Australian Historical Population Statistics* (Table 69), Catalogue no. 3105.0.65.001, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, 2006

persons into South Australia was restricted by an Act of Parliament from 1857.[14] In a petition to the South Australian government in 1888 the South Australia Chinese community did note that their numbers were falling. Some of the Chinese numbers may be due to the substantial numbers who arrived in the South East of South Australia en route to the Victorian gold fields in the 1870s. This was done as a means of avoiding the landing tax on Chinese migrants to Victoria at the time.[15] More broadly the nature of mining booms historically has been that of large numbers of single males who move from one boom to another[16] on a global scale. It is quite likely that a significant number of men (including some British) were simply passing through the state. However the previously noted examples of mixed marriages and histories such as O'Connor's[17] history of the Italian Community in South Australia since 1839 provide evidence that a significant proportion stayed and became part of the South Australian community and ancestry. However the magnitude of this proportion needs to be further researched to establish how substantial it was.

Loss of visibility

One of the ways in which these pre-federation non-British-origin settlers to South Australia may have become relatively invisible, has been through the anglicising, or loss of surnames through marriage. Some surnames in this period may have been changed by deed poll, however informal name changes and the impact of cultural processes, such as women taking on their husband's surname, are perhaps more common reasons for surnames disappearing. As an example of this latter cultural process, Antonio De Souza and his English-born wife had five children who survived into adulthood. Of 19 grandchildren, born to their three sons who had

children, 14 were females, most of whom married and took on their husbands' surname.[18] By the next generation only four of Antonio's great grand-children (sons born to sons) had the potential to carry on the surname of De Souza through the usual cultural process of sons inheriting and passing on the father's name.

Based on the above discussions, it seems reasonable to suggest that the 1901 statistical picture of South Australia hid a not insignificant proportion of second- and maybe even third-generation non-British-origin persons. This disputes the presumption of a homogenous ethnic and cultural basis for the nation of Australia and the White Australia era, to which we shall now turn.

1901 TO 1945: A HOMOGENOUS WHITE ANGLO SOUTH AUSTRALIA?

Figure 1 shows a steady decrease in the proportion of people who were not born in Australia or Britain in South Australia after the late 1800s until the end of WWII. Often it is assumed that the White Australia, British-favouring migration policy that dominated this period is the cause of the statistical picture of few non-Australian or non-British born Australians by WWII. However, a number of key international events impacted on migration to Australia and South Australia specifically, in this time period.

First the 1890s saw a worldwide depression that had a major impact on all of the colonies.[19] At that time South Australia had already been experiencing an economic depression and severe drought, which was understandably not a drawcard for would-be immigrants. Following this time there was a brief period where some immigration occurred before the outbreak of World War I (1914 to 1918) when international migration again plummeted. After the end of WWI a small hiatus of calm

lead to, or allowed, migration to Australia to occur, however this was cut short by the Wall Street stock-market crash in 1929 and the beginning of the Great Depression. Australia was significantly affected by the Great Depression and made only a very slow recovery leading into the years of World War II (1939 to 1945), meaning that for the almost-15 years prior to and including WWII, Australia experienced historically low rates of migration.

As noted there was some migration in the hiatus years. While this was dominated by British migrants[20] there were significant non-British influxes. For example O'Connor[21] has detailed the arrivals and departures of Italy-born persons to South Australia between 1901 and 1947 and from his statistics it is possible to deduce that a total of almost 5000 Italians arrived and stayed for an extended period of time. These data illustrate how White Australia policies did not homogenously oppose non-British migration. White Australia thinking consisted of a hierarchical, racialised view of humanity, and so-called migration suitability, with the Chinese located at the bottom rung.[22] However when British migrants could not be attracted to Australia other less desirable sources of migrant labour were always sought.[23]

O'Connor's data provide some interesting hints, however, pointing to the loss of visibility of some non-Anglo origin, South Australians in this era. The arrival and departure figures for Italians between 1901 and 1933 suggest that almost 4000 Italians had arrived and stayed in South Australia in this specific time frame. However, the census data for 1933 records only 1489 persons living in South Australia who had been born in Italy. While it is possible that some of these people had died, or moved interstate, one of the possibilities is that this discrepancy reflects the environment of fear towards so-called enemy aliens that coloured the periods

leading up to and through both world wars. In South Australia many of the German names of towns were changed[24] and many citizens with German surnames made the choice to change their names by deed poll. Peake[25] lists 157 people who changed their names to Anglo-sounding alternatives in this manner between 1914 and 1918 (in comparison only 13 people with Anglo-sounding names changed their names in this period). During WWII a large number of Italian-origin persons were interned in South Australia. It would not be unreasonable to believe that obscuring one's 'enemy alien' heritage at such times would be prudent.

Second-generation mixed ethnicities
The history of the De Souza family is one example of second-generation intermarriages in South Australia. Indeed looking through the family history there are suggestions of other ethnic origin intermarriages appearing.[26] It is harder to substantiate, but perusal of marriage registrations[27] for this period provides suggestions of other second-generation Anglo/non-Anglo marriages in South Australia. For example on 11 August 1909, Lawrence Verran married Nellie May Chin, whose father is identified as Ah Chin. The combination of a Chinese surname with Anglo first names suggests that Nellie may have had a non-Chinese mother. Similarly, in 1908 (7 October) Andrew Harrison married Mabel Cilento (a mix of Anglo and Italian names?); and several years earlier on 9 September 1902 Frederick Tanner married Ann Leana Dominica Delpozza, whose father was Michael Delpozza, the names are less obviously a mix of Anglo and non-Anglo, but are certainly evidence of a cross-ethnicity marriage whether it is first or second generation. The wedding of Hugo (or Ugo) Pozza, a tailor, and his very English-sounding bride, Thora Kings, made it to the South Australian Register in

1930 when they married in an airplane above the capital city of Adelaide.[28]

Hence it is possible to suggest that the statistical picture in 1945 of a homogenous Anglo-British-origin South Australian population hides significant non-British ancestry. This has occurred through a mix of rapid in-breeding with the numerically predominant British-origin population; a loss of surnames through both deliberate and accidental Anglicisation processes; the impact of cultural practices, especially those of female surname changes; and deliberate obscuring of non-Anglo origins in response to both world wars. A lack of data in regard to the ancestry of the 1945 population, in combination with relatively low numbers of migrants to Australia in the half century before WWII, leads to a cursory statistical picture in 1947 of only 1.7 per cent of South Australia's population being born in neither Australia or Britain. But this disguises a complex, more multi-cultural and less ethnically homogenous picture than has been assumed.

While this is not a new suggestion, the recognition of non-British origins within the Australia-born population up to WWII has been scant. Lyng[29] in the 1920s looked at the patterns of 'non-Britishers' in Australia until his era, as did Price[30] in the early 1960s with his investigation of the history of Southern Europeans in Australia. More recently O'Connor, as previously noted, has looked at the Italian community since the founding of the state.[31] Most researchers have chosen to take a singular ethnic identity focus however, with virtually no searching for pictures such as the multi-ethnic integration that can be discerned in the DeSouza family genealogy. In this regard Windschuttle has been one of the few to recognise the contribution of non-European and mixed-race immigrants to Australia in the nineteenth century.[32] Interethnic mixing can also be found in the indigenous community as one of the authors of this paper (McIntyre)[33] found in her research on the genealogy of Olive Veverbrants, an indigenous Arrernte woman. Olive could trace ancestral links through her grandmother with Hong, a Chinese immigrant; by way of her mother with a Polish immigrant, and Olive's own connections include a Dutch partner and extended family links to Afghan cameleers. However by and large in recent times we have not even conceptualised these possibilities as a precursor to investigating them.

This brings us to the final section of this paper. What implications might reconceptualising South Australia's pre-1900 cultural and ethnic origins offer Australia at the beginning of the 21st Century?

IMPLICATIONS FOR 21ST CENTURY AUSTRALIA

This section is written recognising that the discussion to date has used only South Australian data. We acknowledge that other states and territories will have different patterns of non-Anglo pre-federation migration. Nevertheless the following discussion is based on the authors' belief that these data contest the mythology of homogenous British ethnic origins of federation South Australians,[34] and it is not unreasonable to presume that similar research in regard to other states could well produce equally challenging data.

Multiculturalism was the dominant ideology governing migrant settlement and related policies in Australian from the late 1970s to the mid-1990s. In recent times it has lost some of its political power; however its impact on the Australian psyche can be seen in the manner in which debates about migration, race, ethnicity are still dominated by accusations of 'racism' and 'political correctness'.[35] The idea of multiculturalism in Australia holds within it a number of conceptual pairings: British/

non-British, white/non-white, Anglo/non-Anglo, ethnic/Anglo-origin, Anglo/multicultural. All of these pairings draw on images of two distinct internally homogenous groups. The data and discussion presented in this paper suggest alternatives to the presumed homogeneities that have characterised our understandings of multiculturalism in Australia.

Lopez[36] argues that Australian multiculturalism has struggled to provide responses to the post September 11 awareness and fear of terrorism that has gripped the Western world. Multiculturalism posited that threats to ethnic communities, and hence to the peacefulness of Australia as a whole, came not from within ethnic communities but from the dominant homogenised 'other' a mainstream group who were broadly assumed to be antagonistic to 'ethnics'. The notion that internal anti-Western elements within non-Anglo-Australian (ethnic) populations, or that external 'ethnic' or religious groupings, could pose a significant safety threat to the entire population of Australia, is one that is new to this understanding of ethnicity, race and culture.

The need to rediscover a long history of multiculturalism in Australia suggests that at least some cross-ethnic integration was more easily achieved than we have previously believed. Perhaps paradoxically, one result of smooth integration (as compared to highly conflictual inter-group relations), has been that it has enabled its very existence to be overlooked. The historical findings outlined in the paper suggest that, left to their own devices, diverse human beings can relate more peacefully and sociably with each other than we have imagined over the last 30 plus years. There is a possibility that in searching for inter-ethnic conflict we have found it, and overlooked evidences of non-conflictual interactions,[37] impoverishing our understandings of how human beings can create peaceable lives in the presence of diversity. Findings that at least some of this integration occurred smoothly, in the absence of a multicultural policy, demonstrate that the structural approach to multiculturalism of the 1980s and early 1990s is not a necessity for smooth social interactions in the context of ethnic diversity. These findings contradict the picture of a white Australia that had to be made to welcome non-Anglo migrants by policies promoting the value of other people and cultures (as per multiculturalism). Indeed, is it possible that our secular, reductionist, 20th Century focus on ethnicity and race is imposing a level of centrality on these constructs that is out of proportion to historical experiences. In fact there have been a number of other social differentiators (Christian denominational identity, social class and inter-British ethnicities)[38] that have been highly contentious historically.[39] Indeed the post-September 11 era has thrust religious identification into the spotlight in Australia in a way that has not been seen for several generations.

These previously forgotten data do not just raise questions in regard to multiculturalism, they also challenge the pre-existing notion of assimilation (defined by Markus as a 'policy of Anglo-conformity').[40] At the level of individual and non-powerful citizens' experiences, it is possible to see cultural integration as parallel to genetic integration. The genetic impact of previous generations does not just 'assimilate and conform', rather it becomes part of the genetic heritage pool of following generations. Figure 2 is a photo of the five daughters of Edward De Souza, grand-daughters of Antonio De Souza. While these children are of third generation mixed ethnicity, it is possible to see that some of them carry some physical features that suggest their non-Anglo grandfather.

In the same way, it is possible to conclude that the 1945 Australian culture bore the impact of a significant percentage of non-British migrants, whose second and third generation offspring then formed part of the Australia-born population, suggesting more the cultural melting pot perspective of multiculturalism than a rigid essentialist model.[41]

Recognising that pre WWII white Australia had a not-dissimilar multicultural base to the 20th century multicultural Australia destabilises the multicultural: white Anglo polarity. De-homogenising our ethnic, religious and cultural past is important in 21st century Australia. In this post-September 11 era we need to look for new understandings of national security and safety. Recognising that present and past patterns of ethnic diversity are more similar than has been believed can serve to allay fears that such difference of itself leads to an unsafe, threatening society. We may well be better served through articulating our past diversity and the manner in which it hasn't necessarily mattered—than in continuing to think that our security is assured by conceptual blocks of ethnic sameness. A significant mix of cultures, religions and other ethnic differences have lived together peacefully for a long time in Australia. Indeed an alternate view of the ethnic mix of pre-WWII Australia reminds us of the common ground that we Australians share with those we colonised and with one another as colonisers. We are all, whether newly-arrived or seventh generation 'white' Australian, of migrant extraction with perhaps much closer links with those we colonised than has been considered. These colonised histories of chosen and forced heritage have been written of elsewhere and should not be forgotten[42] as they have implications for the way in which we understand ourselves and others.

Much of our thinking in regard to race and ethnicity at this time in Australia has been built on a foundation of knowing white Australia. The research outlined here challenges this knowing. Data from other states need to be investigated for similarities or differences, but in terms of South Australia the evidence offers significant challenges to what we think we have known about our ethnic and cultural heritage. These findings challenge our mental frameworks and preconceptions, but also provide opportunities in this era where significantly altered defence and security awarenesses are already challenging the construct of multiculturalism as we have known it in recent decades.

Figure 2: Daughters of Edward De Souza

Source: Photograph courtesy of Les Young, son of Jean Young (née De Souza), seated front right

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36 ibid.

37 Indeed conflict becomes part of the public record much more readily than peacefulness. For example court records, newspaper headlines and so on have a bias towards conflict and these written documents are core sources of our knowledge of bygone eras. The authors wish to note that this notion of non-conflictual Australian history excludes the history of indigenous/non-indigenous conflict. The focus of this paper is on non-indigenous history.

38 These historical differentiators in the South Australian context are the subject of another paper that the authors hope to publish.

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