



TASA The Australian
Sociological Association

TITLE: Disaffection—A Contemporary Structure of Feeling

Author/s: Dr Ben Gook

Affiliation/s: The University of Melbourne

We live in an era of uprisings, new and renewed wall fortifications, stymied revolutions, unemployment, debt and uncertainty. *Disaffection* refers to this cultural, social and political constellation, experiences at once shared and seated in personal biographies. This paper will discuss these “varieties” of disaffection – the *organised* and *disorganised*, taken in their social and psychological senses. Moreover, *disaffection* – in its shiftless, nebulous meanings – suggests a feeling that cannot be pinned down, sitting at the edge of conceptual, cognitive and political clarity; a structure of feeling, emergent but without final form. Not quite anger, not quite rage, not quite depression but not quite articulate reaction either; fed up with what is, unsure of what could become. Something has been lost or went missing, although we cannot quite say what *it* is. Hopeful visions of the future no longer have social traction and seem to have a diminishing role in social integration and belonging. Above all, disaffection registers social opaqueness, where people can no longer recognise themselves in society’s images, in its particular institutions, other individuals or the objective whole. I will draw on contemporary culture as a repository of this shift, detailing subjects’ experiences alongside objective changes in institutions, ideologies and practices.