

## **Final Report**

Kimberley Brownlee

We are social creatures who need to live in close connection with others to survive and flourish. When we lack adequate connections with other people we tend to break down mentally, emotionally, and physically. Our social needs are slowly coming to the fore in public debates as we face the realities of an aging population and a tradition of individualistic policies that have eroded social welfare structures.

Analytic philosophy can contribute significantly to debates about social needs by providing conceptual and normative tools to tackle the real-world problems of isolation, loneliness, and social injustice. Surprisingly, though, social needs, unlike economic needs, are largely uncharted territory in contemporary analytic philosophy.

The ISRF Research Fellowship has enabled me to initiate a substantial project on the ethics and politics of sociability, focusing the first instance on social human rights, with the aim of kick-starting philosophical reflection on these issues. The project, which includes a monograph in progress (under contract with Oxford University Press) and a series of academic articles, seeks to give a rigorous analysis of social human rights independent of economic-welfare rights. It also seeks to defend a fundamental human right, neglected in the literature, against social deprivation as a persisting lack of minimally adequate access to decent human contact. (I answer questions about this right in an interview with *Philosophy Bites* (available from July 2015. During the period of the ISRF fellowship, I was a visiting scholar at the University of Monash Law School and the Castan Centre for Human Rights, at which I gave a public lecture and a public radio interview on the human right against social deprivation (available online).)

Additionally, the project aims to show that we have a human right to make social contributions, as we have deep needs to belong, to be valued and valuable to our affiliates, and to contribute to their wellbeing. When our social access rights and social contribution rights are not respected, protected, and fulfilled, we suffer a distinctively *social* type of injustice, that is, we suffer wrongs that are done to us specifically as social beings. Some of these wrongs are behavioural, such as severing a person's social ties through long-term solitary confinement. Some of these wrongs are attitudinal, such as unjustly devaluing a person as a social contributor by not taking her seriously as a social contributor (forthcoming in the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* 2016).

This foundational work on positive social rights has implications for how we think about associative freedom; fleshing out these implications will be one of my core projects going forward. In particular, I aim to upend the liberal consensus on freedom of association to show that it is much more limited than we tend to suppose (*Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, 2015; *Utilitas*, 2015, *Blackwell Companion to Applied Philosophy* 2016). We do not have a general moral right to associate or not as we please. We can sometimes legitimately be compelled to associate with others. Moreover, the rights we do have to control our associations are limited by constraints of consent, need, harm, and respect. That said, since the terrain of human relationships is very complex, I also aim to identify those types of associations that may elude a principled analysis (article in progress).

Issues of sociability cut across the divide between personal morality and political theory. In future work, I aim to specify the boundary between social duty and social virtue, and also to identify personal and societal virtues that contribute to the stability of institutions that support social rights.

I am very grateful to Louise Braddock, Stuart Wilson, and the ISRF for the research support that has enabled me to launch this project.