

Table of Contents

Editorial

Reshawna L. Chapple, Kishonna L. Gray, LaDonna Long, Mia Ortiz

Articles

#TenureTrackHustle: Examining Academic Poverty of First-Generation Women of Color From an Intersectional Standpoint

Kishonna L. Gray and Reshawna L. Chapple

Insider Without: Journey across the Working-Class Academic Arc

Kim A. Case, University of Houston-Clear Lake

In Class, Sharing Class: Faculty Members from Low-Socioeconomic Status Backgrounds and Status Visibility

Elizabeth Lee and Tonya Maynard

Navigating Academia in the ‘Welfare Class’

Emma Penney and Laura Lovejoy

Conceptualizing Critical Friendship as a Protective Measure in Academia

Natalie Currie-Patterson and Kaitlyn Watson

Class and Narrative Accrual: Personal Troubles and Public Issues in Five Vignettes

Matthew Spokes

A Stranger in Charleston: Intersectional Anxiety as a Latina in Academia

Nancy Aguirre

Blockades, Barricades, and Barriers: Accessing and Navigating Academia from a Multi-Marginalized Positionality

A. M. Foiles Sifuentes

Publish AND Perish: On Publishing, Precarity and Poverty in Academia

Emma Vossen

The Poverty of Academia: My Life as a Non-Tenure Track Faculty

Sarah Prior

Ending Adjunct Apartheid

Diane Reynolds

Fishing for a Career: Alternative Livelihoods and the Hardheaded Art of Academic Failure

Deb Cleland

Interview

Organizing Working-Class Academics: A Collective History, an Interview with Allison L. Hurst, Tery Griffin and Alfred Vitale

Book Reviews

Williams, Joan (2017) *White Working Class: Overcoming Class Cluelessness in America*, Harvard Business Review Press, Boston, Ma.

Review by Allison L. Hurst

Early, Steve (2017) *Refinery Town: Big Oil, Big Money and the Remaking of an American City*, Beacon Press, Boston.

Review by Tula Connell

Goldstein, Amy (2017) *Janesville: An American Story*, Simon & Schuster, New York, Ny.

Review by Jeffrey S. Rothstein

Cramer, Katherine J. (2016) *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Il.

Review by Donald P. Taylor

Volume 2 Issue 2: Academic Poverty

Special Issue Editorial

Reshawna L. Chapple, University of Central Florida

Kishonna L. Gray, Arizona State University

Ladonna Long, Roosevelt University

Mia Ortiz, Bridgewater State University

Educational attainment is often framed as positive, having the liberatory potential to free the socio-economically marginalized from their constraints. There is little, if ever, any mention of the unchained slavery of debt and low wages that ties working-class academics to perpetual bondage. Once welfare and working class academics become subsumed into the Ivory Tower, assumptions of class privilege are immediately attached to their bodies: they are perceived as solidly middle class. But many individuals within academic settings occupy marginal positions. This marginalization has led to the creative use and understanding of an ‘outsider within’ status. This special issue attempts to uncover the influences of class status (among other axes of identity) on academics who still occupy this socioeconomically disadvantaged position. Far too often, these stories exist in siloes of private messages, listservs, and Facebook groups. This special issue hopes to move these singular stories of pain and struggle to a forum where the commonalities among these stories as well as the structural influences sustaining these realities can be collectively recognized.

As [Deborah Warnock](#) (2016) illustrates, working-class academics describe the precarious nature of their existences inside the tower. In the work she conducted, she identified five key themes that comprise the marginal existence of working-class academics: 1) alienation, 2) lack of cultural capital, 3) encountering stereotypes and microaggressions, 4) experiencing survivor guilt and the impostor syndrome, and 5) struggling to pass in a middle-class culture that values ego and networking. In the context of the current issue, other intersectional issues will be addressed to highlight the precarious reality of welfare and working class scholars.

Take the following example as one such reality. On September 28, 2017, [The Guardian](#) published an article outlining the reality of an adjunct instructor who also engages in sex work to avoid living in poverty and becoming homeless. While reading this heart wrenching story, we were all quickly reminded about our realities of living paycheck to paycheck, or hoping our contract would be renewed, or wondering if we’d have enough for children’s childcare. The fear of failing in academia is a real concern.

This special issue seeks to reframe the narrative of failing within academia to highlight how academia has failed us, especially the economically marginalized. We

were told to work hard, get an education, and rely on our merit to help us thrive and succeed. Approaching graduation and upon entering our first faculty positions, most of us are quickly reminded that more is involved in thriving in the Ivory Tower. The experience outlined above is not isolated. While others may not engage in sex work, there are other things that many individuals within the cog of academia engage in to supplement their limited incomes and precarious experiences of feeling like second class citizens. The growing class of faculty with temporary and short term employment is a function of the increasing precariat in academia.

The contributors who provided commentary on their experiences within academia outline detailed descriptions of their contentious paths within academia. From moving into tenure track positions to highlighting academia through a lens of apartheid, these scholars express the reality of their professional paths. From the powerful opening of Foiles-Sifuentes' piece '*Your CV reads working class*,' this is an indication of the direction of not only this piece, but it appropriately weaves a thread throughout the entire issue of struggling as welfare and working class scholars at the intersection. Contributions within this issue also provide an examination of what it means to be queer and/or a woman of color which are among the most marginalized identities, and Gray & Chapple provide an overview of this intersection using a Black feminist framework.

This special issue, continuing along the path charted by Warnock and others, seeks to center these marginalized narratives. As Debra Leigh Scott, who is working on a [documentary](#) about adjuncts, states, 'We take a kind of vow of poverty to continue practicing our profession.' This concept rings true but we are hoping to charter a new reality within academia. We must continue to resist the corporate model that seeks to continue exploiting our labor and contributions with little reward.

The Special issue concludes with an interview with founding members of the Association of Working-Class Academics, which provides insights and lessons into the origins of an association that has been vital to the literature on working class studies.

#TenureTrackHustle¹: Examining Academic Poverty of First-Generation Women of Color From an Intersectional Standpoint

Kishonna L. Gray, New College, Arizona State University

Reshawna L. Chapple, University of Central Florida

Abstract

Women of color in academia face challenging obstacles when it comes to surviving and thriving in the ivory tower. Enduring the grind of graduate school and immediately upon attaining a PhD, women of color are often burdened with heavy student loan debt, large teaching loads, unrealistic service expectations, experience microaggressions based on race, gender and class, isolation, alienation and other challenges which compound and negatively impact the path to tenure. Many of the challenges mentioned above often differ from those of their white and/or male counterparts in the academy. Throughout this article, we will examine the literature of Black women in academia, provide personal narratives situating these complexities, and root them all in the context of being Black and Woman in academia. The academy is a place we are rarely welcomed and constantly fighting to survive and thrive.

Keywords

Women of color, academia, intersectionality, personal narratives, racism, sexism, standpoint theory

Introduction

Women of color in academia face challenging obstacles when it comes to surviving and thriving in the ivory tower. Enduring the grind of graduate school and immediately upon attaining a PhD, women of color are often burdened with heavy student loan debt, large teaching loads, unrealistic service expectations, experience microaggressions based on race, gender and class, isolation, alienation and other challenges which compound and negatively impact the path to tenure. Many of the challenges mentioned above often differ from those of their white and/or male counterparts in the academy. Warnock (2016) identifies five characteristics that

¹ A special thanks to Meredith Clark who contextualized the hashtag Tenure Track Hustle and made sense of the academic journey for Black women

encapsulate working class academic narratives: alienation, cultural capital, stereotyping/microaggression, survivor guilt/impostor syndrome and middle-class networking. While each of these tenets reveal themselves as different stages in one's academic career, it is important to highlight the impacts of intersectionality on these and other narratives experienced by women of color. For instance, an additional factor includes marginality anxiety which is the mental health aspect of being Black, and woman, and poor while academic. These narratives will be explored through the lens of intersectionality which is a core component of Black feminist thought. Throughout this article, we will examine the literature of Black women in academia, provide personal narratives situating these complexities, and root them all in the context of being Black and Woman in academia.

Making Sense of Intersectional Experiences in Academia

Intersectionality asserts that marginalized identities are independent, multiply interlocking, and mutually exclusive; this framework has become essential to positioning and understanding cultural identity and structural oppressions within social institutions (Collins, 1998, 2000, Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Intersectionality is defined as 'a concept that enables us to recognize the fact that perceived group membership can make people vulnerable to various forms of bias, yet because we are simultaneously members of many groups, our complex identities can shape the specific way we each experience that bias' (AAPF, 2003, p. 3). Supporting this definition, intersectional identity is concerned with how our marginalized identities interact with each other to shape multiple dimensions of personhood. bell hooks (1986) suggests that feminism is possible not because women share the same experiences, but because it is possible to learn from the varied experiences of oppression and common resistance situated around resistance to oppression. The experiences of Black women exist beneath the consciousness of whiteness and/or masculinity in an invisible and unknown place, which is an extremely complex system of oppressions that can only be understood through detailing their experiences from our perspective or standpoint (Collins, 1998).

Feminist standpoint theory is another framework to situate the realities of being Black and Woman in academia. It focuses on the individual having a sense of agency to represent her position and to challenge these dominant, hegemonic discourses. Feminist standpoint theory argues that knowledge can be gained from the insights derived from the lived experiences of women of color. For women who have been historically ignored and marginalized, according to Black feminist scholars like bell hooks, Barbara Smith and Patricia Hill Collins, using women's experiences as a form of knowledge can be an effective tool for activism, social change and resistance against the dominant narrative. For Black women, race does not exist outside of gender and gender does not exist outside of race (Parker & Lynn, 2002 p.12). Being bound to these identities highlights the impossibility of escaping marginalization. Debunking the popular myth that education is the great equalizer where anyone can achieve success if you work hard enough, Black women and other marginalized populations acknowledge that educational attainment doesn't liberate one from any chain of oppression. Academic discourse oftentimes reifies and determines who is qualified and who belongs. For instance, the academic job search process is in itself a discursive formation, with its own unwritten and well-established set of 'rules' and

expectations. One has to develop the cultural capital to unlock the secrets for success within this structure; and for many White men in particular, they are given the capital to succeed. Within academic discourse, it is unprofessional to discuss money until negotiation time. For those who are privileged enough to not have the conversation, it is often considered irrelevant. Navigating the academic job search requires a specialized knowledge and the academic community creates that domain of knowledge.

On Being Black and Woman in the Academy: The Hustle

Experiences with racism, sexism, homophobia, isolation, marginalization and other intersecting systems of oppression have an extreme effect on the ability to feel connected to a university and ultimately to obtain tenure - especially for female faculty of color (Brayboy, 2003, TuSmith & Reddy, 2002, Turner, C. S. V. 2002, Turner, González, & Wood, 2008). These barriers can include racial, gendered, and class based oppression, lack of access to mentors, unequal educational opportunities as their Black male and White female counterparts and lack of strong preparation for academic life (Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 1996). Many of these women will succeed but not without a difficult road and a tremendous amount of challenges. Many of these barriers are socially constructed assumptions about women of color from marginalized backgrounds that find their way into the public discourse. The assumptions that most women of color, particularly Black and Brown women are lazy, unmarried, uneducated, welfare queens, who have multiple children only to game the system, are often connected to negative stereotypes of Black women and working and welfare class individuals despite research to the contrary. These assumptions also play a prominent role in defining our identities and shaping how others define us (Harris-Perry, 2011). These misrepresentations of women of color can find their way into the academy and paint a negative picture of who we are, thus making it more difficult for us to be successful and ultimately gain tenure.

Black women and other women of color in academia spend most of their time battling false assumptions of who we are, while hustling to survive simultaneously. We engage in a type of 'hustle,' a mythological idea that causes us to believe that if we work three times as hard as our counterparts, we will be seen as equals and earn the recognition we deserve. To further explain the tenure track hustle, we offer these definitions: the standard dictionary defines *hustle* in two ways: 1) to force (someone) to move hurriedly or 2) to fraud or swindle. The Urban Dictionary (2017) defines the word hustle as, 'Working hard, usually towards the common goal of creating an income.' For the purposes of this article, we will use the urban dictionary's definition of hustle to highlight some of the struggles that women of color encounter to survive in academia. The academy is a place we are rarely welcomed and constantly fighting to survive and thrive.

As women of color, we are taught from childhood to hustle, and to do whatever we need to do to survive and thrive. But these experiences often lead to women of color to develop 'imposter syndrome' early in their academic career because of the lack of recognition. Many of us will choose to leave the academy, sacrificing years of education and abandoning dreams of teaching and mentoring other students of color. Brookfield (1995) defined *impostor syndrome* as the innate fear of being unmasked as

something we are not (p. 253). Women who choose to endure the academy, they are often burdened with the reality of living in poverty in academia. Poverty connected to both a lack of financial resources and losing one's soul and spirit. We often care for our families, friends and strangers who need our assistance. This is often done in the background without recognition. Since we do not view ourselves as legitimate members of the academy, we often operate in the shadows. For example, women of color will often engage in mentorship activities and service to the community often without seeking recognition for our talent, payment for our services or credit for our time. We fall into martyrdom in academia. We feel obligated to perform large amounts of service because there are so few women of color in higher education, so students, peers and community members gravitate to us. Consider a conversation with a colleague, a Black cisgender, lesbian woman who holds a position in leadership in a national professional organization. In her leadership capacity, she organized a mentorship breakfast at a conference meeting for LGBTQ+ identified students and junior faculty. When asked about her mentorship accomplishments, she insisted that she was not a mentor. She stated, 'I am not a mentor; I am just doing what we do!' We further explained to her that when she meets with students, colleagues or members of the community to provide them with advice or counseling this is indeed 'mentorship'. Unfortunately, with so few examples of mentors for us in the academy it is difficult to ascertain the difference between formalized mentorship and 'hustling to survive'. The normalization of emotional labor and unacknowledged service leads to the culture of academic poverty, and convinces Black women that we are impostors who do not belong, while at the same time causing us to minimize the actual work we do.

Navigating Whiteness While Black and Woman

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2017), Black faculty comprised 3% of all full-time faculty at degree-granting postsecondary institutions. Forty-two percent were white males, 35 percent were white females, 6 percent were Asian/Pacific Islander males, 4 percent were Asian/Pacific Islander females, and 2 percent each were Hispanic males and Hispanic females. (In)visible within these numbers is a larger story of systemic and structural exclusion and exploitation within the academic industrial complex. These numbers reveal that racial minorities are largely absent and underrepresented. And what these numbers are unable to convey, is the narrative associated with being a cog in the academic machine while Black, Woman, and economically marginalized.

As Tamura Lomax (2015) articulates, 'academia and the growing academic-corporate trend is a microcosm of the world house in its disappearing and disenfranchising of black women' (para. 7). While exploring the precarity of the growing class of academics trying to survive and exist within the confines of exploitation, it has become necessary to provide an intersectional examination of the underbelly of our universities. While the reality of being a part of the adjunct caste is even bleaker, we focus on the 'Tenure Track Hustle' to expose the hypocrisy of tenure and the tenure track for marginalized academics. The path which historically signaled job security, financial stability, and an esteemed status more readily resembles a rat race, not rooted in meritocracy, but a game where players like us are unable to learn the rules but still must play.

In their 2000 book, *Faculty of Color in Academia: Bittersweet Success*, Caroline Turner and Samuel Myers focus on the perceptions held by 64 faculty of color regarding ‘campus climate’ and institutional practices that govern the recruitment and retention of faculty of color. The authors identify four themes that are indicative of the experiences of Black women and other professionals of color working on predominantly white college campuses. Common experiences include: (1) isolated and not well respected, (2) over-worked, (3) tension between family and career choices, and (4) students challenging authority (p. 105-106). These themes, coupled with those outlined by Warnock (2016) must be unpacked when they exist at the intersection; and by providing personal narratives, we hope to provide context to understanding this academic hustle.

Intersection of Race, Class, and (Social) Capital

Black women’s experiences with race and gender are unique intersections that often place them in an interlocking matrix of domination. And acknowledging the dimension of class makes our reality almost unbearable, volatile and highly toxic. Consider this particular narrative that Kishonna recalls:

I was invited to serve as a Visiting Scholar at MIT for the 2016-2017 school year. It was an offer I couldn’t refuse. So, I began the process to make the move from Kentucky to Cambridge, MA to embark upon this remarkable opportunity. Except I couldn’t afford it. Me and my partner spent weeks calculating moving costs, shipping, child care, and knew we either had to decline the offer from MIT or start begging for money. Hey, we’re not too proud to beg. So, I created a crowd fund where me and my family relied on the goodness of others to help us take advantage of this opportunity. We generated almost \$9,000 dollars which was enough to cover first month’s rent, last month’s rent and a security deposit in the expensive Cambridge community. Our problems didn’t end there. My partner was unable to get a job that covered child care costs. So, \$3,000 for rent, \$1,600 for child care, and... you know I am going to stop there. My income was only about \$5,000 a month after taxes and insurance. So, we were left with \$400 a month for groceries, gas for vehicle or public transportation costs, utilities, cell phone bill, credit card bill (which we ran up from the move), co-pays, etc. So, my partner, who has a Master’s degree and experience in academic advising and management, quit his \$7.00 an hour job he found in retail to be a stay at home parent. We were broke. We were isolated. We were depressed. Hell. We are still broke. I am currently working three jobs to get out of this hole we are in. My partner found a job but he must pass a test for licensing or certification before he is able to make money (selling insurance). In the meantime, I am literally a mammy. I do overnight caregiving for an elderly man and work on the weekends at a support home for individuals with disabilities. Like we said, the #TenureTrackHustle... (Kishonna explaining her financial precarity while on the tenure track).

The narrative above does not exist in isolation. When sharing stories such as these in digital support groups and at conferences with those from similar backgrounds, it becomes clear that this is a pattern for many women of color in academia. These

challenges suggest that Black women experience acute forms of ‘gendered racism’ continuously bound within economic exploitation.

Family and (Im)Mobility

Family is an additional consideration for women of color within academia. Being partnered with an academic, with a person underemployed or unemployed, and/or having children creates additional concerns in mobility for Black women wanting to engage in the processes of academia. For instance, applying for fellowships, attending conferences, or doing field research abroad, one would have to factor in financial security for a family, the means to move a family, and also consider other members of the family. Similar to Kishonna’s narrative, Reshawna also recalls her decision to uproot her family and move from Phoenix to Boston to accept a tenure track position:

A year prior to graduating with my PhD, my husband told me that he would be willing to leave his job of 5 years and relocate to help me advance my career. It had become clear that I would not be able to secure a tenure track teaching position in Phoenix, Arizona. In March 2013, I accepted a tenure track position outside of Boston, Massachusetts and prepared to move my family. My partner and I made a house hunting visit to Boston and quickly realized that the cost of rent was extremely high and it would be a challenge to afford to live there; it would be nearly impossible to rent a place similar to our home in Phoenix. We owned our home with a manageable mortgage payment. Against my better judgement, I accepted the job and moved my husband and two daughters from our five bedroom, three bathroom pool home to a third floor apartment with a monthly rent payment double the amount of my mortgage. Our original plan was to keep the house in Arizona and rent it out, but we discovered a roof leak had caused major damage to a retaining wall while moving out. Due to the cost of the cross country move and no moving allowance we were forced to ‘short sale’ our home. We walked away from the home we built with our life savings (nearly \$100,000 down payment) and nearly 10 years of memories...just like that our wealth was gone.

Due to the difficulty of obtaining that coveted ‘tenure track’ position, many women of color have to make impossible choices to gain entry into the academy like giving up one’s home or living apart from one’s family. While in graduate school, the focus is often on finishing the degree and landing a job not on gathering the tools to accomplish in the position. Considering the small number of mentors of color, discussions regarding family life and success after graduation often do not occur. Most students of color are first-generation and believe that graduation equals success. Sadly, graduation is merely the beginning of the challenges that women of color in the academy will face.

Academic Mobility

For many first-generation academics of color the thought of being a college professor and a scholar was never a consideration growing up. Movies and television shows often feature scholars who are white and male, leaving little room to fantasize about being a Black female scholar. Without academic role models, it is difficult to plan for

success in the academy. Even when we believe we are prepared we end up in a place that is not welcoming to people of color especially Black women. This is when we learn that we lack the academic capital to succeed in a hostile environment. Academic capital is a pairing of the culture transmitted by the family with that transmitted by school, but the efficacy of the school-transmitted knowledge is dependent upon the capital the student brings to the classroom from home, which leaves the working-class student at an immediate disadvantage (and it's compounded if one is from the welfare class). Fast forward and imagine this child who has had second and third hand cultural capital and attempts to exist within the elite establishment of academia. Consider this narrative:

In recalling my first tenure track job, I was pulled to the side by a tenured Black woman after I was discussing feelings of ostracization in my department. She politely urged me to reconsider my style of clothing and way of speaking in faculty meetings. She suggested I need to 'play the part' so they would perceive that I belonged. I was baffled a bit because she rooted my negative experiences in outward appearance. But I obliged. My treatment didn't change and I explained this to her. What became clear was that I needed to uphold a particular narrative of being Black in academia that are always professionally dressed, professionally speaking, and professional behaved. My 'lower class' ways of speaking and dressing offended her and my other colleagues' sensibilities. She was unable to see past her own expectations that she couldn't even consider what I might be experiencing in a mostly white and male department. This led to more isolation and I was never able to redevelop that relationship because I didn't belong in their club (Kishonna on being 'too ghetto' for Black folks in academia).

The microaggressions experienced around 'white idealized' professional dress standards for female faculty of color can further isolate Black female faculty and add to the notion of impostor syndrome. Simple critiques and criticisms directed at our style of dress, how we talk, and the way we wear our hair can further alienate women of color from white colleagues and students (and even from our own 'bougie black' colleagues). These microinsults can have a significant impact on our sense of belonging, legitimacy and connection to the academy. Being concerned about not fitting in or not living up to the role of professor can be an added challenge, many women of color on the tenure track participate in a form of performance. An activity in which we try to become the person that we think others want us to be. However, if we decide to drop this façade and be ourselves we run the risk of further alienating ourselves.

Reshawna also shares a similar experience surrounding her 'presentation/performance of the academy' as one of few Black women on campus in Boston.

Growing up in Los Angeles, California the product of a teenage mother, I quickly learned to observe my environment, speak up for myself and fight for my place. I can say with absolute certainty, Boston is not Los Angeles. The year I spent in Boston was a major wake up call for me and my family. I was often the only person of color in the room. This included the classroom. I was the product of a public-school education but I lived a short distance from some of the most elite private schools in the nation. I did not understand the traditions nor did I adhere to the hierarchies. Many of my students and

colleagues challenged the way I dressed, wore my hair and the way I taught my classes. I was often showcased as the ‘articulate Black professor’ for purposes of diversity but ignored and silenced when I spoke about racial injustice and the need for people of color to feel included at the university. The year I was hired (along with another woman of color) a new faculty mentorship program was installed. We were told it was meant to make us feel comfortable. It further alienated us and make us feel like outsiders who needed to be micromanaged. The highlight of the year was when I attended the commencement ceremony and I was mocked for wearing my public school doctoral regalia. I was told the material was odd and it looked ‘cheap’. (jokingly of course). I immediately put myself back on the job market and the following year we relocated again. (Reshawna describing the performance of the academy)

These examples illustrate just how tough it can be being Black, Woman, and from poor and working, welfare, class backgrounds. As these examples highlight, at predominantly white institutions or in spaces emulating whiteness, Black women are often times ostracized because of their assertiveness, experience more failed relationships, and suffer from severe isolation (Jackson, 2001 p. 361).

Educational context is a significant site to explore Black women’s experiences in regard to structural oppression. In particular, Black women who are faculty center their own experiences as critical to the formation and production of alternative theories, which run counter to traditional modes of inquiry. Willis and Lewis (1999) narrate their intersectional interactions with White students and faculty members. Because racism and sexism are systematic in academia as elsewhere, the authors assert that when teaching in predominantly white institutions: ‘our experiences have taught us that these incidents are more than insensitive acts of non-thinking public or acts of ignorance or naiveté. They are part and parcel of a legendary history of oppression encountered by African American women in America’ (p. 247). The mere presence of Black women in academia (and their subsequent treatment) may shock people.

I can recall an incident that happened my first year at my current university. I had been teaching a course that ends at 1:20pm on Tuesdays. I would often end class about 10 minutes early to allow for questions. One afternoon a group of individuals (they appeared to be students) entered my classroom to set up for a meeting. This was not the first time they entered before I was done with the room. The second time this happened, I asked a member of the group to give me a few minutes to wrap up. She responded, ‘we need to set up for a meeting’. I told her that the room was mine for another ten minutes. She proceeded to argue with me about reserving the room. I had to physically approach her to let her know that she will not enter my classroom until I am done using it. (Reshawna narrating microaggressions on campus).

The combination of gendered and racial oppression creates a unique and challenging experience for Black women working and advancing in academia. In the 1969 classic essay ‘Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female,’ Frances Beal critiques white feminism for not only discounting Black women’s experiences, but overlooking systems of class-based oppression. She asserts that the double bind of racism and

sexism that Black women have historically experienced is also intertwined with economic and imperialist exploitation. In the current context, we aim to center the connectedness of these identities.

Hustlin' and Surviving in Academia

Collins (2000) argues that there is not one singular experience encompassing all women's experiences, but that women's experiences are complicated by their 'lived' experiences and situated oppressions. In other words, women's representations of themselves speak truths and how they derive at those truths should be analyzed in a manner that substantiates their being. Our daily experiences form a collective knowledge that women of color are able to understand and decipher. This code is also what instills resilience and persistence to continue to exist within academia. But at what costs? Black women's overburdened bodies have held capitalist institutions together for decades. Many of us continue to hold on because we are too stubborn to quit, admit defeat, throw in the towel, or admit we were playing an unfair game and never had a chance to win. Angela Davis (1981) argues that the capitalistic structure, which bounds Black women to ideas of domestic and public work, creates a context where Black women are often forced to use their bodies to care for families, pay for food and diminish the severity of inhumane treatment or increase safety for children. So, we often work within 'oppressive structures performing backbreaking labor and for long hours, working without or for lower pay, taking jobs where they are overqualified, not attending to health, participating in sex work, and even selling blood. The North American academic structure and its proximation to the institution of slavery as well as its particular treatment of Black women cannot be ignored' (Lomax, 2015, para. 12). Our labor in the academic cog, rooted in the corporate model depends on free and cheap racialized and gendered work. And we are stigmatized for questioning such a model and are expected to accept this status, dismissing our experiences. We are often told to 'slow down', 'wait your turn,' 'you're the lucky one,' etc. without deconstructing these statements that blame us, the victims (Ibid). Because we've been systematically relegated to the service class in the hierarchy of academia and are unfairly pitted against one another and assessed based on the productivity of the well-resourced tokens, we cannot complain. And this would signal a disruption to the rules of the game that has been created for them.

Author Bios

Kishonna L. Gray (PhD, Arizona State University) is an Assistant Professor in the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences in the New College at Arizona State University. She is also a Faculty Associate at the Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University. Dr. Gray previously served as an MLK Scholar and Visiting Professor in Women & Gender Studies and Comparative Media Studies at MIT.

Reshawna L. Chapple, PhD, LCSW is an assistant professor in the School of Social Work at the University of Central Florida. Dr. Chapple received her BSW, MSW and PhD in Justice Studies from Arizona State University. Her dissertation was titled: *Being a Deaf Woman in College is Hard. Being Black Just Adds: Understanding the*

Complexities of Intersectionality. She has worked as a social worker in the areas of mental health, crisis intervention, education and disabilities. Her areas of teaching and scholarship include critical race feminism and social justice, d/Deafness, disability studies and culturally competent social work practice. Dr. Chapple has published in a variety of interdisciplinary journals and has presented research at National and International Conferences. Dr. Chapple serves on the board of the International Association for Social Work with Groups (IASWG) and CSWE's Council on Disability and Persons with Disabilities.

Bibliography

African American Policy Forum, (2003): *A Primer on Intersectionality*, Columbia Law School, New York.

Beal, F.M. (1969): *Black Women's Manifesto; Double Jeopardy: To be Black and Female*, Retrieved from Third World Women's Alliance:
<http://www.hartfordhwp.com/archives/45a/196.html> .

Brayboy, B. M. J. (2003): 'The Implementation of Diversity in Predominantly White Colleges and Universities', *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 34, pp.72–86.

Brookfield, S. (1995): *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.

Collins, P.H. (1990): *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics*, Hyman, London.

Collins, P.H. (1998): *Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice* (vol. 7). University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

Collins, P.H. (2000): 'Gender, Black Feminism, and Black Political Economy', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 568, no.1, pp.41-53.

Crenshaw, K. (1991): 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color', *Stanford Law Review*, vol. 43, no.6, pp.1241-1299.

Crenshaw, K. (1989): 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics', *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, vol. 1, no.8, pp.139-167.

Davis, A. (1983): *Women, Race and Class*, Vintage, New York.

Feagin, J.R., Vera, H. and Imani, N. (1996): *The Agony of Education: Black Students at White Colleges and Universities*, Routledge, New York.

Harris-Perry, M.V. (2011): *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America*. Yale University Press, New Haven.

hooks, b., 1986. Talking back. *Discourse*, pp.123-128.

‘Hustle’ (7) 2017, *Urban Dictionary*, accessed 16 December 2017, www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Hustle.

Jackson, L. R. (2001). The interaction of race and gender in African American women's experiences of self and other at a predominately white women's college. In D. Pope Davis & H. L. K. Coleman (Eds.), *The Intersection of Race, Class, and Gender in Multicultural Counseling* (pp. 49-70). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Lomax, T.A. (2015): ‘Strauss-Kahn, Domestic Immigrants and Money, Power, Respect’, *JENdA: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies*.

Parker, L. and Lynn, M. (2002): ‘What’s Race Got to Do With It? Critical Race Theory’s Conflicts with and Connections to Qualitative Research Methodology and Epistemology’, *Qualitative Inquiry*, vol.8, no.1, pp.7-22.

Turner, C. S. V. (2002): ‘Women of Color in Academe: Living with Multiple Marginality’, *The Journal of Higher Education*, vol.73, pp.74–93.

Turner, C. S. V., González, J., & Wood, J. L. (2008): ‘Faculty of Color in Academe: What 20 Years of Literature Tells Us’, *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, vol.1, pp.139–168.

Turner, C.S.V. and Myers, S.L. (2000): *Faculty of Color in Academe: Bittersweet Success*, Allyn & Bacon, Massachusetts.

TuSmith, B., & Reddy, M. (2002): *Race in the College Classroom: Pedagogy and Politics*, Rutgers University Press, Piscataway, NJ.

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2017): *The Condition of Education 2017* (NCES 2017-144), https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_csc.asp

Warnock, D.M. (2016): ‘Paradise Lost? Patterns and Precarity in Working class Academic Narratives’, *Journal of Working-Class Studies*, vol.1, no.1, pp.28-44.

Willis, A. I., & Lewis, K. C. (1999): ‘Our Known Everydayness: Beyond a Response to White Privilege’, *Urban Education*, vol. 34, no.2, pp. 245-262.

Insider Without: Journey across the Working-Class Academic Arc

Kim A. Case, University of Houston-Clear Lake

Abstract

Patricia Hill Collins (1986) labels herself as an ‘outsider within’ due to her intersectional standpoint as a Black woman sociology professor in the ivory tower. In contrast to the ‘outsider within’ lens, I theorize my own social location as an ‘*insider without*’ due to a complex matrix of identities within the classed academic cultural context. Using counter storytelling, I explore my insider without location through analysis of my journey across the ‘*working-class academic arc*.’ In the working-class academic arc described below, I apply intersectional theory (Collins 1990; Crenshaw 1989) by connecting my personal experiences with existing working-class studies scholarship. The arc process culminates in my development of critical intersectional class consciousness and actions of resistance. By introducing this three-phase arc, I hope to raise awareness of the invisible academic class culture which invalidates working-class ways of being and knowledge production.

Keywords

Insider without, working class academic, class consciousness, class culture, intersectionality, resistance, rejecting respectability, reclaiming identity

When I left Knoxville, Tennessee and Best Buy retail life for the last time (heading to graduate school), I thought my southern, Podunk accent was already gone. My dad made a habit of calling me a yankee or a valley girl because I did not talk like his mountain-folk family. Driving into Ohio with my fiancé, I rounded an interstate 75 curve and was knocked out by the Cincinnati skyline ahead of us. All of the possibilities of a better life hit me like a ton of bricks. This was my chance to move from economic instability to middle-class security. I believed my graduate education held these promises.

During my first week in graduate school with seventeen cohort peers, it became depressingly clear that my hillbilly accent was still ever-present. You see, context. To those growing up surrounded by non-hillbillies, my ‘refined’ (in my mind) southern accent was still thick as molasses. No doubt many of them were able to look past the southern drawl, but others associated my colorful Dixie expressions with less than stellar intelligence. While reading texts for classes, I often came across words on the written page that I had never seen before on paper. Sometimes I did not know how to pronounce them even if I knew the meaning. Knowing the word ‘façade’ by sound (fuh-sahd) did not prevent me from pronouncing it ‘fay-cayde’ the first time I witnessed the word in print. In the last few years, my reading of works by working-

class academics revealed similar experiences of pronunciation and grammar embarrassment (Garger 1995; Phillips 1995).

Although keenly aware of the impact of my biscuits and gravy accent, I somehow failed to fully recognize that middle-class culture was operating as the normative code within academia. Working-class studies scholars consistently complicate conceptualizations of class as more than income (Lee 2017). Barbara Jensen (2012) theorized class as culture and therefore more complex than a set of financial markers. In Jensen's view, class culture serves as the medium to reproduce inequality across class divides. Given working-class studies' appropriate refusal to define working class, Linkon and Russo (2016) urged scholars to clarify how they define class. I define social class as a way of being, relating, and thinking that culminates in a shared cultural experience often invisible to the privileged and the marginalized. As others noted, class culture influences speech and expression, food preferences, hobbies, clothing and presentation, work ethic, physical movement, values, and much more (Attfield 2016; Bettie 2014; Gardner 1993; Jensen 2012; Warnock 2016). In consideration of the impact of class oppression, I also endorse Langston's (1993) framing of class as the range of choices available in life.

In her well-known description of experiences in the academy, Patricia Hill Collins (1986) labeled herself as an 'outsider within' due to her intersectional standpoint as a Black woman sociology professor in the ivory tower. Somewhat in contrast to the outsider within lens, I theorize my own social location as an '*insider without*' due to a complex and interactive matrix of identities within the academic cultural context. For example, my privileged whiteness and heterosexuality afford me presumed *insider* status as a professor because academic spaces operate with white cultural standards and heterosexual norms at the center. At the same time, my working-class body and habitus betray me as an accidental insider who behaves *without* proper middle-class manners, attire, communication style, and competitive individualism. Quite simply, I exist as a professional *insider*, yet simultaneously *without* middle-class cultural performativity or habitus (Lehmann 2013).

Below, I explore my *insider without* location through personal narrative, counter storytelling, and analysis of my journey across what I call the '*working-class academic arc*.' In the working-class academic arc described below, I apply intersectional theory (Cole 2009; Collins 1990; Crenshaw 1989; Dill & Zambrana 2009) by connecting my personal experiences with existing working-class studies scholarship. The arc process culminates in development of critical intersectional class consciousness characterized by reclaiming working-class identity, advocating for working-class perspectives from a strengths perspective, and both naming and resisting middle-class cultural norms in academia. By introducing this arc model, I hope to inform (warn) working-class scholars about the invisible (to the middle-class) nature of academic class culture which operates just below the surface to invalidate and eradicate our shared ways of being and knowledge production. In other words, I have attempted to write the paper I wish I had read in graduate school that would alert me to the middle-class cultural values and codes of behavior that perpetually define me as without.

As bell hooks openly reported in *Where We Stand: Class Matters* (2000), she felt scared and ill-equipped writing about class for the first time. The prospect of writing

about my personal experiences of class brings up similar emotions for me because my training in psychology and positivist science taught me the personal and the scientific are mutually exclusive and should be kept in distinct and separate locations (as if such a goal were possible). Even though my interdisciplinary training in feminist theory, critical race theory, and queer theory clearly challenged such traditional perspectives, writing about personally painful and marginalizing moments paint me into a particularly vulnerable corner. My previous scholarship's almost exclusive focus on systemic inequality where I carry privilege reveals my discomfort with tackling my own oppression based on sex, class, and religious identity. Regardless of my flawed disciplinary training and emotional avoidance of my marginalization, resisting the dominant narrative requires counter storytelling so well utilized by working-class academics who persevered through the emotional labor of writing about class (Fay & Tokarczyk 1993; hooks 2000; LeCourt & Napaleone 2010). Though this work feels self-indulgent and unknown, my goals are to raise awareness and create new spaces for development of critical intersectional class consciousness among both working-class and middle-class academics.

As contextual background, and sometimes foreground, of my academic life, I provide information here about three state universities where I taught over the last seventeen years. The institutions include an urban research university in the Midwest, a smaller teaching-focused university in Kentucky, and a Master's comprehensive Hispanic-Serving institution in Texas. The varied interactions and cultural miscommunications I offer as illustrations in this paper occurred within university settings as well as in academic spaces such as conferences and other professional meetings. Therefore, no assumptions should be made about where these examples took place. In addition, I excluded names, titles, and specific indicators that might reveal the identity of the guilty and the innocent. At the same time, I claim these experiences and perspectives as my own and am more than cognizant of alternative viewpoints as held by the middle-class academics who engaged in the interactions I describe.

The Working-Class Academic Arc: Phase One, Escaping Home through Education

Phase One of the Working-Class Academic Arc encompasses the educational experiences of working-class students and the clear societal message that individual academic merit earns the reward of economic, and often geographic, escape from the working class or working poor. Although no one in the memory of my extended family had ever attended college and my parents were first-generation high school graduates, my mother trained me early and often that education was my way out of facing bankruptcy, living paycheck to paycheck, and choosing between paying the electricity or the water bill. More specifically, she regularly reminded me that my education was top priority because I could never depend on a man to pay my rent. Mom made a specific point of never saying '*if* you go to college.' Instead, she consistently talked about '*when*' I would go to college in the future, phrasing that communicated the path was not optional. My grandmother, Betty Sue, left school after third grade and her sister left eighth grade to work. My grandparents worked in furniture staining and sewing factories Levi Strauss and Breezy Wynn. In fact, my grandmother used to joke that she put her hand down all of the University of Tennessee Volunteer football players' pants...because she expertly sewed every single lace eyelet into their athletic gear. Her naughty sense of humor aside, my

grandmother and great aunt came home every day from Levi with blue hands covered in dye. By the time I began higher education as an undergraduate, my mother's vocational Licensed Practical Nurse degree was the most education anyone had ever achieved in my family. She later earned her Registered Nurse associates degree at the age of 54. So off I went to earn a doctoral degree even though I had zero clue what that meant.

I grew up with the consistent message that education provides the only escape for working-class kids chasing the middle-class dream (Warnock 2016). As Franschelli, Evans, and Schoon (2016) noted, this framing of working-class families, communities, and culture as something to run away from and shed must be further problematized. Phase One involves eroding working-class identity through promotion of the myth of meritocracy and higher education as the magical way out. At the same time, these persistent cultural messages equated me, my generous and caring family, and my community's values of hard work and honesty with rejection and what Loveday (2015) calls 'fugivity.' The higher education enterprise trained me to reject my home and my working-class habitus (Christopher 1995; Hurst & Nenga 2016) and hide or alter my identity (LeCourt & Napaleone 2010). As hooks warns, leaving your past behind is the 'price of the ticket' (2000, p. 36) for success within higher education which requires severing 'ties to community and kin' (hooks 1993, p. 108).

'Education destroys something'

While I was learning to retrain myself to fit middle-class norms, my family struggled to comprehend my graduate education, asking me 'are you *still* in college?' This common experience echoes throughout the reflections of several working-class scholars (Charlip 1995; Christopher 1995; Langston 1993; Law 1995) feeling the pain of separation. Every visit to the local White Store grocery ended with my grandmother telling the cashier that I was in school to be a medical doctor (I was in a Ph.D. program). These encounters embarrassed me when I should have been grateful to my gramma for taking pride in my accomplishments, however inaccurate. I could not articulate this at the time, but her public displays of misunderstanding my education triggered feelings of class stigma within me. Proud to perform my middle-class educational status, I corrected my family's grammar countless times during these years. Jensen (2012) mentions correcting her parents' English as an example of rejection of working-class origins. When Law's mother declared that 'education destroys something' (1995, p. 1), she uttered the perfect description of my complicity in allowing education to destroy the respect, patience, pride, and loyalty my family and broader community deserved.

In contrast to my habits of correcting grammar, I also visited home with a sense that I should downplay my education and avoid being perceived as uppity or too smart. To that end, I engaged in some level of code-switching by leaving academic terms and concepts at the door when returning home. Despite my efforts, I once faced blank stares among friends after using the word 'tangential.' I had become accustomed to its use in academia and mistakenly generalized that to people outside the ivory tower. In professional settings, I switched back to middle-class codes, answering, 'I'm well' (not 'I'm good') when colleagues asked me how I am doing. Among faculty, I made sure not to use southern grammar such as 'ain't' or 'y'all' or 'fixin' to.' Much of this

code-switching occurred without my awareness until I began to unpack my own internalized classism.

To avoid the stigma associated with my class roots, I developed the internalized classism necessary to fully participate in higher education's demand to change myself, and its demand that I not challenge the system that requires this habitus transformation (Loveday 2015). I learned not to tell middle-class academics that I grew up in a trailer, or mobile home for people not well-versed in Southern speak. I learned to keep silent about my relatives who served time in prison, as middle-class peers often reacted in ways that hinted at perceiving me as guilty by association. In addition, I caught on quick that spray cheese on Ritz crackers and screw-top wine result in twisted middle-class faces and ridiculing laughter at social gatherings.

Voluntarily Losing My Voice

My opening anecdote about working hard to rid myself of stigma via accent erasure reflects my efforts to conform to middle-class habitus of standard English, 'the language of power and mobility' (Jensen 2012, p. 81). Habitus transformation requires not only a new vocabulary and new accent (Clancy 1997), but also constant vigilance to keep the back woods (i.e., backwards) accent at bay, for it will betray the hidden working-class academic unexpectedly (LeCourt & Napaleone 2010).

Here I was 22 years young, beginning graduate work, and terribly ashamed anew of my voice and how my people pronounced words. At that point, I made it my mission to become the most non-descript middle-American speaker of all time. Newscasters, actresses, people from the Midwest were my 'talk right' exemplars. A year later, I no longer had people asking me where I am from based on my othered voice. My students in Kentucky would ask me to slow down because I 'talk too fast' and 'sound like a northerner.' This response was music to my ears as I urged my students to 'listen faster.' They would even express surprise when I would reveal my mountain origins. Looking back on it, I am sad to say this became a point of pride for me in my own mind. This feedback reinforced that I had accomplished transformation and denial of my people and of myself. I desperately wanted to disassociate myself from those people in Appalachia (pronounced 'App- uh- latch- uh,' not 'App-uh-lāshe-uh').

For years, I tried to suppress my voice of origin, my heritage, my family, my people as a result of my internalized classism. Why does the U.S. classed educational system require us to become like 'Them' and disavow our stories in order to gain acceptance? At the time, I knew I was working for acceptance in higher education, but I did not view that work or that goal as a negative or as oppression. I viewed it as practical and necessary to get my degree. Perhaps I even viewed this neutral accent 'achievement' as a positive piece of the puzzle of earning advanced degrees. At the time, my understanding of feminist theory, women's studies coursework, critical race theory, and educational foundations, and even sociology did not cause me to take a reflective stance on how I was erasing part of myself for 'Them'. In Phase One, it never even occurred to me, not once, that I should embrace my own voice and just speak like me. That came much later.

Overall, graduate school was less about my course work, and more about striving for respectability (Attfield 2016) under the institutional gaze of middle-class academia. This process of transformation required conscious effort to adjust self-presentation to minimize perceptions of my unacceptable former self and thus avoid the stigma of working-class membership (Lehmann, 2013). In essence, graduate culture provided the site for my personal battle to change my habitus (Hurst & Nenga 2016). Although I consciously sought additional training in women's studies, critical race theory, sociology, and intersectional theory within courses with Patricia Hill Collins, I did not recognize leaving my past behind as oppression, or as an imposed demand of academia, because I perpetuated deficit-model critiques of the working class without attention to systemic analyses or awareness that middle-class cultural norms defined me as without. These higher education rules, schemas, and unwritten norms rest on assumed codes shared by the middle-class and often upper class (Stephens et al. 2012; Jury et al. 2017; Warnock & Appell 2012). It took me another 13 years to acknowledge the additional burden of cultural taxation, draining emotional labor, and loss of time involved in the working-class academic journey to respectability (LeCourt & Napaleone 2010; Lee 2017; Warnock & Appell 2012). My motivation stemmed from a strong desire for a sense of belonging (Ostrove & Long 2007), as well as avoidance of stigma and alienation which working-class students experience at higher levels (Lee 2017). Honestly, I did what I knew I must to survive, graduate, and obtain an academic position.

Phase Two: Insider Without...A Decoder Ring

Phase Two of the Working-Class Academic Arc was characterized by the belief that I had made it, coupled with continued efforts to maintain respectability and acquire more skills to build my middle-class habitus toolkit. Unaware of my 'mark of difference' (LeCourt & Napaleone 2010), my entrance into faculty positions paralleled my naïve assumption that my middle-class performativity equated being perceived as middle-class. At the same time, many of my most salient identities granted me *insider* access as a member of the privileged and normative groups within higher education. My insider white, heterosexual, able-bodied, non-transgender/cisgender, and U.S. citizen privileges automatically offered me a certain level of respect, belonging, and cultural capital in academic spaces that masked the impact my working-class status. My insider degree, profession, income, and tenure-track position left me without awareness of my egregious violations of middle-class norms. In contrast to Patricia Hill Collins' (1986) outsider within location in academia as a woman of color, my position could be summarized as the *insider without* (e.g., without middle-class habitus).

Awareness of 'Without' Status

Of course, male privilege in the academy made it abundantly clear that my presence violated androcentric spaces as I was without the right to speak from expertise or debate a man's argument. Due to imposter syndrome as a woman in academia and subconscious knowledge of lacking class respectability, I typically worked seven days a week during my six years pre-tenure. Warnock (2016) connected working-class origins to feeling like a fraud and inferior to middle-class colleagues, as well as feeling the continuous need to prove legitimacy. I witnessed male faculty belittle sexual harassment laws as setting men up to be falsely accused and was directly asked

whether ‘women’s studies is only about male bashing.’ In fact, a white male faculty member clarified that his offer to treat me to lunch required ‘the full monty’ (i.e., no clothing) during the exact hour he was skipping the department’s required sexual harassment training. As a female professor, experiences of being interrupted and talked over by men, expected to smile and nod as men pontificate on the merits of a policy, and yelled at in meetings when men feel threatened are all unfortunately common for women faculty, especially women of color. My training in women’s studies and connections with feminist academic mentors provided the tools for critical analysis of gender in these moments. When a white male faculty member suggested that the secretaries (all white women) wash dishes for faculty, I perceived this as sexism alone. However, classism was also at play in the assumption that staff should serve the elite professors with no time for the menial task of soaping up a coffee mug. Although my intersectional gendered lens included analyses of race, sexuality, and gender identity, my lens failed to analyze social class as a possible influence on my experiences of microaggressions.

During Phase Two, my class awareness of being *without*, centered on obvious financial gaps between me and my colleagues such as my student loan debt vs. their lavish vacations, inheritances, vacation homes, savings accounts, and spouses making six-figure salaries. Student debt alone lingers as a hidden injury (Warnock 2016) that working-class academics face for decades into their faculty careers. For example, my undergraduate student loans somehow resulted in monthly payments until age 50 which adds up to 29 years of payments! These obvious financial burdens, absent for my middle-class peers, defined my semi-class conscious existence while the impact of class on my academic cultural experiences remained invisible to me. Although I did not yet recognize dislocation from my family as class-related, being without my family caused deep pain and distress. Middle-class habitus within education demands what Schwalbe (1995) called awayward mobility. This geographical separation from working-class families results in decreased communication separation and eventually losing touch (Lang 1995). The aptly titled, *This Place so Far From Home* (Dews & Law 1995), spoke to not only the cultural gap for working-class academics, but also the geographic displacement and isolation from family. In contrast, middle-class families expect moving away for education and career opportunities and possess the funds and vacation benefits for regular travel to visit family (Lang 1995). Upon leaving Tennessee for graduate school in 1998, I was clueless that it would be 16 years before I spent another holiday season with my mom or my family. Without extra cash for travel, I also had a spouse working in retail, which required him to work on 100% of the days around Thanksgiving and December 25. This retail rule prevented travel to see family unless we made the full 430 mile round trip all on Thanksgiving or Christmas day. Middle-class colleagues rarely had employment connections to retail service that demand the job be prioritized over time with family.

Involuntarily Losing My Middle-Class Voice

For the working-class academic, Phase Two includes devoting more energy to practicing middle-class habitus acquired in Phase One and defending the self against being perceived as working class. Despite all that effort to acquire my new respectability accent, moving to Texas for the prized tenure-track job certainly harmed my attempts to avoid sounding southern. Within just a few months of teaching in Houston, my southern accent was creeping back without my awareness.

Soaking in a tub of southern, my hillbilly brain jumped at the chance to absorb what it knows as home. Of course none of this was apparent to me until I started going to conferences across the nation and being asked about my southern accent. The first few times this happened, I was shocked, terrified, and embarrassed. I was even apologetic explaining that Texas messed me up after all I had done to conceal my identity. In Phase Two, I held on to the shame I felt for my own voice and the poetic Dolly Parton accents of my mountain origins. In fact, I grew up in Dolly's hometown clogging (dancing) at Dollywood, so her voice provides the perfect exemplar for the sounds of my people.

Insider Without: Working-Class Violations of Middle-Class Codes

My perception of my social location among the professoriate was that of an insider without the same financial freedom and family connection of my colleagues. Working-class studies narratives refer to the dual nature (Gardner 1993) of working-class academic identity, feeling nowhere at home (Overall 1995), and a borderline state as neither here nor there (Cappello 1995). In my borderline class existence, I unwittingly violated hidden middle-class culture while simultaneously believing I achieved an *insider* position. Early in my career, I received unsolicited feedback from a senior female faculty member that perfectly illustrated the use of middle-class respectability as a tool for controlling working-class bodies (Attfield 2016). After directly vocalizing my support for more degree flexibility for students, she advised me to keep my mouth shut because people are not ready to hear from a strong, opinionated woman. Although she referenced only sexism as the issue at hand, the intersection of my working-class habitus and my marginalized location as a woman informed this advice to silence myself for acceptance in academia. In contrast to how I am read by (upper) middle-class academics as too direct (i.e., difficult, unprofessional), I consistently witness middle-class women speaking in soft, measured, apologetic voices responded to with deference and respect as they perform idealized constructions of classed femininity. The gender and class intersections define me as violating middle-class gender roles that expect women to behave like a proper little lady.

Despite my training and scholarship analyzing complex systems of oppression within the matrix of domination (Collins 1990) and awareness of class inequalities, I had a long way to go on the class-consciousness continuum. Believing in the promise of education as the path to the middle-class, I lacked awareness of the institutional gaze of class (LeCourt & Napaleone 2010) that constructed me as *without*. Higher education typically involves an assumption that all faculty originate from the middle (or upper) class (Gardner 1993; Lee 2017), all the while denying that faculty are classed beings (Lee 2017). The widespread assumption that a doctoral degree erases the prior self renders working-class faculty like me invisible (Gardner 1993; Phillips 1995). This psychology of invisibility (Fryberg & Townsend 2008; Rios & Stewart 2013) perpetuates microaggressions that both deny the impact of class inequality and normalize the experiences and culture of the elite (Lee 2017).

Having no middle-class culture decoder ring bestowed on me at my doctoral hooding ceremony, my mark of difference (LeCourt & Napaleone 2010) as a working-class body in an elite profession for the middle and upper middle-class remained invisible to me. Social class operates at complex levels continually reproduced and maintained

in academic social spaces, ever present in our communication styles, emotions, and body language (LeCourt & Napaleone 2010). Education falsely promises middle-class acceptance and passing for those who distance themselves from working-class origins, but later find themselves unable to shed the marginalized membership as classed outsiders (Lehmann 2013). The false promise lies in the assumption and myth that income equals class status, an extreme over-simplification of social class. Overall (1995) acknowledges she toned down her working-class culture expressiveness to avoid colleagues labeling her as unprofessional, but I find that no amount of shifting the self or assimilating to middle-class mythical norms (Lorde 1984) will ever earn full acceptance for working-class academics. And at what cost would this acceptance be awarded?

My severe lack of awareness of middle-class cultural capital (Warnock 2016) resulted from being *without* access to working-class academics' narratives or mentors. No decoder ring in sight, I remained *without* the couth to avoid talking about the financial impact of cutting faculty travel funds and years without merit raises. Even worse, I openly talked about who faced the greatest negative impact due to these institutional factors, first-generation faculty from working-class families. When I stressed about zero or low raises, middle-class colleagues viewed me as greedy and trying to get more than others. They did not recognize that raises mean more to a working-class colleague with no safety net. For my middle-class peers, no raise might be a disappointment, but it will never mean they cannot get the car fixed, go on a vacation, pay a medical bill, or pay down a credit card currently racking up interest. For me, years without raises or suddenly cutting summer pay for teaching immediately calls my financial security into question. Despite these classed contexts, verbalizing my concerns caused middle-class discomfort and signaled that my direct and open discussions of income are viewed as hostile violations of the hidden code.

The financial and cultural disparities faced by working-class faculty and students remain invisible to middle-class faculty. More specifically, this lack of awareness of the challenges and realities faced by working-class students perpetuates an environment that advantages students from middle- and upper-middle-class backgrounds. For example, working-class students rarely receive the hidden curriculum (Case et al. 2014; Warnock & Appel 2012) that passes from faculty to students during informal interactions (e.g., office hours, chatting after class). As a student, I always assumed I should not approach professors, ask for extensions when sick, or 'bother' them in their offices. Privileged students understand they are welcome to approach faculty and have access to their mentoring, while many working-class students leave class and go directly to low-paying jobs that prevent them from engaging with professors outside of scheduled class time. Middle-class faculty may not consider the extreme financial burden of textbooks that cost over \$100 each or assigning projects that require students to purchase \$50 worth of poster boards and craft supplies. As a working-class faculty member *insider*, I often bring up how faculty might work collectively to address these group disparities and social injustice, thus invoking values of community and interdependence. My calls for working-class perspective-taking, violate higher education's middle-class cultural norms that center independence and individualism, thus marginalizing interdependence and communal values (Stephens et al. 2012). Of course, I recognized academic individualist norms as white, male, and Western cultural values, but somehow neglected to identify them as intricately tied to social class.

Even within feminist academic circles, where I assumed critical analyses of systems of oppression were encouraged, my behaviors met unstated disapproval by middle-class academics ‘who never said what they actually meant or felt’ (LaPaglia 1995, p. 177). Thinking of myself as an insider in feminist spaces openly proclaimed as ‘safe’ by white middle-class academic women, I operated *without* middle-class habitus to fully achieve the acceptance and respect required to effectively participate in decision-making processes. For example, when I attempted to advocate for faculty without affordable childcare during the holidays, suggesting we not require meetings during those semester breaks, an upper-middle-class faculty member scoffed, rolled her eyes, and emphatically declared the claim of no childcare was inaccurate. In this moment, all faculty financial situations and childcare support were framed as equal and adequate, denying class diversity among the faculty and refusing to acknowledge how institutional practices might negatively impact working-class faculty.

Feminist academic spaces promote critiques of gender, and to some extent race, sexuality, and gender identity, but react to the taboo of discussing class/classism with guilt and defensiveness (Mahony & Zmroczek 1997). In contrast, socialist feminist scholars such as Angela Davis, Michelle Fine, Lois Weis, Heidi Hartmann, and Valerie Walkerdine challenge this taboo, but the neglect of social class remains. hooks (2000) shared her story of being misread as rude for asking middle-class colleagues the cost of material possessions. This classed cultural norm against sharing financial information protects those who have more from revealing their economic realities (hooks 2000). Lee (2017) argued that liberal middle-class faculty participate in reproduction of class stigma, a description applicable to my interactions with many, though not all, faculty claiming feminist identity.

These moments of cross-class *communication slippage* occur each time my working-class cultural ways of being crash into middle-class academic expectations that I behave according to their standards and values. LeCourt and Napaleone (2010) wrote about their own encounters with cross-class miscommunication that resulted in being labeled as emotional, defensive, or aggressive. I personally witnessed working-class women academics being described by middle-class faculty as ‘bossy’ for providing solicited advice and as ‘difficult to work with’ for expressing views divergent from their supervisor’s views on an issue. Haney (2016) identified cultural differences among working-class faculty such as frustration with following stuffy parliamentary procedures created by the upper class. When I expressed my impatience with over-baked discussions with no plan of action and endless layers of unnecessary bureaucracy, middle-class academics misread my intentions, my emotions, and my thinking. Class dynamics shape faculty daily encounters (Lee 2017) and inevitably create miscommunications that harm only working-class academics, judged negatively for being *without* the proper behaviors and values that middle-class culture endorses.

Phase Three: Critical Intersectional Class Consciousness

For the small group of working-class academics that make it to Phase Three, this stage is characterized by development of critical intersectional class consciousness, (re)claiming working-class identity, recognizing strengths of working-class culture, as well as resisting oppression and rejecting respectability. In my view, this phase

provides healing through eye-opening realizations and pathways for embracing the previously tenuous position of feeling alienated from both home and profession. After I shared the writing of several working-class scholars with a colleague from a similar background, she replied that reading these personal narratives was ‘like having a veil lifted,’ making her ‘brain hurt, but in a good way.’ In Phase Three, I sought out working-class studies scholarship, which allowed me to finally turn critical attention to my previously invisible marginalization.

Intersectional Theory and Class Consciousness

As I mentioned earlier, my whiteness, along with many privileged identities, often masks my working-class roots, rendering my classed injuries invisible to me and my academic colleagues (Haney 2016; LeCourt & Napaleone 2010; Smith et al. 2016). Reynolds (1997) identified the tendency to conflate African American identity with working-class status and whiteness with middle-class. Despite my own research on privilege and systemic oppression, I failed to reflect on my classed interactions and negative consequences of being the *insider without*. Over the last few years, my scholarship became more focused on intersectional theory and application within psychology and intersectional approaches to teaching. While completing my book on intersectional pedagogy (Case 2017), I attended the 2016 working-class studies conference at Collin College in Texas and attended Sherry Linkon’s keynote talk. The proximity in timing of these events followed by reading the first issue of the *Journal of Working-Class Studies* (Attfield & Giuffre 2016) inspired further reading that expanded my critical intersectional class consciousness.

Scholars of working-class studies repeatedly called for infusing intersectional theory to complicate critical class analyses (Linkon & Russo 2016; Roediger 2005; Russo & Linkon 2005). These recommendations typically pointed out that working-class subjectivities are inherently intersectional (LeCourt & Napaleone 2010) and must critically analyze the impact of race, gender, sexuality, and more. In contrast to these calls for my (non-existent) class analysis to incorporate intersectionality, my intersectionality needed to incorporate class analysis. The main theoretical tenets that I applied to my intersectional pedagogy model (Case 2017) advanced my own critical class consciousness: promoting power analysis, analyzing systemic privilege and oppression, centering the voices of the marginalized (e.g., counter storytelling), and taking action for social justice.

(Re)Claiming Working-Class Identity

Despite the fact that my critical intersectional class consciousness developed after I became full professor, I reclaimed my working-class identity while acknowledging my partial middle-class privilege. My first step in this reclamation required unlearning internalized classism and refusing to support stigma aimed at poor and working-class folks. Still feeling a pull to my Tennessee past as an Appalachian clogger, I joined an exhibition dance team called the Collective Sound Cloggers, and we perform all over Texas and at national conventions. The two-hour practice sessions each week take me fully out of my academic perspective and shut down all scholarly analyses. The women on my team remind me of my family and give me the chance to stay connected to people outside of the ivory tower. This outlet provides an avenue to embrace my roots and return to my working-class habitus. Internalizing the

middle-class gaze, I used to feel uncomfortable and judgmental when family members wore blue jeans to weddings and funerals. In Phase Three, I recognized jeans as perhaps the best and cleanest clothing option that a coal miner or construction worker owns, not signs of disrespect or bad manners.

Students should be exposed to the real me and the open identity of their professors. If we want students to feel they belong, working-class faculty must stop pretending and passing. By reclaiming my voice and fried okra accent, I hope I can serve as an example of a southern girl who breaks stereotypes. My accent does not need to change, academia and the systems that perpetuate classism need to change. By hiding and altering myself in hopes of passing as middle-class, I lost a piece of my working-class habitus. Overall (1995) and hooks (2000) discussed their own conscious efforts to stay connected to the places of their roots and maintain working-class habitus such as writing for accessibility rather than promoting the classed culture of academic jargon. Piper (1995) argued that education convinces working-class students something is wrong with us and our families, but we must confidently engage with working-class culture from a strengths perspective.

Working-Class Culture as Strength

Due to my newfound critical intersectional class consciousness, Phase Three includes overdue critique of the deficit model judgment of working-class people as inferior, backwards, ignorant, and lacking the idealized middle-class cultural habitus. Attfield (2016) rejected the standard viewpoint from higher education that being born into the working class is something to overcome. Jensen (2012) and Warnock (2016) urged moving away from the deficit model to reframe working-class culture and values as strengths that contribute positively to the academic environment. This approach requires turning the critical eye away from working-class people as problematic and toward critique of the culture of academia and institutional systems that perpetuate these negative ideas. This approach does not endorse working-class individuals or shared cultural norms as perfect, but calls for critique of the dominant and privileged middle-class cultural norms that continue to stigmatize and oppress others. Within this new critical analysis, my working-class *without*s described in Phase Two become strengths when recognized, claimed, valued, and wielded to contribute diverse insights and challenge power structures.

Class conscious working-class faculty who openly share their identity also provide models and create less hostile campuses for working-class students (Stricker 2011). We also offer unique insights into the lives of working-class and first-generation students facing more interference in their educational paths than middle- and upper-class students (Stricker 2011). In terms of my approach to faculty duties, Phase Three made me aware of working-class influence on my internal drive to do applied research, teaching, and service. During my doctoral program interview, I expressed my need to engage in applied scholarship to solve social problems instead of conducting studies that collect dust in a journal on a library shelf. I need to produce something relevant and practical for reducing prejudice, raising privilege awareness, or facilitating learning. Haney (2016) identified working class roots as the reason he found non-applied research problematic. For me, my family valued creating and doing, not just talking about an issue, and encouraged an incredible work ethic that pushes me to do more than what is expected. Stricker (2011) also argued working-

class faculty ask different questions than middle-class faculty, a strength that contributes to broader perspectives in the pursuit of quality scholarship.

My class culture taught me to help out anyone in need, give even when I have nothing to give, cheer for the underdog, and relieve suffering above all else. These working-class values of selfless sharing and caring directly influenced my anti-racism advocacy and my ally work with sexual minorities and transgender communities. This working-class strength ingrained social justice morals that prevent me from remaining silent when I witness social inequalities being perpetuated within academic spaces. I find myself *without* the ability to prioritize middle-class comfort above exposure of injustice. Including more working-class faculty who bring these cultural values into higher education will result in more complex considerations of social justice. If the academy includes more diversity, default assumptions are more likely to get questioned versus automatically accepted. Daukas (2006) pointed out people from diverse social backgrounds ask different questions and notice previously hidden patterns. During a research talk that involved offering Saturday workshops for community members, I noticed the speaker describing the research team's confusion as to why the targeted attendees did not show. She declared that given the workshops were held on Saturday morning, the community members were not at work, so they were unclear about the cause of the low attendance. As a working-class woman, I immediately thought of all of the people in this low income, underserved area spending Saturday at their service jobs and blue-collar jobs, or sleeping after working the night shift. Many of these individuals undoubtedly have two to three jobs trying to make ends meet. Jobs such as cleaning offices, cooking food, serving food, selling clothing, painting homes, mowing lawns occur on all days of the week and continue throughout the weekend. Drawing from the strengths of working-class perspectives, this question of workshop absence would be quickly answered.

Resistance and Rejecting Respectability

With critical intersectional class consciousness in Phase Three, working-class faculty begin to reclaim roots as our most powerful resource (hooks 1993) in challenging middle-class norms and exposing invisible cultural values. In Phase Three, working-class faculty act as advocates for making hidden class mobility injuries known and resisting cultural reproduction of these injuries (Franceschelli et al. 2016; Overall 1995). As 'active agents rather than passive subjects' (Sowinska 1993, p. 149), working-class academics insist on working-class inclusion while interrupting and making visible the middle-class performances that create injustice. LeCourt and Napaleone (2010) argued that through deliberate acts of class transgression, faculty might achieve performance of working-class subjectivities, but face perceptions of violating academic norms. Attfield (2016) described scholar Lisa McKenzie as unapologetically working class, a clear rejection of respectability politics. However, when working-class transgressions reject respectability and critique middle-class culture performance, the system will work to undermine the credibility of those seeking to expose the invisible (Attfield 2016). The academy needs more openly working-class faculty, even though this openness may present risk (LeCourt & Napaleone 2010).

Resistance and deliberate acts of transgression help expose middle-class norms and make working-class faculty visible in academia. Resistance called me to write this

paper despite strong middle-class messages that I should hide, keep my mouth shut, and internalize the class marginalization I experienced as something I deserve. Resistance requires me to write even though I feel vulnerable and open to retaliation. If I am to reclaim my roots, I must stand up and speak out because backing down from bullies and oppressors is unacceptable in my community. Resistance means delegitimizing the deficit model that blames working-class people for their economic situation (Cappello 1995). Lee's (2017) working-class academic participants described their acts of resistance to middle-class culture such as cursing, bringing wonder bread and velveeta cheese to a potluck, and introducing oneself as a redneck. Phase Three resistance includes refusal to internalize classist judgments of my accent or language. In Phase Two, I felt embarrassed when my accent marked me as *without*. Now, I prefer to use these moments to educate my middle-class peers on working-class language and challenge the assumed superiority of middle- and upper-class pronunciation. I still frequently encounter middle-class folk who hear me saying 'pin' when I am looking for a writing utensil 'pen.' These two words are actually homonyms in my hometown, and I refuse to pronounce them with distinction.

Conclusions and Call to Action: Working-Class Inclusion in Diversity

Despite higher education diversity initiatives devoted to race and gender, which deserve continued attention and expansion, social class is very rarely acknowledged as relevant in university settings (Fay & Tokarczyk 1993; Lee 2017; Stricker 2011). The neglect of social class coupled with the assumed normativity of the middle-class leaves working-class faculty invisible in academia. To address this exclusion and strengthen diversity programs, initiatives, and policies, social class must become an equally valued aspect of these efforts (Smith et al. 2016; Vitale & Hurst 2016; Warnock 2016). Let me be clear, initiatives incorporating social class must not be implemented to the detriment of diversity initiatives addressing race and ethnicity, but should all function in support of the same goals. The strengths working-class academics bring to the professoriate offer great benefits to students, faculty, staff, and the teaching and research missions of the institutions. Therefore, attention to hiring and retaining a greater number of working-class faculty, especially those with critical class consciousness, should be fundamental to diversity goals (Lee 2017; Stricker 2011). Recruiting more working-class faculty into the academy (ivory tower) across all types of institutions may increase class awareness and strengthen higher education.

Calling for Working-Class Faculty Visibility

Arner (2016) advised junior faculty to keep working-class backgrounds hidden from the middle-class gaze of both students in the classroom and faculty colleagues. I emphatically disagree with this advice, though I understand it comes from a place of protection given the risky nature of being marked as working class. Now is the time for working-class faculty to proudly identify with the roots we were taught to deny and advocate for more visibility of social class issues on campus. Stricker (2011) called for faculty to come out as working class and use our *insider* positions to help students navigate the mystery of academic culture, and more important, that they all have a right to belong and take up space in academic environments. The current silencing of working-class perspectives begs for an influx of working-class faculty speaking out to move academic discussions away from silencing our perspectives (Stricker 2011). As Lehmann (2013) argued, openly working-class faculty serve as a

resource to working-class students as mentors and role models that illustrate belonging for those feeling excluded. Recently, several universities launched campaigns to highlight first-generation faculty on campus, such as University of California, Irvine (Lee 2017) and UC, Santa Cruz. Warnock (2016) called for more of these programs, and I suggest expanding them to explicitly promote ‘working-class’ identity, along with first-generation, although these groups overlap.

Promoting Awareness and Structural Analyses of Class

Intersectional theory demands going beyond the individual level to critical analysis of power operating at systemic, structural, institutional, and societal levels to maintain inequality (Dill & Zambrana 2009). Discussions of class experiences typically concentrated on individuals must shift to deconstruct systemic classism (Fine & Burns 2003). Within my home discipline of psychology, we need much more research by and with working-class communities. Psychology undergraduate curriculum and graduate training programs severely neglect social class at all levels. Of course, psychology also needs to move away from the notion that class is merely a demographic variable to be ‘controlled’ and set aside. Unfortunately, most disciplines could make improvements to the inclusion of social class personal experiences and structural analyses within undergraduate and graduate courses and across the curriculum. Previous campaigns to include writing across the curriculum acknowledge the importance of this skill and planned for infusion into a greater proportion of courses. To their credit, some universities and colleges have implemented initiatives promoting ‘diversity’ across the curriculum, but even these progressive initiatives tend to neglect social class. Faculty also need programs and workshops that support their professional development in understanding the impact of social class in the academy. Such opportunities speak to inclusion for working-class faculty and provide training for middle-class faculty to work as effective allies.

Author Bio

Kim A. Case, Ph.D., is Professor of Psychology at the University of Houston-Clear Lake (UHCL) where she directs the Applied Social Issues graduate degree. Her mixed-methods research examines ally behavior when encountering bias and interventions to increase understanding of intersectionality and systemic privilege, reduce prejudice, and create inclusive spaces within educational and community settings. Her pedagogical scholarship addresses diversity-course effectiveness, inclusive classroom practices, and teaching for social justice. Her book, *Deconstructing Privilege: Teaching and Learning as Allies in the Classroom* (2013), focuses on pedagogical strategies for teaching about privilege through an intersectional lens. Her second book emphasizes intersectionality pedagogy across the curriculum: *Intersectional Pedagogy: Complicating Identity and Social Justice* (2017).

The Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI) has honored Dr. Case with the Outstanding Service Award, the Michelle Alexander Scholarship and Service Award, the Outstanding Teaching and Mentoring Award, and the Innovative Teaching Award. UHCL also recognized her by awarding her two research fellowships and four university teaching awards. As both Fellow of the American

Psychological Association and Fellow of SPSSI, she served as Council member, Representative to APA Council, journal board member, Convention Program Chair, Teaching and Mentoring Chair, and Early Career Scholar Chair. Within APA Council, she served as a member of the Diversity Work Group, Women's Caucus, Ethnic Minority Caucus, Public Interest Caucus (officer), and LGBT Caucus. She is an alum of the APA Leadership Institute for Women in Psychology and served on the Executive Council of the Society for the Psychology of Women. Her blog, teaching resources, and research information can be found at www.drkimcase.com & www.facebook.com/drcasepedagogy.

Bibliography

Arner, L. (2016): 'Survival strategies for working-class women as junior faculty', in A.L. Hurst & S.K. Nenga (eds), *Working in class: Recognizing how social class shapes our academic work*, Rowman and Littlefield, USA, pp. 49-64.

Attfield, S. (2016): 'Rejecting respectability: On being unapologetically working class', *Journal of Working-Class Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 45-57.

Attfield, S. & Giuffre, L. (2016): 'Editorial: Welcome to the Journal of Working-Class Studies', *Journal of Working-Class Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 1-3.

Bettie, J. (2014): *Women without class*, University of California Press, Oakland.

Case, K. (2017): *Intersectional pedagogy: Complicating identity and social justice*, Routledge, New York.

Cappello, M. (1995): 'Useful knowledge', in C.L.B. Dews & C.L. Law (eds), *This fine place so far from home: Voices of academics from the working class*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, pp. 127-136.

Charlip, J. (1995): 'A real class act: Searching for identity in the 'classless' society', in C.L.B. Dews & C.L. Law (eds), *This fine place so far from home: Voices of academics from the working class*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, pp. 26-40.

Christopher, R. (1995): 'Carpenter's daughter' in C.L.B. Dews & C.L. Law (eds), *This fine place so far from home: Voices of academics from the working class*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, pp. 137-150.

Clancy, K. (1997): 'Academic as anarchist: Working-class lives into middle-class culture', in P. Mahony & C. Zmroczek (eds), *Class matters: Working-class women's perspectives on social class*, Taylor and Francis, Exeter, pp. 44-52.

Cole, E.R. (2009): 'Intersectionality and research in psychology', *American Psychologist*, vol. 64, no. 3, pp. 170-180.

Collins, P.H. (1986): 'Learning from the outsider within: The sociological significance of Black feminist thought', *Social Problems*, vol. 33, no. 6, pp. 14-32.

Collins, P.H. (1990): *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of power*, Routledge, New York.

Covarrubias, R. & Fryberg, S. (2015): 'Movin' on up (to college): First-generation college students' experiences with family achievement guilt', *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, vol. 21, no. 3, pp. 420-429.

Crenshaw, K. (1989): 'Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics', *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, vol. 1989, pp. 139-167.

Daukas, N. (2006): 'Epistemic trust and social location', *Episteme*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 109-124.

Dews, C.L.B. & Law, C.L. (1995): *This fine place so far from home: Voices of academics from the working class*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia.

Dill, B.T. & Zambrana, R. (2009): *Emerging intersections: Race, class, and gender in theory, policy, and practice*, Rutgers, New Brunswick, NJ.

Fay, E. & Tokarczyk, M. (1993): 'Introduction', in M. Tokarczyk & E. Fay (eds), *Working-class women in the academy: Laborers in the knowledge factory*, University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, pp. 3-24.

Fine, M. & Burns, A. (2003): 'Class notes: Toward a critical psychology of class and schooling', *Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 59, no. 4, pp. 841-859.

Franceschelli, M., Evans, K. & Schoon, I. (2016): 'A fish out of water?' The therapeutic narratives of class change', *Current Sociology*, vol. 64, no. 3, pp. 353-372.

Fryberg, S. & Townsend, S. (2008): 'The psychology of invisibility', in G. Adams et al. (eds), *Commemorating Brown: The social psychology of racism and discrimination*, American Psychological Association, Washington, DC.

Gardner, S. (1993): 'What's a nice girl like you doing in a place like this?', in M. Tokarczyk & E. Fay (eds), *Working-class women in the academy: Laborers in the knowledge factory*, University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, pp. 49-59.

Garger, S. (1995): 'Bronx syndrome', in C.L.B. Dews & C.L. Law (eds), *This fine place so far from home: Voices of academics from the working class*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, pp. 41-53.

Haney, T.J. (2016): 'We're all middle-class here': Privilege and the denial of class inequality in the Canadian professoriate', in A.L. Hurst & S.K. Nenga (eds), *Working in class: Recognizing how social class shapes our academic work*, Rowman and Littlefield, USA, pp. 141-156.

hooks, b. (1993): 'Keeping close to home: Class and education', in M. Tokarczyk & E. Fay (eds), *Working-class women in the academy: Laborers in the knowledge factory*, University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, pp. 99-111.

hooks, b. (2000): *Where we stand: Class matters*, Routledge, New York.

Hurst, A.L. & Nenga, S.K. (2016): *Working in class: Recognizing how social class shapes our academic work*, Rowman and Littlefield, USA.

Jensen, B. (2012): *Reading classes: On culture and classism in America*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca.

Jury, M. et al. (2017): 'The experience of low-SES students in higher education: Psychological barriers to success and interventions to reduce social-class inequality', *Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 73, no. 1, pp. 23-41.

Lang, D. (1995): 'The social construction of a working-class academic', in C.L.B. Dews & C.L. Law (eds), *This fine place so far from home: Voices of academics from the working class*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, pp. 159-176.

Langston, D. (1993): 'Who am I now? The politics of class identity', in M. Tokarczyk & E. Fay (eds), *Working-class women in the academy: Laborers in the knowledge factory*, University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, pp. 61-72.

LaPaglia, N. (1995): 'Working-class women as academics: Seeing in two directions, awkwardly', in C.L.B. Dews & C.L. Law (eds), *This fine place so far from home: Voices of academics from the working class*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, pp. 177-186.

Law, C.L. (1995): 'Introduction', in C.L.B. Dews & C.L. Law (eds), *This fine place so far from home: Voices of academics from the working class*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, pp. 1-10.

LeCourt, D. & Napaleone, A.R. (2010): 'Teachers with(out) class: Transgressing academic social space through working-class performances', *Pedagogy*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 81-107.

Lee, E. (2017): 'Where people like me don't belong': Faculty members from low-socioeconomic-status backgrounds', *Sociology of Education*, vol. 90, no. 3, pp. 197-212.

Lehmann, W. (2013): 'Habitus transformation and hidden injuries: Successful working-class university students', *Sociology of Education*, vol. 87, no. 1, pp. 1-17.

Linkon, S.L. & Russo, J. (2016): 'Twenty years of working-class studies: Tensions, values, and core questions', *Journal of Working-Class Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 4-13.

Lopez, I. & Legan, O. (2016): 'Controlling for class: Or the persistence of classism in psychology', in A.L. Hurst & S.K. Nenga (eds), *Working in class: Recognizing how social class shapes our academic work*, Rowman and Littlefield, USA, pp. 23-34.

Lorde, A. (1984): *Sister outsider*, Crossing Press, Freedom, CA.

Loveday, V. (2016): 'Working-class participation, middle-class aspiration? Value, upward mobility, and symbolic indebtedness in higher education', *The Sociological Review*, vol. 63, pp. 570-588.

Mahony, P. & Zmroczek, C. (1997): *Class matters: Working-class women's perspectives on social class*, Taylor and Francis, Exeter.

Ostrove, J. & Long, S. (2007): 'Social class and belonging: Implications for college adjustment', *Review of Higher Education*, vol. 30, no. 4, pp. 363-389.

Overall, C. (1995): 'Nowhere at home: Toward a phenomenology of working-class consciousness', in C.L.B. Dews & C.L. Law (eds), *This fine place so far from home: Voices of academics from the working class*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, pp. 209-220.

Phillips, D.B. (1995): 'Past voices, present speakers', in C.L.B. Dews & C.L. Law (eds), *This fine place so far from home: Voices of academics from the working class*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, pp. 221-230.

Piper, D. (1995): 'Psychology's class blindness: Investment in the status quo', in C.L.B. Dews & C.L. Law (eds), *This fine place so far from home: Voices of academics from the working class*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, pp. 286-296.

Reynolds, T. (1997): 'Class matters, 'race' matters, gender matters', in P. Mahony & C. Zmroczek (eds), *Class matters: Working-class women's perspectives on social class*, Taylor and Francis, Exeter, pp. 8-17.

Rios, D. & Stewart, A. (2013): 'Recognizing privilege by reducing invisibility: The Global Feminisms Project as a pedagogical tool', in K.A. Case (ed.), *Deconstructing privilege: Teaching and learning as allies in the classroom*, Routledge, New York, pp. 115-131.

Roediger, D. (2005): 'More than two things: The state of the art of labor history' in J. Russo & S.L. Linkon (eds), *New working-class studies*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, pp. 32-41.

Russo, J. & Linkon, S.L. (2005):, *New working-class studies*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca.

Schwalbe, M. (1995): 'The work of professing (A letter to home)', in C.L.B. Dews & C.L. Law (eds), *This fine place so far from home: Voices of academics from the working class*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, pp. 309-331.

Smith, L., Mao, S. & Deshpande, A. (2016): 'Talking across worlds': Classist microaggressions and higher education', *Journal of Poverty*, vol. 20, no. 2, pp. 127-151.

Sowinska, S. (1993): 'Yer own mutha wouldna reckonized ya: Surviving an apprenticeship in the 'knowledge factory'', in M. Tokarczyk & E. Fay (eds), *Working-*

class women in the academy: Laborers in the knowledge factory, University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, pp. 148-161.

Stephens, N. et al. (2012): 'Unseen disadvantage: How American universities' focus on independence undermines the academic performance of first-generation college students', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 102, no. 6, pp. 1178-1197.

Striker, K. (2011): 'Class consciousness and critical mass: Exploring the practice and scholarship of Academics from the working class', *Race, Gender, and Class*, vol. 18, no. 3/4, pp. 372-384.

Vitale, A. & Hurst, A. (2016): 'Academia's other diversity problem: Class in the ivory tower', *The Hampton Institute*, Accessed Dec 19th, 2017
<http://www.hamptoninstitute.org>

Warnock, D. (2016): 'Paradise lost? Patterns and precarity in working-class Academic narratives', *Journal of Working-Class Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 28-44.

Warnock, D. & Appel, S. (2012): 'Learning the unwritten rules: Working-class students in graduate school', *Innovations in Higher Education*, vol. 37, pp. 307-321.

In Class, Sharing Class: Faculty Members from Low-Socioeconomic Status Backgrounds and Status Visibility

Elizabeth Lee, Ohio University

Tonya Maynard, University of Oklahoma

Abstract

Low-Socioeconomic status (low-SES) faculty members might be well-positioned to support low-SES students. However, research suggests that there are a number of hurdles to faculty members playing such a role. In this paper, we examine low-SES background faculty members' self-described levels of support for their low-SES students, including the likelihood and means of support, how they assess which students might need support, and their reservations about engaging in this work. We show that low-SES faculty members report supporting their low-SES students, most often through direct discussions of experiences that may be shared in common and drawing on their own memories of college experiences.

Keywords

Low-socioeconomic status faculty, first-generation faculty, support for low-socioeconomic status students

Introduction

An increasing number of campuses are initiating connections between low-socioeconomic status (low-SES) faculty and low-SES students as one approach to support students in their collegiate careers. For example, campuses may tabulate lists of self-identified first-generation faculty members who are willing to speak with students about their college experiences, hold panels of first-generation faculty members, or sponsor other forms of connection (see e.g. Freeling 2015, Green 2016). These efforts connect to longstanding literatures on student retention and belonging, suggesting that faculty members can play important roles in knitting students into a college community (e.g. Astin 1993, Pike & Kuh 2005, Schreiner et al. 2011, Tinto

1987). This perspective argues that connections with faculty members are an important source of students' feelings about wellbeing on campus, their academic outcomes, and their ultimate likelihood of graduation. In particular, a number of scholars highlight the importance of connection to faculty who appear to care about and understand students' individual lives and perhaps share some common understanding with them (Booker 2016, Schreiner et al. 2011).

This perspective suggests that low-SES faculty members might be well-positioned to support low-SES students. However, research suggests that there are a number of hurdles to faculty members playing such a role. First, faculty members are often presumed to be from middle-class backgrounds (Haney 2015). Second, faculty members may face classism from other campus community members, potentially leading to a desire to keep their backgrounds private (Lee 2017). Third, administrators and faculty members themselves appear not to conceptualize faculty socioeconomic backgrounds as something important in either faculty members' own lives or as a potential resource for students (Hurst & Nenga 2016, O'Hearn 2015, Oldfield 2007). Moreover, longstanding work concerning faculty of color and female faculty members suggests that being a member of an institutionally recognized minority group often comes with expectations for greater service, at the cost of other priorities (see Cole & Griffin 2013 and Moody 2004 for reviews).

Low-income, first-generation, and working-class students—here collectively low-socioeconomic status students—fare less well across many measures of college outcomes than their middle- or upper-SES cohort-mates. Academically, they are less likely to graduate within six years and less likely to attend graduate school (Bowen, Kurzweil & Tobin 2005); socially, they are less likely to engage in extracurricular activities or to feel satisfied with their college experiences (Stuber 2009, Martin 2012). Because of patterns like these, the need for campuses to better support first-generation and low-income students has gained administrative attention 'since the early 2000s' (Wildhagen 2015. p. 287). Many college campuses are shifting from a focus on college access to a focus on understanding the challenges that students face over the years of enrollment.

In this paper, we examine low-SES background faculty members' self-described levels of support for their low-SES students, including the likelihood and means of support, how they assess which students might need support, and their reservations about engaging in this work. We show that low-SES faculty members report supporting their low-SES students, most often through direct discussions of experiences that may be shared in common and drawing on their own memories of college experiences. However, these decisions are not made lightly and respondents also described different types of reservations about their choices.

Literature: The Costs and Benefits of Authentic Support

Schreiner et al. (2011) indicate that vulnerable students, including those who are first-generation, find important sources of support from faculty and others whom they find 'authentic,' and to whom they can connect 'on [their] own level' (p. 329); by turn, faculty respondents who were successful mentors to such students spoke about how important it was to be 'genuine' with them. This finding has been mirrored by scholars focused on race and gender, who have argued that teaching and mentoring

students allow faculty members who are minoritized in their departments and/or fields to exercise ‘critical agency’ (Baez 2011, Griffin et al., 2011) in an otherwise alienating space. The work of teaching and mentoring students to whom one feels a connection may be powerful and deeply meaningful.

However, scholarship in this area has also documented the extensive ways in which those statuses shape the lives of scholars through such institutional diversity efforts and because of the predominantly white, traditionally male make-up of many departments and faculties as a whole. Hirschfield and Joseph describe a prevalent expectation for minoritized faculty members to perform labor ‘due to their membership in a historically marginalised group within their department or university, beyond that which is expected of other faculty members in the same setting’ (2012, p. 214). They note that the performance of such work is not neutral but rather may bring particular costs including reduced ‘academic productivity and social integration within an academic department or institution’ (2012, p.214). These effects are exacerbated by broader treatment within their fields or departments, such as unfair evaluations, presumptions of lower levels of scholarly competence, and lower levels of mentoring support resulting from the stigmatization and minoritization of women and people of color within academia (see Cole & Griffin 2013 and Moody 2004 for summaries).

This work suggests that faculty members from low-SES backgrounds might risk institutionalized expectations for the performance of such extra labor, what Padilla termed ‘cultural taxation’ (1994). However, there is little institutionalized acknowledgement of faculty members’ socioeconomic backgrounds or class identities (Haney 2015; Haney 2016; O’Hearn 2015; Oldfield 2007), suggesting that institutional ‘taxation’ is less possible along these lines. Several additional factors seem to call such a role into question for low-SES background faculty members. First, while faculty members themselves may maintain identities as working-class or low-income in important ways, they are understood by others to be middle to upper class, based upon their professional capacities, training, and occupational status. Indeed, training in classed spaces typically accustoms white collar professionals from low-SES backgrounds to ‘passing’ in middle or upper-class contexts and adopting at least some commonalities with affluent peers and colleagues (Granfield 1991). Thus faculty members are often assumed by students and colleagues to be from middle or upper-SES backgrounds (Haney 2015; Haney 2016; Lee 2017).

Taking on a role of supporting students as a low-SES faculty member may require clearly signaling that status or announcing one’s background. Moreover, being low-SES remains stigmatized on many campuses: negative stereotypes of low-income and working-class Americans, particularly regarding intelligence and academic capacity (Spencer & Castellano 2007) mean that just as faculty members of color are subject to racism and female faculty members to sexism, low-SES faculty members may be subject to classist commentary, assumptions, and other micro-aggressions (Haney 2015; Haney 2017; Lee 2017). However, low-SES faculty members may have a greater capacity to opt out of this possibility by passing as middle class. While female faculty members and faculty members of color are unlikely to be able to do so, low-SES faculty members may keep their marked status hidden and private if they choose.

Given the presumption of middle-class status based on faculty members' occupations, professors from low-SES backgrounds might prefer to keep their backgrounds private. If faculty members benefit either emotionally or materially from not sharing their class identities because working-class, first-generation, and low-income identities remain stigmatized and othered in the academy, under what circumstances and how might they choose to share that background? Overall, we find that the majority of professors interviewed do seek to support low-SES students, often by explicitly discussing their own backgrounds as a form of symbolic encouragement.

Methods

Data for this study come from interviews with respondents who teach at the college level and have received or are in the process of receiving a terminal degree in their field. This included tenured professors, those on the tenure track, those in visiting or contingent faculty positions, and lecturers in the process of completing their graduate degrees. Respondents worked at different types of campuses across the country, including research universities, small teaching colleges, and community colleges, and come from a range of scholarly fields. Despite purposive sampling, the respondents are primarily White and in social science areas of study (see Table 1), which prevents meaningful comparison within or across racialized categories or professional fields.

Table One: Sample characteristics

Demographics	
Male	17
Female	29
African American	2
Asian American	4
Hispanic/Latina/o	6
Native American/Indigenous	1
Pacific Islander	1
White	32
Employer Campus Type	
Community College	
Public non- or moderately-selective	
Public-flagship	
Private non-profit	
Field	
Social Sciences	5
Natural Sciences	18
Humanities	3
Professional	1
	N:46

Interviews were roughly one hour in length on average, ranging between forty-five minutes and two hours. In most cases they were recorded and later transcribed by a graduate assistant or professional transcriptionist; in rare cases, interviews were transcribed in real time by the first author, who conducted the interviews. Respondents were asked to choose a pseudonym (where none was chosen by the respondent, a pseudonym was assigned), informed that their interview would be kept anonymous and confidential, and that any question could be passed over and the interview terminated at any time. No compensation or remuneration was offered, and the research was conducted with the approval of the first author's home institution.

Respondents were initially recruited through a posted invitation to a Facebook group, and subsequently through emails to faculty members listed as first-generation on publicly-available institutional lists, or who publicly described themselves as first-generation and/or from a low-SES background. For example, if a commenter used their real name and spoke about their background in responding to an online article, the first author contacted them with a request for an interview. Additional respondents were located through snowball sampling.

Interview topics included respondent background (e.g. how did they decide to attend college and then become a faculty member; parents' education levels and occupations); experiences as faculty members in the classroom and with colleagues; level of openness about background with colleagues and students; and other ways in which class or socioeconomic background might be important in their professional lives. Although class and socioeconomic status are not identical concepts, we use them interchangeably here. Respondents were primarily among the first in their families to attend college, grew up in low-income households, and had parents who worked blue-collar jobs, but did not necessarily fit all three of these descriptors. Wishing to be cognizant of the many and multifaceted ways in which inequality may be experienced and may shape lives, we did not restrict the sample to one measure, such as parents' education level or income.

Findings

Providing Focused Support for Low-SES Students

One key question in this research was whether and how respondents understood themselves as supporting low-SES students on their campuses. Most, though not all, respondents described making substantial efforts in this area. The first type of support was through teaching or advocacy choices that, while they likely also benefit middle and upper-SES students, were specifically geared towards the low-SES students in their classes. Raul, for example, described how he now requires all students to meet with him in office hours at least once during the semester, a tactic intended to reach his low-SES students in particular. As he recounted,

Working class kids, it's like they don't—they'd only go and see the professor if they were in trouble and, even then, unwillingly... And, I thought, yeah, I think that was an important thing for a lot of students who were not used to feelin' like they had access. You know, kids whose parents went to school would say to the kid, 'Make sure you go meet the professor. And, make sure

they know who you are.’ ...But these kids weren’t getting that coaching at home.

Personally familiar with working-class reticence to seek help, Raul chooses to require students to see him for support. Similarly, Brynna noted that,

In terms of [the classroom], I do a lot of group work, which I kind of feel is a way to help even the playing field for a bunch of students who aren’t comfortable speaking up. So, I break students into groups and I’m intentional about mixing them up, so I use the physical space of the room and I move them around so that they’re not always working with the same partner and they are broken out of the fear of how, that expectation of, ‘I’m not sure how I’m supposed to act in a classroom, so I’ll just sit really quiet, and I’ll always sit in this one place.’ So, and that, I think, is just specific, that I know works for these students, that are helpful for all students.

As Brynna highlights, these choices are often part of a larger pedagogical approach that provides support to all students in her classes, but is targeted especially to vulnerabilities that low-SES students are likely to have.

Other respondents described altering syllabi and teaching choices to make the costs associated with their classes less expensive, making materials available to students for free, making extra effort in writing letters of recommendation. For example, Brynna, quoted above, also reported that,

I have really actively worked on pricing out my textbooks because I think it’s absurd that students are paying \$230 for a textbook for a one-semester class. So, I have worked really hard to reduce the cost of my textbooks and explain to students that I am intentionally doing that. I also make it—I make it an offer to students if they need other resources that I can help them find those resources.

Thus pedagogical choices aimed specifically at the needs of low-SES students were often good practice for teaching more generally; accordingly, these approaches likely went unnoticed as efforts to target low-SES students.

A larger number of faculty members chose to speak directly to the topic, consistently and in many cases, immediately. Their background is a core aspect of their teaching and something they make explicit. Mary was emblematic of this pattern: as she told us, ‘I always come out on day one to my class.’ Beth also speaks about her background on the very first day, as part of a ‘get to know you game:’

Just showing the ways that we’re similar and the ways that we’re different, and then I put up and talk about, you know, I talk about my degrees, and I show a picture of my children, and I play a clip from the *King and I* with her singing ‘Getting to Know You,’ and then I have everyone go around and say something about themselves, and I say something about my own background.

As she explained, that ‘something’ includes a description of her ‘rural poverty background.’ Lara also indicated that class is part of every course she teaches, and

mentioned that being open about her background is ‘part of acknowledging what they know and how they know’ for her predominantly working-class and low-income students. Taryn noted, ‘I just came to be able to do that [talk about her background], uh, after my master’s degree, that’s when I first began to own it and put it out there. Because my story was just as valid as someone’s story who traveled to Turkey or to Paris. So, absolutely.’ Taryn’s words highlight the fact that for many respondents, speaking about their backgrounds openly has been a process of becoming comfortable and rejecting an implication that their experiences, training, or preparation were less ‘valid’ than those of wealthier peers. This mirrors the implication they are trying to counter for their students, showing by example that low-SES people have just as much right, or validity, in this space as anyone else.

Others indicated that they were not explicit about their background in class on a regular basis, but selectively informed students when the lecture called for it. Roy noted that opportunities to talk about his background come up organically because of the subjects he teaches: ‘So I try to teach on this subject in just about every class that I teach. Like I talk about social networking being [unclear], social and cultural capital being important.’ Reflecting further, he added that, ‘I haven’t made a habit of like describing my whole situation the first day of class, but when we get to the topics, I’ll share a lot about [my background]’ in the form of anecdotes about family, growing up, and college life. Similarly, Sara noted that, ‘I wouldn’t say I make it a point to make sure there’s a class on it, or I don’t have a spiel to start the semester where I talk about [my background].’ However, because she teaches ‘classes on race, education, families—it kind of comes up. It comes up very naturally that this is where I am from, and it becomes part of a dialogue usually that talks about mobility, like social mobility.’ Sara therefore knows that, even without her needing to ‘make a point’ of speaking about her history, she will have ready opportunities to bring it into the class discussion naturally.

Rationales: Why Offer Support?

Given the personal nature of class and family history, as well as the possible risks associated with exposing a low-SES background, why do faculty members engage their students in this way, rather than simply offering more pragmatic and anonymous forms of help? It is clear from these interview narratives that many respondents believed that students would benefit from their openness. As we learned, this belief was often developed through their own experiences as students. Many respondents spoke about their own mentors, professors who had encouraged them to continue and in many cases intervened in critical turning points. Recalling the influence of these faculty members seemed to strongly shape respondents’ awareness of the important roles they themselves might be able to play and their interest in pursuing such a role. In many cases, respondents described dramatically different possible outcomes had they not had such mentors on hand. Michael, for example, noted that he had

some really great mentors, advisors who really pushed for me to go towards [an academic field rather than an applied field.] And so that was really helpful for them to honestly say, ‘Hey, I think you’ll be more successful in this field than [that],’ for whatever reason, because I was really just, I had no idea what the difference would be when I [...] stepped foot on [campus]... So, yeah, I think just not knowing what else to do, right? I mean, if I had graduated and

worked, I think today I probably would have started at Wal-Mart and not, I don't know what I would have done if I hadn't gone to grad school.

As Michael's comment suggests, one way such faculty members were helpful was to point out options that might have previously been invisible. Kevin noted that during college, he 'didn't really know...that you could pursue a career that would be about ... academics, continuing to learn, being close to the academic process, discovery, creativity, all that stuff, I didn't know you could have a job doing that, and I think that that's what that teacher did for me was to open me to that possibility.' This was especially notable in the absence of parents who could provide advice about post-college steps, or who could offer advice about graduate study and academic careers as a future possibility. Oftentimes, parents of first-generation students aren't informed of the possibilities available to their children in terms of education and career. Without outside intervention, they can't encourage first-generation children to pursue experiences which they never had and of which they are still not aware. Given their experiences, training, and awareness of on-campus programs, mentors can illuminate possible opportunities for students and help give them the tools they need to pursue those options. With few connections or known options, having advisors to guide a student is crucial.

Moreover, respondents recalled faculty members as providing them with confidence in themselves. For example, Maureen and Mai each had mentors who publicly endorsed them to groups of their academic peers and heads of their field at conferences. This overt and powerful endorsement gave a significant boost in confidence and served to inspire them. Both, as students, had one-on-one research projects with their mentor. They independently mentioned these moments of endorsement as turning points in their academic career. For example, Mai noted that

When I presented [my project], [my professor] had to give me an introduction [and she said] 'Mai wants to go to like get her master's degree somewhere else, maybe like a JD or like another type of degree, but I see her as someone who can be a faculty member. Like I see her as a researcher and a faculty member somewhere in the future, and I hope she thinks very seriously about pursuing this field.'

This type of support on the part of the advisor allows for closer connection and the humanizing of an otherwise cold academic environment. The academic atmosphere can seem intimidating to people from low-SES backgrounds and having a personally invested mentor rather than a distant experience with academia would make them more comfortable and/or more confident. This may be especially important where students feel the threat of stereotypes that equate socioeconomic status with academic ability (Spencer & Castellano 2007), which may manifest as 'imposter syndrome.' In these cases, students may be afraid to interact with faculty members who appear unapproachable because they are worried they may expose themselves as 'imposters' in academia.

Other respondents also spoke about how important faculty support and connection was outside the formal classroom. Lily, for example, allowed herself to be vulnerable to a professor and that professor reached out to her on a personal level, instead of

simply fulfilling her required academic role of educator or providing her with an alternative. She recalled how,

one of the teachers actually reached out to me ‘cause I basically broke down at the end of her class, [laughter] in like the middle of the first semester, and just being like, ‘Oh my God, I, you know, I spent all this money moving to [a new city] from [home] and I made the wrong choice. And, I don’t know what I’m gonna do now.’ And [...] she really like talked to me about it and like was there for me... And, like after talking to her and taking her advice, I ended up, I guess flourishing, I would say, in that program.

This turn of events inspired Lily to continue pursuing education, where she otherwise might have dropped out during her first semester. Dropping some of the more formal aspects of the professional environment and ‘being real’ with a student can have life-changing positive impact. We saw this reflected in the words of respondents who described speaking informally, cursing, and joking with their classes as means of communicating status—managed not only through breaching the interactional rules of white-collar professional settings but also through this establishment of realness or authenticity. This capacity to be both authentic and caring is crucial, and substantially enhanced by the student’s knowledge that the faculty member herself had experienced something similar for low-SES students. While it seems likely that most students would appreciate caring concern on the part of their professor regardless of background, for low-SES students (and especially those who lack social support among family and friends), this is especially important. This echoes the findings of other scholars examining student-faculty relationships (Booker 2016, Schreiner et al. 2010).

These positive interactions with mentors or teachers who shared their background in turn shaped respondents’ feelings about mentorship and the effect that a faculty member who shares one’s background can have. Having a similar background also boosted respondents’ comfort levels in what respondents described as an often-intimidating academic environment. A shared background can provide the student with a sense of belonging, as well as learning from the faculty member’s experiences and connecting over shared experiences and feelings. Kevin, for example, recalled being ‘very lucky to have [professors] who were from a similar enough background from mine that they could help me sort of negotiate things that I was going through.’ Respondents spoke about these experiences as a meaningful source of inspiration in their own approach to students. As Christina noted, ‘I do feel responsible...This happened for me. I want to do this for you. Like I understand the importance of being able to see yourself in a faculty member, you know?’

For some respondents, providing this support ultimately became the most important aspects of their work lives. Tori, who had begun speaking in her classes about her background after her experience participating on a panel of first-generation faculty members at her institution, spoke movingly about this. She reflected that on the panel, she ‘shared, like, everything. [Inaudible] students were like crying in the audience, and they came up to me afterwards, just like crying and, I mean, it was amazing. It was amazing. Like I really felt like for the first time in my life like I knew what I was supposed to do, you know?’ As an early-career professor who has successfully navigated graduate school, managed the job market, and is working in an academic

setting, for Tori to feel that this was the first moment of real clarity about what she ‘was supposed to do’ says a great deal about the meaning she obtains from this role. Victoria similarly told us that after speaking about her background with students, she had decided that, ‘this is the way I’m going to serve [my campus].’ Indeed, she noted that, ‘It’s the most rewarding part of the work that I do with students when I can connect with a student from low-SES background, if that connection helps [the student] in some way either academically or in her social adjustment. If anything it’s gotten more important to me [over time].’ For Victoria, this is because she has seen over the years of work on committees at her campus that little change has come about. Disillusioned by that process, she now sees direct interaction with students as much more powerful for shaping student outcomes and ultimately broader changes on campus. Similarly, Carmela spoke about the difficult choice she faced in moving to her current job at an elite campus from her earlier job at a public college: ‘Honestly, I felt like these people already have so much, do they need me too? ...They have more than enough. I want to go back home to [my former campus] where I can be of real service.’ A friend changed her mind by telling her that

the students at [that former campus] are surrounded by people like you, whereas the ones at [your new job], how many professors are there really there? You know, wouldn’t you have wanted to have had a [you] available to you [when you were a student]?’ And, I thought, Ugh....yeah. Well, okay. That’s true.

Thinking about the unique role she could play within this specific faculty led Carmela to accept the job, because she recalled her own experience as an undergraduate at an elite college, where she felt alienated from most of her peers and the college as a whole because of both her socioeconomic and racialized ethnic status. The opportunity to mitigate that same feeling for students was meaningful enough to change her mind.

Whom to Support? Ascertaining Status

How do faculty members decide who in their classes might need or want this kind of support? Particularly for faculty members who wish to reach out specifically to students who share their background, engaging in support is related to an assessment of students’ socioeconomic background. Indeed, even for faculty members who wish to offer a more public presentation of class by making jokes or speaking about their background, their interest in doing so may be influenced by an impression of whether or not they have any students in class who share their background. Some respondents—especially those working at campuses with more affluent student demographics—noted that they sometimes could not tell whether there were any low-SES students in their classes, or found out later in a semester that a student they believed to be middle-class was actually from a low-SES background. Although some institutions have formalized means of alerting faculty members to certain markers of SES (for example, an indicator for first-generation student status in an advising pool) these may not cover the full range of students who identify as low-SES or who face challenges associated with a low-SES background, and may not be consistently available. Many campuses have no tracking or other mechanism that might help faculty members to know which of their students, if any, share a low-SES background. Michael reflected on this topic, noting that

They say that there are poor kids [at this campus]. They say that there are first gen students, and they have a history of first gen, or teaching first gen students here. I have met a few, but I don't see it. I see a very nice looking college where I would probably feel uncomfortable going to school if I were here. So, I don't know, they sell it as a place for low income students or a place where they have some low income students, but they have no way of tracking that information.

Faculty members therefore faced a challenge in ascertaining which, if any, students in their classes might be likely to share their backgrounds and experiences.

This complicated their efforts to support such students. Ann, for example, when asked about whether she felt a particular connection to her first-generation, low-income, or working-class students, responded evocatively:

I certainly, I do—I don't always know who they are, but I certainly would. I think I offer myself as a mentor and resource for all my students. As an adviser I try to go above and beyond, see what their plans are for the future and in the process they may say something that helps me know where they are at right now....If I know there is a student who doesn't have the resources, I would certainly offer myself as a resource. [Long pause:] Yeah in a way, but it's kind of hard to know who I need to reach out to.

Ann's desire to support her students, and to play a role similar to the one her own professors played in her life, is therefore somewhat stymied by this lack of knowledge about which students specifically might benefit from her advocacy. While some respondents knew that most of their students were likely to be low-SES because of the campus demographics, faculty members working in selective public and private institutions were likely to share Ann's dilemma.

In some cases, respondents described particular cues and clues they looked for—here again, often based on their own experiences. Sara, for example, told us that she related to students who look 'haggard and tired cause they've been working,' reflecting that 'I really, really relate to them...I see these kids and I identify a lot with them' because she also had to work in college and was also 'haggard.' Victoria also reflected that in her classrooms, 'I see a lot about how people interact with each other. If I see that someone is not chatting with other students, put that together with clothes that look like they are from Old Navy, vs. North Face fleeces, I just put those things together.' As with Sara, this recalled Victoria's own experiences in college.

In other cases, faculty members were simply not sure whether they had any low-SES students in their classes, or if so, which students might fit that category. In the absence of a mean of assessing status, some respondents opted to speak fully openly about their backgrounds, sometimes immediately on the first day of classes. Brittany, for example, reported that she 'always' talks about her class background 'in hopes that if they are in my classroom, they'll, you know, feel comfortable, or feel relieved, or feel some connection, or something.' Notably, respondents sometimes made these efforts specifically because they believed that students would not be able to correctly assess their class backgrounds: as Robert noted,

I think that sometimes the students just assume ‘Well, if you’re a faculty member, you must have gone to private school and you must have had the proverbial silver spoon upbringing, etcetera.’ And I think when they, they find out that ‘Oh! Here’s a faculty member that grew up in a circumstance similar to mine and, actually in a lot of ways that humanizes the faculty member in their eyes. Um, makes them seem less, I guess, reserved, or elite, so to speak.

Being open about a low-SES background may therefore serve as a corrective to class assumptions. Importantly, respondents highlight here the ways that socioeconomic background may be difficult to read in both directions, and the ways that this awareness shapes their choices to be open.

Reservation and Inspiration: Balancing the Narrative of Support

While many respondents spoke about how important providing student support was in their lives—indeed, in some cases such interactions were the single most meaningful part of their work lives and even primary reasons for applying to their specific campus—some respondents also worried about the implications of offering this kind of support. The literature on raced and gendered ‘taxes’ on student support have been covered elsewhere. Here we discuss a different source of concern, the issue of positioning as role models. While very few respondents mentioned this issue, it touches on important themes in broader discussions of socioeconomic mobility.

Cognizant of the narrative of hard work and achievement, some respondents both desired to inspire their students but also had concerns about being used as an ‘up by one’s bootstraps’ example that ‘anyone can make it if they just work hard.’ Sara, for example, was eloquent about this issue in her teaching. On the one hand, she reported,

I want to shake them, and say look, I did it, I did it and you can do it too. I’ve always kind of felt like, I don’t know, this is a really weird thing to say, I don’t quite know how to put it into words, but...Part of me feels like I can be that role model, you know: I did it, I come from a family that didn’t get any education at all, very working class, very poor, and I did it! Like, look at me, I’ve made it big. I’ve got this amazing status job, very happy, I have a wonderful home...

She stops short, however, from positioning herself in this way:

And then the other half of me is loathe, because I know that I am the exception. And so, I remember when I got out of college they asked me if I would be like featured in a magazine about this, and in the end I decided not to do it because I didn’t want people to think that this was normal, and I didn’t want people to think that this makes it alright—that just because I did it, that makes the system fair and equal. I’ve always been very conscious of the fact that I am an exception to the rule, and half of that is because I have been so freaking lucky with the people in my life that have pushed me in the right direction.

While Sara noted that she tries to tell her students that they can do it—she is a role model—she clearly feels a sense of conflict about seeming to endorse or legitimate a system she knows is not equitable to the kinds of students she teaches. Indeed, one may work very hard and not make it. Similarly, Nadia has only recently begun speaking with her students about her background because she is uncomfortable with the idea of being positioned as a role model and the messages that might be communicated—for example, that by talking about her hard work, there may be an implication that others who have not attained advanced educations did not work hard enough.

Both of these scholars wished to support students but were given pause by the implications of a ‘bootstraps’ narrative suggesting that hard work leads inexorably to positive outcome (and the reverse side of the coin). This concern echoes the phrasing used by Brook and Michell (2012) of class mobility and in particular academic attainment as a ‘Cinderella story,’ noting that ‘working-class academics [...] themselves argue that their experience should *not* be interpreted as individual transcendence, of ‘lifting oneself up’” (589, italics in original).

Other respondents felt that class background—and their own backgrounds more generally—was too personal, the kind of thing that does not belong in the classroom. Ann was one example. She told us, ‘I don’t think I do that [share her background] in class, I have pretty big classes. I say, well 20 years ago when I was in school, but I don’t talk about that personal kind of stuff [background] in class.’ Similarly, Shelley spoke about the way that talking about her background with larger groups of students felt too much like ‘posturing,’ meaning that it might smack of some kind of inappropriate claims-making or one-ups-manship.

I mean, yes and no. I think I connect with them or even just in my own mind like empathize for them personally, like on an individual basis. But...I sometimes don’t like the whole like identity politics and posturing side of it either because I think there is some of that. Like there’s some desire to claim the badge of low-income or whatever.

This reluctance was perhaps especially the case for respondents whose field of teaching did not organically lead to the opportunity to speak about socioeconomic status or personal background, meaning that the choice to bring it up would have been more explicit and less happenstance. Alex, for example, teaches courses in a STEM field. When asked whether he ever brought up his experiences as a low-SES student, he told us, ‘In my advising, definitely. I would say in my classroom not so much...I mean, if the opportunity came up, I certainly would. But just through the nature of the kind of material I teach, it doesn’t really have a chance to come up.’

Finally, we may also see important sources of intersectional variation here. Speaking in a personal way about one’s class background may be more risky for faculty of color, who are often already managing substantial challenges in predominantly white departments or fields, than for white faculty members. Roberto, a Hispanic male, reflected that he does not speak about his background with colleagues or in his teaching, only in one-on-one advising. In his largely white, middle- or upper-SES department and campus, speaking about his socioeconomic background is just one more thing for other people to talk about:

I think being a person of color, you have to guard yourself...on the stereotypes and the assumptions and misperceptions. So I personally don't [talk about this]. I feel that, as a man of color in an institution that is mostly white, I don't need another layer, from where I will be judged...Another layer...that has nothing to do with my professional performance, that has nothing to do with what I do or not do in the classroom...

Roberto already perceives the kind of 'surveillance' other scholars have reported for faculty of color (Griffin & Reddick 2011). Marking himself as 'other' in an additional category may provide only more 'judge[ment]' from colleagues. While white male respondents may grapple with risks around socioeconomic background, faculty members of color and female faculty members may experience intersectional, multiplied risks by being open about their socioeconomic backgrounds. We discuss the intersectional issues of race/ethnicity and socioeconomic background elsewhere (Lee & Maynard, forthcoming).

Conclusion

In his 2015 *Chronicle of Higher Education* commentary, Dennis O'Hearn poses the question, 'And who represents people like me, who live as oddities in institutions where we do not feel like we belong and where we meet few people with life experiences we recognize?' The respondents to this study are engaging this role, one that is for some just as critical to them as to their students. Virtually all respondents noted that supporting low-SES students was important to them, and over two-thirds indicated that they speak about their backgrounds in at least some contexts, as well as providing other means of support. We know, then, that faculty respondents saw student support as important and that they were willing to make substantial efforts and investments to facilitate that support—often based on their experiences of having been mentored in their own undergraduate years. In some cases, faculty members reported that this kind of support for students was the single most meaningful aspect of their jobs.

Unlike in the cases of faculty members of color and/or female faculty members, we do not see clear evidence of a 'cultural taxation' framework in place (Padilla 1994): this suggests that department chairs, deans, and colleagues are not coercing or pushing faculty members from low-SES backgrounds to take on these support roles. Rather, respondents largely assessed these needs themselves and stepped in because of the environment they perceive for students. While this lack of taxation is positive because it means that faculty members are not being unduly called upon based on this identity, it is also troublesome in that it indicates that administrators and faculty members are unaware of or uninterested in faculty class backgrounds as a meaningful source of identity and perhaps variation of experience. And, of course, this does not lessen the 'taxation' burdens already experienced by respondents who are female and/or faculty members of color who are also from a low-SES background.

Moreover, the choice to speak openly about background experiences means that faculty members expose themselves to possible stigma around class identity (Lee 2017) and that the potential for intersectional 'cultural taxes' or stigmatization may become higher for faculty members of color and/or female faculty members who are

also low-SES background. A negative response from colleagues would be especially chilling for those respondents who described this aspect as the most important part of their work. Moreover, an atmosphere of risk for low-SES background faculty may contribute to less incentive for low-SES students to aspire to academic careers, further impacting the already small number of low-SES members of the academy (National Science Foundation 2015). Our respondents indicated that their own faculty mentors inspired them to provide support for their low-SES students, which could be at risk of decline if they are sanctioned, whether formally or informally, for providing focused low-SES support.

This may be an especially important issue in thinking about graduate student and contingent faculty experiences, as well as junior tenure-track faculty. In an increasingly competitive academic market, a lack of acknowledgment for the importance of recognizing class status, or punitive measures leveled at those who do acknowledge socioeconomic status, may push some current academics or graduate students out of their fields for fear of pronounced disadvantage, further narrowing the pipeline. In some cases, faculty members are beginning to organize on their own campuses (for example, see King, Griffith, & Murphy's 2017 discussion of 'story sharing'), or through professional organizations such as new task forces focused on working-class, low-income and/or first-generation students and others convened by the Midwestern Sociological Society and the American Sociological Association. This is important work that needs not only to continue, but to be recognized and encouraged as a way to both further diversify the academy and to serve the needs of students.

Author Bios

Elizabeth M. Lee is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Ohio University. Her research focuses primarily on socioeconomic inequality in higher education. She is the author of *Class and Campus Life: Managing and Experiencing Inequality*, as well as other work previously published in *Sociology of Education*, *Sociology Compass*, and *Poetics*, amongst others.

Tonya Maynard is a doctoral student in the Department of Sociology at the University of Oklahoma. Her research interests include deviant subcultures, gender, sexualities, and religion.

Bibliography

Astin, A.W. (1993): *Four Critical Years: What Matters in College Revisited*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.

Aries, E. & Seider, M. (2005): 'The Interactive Relationship Between Class Identity and the College Experience: The Case of Lower-Income Students', *Qualitative Sociology*, vol. 28, pp. 419–43.

Armstrong, E. A. & Hamilton, L. (2013): *Paying for the Party: How College Maintains Inequality*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge.

Booker, K. (2016): 'Connection and Commitment: How Sense of Belonging and Classroom Community Influence Degree Persistence for African American Undergraduate Women', *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, vol. 28, no. 2, pp. 218-29.

Bowen, W. G., Kurzweil, M. A., & Tobin, E. M. (2005): *Equity and Excellence in American Higher Education*, University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville, VA.

Brook, H., & Michell, D. (2012): 'Learners, Learning, Learned: Class, Higher Education, and Autobiographical Essays from Working-Class Academics', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, vol. 34, no. 6, pp. 587-599.

Cole, D. & Griffin, K. A. (2013): 'Advancing the Study of Student-Faculty Interaction: A Focus on Diverse Students and Faculty', in M. B. Paulsen (ed.) *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, Springer, Netherlands, pp. 561-611.

Dews, C. L. B. & Leste Law, C. (1995): *This Fine Place so Far from Home*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia.

Feagin, J. R., Vera, H., & Imani, N. (1996): *The Agony of Education: Black Students at White Colleges and Universities*, Routledge, New York and London.

Granfield, R. (1991): 'Making it by Faking it: Working-class Students in an Elite Academic Environment', *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, vol. 20, no. 3, pp. 331-351.

Green, M. (2016): 'At UC San Diego, Retired Professors are Mentoring First-Generation College Students', *The Conversation*, accessed 30 August, 2017, <https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/uc-san-diego-retired-professors-are-mentoring-first-generation-college-students>.

Griffin, K. A. & Reddick, R. J. (2011): 'Surveillance and Sacrifice Gender Differences in the Mentoring Patterns of Black Professors at Predominantly White Research Universities', *American Educational Research Journal*, vol. 48, no. 5, pp. 1032-57.

Griffin, K. A., Pifer, M. J., Humphrey, J. R., & Hazelwood, A. M. (2011): '(Re) Defining Departure: Exploring Black Professors' Experiences with and Responses to Racism and Racial Climate', *American Journal of Education*, vol. 117, no. 4, pp. 495-526.

Haney, T. J. (2015): '"We're all Middle Class Here:' Privilege and the Denial of Class Inequality in the Canadian Professoriate', in A. Hurst & S. K. Nenga (eds.), *Working in Class*, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, MD, pp. 141-56.

Hirschfield, L. E. & Joseph, T. D. (2012): ‘‘We Need a Woman, We Need a Black Woman:’ Gender, Race, and Identity Taxation in the Academy’, *Gender and Education* vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 213-27.

Hurst, A. L. & Nenga, S. K. (2015): ‘Introduction’, in A. Hurst & S. K. Nenga (eds.), *Working in Class*, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, MD, pp. 1-10.

King, C., Griffith, J., & Murphy, M. (2017): ‘Story Sharing for First-Generation College Students Attending a Regional Comprehensive University: Campus Outreach to Validate Students and Develop Forms of Capital’, *Teacher-Scholar: The Journal of the State Comprehensive University*, vol. 8, article 1.

Lee, E. M. (2017): ‘Where People like me don’t Belong: Faculty Members from Low-Socioeconomic Status Backgrounds’, *Sociology of Education*, vol. 90, no. 3, pp. 197-212.

Lee, E. M. (2016): *Class and Campus Life: Managing and Experiencing Inequality at an Elite College*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca.

Lee, E. M. & Maynard, T. ‘Faculty members from low socioeconomic status backgrounds: student mentorship, motivations, and intersections.’ Forthcoming in W. C. Byrd, S. M. Ovink, & R. J. Brunn-Bevel [ed.s] *Intersected Campuses: The College Experience from Different Identities and Positions*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick.

Martin, N. D. (2012): ‘The Privilege of Ease: Social Class and Campus Life at Highly Selective, Private Universities’, *Research in Higher Education*, vol. 53, no. 4, pp. 426-52.

Moody, J. (2004): *Faculty Diversity: Problems and Solutions*, Routledge, New York.

National Science Foundation (2015): *Doctorate Recipients from U.S. Universities*, NSF 16-300, <http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/sed/>.

O’Hearn, D. (2015): ‘Campus Diversity Efforts Ignore the Widest Gulf: Social Class’, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, accessed 8 June, 2016, <http://chronicle.com/article/Campus-Diversity-Efforts/231233>.

Padilla, A. M. (1994): ‘Ethnic Minority Scholars, Research, and Mentoring: Current and Future Issues’, *Educational Researcher*, vol. 23, no. 4, pp. 24-27.

Pew Research Center. (2014): ‘The Rising Cost of Not Going to College’, accessed 12 February, 2014, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/02/11/the-rising-cost-of-not-going-to-college/>.

Pike, G.R. & Kuh, G.D. (2005): 'First-and Second-Generation College Students: A Comparison of Their Engagement and Intellectual Development', *The Journal of Higher Education*, vol. 76, no. 3, pp. 276-300.

Ryan, J. & Sackrey, C. (1984): *Strangers in Paradise: Academics from the Working Class*, University Press of America, New York.

Schreiner, L.A., Noel, P., & Cantwell, L. (2011): 'The Impact of Faculty and Staff on High-Risk College Student Persistence', *Journal of College Student Development*, vol. 52, no. 3, pp. 321-38.

Spencer, B. & Castellano, E. (2007): 'Social Class is Dead. Long Live Social Class! Stereotype Threat among Low Socioeconomic Status Individuals', *Social Justice Research*, vol. 20, no. 4, pp. 418-32.

Stuber, J.M. (2011): *Inside the College Gates: How Class and Culture Matter in Higher Education*, Lexington Books, Lanham, MD.

Stuber, J. M. (2009): 'Class, Culture, and Participation in the Collegiate Extra-Curriculum', *Sociological Forum*, vol. 24, no. 4, pp. 877-900.

Tinto, V. (1987): *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

West, C. & Fenstermaker, S. (1995): 'Doing Difference', *Gender & Society*, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 8-37.

Wildhagen, T. (2015): "'Not your Typical Student': The Social Construction of the 'First-Generation' College Student", *Qualitative Sociology*, vol. 38, no. 3, pp. 285-303.

Navigating Academia in the ‘Welfare-class’

Emma Penney, University College Dublin

Laura Lovejoy, University College Cork

Abstract

The growing field of working-class studies provides a valuable narrative of the experiences of working-class academics, illustrates commonalities among such experiences and provides a space for dismantling the structural class-based disenfranchisement which proves detrimental to working-class scholars' careers. Recent articles in *The Journal of Working-class Studies* have identified and named the specific experiences of alienation faced by working-class scholars, which include issues of financial disenfranchisement, issues of taste, accent, and 'respectability' (Attfield 2016), issues of 'passing', the imposter syndrome, and feelings of class betrayal (Warnock 2016). However, as Nicola Wilson (2016) and others have noted, 'working-class is a fluid category and grouping'. For many scholars living in or emerging from a background of poverty, the term 'working-class' is limited. The term 'welfare-class' more appropriately describes the experience of some poor and welfare-reliant scholars. Considering the welfare-class as a distinct category within the working or poor classes, this article documents some of the specific experiences of alienation which pertain to being welfare-class in academia by focusing on the lived experiences of the authors, two academics at postgraduate and postdoctoral level. The article aims to contribute to the representation of poor and welfare-class academics among the growing body of autobiographical and autoethnographic knowledge (Warnock 2016) in working-class studies.

Keywords

Welfare-class, alienation, academia

The term 'welfare-class' often has derogatory connotations, referring to individuals, families or generations who are or have been reliant on welfare for what is deemed an inappropriate or excessive amount of time or for illegitimate reasons (Handel 2009). When used disparagingly, the term can invoke individualistic understandings of poverty that link poverty to individual shortcomings rather than structural inequalities (Goodban 1985). Specifically in a late twentieth-century American context, it evokes stereotypes of the lazy poor, epitomised by the racist, misogynistic cliché of the 'Welfare Queen' (Hancock 2004). In the 1980s, sociologists defined 'the welfare-class' as 'a segment of the lower class', the existence of which is 'a characteristic of

modern urban-industrial society' (Weed 1980). U.S. scholars across disparate fields have documented the extent to which welfare dependence is stigmatised. Work by Nancy Goodban (1985), for example, illustrates the psychological impact of welfare stigma on welfare-dependent single mothers. More recent investigations have shown that, despite 1990s reforms, welfare recipience is still stigmatised in the United States (Gershon 2016). If the existence of a 'welfare-class' and the idea of providing financial assistance to the poor was met with 'mixed feelings' (Goodban 1985) by the general public in the mid-1980s, today the idea of a welfare-class in the United States is met with disdain.

The same is true of factions of the U.K. and Ireland. Paul Spicker's 1984 *Stigma and Social Welfare* was reprinted in 2011 and many of its original observations ring true. As Owen Jones has noted, people dependent on unemployment benefits in the U.K. have, as recently as 2010, been subject to state-sanctioned stigmatisation through government campaigns which tap into 'the age-old prejudice that the people at the bottom were breeding out of control, as well as conjuring up the tabloid caricature of the slobbish single mother who milks the benefits system by having lots of children' (Jones 2011). In Ireland in 2017, a high profile bus advertisement launched by then Minister for Social Protection (now Taoiseach/Prime Minister), Leo Varadkar, claimed that 'Welfare Cheats Cheat us All'. In the same year, a Social Welfare and Pensions Bill was published by the Irish government, which included provisions to publish the names, addresses and penalties incurred by people who have been convicted of welfare fraud (Clarke 2017). In an article entitled 'Don't Confuse the Working-class with the Welfare-class', Irish journalist Ian O'Doherty deployed the term in order to differentiate himself, a self-proclaimed member of the working-class, from 'families who are now into their third generation of claiming benefits and see no reason to change their ways' (O'Doherty 2017).

Yet despite its derogatory connotations, for some living in poverty, the term helps to define their experience and differentiate them from other experiences of working-class life. The generalised stigma outlined above is something arguably all members of the 'welfare-class' have to contend with in daily life. When attempting to succeed in an academic career, however, the stigma and resulting feelings of alienation can be intensified; being a member of the 'welfare-class' and an academic presents its own unique challenges. In an effort to provide insight into the lived experience of navigating academia while currently or formerly welfare reliant, we will identify and discuss several key problems – social and structural – which contribute to the alienation of welfare-class scholars in academia. These are: assumptions of financial privilege, disparities between average student experiences of 'poverty' and welfare-class experiences of poverty, structural barriers and the inadequacy of structural accommodations for financially struggling students, and tensions between a welfare-class scholar's life and the methodologies and practices of academia. As with an increasing number of studies within the field of working-class studies, this article is partially autobiographical, reflecting on the authors' lived experiences. This decision is driven by observations made by scholars such as Tim Strangleman (2005, p. 140) that autobiography is of 'tremendous value' in working-class studies.

The Parental 'Safety Net': Financial Privilege and the Welfare-class Scholar

‘When you grow up poor, you don’t have a safety net in your parents. You are your parents’ safety net’ (Wood 2017)

As the above tweet from Twitter user Holly Wood (@girlziplocked) illustrates, parental financial privilege is not a guarantee for some people living below the poverty line. Rather than being in a position to rely on familial wealth in difficult times, poor or welfare-class people may in fact bear the burden of providing for their parents or family financially.

Assumptions about the financial and class backgrounds of academics profoundly impact the ways in which non middle-class scholars engage with the social and official spaces of institutions and academic communities. As the editors of the *Journal of Working-class Studies* have noted in their call for papers for this issue (2017), those who are working-class are often ‘perceived as solidly middle-class’ because of their educational status, qualifications or presence in a graduate studies programme. Indeed, as Claudia Leeb notes,

[T]he assumption that everybody in academia comes from a middle-class background is part of the disciplinary practices that aim to silence any attempts to address class disciplining in academia (Leeb 2004, p. 116).

Such assumptions can generate feelings of profound alienation, owing in part to the fact that they are starkly at odds with the realities of welfare-class scholars. The increasingly competitive job market and the precarity of academia as a career impacts all scholars, even those who are middle-class and relatively financially unburdened. Yet, for many middle and upper class scholars, this precarity is often offset by the existence of a parental financial ‘safety net’. Middle-class scholars, while they may experience temporary periods of low income living, can often turn to parents or family members for loans to cover travel, research expenses, living expenses and university fees. A common assumption, for example, is that a scholar approaching the cessation of their funding can rely on a loan from their family in order to pay the fees for a fourth or fifth year in a PhD programme. This is often impossible for working-class academics and certainly always impossible for scholars whose parents, in addition to themselves, are reliant on welfare as their primary or only source of income. As a result, welfare-class scholars face increased time constraints on their research; literally unable to continue their PhD beyond the period of allocated funding, they may be forced to rush in order to complete their project before funding runs out. This, in turn, impacts the quality of their research and their future funding and employment opportunities. The impossibility of continuing education with no financial support and no means to pay for fees can be met with incredulity by mentors, colleagues and peers who assume that a scholar’s family will simply be in a position to cover costs. Scholars who complete their PhDs in a time-frame seemingly unachievable for many doctoral students often appear extremely diligent and self-motivated to mentors and peers and are met with congratulations and praise for their self-determination. Yet the completion of a doctoral degree in an unusually short time-frame can be motivated as much by financial necessity as commitment: taking a fourth or fifth year to complete a PhD is, for many graduate students, impossible.

As Penney has highlighted, assumptions about a parental financial safety net are rooted in the belief that a scholar’s parents or family members are employed in the

first place. Many welfare-class scholars' family members are in fact only partially employed or unemployed. For Penney, being a student from a household kept afloat by a single-parent welfare payment is highly significant in the context of her experience in academia. As Penney notes, being described as 'working-class' does not account for those who grow up in households where employment is not part of everyday life. For large single-parent families, work outside the home is often made impossible by how employment removes or reduces certain necessary welfare entitlements, and an ability to provide childcare, which could never be covered by part-time employment. Penney only saw somebody work outside the home for a very brief period of time and at a young age, so doing so was not a normalised experience for her. She was a PhD student before she felt confident enough to juggle education with part-time work. The idea of getting a part-time job while also being the first in her family to go to college was overwhelming, and it raised questions: What would that money do? Where would it go? How could it help? By contrast, more financially secure friends who worked used that money to subsidise an already existent allowance. The money they earned was spent on social activities or maybe bills and food that could, in an emergency, be covered by a parent or guardian. For a middle-class student a part-time job is often casually conceived as something that can amp up the experience of college life but for Penney it carried the weight of a lot of unknowns that already surrounded the idea of going to college in the first place. She writes:

I was the first in my family to go to college: no brothers, sisters or parents had gone before me. I had one older sibling and he didn't even go to secondary school so in my immediate family I was also the first to sit my Junior Cert and Leaving Cert. As a single-parent at a young age my mam didn't have the opportunity to pursue higher education but she was highly self-educated and hugely nurturing; it was expected that I would go to college. For most of my life we lived on a single-parent welfare payment of 188 euro per week which, at one time, had to cover food, bills, clothes and other necessities for six people. My mother wrote poetry and read - a lot, but when I started college it was a totally unknown world. I hadn't known anyone who had gone. (Penney 2017)

For many doctoral graduates, including Lovejoy, the elation of completing their PhD is dampened by the cessation of funding and the loss of a reliable income. Given the difficulties of surviving with income only from precarious graduate teaching assistant positions, many doctoral graduates turn to social welfare. In Ireland this is a lengthy process which involves the investigation of a claimant's bank account and home by an inspector; it can take three months after the initial declaration of underemployment or unemployment before any payments are made. As a result, scholars with no parental safety net may have no choice but to spend several months immediately following the completion of their PhD working as a graduate teaching assistant and applying for more funding while earning barely enough to cover their monthly rent. By contrast, those who have recently finished their PhDs and are job hunting are more likely to be in a position to borrow several months' living expenses from their families to keep them afloat until they found full time work, or are in a position to supplement their modest earnings from adjunct teaching positions with the income of financially comfortable family members.

Student Poverty and the Welfare-class

In 2016, the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) published the results of a study which revealed that 58.1% of students in Ireland miss meals in order to fund their education (Waugh 2016). Indeed, much of the public discourse surrounding student poverty in Ireland appears to focus on hunger as a key issue, with advertisers latching on to the student's often precarious relationship with food. In 2015, Irish rail company Iarnród Éireann launched an advertising campaign via public transport and social media urging students to 'go home'. The text of the advertisement was devised by marketing company Publicis D (2015) and read 'Go Home Students – you need a bit of looking after & we have fantastic fares just for you.' The accompanying image showed a young woman looking miserable and unkempt while eating cornflakes out of a wok. Implicit in this advertisement is that the poor student, reduced to eating the most basic of foods, can be saved from this state of misery by returning to her family home where she can eat a balanced and satisfying meal in comfort – be 'looked after' by her parents. But for the welfare-class student, however, their family's staple meal may well be cornflakes.

The comedy in the advertisement comes from the acknowledgement that student life often involves poor levels of self-care and poor domestic skills, owing in part to the financial challenges levelled by pursuing third level education in Ireland. Yet the normalised experience of temporary student 'poverty', epitomised in the United States by the microwavable hot pocket or ramen noodles, is vastly different from the experience of welfare poverty in full time education. Penney notes, of her experience of student poverty and hunger:

Unthinkingly, I developed tactics for survival in college. One was experiencing hunger differently. I didn't always experience a feeling of needing food but had a generalised and incorporated ability to not eat that much. Although this might sound alarming to most, food is one of the only areas that a single-parent family on a very low-income can actually cut down on. I very rarely ate in college. When my middle-class friends in academia discuss workplace precarity, tight budgets, eating cheaply and going out rarely I don't experience this as an opportunity to feel less alone. My particular experience of poverty is still inharmonious with theirs. (Penney 2017)

For the poor and specifically welfare-class scholar, 'budgeting' means a very different thing than it does for middle-class students and academics experiencing temporary financial difficulty. Somewhat normalised discourses of student poverty still have the potential to alienate the welfare-class scholar by presenting a version of poverty which can easily be alleviated by a return to the financially stable embrace of the family home. For many welfare-class scholars, the dynamics of 'being looked after' are reversed: family members are dependent on poor scholars' (often insufficient) incomes. As Penney observes:

This student poverty is a different shape to mine and it throws the crooked angles of my life into relief. Inside my house there is my mother and my brother who is studying

too. With my bursary and small number of teaching hours I often earn more than both of them (Penney 2017)

To an extent, it is socially acceptable among middle-class scholars to discuss the temporary ‘poverty’ of life as a graduate student or underemployed academic. Yet despite the alarming commonness of complaints about low and unreliable income in academia, the necessity of claiming social welfare is a topic which is often met with discomfort or incredulity by peers. Most frequently, it is simply not a polite topic of conversation, even in the context of academic precarity. There is a climate of paranoia surrounding claiming social welfare, particularly in Ireland, where recent high profile government-led campaigns have encouraged members of the public to be vigilant about welfare fraud, and have framed social welfare fraud as a grave crime which hurts the individual and society. As Bernadette Gorman, a former social welfare inspector, remarked, ‘it is implicit in [Varadkar’s] campaign that everyone on social welfare is some kind of cheat, some kind of scum’ (*Social Welfare Fraud Campaign* 2017). Such a culture of stigma and paranoia creates further barriers to welfare-class scholars disclosing their sources of income and revealing their financial limitations to colleagues and mentors when they are unable to attend conferences or purchase materials.

Barriers to Access: Structural Accommodations

As Vivyan Adair and Sandra Dahlberg note in ‘Welfare-class Identity and the Rhetoric of Erasure in Academia’ (2002), success in a university is often determined by the student’s adherence to the qualities associated with the ‘model student’, a normative standard which is necessarily classist. Adair and Dahlberg write that

The normative Universal student today is marked and read as naturally singular, rational, ordered, stable and mobile...These privileged codes are juxtaposed against the alleged multiplicity, disorder, irrationality, illogic, instability, and stagnation of those who do not – and therefore, in this logic, should not – enjoy power and authority (2002, p. 75)

As Adair and Dahlberg noted in the early 2000s, American education envisioned to facilitate upward class mobility is designed ‘for a model student’. These observations resonate, especially for the welfare-class academic in Ireland. Adair and Dahlberg’s identification of the features of the ‘model student’ – ordered, logical, deserving – raises key issues for the discussions about welfare-class academics in this article. Namely, coming from a welfare-class background or navigating higher education, employment, postdoctoral research and teaching while reliant on welfare compromises the scholar’s access to and performance of the qualities of the ‘model’ student or researcher. Forms of financial, geographical and social mobility and stability associated with a middle-class upbringing, for example, often evade or appear alien to the welfare-class academic. Additionally, a second issue is that, if the scholar’s welfare status or background is known or ‘given away’ through accent, clothing, taste, or administrative intervention in the formal welfare system, characteristics of disorder, illogic and instability are often ascribed to the poor scholar, whether or not they existed in the first place. As such, the poor or welfare-class scholar must navigate an educational culture which values these ‘privileged

codes' (Adair and Dahlberg 2002, p. 75), while managing the precarity of a life reliant on social welfare assistance combined with the stigma and damage which results from others' perceptions of a poor individual's incapability.

As Adair and Dahlberg note, in academic institutions and cultures, welfare recipients, one particularly visible and stigmatised class among which is the single mother, are 'marked as internally deviant as they are juxtaposed against the 'deserving' normative students who are read as ordered, stable, singular and progressive' (2002, p. 75). While academic institutions often perpetuate the myth of the 'classless' society (Langston, p. 77), institutions can also end up emphasising distinctions between working-class and poverty-class scholars. As Adair and Dahlberg remark, 'working-class students are read as deserving albeit 'rough' idealized students. This is not so with poverty-class individuals' (2002, p. 75).

Another way in which welfare-class scholars become structurally alienated from institutions is when financial accommodations ignore or deny their particular experiences and needs. In higher level institutions in Ireland, even the accommodations made for struggling students are made for struggling students from middle-class backgrounds. This is evident, for example, in awards such as Ireland's Ad Astra academic scholarships, or the All Ireland scholarships, which are awarded on the basis of points attained in the Irish Leaving Certificate (equivalent to a U.S. High School Diploma or British A Levels). Middle-class students are more likely to receive higher grades in certain subjects and as a result are more likely to be in a position to compete for points-based scholarships. In revealing this pattern Kathleen Lynch warns against a bonus-point system for students who take the higher-level maths paper for their Leaving Cert. In a 2011 article Lynch urged policymakers to recognise 'the increased social divisiveness of the bonus points entry criterion' which will 'further advantage the already advantaged' (those able to pay for expensive grinds) (Holden 2011). In speaking of the new mandatory entrance exam for medicine, (the HPAT), Lynch also reflects on how these exams are 'a new barrier for lower-income students to higher educational entry. Proficiency on the tests requires practice and insider knowledge that is only available to those who can buy it' (Holden 2011). As such, the university scholarship system further rewards those who are usually already financially secure, impacting undergraduates' opportunities to pursue an academic career from an early stage. When Penney started her PhD in 2015, she was awarded the only PhD bursary in the Department of English. The generalised rules attached to the bursary are similarly conceived with a middle-class student in mind: a 5,000 euro bursary would be made but, because of the bursary, she would not be prioritised for teaching hours – a source of income which is often vital for scholars at doctoral and postdoctoral level:

Even the best departmental measures to tackle student poverty make me feel alien. There is an assumption that other supports are available. The overall impact of this is one of feeling unwelcome in university, an imposter, an always-almost not admitted student. I still get anxious when I scan my student card at the library turnstile because I am on the 'special rate grant for disadvantaged students' and the state pays my fees. But they often make a wrong award and come September I am locked out of the library and locked into an administrative battle with the authority funding my

education. The mistake is always on their end. There is never an apology. I will never quite belong here. (Penney 2017)

In *The Working-Class Woman in Elite Academia*, Claudia Leeb argues that the disciplining of the working-class woman's body 'finds its purest manifestation in academic institutions' and that women who are the first generation to enter higher-education are of 'specific interest' (18). Leeb argues that this is because we threaten middle-class subjectivities (which currently exist as the natural order of academic institutions). The 'administrative battle' Penney describes highlights the specific ways in which welfare-class academics must navigate the surveillance structures of the university. As Leeb notes:

[T]here are some individuals who have to be surveyed more than others. These individuals have to be produced as even more docile than others: working-class individuals. Surveillance of working-class individuals resonates throughout the institutions of modern societies, but its purest manifestation in the institutions of higher education because working-class individuals are not supposed to enter institutions of higher education in the first place, since institutions of higher education are the places where middle-classes are reproducing themselves (2004, p. 102)

These modes of surveillance are heightened for poor and welfare-class scholars and often serve to 'out' the working-class scholar or highlight their lack of 'fit' in with the institution. There are several instances where institutional and structural surveillance are heightened for welfare-class students. Firstly, structural surveillance impacts the scholar's engagement with the administrative culture of the institution. As Penney notes, the 'special' status of students on specific low-income grants is made known to administrative staff and often results in instances of humiliation and alienation. Another instance of surveillance is when administrative staff are required to participate in the state's surveillance of a social welfare recipient when the scholar/recipient is engaged in partial work. Welfare systems for the partially employed require the signing and stamping of weekly forms by an employer or representative and the signing of a declaration stating that the welfare claimant did not turn down full-time work in a given week. This system requires weekly disclosure of welfare status to administrators in an institution, effectively singling the welfare-class scholar out. Resulting issues can include university administrators questioning the legitimacy of the scholar's welfare claim, refusing to sign forms, or treating scholars and/or adjunct staff differently once they have disclosed their status as a welfare claimant. Furthermore, the scholar may (often legitimately) feel that administrators and faculty with whom they had previously had a congenial professional relationship now view them differently; at best, with pity and, at worst, as illegitimate claimants or potential 'welfare cheats' – those social deviants the Irish Minister for Protection's high profile campaign identified. This can intensify the poor scholar's feelings of alienation and their sense that the institution is a barrier, rather than an aid, to escaping poverty. As Sara Ahmed has noted in relation to issues of social justice, equality, and welfare for students, the higher education institution can take on the qualities of a brick wall when a marginalised student attempts to be seen, heard and recognised (Ahmed 2012). In situations where partially employed or unemployed scholars require official signatures, letters, and stamps from their institution in order

to verify that they are not in full-time employment and are ‘deserving’ of financial assistance, both the institution and the state are complicit in surveillance. As a result, the scholar feels an intensified sense of difference from their colleagues and peers.

Classlessness in the Classroom: Academic Methodologies and the Denial of Poverty

Once Penney began to think about her class position, she began to feel tension between her life and academia – crucially, not just with the formal structures regarding access and internal policy but with the academic projects that were supported by the institution and with the critical practices that were dominant. As a critic of literature, she began to consider the dominant philosophies influencing this field and found that poetry criticism, her area of expertise, manages to de-problematise capitalism by announcing the aesthetic as a pure space. The biopolitical space of poetry criticism reveals an inherent classism at the heart of literary criticism as a discipline: the neutral space, the pure space, is a middle-class space.

Another way in which academia clashes with the experience of welfare-class people is in its promotion of cultures of overwork. Working overtime, on evenings and through weekends has become normalised in academia and is often considered a necessity. Scholars have pointed out the sexist nature of this – the fact that women do more childcare and housework, and the fact that a singular devotion to academic work, working up to seventy hours per week, is only possible if others (often women) take on the burden of domestic labour and forms of less ‘visible’ labour such as administrative work. Yet demands of overwork and a working week of seventy hours in academia are also often classist. Working-class students, postdoctoral researchers, and anyone who is not fully employed frequently hold multiple jobs in order to survive, many of which are outside of academia. For many working-class and poor scholars, relying on income from stipends and teaching alone is insufficient and many scholars take up multiple jobs in retail or other service industries. This makes it less possible to engage in or *perform* overwork.

Another issue is that the welfare-class academic, particularly if they come from a generation of welfare recipients, has witnessed and internalised a lifetime of rhetoric which constructs social welfare recipients as illegitimate, lazy, and defective members of society. As such, the productivity narratives – which presently dominate higher education in the West, and the increasing commodification of higher education, have a unique impact on the welfare-class scholar – someone who contends with an intensified form of the imposter syndrome. Feelings of laziness, inadequacy and the language of ‘handouts’ which vilify welfare recipients shape the poor scholar’s engagement with and response to academic narratives of productivity and standards of work/life balance. As a result of internalising dominant cultural narratives of welfare-class laziness, welfare-class scholars may feel an increased pressure to work demonstrably harder than their middle-class colleagues, many of whom are already locked into an unhealthy work/life balance. Internalised messages of the laziness and illegitimacy of welfare recipients can lead PhD students, early career researchers and tenured academics to pursue unhealthy work patterns to prove themselves to mentors and colleagues. The guilt which accompanies almost all PhD students when ‘not working’ is intensified for the welfare-class scholar, as many of us have internalised models of labour which equate work and productivity with our very value as members

of society. The welfare-class scholar's relationship to the academic culture of overwork is markedly different from the middle-class scholar's as welfare-class scholars face an increased pressure to 'prove themselves' and to dispel claims that welfare recipients are lazy, unproductive and illegitimate members of society. Yet despite welfare-class academics' frequent commitment to demonstrating capability, commitment and skill through overwork, our contributions to the research and teaching culture of our departments are often not valued as much as those of our middle-class peers, owing at least in part to the characterisations of the welfare-class as illogical and disordered.

Conclusion

While the visibility and representation of the working-classes in academia is limited, the visibility and representation of welfare-class academics is almost non-existent. For us, the precarity of academic life and the sense of alienation experienced as a result of a perceived incompatibility with elitism and the qualities idealised in academia takes on unique, specific dimensions. The stigmatisation and denial of the welfare-class scholar, on interpersonal and structural levels, has implications for our self-image, scholarly output, engagement with research communities, and future employment opportunities. As scholars with welfare-class backgrounds, the welfare-class status is a taint which may cling to us throughout our careers. In her navigation of this, Lisa Waldner writes that 'some will always define me as less than middle-class, a type of sub-class, because of my welfare history. My former welfare status overshadows all my other achievements, including graduating magna cum laude, attending graduate school, and earning a Ph.D' (2003, p. 104). Waldner is one of a number of scholars within working-class studies who notes a distinction between 'the non-welfare working-class' and 'those with a welfare history' (2003, p. 104).

We hope that this article highlights some significant issues for the welfare-class academic, including the assumption that employment is a part of every poor scholar's life, and the assumption that education is a route out of poverty or that one can (or should) 'overcome' or transcend class by attaining a high level of education. We are also cautious in allowing the availability of our testimonies to stand as 'evidence' for an increasing equality of access to higher-education in Ireland which does not exist in reality. A recent article in *The Irish Times* asks 'why do almost 90 per cent of students in Donnybrook (an upper-middle-class neighborhood) go to college but just 16 per cent in Darndale (a working-class area)?' (McGuire 2016). *The Irish Times* feeder school database is free to use online and tells a disturbing story of where our university populations *don't* come from: progression can be as low as 8% in areas of North Dublin such as Finglas or Ballymun and as high as 112% in areas of South Dublin such as Blackrock. This absence of students from low-income areas is reflected in Penney's experience with university access officers:

When recently applying for emergency aid through the university access office, I was surprised to hear that my particular 'case' was extremely rare and that the university simply doesn't encounter 'access students' who make it 'all the way' from further ed. to PhD. This absence causes issues in attaining aid because authorities are not familiar with the circumstances of students' whose family income is often

made up of different *kinds* of welfare payments and certain patterns of unemployment that the system just isn't set-up for. This often leads to funding authorities incorrectly denying students the financial aid they are entitled to (Penney 2017)

Now in the final year of her PhD, Penney is still living in a single-parent, welfare reliant household and still subsidises this household where she can with small financial awards and other forms of student aid. The experience of the welfare-class scholar is still incongruent with the access policies and scholarship structures of third level institutions. Without structural supports for working-class people at primary and secondary level the economic measures used to widen access at third level don't make sense. This way of tackling inequality seems to naturalise class divides and support the myth of a meritocracy. As Waldner notes, 'Working-class, welfare, and poverty are unimportant concepts if we imagine that anyone can leave a status behind through hard work' (2003, p. 104). It is important for us to find a space to share our experiences. Most of the time, telling people about our personal lives happens in the forced contexts of a school or welfare office - in these contexts our privacy is not respected and having to prove our poverty in this environment can be humiliating and frustrating. Going forward, we hope to grow new networks of sharing and to support others in telling their stories.

Author Bios

Emma Penney is currently a PhD student at the School of English, Drama and Film, University College Dublin, where her research is funded by the Roger McHugh Memorial Doctoral Scholarship (Anglo-Irish Literature). After her Leaving Certificate, Emma completed a course in Art, Culture and History at Dunlaoghaire College of Further Education. When she graduated from this post-Leaving Certificate Course, Emma studied a BA (Hons) in English, Media and Cultural Studies at the Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology. In 2014 she completed an MPhil in Irish Writing at the Oscar Wilde Centre, Trinity College Dublin.

Laura Lovejoy is a postdoctoral fellow in the School of English at University College Cork. Her research interests include Irish literature, modernist studies and James Joyce studies. Her work has been published in the journal *Humanities*. She is currently preparing her first monograph *States of Decline: Irish Modernism, Degeneration and the Body* which focuses on intersecting literary representations of gender, the body and statehood during the first two decades of Irish independence.

Bibliography

Adair, V & Dahlberg, S. (2002): 'Welfare-class Identity and the Rhetoric of Erasure in Academia', *Public Voices*, vol. 5, no. 3, pp. 75-84.

Ahmed, S. (2012): *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*, Duke University Press, Durham.

Attfield, S. (2016): 'Rejecting Respectability: On Being Unapologetically Working-class', *The Journal of Working-Class Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 45-57.

'Feeder School Tables 2016', *The Irish Times*, December 2, accessed 28 October 2017,

http://www.irishtimes.com/polopoly_fs/1.2941276.1484735872!/menu/standard/file/feeder_schools2016_new2b.pdf.

Goodban, N. (1985): 'The Psychological Impact of Being on Welfare', *Social Service Review*, vol. 59, no. 3, pp. 403 – 422.

Hancock, A. (2004): *The Politics of Disgust: The Public Identity of the Welfare Queen*, New York Press, New York.

Holden, L. (2011): 'Giving a Voice to Inequality', *The Irish Times*, Mar 15, accessed 12 November, 2017, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/giving-a-voice-to-inequality-1.573154>

Jones, O. (2011): *Chavs: The Demonisation of the Working-class*, Verso, London.

Leeb, C. (2004): *Working-class Women in Elite Academia: A Philosophical Inquiry*, Peter Lang, Bern.

McGuire, P. (2016): 'Mind the Gap: The Stark Class Divide in Access to Third Level', *The Irish Times*, April 12, accessed 24 September, 2017, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/mind-the-gap-the-stark-class-divide-in-access-to-third-level-1.2602138>

Publicis D. (2015): 'Go Home Students – you need a bit of looking after & we've got fantastic fares just for you', Twitter post, 3 March, accessed 25 August, 2017, <https://twitter.com/publicisdublin/status/556129834091692032>

Social Welfare Fraud Campaign (2017): Radio Program, *Today with Sean O'Rourke*, RTE Radio One, Dublin, May 15, 2017.

Strangleman, T. (2011): 'Working-Class Autobiography as Cultural Heritage' in Smith, L., Shackel, P. and Campbell, G. (eds.) *Heritage, Labour and the Working-classes*, Taylor & Francis Ltd, London, pp. 147-159.

Waldner, L. K. (2003): 'If You Want Me to Pull Myself Up, Give Me Bootstraps' in Adair, V., Dahlberg, S. (eds), *Reclaiming Class: Women, Poverty, and the Promise of Higher Education in America*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, pp. 97-110.

Warnock, D. (2016): 'Paradise Lost? Patterns and Precarity in Working-class Academic Narratives', *The Journal of Working-Class Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 28-44.

Weed, F. J. (1980): 'The Social Position of the Welfare-class in Urban Industrial States', *The Pacific Sociological Review*, vol.23, no. 2, pp. 151 – 17.

Wilson, N. (2016): *Home in British Working-class Fiction*, Routledge, London.

Wood, H. (2017): 'When you grow up poor, you don't have a safety net in your parents. You are your parents' safety net', Twitter post, 2 August, accessed 31 August, 2017, <https://twitter.com/girlziplocked/status/892869942684655621>

Conceptualizing Critical Friendship as a Protective Measure in Academia

Natalie Currie-Patterson, Western University, London, Ontario

Kaitlyn Watson, Western University, London, Ontario

Abstract

Critical friendship is often used in the field of education to refer to relationships based on support and critical critique of professional practice. However, we posit that critical friendship has the potential as both a protective measure and mode of functional support for individuals negotiating the lived experiences and consequences of being working-class in the academy. Based on the auto-ethnographic narratives of two self-defined working-class doctoral students living and working in Ontario, Canada, we find that (mis)perceptions of incompetence; negotiating the academy as women; income, debt, and the tensions this creates result in the need for this redefined understanding of critical friendship.

Keywords

Critical friendship, working-class, doctoral student, auto-ethnography, competence, gender, debt

Conceptualizing Critical Friendship as a Protective Measure in Academia

As PhD candidates, the authors of this article reside in, perhaps, one of the most marginal spaces of academia. As part of the Canadian university system we, as PhD candidates, exist and work in a setting that boasts the second lowest PhD completion rate among 16 peer countries as defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (Canada Conference Board 2014). Canadian universities currently face austerity measures which impact students through decreased government funding, increased tuition costs, and related increased student debt. At the same time, however, Canada's universities are experiencing what the Canadian Council for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) has called 'administrative bloat' (2017, p. 10). This 'bloat' has seen 'escalating costs for upper management positions (yearly salaries in excess of \$100,000) while less funding is reaching the classroom' (CCPA 2017, p. 10). The systemic fragility of our positions within the academy is exacerbated by the socio-economic, political, gendered, and personal facets of our lives and work, including, but not limited to: negotiating the academy as women, as mothers, with debt, and as commuters. Taken together, the personal and academic conditions of our lives provide a context which requires us to navigate the precarious nature of our existence at once within, or at least perceived by others to be within, the

‘Ivory tower’ and outside of it. We acknowledge that some characteristics of our being and our positionality, such as our womanhood, marginalize us. Other components of our positionality, including our identification as white settlers in a settler nation state, provide us privilege. Embedded in power relations of gender, university standing, race, and finance, our own experiences seem to echo findings from an Ontario branch study of the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) which identify anxiety, money, and a lack of institutional support as greatly impacting the mental health of graduate students (CFS Ontario 2016, p. 1).

This article explores the issues outlined above and, in doing so, conceptualizes critical friendship as both a protective measure and mode of functional support for individuals negotiating the lived experiences and consequences of being working-class in the academy. Critical friendship has been defined as a relationship between individuals, or groups of individuals, where one, or more of those involved, ‘asks provocative questions, provides data to examine through another lens, and offers critique of a person’s work’ (Costa & Kallick 1993, p. 50). Importantly, the work done amongst critical friends aims to push one another outside their ‘comfort zones’ in order to improve professional practice through ‘supportive but challenging relationships’ (Swaffield 2007, p. 207). Informed by our own experiences and illuminated through a series of auto-ethnographic narratives, we argue that the operationalization of critical friendships in the academy, through the purposeful seeking out, cultivating, and maintenance of these relationships, can challenge the themes of experience of working-class academics identified by Warnock (2016) including, but not limited to: alienation, imposter syndrome, debt, and questioning the meritocracy. Thus, we wish to extend the understanding of critical friendship beyond its utility for professional development, as a practical method for fostering personal and professional growth and wellness amongst working-class academics.

In the paper that follows we have come together to explore the ways critical friendship has impacted our development both personally and as emerging scholars in the field of education. We begin by providing some clarification on key terms used within this paper. Next, we provide some information about critical friendships and how they came to be important in our lives and work. The development of critical friendship as important to us is closely connected to our ontological positioning, epistemologies, as well as lived experiences, which are explored in the following section. A literature review is then presented wherein we provide some commentary on the ways working-class studies intersects with our own experiences and the work of this article. Next, we move into our findings and discussion. Here we highlight four major themes that arose from our auto-ethnographic narratives: (mis)perceptions of incompetence; negotiating the academy as women; income, debt, and the tensions this creates; and the value of critical friendship. We end this article by both looking back and forwards: back to the ways our own critical friendship has developed, and forward by making suggestions for further research in this area and by providing some specific ideas around the seeking out, cultivating, and maintenance of critical friendships.

Terminology

In using the term *protective measure* we draw from the work of Sidney Cobb, an epidemiologist who studied the effects of life and job stress. Cobb’s (1976) work

explored the ways high levels of social support, or relationships which make people feel cared for, valued, and part of a social network, function to protect the individual's physical and mental health. In this article we connect the notion of protective measures with that of *functional support*. Author 1 was introduced to the concept of functional support by an article written by one of her PhD program professors. Richmond and Smith (2012) utilized the concept in their research on Aboriginal youth's sense of belonging in schools. Drawing on both Richmond and Smith (2012) and Cohen and Syme (1985), we define functional support as the characteristics of a social relationship which provide concrete support through action, such as discussion and advice.

Throughout this article we also use the terms *settler-state* and describe ourselves as *settlers*. At this point we feel it appropriate to provide some explanation of these terms. Canada is a settler-state; that is, Canada is a country where the colonizers never left. This requires that we reflect on and explicitly consider the ways present-day politics of place and identity are 'enmeshed with the legacies of imperialism' (Jacobs 1996, p. 4) and the enduring processes of colonialism. As such, our description of ourselves as settler women is a purposeful acknowledgement of the history of colonialism, of Canada as a settler-state, and the benefits we reap as descendants of those who actively settled the land we now know as Canada. Moreover, we use this term as a prompt towards interrogating what Epp (2008) refers to as the settler problem in which we actively confront our own complicity in the ongoing legacies of colonialism as well as the actions we take in an effort to participate in moves towards reconciliation.

Critical Friendship

In the field of education, critical friendship has largely been taken up as a method of professional relationship building aimed at improving educator practice through reflection, discussion, and support. Costa and Kallick (1993) provide what has become, perhaps, the most widely distributed definition, which is worthy of repeating here. They describe the critical friend as an individual who, through action, 'asks provocative questions, provides data to examine through another lens, and offers critique of a person's work' all the while striving to support the success of their friend's work through critique and dialogue (Costa & Kallick 1993, p. 50). Similarly, Swaffield (2007) has described critical friendship as 'a supportive yet challenging relationship between professionals...' (p. 206) that operates to improve teacher practice through flexible and functional support. Bambino (2002) has discussed how time spent in a critical friend group with other teachers offered opportunities for improving teacher practice through the provision of 'structures for effective feedback and strong support' (p. 25). Through this group, Bambino (2002) argues honest, difficult, and critical reflection required teachers to move beyond a deficit line of thinking in order to consider how their own actions may be responsible for their students 'low' performances (p. 26). Like all relationships, however, critical friendships may only be effective if they develop and maintain certain characteristics.

Critical friendship relationships require trust (Swaffield 2005, p. 44), clear communication (Baskerville & Goldblatt 2009, p. 208), and a shared understanding of purpose (Bambino 2002, p. 27). Hill (2002) has identified the skills necessary to engage as a critical friend: attentiveness, reflective listening, being articulate, being

inquiry oriented, and encouraging the collection of multiple forms of data. Achinstein and Meyer (1997), however, caution that there is a tension which can, and often does, arise in the 'traditional dichotomy and hierarchical relationship between friendship and critique' (p. 5), and argue that a critical friendship is difficult to create and maintain.

Approaching critical friendship in a different way, Hedges (2010) has offered an argument that there is value in drawing upon critical friendship in research in order to support the co-construction of knowledge between educators and education researchers. Like Hedges, we believe that critical friendship has much to offer the field of education beyond organizational improvement. The literature concerning the role and efficacy of critical friendship in education has been largely concerned with educational leadership programming, standards raising, and collegial relationships amongst professionals working in a school setting (Baskerville & Goldblatt 2009, p. 207). Thus, in this paper, we extend the operationalization of critical friendship in order to elucidate its value for those existing in marginal positions within the academy. In doing so, we work to alter, in some ways, the conceptualization of critical friendship as presented by educational leadership programs, as a formal and professional relationship between colleagues. Instead, we wish to put forth a vision of critical friendship as a valuable relationship that, when operationalized through an acknowledgement of the intersectionality of our lives, can operate at both a professional and personal level. In doing so, we argue critical friendship offers much potential in terms of supporting personal well-being, professional development, and academic growth. As such, we believe critical friendships should be sought out and carefully maintained by those living and working at the edges of the academy.

Seeking out critical friendship

The critical friendship established by the authors of this paper evolved, in part, due to the nature of our academic work, that is, both authors are doctoral students in the field of Indigenous education. Our positionalities are informed by our self-identification as settler women, as described above, and our personal and academic interests in decolonization. Without using decolonization as a social justice framework to avoid our own complicity in the ongoing colonial project (Tuck & Yang 2012), we understand it to be in relation to colonization, where decolonization makes way for 'possibility, a way out of colonialism' (Smith 1999, p. 204). Although working in diverse areas of this field, each author is interested in disrupting colonial knowledge and the systems that privilege settler peoples. Given that we often put at the forefront our settler, female positionality, we appreciate Zweig's (2016) work which acknowledges that '[b]ringing class questions to the fore should never be a recipe for ignoring racial, gender, and ethnic claims for justice and equality' (p. 19), and as Gillbourn (2012) writes, 'race and class inequalities cannot be fully understood in isolation' (p. 29). Thus, we view our positionality as the outcome of ever-changing and intersecting subjectivities. We are then making an argument that we are molded, influenced, and impacted by the multiple personal, socio-political, cultural, racial, gender, socio-economic (and more) facets of our lives. In doing so, we draw on feminist standpoint theory which works to explain the ways women's experiences, as fundamentally differing from the male experience in androcentric-based systems of power, produce particular knowledge(s) (Harding 2004). Standpoint theory has drawn significant criticism since its emergence in the 1970s and 1980s. These criticisms

have questioned the existence of a women's 'standpoint,' describing it as essentialist and as ignoring the ways gender, race, class, and colonialism (among others) impact experience and knowledge development (Harding 2004). Our claims of intersectional positionality and our existence as individuals experiencing both privilege and marginalization in our lives, then, are supported by the work of Patricia Hill-Collins (1997), who describes standpoint theory as an 'interpretive framework dedicated to explicating how knowledge remains central to maintaining and changing unjust systems of power' (p. 375). As well, the words of Wolkowitz, Lovell, and Andermahr (1997) advocate for the understanding of relationality in standpoint theory rather than the presupposition of a single, and inevitable, women's experience.

Author 1 and Author 2 were introduced to each other while attending the same doctoral program. Because so few students in the program focus on Indigenous education, it became vital to develop a professional relationship, which soon became a personal friendship as well. While discussing program milestones, family history and current circumstances, important readings related to our field, and the challenges of being commuter students, we came to realize the importance of developing a critical friendship where we could share, question, critique, and support each other. Through these conversations, subsequent discussions related to this paper, and in other work we have done together, we realized that we too identify as part of the working-class given our partners' occupations, the intellectual labour we contribute to the university, other employment positions we hold, and our marginalized status in the academy. In the literature review below we explore the term 'working-class' in order to support our use of this category of understanding and to introduce the ways it is implicated in the analysis which follows.

Literature Review

While 'working-class' has been defined across the social sciences (Attfield & Giuffre 2016), Linkon and Russo (2016) describe class as involving 'relations of power, based in economic positions that shape individuals, culture, history, and interests' (p. 5). Therefore, class is used to describe this broadly understood culture, or is used as a category of analysis (Linkon & Russo 2016). With its roots in labor studies (Russo & Linkon 2005), working-class studies investigates 'the organization and deployment of economic power in the labor process and in the military and political arenas; and the creation and operation of culture and identity' (Zweig 2016, p. 17). However, work in this field from the 1980s and 90s is described as being a platform for white, working-class men, with a particular closeness to whiteness studies (Russo & Linkon 2005), while more recent scholarship advocates for an intersectional approach (Warnock 2016; Zweig 2016) that brings together the 'complex entanglements of class with race, gender, and other identities and cultural groups' (Zweig 2016, p. 18).

One of the ways working-class studies has incorporated this intersectionality is through the examination of class and gender (Linkon & Russo 2016). For example, Arner (2014) describes the role of gender and class in hiring practices, specifically for English professoriate at the Modern Languages Association convention. She suggests that these intersections impact where students, and future professors, study; how prepared one might be for a job interview based on past academic and personal experiences; and the prestige of institution one might find work at.

Working-class studies also investigates the lives of working-class academics more broadly. Drawing on eight autoethnographic collections written over a span of 30 years, Warnock (2016) identifies seven themes or patterns of working-class academic life: feelings of alienation, feelings that one lacks cultural capital, experiences with stereotyping and microaggressions, experiencing survivor guilt and the impostor syndrome, the struggle of passing as middle-class, accumulating high student debt, and misuse as adjunct labor. Also drawing on ‘autobiographically-inflected literature’ (Brook & Mitchell 2012, p. 588), Brook & Mitchell (2012), and Rennels (2014), identify that many working-class academics struggle to speak about their families or life in the university. With particular emphasis on her dedication to community as an Indigenous faculty member, Sellers (2014) identifies one’s relationship with community, one’s geographies, as something which is not supported by middle-class views of sacrifice, prestige, and success. She further identifies advantages for staying in one’s community:

For local working-class faculty, we have the strong advantage of living in our home communities and the strength of those roots to carry us through our lives and into old age—those are the roots we can count on regardless of our income (para. 10).

Brook and Mitchell (2012) similarly identify the ways in which working-class academics can use their positionality to support students of low socio-economic status. These professors understand the isolation and exclusion, the need to ‘pass’ as middle class, and the challenges associated with linguistic and institutional practices.

Like the marginalization experienced by some working-class academics, graduate student status is another site of intersection. While working-class academics are often stigmatized, graduate students in particular need to negotiate ‘rising tuition costs, decreased assistance, and an increased pressure to perform a middle-class professorial role without the means to do so’ (Rennels 2014, para. 62). Similar to Warnock’s (2016) work, Jensen (2014) found survivor guilt to be one of the ‘psychological difficulties’ (para. 11) for working-class students based on her own experiences and information gleaned from other research.

Aligning with the use of autobiography and memoir as an important source of data for working-class studies, and with clear interest in the lived experience and voices of working-class people (Russo & Linkon 2005), we also turn to the tool of auto-ethnography as a means to document and cultivate our critical friendship. Recognizing that our declaration as working-class intellectuals is ‘self narration and self disclosure’ (Busk & Goehring 2014, para. 2), we posit that critical friendship can be used to negotiate our working-class status in a ‘white collar’ environment.

Methodological Decision Making: The Value of Auto-ethnography

Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011) explain auto-ethnography as an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience. Auto-ethnography as a method disrupts canonical research and presentation while embracing both political and conscious self-interrogative acts. In this way auto-ethnographic research operates from a position that acknowledges it is not only the content shared that matters: the process of accessing the content, the forms in which the content is produced, and the

ways the content is shared, are also part of the autoethnographic process. Through narrative, co-constructed via various means such as relational dialogue, interactive interviews, or personal narratives using various lenses, auto-ethnography reflects the stories we choose to tell.

In making the decision to pursue a cooperative auto-ethnographic research project on the development of our critical friendship, we work with the notion that language is both individual as well as an opportunity to build connections with others. We draw upon the work of M.J. Barrett (2005) who posits,

the cultural narratives, or discourses to which we have access, make certain subject positions available, and others inaccessible. With each utterance or action, we take up particular subject positions within or in relation to discourses that are available. At the same time that we attempt to (re)position ourselves, we are positioned by others (pp. 84-85).

Situatedness, or positionality, places us in a context that makes and acknowledges meaning making. By this we mean that 'from a given subject position, only certain versions of the world make sense' (Davies 2000, cited in Barrett 2005, p. 84). Auto-ethnographic research, through the act of self-reflection, promotes the acknowledgement of a researcher's limitations accompanied by efforts to confront said limitations. In this way, auto-ethnographic research supports personal connection to one's work and reflexive research practices, particularly the exposing of personal biases and how they affect one's work. When working with personal experiences and human beings who are full of experiences and emotions, we find it incredibly difficult to leave out the psychological, spiritual, soulful, emotional, and loving parts. These parts make up the whole and are pieces of a larger, integral 'system' of who we are. The making up of these parts, how we view these essential parts, and how we piece these parts together are so crucial in understanding who we are. We pursue this auto-ethnographic and reflexive research in a way that focusses on the intersectionality and relationality of our experiences. In doing so, we acknowledge that our experiences, our 'standpoint(s)', do not represent the experiences of all women (Harding 2004). We hope, however, our reflections, words, and ideas may shed light on at least some of the systemic issues which contribute to academic poverty as well as offering a way to combat these issues through critical friendship.

Regardless of what is being studied, our biases impact what we study, how we study it (methods and analysis employed), how language is used to communicate results, where the work is published, and how the work is shared. Auto-ethnography confronts these biases openly as an essential methodological consideration or tool central to the process and relation of research. Thinking about the many hours put into this work reveals how this project was a much richer process than compiling works/data of others to 'prove' our story. Our work included the thinking; the recollection of memories; the decisions behind what stories to include; the decisions behind repeated editing and reframing; and the time tuning into the resonating voice within.

Methods

A mixed methods, auto-ethnographic research approach was used for this collaborative project. In working through a system of combined methods we investigated how our own stories intersected and diverged (Marshall & Rossman 2011). We each individually crafted a multimodal narrative which included images, audio clips, music, and writing addressing our experiences in the academy. We then shared our narratives, or our stories, with each other electronically, owing to the physical distance between us. Using a rubric guided by the themes from the call for papers of this special issue, we independently coded our own narrative to identify recurring themes. Following this, we came together to share our individual findings. After this conversation we took time to code each other's work and then reconvened to identify and analyze the commonalities and differences within our stories and experiences. Both conversations were recorded to aid in capturing nuances and crucial information in support of our findings. This process strengthened our critical friendship and support for one another as we moved through the writing process as working-class doctoral students.

Findings and Discussion

(Mis)perceptions of competence

Author 1: *I look at the stick, it is a very clear positive. We are now expecting our second child. I am thrilled, then almost immediately I am struck with a sense of fear. How will this be accepted by my supervisor, by the Faculty. The academy is not a place for working mothers, certainly grad school is not a welcoming environment...*

Author 2: *Because of my family and their choices, I often feel like an outsider in the academic world ... [I] feel as though I am an imposter in the world of thinking, researching, writing, and publishing. I ask myself: who would want to listen to what I have to say? My family consists of a bunch of degenerates. Often I wonder, do I belong?*

We have identified Warnock's (2016) patterns of experience for working-class academics, including stereotypes and microaggressions, alienation, and lack of cultural capital, as resulting in our (mis)perceptions of competence. Our perceptions of place in the academy manifest in the ways we position our research as settler women interested in Indigenous education. More related to the topic of this paper, the ways in which we express, or do not, our understandings of what it means to be working-class women in a university setting based on our choices, family background, et cetera are made based on the often high expectation that we will have negative encounters based on this identification.

Stereotypes and microaggressions, often encountered by working-class academics from colleagues and students (Warnock 2016), can contribute to one's perception of competence. For Author 1, deciding to have a child while completing her degree solicited hurtful looks, comments, and continued delegitimization of her needs:

When I returned to program activities more fully I realized how unwelcoming a place the Faculty and university is for moms. Nowhere to pump, nowhere to store milk ... [and] nowhere to change baby when I, on rare occasion, need to bring them with me.

These negative experiences related to motherhood in the academy challenged Author 1's sense of competence in the university and caused her to question if she would be able to complete her degree and how motherhood would impact her job search in the future.

For Author 2, a sense of having little cultural capital, and 'the signals this lack emits of difference – read by the middle-class as inferiority or lack of dubiously defined 'fit' – that lead to social, cultural, and professional exclusion' (Warnock 2016, p. 31), results in (mis)perceptions of competence. As a first-generation university student with family members occupying extremely marginalized social positions, Author 2 questions her status in the university: '*Often I wonder, do I belong?*' Author 2 also found '*pressure from ... school via deadlines, progress reports, emails about my peers' proposal presentations, et cetera to get everything done*' while trying to support her younger brother, as a source of anxiety with regards to her perception of competence.

Negotiating the academy as women

Author 1: *Now I struggle to find a balance between work and life, as many do. Our oldest is in part-time childcare - the cost of which takes up a significant portion of my PhD stipend. Our youngest is cared for by my family and friends who I rely on too much. I work at night, and on weekends, and while away at my in-laws trailer for a family weekend because my husband is available to [be with] the girls. As my first daughter gets older she commonly states that she too needs 'to work' and I wonder how my constant refrain of 'I have to work' and papers stacked high on our dining room table is impacting her.*

Author 2: *While my partner and I try not to buy into stereotypical roles, it happens. I do the cleaning, organizing, administration, and cooking – which could make up a full-time job. Sometimes I feel as though my partner does not understand the time it takes to complete these tasks, plus the full-time job I have as a student and teacher.*

The theme of womanhood deeply permeated our narratives and relates to Warnock's (2016) findings of alienation, and stereotypes and microaggressions among working-class academics. In negotiating the academy as women we find that our lives and work are complicated by both physical and symbolic barriers. For Author 1 the physical barriers are intimately connected to the physiological repercussions of bearing children and being a nursing mother: '*please excuse me while I extract the milk from my breasts for my infant in this literal closet...*' The lack of suitable locations to pump breast milk has, and continues, to severely limit Author 1's ability to participate in campus life and community. In the rare cases she is able to secure a location to pump it often requires informing several people, and often those in positions of power and authority within the university, what she is doing - about an intimate part of her physical and emotional life. These experiences have prevented Author 1 from applying to several paid positions within the university, thus contributing to a sense of alienation in the university, her continued economic fragility, and likely impacting her capacity to secure an academic position in future.

This gendered experience has also manifested through symbolic barriers. One such example is that both Authors have experienced the misconception that our partners are somehow intellectually incompatible with us, owing to their jobs in trades which rely heavily on the exchange of physical labour for wages. This questioning of our partners and the relationships we have with them, by peers, colleagues, and at times university ‘superiors’ creates a symbolic barrier to our participation in the academy as we divest time from our research to defend our lives and partners. Moreover, both authors have found that owing to the fact that we live and work primarily away from the university campus, the burden for home administrative tasks and cleaning have fallen to us. For Author 2 this has resulted in trying to overcome the difficulties of *‘maintain[ing] a coherent work day in the same place where I live.’*

Money, debt, and tension

Author 1: *I constantly wage a battle between the work I do for money and the work I do for my dissertation. Knowing that prioritizing work-for-money now will end up costing me more in the long run.*

Author 2: *I have applied for OSAP² at the three different institutions I have attended ... [for my] nine years of post-secondary learning [...]. I’m nervous for what the next nine years will look like, that is, the period student loans are amortized over, given the state of hiring for full-time faculty in the arts and humanities. I have had to make conscious choices to ensure that I will have some sort of stable employment after I am done with school, most notably that I have been hired to [a school board] as a supply teacher, but [I] will need to be careful that this new work does not encroach on the time I need to complete my doctorate.*

Like Warnock’s (2016) findings of growing student debt and increased use of adjunct labor in recent auto-ethnographic accounts from working-class academics, we too identify these as a theme in our narratives. Warnock (2016) suggests increased debt is a ‘roadblock to mobility, one so large that some working-class academics question whether they will find financial stability or success in academia at all’ (p. 36). For Author 2, this resulted in seeking out additional employment while completing her degree, while for Author 1, these questions bring into focus the ongoing problem of time: *‘Time is a constant source of anxiety and overwhelming pressure for me. How can I find time to get my dissertation work done, to publish, to provide for my children, to work and make money to contribute to our household.’* The data clearly indicated that both authors are conscious of their financial situation and the impact this has on their progress in the doctoral program, family, motherhood, and future employment options.

Operationalizing Critical Friendship in the Academy

Author 1: *I had never felt as alone as I did during my Masters. I was the only person in my cohort completing thesis work, original research, my supervisor would take*

² The Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) offers student loans for Ontario residents attending in-and-out-of province post-secondary learning institutions.

whole semesters to return feedback³, and I felt woefully unprepared to be writing. ...We had a MA Geography student lounge and it was in this space that I came to understand the power of friendship in academic work. Those in years above and below me came to have important places in my life as we came together to encourage, gripe, work, play, and reflect together. ... All that I have talked about is caught up in a larger sense of being an imposter. ...I remain lonely and feel this way often, my husband and partner does not really know what I do on a daily basis (when it comes to my work). He, and my family do not understand the inner workings of the University so my complaints fall on well-intentioned but confused ears.

Author 2: *While I have faced challenges as a female, commuter, mother-like big sister, first generation university student, I have found support through meeting and talking with other graduate students in formal and informal spaces. ... Through discussions about our personal lives and academic pursuits, sometimes over a glass of wine or phone conversations paused by screaming babies, I have come to realize that I am not alone: other graduate students are facing personal and professional difficulties as they navigate the murky waters of life as a PhD student in the twenty-first century.*

The findings discussed above are representative of some of the ongoing challenges we face as we attempt to progress through a doctoral program in education. In many ways these themes of (mis)perceptions of competence, negotiating the academy as women, and money, debt and life tension are also intimately interconnected, indeed, co-constitutive of, a broader sense of isolation and being an imposter. As we came together to discuss the coding results of both our own work and one another's, it became evident that the more isolated we felt, the more like an imposter we felt. Relatedly, the more like an imposter we felt, the more we questioned our ability to progress through the doctoral requirements. In this way, critical friendship has operated as a life-buoy as we attempt to wade through the murky waters of academia. For both authors, the ability to converse with someone experiencing a similar sense of doubt, of fear, and of isolation has created opportunities to break the pattern of seclusion: to emerge from a sense of despair with a sense of hope that we do, in fact, know things and we can, in fact, do this.

In addition to the personal life-line this critical friendship has provided, it has also created real possibilities for professional and academic growth. The authors have spent many hours talking about our research, writing, and teaching. Through these discussions we have both come to be introduced to new concepts, new scholars, new resources, and ultimately new capacities to navigate the world of academia. Our critical friendship has prompted us to work outside of our comfort zone, to expand our understandings of education, and importantly to be critically reflexive of our positionality and its impact on our lives and work. By maintaining our critical friendship we have worked to improve our writing and presentation skills as well as our teaching. In many ways this critical friendship has also helped to keep us accountable to ourselves and our progression through the doctoral journey as we

³ I wish to make clear that this is in no way intended to be a personal attack on a supervisor who offered me much support and compassion during my program. Instead, I hope it provides insight into the lived consequences of a post-secondary education system which over-burdens its professoriate. I also wish to acknowledge that my MA supervisor was also attempting to negotiate the complexities of the academy and their own personal life.

encourage one another to be productive but also, and perhaps more importantly, to take steps to care for our physical and mental health.

Conclusion

We wish to conclude this article by looking both backwards and forwards. When we look back on the feelings of loneliness, worry, and fear present throughout our graduate studies we understand that these feelings contributed greatly to the feeling of being an imposter, of not being good enough. We reflect on the ways multiple aspects of our positionality have come to intersect in a way which has positioned us, in some ways, at the margins of university life. We are reminded that this intersection of womanhood, commuter status, research interest, political beliefs, and more brought us together in what we now deem to be a crucial component of our professional and personal lives: critical friendship. As we look forward we would like to position critical friendship as a critical component of the lives and work of working-class academics.

Central to our advocacy for the value of critical friendship is the ability of such a relationship to provide concrete, realized support, or to draw on Richmond and Smith's (2012) work, functional support. By this we mean that critical friendship must be structured and maintained in a way that operationalizes the relationship through tangible actions rather than merely the potential for support. The critical friendship, then, must be active; it must be a part of one's professional identity. Importantly, the critical friendship must be called on in times of both strife and joy. Thus, the relationship must be carefully and purposefully cultivated through ongoing communication and the creation of consistent opportunities for professional growth alongside personal support.

Though the authors of this article share similar ontological beliefs, epistemological positioning, and research interests we wish to make clear that the value of critical friendship can, and perhaps should, cross disciplinary lines and university status. We both maintain critical friendships outside of the ones discussed here, with individuals from a variety of disciplines, including the 'hard' sciences and humanities, as well as with professionals, including teachers, who work outside of the academy but who are closely connected to our own work. In all cases the value of critical friendship lies in its ability to act as a protective measure through the provision of functional support. These critical friendships are integral to our emotional, social, academic, and professional well-being. Having experienced first-hand the value of critical friendship, we call upon university faculty members and administration to both promote and support the development of such relationships, particularly for academics, working-class and otherwise, who are at vulnerable times and places in their academic careers. Looking forward, we also encourage continued research into the efficacy of critical friendship for professional development and personal well-being in the academy.

Lastly, there is, in our minds, a requirement that the foundational characteristic of the critical friendship is accountability: accountability to one another through the expectation of reliable, functional support, and the expectation that our professional knowledges, skills, and experiences will be broadened through careful and considerate critique. Moreover, there is accountability to ourselves: an understanding that the critical friendship will help support professional development and personal

well-being in order to support the ultimate goal of carrying out meaningful work within the academy. The critical friendship, understood this way, is not a place to wallow one's self into academic paralysis but instead a place to find a way through the difficulties of academic work and our precarious positions as working-class academics.

Author Bios

Natalie Currie-Patterson is a Doctoral Candidate in Critical Policy, Equity and Leadership Studies at the Faculty of Education, Western University, London, Ontario. Her doctoral work is aimed at understanding the relationship between teacher practice and enactment of Ontario's Indigenous Education Policy in order to gauge the impact of the policy as well as to consider the relationship between policy and teachers' professional knowledge. Her other interests lie in the area of pre-service education, anti-oppressive pedagogies, moves toward reconciliation through and with education, decolonizing education, and critical pedagogy.

Kaitlyn Watson was born and raised in Ontario, Canada, and is currently a doctoral student in the Faculty of Education at Western University. Her research is concerned with reconciliation efforts among Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, specifically in the context of an event inspired by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. In addition to her research on reconciliation, Kaitlyn is interested in Indigenous education, anti-oppressive pedagogies, the role of education policy on practice, and social justice initiatives more broadly.

Bibliography

Achinstein, B. & Meyer, T. (1997): 'The Uneasy Marriage between Friendship and Critique: Dilemmas for Fostering Critical Friendship in a Novice Teacher Learning Community', *Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association*, Chicago, IL, pp. 1-21.

Arner, L. (2014): 'Working-class Women at the MLA Interview', in Siegel, C. (ed.), *Rhizomes 27: Working-class Academics: Theories, Mythologies, Realities*, accessed 19 July 2017, <http://www.rhizomes.net/issue27/arner.html>.

Attfield, S. & Giuffre, L. (2016), 'Editorial: Welcome to the Journal of Working-Class Studies', *Journal of Working-Class Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 1-3.

Bambino, D. (2002): 'Critical friends', *Educational Leadership*, vol. 59, no. 6, pp. 25-28.

Barrett, M.J. (2005): 'Sense of Feminist Poststructuralism in Environmental Research and Practice', *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, vol. 10, pp. 79-93.

Baskerville, D. & Goldblatt, H. (2009): 'Learning to be a Critical Friend: From Professional Indifference through Challenge to Unguarded Conversations', *Cambridge Journal of Education*, vol. 39, no. 2, pp. 205- 221.

Brook, H. & Mitchell, D. (2012): 'Learners, Learning, Learned: Class, Higher Education, and Autobiographical Essays from Working-class Academics', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, vol. 34, no. 6, pp. 587–599.

Busk, L. & Goehring, B. (2014): 'What Is a Working-Class Intellectual?', in Siegel, C. (ed.), *Rhizomes 27: Working-class Academics: Theories, Mythologies, Realities*, accessed 19 July, 2017, <http://www.rhizomes.net/issue27/busk.html>.

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (2017): 'The Case for Renewal in Post-secondary Education', viewed 30 June 2017, <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/case-renewal-post-secondary-education>.

Canada Conference Board (2014): 'Provincial and Territorial Ranking, PhD Graduates', accessed 30 June, 2017, <http://www.conferenceboard.ca/hcp/provincial/education/phd.aspx>.

Canadian Federation of Students, Ontario (2016): 'Supporting Graduate Student Mental Health', accessed 1 July, 2017, <http://cfsontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Factsheet-GraduateMentalHealth.pdf>.

Cobb, S. (1976): 'Social Support as a Moderator of Life Stress', *Psychosomatic Medicine*, vol. 38, no. 5, pp. 300-314.

Cohen, S. & Smye, S. L. (1985): *Social Support and Health*, Academic Press, San Diego.

Collins, P.H. (1997): 'Comment on Hekman's 'Truth and Method: Feminist Standpoint Theory Revisited': Where's the Power?', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 22, no. 2, pp.375-381.

Costa, A. & Kallick, B. (1993): 'Through the Lens of a Critical Friend', *Educational Leadership*, vol. 51, pp.49-51.

Davies, B. (2000): 'Eclipsing the Constitutive Power of Discourse: The Writing of Janette Turner Hospital', in St. Pierre, E. & Pillow, W. (eds.), *Working the Ruins: Feminist Poststructural Theory and Methods in Education*, Routledge, New York, pp. 179-198.

Ellis, C., Adams, T. & Bochner, A. (2011): 'Autoethnography: An Overview', *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, vol. 12, no. 1, accessed 30 June, 2017, <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1589/3095>.

Epp, R. (2008): *We are all Treaty people: Prairie Essays*, The University of Alberta Press, Edmonton, AB.

Gillbourn, D. (2012): 'The White Working Class, Racism, and Respectability: Victims, Degenerates and Interest-convergence', in Bhopal, K. & Preston, J. (eds.), *Intersectionality and 'Race' in Education*, Routledge, New York, pp. 29-56.

Harding, S.G. (ed.) 2004, *The feminist standpoint theory reader: Intellectual and political controversies*. Psychology Press, New York.

Hedges, H. (2010): 'Blurring the Boundaries: Connecting Research, Practice and Professional Learning', *Cambridge Journal of Education*, vol. 40, no. 3, pp. 299-314.

Hill, G.W. (2002): *Critical Friendship*, Mottram D'Hill & Associates, Brisbane.

Jacobs, J. M. (1996): *Edge of Empire: Postcolonialism and the City*, Routledge, New York.

Jensen, B. (2014): 'Dreams and Nightmares: Survivor Guilt in Working Class Crossovers', in Siegel, C. (ed.), *Rhizomes 27: Working-class academics: Theories, Mythologies, Realities*, accessed 19 July, 2017, <http://www.rhizomes.net/issue27/jensen.html>.

Linkon, S. & Russo, J. (2016): 'Twenty Years of Working-Class Studies: Tensions, Values, and Core Questions', *Journal of Working-Class Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 4-13.

Marshall, C. & Rossman, G. (2011): *Designing Qualitative Research*, 5th edn, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks.

Rennels, T. (2014): 'From the Trailer Park to the Ivory Tower and Somewhere in Between: A Critical Autoethnography of Class Performativity in Academe', in Siegel, C. (ed.), *Rhizomes 27: Working-class academics: Theories, mythologies, realities*, accessed 19 July 2017, <http://www.rhizomes.net/issue27/rennels.html>.

Richmond, C. & Smith, D. (2012): 'Sense of Belonging in the Urban School Environments of Aboriginal Youth', *International Indigenous Policy Journal*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp.1-16.

Russo, J. & Linkon, S. (2005): 'What's New about New Working-Class Studies?' in Russo, J. & Linkon, S. (eds.), *New Working-Class Studies*, Cornell University Press, Ithica, pp. 1-18.

Sellers, S. (2014): 'Homespace: Rejecting Academic Relocation and Honoring Working-Class Roots', in C. Siegel, (ed.), *Rhizomes 27: Working-class Academics: Theories, Mythologies, Realities*, accessed 19 July, 2017, <http://www.rhizomes.net/issue27/sellers.html>.

Smith, L. (1999): *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd edn, Zed Books, New York.

Swaffield, S. (2005): 'No Sleeping Partners: Relationships between Headteachers and Critical friends', *School Leadership and Management*, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 43-57.

Swaffield, S. (2007): 'Light Touch Critical Friendship', *Improving Schools*, vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 205-219.

Tuck, E. & Yang, W. (2012): 'Decolonization is not a Metaphor', *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 1-40.

Warnock, D. (2016) 'Paradise Lost? Patterns and Precarity in Working-Class Academic Narratives', *Journal of Working-Class Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 28-44.

Wolkowitz, C., Lovell, T. & Andermahr, S. (1997): *A Concise Glossary of Feminist Theory*. Arnold, London.

Zweig, M. (2016): 'Rethinking Class and Contemporary Working Class Studies', *Journal of Working-Class Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 14-22.

Class and Narrative Accrual: Personal Troubles and Public Issues in Five Vignettes

Matthew Spokes, York St. John University

Abstract

This paper develops Bruner's (1991) notion of narrative accrual, in conjunction with 'life-stories' and 'event-stories', to focus on the accumulation of experiences as a contributor to working-class identity. Situated between Mills' (1959) personal troubles and public issues, and framed by Nouri and Helterline's (1998) argument that identity is framed by social interaction with signification systems and other people, the author's own experiences as an early-career academic in two different British Universities – one more research-oriented with a predominantly middle-class student body, the other more teaching-oriented with a more class diverse student body – are utilized to forward 'personal narrative accrual' as a way of both conceptualizing and unpacking class associations, reflecting on Warnock's (2016) fivefold typology of alienation, cultural capital, stereotyping/microaggression, survivor guilt/impostor syndrome and middle class networking. Ultimately, this paper considers the interrelated problems of working-class identity, career development, and 'playing the game' through autobiographical vignettes, and suggests the potential application of personal narrative accrual in decreasing feelings of isolation in academia by working-class academics.

Keywords

Personal narrative accrual, working-class academic, life-stories, event-stories

Introduction

In this paper I would like to put forward the idea of 'personal narrative accrual' as a way of thinking through the development of working-classness through individual experiences, particularly in relation to life-stories and event-stories - or what Giele and Elder (1998) call 'event histories' - that contribute to our sense of identity, to what constitutes the 'self'. I say that 'I would like to put forward' because I am not entirely convinced that I can: the reason for this is a combination of second-guessing (in this case, whether or not it is acceptable for me to use my observations about differing treatments of early career staff at different academic institutions in the United Kingdom as a form of analysis about working-class identity) and the ongoing anxiety that accompanies impostor syndrome, an affliction that numerous academics have unpacked in more detail than I am going to offer here (see Long, Jenkins & Bracken 2000; Parkman 2016; Chapman 2017). My tentative approach is compounded by other concerns, including the personal – should I be sharing details

about my experiences with strangers in this way? – and the public, namely how best to format and structure the piece so as to appear suitably ‘academic’ to a wider audience. These worries echo pieces by other working-class academics, on blogs and in national newspapers (Anonymous Academic 2017).

This opening reflection neatly encapsulates not only the sorts of ongoing worries that early career academics (henceforth ECAs) have but also the constantly negotiated intersection between work, the private lives of individuals, and the internal narratives that shape and reshape the working-class academic. Issues around who is considered working-class in academia and the ways in which class is enacted, practiced and reproduced has of course been covered in considerable detail (Brook & Mitchel 2012; Reay 1997; Warnock 2016), so my offering is primarily around situating class experience as a gradual accumulation of individual life-course and event-stories, building on Warnock’s assertion that ‘storytelling can help to reduce the sense of alienation and fears of inferiority which plague many from the working-class’ (2016, p. 37).

Crucially, I see the forwarding of personal stories from working-class academics as resting between what Mills (1959) calls personal troubles and public issues. Mills argues that to be able to resolve troubles we need to understand the relationship between the social circumstances of the individual – ‘the social setting that is directly open to his personal experience and to some extent his willful [sic] activity’ (1967, p. 395-6) – and the individual’s biography. Public issues are, as Mills explains, ‘matters that transcend these local environments of the individual and the limited range of his life’ (1959, p. 8), so my intention in this short piece is to consider the potential implications of considering intersections and relationships between personal troubles and public issues, namely how individual experiences can be used to think through broader issues of class in academic life.

That is not to suggest this is entirely new territory, as recent interjections by Skeggs (2017) in relation to her role as an academic and a de facto carer have demonstrated, as well as Fletcher’s (2015) reflections on the uprooted nature of early career academics. But I want to suggest that, in adapting Bruner’s (1991) notion of ‘narrative accrual’, class can be understood as the stories we tell ourselves, particularly in connecting ‘life-stories’ and ‘event-stories’. As such, my contention is that the class identity of early career academics is forged in relation to experiential narrative accrual in the academy, and that this accumulation of events and stories reinforces predominant notions of impostor syndrome and alienation. Aside from the catharsis of writing this article and reflecting on my own experiences, I also feel that part of my motivation echoes Mazzei and Jacksons (2009) suggestion that by sharing narratives (of success or suffering) there is an opportunity to give voice to a wider set of concerns about the perpetuation of class anxiety in academia.

But how working-class am I? Am I a fake, my lectureship the result of an ongoing clerical error? Can I make myself feel like less of a charlatan by telling stories about how I got where I am today? These sorts of questions, some possibly rhetorical, lie at the heart of the nagging anxiety that accompanies many of my activities as an early career academic: is my anxiety caused by the feeling that my identity is bound up in my class position – that this differs from the class position of my contemporaries – or is this in and of itself a fictional construction?

Part of the confusion here is bound up with the problem that, in a narrative sense at the very least, the ‘me’ that I refer to is an agglomeration of different stories. Stories, as Warnock (2016) suggests, are powerful and significant, especially in relation to constructing and understanding the self as a working-class academic. The self, as Nouri and Helterline (1998, p. 37) argue, (developing Mills), is “‘located” between the personal and the social by the two fundamental parts of social interaction – other persons and signification systems’. To appreciate and disentangle my ‘self’ as a working-class ECA I should consider the interconnections between my social relations with others (family, other academics, students, administrators, and so forth) and my relationship with types of signification system (career progression paths, the structure of the academy, different structures within different institutions and the like): these social interactions inform and reciprocate class relations. It is useful to consider then how stories about my experience of academia – my social interactions - can be understood. In terms of literature on narratives, there are a variety of approaches to conceptualizing experiences that become stories, including (but not limited to) life-stories, and event-stories and histories.

Life-stories and event-stories

Life-stories – that is ‘a series of events and circumstance that are drawn from a well of archetypal experiences common to all’ (Atkinson 1998, p. 121) – are important because of their ability to reaffirm our own experiences in the context of others, thereby situating the individual within a social milieu. Atkinson continues that to fully get to grips with our own lives and identity, to understand the meaning behind our experiences, we need to put stories together: the reason for this is not solely a kind of therapy, though arguably this piece has that function in part for me, but as a way of moving towards clarification and to facilitate reflection that has not previously been possible (1998, p.125-8).

Atkinson’s reading is mirrored by McAdams (2001, p.100) who describes the life story as how individuals ‘provide their lives with unity and purpose by constructing internalized and evolving narratives of the self’. This approach, it is argued, comes as a response to observations by psychologists and others about the ways in which patients tended to frame their experiences in a narrative fashion, implying the underlying value of a life-story approach to understanding individual experiences. This is further emphasized by Thorne (2000) who posits that the individuality of a person is reflected in their narratives they construct. But how can these individual narratives be connected to broader social issues around class?

Event-stories, by contrast, operate at a level of abstraction from the individual, in the sense that whilst the individual is obviously present, the focus is on the social context of the event. Sandberg (2016) suggests that ‘the unit of analysis (the story) is concrete stories about particular events, not summarizing attempts to go to the core of all the different stories told by an individual. (p. 155). Furthermore, it is ‘one way of recounting past events, in which the order of narrative clauses matches the order of events as they occurred’ (Labov, 2010, p. 546). What we have then are individualized, temporalized life-stories, combined with the contextual information provided by event-stories.

To return to Mills, this confluence of life and event-stories – personal troubles and public issues - is akin to the broader project of the sociological imagination, that to comprehend the ‘problems of biography, of history and of their intersections within a society’ (1959, p. 111) enables us to think through the problems of class, in this case, in an institutional sense. In essence, the working-class identity of ECAs can be viewed as the relationship between life-stories (the individual or personal level) and event-stories (the social/contextual level). What I want to suggest is that the working-class identity of ECAs is a cumulative thing, a gradual collecting of individual experiences of social interactions across the life course, what I am calling personal narrative accrual.

Narrative accrual

Simply put, to paraphrase Baker (2006), narrative accrual means that our experience of the world is shaped by our repeated exposure to sets of related narratives that accrue over time, ultimately defining what we understand by a culture, tradition, or history. More specifically, returning to Bruner’s (1991) defining work on the narrative construction of reality, we see that,

‘narratives do accrue, and, as anthropologists insist, the accruals eventually create something variously called a "culture" or a "history" or, more loosely, a "tradition." Even our own homely accounts of happenings in our own lives are eventually converted into more or less coherent autobiographies centered around a Self acting more or less purposefully in a social world’ (1991, p. 18).

Narrative accrual works at a level removed from the individual (history, tradition), but the individual is situated in relation to the accumulated narratives, so even our everyday experiences come into contact with the social, reflecting and refracting our life-stories with event-stories: narrative accrual describes, to an extent, this process. As with the interrelationship between the self, and signification systems, life-stories and event-stories overlap, unintentionally conspire and generally misinform in a way which can lead to biographical destabilization (Verd and Lopez 2011). This is important because it suggests that part of the anxiety experienced by working-class academics can be considered in relation to the separation between the individual and contextual levels of narrative. For instance, how are our life-stories influenced by event-stories or the other way around? To offer some level of stability, I am suggesting that tweaking the concept of narrative accrual – whereby culture and tradition reflects *both* individual histories and collectivised cultures (such as the University as an institution) - would accommodate the intersection of life and event-stories. This creates a cumulative, overarching narrative - the collection of stories we tell ourselves within a particular context - that effectively becomes the self. Simply put, my working-class identity involves my individual experiences in relation to broader institutional frameworks and interactions, and the accumulation of these two factors over time – the personal narrative accrual – no matter how disjointed, is what constitutes a working-class identity. To demonstrate how this might produce particular types of class anxiety, I am going to offer five vignettes related to

Warnock's (2016) typology of working-class academic experience (alienation; cultural capital; stereotypes/microaggressions; survivor guilt/impostor syndrome, ego and networking in middle-class culture). These vignettes will thereby foreground individual experience in the broader context of social interaction over time.

Personal narrative accrual from the perspective of an early career academic

Bearing in mind Busk and Goehring's (2014) methodological caveat about seeing the working-class intellectual through self-disclosure not as aloof but as something viewed from the inside out, I will proceed by considering instances in which my experiences with the academy have impacted my own class awareness. Here I am thinking these events through autoethnographically, writing down that which has hitherto only been part of the internal stories I tell myself about who I am and how I arrived at my present location. In doing so I am conforming to Atkinson's (1998, p. 123) idea of narratives 'read as mostly the researchers own description of what was said, done or intimated'. In the introduction to their edited collection, Muzzatti and Samarco (2006, p. 3), identify autoethnography, or the use of personal narratives to explore social systems, as an 'outsider's methodology' appropriate for interrogating the working-class academic's outsider position. The stories I am going to reflect on will be unpacked as they happened, or rather how I have constructed them as happening.

To assist in framing, I am going to first offer a brief autobiographical sketch to demonstrate my progression from unemployed potential PhD student through to a permanent position as a lecturer, a process which has taken eight years. I am going to follow this by illustrating examples of life-stories in an effort to demonstrate the accrual of a 'working-class' identity or sensibility that constitutes my 'self'. These life-stories will be reinforced in juxtaposition to event-stories, but rather than ordering these temporally, they will be offered in relation to Warnock's typology.

Both my Master's degree and my PhD were self-funded; in the case of the former, this involved a year of working night-shifts unloading lorries for a supermarket, and in the case of the latter two years of the same, alongside three jobs whilst studying, including a stint as a security guard and zero hours-style contracts as an exams invigilator and seminar tutor. The University I studied and worked at was a research-intensive institution, and following three years of part-time employment, I was successful in applying for an academic teaching post. This involved teaching across two years of undergraduate courses and a Master's degree course. This position, under the auspices of giving me a 'leg-up', also enabled more senior academics to spend more of their time on research: additionally, the contract I was on was fixed-term. I raise this because the precarious nature of these contracts not only implies the impossibility of a tenured position but can, in some cases, be used as a way to circumvent incremental service payments, so staff who have not given 'continuous service' remain at the same level of entry earnings. This is potentially an example of institutional practice structuring the academic development of ECAs systematically. Similarly, my heavy teaching load made research more difficult, thereby blocking one of the traditional routes to permanent employment through publication history. As part of the role I was involved in a variety of committees, though most often as a bystander baffled by the technicalities of the talk or the apparent codes in which

decisions about research grants were made. Following the completion of my PhD, I secured a lectureship at a less research-intensive University which was in the process of developing social science courses, where I am presently employed. Using examples from my time as a fledgling academic, I will now expand on the process of personal narrative accrual in relation to how working-class identifiers are reinforced institutionally and internalized individually.

1. Alienation

The first reflection to make, as Grimes and Morris do (1997), is that working-class graduate students often find difficulties – cultural as well as financial – when studying in comparison with their middle-class peers; my initial experience of becoming a PhD student echoes this. I was assigned an office which, for reasons of personal insecurity, I occupied only once in my first year. I met with a number of fellow postgraduates, all of whom had obtained funding for their studies, many of whom had been privately educated. This simple distinction between my State education and theirs, their stipends and my lack of money, was telling: social events where I could have potentially developed my cultural capital were hampered by my need to work to pay my fees and my rent. As Busk and Goehring (2014) suggest, class operates as a differential relationship, the divisions between people determined by particular practices and material conditions, so my introduction into the academy – an event-story - was framed from the offset by class distinctions which reinforced my extant anxiety that I was in the wrong place, a view echoed recently by others from a working-class background (Anonymous Academic 2017, Cathandpavs2013 2017).

It is worth noting that it would be disingenuous to describe my experience as related to ‘third space’ ambivalence (LeCourt 2006) or DuBois’s double consciousness (1903). I am a young white British man, so whilst my alienation is embodied in this particular life-story, my experiences of class are framed without the additional complications of race, gender or ethnicity. However, incidents like the one outlined above (and there were many others) push the individual towards the sort of internalization of class hierarchies that Ryan and Sackrey (1984) discuss. Furthermore, it demonstrates what Warnock calls ‘the cognitive dissonance of upward mobility’ (2016, p. 30), whereby my anxiety is reinforced by simultaneously trying to be *of* the institution whilst working separately for it, an example of the distorted biography created by the confluence of life and event-stories.

2. Cultural capital

Warnock (2016) considers some of the ways in which cultural capital, or lack thereof, manifests itself in the working-class academic, outlining Arner’s (2014) study of class coding and ‘bodily hexis’, whereby class position is highlighted in relation to dress, comportment, hairstyle and the like. When I arrived for my morning interview for my current tenured position, I was wearing the clothes I was subsequently going to work in that afternoon owing to the fact that there would be no time for me to change before teaching six hours of research methods. I realized my error as soon as I was seated with the other candidates, all of whom were formally dressed. Now perhaps this bleeds in to a wider argument about my misunderstanding of interview expectations, but it also underscores a feeling of out-of-placeness, this time embodied

stylistically. I was successful in my interview, but my boss does routinely remind me of how ‘scruffy’ I looked. Worse still, as part of my assimilation and adapting to a ‘higher’ class status, I have internalized these complaints – despite being given in jest – and apply them myself when involved in recruitment of staff. I project my own issues onto others in this regard, an absurdity of cultural capital where performing the role, looking like an academic, is more important than actual competency. What this incident emphasizes is an issue with working-class academics not understanding the rules of the game, as in Rothe’s (2006, p. 56) anecdote about not knowing how to fill in a receipt for expenses.

Similar in its symbolic function is the use of technical language to confer status, or reinforce the feeling that you do not possess status. As Bruner (1991) notes, institutions tend to invent traditions so as to bestow a type of privilege to proceedings that may have otherwise been an ordinary part of organizational affairs. In my previous role as a teaching fellow, the plethora of departmental meetings I attended were frequently couched in a type of language that I did not fully understand, where there was no real opportunity to enquire without further outing myself as somehow inauthentic. Not knowing what ‘triage’, or ‘pump priming’ seems foolish now, but only because my personal narrative accrual has equipped me with either sufficient cultural capital to understand or enough practical intelligence to bluff.

3. Stereotyping/Microaggression

Stereotyping and microaggression have the potential to emphasize differences between both staff and students and, as Warnock identifies (2016, p. 32), it is often down to the individual to decide whether or not to engage in conversations about class in relation to perceived differences; this is especially pronounced in the context of social science disciplines where a level of reflexivity is frequently an assumed trait. Two particular instances neatly underline the effect of stereotyping and microaggressions in the academy in relation to personal experiences, social interactions and signification systems.

At the beginning of each academic year, with the intake of another cohort of first-year undergraduate students (an event-story), I would make my introduction as to who I was and what I did and the way in which I pronounced my name would routinely result in class assumptions being made: ‘Matt’, but owing to my regional accent and a t-glottalization (which I had to Google, just to reinforce my lack of cultural capital in knowing the technical terms for my own mode of speech!) comes out as ‘Ma’. I would subsequently be called Max, or in a few cases, Ma. In addition, I was often asked by the students, who were predominantly middle-class, to pronounce other words as a way of assessing difference, reinforcing modes of speech as part of my working-class identity. Now whilst there are a number of cogent explanations for this, including an inherent fascination with regional differences in speech, the emphasis on ways of speaking contributed to other extant experiences and class markers including during the early stages of my PhD - my personal narrative accrual.

With regard to microaggressions, this is evidenced in a succession of everyday occurrences that gradually undermined my position, or at the very least the accrual of these experiences constructed that impression. I was given responsibilities for a large

course, and was required to liaise with senior academics about content and structure. On paper, I was in charge, but I was vetoed every step of the way, including an elongated period of time in which sorting out the removal of one textbook took three committee meetings and a fortuitous period of research leave by senior staff. This sort of microaggression through institutional signification systems was also present in increasingly fractious email exchanges where my ideas or proposals were shouted down in a snide and insidious manner: a real dose of 'know your place', which reinforced the ego of those responsible whilst diminishing my position further. My experience demonstrates that despite the artifice of control, I had no agency in actual decision making, a factor that Sackey and Ryan (1996, p. 184) suggest is part of the ordinary functioning of the academy, which does 'more to keeping in place the distribution of power and privilege and the ideas that legitimate these distributions, than it does to change or weaken them.'

4. Survivor Guilt/Impostor Syndrome

The microaggressions previously noted also play into the interrelationship between survivor guilt and impostor syndrome. With regards to the former, my move into academia had the potential to alienate me from friendship groups outside University – people whom I had grown up with – which in turn led to a sense of guilt about my position. As a result of earning considerably more money than I did when I was unloading lorries for a living, I was financially able to move towards increasingly middle-class cultural pursuits (as a way of fitting in), thereby strengthening my cultural capital in one sense, but undermining my class identity in the process. In this, Warnock's claim that upward mobility and associated guilt of those left behind appears apt (2016, p. 33). Aware of this, I felt the need to 'double-down', to make my working-class identity a badge of honour, which I would mention as often as possible. Reflecting on this, I feel that my approach was a form of deflection, that my inability to fully assimilate as middle class – noticeable in my lack of stereotypical markers of middle class 'achievement' such as home ownership – could be used as a weapon to differentiate or protect myself. The issue here is as part of broader personal narrative accrual, that my outward facing identity still did not mirror what I believed about myself internally, where the much-discussed impostor syndrome was a lingering concern: was I just performing the role of 'working-class academic' in an unconvincing way?

Impostor syndrome can operate in a number of ways (see Parkman 2016; Chapman 2017), and in my case I responded to my implicit ideas about my inferiority 'with silence and a paralyzing fear' that they didn't 'have anything valuable to contribute to the academic discourse' (Warnock 2016, p. 34). One particular example came at a drinks event when I mentioned a famous (dead) theorist whom I thought was alive, and was laughed at. This resulted in reluctance on my part to offer my thoughts in the future for fear of demonstrating my lack of appropriate knowledge. It was only when I moved to a more class-diverse job and I became more confident in my abilities that this concern subsequently waned, an example of the ongoing destabilization of biography posited by Verd and Lopez (2011).

5. Ego/Networking in middle class cultures

In a research-intensive institution, such as the one where I completed my PhD, the role of networking and ego was especially important, alongside self-promotion. As Warnock (2016) identifies in her meta-analysis, particular types of intellectual attributes are championed in middle-class academia. Already in a position where I was convinced I had been employed as the result of a clerical error, my ability to effectively ‘sell myself’ was limited, even to the extent that when I finished my PhD and continued in my teaching role, I did not adopt ‘Dr.’ in the classroom (as in Muzzatti & Samarco 2006, p. 76). As a part of the event-stories of my route through academy, this meant that my move into academia as a recognized academic through the completion of a thesis was impacted by my class position, or the way in which I had constructed class around me through the accrual of the sort of life-stories I have outlined here.

It is worth stating though that there has been a positive effect in the emphasis on class throughout my academic career and that involves how I teach class today, in a University with a more inclusive student and staff base. Fortunately, I have had a much more substantial say in curriculum design at my present institution, so have been able to foreground class by drawing on my experiences and the experiences of my students to demonstrate both the relationship between hierarchies of class in a variety of institutions (as well as the academy) and the ways in which class is constructed through personal experience, social interaction and signification systems. This, I feel, is particularly important at an institution where widening participation actually makes a tangible difference in the lives of students. In this sense I am moving towards Rennels’ (2014) call for scholars to avoid denying their culture but instead embrace it. Crucially, it is worth underscoring that my personal narrative accrual is of course different from others, and that the more recent shift towards increasing reliance and exploitation of adjunct labour across the sector, both in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, means that these sorts of stories will become more prevalent and more detrimental to future academics currently experiencing similar event-stories.

Conclusions

‘Lives, like stories, are the way we fashion ourselves: encountering and temporarily surmounting the projected demons that would diminish us. This is what a narrative perspective allows us to notice: not only about the way we talk, but also about the way we live.’ (Ochberg 1994, p. 143)

So where do these stories take us more broadly? In this piece I have attempted to demonstrate how the personal - those everyday instances and moments individuals experience (life-stories) - combine with typical or archetypal events to use Atkinsons’ (1998) terminology (event-stories), such as the completion of a PhD, or finding employment. These overlapping narratives feed into a broader, overarching narrative of personal accrual which becomes who we are, our ‘self’. In relation to class, I have outlined, in an asynchronous sense, a number of vignettes that underline Warnock’s typology and show the ways in which individual narratives meet social interactions, and the signification systems of the academy work.

However, alongside the aforementioned notion of biographical distortion, the nature of personal narrative accrual means that class is always ongoing and framed by all sorts of external factors including family. Is my Mum working-class? Was my Grandad? How about where I live (if I buy a house am I a class traitor?). And even how I bring up my daughter; what sort of nursery do I send her to and what does that say about her class position? Do these sorts of concerns demarcate me as middle rather than working class? As Dews' states, 'though I may never find a true home in another world, telling our stories helps at times to reconcile some of the painful ambivalence' (1995, p. 355). Storytelling, as I have tried to offer here, allows us to address alienation and inferiority by showing that working-class academics are not alone in their experiences (Warnock 2016, p. 37). Those experiences, and the working-class identity of scholars, are a cumulative thing, the confluence of individual actions and remembrances in the context of particular meaningful events throughout the life course. Where narrative accrual sees history and tradition as the end point, *personal narrative accrual* sees the constituted self - as far as the self ever becomes entirely constituted - as a liminal construction between the personal and the social.

Accrual is, of course, a double-edged sword. In addition to reflexivity on the part of the individual it also allows you to emphasize and relive all the acts and exchanges that contribute to working-class identity, which in turn can make alienation through class worse. Personal narrative accrual may result in stories about our identities becoming self-actualizing. An example: writing this article, and whether or not I should actually commit to it. Is it okay to write about personal concerns and potential exploitation by institutions or will this result in some sort of contractual issue? I do not know the answer to this question. But personal narrative accrual can also be used as a form of reflective praxis to assist working-class academics, particularly ECAs who are under considerable pressure to publish or perish (without class compounding things). In considering their varying trajectories, unpacking the relationship between life and event-stories, between personal troubles and public issues can perhaps address the process - or at least mitigate the effects of - impostor syndrome its other associated challenges, in much the same way that this article has had a cathartic function for me.

Author Bio

Dr. Matthew Spokes is a lecturer in Sociology and Criminology and York St. John University. His research combines cultural interests (music, videogames) and sociological theory (particularly Lefebvre and Bakhtin).

Bibliography

Anonymous Academic (2017): 'How do you finish a PhD when, as a working-class student, you don't feel like you belong?' *The Guardian*, 11 August, accessed 13 August, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/2017/aug/11/how-do-you-finish-a-phd-when-you-dont-feel-you-belong-at-university?>

Atkinson, R. (1998): *The Life Story Interview*, SAGE, London.

- Baker, M. (2006): *Translation and Conflict: A Narrative Account*, Routledge, London.
- Brook, H. & Michell, D. (2012): 'Learners, Learning, Learned: Class, Higher Education, and Autobiographical Essays from Working-class Academics', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, vol. 34, no. 6, pp. 587-599.
- Bruner, J. (1991): 'The narrative construction of reality', *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 18, no. 1, pp.1-21.
- Busk, L. & Goehring, B. (2014): 'What is a Working-class Intellectual?', *Rhizomes*, no.27, accessed 24 July, 2017, <http://www.rhizomes.net/issue27/busk.html>
- Cathandpavs2013. (2017): 'Academia and Class Politics', *Opinionated Planet blog*, 8 July, accessed 25 July, 2017, <https://opinionatedplanet.wordpress.com/2017/08/07/academia-and-class-politics/amp/>
- Chapman, A. (2017): 'Using the Assessment Process to Overcome Impostor Syndrome in Mature Students', *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, vol. 41, no. 2, pp.112-119.
- DuBois, W.E.B. (1903): *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches*, A.C. McClurg & Co., Chicago.
- Dews, C.L. (1995): *This Fine Place so Far From Home: Voices of Academics from the Working-class*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia.
- Fletcher, C. (2015): 'Five Cities, Seven Years: My Life post-PhD', *Times Higher Education*, 8 July 2015, accessed 23 July, 2017, <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/blog/five-cities-seven-years-my-life-post-phd>
- Giele, J. & Elder, G. (1998): 'The Life Course Mode of Inquiry', in J. Giele & G. Elder (eds.), *Methods of Life Course Research. Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, SAGE, Thousand Oaks, pp.1-4.
- Grimes, M., & Morris, J. (1997): *Caught in the Middle: Contradictions in the Lives of Sociologists from Working-class Backgrounds*, Praeger, Westport.
- LeCourt, D. (2006): 'Making Class Matter: My Life as a Semi-earhole', in S L. Muzzatti & C.V Samarco (eds.), *Reflections from the Wrong Side of the Tracks*, Roman & Littlefield, Lanham, pp. 83-99.
- Labov, W. (2010): 'Narratives of personal experience', in P Hogan (ed.) *Cambridge Encyclopedia of the Language Sciences*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 546-548

- Long, M.L., Jenkins, G.R. & Bracken, S. (2000): 'Impostors in the Sacred Grove: Working-class Women in the Academe', *The Qualitative Report*, vol. 5, no.3, pp.1-15.
- McAdams, D. (2001): 'The Psychology of Life-Stories', *Review of General Psychology*, no.5, pp.100-122.
- Mazzei, L. & Jackson A. (2009): *Voice in Qualitative Inquiry. Challenging Conventional, Interpretive, and Critical Conceptions in Qualitative Research*, Routledge, London.
- Mills, C.W. (1959): *The Sociological Imagination*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Mills, C.W. (1967): *Power, Politics and People: The Collective Essays of C. Wright Mills*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Nouri, M. & Helterline, M. (1998): 'Narrative Accrual and the Life Course', *Research on Aging*, vol. 20, no. 1, pp.36-64.
- Ochberg, R. (1994): 'Life-stories and Storied Lives', in Lieblich, A. & Josselson, R (eds.), *Exploring Identity and Gender: The Narrative Study of Lives*, SAGE: Thousand Oaks, pp. 77- 113.
- Parkman, A. (2016): 'The Impostor Phenomenon in Higher Education: Incidence and Impact', *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice*, vol.16, no. 1, pp.51-60.
- Reay, D. (1997): 'The Double-Bind of the "Working-class" Feminist Academic: The Success of Failure or the Failure of Success', in P. Mahony & C.Zmroczek (eds.) *Class matters: Working-class Women's Perspectives on Social Class*, Taylor and Francis, London, pp.18-29.
- Rennels, T. (2014): 'From the Trailer Park to the Ivory Tower and Somewhere in Between: A Critical Autoethnography of Class Performativity in Academe', *Rhizomes*, no. 27, accessed 24 July, 2017 <http://rhizomes.net/issue27/rennels.html>
- Rothe, D. (2006): 'A Stranger to Paradise: Working-class Graduate in the Culture of Academia', in S L. Muzzatti & CV Samarco (eds.), *Reflections from the Wrong Side of the Tracks*, Roman & Littlefield, Lanham, pp.49-56.
- Ryan, J., & Sackrey, C. (1984): *Strangers in Paradise: Academics from the Working-class*, South End Press, Boston.
- Sandberg, S. (2016): 'The Importance of Stories Untold: Life-story, Event-story and Trope', *Crime, Media, Culture*, vol. 12 no. 2, pp.153-171.
- Skeggs, B. (2017): 'A Crisis In Humanity: What Everyone with Parents is Likely to Face in the Future', *The Sociological Review blog*, 18 January 2017, accessed 20 July, 2017, <https://www.thesociologicalreview.com/blog/a-crisis-in-humanity-what-everyone-with-parents-is-likely-to-face-in-the-future.html>

Thorne A. (2000): 'Personal Memory Telling and Personality Development', *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, no. 4, pp. 45–56.

Verd, J.M. & Andreu, M.L. (2011): 'The Rewards of a Qualitative Approach to Life-course Research: The Example of the Effects of Social Protection Policies on Career Paths', *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung*, vol. 12, no. 3, accessed 20 July, 2017, <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1753/3259>

Warnock, D.M. (2016): 'Paradise Lost? Patterns and Precarity in Working-class Academic Narratives.' *Journal of Working-class Studies*, vol.1, no.1, accessed 20 July, 2017, <https://workingclassstudiesjournal.files.wordpress.com/2016/06/jwcs-vol-1-issue-1-december-2016-warnock.pdf>

A Stranger in Charleston: Intersectional Anxiety as a Latina in Academia

Nancy Aguirre, The Citadel, Charleston

Abstract

Through a personal narrative of my experiences living in Charleston, South Carolina, I consider several problems faced by working-class academics of color. These include: isolation and alienation, being labeled a representative for an entire cultural group, higher service loads, confronting patriarchy and racism in and out of the classroom, and financial struggle. Through telling my story, I examine positionality and the anxieties resulting from the normative expectations placed on academics who are often the first in their families and communities to enter academia. I also emphasize the need for academics facing these problems to form support networks and practice self-care.

Keywords

Positionality, intersectional, self-care, anxiety, immigration, Latino, Latina

On July 28, 2013, I moved from El Paso, Texas, to Charleston, South Carolina. I considered myself fortunate as I arrived in Charleston to begin my new job as Assistant Professor of Latin American History at The Citadel. I was twenty-nine years old, and I had dedicated the previous eight years of my life to graduate school. I achieved the goal I had set for myself as a teenager—to obtain a doctorate in history—and now I was finally going to work in my dream job as a history professor. I left behind my family and loved ones and moved to a city completely foreign to me (the first area I would ever live in without a Catholic church named after the Virgin of Guadalupe). I expected the homesickness, loneliness, and challenges in adjusting to life in Charleston. I also expected a difficult year adjusting to the job and the 4/4 teaching load, especially at a military college with mostly white male students. What I was not prepared for was excruciating alienation. I am a woman of color, the daughter of Mexican immigrants, and the first in my immediate family to obtain a college degree (let alone a Ph.D.). Finding women like me was easy in the places where I previously lived across Texas, in Chicago, and in Mexico City. We supported each other in ‘self-determination’ and forged ahead in achieving our goals, despite our patriarchal Mexican culture in which ‘the oppression that Mexican women suffer which is specific to their gender has hardly been challenged’ (Orozco 2014, p. 266). Yet, in the four years since I moved to Charleston, I have met only a handful of women with similar backgrounds as mine, and this has festered in me a sense of displacement, alienation, and isolation. In Charleston, my *difference* is clearly

marked and exposed, and I find myself continuously explaining and defending my identity.⁴

Deborah M. Warnock outlines five themes in the ‘lived experiences’ of working-class academics, including ‘alienation, lack of cultural capital, encountering stereotypes and microaggressions, experiencing survivor guilt and the impostor syndrome, and struggling to pass in a middle-class culture that values ego and networking’. She adds that the recent growth in ‘crippling’ student loan debt and ‘exploitation of adjunct labor’ (2016, p. 28) have contributed to the burdens of working-class graduate students and faculty. My narrative fits well within this framework. As I began my tenure-track job, I quickly discovered what it meant to be a professor with an intersectional identity. I face the pressures of additional service for the sake of promoting diversity, the burden of ‘representing’ an entire ethnic group, having to frequently explain to family, friends, and strangers what ‘I do for a living’ (and why I do not have a ‘normal’ job), questions about being unmarried and childless, anxiety about family planning while on the tenure-track, and the guilt over my many layers of privilege. To top it off, I have substantial student loan debt that prevents me from saving money and having financial security. As I deal with these issues, I have found great support among my family, friends, and colleagues, and I am grateful. But I have found no relief from feeling like I live in an ‘interstitial space’ (Bhabha 2004), where I am constantly pushed and pulled between my longing for home and the realities of being a Latina in South Carolina, my desire to work more for my community and my physical and mental exhaustion as I work toward tenure, and my goal of attaining economic stability that is set back with every unexpected expense.

As an academic, I inhabit a world that often reinforces structures of privilege; yet, as a woman of color from a working-class immigrant family (and first-generation college graduate), the world of academia remains quite foreign to me. Ever since I began the pursuit of a graduate degree, my life has become a series of continuous disruptions (Hurtado 2000, p. 129). My body is disruptive, my identity is disruptive, my ambition is disruptive, my goals are disruptive, and these disruptions are necessary for breaking down oppressive structures and systems. I feel an enormous responsibility to use my academic work for this purpose, especially at The Citadel, where the student and faculty/staff population is overwhelmingly white, conservative, and male. But I am exhausted, and I feel guilty for being exhausted. I also feel guilty for expressing frustration for the inequalities I encounter within my own position of privilege. I know that my experiences are not unique, and it is important to articulate the struggles of academics with intersectional identities. It is also necessary to acknowledge the complex positionality (Alcoff 1988) of academics who are ‘newcomers’ (Maher & Thompson Tetreault 2007, p. 2) in the world of academia. For me, finding peers who share my experiences and/or background has been vital for my well-being. Networks and support systems are crucial for struggling academics who face any number of issues, including isolation, discrimination, higher service expectations, debt, exploitation, and the pressure of representing an entire cultural group. Publicly

⁴ In this essay, I identify myself in various ways, including *Latina*, Mexican-American, and *Tejana*. I use these different terms because my identity is not static, and how I identify myself largely depends on the context. Moreover, I use the terms *Latino*, *Latina*, and Latin American to identify this community in South Carolina. Although *Latinx* has become more commonly used, gender distinctions are important to my analysis.

recognizing these problems is an important step in breaking down stigmas and forces in academia that perpetuate normative standards.

The American Dream?

I grew up believing in the American Dream. My parents Tere and Javier, Mexican immigrants, embody it. They raised my younger sister Cristina and I in our hometown of Odessa, Texas, and they lifted us from poverty in the 1980s to the middle class by the late 1990s. I saw how much my parents worked—my mom a bookkeeper, and my dad a welder—and they instilled in my sister and I a strong work ethic and the belief that hard work and a good education would give us more flexibility and freedom. We would be able to choose our careers and work in jobs we enjoyed, not jobs that we needed just to make ends meet, which were the paths my parents had been forced to take. They faced many obstacles over the decades—job instability in the boom/bust cycle of the West Texas oil market, learning English, and supporting a family with only their high school credentials. Eventually, they bought a home and saved for retirement, they have good health insurance, and they live comfortably in their fifties, enjoying the fruit of their decades of hard work. My parents achieved the American Dream.

Seeing my parents succeed instilled in me an idealism about the meaning of progress in this country. I believed my parents when they told me that education and hard work were the key to a stable future, and that I would be able to attain financial stability and fulfillment in my career. In 2004, I applied to master's degree programs in Texas and other states, but I was only accepted to out-of-state universities. I accepted the offer from the University of Chicago, though I would only be able to finance my studies with student loans. My parents were in the exasperating position that many working-class families find themselves in. They earned enough income to exclude me from certain need-based financial aid and grants, but they did not make enough to be able to finance an expensive education. Nonetheless, my parents and I decided that this would be a solid investment in my future, and it was only a one-year M.A. program, so I took out nearly \$60000 in loans. Not accepting an offer from an out-of-state school would have meant postponing my graduate studies by at least a year. More importantly, for a working-class minority student from a small town in the middle of West Texas, passing up the chance to attend a school of the University of Chicago's caliber meant missing out on the opportunity of a lifetime. This was my chance at social mobility and expanding my horizons beyond West Texas, and to network and learn from world-renown scholars. I made the correct choice, and having a degree from the University of Chicago has opened many, many doors for me. However, I am literally still paying for it twelve years later. Upward social mobility, it turns out, is expensive.

After completing my M.A., I worked on a doctorate in the Borderlands History Program at the University of Texas at El Paso. I had the typical 'poor graduate student' experience, with a malfunctioning, unreliable vehicle, no health insurance after the age of twenty-five, a small apartment with no space for a real desk, and I worked as an adjunct in the summers to make ends meet. Now as a professor, my standard of living has greatly improved. I own a functioning vehicle, I have health insurance and a pension plan, and I rent a large enough apartment to fit a real desk

and office chair. More importantly, I have a stable salary, which unfortunately, is becoming increasingly rare in our profession as schools continuing hiring more adjuncts at exploitative pay rates.

My parents tell me that I am doing well for myself. I compare my life now at age thirty-three to the conditions my sister and I lived in when my parents were that age. Fast food was a luxury for us, and the years of the oil busts were always very difficult, especially because employment was never guaranteed. Today, I buy fast food when I feel too tired to cook at home, and I enjoy doing my writing inside of coffee shops. In many ways, though, I feel I have less stability than my parents at my age. My parents did not have student loan debt, and I am overwhelmed by it. Charleston has poor infrastructure for public transportation, so owning a reliable vehicle is a necessity. I also rent an apartment in Charleston, where gentrification and rising home costs and rents are driving out working-class residents and even professionals. In 2016, Charleston ranked eleventh in cities nation-wide with the highest home rental rates (Wise 2016). By November 2017, rents in Charleston averaged \$1,600/month, 'higher than the national average' (Darlington 2017), and many renters (including myself) struggle to save money for a down payment on a house. By their mid-thirties, my parents were homeowners, and I am nowhere near that prospect.

Economic studies published since the Great Recession calculate that up to half of U.S. households have little or no savings (Bloom 2017) and only forty-seven percent of Americans have enough savings to cover a \$400 emergency (Gabler 2016). An accident two years ago left me with thousands of dollars in medical expenses, extensive credit card debt and interest charges, permanent physical scars, a year's worth of physical therapy and doctor's visits, and it put me in the position where my salary was no longer enough to cover my basic expenses, including groceries. Last summer, I taught two courses and worked on community projects to pay down medical bills. This helped me tremendously, but it also left me without a summer break, which is precious and the only time I have for the research and writing that is necessary for tenure. The summer work relieved some of my financial burden, but I am still in a tenuous position. I have no savings, I still have medical expenses and monthly car, student loan, and credit card payments, and I cannot afford another emergency. Yet, when I think of my difficult situation, I remember that I am doing better than many of my peers. At least I have a full-time tenure-track job, health insurance, retirement savings, housing in a safe neighborhood, a functioning mode of transportation, and a credit card for emergencies.

I am most acutely aware of my many layers of privilege when I go to church. Gentrification has pushed many of Charleston's minority groups and immigrants to neighboring towns, including North Charleston, Summerville, Goose Creek, and John's Island. Poverty and high crime rates are common in these areas, and in 2016, North Charleston had the eighth-highest murder rate in the nation in a city with a population of over 100,000 (Smith & Knich 2017). I attend St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church, located in North Charleston. It is a multicultural community with immigrants from around the world, including Latin America, Africa, and Asia. In many ways, it is a microcosm of the cultural dynamics in the South Carolina Lowcountry, the southern part of the state that includes Charleston. Language barriers exist between English and non-English speakers, cultural misperceptions and stereotypes cause tensions between ethnic communities (even among the Latin

American immigrants), there is a divide between immigrant parents and their Americanized children, and the current anti-immigrant political environment has elevated many parishioners' anxieties and fears.

When I moved to Charleston, my first goal was to find a church community, preferably Spanish-speaking. In my first days in Charleston, I panicked when I realized that there were no Spanish-language FM radio stations, and Spanish-language television channels were not available unless I paid for a cable subscription. I walked around downtown and could hear no spoken Spanish. My parents helped me with the move to Charleston, and one of their first observations after arriving was that they could not find anyone who looked like us. As Warnock argues, 'the working-class academic is first and foremost characterized by a sense of alienation' (2016, p. 30). I will never forget the afternoon when I sat at a coffee shop, speaking Spanish on the phone with a friend, and an elderly white woman walked across the coffee shop and signaled for me to be quiet. The coffee shop was full of people talking, yet I was the only person she attempted to silence (and for the record- I responded by speaking Spanish louder). The realities of my cultural isolation set in that day. I was terrified by the thought of living in a place with a dominant culture that actively sought to suppress any difference, where my culture was not allowed, and where Spanish, my first language, was not spoken. Thus, I desperately searched for a Spanish-speaking Catholic community where I could feel at home.

I eventually found that community at St. Thomas the Apostle, and I joined the choir and became an active member in the self-described Hispanic community, which is made up almost entirely of immigrants from Latin America and their U.S.-born children. In the three years since I became a member of St. Thomas the Apostle, I have formed friendships, participated in weddings, and shared hardships with my community. I also met my partner Luis in the church choir. I have learned a lot about the lives of immigrants in South Carolina through my interactions at church, and their experiences are not much different from those of immigrants in other parts of the United States. Every Spanish-speaking person I have met at St. Thomas the Apostle who is my age or older is an immigrant, and I understand many of their struggles in adapting to U.S. society because I watched my parents go through it. I remember listening to my father practicing English, watching him come home tired from a long day of working outside in the hot summers and cold winters in the West Texas desert, and doing his very best to provide for his family. I see the men in my community, and they remind me so much of my father. I also see how the women form networks and call on each other when they need help with childcare or other issues. Many of the families at my church are small and extended families are uncommon, so these social networks function as a family.

Although I understand the lives of many of the immigrants at my church, I relate much more to their U.S.-born children. I hear the children and adolescents at my church speaking in English to each other, and I see how they embrace American culture. In some cases, these children know very limited Spanish, and it reminds me of when my father prohibited speaking English at home so that my sister and I would not forget Spanish. This policy worked, but it was also easier for my sister and I to maintain our native language because we regularly traveled to Mexico to visit family, our Mexican cousins kept us updated on Mexican popular culture, and we lived in an area where Spanish was so prevalent that non-Spanish speakers might pick up basic

vocabulary. This is much different from the environment in the South Carolina Lowcountry, where Latin American culture is still largely confined to certain towns and neighborhoods outside of Charleston. When I listen to parents lament the Americanization of their children, I am reminded of my parents' fear that my sister and I will not pass on our Mexican culture.

There is one significant difference between my experience as the daughter of immigrants and the experiences of my church community. My parents and other family members benefited from the substantially less restrictive immigration laws of the 1980s, including IRCA, the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. By the end of the decade, my parents were U.S. citizens, so their legal status was never an issue for me. This is not the case for many families in the Lowcountry. South Carolina lawmakers consistently support anti-immigrant policies, and in 2011, former governor Nikki Haley signed the South Carolina Illegal Immigration Reform Act (SB 20), which required law enforcement officers to check the immigration status of people they lawfully stopped if there was 'reasonable suspicion' that the person was unlawfully present in the United States' (American Civil Liberties Union 2011). This provision was overturned in 2014 after the American Civil Liberties Union and other civil rights organizations filed a lawsuit against the state. Despite the work of activists and politicians including Lindsey Graham, who in 2017 sponsored the DREAM Act to protect DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), nativism, xenophobia, and racism have intensified since the election cycle of 2016. The weeks immediately following the election were tense. Scholars and activists worked diligently to update the community on current immigration policies and how to best protect themselves and their families. One of these information sessions was held at my church, and my heart hurt as I watched my friends, my new family, listen in fear. I will never know the fear of my parents being deported. If I have children, I will never need to make legal provisions for them in case I am detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers. I have a driver's license, and I can go *anywhere, anytime*, without worry. I am also light-skinned, and my ability to "pass" keeps me from drawing the attention of law enforcement.

I have been working to unpack and understand the extent of my privileges resulting from my parents' U.S. citizenship. I know U.S.-born children in my community who were told by classmates immediately after the presidential election that they would be sent back to Mexico. I also know children who live without a parent who was deported, who worry about what will happen to them and their families, and I cannot imagine their anxiety. A social security number, the coveted nine-digit golden ticket, can make a remarkable difference, as it did for my family. Because my parents, my sister, and I have social security numbers, we never worried about deportation or visa issues. When I entered graduate school, my parents were co-signers on my loans, and I was eligible for in-state tuition in Texas, unlike young adults in states like South Carolina and Georgia, where undocumented college students are denied in-state tuition, and in many cases admission, because of their legal status. My citizenship status never prevented me from applying for grants and scholarships (including the full scholarship that funded my entire undergraduate education), and my legal status provides the freedom to travel and pursue whatever employment I choose.

As I write this, I am overcome with embarrassment and guilt. How can I complain about my financial situation, especially with a job that offers a stable salary and

support for my research and conference trips? How can I complain about medical bills and rising premiums, when many of my friends and colleagues (at church and in academia) postpone important surgeries and preventative procedures because they have no health insurance? How can I complain about the student loans that led to me to a career with a salary that many members of my church may never attain? How can I complain about not being a homeowner, when I have an apartment in a safe neighborhood with basic amenities, including heat and air conditioning? Millions of people have risked their lives and made sacrifices for the American Dream, *el sueño americano*. But this dream is deceptive, controlled by those in the highest positions of power, and they grant access to just enough people every few generations to continue perpetuating the ambiguous myths about progress in this country.

Positionality and Intersectional Anxiety

I am a nervous person by nature, and I have struggled with anxiety for most of my life. As an undergraduate student, I began having panic attacks, and for most of my 20s, my anxiety stemmed from the stress of school. Moving to Charleston, however, brought on a new series of pressures in addition to my financial strain. Because I am so different from most of the people I have encountered in Charleston, I am constantly called on to explain and/or defend my identity to others. My disruptive presence is more pronounced, and I am unable to shake feeling like a 'stranger in a strange land.' The professional and cultural isolation I felt in my first year in Charleston led me to the brink of a nervous breakdown, but in sharing my struggles, I met other self-identifying Latino/a professionals at The Citadel and at other institutions who have had similar experiences. Together with allies who share our goal of strengthening ties between The Citadel and minority communities, we work extensively to spread Latino culture and to address problems in the Latino community. Our work is important and necessary, but for those of us in academia, it increases our already high service loads.

At The Citadel, I am the only woman of color in the history department, and since most faculty at The Citadel are white, I stand out as 'ethnic.' Yet, people may not identify me as a Latina because of my light skin, and this has put me in the uncomfortable position of gauging peoples' attitudes about Latinos when they do not realize a Latina is listening. For example, last year I listened to students say "build the wall!" during class (without knowing that my parents are Mexican immigrants), so I now make it clear to all my students that my parents are from Mexico. When I taught a course on the "History of the U.S./Mexico Border" in the fall of 2016, I made sure it was one of the first things I said. Fortunately, I have not heard that awful slogan since. My first semester at The Citadel, I talked to cadets about my family, and when I mentioned that my parents are from Mexico, a student asked if they walked around with maracas. He did not make the comment maliciously, but it was obvious that the stereotype was the first thing that came to his mind, and he quickly apologized. I admit that I was left speechless in that moment. I am proud of my immigrant parents, and I had never received a negative, let alone racist, response to that.

These experiences have pushed me to go on the offensive. I have always been proud of my heritage, but I now work harder to show it. My office is full of Mexican cultural symbols, and I celebrate Mexican Independence Day with my students,

making sure they listen to *corridos* and eat *pan dulce*. In 2015, two of my Latin American colleagues and I began the tradition of building an altar for the Dead of the Day inside The Citadel's Daniel Library. I also incorporate Mexican history into every course that I teach. Before I moved to Charleston, my graduate advisor Samuel Brunk told me that I would be doing the equivalent of missionary work, spreading Mexican culture into areas where it did not previously exist, and he was right. My job is to teach students about Latin American history, but I also work to get students excited about this region and to think about it beyond a simplistic, paternalistic perspective.

My presence as their instructor is key because I challenge the stereotype of the 'subservient' minority (Fraga & Segura 2006, p. 284). For some of my students, I am the first person of Mexican descent they have ever met. For others, I am the first person of Mexican descent *in a position of power* that they have met. Not every student responds favorably to me, but I have found success in facilitating frank discussions with students about race, immigration, national security, colonialism, U.S. imperialism, and other issues (though gender is a more difficult topic to address with a student population that is ninety percent male). Because of my background, I am considered a 'legitimate' source, and my students are generally eager to ask questions and learn about Latin America from an 'authentic' Latina. My work is slowly paying off, and the most gratifying comments I receive on evaluations are from students who state that my course dismantled stereotypes or ambivalence about Latin America.

Currently, about thirty percent of The Citadel's faculty are women, and women are filling the top administrative positions (including Provost), so it is not uncommon for students to encounter women in leadership roles.⁵ However, in my church environment at St. Thomas the Apostle, which is firmly rooted in patriarchal Catholic traditions, women are relegated primarily to care work. When I joined this church, I immediately realized that I was different from everyone else, and I have since experienced the ways in which my presence disrupts and confuses my community. The women my age or older are immigrants, they are all mothers, most have husbands, and most are housewives or work in housekeeping. I am one of the few women with a college education, the only woman with a doctorate, and I have received many puzzled looks over the years because of my choice to postpone marriage and motherhood. Some members of my community assumed that I do not work outside the home, only to express surprise upon learning that I am a professor. I receive questions from women almost weekly about when I am going to get married and have children, and I have also been told that I need to quit work and let my partner Luis support me financially.

I am not surprised by any of this; in fact, I am quite used to it. My parents always wanted my sister and I to obtain bachelor's degrees, but graduate school was beyond their frame of reference. My decision to pursue a master's degree put me at odds with my parents because they wanted me to be an elementary school teacher and marry the man who was my boyfriend at the time. 'Good' Mexican women are not supposed to leave their homes at age twenty-one to move alone across the country to Chicago to study. That is what I did, and I learned to be defiant against the people who tried to

⁵ In addition to growing numbers of female faculty and administrators, the incoming freshman class of 2017-2018 is ten percent female, the highest percentage in The Citadel's history.

impose their patriarchal standards on me, including my parents. Defiance became my survival mechanism, and it is what motivated me in my most difficult moments in graduate school. It took several years, but my parents came to accept my goals and accept that I was forging a singular path, even if they did not always understand or agree with it. My struggles are quite common, and as many Chicana scholars have written, living a life of ‘oppositional consciousness’ (Sandoval 1991) generates tension and even rejection from our families for threatening *machismo* and not submitting to passive domesticity.

Defiance and agency are intertwined for me, but constantly having to identify myself and explain and defend my identity at work and in social settings amplifies my anxiety and feelings of isolation. Last year, Luis mentioned that several people from church had asked him what I am. The question caught me off guard—“what do you mean...*what am I?* I’m... human?” Luis clarified and said that people had asked if I am Colombian, or Central American; they were trying to figure out my nationality and ethnicity, because I look Latina, but I am light skinned and speak English well, which to them made little sense. To problematize further, when Luis told these people that I am from Texas (a *Tejana*), the next question was “well, then why does Nancy speak Spanish so well if she is a *gringa*?” This is one of the peculiarities of being a hyphenated Mexican-American... belonging in both worlds, and in neither at the same time. Gloria Anzaldúa’s writing resonates with me because she describes *mestizas* as ‘half-breed caught in the crossfire between camps’ and ‘the battleground where enemies are kin to each other.’ They are ‘neither *hispana india negra española ni gabacha*...not knowing which side to turn to, run from’ (1999, p. 216). I am the ethnic ‘other’ at work, a privileged *americana* at church, too traditionally Mexican, and not traditional enough.

Self-Care

Support networks and self-care are crucial for academics dealing with the burdens of ‘newcomer’ status. As Jennifer Ruark remarked in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*,

The high stress of the tenure process, the pressures to be brilliant at research and teaching, the cloistered environment, the extent to which internal politics affects people’s careers—it’s a combination that could damage even psychologically healthy people (2010).

When I began experiencing panic attacks in 2014, I found a counselor through my church, and she helped me develop strategies to cope with the stressors at work, as well as my homesickness and loneliness. In the years since, I have learned that my well-being in Charleston depends largely on my ability to maintain a clear sense of personal identity, which is challenging as I frequently encounter people who make assumptions about me or worse, attempt to ascribe identities on me. I also realized that I am not the only academic who has sought counseling, though it remains a taboo subject.

The heightened societal tensions of the last year and half have also contributed to higher levels of stress for myself and many of my colleagues. The growth of extremism and violence, the murder in Charlottesville, the collapse of civic debate,

anti-intellectualism, opposition to diversity, and attacks against higher education are only a few of the issues that academic institutions currently face. As academics, how do we respond? Do we use our privilege to stay in a bubble where we can mind our business and work on our research? Or do we use our positions to address systemic problems both within and outside of academia?

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, South Carolina and Alabama had the fastest-growing Latino populations in the nation. The census also reported a Latino population of 36,000 in the Charleston area—an increase of 150% since 2000. This growth is taking place across the Southeastern United States, and scholars and activists have responded by forming networks with lawyers, media, churches, consulates, and civil rights groups including the ACLU and Black Lives Matter. They also host conferences, organize extensive grassroots efforts, and meet with government officials to address immigration policies. Because of the heightened xenophobia and fears about deportation, most immigrants in the Lowcountry avoid public demonstrations, protests, and meetings with public officials, making the work of activists more pressing.

For me, it also means more work on top of my regular teaching, publication, and service load. As one of the few Latina historians in the Lowcountry, I am asked to give public lectures, work on community projects, attend events on immigration, meet with public officials, and act as a liaison, all of which go beyond the service requirements for tenure. My colleagues and I also organize cultural and educational events for the Latino community, and we have been able to host events at The Citadel and other local schools and libraries, generating a stronger Latino presence in public spaces across the Lowcountry. Furthermore, at St. Thomas the Apostle, I serve as a liaison between the English- and Spanish-speaking communities, I translate documents and answer general questions about how public institutions (schools, hospitals, etc.) function. I love engaging the community, and it has helped me feel more comfortable in Charleston, but I also need to prioritize obtaining tenure. Finding balance between multiple tasks seems to be an elusive goal for academics, and it is challenging for me because there is so much at stake right now for many people I know and love who I feel are counting on me.

I approach that balance by forcing myself to engage in some form of daily self-care. I seek help and advice from my friends, colleagues, and former professors. Their wisdom and guidance on how to navigate academia as a working-class person of color is invaluable, and it reaffirms my belief in collectively identifying our struggles and taking care of each other. I have formed friendships with other Latina professionals in the region, and they remind me of the importance of enjoying Charleston without thinking about work. My partner Luis and I share a love for music, and he plays the guitar and I play the violin in our church choir. I must take care of my physical health, as well. After my accident in 2015, I had to regularly receive chiropractic care. I have continued this practice, and I visit the chiropractor weekly to deal with the physical strain of sitting at my desk for prolonged periods of time. Financially, this is a luxury, so I teach violin lessons to cover the cost.

These strategies have helped me tremendously, and I feel significantly less anxiety than when I first moved to Charleston. I must admit, though, that the anxiety never fully recedes, and Charleston still does not fully feel like ‘home.’ Thus, I make sure to

go home to Odessa at least twice a year—my favorite form of self-care. I am also fortunate that as a Latin Americanist and Borderlands historian, many conferences in my fields take place in Texas, Mexico, or other regions with large Latino populations. When I present at a conference, I immerse myself in familiar sights, sounds, scents, and flavors. Most importantly, I am usually able to see members of my family. These trips take me home, to my place of security, and they provide healing, a moment of existential stability, and they give me the strength to return to my interstitial position in Charleston and resume my work.

Author Bio

Nancy Aguirre is an Assistant Professor at The Citadel. She earned a B.A. from the University of Texas of the Permian Basin, an M.A. from the University of Chicago, and her Ph.D. from the University of Texas at El Paso. Her research focuses on right-wing Mexican exiles forced into the United States during the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1920.

Bibliography

Alcoff, L. (1988): 'Cultural Feminism Versus Post-structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory', *Signs*, vol. 13, no. 4, pp. 405-436.

American Civil Liberties Union (2011): *Analysis of South Carolina's Senate Bill 20*, accessed 30 August 2017, https://www.aclu.org/files/assets/scbill20_analysis.pdf.

Anzaldúa, G. (1999): *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 2nd edn, Aunt Lute Books, San Francisco.

Bhabha, H. K. (2004): *The Location of Culture*, 2nd edn, Routledge, New York.

Bloom, E. (2017): 'Here's How Many Americans Have Nothing at All in Savings. CNBC, 19 June, accessed 30 August 2017, <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/06/19/heres-how-many-americans-have-nothing-at-all-in-savings.html>.

Darlington, A. (2017): 'Charleston's Housing Crisis is on Pace to Mirror San Francisco's. Shunning Development Could Make It Worse', *The Post and Courier*, 5 November, accessed 18 November 2017, http://www.postandcourier.com/news/charleston-s-housing-crisis-is-on-pace-to-mirror-san/article_569e7cca-a7a1-11e7-828a-2fc7072dbd27.html.

Fraga, L. R. & Segura, G. M. (2006): 'Culture Clash? Contesting Notions of American Identity and the Effects of Latin American Immigration', *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 279-287.

Gabler, N. (2016): 'The Secret Shame of Middle-Class Americans', *The Atlantic*, May, accessed 15 November 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/05/my-secret-shame/476415/>.

Hurtado, A. (2000): 'Sitios y Lenguas: Chicanas Theorize Feminisms', in Uma Narayan & Sandra Harding (eds), *Decentering the Center: Philosophy for a Multicultural, Postcolonial, and Feminist World*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, pp. 128-155.

Maher, F. A. & Thompson Tetreault, M. K. (2007): *Privilege and Diversity in the Academy*, Routledge, New York.

Orozco, C. (2014): 'Sexism in Chicano Studies and the Community', in A. García (ed.), *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings*, 2nd edn, Routledge, New York, pp. 265-270.

Ruark, J. (2010): 'In Academic Culture, Mental-Health Problems are Hard to Recognize and Hard to Treat', *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 16 February, accessed 30 August 2017, <http://www.chronicle.com/article/In-Academe-Mental-Health/64246>.

Sandoval, C. (1991): 'U.S. Third World Feminism: The Theory and Method of Oppositional Consciousness in the Postmodern World', *Genders*, vol. 10, Spring, pp. 1-24.

Smith, G. & Knich, D. (2017): 'North Charleston among the Cities with Highest Murder Rate in First Half of 2016', *The Post and Courier*, 28 January, accessed 30 August 2017, http://www.postandcourier.com/news/north-charleston-among-cities-with-highest-murder-rates-in-first/article_e66f0f2c-e4ab-11e6-9214-8b3fb631d143.html.

Warnock, D. M. (2016): 'Paradise Lost? Patterns and Precarity in Working-Class Academic Narratives', *Journal of Working-Class Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp 28-44.

Wise, W. (2016): 'Charleston Home Rental Rates the 11th Highest in the U.S.', *The Post and Courier*, 28 February, accessed 30 August 2017, http://www.postandcourier.com/business/charleston-home-rental-rates-th-highest-in-u-s/article_dde5b050-0718-50ce-b40f-47775ce40b42.html.

Blockades, Barricades, and Barriers: Accessing and Navigating Academia from a Multi-Marginalized Positionality

A. M. Foiles Sifuentes, Sonoma State University

Abstract

This article is an autoethnographic account of a gender-queer, working-class, woman of color scholar's venture into academia. Through an analysis of race and class violence compounded by gender and first-generation college student status, the author recounts the impact of intersectional identities on both their entry into higher education and their progression through graduate school. The author grapples with the isolation derived from engaging graduate students of color from economically privileged backgrounds. Similarly, they delve into finding community among white working-class academics and having to contend with whiteness and unexamined racial privilege. Further, definitions of work and productivity on the academic landscape are thoroughly examined as well as how a class-based consciousness shaped their professional trajectory.

Keywords

Cultural capital, social violence, work, intersectional identities, economic condition

Your CV reads working class. This is going to limit where you can go.

No truer words have been spoken. This statement, though painful to hear, was said to me during a conversation with a respected senior faculty member of my graduate program. I was preparing for my dissertation defense and discussing what my professional life might look like after graduation. Uttered in kindness, the faculty member very softly said, 'Your CV reads working class. This is going to limit where you can go.' They appeared timid and ashamed to admit that class stigma was present in academia. It was the first time that I heard someone be so honest about classism

among scholars. I had experienced classism and stigma throughout my graduate school career and was well aware of the privileges afforded my peers because of family wealth (be it personal or partner). It had not occurred to me that scholars – particularly social scientists who are learned souls conscious of power and inequity – would be participating in class hierarchies during their review processes. Aside from my state school pedigree, I did not understand how my background class was visible on my CV and would be a hindrance. Hindsight has taught me many things about academia, graduate school, and my professional development. More importantly, it has enabled me to see that my working-class, first-generation college student epistemology⁶ shaped the way I approached academia, which is a class-based phenomenon and readable on my CV.

As a first-generation working-class gender-queer woman of color, I was well aware of racism and homophobia within institutions of learning and beyond. I use the term working-class very loosely here. I think a better descriptor would be rural poor. A lot of people in my town did not have running water and struggled to purchase the basic necessities of life. I grew up in a very small town in Texas and poverty was commonplace among my community. My home town was predominantly white and most people worked in three primary industries: chemical production, crude oil refineries, or agriculture. Local residents just filtered into available employment and there were not too many who deviated from that path. One of the unfortunate side effects of white small town life was that the community was not particularly welcoming to people of color, particularly Chicanos. I often found myself the target of hatred from adults and students alike. I was taught very early that I did not belong and was unwelcome in most every place. I would like to say that I sought refuge in books, but that would not be true. I never found what I was looking for – someone like me. I did not find comfort in reading as an escape, because it just exposed another space that was not meant for me – where I did not belong. Every time I looked at a book I just felt more alone.

Learning came easily to me and I never faltered in the classroom. Yes, I endured small-town public school racism and the authorities' attempts to move me into special needs classes. The three students of color in my elementary school, including me, were all in the gifted and talented program yet somehow found ourselves sitting in special needs testing. I am not sure how the three lone students of color in the grade happened to all be marked as special needs, but it happened. I wish that I could say that the three of us had some conceptual framework to have discussed what was happening. That we somehow knew that it was racism. That my parents knew how to protect me from the institutional violence that I was experiencing. Like too many others before and after me, nothing shielded us. We did not have the language as

⁶ I am consciously using epistemology instead of habitus. See writings by Vandenberghe and others. Their work describes the rational for my choice of terms.

young people. My parents did not know how to protect me since they trusted educators to know what was best because they were educated and my parents were not. I endured the violence of that experience in a deafening, defenseless silence. I cannot pinpoint with certainty if this was the moment that my young-self lost my love for learning, but it was close. Sadly, there is a full body of literature that demonstrates students of color are targeted for special needs classrooms at a disproportionate rate than their white counterparts (Ferri & Connor 2005; Gallagher 1999; Reid & Knight 2006). After all of the standardized testing, the institution offered to move me ahead two grades – deeming that I was bored with the curriculum and needed to be challenged. My parents opted to leave me in the same grade level. They saw how the semester-long series of institutional tests and evaluations had drained me and thought I had been through enough. They did not want to put me through a massive grade change into classes with students so much older than me.

My high school years came and it was no surprise to my family when I earned a perfect score on the state required high school exit exam. In Texas, it was mandatory for all students take a comprehensive exam that demonstrated mastery over a range of topics. The exam was administered during our eleventh grade year and every student in the state took the same test. I was one of the few high school students in the state that year to receive a perfect score. No one at my high school said anything aside from one teacher who said in passing, ‘You did really well.’ There was no joy or celebration in their statement. It was short and abrupt. As if what I had accomplished was nothing short of a mosquito buzzing around their head. It was not a compliment. It was a slight and meant to diminish what I had done, the same as the silence only worse. By giving voice to their indifference, it lessened the value of my test scores since I saw them as authority figures. They knew education and learning and neither I – nor anyone in my family – had that skill set. They knew best. Shortly after the scores were released, I started receiving invitations from some of the nation’s top colleges and universities to apply for admission. It seemed like an endless list of campuses that were soliciting my application: Fordham, Colgate, Sarah Lawrence Dartmouth were just a few of the liberal arts campuses that sent me invitations to apply to their schools. The aggressive ones would call my home and offer full scholarships if I were to attend their campus. Please keep in mind that I had not applied to any of the places reaching out to me. They were actively seeking me. Phone calls were coming from many campuses around the country for a number of months. My parents did not know how to talk to the recruiters and would avoid their calls. They started screening incoming phone calls because recruiters were calling frequently for the first month after the scores were released.

I did not know what to say to recruiters and did not really understand what was happening. No one in my family had gone to college and I did not know what to do with all of the material coming in: fliers, pamphlets, brochures, repetitive letters. I tried to speak with guidance counselors at my high school since I knew that they were working with students who were applying to college and were available to help. I

made multiple attempts to speak with the counselors and begged for their support. For whatever reason, I struggled to find gaps in their schedules and not one counselor seemed to have time to speak with me. After about a month of actively seeking a meeting, I had grown increasingly frustrated, angry, and agitated because I knew that my time was limited to apply to college! There was an application window and I was missing it. I finally received an appointment and was told that students like me do not go to college. 'I'm not sure you are college material. You should just find a job when you graduate.' Had I not been so frustrated from having been forced to wait for that meeting, I might have taken what they said seriously. But since I watched classmates that had signed-up for appointments after me receive meeting weeks before I did, I knew that something was very wrong. And that 'those people' were not to be trusted. If capabilities were measured by exams, I reasoned, then a perfect score on the state exam meant that I was smart – smarter than most of the people on campus for sure and maybe smarter than most juniors in the state too. What, then, was the counselor talking about that prohibited me from being college material? It was racism – of course. That was obvious to me then just as it is now. I was Chicana and that meant they were reading my name, my body, and my identity through their tainted lens and imposing some stereotype on me. It was a stereotype that they first created and then enforced through gatekeeping. It was clear to me that what they were seeing was not about me and I knew it! Through their racism, the counselors denied me the basic knowledge of how to apply to college. And I left their offices still not knowing how to do it.

Not only did the high school counselors deem me too *Mexican* to be in college, they actively withheld information that would have enabled me to access the many opportunities that were literally calling my home. Needless to say, I did not go to college right out of high school. I did not know how to apply. Applications are not intuitive and people need to learn the skills to create the required materials. Writing a cover letter, drafting a personal statement, and presenting yourself in print is a skill set and students have to learn how to do those things. For a lot of folks in academia, their parents were able to provide that support to them at home. That is not true for everyone and the institutions are tasked with teaching students these skills. Looking back at my experience brings up a swell of emotions: anger, sadness, frustration, despair. I teeter between rage and tears - mainly. Why would an adult, someone meant to support learning and growth actively stand in the way of a young person and limited their life opportunities. It is unconscionable to me. And I am forced to question how many other students are forced out of college, particularly the elite schools, because someone actively, willfully, and wantonly stood in their way. My high school counselors changed the trajectory of my academic development. Plain and simple. Fortunately, I made it to college a few years later. I attended a community college then a local university where I was allowed to walk-up and fill-out my application on site. The person behind the counter told me how to do it. So, that is how I went to college – with my perfect scores on the state exam.

It is important to note that race and class do intersect. There are profound consequences for those who live at the intersection of these two phenomena. Yes, racism is real and devastating and horrible. Yes, classism for white folks is real and horrible and alienating. These are true statements in and of themselves. When you put the two together, we are talking about a startling reality that works to limit access in profound, unconscionable ways. Folks of color encounter racism at most every pass, particularly if they are young. They have to endure the social and institutional violence that accompanies being of color in institutions of learning (and everywhere else). That means that we are turned away by gatekeeping mechanisms that work against us to limit our opportunities. When you compound that with class bias, then we are talking about populations of people that not only endure racism, but also, as a whole, lack the knowledge and skills to access institutions of higher learning. This is particularly true for first-generation college students. For families that have not accessed higher education, they are truly at the mercy of institutions protected by gatekeepers. Some families might have a working class background and have limited cultural practices that come with economic privilege or comfort, yet have had the privilege of a family member getting a college degree. Information that can be shared within a family with or without economic wealth, even if they are of color, can interrupt some structural violence. If you do not have access to that information within your family or the institution, then you are left without any recourse to acquire that much need information. You are abandoned without any information on how to access institutions of higher education, or much of anything else. It was a vicious behavior that is not often discussed or engaged.

My path changed course while I was pursuing my master's degree. I had fumbled into a graduate program after finishing my bachelor's, because I could not find full-time employment. I worked full time in retail while pursuing an undergraduate degree. I had the traditional mindset of working-class folks, or immigrants, that saw education as a means of increasing employment opportunities (Ray et al. 2001). I took whatever classes fit my schedule and I worked as hard as I could to complete my degree as quickly as possible. Learning was less important than my degree. And since classes were not particularly challenging, I took – on average – 21 to 24 credit hours a semester as well as winter and summer classes. I finished my degree in just short of three years without much effort. I happened to not secure a professional job upon graduation and decided to pursue an advanced degree, because I thought that it would help me find a better employment. My graduate application was much the same as my undergraduate – a quick something that was looking for students to build a program. I suspect that any paying student would have been admitted. While in graduate school, I partnered with a lovely woman of color who was from an educated family. Both of her parents had gone to college, and her mother had nearly completed her PhD. I learned from her the skills that the institution refused me and that my family could not provide. We spent weeks discussing personal narratives and research statements. She taught me the importance of networking and encouraged me to send emails to potential mentors to introduce myself and ask about their research. Yes, we were both

still contending with racism. I remember distinctly her crying one day after she called a school in Oklahoma where she had applied. She wanted to confirm that they had received her application package since she really wanted to attend that school. The office administrator told her that they did not receive her materials and that she had missed the deadline. My partner knew for a fact that they had received her application since she had used priority mail and requested a signature from the person receiving her package. The person that she was speaking with on the phone was the same person that signed for her package. She said as much to the individual, but it did not matter and her pleas went unheard. 'They are doing this because my last name is Gonzales, she cried.' It was hard not to read the situation like that. Together, we chose to move north in the US to leave southern racism and I decided to pursue my PhD. With her help, I finally learned how to submit an application to a university. I had my heart set on one school and she on another. As fate would have it, I was accepted into her dream school and she into mine. And so it went. We parted ways and attend our respective institutions.

I arrived at my new campus in the North East, a region far removed from my small-town Texas roots. I had only been outside of Texas once before moving north to start my PhD and had no frame of reference to understand much of anything. People moved and talked so differently and I was very much a stranger in a foreign land. Meeting my PhD cohort – comprised of eight people – did not ease my concerns in anyway. It only heightened them. They had all attended the elite schools that solicited my applications years before and I had learned – from my partner during my master's degree – that they had received a much better education than I did. Each person in my cohort thought quicker, spoke faster, and had an air of confidence that I just did not possess. When I did speak, my southern drawl marked me as less than (Evans Davies 2007). I did not have the elegant tones that come from the Carolinas or Tennessee old money. I had a gritty Texas drawl that is found among the poverty stricken and it read every time that I spoke. I was poor, brown, queer, and definitely out of place. I sought refuge among graduate students of color hoping that I would find community and people like me.

Even though we were all folks of color, I had never felt so isolated or alone. The graduate students of color were warm and inviting, but I clearly did not belong with them. Most, if not all, of the members of the community identified as working class yet they had a full range of social and personal resources that I could not fathom. I had no means of comprehending what they were able to do. They knew how to access institutional support and leverage 'being of color' into any number of opportunities that supported marginalized students. I had never before met anyone able to access structural mechanisms *because* they were of color. Most everyone I knew from my life in Texas was turned away because of it. I was in absolute shock and could not comprehend how they were able to negotiate the system. It just came naturally to them and they did it with ease. I had never felt so alone, so inferior, or so incapable. I

was devastated. Yes, we were all of color, but there was a huge cultural divide between us that I just – no matter how hard I tried – could not identify.

I heard many discussions among the graduate students of color about how they were struggling financially to pay to attend all of the conferences, that it was a huge strain on their budgets. I was struggling to pay rent and did not understand how many of them were attending one conference a month. They said that they were working class! How could they afford to do that?! I grappled with what was I doing wrong and blamed myself for not working hard enough to be able to keep-up with my job as a student. I later learned that the graduate students of color – most of them – identified as working class as a show of solidarity, a means of connecting with economically disenfranchised people. It was an affinity group for them – not their life experience. Most of the graduate students of color were from wealthy families, one of whom owned several rental properties in NYC. She and her siblings all went to elite liberal arts colleges and her parents paid for her education – and her siblings – and supported her graduate work by supplementing her living expenses. This was a fairly common phenomenon among the graduate students of color. Most, if not all, were from middle or upper class backgrounds. They had the institutional knowledge and cultural capital to access a full range of services available through the university and professional organizations. Moreover, they had financial support from their families and did not have to labor in low wage jobs to survive. Their faux working-class identities – despite having financial comfort – rendered me (a true member of the working class) and my experience invisible.

The underlying assumption about folks of color in academia is that we are from working class backgrounds. The unfortunate reality – like most stereotypes about race – is that it is not true. Most of the folks of color in academia are from middle-class, or higher, backgrounds just like the white population. How could they not be? Economic condition is such a huge predictor of most everything: educational outcomes, imprisonment rates, health outcomes, life expectancy, and so on (Hashimoto 2011; Howe et al. 2013; Lutz 2007; Starfield & Emanuelle-Birn 2007; Yun & Moreno 2006). This is also true for someone's ability to integrate into the ivory tower. We know that working class white folks struggle to integrate into academia (Mazurek 2009; Muzzatti & Samarco 2006; Schell 1998, Warnock 2016). The struggle for working class folks of color, especially first-generation, is compounded by class – not lessened by color. Working class people of color have a comparable frame of reference to that of working class white folks (Linkon & Russo 2016) – we do not have information or the skill-base to ask for support like white academics. White folks talk about this in their work engaging what it is to be working-class scholars (Warnock & Appel 2012). What makes people think that working-class people of color are not struggling with the same stigmas around asking for help and support? For folks of color who make it into academia, the majority of them are from middle or higher class backgrounds and their knowledge of and willingness to engage with structural supports come from their class privilege – not their color!

It took a few years, but I finally found someone more closely aligned to my sensibilities. My closest friend in graduate school happened to be a gender-queer, white working class person from small town as well and we were both enrolled in PhD programs at the same university. We had many things in common and we had a fantastic relationship, although I did have to work with them on their racism and ideological whiteness. Despite having a shared class background, my dear friend was fully supported by their department and was given guidance and resources from their advisors and broader campus faculty while I received none of those things. My friend kindly shared with me what they were learning while ignoring the fact that I was being excluded from knowledge shared within our university. It was hard on our relationship at first, because I wanted them to see the ways in which I was being marginalized. They could not recognize how their racial privilege yielded benefits that I was denied. I became disheartened and finally gave up on trying to help them recognize my experience and just accepted the precious information. After a short period of time, my friend began to see me as competition for campus and professional resources. They quit sharing institutional knowledge with me. And I was again without information, without support, and without a compass.

Through sheer grit and determination, I collected my senses and turned my attention to, what I have heard referred to as, academic climbing, the benchmark of success in academia. Academic climbing is one of those coded phrases that hints at productivity, but something more. I did not have the subtle delicacies (Bourdieu 1984) that a middle class, or higher, background affords or the guidance of a learned advisor or peer. I had no consciousness that ‘something more’ existed let alone how to engage with it. I approached academia, specifically the concept of productivity, through my working-class understanding of labor – blue-collar grind it out work. So, like any good blue-collar worker, I set my sights on completing a job that required a series of benchmarks that defined success. I sought advice from those few senior scholars who acknowledged me and asked what defined productivity. I collected their statements and compiled a list of how success was measured: publications, presentations, and grants. As the first person in my family, immediate or extended, to receive a college degree let alone enter a PhD program, it was imperative that I meet each benchmark and set an example for my family. I was task-driven, goal-orientated, and committed to institutional definitions of success. So, I dug in and went to work. I read full bodies of literature from theoretical inception to variable trends and evolutions so that I could write informed articles. I attended workshops and trainings while I was presenting at a conference. I started reading old grant applications that had been funded by major granting agencies so that I could learn how it was done. You name it. If I could find the time in my sixteen hours a day, seven days a week schedule, I found a way to do it. Little did I know at the time that – depending upon one’s class position – there are vastly different definitions of work and productivity (Rothe 2006).

For me, my class-based ideology defined work as labor that produced outcomes that were measurable through money or could be quantified in some way that demonstrated productivity. I needed to have something tangible to show for my time and energy. I had to survive financially and grow my CV at the same time, which required strategic planning and a conscious use of my resources. In my mind, that meant that I needed to start teaching classes since it would both allow me to gain experience in my field, show productivity on my CV, and help me survive financially. So, I hit the adjunct wheel and started running a desperate race in an attempt to catch up with and surpass my peers. I did not come from elite institutions and knew that I was behind my colleagues, both in terms of skill and prestige. I thought that teaching classes would help me catch up since teaching a stand-alone course was held in such high regard in my department. Only the most respected graduate students were gifted the honor of teaching stand-alone courses. Graduate students had to apply for every position during graduate school and were measured on our CVs similarly to the academic job market. I was under the delusion that our value in the academic marketplace was based on our work – my working class definition of work.

For nearly all of my graduate school career, I struggled to receive graduate student research or teaching appointments in my department. I had a growing body of publications, had received small grants, and was presenting at conferences. Yet, I still could not seem to catch-up according to my department's measurement of work. I watched my peers get positions and even accolades for all of the 'work' that they were doing. In my mind, they were not doing anything. They just lounged around celebrating themselves and their minimal accomplishments. I had *more* of 'everything' that counted on the metric of success and still could not break in. It did not make any sense to me! I thought at first that maybe it was racism or homophobia that was limiting my opportunities. I am sure that those phenomena had something to do with it, but they are hard to measure. Most of the people receiving appointments were straight white men. They made up the majority of my department so that filtering process had already happened. I think we had nine people of color out of 100 graduate students, and about six of us identified as LGBTQ. I was the only gender-queer person of color⁷. Even with those numbers, I noticed folks of color getting appointments and even queer folks. Was it because I was both a person of color and queer? Was the combination of two visibly marked identities limiting my ability to access department support? Something was happening that I just did not understand. Why was my application not good enough to warrant an appointment? I read it as a lack of effort of my part so I leaned in harder and worked more – because I thought that it was my fault and that I was not doing enough. I had a very small amount of time that I gave myself for a social life outside of graduate school. I surrendered that

⁷ There are variations in the LGBTQ community. Gender-queer refers to people that do not adhere to US normative gender presentations. They are visibly different, because they do not follow the cultural norms of gender. They are a small subsection of the LGBTQ community.

time to community service and found ways to do community service that would allow me to integrate research and presentations. And that, ultimately, became the extent of my social life. To use a Texas colloquialism in regard to football – I left it all on the field. I gave all of my time, energy, thoughts, everything that I had to benchmarks of success in graduate school.

After years of leaning and grinding, I finally graduated and was ready to enter the job market. I was very proud of all of the work that I had done in my graduate career, although I never managed to get any accolades or appointments from my department. Somehow I had finished on time – and in some instances ahead of my colleagues – despite having no institutional support. With a 50% attrition rate in my department, finishing was an accomplishment in and of itself. And I was finishing in great form and had a full body of work on my CV to demonstrate my productivity. I was relishing my accomplishment when I sat down with the senior, respected member of my department and heard the news about my CV and readable class-based deficit. During a very brief introductory conversation, they asked, ‘who have you worked with and who do you know?’ At first, I was taken aback by the question since it did not have anything to do with my labor. I answered with poise and confidence, ‘Well’, I said, ‘I’ve worked with this one person, because they were all that I needed.’ He had so much to offer, why would I go anywhere else I thought to myself. I did not have time for luxuries or chit-chat. I needed to work. With that, this individual examined my CV and marked my class disparity. According to all three markers of academic productivity – research, teaching, and service – I had hit my bench marks and exceeded my colleagues. I had a number of single-authored publications, had presented at conferences, and received fellowships and grants. I had also managed, despite all of it, to be the instructor of record for 67 classes. Yes, it required me traveling to multiple campuses each semester and I – basically – taught a 5/5 for the bulk of my graduate school career. I needed to survive which meant that I had to work. And it was my class-based understanding of productivity and that highlighted my working-class background – aside from the huge number of classes that I had taught.

My classmates took campus jobs so that they would have more time to connect with faculty. My limited understanding of academic institutions meant that you taught classes if you wanted to be on the academic side and worked on campus if you wanted to be in administration or student affairs. I did not realize that administrative or student affairs positions enabled graduate students one of the most precious commodities – networking. I could have taken a campus job so that I could make connections. It would have been those connections that would later help secure me campus resources and departmental respect. And it was that respect that would eventually turn into letters of recommendation, fellowship opportunities, stand-alone courses, and eventually tenure-track job offers. Networking was the language that I did not possess – the social capital that comes with connections with senior faculty and administrators (Warnock 2016). The wages between their campus jobs and my

adjuncting were essentially the same. What they received by working on campus was priceless in comparison.

Upon graduation, I joined the faculty at a satellite campus within the same university system where I received my PhD. I was – I believe – the only anthropologist hired in the university system that year and I was thrilled and grateful to have the job. It was a teaching position, but I had taught so many classes at that point I was an old-hand. I thought that I would easily transition into my new appointment. While at my new campus, I learned for the first time how profoundly my class background had limited my understanding of academia. I realized very quickly how desperately I had lacked guidance during my graduate career. My new colleagues in the department moved very slowly and seemed to relish every word that they said – both spoken and in print. I remember my graduate school advisor saying that he sometimes spent 10 minutes thinking of a word while he was writing before moving onto the next. At the time, I thought that it seemed extravagant to spend some much energy on one word. Who has that much time I thought?! Well, professors do. And that was the class rub. I learned that ‘being’ a professor was part of the equation that I had not learned in graduate school. While I was working, my peers were learning how to ‘be’ professors and it was an elegance that I did not possess. I quickly learned how to project ‘professor’, although it never felt comfortable and was counter-intuitive to my epistemology.

I am now three years out of graduate school and starting the second year of my first tenure track position. I am at a teaching institution and my CV is teaching heavy. I am encountering much the same situation that I did in graduate school. I have the requisite publications, presentations, and grants of someone three years out. I also happen to have taught 100 classes. Yes, I have continued teaching a 5/5. I still need to survive. That has not changed. What has changed is me. I have long since shed my southern Texas accent. I have lost all reverence for the Ivory Tower and those who occupy it. I no longer have imposter syndrome or feel a deficit of any kind. I do not take anything for granted – not that I ever did. What I do more now is pause and wonder. There is something just beneath the surface of most every interaction in academia and I now know to look for it. I take a few extra minutes to contemplate what is not being said and how that will influence the outcome. I look at those around me and chuckle (quietly of course) when their egos are visible and guiding their behavior, because I know that it is just their class talking. I have grown into a quiet-confidence that comes from years of work, struggle, and – ultimately – success. My academic career and professional trajectory were changed a long time ago during my high school years. There is no altering that experience or the path that it set me on. Nor is there any recreating or rectifying my graduate school experience. I did the best that I could with the tools that I had. Yes, some members of academic search committees grimace during a job interview when they see me via Skype with my short hair and tie. I am not at all surprised when I do not get a campus visit. I am sure that some people pass my CV over when they read my last name. All of these things

are true. What is also true is that despite all of the barriers and roadblocks put in my way – I am still here and still standing strong. And I have no illusions.

Acknowledgements

My deepest, most sincere gratitude goes to my dear friend and colleague Valerie Joseph. Thank you for your brilliance, for our conversations, for offering revisions, and for challenging me to make myself more visible in this piece.

Author Bio

Dr. Foiles Sifuentes has focused her research on the role of structural and social violence in the creation and maintenance of marginalized populations. Currently, she is working on a critical assessment of nation-states' use of internal checkpoints and white only enclaves to impose difference on the local people in the Texas-Mexico borderlands.

Bibliography

Bourdieu, P. (1984): *Distinctions: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Routledge, London & New York.

Evans Davies, C. (2007): 'Language and Identity in Discourse in the American South', in Bamberg, M., De Fina, A. and Schiffrin, D. (eds.), *Selves and Identities in Narratives and Discourse*, John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam & Philadelphia.

Ferri, B. A. & Connor, D. J. (2005): 'In the Shadow of Brown: Special Education and Overrepresentation of Students of Color', *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, vol. 26, no. 2, pp. 93-100.

Gallagher, S. (1999): 'An Exchange of Gazes', in Kinchloe, J. L., Steinberg, S. R. & Villaverde, L. E. (eds), *Rethinking Intelligence*, Routledge, New York.

Hashimoto, E. J. (2011): 'Class Matters', *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, vol. 101, no. 1, pp. 31-76.

Howe, L. D., Lawlor, D. A. and Propper, C. (2013): 'Trajectories of Socioeconomic Inequalities in Health, Behaviors and Academic Achievement across Childhood and Adolescence', *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, vol. 67, no. 4, pp. 358-364.

Linkon, S.L. and Russo, J. (2016): 'Twenty Years of Working-Class Studies: Tensions, Values, and Core Questions', *Journal of Working-Class Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 4-13.

Lutz, A. (2007): Barriers to High-School Completion among Immigrant and Later-Generation Latinos in the USA: Language, Ethnicity, and Socioeconomic Atatus', *Ethnicities*, vol. 7, no. 3, pp. 323-342.

Mazurek, R. A. (2009): 'Work and Class in the Box Store University: Autobiographies of Working-Class Academics', *College Literature*, vol. 36, no.4, pp. 147-178.

Muzzatti, S. L. & Samarco, V.C. (eds.) (2006): *Reflections From the Wrong Side of the Tracks*, Rowan and Littlefield, New York.

Ray, D., Davies, J. David, M., and Ball, S.J. (2001): 'Choices of Degree of Degrees of Choice? Class, 'Race' and the Higher Education Choice Process', *Sociology*, vol. 35, no. 4, pp. 855-874.

Reid, K. D. & Knight, M.G. (2006): 'Disability Justifies Exclusion of Minority Students: A Critical History Grounded in Disability Studies', *Educational Researcher*, vol. 35, no. 6, pp. 18-23.

Rothe, D. (2006): 'A Stranger to Paradise: Working-Class Graduate in the Culture of Academia', in Muzzatti. S. L., & Samarco, V. C. (eds.) *Reflections From the Wrong Side of the Tracks*, Rowan and Littlefield, New York.

Shell, E. (1998): *Gypsy Academics and Mother-Teachers*, Boynton-Cook, Portsmouth, NH.

Starfield, B. and Emanuelle-Birn, A. (2007): 'Evidence-Based Public Health Policy and Practice. Income Redistribution is not Enough: Income Inequality, Social Welfare Programs, and Achieving Equity in Health', *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, vol. 61, no. 12, pp. 1038-1041.

Warnock, D. M. (2016): 'Paradise Lost? Patterns and Precarity in Working-Class Academic Narratives', *Journal of Working-Class Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 28-44.

Warnock, D. M. & Appel, S. (2012): 'Learning the Unwritten Rules: Working Class Students in Graduate School', *Innovative Higher Education*, vol. 37, pp. 307-321.

Yun, J.T. and Moreno, J.F. (2006): 'College Access, K-12 Concentrated Disadvantages, and the Next 25 Years of Education Research', *Educational Researcher*, vol. 35, no. 1, pp. 12-19.

Publish AND Perish: On Publishing, Precarity and Poverty in Academia

Emma Vossen, PhD Candidate University of Waterloo

Abstract

We have all heard the phrase ‘publish or perish’ but what does perishing actually look like? Are you publishing and still perishing? In this article, Vossen probes into the complexity of academic publishing from her perspective as both a poor PhD student and the editor-in-chief of Game Studies publication *First Person Scholar*. Vossen argues that academic publishing (examining both journal articles and academic manuscripts) exploits the labour of grad students and contract workers by encouraging them to publish their work without compensation in the hopes of attaining tenure-track employment in the future. This ‘work for exposure’ method is dependent on the optimism of young scholars, the majority of whom will not attain tenure-track positions. Vossen focuses specifically on how academic journal articles function as both currency and commodity, devaluing alternative forms of research sharing (such as the work published in *First Person Scholar*) which is seen as ‘academic waste’ that doesn’t ‘count’. Academic journal articles are intrinsically linked to an academics’ ‘worth’ both culturally and financially and therefore, many untenured academics feel they can’t take the financial risk of publishing outside of traditional venues for fear of furthering their descent into debt and poverty. Vossen and the staff of *First Person Scholar* have attempted to remedy the system in their field of Game Studies by both paying academics for their writing and firmly rejecting opportunities to become an academic journal to instead be considered a ‘middle state publication’. Lastly, Vossen discusses opting out of the publish or perish game as a grad student and what you lose when you decide not to play.

Keywords

Academic publishing, graduate students, exploitation, academic worth

Academic Publishing is Broken⁸

Academic publishing is broken and most of us can’t afford to fix it. I mean this in two distinct senses; few of us have the economic capital to fix it, and even fewer have the

⁸ In 2016 I made a video entitled ‘[First Person Scholar: Publish with Purpose](#)’, which won the Social Science and Humanities Research Council’s (SSHRC) ‘[SSHRC Storytellers Contest](#)’. The video, as well as this post on [First Person Scholar](#), were earlier versions of this article.

academic capital. But, god help me, I've tried. This article is about my attempts to do *something* about the broken system through the middle state publication First Person Scholar. Furthermore it is about the intersections of poverty, precarity, and publishing. These three factors meet in our broken system, with its credo of publish or perish. The idea behind these much repeated words is that as a grad student or early-career academic you must publish as much as possible if you want to get a job, and/or ascend up the tenure track system. This model sounds like a meritocracy, put in the work and you are rewarded (and I'm sure it looks that way for those who have risen to the top). But now that full-time permanent academic jobs are so few and far between what about those who publish and have yet still seen their careers perished? Those who don't get to benefit from the supposed libratory potential of the academy, those who are poor as grad students, who spend countless hours writing, editing, and publishing in hopes of securing full-time employment, and then stay poor working as postdocs and contract professors? These are the victims of the publish or perish system.

The academic publishing system **stays** broken because we can't afford to fix it and because those profiting off of it don't want it to change. Those of us living in academic poverty, grad students, postdocs and contract instructors, *need* to participate in the broken system if we want to ascend to the well paid parts of the academy. But even if we do participate in the current broken system by publishing as many journal articles as possible, and by publishing a sole authored academic manuscript, *we probably still won't get jobs*. Some researchers have compared the production of PhDs to the number of jobs as an issue of 'birth rate' arguing that each professor is birthing more PhDs than there are academic jobs: 'only 12.8% of PhD graduates can attain academic positions in the USA' (Larson and Ghaffarzadegan, 2014, p 745). Furthermore, this is not just a humanities problem, in fact, 'less than 17% of new PhDs in science, engineering and health-related fields find tenure-track positions within 3 years after graduation' (Larson and Ghaffarzadegan, 2014, p 745). There just aren't enough jobs to go around, the solution is not to train all PhDs as if they are going to attain academic jobs, to not put pressure on all PhDs to publish journal articles and manuscripts – but we do. In other words, the pressure to publish journal articles and academic manuscripts to get jobs is causing young academics the world over to publish AND perish.

Journal Articles and Academic Waste

The largest piece of this problem is how we, as a collective, value research. We value some research more than others. Journal articles were once about sharing research, now that function is second to the *economic function* of creating journal articles. **Journal articles are currency in the academic economy.** While full-time faculty are compensated for their time pursuing research, grad students and new PhDs are not. We create journal articles for free, although it costs us an inordinate amount of time, and then we exchange them, or at least the idea of them, for employment and research funding. From our first month of grad school we are fed the narrative 'just present at conferences A B and C and publish in journals X Y and Z and you will get a job'. We are taught, not to produce the best research, the most needed research, but to exploit a system to secure employment. Rarely would someone talk to you about the content of your articles, they are most interested in simply the number of them, what journals they are published in, and what the rejection rate of that journal is. We place our worth in rejection, in resubmission, in outdated ideas of value.

Because journal articles are a currency, many people try to find ways to game the system and produce as many of them as possible, sometimes publishing four or five slightly different articles on the same research. In many fields grad students and postdocs are exploited to do research and write journal articles for their supervisors just to get credit as ‘second’ author. Journal articles are not the research that researchers felt the need to publish. They are the research that researchers published in an attempt to get a job, or secure a raise, or a grant. In the end those who can play this game, who can fit into the system most easily, secure jobs and tenure and funding.

Furthermore, we’ve fundamentally devalued the other types of research in this economy. Not every bit of writing is, or should be, a journal article. Some conference talks should just be talks, some writing needs to be shared quickly and should be blogged, some research is short, some is personal, some writing doesn’t come with a bibliography. Some information is better shared as a video, or a podcast, or a round table. But, because all other forms of research sharing are devalued, academics feel that all research and writing must ‘become’ a journal article to ‘count’ in the system. Like smelting all the chunks of ore you find into gold bars so they can be exchanged for money. This also means that other research and writing (blogging, freelance work, podcasting, journalism, research creation, art) doesn’t ‘count’.

But it is not simply digital contributions that are looked down on, in the humanities co-authored journal articles are often called a ‘waste’. Even more shockingly, edited collections, which are physical books written and edited by a collective of academics on a single topic, are also seen by many as ‘a waste of time’. Recently, while working on an edited collection I had two senior academics in my field explain to me patiently over drinks how they, and others in their position, didn’t want to be part of my book of essays, or any book of essays because book chapters have no value in the academic economy. It was a ‘waste’ of research that could have become a journal article, something that would really ‘count’. While I was shocked they were so cynical, none of the content of our conversation surprised me because for years I had been working at *First Person Scholar* and hearing that the work that we did editing and writing and publishing research was a ‘waste’ of time.

Middle State Publishing is The Future

First Person Scholar (FPS) is an online publication of critical writing about games and games culture run by a group of student academics from the University of Waterloo. It is not a blog, it is not an academic journal, it is *a publication*. I use the word publication quite strategically. We could go through the process of becoming an academic journal, or we could market ourselves as a games journalism website but we don’t because our strength lies in not being either of these things in any official capacity. I have frequently been asked why we don’t find a way to become a ‘real’ journal so that we as editors and as young scholars can ‘get something’ out of this experience for our careers. **Once I was told that FPS was ‘a nice idea’ but ‘a big waste of time’ considering that the work we are doing wasn’t valued by the academy.** This sentiment implies an ignorance about what careers in academia are like, and about where academia is moving. I feel very strongly that game studies doesn’t need another journal — it needs a way to open itself up to non-academics who are interested in what we have to offer. It needs a way to showcase our work to the

largest audience possible in a quick but rigorous manner. As founding editor in chief of *FPS* Steve Wilcox has explained in his article ‘On the Publishing Methods of Our Time: Mobilizing Knowledge in Game Studies’:

FPS strives to engage in *intercultural communication*, meaning that our contributors are encouraged to write for a wide audience for the purposes of engaging those situated in academic and non-academic cultures (2015).

You may be thinking, ‘well you can’t call yourself a publication, you must be a *type* of publication’ — and we are! We are a middle state publication, a website that publishes middle state writing. This is writing that is somewhere between the poles of quick digitally published writing (like blogging) and academic journal articles. As Brendan Keogh has argued, a lot of the best, most influential culture-changing game studies work is being done in the middle state realm (2014). Academic researchers can benefit from using that writing in their teaching and research **but** — academics also need to care about publishing our research *as* middle state writing so that we can be part of the larger critical conversation about games and so that we can influence change beyond the walls of the academy. Unfortunately, this goal might seem lofty when you are a young scholar with no job security.

Middle state publishing is what you may imagine it is. It’s an act of writing that is between the poles of blogging and academic writing. As Steve Wilcox has explained, middle state articles ‘are digital publications that have the timeliness of blogs but the critical attention to detail of a journal’ (2013). *FPS* has been at the forefront of discussions of the middle state since 2013 (Wilcox, 2013; Hawreliak, 2013) and game studies specifically has been a big part of the discussion around the middle state. Games critic and academic Zoya Street (who runs middle state publication *Memory Insufficient*) calls those of us who write somewhere between the spheres of academia and journalism ‘cyborg critics’. Street explains that this position involves ‘citing blogs in academic papers. It means tweeting at DiGRA. It means self-publishing books for a non-academic audience’ it is ‘academia without the purity complex. It’s middle-state writing’ (2014).

It is important to note here that middle state writing is not simply an academic journal article slapped onto a WordPress site. Everything about this writing is different, it is a totally unique rhetorical act as you have an entirely different, much larger and more complex, audience. It is about letting go of the pretensions of the academic journal article and writing about your research in a way that is both clear and enjoyable to read. This isn’t to say that middle state writing isn’t still curated and edited, but the editors at *FPS* aren’t there to be ‘reviewer number two’ who tears your argument apart, nor are we there to send you a revise and resubmit to boost our rejection rate. The editors at *FPS* work closely and carefully with the authors of our articles and help them take their writing and build it into something clear and concise, something our audience, which is made up of academics, enthusiasts, developers and activists alike, will enjoy reading. The work published on *FPS* isn’t peer-reviewed, it’s reviewed by your peers.

It’s increasingly hard for academics to value this type of public engagement when our worth as individuals is calculated by the number of academic journal articles and academic books we produce – for free. As grad students, we are expected to publish for the jobs we want – the jobs we likely will not get. While middle state publishing may be what is best for academia, many people move away from unconventional but

accessible platforms of research dissemination because they fear for their jobs, and their financial stability.

The middle state is the future of academic writing, so why are the majority of voices in the middle state those of us without academic job security? Those of us with the least privilege in the academy are doing the most to try to move it into the 21st century and we are doing it at the very real financial cost of our careers.

Open Access is Not Enough

I'm going to cut right to it — middle state publishing exists because traditional academic writing is an oppressive force that keeps our knowledge locked up in the light of academic libraries and keeps those not privileged enough to be part of the academy in the dark. Academic writing is so rarely about clarity and so often involves unnecessarily complicated or pretentious language, which can also keep the reader in the dark. As a university employee, I am complicit in this system of oppression and the hierarchies of knowledge it creates. As more and more people speak out against academic writing and publishing it becomes harder and harder to support the idealized vision of the university as an institution for learning. The purpose of academic publishing is so often presented to us as a method of adding lines to one's CV rather than sharing important information.

Many have pointed out the ways in which the corporatization of the University system is negatively affecting students and faculty alike by devaluing education (Chomsky, 2011; Stewart, 2015; Proctor, 2015; McKenn, 2014). Universities have become corporations and the instructors and professors are its machinery. We produce undergraduate degrees through our teaching, and we produce publications out of our research and this output fuels the university engine. The runoff from our machines are the students who leave saddled with unpayable debt and few job prospects. Now before you say, 'not all academics', or 'I'm only a grad student', or 'I'm only a contract instructor', let me say 'Yes, all academics.' We are all implicated in this oppressive structure — some of us just benefit more from it than others.

Luckily, there are some things that we can do about this. We can change how we publish and who we are publishing for. SSHRC has actually mandated that we do something about the traditional publishing structure in 2004 and has since been working to help academic journals become open access (Government of Canada, *Aid*, 2012) and encouraging their grant holders to publish their research in open access journals (Government of Canada, *Open*, 2012). In fact now the *Tri-Agency Open Access Policy on Publications* actually 'requires that peer-reviewed journal publications resulting from Tri-Agency (NSERC, SSHRC, CIHR) grants be freely accessible within 12 months of publication' (Government of Canada, *Open*, 2012).

I'm a big fan of their initiatives **but creating physical access to our scholarship is just one-half of the problem.** An open access journal article may be physically available to the public, but that doesn't mean the knowledge in the article is effectively disseminated or effectively translated to the public. If we want our research to make changes to culture, industry, and policy, we need our writing to not just be physically accessible but also readable, i.e. understandable by people who haven't spent a decade learning how to read academese or all the dialects of academese via discipline specific academic language. Our research may as well be in

another language, and it is our responsibility to translate it, not the public's responsibility to learn how to read it.

Unfortunately, publishing outside a 'well-respected' journal is not seen as an option by most academics because they don't see anything to gain from the amount of effort put in. No one is getting an academic job for writing in clear accessible language that the public can read. And we all really need stable jobs. If your institution or department doesn't value knowledge mobilization or public outreach, then you might feel like you are stuck in between a rock and a hard place. Worse sometimes universities value this type of publication culturally, or in theory, but do not reward the behavior or consider it as equal to other forms of academic work. No one wants to feel like their work isn't being read or has no impact, but if you are trying to get a tenure-track job you might feel like you don't have the luxury of making any 'mistakes'. Furthermore as a grad student, you may feel that publishing as many journal articles as possible will make all the difference when attempting to secure a tenure track job. Therefore our publishing strategies are tied in a very real way to our poverty and survival.

Academic Poverty and Precarity

I frequently work 16 hour days or 60 hour weeks, yet I still don't have enough money to cover my (very cheap) rent and bills. Sometimes I drive 12 (or more) hours in a week just to attend meetings and teach classes in another city. Sometimes I wake up at 5 am to get to the class I am currently teaching in another city on time. I'm also still technically a student and I'm still paying tuition to a university for the privilege of being a grad student there, despite setting foot on campus only 2 or 3 times a year. In an average semester of the funded part of my PhD I made about \$7334 a semester, before paying \$2863 in tuition for the privilege of making that \$7334. That means my take home pay for a semester was about \$4471, about \$279 dollars a week. In case you can't do fast math that means I am getting paid about \$6.99 an hour *if* I only worked 40 hours a week. While that wasn't enough to live on, it seems like a lot compared to what I make now as a contract instructor paying tuition. I used to be a cashier at Value Village (a used goods store) and I was in a much better financial state working there for minimum wage than at any point of my PhD teaching university and college students.

Furthermore, every hour I've spent writing, and giving talks, and running events, and in meetings, and editing, and course prep, and marking, for free is an hour I could have been paid to do work literally anywhere else. Once after outlining to a friend all the work I had to do that week and how poor I was he turned to me and said 'you know that outside of the academy people get paid to do all that right?' I did know that, but I often forget. I often forget that if I just left academia, I could get paid for all the work I do. I forget that if I added up all the hours I spent writing academic talks and articles and book chapters, and dissertations, and not getting paid for it, the number would be substantial. Huge even. Much like an unpaid internship, or a working 'for exposure' model we in academia demand free labour now for 'success' later. If I had a dollar for every hour of academic work I've done for free I'd have a lot of dollars, if I had minimum wage for every hour of work I've done I'd be rich. But I don't get paid for that work, so instead I do that work for free and to pay the bills, I teach.

I'm Your Teacher, and I'm Also Their Student

Despite my better judgement, I'm still a PhD student, and I'm still teaching. It's beyond weird to occupy the positions of student and teacher simultaneously. My students expect me to be well compensated and educated but all the money I made in the first 2 months of teaching them went directly to another school to pay my tuition. I paid off the last \$100 of my tuition one day before the deadline while getting constant emails saying that if I didn't pay soon I would be removed from my program. I can't tell them that I can just barely afford to get a PhD. Sometimes, for teaching, I'm paid only for the hours I'm physically in the classroom. Sometimes I'm paid \$100 bucks per student for the semester. Sometimes I'm paid as little as \$1,800 (Canadian dollars) for an entire semester of teaching work.

Currently the college I work for is on strike. I support this strike fully but I'm also not technically on strike as I 'only' teach two classes, and therefore I'm only paid for 6 hours of work which is not enough to be part of the union. The strike has me thinking a lot about the way people perceive college instructors and how little our students (or anyone) know, even during strike times, about discrepancies of wages between instructors and professors. The continued exploitation of instructors and students is based on this lack of knowledge and communication between these two exploited groups. The greatest thing for these institutions and their continued exploitation of instructors and students is for those students to hate us for striking – and they do.

I keep seeing an idea repeated by students affected by the strike: 'our tuition pays your salary'. This idea is ironic, because yes, their tuition pays for everything, but very very very very little of it pays my salary. I don't have a salary. I am paid by the hour, only for the hours I am in the classroom and only for four months at a time. Imagine, not being paid for course research and prep, assignment design, grading, talking to students, answering emails, administrative work – none of this is calculated in the hours of work I do in a week, yet without that labour the course couldn't run. I'm not paid for those hours despite my students paying incredible amounts of tuition. **Their tuition pays for the continued exploitation of students and instructors. As does my tuition as a PhD candidate. But most students don't know any of this. My students don't know any of this about me.**

This lack of knowledge is perpetuated because out of pride, or shame, or professionalism, or fear for our jobs, **those of us who teach hide how much money we make from our students.** It's hard not to because you are attempting to be seen as an authority. So, to get up there and say, 'I'm paid so little to teach you that I can't afford to pay my rent! I don't answer my phone because I don't want to talk to the bill collectors!' immediately undermines that authority. If you are an expert, why can't you support yourself?

This is especially true when you are young, especially when you are a woman. I find it *very difficult* to talk to my students about the difference between myself and their other instructors. Recently I've tried and failed to communicate it. I'll start talking but not get through the whole thing. I find myself terrified that my students will no longer respect me if they knew the full extent of my financial struggles.

When I was doing my undergrad, I was smart, but I had NO IDEA that *so many* of my favourite instructors were paid so little. I feel stupid looking back on this. I had no idea that the person teaching me in the morning was being paid ten times what the person teaching me in the afternoon was paid. **I had no idea that the instructors**

inspiring me to go to grad school and become a professor were grad students themselves. I had no idea that some of my favourite instructors were still paying tuition to the institution I thought they worked for as professors. I didn't understand how tenure worked. I didn't know the difference between an instructor and a full professor. I didn't know the word sessional. As a student I saw teaching university as a good paying job. As a student I saw all my instructors as the same, no one more qualified or well paid than the other – and while that should be a good thing, it's sadly part of the problem.

The wake up call for me was when I signed up for a class taught by one of my favourite instructors. I was excited on the first day but when I walked into the classroom he was nowhere to be seen. I heard countless telephone game style rumours over the following weeks that shocked my naive student self. I would hear stories that he turned down the teaching position because he got a job at a bar, or a coffee shop, or a copy shop, and that it paid much more money than teaching. I heard that he was never coming back because teaching paid so badly. That moment was important to me as a student to realize that many of these people I respected, who were doing what I thought was the most interesting job in the world – were paid almost nothing. **It was so hard to wrap my head around the idea that teaching at a university was not a well paying job.** There was all this inequality right under my nose that I had no idea about and I was paying into that system.

Now I experience that inequality first hand every day. There is a prestige associated with my job. It is seen as a 'cool' job or an important one. But that veneer of importance disguises the ways instructors are exploited just like students. I'm just paying money from one institution to another to be exploited twice, once as an instructor and once as a student. Those of us who are students teaching students fear what they will think of us, and most importantly we fear losing our jobs if we speak out too often or too loud.

I'm telling you all of this about myself to explain that even as I'm saying it's terrible to be constantly expected/asked to work for free, I've *also* bought into the idea that working for free (or for very little) now will lead to, if not an academic job, then at least getting paid to write later in life. I need to believe that all this working for free will pay off one day. Once you've bought into this almost pyramid scheme type logic, it's hard to stop. It's hard to accept that more education does not lead to more stability, that more publications don't lead to better jobs. That none of this is for our benefit. That we are all just unwitting pawns in a much bigger game to make as much money off of higher education as possible by maximizing the amount of students paying tuition and minimizing the cost of running the classes. This money making game extends to academic publishing as well, not just journals, as I've established above, but academic book publishing where academics write books for free, and publishers sell them for hundreds of dollars.

Publish an Academic Manuscript or Perish

Publishing has become a numbers game. First you publish as many journal articles as possible, and then if by some miracle you get a job, you will probably have to write a book to get tenure, but **that book must be for an academic audience and must be published with a 'good' academic publisher.**

As many before me have pointed out but as people outside of the academy rarely know, academic book publishing is criminal in concept but totally accepted by most in the academy (Academic, 2015). Academic books can cost between 40 and 300 dollars (in the arts — they can cost MUCH more in other disciplines) and are sold almost entirely to libraries with few exceptions. Academic publishers who sell both to libraries and enthusiast audiences (such as McFarland) are considered ‘lesser’, to put it in the nicest way possible.⁹

Most importantly, the academics who write and edit these books more often than not aren’t paid a single cent. **Some even PAY the publisher to have their work published** in order to qualify for promotions, or maybe just to live out a lifelong dream of having their own book, or maybe to avoid perishing at all costs. If you aren’t in academia, you may ask ‘why would *anyone* write a book for free?’. But academics would argue that you’re already being paid by your university, so it’s quite simple: you are doing it for future money, future advancement. As Richard J. Evans explains in an article of publishing tips for academics:

If it’s a first book, don’t worry about the money; go for a prestigious university press, unless you have an obviously commercial product (for example, a book with ‘Hitler’ or ‘Nazism’ in the title). Bear in mind that a successful first book with a good university press generates a lot of secondary income in terms of jobs, tenure, promotion and the like. (2014).

Later in the article he remarks:

Forget about an advance for a first book unless it’s with a commercial publisher such as Penguin, Bloomsbury or Little, Brown. Just think of the secondary income it can generate and benefits to your academic career (2014).

A lot of people support this logic (which is common knowledge in academia but often a surprise to new grad students who hold the assumption that writing a book is a job) because they desperately want the mythic, powerful, immortality of a tenure-track job. But if only one in five Canadian PhDs will actually get a tenure track job in their field then that means lots of grad students, junior faculty, and contract professors are publishing for free, to a purely academic audience and then *not* gaining the positions they seek (Tremonti, 2015). Therefore, to use Evans rhetoric, they aren’t even generating a ‘second income’ out of it, in fact when considering the labour put in they are losing money. The ‘work for exposure’ or ‘work for inevitable future’ model may have worked at one point, but if there aren’t enough jobs for the PhDs, this model is simply exploitation.

I’m not saying we need more jobs, I know that is a whole other can of worms, we just need to treat PhDs as what they are, university employees, teachers and researchers who are being trained in a specific subject and not for a specific job. But instead, we are all being trained and led as if we are all preparing for the same job, like a big game of musical chairs. One way to guarantee that you will be the one to sit in that chair is to write an academic book that will be sold to libraries, without being

⁹ I once exclaimed at a conference that I was excited that the editors of an anthology I had written for had picked McFarland as our publisher because my friends and family **could actually afford to buy the book** (I had found out that second via email). A fellow conference goer looked at me horrified that I could ever think that was a GOOD thing if my chapter wasn’t worth anything due to the publishing house.

compensated for that writing, as a measure of job security or in some cases future job security.

This has led to a lot of academic books and a lot of people asking questions along these lines:

So if academic books aren't exactly commercial endeavors, and they aren't exactly providing knowledge for the masses, what are they doing, exactly? (Berlatsky, 2014).

What they do is keep people flowing through the university ecosystem. They keep giving grad students the dream of having a book of their own, they fill library shelves, and sometimes, if they aren't read, they waste perfectly good research. But if there are fewer jobs and less tenure, will there also be fewer books? Or will there be more books as people desperately try to make themselves look appealing for the very few jobs? Getting paid for your work in academia makes your work less, not more, valuable. To gain cultural capital, you have to work for free, for no *financial* capital, and this tradition has led us to where we are today – poor and precarious.

As a young up and coming grad student, I hope I never publish an academic monograph. Despite writing a book being my #1 goal in life, I can't imagine writing a book, that will be sold for hundreds of dollars to libraries – for free. Call me an entitled millennial if you need to, but once I get my PhD I'm done working for free in hopes that I'll be graced with 'something more' down the line. While I can say that, I'm currently still in my PhD, in the final stages where the work of dissertation revision is heavy but funding from my institution is all dried up. Writing for free, including this article I should add, and teaching for very little, is part of the deal.

I will never ever pay to write a book or write a book for free, even if I *have* an academic job. Even if that means giving up the lifelong dream of writing my own book entirely. Maybe this is cocky or presumptuous of me, but I won't do it. I believe that my writing and the writing of my peers is more than just a means to a job. I want people to read my writing, I want to change people's minds, I want to communicate. I believe our work is important and interesting and is worth more than just a line on our CVs. It should be read, it should be circulated. Our research, our knowledge has purpose and I hope *FPS* showcases that.

I'm aware that many others also believe their writing has more value than all of this. They want to communicate and share but when confronted with the choice of publish or perish. They publish. But, what if we perished?

Join Me, Let's Perish

What if we perished? What if the public can no longer see the purpose of academic research, and slowly but surely people stop pursuing degrees for knowledge, or maybe like the recent case in Japan has shown, they just shut down humanities departments entirely (Dean, 2015)? Or what if we as young grad students just stop submitting to journals, stop writing articles and chapters that will just sit in libraries for free. If we aren't getting paid anyway why not put our research online for everyone to read and just ... perish out of the academic system entirely?

This might all sound incredibly naive, but the enabling power of being a young grad student is that I have nothing to lose. I also have nothing to gain by pointing out how everything around me seems broken. I have nothing to gain by telling you that I feel a crushing guilt when I teach my students, not because I'm not giving them the best education I possibly can—I pour all I've got into it—but because I know that soon they will be confronted with their debt, that they are paying so much for the privilege of being here, and I'm being paid pennies to keep them here. The idea that 52% of students at a school can be taught by contract instructors makes you wonder why more money can't be invested in those teachers (Basen, 2014). Especially when they have PhDs and mountains of debt. In my case about \$68,000 in student loans with an estimated \$30,000 of interest if I pay it off in only 10 years. That's \$98,000 (killmeplease) and places me in the top 17.4% of humanities PhDs with the most debt *in the United States*, where tuition is much more expensive (Jaschik, 2016).

This is not an anti-academia or an anti-university argument, it is instead a pro-education and anti-poverty argument — *but* it is very difficult to be pro-academia while being pro-education, or pro-university while being anti-poverty. It's very complicated to reconcile all these ideas at the same time. That's why before I enter the world with a PhD and try to pay off 100k in debt I might as well use my privilege to point out that we can't keep doing this. We might as well perish.

Even still, with all the privilege I have as a white, cis, able-bodied, PhD candidate, it's incredibly difficult to speak up and talk about the flaws in the system you are a part of. As a young grad student working in academia, you know that you are constantly being judged and that your financial future (in the form of awards, teaching and research positions) is subjectively placed in the hands of your more privileged tenured peers. A student or a professor who challenges the status quo, or who fights for their rights, or who seems ungrateful might not seem like the ideal candidate for an award or promotion.

It's difficult for anyone to speak out. It is even more difficult if you aren't cis, or white, or a man. It's hard enough with those who have the privilege of tenure to speak up; those lacking privilege find themselves muzzled by their desire to have a career. In a similar scenario but in the literary scene, Saeed Jones wrote an incredible piece about what it's like to be a marginalized writer in his article 'Self-Portrait Of The Artist As Ungrateful Black Writer' Jones explains:

You can make yourself crazy simply by paying attention. The publishing industry on which my work depends is 89% white. And so, when one of those white people puts their hands in my hair, it's difficult for me to speak up in the moment, or even months later, because I want to have a career, not just one book. I suspect there are limits to the literary elite's willingness to tolerate an insistently 'angry black writer' in their presence. Writers who speak out too loudly, too often will never be told explicitly 'you've bitten the hand that feeds you' but there are so many ways to starve (2015).

Jones, like so many of us, has to balance his desire to have a career, with his desire to confront the inequality of his industry. I think these thoughts too, and I wonder, what if all of us, as marginalized writers, just perished? What if we just perished out of academia? Out of literary circles? Like Jones says, there are just so so many ways to starve. In some cases, academics might be starving quite literally (Saacaro, 2014).

Part of me wants to devour the hand that feeds me. Part of me wants to starve. Part of me wants to perish.

But another, bigger part of me wonders, what if we, the marginalized being forced out of academia – published?

What if we published with purpose?

Publish with Purpose

What if we weren't publishing for a tenure committee, or our supervisors, or job committees? What if we published for the public? What if we published for those who our research affects? What if we published for those who were interested in the topic? Even if they didn't have a graduate degree?

What if we published with purpose?

What is the rhetorical purpose of publishing? Is it to change people's minds about something? Is it to educate? How many minds do you want to change? Whose minds do you want to change? These are the questions I wrangled with as EIC of *FPS* and they are the questions I still ask myself when publishing today. This article, for example, is not being published because I want to put it on my CV, because I want to say that I *did* publish a single journal article during my PhD. I'm publishing this article with a purpose – to change the way you think about publishing.

There are benefits to publishing outside of academic journals. *FPS* articles are part of a larger critical conversation where we educate and change minds outside of the academy. I don't think you could say that about most, if any, journal articles. Our articles are frequently cited not just by academics but by publications like *The New Yorker*, *The Huffington Post*, (Parkin, 2014; Ryan, 2014) and most frequently by Gamergate, the public who is so confused about what the hell game studies academics do that they literally think we are part of a large communist conspiracy to ruin video games (Chess and Shaw, 2015; Vossen, 2014).

But, it's hard work educating and changing minds, it often feels like thankless labour. *FPS* was once an entirely volunteer-run endeavor, something I struggled with, but now we pay both our editors and contributors the most we can manage. Yes, that's right, we pay people (frequently academics!) to write things. It's unheard of. Running *FPS* takes countless hours of work but we work with the belief that game studies research is too important to only be read by those with access to academic libraries. We try as much as possible to help highlight the voices of those who frequently find themselves without places to speak in games and game studies. We do this not only through our weekly contribution but also through special issues composed of articles that are converted talks from game designers and critics from the [Different Games Conference](#) and the [Queer Games Con](#). Most notably, of course, is that we have used *First Person Scholar* as a platform for those who have been oppressed, targeted, harassed and marginalized by GamerGate to not only speak out about the hate movement but also to discuss the implications of such events in a space where we can monitor the comments incredibly closely (Cross, 2014; Wilcox, 2015).

FPS offers contributors free editorial help and a large engaged public audience of designers, academics, gamers, and activists. Publishing with us probably won't get you a job in academia, but it will get your work read, and in my experience, cited. I've seen my *FPS* work (and the *FPS* work of others) cited in print and online *many many times* but I have yet to see any of my print work cited, very possibly because almost no one has ever read it!

As *FPS* Editor In Chief my goal was to disrupt the academic economy by helping scholars share their research with the public, and I continue to advocate for the publication, and other middle state publications. In the future, I would love to have *FPS* articles, and other writing like it, be treated as *valid* academic work in the future. I want to help end the tyranny of the academic journal article. I want to help set an expectation that we deserve to be compensated for all work, *even in academia*. Furthermore, I would like to have the public be seen as a valid academic audience.

Most importantly, I would like academics to feel like they can publish with purpose, and not feel that we are dooming ourselves to poverty by doing it.

Author Bio

Emma Vossen is an award-winning public speaker, writer, and PhD candidate at the University of Waterloo Games Institute. Her research and writing about gender and games has been referenced by *NBC*, *The CBC*, *Rolling Stone*, and was selected as the focus of a 50-minute documentary made by CBC Radio and broadcast across Canada in 2016. She is the retired Editor in Chief of Game Studies publication *First Person Scholar*.

Bibliography

Academic, Anonymous. (2015): 'Academics Are Being Hoodwinked into Writing Books Nobody Can Buy.' *The Guardian*, September 4, 2015, accessed 19 December, 2017, <http://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/2015/sep/04/academics-are-being-hoodwinked-into-writing-books-nobody-can-buy>.

Basen, I. (2014): 'Most University Undergrads Now Taught by Poorly Paid Part-Timers - Canada - *CBC News*.' 2014, accessed 19 December, 2017, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/most-university-undergrads-now-taught-by-poorly-paid-part-timers-1.2756024>.

Berlatsky, N. (2014): 'What Is the Point of Academic Books?' *Pacific Standard*, 2014, accessed 19 December, 2017, <https://psmag.com/social-justice/point-academic-books-publishing-writing-literature-96610>

Chess, S., and Shaw, A. (2015): 'A Conspiracy of Fishes, Or, How We Learned to Stop Worrying About #GamerGate and Embrace Hegemonic Masculinity.' *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* vol. 59, no.1, pp. 208–20,

Chomsky, N. (2011): 'Academic Freedom and the Corporatization of Universities', *Chomsky*, 2011, accessed 19 December, 2017, <https://chomsky.info/20110406/>

Cross, K. (2014): “We Will Force Gaming to Be Free.” *First Person Scholar*, October, accessed 19 December, 2017, <http://www.firstpersonscholar.com/we-will-force-gaming-to-be-free/>

Dean, A. (2015): ‘Japan’s Humanities Chop Sends Shivers down Academic Spines’, *The Guardian*, September 26, 2015, accessed 19 December, 2017, <http://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/2015/sep/25/japans-humanities-chop-sends-shivers-down-academic-spines>

Evans, R. J. Birkhead, T., Boys, J., Graziosi, B., McQuillan, M., Bassnett, S., Ryan, A., and Cooper, C. (2014): ‘10 Point Guide to Dodging Publishing Pitfalls.’ *Times Higher Education (THE)*, March 6, 2014, accessed 19 December, 2017,

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/features/10-point-guide-to-dodging-publishing-pitfalls/2011808.article>

Government of Canada, Innovation (2012): ‘Tri-Agency Open Access Policy on Publications - Science.gc.ca.’ 2012, accessed 19 December, 2017,

http://www.science.gc.ca/eic/site/063.nsf/eng/h_F6765465.html?OpenDocument

Government of Canada, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (2012a): ‘Aid to Scholarly Journals.’ May 11, 2012, accessed 19 December, 2017, http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/programs-programmes/scholarly_journals-revues_savantes-eng.aspx

———. (2012b): ‘Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.’ May 11, 2012, http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/programs-programmes/scholarly_journals-revues_savantes-eng.aspx

Hawreliak, J. (2013): ‘Hybrid Publishing: The Case for the Middle-State.’ *First Person Scholar*, accessed 19 December, 2017, <http://www.firstpersonscholar.com/the-case-for-the-middle-state> .

Jaschik, S. (2016): ‘New Data Show Tightening Ph.D. Job Market across Disciplines’, accessed 19 December, 2017,

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/04/04/new-data-show-tightening-phd-job-market-across-disciplines>

Jones, S. (2015): ‘Self-Portrait Of The Artist As Ungrateful Black Writer’, *BuzzFeed*, accessed 19 December, 2017, <https://www.buzzfeed.com/saeedjones/self-portrait-of-the-artist-as-ungrateful-black-writer>

Keogh, B. (2014): ‘Across Worlds and Bodies: Criticism in the Age of Video Games.’ *Journal of Games Criticism*, January 22, accessed 19 December, 2017, <http://gamescriticism.org/articles/keogh-1-1/>

Larson, R. C., Ghaffarzadegan, N., and Xue, Y. (2014): ‘Too Many PhD Graduates or Too Few Academic Job Openings: The Basic Reproductive Number R0 in Academia’, *Systems Research and Behavioral Science* vol. 31, no.6, pp. 745–50.

McKenn, A. (2014): ‘The Corporatization of U of T.’ *The Varsity*, November 24, accessed 19 December, 2017, <https://thevarsity.ca/2014/11/24/the-corporatization-of-u-of-t/>

Proctor, J. (2015): 'Corporate U: Why Unions Are Storming the Ivory Towers', *CBC News*, accessed 19 December, 2017, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/university-strikes-and-why-unions-are-storming-the-ivory-towers-1.2994627>

Ryan, M. (2014): 'The Threats Against Anita Sarkeesian Expose The Darkest Aspects Of Online Misogyny.' *Huffington Post* (blog). October 15, accessed 19 December, 2017, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/maureen-ryan/anita-sarkeesian_b_5993082.html

Saccaro, M. (2014): 'Professors on Food Stamps: The Shocking True Story of Academia in 2014', *Salon.com*, accessed 19 December, 2017, https://www.salon.com/2014/09/21/professors_on_food_stamps_the_shocking_true_story_of_academia_in_2014/

Simon, P. (2014): 'Gamergate: A Scandal Erupts in the Video-Game Community', *The New Yorker*, accessed 19 December, 2017, <https://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/gamergate-scandal-erupts-video-game-community>

Stewart, M. (2015): 'Corporatization of Canadian Universities Leaves Students and Faculty on the Brink', *Rabble.ca.* *Rabble.ca.*, accessed 19 December, 2017, <http://rabble.ca/books/reviews/2015/08/corporatization-canadian-universities-leaves-students-and-faculty-on-brink>

Street, Z. (2014): 'The Cyborg Critic.' *Culture Crit* (blog), January 25, accessed 19 December, 2017, <https://medium.com/culture-crit/the-cyborg-critic-3cb8a206dbc8#.3lr9qbvkm>

Tremonti, A. M. (2015): 'Only 1 in 5 Canadians with PhDs Land a Tenure-Track Job in Their Field', *CBC Radio The Current*, accessed 19 December, 2017, <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-december-4-2015-1.3350342/only-1-in-5-canadians-with-phds-land-a-tenure-track-job-in-their-field-1.3350399>.

Vossen, E. (2014): '“Smoky-Room Communist Meetings” – First Person Scholar.' *First Person Scholar*, September, accessed 19 December, 2017, <http://www.firstpersonscholar.com/smoky-room-communist-meetings/>.

Wilcox, S. (2013): 'Feed-Forward Scholarship: Why Game Studies Needs Middle-State Publishing', *First Person Scholar*, accessed 19 December, 2017, <http://www.firstpersonscholar.com/feed-forward-scholarship/>.

———. (2015): 'On the Publishing Methods of Our Time: Mobilizing Knowledge in Game Studies.' *Scholarly and Research Communication* vol. 6, no. 3, accessed 19 December, 2017, <http://src-online.ca/index.php/src/article/view/203>.

The Poverty of Academia: My Life as Non-Tenure Track Faculty

Sarah Prior, Michigan State University

Abstract

Non-tenure track (NTT) positions include faculty who teach full and part-time and are not on the tenure-track. These positions include full-time lecturers, fixed-term faculty, etc. Positions such as these are typically on one-year contracts, though some may be on 1 - 3 year contracts. While the title, pay and status, among other things, varies by institutions, it is undeniable that universities and colleges have been shifting in recent years to this kind of contingent labor force. These positions also include part-time adjuncts including professionals teaching a class here and there, and professional teachers who may teach at many institutions. Individuals who are not on the tenure-track often find themselves with little job security, an often inequitable distribution of labor (in terms of class preps, class size, etc.), and in positions that pay significantly less than their tenure-track counterparts' salaries.

Keywords

Non-tenure track faculty, poverty in academia, adjuncts

At a recent conference I was at a roundtable discussing the trials and tribulations of contingent/non-tenure track (NTT) faculty. As we all discussed the difficulties of balancing heavy teaching loads, service work, and our own scholarly agendas, not to mention families and work/life balance (if there is such a thing), a graduate student raised her hand and asked, 'why, if these jobs were so 'bad' why did I 'choose' this career path'. Her comment exposed the continuing assumption that academics choose to be in NTT positions. While this is true for some people, for many, myself included, my 'choice' is dictated by several other factors including the changing nature of the academic job market and my family situation. NTT positions include faculty who teach full and part-time and are not on the tenure-track. Positions such as these are typically on one-year contracts, though some may be on one to three year contracts. While the title, pay and status varies by institutions, it is undeniable that universities and colleges have been shifting in recent years to this kind of contingent labor force. These positions also include part-time adjuncts, professionals teaching a class here and there, and professional teachers who may teach at many institutions. Individuals who are not on the tenure-track often find themselves with little job security, an often inequitable distribution of labor (in terms of class preps, class size,

prep time, etc.), and in positions that pay significantly less than their tenure-track counterparts salaries.

As I ponder the struggle of poverty in academia I must first express and acknowledge my privileged status. I have a partner whose work provides our family with financial security. If it did not, my own work in academia would not even keep me above the poverty line. The issues I focus on in this essay focus on my own 'worth' in terms of academia and my conception of poverty. I struggled to write this because I felt like an imposter discussing my own experiences given my class status and acknowledge that many other academics with similar credentials have it much worse than I do. I keep in mind faculty that are living at or below the poverty threshold as they teach and recognize that while we often experience similar things in terms of our 'value' to our universities, financial security provided by my partner gives me a privileged experience as contingent faculty.

Journey to NTT Position

My journey to my PhD started in 2008 (not a good time to be starting a Ph.D. program in the midst of the financial crisis). My goal had always been to have a tenure track (TT) position, with while being able to teach, research, and change lives. My journey toward a TT position has been paved with frustration, like that of so many others. While the social science job market has improved in recent years and continues to get better in many ways, the compounded nature of the adjunctification of academia and my own family/life situation have positioned me as a contingent NTT laborer since I obtained my degree.

After I graduated in December 2012, I did not have a TT job lined up for a variety of reasons. I took a faculty associate position teaching for two separate schools at my doctoral Alma Mater and was paid barely more than the money I made as a graduate student. I continued to apply for TT jobs. By April I still did not have a TT job so instead, I accepted an instructor position at the university where I received my master's degree. The job was a 4:4 teaching load, four new preps, and happened to be two and a half hours away from where I lived. I took the job for a variety of reasons: I needed full-time work, university benefits are excellent and with a small family that was important to me. I wanted to have an institutional affiliation, the position paid triple what I was making as an adjunct, and my mother lived in the city so I had free rent and my daughter could spend some time with grandma. Since then I have held four separate positions in two states. While I had some security (I use that word very loosely) in my job as an instructor and my later position as a lecturer, when my family moved I lost any semblance of job security.

The adjunctification of academia has been a growing concern for scholars in recent years. The inequitable labor distribution, the 'demise' of tenure and job security and the increasing devaluation of scholars all contribute to the attention to this issue. As institutions of higher learning continue to move toward more corporate-based models of teaching, there continues to be immense changes in the lives of academics, particularly parenting academics. The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) issued a statement expressing concern that the growth in non-tenure track faculty can undermine academic freedom, educational equality, and collegiality. Universities around the country have established conferences, workshops, and paper

presentations about the changing nature of colleges and universities. Clearly these issues remain relevant in the life of academics in general, but specifically for graduate students, who like myself, are in NTT positions.

The two main areas I will focus on here are the inequitable pay of NTT faculty and the lack of connection to the institution. As a NTT faculty member, I am considered less-than my TT counterparts. Essentially, I am not perceived as a true faculty member, merely a 'temporary' staff that does not have the same status as the full-time faculty. This 'temporary' nature of work has only increased since I left my full-time NTT position and became a part-time employee. While full-time NTT faculty encounter significant disadvantage in terms of workload distribution, job security, pay differentials, among others, the experience of most part-time NTT faculty is significantly worse. Here, I am not referring to part-time faculty who are professionals in their field and teach a class here or there, or the individuals who have no desire to have a full-time, benefit eligible teaching position. Instead I am talking about faculty who, like myself, piecemeal courses together at multiple institutions in order to keep faculty affiliations, pay bills, and for some, survive. It is this piecemealing that further distances part-time NTT faculty from institutional relevance and support.

Struggles Faced by NTT Faculty

Being a NTT faculty member (full-time or part-time) it is not just about the classes or the money. It is also about the connection to the institution and the field. Often I feel as if my status as a NTT faculty affects people's perception of me as a scholar. When I do have the chance to go to meetings, or I talk to faculty at my or other universities, I often feel like I have to provide a caveat as to why I am not in a TT position. I say I am on the market (which I feel like I have been on forever). I say I have had on campus interviews (which are hard to continue to go to when, in the end, they go with someone with more experience). I say I recently relocated and am looking for positions in my new area (true, but the secret fear behind that is that there may never be a TT position available in my field at a close university and that my search perimeters have significantly decreased). I also fear that when they look at me they think I am not a legitimate scholar/researcher since my life as a NTT is not by 'choice'.

As a NTT faculty member, every semester feels like starting over. When I had a full-time position, each academic year I was sent a letter indicating that my position was essentially disposable. While the likelihood that they would have terminated full-time lecturers who teach the majority of their classes was unlikely, getting a letter each year indicating you are expendable does not promote a feeling of job security. Living on a one-year contract is disheartening. This is amplified as a part-time faculty member as I get these letters every semester. Each institution tells me my employment has an expiration date. Not being in a TT line means that I usually have significantly less lead-time for course prep. For example, this semester, I was offered a class three days before the start of the semester. I got access to the course shell for the online class on the day that class started. This kind of short notice is not 'normal' but often I have only a few weeks to prep syllabi, order books, and do other course related prep. It also means that I have very little 'choice' in what courses I teach. I am often given the courses they cannot fill. This means that since I got my degree I

have taught 24 different classes/new preps (in 9 semesters). While I do not have specific data, I would guess this is more than most faculty on a TT line. For TT faculty who teach 4:4 loads at teaching focused institutions, my guess would be that while the number of classes is similar, the number of preps is not.

NTT faculty additionally have to struggle with legitimization issues at an institutional level. Beyond just struggling for classes, NTT faculty are often not eligible to apply for grants or research funding. They are not able to be PI on research grant applications and instead have to work with TT faculty members in order to submit grants. While I am not knocking collaboration, not being able to submit something on your own is frustrating and arbitrary, particularly in departments that require a Ph.D. for even NTT faculty. These requirements further the feeling of inadequacy experienced by NTT faculty.

Mothering and Family Responsibilities

The compounded, intersectional, nature of these issues become even more pressing since I am a mother of two young (non-school-aged) children. As a mother of two young children, childcare costs are a very relevant aspect of my life. As many others have written about in recent years, motherhood can be treacherous territory for new academics; especially ones who are not in secured positions (Evans & Grant 2008; Frank Fox, Fonseca & Bao 2011, Nzinga-Johnson 2013). Women experience motherhood in the academy in a variety of ways. Some institutions are more welcoming to mothers than others. As Waxman and Ispa-Landa (2016) point out, there seems to be a 'baby penalty' for women academia. The fact that academic men continued to fare better in 2017 highlights the gendered bias that exists for women in the academy.

I had my first child at the end of my doctoral program and my second child while teaching in a full-time, non-tenure track position. Each presented its own challenges. As a graduate student I struggled with childcare. Pay for a graduate student is minimal. For me personally, this was exacerbated by an institutional environment that frowned upon bringing my child to campus or with me to meetings. While I pushed back on that system as much as I could, there were days that this meant hiring childcare.

I had my second child while I was a non-tenure eligible lecturer at the same institution at which I had accepted the instructor position. As a lecturer, I made roughly two thirds of the salary of a TT faculty member. I taught a 4:4 or 3:4 teaching load often with multiple preps while my TT colleagues taught 2:2 or 2:3 loads. While this labor distribution is under the auspices of TT faculty conducting research and publishing, in my own circumstances, and the circumstances of many NTT faculty around the country, we too are still required to publish and conduct research because we are eternally on the market. If we did not continue to remain relevant in the field how would we ever get that yearned for TT position?

As an independent scholar (what I prefer to call myself versus travelling adjunct), my financial income has significantly declined. When I left my NTT lecturer position to move with my partner whose job supports us, I cut my income in half. And, as many of us understand, it is not always just about the number on the paycheck. As a non-

benefit eligible employee I also lost great health care and was not eligible for university health care at any of my three institutions. So in addition to making less income, I was paying significantly more in health care expenses. Last semester one of my institutions offered me an additional class to teach. Accepting this class would have meant putting both my children in daycare for two additional days per week. The cost of the childcare was significantly more than the pay for the job. This frustrated my chair as she needed it covered and assumed I would take it and showed little recognition that I would have actually be paying to work.

As I sit here trying to disentangle my economic experiences, it is nearly impossible to not discuss how these experiences were not just about money, but were about deeply gendered systems. Children are expensive. Health care is expensive. It often feels like being a woman is expensive.

The Poverty of Academia

In these ways, I continue to *publish and perish* in terms of my financial advancement in academia. I often teach more students, have more course preps, do not have faculty development support to attend meetings and conferences, and get paid significantly less than faculty with the same credentials. My students are often shocked when they hear that I chose not teaching a class because it would have actually cost money to work. My story is unique in the sense that particular circumstances led to my current state of existence. But as unique as my story is, it is not unfamiliar and shockingly common in this tumultuous time in academia.

When the call for this special issue came out, it was hard not to respond. The editors were looking for submissions that discussed a broad range of experiences that included publishing and perishing; cultural capital; employment and debt; failed academic job searches; demands of travel; the faltering academic job market; parenting while professor; negotiating want vs. need; part-time faculty income/debt; perceptions of competence and sharing/community building. So, publishing *and* perishing, *check*. Since I graduated I have published two journal articles, one edited book, six book chapters, one blog, two textboxes, two encyclopedia entries, and one reading guide/set of discussion questions. This is what is published and does not reflect work in the pipeline including articles under review and in progress. Loss of cultural capital, *check*. My contingent status and cross country move cost significant cultural and social academic capital. Failed academic job search, *check*. That feels like the story of my life. And while each year gets better and I have more on campus interviews, my change in geography has severely limited my job search capabilities. Parenting while professor, *check*. Issues related to this are multifaceted. The monetary struggles and having work cost more (i.e. because of childcare costs), the maternal guilt, the stress of taking on additional classes in order to financially contribute, institutions punishing mothers at worst, and being indifferent at best. Being a mother academic gets harder the farther from TT I go. Part-time faculty income, *check*. It's awful. And while some institutions are better than others, I often make the same per class that I did as a graduate student only with a degree and without health benefits. Perceptions of incompetence, *check*. This seems to get worse for me the farther from degree conferral I go. I could go on...

I will say that it is not all doom and gloom. I am much better off than many others. As I said, I have the privilege of having a spouse who works incredibly hard and can provide for our family. My most current institution pays better per class than the other two I have recently worked for and provides me the title of Assistant Professor, which, makes a significant difference when students engage with me. It also looks better on professional correspondence. I am beginning to establish connections and starting to create community in my new environment, which is hard after any move but is even more difficult given my part-time status. This is slow going, especially since I spread my time between institutions. Having worked at several institutions over the last several years, I have had the opportunity to create relationships with incredible academic who are supportive and compassionate. I have collaborated with other academics who push me as a scholar and encourage my own academic growth. This has been particularly helpful especially when institutional support is not always there.

Reflecting on the current state of academia it is hard not to recognize the rampant inequity. While the degree varies, countless faculty experience a precarious existence due to an ever-increasing corporate and institutional model that devalues scholars. This devaluation is compounded when you are a scholar of color, a woman, a mother, working class, LGBTQ, the list goes on and on and on. As Warnock (2016) highlights, experiences of academics in the precarious existence as nontenure-track is punctuated by feelings of inadequacy, a sense of alienation, and exploitation. As universities and colleges continue toward the path of adjunctification, upward mobility within academia for faculty at the margins seems continuously out of reach.

Author Bio

Dr. Sarah Prior is an Assistant Professor in the Sociology Department at Michigan State University. She is also a Faculty Associate in the School of Social Transformation at Arizona State University. She received her Ph.D. (2012) in Justice Studies from Arizona State University. Her research primarily focuses on gendered violence specifically looking at campus sexual violence, academic inequity for nontenure-track faculty/contingent workers, intersectionality, and gender and sexuality issues more broadly.

Bibliography

Evans, E. and Grant, C. (eds), (2008), *Mama, PhD: Women Write about Motherhood and Academic life*. Rutgers University Press, New Jersey.

Frank Fox, M., Fonseca, C. Bao, J. (2011), 'Work and Family Conflict in Academic Science: Patterns and Predictors among Women and Men in Research Universities', *Social Studies of Science*, vol. 41, pp. 715 – 735.

Nzinga-Johnson, S. (ed.), (2013), *Laboring Positions: Black Women, Mothering and the Academy*, Demeter Press, Ontario

Warnock, D. (2016), 'Paradise Lost? Patterns and Precarity in Working-class Academic Narratives' *Journal of Working-Class Studies*, vol. 1 no. 1, pp. 28 - 24

Waxman, S., and Ispa-Landa, S. (2016), 'Academia's 'Baby Penalty': Men Fare Better in Academia than Women – Especially Women who Have Children', *U.S. News & World Reports*, Feb. 11, accessed 19 December, 2017, <https://www.usnews.com/opinion/knowledge-bank/articles/2016-02-11/academia-must-correct-systemic-discrimination-and-bias-against-mothers>

Ending Adjunct Apartheid

Diane Reynolds, Independent scholar, adjunct teacher

Abstract

As has been well-documented, adjuncts, who often live beneath the poverty line, lack adequate financial compensation and job security for the work they do. What is not normally focused on is the way the apartheid structure of academe, which severs the adjunct from institutional support and protection, violates the core mission of academe. Academics are defined not as employees, but as professionals, and offered academic freedom because the larger society understands that their unfettered pursuit of knowledge leads to the betterment of humankind. This paper argues that academe, according to its own standards, is obligated to provide adjuncts, many of whom are independent scholars, far greater professional support and protection. The paper also explores empathy towards adjuncts and ways to overcome adjunct separation.

Keywords

Adjunct faculty, exploitation, lack of professional support

Introduction

I had a daylong interview for a permanent teaching position at the university where I had adjunct taught English for five years. It ended with dinner at a local Italian restaurant with entrees like salmon and lovely views of the surrounding hills. I learned during that dinner that in the fall the full-time faculty convenes there for at least one evening of dining and bonding, at university expense. Finding out about this was like a glimpse into a secret world. Adjuncts like me, who make up the bulk of the teaching faculty at this university, are not invited. We get a pizza meeting in a university classroom. We don't bond: we sit at desks and listen.

If it sounds like apartheid, it is.

How can the university do this, I wondered? Why not invite the adjuncts? What enormous value there would be for us too to bond with each other and full-time faculty in a gracious, off-campus setting. But I knew the answer: we'd love to but we can't afford it.

Arguably, this kind of dining, about which adjuncts know nothing, can't harm them if they are unaware of it—and yet it does harm them, because it sends a message to the full-time faculty about who matters and who doesn't, who is privileged and who is not. It reinforces who has the power and access—and who is powerless and untouchable.

In a better world, we'd all meet on level ground—even if it meant only over pizza.

I didn't get hired for the full-time job. Though I was the candidate 'left standing' at the end of the process, the hiring committee at the last minute got permission to bring in a younger male to interview. They hired him.

I have discovered that like Fanny Price in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, an adjunct often finds

her feelings disregarded, and her comprehension
undervalued ... [while experiencing] the pains of tyranny, of ridicule,
and neglect. ... (Austen, 1814, p. 152)

Fanny, the poor relation adopted into the rich Bertram family, has a status position similar to that of an adjunct. Fanny was not a servant and was offered the same education as her richer female cousins, but not with the secure expectations of income, marriage and benefits—and little possibility of ever being anything but the poor relation, spending her days holding the other end of her aunt's embroidery. One thinks as well of Sonya in *War and Peace*, who is expected—and does—give way in marriage when Nikolai needs to marry wealth. It seems only natural she should be content to spend her life as a poor dependent. Academe can also be deeply debilitating in ways that have often been outlined, and which academe, I will argue, is *professionally obligated* to work to ameliorate.

This article will not focus on rehearsing, except in brief, the well-seasoned litany of adjunct woes, nor the intersectionalities that make the work a dead-end job for most adjuncts, who become trapped through age and gender. Instead, using Martha Nussbaum's work in *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*, Henry Giroux's 'The Culture of Cruelty,' and Václav Havel's 'The Power of the Powerless,' this article will move beyond the exploitation to explore why, as documented by Warnock, after more than 30 years of the same stories and the same hand-wringing, the plight of the adjunct has only worsened—and to suggest what we might do about it. I will examine why adjuncts are sometimes considered to not be worthy of compassion and how the larger system of lying and cruelty applied to the working class in this country supports adjunct exploitation and undermines academe as a whole. Finally, the article will attempt to hold tenured academics' feet to the fire to urge them to move past the 30 years of *verbal* expression of support by arguing that professional scholars have a moral and *professional responsibility* to engage in *actual action* on behalf of their adjunct colleagues. As Neil Hamilton and Jerry Gaff put it: 'Personal conscience—that is, awareness of the moral goodness or blameworthiness of one's own intentions and conduct together with a feeling of obligation to be and to do what is morally good—is the foundation on which each member of a peer-review profession builds an ethical professional identity'.¹⁰ (Hamilton & Gaff, 2009).

¹⁰ 'Professional education engages students and practicing professionals over a career to develop personal conscience in a professional context. Personal conscience in a professional context requires each professional to internalize (1) the ethics of duty—the minimum standards of professional skill and ethical conduct below which the profession will impose discipline; (2) the ethics of aspiration—the core values and ideals of the profession; (3) the peer-review duty both to hold other members of the profession accountable for meeting the minimum standards of the profession and to encourage them to realize the core values and ideals of the profession; 5 and (4) the concept of fiduciary duty where the

The Plight: A Profession at War with Itself

The plight of the adjunct has been well documented, as below:

... the availability of full-time tenure-track positions has declined by 50% over the past 40 years with tenured and tenure-track faculty making up a scant 29% of the academic workforce (American Association of University Professors 2016). Women and faculty of color are overrepresented in contingent positions (Bousquet 2008) and Soria (2016) ... Adjuncts and contingent faculty often teach classes at multiple institutions, earning poverty-level wages for the equivalent of a full-time teaching load. The increased reliance on adjunct labor reinforces and accentuates class hierarchy in academia, treating adjuncts as 'second class citizens' thereby weakening faculty governance and reducing graduation rates (Bettinger and Long 2004, p. 2). Apart from being underpaid, adjunct professors suffer from the stress, anxiety, and depression that accompanies the lack of respect and uncertainty of the position (Reevy & Deason 2014). Adjunct professors are less likely to engage in scholarship, largely because they lack the time and resources to do so (AAUP 2016). Wilson (2006, p. 164) argues that through the increased reliance on invisible and devalued adjunct labor, 'exploitation becomes normative' on the college campus. ... increasingly this has become the new normal for working-class academics. (Warnock 2016).

As described above, adjuncts lack job security and any reasonable path to advancement (ie, they are trapped in dead end jobs), are denied the benefits that encourage and support scholarship, and have no role in the self-governance integral to the profession, despite comprising about half of it.

Warnock asks

Indeed, when it comes to the possibilities of upward mobility in the contemporary higher education climate marked by mounting debt burdens and rampant exploitation of adjunct faculty, it bears to question if the term working-class academic truly remains a contradiction in terms. (2016)

That so many college and university faculty survive in sub-altern situations jeopardizes the ethical foundations of academe, and I will repeat Hamilton and Gaff's description of that foundation:

Personal conscience—that is, awareness of the moral goodness or blameworthiness of one's own intentions and conduct together with... a feeling of obligation to be and to do what is morally good—is the foundation on which each member of a peer-review profession builds an ethical professional identity. Professional education engages students and practicing

professional's self-interest is overbalanced by devotion to the person served and the public good in the profession's area of responsibility (Hamilton & Gaff, 2009).

professionals over a career to develop personal conscience in a professional context (2009).

Hamilton and Gaff note that the ability to perform *ethical* scholarship is the rationale behind academic freedom and faculty self-governance. What this means is that job security, time and resources for scholarship, and the protected right to pursue one's own line of scholarship is not simply a God-given right. It is given in exchange for and in protection of ethical professional behavior that is expected to benefit the wider society. It is the reason why university faculties resist market-driven metrics, and is, in fact, *why professional academe exists at all*. Hamilton and Gaff quote the 1915 Declaration of Principles of the American Association of University Professors:

It is conceivable that our profession may prove unworthy of its high calling ['the creation and dissemination of knowledge'], and unfit to exercise the responsibilities that belong to it. . . . And the existence of this Association . . . must be construed as a pledge, not only that the profession will earnestly guard those liberties without which it cannot rightly render its distinctive and indispensable service to society, but also that it will with equal earnestness seek to maintain such standards of professional character, and of scientific integrity and competency, . . . as shall make it a fit instrument for that service (2009, 291).

Hamilton and Gaff point to the sharp rise of contingent faculty as a threat to academic freedom and self-governance, both of which they understand as foundational to ethical scholarship—ie, as creating conditions that threaten the foundational reasons the profession exists.

However, academe's professional ethical commitment is broader than merely a commitment to sound scholarship. Academe works to safeguard ethical scholarship not merely to produce ethical scholarship, but because academe believes it can be an important part of creating an ethical society, a society which, in the words of Catholic Worker founder and social justice champion, Dorothy Day, makes it easier for people to be good. In other words, academics should not be doing research in a vacuum. Academics should not want the academic freedom to publish findings that, for example, cigarette smoking leads to lung cancer (even if that disturbs the bottom line of university's corporate donor), simply to publish those findings as sound scholarship or to earn tenure: we want those findings to influence the larger society for the better by changing its behavior. Likewise, we are granted academic freedom to be able to study climate change or Marxist labor theory or feminist readings of Jane Austen not just to publish beautiful papers or secure book contracts but to contribute to building a more just and healthy society, even if offends political, corporate or religious donors. The ethical concerns of scholarship cannot be reasonably divorced from the ethical concerns of the larger society. The end goal of scholarship *must* be to influence praxis. Otherwise the scholarship is pointless and even counterproductive, by siphoning talent and energy from useful activities.

Thus, the *scholarly* ethic that justifies the very existence of academe as a profession puts it under an obligation to practice *real world* ethics—and that means, at the very least, to advocate actively for the rights of adjuncts as fellow academics so that we can also function ethically and reasonably within our profession. Right now, too many

adjuncts like myself are publishing under adverse circumstances that threaten to undermine the quality of our scholarship through lack of time, resources and institutional support—and thus threaten the quality of our profession. Most of us go to great effort to ensure the quality and integrity of our work, but the conditions under which we function do nevertheless endanger that work, leading even to the possibility of it not being done at all—the work that is the *core mission* of our profession. But beyond that, even for adjuncts who simply teach, which is an enormously important component of our job, the ethical principles undergirding the *raison d'être* of our profession demand more than mere hand-wringing and capitulations to free market forces. To do their work, adjuncts need the kind of professional environment that fosters both good teaching and scholarship—and, more fundamentally, a situation that allows them, as human beings, dignity, security and a living wage. If we take seriously academe as an ethical realm, this is not a negotiable. But how do we get the point where we can begin to work seriously for adjunct rights and inclusion?

Growth of Compassion

Nussbaum's *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* argues that developing compassion is a necessary precondition to social change. She defines compassion as 'a painful emotion occasioned by the awareness of another person's undeserved misfortune.' (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 301). Compassion reflects the point of view of the witness to suffering and has two 'cognitive requirements:' that the sufferer's plight be serious and undeserved.¹¹[2]

Nussbaum notes that Aristotle found occasions for compassion in 'reversals of expectations' and 'absence of good prospects' (2001, p. 307). In modern times, she adds, discrimination and 'role strain,' such as single parenting, also have been documented to create compassion.

Adjuncting appears compassion worthy because it does often reflect 'reversals of expectations,' and 'absence of good prospects.' It also involves 'role strain' as adjuncts struggle to perform without such basic supports as office space, other colleagues to talk to, or even access to paperclips. Many adjuncts have PhDs and have published scholarly books (which their tenured peers from an earlier era may not have done)—and yet are working precariously from semester to semester as adjuncts, doubtless a 'reversal of expectation.' In addition, once one is caught in the maw of adjuncting, and particularly as one begins to age, one's 'good prospects' rapidly begin to fade.

Yet isn't the adjunct's suffering deserved? Aren't adjuncts culpable in 'bringing it on themselves?' Nobody lies to us about the rules of the game. Nobody promises an adjunct a better future. Graduate students are reminded repeatedly of bleak job markets. I have been informed more than once as an adjunct that nothing is owed me. Don't we enter into the situation with our eyes open? Haven't we made our choice? Doesn't compassion end at this point?

¹¹ Nussbaum describes empathy as different from compassion: Empathy is imaginatively reconstructing another's experience, but a malevolent person may enjoy another's distress (2001, p. 302).

Like a poor relation in a rich household, or a nineteenth-century governess in a wealthy home, the life of an adjunct can look comparatively comfortable to outsiders. To be teaching in a college classroom does not carry the same dramatic weight of the suffering cotton mill worker depicted in *Capital*:

Children of nine or ten are dragged from their squalid beds at four a.m. and compelled to work until ten, eleven, or twelve at night, their limbs wearing away, their frames dwindling, their faces whitening ... (Marx, 1867)

Despite the fact that adjuncts sometimes sell their blood, collect food stamps, and carry punishing work loads of six or seven courses divided between far flung campuses for starvation wages while holding down other jobs, the work is ostensibly professional—and it carries intrinsic rewards.

In what Henry Giroux calls a ‘culture of cruelty,’ the first line of defense in the hardening of the heart against the adjunct or other contingent worker is to blame him or her. As Giroux puts it:

A ruthless form of neoliberalism ... has stripped economic activity from ethical considerations and social costs. in a society in which the quality of life is measured through market-based metrics, such as cost-benefit analyses, it becomes difficult for the public to acknowledge or even understand the cost in human misery and everyday hardship that an increasing number of people have to endure. ... in a culture of cruelty, the discourse of disposability extends to an increasing number of groups that are considered superfluous. Underlying this form of neoliberal authoritarianism and its attendant culture of cruelty is a powerfully oppressive ideology that insists that the only unit of agency that matters is the isolated individual. Hence, mutual trust and shared visions of equality, freedom and justice give way to fears and self-blame reinforced by the neoliberal notion that individuals are solely responsible for their political, economic and social misfortunes (2017, para 1).

This is the unspoken assumption everywhere I have adjuncted: you, adjunct, knew what you were getting yourself into. Therefore, you have forfeited the right to expect more. Yet no long-term adjunct I know of willingly accepts their situation as is: every single one, given the choice, would chose a secure job in academe, even at the same pay. And nobody I have ever spoken to understands adjuncting as anything but arbitrary: when an adjunct with two well-received scholarly books works for a fraction of the pay beside a tenured faculty member who hasn’t published more than three articles and none in two decades, nobody argues a meritocracy. As with our poor relations Fanny and Sonya, contemporary academe is often simply the luck of draw. And in a less ruthless society, this would engender both compassion and action.

Hierarchy

Referencing Rousseau, Nussbaum notes that ‘social distinctions of class and rank’ are ‘especially keen in situations of hierarchy, where a privileged group defines its prospects as vastly superior to those of the inferior, and even gets to the point of thinking itself invulnerable.’ (2001, p. 342). Aristotle likewise thought people would

lack compassion if they felt the they were ‘above suffering and ha[d] everything;’ (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 315) in other words, if they believed that the situation couldn’t happen to them. To experience compassion, we need to see the sufferer as somehow like us. That’s why those who wish to withhold compassion and teach others to do the same try to portray the sufferers ‘as altogether dissimilar in kind and in possibility’ (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 319). Nussbaum, not surprisingly, cites the Nazi characterization of the Jew as vermin to support her argument. It’s no mystery either that the distinct and often arbitrary hierarchies in academe lead to a situation in which the lives of the tenured can feel far distanced from those of the adjunct, creating a barrier to identification. Anecdotally, I have more than once seen the flick of the wrist and heard the tone of derision in which a tenured or tenure-track faculty says ‘oh, we can always get an adjunct.’ Adjuncts in my experience often function as an untouchable class, the academic equivalent of jobs emptying the chamber pots: I have been hired to teach developmental classes simply because no full-time faculty wanted to touch them.

According to Nussbaum, both Rousseau and de Toqueville show that empathy is ‘profoundly influenced by the ways in which institutions situate people in relation to one other: sharp separations impede these mechanisms, and similar situations promote them’ (2001, p. 405).

Further, Nussbaum cites C. Daniel Bateson’s studies of compassion and helping behavior, in which one set of volunteers is told to have an empathic and imaginative connection with sufferers; the other set is told to focus on the technical details of the suffering. Not surprisingly, empathy engenders more compassion. Certainly, the extent to which the business model is used to justify treating adjuncts as ‘widgets’ leads to a lack of empathy—even the term ‘adjunct,’ rather than ‘professor,’ can buttress dehumanization. Adjunct ... android ... can one say ‘oh, we can always get a professor,’ with the same lack of identification?

Shame and Disgust

Other impediments to offering adjuncts a path up the career ladder to permanent positions with security, benefits and esteem are two emotions Nussbaum identifies as stumbling blocks to compassion: shame and disgust—and what she calls ‘the adaptive response’ to these (2001, p. 309).

The extent to which a collective experience of shame and disgust is projected onto the adjunct is difficult to prove beyond the intuitive—Nussbaum cites Theweleit’s work on the Nazis and clearly the vast majority of academics don’t share the pathologies of hardcore fascists. However, in Nussbaum’s grammar, shame, an inner experience of unworthiness or failure, can lead to a disinclination to identify with adjuncts who may be seen as the physical embodiments of this failure. Likewise, the disgust reaction, a human emotion meant to safeguard people from danger, can function to cause people to distance themselves from what Nussbaum calls vulnerability and mortality. Julie Kristeva states this more forcefully in her writing on abjection, locating the abject in the corpse, ‘The corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life.’ (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4). Adjuncts often perceive themselves as ghosts, ie the dead (though not with entirely the same symbolic function as Kristeva’s corpse); nevertheless, we float in semi-invisibility and semi-

humanity on college campuses (Charbonneau & Rice, 2003) What are adjuncts but people of vulnerability and uneasy reminders of precariousness, Nussbaum's symbols of disgust? Nussbaum contends, disgust can be used to say: 'We need a group of humans to bound ourselves against ...' (2001, p. 347). The repulsion adjunct status can engender plus the possibility of full-time academics bonding against them, works against compassion.

Further, and perhaps most importantly, adjuncts internalize shame and disgust. As Nussbaum puts it 'suffering and deprivation 'corrupt' perception: 'They often produce adaptive responses that deny the importance of the suffering; this is especially likely to be so when the deprivation is connected to oppression or hierarchy, and taught as proper through ... cultural channels' (2001, p. 309).

Or as a *New York Times* op-ed piece put it, while discussing Hillary Clinton and all women in general, but with a sentiment as applicable to adjuncts: 'And there's the biting isolation of concluding it must be you who is terribly and irredeemably flawed, and the gut-punch that comes when others agree by demeaning or humiliating or threatening you — you, who individually and obviously does not belong here ...' (Filipovic, 2017)..

Yet universities, knowing the situation in academe, continue to offer graduate slots far in excess of job market demand for tenure track positions. Do universities have a responsibility in this instance to look beyond their own bottom lines? Should they not be limiting graduate students to numbers that can reasonably expect jobs, then after that hiring full-time positions from the existing surplus pool of people with advanced degrees rather than using exploited graduate student labor? Are they not complicit in creating a situation they then disavow?

Thinking Post-Academe?

Havel's 1978 essay 'The Power of the Powerless' may provide a way forward. While Havel describes a situation in many ways far different from academe in his analysis of late-phase Soviet totalitarianism — what he calls 'post-totalitarianism' as he experienced it in Czechoslovakia — points of convergence yet emerge.

For instance, in post-totalitarian Czechoslovakia, the government pretended it was still enacting revolutionary ideals—Havel cites the example of the Czech greengrocer putting a 'workers of the world unite' poster in his shop window while both he, and his customers, fully understood they were living under a regime not at all interested in worker aspirations. Likewise, the average adjunct is treated as disposable, less than human, and temporary when the reality is that the system would collapse without adjuncts, adjuncts are human, and many adjuncts work in the same positions for decades as de facto permanent part-time employees. If the poster communicates the fear and abjection of the grocer—the grocer is afraid, Havel argues, not to hang the poster—so the pretense of the 'temporary' adjunct masks the brutality of a system cynically ready to exploit the unlucky academic for a lifetime.

Like the greengrocer, many adjuncts feel they 'must live within a lie.' (Havel, 1978). An adjunct acquaintance of mine, for instance, works for a prestigious liberal arts college. She is intensely frustrated with her status and would like a regular job after

her many years of good service teaching upper level literature courses. When a new president came in and asked what could make faculty life better, this adjunct wrote ‘a permanent job,’ and then was worried she would be fired altogether—for like any adjunct, she is hired course to course with no job security. Her campus is now trying to build ‘school spirit’ and asking for suggestions. Her suggestion is rather than new tee-shirts, make adjunct positions permanent—but she is afraid to say it.

Like post-totalitarian Czechoslovakia, academe is, ironically for a profession that stakes its claim on integrity, as Havel says ‘built on lies.’ (Havel, 1978).

Havel understood post-totalitarianism as having two possibilities, (1), becoming more of what it already was,

thus inevitably coming closer to some dreadful Orwellian vision of a world of absolute manipulation, while all the more articulate expressions of living within the truth are definitely snuffed out; or (2). the independent life of society (the parallel polis), including the ‘dissident’ movements, will slowly but surely become a social phenomenon of growing importance, taking a real part in the life of society with increasing clarity and influencing the general situation. (Havel, 1978)

Could the same be said of academe?

Changing the System

The system of adjunct apartheid arguably reinforces barriers and hence shame and disgust. A first step towards changing the system would be for colleges and universities to break down the barriers between full-time faculty and contingent faculty as far as possible. The usual rationale for the existence of adjuncts is financial, yet there are many non-economic or low-economic impact ways to break down walls. Below are low-cost but important gestures:

Actively pursue using respectful language in referring to adjuncts. Call them professors. This costs nothing.

Set up a formal system in which qualified long term adjuncts automatically slot into job openings. This would actually *save* money. The interview process I was involved in with two other candidates cost easily upwards of \$500 in meals alone—and that was before the fourth candidate was brought in. This is extraordinarily important in breaking down barriers: it moves adjuncts from a permanent untouchable class to future colleagues. Here, Jane Austen is instructive. The moment Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park* gets a marriage proposal from a wealthy man, her guardian uncle is no longer ‘not seeing’ her situation. All of a sudden, she gets a fire in her attic study. Would this no-cost change in adjunct status, subtle as it is, produce similar gains?

Make it mandatory that any conference travel money not used by full-time staff be reserved for adjuncts. Do fundraising to obtain funds to support adjunct scholarship.

In situations where there is office space, don’t segregate adjuncts from full-time staff. In one university where I work, full-time professors decided to move to a corridor of

offices consciously dedicated to full-time professors. I had previously shared a corridor with them. This then it became designated the 'adjunct' corridor, creating a ghetto.

Invite adjuncts to faculty meetings and encourage them to attend. Offer them possibilities to serve on committees. Many won't be able to participate in either of these activities, but could be kept apprised with copies of minutes and asked to email their input, which should be taken under consideration and responded to.

If there is a faculty event, invite adjuncts and encourage them to come. Try to understand what the blocks are to adjuncts engaging more fully in the life of any given university.

'Anger,' Nussbaum writes, 'is an appropriate response to injustice.' (2001, p.394). Such anger is based on a sense of unfairness and inappropriateness. In this context, we must express anger in demanding action. We need, writes Nussbaum, to be alert to possibility of 'self-indulgent and self-congratulatory behavior, rather than real helpfulness.' An experience of compassion is not the same as taking steps to change the world. The focus needs to be 'on actions and institutions.' (2001, p. 399) We must not lose sight of nor fail to repeat that academe's *raison d'être* is moral and ethical and that this ethic extends to praxis.

'Some-cost' solutions:

Make it as easy as possible for adjuncts to qualify as part-time employees. If a person teaches one course a semester for more than two consecutive semesters, he or she should qualify as a part-time employee.

Proposals to replace adjuncts with faculty with a terminal degree¹² should first include the opportunity for adjunct faculty currently in place to pursue the degree while continuing teaching. As Amy Lynch-Binieck envisions:

We have realized that we are mistreating our adjuncts, and that we were undermining the doctoral degree and our own majors by not exclusively hiring faculty with the terminal degree. So, good news! We're replacing all of our adjunct jobs with teaching-intensive tenure-track jobs! Isn't that great? Since you have an MA, though, I'm afraid, we have to let you go. Bye.

At this point, many of our contingent faculty colleagues have been teaching for decades. After years of poverty-level wages, most don't have the resources to return for or complete the terminal degree. They have loads of teaching experience that won't necessarily help them to get alt-ac jobs. And now they will be unemployed. Legions of them.

This should not be a matter to be figured out later. People's lives and livelihoods should never be an afterthought. (Lynch-Binieck, 2015)

¹² A 'terminal degree' is the highest degree awarded in a particular discipline.

Adjuncts should not expect to lift our status this without the help of others. As Nussbaum writes, we shouldn't 'accept the simplistic contrast between agency and passivity ... all dignity being placed on our agency, and passivity being seen as always shameful. After all, it is precisely the refusal to accept passivity ... that we have criticized as pathological narcissism, noting that such narcissism can be extremely in societies that excessively prize manly strength and invulnerability' (2001, pp. 408-09). Adjuncts should, in other words expect help, and not feel undermined by requesting it. Finally, as Nussbaum points out, we need protection: 'Legal guarantees, we think, do not erode agency; they create a framework within which people can develop and exercise agency' (2001, p. 407).

Change for adjuncts will come when adjuncts are fully included in the collective bargaining that represents university faculty, but pre-conditions for this will help the process. Havel discusses what he calls a 'second culture,' the dissident culture that arose alongside the official culture in Soviet client states. Adjuncts need to develop their own parallel culture—and we have not yet done this. To be most useful, this culture, to quote Havel

has an element of universality about it. In other words, it is not something partial, accessible only to a restricted community, and not transferable to any other. On the contrary, it must be potentially accessible to everyone; it must foreshadow a general solution and, thus, it is not just the expression of an introverted, self contained responsibility that individuals have to and for themselves alone, but responsibility to and for the world. Thus it would be quite wrong to understand the parallel structures and the parallel polis as a retreat into a ghetto and as an act of isolation, addressing itself only to the welfare of those who had decided on such a course, and who are indifferent to the rest. It would be wrong, in short, to consider it an essentially group solution that has nothing to do with the general situation ... (Havel, 1978).

Hoping to revitalize academe to its ethical promise, this adjunct culture would, to borrow again from Havel, be 'a sign of some kind of rudimentary moral reconstitution'.

provide hope of a moral reconstitution of society, which means a radical renewal of the relationship of human beings to what I have called the 'human order,' which no political order can replace. A new experience of being, a renewed rootedness in the universe, a newly grasped sense of higher responsibility, a newfound inner relationship to other people and to the human community—these factors clearly indicate the direction in which we must go (1978).

The work is ahead: leveling hierarchies, shouldering ethical responsibilities integral to academe and trying to rethink our way to a more humane academy.

Author Bio

Diane Reynolds, a journalist and academic, who recently added an Mdiv with an emphasis on writing to her credentials in English literature, in 2016 published a highly-praised book, *The Doubled Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*. She adjunct teaches

literature, writing, and religion at a number of different colleges and universities. Issues of humane living and creating and studying a humane literature lie at the heart of her academic interests and studies.

Bibliography

Austen, J. (1814): *Mansfield Park*, Oxford University Press, London.

Charbonneau, A. & Rice, R. (2003): 'Ghosts in the Classroom: Stories of College Adjunct Faculty and the Price We All Pay,' *The Montana Professor*, vol. 14, no.1, accessed 1 September, 2017, <http://mtprof.msun.edu/Fall2003/charrev.html>

Filipovic, J. (2017): 'Donald Was a Creep. Too Bad Hillary Couldn't Say It.' *The New York Times*, 24 August, accessed 1 September, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/24/opinion/sunday/donald-was-a-creep-too-bad-hillary-couldnt-say-it.html?_r=0

Giroux, H. (2017): 'The Culture of Cruelty in Trump's America' *Truthout*, 22 March, accessed 1 September, 2017, <http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/39925-the-culture-of-cruelty-in-trump-s-america>.

Hamilton, N.W. & Gaff, J. (2009): 'Proactively Justifying the Academic Profession's Social Contract' Social Science Research Network, Rochester, NY, 6 August, accessed 1 September, 2017, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1444587>

Havel, V. (1978): *The Power of the Powerless*, accessed 1 September, 2017, https://s3.amazonaws.com/Random_Public_Files/powerless.pdf.

Kristeva, J. (1982): *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, Columbia University Press, New York.

Lynch-Binieck, A. (2015): 'Replacing a System, but Not the People,' 10 March, accessed 1 Sept, 2017, <http://www.compositionist.net/1/post/2015/03/replacing-a-system-but-not-the-people.html>.

Marx, K. (1867) *Capital*, Vol. I, accessed 1 Sept, 2017, <https://www.lib.uts.edu.au/sites/default/files/attachments/page/InteractiveHarvardUTSGuide.pdf>.

Nussbaum, M. (2001): *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*, University of Cambridge, Cambridge.

Warnock, D. (2016): 'Paradise Lost? Patterns and Precarity in Working-Class Academic Narratives,' *Journal of Working Class Studies*, vol. 1, issue 1, 1 December, accessed 1 September, 2017, <https://workingclassstudiesjournal.files.wordpress.com/2016/06/jwcs-vol-1-issue-1-december-2016-warnock.pdf>

Fishing for a Career: Alternative Livelihoods and the Hardheaded Art of Academic Failure

Deb Cleland, School of Regulation and Global Governance, at the Australian National University, Canberra, Australia

Abstract

Charting the course: The world of alternative livelihood research brings a heavy history of paternalistic colonial intervention and moralising. In particular, subsistence fishers in South East Asia are cyclical attractors of project funding to help them exit poverty and not ‘further degrade the marine ecosystem’ (Cinner et al. 2011), through leaving their boats behind and embarking on non-oceanic careers. What happens, then, when we turn an autoethnographic eye on the livelihood of the alternative livelihood researcher? What lexicons of lack and luck may we borrow from the fishers in order to ‘render articulate and more systematic those feelings of dissatisfaction’ (Young 2002) of an academic’s life’s work and our work-life? What might we learn from comparing small-scale fishers to small-scale scholars about how to successfully ‘navigate’ the casualised waters of the modern university? Does this unlikely course bring any ideas of ‘possibilities glimmering’ (Young 2002) for ‘exiting’ poverty in Academia?

Keywords

Autoethnography, casual academics, poverty in academia

Part 1: Shipwreck

It is 2012, and I’m at the world’s largest Coral Reef Science Conference: over two thousand delegates, held every four years, marine science’s equivalent of the Olympic Games. It’s two months after the abrupt failure of my marriage, perhaps two weeks since my father was diagnosed with operable cancer, and almost two years since the completion of my doctoral fieldwork. I am presenting in the ‘socio-economic stream’, which is somewhat drowned out by the eleven other parallel sessions on various aspects of coral and fish ecology. Real science has invited the social in, but only as a side-show.

I’m bright, but brittle, as I take the stage to give my paper about using simulation games to encourage small-scale fishers into alternative livelihoods, the result of work on a project entitled ‘Finding a Way Out for Depleted Subsistence Fisheries’ or

FindFishSup. The argument seems straightforward: the sea is overfished, so let's stop people fishing. I describe our workshops in the Philippines in mostly Pollyanna terms, emphasising the laughs and the learning rather than the silences and doubts. The cracks probably don't show as I bumble through, since it's a modified version of a talk I've given at several other conferences. I learned this recycling manoeuvre early, it is one of the tricks of my trade. Conference talks, networking, asking pertinent questions: these are the core skills of this livelihood of mine that, on the surface, looks so different from the fishers' one, out on the ocean-blue. However, as we shall explore, it seems the current global epoch has us both at the end of the proverbial line.

After my talk, as I walk to the conference dinner, I think, well, that went ok. Piece of cake. My writing may have stalled, but I can still hold an audience. At the dinner, I flow between old friends, new mates, vague acquaintances and perfect strangers. Currents flow thick and fast among the teeming school of academics. Here I find a Costa Rican ecologist who knows the fishing village where I used to work. There I dance with my labmates from Manila. Here again, chatting with the Germans I'd accompanied on a dishevelled research cruise in Sulawesi back when my doctoral research still sparkled with unrealised promise. Each experience adds colour and texture to my tapestry of knowledge about small-scale fishers from elsewhere and their responses to our global problems. Conferences are the gilded edge of academia, a global community gathered together in a ritualised cultural celebration. It's our work, and we *love* it.

Can conference dinners be compared, perhaps, to the 'jackpot' moments of the fishers? Where a large landing is secured, and by osmosis, or just gossip on the wind, and representatives from all households turn up on the beach to take part in the joy of the successful labour of the fishers, and take part in the sharing out of the catch (Mangahas 2000)? More planned, perhaps, but still with the sense of ceremony, the guarantee of a good feed, and the subtle yet persistent knowledge of an unspoken hierarchy, which influences proceedings in ways that do not start or end with the event itself.

Back to our dinner. When the venue is emptying at around midnight, a friend introduces me to a man about my age. I lapse into clichés. He's tall, dark(haired) and handsome, and, as an aside, known to have leapt up the academic ladder with the greatest of ease after completing his thesis – which was written at the same time as he was completing several lucrative consultancies. His livelihood is certainly looking a lot more secure than mine, dangling, as I was, at the tail-end of a stipend scholarship, and juggling casual teaching contracts. Opposites attract, etc.

We move on to a sleazy backpacker club with other delegates. His hand brushes against my thigh as we dance. Some hours later, we leave together.

As we emerge onto the street I realise I have no idea where I am. Like so many other shared traits with Norman Rush's protagonist in *Mating* (the one who was 'working her tits down to nubs on a thesis that didn't exist') (Rush 1992), I too have topological agnosia, an inability to locate myself in relation to my surroundings. Assoc. Prof Tall, Dark and Handsome offers to help me back to my apartment, if he can stay, as his

own lodgings are not within walking distance. Somewhere amid this, he reveals he has a wife, and my axis falls further out of line. Talk turns to unfulfilled promises of platonic behaviour.

After, he says, 'I can't stay'. I nod. He says, 'I'm going,' and I say 'go.' He leaves. The departure of this exemplar of white, male academic perfection seems prophetic in retrospect. My feeling of being left behind begins there perhaps: marooned, stranded, alone. My fringe-dweller status in the world of academe is confirmed: as a social scientist among scientists, as a casual employee among the tenured, as a woman among men. My professional instability is exacerbated by the intrusion of my personal life: my parents' failing health, the wreckage of my marriage. I leak salt onto my pillow, and my thoughts turn to the leaky pipeline, that evocative metaphor for how women are 'lost' to the academy at every step from PhD onwards (Van den Brink & Benschop 2012b). But do we leave, or are we left behind?

The next day, back at the Conference, I am once again brittle, but bright. I bounce through sessions and have a coffee with someone who saw my presentation and is intrigued by the approach. However, my batteries are running very low. I receive emails in the following weeks, requesting advice on participatory methods in poor countries, and, for the first time, I bin these without responding. Circulation of academic goodwill, the exchange of free knowledge and advice, this is the bread and butter of collegiality and collaboration: what gives life to academia's global workplace, and not infrequently secures employment opportunities. But when your butter pot is empty, and the bread is stale, who has the energy to connect with strangers?

I'm fraying. The toll of divorce, my father's cancer, my project inescapably broken and delayed despite my sunny presentation. Cells, bodies, relationships, ideas all misbehaving, mutating, non-conforming. Butter, bread, ropes, batteries, these are the mixed metaphors of un-oiled cogs grinding against each other. Oops! There goes another one. I have nothing left to feed the machine. Drowning in my own rhetoric, I can't possibly work under these conditions.

In the following months, I take leave from my PhD. First 6 weeks, then 12. Finally, after months of agonising stagnation, I decide to quit. In a quixotic move, the university offers no easy way of withdrawing from a PhD. I search fruitlessly through the depths of our website for an appropriate form. Instead, I can put it all on hold—for a year, two years. My therapist, provided free of charge through the student union health services, provides documentation supporting leave, and I secure the relevant signatures. Leave is granted, and I pack up my office.

Part 2: Lifejackets

It turns out to be difficult to find work off-campus. The new conservative federal government 'needs' to find 'savings' and even those in 'permanent' jobs are being shown the door. In my town of government work and government contracts, the economy beats to parliament's drum. I end up tutoring again. It's my 5th 'casual

sessional' contract at the university in half as many years. The money isn't bad, enough to pay the rent, and though the marking rate doesn't cover the time I spend googling suspiciously perfect sentences to prove plagiarism (an occupational hazard), I enjoy the face-to-face teaching in small groups. The students and I get to know each other, the exchange of stories, knowledge and experiences feels genuine and grounding. But in the four-month Summer gap between semester 2 and the following semester 1, 'casual sessionals' do not get paid. My seasonal work is about to disappear.

In a lucky break, (or is it my winning ways? We shall return to this question), about half-way through the semester, the mother of one of my (local, high-quality, public) high school friends, who also happens to be a founding professor of one of our most lauded research schools, invited me to work for her. She knows I'm struggling, and has provided lunch, tea, and timely, sage advice since. Here again, a safe harbour in otherwise rough seas. This is what keeps you hoping that just around the bend is security and fulfilment, or, at least, a nice place to work. The job – and handouts from my parents loosely associated with Christmas and birthdays – has kept me limping along ever since. These three facts (good public school, a job, monetary gifts) speak worlds of my life of relative ease and privilege. Failing, giving up, giving in, never getting started, were (and are) only a few suburbs away, so consider my complaints as soft ones, perhaps of the 'first world' variety.

For more than three years, the same length of time you are nominally given to do an entire Australian doctorate, I have been working as a bottom feeder in the academic system. This should also not be a complaint: university bottom feeders are comparatively well-nourished. Although I only earned 70% of our full-time minimum wage last financial year, my hourly rate is 228% of that (Australian Government Fair Work Ombudsman 2016). This means I can work less than half the hours of, say, the cleaners I greet vaguely on the rare days I arrive before 8am, to reach my society's accepted subsistence level. This is such a luxury. Much of the agonised writing coming out of North America in particular speaks of the very real struggle of existing on casual wages, in places where there are no competing employers or accessible alternatives for most people who complete any kind of tertiary education.

Alongside my sporadic hours as a research assistant, my doctoral studies hobble on. For reasons I can explain but do not fully grasp, I cannot let my thesis go unfinished, even now long after the sunk cost fallacy has become a clear truth and the hardheaded, rational response would have been to give in gracefully. I stubbornly want that Dr: many (many!) journal entries attest to my sincere desire to have the right to a genderless honorific. If it seems shallow, a poor motivator, then feel free to judge. I have little status to lose in this world, so I will cling to this life craft of sorts.

In the spirit of 'neo-liberal self-improvement' (Murray 2013; Vijayakumar 2013), I attend countless writing courses, enrol in Massive Open Online Courses to boost my time management and productivity, hire a writing coach I can ill-afford. When I finally finish the first substantive piece of writing in about four years in January 2016, I email an ex-supervisor jubilantly, inviting him to be co-author if he could give me some feedback and a bit of guidance about where to try for publication. A few weeks

later he gets back to me, saying he cannot read it until September (he's flat out!), and I should put it in for a conference in the meantime. He reassures me about this daring recommendation, saying I shouldn't worry, his position on the conference committee would mean my paper would (luckily! nepotically!) 'get in'.

The casual assumption of the benefits and privileges associated with academic networks is, of course, well-placed (Burris 2004; Sherren et al. 2009). It's only now, on the fringes of other people's projects, that I realise what was offered early on. Attachments to people, projects and programs allows you access to more than just funding, conference attendance and your name on papers. It is acceptance, opportunities and a general sense of being part of an 'in-' crowd. Before the first year of my doctorate was up, I had: half a dozen collaborative articles in the pipeline; presented at as many international conferences; and participated in countless professional development activities run by colleagues and colleagues of colleagues. Like so much else, this abruptly stopped at about the time of the events described at the beginning of this essay. The project funding my work finished, one supervisor retired, another moved fields and the third moved away: my access pass disappeared with these changes.

This transition from inside to outside was, in many ways, a transition from a masculine experience of the academy, to a feminine one: researchers from across the globe confirm that women are disproportionately excluded from collegial circles that are critical for continuing acceptance and success (Brown & Watson 2010; Kantola 2008; Martin 1994). Who you hang out with at conference dinners (and the like) turns into who cites you (Van den Brink & Benschop 2012a), who tells you about employment opportunities (Bagilhole & Goode 2001), who invites you to publish and present (Kantola 2008), and who praises your work to recruitment and grant committees (Van den Brink & Benschop 2012b). Life on the academic margins is one of eking out a livelihood, that task of minorities the world over. And so, despite the comfort of my class and race, I begin identifying with the fishers and not with the men who study them.

Like 'real' poverty, academic poverty is not just material, but rather social, political, emotional and psychological hardship and resource scarcity. It comes with crippling isolation, self-doubt, a sense of things going on around you, not with you, and an intuitive certainty that at some level the institution just wants you to *go away*.

Part 3: To Fish or Not to Fish?

And why not leave? There is so much world outside these walls, notwithstanding my earlier inability to secure a job. And surely, especially for those to whom academic culture means nothing, a PhD is a useless adornment compared to a livelihood. Get a real job, bow to the weight of the empirical knowledge that I, like most others, do not belong here. It is now oft-argued that PhDs are in oversupply (Cyranoski et al. 2011). PhD training has in the past been specifically, if not solely, the entry point for a vocational career in academia. No longer: PhD students outnumber tenured positions with an estimated ratio of 1:20 (Crossley 2013). Doctoral students are now offered an

array of alternative livelihood workshops to prepare them for the seemingly inevitable alternative life outside the academy.

For those familiar with the ‘alternative livelihood’ nomenclature, this choice of words will seem odd. It is a largely unspoken assumption that ‘alternative livelihoods’ are devised for the poor, rural and (mostly) brown, not the (relatively) rich, urban and (mostly) white. Indeed, it was a deeply unsettling experience when I realised that what I was doing to the fishers, the university was trying to do to me. I was perusing the latest offerings from our research education office, a team of dedicated, lively people, when the title ‘PhD to Present’ caught my eye. The idea behind the workshop is that livelihoods beyond the sandstone walls are available. Not only available but desirable! More money, more security, more of everything outside the campus. I recall, ruefully, the fisher who said to us ‘you want us to stop fishing, don’t you? Then why don’t you just come out and say it’. I imagine the response if I were to say the same thing to the university’s workshop organisers.

‘Landing’ a permanent academic job has indeed become the domain of the very lucky or very skilled, depending on your perspective. Armed with this knowledge, why do we still flock (school?) to doctoral programs? It’s a pending question.

The very same discourse of luck and skill is discussed by Volero (1994) in relation to Filipino fishers. Where control is elusive and stakes are high, rationality bifurcates. Those who do well attribute this to either internal characteristics (skill, or ‘diskarte’) or external forces (luck or ‘suwerte’). Amongst the fishers, skill is more likely to be attributed where boats are big and fishing gear hi-tech. Material abundance gives rise to faith in one’s own ability to command the tides of fate and destiny. Luck, on the other hand, is the purview of the small-scale fishers. Armed with hand-made nets, traps and spears, fortune’s fluctuations are firmly out of one’s hand. No-one’s fault, just the way of the gods and the sea.

Of course, when catches are small and jobs are scarce then more people are out of luck. At this point, luck disappears as an explanatory variable, and the focus shifts to upskilling. The ones doing badly become the target of interventions that will give them the ‘competencies’ and pathways they need (Brien, Burr & Webb 2013). This is how particular groups are rendered the site and source of a problem, and the systems perpetuating said problem vanish from view (Ahmed 2017). Circular logic becomes common at this point. As Christophe Béné mocks in his hypercritical paper on structural exclusion from fishing grounds, scholars have tended to fall into claiming people are fishers because they’re poor and poor because they’re fishers (Béné 2003). We could easily substitute this with ‘people are untenured because they’re poor performers and poor performers because they’re untenured’, resulting in precisely the problem lamented regularly in higher education supplements and related popular publications across the globe.

Economic resources and socially enabled privilege are not foregrounded in the skills/luck framework. The idea of merit (I deserve this! I am skilled!) may take on special weight when your hold upon it is so tenuous – untenured. If, as David Mosse (2006) has argued, it is a matter of routine institutionalised practice that success is

collectivised and failure individualised, we must point to high achievers as markers of a system that is working, and ask the losers what they are doing wrong.

I am sure part of my internal resistance to finishing my PhD (why else would I sit here day after day, not doing, not doing?) is from looking on at my long-finished contemporaries. Many are juggling multiple short-term contracts, where your time is up just as you're getting started (Saracci et al. 1999), and those who aren't facing cyclical contract expiration keep working hours that many (and I) consider barbaric in their length and intensity (Hemer 2014). At least while I stay in undone limbo land, working very little (I must finish my thesis) and studying even less (I must work), I have an excuse for every situation which more or less holds water.

Likewise, the fishers who participated in my simulation games (that I reported on at the conference which began our journey) were often very resistant to the idea of leaving fishing and joining the bottom feeders of market capitalism. This is really what alternative livelihoods usually mean – explicit encouragement into seasonal, precarious employment or becoming dependent sole traders of dubious economic viability (Wright et al. 2015). One fisher put it rather poetically, recommending another to 'never mind, just get a job cleaning up the shit', a reference to the unpalatable labour requirements so often expected of Filipino workers, both home and abroad (Semyonov & Gorodzeisky 2004).

The fishers' stubbornness in sticking to fishing, even in the face of (unrealistically) highly paid and accessible other employment options within our simulation games, was commented on in frustration by government workers and scientists alike. 'They're so stubborn', 'I think they'll just die fishing' were common refrains. 'Hardheaded' is the literal translation of the expression for stubborn in Filipino (*matigas ng ulo*). It has none of the English 'hardheaded' meaning of being practical and realistic. Rather, it is commonly used as an admonishment. The same affective qualities appear in the bulletins and blogposts about the PhD glut. Even as some describe the programs as pyramid or Ponzi schemes ('The disposable academic: why doing a PhD is often a waste of time' 2010), there are still undertones of condemning the irresponsibility shown in signing up to an activity so likely to end in failure.

It does beg the question: why? This is where the analogy with the fishers starts to collapse. Certainly, fishers are known to testify that they enjoy their occupation because of the freedom, the lack of 'a boss', and their connection to the ocean (Pollnac, Bavinck & Monnereau 2012): substitute ocean for 'field of study', our comparison still holds. However, the small-scale fishers' oppression by exploitative market arrangements, their vulnerability to climate change, their constant displacement from traditional fishing grounds, and the impacts of the usually unfettered access of commercial fishers to both high sea and near shore fisheries mean a precarity of existence that only in extreme cases could describe any urban student (Fabinyi, Foale & Macintyre 2013; Knudsen 2016; Lim, Matsuda & Shigemi 1995). As the fishers told us in no uncertain terms. In many cases, if they had access to more attractive livelihoods, then most would not hesitate to do other things. The fishers were being hardheaded in the English sense, practical and realistic.

On the other hand, however you frame it, labelling a PhD program as a livelihood of last resort is not convincing. We are attracted to it; enrolments continue to expand despite the disgruntled whisperings from within the academy and without (Cuthbert & Molla 2015). Why? Let us centre the figure of the autonomous scholar: this is what institutions foreground as the outcome and therefore ‘the point’ of PhD programs (Harrison 2010). Here again, the idea of being free, having no boss. Further, it is a way of ‘being productive’ without creating the material waste so symptomatic of other areas of modern Western culture. By not selling anything, we are not forcing anyone else to buy.

But does this logic hold? The academy’s distance from capitalist relationships of production has never been shorter (Thornton 2015). I shall never forget how I mistook my first cheque for a popular journal article for an invoice. We academics are so alienated from the products of our labour that it is more common to pay than be paid. That students should retain intellectual property rights over the knowledge (or other) products of their research is a battle that has but temporarily subsided in my university, as it moves to position itself as an institutional, intellectual bourgeoisie. Intellectual property, after all, is ‘what we produce’, and my institution owns (Thornton 2015, p33). So, in a quest to understand the pull, I still end up confused – if I had understood the route, would I have started the journey?

Part 4: If the Sea is Empty, Should we Encourage Fishing?

Before I went into the field to meet my fishers, the university rightly insisted that I pass an ethics committee assessment. An ethics application revolves around the risk of causing harm, and the distribution of benefits. The risks must be considered reasonable and the benefits adequate if the research is to be given permission to go ahead. As a thought experiment, I wonder what the university’s ethics application for enrolling a PhD student would look like? How would the potential harms be identified? To whom do benefits accrue? If we put the reported levels of mental ill-health, physical malaise, and hours that would violate labour codes in other industries (Lucia 2016) together with the alleged economic gains the university stands to make from each graduating student (Brien, Burr & Webb 2013), it looks like a very lopsided equation. I wonder again if the required disclosure of risk now being demanded of doctors and medical specialists around the Western world were applied to our admission offices (Alani & Kelleher 2016), how long this ‘PhD Ponzi scheme’ would continue to operate.

What, then, of my current limbo state, occupied by so many in today’s corporate university: as both PhD student and casual employee, I sit in the centre of the Venn diagram of the university’s growing labour problem. Tied up, but not tied in, we wonder what we should do: to accept and valorise our casual state may be to relinquish the gains made by workers, such as sick pay, long service leave, maternity provisions. Alternatively, maybe we just keep muddling on, occupying small spaces ethically, diligently, and with a strong splash of defiance. In support of this, the vision offered by O’Gorman and Werry (2012) is an attractive one: we may ‘slip the yoke of commoditization by failing to achieve permanence, failing to offer the bankable rewards of virtuosity.’ We can deliberately puddle around, be unproductive, opt out.

This pathway is still risky though, as these authors warn: ‘Failure hurts. Failure haunts. It comes laced with shame, anger, despair, abjection, guilt, frustration.’ Not to mention no necessary connection with, or contribution to, a collective realisation of an alternative society.

It seems fitting that around the time I started writing this essay, my mother told me she wished I worked more. I think of my community-making art projects, my volunteer English teaching, my endeavours for our food co-operative, my vegetable garden, my lover and his children; but still her comment rankles, even though I know it comes from a place of love and concern for my security and wellbeing. As Halberstam (2011) has written ‘it is grim’ to push against individual success, that logical linking of achievement, (protestant) ethics, and personal worth inside the indispensable collective.

In a culture that does not value that which does not add monetary value, those without career aspirations do not fit. Value-as-price so often contradicts value-as-moral. Likewise, within an economic system that demands efficiency, surplus and a link between supply and demand, many small-scale fishers and PhD students/graduates are excess to requirements – the ultimate failure. I think again of the fishers: in the fishing game we played, they would subvert our Boolean rules of fishing OR ‘alternative livelihood’, somehow managing to wrangle it so they could always have fishing AND ‘sideline’ activities. Fishing is not just marginal subsistence. It is instant fresh food, the satisfying deployment of a hard-won skill, privacy from an invasive world, all these intangible and tangible pleasures rendered invisible by that question: ‘how much do you earn?’

Part 5: A Way out of Depleted, Subsistence Fisheries?

Late capitalism does not offer any easy alternatives to this question, and expecting an individual answer to a collective problem is dicey at best. Even so, another thought experiment: how might we reconfigure our values-as-morals? One small idea, a start, one coming straight from the laboral pastiche entailed by casual and intermittent academic work. A pleasure of my unearned privilege of being able to survive working less than pleases my mother has been having time for other activities. Exploration in free time has led me, among other things, to performance, physical theatre and dance. I’ve come to think that if the outworkers of the university come to define themselves as what they do after hours, as did the moonlighting fishers, then we may have the workings of a plausible labour alternative on our hands.

With this we may start to reclaim territory, what we *are* will no longer be merely what we *do* in exchange for money. Breaking open the cracks of our overworked society is aided by a stubborn (hardheaded even?) focus on the nascent possibilities of non-capitalist transactions (McKinnon, Gibson & Malam 2008). Just as fishing is primarily food and a life on the waves, not a cash income, wherever possible perhaps we can prioritise everything non-monetary. That may be morally valuable, a reconfiguration that is meekly revolutionary.

So, to bring the story back to me, the protagonist and story-teller, and whether I will fish for a career inside academia's ivory walls. No. I will make art, and I'll be a Research Officer as long as my contract holds. I will take my real work, my precious work, my heart work, into a world of ensemble performance, where to speak of individual achievement betrays the ethos, the practice and the product. Sometimes the star, and sometimes the chorus, sometimes on stage and sometimes on page, I can work with others to create inside, outside and beyond disciplinary divides. I may well continue to be poor: poorly received, poorly remunerated. It's a gamble requiring both luck and skill, a precarity embraceable only because of my cushions of class and education. I wonder if I can spread my safety net to capture the falls of others. Perhaps, in my state of minimal work, I can let 'contented idleness...(be) the succulent mistress of creativity' (Wendt 1980), thereby helping devise collectively ingenious ways to instigate the transformation necessary so that 228% of the minimum wage is the standard rather than the exception, in both directions. The fishers I will leave to their own devices: they do not, and never did, need me.

I think back on the conference, and realise I wasn't stranded, but invited to strike out for a different shore. In being left behind by those things I thought I wanted - a marriage, a nuclear family, an academic career - new and inviting navigation lines appeared. In company, always in company.

Welcome to our side-show.

Author Bio

Deb Cleland is a contract academic, currently working on how individuals and institutions can build social capital to improve regulation, quality of life and citizen engagement. Combining her background in human ecology and interest in creative research approaches, at long last Deb finished her PhD thesis on how to design and play interactive games for science communication in fisheries (or, alternatively, a PhD on how to use different epistemologies to analyse 'conservation for development' projects) in 2017. She blogs on occasion at www.onefishtofish.com and tweets from @debisda. When not making ends meet through working in Higher Education, you can watch her perform (usually for free) as an acrobat with the aerial dance troupe SolcoAcro or the arts group Distaffic Collectif in and around her home town of Canberra, Australia.

Acknowledgements

This essay incorporates edited versions of two previously written blog posts, 'my space', published 2015 on onefishtofish.com and 'Liveaboard/Liver bored' published in 2012 on temptationlivesupstairs.com (defunct), as well as a few repurposed sentences from a talk given at a 'Feminist in the Arts' panel hosted by Feminartsy, and published on their website. Thank you to Jeff Thompson, Julie Watson, Kate Henne, Ruth Pitt and Lisa Petheram for encouragement and insightful comments on drafts. Endless gratitude to my Filipino colleagues at COMECO/UPSMI, especially the one, the only, Porfirio Aliño. Thanks also to Val Braithwaite, my academic lifeline. The 'small idea, a start' is mostly

attributable to Millie Rooney, www.asparagusrevolution.net. All errors and hyperbole are my own.

Bibliography

Ahmed, S. (2017): *Living a Feminist Life*, Duke University Press, North Carolina.

Alani, A. & Kelleher, M. (2016): 'Restorative Complications of Orthodontic Treatment', *British Dental Journal*, vol. 221, no. 7, pp. 389–400.

Australian Government Fair Work Ombudsman (2016): *Minimum Wage*, accessed 1 March 2017, <http://www.fairwork.gov.au/how-we-will-help/templates-and-guides/fact-sheets/minimum-workplace-entitlements/minimum-wages>

Bagilhole, B. & Goode, J. (2001): 'The Contradiction of the Myth of Individual Merit, and the Reality of a Patriarchal Support System in Academic Careers: A Feminist Investigation', *European Journal of Women's Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 161–80.

Béné, C. (2003): 'When Fishery Rhymes with Poverty: A First Step Beyond the Old Paradigm on Poverty in Small-Scale Fisheries', *World Development*, vol. 31, no. 6, pp. 949–75.

Brien, D.L., Burr, S. & Webb, J. (2013): 'Fail Better': Doctoral Examination and the Creative Field', *Text*, vol. 22, pp. 1–12.

Brown, L. & Watson, P. (2010): 'Understanding the Experiences of Female Doctoral Students', *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, vol. 34, no. 3, pp. 385–404.

Burris, V. (2004): 'The Academic Caste System: Prestige Hierarchies in PhD Exchange Networks', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 69, no. 2, pp. 239–64.

Cinner, J.E., Folke, C., Daw, T. & Hicks, C.C. (2011): 'Responding to Change: Using Scenarios to Understand how Socioeconomic Factors may Influence Amplifying or Dampening Exploitation Feedbacks among Tanzanian Fishers', *Global Environmental Change*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 7–12.

Crossley, J. (2013): 'Are PhD Students Expecting too Much', *The Conversation*, March 19.

Cuthbert, D. & Molla, T. (2015): 'PhD Crisis Discourse: A Critical Approach to the Framing of the Problem and some Australian 'Solutions'', *Higher Education*, vol. 69, no. 1, pp. 33–53.

Cyranoski, D., Gilbert, N., Ledford, H., Nayar, A. & Yahia, M. (2011): 'The PHD Factory', *Nature*, vol. 472, no. 7343, pp. 276–9.

'The disposable academic: why doing a PhD is often a waste of time' (2010): *The Economist*, December 16.

Fabinyi, M., Foale, S. & Macintyre, M. (2013): 'Managing Inequality or Managing Stocks? An Ethnographic Perspective on the Governance of Small-Scale Fisheries', *Fish and Fisheries*, vol. 16, no. 3, pp. 471–85.

Halberstam, J. (2011): *The Queer Art of Failure*, Duke University Press, North Carolina.

Harrison, J.E. (2010): 'Developing a Doctoral Identity: A Narrative Study in an Autoethnographic Frame', PhD Thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

Hemer, S.R. (2014): 'Finding Time for Quality Teaching: An Ethnographic Study of Academic Workloads in the Social Sciences and their Impact on Teaching Practices', *Higher Education Research & Development*, vol. 33, no. 3, pp. 483–95.

Kantola, J. (2008): '“Why do all the Women Disappear?” Gendering Processes in a Political Science Department', *Gender, Work & Organization*, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 202–25.

Knudsen, M. (2016): 'Poverty and Beyond: Small-scale Fishing in Overexploited Marine Environments', *Human Ecology*, vol. 44, no. 3, pp. 341–52.

Lim, C., Matsuda, Y. & Shigemi, Y. (1995): 'Problems and Constraints in Philippine Municipal Fisheries: The case of San Miguel Bay, Camarines Sur', *Environmental Management*, vol. 19, no. 6, pp. 837–52.

Lucia, D. (2016): 'Pulling Back the Curtain: Mental Health in Academia', *Lateral Magazine*, vol. 7.

Mangahas, M. (2000): 'Managing Luck and Negotiating Change: Ethnographies of Fishing and Sharing in the Philippines', PhD thesis, Cambridge University, Cambridge.

Martin, J. (1994): 'The Organization of Exclusion: Institutionalization of Sex Inequality, Gendered Faculty Jobs and Gendered Knowledge in Organizational Theory and Research', *Organization*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 401–31.

McKinnon, K., Gibson, K. & Malam, L. (2008): 'Introduction: Critical and Hopeful Area Studies – Emerging Work in Asia and the Pacific', *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, vol. 49, no. 3, pp. 273–80.

Mosse, D. (2006): 'Anti-Social Anthropology? Objectivity, Objection, and the Ethnography of Public Policy and Professional Communities', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 935–56.

Murray, D.P. (2013): 'Branding ‘Real’ Social Change in Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty', *Feminist Media Studies*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 83–101.

O'Gorman, R. & Werry, M. (2012): 'On failure (on Pedagogy): Editorial Introduction', *Performance Research*, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 1–8.

- Pollnac, R., Bavinck, M. & Monnereau, I. (2012): 'Job Satisfaction in Fisheries Compared', *Social Indicators Research*, vol. 109, no. 1, pp. 119–33.
- Rush, N. (1992): *Mating*, Granta, London.
- Saracci, R., Josep Anto, J.O., McMichael, A. & Trichopoulos, D. (1999): 'New Epidemiological Research in Europe may be Thwarted by Short Term Funding', *BMJ: British Medical Journal*, vol. 319, no. 7213, pp. 855–6.
- Semyonov, M. & Gorodzeisky, A. (2004): 'Occupational Destinations and Economic Mobility of Filipino Overseas Workers', *International Migration Review*, vol. 38, no. 1, pp. 5–25.
- Sherren, K., Klov Dahl, A.S., Robin, L., Butler, L. & Dovers, S. (2009): 'Collaborative Research on Sustainability: Myths and Conundrums of Interdisciplinary Departments', *Journal of Research Practice*, vol. 5, no. 1.
- Thornton, M. (2015): *Through a Glass Darkly: The Social Sciences Look at the Neoliberal University*, ANU Press, Canberra.
- Van den Brink, M. & Benschop, Y. (2012a): 'Gender Practices in the Construction of Academic Excellence: Sheep with Five Legs', *Organization*, vol. 19, no. 4, pp. 507–24.
- Van den Brink, M. & Benschop, Y. (2012b): 'Slaying the Seven-headed Dragon: The Quest for Gender Change in Academia', *Gender, Work & Organization*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 71–92.
- Veloro, C.E. (1994): 'Suwerte and diskarte: Notions of Fishing, Success and Social Relations in two Palawan Villages', in I. Ushijima & C.N. Zayas (eds), *Fishers of the Visayas: Visayas Maritime Anthropological Studies 1: 1991–1993*, CSSP Publications and University of the Philippines Press, Quezon City.
- Vijayakumar, G. (2013): 'I'll be like Water', *Gender & Society*, vol. 27, no. 6, pp. 777–98.
- Wendt, A. (1980): *Wendt: Pouliuli*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu.
- Wright, J.H., Hill, N., Roe, D., Rowcliffe, J.M., Ku'mpel, N.F., Day, M., Booker, F. & Milner-Gulland, E.J. (2015): 'Reframing the Concept of Alternative Livelihoods', *Conservation Biology*, vol. 30, no. 1, pp. 7–13.
- Young, I.M. (2002): *Inclusion and Democracy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Organizing Working-Class Academics: A Collective History

Allison L. Hurst, Oregon State University

Tery Griffin, Wesley College (DE)

Alfred Vitale, University of Rochester (NY) & Monroe Community College (NY)

Abstract

In 2008, the Association of Working-Class Academics was founded in upstate New York by three former members of the Working-Class/Poverty-Class Academics Listserv. The Association had three goals: advocate for WCAs, build organizations on campuses that would support both working-class college students and WCAs, and support scholarship on issues relevant to class and higher education. The Association grew from a small handful to more than 200 members located in the US, UK, Australia, Canada, and Germany. In 2015, it was formally merged with the Working-Class Studies Association, and continues there as a special section for WCSA members. This is our collective account of the organization, told through responses to four key questions. We hope this history will provide insight and lessons for anyone interested in building similar organizations.

Keywords

Working-class academics, Working-Class Studies Association, organizing, campus collectives

Q1: How did you come to be one of the organizers of AWCA?

ALH: In the spring of 2005, I was finishing up my dissertation, what would eventually become *The Burden of Academic Success*. I was looking for people, anyone, who would understand what I was trying to do, and why I thought it was a good idea to ask working-class college students about their experiences. Plenty of people I ran up against in the academy just didn't understand that class could be relevant in the context of college (as an aside, I think we have come a *very* long way since then, in just one short decade). I had read everything I could possibly find on the subject of working-class academics, starting with Jake Ryan and Charles Sackrey, of course, and I also knew there was an online group that identified as academics from working-class and poverty-class backgrounds. This was originally started by Barbara Peters, and the group had been meeting at an informal conference every year since 1995.

AV: I first heard of the WCA listserv while living in Philadelphia in the early 2000s, as an article appeared about it in a local newspaper. At that point, I was squarely situated in the ‘middle skills ghetto’ – being a high school dropout having only attended some college after getting my GED. I knew I was working class – though given my background I identified more realistically as poor – but knew very little about academia. I had been enrolled at Brooklyn College in the late 1980s, where I managed three years but couldn’t handle the stress of working full time on top of college (which would characterize my entire college career). I found the email address and reached out to the listserv host, Barbara Peters, and was allowed to join. I can’t remember precisely when I joined the listserv, but it was probably around 2002. At that point, I had gone back to school to finish my bachelor’s degree at the University of Rochester. The listserv discussions helped me understand some of my experience – naïve, poor, and attending a private university while working two jobs and parenting my toddler daughter – and it helped me to take on the identity of a working-class academic. While I was in my undergraduate studies at UR, I met a fellow working-class academic who was working in academic services. Although he was from the UK, and not academic faculty, he encouraged me in my studies and to consider a future as a working-class academic. And when I graduated in 2004, it was my intention to head to graduate school to eventually become faculty somewhere (my field was religious studies – particularly, contemporary and new religious movements). I recall when I spoke to my faculty advisor about my intention to go into academia, he looked me straight in the eye and asked, very seriously, ‘Do you really want to do this?’ And while my advisor was someone I greatly respected, he had also come from privilege (admitting in a class once that the only job he had before academia was delivering pizza one summer) and because by then I’d identified as a working-class academic, I found his question to be something of an insult. Or, at least, a challenge. Looking at the question today, years after I’ve obtained a PhD, I see his question as being one of genuine concern, and kindness – he was really asking me if I wanted to suffer through an academic life, not asking if I was capable of being an academic. Perhaps he even knew that, given my background, my chances in academia were slim and the road ahead would be treacherous and costly.

TG: I don’t remember how I heard about the WCS email list, but the list is what got me to the conference where I met Allison and Alfred. The discussions on the list sounded much more like my life and my experiences than anything else I had run across in academe. I wanted to meet the people on the list in person. By that time, I had a tenure-track job and had learned the art of making everything I did count in some way toward promotion and tenure. I was in a Communication Department so designed a project where I would interview working-class academics at the conference and create a short documentary. That also allowed me to get some funding from the school to support going to the conference. By the way, that is always a problem working class academics have - the difficulty of affording to go to the necessary conferences. It runs through graduate school and well into their tenure track jobs.

ALH: That’s certainly true, Tery. It makes it very difficult to organize around class when those who are most primed to organize around it can’t afford to meet. So, it

was the listserv for all three of us. Thank you, Barbara Peters! I decided to go to the next meeting of the listserv, in June of 2005, which, incidentally, turned out to be the 10th conference and the largest one yet. It was held at Ithaca College. I think this was only the second conference I ever attended, and it was so different from the first (regional sociology) conference. Even thinking about this more than a decade later and I get goosebumps. It was like coming home, to a home I didn't even know existed. Everyone was smart, very smart, but they also seemed to share the same habits of mind, customs, values, struggles I had, as the weirdo smart kid in class. I know now there were and are lots of differences within the WCA community, but at that first meeting, none of those mattered as much as the similarities. The conference was only two or three days long, but it was one of those experiences in your life that change everything. On the first night, those of us who were new to the organization, or those of us who were graduate students, were paired up with a mentor who paid for our dinner. About 20 of us, mentor and mentees, went to Moosewood (an experience in itself), and had a wide-ranging conversation about, well, everything. One of the running jokes about WCAs is that we don't know how to filter. Everything came out. My mentor was Ken Oldfield, who remains, to this day, a person I go to for advice. Later, I spent a lot of time hanging out with him and a person who had been with the group since the very beginning. As I didn't have a car (or drive), these two very kindly schlepped me all over town. But that is also the way the 'conference' operated – we were all there to support each other. It was an amazing experience. It might have been the second night that I met Alfred Vitale, over another dinner attended by almost everyone (40 people? I know we took over the restaurant). By now I was picking up subtle differences, who was there only for camaraderie, who was there to push for change, things like that. Alfred struck me as someone who pushed for change, and I loved that. We may have begun talking about organizing the group in a more political fashion at that dinner, I can't recall. But the idea was in the air. This was the tenth meeting, and many people wanted the group to evolve into a formal organization, with a website and real presence in the world. By the way, I met Tery Griffin because I was one of the attendees she interviewed. I thought that was a very cool thing to be doing!

I wonder where those videotape recordings are now? Tery, whatever happened to those tapes?

TG: I had forgotten about the recordings! I returned from the conference and instead of working on digitizing the tapes, I had to jump back into preparations for the next semester. With a 4/4 teaching load, plus the expectation of taking on overloads, and the advising, committee work, everything else that comes with an academic life, the tapes remained on my to-do shelf for a very long time. It's entirely possible that they are still in a box in my study.

ALH: Some day we will have to find them! Alfred, am I right you were thinking politically before that conference?

AV: Yes, and the WCA list opened my eyes to the value of our perspective. I had realized how valuable it would have been for me to see other WCAs during my academic career. So sometime around late 2003 or early 2004, I started to think

bigger. I'd always been an organizer of some sort or another, quite far to the left in my political proclivities and involved with the underground literary movement in NYC (my hometown). While the listserv continued, I had thought very hard about proposing that the group become something more than just a listserv. It was all well and good to provide a space for camaraderie, but I wanted to see us start to collectivize to amplify our voice. Others on the list had started to speak about the potential to grow this group into something more deliberate and strategic; ideas were starting to formulate. Soon, Signe M. Kastberg (who turned out to live near me), Ken Oldfield, Julie Charlip, and some names that escape me, began to discuss this on the WCA list. But it was the conference at Ithaca College that moved us from chatting about AWCA, to building it.

Allison, were you involved in those early on-line discussions, too?

ALH: The idea of such an organization had never crossed my mind before attending the conference in Ithaca. Everything was new to me that year. On the last day of the conference, about twenty of us gathered in a circle to talk about creating a formal organization. I was not one of the leaders of this discussion, and only joined because I wasn't ready to walk away. Alfred talked a lot, but so did Signe M. Kastberg, a remarkably able organizer who has written a very useful book on the subject (Kastberg 2007), Julie Charlip, who has done so much for working-class students at Whitman College, and Ken Oldfield, prolific author and champion of the idea of including class in conversations about diversity (Oldfield 2007). Tery was there as well, but I think she took a back seat like I did. Jake Ryan and Charles Sackrey had been at the conference, but I think they had left before the meeting, as had David Greene, another well-known and liked attendee. There was some sense that many of us were of a younger generation, and were willing to put in the time and effort to push the group forward (particularly with things like creating a website). When the meeting broke up, it was decided that we would continue things via email. Days after I returned to Oregon, there were about fifteen of us who were in constant communication about creating what we decided to call, after much heated discussion, the Association of Working-Class Academics (shortened hereinafter to AWCA, pronounced 'aw-cah'). I remember some of us balked (Alfred, I am thinking of here), because our parents were never able to get into the working class – 'poverty class' might be a better name for us. As a sociologist, I didn't really like the concept of poverty as a class and argued, along with others, that working class was really inclusive of the working poor and the non-working poor alike. Still, we always kept the language of 'poverty class and working class' in our descriptions and calls for membership.

AV: While the concept for what to create was being batted around, it was clear that Barbara Peters was not really on-board. After the conference, I could tell that Allison and I had similar orientations to change and to what WCAs could do if they moved collectively. And soon we had numerous 'off list' conversations about what might be possible, perhaps because we were realizing that Barbara remained hesitant to support the idea. The WCA listserv was her baby, and here were these young upstarts (Allison and I are close in age, and younger than many on the list) trying to do something to ostensibly compete with the listserv. Yet that was not at all what we

had intended, and I don't believe anyone in those early days actually considered anything like that. We all felt the listserv provided something valuable, and that it would be an important part of a formal organization. And it was the garden in which AWCAs seeds were planted

ALH: Remember that I said we WCAs have a tendency to not filter? We can over-share, and we can also be a little more direct and frank than is politic. The squabbles over the name drove out a few of us. A hardcore of a committed ten formed, and then splintered, over a series of petty and not-so-petty disagreements. We lost a few key people right away because there was word that Barbara Peters did not like the idea of formalizing the organization. With the heedlessness of youth, the rest of us pressed on. We lost Signe and almost lost Tery when Alfred said some impolitic remarks that were construed as being gender-insensitive. Insults were passed back and forth. Some of us tried to be moderators (myself included), but we couldn't keep everyone in the fold. Our final conflict came over the issue of whether we would formally incorporate as a non-profit. Alfred and I, with anarchistic tendencies, thought this was unnecessary (he probably will have choicer words for this than I). Some said they would refuse to go forward in any capacity as an officer, without the protection of incorporation. Eventually, those concerned about officer liability won out and I offered to do the paperwork to file as a nonprofit, putting my law degree to some use. The irony is that in this final conflict we lost those who were pushing for incorporation, and those who remained didn't really care that much about the issue.

Alfred, what do you remember about the early conflicts in building the organization?

AV: By 2005, we had drafted our first Mission and Goals document. The mission managed to stay relatively intact for AWCAs entire history. But while the mission was clear, the organization's shape itself was a question mark. The nine or so members of this new conceptual organization, the steering committee, had differing views of what AWCA would do and what it would look like. As is often the case when a number of good intentions start to share the stage, heads begin to butt together. From my recollection, there were essentially two camps: some of us were convinced that AWCA should be something like a labor union – a collective structure to pressure academia to give us a voice, power and a seat at the table, and to be a force to advocate on behalf of WCAs being mistreated in the academic workplace. Others wanted AWCA to be primarily a professional networking organization – connecting WCAs together for various purposes, particularly career-oriented, to share professional opportunities, push for more hiring of WCAs and leveraging the membership to promote WCA work. There were variations on these, but the gist of it was simply that some wanted AWCA to be a force to push and prod academia, and some wanted AWCA to be a society to nurture the career development of WCAs. Looking back, it's obvious that both of these were necessary. However, early on, we could not quite reconcile these general orientations. And it was causing some consternation and ongoing, unresolved disagreements that bled into unseemly personal attacks (some of which were my fault). Increasingly, my frustration activated some of the skeletons from my past – the brutal language of the housing projects where I was raised would creep in, and an exchange with a very provocative and unpopular listserv member (not part of AWCA), who bullied others but kept his

comments within the letter of law, left me permanently barred from the WCA listserv. As I had just gone through a divorce, and was unsure about my own future, I had a shorter fuse and tighter margins than I would have liked. And I was growing impatient, and surly. The anarchist in me grew frustrated as we started to hash out the minutiae of making AWCA a formal organization.

Adding to that, there was growing concern among some of the membership about formalizing the group as a non-profit. What would membership look like? Who was allowed to join? What were the criteria to define 'Working Class Academic' (criteria upon which we would never really settle)? How would we protect ourselves from being research subjects for those who studied the working class? Would we charge dues? How do we protect ourselves from lawsuits? It was this last question that broke the camel's back for me. I pushed back and rejected the idea that lawsuits would ever be a thing. Why would they? And I was tired of discussions about finance (ironically, I became the Treasurer) and dues – I'd rather have us just leave things open for donations and make membership free (a position that I would never let go, even after we finalized a dues structure). We would go be going back and forth about these and related organizational issues for the next couple of years in one way or another.

During the long process of formalizing bylaws, in particular, we started to get attrition in the steering committee, and it highlighted a problem under the surface. When the steering committee was at its peak, there was something like a 50-50 split between men and women. I felt that we should work to keep this balance, and argued vociferously for it. But in Academia, women had too often been excluded from leadership. So, it was suggested that the majority (or perhaps it was all) of our final officer roles should go to women. As I had been doing a lot of the legwork, and had been there since the beginning, this stung. By the time we were agreed that bylaws were set, and we had a process mapped out to get us off the ground, we had been reduced to four: Allison, Tery, Signe and me. But then it was reduced to three, after Signe took on a larger and more demanding academic position at a new institution (though she remains a supportive colleague and an important voice for WCAs). Thus, when we had incorporated in 2008, it was just Allison, Tery and me taking on all the officer roles. Allison was the clearest choice for president – with an incredible wealth of useful skills and knowledge, and an absolutely sharp mind for organizational development (not to mention her instrumental role in getting our non-profit status). Tery Griffin took on multiple roles – communications and, most importantly, building the AWCA website and getting the membership portal set up using only free web resources (no small feat!). And though I hemmed and hawed about having any dues structure at all, I wound up in the role of treasurer – not a role I coveted, but one that was necessary all the same.

TG: I fell in the camp of wanting the organization to help working class people in academe—not necessarily to become or remain professors, but to get as much out of higher education as they could, and perhaps to avoid the stumbling blocks their predecessors had hit. I envisioned a mentorship structure, where tenured professors would mentor professors who were on the tenure track but not yet tenured, the tenure track professors would mentor students who were finishing graduate school and

looking for tenure track jobs, the grad school students would mentor undergraduates who were considering or actively applying to grad school, and undergraduates would mentor high school students who were interested in going on to college. The official structure of AWCA would provide a more formal conference than the one organized by the people on Barbara's list—a conference where presentations would easily be accepted as counting in hiring decisions, and toward promotion and tenure, and which could someday publish conference papers, which would provide publications to help people get and keep jobs.

ALH: It wasn't until 2008 that most of this was ironed out. By that time, I had a new position as a visiting professor at Kenyon College. That position gave me a lot of time to help develop the organization. We working-class academics really know how to use unemployment and underemployment to our advantage! Tery Griffin put a website together for AWCA, and I proceeded to do the paperwork to incorporate us. When it came time to put forth officer's names, there was just the three of us left. We made Alfred Secretary-Treasurer because he was the most likely to stay put for a few years and we needed a permanent address and bank account. Tery and I scrambled for VP position (neither wanted to be President), but I lost out, as she had already done so much work on the website.

Well, that was the long story about how AWCA came to be. We want to conclude by answering a few more general questions about being a working-class academic and organizing around class.

Q2: When did you first realize you were a working-class academic, or have you? What does this mean to you?

ALH: I didn't have the label to affix to myself until I read Jake Ryan and Charles' Sackrey's *Strangers in Paradise* in graduate school, probably around 2003. But I had known for quite some time that I was different from my peers. I've talked elsewhere (Hurst 2010) about some of the events that motivated me to switch dissertation topics from Intellectual Property Regimes and their impact on development in Africa to how working-class college students confront the possibility of social mobility. Suffice it to say there were a series of micro-aggressions against me and people I saw as like me that forced my attention. And I have to admit there was a great deal of comfort in putting a name to this. When I was younger I had often been the 'smart kid,' kind of the weirdo who liked to read and stay indoors. I was used to that description of myself. But what I realized in graduate school was that I was also different among other readers (actually, there are a surprising number of academics who don't appear to love reading, go figure). My difference was double-sided. That is the experience of the working-class academic. We have in many ways left our homes behind (some of us with deep regret, others not fast enough) but we haven't fully joined the middle class, either. I think this explains why so many WCAs love Bourdieu. He described the experience well. It was his own experience, too.

AV: One of the nagging issues that poor and working-class academics have as they navigate academia is that they will, at some point, suffer from imposter-syndrome. I still do. I have a Master's degree and a Ph.D., and I've always found it difficult to feel like I fit in to the ivory tower - which is why I decided to forego a career in academia

and, instead, went back into project management (though I work with projects congruent with my Education and Human Development background). But I do adjunct regularly at a couple of universities, and that helps me feel like I'm still 'in the game.' It occurs to me, as I write this, that maybe it serves cross-purposes - I feel like I'm 'in the game' but I don't feel like I'm accepted as part of the larger institution. This may be another thing that characterizes the class-dissonance we feel in academia. We may have been allowed into the country club, but we sometimes feel our membership is easily revoked if we slip up and let our class roots show. It was my hope that AWCA might temper this, but it may have been the political events of the last year that gave social class the biggest discursive boost in a long time. Allison and I have written about this recently (Hurst & Vitale, 2016).

TG: Although I did not have the label, I think I was aware of the situation from the first time I tried to go to college. There are several long stories involved, having to do with not having the money to go unless I worked a lot of hours, which did not leave time for going to college. When I did finally maneuver myself into a position where I was able to go to college and work (by running my own business), the students—and the professors—at the college I went to either came from very different backgrounds from my own or were doing a good job of leaving their backgrounds behind. The people who were most familiar to me were the college's support staff: the secretaries, cafeteria workers, and groundspeople. Mostly what it meant to me was that everything was harder. I started college much later than the students in my classes, and before I finished undergraduate school, I was already aware that some doors were permanently closed. I would never be the hot young writer or hot young scholar that everyone wants to discover.

Q3: *What lessons did you learn as an organizer of AWCA? What was your worst experience? Your best?*

ALH: There are so many ways I can answer this! Although there were a lot of headaches, being one of the organizers of AWCA changed my life. After the loss of so many others, the three of us worked very well together. Although most of our operations happened virtually, and we rarely had the opportunity to meet together after that initial conference in Ithaca, I don't have strong enough words to describe how much I admire Tery and Alfred. Admire is probably not the right word. It is more that they have become family, in the working-class sense. They are there, like appendages, that I rely on and could never cut off even had I wanted to. They have been there *for the long haul*, through all kinds of lows and organizational woes. They are my fellow soldiers in the fight and I am so grateful we have been in the fight together for so long.

AV: I don't feel that there was ever a well-articulated 'worst experience' for me. Organizations like AWCA are roller coasters by nature, so ups and downs are part of it. I think that I felt more disappointment – because I had hoped more people would have recognized the importance of having a collective of working-class academics who could leverage that collective strength to improve our experiences in academia, and that they'd naturally want to take the organization and grow it. But I've learned – through AWCA and many other groups I've worked with – that no matter how much

you strive for consensus, or encourage broader organizational power-sharing, it will fall on the shoulders of the few most dedicated members to keep things afloat. And in the end, most of the membership in a group wind up being okay with that (happy that someone else is taking on the work). But there's also a larger lesson that is important for most socially-just organizing: the marginal populations you wish to empower will inevitably have twice the hardships and obstacles to participating as the mainstream. WCAs are the ones working full-time through their college careers, and are saddled with six-figure student loan debt (something else that Allison and I share), and can't take the time off to attend conferences that they have to pay for up front (thereby missing opportunities for career development), and can't take time away from their overburdened schedules to draft bylaws or get a PO Box set up or keep up with collecting dues or providing fresh content on websites or social media. As an organizer on the Left, I see this with well-intentioned groups wishing to mobilize the poor and working-class – forgetting that those systemic forces we oppose are the same ones that are keeping them from participating in the first place. So, the bottom line is simple: expect nothing, do what you can, and don't resent it when you're the one left holding the ball despite everyone else's insistence that they wanted to play.

TG: Like Alfred, I don't really have one worst experience. What I found most difficult to deal with was the frustration of not having more people willing to get involved. With just the three of us, all we could ever do was just keep the organization afloat. The visions I had for the organization remained just visions.

ALH: We had many visions! Hopefully, some of them can still come true through the WCSA and its new WCA section. It won't be easy, though. Alfred is exactly right about the difficulty of organizing WCAs, and we see this with campus groups organizing around class as well. Back when I was working on my dissertation, I ran into a woman named Sophie, who was working in financial aid at the University of Oregon. She told me that she had started a working-class students group, but that it fell apart within a year because so few people had the time to keep it up and running. When she graduated, that was the end. Since then, I've seen this happen on many other campuses. One of the things we wanted to achieve with AWCA was an institutional base from which to coordinate and support these campus efforts. We are still working on achieving that at the Working-Class Studies Association (see our 'Class on Campus' pages).

Alfred, Tery, and I spent a lot of time keeping things going, too much to allow us opportunities to expand our programming. I learned how important volunteers are, and I also had a real lightbulb moment realizing that I never learned this growing up working class. We were always just too busy keeping our lives afloat, our children fed, to think much of *volunteering*. I'm sure I am not speaking for all working-class people here, especially those with strong religious communities who learn to be active and engaged just as part of being human (something I saw a lot when I lived in South Carolina). But for my family, and many others I know personally, volunteering reeks of privilege. Voluntary organization work is also foreign to many working-class people because we have learned to clearly separate 'work' from the rest of our lives, which tend to be focused on home and family. Work is where you have to go, where you are told what to do, and what you leave behind when you punch out. So, to ask

people to take on labor voluntarily just kind of doesn't make a lot of sense. I always assumed that things ran somehow, without my input, by people with a lot more power than me. Once I myself was in a position of leadership, I realized how wrong this sense of mine was, but I think a lot of our WCA peers still haven't figured that out. When we say we need input we really mean it! When we ask people to build their own organizations, that's not a luxury or a privilege but a necessity.

TG: My background there is very different from Allison's. My family was involved with the church, so volunteered there. And my brothers were all active in their unions. I learned from my family that if you see something you want done, you should do it, not wait for someone else to do it for you.

Q4: What hopes do you have for working-class persons in (or out) of the academy?

ALH: Oh, that is a tough question! Alfred, you go first...

AV: This is where my collegial kindness hits a wall. Many, I think, would like to believe that a type of equality (social or economic) is possible through convincing systemic forces that the poor and working-class deserve equality. I, on the other hand, think this slow-motion slog of discursive dilly-dallying will never really move the needle without an absolute, loud, public and pointed indictment aimed directly at affluence and the institutions which serve to sustain it. It is, and should be, time to call them out harshly. I would rather destabilize the cultural, social and economic foundations that tacitly condone, praise, or support the pursuit of affluence and instead I want to recast them as being the shameful, immoral causes of human suffering. As Allison has alluded, my anarchic tendencies characterized my engagement with AWCA – but it was the integrity, skill, clarity and thoughtfulness of Allison and Tery that kept that side of me fairly subdued as we built AWCA. Yet I was never censored, and I felt that I was able to express the most radical ideas to Tery and Allison without the judgement I would receive from some of my non-WCA colleagues. We may have few filters for our words, but this openness of expression is precisely one of the most wonderful characteristics of WCAs. Around each other, we don't care if our class roots are showing.

ALH: We always had to balance our more personal revolutionary tendencies with the necessities of building a large and inclusive group! Look, there are many WCAs out there that really want to put their pasts behind them and move on to better things. They don't have a critique of capitalism. They want the good life. We always wanted to keep space open for these people, because they need support and mentorship as well, and, we kind of secretly hoped, building solidarity with them might make them appreciate the things about their working-class selves that they were trying to move past. But we were always striving to be a big tent, and I think that is important.

Personally, I am with Alfred in that I'd like to see the system of inequality called out, destabilized, toppled. But I am also pretty sure that this can't happen without getting as many people with working-class experiences into the conversation as possible. There is a difference between having a theoretical dislike of inequality, or even a humanistic disgust of inequality, and having the experience of seeing family members

systematically oppressed and exploited for their entire lives. A bunch of platitudes just implode when you know people personally whose lives have been permanently deformed by capitalism. And it isn't always the big things, it's at the mundane level most clearly. Here's an example. Cleaning toilets (which I did as a Merry Maid for one summer only) is a hard job. It hurts your back and your knees and gives you a chemical headache. It also needs to be done – but not by the same person for twenty to forty years of her life, six to eight to twelve hours a day. We need to figure out more equitable ways to distribute this necessary labor. Having working-class persons in the academy means we have people with intimate knowledge of the daily effects of capitalism on workers, to remind us that a vision of a better world is not pie in the sky but necessary and achievable. I realize that may sound very idealistic, but I still believe in the power of democracy. Democracy only works when everyone has a voice and every voice is heard. What's not working with the system we have? Stop asking the people who are benefiting from it and ask the rest of us. We'll tell you.

TG: That is an immense question. The fact that we even have people we call working class bothers me. It suggests that we accept a culture where some people are expected to spend large blocks of their lives in jobs that give them little except money they need in order to live, while other people have no such expectations placed upon them. And more and more, those working people cannot earn enough with one full time job to survive—if they can even find a full-time job—so are forced to work multiple jobs. This thing that we're all in the middle of is supposed to be a life, not a never-ending job.

And that, folks, is why we need to organize around class, even when it is quite difficult to do so!

Author Bios

Allison L. Hurst is an Associate Professor of Sociology in the School of Public Policy at Oregon State University, where she teaches courses on the sociology of education, inequality, qualitative methods and sociological theory. She has written two books on the experiences and identity reformations of working-class college students, *The Burden of Academic Success: Loyalists, Renegades, and Double Agents* (2010) and *College and the Working Class* (2012) and is the co-editor (with Sandi K. Kenga) of *Working in Class: Recognizing How Social Class Shapes Our Academic Work* (2016). Her current research focuses on the outcomes of college graduates, specifically the role of class and the impact of student debt. She was one of the founders of the Association of Working-Class Academics, for which she also served as president from 2008 to 2014. She served as the first Chairperson of the Working-Class Academics Section of the Working-Class Studies Association from 2014 to 2016.

Tery Griffin is a writer and computer consultant specializing in working with writers and other artists. Her fiction has appeared in literary journals including *ninepatch: A Creative Journal for Women and Gender Studies*, *Moondance*, *Men As We Are*, *O. Henry Festival Stories* and *The Wittenberg Review*. Now retired, Tery was

Associate Professor of Communications at Wesley College until 2016. She was a co-founder of the Association of Working-Class Academics, where she served as vice-president from 2008-2014.

Alfred Vitale is an adjunct instructor at the University of Rochester, where he teaches graduate courses in human development, life course theories, and theories of self and identity. He is also adjunct faculty at Monroe Community College, in the Human Services program. Professionally, he is a program administrator at the University of Rochester Medical Center. His current research focuses on the relationship between neoliberalism and the complicity of social science research. Prior to academia, he was the publisher of a literary journal and co-editor of two literary anthologies (*The Worst Book I Ever Read* and *Help Yourself!* both published by Autonomedia press), and was involved with Anarchist and radical organizations in NYC, Philadelphia, and Rochester, NY. He was a co-founder of the Association of Working-Class Academics, where he served as secretary and treasurer from 2008-2014.

Bibliography

Hurst, A. (2010): *The Burden of Academic Success: Renegades, Loyalists, and Double Agents*, Lexington Books, Lanham, Maryland.

Kastberg, S. M. (2007): *Servants in the House of the Masters: A Social Class Primer for Educators, Helping Professionals, and Others who want to Change the World*, iUniverse, Inc, New York.

Oldfield, K. (2007): 'Humble and Hopeful: Welcoming First-Generation Poor and Working-Class Students to College' *About Campus*, vol. 11, no.6, pp. 2-12.

Oldfield, K. (2007): 'A Two Step Approach to Recruiting, Hiring, and Retaining More Professors of Poverty and Working-Class Origins', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, vol. 29, pp. 217-230.

Ryan, J. & Sackrey, C. (1984): *Strangers in Paradise: Academics from the Working Class*, South End Press, Boston.

Vitale, A. & Hurst, A. (2016): 'Academia's Other Diversity Problem: Class in the Ivory Tower', *The Hampton Institute*,
<http://www.hamptoninstitution.org/academia-and-class.html#.WaXNbch96Uk>

Williams, Joan (2017) *White Working Class: Overcoming Class Cluelessness in America*, Harvard Business Review Press, Boston, Ma.

Review by Allison L. Hurst

By now we are all thoroughly tired of hearing that the ‘white working class’ is to blame for Trump’s election. Last year, I thought we would finally have a national conversation about class. This year, it seems that conversation has been stuck between classist putdowns and liberal lament, neither of which advances our understanding or our politics very much. Two days after the election, law professor Joan Williams wrote what I thought was one of the most intelligent essays of its kind, published in the *Harvard Business Review*. The essay was called ‘What So Many People Don’t Get About the US Working Class’ and it included nuggets such as ‘Avoid the Temptation to Write Off Blue-Collar Resentment as Racism.’ You might have read it – it circulated widely on social media. She quickly took the themes of the essay and expanded them into a book, published four months later, surely a record of sorts, and a testament to the timeliness of the subject. It’s a great book, but it is also a rushed one, and imperfect.

The first thing to say about Williams’ book is that it is best understood as written for educated elites, the kind who voted for Hilary, and who are absolutely confused that she lost. At times, she writes as if she is describing an alien species, one that apparently makes up the majority of the American electorate, so one it behooves us to better understand. She never questions the ‘us’ behind her presentation, although she does spend some time telling us her father-in-law is one of these strange folk, so she has some inside perspective.

Let me get all of my crankiness up front here, before going on to describe what makes this a great book to read. As a sociologist, I cannot forgive her for the way she defines working class. As a working-class academic (what she calls a ‘class migrant’), I appreciate that she probably doesn’t understand what she did wrong. So here goes a description of her method of classification. Take all the White Americans (ignore all others for this investigation into class) and divide them by income. Those in the bottom thirty percent? Those are poor Whites, and we’ll ignore them from now on. Take those in the top twenty percent and, if they have a college degree or more, like Dr. Williams and her intended audience, call those the affluent and set aside. What you have remaining is, *voila*, the White Working Class. Note who is included here – the self-made millionaire as well as public school teachers, social workers with advanced degrees but middling income, and, of course, your stereotypical plumbers and hardhats. Who is not included? Well, working-class people of color, obviously, but also the working poor, our Wal-Mart greeters, janitors, nurse’s aides, hotel

cleaners. You kind of get the feeling that Williams assumes these are people of color so the 'poor vs. working class' line is one primarily of race. Need I remind you this is not true?

I spend so much time on Williams' definition because I think it is her one big flaw, and one related to her own elite class position. The book would be more accurately titled, *The White Middle Class: Yes, There Are White People Outside My Gated Community and They Think Differently Than I.*

There are important consequences to her flawed definition of the working class. For one, it reinforces stereotypes the highly educated have about the racial distinctions within the working class. This works against one of Williams' primary arguments, that the 'white working class' support of Trump was not founded on racism. At the same time she is telling her readers this, she has artificially severed the working class into two opposing racial groups. In reality, the (occupationally-based) working class is full of people living and working and loving across racial lines. Her definition also obscures important distinctions between the wealthy and the poor and, given that the former is included in her definition but not the latter, muddies her discussion of economic inequality and how economic anxiety fuels politics. Most of all, the definition sort of proves the point of many on the right, that highly-educated liberals see everyone else as beneath them, here to be pitied and explained rather than denigrated as deplorables, but still operating as the other group.

Despite this, however, the book is well worth reading. Here's why:

Williams argues that affluent, highly educated people are clueless about class, and sometimes downright callous about the economic anxieties felt by most Americans. Instead of taking these anxieties seriously, elites attribute voiced concerns to racism, sexism, and nativism. We all remember last year, right? She then spends most of the book schooling elites on how the 'working class' really thinks, with catchy chapter titles such as 'Is the Working Class Just Racist?' (Not necessarily!), 'Is the Working Class Just Sexist?' (Yeah, but so is the UMC). As a working-class academic, I found the chapter 'Why Doesn't the Working Class Get with It and Go to College' mostly right-on target, if a little simplistic. 'Educational levels do not just reflect social class, they are *constitutive* of it. Graduating from college is a class act that both enacts class status and reproduces it' (43). You get the point. Throughout these chapters, and in a penultimate chapter that is overtly about political strategy, she gives clear and cogent examples of strategies that can help rebuild democratic coalitions. All good stuff.

Behind almost every chapter lurks the spectre of Trump and Williams' view that class cluelessness was directly attributable to his election. By being smirky and condescending, educated elites pushed the 'white working class' into the arms of the enemy. There are serious problems with this analysis, not least of which is that Trump won a majority of votes at all income levels, and that *most* white working-class people either did not vote for him or did not vote at all. Still, if Williams can persuade more people like herself to stop being clueless and callous about class, we probably will be much better off as a nation. In the conclusion, Williams describes her project as one of describing a 'relationship gone bad' between elites and the white working class. She wryly writes, 'If you like what that dynamic is doing to the country, by all means continue business as usual' (131). As the class divide widens,

as income inequality grows, as we become a nation of luxurious gated communities for the few and austerity politics for the many, there will be more, not less, chance of class cluelessness morphing into class callousness. We will need writers like Williams to raise the cry among the few to attend to the needs and cries of the many if we have any chance of remaining in it together.

Reviewer Bio

Allison L. Hurst is an Associate Professor of Sociology at Oregon State University, where she teaches courses on the sociology of education, theory, and qualitative research methods. She has written two books on the experiences and identity reformations of working-class college students, *The Burden of Academic Success: Loyalists, Renegades, and Double Agents* (2010) and *College and the Working Class* (2012). Her current research focuses on the outcomes of college graduates, specifically the role of class and the impact of student debt. She was one of the founders of the Association of Working-Class Academics, an organization composed of college faculty and staff who were the first in their families to graduate from college, for which she also served as president from 2008 to 2014.

Early, Steve (2017) *Refinery Town: Big Oil, Big Money and the Remaking of an American City*, Beacon Press, Boston.

Review by Tula Connell

In the 1990s, after the religious conservative policy organization Focus on the Family moved to Colorado Springs, the state's second largest city was colonized by a pantheon of politically rightwing Christian groups, earning it a new nickname, 'the Evangelical Vatican.' By 2014, the city that had helped send Democratic environmentalist Richard Lamb to the governor's office in the 1970s was named the fourth most conservative city in the nation.

A similar dynamic occurred in the early 2000s in Richmond, California, but with a dramatically different outcome. People with left-liberal and Green political backgrounds moved to the economically depressed and environmentally besieged city, invited like-minded friends and colleagues to join them, and together they helped lead a political wave that challenged the town's political overlord, Chevron, championed economically and socially progressive issues, and revamped the city's policing structure. Once the poor cousin of Bay-area cities like Berkeley, Richmond in recent years has been hailed for its rebirth.

Among those newcomers, labor activist and writer Steve Early had the foresight to document the change process in *Refinery Town: Big Oil, Big Money and the Remaking of an American City*. Early, a longtime labor lawyer, organizer and union representative, has written extensively about union organizing campaigns, strikes, and politics, and explored broader themes of working-class empowerment throughout a career in which he has worked at the Mineworkers union, the Teamsters, and the Communications Workers of America (CWA).

Following many years at CWA, in 2011 Early relocated from his base in the Northeast to Richmond. There, he followed a group of left-liberal activists who had recently moved to the city and were taking part in a broad progressive political coalition, the Richmond Progressive Alliance (RPA), which had begun as a loose coalition of Greens in the early 2000s.

Shortly after arriving in Richmond, Early and wife were shaken by a fire at Chevron that required residents to 'shelter in place,' an official directive that recommended taping windows to seal out toxic chemical fumes. The 2012 disaster, caused by a faulty pipe—which had been unaddressed for more than a decade after being identified by Chevron engineers as needing repair—resulted in a \$1.86 billion drop in the city's assessed property values and sparked Early to detail, via 'participatory journalism,' the evolution of Richmond from company town to vibrant democracy.

Early contextualizes Richmond and its historical relationship with Chevron, beginning with the company's formation as Standard Oil of California in 1905. True to the Rockefeller playbook, as the Richmond-based refinery grew to become one of the world's largest, a combination of union-busting and company unionism succeeded in shutting workers out of genuine labor representation for much of the twentieth century.

An influx of African Americans to carry out ship production during World War II shifted the demographics of the white-majority city, which in the 1960s became home to the Black Panthers and ultimately; they became a 'majority minority.' As in most cities across the United States in the 1950s and 1960s, African Americans in Richmond were blocked from obtaining decent housing and often, good jobs. In the ensuing decades, while poverty rose, Chevron increasingly amassed economic and political clout, investing in large-scale real estate ventures and pouring money into local elections, backing candidates most favorable to its interests. By the early 2000s, many factories had closed, leaving vacant lots often toxic with chemicals. Financial mismanagement had created massive city debt and widespread crime gave Richmond a reputation as one of the most dangerous cities in the country.

A city-proposed power plant next to the Chevron refinery in 2004 proved to be the spark for change. A group of Greens coalesced to successfully oppose the move, arguing for alternative energy solutions. Led by an Argentine native and recent city resident, their organization soon evolved into the RPA, as it broadened to include Democrats, African Americans, Latinos and 'free spirits,' in the words of one council member.

Also in 2004, Gayle McLaughlin, another newcomer, successfully ran on an RPA slate for city council, and quickly was elected mayor. McLaughlin and RPA supporters championed a series of innovative and often highly controversial proposals that included a failed attempt to use eminent domain to stop foreclosures and a successful effort to force Chevron to pay a rare tax increase. At the same time, a new police chief from the Midwest implemented a series of reforms that significantly improved both the way police interacted with the community and lowered the crime rate.

The RPA also successfully fought creation of a casino and hotel on the shoreline that would have taken away space for running trails and parks, and campaigned in favor of a soda tax to fund youth sports programs and health initiatives in a referendum voters overwhelmingly defeated. Neither effort was supported by most African American council members, and in the case of the soda tax, the American Beverage Association spent more than \$2 million opposing the plan, targeting the African American and Latino communities with appeals to reject an elitist tax on the working class.

Refinery Town fittingly frames the two campaigns as Big Business versus the people, but does not examine how the political battles also highlight the recurring tensions between environmentalists, and working class and low-income residents for whom jobs and lower taxes are more important. The casino-hotel complex would have created many much-needed jobs in a community where 20 percent of the population lived in poverty. Jobs also proved to be a line in the sand for union support of the soda

tax. Some unions opposed the tax, including the Teamsters, whose members stood to lose jobs as delivery drivers and bottling plant workers.

The two-to-one rejection of the soda tax indicates that charges of liberal paternalism also had significant resonance. A deeper analysis of these fissures in Richmond could have shed valuable light on divisions brought to the fore in the 2016 elections between the ‘elite’ writ large and many working-class voters. And while *Refinery Town*’s emphasis on local leaders offers a close look at progressive politics from above, the voices of working-class residents and other community members would have added critical perspective to such divisive issues, including the role of newcomers as the city’s change leaders.

The political battles Early details in *Refinery Town* highlight not only Chevron’s cash-fueled city clout, but also tension between RPA allies and the entrenched Democratic officeholders who had long backed Chevron. Left unexplored is why these African American council members were strongly supported by their constituents—perhaps because even as Chevron bought politicians, polluted land and endangered residents, it also is the source of well-paid—and now unionized—jobs? Greater interrogation of working-class perspectives and actions here and throughout *Refinery Town* would have broadened and deepened the narrative, necessarily complicating our understanding of the city’s evolving class dynamics.

These are just a sample of the contradictions and complexities the book surfaces in Richmond, a city not so different in its competing priorities from many newly-revitalizing municipalities across the United States. Toward the end of the narrative, the RPA leaders recognize the need to diversify their ranks, acknowledging that the group had too many ‘old, white, economically comfortable retired people of leisure running things.’ A good start.

Even in its failures, the RPA served to open a new dialogue about what is possible in achieving justice for an underserved and often abandoned community, thereby opening a door for future social, political and economic advancement that had long been locked. In documenting the messy, often painful, jumpstarting of a city-wide change process, *Refinery Town* offers an important case study—both cautionary and visionary—for progressive politics.

Reviewer Bio

Tula Connell, an historian of the United States focusing on 20th century labor and social movements, is author of *Conservative Counterrevolution: Challenging Liberalism in 1950s Milwaukee* (University of Illinois Press, April 2016). Connell has worked in labor communications for more than 20 years, including at the AFL-CIO and SEIU, and currently is Senior Communications Officer at the Solidarity Center, an international labor rights organization.

Goldstein, Amy (2017) *Janesville: An American Story*, Simon & Schuster, New York, Ny.

Review by Jeffrey S. Rothstein

What transpires when an automaker shuts an assembly plant and a small city loses its largest employer and blue collar workers' 'best place to get good pay, good benefits' and 'a stable work life' (p. 29)? What happens to those workers and their families 'when good jobs go away and middle-class people tumble out of the middle class' (p. 5)? How does the community navigate the economic and social upheaval? These are some of the questions explored in *Janesville: An American Story*, journalist Amy Goldstein's compelling narrative of the aftermath of the 2008 closure of General Motors' facility in Janesville, Wisconsin.

Based on a diversity of research, including Goldstein's own interviews, historical archives and newspaper articles, and even a documentary about Janesville from which the author quotes dialogue, the book follows a wide cast of characters whose lives are somehow impacted by the plant closure. The author invites us into the homes of workers dealing with job loss and deciding what to do next, schools where local teachers respond to their students' growing emotional and financial crises, and a local job center suddenly flooded with clients. We also sit in on the planning meetings of local politicians and businesspeople strategizing the way forward.

The book is divided into six sections, one for each year, 2008 through 2013. Within each section, chapters of two to seven pages provide glimpsed updates into the lives of Goldstein's informants – workers and their families, politicians, educators, local business people – affected by, and responding to, the plant closure. This format allows Goldstein to simultaneously illustrate the rippling effects of the plant closure through Janesville while juxtaposing the unequal ramifications on members of that community. Indeed, Goldstein concludes that by 2013 a single community has been split into 'two Janesvilles.'

On the one-hand, there is the Janesville of factory workers whose jobs at GM and the automaker's local suppliers have disappeared at the onset of the Great Recession. This is the Janesville struggling to hold their families together and keep from falling into poverty. Investigating this Janesville, Goldstein's research takes on an ethnographic bent, offering intimate portrayals of the families' decision-making around questions with no good or easy answers. Should the family breadwinner take a job at GM's plant in Fort Wayne, Indiana and commute four hours home on weekends? Is it better to keep the family together and hope to find a decent paying job locally? Is it worth trying to retrain at the local community college, and for what job? As the book progresses, we see the consequences of those decisions – the loneliness of living away from home in Fort Wayne; teenagers with multiple jobs buying groceries and dipping

quietly into the closet at school stocked with donated clothes and toiletries; laid off workers with new degrees unable to match the incomes they enjoyed at GM.

On the other hand, there is the Janesville of the local businesspeople and politicians who can afford to be ‘ambassadors of optimism’ (Chapter 28). They view the GM plant closure as a challenge, and perhaps even an opportunity to rebrand the city. They attend fundraising banquets for local charities and celebrate the victories of Republican Governor Scott Walker and local Congressman Paul Ryan. We get to know the local bank executive as she teams up with a billionaire from Janesville’s traditional rival, Beloit. The two women form and lead Rock County 5.0, a business coalition promoting a five-year strategic plan to overcome the two communities’ economic dependence on, and identification with, the automotive industry.

Those looking for complex theoretical analyses of this material will not find much beyond this idea that the plant closing resulted in a split of this community into two Janesvilles. There are some startling statistics on the failure of retraining programs to improve graduates’ earnings over their counterparts who just went and looked for a new job, as well as some jobs data that calls into question the efficacy of local economic initiatives. But the implications of these empirical findings are mostly left for readers to discern.

Amy Goldstein is a journalist, not a scholar. Her goal is not to contribute to academic debates, but to convey and conjure the very emotions that academic writing frequently eschews. She does so to great effect in this work of creative non-fiction, particularly as she incorporates her subjects’ recollections of what they were saying and thinking at seminal moments into scenes written in the present tense. For example, Chapter 20 opens with the line ‘*Just get going*, Matt Wopat whispers to himself. *Go.*’ He is behind the wheel of his pickup readying himself for the drive to his new job at GM’s plant in Fort Wayne. His wife and daughters ‘are crowded together. He watches them as if in a picture frame. They’re crying. They’re blowing kisses his way’ (p. 103). In the chapter *Discovering the Closet*, a student introduced to the closet in her high school stocked with donated clothes and toiletries ‘is overwhelmed by this thought that is hitting her, all of a sudden. ‘There’s [sic] more kids like me!’’ (p. 182).

If there is fault to be found in this narrative, it lies in the caricature of Janesville before the plant closing as the bucolic, tight-knit community with a ‘can-do spirit’ to which Goldstein refers repeatedly. Those of us familiar with Janesville before the plant closure knew a more complicated workplace and city. My own book depicts a GM workforce with schisms between Janesville natives and workers who had transferred from other states after the automaker closed their plants. Furthermore, Goldstein’s description of Paul Ryan as rising from ‘one of three sprawling families in town known collectively as the ‘Irish Mafia’ because of an outsized role in construction that made many of the Ryans wealthy’ (p. 37) suggests a city of some historic class divisions. In fact, though Ryan links his politics to ‘the values and people of Janesville’ (p. 225), Goldstein is careful to point out that he does not win a majority of the Janesville vote and, after being introduced as Mitt Romney’s 2008 running mate, is forced to hold his ‘homecoming’ outside his own congressional district to avoid pro-union demonstrators.

What makes Goldstein’s oversimplified depiction of Janesville before the GM plant closed disappointing is that as ‘An American Story’ of economic upheaval, a more

complex Janesville would be more representative. Economic crises do not create class divisions in American society; they expose and exacerbate them. That is what happened in Janesville. Plant closure affected the whole city, but some lives continued relatively unchanged while others faced upheaval. Goldstein captures this all-too-familiar phenomenon in a book that is both a page-turner and potential teaching tool for helping students understand the real-life impact of de-industrialization, economic inequality, and the failure of our economy to produce quality jobs for the working class.

Reviewer Bio

Jeffrey S. Rothstein is Associate Professor of Sociology at Grand Valley State University in Grand Rapids, Michigan. His research focuses on the changing nature of work in the global economy and the impact of globalization on labor. He is the author of *When Good Jobs Go Bad: Globalization, De-unionization and Declining Job Quality in the North American Auto Industry* (Rutgers University Press).

Cramer, Katherine J. (2016) *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Il.

Review by Donald P. Taylor

‘Why do working class people vote against their own interests?’ is a chronically vexing question in liberal and academic circles. In Wisconsin, Scott Walker was elected governor in 2010, and then, after a legislative assault on public employees, he prevailed in a recall election in 2012 and won re-election in 2014. These events led many to cry: ‘How could this possibly have happened? Don’t people understand what he has done?’ In her book *The Politics of Resentment*, University of Wisconsin-Madison political science scholar Katharine J. Cramer presents a reply to this conundrum: rural working class voters did indeed have an understanding of at least part of what Walker was doing – and they supported it.

Cramer’s research approach was to identify a variety of rural communities around Wisconsin, then visit each to seek out ‘groups that met regularly and in a place in which I could easily introduce myself’ (29-30), such as local diners, restaurants, gas stations, and other places. She ultimately visited twenty seven communities where she very openly identified herself as a professor from Madison, and wrestled, with varying degrees of success, with the barriers created by her subjects’ perceptions of that identity. In pursuing these dialogues, she has uncovered a significant frame of perception not visible to those who are confused by the voting behavior of rural working class people: resentment, springing from an insider-outsider identity that focuses political questions around who gets what, who doesn’t, and who is to blame. In the author’s words, the book ‘shows people making sense of politics in a way that places resentment toward other citizens at the center’ (5). Her book speaks to a middle-class audience: those seeking to understand, from some distance, the perplexing political behaviors of the rural poor and working class.

According to Cramer, there is a ‘rural consciousness’ that combines identities of class and place. She describes rural consciousness as having three elements: perceptions of power, perceptions of values and lifestyles, and perceptions of who gets what. From within this framework, rural people see themselves as hard working yet not getting a fair shake, and powerless to do anything about it. Meanwhile, people in Milwaukee and Madison – especially government bureaucrats and university faculty – are perceived as not working hard and yet receiving a greatly disproportionate share of

reward, in large part because they have the power to make decisions about who gets what.

Cramer provides enlightening samples of the remarks she heard, illustrating people's sense of separateness and victimization, largely at the hands of government and public employees. One subject plainly emphasized resentment toward public employees, saying, in reference to Walker's stripping of public employees' collective bargaining rights, 'I'm glad Walker did what he did. It's about time someone takes something away from those bastards' (27). Other conversations brought forth similar sentiments about public employees. One person said, 'You name me one thing that they've given up in the past 45 years. It's nothing, nothing, nothing... I'm sick of collective bargaining' (187). Another, a former Democrat, asserted, 'Those folks downstate have little understanding of what life is like up here. Enough is enough. Public employees gotta pay their share' (193). The sense of victimization by government was also captured in people's perception that the two main urban areas of Madison and Milwaukee get preferential treatment from government, while rural areas receive back less than they contribute. In one of these conversations, one person said, 'All the things they do, based on Madison and Milwaukee, never us,' to which another replied, 'They don't understand how rural people live and what we deal with and our problems' (71). In another, a subject stated, 'The money is collected here, it is sent to Madison, and it is dispersed to Milwaukee and Madison primarily, and so our return on what we spend is very little, you know?' (160).

What Cramer shows is that the subjects have constructed an us-versus-them worldview in which the 'us' is 'rural people' and the 'them' is not the wealthy, not immigrants, but fellow citizens who are perceived as powerful, privileged urban liberals. So while many are perplexed and assume that working-class people are tricked into voting against their own interests by the lure of conservative social issues, Cramer demonstrates that for many, their patterns of voting and political engagement are directly in line with their perceived interests: going after the people who unduly benefit and/or don't work hard:

rural folks like me = hard-working people = non-public employees = deserving
versus
urbanites = people who don't work hard = public employees = undeserving (189)

Viewed through this lens, Walker's attacks on public employees 'were a victory for small-town Wisconsinites like themselves' (186).

A problematic aspect of Cramer's research method is that it is not possible to generalize her results to a larger population. Hers was not a representative sample derived using traditional social science methodologies; it was a series of informal conversations held with 'coffee klatch' groups in twenty seven Wisconsin communities. The people in these groups tended to be white, male, and older – near or past retirement age. Cramer recognizes the limitations of this approach, asserting 'my purpose was to better understand how people in particular places prescribed meaning to their political world. This study should not be judged, therefore, on the basis of whether the results are sufficiently generalizable to a broader population...' (214).

If we cannot generalize the results to a broader population, how much actual value does the book have to the field of working-class studies, or any other? Despite our inability to scientifically generalize its results, its value lies in the fact that it opens up a different way of thinking about the political behaviors of the rural working class. We are unable, from her 'data,' to draw any strong conclusions, but Cramer poses an important alternative way for us to consider the questions at hand. Agonizing over working-class people voting against their own interests is an analytical dead-end; considering the possibility that identity frames and resentment may lie behind political behavior points an important possible way out of that dead end. Accordingly, despite this limitation, Cramer's book poses a more useful analytical schema than another recent book, J.D. Vance's memoir *Hillbilly Elegy*, which constructs a view of the poor and working-class world solely through the personal, anecdotal experiences of its author, without developing a framework for a broader, thoughtful analysis of any aspect of working class life.

A second problematic aspect of Cramer's book is her narrow, and ultimately incomplete, analysis of the origins of rural consciousness and resentment. She tests the theory that media messages are a significant factor, but does this primarily through an examination of local newspapers. Initially hypothesizing that local papers would tend to be anti-government and critical of public employees, she instead found the opposite: that local newspapers tended to be more supportive than metropolitan papers. She thus concluded that newspapers are not a contributing factor to rural resentment. She surprisingly has little to say about the influence of the Internet or national news media such as Fox News. Bypassing these seemingly important factors, she concludes that 'It is likely that rural consciousness exists not because it is communicated via news media but because we teach these things to each other,' (110), through a 'bottom-up process of people teaching in-group/out-group categorizations to each other, including the many layers and associations that those distinctions contain, that clarifies, reinforces, and keeps alive these divisions that politicians can then exploit' (219). Her conclusion on this point is thus incomplete and unsatisfying, leaving important questions unexplored.

Reading *The Politics of Resentment*, one very quickly realizes that Cramer is not just posing useful questions about Wisconsin. Although written before the 2016 election, the book provides a thought-provoking framework for discussing the election of Donald Trump – an election that once again triggered hand-wringing over the voting patterns of working-class whites. While some observers blame the economic status of the working class and others point to the influence of conservative social issues, Cramer has provided a vocabulary and framework for discussing whether identity and resentment might be important factors as well.

Reviewer Bio

Donald P. Taylor is an Associate Professor of Labor Education at the School for Workers, University of Wisconsin-Extension. He teaches in the areas of union leadership, organizational development and change, and public sector labor relations. He has published in journals including *Labor Studies Journal* and *Labor Law Journal*. His current book project examines the experiences of workers in a now-closed New Hampshire sneaker factory.