'WELCOME TO THE MACHINE!' RESISTING ISOMORPHIC, MASCULINISED CORPORATISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH FEMINIST SCHOLARSHIP

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Abstract

This paper discusses the synthesised findings from two interdisciplinary, feminist studies conducted under the auspices of the non-corporate nexus, the Women's Academic Network at Bournemouth University, UK, of which the main author is a co-convenor and co-founder. These qualitative studies focus on academic women's experiences of managing careers in the work culture of corporate Institutions of Higher Education (HE) in a modern UK university. The background to this work draws from a body of international research into the slower career progression rates of women academics in comparison to male counterparts and the gendered barriers the former encounter. While there has been encouragement within Higher Education bodies across the EU to balance out the current gendered inequities within academia, our findings indicate that these are woven into the institutional fabric of enacted daily academic practices serving to disadvantage women scholars.

Furthermore, although located at different starting and end positions on the career track, women academics, like male colleagues, are equally subject to the increasing expectations of the corporate HEI towards production line academic work which serves to decentralise and degrade the critical intellectualism and worth of academia in an attempt to reframe it as a masculinised, quantifiably driven, quasi-business exercise in knowledge 'output' and production-line teaching in the context of mass education. This isomorphic global trend is analysed in an illuminating book *The Slow Professor* by Berg and Seeber (2016).

'Slow' taken in the sense that Berg and Seeber (2016) intend is a term has been inspired by other 'slow' movements (for example 'slow food' versus 'fast food'). In this usage it means 'deliberate' or 'conscious' as well as 'in-depth'. This is posed as a challenge to corporatisation and the demands of an ever-increasing tempo in HE.

In our paper, in line with feminist research methodologies, we take our inspiration from Berg and Seeber's analysis to further explore how women academics are situated and 'managed' in the gendered commodification of Higher Education in the UK, with clear applications to a wider international community of women scholars working in entrenched patriarchal HEI.

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Introduction 1

The title of the paper was partially inspired by a well known song by the progressive rock band, Pink Floyd, describing how creative generativity is processed into commodities through mechanised, profiteering control. This resonates with the topic of this presentation where two interdisciplinary, feminist studies are explored in a critical discussion synthesising the findings from these complementary studies as conducted by the independent and non-corporate body, the Women's Academic Network (WAN) at Bournemouth University, UK. The author was the

Principal Investigator of the studies and is both a co-founder of WAN and has been its primary co-convenor since 2013.

The founding of WAN was based on the results of an informal survey of women colleagues at the institution indicating the desire of women academics for a network that would assist in promoting their careers and lobbying on issues of concern for women in academic workplaces. These form the primary aims of WAN and where a further survey in 2017 provided evidence that WAN was indeed considered to be very important to its members; although it was recognised that greater institutional and external impact was needed to tackle gender inequities in Higher Education (HE). To this end, WAN also supports research related to its concerns, where the two qualitative papers discussed here focus on the experiences of women academics in managing their careers within the corporate culture of Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in a modern UK university setting.

Here the concept of isomorphic convergence is employed. This refers to replication of perceived successful models in the pursuit of organisational efficiency. Yet in so doing it raises the problems of reducing diverse approaches to a constraining homogeneity. The rationale of compliancy and conformity dominates regardless of the differences of context (DiMaggio & Powell 1983; Ashencaen Crabtree forthcoming).

A key example of this, and which is a hallmark of the corporatisation of many modern universities globally, relates to the isomorphic trend of reframing HE as quasi-businesses with the focus on mass education and quantifiable 'output' (Ashencaen Crabtree & Shiel forthcoming, a). Depleted resources (such as time, conducive infrastructure together with sufficient support and administrative staff) are reduced in this model, while greater demands are made on academics to generate profit margins and fill institutional resource gaps. In keeping with the quasi-business model the rhetoric of 'management', as well as a proliferation in managerial, 'overseeing' roles are characteristics of the corporate university (Ashencaen Crabtree forthcoming, b). These are issues explored by Berg and Seeber (2016) in their published manifesto: *The Slow Professor: Challenging the culture of speed in the academy*.

Finally, gender forms a main analytical concept here and is employed as an acknowledged social construction that is both created and enacted within social and cultural milieus particular to specific contexts (Charlebois 2011; Wharton 2012). In turn Morley (2013) considers how gender is constituted within the academy foregrounding the discussion of how women academics thereby operate or negotiate, comply with or undermine these gender constructions. The ontological aspects of gender, such as biological differences and gender normativity (Butler 1999), for example in terms of the domestic roles of motherhood, are explored further.

Critical literature summary

Relevant international research literature focuses on the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects as forming the more conspicuous areas where gender inequalities are found. Thus although gender parity of students studying medicine is noted, the numbers entering the academy are heavily skewed post-graduation (Bhatia et al., 2015). The so-called 'leaking pipe' has been noted by a number of authors as constituting higher attrition rates of junior women academics in the US (Easterley & Ricard 2011). Gender discrepancies in terms of rank, salary and resources are noted in this regard (Wright et al. 2003). Moreover, the UK context in relation to STEM subjects is not dissimilar to that of the US (Dickey Zakaib 2011; Shen 2013); giving rise to the UK 'Athena Swan' Awards under the UK's Equality Charter Unit, originally promoting women in the sciences but now extended to other disciplines as well (Ashencaen Crabtree forthcoming).

This, however, is not to suggest that such inequalities exist only in the STEM subjects. It is apparent that internationally gendered differences are implicated in academic career progression. For example, statistical data referring to the year 2013/4 reports that in the UK only 22% of professors were women (Grove 2015), representing a slight rise on the previous year. Accordingly this is also reflected in academic wages where a 12.3% gender wage gap was found for the year 2014/5; this only being only a marginal increase on the previous year (University and College Union 2016).

Academia retains its characterisation as a male-dominated environment that embraces the idea of the 'male model of work', implying total commitment to waged work of long hours uninterrupted labour from domestic or family commitments (Pascall 2012). This is exacerbated by the prevalence of computer technology and the infiltration of this into all parts of the academic role, which in turn seep into the private domain (Nippert-Eng 1995). Rooted in the traditional idea of academic life is the old notion of the male monastic world that excludes women and children, but contemporary academia also seeks to embrace the macho elements of the corporate world (Ashencaen Crabtree & Shiel forthcoming b). Such work contexts are inhospitable to the majority of women, for whom survival in this male world demands learning to adopt masculine characteristics and behaviour, even in traditional female-majority vocational areas like nursing studies (Lindhardt & Bøttcher Berthelsen 2016)

It is thus not surprising to learn that Australian women academics regard a work-life balance as almost impossible to attain (Toffoletti & Starr 2016). While Taşçı-Kaya (2016) comments on the difficulties of managing heavily bureaucratised academic roles and family life in Turkish HEI. Higher levels of stress, slower career progression and family conflicts are discussed by Zhang (2010) in reference to Chinese women academics. The hard choice between a career or children as faced by women academics in the Western hemisphere is considered by Heijstra et al. (2015). Commensurately Sallee (2016) notes the high rates of single, childless women compared to male academics

in the US. Finally, in a comparative study of university policies in Australia, Probert (2005) reaches the conclusion that women's career barriers are primarily caused by unshared domestic responsibilities, rather than created within university contexts.

Returning to the UK, however, gender channelling into particular roles and tasks features, where statistical data indicates the lower inclusion of women academics (as well as those from minority ethnic groups) in the recent, national 5-year Research Excellence Framework exercise (HEFCE 2015). Women academics in turn are apparently more likely to be channelled into teaching, pastoral and administrative roles - the so-called 'Mom's roles' (Eddy & Ward 2015: 4). Commensurately Bartlett (2005) notes the importance given to student teaching evaluations, where women's labour in these feminised roles is institutionally useful but significantly less rewarded than the more elite, masculinised research roles (Ashencaen Crabtree & Shiel forthcoming a). In this vein Guy and Newman (2004) comment on how women as expected to provide essentialised mothering nurturance to students and where they fail to do so are likely to be punished by poor student evaluations.

Given these obstacles the question of how women are supported in academia is moot. The somewhat contested issue of mentoring offers one such panacea, where women are claimed to be more confident, satisfied and productive through mentorship (Schor 1997). The initiation of novices into academia is an important component of mentorship (Ali & Coate 2013). However, other literature points out that insensitive or inappropriate mentorship can be equally harmful ((Blood et al. 2012). This leads to the suggestion that to counter unhelpful power dynamics between mentor and mentee, egalitarian feminist co-mentoring carries clear merit (McGuire & Reger 2003).

A less explored form of support resonating strongly with both the focus and source of the WAN studies relates to women's support networks within academia. Accordingly, Selepè et al. (2012) discuss the virtues of the South African 'W(h)ine Club', whose original purpose was to act as a multidisciplinary research team but is extended to become a social lifeline (wine) as well as a supportive (whine) nexus of women scholars. Likewise, the 'Critical Pedagogy group' in Australia offers an academic outlet but crucially one that enables female members collectively explore survival strategies (Wilson et al. 2005). Both are reminiscent of the authors' women's academic group, WAN, where women's careers are collectively promoted while attempts are made to support individuals in the group. Women-centric groups such as these may provide another level up from individual mentoring to collective expressions of solidarity with actions to lobby for greater gender equity in the academy for the benefit of all.

The WAN studies: methods and methodology

Here, a syncretic discussion is offered of the two qualitative studies carried out under the auspices of WAN at the same institution. '"Loaded dice?" Barriers to women's progression' was the first study carried out in 2015. While the second, 'Donning the "Slow Professor": a feminist action research pilot project' is on-going. Both studies employed aspects of feminist epistemology where the subjective perception offers insights into the overarching structural constraints influencing the nature of the national and global academy (Stanley & Wise 1994). Furthermore, in keeping with the methodologies chosen in the first study the overturning of hierarchical dyads of the researcher-subject was established, where, for example, participant accounts are attributed to the person albeit via an alias. In the second study, all participants as potential 'slow professors' were elevated to the position of co-researcher in order to avoid an artificial distinction between the researcher and the researched (Ramazanoglu & Holland 2002; Ashencaen Crabtree forthcoming). Thus Stacey's (1991: 21) position that authenticity, reciprocity and intersubjectivity are critical to feminist epistemology was observed.

The earlier study 'Loaded dice?' employed focus group discussions (FGD) for data gathering together with a thematic analysis. This sought to explore three research questions:

1. What barriers to progression do women academics within the institution experience during their careers?
2. How are the implications and impact of these perceived?
3. How do participants identify positive solutions that might facilitate change based on these experiences?

FGD depend upon the development of dialogue within the group of participants chosen for similar characteristics, in this case they were all women colleagues at the same institution and where the majority were WAN members. A level of homogeneity in dialogue enables topics relevant to participants to unfold and by so doing creating new insights (Seal et al. 1998). Reaching a consensus of opinions is not the aim of FGD but the inclusion of all views, whether shared or otherwise, is. Facilitation by the researchers helps to engage participants, guide the topic and ensure that all views are heard with the group. Context and content are both important to the process (Bryman 2016; Woodyatt et al. 2016). An example of this was the topic regarding power differentials within the academy, those by male colleagues over women and indeed senior women over other female colleagues.

A Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology was used for the 'slow professor' study involving WAN members, this being 'Donning the "Slow Professor": a feminist action research pilot project'. PAR relates to the active engagement of participants as co-researchers exploring their own condition and therefore holds elements of conscious-raising through problem identification, agreed intervention and group evaluation before moving on to the next cycle of problem identification (Chesnay 2016; Ashencaen Crabtree et al. 2001).

In this latter study only one research question was offered:

'What are the perceived benefits and barriers towards the adoption of Slow Professor principles for academic women in a modern corporate university following a period of trial adoption?'

The plan for this study was to trial various strategies as selected by individuals over an agreed time period to enable new habits and working practices to form. If experienced as a successful strategy this would be returned to the group for further discussion, refinement and adoption. Ultimately the plan was to offer a raft of tried-and-tested strategies across the faculties for other academics of both sexes and across disciplines to try out with a view to seeing if these were efficacious in combatting the damaging levels of stress, pressure and ill health increasingly associated with academia. An equally important aim was to re-enshrine the concept of scholarship as a deeply intellectual endeavour requiring time to think, plan, write and disseminate in a way that is felt and argued to be eroded in the neo-liberal corporate academy (Berg & Seeber 2016).

Findings

From analysis of data from the first study focusing on academic barriers influencing women's careers, six thematic themes were developed as follows together with explanations:

1. '"She for He" views from the inside', which played on and inverted a well-known sponsorship programmes for businesswomen by senior male colleagues in corporate industries beyond academia. Here the theme related to how women academics perceive male authority and prerogatives to be bolstered by senior women in the academy over and beyond that of women colleagues.
2. 'The new housework' refers to participant views of academic tasks, such as teaching and administration that are viewed as holding lower kudos than research positions, and where women are primarily channelled into the former and men into the latter.
3. 'Tokenism' was a theme relating to the tendency for women's rise into the higher echelons of the institution to remain noted exceptions rather than a normal or achievable trajectory for women academics. Such uniqueness was viewed as serving the interests of particular 'exceptional' women as female tokens in a predominantly male world, working against the collective aims of the majority of lower ranking women.
4. A further finding, 'A view from the outside: male one-upmanship' referred to perceived gamesmanship by male colleagues towards gaiting personal advantage over other colleagues and capitalising on inherent sexist privileges in the academy.
5. 'Toxic environments' in turn relates directly to masculinist work cultures, the ethos and the practices behind these and the punitive marginalisation of non-compliance with these.
6. Finally 'Helping Hands' is a theme that relates to both formal and more often, informal, support, mentorship and sponsorship of women colleagues within the academy, and frequently in the form of one-to-one relationships or women's groups, such as WAN.

Two meta-discourses, discussed elsewhere, were also developed through analysis welding the themes together. These being the construction of gender in the academy and ludic games playing the academy (Ashencaen Crabtree & Shiel forthcoming a and b).

In the 'slow professor' study, identified strategies (many inspired by Berg & Seeber 2016) sought to test the effectiveness of suggested approaches against the co-researchers' accepted standards of deliberate scholarship, rather than solely in terms of constructions of corporate efficiency. The following strategies were selected by individual co-researchers:

- 'Timelessness' strategies (*the difference between artificial 'corporate time' and genuine 'academic time'.*
- Restricting the inner bully
- Risking candour (*being honest about what I am finding hard to accomplish*)
- Scheduling in 'thinking' time (*I don't have to 'do' all the time to be of value*!)
- Making sure I always prioritize supporting colleagues above the demands and often artificial deadlines of the organisation (*people first!*)
- Planning to look at work emails only twice a day. Closing Microsoft Outlook at all other times (*the multitasking/continuous online presence is really affecting my ability to concentrate*).
- Stop feeling guilty *(I would love to learn how to do it. I recognise this as a big issue for me)*
- Learning to say 'no' a bit more often and assertively (*saying 'yes' to other demands often means saying 'no' to what I want to do*)
- Permitting 'fallow' times (*time to rest my mind between bigger projects/tasks instead of trying to rush into the next big job immediately*)
- Instituting rest times within the working day
- Sharing these ideas with other people, including students
- Working towards the goals of this project by sharing with other colleagues
- Listen more to myself and other people
- Stop charging through day ticking off tasks on a list that never disappears because I keep adding new things at the bottom (*have list-free days!*)
- Address my addiction to emails/the online world.

- Accept and embrace my imperfections
- Time to Care (*Specifically I plan to: A. Plan break times in my day – to go for a walk, to reflect and clear my head. B. Be more critically discerning about the emails I send. Do I need to send them or can I phone instead? C. Don't be critical of myself for wanting to protect home time. Stop myself from feeling I have to work at the weekends to keep afloat*).
- Be more realistic of myself (*stop expecting the impossible*)
- Start putting in 'keep clear days' to remind myself not to book in meetings when I plan to work from home and when I have to be in the office (*Skype instead so I have 'time'*)
- Be more realistic in the targets I set myself – plan how long tasks may take and then double it.

A critical synthesis of study findings
The '24/7' Academia Inc. work culture
In keeping with the concept of corporatisation of the academy, whether aggressively pursued or passively accepted, participants in both studies viewed HE as potentially damaging to academics, particularly women academics, in leading to stress, dissatisfaction and ill health. The ideal of a work-life balance was regarded as completely undefended within the masculinised 'total' work culture of academia (Pascall 2012; Toffoletti and Starr, 2016). For women, particularly those with domestic responsibilities such as children or older parents to care for, the burden of trying to conform to the culture and values of the corporate academy without neglecting their domestic duties was a heavy one, as this respondent points out:

'Mala':   I think the reality is, that, that women do carry the greater burden, caring burdens, in society... And so if the work life balance is not being addressed, then it's having a greater impact on women. And that is probably reflected in the [low] number of women who are getting in to the top, because our work life balance in University is toxic, because we're all seen to be working all the time. And so, if you're not able to work all the time, you can't progress, can you?'

This was seen by another participant as a particularly female problem, which was perceived as not affecting more confident male colleagues:

Miriam: I also find that my male colleagues are much better than my female colleagues and myself, in saying 'no' to things, or in just saying, 'right, this is it for the day'. Yeah, in all these things where we are hesitant to display what we might be done, and we can't do anymore of things. Be it in a day, or in a project... I feel that they [men] are much quicker in saying, 'this is what I've done,' and 'I've done well today'...And also they don't hesitate so much to say 'no'.

Heavy workloads were often described as overwhelming where tasks completed simply led to a proliferation of new tasks to do. Yet participants in the first study also viewed themselves as unable to articulate their fatigue or stress for fear of being viewed as failing in a highly competitive working environment. The acceleration of speed in the academy exacerbated this tension without the amelioration of equal levels of personal satisfaction.

'Pam':   I have to say that, there are days when I just want to burst into tears in my office because things have got too much. And I'd have to say that in the four years I've been here, that has only happened once. And the shame I felt, because it happened in front of a male colleague, who shared my office, and I was just mortified, well I just couldn't handle it anymore. But I think, for me, I do try to definitely put on this front that, you know, that 'yep, no, everything's ok, I can handle everything, no problem'. But, the number of times I actually go home at the end of the day and just cry, you know, just because I can't handle the stress of it, and you know, the student problems are just too much ... and there's no outlet for that, you know... I wake up every morning going, 'oh, I don't want to go to work today, you know, because I know what's coming.'

Resonating with these accounts, a telling strategy offered by one 'slow professor' co-researcher was that of 'risking candour', where a precarious situation could arise through such honesty but which also promised a level of emancipation. In addition to this courageous step two other tactics were offered to counter collegial silence regarding the feasibility of managing heavy workloads without reprieve: 'Be more realistic of myself (*stop expecting the impossible*)' and 'Stop charging through day ticking off tasks on a list that never disappears because I keep adding new things at the bottom (*have list-free days!*)'
However bravely such strategies were flagged up the hazards of these were also felt to be very genuine ones in stripping oneself of the armour of pretence to reveal the capacities and vulnerabilities of the real person beneath. Indefatigable labour and conveyor-belt productivity as ideals to strive for in the corporate academy were regarded by participants in both studies as not only impossible to achieve but as at the root of a number of dysfunctions affecting HE. Thus while the risks were high so too were the rewards in terms of liberation from damaging ideologies

and practices.

The theme of toxicity was one that emerged from the first study in terms of the workplace as grounded in a culture of blame, where the individual is experienced as almost entirely subordinated to the mechanistic processes of the institution. Bullying and harassment individually or as group was said to be one way these toxic messages are communicated to staff, while others lay in the nature of communiqués to staff in terms of the number of demands and new protocols that were imposed top-down without adequate consultation. However, a more invidious aspect of institutional toxicity arose from the perception of how punitive attitudes became internalised in staff, where there became less need for institutional policing given the self-regulation of staff. This in turn related strongly to findings relating to guilt and anxiety as articulated below:

'Diane':   I live in guilt. I wake up in the morning and I feel guilty, I mean. I feel guilty, I get here at 8am, I feel guilty I wasn't here at half seven, you know. Or, you know, I feel guilty when I take 30 minutes to have a lunch break. I never have a lunch break, ever, ever! And if I do take a lunch break, it tends to be with a colleague, it's the only time I'll allow myself to have lunch, is with, or at a meeting at my desk. Well, exactly like that, you know. It's exactly like that, but yeah, there's guilt.

A sense of isolation emerged from the findings, where it remained uncertain to participants whether struggling with overwhelming demands was one shared by other colleagues or not, leading to uncertainty whether anything could be done to reasonably ameliorate unreasonable levels of work. In this respect the heavy reliance by universities on computer technology fed into the associated aspects of social media entering academia. Sites such as Linked In are often promoted as very important to gaining an international academic presence where self-promotion appears to be a raison d'être for the ambitious academic. Thus the 24/7 work culture of academia was viewed as invading the privacy of the domestic sphere, which in turn became just another routinised work environment (Nippert-Eng 1995). The anxiety of self-regulation demands almost total adherence to the work culture and so it was unsurprising that the second study noted that one of the main barriers militating against deep concentration was habitual and obsessive email checking, leading to the following responses: 'Address my addiction to emails/the online world' and 'Planning to look at work emails only twice a day. Closing Microsoft Outlook at all other times (*the multitasking/ continuous online presence is really affecting my ability to concentrate*)'.

As we have seen Probert (2005) claims that the university policies she studies were free of gender inequalities and thus where other causes need to be found for the slow rise of women academics into leadership positions. In the first WAN study it was felt that gender inequalities were evident in practices if not in the written detail of institutional policies but that the results were similar (Ashencaen Crabtree & Shiel forthcoming a). The lonely and obsessive figure as described by Lindhardt & Bøttcher Berthelsen (2016) was viewed as not so much admirable but rather a dysfunctional role model.

Self-sustaining strategies

How women academics cope within the corporatised academy proved an interesting discussion point in both studies. Yet these were not painless options but demanded, in one case, demotion to lesser rank and in another moving out of academia and into administration, viewed as offering greater gender equity.

'Jude'   In fact, I've reduced my hours, so I'm now at Point X [career grade]. But that enables me to work my full hours a week and still have my weekends free. Because I'm in a distance relationship for 5 or 6 years and so when you only see your other half for, like, one night a week, and then you spend most of your time on the computer on Saturdays, or marking or whatever. It just got to a point where we said 'working at weekends has got to stop!'

Making career sacrifices in the service of adult relationships is perhaps less common than those for children, as reported by Taşçı-Kaya (2016) in terms of the problems of juggling academic careers with domestic life, and the stress consequences of trying to do so, as noted by Zhang (2010). However, in the first WAN study women who manage to achieve a successful career with children were apparently often seen as surprisingly unusual.

Claire: When I was at University of X one of the female administrators said to me, because I was talking about, I don't know, something. And she said, 'oh, you've got children,' and my children were both quite small then, I said, 'yes'. She said, 'oh, I didn't think people like you had children.' I suddenly thought, 'what do you mean?' She said, 'well, you know, you have a career, and everything, you know you don't look like you've got children.' So you get these really odd comments from women as well.

The idea that academic success and parenthood is less likely to occur in women than male colleagues, forms part of the asymmetrical gendered assumptions that are prevalent in HE (Sallee 2016; Heijstra et al. 2015). The basis of such assumptions relies on the unspoken belief that wives can cover domestic responsibilities and that none exist for single women. Given such untested assumptions the incentives for HE to create family friendly working

hours and conditions are reduced, for unlike many genuine profit-making businesses where women employees proliferate, the profile of academia, particularly in the upper hierarchies, remains ideologically archetypally male.

Findings from the first study indicted that academic mothers were more likely to draw upon the support of female staff who were non-parents rather than ask for assistance from male colleagues who were themselves parents. This, however, was also seen to be a problematic solution by participants:

Holly: There's an assumption that if you're a single woman and you don't have a boyfriend or partner, or whatever, and you don't have any children, well then of course you're available for an Open Day on a Saturday. And of course you can stay late into the night, because you've got nothing else to do, because you're *just* a sad, single woman. Now, thankfully I have a partner now, for the first time in a while, but even now... I'm approached first for things, and I'm, you know, 'well, ummm... no.' But even when you said 'no' before, it would be, 'yeah but you know you don't have the kids to go home to, so you know childcare is an issue for me'. And you know, and it's like, 'yeah ok'. So you end up getting 'guilted' into a lot of stuff as well, if you're a single female within the academy. So, it's interesting how it just hits you on both sides: you're screwed if you are and you're screwed if you're not.

In the 'slow professor' study, the ability to refuse to take on extra demands in order to protect one's time was viewed as very difficult one to do, where one co-researcher put forward the following goal: 'Learning to say "no" a bit more often and assertively (*saying 'yes' to other demands often means saying 'no' to what I want to do*)'. Yet the ability to do this without emotional repercussions was also viewed as a difficult to learn as stated in this strategy: 'Stop feeling guilty *(I would love to learn how to do it. I recognise this as a big issue for me)*'.

Other forms of institutional support however relate to staff development that may include formal mentoring, although informal mentoring between colleagues was also appreciated as being less tied to institutional goal setting and control (Blood et al. 2012). In both cases these were likely to involve partnerships between experienced and novice colleagues as described by Ali and Coate (2013) and McGuire and Reger (2003) Collective support could also be found via WAN or university trade unions, although the latter were not specifically woman-centric lobby. However, without mentoring or individually supportive help many other female colleagues remain unheard and unhelped, yet with a deep need to be so, as reflected in t his account:

'Ella': You know, I ended up finding another Programme Leader that I could talk to, but then I was taking away from her, being as busy as I am. But now I'm taking 20, 30 minutes of her time just going, 'blah, blah, blah! And then I did this, and then I did that. Do you think I should've done this? I don't know!' And you're really just kind of... you're verbally vomiting really about what's just happened, and you need some... I don't know what it is, you just... it's almost like you need [someone] to go, 'yeah, you know what? You did that fine!' or 'yeah, that was great!' [But] there's no congratulatory thing there.

In consequence the need by colleagues to provide active listening as collegial support, was identified as another slow professor strategy, which specifically challenged the impersonal and sometimes inhuman culture of the academy where individuals felt reduced to mere units of labour: 'Making sure I always prioritize supporting colleagues above the demands and often artificial deadlines of the organisation (*people first!)*' However, offering compassionate collegiality also demanded that individuals recognised the injuries of self-regulation through these strategies: 'Listen more to myself and other people'; along with the evangelical mission of spreading the 'good news': 'Sharing these ideas with other people, including students'.

Finally, the issue of time, as the most scarce resource of all in the corporate academy, was recognised in both studies but where the 'slow professors' reframed this as artificially depleted by the deliberate speeding up of time and increased productivity demands in HEI. Thus, time to think, time to plan, time to recuperate, time simply to *be*, co-researchers defined as: 'Permitting 'fallow' times (*time to rest my mind between bigger projects/tasks instead of trying to rush into the next big job immediately*)' and 'Instituting rest times within the working day'; and finally, the revolutionary, 'Accept and embrace my imperfections'.

Conclusion

The two studies discussed in this paper demonstrate that women's position in the academy is still occluded and that corporatisation and the increase of women academics in HE has not altered these gendered terrains. Here the opportunity to amplify these concerns through feminist epistemologies serves to deconstruct hierarchies of power by breaking through an unspoken sense of individual isolation and the associated self-governance generated by anxiety which serves to perpetuate inequities, as described in the first study. In this vein an emancipatory mission through consciousness-raising in the PAR process is being realised via the aims of the second study.

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