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Doing Academia Differently: "I Needed Self-Help Less Than I Needed a Fair Society"

> A great deal of harm is being done by belief in the virtuousness of work.
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> — Bertrand Russell, "In Praise of Idleness"

> We are committed to doing academia in particular ways, and not in others.
>
> — Brocher Foundation Feminist Collective

I had decided that becoming a university professor might be a good fit; friends and colleagues had suggested that I would be valuable to a university, so I prepared for a restructuring of my family life.[1] *I read Tokarczyk and Fay's* Working-Class Women in the Academy *and Babcock and Laschever's* Women Don't Ask *to gather understandings of the milieu I was entering. I now see that my preparations had not shined sufficient light on the social and structural factors that organize the contemporary university.... As it turns out, the restructuring of our lives within the working conditions, priorities, and rationalities of this professional milieu triggered unanticipated and painful effects.... Had Mountz published her article "Women on the Edge" before I decided on a career migration into the university system and, had I been fortunate enough to discover it, I would have made other career choices.*[2]

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1. The authors, who describe themselves as the Brocher Foundation Feminist Collective, indicate their personal narratives in this text using italics.
2. Michelle M. Tokarczyk and Elizabeth A. Fay, eds., *Working-Class Women in the Academy: Laborers in the Knowledge Factory* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993); Linda Babcock and Sara Laschever, *Women Don't Ask: Negotiation and the Gender Divide* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University

INTRODUCTION: PERSONAL, PROFESSIONAL, AND POLITICAL

We are seven women who met at the Brocher Foundation in Hermance, Switzerland, in July 2017, where we had been selected to spend a few months as research fellows. This competitively awarded opportunity is open to persons fluent in English, from graduate students to senior scholars, with or without academic appointment, whose scholarship advances knowledge about the ethical, legal, and social implications of health and biotechnologies.[3] When we found ourselves on the shores of Lake Leman with the gift of time, we began opening up to each other in unexpected, compelling ways. Whatever our vantage point in the hierarchy of the university system, we discovered that there was remarkable overlap in our experiences as women in academia. When we began writing, our authoring team was composed of two graduate students, four faculty members at the assistant professor rank, and one full professor, residing in Canada, the Netherlands, Romania, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Our plural subject position led us to underexplored and imaginative responses to broader social issues, which we share in this article as the "Brocher Foundation Feminist Collective."

We analyze our experiences from our standpoint as women health researchers laboring in the academy. Our similarities and differences were exciting entry points for discussion and analysis: we are all of eastern or western European descent. We have different countries of birth, mother tongues, ages, disciplinary training and career trajectories, relationships to chronic illness and disability, marital status, and experiences with parenthood. We bring the troubles and contradictions we experience as academics into conversation with each other. We seek to productively illustrate and emphasize that the tensions we see around us, and also feel within us, arise as a result of how the academic system is organized, produced, and sustained across time, place, and space.

Press, 2003); Alison Mountz, "Women on the Edge: Workplace Stress at Universities in North America," *The Canadian Geographer* 60, no. 2 (2016): 205–18.

3. We experienced this fellowship as a valuable opportunity. But we also recognized that our access to it was mediated by social, economic, or other obligations. As countries in the global north continue to tighten their national border regimes, marginalized academics, especially those from the global South, were less likely to succeed in getting a Swiss visa or securing relevant temporal and economic resources.

The promise here, we posit, is that in articulating our experiences and bringing them in conversation with one another, we can produce shared knowledge. In turn, our ideas can be contemplated, discussed, and taken up in practice by others and ourselves.

Whether during communal mealtime or walks through the woods, the seven of us began to detect similarities in how our professional workplaces are organized socially. During these activities, we deciphered patterns in how we experience our places of work, and in particular, the ways in which we were feeling sick and also being diagnosed with illnesses and disabilities. The narrative in the prologue foreshadows both common tensions and what we would come to understand as the socially produced and sustained character of our dilemmas. As we paid close attention to how the focus and demands of our work manifest in our bodies, we discovered striking and deeply troubling overlaps in the physiological, personal, social, and political origins of our ailments. Together, we produced new knowledge and novel understandings of the ways that academia produces sickness.

We draw on our experiences to provide the empirical basis for our later claims. Although we take these as the starting point of our analysis, we understand our experiences as simultaneously produced by, and productive of, the very worlds we live in. In other words, we take our narratives to be both the effects of social production, but also keys to possibilities of reshaping these modes of organization. From our narratives, then, we move into the "ruling relations" that organize contemporary academic workplaces across time, place, and space.[4] The direct quotations highlighted in italics are drawn from essay writing that we prepared separately and then brought into conversation. While together in person, we presented our ideas informally to each other: listening, lingering, and deliberating for quite some time. Individually, we finessed our thoughts on what details to bring out, and which to conceal, a process that grew in consequence as we moved along in our writing. How revealing we felt we could be and what we thought must go without saying were mediated by our positions within the university system. We have therefore chosen not to attribute our writings to individuals. In what follows, we bring

4. Dorothy E. Smith, *Institutional Ethnography as Practice* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).

our stories into dialogue with literature on academic women's living and working conditions. In doing so, we lay bare how the expectations created and sustained by the modern university system affect the well-being of its workers. We argue that failure to fully recognize the embodied nature of academic work means that universities can be, and often are, inhospitable and unsustainable sites for their workers. We illustrate this claim by foregrounding our socially organized experiences of exhaustion, overwork, bodily pain, and gendered care labor as cisgender women in the academy.

By jointly analyzing the personal, professional, and political, we mobilized scholarly and lay forms of knowledge generated in numerous languages and sociohistorical realms. What emerged is the fruit of a fiercely interdisciplinary project and an immensely rewarding process. We were fortunate to discover fellow "interdisciplinarians, [who] often treat themselves to the intellectual equivalent of travelling to new lands."[5] In committing to practice this way, we contribute to decentering the primacy of the Anglo-American realm in scientific knowledge production. Since scholars have different relations to the structure of the academy depending on where they stand within it, we were able to see the privileges and challenges bound up in our differences. Our experiences as white, cisgender women of eastern and western European descent working in Anglo-American and European contexts also draws attention to the ways that exclusion and discrimination are felt even more acutely by those who are underrepresented in their sites of work, including people belonging to racial minorities, those who experience linguistic marginalization, scholars from the working class, and persons with chronic illness, among others.[6] Those historic exclusions intersect with and compound the circumstances and oppressions that we explicate here.[7]

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5. Moti Nissani, "Ten Cheers for Interdisciplinarity: The Case for Interdisciplinary Knowledge and Research," *The Social Science Journal* 34, no. 2 (1997): 201–16.
6. For an intersectional analysis of narratives by women of color in academia, see Gabriella Gutiérrez y Muhs, Yolanda Flores Niemann, Carmen G. Gonzalez, and Angela P. Harris, eds., *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2012).
7. Rodrigue Landry, "Life in an Official Minority Language in Canada" (Moncton, New Brunswick: Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities, October 2014).

This article is laid out in four parts. We first situate our contribution as part of a body of research concerned with the organization of the university workplace and its consequence for women. Within this line of inquiry, we discuss the ways that exhaustion informed our collective experiences by identifying how overwork and burnout have become taken-for-granted elements of academic life. Secondly, we interrogate how the erasure of women's bodies within the academy is made possible by the intellectual focus of academic life, minimizing the ways that pain, illness, and disability can constrain one's capacity to "perform" intelligibly.[8] Next, we examine the social reproduction of academic life and specifically, we explore the complexities of gendered work related to caring for and nurturing others as well as the ties between care work and academic life. We interrogate how caring labor places additional limits on women's lives and well-being. Lastly, we propose strategies to collectively think about structural changes that could be made to alleviate embodied injury. Our ideas emphasize the value of joining forces to resist the challenges of the contemporary university as a workplace.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND PRODUCTION OF "WOMEN ON THE EDGE"

In her 2016 article, "Women on the Edge: Workplace Stress at Universities in North America," geographer Alison Mountz draws on interviews she carried out with women academics in a variety of fields across Canada and the United States. Her aim was to explore the toll that academia takes on women's bodies through anxiety, insomnia, weight fluctuation, infertility, delayed pregnancy, irregular menstrual cycles, and back pain, among a host of psychosocial challenges. Mountz, a senior scholar and Canada Research Chair, uses her own experience of illness as a point of entry, demonstrating how sickness arises as a symptom of a troubled system rather than the result of any one particular body. Mountz focuses on women as a deliberate analytic choice, as we do, precisely because she is interested in making visible and problematizing the

8. Margrit Shildrick, *Leaky Bodies and Boundaries: Feminism, Postmodernism and (Bio)ethics*, (London: Routledge, 1997). See also Noortje van Amsterdam, "Othering the 'Leaky Body': An Autoethnographic Story about Expressing Breast Milk in the Workplace," *Culture and Organization* 21, no. 3 (2015): 269–87.

"important, under-explored relationship between deteriorating work conditions in the neoliberal university and the deteriorating well-being and health of women at universities."[9]

The "neoliberal university" is a set of commitments and work practices that reduces ethics to an economic calculation of wealth and productivity.[10] Neoliberal forms of logic and social organizations support a long list of changes that shift universities' focus away from their longstanding role as public-facing institutions vested in teaching, research, and service, and toward the new role of market-driven businesses aiming to maximize profits.[11] Noted changes include, but are not limited to, decreased public funding, increased reliance on contractual and temporary work, and with it, declining job security, positioning to secure external grants and form corporate partnerships, reframing education writ-large as a training ground for the labor market, and auditing every place, person, practice, and process within the institution.[12] These changes are made possible by long working hours and heavy workloads.[13]

The culture of professional practice within neoliberal organizing is one of "audit and efficiency," requiring workers to do more with less, and at the same time, requiring that they account for each moment and resource spent.[14] What emerges is a working environment rife with expectations that may not be achievable unless a worker foregoes their health and equilibrium. As researchers who study health, illness, and

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9. Mountz, "Women on the Edge," 205.
10. Stanley Fish, "Neoliberalism and Higher Education," *Opinionator* (blog), *New York Times*, March 8, 2009, https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/03/08/neoliberalism-and-higher-education.
11. Marc Spooner, "Qualitative Research and Global Audit Culture: The Politics of Productivity, Accountability, and Possibility," in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing, 2018): 894–914; Isabelle Stengers and Vinciane Despret, *Women Who Make a Fuss: The Unfaithful Daughters of Virginia Woolf* (Minneapolis, MN: Univocal Publishing, 2014).
12. Stephen J. Ball, "Living the Neo-Liberal University," *European Journal of Education* 50, no. 3 (2015): 258–61; Eimear Enright, Laura Alfrey, and Steven B. Rynne, "Being and Becoming an Academic in the Neoliberal University: A Necessary Conversation," *Sport, Education and Society* 22, no. 1 (2017): 1–4.
13. Linda J. Peake and Beverley Mullings, "Critical Reflections on Mental and Emotional Distress in the Academy," *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 15, no. 2 (2016): 253–84.
14. Mountz, "Women on the Edge" 208.

disability, the physiological and psychological toll of these demands represents a contradiction of an obvious and troubling sort: while we are busy inquiring into others' health and well-being, we find *ourselves* worn thin. As we nourish careers wedded to abstract ideas about the prospective implications of our research, we struggle with the consequences for our students, families, patients, and research participants.

Our experiences and those of others suggest that social experience and knowledge production are gendered relations and that women's caring work in the academy is often invisible and unaccounted for, as is true in other institutions.[15] Academics around the world are currently speaking out about the implications of ever-increasing and unclear expectations, demands that the modern university makes on their professional careers, personal lives, and overall feelings of health and well-being.[16] Since caring work is unevenly distributed, those who take on caring responsibilities differentially experience symptoms such as fatigue and strain. We are alarmed by how professional academic life has colonized people's personal lives such that there are discernible patterns of mental illness and seemingly endemic yet normalized depletion of energetic stores in the academic body.[17] Importantly, we know

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15. Margunn Bjørnholt and Ailsa McKay, eds., *Counting on Marilyn Waring: New Advances in Feminist Economics* (Bradford, ON: Demeter Press, 2013).
16. Laura Bisaillon and Joan Eakin, "Strategies for Understanding and Navigating the 'Academic Underlife,'" *University Affairs* (blog), November 12, 2014, https://www.universityaffairs.ca/career-advice/career-advice-article/strategies-understanding-navigating-academic-underlife; Rosalind Gill, "Breaking the Silence: The Hidden Injuries of the Neoliberal University," in *Secrecy and Silence in the Research Process: Feminist Reflections*, ed. Róisín Ryan-Flood and Rosalind Gill (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2010), 229–44; Gail Kinman and Fiona Jones, "A Life Beyond Work? Job Demands, Work-Life Balance, and Wellbeing in UK Academics," *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 17, no. 1–2 (2008): 41–60; Nicholas H. Wolfinger, Mary Ann Mason, and Marc Goulden, "Problems in the Pipeline: Gender, Marriage, and Fertility in the Ivory Tower," *The Journal of Higher Education* 79, no. 4 (2008): 388–405.
17. Peake and Mullings, "Critical Reflections on Mental and Emotional Distress in the Academy"; Amanda Murdie, "Depression and Academia — Let's Talk," *Duck of Minerva* (blog), March 4, 2014, http://duckofminerva.com/2014/03/depression-and-academia-lets-talk.html; Katia Levecque, Frederik Anseel, Alain De Beuckelaer, Johan Van der Heyden, and Lydia Gisle, "Work Organization and Mental Health Problems in PhD Students," *Research Policy* 46, no. 4 (2017): 868–79.

that women; people of color; people with illness and disability; people from the working class; people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer; and individuals with intersecting and intimate knowledges of being marginalized in institutional settings report facing sickness most acutely.[18] Expressions of prejudice that can lead to tacit and overt forms of discrimination such as sexism, racism, ableism, classism, and homophobia, among others, impoverish everybody in the university system, though they are most sharply felt by those experiencing marginality. What we see, then, is that what has been called the ivory tower can be a particularly inclement milieu for particular bodies.

GETTING SICK, BEING ILL, AND CONTESTING THE "IDEAL ACADEMIC"

> *I am at ease with working "harder and harder," forty hours per week and then sixty, and then sometimes seventy or even eighty hours per week, every week. I was doing just that when I started my four-year career grant in 2013. Then, at the end of that grant, my body literally shut down.... My second experience of burnout happened at the end of my last postdoctoral year, while I was officially working only a half-time position (and paid to match), which meant that I had very limited financial resources to take care of myself. I remember that in my last months in the city, I was barely able to pay my rent, not having the resources to eat healthy more than once or twice per week, and being tired most of the time.*

The concerns that face academics relate directly to the increasing demands in teaching, research, and service. An expansion of senior administration, stagnation of full-time faculty hires, growth of contractual hires, and rising student enrollments have aligned across space, time, and place to produce a temporary, precarious, and "overworked, isolated and lonel[y]" academic workforce.[19] All over the world — includ-

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18. Zak Vescera, "The Unseen Labour of Racialized Faculty," *The Ubyssey Magazine*, February 26, 2019, https://www.ubyssey.ca/magazine/unseen-labour; Ruth Enid Zambrana, *Toxic Ivory Towers: The Consequences of Work Stress on Underrepresented Minority Faculty* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2018).
19. Olivier Sibai, Bernardo Figueiredo, and Marcia Christina Ferreira, "Overworked and Isolated: The Rising Epidemic of Loneliness in Academia," *The*

ing the countries where the seven of us have firsthand experience — part-time academic workers subsist by cobbling together a patchwork of sessional teaching and research contracts. In the passage above, we see our colleague positioned to work contractually, and willing to do so, which translates into simultaneous sorts of vulnerability that, ultimately, produce harm for her. We see that she has suffered two periods of burnout and acute illness, brought on by material working conditions over which she had little control. Importantly, the predicaments she faces are brought to life through human decision-making. Seen in this way, conditions of suffering are contingent and changeable; they are a promissory note.

The types of social organization that shape such experiences are part of an encroachment of neoliberal practices. These have been applied to universities on a global scale for almost forty-five years. This ascendency parallels a pattern of downsizing the workforce and outsourcing jobs from publicly funded institutions since the 1970s.[20] While universities have long relied on contract labor to fill so-called workforce gaps, the patterns we see at present stand apart in terms of the number of highly trained individuals who have joined academia but do not enjoy job security.[21] Teaching fellowships and visiting positions crowd out tenure-track positions on job vacancy notice boards. This trend marks the impermanent and migrant character of university labor. Cycles of preparing and submitting applications in response to vacancies are central and time-consuming activities for an academic hopeful, often at the expense of publishing work that would enable people to secure the jobs to which they are applying. These pursuits compete with, and in some cases, eclipse scholarly activities such as reading and writing.

Even for academics situated in secure tenured and tenure-track positions, workload expectations are both undesirable and unsustainable. We and others before us have asked whether the pre-tenure period,

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Conversation (blog), January 29, 2019, https://theconversation.com/overworked-and-isolated-the-rising-epidemic-of-loneliness-in-academia-110009.

20. David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
21. John W. Curtis and Saranna Thornton, "Here's the News: The Annual Report on the Economic Status of the Profession" (American Association of University Professors, April 2013), https://www.aaup.org/report/heres-news-annual-report-economic-status-profession-2012–13.

which can span five to seven years in North America, is a form of hazing.[22] If we accept this to be so, we are actively and continuously hazing one another in our university workplaces. What is being achieved by a protracted process infused with expectations that are commonly unclear? Importantly, in whose interest are these relations maintained? Comprehensive exams and mountains of reading in graduate school are widely thought of as rites of passage, meant to test the mettle of would-be academics. But what is initially thought to be a temporary, albeit extraordinary, workload instead portends a new normal. In our experiences and those of others, we see that other parts of people's lives are forced to give way. As academics, we contribute to the maintenance of this system, which sidelines the affective support systems we need to survive, including healthy, functioning, and intimate relationships. As we strive to be so-called ideal academic workers, "able to perform long hours physically and emotionally, and unencumbered by 'outside demands' like family or personal needs," the pace and volume of work is unrelenting.[23] At some point, bodies falter.

The manner and extent to which academic bodies are failing and flailing, stumbling and snagging, is untenable.

> *I was hired into a program that, I came to find out, was not really a program at all. How it was to be organized was undetermined and in flux. It was marred by dysfunction. External assessors described the problems having had "a particularly negative impact on faculty members, whose morale and professional development have been very negatively impacted and who have suffered." I found myself needing to consult with the union about recurring irregular situations; unpleasant and time-consuming.*
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> *A dozen physical symptoms erupted in my body. My marriage was compromised. I was unable to keep commitments to colleagues and friends. (I still feel horrible about that.) I was referred to a specialist who ordered an immediate medical leave. In hindsight, while I knew that I needed self-help less than I needed a fair society, the penalties of* not

22. Michael Brown and Mary Churchill, "Tenure as Academic Hazing," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Old School, New School (blog), May 5, 2011, https://www.chronicle.com/blogs/old-new/tenure-as-academic-hazing/362.
23. Mountz, "Women on the Edge," 208.

accepting such care were too great. I am grateful for the care. I learned a lot from falling ill and then working hard to get well again.

In the passage above, we are confronted with difficult events in a journey from health at the time of hire to illness two years later. We read about a disorganized workplace that caused sickness in more than one woman. We learn about the implications of inconsistent standards for measuring academic "success." In a system where bodies are read as disposable, there are bound to be problems.

The intensification of academic labor translates not only to higher incidence, but also to more prevalent faculty burnout and exhaustion.[24] Rosalind Gill writes, "a punishing intensification of work has become an endemic feature of academic life."[25]

How is the university responsible for the damaging consequences? Accountability is unclear. I am still an injured worker, since I still take medication and see a specialist. What will the effects of this spoiled identity be for me, professionally? I mean, academia is a world that prizes the head, and the university hires us to do thinking work. When we are recovering from impairment, time still ticks forward, and we work, as we can, within difficult conditions that are both within our head and outside of it. While the employer admits that working conditions caused me "damage," I have been frightened, to be frank, by some of the, well, bad and bald, realizations that I have come to through all of this. It seems to me that somehow insisting that we and others be frank with each other, respect one another, be held accountable to each other, and care for each other as practices could have prevented all of this in the first place.

Studies of university labor in various international settings reveal that academics are among the most overworked professionals. It is common for academics to work the equivalent of two unpaid days per week.[26] Work-induced exhaustion in the academy that we (and others) have experienced happens in ways similar to exhaustion that medical,

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24. Erin Wunker, "Guest Post: When Too Much Is Still Not Enough; Academic Workloads and Campus Exhaustion," *Hook & Eye* (blog), October 6, 2017, https://hookandeye.ca/2017/10/06/guest-post-when-too-much-is-still-not-enough-academic-workloads-and-campus-exhaustion.
25. Gill, "Breaking the Silence," 231."
26. Enright, Alfrey, and Rynne, "Being and Becoming an Academic in the Neoliberal University." See also Laura McKenna, "How Hard Do Professors

health, and social support workers experience, and these milieus are all brought into being through our personal interaction.[27]

LIVING WITH PAIN AND WORKING EVERY DAY

Existing scholarship on the consequences of neoliberal arrangements between universities and the people working in them has tended to focus on stress and anxiety. For example, attention is called to the experience of being isolated from others, of working in competition either latently or explicitly, and of how "burn out" looks and feels. Yet, conversations among the seven of us revealed a host of additional concerns, which are rarely discussed, if ever: the physical toll that academic life takes.[28]

> *Over the past four years, I have felt pain while sitting at my computer. More than once, I wanted to write into my papers that the reader should not conceive of my text as a disembodied one. Of course, my pain could never become part of my paper. Right? Instead, the central argument needed to be written up. If I could only ignore the pain until I made that deadline, I thought. If I could only work a little bit longer, despite the persistent pain in my body.*

The intellectual nature of academic work, with its emphasis on generating ideas, writing, and teaching, renders invisible the embodied, often sedentary, nature of academic work. The effects of this work on our bodies were important and recurring features of our discussions. Take, for example, the experience of living with pain, the difficulties of not being well enough to sit, and the ambivalence of feeling that disclosing the pain brought on by the demands of work is not a suitable subject to bring to light in the first place. Surely, we should keep quiet about such things.

Academic work is not always sedentary. Some of us do fieldwork and lab work, which involve protracted periods of living at field sites near or far and standing upright for many hours on end, respectively. Teaching, too, is a physical endeavor — learning how to stand at a lectern, to activate, operate, and adjust technology while lecturing at the same

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Actually Work?" *The Atlantic*, February 7, 2018, https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2018/02/how-hard-do-professors-actually-work/552698.

27. Jenny Watts and Noelle Robertson, "Burnout in University Teaching Staff: A Systematic Literature Review," *Educational Research* 53, no. 1 (2011): 33–50.
28. Ibid. See also Gill, "Breaking the Silence."

time. The instructor must project and modulate their voice to be audible throughout small or large spaces and move around the classroom in an attempt to secure and hold students' attention. Classroom performance is not for the faint of heart! As we look back, our collective process marked the first time some of us voiced these associations and their effects outside of our own heads.

In acknowledging the physicality of academic work, as our colleague did in the quote above, we discovered that we all shared bodily feelings of ambivalence. We learned that we share ailments, and in some cases, chronic conditions that have come to accompany us over time: neck and spinal pain, joint dysfunction, muscle pain and atrophy, eye strain, and deteriorated vision. This holds true for the youngest right through to the most senior among us. Our bodies seemingly express themselves in particular ways in response to the requirements and demands of our profession. Although manifestations such as back pain are, following the late Susan Leigh Star, "in the grand scheme of things . . . a very minor disability," the ubiquity of conditions such as back pain and vision damage gave our group pause.[29] Should this not give *all* of us pause?

Strategies to prevent wear and tear on the body can and often do fall short. Screen protectors, ergonomic workstations, standing desks, and floor mats do not fully or ever, we posit, compensate for a body ignored. These experiences remind us of the need to disrupt the notion that intellectual work is solitary and done at one's desk, whether sitting or standing. One of us was involved in a "walking seminar series" where faculty and students stroll while talking about the substance of their intellectual work. The "idea is that talking-while-walking enhances thinking in ways not attainable behind a desk or in a seminar sitting down."[30] While it might be challenging to commit to walking in between tightly scheduled obligations and impending deadlines, we suggest that this is precisely the point. We simply cannot and should not accept division along Cartesian lines, into bodies distinct from minds. These do not operate independently from each other. They cannot. Our individual and shared

29. Susan Leigh Star, "Power, Technology and the Phenomenology of Conventions: On Being Allergic to Onions," *Sociological Review* 38, no. S1 (1990): 26–56.
30. "The Walking Seminar," http://walkingseminar.blogspot.com.

experiences of and in our seven bodies attest to this. Our messy, complex, willful, wondrous bodies directly inform our analysis.

> *In our pursuit of becoming "ideal academics," do we not lose sight, or even completely forget, that we need to take seriously the fact that we are not only or just intellectual workers?*

We are also, and above all, embodied persons. We need not simply try to control pain, push through it or, worse yet, ignore pain. Such pain is how our bodies make themselves heard, reminding us that they are, indeed, present. We follow Thoreau's reflection that "the greatest compliment that was ever paid me was when one asked me what I thought, and attended to my answer."[31] Our bodies demand our attention. Developing understandings of how to attend to pain is an expression of respect for our bodies and thus a tribute to ourselves.

There are limitations here, too, since disability, access, and difference necessitate strategies to address, cope with, and circumvent pain in any number of ways. Walking, itself, might be a problem. Resisting the isolation that can and often does accompany writing, and exercising the body at the same time, is a helpful intervention. Donna Haraway argues that bodies are not mere resources, but rather, agents in and of themselves.[32] In settings that encourage the practice of overworking as a norm of increased expectations around productivity, auditing, and competitive relations, work is done in separation from others. It is here where bodies, generally, and our bodies, specifically, have poignantly shown us that enough is enough at various points of our careers. We see this, for example, when meetings run longer than scheduled, when presentations do not include washroom breaks, or when lunches are scheduled without time for participants to actually eat. Our bodies, while they work, are at the same time physical, carnal, sensual. They feel, express, acquiesce, and also resist. In recognizing and articulating physical needs, we can render our bodies visible to others and ourselves. We can conceive of

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31. Henry David Thoreau, "Life Without Principle," *The Atlantic*, October 1863, https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1863/10/life-without-principle/542217.
32. Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 575–99.

practices, such as writing and sitting while listening to conference presentations, as requiring a specific *kind* of body. Namely, one that must be disciplined to sit and be awake, alert, and unfettered for long stretches of time.

BEING RESPONSIBLE, WORKING MEANINGFULLY, AND CAREGIVING

> *It is unfair to women, who have historically been positioned to take primary responsibility for work associated with caring for children and other dependents, not to offer respite from caregiving. For dependent children, this can take the form of affordable childcare, preferably at the workplace for infants, and at school for older children, before and after the school day. For dependent elderly people, respite can take various forms, including home healthcare, adult day care, and reimbursement through tax credits and deductions. In the absence of such support, many women make "choices" like I did. Are these really choices? I exchanged traveling to academic conferences for serving as diaper changer, laundress, and cook; I left early and arrived late to work to be able to chauffeur children, and I devoted way more time to being a maid than to building relationships with colleagues.*

The conversations among the seven of us revealed, like those of women before us, that well-being is deeply organized and sustained by gendered notions of care. In the passage above, one of us describes the tensions between professional duties and responsibilities to various others who depend on her in the home. She arrived at "tradeoffs" between meeting demands of academic life and responsibilities of care, which she points out, have disproportionately fallen to women over time and across places.[33] The academic institution mirrors gender roles for childcare and eldercare responsibilities in the broader society. In the quote above, we

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33. Mari Castañeda and Kirsten Isgro, eds., *Mothers in Academia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013); Mariana Past, "My Double Life in Academia, or Extreme Parenting on the Tenure Track," in *Staging Women's Lives in Academia: Gendered Life Stages in Language and Literature Workplaces*, ed. Michelle A. Massé and Nan Bauer-Maglin (Albany: SUNY Press, 2017), 83–95; Kristine De Welde and Andi Stepnick, *Disrupting the Culture of Silence: Confronting Gender Inequality and Making Change in Higher Education* (Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2015).

see these being magnified. Studies on academic work reveal that even when men take parental leave, they are less involved in childcare than their partners.[34] Mounting pressures in academic settings, such as those we are bringing to light, match pressures in women's domestic lives as well, in which expectations of being a "good mother" and meeting social norms around "natural" pregnancy, childbirth, and feeding coexist in exerting gendered pressures with corollary consequences.[35] In the academy, the lines between personal and professional are often firmly drawn. Childcare and breastfeeding spaces at conferences longer than two or three days, for example, remain rare in milieus where the seven of us have circulated, and university spaces more generally remain insufficiently equipped to support being back at work while breastfeeding.[36] In practice, institutional policies seldom recognize the constraints of having elderly family members at home. Administrative policies only exceptionally grant leave to workers needing to care for such dependents, which serves to normalize and entrench contradictions such as those that manifested for our colleague.

While the gendered nature of care work is often theorized in terms of establishing balance between one's personal and professional life, for many women, this is an uncomfortable iteration and also an untenable divide. We posit that this is a misleading binary. For women in these circumstances, the experience of being a caretaker extends to the university. We see this in service and teaching work as well as the relationships that we cultivate with research colleagues and participants. Regarding service work, it is widely noted that women are more likely than men to serve on committees and engage in other forms of service. Further, this finding is independent of academic rank and field, though it is acutely felt by those who experience other forms of marginality, including people of color.[37] If service work is the unglamorous, un-rewarded, and tak-

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34. Steven E. Rhoads and Christopher Rhoads, "Gender Roles and Infant/Toddler Care: Male and Female Professors on the Tenure Track," *Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology* 6 (2012): 13.
35. Rebecca Kukla, "Measuring Mothering," *IJFAB: International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics* 1, no. 1 (2008): 67–90.
36. van Amsterdam, "Othering the 'Leaky Body,'" 269.
37. Cassandra M. Guarino and Victor M. H. Borden, "Faculty Service Loads and Gender: Are Women Taking Care of the Academic Family?" *Research in Higher Education* 58, no. 6 (2017): 672–94; Joya Misra, Jennifer Hickes

en-for-granted labor that sustains universities, that is, the institution's "reproductive labour," women are thus actively at work "taking care of the academic family."[38] In our experiences and those of others, women's extensive engagement in academic service work comes to displace activities that are more readily visible and tangibly auditable. This is particularly true of research, as whatever forms of recognition we might accrue from service and teaching, it is based on our research agendas that our professional standing, merit, tenure, and promotion are awarded.

As educators and supervisors, women also experience strains that are traceably gendered. A sizeable corpus of evidence shows that women undertake heavier teaching loads than men and that these high-levels of responsibility come to impede a person's ability to do research and publish results.[39] This is particularly pressing in the contemporary university where temporary faculty members commonly carry heavy teaching loads, whether contract, adjunct, or visiting professors. It is no wonder that women find themselves stymied in attempts to rise through the academic ranks. When we carry out fieldwork, whether outside or inside a formal laboratory space, women's work is visibly organized by relations of care.

> *I find it really hard that in my role as a researcher, I am officially only gathering data from patients instead of really doing something meaningful for them in return; short term, for their own benefit, not the long-term benefit of the patient group they belong to. I would like to answer the promise that I make when convincing them to participate: that their participation is* meaningful*. That is, not only for other people, but also for* them*. In practice, I deal with this problem by investing more time in taking care of my participants to do something in return. For example, extra time to answer the questions they have about their condition and extra time coaching or counseling participants during the data*

Lundquist, and Abby Templer, "Gender, Work Time, and Care Responsibilities Among Faculty," *Sociological Forum* 27, no. 2 (2012): 300–323.

38. Alana Cattapan, "Guest Post: Attend Meetings or Perish . . . " *Hook & Eye* (blog), September 22, 2017, https://hookandeye.ca/2017/09/22/guest-post-attend-meetings-or-perish; Guarino and Borden, "Faculty Service Loads and Gender."
39. Marcia L. Bellas and Robert K. Toutkoushian, "Faculty Time Allocations and Research Productivity: Gender, Race and Family Effects," *The Review of Higher Education* 22, no. 4 (1999): 367–90.

> *collection procedure when they are sometimes exposed to really challenging conditions. Moreover, I have to deal with the dilemma of, on the one hand, getting reliable data, and on the other hand, taking care of their well-being in terms of "their feeling of being meaningful." When I spend more time caring for my participants' well-being and not on the act of data collection itself, I am aware that this could influence the quality of the data.*

Collecting samples, doing observational research, and conducting interviews can themselves be bound up with acts of care; these points are communicated in the passage above. Our colleague understands her practice to be anchored in obligations to her research participants. All seven of us do empirical work of some description. We are also involved in engagements with various publics and our home communities. We are serious about recognizing and respecting people who take part in our projects, well beyond what they do for and with us in these specific situations. We all strive to provide care in some way and give back to the people we meet through our work. We recognize their contributions and give or refer people for support when it seems like a good idea. This view of the research endeavor and the creation of new knowledge, which foregrounds emotional and reproductive labor, is often outside of conventional frames and logics of health research, in particular, with its dogged emphasis on objectivity. While relationality and ethics of care are not inherent antagonists to empirical research design, practicing care in situ requires rethinking the roles of researcher and participants. It also calls us to consider the former's obligations to engage the latter in ways that inform and thus make their empirical inquiries possible in the first place.[40]

> *I am constantly compensating, both in my professional and my personal life, for the uncertainties I feel about my academic excellence and the doubts I have about the* impact *and meaningfulness of my work—spending extra time helping, coaching, and answering questions from my participants and the students I supervise. Also, engaging in activities related to more short-term societal impact and the* translation *of scientific knowledge to society. I take extra time for teaching courses, and I*

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40. María Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

> *am constantly trying to* improve *my non-academic skills. This is all in addition to the time I spend on the main obligations of my project, risking high personal stress levels and imbalance, which can ultimately lead to worsened* performance.

The passage above makes clear that the material and emotional costs of care work are steep. The actions of our colleague to care for others in homes, classrooms, departments, and in clinical and academic research settings are fundamental to sustaining what she understands to be a meaningful, tolerable, ethical, and livable life. The seven of us have experienced comparable strains and contradictions.

> *Academic excellence, and the rewards related to it, is in contrast to my own feeling of doing something meaningful. Being part of a generation of insecure overachievers makes it even harder for me to be kind and mindful toward myself.*

As these passages reveal, there is a tension between feeling compelled to care for others borne out of purpose, dignity, and respect and what is expected from the academic worker. Managing the effects of these contradictions is difficult. For one thing, we are aware of how our work comes to be infused with language and reasoning imported from neoliberal logics. Our immersion in academia teaches and trains us in such a way that we find ourselves, unwittingly at first, talking about ourselves, others — our own work and that of our colleagues — using concepts and turns of phrases intrinsic to the market. Our colleagues' use of the words "impact," "translation," "improves," and "performance," to talk about her work, makes this point. Neoliberal language infiltrates how we communicate with each other.

Prevailing social arrangements such as these contribute to feelings in many situations in academia of being rather off balance and not entirely well. In a post for the blog *Hook and Eye*, Margeaux Feldman describes how being okay, or rather, pretending to be okay, is also a matter of gendered care work. Further, she points out that women academics routinely do perform in this way. Here, Feldman cites Sarah Ahmed's concerns about what *pretending* to be all right and to be happy amid manifestly troubling circumstances does to and for us in the long

run.[41] The performance of maintaining the status quo, when our eyes and bodies tell a different story, "functions to justify gendered forms of labour not as products of nature, law, or duty, but as an expression of collective wish and desire."[42] The strains of working within institutions that do not or cannot address affective labor are perhaps hard to see, but they nevertheless produce real effects for people. In making this point, we reflect on our own experiences and those of other academic women in our midst. If we have concern for health and well-being, we should have equivalent concern for emotional labor.

CONCLUSION: NAMING HARMS, RESISTING TOGETHER, AND DOING ACADEMIA DIFFERENTLY

This article testifies to an immersive experience that was generative and regenerative for us. We were fortunate to have been selected for our fellowships based on past accomplishments and future promise, which gave us the opportunity to experience slowing down and being thoughtful and collegial with one another. Nevertheless, even during our time together, we were acutely aware that once back at home, the time to ponder, work through ideas, and generate fresh lines of thinking would likely be the exception rather than the rule. As Mountz points out, our relation to time and its passage—how we keep time, make time, talk about time, track time, watch time, and hop, skip, and jump to time—align with neoliberal logics of priority-setting.[43]

We do feel fortunate to be laborers within the university system. We intend to continue to pursue lives as researchers, educators, and mentors. We hope that our lives will be such that we are able to carry out quality scholarship. We work with integrity, we are good at what we do, and we are committed to continuing to care about our students and allied colleagues. It is exactly *because* we stand in places of social and professional privilege that we take seriously the responsibility of

41. Margeaux Feldman, "Guest Post: 'There's No Crying in Academia,' Acknowledging Emotional Labour in the Academy," *Hook & Eye* (blog), October 21, 2015, https://hookandeye.ca/2015/10/21/guest-post-theres-no-crying-in-academia-acknowledging-emotional-labour-in-the-academy.
42. Ahmed, as cited by Feldman. See also Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).
43. Mountz, "Women on the Edge."

marshaling it. We do this by working on and through ideas that can be useful for betterment inside and outside the academy.

At the Brocher Foundation, we found words for how the social organization of academia, in addition to providing us with opportunities to do activities we value, also makes it harmful. We were, and continue to be, struck by the patterns that organize our institutional workplaces independent of specific cultural, geographical, and disciplinary contexts. What we see before us and on the horizon are palpable relations between gendered experiences of academic women and neoliberal practices that at once dominate and devalue how we care for and care about each other. Such conditions make people, including us, unwell. Since change is overdue, we will continue to collaborate with each other as well as with others outside of our group to subvert structural causes of sickness and illness. From this mapping of institutional arrangements, we are able to know where, exactly, to roll up our sleeves and get to work.

In closing, we offer three reflections stemming from our collaboration. These are starting points for the collective thinking-work needed to alleviate embodied injuries and other problems.

1. What did we learn through this collaboration?

We gained a shared concern regarding professional ethics and accountability in the academic workplace. While the practices of other professionals such as health providers and lawyers are governed by codes of ethics, there are no equivalent rules or structures in academia. Some of us work in contexts where there are mechanisms to file a complaint when there is a lapse in civility, for example. At the same time, the risks for an aggrieved person to proceed in this way make it such that in practice, these tools are used infrequently. We are neither calling for guidelines to be developed, nor are we suggesting that oversight is relevant in all contexts. However, we wonder what academia would look and feel like, specifically for those experiencing vulnerability, if we were obliged to conduct ourselves, inwardly and outwardly, within relations of integrity and care. What if, for example, instead of faculty being asked to serve the administration post-tenure, scholars in North America were rewarded for service toward and with their junior colleagues? Being held accountable for assisting others would be an important, intentional step in seeing and acknowledging the humanity of the workers who bring academia into being in the first place.

The opportunity to work collaboratively allowed us to reflect on our personal and shared experiences. In our case, we dared to experiment with the language through which we expressed our own and others' vulnerability, fragility, anxiety, and fear as well as our strength, resilience, and joy. Our experiences opened up the possibility for us to view problems as systemic and explore how our lives as workers in the academy are socially produced, organized, and sustained. Since the problems that we unearthed are beyond any one person's experience, collective social remedies are needed.

It was through this deliberate, time-consuming, and stimulating collaboration that we saw the purposefulness of rejecting the compartmentalization that happens when we relate to each other through the hierarchies of graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, sessional workers, lecturers, and professors. The seven of us either have or will pass through these phases; they each come with opportunities and challenges, as this passage shows:

> *Upon signing the contract for my current position, I slept with little interruption for nearly ten days—more exhausted than I thought possible and realizing it only in the moment when I could take a rest. A close friend and colleague cried for hours following her successful doctoral defense, not out of relief or joy, but because she was completely and utterly spent. Another friend has ongoing migraine headaches exacerbated by a high-stress schedule for completing her dissertation, teaching full time, and raising her young child. The advice I keep getting about the first year on the tenure track is to find ways to* survive. *These conversations with my friends and colleagues, the women's writing group at my new university, and you, who I found in the most serene place, at such a strange time of transition in my life, are all helping me* survive.

Here we see simultaneous exhilaration and exhaustion after signing a new academic contract. Analytically, what is disturbing is the recurring use of the word "survive." When we compared notes, as it turned out, we all had received such messaging at the start of our academic careers. With the best of intentions, colleagues and mentors offered advice such as "fly under the wire," "keep your head down," and "focus on making it through tenure alive." However, we are interested in going beyond surviving these periods in time that are also hurdles. We suggest with firm resolve that we must set out to thrive in academic settings and that we must also assist others to do the same. Since it is academic workers who

perpetuate this system through their practices, we can commit to being deliberate in how we communicate with one another. Turns of phrase that reify sacrifice and reinforce silence, neither of which are necessary habits, can be left behind when we are committed to liberatory practice. With the thinking that undergirds these statements, we orient ourselves, and perhaps others, toward thriving.

2. What does resisting look and feel like in everyday practice?
Since labor conditions were central among our concerns, resisting in daily life can consist of organizing collectively to work toward unionized workplaces. Calling on the expertise of labor organizers would be beneficial. Unionized environments provide a legally binding framework in which a collective agreement reached between a university employer and its employees identifies and governs material working conditions. One benefit of an academic workplace organized in this way is that legal entitlements and processes are clarified in writing. Labor unions are particularly useful where institutional hierarchies are sharp and uneven, such that employees could benefit from a body organized to work in their subjective best interests.

Talking to each other is a necessary preliminary step for working toward structural changes that assuage harm. This connects with a long tradition of feminist approaches to collective organizing and action. Its importance bears emphasizing, however, given the space and place accorded to social media in our contemporary lives. The process of creating the "Brocher Foundation Feminist Collective" revealed transformative possibilities that "collectives [achieve in forging] alternative, inclusive spaces and ways of working that challenge individualization, competition and hierarchy."[44] Mountz offers practical strategies that raise awareness about how to work better and more healthfully as academic laborers. To this end, she implores academics of all genders to "decolonize time by embracing slowness, laziness, and failure" and by "form[ing] collectives."[45] Our continued association is marked by a desire to work in ways that express scholarly solidarity, support, and sociability. Proceeding in this way, we destabilized the idea that our professional

44. Mountz, "Women on the Edge," 216.
45. Ibid.

circumstances as academic women are unique or singularly experienced. In fact, the seven of us share disquieting and analogous symptoms of stress, disability, and disorder; pervasively experienced across context and time.[46]

> *Thriving is a hard, if not impossible, output to measure. I mean, this is not how fulfillment happens. This is not how we talk about such a thing, when we even take the time to talk about these dimensions of our being. Therefore, this is an infinitely hard experience to capture and account for within the day-to-day organization and logic of scientific environments.*

Working collectively, reflexively, with colleagues at different career stages opens our eyes, ears, and hearts. When we do so, we are attentive to how we might reimagine our relations with each other and also with time itself. The promise is that we can learn skills to succeed and take care in the here and now, while also challenging oppressive forms of social organization. We would do well to remind ourselves that it is not the responsibility of individuals to resist unreasonable pressures. We all want to work in ways that unveil the struggles we have faced, whether resisted and overcome or not, so that we can enjoy the "fulfillment" that our colleague referred to above.

One critique of the idea of practicing "slowness" in academia is that it is elitist. As this line of thinking goes, slowing down is only possible for those experiencing privilege, who have the luxury of time and space to change their relationship to work.[47] For at least two reasons, we struggle with this critique. First, listening to women who have come before, and who proffer hard-earned insight, has proved valuable for us. The creative process involved in preparing this article has enabled us to

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46. Alison Mountz, Anne Bonds, Becky Mansfield, Jenna Loyd, Jennifer Hyndman, Margaret Walton-Roberts, Ranu Basu, Risa Whitson, Roberta Hawkins, Trina Hamilton, and Winifred Curran, "For Slow Scholarship: A Feminist Politics of Resistance through Collective Action in the Neoliberal University," *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 14, no. 4 (2015): 1235–59.
47. Alison Mountz, Anne Bonds, Becky Mansfield, Jenna Loyd, Jennifer Hyndman, Margaret Walton-Roberts, Ranu Basu, Risa Whitson, Roberta Hawkins, Trina Hamilton, and Winifred Curran, "All for Slow Scholarship and Slow Scholarship for All," *University Affairs* (blog), May 9, 2016, https://www.universityaffairs.ca/opinion/in-my-opinion/slow-scholarship-slow-scholarship.

benefit from one another, and we have worked through conceptual and experiential similarities and differences related to the cadence of time despite only one of us holding a permanent academic position. Second, the seven of us have challenged ourselves to reflect on the high stakes of working in ways unaligned with professional trajectories presented as routes to "success." Holding fast to the idea that slowness is only available to people with job security misses the potential to contest what constitutes an ideal academic career. A number of us have experienced burnout and illness triggered by material working conditions. Through the long and difficult days of working to restore our bodies and spirits, we arrived at finding our own professional practices problematic. Specifically, when we start romanticizing what we do for a living or aggrandizing its purpose, we enter troubled territory. Those of us with chronic illness must contend with our bodies' limits as a ritual practice. Thinking with our bodies has led the seven of us to produce insights on resilience, openness, susceptibility, and receptiveness.[48] In sum, we argue that we have no choice *but* to attend to our bodies as a matter of survival, out of respect for our humanity and that of others.

3. From our scholarly practices, what are examples of "doing academia differently"?

One way to disrupt problematic forms of academic practice is to pay attention to our own and others' verbal and written dialogical practices. This is an individual, social, and political move in equal measure. We might first stop and reflect on how we actually know each other. Knowing someone personally is different than knowing someone textually. An annual report of scholarly activities is but a representation of our commitments and a shorthand version of the work we have accomplished. Such scripts, which report on how we create and circulate knowledge within institutions, mediate and abstract our efforts rather than constituting firsthand expressions of the same. In other words, practicing generosity and benefit of the doubt are intentional strategies that we must use to arrest experiences of lateral violence, which is too commonly

48. Laura Bisaillon, "Practicing Slow Scholarship in Slow Classrooms," University of Toronto Scarborough, podcast, November 14, 2018, https://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/ctl/twc/educator-exchange-video-archive.

exercised in university workplaces.[49] In part, this is because academia sets us up to be accountable vertically rather than horizontally. Lateral violence, in its hard-to-see, taken-for-granted, and notoriously hard-to-be-held-directly-accountable-for ways, is unacceptable, its presence corrosive. When we inflict lateral violence, we oblige others to adopt vigilance as a survival strategy, which must be avoided.[50] We must destabilize rather than reify disembodied ways of knowing and relating to one another as legitimate practices.

A second step involves identifying instances of our own and others' "institutional capture."[51] This refers to the processes through which we are drawn into the ruling relations of the milieus where we work, live, teach, or research, such that we take their logics for granted. When this happens, we can fail to interrogate the words, concepts, or ideas that we commonly employ, thus losing sight of experiential knowledge. For example, as the seven of us interacted with one another, we reflected with greater care about how, when, and where we use words from the neoliberal lexicon. We agree that monitoring our dialogical practices is an extremely valuable insight, since continuing to use language in certain ways feeds the rising demands of academic work. While we may continue to associate the terms "impact," "knowledge translation," and "performance" with our intellectual practices, and act accordingly, we now do so with heightened awareness of whether and how we reproduce the language of ever-heightened expectations. As we have argued, the latter are unsustainable because they are making people, us included, sick. One of us shared two clever and easy-to-implement strategies for reconfiguring talk and focusing verbal interactions in ways that are both personally helpful and socially "subversive."

> *I have not used the word* busy *since 2010. I mean, as it applies to my work or pursuits or life. I boycott it altogether. I also do not entertain*

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49. Sue O'Donnell, Judith MacIntosh, and Judith Wuest, "A Theoretical Understanding of Sickness Absence among Women Who Have Experienced Workplace Bullying," *Qualitative Health Research* 20, no. 4 (2010): 439–452.
50. Michelle Munyikwa, "Vigilance as Coping, Vigilance as Injury," *Somatosphere* (blog), March 6, 2019, http://somatosphere.net/2019/vigilance-as-coping-vigilance-as-injury.html.
51. Dorothy E. Smith, *Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology for People* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira, 2005), 225.

> *conversation about others' busy-ness. I cannot divert my mind in this way. This is a deliberate choice and conversational strategy. It directs us to talk about certain things, anything, other than the anxiety-provoking dimensions of how we earn a living. Also, I have not used the word* should *since 2016, as it applies to something I have not done. This word is a trap. We need not be snared by it. To the point of language and gender, when we stop and pay attention to how we and other women talk, we will surely find that we, they, and us are apologizing for this, that, and things over which we have little or no control. I talk about both of these linguistic decisions with students. I am particularly interested in having women students stop apologizing for happenings outside of their control. I tell them that, by avoiding certain words and expressions that are oddly normalized, we subvert harm, while also being actively subversive.*

In the time that has elapsed since we were together, the seven of us have taken to approaching our teaching and mentoring differently. To make the embodied visible with the subsequent intention of making it sustainable, we are intentionally creating spaces for our students and colleagues that build from an embodied understanding of life since, as we have shown, our bodies communicate with us. How we position ourselves in order to hear what is being said is another matter. In making these changes, we are making efforts to address them, and ourselves, as whole, connected beings and not as partial or instrumental workers. For example, the space and time we had on our research retreat saw us swim, run, bike, hike, do yoga, and walk *as totally integrated* parts of our academic practice. In other words, these are not *extraneous* to our professional practice or what we need to thrive. As we have made concerted efforts to move in the direction of doing academia differently, we aim to better recognize and take seriously our bodies — a practice that needs to be integral to our lives as academics. In exploring new ideas and ways of doing, we also found, and continue to find, affinity, support, respect, bonds, and friendship in one another. While articulated by one of us, we all agree that the reflection below animates all of our orientations to work as academic women.

> *We might imagine thriving in the overlapping space between doing something meaningful for one's life, doing something for which we are rewarded or that gives pleasure, and something we are good at, meaning a practice in line with innate strengths, which does not require too*

much energy. For me, finding this space in my day-to-day life, and committing to a mindset to propel me to flourish, are necessary challenges for me; for my survival.

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