

Collaborate, compete, repeat: career(ing) in higher education

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Context

Higher Education as a working environment

- flexibility, autonomy, privilege
- "Hyperprofessionals" (Gornall and Salisbury, 2012)
- going above and beyond for excellence discourse (Blackmore, 2015)

Lived experiences of neoliberal university and precarious contracts
(Taylor and Lahad, 2018)

Autoethnographic poetry

Autoethnography

- auto(self), ethno(folk, people), graphy (write) (Kara, 2015)
- to describe and systematically analyse personal experience in order to understand cultural experience (Ellis et al, 2001:1)

Poetry and poetic inquiry

- emphasis on empathy, raising awareness, evoking and provoking, unsettling stereotypes, including marginalised voices (Leavy, 2015)
- focus on social justice and social change (Faulkner, 2020)

Features of autoethnographic poetry

...focused *crystallization* of experience via *lyrical* aesthetics (Rawlins, 2018)

arrangement, form, word choice, rhythm, rhyme

poetic devices: metaphors, similes, images

4 poems

dialogic form, in parts written in dialogue

sestina – 6 key words repeating in particular pattern

Collaborate

I thank you for the question
you pose and the conversation
you have opened...

I am also very interested...

I'd welcome the opportunity
to catch up with you.

The pleasure is all
mine. There is so much
more to learn.

I agree. Yet
I don't.
More work is needed.

Would you like to Zoom?

I think it is a great idea

link collaborative re/design with dialogue

We shall definitely explore the options.

I'm truly grateful
for your time.

Of course.
We collaborate.

I really appreciate that.

I wish I had the time to join your project
I've taken on too much, I'm completely
overwhelmed with work, I'll try
again next term.

Aine: Compete

*I am aware
of your ambition
I heard you state it very clearly
but that's not how it works.
And if you keep this up
You're going to put
some noses out of joint.*

Stay quiet.

Don't let them think you think your thoughts
are big. Take the light and hide
it for a while; don't let it be extinguished.

*I am sorry to not
be able
to support you.
I admire your ambition,
but your status doesn't equal
your aspiration.*

Be satisfied. What does this mean?
Shrink a little bit.

*I don't begrudge you
the opportunity
but if it was my choice..
you'll see I indicated
I wouldn't
make that choice.*

Why not me?

That wouldn't be fair

Why others?

Well...

What is wrong
with me?

Nicole: Compete

Meet the essential criteria.
Hit the desirables, several
publications. Not enough
experience in research.

Try again, but for now, work
harder.

High impact, full engagement, total
reach. Excellent research.
You're top of the game.
Outstanding. Not enough
experience in teaching.

Try again, but for now, work
harder.

How can I gain
experience, with no opportunity?
Someone, take a leap of faith?

Do more, still no
role. Unpaid
hours in research labs, lecture halls, seminar rooms.
For now, work harder, volunteer,

try again.

Another rejection, another "no".
This is not right
for you. You're overqualified.
You should have tried
last year.

Career(ing)

Life is a series of marriages (if you will); we try to connect ourselves, the other, the work in which we participate.

I want my work to mean something; to do, to think, to share, to research.

I thought I'd come with open wonder to this work -

In the playground my child says hi to everyone, runs up, reaches out his hand. In the process some children answer and some are mortified by his attempt at dialogue.

Othered, ostracised, missing dialogue.

Day after day wanting to connect

in academia. We must process

being overwhelmed, needing to participate.

It feels like a privilege, a calling, to work

flexibly with others in research.

And I am hurt. How can I ensure that he (I) succeed(s)? I must research!

Wait, what I really mean (for him) is 'happy' - in creative dialogue with life. How can I make sure my mothering works?

When I take my child to the child minder, I still connect

to meetings in the car, so the work world knows that I participate in everything, at all times. Yes, yes, yes I say. I know the process.

An academic career is a process
of learning to fit in, to belong. You research
what it means to participate
and follow the instructions, no dialogue.
Somewhere along the way you forget to connect
with yourself, with others. What remains is work.

I have wandered corridors, looking for an open door at work
for a window, for a way in, through this labyrinth process.
*Maybe a conversation at the copier will connect
me to a chance and I will pass as someone capable of research.*
“Oh, you know I’m into poetry, yes, and Blommaert J, and Freire P. and Dialogue.
Oh yes, I’m really very smart and very keen. Could I participate?”

But how can you belong and participate
when you don’t understand the rules of work?
You do, think, but don’t share or dialogue
because competition is part of the process.
Faster, better, more impactful research
is needed. There is no need to connect.

My child shows me the process at the park; how to participate.
I didn’t research it or show him how play works.
He climbs the rope, turns to connect, uses his ‘let me help you’ dialogue.

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