Gender, Time and 'Waiting' in Everyday Academic Life

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The increasing dominance of accountability measures and 'audit culture' in higher education has been well documented in the literature (see e.g. Slaughter and Leslie, 1997; Henkel, 1999; Harley, 2001; Morley, 2003; Lynch, 2006) – and there are an increasing number of studies noting the detrimental effects of the pressures of the 'audit culture' and 'top-down' managerialist practices on academic life and work (Henkel, 1997; Harley and Lowe, 1998; Hey, 2004; David, 2008; Leathwood and Read, 2013). Within and alongside these discussions are those pointing to the continued pleasures of academia as a profession, with, for example, Gornall and Salisbury stating that "there are not many professional jobs you can do in your dressing gown" (2012: 151, see also Vostal, 2015). The disruption of notional temporal and spatial boundaries, of home and work in this particular image of the academic in their dressing gown highlight some of the complexities of discussing our felt experiences of 'academia' and 'academic work'. For example, who is defined as an academic, and what is defined as academic work, are fluid subjective concepts, and not necessarily bound to the limits of paid employment at an institution of higher education. Of course, like all professions there are many ways of experiencing academia and academic life, related both to social positionings, for example in terms of gender, class, ethnicity, age; and also to material positionings, for example the 'reality' of occupational and contract status, and wider caring/family responsibilities. In embarking on our contribution to this volume we were keen to explore the ways in which both the similarities and differences of identity, contractual status, life commitments and experience infuse the ways in which we 'feel' academic life and work.

Noting the importance of a focus on the temporal in the analysis of social life, we were keen to organize our analysis of this topic through a temporal lens. It struck us that whilst much of

our working lives seemed incessantly fast-paced, it was often, and intuitively contradictorily, characterized by multiple and overlapping episodes of stillness and 'waiting'. We thus decided to reflect in this chapter on the complex ways in which such positionings shape our experiences of 'waiting', and the ways in particular conceptions of 'time' and the 'temporal' influence the ways in which we feel and perform the 'academic' in our everyday working lives. In doing so we will be using experimental autoethnographies (Bradley, 2015) to explore our own experiences of waiting in our 'academic' lives over the course of a single week. The methods we will be using will be the photographing of images over a course of a week which will be intended to construct 'talking points' relating to our experiences of waiting, which we will then discuss with each other in a 'co-interview', loosely structured around the images.

Waiting as a social construction

Analyzing the concept of 'waiting' involves, necessarily, an interrogation of the social construction of time itself, and a consideration of the ways in which dominant sociocultural constructions of conceptualizing and regulating time pervade our everyday lives (Leach, 1971; Zeruvabel, 1981; Elias, 1983; Lahad, 2012). As Adam (the founder of the interdisciplinary journal *Time & Society*) notes, the study of the social dynamics of time is still under-researched in academia:

> Much like people in their everyday lives, social scientists take time largely for granted. Time is such an obvious factor in social science that it is almost invisible. To 'see' it and to recognise it in not just its dominant but also its less visible forms has proved to be hard work.

> (Adam, 1990: 3)

Lisa has written elsewhere (Bradley, 2015) about how time is a political construction, and that we must look at the ways in which such temporal political constructions inevitably shape the construction of whole *ways of life* (see Bourdieu, 2000). Life in the modern West is infused with the hegemonic discourse of 'clock time' as an unquestioned, inevitable 'reality' (Adam 1990, 1995). E. P. Thompson charts the gradual ascendance of measured clock time into working people's 'time-sense' (1967: 57). Originally the preserve of the privileged with access to advances in technology, clock time gradually pervaded all sections of society with industrialists' demand for an accurate measurement of a worker's 'labour time'. Twinned

with this is a marked increase in an expectation of the 'pace' of life – what and how much a person is expected to do or reach during these periods of time – that in the West was catalyzed by the Industrial Revolution and has been exacerbated exponentially by advances in technology ever since (Adam, 2005; Levine, 2006; Burnett et al., 2007; Birth, 2007). In a social climate pervaded by 'hurry sickness' (Dossey, 1982), moments of time when we are required to be 'still' and *wait* can seem much more difficult to achieve with equanimity.

It is an interesting exercise, then, to explore instances of 'waiting' connected to academic working life, that is increasingly infused by neoliberal, marketised discourses that constrain and influence what is seen to be 'appropriate' ways of being and doing in the academy, predominating over a previous conception of 'traditional' collegiate academic life (Deem, 1998; Harris, 2005; Leathwood and Read, 2013; Read and Leathwood, 2016) and encouraging a much 'faster' pace of academic life (Davies and Bansel 2005; Clegg, 2010). This 'marketised' conception of academia consists of beliefs and values in relation to evaluation and accountability that are as problematic in its attempts to 'measure' academic endeavor as 'clock time' is able to measure and account for the 'messiness' of life itself (Leathwood and Read, 2009, 2013; Bradley, 2015).

Critique and resistance to this discourse has included an emerging 'slow' movement in academia (see e.g. Garey et al., 2014; Mountz et al., 2015). Mendick (2014) however cautions on the need to examine how the discourse of 'slow' can at times implicitly support gendered classed and racialized patterns of inequality under a banner of idealizing a 'golden age' of academia. Moreover, in current times, with an increased distinction between those on secure positions and those on temporary or part-time contracts, some in the academy are more likely to have the ability than others resist with such practices, and to do so with less consequence (see also Leathwood and Read, 2013; Martell, 2014).

Just as there are normative 'ways of being and doing' in the academy that are highly gendered, classed and 'racialised' (Reay 2004; Mirza 2006; Leathwood and Read, 2009), time itself is experienced and negotiated differently according to complex matrices of identity and privilege. Bradley (2015) notes, for example, that as well as 'time' being 'money', having money (and the social capital of connections) may help in negotiating obstacles in order to 'free' more time for oneself, for example in being able to afford childcare, spending money on taxis and avoiding the need to wait in line for the bus. Indeed, in terms of waiting, it is possible to literally pay more money in order *not* to wait, for example in paying for

'speedy boarding' passes on some airlines, so that some people can become – at least in certain areas of their lives – "nearly immune from waiting" (Levine, 2006, 114). Through her analysis of discourses of single women 'waiting for the One' in popular culture, Lahad (2012, 2016) discusses the gendered and aged connotations of passivity infused with the notion of 'waiting', noting that "waiting implicates the submission to ideological commands, through which single women are sanctioned and punished if they fail to comply with socio-temporal norms" (2016: 6). She draws on Bourdieu (2000) who delineates numerous ways in which 'waiting' is infused with unequal power relations:

> ….one would need to catalogue, and analyze, all the behaviors associated with the exercise of power over other people's time both on the side of the powerful (adjourning, deferring, delaying, raising false hopes or conversely rushing, taking by surprise) and on the side of the 'patient' as they say in the medical universe, one of the sites par excellence of anxious powerless waiting. Waiting implies submission.''
> (Bourdieu, 2000: 228, in Lahad, 2016)

There are times when we can both resist and challenge such positionings (although, as we have noted, some have more agency to do this than others). And, of course, there are pleasures and agency in the act and performance of waiting itself, as we go on to discuss. We were interested in exploring these complicated dynamics of 'waiting' as experienced in our own working lives – as two women with different backgrounds, caring responsibilities and with contrasting levels of security and permanence in academia. How is our working time, and flows of waiting, experienced similarly and differently for us under such circumstances and parameters? This is what we attempted to explore by recording and discussing instances of 'waiting' over the course of a single week in our 'academic' lives.

Methodology

The practice and potential of autoethnography is in no way commonly agreed upon by the academic community. It has been diversely defined, ranging from a cultural study of one's own people (Hayano, 1979; Anderson, 2006), to a method which allows researchers to understand themselves in deeper ways, in turn enhancing their understanding of other issues (Hemmingson, 2008). Sitting somewhere between these descriptions, our use of an autoethnographical approach here springs from Lisa's use of autoethnography in her PhD research, prompted by a desire to get behind the dominant experiences and representations of

time in everyday urban life (Bradley, 2015). Whilst Lisa conducted a variety of autoethnographical 'experiments' for her doctoral research (including experiencing a period of time without clocks or conventional time-keeping; staggering the time to conduct a regular walk to a particular destination once a week; and comparing time experienced 'on holiday' and 'at work'), our method here was to designate a 'fieldwork week' in our working lives, where we would take photographs of instances of 'waiting'. We would then find a time soon afterwards and meet and carry out a joint discussion of these experiences, using the photographs as prompts for the conversation. We ended up conducting these interviews over two lunchtimes, a simultaneously pleasurable experience and also one that speaks eloquently of our felt need to 'snatch' time for such research endeavours during a time period conventionally culturally linked to a period of leisure and sustenance inbetween other, appointments conducted 'legitimately' in 'work time'.

In considering these methods, we were struck by just how difficult it is to capture the experience of waiting through photographs. We were aware of different ways in which we felt a sense of 'waiting' simultaneously at different times and different places for different things. Some periods of waiting time had a short duration: waiting to come home after a trip to the university campus; waiting for a child to wake from a nap). Whilst other 'waits' had begun long before the week had started and were to go on long after: Lisa's 'wait' for her second child to be born (she was 7 months pregnant at the time of our conversation); the wait for the results of our joint bid to the ESRC for funding for a project (that would guarantee Lisa full-time employment for three years). Other experiences of waiting were more fleeting but also seemed to evade visual representation – a number of times Barbara took a photo of her email inbox to signify a wait for an answer or for input or feedback on collaborative enterprises, feeling unable to represent these in more imaginative ways. Therefore we allowed a period of time after we had discussed our images to go through our diaries as an alternative prompt for other aspects of waiting we felt we may have 'missed' recording through the photo taking. Barbara also noted her need to look at her diary in order not only to remember the context of particular photographs but to make sense of the previous week ("because it's a complete jumble in my head") – showing the ways we need to utilize particular material 'props' that construct and portray time in particular categorized ways in order to understand and order everyday life past, present, and future. So, paradoxically, whilst we took the photographs in order to help us remember and articulate aspects of waiting

over that week, we ended up using other visual/textual 'props' such as notes or diary entries in order to remember why we took those photographs in the first place.

Boundaries of 'Work' and 'Not Work'

Both of us were struck by the difficulties of establishing clear boundaries between 'work' and 'non-work' both in spatial and temporal terms, partly connected to the fluidity of the academic occupation. There are periods of time that are considered more likely to be 'non-work' time – time spent on vacation, sickness leave, weekends, evening and night-time hours – that can only be classified as such because there are contracted hours of paid work (Scott, 2009). Academic contracts often specify a number of hours that should be devoted to the paid work of the position – however this remains notional for many academics, and many academics find themselves working well over this stated limit despite not technically being paid for this time (Highwood, 2013), and also conduct academic work that their employers may consider to be 'in addition to their stated brief' or not a priority. Indeed, being an 'academic', like other 'vocations', is an identification not necessarily connected to a person's actual paid work or duties – so that a person may consider themselves to still be an academic even if they are not in current employment with an academic institution, and conversely some who teach/research in a university position may have stronger identification with other professional or vocational statuses, such as being a teacher, artist, writer or lawyer (Leathwood and Read, 2009).

Lisa expressed a concern at the time of interview that her photos were too 'similar' and on aspects of life not directly related to work. She felt that partly this was due to her part-time working pattern (two days a week). However when discussing the photographs she was easily able to discuss them in relation to work, even if it was in discussing how aspects of 'outside' life felt to her to be 'barriers' to her being able to undertake academic work. Barbara, who works full-time, stated that often her photographs were on aspects of life that were nominally 'outside' of work, but which could not be separated from work: whether this was a photo of a bus she was waiting for, using the waiting-time to also read an academic article, or taking a photo of her bedroom window whilst waiting to fall back to sleep, a period of fretfulness over a work situation causing a few hours of insomnia. Despite this, only one of her photographs was taken in her official 'workplace' – demonstrating a locational fluidity, an agency in terms of *where* to undertake work, that she especially valued, but again speaks to the nebulousness of the status of doing/being an academic.

So therefore there was a certain fluidity in our notions of the boundaries of work, and therefore of experiences of 'waiting' that may be work-related. We also found, interestingly, that there were some qualitative differences of experience in waiting that related to whether we felt the 'waiting' was something instigated by others and externally 'imposed' on us, whether we ourselves were 'imposing' waiting on others (linking to the power relations infused in the waiting process discussed above) – or indeed a third form of 'waiting': times when we perceived that we were making *ourselves* wait.

'Self-inflicted' Waiting

> Lisa: A lot of the waiting we do in academia, it's external – so we're waiting on emails from people, we're waiting for students to turn up, transport to turn up to get us places, the decisions of funding applications, things like that, but there's also *us* putting off things that we have to do.

One of Lisa's photos was of a thermostat in her parents' house. In visiting her parents and doing some work whilst there, she was reminded of a way in which she habitually 'imposed' waiting on herself in relation to her own working environment in her own home:

> Lisa: I very rarely put the heating on in our house, because I have to get a stepstool out to climb up to do it, which is fine to do, but I'm a bit too lazy to do it, and it got me thinking of the self-inflicted waiting that I do..[….] I almost kind of procrastinate in terms of my own comfort […] I would often wait until Jason got home, or wait until the evening to – I often kind of deprive myself…[….] I don't know why.

Lisa recognized such aspects of 'self-imposed' waiting not only in terms of controlling or organizing her work environment, but also in terms of the process of writing itself.

> Lisa: There were sections of the PhD that I didn't write until the very very end, I was almost…I was waiting to do them, I was waiting for the perfect conditions, I was waiting for - who knows, but they sat there…

She describes that one such section was about a quilt she had made as part of her autoethnographic methodology which was heavily invested in meaning for her. She believes that this investment contributed to her procrastination around tackling this part of the 'writing up' process:

Lisa: I think there's probably a lot of that, we do the pieces of work that we're not emotionally attached to […] I think it [the quilt] was the bit that I was proudest of – that I'd allowed myself to make a quilt in the first place, and so I thought I had to do it justice in writing it up. And I'd never felt I was there yet in order to write it up well. And even now in reading that section it reads fine […] but I still want it to be better than it was….

The 'finished product' of such work shows nothing of the *temporality* of the writing process, the stops and starts, the non-linear slow progression and revision, breaks and breakdowns that are involved in the process of weaving everything together to form a 'whole'. Indeed part of the deemed 'success' of written work in academia is for a piece of writing to have a fluid coherence or 'polish' that precisely does not show the messy mechanics of its slow (and sometimes painful!) development. And what might seem to us to be purely individualised periods of procrastination are often influenced by aspects of our own subjectivities and the constraints of the contexts in which we are sitting down to write. This can be highly gendered, classed and racialized - for example the 'polished' self-confident communication style of academic language is arguably more easily adopted by those from middle-class or upper-class backgrounds – those who move through academia 'like a fish in water' (Bourdieu, 1987). Moreover, confidence in the reception of your work by others may be more easily felt by those who have an established position in academia to 'validate' them, and those whose embodied selves fit more closely the dominant discursive construction of the 'valid' 'serious' academic – white, middle-class, middle-aged, male (see Mahony and Zrmrocek, 1997; Acker and Armenti, 2004; Mirza 2006; Leathwood and Read, 2009). Meanwhile whilst being influenced by our perceptions of its reception by an imagined critical audience, we are also juggling space to find time to write inbetween other caring commitments and obligations that are also more pressing for those like Lisa who (through monetary constraints or a sense of guilt at relinquishing the caring role) do not feel able to 'buy time' through arranging paid childcare (Acker and Webber, 2006). Therefore although we perceive and experience these dynamics as 'self-inflicted' instances of waiting, they are nevertheless socially imbued, and our agency within this is only, of course, a partial agency that operates under 'social constraints'.

'Time squeezing', time 'management' and the presentation of the academic in everyday life

There was a lot of discussion in our conversation about the ways in which we aimed to juggle and compress time, in order to fit as much possible into a small confined temporal space – known as 'time squeezing' (Southerton, 2003). This ranged from the dizziness of a day switching quickly from one type of work to another type of work needing very different skills (teaching, writing, meetings, fieldwork) to aiming to arrange meetings into defined days of the week in order to carve out other spaces to work from home – resulting in long intense and slightly manically busy days on campus on 'appointment days'. Barbara recounted as one of her photograph stories an incident during the week, where she had tried to fit in a personal task before a work task, without success. One aspect of the week had been the wait for payday – despite having a permanent job with a regular monthly income she had run low on funds and was trying to change some foreign currency into sterling to help. She had optimistically hoped that she would have enough time to do this before a supervision meeting: however "I ended up stuck in the queue from hell at the post office [….]" She was embarrassed to bypass the queue by going straight to the bureau de change window (due to a combination of feeling it would be violating the unwritten 'spirit' of the queue, and also due to a fear of being seen to be 'rude' by others in the queue for such an infringement). She therefore stood waiting in the queue and grew steadily more (inwardly) annoyed at others who were not concerned at all about social judgements and were happily bypassing the queue and using the bureau de change window. Eventually mounting anxiety at missing her supervision appointment and caused her to leave the queue without having been able to change her money, and ended up late for the supervision appointment (giving an evasive truncated version of the story to her student and co-supervisor out of further embarrassment at both her lack of 'time management' and being in a weak financial position). We can see here aspects of culturally gendered behaviours and perceptions (fear of being assertive/transgressing social norms by using the bureau de change window; fear of being judged negatively by others) that also contributed to this incident of (unfruitful) waiting (see Fox, 2004; Scott 2009). Moreover, Barbara's evasiveness as to the reasons for her lateness for the supervision appointment was actually motivated less by personally held feelings of shame or guilt at her normative 'disorganization' in terms of time and money, but by a concern not to 'lose face' with her student and co-supervisor. She realized through analyzing this incident how much she edits her 'presentation of self' in order to try and perform a discursively constructed notion of the 'academic' as being slightly quirky and informal (in comparison to a business or legal professional, say), but nevertheless ultimately 'sensible, orderly, trustworthy, moderate and in control' – including being in control of time.

Barbara: Most of the time I try and be, I guess, professional-*ish*, but I'm not a particularly smart person…part of the thing I love about the job is you don't have to be 'business-corporate', and you are allowed to sometimes say 'oh gosh I've been busy doing x y z, and people being fine about it […] but if you do it too much…for me there feels like there's a limit and sometimes I feel like I'm not in control of it, and I'm letting too much of my inner scattiness onto the outside, and people will realise.

There are complex patterns here in relation to power, status, privilege and dis/advantage- as Schwartz argues, "the distribution of waiting time coincides with the distribution of power" (1975: 5; see also Lahad, 2012). Barbara arguably only feels the need to present herself as 'in control' of time because of her professional role – one that is connected to a range of material and social advantages – yet gendered insecurities around presentation of an 'assertive' powerful self are also invoked in her experience in the post office, that paradoxically then threaten to disrupt her intended 'professional' self-presentation.

Lisa went on to relate how she and her ex-supervisor were working on a project with a third colleague, who always turned up a little late for meetings, about 10 past the hour, and left a little early, and that her ex-supervisor commented that this colleague was on 'academic time' – the rhythm of the 'teaching hour' where classes always started a little past the hour and ended a little before due to students travel from one class to the next. Lisa and Barbara both agreed that they were not quite used to this rhythm of time either and discussed how both of them would usually start a class 'on the dot' if all the students were there and teach 'right up to the wire' of the hour, forgetting that oftentimes another lecturer would be waiting to use the room. Both felt that responsibility for the timing of teaching sessions and meetings was an aspect of work that was quite mentally draining and that when the responsibility was lifted (for example during the day before when Lisa attended an all-day event organized by others) it felt like a 'treat'. Although in general both cherished the relative freedom of the job in terms of being 'in charge of your own time', there was also an element of pleasure in being temporarily able to give this power up to others and not 'having to be in control' – the control of time being a very simple and direct way of experiencing shifting degrees of power and responsibility involved in academic life, and our levels of agency within this.

The 'breathing space' of waiting…

Of course, such agency is constrained at all times by our own identity positionings, subjectivities and the constellations of our connectivities with others – and experienced by us emotionally in a multitude of ways. This was brought to the fore in our conversations when Lisa discussed a picture of her daughter asleep in her car. Lisa took the photo to illustrate a regular occurrence for her – waiting while her daughter sleeps. Lisa explained that as they live in a top floor flat, there's no easy way of transporting her daughter upstairs without waking her. Ensuring that her daughter has a lunchtime nap means that she will then sleep reasonably early around 7pm, and Lisa can spend a few hours relaxing in the evening. If she has a later nap then this relaxation time is missed, and with no nap then the evening is frantic as Lisa and her partner have to try and keep their daughter awake during dinner and bathtime. Therefore if Lisa's daughter does fall asleep at lunchtime, Lisa will often spend that time waiting – even if this is in the car. Sometimes Lisa will also have a quick nap, but nowadays she often spends this time 'fitting in some work'.

> Lisa: So waiting isn't necessarily always a negative thing….in some ways there's a frustration there – I'm stuck in the car, having to work with my laptop on my knee. But there's also kind of a relief there – you know what, I don't need to be in the office right now, and I don't need to go up the stairs and do all that….

In this way, the time spent waiting whilst her daughter is asleep is experienced in a variety of emotional ways by Lisa – the annoyance of the practical difficulties of her surroundings (and the need to maximize the use of 'snatches' of time to work in such spaces due to her caring commitments) mixed with the feeling of relief or pleasurable enjoyment where the imposed stillness can also be used as unexpected yet 'legitimate' free time.

We then discussed the similarity between this dynamic and the experience of waiting after having sent an email to a colleague in relation to a joint project or endeavor:

> Lisa: I suppose when you're waiting on [work] emails as well, back from people, it almost kind of gives you a breathing space…[…] I think there's something really liberating when you finally draft that email and press send, and it's somebody else's thing to deal with…

> Barbara: Yes! Passing the buck! And you don't have to then deal with it for a little period of time I suppose the down side of that is the sort of guilt, when you've got a lot of emails in your inbox, that *have* been passed over to you, and you're sort of

aware of them weighing on your head. And you've got in your head a probably very subjective idea of what's an appropriate time to send it back to [them].

Since the 1990s emails have become by far the most commonly used form of communication between university staff, and take up a sizeable part of the working day (or night) – in a rather nebulous, unquantifiable way. Reflecting on this, Lisa noted the difficulties she has, as an 'atypical' hourly paid worker, of logging in how much time is exactly spent in the process of reading and replying to emails, which is often undertaken in sporadic bursts throughout the day. Such time also often goes unregistered by workload systems that purportedly aim to map in quantifiable 'chunks' the hours that employees should spend on particular tasks. Indeed one of the photos Barbara took was of the skype button on her desktop – whilst waiting for a skype supervision to start she took the chance to reply to a few emails at the same time.

The time spent dealing with emails is not of course always restricted to the acts of reading and writing, but also the time spent on reflection and mulling over issues within them, and pondering possible ways of replying – often taken, as we noted at the beginning of the chapter, in supposedly 'non-work' spaces and times of day such as walking down the road or lying in bed at night. Lisa noted the importance of valuing such nebulous periods of time, which were often 'waiting times' for the gestation and development of creative ideas.

> Lisa: One of the reasons why I made the quilt [submitted as part of her PhD] was that I noticed that the times I was writing the PhD wasn't when I was sitting at the computer – it was when I was in the shower, sitting crocheting at night [….] it just really struck me that the physical space we inhabit to write isn't the actual emotional and mental space we need to write. But all of that kind of flows outwith the boundaries of what a kind of 'normal' academic day should be. It's in our dreams, and when we're waking up in the middle of the night, and it's when we're on the bus [….] it's not sat in an office in front of the computer […] In many ways I wouldn't change it, but I would like it to be recognized actually what spaces academia inhabits - because it's not the university, it's not the campus, it can't be demarcated in those ways.

Waiting…for Decisions

Of course, the workload system is not the only practice or procedure that attempts to quantifiably record and measure academic work and life. Both Lisa and Barbara are required

by the university to undertake an annual appraisal where targets are set for the upcoming year. In Lisa's case this was something of a farce in that she hadn't been set any targets for the previous year as she hadn't taken on the work yet, and she can't set any for the year ahead, as her contract is coming to an end and she will be on (unpaid) maternity leave.

Barbara's targets were largely based around publication and even more importantly, research funding targets – anxiety around which had caused her to wake up in the middle of the night the week before, recorded by the photograph of her bedroom window. Throughout the period of the fieldwork, indeed throughout much of 2016, Lisa and Barbara had both been waiting on a decision for their bid for a research grant in the ESRC open call. For Barbara the anxiety related to the key expectation of her job to bring in research funding, and a nebulous feeling of insecurity generated by pondering the consequences of being repeatedly unsuccessful in this arena. She discussed how such feelings of insecurity are not generated directly from communications from university management, but from her own 'self-policing' in response to general discourses of 'appropriate' academic performance:

> Barbara: In a way I'm already there with a ball and chain and whip over my head saying 'you are the most terrible person because you haven't brought in xyz funding, therefore you don't deserve to be there'.

For Lisa the connection between the grant and job security was much more immediate, as the grant would supply her with a three-year full-time contract on a gradescale that recognized her PhD and experience. For Lisa, it was the first time she had been involved in the preparation of a large bid from start to finish, and she was struck by the length of time involved and the long periods of waiting time during the process, firstly the inevitable waiting time needed for team members to all develop sections of the bid and contribute feedback on other sections, waiting for internal feedback at School and College level, for permissions to conduct fieldwork by gatekeepers, and now finally waiting for the application to be evaluated by the funders. For Lisa this labyrinthine process had been more eye-opening than anxiety-making, which she related to her current marginal position in academia:

> Lisa: I [experience insomnia] less now, but when I do it's not often about work. Not since I finished the PhD. And I don't know if that's because I don't have that kind of investment in anything yet, the same way that I did with the PhD. And I don't feel my career's riding on anything because I don't feel like I've *got* a career. In some ways

it's nice [not to be feeling the anxiety] [….] There's a part of me that's reluctant to go back into it […] I enjoy being calm! It feels like a nice way to be! […] But I also want to have enough money to pay my bills…

We began to talk about the ways in which processes like our annual appraisals and workload models attempt to construct a linear, clear, measurable sense of time that contradicts the unpredictability and 'messiness' of real life, including our caring and personal commitments to friends and family, times when we ourselves or others become ill or bereaved, and the need to take extra time for experiences such as a pregnancy that do not run to a predictable schedule. As feminist writers such as Davies (1994) and Odih (1999) note, the gendered activities of care time can often run counter to dominant linear (masculinized) 'clock time':

Lisa: I've encountered academia at a time in my life when my physical body, my biology, all of those types of things, are very much *present*. And because of that I can't really imagine a time when they're not. 'Cause I think well people get ill, you get different desires, lots of things – those are the things that make me who I am, not how many papers I write. I can't quite take it seriously, and I don't know how to bring those things together.

> Barbara: I think that's kind of a very sane reaction to the whole thing, you know what I mean? I can get really sucked into it, where, even though I do work on academic culture and stuff like that, I still find myself thinking 'Oh my god, I'm not good enough, I'm not this, I'm not that, I need to be more productive….I just bought a book called *How to Be a Productivity Ninja*'! [both laugh]. Needless to say I read the first few pages and thought 'oh no….!'

> Lisa: But you still bought the book!

> Barbara: Yes, it's ridiculous!

Conclusion

The exercise of attempting to record instances of 'waiting' in our working lives ended up making us acutely aware of the ways in which the temporal pervades our lives – in particular the ways in which occupational, institutional, familial, personal and social factors interwove and shaped these experiences, and the limits of our many and varied attempts at agency within these constraints. In analyzing these instances of 'waiting' it became clear that for Lisa in particular the constraints of her position as carer were very direct, and the explicit

precariousness of her working conditions were felt much more acutely than for Barbara, whose temporal concerns and anxieties revolved more around the attempts to present a particular professional image ('You want to look like a swan gliding on the water, and disguise the flailing limbs underneath') and self-regulation of productivity via nebulous fears of the potentially dire consequences of academic 'failure'. Nevertheless, the exercise did bring up realisations we weren't expecting – for example the realization of the potential pleasures and possibilities of waiting as a 'breathing space' in the contemporary 'fast' world of academia, and indeed the simple pleasure of 'making time' to meet with each other over lunch and reflect on these experiences. As Lahad (2012) notes, **"**waiting has multiple facets: it can be tranquil or anxious, patient or impatient, a waste of time or an important and meaningful interval in our lives" (2012: 165).

Moreover, and despite the continued dominance of the conception of the academic as a dispassionate, 'rational' subject' and HE as an "emotion-free zone" (Leathwood and Hey, 2009: 429), our accounts of these temporal facets of academic work are *saturated* with emotions, arguably often felt more strongly by those who feel in some sense 'othered' in the dominant cultures and practices of HE, whether due to social positionings/identities such as gender, class, and 'race' and/or through contractual status and position. As we recount here our own accounts are threaded through with emotions such as anxiety, blame, guilt, fear, and at certain more positive moments, relief, happiness, satisfaction and pride – emotions that are intimately connected to our own identities, and positionings – whether these be in some senses privileged and some instances more marginal and 'other' to normative conceptions of the academic.

Overall, conducting this exercise made us both acutely aware of the ways in which seemingly innocuous, personalized events in 'everyday life' are actually socially located. Feminist academics are of course acutely aware of the myriad ways in which 'the personal is political', and in acknowledging, and identifying the ways in which our day-to-day working practices may reflect- and help reinforce – inequity, we can also then work to try and subvert or challenge such practices.

At the time of writing Lisa has given birth to her second daughter; we were ultimately unsuccessful with our research funding bid; Barbara still hasn't found out how to be a productivity ninja.

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