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Title:

Precarity, gender and care in the neoliberal academy

Short title:

Precarity, gender, care

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Abstract

This article examines the rise in precarious academic employment in Ireland as an outcome of the higher education restructuring following OECD, government initiatives and post-crisis austerity. Presenting the narratives of academic women at different career stages, we claim that a focus on care sheds new light on the debate on precarity. A more complete understanding of precarity should take account not only the contractual security but also affective relational security in the lives of employees.

The intersectionality of paid work and care work lives was a dominant theme in our interviews among academic women. In a globalised academic market, premised on the care-free masculinised ideals of competitive performance, 24/7 work and geographical mobility, women who opt out of these norms, suffer labour-led contractual precarity and are over-represented in part-time and fixed-term positions. Women who comply with these organisational commands need to peripheralise their relational lives and experience care-led affective precarity.

Keywords

affective, care, gender, higher education, Ireland, neoliberalism, precarity

Neoliberalism, Precarity and the Commercialisation of Academia

Neoliberal capitalism is the dominant political-economic ideology of our time (Harvey, 2005). Premised on the primacy of the market in the organisation of economic, *and* political and social, life, while it has been contested, it has retained cognitive hegemony (Leyva, 2018). One of the ways in which neoliberalism has achieved hegemony is through the institutionalisation of market values and norms not only in private, but also in public sector organisations. While the incursion of new managerialist market values into the public sector is greatest in Anglophone countries, it has also occurred in mainland Europe and beyond (Bosanquet, et al., 2016; Clarke et al, 2000; Sowa et al, 2018). As it endorses a form of entrepreneurial individualism that is highly competitive and self-interested, and as it regards these traits as natural and desirable (Friedman, 2002), neoliberalism is antithetical to care in deep and profound ways (Federici, 2012; Fraser, 2016; Oksala, 2016).

Although the promotion of neoliberal values began prior to austerity, it was exacerbated internationally in higher education due to public funding cutbacks post-2008 (Hazelkorn, 2017). Given the lack of synchrony between care values and commercial values, it is not surprising that carelessness developed as a norm within academia (Lynch, 2010), a norm that was both a product of, and enhanced by, growing precarity (Cardozo, 2017).

Ireland promoted neoliberal managerialist values in public policy-making from the late 1990s (Collins, 2007), and in higher education from the early 2000s (Lynch, 2006 Lynch and Grummell, 2018; Loxley et al, 2014); neoliberalism dominated all welfare policy-making post-2008 (Murphy and Dukelow, 2016).

It is in this context that the concept of precarity has come to designate growing existential and structural uncertainties in an era of neoliberal capitalism (Butler, 2009; Kalleberg, 2009;

Standing, 2011). In the post-war era when stable working and living conditions became accessible to citizens of wealthy countries engaged in productive work, free from direct dependence or dependents (Neilson and Rossiter, 2008), the academic labour force benefited greatly from job stability and security. The rapid marketization of higher education (Marginson and Considine, 2000; Slaughter and Leslie, 1997) has, however, transformed many universities into powerful consumer-oriented corporate networks, where public-interest values are seriously challenged (Ball 2012; Hazelkorn, 2017). Higher education in Ireland is no exception (Grummel et al. 2009; Loxley et al., 2014).

Growing pressures for competition and commercialization have also put a high personal and economic price on a successful academic career (Gill, 2009), pushing many into regular migration within and between countries to secure visibility and permanent employment (Herschberg et al. 2018; Stalford 2005). A deep polarization has emerged between elite permanent academics and a reserve army of teaching and research staff with hyper-flexible contracts (Cordozo, 2017). While academia is a relatively privileged site of precarity, over the last decades many precarious academics have fallen steadily into the ranks of the working poor (Courtois and O'Keefe, 2015; UCU, 2016).

The price of a successful academic career seems particularly high for women. In Europe women are increasingly dropping out of academic career paths even when qualified to pursue them (ESF, 2009). Across the EU, in 2010, women comprised 59% of all graduates but only 44% of lecturers, 37% of senior lecturers and 20% of professors (EC/SHE figures, 2013: 8). In the UK, one of the largest academic job markets worldwide, women hold only 39% of full-time positions, and only 36% of permanent full-time positions that involve both teaching and research (Locke, 2014: 12-13; 21). In Ireland, while 51% of lecturers are women, just 24% of professors are women; in contrast, 61% of those on part-time temporary contracts are women (HEA, Higher Education Authority, 2018: 7).

To date research on gender equality in academia has focused strongly on promotional opportunities for women in academia (Deem, 2003; Fritsch, 2015; Morley, 2013; O'Connor, 2014). Others have explored labour market structures and mobility requirements in relation to parenting and the retention of early career researchers (Ackers and Gill, 2005; Lörz, M. and Mühleck, 2018; Stalford, 2005). There has been relatively little reflection on the gendered aspects of precarity on women in academia. Analysing the gendered aspect of precarity within a polarized labour force (Kalleberg, 2013) is important as it allows us to better understand why women are over-represented in part-time and fixed-term appointments in elite fields like higher education: it enhances understanding of the complex interface between gender and '…women's lived experiences, organizational practices and societal norms" (Ozkazanc-Pan and Clark Muntean, 2018: 380). Refocusing the theoretical discussion on women's relational and caring lives also advances understanding of gender equality more generally (Powell et al, 2018: 127).

Given the moral imperative on women to care (Bubeck, 1995; Glenn, 2010; O'Brien, 2007), female academics are disproportionately affected by the masculinist care-free norms of geographic mobility and the 24/7 availability of the 'ideal academic' (Lynch, 2010; Devine et al., 2011; Bomert and Leinfellner, 2017; Herschberg, et al. 2018). Although employed women remain the primary carers in families (Lynch and Lyons, 2008), those in academia are assessed vis-a-vis the modalities of academic masculinity, the pinnacle of which is career

masculinity involving a 'weak relational commitment' (O'Connor et al., 2015). Although subordinated masculinities operate in the academy, a hegemonic masculinity model is still dominant (Lynch et al., 2012).

This article offers an empirically-grounded reflection on the complex interrelations between two profoundly gendered types of precarity in academia: labour-led precarity and care-led affective precarity. By affective we mean productive, materialist human relations that constitute people mentally, emotionally, physically, and socially (Lynch et al., 2009; Cantillon and Lynch, 2017). Both labour and care-led, affective, precarity require the sacrifice of different aspects of care and self-care. Drawing on data from qualitative interviews within a large multi-sited research project, we use ethnographic writing to narrate three complex, telling case studies of women in academic careers that we encountered during our fieldwork. We demonstrate how the material demands on women to be primary carers at home, while working under the masculine 'academic ideal', deepens and polarises the types of precarity experienced by women. We go beyond the current debate on precarity by highlighting the gendered polarization of precarity that affects academic women, not only as employees, but also as people who have attachments, ties and emotional commitments that are culturally and socially assigned in ways that are different to men.

We argue that, unlike standard labour polarization theories (Kalleberg, 2013) that analyse workers along the lines of income and career satisfaction, the focus on care places gender on the forefront of debates on labour polarization and precarity alike. We highlight existential choices around care and commitment that arise far more rarely for men. While both men and women are pressed to seek serial employment through geographic mobility, severing intimate, familial, social and professional relations (Bomert and Leinfellner, 2017), it is mostly women who do so in the context of the biological pressures of child-birth and imperatives to be the primary carer in families. This gives early career female academics two similarly limiting choices placing them on polar-opposite employment tracks yet in similarly precarious existential positions. Those who opt out of transnational mobility often remain trapped into precarious teaching and research arrangements. Those who seek to balance care responsibilities with a career, do so in the context of ever-declining incomes, welfare regimes, and career prospects (Stalford, 2005). Those seeking transnational mobility as the new 'ideal', face a trajectory hostile to the care of dependent others that requires them to sacrifice friends, family, and intimate relations, experiencing loneliness and lack of self-care. Rethinking care as a central activity in human production and reproduction (Federici, 2012), allows us to explore potential venues of exploitation and liberation within the predicament of the precarious academy.

Bringing care into the discussion of academic precarity

While a focus on 'contractual insecurity' is inevitably central to debates on precarity (Possner, 2015; Standing, 2011), precarity also has an affective relational dimension. A risk to the security of one's care and love relations is as real as a threat to one's wage relations, and equally serious in its consequences. Moreover, in both its employment and relational dimensions, precarity operates differentially in gender terms. It is deeply interwoven with how both the unpaid and paid care economy function (Folbre, 1994, 2001) on the one hand, and how affective relations both produce and reproduce people in their humanness on the other (Cantillon and Lynch, 2017).

To bring care work and affective labour into the discussion of precarity, we need to examine paid work, and work and life outside of employment, not as separate entities, but as overlapping sites of an interconnected gendered system (McDowell, 2004: 147: O'Hagan, 2018). Care and employment operate interdependently through the materiality and relationality of the bodies and minds that occupy these shared spaces. They also intersect through the gendered, cultural, racial, and classed power relations that assign different responsibilities to women and men in care and labour market terms.

The precarisation of the university

Under the pressures of declining state funding, universities pressurize faculty and departments to generate surplus in visible, measurable ways. These expectations were exacerbated after the financial crisis as there was a shift from tax- to student-fees-generated core budgets in a several countries (Lynch and Ivancheva, 2015; Hazelkorn, 2017). The recruitment of international fee-paying students became a priority, pushing universities to achieve ever higher 'benchmarks' of fundraising and publication to boost their international rankings (Lynch, 2014). Participation in geographic mobility and international cooperation also increased academics' abilities to enhance institutional rankings by securing external grants and thus, time to do research and publish. In the UK, while a growing number of graduates entered the labour force in administrative positions evaluating and managing funds, even more enter precarious research and teaching positions (Locke, 2014).

New managerial governance and the pressures of marketisation created a hidden doxa of carelessness underpinning successful academic careers (Lynch, 2010). The ideal academic was (Acker, 1990) and is masculine (Herschberg et al, 2018), rooted in the norm of 'global hegemonic masculinity' (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005): s/he is highly productive, career-oriented, mobile, and free from primary hands-on care responsibilities.

The changes in the academic profession are most visible among early-career academics and are evident in both Anglophone and European countries (Bomert and Leinfellner, 2017; Bozzon et al., 2017; Honan and Teferra, 2011). While celibate travelling scholars represented the medieval scholastic traditions, neoliberal demands for internationalisation and self-marketisation require a new kind of "monk", a truly elastic self "with no boundaries in time, space, energy or emotion" (Devine et al., 2011: 632). Writing and research overtime are combined with extensive research and conferencing travel, and required relocations to different positions, abandoning care commitments and professional communities (Herschberg et al., 2018; Lynch and Ivancheva, 2015). Many suffer loneliness and depression while others move their whole families or commute across regional or national borders to make ends meet (Zanou, 2013; Ivancheva, 2015). Unlike research-only fixed-term positions, which allow time for publication and professional visibility, teaching-only positions are seen and experienced as an academic *cul-de-sac* (Cardozo, 2017; Locke, 2014). Administrative work, answering emails, assessments, preparation work, and pastoral care are not recognized in job competitions (Courtois and O'Keefe, 2015). Precarious research and teaching staff are thus pitted against each other to compete over scarce resources and only a few achieve permanency (Ivancheva and O'Flynn, 2016).

With a dearth of secure funding, atypical fixed-term part-time academic contracts are proliferating internationally (Cardozo, 2017). In the USA tenured faculty with permanent contracts declined from 75% in 1970 to 30% in 2007 (Kaplan, 2010). In UK universities

there were over 74,000 atypical contracts of which 80% entailed teaching-only responsibilities in 2012-2013; around 55% of these were fixed-term or part-time, including zero-hour contracts (Locke, 2014: 12-13; 20-21; UCU, 2013, 2016). Labour markets and working conditions in science have deteriorated significantly also in Germany and in France though not to the same degree: in France, 65% of university faculty staff have tenure-track positions; in Germany, only 25% of faculty staff have such contracts (Bomert and Leinfellner, 2017: 111).

In Ireland a majority of academic core, state-funded staff are on permanent full-time contracts (HEA 2018: 7)[1]. After the government capped the number of posts in the public sector during austerity, part-time and fixed-term flexible research and teaching contracts proliferated (IFUT, 2015): in absolute numerical terms the numbers employed in part-time lecturing is high, even if the amount of lecturing/tutoring undertaken by a given person is low (Cush, 2016). With the expansion of research funding in Ireland (HEA, 2016), and an expectation that academics become involved in funded-research activities, for which recruitment of contractual research staff and teaching buy-outs are the norm, there has been a proliferation of fixed-term contracts. In 2011, 80% of all the 5,202 researchers on Irish institutions of higher education were on temporary contracts (Loxley et al., 2016: 128); over 80% of research staff in Germany are also fixed-term appointments (Wissenschaftsrat, 2014:5).

The feminization of academic precarity

Given the lack of accessible child care in declining welfare regimes, and the inevitable dissolution of care networks accompanying migration, women who are faced with a limited window of opportunity to become mothers, often facing the choice of forfeiting migration or of delaying motherhood (Stalford, 2005).

The first choice jeopardizes academic careers and inflicts labour-led precarity by giving up or reducing the amount of visible measurable work, especially research and publications (Courtois and O'Keefe, 2015). A similar process has been observed in other high-skilled workplaces where part-time work jeopardised the opportunity to close the gender pay gap and secure women's career progression (O'Hagan, 2018; Smithson et al., 2004). Thus, within the new managerial regime, most women and primary carers in families hit a 'care ceiling' as they defy organizational 'shapes' (Lynch, 2010; O'Connor, 2014; Raddon, 2012; Toffoletti and Starr, 2016).

The second choice comes at the expense of cutting familial and intimate relations. Under this hidden gendered doxa of carelessness (Lynch et al., 2012), those who get permanent academic positions are disproportionately care-free individuals: Bomert and Leinfellner (2017: 120) report that 75% of the female research fellows and 62% of the female professors in Germany were childless in 2006. Female research fellows, as well as female professors, are more likely to remain without children than their male colleagues throughout their careers, as 62% of the female compared with 33% of the male Professoriate had no children

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[1] There were 3,760 whole time equivalents (WTEs) on permanent contracts in higher education of whom 42% (1597) were women in Ireland in 2017; there were 605 WTEs on temporary contracts, of whom 54% (327) were women (HEA, 2018). As WTEs are not equal to single persons, these figures much we read with caution.

at that time. The ideal academic worker is one '…with no interests or responsibilities outside of work' (Bailyn, 2003: 141). Women who move, living up to the masculine ideal, risk marginalizing their affective and relational lives, and often have to postpone indeterminably the choice of having a family (Stalford, 2005); the alternative option is to live with the responsibility of being a 'failure' in their own eyes and that of colleagues (Toffoletti and Starr, 2016).

Care-led affective forms of precarity brings to the fore temporal and spatial concerns around work-related migration. While the 'mobility power' (Alberti, 2014) of transnational exit to escape uncertainty is used by academics as a form of resistance, it comes at a double cost. Even if female scientists are more often unmarried and childless than women in general, there is little proof that this gives them greater career opportunities (Bozzon et al, 2017). Yet, in a highly individualized professions, such as academic careers, migration is even more subject to the migrant weakening of social relations and care networks (Anderson, 2010; Stalford, 2005). The individual capacity to develop relationships of love, care and solidarity is diminished by a constant deficit of time, due to the physical and emotional resources deployed in academic performance and mobility.

While research on the work and organisations addresses issues of gender and care in considerable detail (reviews in Leuze and Strauss, 2016; Nalvini and Pavolini, 2016) the framing of the relationship between the worlds of care and of that of paid work is largely binary. Care is subsumed under the term of 'life' (separate from work in the 'work-life balance') (Russell et al., 2009) concealing its internal dynamics, emotionality and materiality. Clear boundaries are drawn between the market sphere and the care sphere in the way research questions are framed. Such boundaries exclude some forms of relations from sociological investigation about work, including informal unpaid care relations (Hatton, 2015). As boundaries between forms of work are situated in relations of power and are forms of exclusion, they need to be contested (Lamont and Molnár, 2002) especially in understanding the care and love-related dimensions of precarity and security.

The academy is a highly individualistic, competitive and greedy work institution in time terms (Misra et al, 2012), increasingly governed by new managerialist norms of overworking that the care-free alone can fully observe (Toffoletti and Starr, 2016). An increasingly segmented labour markets exists where tenured faculty build careers at the expense of the precarious professional *and* affective relational lives of those who unable to give that 24/7 commitment, the majority of whom are women (Bauder, 2006). Unlike women, men do not face a trade-off between professional security and affective relational security. They have a free pass on hands-on care that does not exist for women, especially regarding the care of young children (Misra et al., 2012).

As the case studies we narrate clearly show, women who take up flexible arrangements (i.e. part-time or temporary work) to do caring are at a disadvantage when it comes to taking up the same job they have left and securing permanent employment. An aspect often overlooked by the sociology of work is that engaging in transnational mobility in the pursuit of security impacts on women's ability to have a family or become part of an affective community of solidarity, care, and love. Unlike men who either experience labour precarity or do not, many women experience complex forms of labour and/or care-led precarity regardless of their career outcomes.

Methodology

The article is based on a research project involving 10 higher education institutions in Ireland chosen on a strategic sampling basis to represent the major sectors of higher education, namely universities and institutes of technology. A total of 102 semi-structured in-depth interviews were undertaken across the colleges, of which 59% were with women; all types of employees were sampled, senior management, professors/lecturers (with a balance across disciplines), researchers, IT/technicians, library staff, administrative staff, HR, and general service workers. Of the women interviewed, 43% (n=22) were employed as academics, compared with 23 men. Data was coded over a three-month period and analysed for key themes using NVivo software. Codes were cross-checked between the researchers who blind-coded others' work for verification purposes. A number of major themes emerged from the analysis, including gender and care; power and autonomy; measurement and metrics; time pressures and the rise of new technologies; appreciation, recognition and emotions; and collegiality, community, and collective mobilisation at work.

Care and its relation to precarity, migration, commuting, and childcare was a major theme and concern especially prominent in our interviews with academic women; this theme did not arise spontaneously in academic men's narratives. From all women's narratives, two patterns emerged that represented two disparate positions for women within the polarized academic labour force, both leading to different forms of precarity not similarly faced by men. That is not to say that men did not do care work, however, they did not have the complex relationship with care than women had, not least as they are not as impelled by society to be primary carers (Hanlon, 2012). The dilemmas and sacrifices required by either track are often faced especially by early-career female academics pressurized to choose between family and career, under biological and social imperatives. As affective relations of love and care were dominant narrative in women's stories of their working lives, we have focused this paper on their preoccupations. And while the narratives of our informants are context-embedded within the Anglo-Saxon academy, similar processes have been observed in other countries in Europe (Bozzon et al., 2017; Steinþórsdóttir et al., 2018) and beyond (Bosanquet, et al., 2016).

To present these topics in their complex interrelation within individual stories, while protecting our informants' anonymity, we narrate the stories of six women, combined in pairs, as three prototypical 'cases'; each pair had quite similar stories to tell. These three 'cases' illustrate how labour market and care insecurities intersect in a highly gendered way. Two of the authors of the paper did all these six interviews. We both took field-notes that allowed detailed reporting back to the team of the communication with individual women, the setting of the interview and the emotions expressed during it that would not always be visible in a transcript. The similarities between certain stories were striking. While we have kept the core of these similar stories, key identifiers such as nationality (Irish/non-Irish), age group, and types of institutions, we have changed characteristics that would identify individuals. We used the method of semi-fictionalized organizational ethnography: "restructuring events occurring within one or more ethnographic investigations into a single narrative" (Humphreys and Watson 2009: 44). This method allows to protect individuals in particularly vulnerable positions (Ellen 1984), especially in contexts where 'blanket anonymisation' methods can be compromised by the limited number of organizations matching the case description and where readers might try to guess the identity of particular research subjects

(Humphreys and Watson 2009: 47). The rich ethnographic narration also allows us to reveal details of scene-setting, dialogue, and emotional responses by the interviewer and the interviewees (Rose 1990: 55).

Labour and affective precarity: three ethnographic studies

Case 1: Róisín: the jam-winner

The interview with Róisín – a part-time coordinator and occasional lecturer at a department of social sciences in a large Irish university – took place in a tiny seminar room in a back corridor of an old university building. Afraid that someone would see us talking, she locked the door behind "just in case". She told us anticipating the interview made her "think again" in a mixture of fear and anger. During the interview Róisín's eyes would water, but she would shake off her tears. Róisín had her first child thirteen years ago just after she defended her PhD: "I was very career oriented, was just about to accept a post-doc in the USA. And then I met someone... I stayed and had my first and my second child in the matter of two years". At that point her priorities changed. She wanted to spend all the possible time with her family: "Coming back to a full-time academic position made little sense". At the university, however, student numbers were growing while the staff stayed stagnant and she was offered a part-time job as coordinator and some teaching hours:

> I have been teaching across modules but never having one on my own. And I have been doing the job of a part-time department coordinator for almost twelve years, coming in two and a half days a week, but I never had a contract.

For a while the flexible arrangement worked for Róisín; she felt valued by her colleagues and the department head. However, five years into the job she had a moment of epiphany "I looked around and realized I had been so stupid – everyone around me was doing a quarter of my work for triple my pay. I decided to fight for my rights to get a permanent pensionable employment". Her decision coincided with the financial crisis and the public sector freeze in 2009: "A new rector came with his new methods of management. The head of department backed off: those who were looking for permanent arrangements were kindly asked to look for new jobs". Róisín was devastated. She contacted the trade union and HR, and senior management conceded before the case went to the Labour Court. Only her part-time contract as coordinator became permanent. She had more administrative work and ever less teaching. "And I love teaching so much, it has been my life, I have been doing it almost for free" Róisín frowned, then laughed through tears: "Don't tell anybody, but I love, love, love this university; it is mine, nobody realizes it is mine!... But it was my fault, I made myself far too available".

Róisín never depended on income from the university – her husband worked in the private sector and was earning enough for them to live comfortably:

> He is the bread-winner, but I am the jam winner – it was crucial for me to take my children from school, drop them to piano and rugby lessons, a lovely routine. My husband sometimes left work on time to pick them up, he helped a lot. But weekends were sacred family time, I couldn't work.

However, Rosin told us she regretted at times having given up on her research career and put up with precarious teaching arrangements. She felt less valued than while doing a PhD: "And

regardless of how much one is self-contained and self-reliant, we're all subject to the feelings of how we're viewed by others. I often ask myself: 'Why am I doing this, again?'"

Case 2: Sarah: the care-less overachiever?

To arrange an interview with Sarah, a woman in her late forties, a professor in the life sciences, we received a number of replies from her in unconventional hours. During our interview, sitting in her ample bright office in a big city university and treating us to sweets bought at an airport *en route* to a conference, she apologized about rescheduling: she had meetings of the numerous committees she attended weekly.

After finishing her PhD at a UK Russell group university, Sarah held two fixed-term positions across Europe, got a lectureship in the UK, and quickly progressed to senior lectureship. In that position a colleague invited her to interview for a Professorship at an Irish university. Sarah's application was successful and she moved. She was soon to join senior management as a Vice-President, a position rarely occupied by a woman at Irish universities.

> I was headhunted. If you look at the women who are professors in Irish universities, most were hired at that rank and from abroad. No promotions of women from within. And more has been asked of women in terms of the pastoral care and administrative work, things not valued by the university.

Speaking of her own work as a Vice-President she said it became "a full-time job, with practically no holiday ever, you're always on the ball". Her standard working week entailed endless meetings, "anywhere between two and five meetings a day, sometimes from nine to five, and at times – an evening awards ceremony or other official event sometimes scheduled over weekends". While taking up a leadership position was important, her academic career suffered: "You do your research evenings, at weekends, during vacations, if you take vacations at all. You sleep four hours a night, and you are no longer a student!"

Sarah felt that she was not giving a good example to junior colleagues who saw her overworked; and knew they needed to do the same to advance their careers. "I was overdoing it. When I stepped back as Vice-President I went to conferences in three different continents within a month, I just wanted to compensate". Sarah confessed she had given up on her hobbies, even cooking, "Lunch is a sandwich at the computer. Even away from the office I'm still on email and phone... And now you can read your emails on phone, it becomes an addiction... Frightening!" At this point of our conversation Sarah paused and said with intense emotion:

> The feeling is that if you don't have children, you don't have a life. So it is common for single women to be asked to do more, more than single men. Sometimes I stand in for my colleagues who have a family. Fact is, I don't have a child to pick up from school, saying 'No!' would be mean. One could say 'Twenty years an academic, and it was always like this; that's why you didn't have a family'… But this isn't confession, it's an interview!

Despite her insistence on collegiality and community, Sarah did not feel at home in Ireland. "Before I felt I was at a place just for a period of time for study or teaching… By now, I feel I became a migrant. I would wake up at night thinking 'What am I doing here?'". She felt very

isolated at her work: "I never got to discuss my research with any of my colleagues. I came in a managerial position, so I was 'the boss'". Still, as her position seemed "God-sent, and she felt she needed to be grateful to the institution for hiring her, a foreigner, and a woman in a male-dominated field. "Yet, this doesn't mean you are happy," she shrugged. Outside her job, the sense of isolation continued: "I got to know people, but it's hard for somebody coming from outside to establish a pool of friends, everybody's settled in their social networks. Maybe if you come younger… or if you marry in and inherit a family it's different."

Sarah made efforts to create a community around her at work, but this was difficult, especially with the crisis. For years she tried to establish a weekly social gathering at the department "...just to create some sense of community, so we don't feel miserable, overwhelmed, or panicking, more like home …" Her attempts hit a rock: "In academia socialising turned into 'networking'. With the cuts you can't organize dinners or take department members out with seminar speakers." She kept on trying: "When you spend most time at work, work is your life. If you don't have a family, you want work to be nice."

Aoife: at the crossroad

Our interview with Aoife was held at a quiet lobby of a hotel a few bus stops away from the university where she worked as a lecturer, replacing a permanent faculty member on maternity leave. She had an office, but was anxious not to have her colleagues see her being interviewed. Aoife defended her PhD in Languages from a Dublin university. Her partner – an architect – worked for a company in Dublin. The department where she finished her PhD had no position for her, but she continued doing hourly-paid tutorials. "One month it would have been …eight lectures, twelve tutorials and fifty essays, paid according to the hourly rate for lectures... Basically it was a zero-hour contract…"

The replacement position, advertised as "visiting lecturer" came at Assistant Lecturer rate, a position that does not require PhD qualification. For Aoife "It was a job… I was starting to panic: summer, I had nothing, this would get me through to spring." Suddenly, Aoife's teaching load was bigger than that of most other lecturers:

> Most colleagues teach three modules per year, but after I accepted the position they asked me to teach four... But, you can't refuse… it's an opportunity, you can put on your CV. You don't build good relations with other colleagues by saying 'I only do what I'm paid for'?

Aoife was used to doing extra work. During her PhD, she did administrative and teaching work. She ran a tutorial programme, managing seventy classes per week, recruiting and training the tutors, timetabling and budgeting. "I hoped it would pay back to get a permanent position."

The assistant lecturing post was on the other side of the island, so Aoife commuted. She would go to the university on Tuesday morning and come back Thursday night, staying two nights a week with a relative. The commute took its toll on her health and relationship. "I am exhausted. I read on the bus but there's only so much you can do when you're travelling. I had a cold from November until Easter, on and off, because of the stress and travel". Work-wise she felt guilty: "I should be working more efficiently, I should be doing this or that better…" As she had to work from home on her lectures and unfinished articles, spending quality time with her partner when she was neither tired, sick, or busy was a challenge. A day with him

meant less time to prepare teaching and publications. There was no question of her partner commuting "He is in a normal job. It doesn't make sense to follow me, what I have is so short term, so insecure." Still, she felt like she was "sacrificing time with people that you love. It's not sustainable to keep working all the time forever. You have your family and all that". The question of the family brought tears to her eyes:

> I don't have children. I'm thirty-five now. We would like to have kids, but we both feel that we shouldn't have children until I have some security. It's not even the money. It's the time, the moving around. I couldn't leave a baby and live in another city or country… Colleagues of mine were asked at interview boards if they planned to have children... [They] stopped wearing their wedding rings.

Aoife also worried if she could have a child if she got another replacement or short-term contract or moved sector. "There are jobs where it's risky to have a child in the first six or twelve months". She previously applied for jobs in England but commuting was hard even within Ireland, "It wouldn't have been a life. My partner says that if I got something like a well-paid permanent job in England, we'd both go, but I'm cautious …before we really have to make the choice. He has never really wanted to leave Ireland... nor have I".

Discussion and Conclusion

While the cases of Sarah and Róisín show two rather distinct career tracks, Aoife's case is that of a woman who is pressed to make a choice between two equally unappealing alternatives. What all three cases show is how care and gender interface with the precarity and security. Having chosen to prioritise the care life of their children and living by the gendered moral imperative to be a primary carer (Glenn, 2010; O'Brien, 2007), women in Róisín's position must sideline their professional development. Consignment to casual employment results in a loss of pay and long-term pension insecurity. Such women experienced what Theresa O'Keefe and Aline Courtois (2019) have called 'second class citizenship' in academia, undertaking teaching or administrative-only contract labour that never bring professional recognition and renders them invisible to their professional field. In the case of Sarah, and women in her position, the situation has been the reverse. Having put in extra hours of work, travel and self-promotion, such women stay out of familial arrangements, and their work becomes their principal source of identity and recognition. However, in the affective domain, women like Sarah experience affective precarity; they have little or no personal or family life they can call their own. Sarah exemplifies the position of single women migrating to foreign countries with no time to develop friendships and personal relationships outside of work. Sarah's story reveals ways in which the talk of life-work balance is meaningless when a 24/7 hyper-mobile academic work culture prevails.

The education restructuring following OECD (2004), government initiatives and post-crisis austerity in Ireland (2011), and the expansion of research funding through Irish (HEA, 2016; Locke, 2014) and EU funding programs (through Marie Curie, ERC or the European Commission) has created a large market of mostly temporary, precarious workers doing research or replacing permanent staff on leave. While research-funded contracts actively promote geographic mobility, they are project-led and confined to a limited time frame of up to a few years. Most research programmes do not create permanent posts in Ireland (Loxley

et al., 2016) or elsewhere (Ackers and Gill, 2005: Bauder, 2006). The production of PhD graduates[2] and proliferation of post-doctoral positions, regardless of the long-term-employment opportunities inside or outside of academia raises serious ethical questions for universities.

Precarity is not just an economic issue, it is also a care issue. Accounting for care reveals the Janus face of labour precarity for women: it highlights the precarity of affective relations in a globalised world. The focus on women in leadership positions and promotion at workplaces eclipses the structural constraints on women who stay in permanent full-time employment. Focusing only on labour insecurity, without regard to caring and affective insecurities, conveys the message that women who have cracked the care-free, temporally elastic and globally mobile ideal suffer no forms of precarity. However, when in leadership positions, few female academics are able 'to have it all'. As noted above, almost twice as many tenured female professors in German universities have no children compared with men (Bomert and Leinfellner, 2017). The assumption that affective lives are easily left behind and re-established in new places for the purpose of career success also ignores the emotional costs of migration. Our data shows that relational lives and employment lives are lived as one. It also shows that while mobility can be empowering (Alberti, 2014), it curtails caring and relational lives of those who go through it and can lead to certain affective precarity.

While men do also have precarity challenges, due to labour segmentation in academia, our data shows that the relational aspect of precarity is not a major male preoccupation in their work narratives. What is evident is that both contractual and affective precarity operate coterminously for women, each posing significant limitations to a sense of security.

While Acker's (1990) theory of gendered organizations holds true, and work places operate under different statutory and institutional arrangement that accommodate or modify these male-defined organizational norms, varying by cultural context (Leuze and Strauss, 2016; Nalvini and Pavolini, 2015), the care-free affective assumptions of gendered organisations need more investigation. The affective inequality experienced by women on the top of the academic hierarchy shows that contractual stability is not enough to fix the 24/7 culture of working that has become normalised in neoliberal academia (Lynch, 2010). Instead of speaking of work-life balance, a term that presumes boundaries between care work and paid employment, we solicit a more complex understanding of a lifeworld-work continuum, in which secure and stable work should be based on principles of collegiality, community, and care that have been eroded by the competitive culture, lack of contractual security, and recurrent mobility in the neoliberal academia (Ivancheva, 2015; Ivancheva and O'Flynn, 2016).

Accounting for issues of care within the discussion of precarity allows us to understand better the gendered and affective aspects of precarity in allegedly privileged workplaces such as academia.

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[2] Using data from the Canadian Association of University Teachers, Bauder (2006: 233) reported that in the 2003-2004 academic year alone, 426 Ph.D. students were enrolled in Canadian geography programs, which compares to a total labour force of 531 full-time professors in that field in Canadian universities.

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