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Fitting Procrustes' Bed: A Shifting Reality

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This article uses the metaphor of Procrustes' bed to discuss the experiences of academics "fitting" the academy amidst shifting realities. The focus is on external evaluations faced by the academics, as well as their engagements in evaluations of self and others (which are inherent aspects of academic life).

Procrustes lived beside the road at Erineus, near Eleusis. His real name was Polypemon or Damastes, but he was nicknamed Procrustes, "Beater," because of the way in which he dealt with the wayfarers whom he lured into his house on the promise of hospitality. He forced his victim to lie on one of his two beds, one of which was short and one long, then saw to it that he exactly fitted the bed. He put short men into the long bed and hammered them to length, tall men into the short bed and lopped off their extremities. (March, 1998/2001, pp. 662–663)

Like ancient Greek travellers, many academics feel forced into an ill-fitting bed as they journey along the roads of academe. Throughout the interviews, we heard stories about the ways that academics perceived parts of themselves or their work being stretched or cut down to fit some standard mould. For Procrustes' victims (and later Procrustes himself when he was slain by Theseus), the stretching or chopping was invariably fatal. In contrast, the continual adjustments and re-adjustments in academe might be blamed for maiming or injuring the academics in this project, but all remain resolutely alive; those who are no longer pursuing academic careers (Jingyi, Annabelle) are engaged in other personally meaningful careers.

In this article, we describe external evaluations faced by the academics, as well as their engagements in evaluations of self and others. We found the metaphor of Procrustes' bed an all-too-common experience for these academics and yet, over time, some academics did manage to find reasonably comfortable fits for

themselves within academe. The stories here are intended to point to some of the problems of assessment and evaluation for academics, as well as provide some strategies for participating in the assessments and evaluations that are inherent aspects of academic life.

Facing Procrustes: Being Evaluated in Academe

Academics are evaluated on an almost continual basis. Students submit formal teaching evaluations at the end of every course. Conference proposals must be reviewed and accepted before a paper can be presented at a conference. Three or more people review every journal manuscript before any paper is accepted. Book manuscripts are sent to various editors and reviewers before publication. The quality of publishers, journals, and conferences is related to low acceptance rates, so there must be many more submissions than acceptances for an acceptance to be counted as worthy. The same is true for grant applications: countless hours are spent writing grant proposals that must be vetted by (often large) adjudication panels (see Lamont, 2009; Rockwell, 2009). Evidence of performance related to teaching, scholarly and creative activities, and service to the institution and the community is considered in decisions regarding initial hiring, contract renewal, tenure, promotion, ongoing performance evaluations, and awards or designations. A report from the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC, 2007) indicates that demands and expectations have increased in recent years for Canadian academics in terms of teaching, scholarly and creative activities, and service. The desire to satisfy these demands has led to focused efforts to document the quality, quantity,

and impact of contributions across these areas (Heap, 2007; Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada [SSHRC], 2008, 2010). Departmental, institutional, and sometimes national or international evaluations contribute to the requested evidence. As Shore and Wright (2004) argue, a vast array of areas of professional life must now be scrutinized, quantified, statistically ranked, and rendered visible for consumers, supervisors, and assorted bureaucrats. It seems that every component of academic life must now be recorded and evaluated, leaving many academics feeling battered and stretched, as if they had encountered Procrustes (Harley, 2002; Middleton, 2005; Morley, 2001).

The career and day-to-day activities of fictional professor, Dr. Wayne Young, sketched in Pocklington and Tupper (2002), provides a clear example of the staggering number of points for evaluation in an academic career. Dr. Young was designated as gifted in high school, which would necessarily have involved a vast array of testing. He received evaluations for countless academic assignments throughout his elementary, secondary, undergraduate, master's, and doctoral education. In addition to admission to the next level of study, his successful performance as determined by these evaluations led to research assistantships, teaching assistantships, and opportunities to engage in a whole host of academic activities, all of which paved the way for his postdoctoral fellowship and then his appointment as an Assistant Professor. He authored or co-authored various publications as a graduate student, postdoctoral fellow, and then academic staff member. Each of these papers involved judgments from

peer reviewers, as did his promotions from Assistant to Associate Professor and then to Full Professor.

The many evaluations faced by the fictitious Dr. Young are similar to the evaluations described by the participants in this research project. Consider, for example, John's experiences as he, like Dr. Young, sailed smoothly through many of the phases leading him to an academic career. He performed well in educational settings first as a student and then teacher and eventually administrator, before returning to university to pursue doctoral studies. Like Dr. Young, he was deemed one of the "chosen ones" destined for greatness; John was celebrated, counselled, and championed throughout his graduate work and into his first academic appointment. Unlike Dr. Young, his progress did not continue unabated. After more than a decade as an academic, he hit a turning point, which he attributed to two incidents:

- He published a critical article in a local newspaper that was interpreted by senior administrators as contrary to an important institutional initiative.
- He pushed for better treatment of a group of employees at his institution.

These two incidents left him feeling unsupported and unvalued for the first time at the institution. His sense of discord was further exacerbated when he was not selected for an administrative position to which he had applied. This was his first real experience of not measuring up in academe. Despite extensive teaching, research, and service accomplishments, he was not supported in his bid for this position and he felt this

had far more to do with disagreements with the argument he presented in the newspaper article and his public stand in support of the employee group than with his academic record or the stated criteria for the position. This first negative outcome left him feeling acutely aware of the ongoing monitoring and evaluation that all academics face.

It is perhaps not surprising that John was particularly conscious of the prevalence and shortcomings of evaluations when he received an evaluation that was less positive than the ones to which he had become accustomed throughout his career. Other participants who had not experienced the same kinds of active courting and support throughout their academic careers that John had experienced, seemed to be even more conscious of the evaluations in academe. Michelle, Renée, and others talked about how discouraging it was to be short-listed for multiple positions, but not hired. Tania described in detail her dissatisfaction with the contract renewal process at her first institution where some questions had been raised about her profile before the final decision was eventually made to renew her contract. Frances was upset about her first institution's refusal to grant her tenure, but felt somewhat vindicated by the multiple job offers that she subsequently received for positions that she felt were better than the one that she left. Anne was unhappy with the ways that the time she devoted to reading and writing academic papers was discounted as superfluous due to the heavy service load associated with her non-tenure-track academic appointment.

Beyond the sorts of evaluations faced by the fictitious Dr. Young, the majority of our research participants, as scholars in Education, have also

experienced another set of evaluations associated with admittance to and performance within teacher education programs, and then in school systems where many worked as teachers, resource personnel, or administrators at some points during their professional careers. This connection to school systems means that Education scholars are often expected to continue to contribute to the professional field of schooling in addition to fulfilling the standard expectations for tenure and promotion that apply across disciplines. That is, some universities have developed "special criteria" to recognize disciplinary expectations, but these tend to be interpreted as additional not replacement criteria. For example, John described his contributions to teachers in the field:

> The last two months I've done a tremendous amount really a tremendous amount of in-service work for teachers—workshops, three-day workshops, that sort of thing—and in doing them, I was aware in the back of my mind, this counts for nothing in terms of decisions like, well I am tenured, so in terms of decisions like promotion, it counts for nothing. It's service to the field. I will continue to do it because it's my connection to the field, but at my institution it's not going to get me anywhere.

The emphasis upon evaluation in academe is underscored by a managerial focus on accountability and excellence. As Shore and Wright (2004) have argued, a public management focus is rampant in academe as in other sectors. This management focus involves an almost obsessive fixation with measures, quantification, benchmarking, performance indicators, ratings, and rankings. A whole new vocabulary has been invented to enable the assessment and ranking of "quality" and "excellence." Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper has called for a thorough accounting of all funds allocated through the federal granting agencies, which has prompted SSHRC President, Chad Gaffield (2007), to sound an alarm, challenging social scientists and humanists to get engaged or risk the imposition of a faulty system.

This focus on accountability (or "accountancy"; see Shore & Wright, 2004) can take a tremendous toll on academics' lives. Negative evaluations can be emotionally devastating and may end academic careers. As Tania explained,

> There's a whole self-esteem wrapped up in this career. It's not the kind of career you do half. Your whole being is wrapped up in it and academics always talk about that. It's a, I think, maybe a strange career in that way . . . it's just so all consuming. You have so much often wrapped up in it.

Receiving a critical evaluation at the point of contract renewal for her first academic appointment had compromised Tania's level of self-esteem and left her feeling somewhat "gun shy" during her second academic appointment. At this new institution, she delayed her application for tenure for two years despite an impressive research, teaching, and service record. Frances also described "the need to not do right off the bat at least anything too adventurous, just buckle down and write the peer-

reviewed articles" as she took up her new position at a second institution.

During our first interview, Renée was working in a limited-term position and awaiting decisions from various job applications, which left her feeling particularly vulnerable to the evaluation systems:

> Before we began taping, I told you what, how much it meant to me when someone who was on a hiring committee at a university approached me after a decision was made to give me details about why I had not been the chosen candidate. Because you try after seven interviews I mean you think, "Wow, that's a pretty good percentage" I would think, to be short listed for seven positions when you only send out however many letters. So I felt really good that I had been short listed and yet you know you start to wonder what's going wrong if you are always the bridesmaid and never the bride, and so it was nice to know that it was outside me and that it was part of the institutional process. It really had very little to do with my candidacy.

She found it much easier to understand and deal with negative evaluations when she tried to deflect the blame from herself: "I like to think that in the grand scheme of things that the reason that I was not chosen sometimes has more to do with things that are outside my personal control."

Even positive evaluations can be problematic for they may lead to resentments or envy from co-workers. Tania had experienced this as a result of her participation in an active research centre during her first academic appointment. Engagement with the centre contributed to her successful research grant applications, and her research and writing productivity. However, her participation in this centre also "put [her] on a hit list with a subgroup in the department." The committee charged with deciding about Tania's contract renewal included members of this subgroup who were not aligned with the research centre. Despite positive evaluations from research-grant committees, journal editors, and senior scholars within the research centre and beyond the institution, Tania received a mixed evaluation from the committee regarding her contract renewal. Although her contract was eventually renewed, she found the process emotionally damaging and felt that she would not receive sufficient support to continue her academic career at that institution and she began to seek other appointments.

As Tania's story suggests, success can be a double-edged sword. Emily Newton, a pseudonym for one of the participants in McGinn (2007), felt shamed and discouraged by others who assumed that her successes in writing grants, publishing, and securing research collaborators meant that she lacked commitment to students and the community. Some evaluators seem to assume that although academics need to contribute in all three areas of teaching, research, and service, it is just not possible to perform well in all three, and therefore these evaluators treat evidence of success in one area as an indication of lack of success or commitment in one of the other areas. Litner (2002) wrote:

> Spending more time on course preparation or helping a student in difficulty, for instance, means having less time to write and do research,

which in turn means that I will have, as one of my colleagues put it, fewer badges to show for my efforts, fewer badges as signs of productivity to display across my chest. As in a game of monopoly, fewer badges mean that I don't pass GO, that I don't collect $200, and that I won't be in a position to increase my power and influence to buy more hotels/promotion/tenure. (p. 132)

Evaluations do more than measure some performance characteristic. As Morley (2001) argues, "quality assurance is actively constructing, rather than measuring the academy and this has implications for women [and men] in terms of what is valued, rewarded or suppressed in the academy" (p. 477). The Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) in Britain represents a glaring example of the power of evaluations to reshape the academy: entire departments were closed in response to low evaluations of the associated academic staff members. Similar fears have been raised in response to the Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) in New Zealand and the now-defunct Research Evaluation and Policy Project (REPP) in Australia. Gaffield's (2007) warning represents a strong call to prevent the imposition of a similar system in Canada.

Squeezing or Stretching Into the Bed: Being Measured Against a Standard Model

Any evaluation necessitates some consideration of the goal or standard: "A worthwhile evaluation needs to explicitly define the relevant comparison group and to make a case for the employed choice" (Rauber & Ursprung, 2006, p. 1). In the context of the evaluations that academics face, the comparison tends to be some "standard mould" for an academic. The typical Canadian academic workload is characterized as comprising 40% teaching, 40% research, and 20% academic service, yet the profile of the fictitious Dr. Young seems to reflect a differing standard. Pocklington and Tupper (2002) describe the increasingly higher levels of achievement and impact Dr. Young faced throughout his career, with a major focus on his research accomplishments, some attention to his teaching, and nary a mention of his service contributions. There is an imbalance between research, teaching, and service in the evaluations of academics' contributions. Frances described her unsuccessful application for tenure with respect to these three categories:

> In the evaluation, my teaching was fine and my service work was fine but, in fact, you know, two out of three or two and a half or however they added it, still means zero as far as the committee is concerned.

Frances was denied tenure "supposedly for insufficient peer-reviewed research," despite what she perceived as a productive record of research and scholarship. At the time of her tenure application, she had produced peer-reviewed artistic work and arts-based research, so she felt that, in addition to failing to value her teaching and service contributions, the tenure committee was too "tied into their own sort of sense of what research is or scholarship is." She believed that they didn't understand her scholarship or possibly, that "they didn't even read the

documentation." Her view was reinforced by the multiple job offers that she received when she decided to apply elsewhere.

Frances' experience shows that the standard mould is a poor match to the diversity of scholars who are employed in Canadian universities. John also expressed his disappointment with what he perceived to be a narrow conception of scholarship. Such a narrow conception of research undermines the sense of self-worth for those who do not fit this mould. Litner (2002) explained:

> As I make myself complete the "productivity" report, its very composition a testimony to what counts and what doesn't as academic currency, I find myself confronting the fact that much of what I care about in my life as an academic doesn't fit with the prevailing definition and dominant view of what is meant by and counts as productivity. (p. 129)

It is clear that particular kinds of scholarly activities are rated as more valuable than other kinds of activities (McGinn, 2007). "Widely regarded as the main source of esteem, as a requirement for individual promotion, as evidence of institutional excellence, and as a sine qua non for obtaining competitive research funds, publication is central to scholarly activity and recognition" (Ramsden, 1994, p. 207). The mantra of "publish or perish" continues to hold sway in academe, but not all publications are treated as equal. As Frances and Lillian explained, the peer-review process involved in artistic productions may not be appropriately recognized. Peer-reviewed publications in top-tier scholarly journals and academic presses are more highly valued than publications in lesser-known or more professionally focused venues. This standard holds for all, despite evidence that academic publication rates are, on average, quite low with large variance (Ramsden, 1994; Rauber & Ursprung, 2006). For example, Rauber and Ursprung (2006) calculated the publication productivity of all German academics in economics. They considered article length and recognized journal ratings to create a standardized unit of comparison. They concluded that the median German economist produces the equivalent of 10 pages in a top-tier journal, which amounts to one article in a third-tier journal or six articles in the lowest-tier journals; most never publish in a top-tier journal.

Just as there are differences based upon publication outlet, there are differences based upon research input in the form of grants: research that is supported by nationally or internationally adjudicated grants is more highly valued than research that is self-funded or institutionally financed. Within Canada, the peer-reviewed grants available from the three federal granting agencies represent the "gold standard" for research. As John stated, "It has become about money, much more so than even establishing of a research culture. It's about who has a grant, whose a principal investigator on it, how much is it?" More and more frequently, smaller institutional grants are limited to seed funding for projects that are intended to eventually lead to funds from a federal granting agency. John explained:

> I applied for and just got a small internal grant to start some work.

We've started a [research] centre at [my institution]. We are now applying for money and we're going to do a bit of a national conference this year. But the language from our director was, "Now will this lead to big money? Will it lead to, you know a SSHRC grant or something like that?"

Securing funding from an external granting agency such as the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) is perceived as an important accomplishment. Chawla (2006) used the label "high-performing researchers" to designate academics who had secured a Standard Research Grant in either of the two previous grant competitions (p. 102). Standard Research Grants were the central program at SSHRC at the time and were allocated on the basis of the value and viability of the research program, as well as the productivity of the researcher. Chawla asserted that Principal Investigators on these competitive grants would be considered high performers because they have the financial resources to attend conferences and support graduate students. The significance of her label is particularly evident given that an internet search uncovered at least two Canadian scholars who now list this designation as a "high-performing researcher" as an award or distinction they have earned. While such listings are clear exaggerations that should be recognized as inappropriate padding of their academic profiles, the incentive to include such a listing might also be seen as a natural byproduct of the continual evaluations that academics face and the high esteem associated with external grant funding.

The esteem associated with external grant funding raises particular challenges for academics whose research does not require large amounts of money. Frances asked, "How much money does it take to do the kinds of research we want to do?" As she noted, "when [grant dollars are] the standard, our status and value seems to be less in the academy overall." Similarly, Renée described the tensions she felt between pressures to bring in large grant money compared to the importance of doing research that really matters:

Some of my colleagues are getting big grants, like big grants, and I have a very small grant. . . . There's just no way that it's fair that someone who gets a $250,000 grant and produces whatever, is more significant than the work that we're doing with $6,000. We are really going to make a difference because we're going to be able to get something done. . . . We're actually going to make a difference in the lives of 100 or 1000 people. I mean, that's a tremendous thing for only $6,000 and yet when I'm getting ready to go up for tenure, no one is going to hold that grant in very much esteem because I'm not getting big money, and that's what's important, is how much big money am I bringing in. And that drives me crazy.

It is not just a matter of securing some grant funds: research funding agencies and institutional administrators are now placing greater emphasis upon research collaboration rather than lone scribes sequestered in individual offices. For example, despite a continued commitment to fund projects led by individual scholars, SSHRC's current strategic plan highlights large-scale

collaborations involving scholars from multiple disciplines and institutions working alongside public stakeholders (SSHRC, 2004, 2005, 2010). While it is clear that SSHRC continues to fund individual applicants through the Insight Grants program, this is not the case for larger programs such as Partnership Grants or the new College–University Idea to Innovation Grants, and seems not to be the case in some other programs where collaboration is not identified as an explicit expectation (e.g., the former Research and Development Initiative). This represents a transition in the academic research landscape (AUCC, 2007) that is often criticized as leading to unfair or uninformed decisions about the types of research that are funded (Decker, Wimsatt, Trice, & Konstan, 2007). This move toward collaborative research also comes with a new set of challenges in relation to ensuring that effective communication and management structures are in place. More and more frequently, research services personnel hear from academics who are struggling with challenges that can arise in research teams, especially on funded research projects (Chandler, McGinn, & Bubic, 2008). Collaborative research projects also lead to questions about authorship credit and divergent opinions about the value assigned to co-authored work. The standards seem to be shifting.

Contending With an Ever-Adjusting Bed: Hitting the Moving Targets of Evaluation

As with other ancient myths, there are multiple literary and artistic interpretations of Procrustes and his bed. In some versions of the myth, Procrustes has two beds, one short and one long to ensure that no one will ever fit, whereas other versions include a single bed only (March, 1998/2001). In some cases, the single bed is secretly adjustable to ensure that no one individual could ever fit exactly and consequently all would require adjustment. Likewise, the participants in our study described the ways that even an academic career that seems to match the stated norms never quite measures up to the exacting standards. There's always some part that deviates in some way from the desired performance, something that must be stretched or squeezed to fit. Just when they felt that they had achieved some milestone that had been established, the participants saw that the milestone had been reshaped or moved.

As has been identified in the literature (AUCC, 2007; McGinn, 2007; Rauber & Ursprung, 2006), academics report yearly revisions in "expectations" to merit tenure, such that every time a new faculty member gets closer, the bar seems to be moved again. "Tenure and promotion committees have always compared the track records of the applicants with precedents. Alternatively, they have judged whether the track records are compatible with an established policy or standard. These standards, however, have evolved over time" (Rauber & Ursprung, 2006, p. 1). As they move through their careers, academics continue to stretch and be stretched in their efforts to fit into Procrustes' ever-changing bed. They dream of being as flexible as the doll Suzie Stretch (or the comparable action figures, Stretch Armstrong, Stretch X-Ray, and their ilk), such that their arms and legs could be stretched to fit without distorting their bodies, that is, without compromising their core principles and beliefs.

To complicate the issue further, academics are accountable to more than one evaluation body and more than one set of standards for defining and evaluating success. More unsettling is the fact that adequately satisfying the criteria as defined by one evaluation body, may detract from the evaluations provided from another body. As Tania asked:

How can we satisfy governing bodies that merely count the number of published articles versus those that weight the quality of a journal or publisher? How can we satisfy evaluators that define teaching success as a numerical rating or a comparative numerical rating across colleagues compared to those that value growth and innovation in teaching?

The standards for these evaluations are external, with little attention paid to internal standards. As McGinn, Tilley, and Hadwin (2005) argued, personal definitions of success are nearly absent from the formal evaluations used in academe.

Making One's Own Bed: Evaluating Self

Just as they face regular evaluations by others, academics also routinely evaluate themselves. A concerted self-consciousness is "a necessary part of a process of professional re-definition and goal setting" (Hall, 2002, p. 5). Before submitting an application, academics self-evaluate to decide whether they might be considered potential candidates for some activity or honour. As they amass evidence to serve as documentation for the various external evaluations, there is an inherent aspect of self-evaluation. Sometimes formal self-evaluation is a component of the required documentation.

Internal and external evaluations may conflict. Persevering in spite of a negative external evaluation often requires a competing internal evaluation. Even in the midst of continual monitoring and evaluation from external forces, "'success' is almost always individually defined, as [academics] compete for awards, recognition, and, of course, scarce jobs" (Hall, 2002, p. 67).

Hey (2004) described the ambiguous and often uncomfortable pleasures of competition and status. She documented her own "guilty pleasures" (p. 41) in response to her own personal successes. She struggled, for example, with identifying an appropriate way to celebrate her success in securing a research chair position and still remain faithful to her feminist inclinations and the value she placed upon collaboration and community success.

In a competitive system, one person's success regularly means another's failure. Renée was particularly conscious of playing into a zero-sum game where her own need to secure an academic appointment came into conflict with her personal commitments to social justice and equity. She explained that as a White woman, "I feel torn. . . . I feel like I'm in some ways if I do get a job it's at the expense of these other marginalized groups."

Likewise, success in one area may be interpreted as a failure in some other area as Emily Newton experienced when some department colleagues suggested that she lacked commitment to students and the community because she had achieved success with research grants and publications (McGinn, 2007). In our interviews, Michelle questioned

the feedback that she received in response to an application for a research award:

> How should I interpret the comment that I should consider applying for a teaching award? Is that a compliment that both my teaching and research profiles are strong? Or is it an evaluation that my research profile is not strong enough, and that maybe I should try teaching instead?

External evaluations may influence internal evaluations; however, academics cannot allow external evaluations to overshadow their own internal evaluations. It is important to heed Hall's (2002) warning: "If we have tied our entire sense of accomplishment and selfhood to someone else's approval or a narrowly defined product or outcome, then such an occurrence can wreak havoc on our personal and professional lives" (p. 52).

Wielding the Hammer or Axe: Evaluating Others Without Being Stretched Too Thin
One of the day-to-day activities of an academic life that was missing from Pocklington and Tupper's (2002) portrayal of the fictitious Dr. Young was any reference to the committees and service commitments expected for academics. The emphasis on self-governance within universities means that inordinate amounts of time are devoted to running the institution and this includes participation in the various evaluation and monitoring schemes that have been put in place. Academics not only face evaluation of their own work, but they must also evaluate and comment on others' work (AUCC, 2007; Neumann & Terosky, 2007). There is a

tremendous amount of peer-evaluation within academe, which means that in addition to being evaluated, each academic also evaluates others.

Assessment and evaluation mechanisms take time away from other activities. The time spent preparing documentation is not spent engaging in research, teaching, or other scholarly activities. Most assessment exercises involve evaluations conducted by other academics, so there are also expectations for academics to review others' documentation to make judgments. Again, this is time taken away from other teaching, research, and service activities. "Peer evaluation consumes what for many academics seems like an ever-growing portion of their time" (Lamont, 2009, p. 3).

Our research was conducted during a time period when there was an increase in faculty hiring after many years of stagnation. Participants in our study included newly appointed academics as well as more senior colleagues; during the time of our study, there were additional faculty appointments within the departments and units where these individuals were employed. This meant that those employed in academic departments faced expectations to participate in tenure and promotion decisions for others:

> Since the late 1990s, faculty growth has resulted in greater numbers of appointments. Since 1996, faculty promotions have accounted for some 1,600 to 2,000 additional appointments each year. In 2003 and 2004, there were approximately 1,000 promotions to the rank of associate professor, an increase from about 750 annually at the end of the 1990s. . . .

Between 1999 to 2004, there were about 700 promotions to the rank of full professor annually. (AUCC, 2007, p. 13)

All of the associated evaluations take time. Time spent engaged in these evaluations is time not spent engaged in other academic tasks, which contributes to the sense that academics are "time poor" (Hobson, Jones, & Deane, 2005) and have "no time to think" (Menzies, 2005; Menzies & Newson, 2007). As Cohen (2009) has argued, "time is always the issue for all academics." The administrative burden takes time away from the research and teaching activities that are presumed to be the cornerstones of academic life (Decker et al., 2007; Mullen, Murthy, & Teague, 2008; Rockwell, 2009). More fundamentally, the required documentation may foreground features of academic work that differ from personal commitments, preferences, and goals, leaving individuals feeling marginalized and underappreciated (see also Litner, 2002; McGinn, Tilley, & Hadwin, 2005; Morley, 2001), and this may undermine their motivation to continue the work (Roberts, 2007).

McGinn, Tilley, and Hadwin (2005) described new women of academe who had been appointed to their first full-time, continuing academic positions five years previously and were now being identified as experienced faculty. They argue that, as retirements multiply, these newly experienced faculty need to be poised to initiate the kinds of changes they have envisioned, including being thoughtful in the ways that they take up their roles as evaluators of other colleagues. They ask:

I wonder what evaluation would look like if everyone reviewed their own application for tenure or promotion before evaluating those that sit in front of them. I suspect our memories fail us when we set what we perceive to be "reasonable" criteria for success without re-positioning ourselves in that early career progress.

Lamont (2009) found that ratings of the quality of research grant applications were confounded by perceptions about the assumed expertise of the evaluators. The first applications reviewed by an adjudication committee require extensive discussion time as the evaluators contextually redevelop the criteria for the awards and undertake the necessary identity work to situate themselves amongst other peers on the committee. Committee deliberations are themselves performances. "Evaluation is a process that is deeply emotional and interactional. It is culturally embedded and influenced by the 'social identity' of panelists—that is, their self-concept and how others define them" (p. 8).

Lamont's "analysis suggests the importance of considering the self and emotions—in particular pleasure, saving face, and maintaining one's self-concept—as part of the investment that academics make in scholarly evaluation" (p. 20). Renée questioned some of the hiring practices that she observed on her campus:

We were interviewing people who were from visible minority groups but when you looked at the work that they were doing if we interviewed someone whose take on things wasn't the same as the take that everyone else in the department had, they weren't prepared to look at that issue

of diversity. So again there was this you know the bodies might have looked different but there was a real push to have that homogeneity in the way that [candidates] presented the knowledge.

The challenge for evaluators is to focus on stated criteria or goals, and not to be too led by their own perspectives or approach. As Hall (2002) argues, "Comparison as the primary determinant of 'success' will always threaten our relationships with colleagues and the functionality of our communities" (p. 75).

Escaping Procrustes: Surviving in Academe

Evaluation is ever present in academe and there is no reason to anticipate any reductions in this emphasis. It seems that the only option is for academics to try to focus on those aspects that are within their control and to resist the pressures to be brought down by those things that are outside their control. Just as we heard from Kenneth, Tania, and other research participants, Hall (2002) recommends that academics articulate their own professional statements about who they are as academics and what they hold as standards for their own success. Such efforts could help to maintain a reasonable level of self-esteem in the midst of difficult situations and, at the same time, could serve as important reminders to seek individualized markers of success when faced with the task of evaluating others.

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