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NAVIGATING THE NEOLIBERAL TERRAIN: ELDER FACULTY SPEAK OUT

...neoliberal trends are transforming universities into business like enterprises that will lock intellectual work into the neoliberal matrix based on market discourses of competition and surveillance...

Dahlström (2008), p. 8

Abstract

Neoliberal policies and practices continue to impact and influence the vision, work and learning culture, and direction of Canadian universities. Elder faculty members (professors) have navigated university landscapes for extended periods of time. In this paper, some perspectives of Elder faculty regarding the impact of neoliberalism on universities are shared. Key themes that emerged through dialogue with Elder faculty are drawn from a qualitative, SSHRC funded study. Elder faculty, from selected universities in Canada, were invited to share their storied experiences of teaching, research, and service during times of great change. Key themes pertaining to neoliberal policies and practices discussed in this paper include: power shifts and displacement; pedagogical shifts and imbalances; and devaluation of the professoriate.

Introduction

Although neoliberalism is frequently cited and critiqued in ongoing academic discourses, a coherent denotation of neoliberalism remains elusive. Boas and Gans-Morse (2009) cited neoliberalism as an "academic catchphrase [where] the meaning and proper usage...have elicited little scholarly debate" (p. 137). After conducting a content analysis of 148 articles where 'neoliberalism' was cited and referred to, Boas and Gans-Morse (2009) concluded that achieving a unified understanding of and reference to neoliberalism in the literature continues to be problematic for several reasons:

> ... neoliberalism is used asymmetrically across ideological divides, rarely appearing in scholarship that makes positive assessments of the free market. Second, those who employ the term in empirical research often do not define it. And third, scholars tend to associate neoliberalism with multiple underlying concepts, including a set of policies, a development model, an ideology, and an academic paradigm. (p. 140)

Indeed, multiplicity of factors and dissonance continue to play a key role in muddying the definitional

waters. Whether scholarly notions pertaining to neoliberalism carry radical or more moderate connotations, however, one thing is for certain; "the term neoliberalism is most frequently employed by those who are critical of the free market phenomena to which it refers" (Boas & Gans-Morse, 2009, p. 140). Those who have lived and worked within higher education, university cultures and contexts represent some of the most critical voices challenging the ongoing impact of this free market phenomenon.

Through an "Elder's" Lens

In this paper, Elder faculty, from selected universities across Canada, share their interpretations and experiences of neoliberalism and the impact that neoliberal policies and practices continue to have on academic work, on university culture, and on academic life and learning. In spite of the lack of a concise definition in the literature, participants in this study referred to neoliberalism as the transformation of universities into business enterprises where deliverables and excellence were determined, driven, and defined by the market economy. Participants referred to how competition and a narrow focus on generalized, measureable, learning/education outcomes now serve to determine what constitutes education and learning excellence. In the words of Dahlström (2008), "pressure from external surveillance disguised as evaluation research, and talks about excellence that will restructure universities into shopping markets diminishing opportunities for the human narratives, usefulness, and craftsmanship necessary for critical intellectual work" (p. 13) reside at the heart of the neoliberal discourse.

Elder faculty, professors fifty-five years of age or older who have navigated the university terrain for twenty or more years, offer a lens through which to view the role and focus of universities *from another place and time*. Simply put, many Elder faculty participating bear witness to "universities abandoning their conventional role as independent sources of critical thought and moving towards becoming centralized sites of corporate-funded knowledge production" (Hoben & Yeoman, 2011, para.1). Having contributed extensively to teaching, research, and service, Elder faculty are now called to reinvent themselves in response to a new reality in academia. The commoditization of education and critical thinking and learning, taking a back seat to competency-based education practices defined and driven by economic agendas, inform this new reality. In light of this assault on the foundational, guiding principles and practices that have traditionally informed the democratic culture and community of universities, we are reminded by Hoben and Yeoman (2011) that:

> …we must help young intellectuals make informed ethical decisions as they assess their own values in an attempt to take up more nuanced positions … beyond a simpleminded acquiescence to ever more intrusive changes to contemporary academic culture. More important, such efforts must be reinforced by those of tenured professors in voicing the complex politics of market reform as these issues become central to the socialization of the next generation of academics. (p. 13)

The paradoxical tension resides in that space where Elder faculty, a critical resource whose perspectives and lived experiences could serve to inform the shaping of a profoundly shifting academic reality, are often disregarded in favour of a discourse and direction that supports the corporatization of universities. Many Elders referred to being relegated to the margins and effectively silenced, tagged as defiant, or considered redundant after attempting to publicly challenge the corporate posturing of their academic institutions. This paper addresses some salient themes that have emerged, thus far, regarding perspectives of Elder faculty in their struggle to make sense of a profoundly altered academic landscape.

Significance of Study

The full (2009-2012) Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) funded study extends beyond university culture and contexts to include tendencies to marginalize aging populations in some

workplace settings, the benefits and challenges of multi-generational relationships working and learning together, the learning needs of new hires, and some reciprocal benefits when Elders and less experienced individuals share significant learning moments. For the purposes of this paper, findings discussed focus *specifically* on emergent themes pertaining to significant shifts in the university landscape influenced by a larger, societal, neoliberal agenda.

Methodology

This study invited Elder faculty to share significant learning moments and tacit knowledge acquired, *along the way,* having navigated university landscapes for an extended period of time.

The design of this study draws from the foundational principles of adult education that support a holistic view of lifelong learning, collaboration of community members, and the interconnectivity of individual experiences to the larger community narrative. This study is also guided by intersecting two theoretical frameworks: Indigenous epistemology and conservation theory.

Indigenous epistemology is a respectful, inclusive, and holistic ideology (Ermine, 1999) informed by "traditional values of interconnectedness, wholeness and balance" (National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2007, p. 4). Conservation theory refers to the valuing and protection of resources and seeks collaboration amongst individuals interested in promoting understanding and appreciation (Eversole & Martin, 2005; Hiwasaki, 2005; Hobfoll, Freedy, Lane, & Geller, 1990; Holsman, 2000). Conservation theory and Indigenous epistemology both focus on a deepened understanding and appreciation of interconnectivity of *all* environmental parts. This study views higher education environments as an ecosystem, an "arrangement of mutual dependencies in a population by which the whole operates as a unit [maintaining] a viable environmental relationship" (Hawley, 1986, p. 26) where "rhythmic actions and interactions [hold all parts] in constant relation to one another" (p. 27). Within the context of this study, Elder faculty are located and regarded as valued resources and critical elements of and contributors to the intricate ecosystem within universities. Positioning Elder faculty members *and* their knowledge as *environmental resources*, this study sought to explore the power and possibility when Elder knowledge is shared and protected for future generations of new academics and learners.

Life history methodology informs the larger study. Coles and Knowles (2001) described life history inquiry as:

> …understanding the relationship, the complex interaction, between life and context, self and place. It is about comprehending the complexities of a person's day-to-day…and the ultimate consequences that play out in that life so that insights into the broader collective experience may be achieved. (p. 12)

Life history work that explores experiences and tacit knowledge acquired by Elder faculty in university settings can support newer faculty who search for a deeper understanding of the nuances and not so subtle challenges shaping the new academic reality.

Participants

Snowball sampling was used to recruit participants from Western, Central, and Eastern Canada. Thirty-seven Elder faculty from selected Canadian universities participated. This included 24 male and 13 female Elder faculty. Approximately 74% were contemplating retirement within the next five to seven years; 14% had retired within the past five years; 12% had been retired for more than five years. Elder faculty had worked within one or more university settings for a total of 20 or more years; all had been tenured for no less than 10 years. Elder and focus group participants spanned Faculties of Education (including Adult Education), Social Work, Nursing, Law, Science, Medicine, and Fine Arts.

Four small focus groups (three to four participants per group), representing *newer and mid-career* faculty members, also participated in this study. Findings from focus groups relate more specifically to the mentoring needs of newer and mid-career faculty navigating tenure and promotion. For this reason, these findings are not included in this paper.

Data Collection and Analysis

Story sharing (Stroobants, 2005) through open dialogue (Bohm, 1998; Bohm, Factor & Garrett, 1991) and life history interviewing (Clandinin, 2002; Cole & Knowles, 2001; Edmondson Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995; Keats-Whelan, Huber, Rose, Davies & Clandinin, 2001; Measor & Sikes, 1992) were the chosen research methods. Although face-to-face dialogues were preferred, due to some geographical challenges, Skype and Elluminate, via the Internet, were also employed to connect with some participants.

Kawalilak and Dudley (2002) referred to the potential to co-create knowledge and shared understanding and to a strengthening of one's sense of community when stories of lived experience are shared and reflected upon. Through story sharing and dialogue, there is significant potential to transform perspectives and relationships (Bohm, 1996, Bohm, 1998, Bohm, Factor & Garrett, 1991; Ellinor & Gerard, 1998). Reminded by Schaef (1998) that "humankind" can/does not exist in isolation, connecting stories to the greater community narrative, within and beyond a particular culture and context, provides an opportunity to make deeper meaning of lived experiences.

Data analysis included repetitive review of audio taped dialogues, storyboarding (metaphor referencing and illustrations) to visually depict emergent themes, and clustering and connecting key and sub-themes using NVivo software. NVivo is intuitive and complimentary to storyboarding; both function well, visually and spatially.

Emergent Themes

Three salient themes that align to some trends and influences of neoliberalism and the impact of neoliberalism on Elder faculty from selected Canadian universities emerged from the data: 1) power shifts and displacement, 2) pedagogical shifts and imbalances, and, 3) devaluation of the professoriate. To separate these into distinct, independent themes presented a challenge in that all were intimately interrelated; the ebb and flow of one impacts and influences the others.

Power Shifts and Displacement

Regarding how the community, culture, and relational (power) dynamics within universities have been influenced and altered, Elder faculty made frequent reference to an assault on the academic ideologies that have traditionally informed the central function and mission of universities. Competing agendas within the academy that compromise the conservation of academic principles and identities (Henkel, 2004) were of particular concern:

> Escalating trends in universities brought about by closer alignments with corporations and corporate dollars contribute to a heightened focus on employment preparation than on critical thinking, citizenship, and character education. This directly impacts who's hired, who's valued, and what courses are offered. We now have those who educate students specifically to secure employment and those who focus on the philosophical, foundational roots that inform our discipline. (Associate Professor K)

Tensions brought about by competing corporate and academic agendas contributed to certain disciplines (and individuals) being devalued, particularly disciplines and fields of scholarship that did not directly focus on supporting the acquisition of *job skills*. Professor L spoke of "feeling displaced and sometimes

homeless" and to "struggling to know where I fit anymore." As retired Professor A pondered recent changes in his life brought about by retirement, he asked: "What price is to high and what is one required to compromise…to forfeit, in exchange for being welcomed, included, and regarded as a valued, contributing member within this turbulent landscape?"

Professors W and N extended this notion of homelessness and feeling discarded. They spoke of being "misplaced" and "replaced" when their respective areas of scholarship were no longer identified within the current Faculty structure and university strategic plan as "relevant." Professor N elaborated:

> I spent a long time reflecting on where I belonged and what Faculty might value my particular area of expertise and research focus. It took me four years to find a new home. In retrospect, I didn't realize the toll this took on me. It wasn't until I found a new home that I acknowledged feeling discarded and having lost the one I had been a part of for so many years.

Devaluing certain disciplines was cited as being "directly related to universities being driven by a corporate agenda…with the almighty dollar being the bottom line" (Professor W). Recently retired Emeritus C spoke of retiring "three full years in advance of initial retirement plans" due to feeling pressured to "either submit to the newly articulated priorities of the Faculty" or "justify the relevance of my teaching focus and area of research and scholarship as these no longer aligned to the new, strategic vision of the university." Some Elder faculty referred to abolishment of sociologically based and politically informed adult education programs in many universities as a primary example of devaluing, with specific reference to programs falling short of being "cash cows," "income generating," or "self-sustaining." In the words of Professor E:

> Grassroots adult education is not sexy enough…at least not as sexy as the proliferation of adult education programs now designed to enhance the skill-base and overall productivity of 'workers' so that they might ultimately contribute to the corporate competitiveness and profit margins that benefit their organizations.

Giroux (2005) identified this same concern and argued that "academic labor [is] increasingly being transformed in the image of the new multinational conglomerate workforce" (para. 12).

Pedagogical Shifts and Imbalances

Participants noted a repositioning of the pedagogical fulcrum that favoured corporate, commercial values over academic values of heightened social consciousness and critical awareness. Reference was made to "who and what drives the university agenda" (Professor M), "the diminishing role of universities as agents of social change" (Emeritus S), and a "decreased focus on strengthening critical thinking skills of adult learners to support thoughtful, purposeful, and intentional engagement as citizens of the world" (Associate Professor W). When labour force development (market knowledge) supersedes the acquisition of social knowledge and critical learning, we run the risk of measuring education, in relative terms, by how it directly impacts and contributes to economic gain.

A marked increase of students in classrooms was identified as a key factor "contributing to less meaningful student-teacher engagement" (Professor C). This was cited as "a factor that forces professors to rely on administering tests that can be scored quickly and efficiently" (Professor T) due to the sheer numbers of students in any given class. Online learning was perceived to be a medium in support of increased student access to university education and several participants identified inflated tuition/course costs to off-set (university/faculty) budget deficits as the dominant force driving the proliferation of distance education today. In graduate programs, for example, where students might expect to experience a smaller, more intimate, engaged, and inquiry-based, learning environment, "online class size sometimes

spans 25 to 30 graduate students who pay almost double for the same course they could have taken on campus" (Associate Professor D). Larger class sizes in the face-to-face learning environment "forces me to resort back to the 'sage on the stage' model of teaching, versus a more inquiry-based approach that, I firmly believe, resides at the heart of teaching excellence and authentic student engagement" (Professor H).

A dominant sub-theme referred to by most participants was an increased reliance and dependency on contingent faculty hired to teach in face-to-face and online environments, "a strategy of the university to get a bigger bang for our buck" (Professor C). Associate Professor D provided an example of this heightened focus on "efficiencies for economic gain" and said:

> If we cram 25 plus graduate students into an online course, remember – they have paid double the tuition, we can then hire a part-time sessional from industry who is much less expensive than a faculty member. Do the math!

A heavy reliance on contracted, part-time, and adjunct faculty also extended to shifts in dynamics and relationships within universities. Concerns expressed by Elder participants aligned to scholarly voices in the literature in that these types of hires "do not have input into the governance of the institution…result[ing] in an aggregate decrease in faculty power" (Saunders, 2010, p. 59).

Shifts in dynamics and power also extended to how students view themselves. Now regarded and self-identified as customers and consumers with a dominant focus on program/course deliverables and outcomes that promise employment preparation and success, students appear more focused on obtaining credentials that will support them to achieve their economic goals than on the exploration of knowledge. Professor W referred to this shift:

> From the first day of class, students want to know, specifically, what will earn them an "A" in the course, how many pages of text and the exact number of references expected to be included in the mid-term paper, and what relationship this course has to their program of study and career aspirations. I feel that, in their minds…for many if not most…they value being here only if this course will effectively prepare them for employment.

In light of these shifts, Elder participants expressed grave concern that sound teaching and learning pedagogy had become a poor cousin to the dominant focus on efficiencies, economics, and consumerism and that their role in contributing to pedagogical integrity had been sorely thwarted.

Devaluation of the Professoriate

The influx of contingent faculty hires, coupled with the fulcrum shifting to position university education as an employment preparation program contributed to many Elder faculty and the knowledge they brought to the table being devalued and disregarded. With mounting (subtle or not so much) pressure to transition into retirement, Professor M provided the following comment when describing a recent lunch with the Dean:

> Although the words were never actually spoken, I read between the lines. I know that there are strategies at work to nudge many senior professors into retirement. In the eyes of our Dean, we are simply too expensive and out-of-date. The Dean actually said, "Although there is no mandatory retirement at our university, we need to make room for new assistant professors who are more current and this will not happen until we create space."

Professor M maintained that "[we need] to push up against some of the proposed initiatives being thrown about in our Faculty. If senior faculty failed to stand up and challenge, who would? Junior faculty are afraid to speak out and for good reason."

Professor T also reflected on many senior faculty feeling devalued by the university and said:

> Deep change is not foreign to this university. Our long-standing experience, [as senior faculty], in dealing with large-scale transition and change used to mean something back then. Our challenge was always how do we support change while remaining true to our underlying principles, purpose, and integrity as academics and scholars? Dialogue was integral and decisions that impacted my own Faculty were made collectively. Debate was encouraged and people came to meetings then.

Recently retired Professor A likened "feeling devalued and dismissed" to the "ending of a marriage":

> I remember being told many years back when I was preparing for promotion that being granted tenure was a long-term, contractual commitment by the university, not unlike a lifelong marriage commitment. Even though it was my decision to ultimately retire, it felt to me like the disillusionment of a marriage was taking place. I decided to leave because I no longer experienced feeling valued and regarded as a respected, contributing partner in the eyes of "the other."

And from another professor in her early sixties, who continues to be fully engaged in her university work and does not anticipate retiring for the next eight or more years:

> I have been married to the university for the past 30 years. But, for the last few, I feel that I am the only one nurturing this union. Our contract appears to have changed these past few years and I am only finding out now that the rules of engagement have changed as well…this goes both ways. I don't want to retire yet. I still have work to do!

Several Elder participants elaborated on increased teaching loads, service commitments and graduate student supervision responsibilities, and on significant pressure to secure more research funding. In the words of Elder professor C, "I feel pressure to bring in more research funding – mainly to offset the costs of funding graduate students in the faculty." And from another participant considering *early* retirement:

> To use an analogy here, when I was hired, I was expected to learn how to shovel as an academic; in other words, to teach, do service, and publish. Now that I am a senior faculty member and full professor, I am simply expected to shovel *more*. They just don't get that I continue…and *want* to continue shoveling. I am simply shoveling *differently* now…more thoughtfully and critically. Shoveling differently is not valued here as the only lens being used for annual review and merit is a quantitative lens. (emphases added)

Again, economic efficiencies (an increase of contingent faculty hires) and how this impacted power differentials was revisited and referenced by several participants in this study. Professor D maintained that, "large numbers of part-time sessionals being hired to teach detracts from our critical, collective voice. Full-time, tenured faculty members are more costly but we are also more equipped…better positioned to challenge issues and to participate in governance." Exploitation of contingent, part-time faculty, with respect to heavy workloads with no benefits, remained a key concern. Emeritus S believed that the increase of contingent faculty in universities was also "a strategy to reduce the power of resistant faculty members…those who were not as entrepreneurial as others" with respect to the emergent corporate agenda. Motivating factors contributing to the increase in contingent faculty hires included dwindling public funding; valuing applied/experiential knowledge of professionals over the social and theoretical knowledge of full-time academics; and a need to appear more timely and relevant to corporations whose financial support factors significantly into underwriting university budgets.

Elder participants frequently cited feeling marginalized and powerless. Most acknowledged current economic realities contributing to monumental shifts in university affairs and governance. Many Elder participants felt deeply impacted by this reality and some expressed frustration with the lack of

opportunity to actively engage in navigating the changes. In the words of Professor M, "There was a time I was invited to participate in planning for change … my experience and perspective as a senior professor held more currency then." This sentiment aligned to Buchbinder and Rajabopal (1996) who described the academic professoriate as "central to the academic enterprise … and to the mission of the university" (pp. 292-293). Most Elder faculty participants advocated for a central role in decision-making and a more inclusive, collaborative, and democratic approach regarding the future directions of their Faculties and universities.

Discussion

As economic influences and demands continue to impact individuals, communities, organizations, and societies, universities become more vulnerable, ergo resigned, to the hegemony of neoliberalism. With reference to the shifting landscapes of university environments, Whiteley, Aguiar, and Marten (2008) expressed concerns pertaining to the detrimental trends brought about by neoliberalism, the bureaucratization of work academic relationships, and to:

> …rob[bing] individuals of the ability to protect themselves into the future and to develop any feelings of collectivity and solidarity…and enhanced alliances between industry and universities [and] the relationships between academics' research programs to funding sources in the private sector. (pp. 131-132)

The potential for erosion of relationships, fragmentation across and within program areas, and a deepening sense and focus on competition and individualism, over collaboration and community, were all cited as prickly thorns protruding from the dark side of the neoliberal agenda. These environmental elements received significant attention in dialogues with Elder faculty who participated in this study.

Of note is that many concerns and cautions expressed by Elders also aligned to what Manley-Casimir, Fenton, McGinn, and Sheilds (2012) described as the plight of "new" scholars entering the academy. Specifically, they note:

> Regardless of background, the beginning academician seeks a sense of belonging upon entering the academy. The desire for belonging is grounded in a fundamental need to be recognized as having something of value to contribute to the organization. In addition to an academic background hard won through many years of undergraduate and graduate study, culminating in this new appointment to the academy, the beginning academic expects to be valued as a person who has a real contribution to make, to join a group of other academics in their mutual pursuit of truth and scholarly advancement. (p. 36)

Extending this struggle to experiences of Elder professors struggling to reinvent, relocate, and identify themselves within an unfamiliar culture that dimly resembles *home*, "the price of [continuing to belong] may be high – higher than expected – and it may be exacted at unexpected turns in the academic journey…" (Manley-Casimir, Fenton, McGinn, & Sheilds, 2012, p. 36). In this way, experiences of many Elder faculty intersect with and illuminate some of the experiences of newcomers to university life when one ponders the question, "*What price is too high*?" In the words of one Elder professor, "I appreciate what newer faculty are experiencing as what I struggle with is not so different."

No unlike some participants in this study, Shields, McGinn, Manley-Casimir, and Fenton (2012) spoke of the "marriage" metaphor and, specifically, the disillusionment of a marriage in their article, "The Erosion of Academic Troth: Disengaging from the Ties that Bind":

> The analogy between separation in a failed marriage or relationship and that of the academic stepping away or distancing herself or himself from the university in some way continues in the

> various forms of disengagement that those in our study spoke of choosing in order to maintain their sense of self. For example, disengagement can mean staying in a position but working as a shadow of the self, going about work without real interest or enthusiasm. It can mean choosing to stay at an institution but not taking part in faculty workload beyond what is minimally required. It can mean revising a sense of loyalty and respect when none is given in return…
>
> The act of distancing works in a similar manner from a university standpoint. The once happily appointed academic who becomes perceived as not loyal or worthy of troth finds herself or himself on the margins of faculty activity… (p. 81)

Inclusion, belonging, and spaces to contribute voice and perspective were identified as critical needs of Elder faculty participants. *Creating space* is not a particular forte in a neoliberal agenda, however. Spaces are, more often than not, perceived, regarded, and responded to as: providing potential for more *bums in seats*, whilst pulling the purse strings tighter; opportunities to create more stream-lined, leaner initiatives; or a potential threat fearing that creating space may be exploited by those faculty members who seek to express contrariety. All of this conjures up images of the old Clydesdale horse that pulled the milk truck along my street when I was a little girl. The horse's leather flaps, strategically located to the side of each eye, were positioned to restrict peripheral vision so as not to upset or disturb. These flaps restricted that which would have, otherwise, remained visible on either side. Creating spaces to honour and draw from the historical narratives of Elder faculty who wish to remain engaged, those who have navigated university landscapes for an extended period of time, would be an admission that focusing only on that ground that we are standing on and the roadway straight ahead constitute too narrow a vision. To move forward successfully, cohesively, and with integrity, might universities not be better served by consulting voices that have significantly contributed to the larger, historical, academic narrative?

Summary

In this paper, Elder faculty, spanning selected universities across Canada share perspectives and experiences of a shifting academic landscape – a terrain significantly impacted by economics, globalization, corporatization, and competency-based agendas. Although not all Elder faculty strive to remain active and engaged as academics, those who do identify a need for *space* to share perspectives, experiences, and tacit knowledge acquired, having navigated university landscapes for an extended period of time. The expressed desire, by many Elder participants, was to contribute to and support sound, integral academic values, pedagogical practices, and a spirit of collaboration and community.

Power shifts and displacement, pedagogical shifts and imbalances, and the devaluation of the professoriate, identified as *off shoots* of a neoliberal agenda, were three dominant themes that emerged from the data. These challenges were cited as formidably impacting universities across Canada. Many Elders expressed feeling marginalized and/or often powerless in combating current trends that serve to erode what Giroux (2005) identified as a decline of intellectual culture in universities. Repeated reference to future directions of universities, to how education was being reframed and redefined, and to a new reality that negatively impacted the teaching and scholarly work of faculty members were testimony to the depth and breadth of Elders' concerns. Being that most participants in this study were all soon eligible to retire (some had retired), a tone of acquiescence, hesitation, or an unwillingness to challenge the status quo became evident in many of the dialogues. Expressions of fatigue, frustration, and being 'too close to retirement' were cited as contributing factors.

Several participants remained, albeit, cautiously optimistic, expressing confidence in some of their less senior colleagues to carry on this critical discourse. One Elder participant was more hopeful, however. In a gentle and thoughtful voice, while pondering a seagull on his windowsill, he reflected:

> I have done good work here over the past several decades. Some of my colleagues left because

they felt this was necessary to create room for younger faculty trying to move up through the ranks. I know that this is a view held by some. It really has more to do with dollar and cents though as my salary would create room for a few new junior faculty. I suspect that I will move on in the next few years but I will leave for my own reasons and on my own terms. And…I still have a long list of graduate students to mentor through completion. They believe I have something to offer.

The time for me to go will be when these younger academics stop knocking on my door seeking mentoring and support, or simply just wanting to share, debate, and dialogue about ideas. Sometimes we hide in here and talk for hours. When these young, great minds consider me redundant, then it will be time for me to leave. This is the hourglass I pay attention to…I still have a few more stories to share. Many of these bright lights give me great hope.

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