

I did not interview men, although they too experience stress in ways that surely parallel and diverge from women's experiences. There is also important work to be done on men's experiences of stress. I began with women because I am one and because I witnessed them carrying burdens that were making them ill. Too many women were suffering in isolation, and I wanted to know why. I have also witnessed some of the ways that my male colleagues contend with the tremendous pressure to perform, and wonder if these pressures might prove more difficult at times because constructions of masculinity may preclude more discussion of their experiences. For better and for worse, women are essentialized as people with whom to discuss health issues. In her recent essay "Thanks for Listening," Green (2015) estimates that someone cries in her office "at least once every three weeks." She notes that she is not trained as therapist or social worker and is not chair of her department, but "I'm a female professor at a research university, where faculty members and students—especially graduate students—regularly show up at my office, often after sending me a vague email asking if I have time to talk. And then they tell me things." This has been a common experience for me, and female colleagues and I have spoken often about keeping tissues in our offices for these occasions. Green goes on to depict the kinds of conversations that ensue as "private," "confidential," and "the underbelly of that work"—by which she means academic work, career strategies, and socialization into the academy. Green (a pseudonym) notes that while "a few women colleagues nod their heads knowingly" when she speaks of the tissue box kept on her desk, "many professors act baffled: Why would someone cry in your office? Men in particular say that."

Female professors often experience and find themselves exposed disproportionately to this underbelly work or what Hochschild (1983) called "emotional labour," due in part to gendered constructions of women as nice, friendly, caring—as those who in fact do a disproportionate amount of care work in the university. This project largely emerged from the preponderance of these kinds of conversations; it involved a desire to expose how much people—and especially women—were suffering, but not able to share this suffering in public ways.

The project began at a time when I found myself discussing these issues with some frequency. As

friends and colleagues struggled, and as I struggled, these conversations became important and necessary for survival. Audre Lorde (1988) and Sara Ahmed (2014) write about "self-care as warfare." I found myself engaged in these conversations, and found that they helped: that finding ways to discuss overwhelming stress and health struggles made me realize that many people around me were experiencing similar things. There was relief and hope in and for something bigger; there was power in forging the collective. The process was one where conversations evolved into interviews as I explained the project. I put tools of social science, friendship, and the power of conversation into the healing process.

While I do not want to essentialize the category of woman, the experiences of women, or their ways of engaging each other, I have found that conversations about these issues seem to happen more often—for me—with other women. In the time since co-authoring an essay called "For Slow Scholarship" (Mountz et al. 2015) however, I have had the opportunity to learn from more men about how these issues affect them. In the future, I would conduct research with everyone interested in discussing these issues in order to understand their gendering more fully.

I am not trained in autobiography or autoethnography as methods; this article does not claim to use these methods. On occasion, I do share my own experiences in this article. Some find this a claim to legitimacy and power. For me, including my own experiences is a political act. I identify with those whose stories are shared here. I share many of their experiences—albeit in different ways for every person—and want to locate my own subject position. I do so as a form of situated knowledge, acknowledging that this is—like all knowledge construction—a "view from somewhere" (Haraway 1991).

I proceed with a brief discussion of existing literature. I then present and discuss findings, strategies for change, and conclusions that explore implications and questions raised by this work.

### **Setting the scene: Working in the contemporary university**

In environments that privilege endurance and hard work, there is little space for discussion of ailments, burnout, and breaking points. As a result, people