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# The CV as a symbol of the changing nature of academic life: performativity, prestige and self-presentation

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## ABSTRACT

The effects of performativity in academic life are widely discussed and debated. Yet most analysis relies on conventional forms of empirical enquiry, notably interviews and questionnaires. The curriculum vitae (CV) is a comparatively neglected source of insight into the changing nature of academic life that offers a fresh insight. Drawing on the CVs of three generations of UK academics, this exploratory study analyses changing patterns of self-representation. While the CVs of scholars first academically active from the mid-1960s are largely a historical record, those of subsequent generations increasingly resemble a personal marketing tool. There has been an increase in the use of self-laudatory language, the presentation of evidence with respect to the impact of scholarship, and a shift in publication patterns towards the journal article. These trends, and others reported in this paper, appear to be related to the effects of performativity and contemporary understandings of academic prestige.

## KEYWORDS

Academic CV; performativity; prestige; publication; research excellence framework; inter-generational analysis

## Introduction

The changing nature of academic life and the pressures of performativity are the subjects of considerable debate and research (e.g. O'Neill 2002; Ball 2003; Lucas 2006). There is an ever-growing emphasis on the measurement of academic performance that 'haunts virtually all aspects of our work ...' (Peseta, Barrie, and McClean 2017, 453) and a related growth in the culture of self-promotion in academia (Kandiko-Howson, Coate, and de St Croix 2018). Empirical studies analysing the effects of performativity normally rely on interviews or surveys among academics as a means of investigation. However, these conventional research methods do not capture the various ways in which academics present themselves as professionals to their peers and employers. The academic curriculum vitae (CV) provides a largely neglected means of understanding the changing nature of academic life both in terms of patterns of publication and other ways in which individuals choose to represent their career achievements. It is also a window on how individual academics understand what has been referred to as the 'prestige economy' (Blackmore and Kandiko 2011, 399).

This paper reports on a study analysing the academic CVs of 24 UK higher education researchers drawn from three different generations of scholars who started their careers between the mid-1960s and the 2010s. The results illustrate the evolution of the academic CV from a largely historical record listing qualifications, employment, along with research and publications, to one that reflects elements of a self-promotional marketing tool. Moreover, the analysis shows the growing dominance of the journal article as a form of publication accounting for 30% of all outputs of those who started their publication career between 1963 and 1982 rising to 60% of the productivity of those who began

publishing after 2003. This exploratory study indicates that the academic CV is a useful source of secondary data that acts as a barometer of the changing nature of academic life, the shift to a research-oriented environment and allied growth of performative pressures, such as publication rates and grant getting success. It further points to the way in which academic prestige is understood and has, to some extent, shifted.

## Context

Considerable changes have occurred in academic life since the mid-1960s. Systems of higher education in most developed contexts have massified and the sector has felt the effects of a series of global trends: world university rankings have become an influential indicator of institutional reputation; the student market has internationalised; and the services of high performing academics are now part of a global knowledge economy. A global academic marketplace has emerged in response to these changes (Altbach, Resiberg, and Rumbley 2009) along with a growing emphasis on personal research and publication records. Over the last 20 years the international Changing Academic Profession survey has charted the shifting priorities of academics with an increasing emphasis on the importance of research in academic life (Locke and Bennion 2010; Arimoto et al. 2015; Macfarlane 2017). The changing nature of academic life is related theoretically to the rise of neo-liberalism and discourses associated with new public management (Olssen and Peters 2005). These forces have brought about significant changes in academic identity evidenced by the impact of research policy on academic performativity (Leathwood and Read 2013).

Shifting priorities for individual academics have been closely linked with changes in public funding systems of higher education. In the UK, with the exception of Oxford and Cambridge universities, funding for public higher education was undifferentiated until the mid-1980s as a result of which institutions received income on the basis of student numbers. However, the allocation of public funding to UK universities was then divided between teaching and research through evaluating institutional research quality via the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) in 1986. Similar changes have occurred in other national contexts as governments have adopted a more hands-on approach to university funding as the principles of new public management have taken hold. Since the mid-1980s there have also been significant shifts in the gender balance of the academy and, to a more limited extent, the representation of Black and Ethnic Minority groups although the pace of these changes have been a source of considerable debate and reflection (Morley 2014).

The role of the 'university teacher', the phrase used consistently in the literature about higher education until the mid to late 1980s, was largely to teach with limited expectations with respect to research productivity. Such an observation applies as much to elite institutions, such as Oxford and Cambridge, as to other newer universities. As Alderman (2010, 244) observed:

In the small, frankly elitist, university environment in which I was trained as a historian (1962–1968) the primary function of the academy was to teach – or rather, to guide the self-motivating student (which is what the so-called teaching function amounts to in the higher education context). That is not to say that university dons did not engage in research and publish the results thereof. Of course they did. But at the university at which I was educated (Oxford) the basic requirement of the fellows and lecturers was to teach – to impart knowledge, inspire, challenge pre-conceived notions and expose woolly thinking.

Halsey and Trow's (1971) survey of British academics, undertaken in the mid-1960s, further illustrates how much conceptions of the role have altered. They found that academics mainly defined their role and priorities in terms of teaching, as opposed to research. Just 10% of respondents to their survey were even 'interested' in research, a very low figure considering that the institutions from which academics were surveyed at this time are what today would be defined as 'old', elite universities prior to the formal endorsement of the major expansion of higher education as a result of the recommendations of the Robbins report. In a North American context, the priorities of academics during this period were not dissimilar from their British counterparts. Even in the late 1970s Logan

Wilson commented that ‘the majority consider teaching to be more important ... [than research]’ (Wilson 1979, 234).

The Changing Academic Profession (CAP) survey is perhaps one of the best barometers of how priorities among academics have changed since this period. Rising publication rates are one of the most significant trends. Among Hong Kong academics the number of publications increased two-fold between 1993, when the survey was first conducted, and 2007–2008. The production of more journal articles largely accounts for this increase (Macfarlane 2017). Similar trends have been noted in other international contexts, such as Korea (Postiglione and Tang 2008) and this heightened productivity is widely viewed as an international phenomenon (Blackmore and Kandiko 2011). In the UK the RAE, later re-branded as the Research Excellence Framework (REF), has had a considerable impact in rising publication rates. In addition, especially during the last decade, the economic and social ‘value’ of research, often referred to as ‘impact’, has become an increasing focus of national research evaluation processes and part of the criteria of prestigious funding bodies in receipt of government support. The impact of research has risen in influence as part of the UK REF and will account for 25% of the total evaluation of quality in the 2021 audit, having risen from 20% in 2014. Under the rules for the REF2021 all academics in British universities who have contracts where research is a substantive element must be entered. Previous exercises have allowed institutions to submit academics with the strongest publication records and exclude those who are deemed to be performing less strongly or have no publications. The rules for 2021 mean that, in effect, all academics on ‘all-round’ teaching and research contracts must be entered.

These changes, among others, have led to a growing literature focused on the ‘performative’ demands that are now part of academic life with more emphasis on meeting targets and performance measures in respect to both research and teaching quality at the institutional and individual level (Ball 2003). In the global market for higher education ‘a university considered to be *world class* is less likely to stress teaching ...’ (Altbach, Resiberg, and Rumbley 2009, 11). The prioritization of research at the macro level as a means by which to establish global prestige has clearly impacted at the micro or individual level through the emphasis now placed on publication and grant getting, the former of which is the key determinant of reward and recognition in academic careers (Bergeron et al. 2014). At the same time, the number of academics employed on ‘teaching only’ contracts has expanded indicating an increasing division of labour in university education. While research has always been important in academic life it is now ever more firmly embedded as the key to career success on an international basis.

## Method

It is against the backdrop of these changes in the nature of academic life over the decades since the 1960s that this research is set. It is important to understand the effects these changes have had on the role and self-perception of academics over this period. Most research about academic life though tends to be based on interviews and questionnaires, normally offering a snapshot of opinions and attitudes at any one time. There is also a tendency to focus on examining differences between academics based on institutional location but more limited attention to inter-generational changes based on age and experience over the decades. The academic CV offers an alternative lens on the academic profession. It is both a personal document representing academic achievements as well as one that illustrates individual styles of self-presentation.

This small scale, exploratory study is based on a purposive sample of CVs obtained from a UK-based population of academics who conduct research into higher education. A sample representative of each stratum of the population primarily based on years of experience was sought. Attention was further paid to obtaining an equal number of males and females in the sample. The individuals identified were drawn from diverse disciplinary backgrounds in sociology, politics, philosophy and other mainly social science disciplines from which this community originate (Macfarlane and Burg 2017). All of the participants were in full-time academic positions at a range of different UK

universities. These ranged from lecturers (or assistant professors) to (full) professors. Research assistants and those holding post-doctoral positions were not included. 24 higher education researchers were selected as representative of three different generations with 8 in each generation as follows: veterans (1963–1982), mid-careerists (1983–2002), and newcomers (2003–2016). The generations are based on the date of participant's first (and in some cases, last) 'HE relevant' publication. This step was taken in order to take account of the fact that many individuals did not begin their academic careers in higher education studies but in a different academic field and to ensure that only publications deemed relevant to the field were included in the analysis. Clarification was occasionally sought from a small number of participants who had switched into higher education studies from another academic field as to the date of their first 'HE relevant' publication.

The academic CV has been described as 'a record of scientific accomplishment, a brief history of the professional life course, an obligation to administrative superiors, and a job search resource' (Cañibano and Bozeman, 2009, 86). During the early 1990s, a number of researchers in the sociology of science began to establish the CV as a method rather than simply a data source (e.g. Bonzi 1992). In this respect it can be regarded as a form of documentary analysis (Bowen 2009). The CV is an embodiment of the knowledge value of an academic incorporating their human capital (e.g. qualifications) and their broader social capital (e.g. tacit knowledge, membership of networks, etc.) (Dietz et al. 2000). It needs to be acknowledged though that the CV is, at least to some extent, a tool of personal promotion the accuracy of which is dependent on the recollections and honesty of each individual. Another cautionary note is that while a CV may contain a long list of publications these do not necessarily equate with the quality or impact of a person's academic profile. Yet, in many other respects, there is little to suggest that a CV is any less reliable than interview data and indeed may contain more factually accurate information on which to draw.

Thematic analysis was used based on the standard features of academic CVs, such as academic qualifications, employment history, and research and publication sections. This form of analysis was a relatively straightforward process given the formulaic nature of most CVs compared with other methods of data collection, such as interviews. Publications were analysed as follows: journal articles, books and book chapters, and reports and other outputs. The term 'reports' refers to publications written in a report format that were commissioned by an organisation, normally on the basis of a funded project. The wide variety of different types of books, including monographs, edited collections, and textbooks, and contributions ranging from single authorship of monographs to multiple authorship of edited works, meant that a decision was taken to combine outputs of books and book chapters in one category. Personal statements, acting as summative descriptions of a person's experience, skills and achievements, were also included following re-coding even though this was not a universal feature. The notable difference between the use of descriptive prose as opposed to writing of a self-promotional nature within CVs that these sections revealed led to the identification of language and self-presentation as a further theme.

## Findings

### *Qualifications and employment history*

Academic CVs are individual records of achievement and experience. As such they vary in style and substance to some extent whilst still containing similar sections and features. The longest CV in the sample was 60 pages while the shortest consisted of just two. The CVs of those with the longest academic careers, veterans, were, on average 18.5 pages in length while those of mid-careerists were slightly shorter at 16.8. Newcomers, who only started publishing in 2003, averaged just over 7 pages mainly due to the fact that the publication lists of the more established generations tended to be longer. However, within these averages there were considerable individual differences. Some newcomers had CVs that were longer than veterans. Here, as the subsequent analysis will reveal in

more detail, newcomers often included lists of conference attendance and fleshed out CVs and through self-descriptive summary statements reflecting on their skills, attributes and achievements.

Despite being by far the least experienced group newcomers possessed the most academic qualifications with 26 in total compared with both the older generations at 24 (mid-careerists) and 20 (veterans), respectively. Two veterans did not possess a doctorate and a further two of this generation obtained one at a very late stage in their careers, one of which was a PhD by publication. This finding is indicative of the fact that relatively few British academics possessed a PhD in the 1960s and 1970s compared to current levels. All except one newcomer had a master's degree whilst only four veterans possessed a doctorate. It was notable that many members of the more mature generations had long gaps between obtaining their first degrees and their doctorates, often completing the latter as a more mature part-time students in the 1990s and 2000s. Henry (a veteran), for example, was awarded his BA in 1971 and his PhD in 2015 while Tony (a mid-careerist) gained a BA in 1976 and a PhD in 1998. By contrast, most newcomers progressed quite quickly and often in a linear fashion from first degree to doctorate typically within a space of five to seven years. For example, Jane was awarded her PhD in 2002 just four years after obtaining her BA in 1998.

Aside from academic qualifications, CVs routinely include details of a person's employment history. Among veterans the number of changes between higher education institutions was relatively low by contemporary standards, especially given the length of their academic careers. One veteran had experienced five job changes during the course of their career but this pattern was an exception. On average, veterans spent 11 and a half years in any one institution. This length of service per university compared with an average of four years per institution among newcomers. Three newcomers had experienced six career moves to date and one had changed jobs six times within a period of just eight years. Hence, whilst one might expect to see differences in the number of career moves depending on the length of an academic career it was notable that newcomers had already experienced more institutional and job changes than veterans during much shorter careers to date. These figures illustrate both the increasing insecurity of academic work and its casualisation via temporary positions (eg research assistants, post-doctoral fellows) and part-time teaching posts all of which have become more common across the UK higher education sector since the 1960s (UCU 2016; HESA 2017). The fact that more than a third of UK academics are employed on fixed-term contracts (HESA 2017) is indicative of what is now widely referred to as an 'academic precariat' (Nöbauer 2012).

### ***Teaching and service***

The CVs of all the generations contained surprisingly sparse information about teaching experience and responsibilities compared with research and publications. Just eight of the 16 newcomers and mid-careerists included any substantive reference to teaching within their CV. The absence of information about teaching was even more evident in the CVs of veterans, just two of whom made mention of it at all. There may be less expectation that teaching experience is something that needs to be included. Furthermore, many newcomers have little or no teaching experience to report on anyway having largely or exclusively forged their nascent academic careers on the basis of their research work through doctoral work and temporary post-doctoral positions. Working as a junior researcher was a more common route into academic life for newcomers than for mid-careerists or veterans, many of whom had not experienced an early career research training. The CVs of all three generations were more likely to make mention of doctoral supervision rather than the teaching of undergraduates or taught postgraduates. This is perhaps not unexpected given that doctoral supervision is a relatively more prestigious activity than, say, undergraduate teaching. Where mention of teaching occurred it tended to appear toward the end of the CV, another indicator of the lack of prestige or esteem attached to this form of academic work. This observation may indicate that the more tightly coupled research and teaching responsibilities and identities of academics of the past have been loosened.

Nearly all CVs contained information about contributions to service and academic citizenship both internal and external to the university as an institution. The term ‘service’ or ‘academic citizenship’ has been widely discussed in the higher education literature and refers to a range of duties and responsibilities connected with both the internal life of the institution (eg programme leadership, committee membership, mentorship, and student advising) as well as contributions to professional and public life more broadly (e.g. editorial board membership, reviewing research grant proposals, or advising a range of governmental and non-governmental organisations) (see Macfarlane 2007; Nørgård and Bengtsen 2016). Most CVs placed greater emphasis, and devoted a great deal more space, to externally facing activities, such as external examining, membership and responsibilities connected with academic societies, commissioned and consultancy work, invited keynote lectures and memberships of editorial boards of journals. These records of external service tended to predominate with sparser details in relation to internal roles included, such as course and programme management, and other middle-ranking leadership roles and responsibilities within institutions. The emphasis on external service is probably due to the way in which these activities have a higher esteem and are indicative of the social capital of academics through their key academic networks, such as membership of and positions held within research societies.

### Publications

By contemporary standards the veterans (1963–1982) tend to have quite modest publication records. Their average annual productivity rate was 2.4 publications per year (see Table 1). It is notable that books and book chapters were the most common form of output and journal articles consist of just 30% of their overall productivity. Only one veteran had a productivity rate above 2.8 (i.e. Charles, at 5.8) while the lowest was Robert at 0.7. The average journal article ratio among veterans was 0.3 compared with a books and book chapter ratio of 0.43. The publication pattern of many members of this generation indicates that they would often go several years without producing a journal article. Their output was quite sporadic in this respect. For example, there was a gap of six years between Harry’s first and second journal article.

Academic CVs need to be understood in the context in which the employment history of academics has developed during the course of their careers. Several veterans had forged their careers in academic management, administration and teaching roles leaving limited time, opportunity or support for research during large parts of their working life. Also, it is crucial to understand that

**Table 1:** Veterans (1963–1982).

	Journal articles	Books and chapters	Reports and other outputs	Total years research active	Average annual productivity	Journal article ratio
Eleanor, 1980	16	26	5	38 (1978–2016)	1.2	0.3
Robert, 1973	16	4	2	33 (1973–2006)	0.7	0.7
Susan, 1966	20	29	32	41 (1966–2007)	2.0	0.2
James, 1971	17	38	20	36 (1971–2007)	2.1	0.2
Fiona, 1974	53	61	6	42 (1974–2016)	2.8	0.4
Harry, 1970	49	37	22	46 (1970–2016)	2.3	0.4
Charles, 1981	59	99	46	35 (1981–2016)	5.8	0.3
Terry, 1973	18	32	49	43 (1973–2016)	2.3	0.2
Totals and Averages	248	326	182	314	2.4	0.3

this generation was working, for large parts of their careers, at a time prior to the first UK research assessment exercise in 1986.

Mid-careerists (1983–2002) were, on average, around one third more productive than veterans with an annual productivity rate of 3.5 outputs per year. This figure hides considerable variation between individuals with Tony and Dawn averaging 1.5 outputs per annum compared with more highly productive scholars such as Brian and Geoff with 4.6 outputs, respectively. Only Charles had a productivity rate above 2.8 among the veterans while just 2 out of the 8 the mid-career group had a productivity rate below 3.4. Two in five of this generation's publications were in the form of journal articles compared to 30% of outputs from veterans. Books and book chapters continued to play an important role in their overall productivity but at a proportionately lower rate overall (see Table 2).

Most newcomers (2003–2016) had, understandably, far fewer publications compared with the earlier two generations largely due to the relatively short duration of their research careers thus far (see Table 3). One (Ava) only had conference papers accepted at the time of the analysis and so was recorded, on the basis of the criteria, as a nil return. In terms of productivity all except one were at or below 2 outputs per annum. However, it should be noted that, overall, and especially if Charles is discounted as an outlier, most veterans had only slightly higher rates of annual productivity.

Across the generations there was a notable rise in journal articles as a proportion of overall output (see Table 4). Newcomers produced on average three journal articles for every book/book chapter or report accounting for 60% of all their publications. Another notable feature of the pattern of publication for this generation is that reports and other forms of output (i.e. 21) were almost as numerous as books and book chapters (i.e. 22). In part, this may be explained by the fact that many less experienced academics were employed in roles connected with funded research projects resulting in the generation of published reports on findings.

The changes in publication patterns between the generations may be illustrated by reference to James, a veteran whose first publication was in 1971, and Jane, a newcomer, who started publishing in 2004 (see Table 5). Even though James had an academic career three times the length of Jane's, at the time the CVs were collected, Jane's productivity of journal articles had already exceeded his. James' average annual productivity figure was also lower than Jane's. On the other hand, James had produced more than twice as many books and book chapters, and reports than journal articles.

**Table 2.** Mid-careerists (1983–2002).

	Journal articles	Books and chapters	Reports and other outputs	Total years research active	Average annual productivity	Journal article ratio
Brian, 1995	40	55	7	22 (1995–2017)	4.6	0.4
Tony, 1994	20	22	8	33 (1994–2017)	1.5	0.4
Margaret, 1994	47	54	30	33 (1994–2017)	4.0	0.4
Dawn, 1987	8	10	3	14 (1987–2001)	1.5	0.4
Geoff, 1988	21	36	70	28 (1988–2016)	4.5	0.2
Henry, 1996	45	5	5	12 (1996–2008)	4.6	0.8
Andrew, 2002	26	19	12	14 (2002–2016)	4.0	0.5
Pat, 1994	29	36	7	21 (1994–2015)	3.4	0.4
Totals and averages	236	237	142	177	3.5	0.4

**Table 3.** Newcomers (2003–2016).

	Journal articles	Books and chapters	Reports and other outputs	Total years research active	Average annual productivity	Journal article ratio
Felicity, 2008	7	5	3	8 (2008–2016)	1.9	0.5
Charlotte, 2012	4	2	2	4 (2012–2016)	2.0	0.5
Carrie, 2004	9	7	2	12 (2004–2016)	1.5	0.5
Donald, 2006	9	1	5	10 (2006–2016)	1.5	0.6
Scott, 2016	2	0	0	1 (2016–2016)	2.0	1.0
George, 2010	7	3	0	6 (2010–2016)	1.7	0.7
Ava, 2016	0	0	0	1 (2016–2016)	Nil	Nil
Jane, 2004	22	4	9	12 (2004–2016)	2.9	0.6
Totals and averages	60	22	21	54	1.9	0.6

**Table 4.** Inter-generational publication patterns.

	Journal articles	Books and chapters	Reports and other outputs	Total years research active	Average annual productivity	Journal article ratio
Veterans (1963–1982)	248	326	182	314	2.4	0.3
Mid-careerists (1983–2002)	236	237	142	177	3.5	0.4
Newcomers (2003–2016)	60	22	21	54	1.9	0.6

**Table 5.** Comparing the generations – James and Jane.

	Journal articles	Books and chapters	Reports and other outputs	Total years research active	Average annual productivity	Journal article ratio
James, 1971	17	38	20	36 (1971–2007)	2.1	0.2
Jane, 2004	22	4	9	12 (2004–2016)	2.9	0.6

### **Language and self-presentation**

The CVs of veterans (1963–1982) were notable for being almost wholly factual in nature with standard sections on academic qualifications, employment history, and research and publications. There was little or no attempt to embellish or explain academic achievements through the use of self-laudatory language claiming special skills and abilities (e.g. ‘leadership’, ‘innovation’, etc.) or words intended to capture dynamic personal characteristics (e.g. ‘developed’, ‘established’, ‘created’, ‘founded’, ‘managed’, etc.). Hence, few CVs among this generation included any form of numerical or summary information conveying career achievements.

Summary statements at the beginning of the CV, where they were very occasionally included, made little or no attempt to promote the individual but were purely descriptive of ‘research interests’ or ‘specialisms’. This self-effacing language is used in spite of the fact that several veterans within the sample were significant figures in the development of higher education as a research field who had developed key concepts widely used by other scholars and possessed well-established international reputations. Publications were generally presented as a single chronological list, often at the very end

of the CV, without differentiation between different types of outputs (e.g. journal articles, books, etc.). Where differentiation occurred monographs and single-authored books tended to be listed before journal articles providing an indication of the elevated status of this type of publication. The CVs of veterans were, quite simply, historical records with few, if any, embellishments.

The CVs of mid-careerists (1983–2002) placed more emphasis on presenting information reporting success in winning externally funded research grants. Often this information would be presented prior to listing publications and occasionally a summary of the total money generated during a recent period of time or over the person's career might be prominently cited. However, some members of this generation list grants but without including information about the monetary level of awards.

Lists of publications were normally divided by mid-careerists into separate categories of books (and monographs), journal articles, book chapters, reports, and so on. Self-descriptive language indicative of personal characteristics such as 'founded', 'led', 'developed', and 'collaborated' are more likely to be found in the CVs of mid-careerists than veterans. Some mid-careerists mentioned data in relation to metrics (e.g. their H index, citations, etc.) although this was not a common pattern. There was though some evidence of reference to the impact of their scholarship via media coverage and writing for the news media more generally.

The CVs of newcomers (2003–2016) stand in more obvious contrast to those of veterans. Research funding success was often presented very near to the beginning of their academic CVs, typically immediately following basic information about qualifications and current and past positions held. In the presentation of information about publications journal articles were almost always listed before other types of output. Overview or summary sections were commonly included at the beginning of the CVs of this generation containing self-descriptive statements. Examples include the following written in both the first and third person singular:

I am an active higher education researcher and was returned in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF).  
(Jane, newcomer)

[I have] ... a passion for equity and inclusion in higher education. (Charlotte, newcomer)

He has a great deal of international experience ... led or co-led several institution-wide initiatives ... significant role in sustainability based activities.  
(Donald, newcomer)

[I have a] Strong publication trajectory ... actively involved in enhancing impact through public engagement and presentations at national and international conferences. (Scott, newcomer)

The use of this kind of hyperbole is common within the CVs of generation 3 but only occasionally present within the CVs of mid-careerists, and almost completely absent (save one exception) in the CVs of veterans. It was further not uncommon among newcomers to refer to social media activities such as blogs and business-oriented social networking platforms. There is very little reference to metrics although this may be due to the fact that as early career researchers evidence with regard to the impact of their scholarship is nascent. Hence, many newcomers have limited teaching experience or publications to date. Perhaps as a result they tend to flesh out their CVs by including information about conference attendance and allied presentations often absent from the CVs of their more experienced (or now retired) colleagues.

## Discussion

It was notable that newcomers were the best-qualified generation despite their relative inexperience. By contrast with the two previous generations they tended to move more rapidly on from first degree to a masters qualification and thence to a PhD normally within five to seven years. They are also more likely to possess a PhD than veterans. This is indicative of the way in which the PhD has become the *de facto* union card for entry into modern academe in the UK. Gaining an academic position was

previously much less reliant on possession of a doctorate as the CVs of veterans, in particular, indicate. Newcomers experience a far higher number of career moves in relation to their years of experience than their more experienced peers. This points to the less secure nature of academic employment in forging a career post-PhD. Hence, while the PhD has become the norm it needs to be understood in the context of a more highly competitive academic labour market where the supply of those with a doctorate exceeds the demand in academe (Gould 2015). It is, therefore, unsurprising that newcomers experience many more career moves than members of the earlier generations.

The findings of this exploratory study further show how the academic CV has been developed and adapted for a more performative academic age shaped by the assumptions of neo-liberalism. The CVs of veterans are essentially little more than descriptive historical records of their academic careers without the use of self-laudatory language or hyperbole. The importance of research performance understood in terms of publication, grant funding and evidence of impact becomes more apparent in the CVs of mid-careerists many of whom were involved in the gradual professionalisation of higher education studies and the establishment of research centres (see Macfarlane and Burg 2017). The CVs of newcomers include the most evidence of self-laudatory language and demonstrate the shift toward personalised marketing tailored to the performative expectations of modern higher education employers. To some extent the CV of a recent (doctoral) graduate or early career academic might be reasonably expected to more closely resemble a marketing tool compared to that of a more experienced academic (Dietz et al. 2000) but the differences between veterans and newcomers were too marked for this to be the only explanation.

It is also clear that the publication patterns of mid-careerists and newcomers have narrowed with a growing emphasis on journal articles at the expense of books and book chapters in particular. This trend appears to be linked to the effects of the UK REF and the RAE before it. While the REF does not treat different types of research output unequally the proportion of books and book chapters submitted have been falling in many humanities and social science disciplines, such as history and geography (HEFCE 2015a; HEFCE 2015b). The academic CV is now part of a larger panoply of the materials, interactive resources and tools now made available through personal websites and social media platforms. These collectively constitute a form of personal branding that was not formerly available to academics who began their careers before the mid to late 1980s. By contrast, those who have started their academic careers in more recent times appear to have had their understanding of the CV more strongly influenced by digital information and social media platforms that help them demonstrate their impact beyond lists of publications and qualifications.

Finally, it is clear that the academic CV helps to illuminate conceptions of prestige within the academic economy. Here there is a strengthening relationship between the research and publication profile and that of the 'monetary economy' (Blackmore and Kandiko 2011, 405). This is expressed in terms of the prominent signalling of obtaining research grants within the CVs of the newcomers, a symbol of neo-liberal performativity at the individual level. Prestige and monetary reward overlap in this instance but other indicators of esteem continue to have little financial value, notably activities connected with external service or academic citizenship such as invited keynote lectures and membership of editorial boards. Such work though remains important both in terms of meeting conventional obligations of collegiality within academic communities and where it is associated with high levels of social and cultural capital. It may further contribute indirectly to monetary reward via enhanced promotion opportunities. This is at least part of the reason why, as Blackmore and Kandiko (2011) note, 'many faculty continue to volunteer for activities that do not have a significant financial benefit' (399).

## Conclusion

Academic CVs provide a fine-grained illustration of the changing nature of academic life and, in particular, the effect of performativity on the security of employment and publication patterns. It is an illustration of what Kandiko-Howson, Coate, and de St Croix (2018, 545) have referred to as a growing

dependence on 'cultures of self-promotion, fuelled partly by the metrication of academic work'. While this study has not focused on the gendered dimensions of self-promotion explored elsewhere in the literature, it has provided an example of the way that the metrication and measurement of academic work have become a critical part of the contemporary academic CV. The empirical work of this small-scale and exploratory study provides a snapshot of the way the culture of self-promotion has grown in the prestige economy of academic life. Acknowledging these limitations the study reveals the effects of more casual and fixed term academic contracts and a heightened emphasis on publication via journal articles at the expense of books and book chapters. The former is highlighted by the higher number of career moves undertaken by newcomers compared with veterans whilst the latter is evidenced in the proportionate growth of articles being published by newcomers and mid-careerists.

The style of the academic CV has shifted from a relatively anodyne historical record to one that more closely resembles a self-promotional tool tailored to the demands of modern academe. This is especially notable with respect to the CVs of the newcomers as they hunt for permanent positions. Here there is an increasing emphasis on the assertion of personal qualities and achievements, such as gaining research grants, and the evidencing of quality and impact through reference to metrics, such as citations, and peer ratings of publications relevant to the REF. These newly emerging features of the academic CV are indicative of the pressures of performativity and the way it is affecting the academic job role.

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