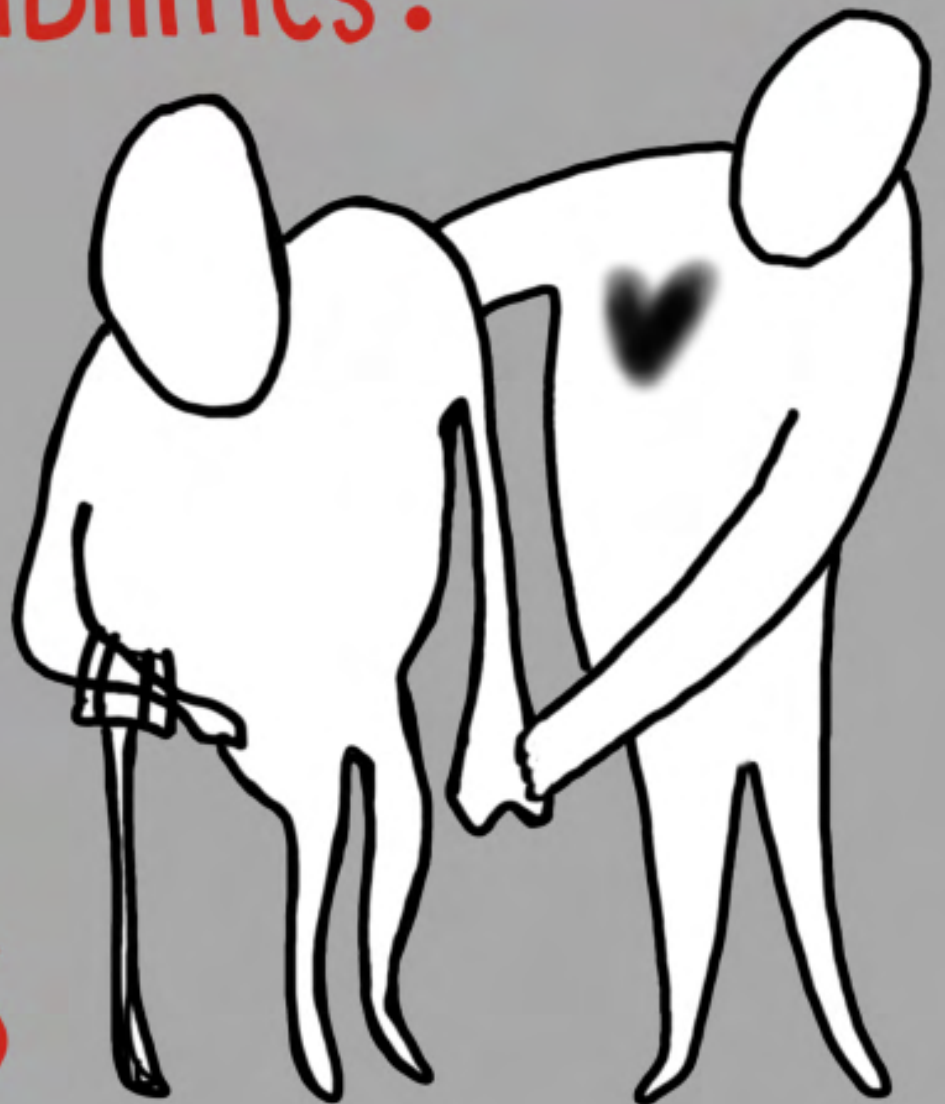


Fostering a sense of
belonging for higher
education staff and
students with caring
responsibilities:

What
Works





Marie-Pierre Moreau & Sally Campbell Galman



Funded by an Advance HE
Good Practice
Grant

Higher Education has
been dominated
by a construction of
the "good" and "legitimate"
academic worker as
white, male, and seemingly
carefree ...
and this trope has proven
itself to be durable.



The durability and power of this construction of "goodness," "legitimacy," and competence is such that most academic workers must make parts of themselves invisible. Among the



A more accurate image of an academic is not a "carefree" depiction, but rather a portrait of stressful multitasking, juggling care with academic work while under tremendous pressure to APPEAR care-free against a backdrop of

INVISIBILITY



"I feel like I have this

GUILTY SECRET

that I actually have a family."

- Lauren
PhD Student

However, INVISIBILITY quickly becomes something else... a kind of MISRECOGNITION happens and carers become resented as

"SPACE INVADERS"

"I don't think I get any support for being a student parent. I get some GRUDGING ACKNOWLEDGEMENT, but it's this OH YES I SUPPOSE YOU'D HAVE TO GO TO THAT WOULDN'T YOU? Not really good enough, not focused on the task. COME ON NOW LADY, YOU'RE DOING A PHD—

WHERE ARE YOUR PRIORITIES?
IS WHAT I FEEL IS THE LINE SO YOU HAVE TO PRETEND AND GET 'ROUND IT."
(Lauren, PhD student)



"I think it is very **IRRESPONSIBLE** of a student to go to *University* and **EXPECT** the *University* to sort everything out for them. That's **WRONG**. If you're a **PARENT**...and if you then make a decision to educate yourself, which is *admirable* ... It's like saying, 'Oh but I've got three **DOGS**, who's going to walk me dogs?' You wouldn't expect the university to become **DOG WALKERS** would you? If

it means
sorting out
childcare,
then you

**JOLLY WELL
SORT IT."**

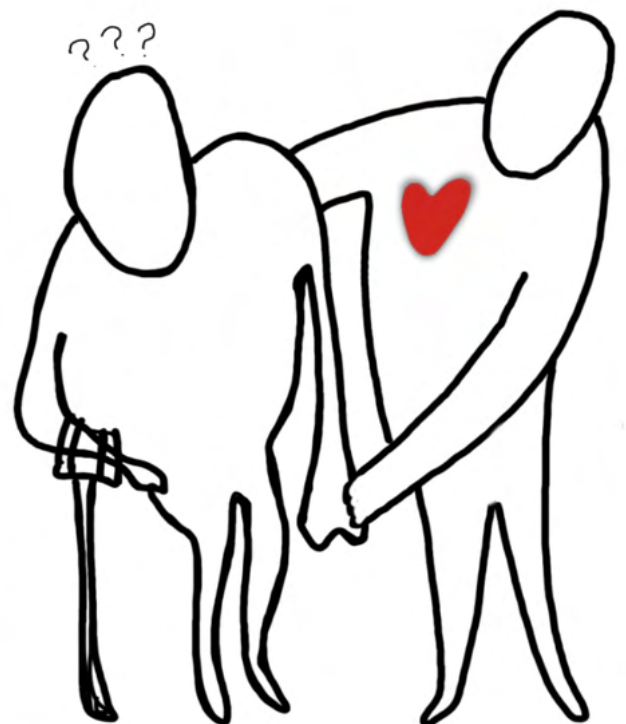
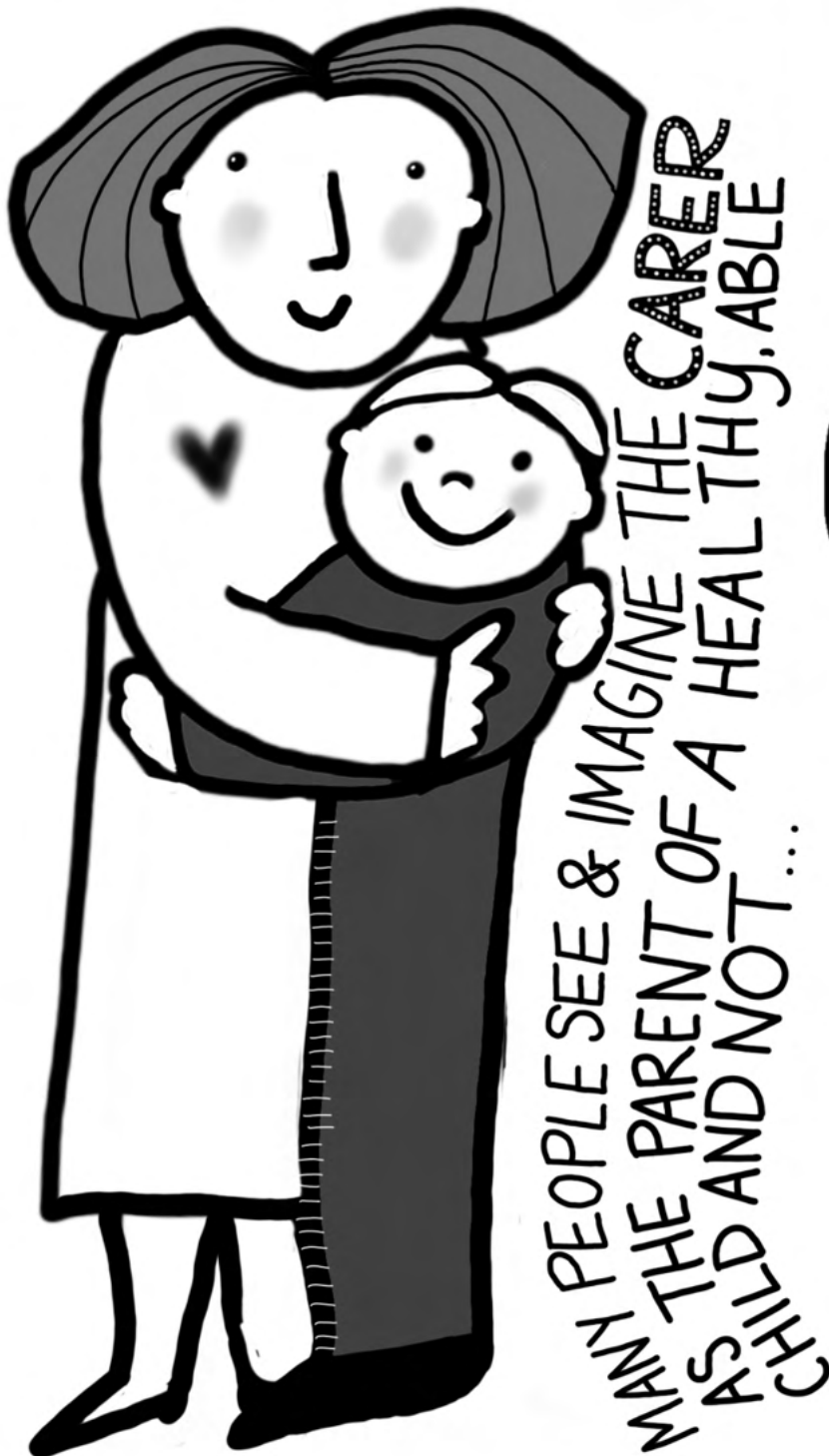
(An actual quote
from a Head of
Student Services)



YOU WOULDN'T
EXPECT THE
UNIVERSITY
TO BECOME
DOG WALKERS
WOULD YOU



While most carers navigate **INVISIBILITY**
and being pushed out as **SPACE INVADERS**,
caring responsibilities are diverse, complex, and
shifting, and they exist within hierarchies of care.
These hierarchies come with differences in
VISIBILITY & SUPPORT

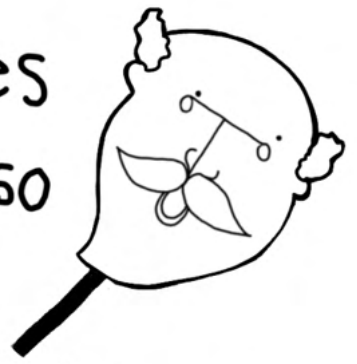


"At the moment, EVERY PLAN I MAKE includes how I can get back as quickly as I need to and THIS WILL GO ON until father finally keels over. The main thing is the EXTRA BURDEN of having this HANGING over me all the time and wondering what it's going to be **EVERY TIME**"

- Isabella, Lecturer



Just as caring responsibilities are diverse and hierarchical, so also the positionalities of the carer create differences in **belonging**.



Carefree, masculinist, heteronormative higher ed discriminates against

ALL

carers,

but especially

those who occupy marginalized positions

vis-a-vis gender,

ethnicity, class

& sexuality.





"When [son] was born,
the PR people I work
with were VERY

KEEN for it to be
very **PUBLIC**

that I was
taking some
paternity leave
... to demonstrate
from the top
down that we
thought it was
a sensible thing
that **FATHERS**

took time off work
and spent time with
their newborn children."

(Dave, vc)



Caring is a virtue signal
for men, but a professional
impediment for women.



"[Caring
responsibilities
are] NOT
SOMETHING
THAT I CAN
OPENLY
DISCUSS
because it would
be seen as a
PROBLEM."

(Kat, professor)



"My partner was ill. I was on temporary contract [and] there were two or three other members of staff on the same temporary contract. One of them, a man, got a post elsewhere and used that to get a post here. I was told by various people that this was okay **BECAUSE HE HAD A FAMILY.**

I pointed out that I did actually have a family and I had caring responsibilities and somehow **THAT WASN'T RECOGNIZED** because **MY PARTNER WAS A WOMAN.....**

... and because there weren't children. Because of that I've always been more explicit to make clear what those caring responsibilities are, so people can't

HIDE 
BEHIND

a sense of,

Oh! But it's not kids and you're not a parent!



Finally we
must also recognise

POWER,
PRIVILEGE,

&

PRECARITY

amid the complications
of hierarchies.



Carers at the top of the hierarchy are privileged but their caring is not seen.



Since I've moved to management, I can't talk about the challenges of child care. It's glossed over.

(Jessica, Department Head)

I can talk about caring but I will need to unroot regularly as a post doc.



There is more visibility at the bottom of the hierarchy... but also more PRECARITY.

And what about support staff?

We know very little about those who work in such positions and how they experience

**CARE
WORK**



WHAT WORKS



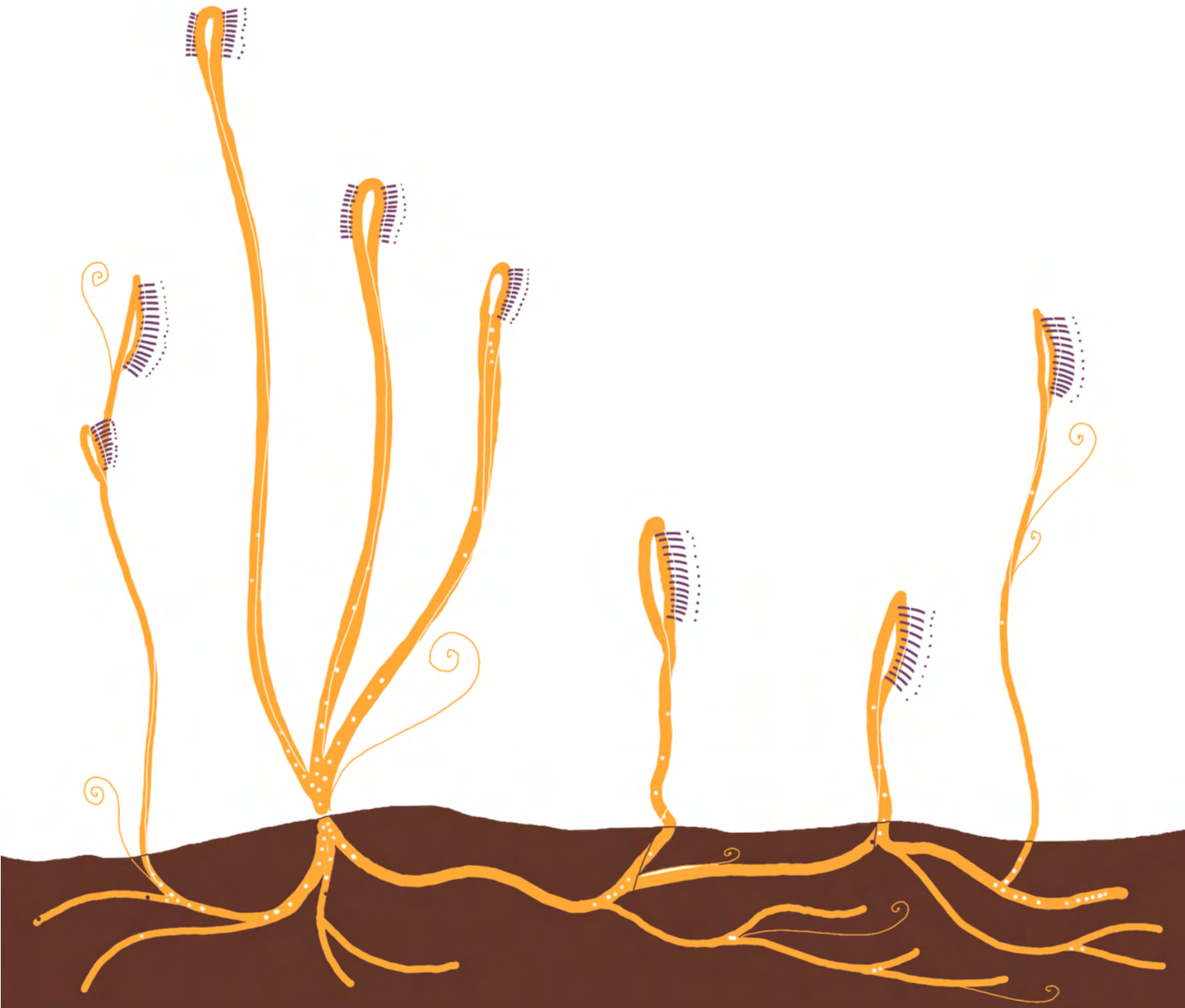
Good practices
are multidimensional

Good practices are
multi-level

Good practices follow an ethic of CARE
rather than top-down, one-size fits all
approaches.



Good policies work a bit like
rhizomatic plants: they creep
along responsively over time,
making connections and little
adjustments as needed ...



Marie-Pierre Moreau is Professor in Education and Education research Lead at Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge UK. Her research is concerned with the formation of identities and inequalities in education and at work. In 2008-09, while still a PhD student, she had a eureka moment when taking her daughter, Nina, to the campus nursery. Since then, Marie-Pierre has been researching the lives of carers in academia and has no intention to stop anytime soon.



Sally Campbell Galman is Professor of Child and Family Studies @ the University of Massachusetts @ Amherst. She wrote and illustrated this piece while at home as a single parent of three children during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The irony of doing THIS work during the pandemic was astonishing as she witnessed how COVID continues to disproportionately affect female academics, up close and in real time. You can learn more about her arts-based scholarship at sallycampbellgalman.com.



