

Resilience, apps and reluctant individualism: Technologies of self in the neoliberal academy

Rosalind Gill ^a, Ngaire Donaghue ^b

^a Social and Cultural Analysis, School of Arts and Social Sciences, City University London, Room ALG15 (Arts Building - lower ground), Northampton Square, London EC1V 0HB, United Kingdom

increasingly clear to those who are listening, but is still systematically silenced in the 'official spaces' of the academy, and without 'proper channels' of expression. These experiences are more likely to be the topic of corridor conversations or e-mail exchanges between friends and colleagues, than to appear as agenda items on departmental forums or even union meetings — despite their significance and pervasiveness. Indeed, the proximity of ourselves and many of our colleagues to complete physical and mental collapse seems to be the 'elephant in the room' in most settings within the academy.

According to the British University and College Union, higher education is one of the most casualised sectors of employ-

things – to generate funding, to close down courses, to single out people for disciplinary hearings, etc.

Cris Shore (2008: 292) argues that 'auditing processes are having a corrosive effect on people's sense of professionalism and autonomy'. They produce what Chris Lorenz (2012) dubs 'self exploitation' and 'inner immigration'. They also produce distinctive kind of precarity that, as we have argued elsewhere (Gill, 2013), doesn't just go 'all the way down' to each individual's psyche, but also goes all the way up, structurally and institutionally, rendering almost everyone at risk – regardless of their contractual status (Huws, 2006). In one of our own universities, for example, a student evaluation of less than 3.5 (on a five-point scale where 5 is excellent)

term lecturers (it's complicated; I'm really thinking about it).

Guardian newspaper in 2014, entitled 'Mental health: a university crisis' variously point to increasing levels of stress and depression amongst staff and students, university counselling services unable to cope with demand, and to the detrimental effects of excessive overwork. A repeated theme across the series is the sense of pressure and isolation being

- Giroux, H. (2002). The corporate war against higher education. *Workplace*, 9, 103117. <http://ojs.library.ubc.ca/index.php/workplace/article/viewFile/184051/183878> (accessed May 21 2013)
- Gregg, M. (2011). *Work's intimacy*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Gregg, M. (2013). Getting things done: Productivity, self-Management and the order of things, paper presented at Being in the Zone conference. King's College June 2013.
- Griffin (2010). Gender studies as a profession. In B. Rieggraf (Eds.), *Gender change in academia: Remapping the fields of work, knowledge and politics from a gender perspective* Wiesbaden: VS-Verlag.
- Harley, D. (2001). Higher education in the digital age: Planning for an uncertain future. *Syllabus: New Dimensions in Education Technology* 15, 10–12.
- Harney, S., & Moten, F. (2013). *The undercommons: Fugitive planning and Black study*. Minor Compositions.
- Hemmings, C. (2011). *Why stories matter: The political grammar of feminist theory*. Duke University Press.
- HESA (2015). <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/stats-staff> accessed 13.7.15.
- Huws, U. (2006, June 7th). Begging and bragging: The self and the commodification of intellectual activity. Inaugural Lecture. London: Metropolitan University.
- Kelan, E. (2009). Gender fatigue: The ideological dilemma of gender neutrality and discrimination in organizations. *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences* 26, 197–210.
- Krause, M., Nolan, M., Palm, M., & Ross, A. (2008). *The university against itself: The NYU strike and the future of the academic workplace*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Kuehn, K., & Corrigan, T. F. (2013). Hope labor: The role of employment prospects in online social production. *The Political Economy of Communication*, 1(1).
- Lazzarato, M. (2011). *The making of the indebted man*. LA: Semiotext(e).
- Leathwood, C., & Read, B. (2012). Assessing the impact of developments in research policy for research on higher education: An exploratory study.
- Lorenz, C. (2012). If you're so smart, why are you under surveillance? Universities, neoliberalism and new public management. *Critical Inquiry*, 38, 599–629.