Rethinking Higher Education

Mark Vicars
Ligia Pelosi *Editors*

Storying Pedagogy as Critical Praxis in the Neoliberal University

Encounters and Disruptions

Springer

Rethinking Higher Education

The current state of higher education perpetuates fatalism, where choice and decision-making towards equity and change has been replaced with bottom-lines and return on investment. This series disrupts this present state of higher education by sharing the stories, actions, and research of students, academics, and administrators in higher education that begin with humanity, equity, and change. It highlights the work of scholars at all stages of career (emerging, mid-career, senior) as well as students beginning their experiences in higher education. Edited, single-authored, and co-authored texts all contribute to new discussions around what is possible in higher education when students, academics, and administrators push their capacity to create possibilities grounded in the ethical and political. This series offers a variety of provocations to rethink teaching, research, policies, and procedures in higher education and working towards local and global change and engagement.

Please contact Grace Ma (grace.ma@springer.com) for submitting book proposals for this series.

Mark Vicars · Ligia Pelosi
Editors

Storying Pedagogy as Critical Praxis in the Neoliberal University

Encounters and Disruptions

Springer

Editors
Mark Vicars
Victoria University
Melbourne, VIC, Australia

Ligia Pelosi
Victoria University
Melbourne, VIC, Australia

ISSN 2662-1479 ISSN 2662-1487 (electronic)
Rethinking Higher Education
ISBN 978-981-99-4245-9 ISBN 978-981-99-4246-6 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-4246-6

This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd.
The registered company address is: 152 Beach Road, #21-01/04 Gateway East, Singapore 189721, Singapore

Preface

In memory of Kip Jones, a pioneer of performative social science and a master flipper of scripts.

> The likelihood that your acts of resistance cannot stop the injustice does not exempt you from acting in what you sincerely and reflectively hold to be the best interests of your community.
>
> Susan Sontag (2007)

As educational workers, in the past we have ruminated on Darwin's suggestion of how [we] as [an academic] species will continue to survive. Our wonderings about our own survival as workers in the neoliberal university (Vicars & Pelosi, 2020) prompted us to propose editing a volume on how Higher Education classrooms are increasingly shaped by the wider discourses and practices of neoliberal performativity. We hoped that the volume would engage with the stories academic workers tell about their work and with the stories that get told out of and from Higher Education teaching and learning domains globally. We were interested in hearing about how academic work—those teaching and learning and research duties have been reshaped in relation to prescribed neoliberal institutional policies. The chapters in this volume will become united around a common them of having to flip the script to survive (Giroux, 2015). Nearly all the authors in this volume address in their chapters how they have become acutely aware of:

> the alleged strengths of the ruling-class [read neoliberal] types, such as their, cold, hypermasculine modes of embodiment, along with their ruthless sense of competitiveness, their suffocating narcissism, their view of unbridled self-interest as the highest virtue, their ponderous and empty elaborated code, and their often savage and insensitive modes of interaction, [are] actually poisonous deficits.
>
> (Giroux, 2015)

The authors in this volume narrate a contemporary account of the social realities as experienced within the Higher Education classroom across the globe and are 'flipping the neoliberal script in order to rewrite themselves for reform of economic

and political change—in which a radical democracy comes alive with justice and hope for a better future' (Giroux, 2015).

This volume engages with storytelling as a critical practice offering accounts of how neoliberal institutional ecological factors are increasingly reshaping Higher Education pedagogy, vis-a-vis how teachers' and learners' identities are being reframed in Higher Education domains by neoliberal policies and practices. This volume aims to extend existing scholarship in the field in the tradition of Waller (1932), Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) and Cutuly (1993) and draws on quotidian portraits of Higher Education practices that account for the multiplicity of ways in which educators juggle the complexity of competing personal and professional demands, moral and ethical conflicts within their institutions. As noted by Darder (2011, p. 238) 'Teachers, whose bodies are similarly restricted, alienated, and domesticated by their workplace, are often under enormous pressure to follow strict policies and procedures for classroom conduct'.

The academic work(ers) that have authored chapters in this volume demonstrate how their work is closely tied to their identities, beliefs, values and passions and how these underwrite their reflections. The author's contributions in this volume take the form of theoretical explorations and personal narratives and draw on empirical experience to explore how narrative knowing and articulation can be a disruptive presence and a space for critique. This volume aims to offer an interrogation into the personal/professional experience of educational systems and how educators daily judge and juggle the complexity and competing demands to make learning meaningful for their students. Each chapter has the aim of acting as a counterpoint, a synoptic method for readerly/writerly comparison for understanding how excellence is an art won by training and habitation. We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence but rather have those because we have acted rightly. We are what we repeatedly do.

Hong, Greene and Lowery (2017) assert that individual and personal experiences [can critically] orient teachers in their professional lives and can provide valuable insight into effective strategies for coping (or not) with professional obstacles and adversity. As a critical practice for troubling the all-pervasive neoliberal mantra in Higher Education, the chapter authors narrate the pedagogy of the personal as a significant critical presence of interruption in the contemporary performativity of Higher Educational discourse. Goodson and Gill (2011) have noted that when narratives of performativity are entrenched, disruption and provocation are required. The authors in this volume disseminate dissident narratives informed by the day-to-day involvement in Higher Education classroom life. Speaking back truth to power, the authors in their chapters have (re)presented a kaleidoscopic insight into the social and cultural landscapes of Higher Educational practices to disrupt the grand narratives of neoliberal performativity.

Accounts of tertiary educational practices can become under represented (Forrest, Keener and Harkins, 2010) and silenced by the constraints and impact that test-driven pedagogical methods have on how we see ourselves as evaluated through students' narrations of our work. As World rankings, league tables dominate the university's psyche, an ever-constant worry on the minds of academics is a fear for our jobs. Vickers (2002, p. 164) has noted how;—it can be dangerous to write about what

goes on in organisations—telling it like it was (or is) threatens the status quo and powerful political, economic and social forces continue to pressure survivors either to keep their silence or to revise their stories.

Robinson's (2013) TED Talk, '*How to Escape Education's Death Valley'* brings to mind Giroux's (2015) thoughts about being 'absorbed in privatized orbits of consumption, commodification and display'. Isolation, privatisation and the cold logic of instrumental rationality have created a new kind of social formation and social order in [Higher Education] which [makes] it becomes difficult to form communal bonds, deep connections, a sense of intimacy and long-term commitments. The chapters in this volume purposively reconstruct meaning from the generic narrative of the public face of education, which homogenises and diminishes collective understandings of contemporary Higher Education. Somewhat like the 1890's Mutoscope peep show devices that, for the price of a nickel, enabled a peep beneath the underskirts of the forbidden, the chapters in this volume have emerged from our interest in the telling moments in life stories and how these moments are often connected to life transitions and transformations. Bringing storied data and theory together the chapters in this volume can be read independently or collectively to reconstruct a grand narrative that tells a story about the stories. We leave it to the reader to assess the integrity and coherence of each story and the context in which it was told.

Theorising one's experience from a first-person standpoint requires courage and when COVID came to visit the world as universities knew it was forced to change to a reality that has long existed in powerful Western democracies that adopted neoliberal ideas as a central ideological tenet. It is this sense of dogmatic, unbending leadership that continues to haunt the corridors of Higher Education leaving an indelible mark on academic work(ers). A chilling context for what could be described as the current predicament is the feeling of an inexorable march in a direction which many in Higher Education would like to change. A brutal kind of bureaucratisation that has constantly escalated but rather than despair we should be galvanised by Iorio's and Tanabe's (2019) concept of hope as a research practice. Listening to colleagues' quotidian stories of their institutions, we are hopeful that there are enough people to form a movement that would provide some viable opposition. We are not stuck travelling down a road we would rather not be travelling down or one that we don't recognise.

The chapters in this volume identify alternative pathways and remind us that we do not have to be besieged by a grudging and powerless kind of acquiescence, rendering us a compliant, submissive bunch predisposed to mute assent. In Tolkien's *Two Towers,* the second volume in Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy that heralds the end of the Third Age of Middle-earth, the narrative provides an account of Frodo's struggle with carrying the ever-heavier burden of the Ring as he and Sam convey it to Mordor and its ultimate destruction. Sam, Frodo's constant but anguished companion expresses his uncertainty about how to proceed amidst the decay of a civilisation he

has only ever known. In a moment of despair by Frodo, Sam reminds him of the value of fellowship and of duty.

Melbourne, VIC, Australia

Mark Vicars
Ligia Pelosi

References

Cutuly, J. (1993), *Home of the wildcats: perils of an English teacher*, National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana, Illinois.

Darder, A. (2011), A dissident voice: essays on culture, pedagogy, and power, Peter Lang, New York.

Forrest, M, Keener, T & Harkins, M. (2010), 'Understanding narrative relations in teacher education', *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, vol. 38, (2), 87–101.

Giroux, H.A. (2015) Flipping the Script: Rethinking Working-Class Resistance, *Truthout*, https://truthout.org/articles/flipping-the-script-rethinking-working-class-resistance/

Goodson, I & Gill, S (2011), Narrative pedagogy: life history and learning, Peter Lang, New York.

Hong, J., Greene, B., & Lowery. J. (2017). Multiple dimensions of teacher identity development from pre-service to early years of teaching: a longitudinal study. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 43:1, 84–98. Doi: 10.1080/02607476.2017.1251111

Iorio, Jeanne and Tanabe, CS (2019) *Out and about: Practicing hope through research.* In: Educating for Social Justice in Early Childhood. Kessler, Shirley A and Swadener, Beth Blue, eds. Routledge, New York, pp. 117–130.

Lawrence-Lightfoot, S, (1983), The good high school: portraits of character and culture, Basic Books, US.

Susan Sontag (2007). *At the same time Essays and speeches* (Eds) Paolo Dilonardo & Anne Jump, New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux. https://www.themarginalian.org/2012/12/05/susan-sontag-on-courage-and-resistance/

Vicars, M. & Pelosi, L. (2020). Researching with the Sturm und Drang of COVID-19: Telling tales of teachers' teaching. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 20 (4) 393–403.

Vickers, M. (2002). Researchers as storytellers: writing on the edge and without a safety net. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8 (5), 685–621.

Waller, W, (1932), The sociology of teaching, John Wiley & Sons, New York.

Acknowledgements

The editors would like to thank the contributors for their trust and commitment to the ongoing collaboration and for working through the initial stages of the pandemic in 2020. We thank the Series Editors, Jeanne and Clint and the team at Springer for their support and patience in seeing this book through the ups and downs of the production process.

Contents

Editors and Contributors

About the Editors

Mark Vicars Ph.D. is an Associate Professor in the College of Arts and Education at Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia and Honorary Adjunct Professor at the Research Institute of language and culture of Asia, Mahidol University, Thailand. Following 24 years of working in education in several countries, with 15 of those in higher education, Mark has extensive international, multi-sector experience of teaching and learning, embodied, blended and online, as well as a solid track record of team and curriculum leadership. He is highly experienced in developing international strategy on teaching and learning in Australia, Asia and the UK, generating international opportunities for collaborative partnerships focused on the teaching/research nexus. He has developed research affiliations and education partnerships internationally to deliver educational workplace training and research. Mark's philosophy of praxis is underpinned by principles of social justice and he has proven success in leadership in tertiary educative contexts and has substantial experience in providing quality and innovation in learning. As a scholar, researcher, teacher Mark is dedicated, innovative, and passionate about creative, research-oriented professional journeys and community engagement. He is intrinsically motivated and enjoys working collaboratively in dynamic, creative environments. Mark's teaching is highly evaluated, based on a commitment to working with students from diverse countries, cultures, socio-economic and educational backgrounds. Throughout his career, Mark has produced an integrated body of work that has fundamentally been focused upon engaging with teacher-learners through a transformative student experience.

Ligia Pelosi Ph.D. is a Senior Lecturer in the College of Arts and Education at Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia. Ligia has worked in education for over 20 years, with 11 of those spent in higher education. Her work in primary schools was as a generalist and LOTE teacher, but most extensively as a music specialist. Currently, Ligia shares the role of Director of Learning and Teaching. She teaches in the Bachelor of Education (P-12) and the Master of Teaching (Primary). Ligia completed her

Ph.D. as a creative project—a novel and exegesis. Her research and writing to date is positioned within qualitative narrative methodologies in the field of literacy and creativity. Ligia is currently involved in the National Exceptional teachers for Disadvantaged Schools (NETDS) research project, which is funded by the Department of Education and Training, Victoria. The project involves placing high-achieving preservice teachers (PSTs) in schools serving diverse and disadvantaged communities. The program provides a shared focus for PSTs to share experiences, ideas and strategies, thus supporting them to become effective and resilient teachers, and helping them to build their confidence and motivation to continue to take on the challenges of teaching in diverse and disadvantaged communities after graduation. This project is relevant to Ligia's research interests in the impact of neoliberalism on schooling, which affects the wellbeing and achievements of not only students but teachers.

Contributors

Naoko Araki Akita International University, Akita, Japan

Ann Cheryl Armstrong The University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand

Greg Aronson Victoria University, Melbourne, VIC, Australia

Sirintorn Bhibulbhanuvat Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand

Theeraphong Boonrugsa Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand

Kristiina Brunila AGORA for the Study of Social Justice and Equality Research Centre, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

Nuntiya Doungphummes Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand

Gabriele Griffin Centre for Gender Research, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden

Nicholas D. Hartlep Berea College, Berea, KY, USA

Leanne Holt Macquarie University, Macquarie Park, NSW, Australia

Kip Jones Bournemouth University, Poole, England

Tricia M. Kress Molloy University, Rockville Centre, New York, NY, USA

Pierre Orelus Fairfield University, Fairfield, CT, USA

Ligia Pelosi Victoria University, Melbourne, VIC, Australia

Joe Perry Macquarie University, Macquarie Park, NSW, Australia

Pat Sikes University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK

Mark Vicars Victoria University, Melbourne, VIC, Australia

Roz Ward Melbourne, Australia

Chapter 1
Doing It on Your Own Terms: Narrating Time and Place in the Neoliberal University

Mark Vicars and Greg Aronson

Abstract The epistemic landscape around Higher Education has been radically contested by neoliberal reforms over the last few years with universities increasingly being described as places difficult to work in both personally and professionally (Edwards in The Qualitative Report 27(10):2113–2134, 2022; Vicars in Affective capitalism in academia. Bristol University Press, 2023). In this chapter we seek to broaden out of the complexities of the educator's life world in Higher Education; developing an understanding of subjectivation in relation to what Priestley et al. (Curriculum making in Europe: Policy and practice within and across diverse contexts, Bingley, 2021) distinguish between 'meso-national governments, curriculum agencies; micro- principals and teachers and nano- teachers and students'. To capture the highly complex nature of university educators life worlds, the chapter is framed by the problematic of how to narrate situated *ethical* dispositions constituted from our interpretative insider observations of university 'social relations, cultural models, power and politics, perspectives on experience, values and attitudes, as well as things and places in the world' (Gee in Social linguistics and literacies: Ideologies in discourses. Routledge, 2008, p. 1).

1.1 Introduction

As a result of COVID, we as educators are now facilitating both synchronous and asynchronous learning experiences and the copious literature on what is and gets counted as a university work has/is routinely centred interrogation on how neoliberal Higher Education policies reify dispositional, structural, and institutional inequalities (Nehring & Brunilla, 2023; Sparkes, 2007, 2021). Pearce (2020) has suggested how:

M. Vicars (✉) · G. Aronson
Victoria University, Melbourne, VIC, Australia
e-mail: Mark.Vicars@vu.edu.au

G. Aronson
e-mail: Greg.Aronson@vu.edu.au

M. Vicars and L. Pelosi (eds.), *Storying Pedagogy as Critical Praxis in the Neoliberal University*, Rethinking Higher Education,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-4246-6_1

> ….neoliberal reforms have piled growing pressure upon an increasingly precarious academic complex, often incoherent, unstable and even contradictory set of practices that are organized around a certain imagination of the 'market' as a basis for the universalisation of market-based social relations, with the corresponding penetration in almost every single aspect of our lives. Consequences of this within higher education institutions include increased internal competition, the proliferation of 'hard' management practices, such as 'the imposition of discourses and techniques of reward and punishment' (Deem, 1998p. 53). Staff and students alike report growing levels of anxiety and stress due to growing pressures to perform, compounded by disciplinary processes and means of institutional/ self-surveillance. (p. 812)

In this chapter instead of trying to smooth out our different narratives we have chosen to piece the together from the bits and pieces of our personal and professional lives a nonstandard, atypical, and irregular understanding of academic practice learned and developed as a result of day-to-day work in the neoliberal academy. Edwards (2022) names these as 'dissatisfaction narratives' produced from out of a specific set of contextual institutional circumstances that:

> …aligns with the process over many years whereby universities increasingly moved away from a collegial style of management (Blaschke et al., 2014) towards management approaches focused on an ideology of leaderism (Morley, 2012), a new managerialism (Grummell, et al., 2009), and typified by pervasive managerial audit culture (Erickson, et al., 2021).Worker dissatisfaction is noted in commentary about greater emphasis on commercialisation of teaching and learning… these various factors impact the contract between universities as profit-making entities versus public institutions with missions to serve the public good. Similarly, individual workers experience increased accountability for time use and outputs, compliance with internal and external regulations, and responsibility to expertly access and use learning management systems in which their course materials are held and/or delivered. These expectations of staff time usage and presumed generic expertise results in extensive workload creep which is apparent to staff but hidden in institutional reporting when accounting for academic worker activity and success. (p. 2113)

We had *différance* (Derrida, 1982) stories to tell and as we thought about the encounter between the worlds of the self and the world of the university, the ecological and situated quality of what we had all experienced moved us into methodological messiness and complexity.

Schön (1983) has articulated that practitioners develop their theory-in-use and spoke of the importance of how an understanding of practice is learned and developed as a result of day-to-day work. In bringing together our disparate experiences we decided to create a composite character (Piper & Sikes, 2010; Sparkes, 1995). A composite character is drawn out of multiple observations and represents our varied pedagogic classroom encounters. Yim and Schwartz-Shea (2021, p. 3) define composites as 'a representation based not on a single individual… but a researcher-designed construct based on aggregated field evidence'. They note how 'empirical evidence connects to the composites they construct…[and how] our conception of composites functions within a social scientific framework in which methodological processes and concerns constrain how they are crafted and used' (p. 5). Drawing on the work of Markham (2012) and Willis (2018) we utilise the concept of a composite actor: …to represent and convey scholarly arguments' as 'composite actors do not just "stand in" for research participants but are constructed intentionally to enact

the … argument… [and we do so because] their believability comes from drawing directly from the characteristics of people, actions and interactions found in the field notes' (Yim & Schwartz-Shea, 2021, p. 9). Tyler (1986, p. 125) has commented that texts constructed out of this paradigm consist of 'fragments of discourse intended to evoke in the minds of both reader and writer an emergent fantasy of a possible world'. Thus, we situate the composite character as an analytical tool to be critical of the meso- and micro and nano-level effects in neoliberal universities corridors and classrooms (Priestley et al., 2021). Luke (2004) has noted, being

> Critical is calling for scrutiny, through embodied action or discourse practice, of the rules of exchange within a social field. To do so requires a logical move to self-position oneself as Other, even in a market or field that might not necessarily construe or structurally position one as Other. This doubling and positioning of the self from dominant text and discourse can be cognate, analytic, expository, and hypothetical, and it can, indeed, be already lived, narrated, embodied, and experienced. (p. 26)

We now offer up our story as a way of articulating confronting experiences that took place and how our responses had costly consequences on our physical bodies and psychic character which go some way to illustrate what Elizabeth Anderson (2017, p. 33) notes, is like 'blaming those left standing in a game of musical chairs, while denying that the structure of the game has anything to do with the outcome'.

1.2 Knowing as Emotion—Opening Us to Worlds of Passions, Intuition, Fears and Betrayals

As an academic in a tertiary education institution in Australia I have tossed and turned over the events that form the basis of this narrative. I have experienced a range of emotions and I am angry. Angry that my workplace let me down in assisting to manage a difficult and dangerous situation related to a student. Hell, I'm angry with the student. Angry at his selfishness, at his toxic masculinity. I'm mad with his parents—although I acknowledge I don't really know anything about his family life. I'm furious about the disparity between policy rhetoric and real world attempts to ameliorate the situation. I'm angry with some individuals whose job it is to 'make us safe' but who dodge, weave and hide. Angry that the pursuit of avoiding liability and blame is often cast greater than acting in good faith to improve the situation and look after people. But my anger masks sadness, disgust and trauma. Sadness at the paucity of goodwill and effective practice. At lack of resourcing and support. I am left forlorn at the lack of investment in mental health resourcing and support for academics who are trying to walk the talk of opportunities for our students. I experience visceral disgust at neoliberal thinking and practice and the insidious inevitability of the commercialisation and commodification of education, neoliberalism as a cynical political rationality sweeping the developing world (Adkins, 2019).

I didn't want to retrace a literal blow by blow account of this stupid story, and frankly, I doubt many would want to read it. So I'll tell you a story instead that

describes the process of creating world, after all. This is how I heal. or me, too, if I'm being honest. This is how I make sense.

I am not me. I am Gordon. No, let's make it Leonard. Call me Len. I work as a teacher at Rankin College. No, actually, it's Addendale University, now. What's in a name? A brand? I'm an old timer. Institutionalised, they say. I've been told I'm a larrikin, a tall story teller and this is a story about a student I had the pleasurable misfortune to meet. It's a bit of a curly one. A bit slippery. So bear with me and we'll see if we can't make some sense of it.

I'm as they say, a multi-disciplinary creative concepts and practice educator. My colleagues and I work in the Addendale University (AU) art department, a series of warrens coiling about the lower intestines of AU's oldest, crumbliest, most neglected, building. I doubt that few know we are here. Well, no one that really matters in the university. But that's OK. We like it that way—the teachers and students. Means we can get on with it, and work, paint, sculpt, squabble, and whinge without interruption. Without the university 'big ship' causing waves. We do get all sorts though. Both teachers and budding artists! I think you'd call us 'accommodating'. All are welcome as long as you want to do something, create something, make beauty, and make art. So we slop about together, cursing and fuming, admiring and celebrating breakthroughs and blowhards, sizing up our differences and praying patience upon both our friends and enemies.

Now, Stuart showed up four years ago now. I can't remember if it was grey skies or blue, but it should've been blood red, like the crimson warning to shepherds on the morning of a storm. He told us he had 'learning difficulties' and 'mental health issues'. But we didn't care. Who hasn't?! He said he wanted to paint and sculpt and create and that was good enough. So we gave him his own little cubby hole and told him to go forth and make wonder. He seemed happy, and was eager to make friends with all the other kids. Let the show commence!

And what a show! Not only did Stuart lack artistic flair (or even fluff), but he quickly demonstrated a whole range of other 'skills' that were, um, problematic or challenging, as AU likes to refer to these types of behaviour. Stuart raged. Stuart stomped. He huffed and puffed and swore and railed. And he argued. Oh, he absolutely loved to disagree, disrupt, wriggle and weave, contest, conject, and tried his utmost to rub every one of us up the foulest way he could think of. He was a walking installation, except that his dark and devious behaviour was the artistic method; the lies, deceit and grievances, his body of work. What a portfolio he compiled! Now, we are an easy going lot. We turn the cheek and resist casting the stones, lest we see our own arthouses shattered. But after months of the Stuart storm raging about our corridors and cubby holes, we all decided we'd had as much rain, sleet, snow and gales as we could take. Mind you, this was after we'd tried all the tricks in the playbook to bring Stuart to some kind of reasonable middle ground. We'd cajoled, joked, appealed and implored. Dangled carrots, spared the stick. To no avail, I'm afraid. In fact, that's what we all had become—afraid.

AU cares though. The university has won many awards for caring. They care about students, they care about staff. Fairness, equity and inclusion are at the heart of every AU policy, procedure and guideline. Every day there is a glowing news story about

something lovely, shiny and sweet. We have lots of forums where more love and care abound. We are smothered in love. So, when our little art crew found ourselves in this Stuart prickly pickle, we were all comforted that AU would be there for us.

I located a dusty glass case in the art department basement that, in faded gilded lettering, boldly declared that it should be broken in case of emergency. Well, this was just such an occasion!

Behind the shards sat a red telephone. I picked up the receiver and dialled the emergency number. After I had listened to a lengthy series of options from the automated voice, I pressed 235 to speak to the AU department of Care and Belonging (AUCB). Vice Associate branch manager of AUCB (acting), Elton Acton, listened intently to our woes and dilemmas. He took notes. He was empathetic. He was really very caring and nice. He told me they had excellent policies and procedures for just such woes and dilemmas. He assured me that not only did they really care about all of us in the AU Arts department but that they would, very soon, be in a position to convene several meetings of holders of stake (whatever that was) to discuss a series of very actionable, nimble and nuanced options for the very competent committees convened for these kinds of matters to discuss, consider and contemplate. All we needed to do, said Elton, was to complete memo forms A through P, create a photo montage depicting symbolic representations of the alleged behaviour of Stuart and then take the montage and forms to Building X (!) via the adventure playground obstacle course.

We lost some good AU art department people the day we ran the Building X obstacle course. Vale Corey, Lisa and Nhuan. You will not be forgotten. But we persevered (and afterwards we all agreed that our photo montage was a first-rate example of Bauhaus bricolage). Two very tall men in long white wigs took our forms and photos, stamped them and told us to wait in the 'weighting' room. It was a little alarming that this room had a series of army style bunk cots, which after several days, we availed ourselves of. Being cared for was turning out to be very tiring. After several weeks, Elton Acton's personal assailant sent a letter via carrier pigeon to the weighting room, informing us of the success of our request for care. Huzzah, hooray and a jolly hear, hear! We were instructed to head back to art HQ and await further advice.

Upon our return we were shocked and dismayed to find the building a smouldering state of charred remains. Standing, chest puffed out and brandishing a gleaming cutlass, was Stuart. As we huddled together behind a stand of trees, our graphics teacher, Tracy, called the Addleton police and reported the shocking incident. Thank goodness for Addleton's finest, who responded with great alacrity and soon had Stuart bending his head as he was bundled into the back of car and driven to the Police station. What a relief! True, we now had no art department, and we had lost time, and colleagues, in this jarring set of events, but at least we were now safe from the wrath of Stuart.

As we rebuilt the art building, using a diverse array of found objects collected from the underground tunnels that AU built during the last war, we received notice of an imminent visit from Elton Acton—in person. I was just putting the final paper cups and misshaped paper clips in place for our new ceramics lab, when I looked up

and saw a magnificent white stallion gallop into the art department forecourt. As she skidded to a graceful stop, Elton Acton, impeccably purred, beamed and bellowed from high on the stead:

> *Behold! Incident number 4, 568, 234 – the case of Stuart – is now closed! As you all know, AU cares about you all very dearly. We really couldn't be more thankful for your service. What would we do without you?! And AU cares about all our wonderful customers too. They are the zing in our zest, the Vegemite to our morning toast. Like balancing the tannins in a fine bottle of Beaujolais, we must strive to ensure everyone is safe, happy and thriving. And just as we have successfully attended to your, er, issues, we can also report that the well-being and welfare of our dear customer, Stuart, has also been arranged. We are so grateful to the wonderful assistance from our in house team of legal eagle beagles, who were able to secure Stuart's release and help AU police to understand their misunderstandings in this affair. Our amazing team of wellness gurus have worked tirelessly with Stuart over these past months. You would not believe the transformation. And Stuart has worked so hard to reflect, flex, digest, dig deep, look up, and turn himself around, and then around again. We could not be more impressed. And so, we are certain that you will all be delighted to hear that you will be working closely with Stuart, in his new role as head mentor in AU's renowned customer service guide reward program.*

So, that's our story about Stuart. I know, it sounds far-fetched. And if it all didn't play out exactly like I've told it, at least be assured that something just as absurd really did happen. And, frankly, we're all still a little afraid, and not a little bit, well, jaded. I am fearful. Did I do the right thing? Did I let others (including the student) down? I am vulnerable. But I'm not supposed to be. I, we, should be able to 'solve this'. Right? And so, stepping off the terrifying, nauseating, roller coaster for a moment, I come to a realisation. The whole incident was simply absurd.

Absurdity may provide a lens to view how the events unfolded, and how things ended up. I recall Camus' Stranger and Heller's Yossarian. I'm reminded of Vonnegut's attempts to unpack horrific trauma through the use of absurdist comedy, via characters such as Billy Pilgrim. I wonder whether these authors were able to somehow address their various traumas through writing absurdist fiction. I am starting to appreciate the seminal groundwork on satirist fiction of Bowles (2015), and I'm particularly interested in how we as academics in the neoliberal university might use absurdist humour to understand and manage our on-going work place induced trauma.

1.3 Knowing as Embodiment-Knowing Through Our Body—The Discomforts and Pains

Where do I start? I now go back to when they developed a new workload model and enterprise agreement and reduced the time fraction by half for Ph.D. supervision. During the preceding three years I had taken on ten Ph.D. students and when I cited their HDR supervision documentation that indicated I had to meet with these students every 2 weeks, the response was you don't have to meet with them for an hour. How

do you discuss a 100,000 word thesis with a student in 20 min, with international students who can barely speak English and struggle with concepts?

Addendale University is not providing a safe work place and the crunch came when on top of all my other duties I took on a deputy dean role. Three years later I ended up in emergency department of my local hospital three times and the final time the Doctor's thought I was having a stroke. I then ended up having MR scans and neuro-psych testing to assess if I had post stroke possible brain damage. The final conclusion from the medics and consulting Doctor was that everything I was experiencing was due to excessive workload and workplace stress—I was not having a stroke; I was fully fit but there was something wrong. During the same period I went from having perfect blood pressure to being prescribed various medications as my blood pressure got so high I ended up having a blood vessel in my nose explode and the bleeding could not be stemmed for an hour. For an hour I was stood with my head over a sink with blood pouring down the drain, an ambulance was called by my partner but they couldn't stop the bleeding either so I ended up in emergency again where they pumped me full of meds and changed my blood pressure tablets strength to high power. I realised there and then that if I didn't get my workload under control I might actually die. I made an appointment to see my GP who after looking at my work load asked ' Are they trying to kill you?' and immediately signed me off work for 6 months.

Every time I had ended up in emergency I submitted an Occupational Health and Safety report but each time these were ignored by the university and after much chasing up on my part which took many months, nothing eventuated of my concerns and complaints and I am left to surmise that they are not taking what happened to me seriously. The only response I received from the institution was 'to stop being too emotional'. My Dean is supportive and knows that I am good at my job and appreciates what I have achieved but has taken the stance that he has no influence to amend the enterprise work agreement as it allocates the number of hours allotted to each task and there is no discussion or negotiation to be had.

I am planning to come back to work in the next couple of months and expect to receive a full workload that hasn't taken into consideration my health issues. I am resilient and I will keep fighting. The management and Human Resources play tricks like arranging meetings and then not showing up as a way to drag out the complaint process. It feels like I am dealing with a very good barrister who is telling me to stop being too emotional. I have been in contact with the Vice Chancellor who has ignored my emails for over a year.

I have been at Addendale University for eleven years and the cultural shift in organisational reform as illustrated in the most recent enterprise agreement has made the place unrecognisable. For example when I first started working here the workload was a 40 (teaching)/40 (research)/20 (service) split. The situation now I have to go cap in hand with an application to be research active. There are a lot of people across the university that are publishing research but not getting any workload hours in recognition of that labour. It is made very clear by management that as part of our job we are supposed to be doing research but unless you are deemed productive enough in the application you end up with nothing which means research get done

on your own time at weekends and in the evenings. Managers tend to look the other way when this is brought to their attention as there are legal implications. If the institution knows I am doing 120 h a week they have a responsibility to look after my welfare: it is a case of workplace safety. The defence that usually articulated is 'was you chose to do those hours we didn't make you' but in admitting they know I am working over the agreed amount of hours as stated in the enterprise agreement they are admitting culpability. It is common knowledge that most of us are working well over the stated enterprise agreement hours. Eventually you get to the pointy end of the stick where you either leave or go fractional. I complained for three years saying I couldn't keep up with the workload. I have ended up with a stance of 'stick your job up your arse, resigned as deputy Dean and I am now a teaching focused academic that fits research around the edges'.

1.4 Knowing as Situated Inquiry—Thinking How Far Is Knowledge Able to Travel and Does It Still Make Sense in Other Locations?

Perhaps I am not well, I don't feel well. I am tired. I am having difficulty sleeping again, Need to ask the doctor for sleeping tablets. My list of 'things to do' is getting longer. Oh fuck another twenty emails and I still haven't started the chapter. I am letting people down. Why can't I concentrate? Why can't I think?

[Phone Rings]

Ignore it. I don't have the energy to talk to anyone. Perhaps I should have a lie down. No that would not help. I don't feel well. What is going on? My hands are tingling, my head feels strange. Am I having a heart attack? I wish I was having a heart attack then this would all be over. Go and lie down, take a break, it's alright you can spare the time.

* * *

…….. Made an appointment with the doctor. I can feel it coming on again Haven't eaten for two days now- not interested- not even hungry anymore. Wonder how long I can keep this up without it buggering up the diabetes? I think I need to see the GP. I should ask to go back on the Prozac. Today is not a good day. I am going down …I can feel it. Three PhD student drafts have just come in-try and get them read by the weekend. There is that report to finish and the journal papers to process. Jo has invited me to her birthday party. I will have to cancel. I am not in the mood and I don't have the time. What excuse can I make? I will say I am not well. I am not well- I feel awful. Perhaps I will go and lie down. No, I have too much to do. I haven't done anything on the paper. I can't do this job. What made me think I could do this job? I am going to be found out. I am going to be fired. Then what will I do? I am going to be homeless. What will I do with the animals? What am I going to do? Go and eat something you will feel better? Not hungry. Don't feel well enough to eat.

Tested sugar- was low- I should really eat something to avoid a hypo. Feel sick…I Can't eat anything now. Go and lie down.

* * *

The doctor has upped the Prozac dose. Gone from 20 to 60 mg and has prescribed Valium for the anxiety. I have become the medicalized and transquilized academic. Got to wait another two weeks for the chemicals to settle. Note to self- taking more than prescribed dose is not advisable. Perhaps the Valium will help? Note to self- don't take the Valium and Temazapam together. Doctor said he will make referral to see someone- I think I should see someone. This is not getting better. Why so many fucking emails. Still haven't read the PhD drafts. Started the chapter but it is not very good- needs rewriting. I have nothing to say. Why did they ask me? I have nothing to offer. What made me think I could I do this job? What am I going to do? I don't want to go back to a school. Haven't been in a school for twenty-years, they wouldn't want me anyway. What am I going to do when I lose this job? Will have to sell the house. I could buy a caravan and live in that. Where though? I knew this would end like this. Oh God what a mess. I am a failure. Go and lie down- not that it helps. The tingling has come back. Feel sweaty again. It is not a heart attack. CALM DOWN. Wish it was a heart attack and it would all be over.

* * *

Weekend spent in bed, Phone kept ringing- did not have the energy to answer it. Did not have energy to do anything. Didn't eat. Sugars went low- don't care. Too many dark thoughts not that it matters. Wouldn't do anything- just thoughts. Who would look after the animals? Feels like I have run a marathon. Can't face the computer. Sat staring at the wall for two hours. Kept promising myself in another 15 minutes I will get up. The day was spent in a series of another 15 minutes. Should try and get some sleep. Can't sleep, can't eat. When will the tablets kick in? Should make another appointment with the doctor. Got the zoom tomorrow with the new students. Haven't read the PhD drafts. Haven't done any more on the chapter. Fingers tingling again. Try and get out of bed in another 15 minutes and feed the dogs. Dogs haven't been walked for days. Why am I so crap?

* * *

Jill rang tonight asking if I was okay. She said I wasn't myself on zoom. I looked ill and a bit unfocused, not that anyone would know but she picked up that maybe something was wrong as I wasn't my usual self. Spoke to the GP. He can't get me a referral to see the psych- apparently, they are overwhelmed and not taking on new referrals for the next 7 months. Spoke to colleague who sees a psychologist. Got his number. Rang him- no answer. He called me back and asked me a few questions. Said it sounded like I needed to be hospitalised. That it *could be bipolar. I am not bipolar. Had to take dog for injection today -Had a panic attack in the vets and had to leave. Had to get home. Oh god- what if I am becoming agoraphobic? Where have I gone?*

When am I coming back? What if I never come back? Got home and went to bed. Stayed in bed for 5 days. Have upped my Valium to three tablets- Fuck it- I don't care. Phone keeps ringing- word has got round and people are checking in- Very kind but I don't want to talk to anyone- I don't have the energy. Sue offered to drive down from Melbourne- No, No, No, I barely have the energy to get out of bed. GP has signed me off work for two weeks. He asked me to rate myself on a scale of 1–10 how I felt. The diagnostic criteria for a Major Depressive Episode (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition) require that five (or more) of these symptoms must be present nearly every day during a two-week period. At least one of the symptoms must be (1) depressed mood most of the day- *yup* (2) markedly diminished interest or pleasure in all, or almost all, activities most of the day- *yup* (3) significant weight loss when not dieting or weight gain, or decrease or increase in appetite- *yup* (4) insomnia or hypersomnia- yup (5) psychomotor agitation or retardation- *WTF does that mean?* (6) fatigue or loss of energy- yup (7) feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt- *yup* (8) diminished ability to think or concentrate, or indecisiveness- *yup* (9) recurrent thoughts of death (not just fear of dying), recurrent suicidal ideation without a specific plan, or a suicide attempt or a specific plan for committing suicide- *yup.*
I don't care about his fucking scale.

(Vicars, 2023, pp. 157–159)

1.5 Knowing Through Deliberate Imposition—Rethinking About Our Ideas About the World, Finding Ways of Knowing That Are Slippery and Indistinct

Foucault (1977, p. 3) has noted how 'Power is not an institution, and not a structure, neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society. There are forms of oppression and domination which become invisible- the new normal'. The 'New' University, it could be argued has formed a monstrous ecology and the dominance of neoliberalism in higher education has required of its occupants a constant review, reconsideration and reinterpretation of what it means to be an academic worker. Christou and Janta (2019) suggest:

> Such almost unbearable working conditions have created a deep crisis in universities through the very same structural impacts that have produced extensive psychosocial and somatic catastrophe amongst academics (and other university workers) that manifests in experiences of chronic stress, anxiety, exhaustion, insomnia and spiralling rates of physical and mental illness. (p. 5)

All these issues are part of a wider repertoire of academic life, one which is designated [crisis "and replete with hidden injuries of the neoliberal university" (Gill, 2010) but such new spaces are not simply a mosaic of subjective experiences of contemporary academic labour, they are collective realities that require a collective

framework in coping with such strains. Our composite character. could reside in any Higher Education institution and for those of us on the 'inside', the tropes that can be found in our story speak to the framing of both academic process and product that remakes intellectual work(ers) subject to disciplinary subjectification with the attendant implication that the only role worth having is in managerial leadership with teachers being at the bottom of the pile and the tacit, or not so discourse that a successful, good life can only mean being in a position of dominance relative to others.

Recognising the terrain in which academic work is now located and the direction in which it is travelling increasingly raises questions about academic agency when we become the other in our own experiential and embodied narratives. It is clearly traceable in how we understand our working lives in the academy is producing a language that is characterised by affect and perhaps speaking longingly and in halcyon terms will do little to transform the contemporary realities of academic life. The question of 'What can we do' is an enduring one and Springer (2016) responded in his article 'Fuck Neoliberalism' that:

> …though we can only respond in an academic format using complex…theories…to weaken its edifice this seemed disempowering…I often fell that this sort of framing works against the type of argument I actually want to make. It is precisely in the everyday, the ordinary, the unremarkable, and the mundane that I think a politics of refusal must be located. (p. 286)

What we do know is that speaking back to the everyday realities of tertiary education can be a fraught affair. Demonstrated in this chapter is a story constructed out of fragments of everyday academic life that speaks of:

> a socio-political context of exacerbated managerialism and performance management within an audit and metrics driven culture in academia has not only led to an obsession with measurement of performance but also an instrumentalised thinking of the academic as a quantified worker, v measured against rankings, league tables, assessment exercises and above all unjustifiably excessive work programme hours.
>
> Christou and Janta (2019, p. 5)

Our composite character threaded together experiential narratives with the aim of providing insight into endeavours that move beyond the mere confessional but are instead a telling relation, to do with what Giroux (2022, p. 3) argues are bigger questions 'connected to values, the struggle over agency, the questions of power, to particular kinds of social relationships, to particular modes of organization [and the operation of] particular relations of power'. From the standpoint of an academic insider, there is for us a resonance to the story as we recognise in the 'I' our personal involvements and emotional attachments. For you the reader we hope the narrative has a disquieting verisimilitude.

References

Adkins, A. (2019). Neoliberal disgust in Aravind Adiga's: The white tiger. *Journal of Modern Literature, 42*(3), 169–188. Project MUSE. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/729785

Anderson, E. (2017). *Private government: Why employers rule our lives (and why we don't talk about it)*. Princeton University Press.

Bowles, D. (2015). *The ends of satire: Legacies of satire in postwar German writing*. De Gruyter.

Blaschke, S., Frost, J., & Hattke, F. (2014). Towards a micro foundation of leadership, governance, and management in universities. *Higher Education, 68*(5), 711–732. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-014-9740-2

Christou, A., & Janta, H. (2019). Affecting solidarities: Bringing feeling into feminism, empathy in employment and compassion in academic communities of crises. *Tourism Management Perspectives, 30*, 232–239.

Deem, R. (1998). 'New managerialism' and higher education: The management of performances and cultures in universities in the United Kingdom. *Studies in Sociology of Education, 8*(1), 47–70.

Derrida, J. (1982). Differance. In J. Derrida (Ed.), *Margins of philosophy*. The University of Chicago Press.

Edwards, J. (2022). Discrimination and exclusion in higher education is reflected in multiple Autoethnographies. *The Qualitative Report, 27*(10), 2113–2134. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2022.5445

Erickson, M., Hanna, P., & Walker, C. (2021). The UK higher education senior management survey: A stat activist response to managerialist governance. *Studies in Higher Education, 46*(11), 2134–2151. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2020.1712693

Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish*, Allen Lane.

Gee, J. P. (2008). *Social linguistics and literacies: Ideologies in discourses*. Routledge.

Gill, R. (2010). Breaking the silence: The hidden injuries of the neoliberal university. In R. Flood & R. Gill (Eds.), *Secrecy and silence in the research process: Feminist reflections* (pp. 228–244). Routledge.

Giroux, H. (2022). Courage My Friends Podcast Series II—Episode 1 Education, Critical Pedagogy and the Future of Learning in a Post-Pandemic World https://www.georgebrown.ca/media/25326/view

Grummell, B., Devine, D., & Lynch, K. (2009). The care-less manager: Gender, care and new managerialism in higher education. *Gender and Education, 21*(2), 191–208. https://doi.org/10.1080/09540250802392273

Luke, A. (2004). Two takes on the critical. In B. Norton & K. Toohey (Eds.), *Critical pedagogies and language learning* (pp. 21–29). Cambridge University Press.

Markham, A. (2012). Fabrication as ethical practice. *Information, Communication & Society, 15*(3), 334–353. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2011.641993

Morley, L. (2012). Researching absences and silences in higher education: Data for democratisation. *Higher Education Research & Development, 31*(3), 353–368. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2011.63438

Nehring, D., & Brunila, K. (Eds.). (2023). *Affective capitalism in academia* (pp. 1–248). Bristol University Press.

Pearce, R. (2020). A methodology for the marginalised: Surviving oppression and traumatic fieldwork in the neoliberal academy. *Sociology, 54*(4), 806–824.

Piper, H., & Sikes, P. (2010). All teachers are vulnerable, but especially gay teachers: Using composite fictions to protect research participants in pupil-teacher sex related research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 16*(7), 566–574.

Priestley, M., Alvunger, D., Philippou, S., & Soini, T. (2021). *Curriculum making in Europe: Policy and practice within and across diverse contexts*. Bingley.

Sparkes, A. (1995). Physical education teachers and the search for self. In N. Armstrong (Ed.), *New directions in physical education* (pp. 157–178). Cassell.

Sparkes, A. C. (2007). Embodiment, academics, and the audit culture: A story seeking consideration. *Qualitative Research, 7*(4), 521–550.

Sparkes, A. C. (2021). Making a spectacle of oneself in the academy using the H-Index: From becoming an artificial person to laughing at absurdities. *Qualitative Inquiry, 27*(8–9), 1–13.

Tyler, S. (1986). *Postmodern ethnography: From document of the occult to occult document. In writing culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography* (J. Clifford & G. Marcus, Eds.) (pp. 99–122). University of California Press.

Vicars, M. (2023). What doesn't kill you makes you weaker: An uncanny auto/ethnographic story of contemporary academic life. In K. Brunila & D. Nehring (Eds.), *Affective capitalism in academia*. Bristol University Press.

Willis, R. (2018). The use of composite narratives to present interview findings. *Qualitative Research, 19*(4). https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794118787711. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1468794118787711

Yim, J. M., & Schwartz-Shea, P. (2021). Composite actors as participant protection: Methodological opportunities for ethnographers. *Journal of Organizational Ethnography*. https://doi.org/10.1108/JOE-02-2021-0009

Mark Vicars Ph.D. is an Associate Professor in the College of Arts and Education at Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia and Honorary Adjunct Professor at the Research Institute of language and culture of Asia, Mahidol University, Thailand. Following 24 years of working in education in several countries, with 15 of those in higher education, Mark has extensive international, multi-sector experience of teaching and learning, embodied, blended and online, as well as a solid track record of team and curriculum leadership. He is highly experienced in developing international strategy on teaching and learning in Australia, Asia and the UK, generating international opportunities for collaborative partnerships focused on the teaching/research nexus. He has developed research affiliations and education partnerships internationally to deliver educational workplace training and research. Mark's philosophy of praxis is underpinned by principles of social justice and he has proven success in leadership in tertiary educative contexts and has substantial experience in providing quality and innovation in learning. As a scholar, researcher, teacher Mark is dedicated, innovative, and passionate about creative, research-oriented professional journeys and community engagement. He is intrinsically motivated and enjoys working collaboratively in dynamic, creative environments. Mark's teaching is highly evaluated, based on a commitment to working with students from diverse countries, cultures, socio-economic and educational backgrounds. Throughout his career, Mark has produced an integrated body of work that has fundamentally been focused upon engaging with teacher-learners through a transformative student experience

Greg Aronson is a senior lecturer in music, in the College of Arts and Education, and co-chair of the Bachelor of Music. He specialises in musicology and music pedagogy and curriculum. Greg began tertiary music lecturing at Melba Conservatorium in the early 2000s and has been an academic at VU since 2008.Greg is a practising musician, with over 25 years of professional experience across a range of music and arts industry contexts. Greg is a passionate teacher, with over 25 years' experience in secondary and tertiary music education. Greg's Ph.D. explored the backgrounds and experiences of students in tertiary music education settings. Greg has a strong interest in internationalising tertiary music education. He has worked over the last ten years on a variety of short-term mobility projects in China, India and Indonesia to foster intercultural awareness for music students through music and creative-based arts projects.

Chapter 2
Personal Troubles, Public Concerns: A Story from a Neoliberal Academy

Pat Sikes

Abstract In 1966 a British historian of education, Brian Simon, wrote that 'there is, perhaps, no more liberating influence than the knowledge that things have not always been as they are and need not remain so' (p. 9). One of the main benefits of growing older can be the accruing of experientially based knowledge that things have been different in the past and that there may be an alternative, even when the existence of dominant narratives suggests that there isn't. In this chapter, and with the full awareness that memories and stories are always and ever potentially changeable personal interpretations, influenced by contexts, beliefs and values, I want to share some observations around, and reflections on, experiences within the neoliberal university that are grounded in a career in higher education beginning in 1974 when I first went to teacher training college. I know that some may charge me with golden age thinking while others might suspect that I'm guilty of constructing a revenge piece but as my stories resonate with those being told by plenty of other, often younger, academics, such accusations seem less defendable. Stephan Ball (British Journal of Sociology of Education 37:1129–1146, 2016) has commented that 'subjectivity is a key site of political struggle in the contexts of neo-liberalisation and neoliberal governmentality… *offering*… forms of resistance to, or what I shall call the refusal of, neo-liberalisation' (p. 1129). To me, this privileging of subjectivity echoes C. Wright Mills' (The Sociological Imagination. Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1970) exhortation to sociologists to use the sociological imagination ethically and critically and in such a way that 'the personal uneasiness of individuals is focused upon explicit troubles and the indifference of publics is transformed into involvement with public issues' (pp. 11–12). I've spent much of the last 45 years following that imperative to explore aspects of teachers' lives and careers. Here, in a series of vignettes, my focus is on my own personal uneasiness and downright discomfort as I have come to experience the climate within, and the demands of, contemporary academia as inimical to my ethical, moral, physical and mental well-being.

P. Sikes (✉)
University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK
e-mail: p.j.sikes@sheffield.ac.uk

M. Vicars and L. Pelosi (eds.), *Storying Pedagogy as Critical Praxis in the Neoliberal University*, Rethinking Higher Education,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-4246-6_2

My Ph.D. research, which I began in 1979, was entitled *The mid-career teacher: adaptations and motivations in a contracting secondary school system.* Initially, and before I started fieldwork, my focus was on ascertaining how important promotion was to male secondary school teachers in the light of potentially reduced prospects occasioned by falling rolls. I was, essentially, looking to be able to describe a relatively simple relationship. By the time I had run responses to over 1,500 questionnaires through SPSS, transcribed the tape recordings of 121 h-plus narrative interviews, and written up the field notes I'd made during the five-day mini ethnographic studies I undertook in 35 schools (yes—way too much data but in those days a Ph.D. tended to be seen as a very different beast to how it is conceptualised now), I'd come to the opinion that life, as lived, was far more complex and subjective than the scope envisioned and allowed for by my original research methods and questions. I also realised that the ways of understanding and re-presenting the social world that felt both ethical and which made sense to me were those that unequivocally linked the personal with the social and set stories of action in theories of context, as Lawrence Stenhouse (1975) had put it. I had become—and continue to be—convinced by C. Wright Mills' (1959/1970) exhortation to social scientists to employ the 'sociological imagination' whereby 'the personal uneasiness of individuals is focused upon explicit troubles and the indifference of publics is transformed into involvement with public issues' (pp. 11–12) in such a way that could prompt transformational change aimed at furthering social justice. I also agreed with his view that 'no social study that does not come back to the problems of biography, of history, and of their intersections within a society, has completed its intellectual journey' ([1959] 1970: p. 12)—although I now question whether an intellectual journey can ever be finally completed.

As I have written elsewhere (Sikes, 2017; Sikes & Goodson, 2003) my experiences of doing this work laid the foundation for a research career in which my preferred methodological stance has come to be narrative auto/biography (the slash following Stanley, 1993). This preference is grounded in the belief that this approach, which acknowledges the inter-relationship between the individual and the social, best allows me to pursue the sort of moral, social justice-based inquiry I am committed to (Sikes et al., 2003). I also favour an auto/biographical approach to teaching. This is because not only do I think it offers similar potential for effective learning to the sort of experiential socially located pedagogy described and advocated by Dewey (1938) but my experience is also that it can encourage students to take a more critical, moral and ethical approach to social issues whereby they are less likely to 'other' other people and be more inclined to seek and work for change themselves (Sikes & Troyna, 1991).

As well as putting my cards on the table with regard to my ontological, epistemological and axiological positioning, I invoke my doctoral study for another reason, namely that many of the teachers involved talked about teaching no longer being the same job they'd originally gone into. This theme was repeated and elaborated by the mid-career and retired teachers who participated in the in-depth ESRC-funded teachers' lives and careers life history study Lynda Measor, Peter Woods and I worked on in the early 1980s (Sikes et al., 1985), immediately after I'd finished my Ph.D.

* * *

I was in my twenties, therefore, when I was asking people who were both well established in their careers and at least ten, and in the case of the retired teachers sometimes fifty, years older than me, to share their perceptions and experiences, be they positive or negative, of their working lives. While I heard and empathised with what they said and was able to make sense of their stories within the social, cultural and historical contexts in which they were located, in many respects their accounts were, to me, 'data', 'academic' and 'abstract', in that they were distant from my own experiences. Having only just begun my career within the academy I had no idea what facing significant changes which challenged my understanding of what that career entailed with regard to, for example, working conditions, terms of service, organisation, mission and aims, and most importantly, beliefs and values, might feel like.

Inter alia, and unsurprisingly, many of the English and Welsh teachers I spoke with in the late 70s and early 80s told stories about the ideological and organisational shift from a selective, grammar and secondary modern system to comprehensive schools that took place in most areas of the country from 1965 onwards. Some welcomed and applauded the change, even, on occasion and having gone through it, to their utter surprise. Others, however, including a few who had been philosophically and politically in favour, experienced it as being completely negative, even disastrous, with absolutely no redeeming consequences for themselves. They couldn't even take any comfort from the notion that students might be profiting and, indeed, even began to question the possibility of there being any benefit.

Overall and across the spectrum of responses the teachers talked of changes in the career structure, in the sorts of qualifications required for promotion, of alternative, improved or reduced opportunities for 'people like them'. They described new, exciting, threatened and lost identities. Some spoke, in either positive or negative terms, of being required to undertake tasks or take on responsibilities that they had not previously seen as being within their remit, or, conversely, of being prevented from doing things that they had seen as being extremely important and valuable components of their job—sometimes, even, the very reason, why they had become teachers in the first place. There was also mention of both welcome and undesirable organisational, managerial, syllabi and curricula changes. It's worth pointing out that both of the research studies I'm referring to here were undertaken before the 1988 Education Reform Act whose measures included the introduction of a National Curriculum and a new regime of school, and thereby teacher, inspection leading to league tables of 'quality'. Many consider this act to be the harbinger of the neoliberal sea change in the English and Welsh education system which, in the way that market forces have been privileged, has had far-reaching implications for schools, colleges, universities, for those who, like me study and work in them and, thereby, for society as a whole. However, the salient point here, and in the context of this chapter, is that forty years on from my neophyte days I think that I now have a far better understanding of the significance of what those teachers whose views I sought in the 1980s were talking about when they said 'it isn't the job or career I went into'.

Nor is my job the job I went into anymore and in this chapter I want to tell a story that is reflective of my perceptions and experiences, my own personal uneasiness and downright discomfort occasioned by the climate within, and the demands of, contemporary, neoliberal academia.

* * *

Stephen Ball (2012) has written that 'reflection is a dangerous thing: it is all too easy to step from careful reassessment and analysis into nostalgia and "golden ageism", although in a period of austerity that slippage might be understandable' (p. 17). This is of course the case but as he has also commented, 'subjectivity is a key site of political struggle in the contexts of neo-liberalisation and neoliberal governmentality… *offering*… forms of resistance to, or what I shall call the refusal of, neo-liberalisation' (2016, p. 1129). I take this as a warrant to, once again, make private troubles public concerns, to offer resistance and refusal. Doing this can, I believe, challenge the notion of TINA—There Is No Alternative—that Robert Bullough (2020) describes as 'a strange malady … that grows and spreads… slips into consciousness and affects social and educational policy' (p. 80). Bullough believes academics have a responsibility to remind people of their histories in a way that chimes with Brian Simon's (1966) observation that 'there is, perhaps, no more liberating influence than the knowledge that things have not always been as they are and need not remain so' (p. 9). Sharing stories is an important way of doing this and a means of capitalising on the potential of collective memory to keep alive and transmit values and beliefs… of research [and higher education as sites] of moral practice (Sikes & Goodson, 2003). This is important because, as Harold Rosen (1998) noted, 'there is often a social struggle to gain ascendancy over our memories and those who feel the pull (of different cultures, beliefs and values) will experience the pain of this battle fought out in their social consciousness' (p. 131). We have a responsibility to use our personal stories to 'break the stranglehold of meta-narratives that establish rules of truth, legitimacy and identity' (Tierney, 2000, p. 546). I also need to do this in order to be able to feel that I have done what I can to maintain my integrity and kept true to the foundational moral and ethical beliefs and values that guide my progress through the world.

* * *

I am ever conscious that, as Laurel Richardson (1990) points out, 'narrativizing, like all intentional behaviour … is a site of moral responsibility' (p. 131). That this is so is thrown into particularly stark relief when adopting an autoethnographic approach (Adams & Herrmann, 2020; Ellis & Bochner, 2000) as I am doing here and writing about what are, fundamentally, personal and therefore subjective, perceptions and experiences located within particular social settings. This is because other people are usually implicated in the stories told and not only that but implicated within the writer's own version of 'reality'. Critics of autoethnography, such as Sara Delamont (2007, 2009) and Martin Tolich (2004, 2010) often raise the unavoidable 'fact' that, if

the name that an author is known by is on an autoethnography—or indeed any other type of auto/biographical account—anyone who may be mentioned or referred to within it is potentially identifiable, even if pseudonyms, fictional alterations or other disguising strategies are employed. In any case people will also sometimes assert that they know who totally confected characters are (Piper & Sikes, 2010)—which perhaps says something about a writer's ability to achieve verisimilitude and accurate re-presentation but which isn't always necessarily helpful as Andrew Sparkes' (2007, 2018) stories about a 'fictional' academic's experiences of the audit culture have shown. Writing about lives means that there can be consequences for completely unconnected individuals. However sometimes these consequences may be targeted and intentional and over the years I have come across a number of auto/biographical studies, in the form of journal articles, monographs and doctoral theses, which could be interpreted as being revenge texts in that they belittle, demean, accuse or in other ways re-present people in a negative light. Tony Adams (2008) raises important questions about narrative privilege, asking who has the ability to tell/write and disseminate their story and who will be able to hear/read it. Adams reflects on his published writings about his difficult relationship with his father and acknowledges that, as his dad is not an academic, he is unlikely to read them and nor does he have the ability to respond and give his side of the story within the same fora. Ethical concerns are clearly extremely important (as indeed they are regardless of methodological approach, method or form of re-presentation) and we should always be careful to be respectful of those who are or who may be in some way recognisable, in our writing. There are no easy answers and we need to think very carefully about how—or even if—we go about crafting our stories and about what sorts of conceits and devices we may be able to use to protect people (see Ellis, 2007). The various contributors to the section on Ethical Approaches in Goodson, Antikainen, Sikes and Andrews, 2017, pp. 405–629 also offer useful points for consideration and suggestions for ways forward).

Given what I have just said I do feel that writing about what, for me, have been negative experiences of the neoliberal academy is to be on dodgy ethical ground because those experiences have been occasioned by policies and practices developed and enacted by ultimately identifiable individuals, albeit they may be working in their capacity as employees of a university, rather than acting out of their own beliefs and values. This account—my story—will not seek theirs because this is about me, about my perceptions and experiences of phenomena—policies, strategies—that are on public record, about how I have found myself in a very different working environment to that which I entered over 40 years ago, and about how I have experienced these phenomena and this environment as a threat to my integrity.

* * *

I am aware that my story of the neoliberal academy may prompt some to accuse me of such things as writing a revenge text, being disloyal to my institution, washing dirty linen in public or of being a sad has-been who can't hack and doesn't measure up to the demands of present-day conditions. As Margaret Vickers has said, it can

be dangerous to write about what goes on in on organisations… telling it like it was (or is) threatens the status quo and powerful political, economic and social forces continue to pressure survivors either to keep their silence or to revise their stories' (2002, p. 614).

We all have our own take and yet, and as even a cursory glance at the contents of a range of academic journals and publishers' lists will show, criticism of the neoliberal academy is a major preoccupation with critiques by authors from the range of disciplinary and methodological backgrounds often taking an auto/biographical approach that offers both a way of making sense of and a strategy for, resisting the various manifestations of neoliberalism (e.g. Maisuria & Holmes, 2020; Moriarty, 2019). Exploring what the cultural, institutional and organisational changes mean for individual academic and personal lives is to do exactly what Mills, cited at the beginning of this piece was asking us to do…and at this point, my intention was to tell my stories. I had literally got to the place where I was about to begin writing/crafting those stories when I had to put the work aside in order to attend to other pressing matters—feeding back on students' work, supervising, examining, lecturing, holding tutorials, doing admin and so on

BUT THEN CAME THE CORONAVIRUS

and the measures to deal with it adopted within the university sent the stories I had intended to tell—such as those about the imperative to bring in funding and about the way in which 'lone scholar' has come to be a term of abuse—straight out of the window. They no longer seemed to be the 'right' ones because, although they dealt with issues and themes that I still felt were relevant, the detail, the focus and the critique of neoliberalism had all been thrown, I felt, into sharper relief, altered and recast within the parameters of the institution's response to an unfolding pandemic narrative.

* * *

On Tuesday, March 23, 2020, UK citizens were asked, by the prime minister and his government to observe a 'lockdown'. In short, we were told to self-isolate within our homes and to work from there wherever it was possible. All shops, except those deemed to sell essential supplies—food, medicines, pet requisites, do-it-your-self and construction materials—were closed, as were pubs, cafes, restaurants and places of worship and entertainment. We were forbidden from visiting people, including family members, who did not live in the same house and if we did encounter people on strictly limited visits to shop if we had not been able to secure home food deliveries, we had to keep a distance of 2 m. Up to an hour's exercise—walking, running, cycling—was allowed each day.

The university where I work immediately implemented a working-from-home policy for staff and students but emphasised that it was to be 'business as usual'. Meetings, lectures, tutorials and supervisions were moved online and, from Wednesday March 24th IT specialists and technicians began running courses on how to use the various synchronous and asynchronous teaching and learning platforms we were to start using.

I went on the first course available, believing I was likely to be one of the most digitally inexperienced people within the School. Not to beat about the bush, I was terrified. I am totally at home with Skype supervisions, having supervised 20-plus remote location doctoral students to successful completion. I'm also fine with Facetime and WhatsApp video calls. Running a live tutor group session with 25 students was a different matter. I was afraid that I simply wouldn't be able to understand what to do and that any teaching and learning that might occur would be of extremely poor quality. The course, which went on for nearly twice as long as scheduled because I certainly was not the only person who could not get a grasp on what to do leading to lots of questions, left me in tears and having the closest thing to a panic attack I have ever experienced. My panic wasn't solely to do with my inability to understand, or with the various technical problems that were revealed with the system as we went along but was more the consequence of me feeling that I was being required to work with students in a way that was going to fall more than very far short of the standards I set for myself as a teacher. But what is this to do with the neoliberal academy as opposed to my digital incompetence?

* * *

Like many universities in the UK and in other countries, mine has, and is, heavily invested in recruiting overseas students and particularly those from China. Vast amounts of money have been spent on upgrading the campus, with architect designed new build, renovation and landscaping all aimed at making the institution appear especially physically attractive. Online the website describes what all students can expect: vibrant courses; state-of-the-art facilities; world-leading research and teaching; language, learning and mental health support services; scholarships; progression routes from undergraduate to post-doctoral programmes; lively and varied social, sporting and cultural life; comfortable accommodation and great amenities, ease of communication to other parts of the country, and much much more. Within the targeted countries, recruitment fairs, permanent university staff and agents similarly seek to sell the offer as superior. Nothing unusual here and there's nothing unusual either in openly seeking to satisfy the demand for a UK university education, particularly one from a Russell Group (i.e. 'elite' research-focused) institution.

As in universities in other countries, overseas students pay premium fees yielding income that has come to form an important part of UK HE institutions' budgets. To the observer, especially when they are within the institution and have access to minutes and reports back from boards and committees, these fees can look to be the main point of increasing the overseas student body with other aims such as enhancing development and social justice or encouraging democracy in other countries, being secondary. This impression is strengthened when programmes offered to and in, and recruitment of students from, other less wealthy and even impoverished countries are dropped or not pursued as they previously had been before the push to 'make the most of the Asian bubble whilst it lasts'.

* * *

Bubbles are by their nature fragile and ephemeral. If the Covid19 pandemic has not actually burst the bubble it certainly seems as if it has—and prematurely—put a spoke in the works that was fuelling the growth in the numbers of overseas students and the concomitant financial reward they brought. On April 15, 2020, the Guardian newspaper reported that financially 'education will be the sector hardest hit by the coronavirus crisis according to the Office for Budget responsibility analysis, with the impact felt most by universities' (https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/apr/15/watchdog-identifies-sectors-hit-hardest-by-covid-19-in-britain). Opinions vary on whether this is a break or make situation with potential opportunities for positive changes as well as the likelihood that some institutions will be more negatively affected than others.

* * *

In the last 3 or so years the number of Chinese students within the School where I work has grown exponentially, especially in the MA programme. My discomfort and what I consider to be the challenge to my integrity are grounded in the implications and consequences of, and the way in which this expansion has been addressed.

Rising numbers had already meant changes—reductions—in the amount of time allocated for one-to-one tutoring and supervision. They also led to more use of graduate teaching assistants, who, on the whole, are people currently working towards, or who had recently obtained, their own Ph.D. In the not-so-distant past, students were usually supervised by lecturers on research and teaching or, less frequently because, in a research-intensive university they were fewer in number, teaching only contracts. Of course, graduate students can be excellent teachers but within the UK, compared to North America, the aspiration if not the expectation, has been that lecturers will be people who already have their doctorate.

* * *

When I started working as a lecturer in traditional (as opposed to polytechnic) universities in 1988, the workloads of staff on research and teaching contracts were usually made up through a relatively organic process whereby—in addition to the time spent on research—people were asked to take on certain administrative responsibilities, and teach on and/or develop, particular programmes and courses: often those which matched their interests and expertise. These courses and programmes involved meeting students for timetabled teaching or for supervisory sessions but in most institutions in those days there were no figures attached to how long one would spend in preparation, in marking, and in individual supervision/tutoring. Academics were expected to be able to pace their own work and to make decisions about how long to devote to the different things they had to do. So, for example, it was generally taken for granted that some students would need more help and time than others. As neoliberalism and marketisation took hold things began to change and time tariffs which covered the various components of academic and administrative tasks, research related work and other activities such as 'citizenship' and civic engagement, e.g. being a school governor, began to be introduced.

One way in which such tariffs can be seen is as protection for workers who can use them to point out instances where insufficient time is allocated to one particular task/area of work to the detriment of another. It can also be argued that specifying how much tutor time a student will get promotes equity because all get the same. The equity argument can also be applied to academics, some of whose career development may suffer if they don't give as much space to some parts of the job where they need to show accomplishments in order to achieve promotion. Knowing how much time to spend on what can theoretically help.

Having said this, the work allocation framework approach sits ill with many academics, including myself, and particularly so with regard to our interactions with students. We are not making standardised widgets in academia but are, rather, engaging in relationships with people who have individual needs that necessitate tailored attention. As Karl Marx put it, 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs' (1875). Not being able to address those needs because the framework does not permit sufficient time to work with a particular student, and if you do give that time you will be judged to be behaving inequitably and even 'illegally' as it were, leaves me feeling compromised.

* * *

Overseas students joining UK courses are required to demonstrate competence in English by having achieved a minimum mark in a recognised language test. Taking tests that one has revised for in examination conditions is very different from using language in everyday life, let alone in an academic, disciplinary context where specialist terms and discourses and complex notions are likely to be encountered and required to be used. Many English as a Second Language students struggle to comprehend and communicate—and to communicate the nature of their difficulties - and dictionaries and translation apps only go so far. I have already mentioned reductions in the amount of time available for student supervision and this becomes particularly problematic when students face significant linguistic challenges. In common with most of my colleagues I do not speak any Chinese language and nor do I have any knowledge or expertise around teaching English. I find it distressing to work with students who I don't understand and who don't understand me: put bluntly I do not feel I can be a good teacher for these students and, in market terms, I don't believe they are getting value for money. This is hard to live with. The language teaching services are stretched, and individuals can only access limited support.

Developing English language skills is often a key motivator for choosing to study in the UK but students tell me they are not getting the opportunities to practice English as the vast majority of students on their course are Chinese. They tell me they didn't expect this to be the case and that it is a disappointment. They often share accommodation with other Chinese students and it is entirely understandable that, a long way from home, they may be inclined to seek out the comfort of familiar language and cultural practices. In the face of Covid19 lockdown, the problems are exacerbated as these young people are isolated, stuck in their rooms and limited to communication via social media. Of course, there are those who work hard to use

their English even in these circumstances and whose linguistic skills consequently improve but an effort definitely has to be made and for some that is too much of a challenge and I doubt that it is one they thought they would have to face.

The pandemic was not predicted—although one would imagine that risk analysis would have considered a change in markets, albeit maybe not as sudden and extreme as that which may be caused by Covid19. Following the neoliberal agenda means that universities now find themselves in a position whereby the contract they made with students is not being met in the way that had been intended and expected. No students are getting exactly what they believed they were buying—whether they were paying 'home' or the far higher, 'overseas' fees. There are already calls for reimbursements and, no doubt, legal challenges will have been raised—and by the time this book appears (over 3 years on from when I wrote this chapter) will likely have been settled. Of course, in the market, the principle of *caveat emptor* may be invoked and, in any case, 'acts of God' have usually been exempted when people seek to get their money back. However, and for me, this does nothing to assuage my personal discomfort and nor do the steps taken to try to ameliorate the circumstances.

* * *

High quality online and other distance approaches to teaching and learning were both well-established and a growth area long before Covid19. In the UK for example, the world-famous Open University was established as long ago as 1969. It's probably fair to say that significant involvement in such approaches is something of a specialist interest and those using them often base their research on, and publish in, the field. Despite my own frequent use of skype to supervise doctoral students overseas, I don't think that really counts and I have really struggled to gain even minimal competence and confidence in using synchronous and asynchronous teaching and learning platforms. I know I am not alone and I find it hard to believe that the majority of students think online teaching, especially when provided by 'amateurs' on a steep learning curve, is of equivalent value to face-to-face education when that is what they had signed up for.

Another key area where I feel extreme dis-ease is with regard to changes in assessment procedures and requirements whereby grading criteria are retained but the nature of the tasks may have changed, by reductions in word lengths or by a more dramatic alteration, e.g. from an essay to a short presentation or from an extended research-based dissertation to an essay. I acknowledge that 'traditional' forms of assessment may not always be the best way of gauging whether learning has taken place and, over the years, innovative, more sensitive and relevant approaches have been explored and implemented. There is a difference though between the thoughtful and critical development of alternative research-based approaches to assessment and the institution of radical changes in response to a crisis. I have questions about such changes, particularly when the justification for them seems dubious.

Before the pandemic there was growing disquiet that workload allocations often did not provide sufficient time for what many people considered to be thorough

and careful reading, assessment and formative (even when offering a summative'verdict') feedback, and this problem—rather than academic and pedagogical reasons—became an argument for shorter and/or alternative assessment tasks. In the face of Covid19 social distancing and concerns around students feeling short-changed, a possible and plausible interpretation of the introduction of reduced assessment requirements is that they may be more likely to provide students with the grade and qualifications outcomes, if not the learning and research experiences, they hoped they were purchasing. Once again, being required to implement these measures results in me feeling compromised.

* * *

There isn't anything that I have written here that has not been said before and more fluently by others. Nor have I said anything radical. That I was working on the piece at the time of the Covid19 pandemic affecting the UK and the subsequent lockdown and policy of social distancing did lead to me focusing what I had to say around how neoliberal concerns could be seen to influence how institutions dealt with it. For example, I had not previously planned to say anything about online teaching and learning because that was not part of my experience, but I had wanted to talk about the consequences of workload allocation frameworks. As to the changes in assessment, well, I could not have envisaged those.

I started out by declaring that my purpose in this piece was to follow the Millsian imperative to make personal troubles public concerns. As I believe that telling our stories keeps beliefs and values and histories alive, my aim has to been to offer a personal history of how the ascendancy of neoliberalism and within the academy has significantly changed the nature of the job and career I went into 40 plus years ago. For me those changes threaten my integrity because they strike at the heart of the moral foundations of the enterprise I have been committed to which is, essentially, research and education grounded in auto/biographical approaches and aimed at furthering social justice. It may be naïve and optimistic but I do have a slight hope that our shared involvement in at least some—although definitely not all—aspects of the pandemic together with the widespread dissemination of how social groups and individuals have been differentially impacted and/or have contributed to the common good may eventually lead to reassessment. The neoliberal agenda has let us all down: we need to work towards an alternative.

References

Adams, T. (2008). A review of narrative ethics. *Qualitative Inquiry, 14*(2), 175–194.

Adams, T., & Herrmann, A. (2020). Expanding our autoethnographic future. *Journal of Autoethnography, 1*(1), 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1525/joae.2020.1.1.1

Ball, S. (2012). Performativity, commodification and commitment: An I-spy guide to the neoliberal university. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 60*(1), 17–28.

Ball, S. (2016). Subjectivity as a site of struggle: Refusing neoliberalism? *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 37*(8), 1129–1146.

Bullough, R. V., Jr. (2020). 'Bestirring the quiet voice of ethically engaged reason': Public intellectuals, education and Ivor Goodson. In P. Sikes & Y. Novacovik (Eds.), *Storying the public intellectual: Commentaries on the impact and influence of the work of Ivor Goodson* (pp. 80–88). Routledge.

Delamont, S. (2007, September 5–7). *Arguments against autoethnography*. Paper presented at BERA conference, Institute of Education, University of London.

Delamont, S. (2009). The only honest thing: Autoethnography, reflexivity and small crises in fieldwork. *Ethnography and Education, 4*, 51–63.

Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and Education.* Kappa Delata Pi.

Ellis, C. (2007). Telling secrets, revealing lies: Relational ethics in intimate research with others. *Qualitative Inquiry, 13*, 3–29.

Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. (2000). Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: Researcher as subject. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Sage.

Maisuria, A., & Holmes, S. (2020). *Life for the academic in the neo-liberal university*. Routledge.

Marx, K. (1875). *Critique of the Gotha Project*.

Mills, C. W. (1970). *The Sociological Imagination.* Penguin (Originally published in 1959 by Oxford University Press).

Moriarty, J. (Ed.). (2019). *Autoethnographies from the neoliberal academy: Rewilding, writing and resistance in Higher Education*. Routledge.

Piper, H., & Sikes, P. (2010). 'All teachers are vulnerable, but especially gay teachers': Using composite fictions to protect research participants in pupil-teacher sex related research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 16*(7), 566–574.

Richardson, L. (1990). Narrative and sociology. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 19*(1), 116–135.

Rosen, H. (1998). *Speaking from memory: The study of autobiographical discourse.* Trentham.

Sikes, P. (2017). 'But who is Mrs Galinsky, mother?': From Nana Sikes' stories to studying lives and careers. In I. Goodson, A. Antikainen, P. Sikes, & M. Andrews (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook on narrative and life history* (pp. 405–430). Routledge.

Sikes, P., & Goodson, I. (2003). Living research: Thoughts on educational research as moral practice. In P. Sikes, J. Nixon, & W. Carr (Eds.), *The moral foundations of educational research: Knowledge, inquiry and values* (pp. 32–51). Open University Press/McGraw Hill Educational.

Sikes, P., Measor, L., & Woods, P. (1985). *Teacher careers: Crises and continuities.* Falmer.

Sikes, P., Nixon, J. & Carr, W. (Eds.). (2003). *The moral foundations of educational research: Knowledge, inquiry and values*. Open University Press/McGraw Hill Educational.

Sikes, P., & Troyna, B. (1991). True stories: A case study in the use of life history in initial teacher education. *Educational Review, 43*(1), 3–16.

Simon, B. (1966). The history of education. In J. W. Tibble (Ed.), *The study of education.* Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Sparkes, A. (2007). Embodiment, academics and the audit culture: A story seeking consideration. *Qualitative Research, 7*(4), 521–550.

Sparkes, A. (2018). Autoethnography comes of age: Consequences, comforts and concerns. In D. Beach, C. Bagley, & S. Marques da Silva (Eds.), *The Wiley handbook of ethnography of education* (pp. 497–499). Wiley Blackwell.

Stanley, E. (1993). On auto/biography in sociology. *Sociology, 27*(1), 41–52.

Stenhouse, L. (1975). *An introduction to curriculum research and development*. Heinemann.

Tierney, W. (2000). Undaunted courage: Life history and the post modern challenge. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Sage.

Tolich, M. (2004). Internal confidentiality: When confidentiality assurances fail relational informants. *Qualitative Sociology, 27*(1), 101–106.

Tolich, M. (2010). A critique of current practice: Ten foundational guidelines for autoethnography. *Qualitative Health Research, 20*, 1599–1610.

Vickers, M. (2002). Researchers as storytellers: Writing on the edge and without a safety net. *Qualitative Inquiry, 8*(5), 685–621.

Pat Sikes is Professor Emeritus of Qualitative Inquiry University of Sheffield, UK. As Professor Emeritus Pat continues to be involved in research, writing, out-reach, and consultancy. Pat's academic career began in 1978 and since then her interests have been around: qualitative, and especially narrative and auto/biographical approaches, to research and its re-presentation; research ethics; and social justice issues. In September 2018 Pat was awarded the John Nisbet Fellowship by the British Educational Research Association for an outstanding contribution to educational research. Pat is on the editorial boards of the *British Educational Research Journal*, the *International Journal of Research and Method in Education*, Qualitative Research, and the Qualitative Research Journal

Chapter 3
Shaping the Narratives—Indigenous Knowledges Through Storying

Leanne Holt and Joe Perry

Abstract Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples share knowledges, and make personal connections that define our identity, values, perspectives and aspirations through narratives and storying. Storytelling was and will always be a cultural conduit utilised by Aboriginal people as a pedagogical approach for imparting and sharing of knowledge as well as understanding and formulating new knowledges. This Aboriginal worldview is becoming more accepted within the Western research paradigms, which recognises and values the pedagogy that exists between Aboriginal narratives and the transmitting of knowledge. A relational methodological approach is drawn from the form of narrative inquiry through the representation of storytelling and reflexivity. Storytelling allows the listener to interact with the content; linking and drawing comparisons and reflecting on their life experiences and knowledges acquired and breaking down the non-Aboriginal discourse that has dominated the telling of our histories. Narratives allow for connected dialogue that moves beyond just analytical discovery, it provides the platform to share emotions, heal trauma and hurt resulting from past racist policies and practices, create a better understanding of the world we live in and discover new, improved futures. Through stories, we share our thoughts, repair our spirit, reflect on our aspirations, maintain our sense of belonging and strengthen our communities. As universities in Australia attempt to conceptualise processes and structures to embed Indigenous histories, knowledges and perspectives across all curricula, Aboriginal narratives have become a more recognised pedagogy that can challenge the Western concepts of knowledge translation and interpretation. Both authors are from Worimi Country and have each been working in higher education for over two decades as Aboriginal academics and in leadership positions, during this time we have encountered both successes and challenges within our learning and teaching environments. We continually attempt to disrupt the traditional Western discourse that has controlled the conservative classroom for too long. We believe that narrative pedagogies can shape and influence

L. Holt (✉) · J. Perry
Macquarie University, Macquarie Park, NSW, Australia
e-mail: Leanne.holt@mq.edu.au

J. Perry
e-mail: joe.perry@mq.edu.au

M. Vicars and L. Pelosi (eds.), *Storying Pedagogy as Critical Praxis in the Neoliberal University*, Rethinking Higher Education,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-4246-6_3

diverse perspectives by seeing the world through a different lens, therefore moving knowledge transmission beyond a neoliberal objective, to one where social discourse is valued to transform future societies. We will share our personal experiences as Aboriginal academics teaching Indigenous knowledges in higher education through a narrative pedagogy, continuing the stories of our ancestors and introducing new knowledges that will bring forth changes to future societies and build on the existing knowledge of the academy.

3.1 Introduction

Education is a significant vehicle to continually convey societal knowledges, cultures and values to future generations. Education takes many forms, and these allow people to become active adult members of society, able to contribute to its longevity. Education in Aboriginal societies was taught through individual and communal learning related to our cultural landscapes, our values, our philosophies, our lore, laws and customs. Traditional education was oral in nature with a curriculum embedded within storytelling, ceremonies, art and nature.

Our world and cultural beliefs would change dramatically with the arrival of the destructive forces imposed by Western colonisation. Massacres and indiscriminate murders gave way to assimilationist practices which saw Aboriginal peoples herded and incarcerated on government-controlled institutions known as Government Reserves, Missions and Stations (Mitchell, 2011; Rowley, 1970). Aboriginal people were not afforded the privilege of a Western education, rather their education was either neglected or delivered by untrained people, inclusive of a religious indoctrination. Ultimately, Aboriginal people were perceived to be an inferior race doomed for extinction, but they were grossly underestimated. In fact, over many years, Aboriginal peoples have survived, thrived and continue to challenge the paternal government controls over our people.

Our political struggle has led us into a different world where we are placing our cultural footprint in sometimes, unresponsive places within Western higher education. It is a place where we have challenged the notion of what constitutes knowledge and pedagogical practices that are not seeded from the trees of the Western academy. It is a space that will mould and influence societal values, our beliefs and behaviours. In this chapter we intend to discuss how narrative pedagogies can shape and influence learning perspectives through seeing the world through a First Nation's lens. Our experiences as Aboriginal academics will provide perspectives on how within the academy we can continue the stories and achievements of our ancestors and create new knowledges that inform future societies of First Nation's knowledges.

3.2 Breaking through a neo-liberal ideology

Over the past four decades there has been much progress in Indigenous higher education in Australia, however there is a continual challenge in maintaining a space within the academy that is compatible with an Aboriginal ontology, cultural values, principles and aspirations, whilst navigating a neo-liberal education and research environment. Holt and Morgan (2016) state.

> *…when Australian universities explore processes to enhance Aboriginal cultural affirmation and integrity they usually adopt a 'Cultural Awareness or Competency' approach, an approach that primarily positions Aboriginal peoples as a 'guest' in the broader university context.* (p. 102)

This is based on a neo-liberal ideology that encourages and rewards individualism, hierarchy, being impassive to a social conscience, with an 'unwillingness to recognise structural barriers to equal opportunity' (Howard-Wagner, 2019). This environment is also opposed to cultures that align with collective values and pursuing education for the advancement of societal change. The growing corporatisation model of universities is concerning as they play an important role in correcting past injustices and educating graduates that will contribute strongly to fair and just future societies. However, this requires an increased value and respect for Aboriginal peoples and knowledges within the academy, ensuring that Aboriginal peoples do not feel like 'guests' but rather as equal contributors in the academic mission of the pursuit and delivery of knowledges that will serve our communities well into the future. The existing deficit was highlighted in the submission of the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council to the Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in 2012, determining that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pedagogies and epistemologies continue to exist on the fringes of academic environments, resulting in the perception that non-Western knowledges and practice is not valued within Australian universities (DISRTE, 2012, p.79). Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy 2017-2020, set out the importance of universities valuing and recognising the contributions of Indigenous knowledges, stating that:

> *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people hold unique knowledge and knowledge systems which are foundational and fundamentally important to Australia's intellectual, social and cultural capital.* (p. 11)

This statement is integral to universities looking beyond a neoliberal ideology of becoming corporatized, demand-driven organisations that silence social critique rather than recognising their roles in educating a future that can address social agency, change and transformation.

Macquarie University has commenced a journey that attempts to address agendas of social responsibility and provide a platform within higher education to empower marginalised education through embedding Indigenous knowledges and practices into all aspects of the Universities DNA. Over the past few years the University has

developed strategies and programs that demonstrate their commitment to Indigenous higher education, however amidst the current 'Black Lives Matter' movement and the global attention on the celebration of oppressive colonisers, Macquarie's namesake once again comes into the spotlight. The University was named after Governor Lachlan Macquarie, who the University proudly promoted it's connection to as a humanitarian, Governor of the New South Wales colony, that influenced the treatment of convicts as 'social equals and free settlers'. However, to Aboriginal peoples Governor Lachlan Macquarie's reputation casts a dark cloud on their histories, supporting the massacre and mistreatment of Aboriginal men, woman and children. Recently the University is taking the opportunity to utilise their namesake to tell a different story that reflects truth telling, in consideration of the social impacts that Macquarie's actions have had on the first peoples of the country the University is located on. To recognise the contemporary impacts and provide a strong forum for truth telling and education about our histories and our futures (Howitt, Holt & Locke, 2022)

Narratives and storying will be at the centre of this process as the University aims to reimagine a new future that privileges social narrative through truth telling; respects and acknowledges the past journeys of Aboriginal peoples; celebrates the contributions of the many past and current Aboriginal scholars, activists and leaders; and empowers the future generation to be proud of their place as first nations people of this country. The University has endorsed an Indigenous Connected Curriculum Framework within their curriculum architecture aiming to align cultural values and principles within leaning and teaching across all courses, that promotes a commitment to human rights, social justice and respect for diverse cultural viewpoints. The framework encourages Indigenous storying as a pedagogy to allow students to be reflective of their own values and beliefs against their own experiences and worldviews to better understand the 'cultural other'. Also, to develop a knowledge and understanding of Indigenous cultures, perspectives and realities through Indigenous voices and ontologies, with an aim for all students to develop skills that will contribute to them being socially responsible and aware global citizens (Macquarie University, 2019).

3.3 Indigenous knowledges and pedagogy

There has been a longitudinal effort over decades to embed Indigenous content within the Australian higher education curriculum (Universities Australia, 2011). Some disciplines have been more successful than others, such as teaching, medicine and psychology. However, more holistically the attempts have been very ad hoc and rely mostly on the goodwill of individual academics. More recently the efforts have re-emerged and there is evidence that a new wave of universities implementing strategies, that will not just embed Indigenous curriculum but also consider the validity and value of Indigenous pedagogy as an effective mode of teaching and learning. The

challenge therefore is identifying pedagogical approaches that can examine the relationships between Indigenous and Western knowledges challenging existing norms and ideologies. Hollinsworth (2016) believes that pedagogical approaches within this space should challenge students to reflect on their bias and privilege, whilst being subjected to the knowledges, perspectives and experiences of the cultural other. Additionally, Hughes (1984) suggests that educators need to have a greater understanding of the diverse aspects of Aboriginal communities and traditional pedagogy. Western knowledges need to be combined with Aboriginal knowledges drawing on the strengths of Aboriginal students, including spatial ways of learning.

Indigenous pedagogy is continually building it's recognition as a valued form of sharing knowledges and articulating personal connections to knowledge, such as cultural values, perspectives and individual experiences. In comparison, Western pedagogy, is traditionally based on large lectures and classes resulting in an impersonal instructor and student model, with the instructor commonly providing the knowledge free of emotion or life experience (Mulryan-Kyne, 2010). Likewise, the curriculum commonly revolves around building knowledges that will respond to industry and corporate demands. The recent government proposed 'Job Ready Graduates' package reflects this approach, significantly increasing student contributions to humanities and social science disciplines in an attempt to influence students into science and technology disciplines as response to market demand (DESE,2020). This action once again devalues disciplines that promote social and cultural critique and agency. Aboriginal scholars are often attracted to the academy as they believe it is the platform for social change to make a difference to the future of their peoples and their communities.

Therefore, the move to further silence social sciences that focus on such things as, social justice,equality, cultural diversity and sustainability, will further marginalise Aboriginal scholars and Indigenous knowledges within the academy (Kidman, 2020). Kidman (2020) warns that if,

> *indigenous peoples are going to survive in the neoliberal university, our scholarship must face outwards towards native publics or else sit forever in limbo, neither transforming the institution nor fuelling indigenous struggles against oppression and colonialism.* (p. 258)

Although Universities are attempting to become more student focused, they are grounded by a hierarchical tradition of the Professor being the authoritative figure translating knowledges in one direction rarely taking into consideration their surrounding physical and emotional environments.Indigenous narrative pedagogy has the potential to immerse students in curriculum academically,culturally, spiritually and emotionally. In this way, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics teaching Indigenous studies are often personally and emotionally attached to the content, drawing on their own life experiences that paints a picture within the use of storying and narrative.

3.4 Narrative Pedagogy—Storying

Traditional Aboriginal Australian societies, as well as many Indigenous cultures globally, participated in educational practices that transmitted knowledge about every aspect of their cultural history, religion and, more importantly, all aspects of their land and their spirituality. This traditional form of education was a communal model developed to ensure economic and social survival for each of these First Nation's peoples and their communities. Oral education took many forms with children learning by listening, observation and imitation, whilst adult knowledge was more formal and individually taught containing spiritual and ritual ceremony. As the child grew, education became increasingly more interpersonal and focussed on individual learning. Unlike Western educational institutions Aboriginal knowledge was never written and catalogued but stored in the living memory of specific individuals, our Elders. These Elders were educators responsible for the transmission of knowledge to the following generations (Hughes & More, 2004).

Kelly (2016) discusses the concept of 'living memory' using the term Memory Code to describe the process of recording vast data of traditional Aboriginal information, utilising stone circles as part of the recording of their historical memories. Information is formally memorised, learning and studying it over and over, until it had been engrained in the memories of the learners. Kelly believed no significant cultural information was learnt around the campfire at night, reinforcing a stereotype that it was just a casual night gathering for social interaction and entertainment. Kelly asserts that structures like the Aboriginal Songlines, Native American Trails, Inca Ceques and many other landscapes created by Indigenous cultures were a result of their training memories. This interpretation failed to recognise the holistic nature of the sharing of Indigenous knowledges and that living memory was a result of all interactions and connections.

Storytelling has always been used by Aboriginal people as a pedagogy for the teaching and sharing of knowledges. The transmission of our knowledge was delivered through oral storytelling, song, dance, art and observation. Klapproth (2004) defines cultural narrative discourse within the relationships between Aboriginal storytelling and transmission of knowledge:

> *...in Australian Aboriginal culture, traditional oral storytelling practice plays a decisive role both in the negotiation of social and personal identity as well as in the transmission of cultural knowledge, the two areas furthermore being conceived of as intrinsically linked.* (p. 79)

This method is becoming more accepted within the Western education and research paradigm, recognising valued relationships between Aboriginal stories and the transmitting of knowledges. Indigenous storying is multi-disciplinary and is an effective learning and teaching pedagogy across many educational paradigms. The growing validity of narrative and storying across disciplines by non-Indigenous academics is demonstrated in the recent release of the book, 'Novel Politics' by Uhr and Crowe (2020). Uhr and Crowe use the narrative and storying of six Australian pre-Federation authors to unpack the political milieu during that time period. The

book gives credence to the insightfulness of narrative and how integral it is to understand our histories and inform our futures, for the benefit of our future generations. The whole experience of connection and sharing of stories reflects an Indigenous epistemology of oral knowledge production and the passing of knowledge from generation to generation (Battiste, 2008; Kovach, 2010).

Narrative pedagogy introduces a relational learning and teaching approach that is represented through storying and reflexivity on past, present and future knowledges. Barton (2004) theorises that the sharing of stories and knowledges can result in the construction of new knowledges, defining the narrative discourse:

> *as life stories understood through the dimensions of interaction, continuity and situation.* (p. 1)

Wilson (2008) describes how storytelling allows the listener to interact with the content, linking and drawing comparisons with their own life experiences and knowledge. This moves us past the usual conventions of the Western model of teaching, breaking through the non-Aboriginal discourse that has so far dominated the telling of histories. It could also be argued that the term 'storytelling' does not represent the holistic nature of reciprocal sharing that is the intended outcome of this pedagogy, therefore, from now on we will continually refer to it as 'storying'.

Storying is vital in Aboriginal communities to teach and pass on important lessons and can create a greater connection for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. In Aboriginal culture, the traditional transmission of our knowledge was delivered through oral storying, song, dance, art and observation. Traditional storying is not always chronologically sequenced (Klapproth, 2004); however, it takes an intergenerational approach to pass the knowledge of the storytellers from one generation to the next ensuring the longevity of the knowledge and experiences to be shared.

It is the responsibility of the academic taking on the role of the storyteller to ensure the integrity of the story is being upheld, particularly if it is translated into a written form (Wilson, 2008). Kovach (2010) details the challenges of the translation and interpretation of oral story to written story:

> *In written narrative, the story becomes finalized as a written product to be read and considered according to the reader's interpretation. Once written, the relationship between the reader and the storyteller is conceptual, not tangible. In an oral culture, story lives, develops, and is imbued with the energy of the dynamic relationship between teller and listener.* (p. 101)

Reflectivity is also an important tool in ensuring that the true nature and philosophy of storying are being understood by students. Students reflecting on their own experiences and realities ensures that the true intent of pedagogical narratives is being captured. Kahakalau refers to this process as 'illumination and reflection' (p. 29). She explains this process as

> *what has awakened in consciousness, I focused on all that I had learned so far, and I tried to figure out what I had yet to understand. I allowed myself to receive many new insights. I fine-tuned many aspects of my philosophy.* (Kahakalau, 2004, p. 29)

The 'illumination and reflection' process allows students to immerse themselves in the narrative of storying to create a greater understanding of their own connected

experiences, perspectives and attitudes. Reflective thought is also captured in the philosophical approach of Dadirri described by Ungunmerr Bauman as:

> *a special quality, a unique gift of the Aboriginal people, is inner deep listening and quiet still awareness. Dadirri recognises the deep spring that is inside us. It is something like what you call contemplation.* (2002, p. 2)

This philosophical approach was explained to me by an Elder as, 'listen to learn, not listen to respond'. It represents a deep respect, the virtue of patience and reflexivity in our personal, cultural, spiritual and social relationships and connections. Dadirri captures the true essence of spirituality, knowledges and experiences.

Five principles to storying are defined by Phillips and Bunda (2018) in their powerful examination of 'research through, with and as storying', including:

1. Storying nourishes through body, and soul;
2. claims voice in the silenced margins;
3. storying is embodied in relational meaning-making'
4. storying intersects past and present as living oral archives; and
5. storying enacts collective ownership and authority. (p. 43)

These five principles provide an insight into the physical, spiritual, emotional and intellectual layers that embody Indigenous storying as well as a method to navigate complex topics and experiences. Tur (2019) suggests that:

> *Collective storying is not an easy task and requires great care, thoughtful and rigorous intellectual scholarship, deep listening, respect and recognition of ones' own position.*

Tur's words reinforce the importance of storying being captured and shared in ways that are conducive to the values and principles that symbolises the act of storying.

3.5 Indigenous Storying Methods

Indigenous storying is centred around relationality and our connections to our identity, our country and our ways of knowing and doing to convey knowledges that reflect our own standpoint as Aboriginal men and women (Moreton-Robinson, 2013; Nakata, 1998). Phillips and Bunda (2018) take relationality to another level and declare that 'we see story as the communication of what it means to be human' (p. 3).

Various learning mediums reflect the relationality of storying, from oral storying to art, music and cultural practice, providing a canvas to transform the way we see and learn from the world, philosophically and practically. This takes us beyond a classroom setting and connects us to the antiquity of our landscapes that are often taken for granted. For example, Aboriginal Rock Art can retell the stories of climatic changes and trading relationships with the Macassans, as well as the arrival of Western

man (Clark & May, 2013). All forms of Aboriginal art across the country portray the stories of our histories, religion and connections to land and the environment.

Aboriginal writers have transformed storying through poetry, short stories and fiction, as well as historical accounts of Aboriginal communities, culture and families. These literary warriors have, and continue to, help forge our way into the sandstone foundations of the Western academy. Song, dance and performance are also powerful media to interpret and share storying, translating knowledge. Ceremonies and dance recreate and tell the stories of first nation's people, it is an artistic expression and lesson of histories, religion and cultural values. Storying from songs has explained the complexities of Aboriginal life before and after the arrival of foreigners to their shores. Performance and songs became an important aspect of traditional Aboriginal culture and a means of education, socialisation and entertainment, sharing storying knowledge across our diverse countries. It can also be used to express beliefs and practices. In this way, Cajete (1999) shares an example of animal mythology expressed through art, dance and song:

> *...one visualizes tracking the trace of the hunter, then into the mouth of the hunter, then back through his hand, his body, and his psyche in the forms of art, dance, song and ritual'.* (p. 108)

This spiritual, physical and social display of knowledge sharing is for the purpose of celebrating the animals and the belief that they will then become fertile and produce more animals for the hunters (Cajete, 1999).

Alternatively, Tur, Baker, Blanch and Harkin used song, dance and performance to educate and share storying related to 'sovereignty'. Their performance 'Bound and Unbound' set out to challenge the concepts of identity, sovereignty and the 'complex ideas of being both bound and free'. Their series performance created a platform for examining, challenging and analysing themes of 'colonial archives, ethical practice, enacting memory and sovereign identity' in a way that invokes emotion, connection and passion (Baker & Tur, 2019).

3.6 Metaphors and Indigenous Storying

Metaphors have and continue to play an important role in Indigenous storying for thousands of years. Indigenous cultures across the world utilise metaphorical learning in dreaming from the first dawn to today. Cajete (1999) argues that this is captured in 'its art forms, its way of community, its language, and its way of understanding itself in relationship to its natural environment' (p. 56). Carter and Pitcher (2010) simplistically outline the benefits of Metaphor pedagogy using the words of Sticht (1993)

> *Learning is advanced through metaphor's cognitive challenges: 'just as the repeated use of a hammer may strengthen the arm, so the repeated use of metaphors may strengthen the powers of analysis and synthesis'.* (p. 583)

Using metaphors as a form of connectivity within storying I share my own example of a metaphor used in my research in order to connect the narrative related to members of the National Aboriginal Education Committee and their plight in the development of Aboriginal education policy in Australia to my country, identity and culture as the sharer of the story. Moreton-Robinson (2013) privileges the significance of the interconnectedness of country, place and experiences as inherent to Aboriginal identity. She discusses Indigenous relationality as:

> *informed by our embodied connection to our respective countries, all living entities and our ancestors; our sovereignty.* (p. 337)

The metaphor outlined demonstrates how narrative is connected to my relationality to my country, my knowledge, my journey and experiences as a Worimi woman.

Karuah River runs through Worimi country from the mountains of Gloucester (NSW) down to the mouth of the river at Karuah flowing out to the Tasman Sea of the Pacific Ocean. The riverbanks are where my ancestors lived as fisherman and oyster farmers. My grandfather's spirit (ashes) was returned to the river once he passed over to the spirit world. Although this was not the country I grew up on I feel a connection to the river through the spirits of my ancestors, as a significant place to me personally but also to the Worimi people. The connectivity to my research is defined through the water in the river. As it commences its journey the freshwater gradually meets the salt water fed from the ocean; it becomes a mix of fresh and saltwater (brackish).

The freshwater represents the Aboriginal people who have long journeyed through mountains, coastal lands and bush bringing with them stories/education passed through generations. The river survives through flood and drought, like the strength of our people who show resilience, sometimes varying their path dependent on environmental impacts however always continuing to flow. Freshwater gives life, just as the members of the National Aboriginal Education Committee gave life to Aboriginal education. Through sharing their experience and expertise they were able to forge a journey for us to continue.

The saltwater represents non-Aboriginal people who have travelled across the oceans to settle within Australia, bringing different viewpoints and forms of education. The saltwater whilst in the ocean can sometimes be forceful and damaging and not always easy for swimming however when it enters the river or estuary it is calmer and easier to interact with. The saltwater can be associated with the government, particularly in this instance, the Department of Education and Department of Aboriginal Affairs, including the non-Aboriginal people within the departments, Ministers and public servants.

The coming together of the salt and fresh water is at times a space where fish have time to adapt to different environments (eg. fresh to salt) and where as part of their lifecycle they develop social groupings. The joining of fresh and saltwater is a reflective environment representing the sharing of cultures, experiences and stories based on respect and reciprocity to ensure a healthy future for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. The river itself represents a journey; it gives life and sustenance to living things, it represents our future (Holt, 2021).

Within a teaching environment, I could use this metaphor as a continual narrative woven through the curriculum to demonstrate the holistic nature of Indigenous methodologies. A narrative that is multi-sensory inter-twining the aspects of our natural environments that we can see, feel, hear and smell.

This example used by my colleague also has great significance to many Aboriginal people around this country as metaphorical pedagogy utilised across nations. Similar teaching is done in the Northern Territory on the Gove Peninsula with the Garma festival, where I listened to the Yolngu Elders draw reference to the blending of fresh and saltwater. Meaning where Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures meet, intersect and sometimes collide. This is known by the Yolngu people as Galtha Rom pedagogy the merging of Western and Aboriginal Knowledges (McMahon, et al., 2022). The festival is used to showcase many of the cultural aspects of Yolngu culture for non-Aboriginal people who attend and participate in the cultural activities.

3.7 Indigenous Storying as a Multi-Sensory Approach

Now that we have explored the concepts and philosophies of Indigenous storying and narrative, as well as the different mediums they can be presented in, it is clear they are not just isolated to the oral journey of learning, they are sensory, encouraging learners to use all their senses. Indigenous narrative pedagogy related to storying should immerse the student holistically in a way that they can hear, see, feel and smell.

Multi-sensory storytelling (MSST) is an experience that immerses the participants with all their senses, introduced into academia as a concept and coined by Fuller in the late 1980s and has primarily been used in early childhood and for people with disabilities (Fornefeld, 2013; Preece & Zhao, 2016). Indigenous multi-sensory storying (IMSS) however has been used by Indigenous peoples around the world since time immemorial. Although both concepts adopt sensory learning techniques, they are quite different. MSST is solely a learning tool utilising manufactured stories or existing stories and adapting them by utilising tactile objects relevant to the audience (Preece & Zhao, 2016). Alternatively, the multi-sensory nature of Indigenous storying is already embodied within the connections to country, plants, animals and culture. It is part of an Indigenous epistemology and a generational pedagogy that correlates to our identity and the understanding of our roles and responsibilities within the world that we live.

Indigenous storying is described as an oral passing of histories, realities, values, cultures and customs (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Kovach, 2010). However, we argue that IMSS is more than just oral storying that is told, but rather storying that is shared to enable the engaged to not just hear but visualise and feel the narrative, be reflective of the messaging and conceptualise this within their own experiences. Being engaged in storying that is multi-sensory provides a greater opportunity for the engaged to take an accurate account of the story so they can learn and share. This is supported by Datta (2018), expressing Indigenous storytelling requiring:

> *... expert use of the voice, vocal and body expression, intonation, verbal imagery, facial animation, context, plot and character development, natural pacing, and careful authentic recall of the story.* (p. 37)

Being a part of IMSS you are not just a participant or a listener learner, you are engaged as a collaborator, as a part of a reciprocal exchanging of knowledges, where your own ontologies and connections are acknowledged. This is why we often share storying in circles whether it be around a fire, or through dance, circles are integral to understanding our existence and how we interact with our surrounding landscapes.

Circles are intrinsic to Aboriginal and many other Indigenous cultures, moving away from a linear view of the cosmos becoming a holistic constant of life, spirituality, land and peoples. Circles also represent relationships that are non-hierarchial and acentric, reinforcing an Indigenous philosophical standpoint that we are as one within the natural environments that we exist, without any beginning or end.

Indigenous storying is not a disconnected rhetoric that draws on an impersonal or unrelated theory, it is a recollection of memories, teachings, personal experiences and reflection from the first dawn to today. It is interactive between the sharer and the engaged, stimulating the use of imagination or connection for experiential learning and the building of relationships (Datta, 2018; Kovach, 2009). Therefore, it can conjure physical, emotional and spiritual feelings as the stories are portrayed and recounted. Indigenous storying is holistic and interconnected, articulating scientific theories and concepts that sustain life, give meaning to our cosmos, demonstrate our resistance and resilience and provide guidance on values and behaviours for respectful and reciprocal relationships (Kovach, 2010).

The use of artwork, dance, song, and oral mediums allow for multi-sensory experiences to seeing, hearing, feeling and spiritually connecting with Indigenous storying. During ceremonies, the use of paint taken from the earth and put onto the body tells a story related to identity and connections. Similarly, when learning about country, students engaged in IMSS are often instructed to sit down to feel the earth beneath them and close their eyes to stimulate greater senses of smell, feel and the connectedness of country and storying.

Archibald (2008) talks of the importance of 'storied memory' that considers generational oral traditions, lived experiences and stories and cultural connections to land and peoples. In our storying sometimes our ancestors take different natural land formations to assist us in our 'storied memory' and remembering the lessons that are important for our survival and development. For example, there are many stories about how our ancestors were transformed into mountains, rivers and gorges. However, Indigenous storying doesn't stagnate knowledge, rather knowledge and perspectives are transformed over generations, taking into account evolving environments and cultures.

In practice, Cajete (1999) recommends a curriculum that challenges students to see through a wider lens, immersing students in experiential experiences, encounters and metaphoric storying that is multi-dimensional capturing all of their senses, as well as their abilities and faculties. For the past few years, there have been discussions about the complete overhaul of curriculum in the Australian school system, which

is indicative that the current Western pedagogy is not fulfilling the basic needs of children and the learning outcomes that are way below what is an acceptable standard of education, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (Burgess et al. 2019). Privileging Indigenous knowledges, epistemologies and pedagogies can offer a strong alternative to the current Western mode of delivery.

3.8 Reflection

Aboriginal academic departments/schools in universities started to rise in the late 1990s to teach Aboriginal studies, however, there were very few that had their own academic programmes. Wollotuka, at the University of Newcastle, was one such unit. It had been offering an Aboriginal Diploma of Aboriginal Studies, which trained Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to either be Aboriginal Administrators or Health Workers in their communities. Requests came from students to upgrade the Diploma to a Bachelor's degree, which gave students an additional opportunity for employment outside of Aboriginal communities.

This is how I entered Academia, appointed by Wollotuka to assist writing the Bachelor of Aboriginal Studies after completing my own Bachelor of Adult Education at University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) in 1995. I was given the primary role of developing and completing the cultural component, as the diploma required stronger cultural perspectives throughout. The development of new courses within the newly formed Bachelor programme allowed the infusion of more cultural philosophies and different pedagogical approaches. These changes would not only impact culturally on our students but also the Newcastle University academic community, as it was now additionally offered to non-Indigenous students.

The development of the Bachelor programme provided the opportunity to challenge the hallowed halls of history and the anthropological interpretation of Indigenous people around the world, which were littered with inaccuracies, filtered with the view that all real knowledge was borne of Western societies. The search for the perfectibility of mankind through the development of scientific racism had placed all Indigenous (Blak) races at the bottom end of the evolutionary scales. Science has been used as evidence to establish the inferiority of Blak Races and show the superiority of Western Europeans. The lives and knowledge contained within the culture of that inferior blak race was deemed unworthy to be included in the Western Academy unless it was to be used to maintain the unbalanced power created by the Western world. The movement to change this status quo occurred in Australia in the 1970s where policies would be implemented that opened the doors of universities to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

As a local Worimi man, and with the University situated on the lands of the neighbouring Awabakal people, we believed that it was important for students to gain insight into the people who have walked this country and their contributions to the Australian history, The Awabakal are neighbours of the Worimi people and there are

many similarities and clan group associations. I therefore embedded local traditional cultural knowledges, histories and storying wherever possible.

The research to complete the Bachelor was something that we proudly carried out as an important task with local communities, blending and including a cultural footprint and a new contemporary Songline woven throughout the treads of learning in the University. The Songline represents the all-encompassing spiritual belief system that created the Aboriginal world and is directly related to Aboriginal country and Aboriginal people's connection to these specific tracts of land for Aboriginal people, they are the footprints of their ancestors, also called the 'way of the Law', which also explain Aboriginal creation and their very existence (Perry & Holt, 2018; Utz, 2001). This cultural footprint began to take shape as we structured the pedagogical approach to teaching and learning.

We believed the core values of Aboriginal culture had to be the theme that would encourage students to undertake the programme and make it successful. These core values and philosophies needed to be blended into the curriculum and throughout our pedagogical approach to teaching and learning. Of course it was a genuine challenge to include the values and principles into a Western framework however we tried to think a little outside the box. Values and perspectives like respect, resilience, reciprocity, identity, country, spirituality, cultural beliefs and self-determination were just a few that we identified as essential to the development of the programme.

3.9 Lectures

Academic rigour is the backbone of universities to produce and transfer knowledge that builds on the works of previous academics. Resources and materials focussed on the local people, the Awabakal and the academic work recorded over a long period of time assisted with the delivery of Aboriginal culture and histories in the classroom. Awabakal dreaming stories and their history were well documented by various anthropologists and historians to provide rigour required for the programme. The use of Elders and significant Aboriginal people provided the storying to infuse cultural knowledge of Aboriginal lived experiences in lectures. Creating narratives that contravenes some of recorded Australian history and many of the myths and stereotypes maintained in the media and society.

3.10 Talking Circles/Yarning

> *For many generations aboriginal people before and after colonisation have used talking circles as a way of handing on knowledge, family responsibilities, Dreaming stories, culture, history and to connect with the area and environment surrounding it*. (Chapman & Whiteford, 2017, p. 67)

We determined this was the best way to run tutorials in the classroom utilising something that has be successful for our people in education since the Aboriginal world was created. Circles interpret all forms of relationships throughout Aboriginal society by forming talking circles in class it becomes a neutral state where control and leadership is not dictated by one person.

Students formed a circle of chairs as part of their tutorial process and found the experience less threatening and more cohesive for engaging in conversations and discussions. It broke down the traditional model and power structure of the teacher directing the learning process from the front of the classroom. It empowered students to be more interactive in a social environmental setting which assists throughout the educational journey. Talking circles encourage students to find their voice which builds relationships and allows them to express their views in a safe learning environment. Ultimately talking circles can encourage and generate alternate thinking patterns permitting students' linear thinking to a more holistic worldview, to develop a greater understanding of Aboriginal knowledges (Hillier, 2009).

Talking circles included Aboriginal Elders or significant Aboriginal people who have been involved with Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal organisations at the grassroots level. It is vital for students to learn about Aboriginal history and the political struggles across many Aboriginal communities. The narratives and stories from Aboriginal people/communities challenges the grand narratives of Australian history and Aboriginal politics (Phillips & Bunda, 2018). These lived experiences transmitted through storying personalise the Aboriginal landscape and breathe life into a system of knowledge that predates anything written by mankind.

3.11 On-Country Experiences

Fortunately, in Awabakal and Wonaruah country there is an abundance of sacred and significant sites. This began as an essential tool for providing cultural knowledge to students and was factored into the programme. Site visits and camps were a great means of Aboriginal learning again utilising local elders and community people storying the significance and importance of each site narrating local Aboriginal culture from local people. Dreaming stories portray many of the morals of Aboriginal society also stories of country, history and its people.

Site visits were carried out on camps along with lectures and talking circles taking our programme on country and in community. During the evenings around the campfire, local people spoke about traditional culture and their experiences growing up as Aboriginal people. Stories of segregation, assimilation, stolen generation and what it was like when they were young growing up in overt racism and oppression. The stories told were about families overcoming the deficit imposed by governments how they survived and kept moving forward.

Annual visits to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies became a very important aspect of their learning and storying. The family history unit gave many students an opportunity to research their families and country,

providing them with more details about the hardships endured by their ancestors in Australia.

The whole process through this pedagogical approach gave students valuable insights into their culture, family histories and a Black history that was not taught to them before. The new bachelor programme and the different approach to their learning instilled a greater sense of who they are and where the future would take them. Education should foster an understanding of other peoples, a sense of one's heritage and a sense of equality in the Australian community (Tugby, 1973). The evidence can be found with some of the former students who completed the Bachelor's programme.

> *...Yeah, I'm a stronger person because I met my family and understanding where my families coming from and it's just helped me be a stronger person than what I am. I know who I am I'm more stronger in knowing where my family comes from and what they've suffered.* (Perry, 2004)

It is evident that the Aboriginal pedagogy assisted students in the learning process throughout the bachelor program gaining a better understanding of who they were as Aboriginal people. Indigenous storying allowed students to learn from an Aboriginal perspective, utilising Aboriginal knowledges, from Aboriginal people within the academy. The Aboriginal narrative was able to be voiced and accepted as part of their academic learning. It provided legitimacy of cultural beliefs and identity of how Aboriginal knowledges and how Aboriginal people had a place in the future within the broader Australian society. As another student commented:

> *I think the main thing for me is you find out about yourself, because when you're at school and you go through the white fulla way they teach and you think that you've got no history that your nobody and even then you didn't feel, I didn't feel, that I was a part of that. When you come to University, you find out about your culture, and you find that you've got a place there and its real, and that your important. Because I felt like nobody until the time that I came to the university.* (Perry, 2004)

Overall, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students found the approach of Indigenous storying, whether it be in the classroom, yarning through talking circles or on-country, a valuable and positive learning experience. It not only allowed them to learn about Aboriginal knowledges and cultures from Aboriginal people in an Aboriginal way, but it also provided the opportunity for self-discovery and self-reflection. These personal qualities and knowledges gained in the degree led to student attributes that contribute to future global societies that are respectful and transformative.

3.12 Conclusion

Indigenous storying is a successful pedagogical practice that has been developed over thousands of years. Utilising narratives that are grounded in cultural values, Indigenous perspectives, life experiences and worldviews articulate knowledges that

can be transformed into new knowledges within the academy. Our storying knowledge can only add to the student learning process that is delivered culturally into a safe learning environment. The translation and continuity of our ancestor knowledge through the pedagogy of storying is a great responsibility and one that ensures we as First Nation's people will continue to be heard. The voices of our ancestors storying can be presented in a symbiotic relationship with higher education. Indigenous storying provides a platform to discover, learn, share and celebrate Indigenous understandings of the planet that have been neglected and abused. It creates an opportunity to challenge neoliberal ideologies and provide critical reflection of the social and cultural environments that we share.

Further to this, the concept of Indigenous multi-sensory storying as a pedagogical approach within learning and teaching and research environments allows us not to just connect with the knowledge as a static text but utilise all our senses to feel, see, hear and smell the knowledge, incorporating our own experiences to think, reflect and understand through a reflective lens.

Indigenous storying embraces our cultural values and perspectives, translating knowledges that have contributed to our survival as the oldest continuing culture known to human civilisation. We continue to forge our way as teachers and educators within Western neoliberal educational paradigms of hierarchy and economic demand driven environments, to instead create an empowering space where Indigenous storying is a valued and respected pedagogy, strengthening student ways of knowing and doing. As Indigenous academics within the academy we must continue to utilise narrative through storying to challenge the neoliberal ideologies that rejects notions of social justice and inclusion. Indigenous storying offers the opportunity for higher education disciplines to apply a well-established humanistic pedagogical approach to analyse and challenge complexed theories and understandings for a more inclusive tomorrow.

References

Archibald, J. (2008). *Indigenous storywork: Educating the heart, mind, body, and spirit*. UBC Press.

Baker, A. G., & Tur, S. U. (February, 2019). Sovereign acts: Decolonising methodologies, bound/unbound collective. In A. G. Baker, F. Blanch, N. Harkin, & S. U. Tur (lecture presentation), AUST9000 *Indigenous research methodologies*. Flinders University.

Barton, S. S. (2004). Narrative inquiry: Locating aboriginal epistemology in a relational methodology. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 45*(5), 519–526.

Battiste, M. (2008). Research ethics for protecting Indigenous knowledge and heritage: Institutional and researcher responsibilities. In N. K. Denzin, Y. S. Lincoln, & L. T. Smith (Eds.), *Handbook of critical and indigenous methodologies* (pp. 497–510). Sage.

Burgess, C., Lowe, K., Freebody, S., & Goodwin, H. (2019). Aboriginal voices: Social justice and transforming Aboriginal education. *Higher Education, Pedagogy and Social Justice: Politics and Practice*, 97–117.

Cajete, G. A. (1999). *Igniting the sparkle: An indigenous science education model*. Kivaki Press.

Carter, S., & Pitcher, R. (2010). Extended metaphors for pedagogy: Using sameness and difference. *Teaching in Higher Education, 15*(5), 579–589. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2010.491904

Clark, M., & May, S. (2013). *Macassan history and heritage: Journeys, encounters and influences*. ANU E Press.

Chapman, C., & Whiteford, G. (2017). Supporting Indigenous students through the university journey: The elder in residence program. In M. Shah & G. Whiteford (Eds.), *Pathways and transitions: International innovations in widening participation* (p. 67). Chandos Publishing.

Datta, R. (2018). Traditional storytelling: An effective Indigenous research methodology and its implications for environmental research. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples, 14*(1), 35–44.

Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2008). Introduction: Critical methodologies and indigenous inquiry. In N. Denzin, Y. Lincoln, & S. L. Tuhiwai (Eds.), *Handbook of critical and indigenous methodologies* (pp. 3–40). Sage.

Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE). (2020). *Job Ready Graduates Package*. Retrieved from https://www.dese.gov.au/job-ready

Department of Industry, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DISRTE) (2012). *Review of higher education access and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people final report*, Commonwealth Government Publishing, Canberra.

Fornefeld, B. (2013). Storytelling with all our senses: mehr-Sinn® Geschichten. In N. Grove (ed.), *Using storytelling to support children and adults with special needs* (pp. 78–85). Routledge.

Hillier, Y. (2009). *Innovation in teaching and learning in vocational education and training: International perspectives*. National Centre for Vocational Education Research.

Hollinsworth, D. (2016). Unsettling Australian settler supremacy: Combating resistance in university Aboriginal studies. *Race, Ethnicity and Education, 19*(2), 412–432.

Holt, L., & Morgan, R. (2016). Empowering Aboriginal aspirations in Australian university structures and systems. *Higher Education Research and Development*, *39*, 96–105. http://www.herdsa.org.au/publications/conference-proceedings/research-and-development-higher-education-shape-higher-9

Holt, L. (2021). *Talking Strong: The National Aboriginal Education Committee and the development of Aboriginal education policy*. Aboriginal Studies Press.

Howard-Wagner, D. (2019). Indigenous policy formation in the neo-liberal age? *Critical Race and Whiteness Studies Journal*, Inaugural issue.

Howitt, R., Holt, L., & Locke, M. L. (2022). Challenging the colonial legacy of/at macquarie geographical research. *60*(1), 71–85. https://doi.org/10.1111/geor.v60.110.1111/1745-5871.12496

Hughes, P. (1984). A call for an Aboriginal pedagogy. *The Australian Teacher, 9*, 20–22.

Hughes, P., & More, A. J. (2004). *Aboriginal ways of learning*. Paul Hughes.

Kahakalau, K. (2004). Indigenous heuristic action research: Bridging western and indigenous research methodologies. *Hulili: Multidisciplinary Research on Hawaiian Well-Being, 1*(1), 19–33.

Kelly, L. (2016). *The memory code: The traditional aboriginal memory technique that unlocks the secrets of stone henge, easter island and ancient monuments the world over*. Allen & Unwin.

Kidman, J. (2020). Whither decolonisation? Indigenous scholars and the problem of inclusion in the neoliberal university. *Journal of Sociology*, June 2020, *56*(2), 247–262.

Klapproth, D. M. (2004). *Narrative as social practice: Anglo-western and Australian aboriginal oral traditions*. Mouton de Gruyter.

Kovach, M. E. (2010). *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations, and contexts*. University of Toronto Press.

Macquarie Univeristy. (2019). Mudang Dali, indigenous connected curriculum framework. Retrieved from, https://www.mq.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/836164/MUDANG-DALI_IndigenousCurFramework_web.pdf

McMahon, K., Devlin, B. C., Kinslow-Harris, J., Devlin, N. R. F., & Harris, J. E. (2022). Mulmul—Flecks of foam in an everchanging educational world: Community-based participatory research. *Stephen Harris—Writer, Educator, Anthropologist: Kantriman Blanga Melabat (Our Countryman)* (pp. 235–249). Springer Nature.

Mitchell, J. (2011). In good faith? Governing Indigenous Australia through god, charity and empire. *Aboriginal History Monograph* (pp. 1825–1855). ANU Press.
Moreton-Robinson, A. (2013). Towards an Australian Indigenous women's standpoint theory: A methodological tool. *Australian Feminist Studies, 28*(78), 331.
Mulryan-Kyne, C. (2010). Teaching large classes at college and university level: Challenges and opportunities. *Teaching in Higher Education, 15*(2), 175–185. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562511003620001
Nakata, M. (1998). An Indigenous standpoint theory. In M. Nakata (Ed.), *Disciplining the savages: Savaging the disciplines* (pp. 213–217). Aboriginal Studies Press.
Perry, J. (2004). Learning through Indigenous identity, *International Journal of Learning, 11*, Article: LC04–0192.
Perry, L., & Holt, L. (2018). Searching for the Songlines of Aboriginal education and culture within Australian higher education. *The Australian Educational Researcher, 45*(3), 343–361. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-017-0251-x
Phillips, L. G., & Bunda, T. (2018). *Research through, with and as storying*. Routledge.
Preece, D., & Zhao, Y. (2016). Multi-sensory storytelling: A tool for teaching or an intervention? *British Journal of Special Education, 42*(4), 429–443.
Rowley, C. D. (1970). *The destruction of aboriginal society*. Australian National University Press.
Sticht, T.G. (1993). Educational uses of metaphor. In Ortony, A. (ed.), *Metaphor and Thought.* (pp. 621–632). Cambridge University Press.
Tugby, D. (1973). *Aboriginal identity in contemporary Australian Society*. Jacaranda Press.
Uhr, J., & Crowe, S. (2020). *Novel politics: Studies in Australian political fiction.* Melbourne University Press.
Ungunmerr Bauman, M. R. (2002). *Dadirri: Inner deep listening and quiet still awareness*. Emmaus Productions. Retrieved March 16, 2021, from http://nextwave.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Dadirri-Inner-Deep-Listening-M-R-Ungunmerr-Bauman-Refl.pdf
Universities Australia. (2011). *National best practice framework for indigenous cultural competency in Australian universities.* https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/uni-participation-quality/Indigenous-Higher-Education/Indigenous-Cultural-Compet#.W017ndIzaUk. Accessed 1 July 2020.
Utz, R. "The Songlines". The Literary Encyclopedia. First published 08 March 2001 https://www.litencyc.com/php/sworks.php?rec=true&UID=7782 accessed 24 July 2023.
Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods.* Fernwood Publishing.

Professor Leanne Holt is a Worimi/Biripi woman and has over twenty five years of experience in the higher education sector. Dr. Holt is the inaugural Pro-Vice Chancellor (Indigenous Strategy) and Adjunct Academic Fellow at Macquarie University. Her research focus areas are in Indigenous educational leadership and policy. She serves on a range of community and professional local, national and international boards, committees and government expert panels, focusing on the advancement of Indigenous education.

Dr. Joe Perry is Indigenous Academic Director Learning and Teaching at Macquarie University and has twenty eight years of experience in Indigenous higher education. His research focus areas are in Indigenous education, community development and history. He contributes cultural education to a range of community and industry organisations.

Chapter 4
Solitary Suffering: 'Imagined' Hierarchies in the New Ethos of a Neoliberal University

Naoko Araki

Abstract Pedagogy influences individuals' conceptual understandings and identity construction; in this respect, Japanese university educators are no different from any other international colleagues. However, every April cherry blossom season, eager Japanese first years enter universities in Japan. Full of aspirations and excitement (these students have strived to enter one of the few English-as-the-medium-of-instruction international universities), they come to an abrupt landing. The English-only campus environment presumes advanced levels of language proficiency in academic and social communication, adding to an already heightened, prevalent feeling of anxiety. Japanese university students are subject to the government's educational policy on globalising Japan to become more internationally competitive. The commodification of university students is nuanced and almost untraceable, yet as Aoki (Aoki et al., Curriculum in a new key: The collected works of Ted T, Routledge, 2004) points out as university educators pedagogically 'move away from the dominant technicity understanding of the world, and …reorient themselves to a world grounded in the dwelling place of humans' (p. 235), such positioning can invariably require resistance to institutional hegemonic discourse. Discussion in this chapter will critically examine how a neoliberal globalising context has shaped learning and teaching in higher education in Japan. The chapter is especially concerned with the challenge both personally and collectively that educators working in Japanese universities face when teaching and learning are grounded in a humanistic pedagogic orientation.

N. Araki (✉)
Akita International University, Akita, Japan

M. Vicars and L. Pelosi (eds.), *Storying Pedagogy as Critical Praxis in the Neoliberal University*, Rethinking Higher Education,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-4246-6_4

4.1 Introduction

Constantly questioning myself and my self-worth, blaming my limited English language proficiency became a daily habit when I was an international student at an Australian university. Even now, as an educator in a Japanese international university (where all courses are taught in English), added to my ingrained self-doubt is an emerging and more significant concern. I keep asking myself over the years, 'Am I contributing to the reproduction of 'solitary suffering' in my own students?' I coined the term solitary suffering to refer to a unique relationship between Japanese and English. In particular, it points to how individual students suffer from self-blame due to their perceived and misconstrued limited English expression for communication in both academic studies and general day-to-day interactions. This 'responsibilising of the self' (Peters, 2001) becomes an overwhelming personal feeling of disappointment, with students blaming everything on themselves and their shortcomings in the same way I did many years ago as an undergraduate studying overseas. I have witnessed many Japanese students suffering from similar psychological dissonance in an increasingly neoliberal educational setting in Japan. Their self-blame hangs upon unrealistic expectations such as taking 'too much time' in shifting academic expectations from secondary to tertiary education, failing to adjust quickly enough to unfamiliar pedagogical approaches offered by the international university in Japan, and experiencing a major linguistic shift from Japanese to English for daily communication and academic studies. Ironically, current Japanese university students are consumed by an overwhelming desire to be highly proficient in the English language while feeding extreme anxiety 'increasingly haunted by shame rooted in a nebulous sense of personal failure' (Rogers-Vaughn, 2016, p. 2). Predominant feelings of personal failure and self-shame became pronounced in individuals in the era of neoliberalism (Rogers-Vaughn, 2016). Listening to Japanese students' voices forces me to relive similar painful personal and academic experiences in Australia. Perhaps this is a timely opportunity as a pedagogue and educator interested in the complex intertwined nature between education, society and politics to theorise the distressing manifestations of doubt and shame as something more than just the growing pains of youth, inexperience or immaturity.

There is a connectedness between education and learning policy with the Japanese government's agenda and future political directions. Under the neoliberal political beliefs and directives of the Japanese government, the posture taken to youth is mirrored in much the same way as other nations as an 'appeal to personal "freedom" in the market agenda' of education (Connell, 2010, p. 28). At the same time, sole responsibility in learning has fully shifted to individuals, in particular for choosing educational paths based on decisions they were made to believe was solely theirs. One of the major differences between the recent past and present Japan is Japanese people's English language proficiency. It is crystallising as a precious commodity. In my professional capacity, I see students experiencing themselves 'as a commodity in a world of commodities' (Rogers-Vaughn, 2016, p. 2) unquestioningly embracing the Japanese government's English language framework narrative.

At times, I reflect with no little cynicism that my collaboration as a teaching member at such an English-focused academic institution contributes and reinforces neoliberal rhetoric. Such reflections often cause feelings of powerlessness, disappointment and grating frustration. Critical discussions in this chapter will be centred around how the idea of neoliberalism impacts individual learners and how the commodification of English language ability in Japanese learners is being justified. The main focus will demonstrate how this suffering is brought about in individuals through a variety of illustrative narrative depictions.

4.2 Commodification of English Language Ability

In my childhood living in a small countryside community in Japan in the 80s, those few who spoke English with fluency were regarded with great admiration. They were usually teachers or short-stay international visitors. By simple virtue of their ease with this foreign language, these lucky few were seen as better than others. Parents, teachers and the community hoped that their young people would become *kosumopolitan* 'cosmopolitan[1]' like these ideal individuals. In my adolescent eyes, I saw these individuals as having an automatic 'ticket/card' to freedom and unconditional acceptance that only 'winners' can possess. 'In the zero-sum game of global neoliberalism, Japanese people's English language proficiency creates an immediate division between "winners" or "losers"' (Araki & Senior, 2017, p. 32). This zero-sum game greatly influenced a young learner's mind in the 80s from my recollections and those of my peers. In the public discourse of Japan, acquiring high levels of the English language is the means for climbing a social ladder or rather, a *social and linguistic* ladder. English language proficiency is a valuable positional commodity that 'costs' in solitary suffering with each rung and yet is rarely discussed beyond the possible frailties of specific individuals.

I was born in a relatively large city in the southern part of Japan, spending my childhood in the countryside and my youth in the city. Nobody spoke English in daily conversations. English as a foreign language was only taught in secondary schools for six years as one of the compulsory academic subjects. During the six years, the main aim of English classes was to develop students' vocabulary and grammar-translation skills. There was no focus on communication skills at all. All I did was memorise spelling and grammatical rules for exams. My knowledge of the English language was based on the textbook English at that time. Attending a local school until Year 12 gave me certain views of Japan and the world; Japan was unique, and the world was a curious place outside of 'us'.

I was raised in a typical family: mother, father and one older brother. As an only daughter, I cannot remember when I started feeling my brother received much more parental expectations than I did. The choice of an educational institution given to me for senior high school and 'possible' tertiary education clearly differed from that of my brother. He received priority treatment simply because he was the only son. My father's words revealed this unspoken hierarchy when he declared that he could

not afford university tuition for me on top of my brother's. So I was asked to give up on getting a bachelor's degree. Instead, I was asked to choose whether I would attend a two-year vocational school or junior college (something in the way of a 'finishing' school, usually to prepare young women for marriage). I remember an urgent feeling that I needed to convince him otherwise but did not know how. The only thing I knew was that my new proposal had to be much more convincing than simply seeking permission to go to university. Otherwise, my father would think he would be wasting his money. It was clear that he did not see any real value in his daughter simply going to a Japanese university and getting a degree. A long negotiation started.

My new proposal was to study at a university in an English-speaking country. After extensive research on living costs and university tuition for international students, I suggested Australia as a country to study. I finally convinced him, presenting a detailed study plan for my tertiary education. One convincing reason was that the overall tuition fees and living costs were relatively cheaper considering the exchange rates at that time. Still, the main attraction for him was that his daughter would receive a degree in English. In his mind, a Japanese student with fluency in English was also seen as a 'hope' for future career employment in national and international settings. I remember feeling an enormous amount of responsibility for what I had proposed. The reality hit much harder later on. I underestimated how challenging it was to study and live in an unknown environment in another country without any support from my family and friends. I believed that after my undergraduate studies-acquired fluency in English, I would have better choices in my career than other Japanese people in my age group.

English was already seen as 'linguistically and economically desirable within Japan' (Araki & Senior, 2017, p. 32). As a senior high school student in Japan, it appeared to me that acquiring a high level of English language proficiency automatically offers a better future and economic status. My interest in learning English to become a fluent speaker grew in me while recognising the unspoken pressure and expectations as a woman in Japanese society. Studying abroad and acquiring a near-native English level, in particular, was a challenging task. The education I would receive in Australia would allow me to master the language. The aspiration and potential financial rewards of a successful business person were very appealing to a young girl with dreams of independence and mobility. Frankly, I knew it was one of the few convincing suggestions that would be considered acceptable among my restricted choices as a female.

Studying at a university in Australia was such a challenge. As an 18-year-old girl who had travelled only once with her family overseas before, navigating around the city, finding housing, and attending classes were too much to handle by myself. Although intercultural differences are to be expected, they were not the most challenging part to deal with. The most difficult task was the unfamiliar expectations in learning. The pedagogical shift from heavily relying on the transmission of knowledge to more discussion-based learning with the expectation of freely expressing critical thinking in written assignments made my study uncertain. I often thought to myself, 'I am struggling to understand how to approach assignments and writing

academic essays in Australia because I am not good enough'. Whenever I was asked about my opinions in class discussions, it caused a lot of internal agonising. I believed I did not know how to answer. Teachers in Japanese schools never invited critical discussion in class. Basically, students' opinions were not relevant or significant as teachers delivered the set national curriculum. My opinion seemed much more valued in class discussions and written assignments in Australia. Confusion consumed me. I was so afraid of speaking up. How did one go about such a thing? Was there a particular way to express such ideas? Was there a right way to do this? How come I didn't know how to do this? Firstly, I needed to process internally what my opinions were. I blamed limited English language proficiency as part of this conflict regarding self-expression. At that time, it did not strike me that I was being unrealistic; expecting myself to perform at the same level as other students who had been educated in Australia.

I had never written any essays in English, let alone in my first language, Japanese, at schools in Japan. In my first year of studying in Australia at a Foundation course for international students, I learnt how to write an academic essay for the first time in my life. Constant self-blame continued during my bachelor's degree years that it was my fault for not meeting the expectations at a university in Australia.

I truly believed that it was also my fault that I could not communicate fluently with other Australian students in English. My self-esteem was so low, but I knew going back to Japan was not a choice. Instead, I suffered and struggled to understand why it was so painful to study. One of my lecturers in the school of education, an older white woman, told me at the time that I should not be studying education in Australia as I had never experienced schooling here. She saw my unnatural English as a major problem. She went on to say that she would never leave her child in my class if I ever became a teacher in Australia. I felt humiliated. I felt small. I felt like a lesser person because perfect English fluency had alluded me after all the struggle and effort. I was deficient. She judged me not as a person but simply as a speaker of English. This occurred in my first year of study in my bachelor. I still had three more years of teacher education remaining, with ongoing teaching practicum experiences in addition. Overwhelming shame rendered me speechless in front of her.

I did not know how to explain my thoughts or defend my complex circumstances in English. I wanted to simply disappear. I chose to study education because I believed it allowed me to understand society and people in the multicultural nation of Australia. After this distressing experience, I eagerly sought academic support from the study skills centre at the university. The individual, regular support was excellent, and I began paying more attention to details; my essay writing became much more readable with a more explicit logical structure. At the same time, another professor encouraged me to speak up in class. After reading my essays, she recognised that sharing my pedagogical experiences in Japan in class would be valuable for other Australian students. She saw value in me beyond my limited English language. Regular teaching practicums in Australian schools greatly helped improve my English communication skills. By the time I successfully completed my bachelor degree and became a qualified teacher there, I began enjoying freely expressing my ideas in class and written assignments. I even felt delighted to discuss ideas.

I then recognised my English language proficiency and curiosity towards further studies at the Master level had increased.

Reflecting upon my high school years in Japan, pedagogy there focused on the memorisation of knowledge. No matter how much I studied with memorisation, I could not be the top student in my class. The amount of information I had to memorise was endlessly painful. I understood learning could be a painful process, but I was surprised that I enjoyed learning in my bachelor years in Australia. I was intrigued by reading reference materials, exploring the views of others, creating possible connections from my own understanding and experiences, and synthesising ideas. Each process was intellectually stimulating. My achievement proved to me that my English language proficiency as an EFL learner could not be the only source of judgement on the individual's personal and academic growth.

Writing the above narrative was painful. In hindsight, given the pedagogical differences between Japan and Australia, taking time to adjust to a new learning environment seems a natural reaction. Reflecting on the above experiences gives me an opportunity to teach different expectations in learning and that educational culture differs from country to country. The differences and their effects should be taught more explicitly. Educational institutions have a responsibility to provide such cultural and pedagogical insights, yet since the process of education (Connell, 2013) has become a neoliberal commodity, figuring out such differences and adjustments are well and truly 'the responsibility of the self' (Peters, 2001). The humiliation I felt when the education lecturer 'counselled' me came from a sense of exclusion. The neoliberal commodification of education or learning requires winners and losers, those who have made the grade and those who do not. There must be a strong and unquestionable sense of what is at stake: what product is up for sale. In my case, I had bought the dream of an ideal *cosmopolitan* education replete with impeccable English. The kind of English that would give me entry into the hallowed circle of native speaker proficiency. Without such crude differentiations, there can be no easily recognisable product on offer, so the 'inherently socially inclusive' (Connell, 2013, p. 105) practice of education becomes one in the exercise of power.

Interacting with Japanese students in and outside the classroom at an international university where I teach nowadays reminds me of the psychological anguish I experienced back in Australia as an undergraduate student. My current university offers a liberal arts-focused curriculum in an English-only pedagogical environment within Japan. Its curriculum is considered unique and highly prestigious. It is expected that Japanese students' English language proficiency will reach a relative or *native level* within the four-year curriculum, including the completion of a mandatory one year studying abroad program at a partner university outside Japan. The university invites international students from its partner universities worldwide to study in Japan for a half year or full year. Studying on such an international campus aids the prestige attached to this learning environment, and entry is highly competitive. Not having to leave Japan for extensive periods to gain such an immersive environment is an excellent improvement from the past. Still, it also signals a greater entrenchment of the *cosmopolitan* ideal. Although our students' aspirational wishes to make it into

such a university become a reality, all too soon, I have recognised the indications of self-blame and self-proclaimed deficiency in English proficiency.

These students are under extreme pressure to improve their English and adjust to life on an English-only campus within one or two semesters in their first year. Unlike other universities in Japan, the international university where I teach focuses on developing students' critical thinking and most assignments are based on essays written in English. Japanese students who were educated solely in Japan struggle. They often face a dilemma and self-criticism in the process of shifting to a different pedagogical expectation in discussion-based class and written expression. Echoing my own earlier educational experiences at school in Japan, these students still experienced education and teaching with an emphasis on knowledge as transmission. Their experience with writing essays even in Japanese is still extremely limited. It appears not much has changed since I was in school.

Some Japanese students I teach in the first-year academic writing class come to my office for consultation about their essay writing, but the more I interact with them I realise their struggles are not only with language proficiency. Most students in my class are used to getting high scores in English but somehow they cannot seem to make such grades at the university. They believe studying very hard with English textbooks will increase their vocabulary and as a consequence their academic writing will improve. Prior to coming to the university, their studies focused on paragraph writing; the approximate 300-word paragraph for a tertiary entrance exam.

In the first year of their academic course, they are required to write several essays of more than 1000 words. They also struggle when they are asked for their opinions in class discussions. They are good at answering straightforward questions directly relating to the homework readings but they struggle with critical discussion questions. When I ask them to elaborate upon their contributions they look either tense or struggling to compose a neutral face. It appears that their thoughtfulness comes to a sudden halt. But my own experience all those years ago with that education lecturer tells me otherwise. They often confide later that they are not sure what to say; that this is the very first time they have participated in discussion-based learning. Some students confess that they were too concerned about giving the right answer. They are preoccupied with what they might be expected to contribute. One illustrative episode I remember was when some discussion questions in class were about questioning government policy on social issues. Some students said the policy was 'good' or 'bad', their reasons based on what the media had focused upon. I continued questioning: 'how does this policy impact on you, your family, or your community?' My aim was for them to feel more involved as many did not even think they were allowed to criticise the government's policy. After some quiet deliberation, a few admitted that the policy would not be effective. At the same time, they were stunned with themselves criticising and questioning the government. Their default mind-set seemed to be one of unquestioning acceptance of government policy. Similar confusions and struggles can be seen in their essay-writing process. As they read more academic sources, they report everyone's opinions in printed source matter but not their own. I remember some students asking me how they can find their own opinions. Is this *deja-vu*?

Pedagogical practices are a significant and powerful influence on individual students' identity constructions. These Japanese students (as did I when in Australia), received a particular style of education that sublimates learners' opinions in the classroom. It can be said that such pedagogical experiences send an unconscious message to students that their opinions are less worthy and possibly not worth sharing. This is the central idea of pedagogical oppression asserted by Paulo Freire (2013). These students understood that their opinions do not matter, as preparation for high-level university entrance exams based on the transmission of knowledge was the sole focus of their high schools. The Japanese term they use when reflecting on these circumstances, *shoganai*, ("that is just the way it is") explains the limited opportunity to share their voices in daily learning at school.

Conditioning learners in such a way creates its own consequences, especially with regard to English language learning. The positionality and commodification of English in Japan means that for some of my students, there is an almost unconscious expectation that their intercultural and linguistic skills will automatically improve once they enter the English-only university. They believe as long as they complete their assignments, learning is *given*, not *earnt*.

Some students asked in class why, given my experience in Australia: teaching in schools, completing a PhD, and working in academia, I decided to come back to Japan to teach. They saw the idea of lecturing in Australia as a more ideal situation. In their eyes, it is rather disappointing to see a Japanese person with English fluency returning to Japan. Their view is that I gave up on an admirable international employment opportunity. I had 'won': a high enough level of English proficiency to work, research, and teach internationally. In their mind, working outside Japan is the height of the cosmopolitan idealised dream.

4.3 Commodification and Nativispeakerism

With all the aspirations and desires of becoming international, Japanese students believe English fluency is the only path to success. In their view, nobody can be international if their English is not fluent enough. Some students' responses to my early semester questions demonstrate their perceptions of becoming international: they chose the English-only university in Japan as they wish to communicate in English with *native* speakers of English so that their English language proficiency will reach a native speaker level. The relationship between Japanese people and *native* speakers of English is a unique and complex fixation strongly associated with English language learning (Houghton & Rivers, 2013). It could be said that the ideologies of native and non-native speakers in Japan is 'priori' (Seargeant, 2013, p. 336). This 'phenomenological reality' (ibid.) creates 'the perceptions of the "us and them" mentality by casting teachers' (Yphantides, 2013, p. 208). The phenomenon of native speakers of English in Japan further causes conflict within language learners and in educational institutions that Kubota and Fujimoto (2013) claim perceptions being so 'powerful…[and] complex…that racial and linguistic self-identities can conflict with

perceived or imposed identities in a devastating way' (p. 204). One deeply ingrained belief Japanese learners have is that being taught by native speakers in English-only learning environment is the most effective way of improving their English proficiency for communication (Yphantides, 2013). Japanese students I teach in the English-only university in Japan have *bought into* an idealised dream; a 'ticket' for faster learning of English at an institution where more than half of academics are international and where there are many Japanese academics with educational qualifications from overseas universities. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) in Japan encourages English-only pedagogical policies in educational institutions. One of the annual requirements my university has for MEXT is to report the number of international conferences academics attend to ensure 'international standard' are being maintained. I, as a non-native speaker of English, question the divide of international (English) and domestic (Japanese) conferences. If the purpose of the report is to ensure the promotion of academic intellect, in my view creating such conflicts of 'them and us' is not necessary. It would simply count the numbers of conferences that academics attended and presented their paper. The commodification of English is also seen at an administration and micro policy level of the Japanese tertiary institution; that English, as a commodity, is far more worthy than Japanese.

The conflicts caused by the native vs. non-native speaker phenomenon impact on individual learners as well as educators in English Language education in Japan. Imagined yet fixed native speaker ideology triggered my ingrained self-doubt a few years ago.

Standing and looking around a lecture hall filled with native speakers of English from the central stage suddenly triggered ingrained self-doubt. I was invited by the local ministry of education to give a keynote lecture on English language education in Japan to a large group of native speakers of English, the assistant language teachers for English language classes in public schools in a rural area of Japan. An educational officer from the local ministry explained in meetings prior to the lecture that some of them have been in Japan for less than one year but others have been teaching English for the past three to five years. They have a degree from a university back in their countries but they are not qualified teachers. All eyes were fixed on me. My inner voices overflowed and whispered, 'Are you sure your lecture will be interesting to them?' 'They are all native speakers, but I am not. Would they listen to me?' 'They might think my English is not clear enough as soon as I start talking'. I am very surprised by my self-doubt dragging myself down to a deeper darker space. I feel like I am forced to be back in my first year of university in Australia.

Where on earth does this self-doubt suddenly come from? I lectured many times in front of so- called *native* speakers of English. I taught undergraduate and graduate students back in Australia. I even supervised PhD candidates there. I offered a range of professional development workshops for teachers in Australia and Singapore. Why now? Why here, suddenly? Why am I feeling so small and powerless? I need to change my mind-set quickly before I begin my lecture. I see a glass of water at the lecture stand and have a sip of water to ignore my self-doubt before it consumes me with exhaustion.

The ingrained self-doubt was so influential that the priori phenomenon (Seargeant, 2013) of native speakerism became very real to me in the above episode. A couple of weeks later, one of my colleagues at the university mentioned he had met some of the assistant teachers attending my lecture and they commented on the content of my lecture being insightful, with critical views on English language education. In their opinion, the annual lecture had become mundane but stated that it was highly engaging this year. I felt relieved. The main aim of my lecture was to remind these assistant teachers of the positionality of the English language in the context of Japan and its impact and overwhelming unspoken pressure on the teachers and learners. I hope that a better understanding of the specific context and deeply ingrained psychological agony Japanese learners and teachers have would help these non-Japanese teachers to be 'pedagogically regarded' (van Manen, 2016) and perhaps be more compassionate when they are confronted with Japanese students' hesitations and concerns in their allocated school.

4.4 Conclusion

The competitive nature of neoliberalism throws individuals into a *river* of commodities. With the concept of native speakerism and the commodification of English in Japan, individuals' country of birth and English as the first language spoken from birth can be considered highly valued commodities. The highly valued commodities are closely related to racial hierarchy as seen in Kubota and Fujimoto's (2013) research findings that 'racial, cultural and linguistic identities [of active English speakers in Japan] are…fixed and static' (p. 204), closely relating to the idea of 'white supremacy'. When such commodities are associated with racial identities, they become unreachable for individual Japanese who do not belong to the group of commodified races. The competition with endless goals of chasing unrealistic commodified ideology can be imagined and imposed through education.

Yet, a society like Japan openly sells the commodified idealised dream to individual learners of English. When commodification occurs, the existing norms and values change, and that imagined linguistic and social hierarchy is reconstructed according to the valued commodities at that time of era. In this sense, commodification is fluid and changeable. It can be said that Japanese learners keep swimming the *river* of commodities with the belief that one day, if only they strive hard enough, they will be able to reach a native or near-native level of English. This swimming competition is endless and will continue as long as access to English language education is offered for sale. Individual learners are suffering much more from 'the responsibility of the self' (Peters, 2001) in exacerbation of neoliberalising society. On the bright side, I am in a position as a pedagogue in a tertiary educational institution, to open dialogues with university students about solitary suffering. Openly discussing my experience may raise awareness of the unspoken or hidden impacts of neoliberalism. It would perhaps stop individuals from further isolation or self-blame.

Note

1. 'cosmopolitan' was a popular term being used at that time to describe someone who had international connections. It was often associated with English language, not any other languages.

References

Aoki, T. T., Pinar, W. F., & Irwin, R. L. (2004). *Curriculum in a new key: The collected works of Ted T*. Routledge.

Araki, N., & Senior, K. (2017). Japanese students' experiences of the internationalisation of education in Japan. In N. Araki (Ed.), *Diversity in Japanese education* (pp. 31–41). Sense Publishers. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6351-059-2_3

Connell, R. (2010). Understanding neoliberalism. In S. Braedley & M. Luxton (Eds.), *Neoliberalism and everyday life* (pp. 22–36). McGill-Queen's University Press.

Connell, R. (2013). The neoliberal cascade and education: An essay on the market agenda and its consequences. *Critical Studies in Education, 54*(2), 99–112. https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2013.776990

Freire, P. (2013). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Houghton, A. S., & Rivers, J. D. (2013). *Native-speakerism in Japan: Intergroup dynamics in foreign language education.* Multilingual Matters. https://doi.org/10.21832/9781847698704-018

Kubota, R., & Fujimoto, D. (2013). Racialized native speakers: Voices of Japanese American English language professionals. In S.A. Houghton & J. D. Rivers (Eds.), *Native-speakerism in Japan: Intergroup dynamics in foreign language education* (pp. 196–206). Multilingual Matters. https://doi.org/10.21832/9781847698704-018

Manen, M. V. (2016). *Pedagogical tact: Knowing what to do when you don't know what to do.* Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315422855

Peters, M. (2001). Education, enterprise culture and the entrepreneurial self: A Foucauldian perspective. *Journal of Educational Enquiry, 2*(2), 58–71.

Rogers-Vaughn, B. (2016). *Caring for souls in a neoliberal age.* Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-55339-3

Seargeant, P. (2013). Ideologies of nativism and linguistic globalization. In A.S. Houghton & J. D. Rivers (Eds.), *Native-speakerism in Japan: Intergroup dynamics in foreign language education* (pp. 231–242). Multilingual Matters. https://doi.org/10.21832/9781847698704-021

Yphantides, J. (2013). Native-speakerism through English-only policies: Teachers, students and the changing face of Japan. In A. S. Houghton & J. D. Rivers (Eds.), *Native-speakerism in Japan: Intergroup dynamics in foreign language education* (pp. 207–216). Multilingual Matters. https://doi.org/10.21832/9781847698704-019

Dr. Naoko Araki is a Professor of Education at Akita University, Japan. She has a specialist interest in the use of drama in the teaching of English as an additional language.

Chapter 5
The Posthuman University: A Sign of Our Times

Gabriele Griffin

Abstract In the spring of the year when bird flu or SARS broke out in China and spread across the globe, the research-intensive university at which I taught at the time issued an edict that all teaching materials and detailed session plans were to be put online for the September of that year so that in case members of staff fell ill (and died?), the courses could proceed anyway. Staff complied. Online materials also of course obviate the need to be present at lectures or seminars. In many UK universities 'lecture capture', the recording of lectures so that those unable to attend can watch them at their leisure, has become commonplace. And since this is automated, it requires precise start and finish times—the automation, in a sense, of the teaching process itself. The drive here is potentially towards the people-less, posthuman university, an evacuated dispersed space in which all connection is mediated and made via the traceable internet. This contrasts interestingly with recent eruptions around the globe—in Hong Kong, in Chile, in India—where students and staff have come together, organized and demonstrated to protest contemporary socio-political, economic and climate conditions and policies. This chapter explores questions of the posthuman university in an age when dispersal of community (e.g. academic community) as a function of technologization and the retrenchment of the public sector is challenged by political, economic and climate developments that require the re-formation of community.

5.1 Preamble

17 March 2020: Uppsala University, where I work, has the following notice on its internal homepage: 'Prepare for the possibility of working at home by taking your computer home with you and ensuring that you can use Zoom for meetings. Here you will find information about Zoom and how to get started'. In fact, we have already moved to distance working in most matters of teaching, and colleagues

G. Griffin (✉)
Centre for Gender Research, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden
e-mail: gabriele.griffin@gender.uu.se

M. Vicars and L. Pelosi (eds.), *Storying Pedagogy as Critical Praxis in the Neoliberal University*, Rethinking Higher Education,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-4246-6_5

are trying, to some extent collectively but also individually, to think through how to complete this academic year's teaching (2019–2020) which ends in June 2020 via technologized means. Uppsala University is not a distance-learning university ('Fernuni' in German, the 'Open University' in the UK) and hence not really set up to handle distance learning and teaching at a stroke from one day to the next. A colleague tells me that so many staff are trying to use Zoom that the system cannot cope. It is also not practical to use Zoom for lectures with hundreds, or even just a hundred, students. Many staff in conventional higher education institutions (HEIs) have no or very limited experience in using distance-learning tools beyond one-on-one sessions with (usually) postgraduates via skype.[1]

The expectation that staff can and will readily adopt technologies they have had no training for, and will comply with what are at times completely unreasonable directives from university managements, has been part of a longer-term turn in higher education under the auspices of the neoliberalization of universities and the so-called new public management, supported by digital technologization. The digitization of many learning and teaching, not to mention research-related, processes, together with their ever-heightening digitized bureaucratization, has led to a situation where staff have become laminated to their computers and institutions demand perpetual presence, most particularly in the anglophone sphere, both for them and for their 'customers', the fee-paying students. At the last UK university I taught at we were told that we were expected to answer student emails within 48 hours and that we could not put an automated email on stating we were 'on vacation' or at a conference or similar because of its effect on information flows and email boxes. Simultaneously the digital processes to which we were required to respond grew exponentially, whether this be online marking, the online processing of one's travel and other claims, or responding online to endless demands to fill in diverse and unconnected databases related to research and other forms of productivity, thus demanding the labour-intensive repeated replication of mind-numbing online form-filling of the same information in a similar or near-identical form. Coming from a range of directions such requirements, presented as if they were 'the only one' each time a new request appeared, multiplied alarmingly. Together with the widespread abolition of physical meeting spaces such as senior common rooms, and the establishment of processes such as the infamous Research Excellence Framework and the Teaching Excellence Framework in the UK, this process has resulted in the production of 'people who are [for the most part] unable and unwilling to revolt because they do not see the way to autonomy and solidarity because of the precariousness, anxiousness and competition that are linked to the present organization of work' (Berardi, 2017: 111). This was the seed ground for contemporary measures to combat the coronavirus. As these measures spread, and governments and educational and other institutions were seeking to fall in line with the recommendations of epidemiological and public health experts, we experienced a moment when teaching and research in higher education was changed beyond all recognition due to a virus and governmental reactions to this, though for how long was unclear. But there are telling antecedents to the coronavirus scare (Lau and Ross, 2020). Roll back to 2008.

5.2 Introduction

In the spring of 2008 when bird flu or SARS broke out, yet again, in China and spread across the globe, the research-intensive university in the UK at which I taught at the time issued an edict that all teaching/learning materials and detailed session plans were to be put online for the September of that year (the new academic year) so that in case members of staff fell ill (and died?), the courses could proceed anyway. Staff complied, even as they grumbled, more because of the large amount of unexpected additional labour without significant institutional support than because of any implications of doing so for the university as a knowledge community. There was little or no discussion of any effects that this might have on student–teacher relations, on the learning or knowledge co-production process, on the changing specificities (I can no longer use the word 'nature' here) of knowledge production and delivery. And yet there is a vast literature on the 'effects of distance learning on teacher student relations': this key phrase search in Google Scholar threw up 1,030,000 hits alone. Most of these texts assume an e-learning or distance-learning environment (e.g. Cho et al., 2017; Gray & DiLoreto, 2016; Hernández-Sellés et al., 2019; Luo et al., 2017). Few engage with distance learning as a form of crisis management tool for non-distance-learning institutions in exceptional circumstances, or in the aftermath of this. Where they do, 'crisis' usually relates to war (e.g. Milić et al., 2019), civil unrest (e.g. Okopi & Pindar, 2013) or natural disasters such as earthquakes (Dabner, 2012; Mackey et al., 2012) rather than to epidemics such as SARS or the coronavirus. In the latter cases, it is not clear if distance learning is to be used as a temporary tie-over until the crisis subsides or if it is to become, or morph into, a permanent fixture. But in March 2020, as I write, HEIs in the UK and in Sweden, the two learning environments I am most familiar with, are engaging in what Deterala and Villar (2019) term 'improvisational methodologies' where directives are issued on a day-by-day basis about how learning and teaching is to be conducted, and for periods individually determined by HEIs. Hence it is not clear what the future is of the learning processes that staff in non-distance learning higher education environments are being asked to adopt ('use Zoom for meetings'—and what about teaching?). Will they be temporary or are they going to become the new normal? Between the start of this text and this point, a few hours later on the same day, Uppsala University had moved, on its intranet, to recommending teaching at a distance.[2]

5.3 Coping with an Epidemiological Crisis: Technologizing the Teaching and Learning Process

In 2008 we were asked to put all teaching materials online. This is not exactly the case at Uppsala University in March 2020, but distance learning/teaching *is* recommended to achieve 'social distancing' and retard the spread of spread of the coronavirus. 'Social distancing' is a phrase that came to the fore in the early 2000s in the context

of disease control (see Baum et al., 2009; Caley et al., 2008; Glass et al., 2006; Kelso et al., 2009; Reluga, 2010; Sun et al., 2011). Its potential as a means to break infection circuits (Ahmed et al., 2018) has made it an obvious tool in combatting epidemics. This, however, does not tell us much about the effects, medium- or long-term, of the use of this measure on work environments or teacher–student relations. But social distancing achieved through distance learning and teaching does have consequences.

Perhaps one of the most telling examples of this, in our age of mass education, is the history of MOOCs (massive open online courses). Siemens (2015) describes how in the US, where significant public de-funding of higher education was threatening the survival of many universities from the early post-2010s, MOOCs were the 'subject of unprecedented hype' from the autumn of 2011 until around 2014, suggesting that 'traditional higher education was dead' (viii). However, by 2015 this early enthusiasm had subsided, tampered by the recognition that MOOCs had 'high dropout rates, limited social interaction, heavy reliance on instructivist teaching, poor results for underrepresented student groups and so on' (xiv). MOOCs were not all they had been cracked up to be.

I want to pause on the issue of 'limited social interaction' as one of the critiques of MOOCs. Online materials of courses obviate the need to be physically present in a learning encounter, face-to-face at lectures or seminars; this is one effect of the social distancing that distance learning encourages. Skype and Zoom, the currently indicated preferred modes of communication in the 2020 coronavirus crisis, often tend to work best, especially Skype, when the camera/video is turned off, and the more participants are involved, the greater that necessity.

In other words, you can choose between hearing participants or seeing them—if multiple people are involved, having both is frequently a technological problem. Here social interaction becomes of necessity limited, and in more ways than one.

It should also be noted that the phrase 'social interaction' does not capture the specificities of any given social interaction. Are we talking about physical presence? Or online presence? And quite what kind of online presence? Responding to blog posts, for example, is one type of social interaction. So is responding to a student's email. But are these the social interactions referenced here when 'limited social interaction' is raised as a point of critique of certain types of distance learning?

5.4 Lecture Capture: The Answer?

Following the 2008 SARS crisis, many non-distance learning UK universities began to practise 'lecture capture', the recording of lectures so that those unable to attend could watch them at their leisure. Since extensive learning support material such as detailed lesson plans, annotated reading lists, coursework material, etc. was already online as an effect of measures taken when SARS occurred, lecture capture was just one more addition to the remotification of learning/teaching that was already under way. Lecture capture has become fairly commonplace (Williams et al., 2013); in many HEIs it is obligatory (Evans & Luke, 2020). It is part of the digital learning

process (Siemens et al., 2015) that has now been established at HEIs. This appears to reduce estate costs, and flexibilize learning to accommodate students' supposed needs such as combining work and learning, and family and learning. It also decouples the production of learning materials from their consumption, enabling viewing-on-demand (might we arrive at a situation of 'pay-per-view'?) and increases HEIs' ability to surveillance their staff, retain the learning materials and copyright of materials produced by staff as part of their work, and control the timeliness and quality of staff's teaching and learning outputs. Institutionally it answers perfectly to the neoliberalization, marketization, individualization and audit culture of higher education (Strathern, 2000).

'Lecture capture' as a practice and process has specific impacts on how one teaches. Staff who have not done it, tend to worry about 'saying the wrong thing' and feel stressed by the prospect of being recorded (Bond & Grussendorf, 2013; Secker et al., 2010). This issue is a common response to any form of recording—the fear of the documenting for public consumption of any form of inappropriateness haunts many. Anecdotal evidence indicates that students themselves do not like to be thus captured in interactions with staff. One of the most used platforms for lecture capture is the worryingly named Panopto—'Panopto' being strongly reminiscent of the panopticon Michel Foucault (1977) describes so vividly in his depiction of prison surveillance. But, more to the point for this chapter perhaps, since lecture capture is automated, it requires precise start and finish times—the automation, in a sense, of the teaching process itself. This also goes for student–teacher interactions during 'lecture capture'. Staff members can stop the recording while engaging with someone and then start it again when they go back into lecturing mode. Overall, spontaneous interaction loses out in this process (Dommett et al., 2019; Williams et al., 2013), especially when it is not the usual mode of learning.

Lecture capture also has negative consequences for student attendance. Edwards and Clinton (2019) for example report that:

> Data collected from a matched cohort before (N = 161) and after (N = 160) lecture capture introduction showed that attendance substantially dropped in three matched lectures after capture became available. Attendance, which predicts higher attainment (controlling for students' previous grade and gender), mediates a negative relationship between lecture capture availability and attainment… the net effect of lecture capture introduction on the cohort is generally negative; the study serves as a useful example (that can be communicated to students) of the pitfalls of an over-reliance on lecture capture as a replacement for lecture attendance. (p. 403)

Others such as Bosshardt and Chiang (2016) and Dommett et al. (2019) report more mixed results regarding the value and usage of lecture capture. One thing though is very clear: if students rely on or mainly use lecture capture, or viewing on demand, they minimize social interaction with others, at least in that context (but see Evans & Luke, 2020, for a different take). But what does it mean that students can view lectures at their leisure whenever they want?

There is some research to suggest that lecture capture can work well for students who are disabled and/or suffer from anxieties (Dommett et al., 2019), for example, and that captured lectures are viewed more frequently when students revise for exams.

But overall, the drive here is potentially towards the people-less, posthuman university, an evacuated dispersed-in-spacetime location in which all connection is mediated and made via the traceable internet. Here I use 'posthuman' in the sense of a space without humans, or rather, without community. A growing body of research on the use of lecture capture suggests that it is best used as part of a blended learning strategy involving both classroom and peer interaction *and* digital learning (Evans & Luke, 2020; Ranasinghe & Wright, 2019; Wood et al., 2020). The issue of community—community of inquiry, community of practice, knowledge community—is in question here.

5.5 The Posthuman as Entanglements of the Human, Non-Human and Material

But there is, of course, another meaning of 'posthuman', one that points towards the entanglements of the human, the non-human and the material (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2013). 'Posthuman' here takes on a rather different meaning, disrupting the idea of a binary (e.g. 'traditional', classroom-based, face-to-face *versus* digital, de-spatialized, dispersed online teaching/learning). Instead it points to the imbrication of materiality, the human and the non- human, and articulates its intra-action (Barad, 2007). Such intra-action makes itself felt at points of crisis when taken-for-granted modes of teaching and learning interaction are challenged by the prevailing conditions—such as is the case in the 2020 coronavirus crisis. In many countries schools and universities were closed from one day to the next, exams were abandoned or refigured, and teaching and learning shifted online. With Strom et al. (2018) we might describe this in terms of diffraction 'which, scientifically, refers to the way phenomena change upon meeting a barrier' (36). During the current coronavirus crisis and in the SARS epidemic referred to above, a range of practices including teaching and learning met the barrier of health-related proscriptions of contact avoidance and social distancing. According to Strom et al. (2018), 'As a mode of inquiry, mapping diffraction patterns requires attending to not just instances of difference [i.e. the sudden requirement for digital learning modes in universities that are not distance-learning institutions], but also their effects – that is, what they produce… the processes of becoming-different and becoming-otherwise in relation to a constellation of material and discursive factors' (36). One effect of the epidemic crises we have faced and are facing is the requirement for social distancing and the unanticipated use of digital learning tools. And an effect of this is individual isolation, dispersed learning and a loss of community of inquiry.

5.6 Bringing (Academic) Community Together: Technology Use in Times of Socio-Political Crisis

This loss of community contrasts interestingly with recent eruptions around the globe—in Hong Kong, in Chile, in India—where students and staff have come together, organized and demonstrated, to protest against contemporary socio-political, economic and climate conditions and policies (e.g. Dey, 2019; Law, 2019; Lee & Sing, 2019; Mega, 2019; Normile, 2019; O'Connor, 2020; Qi et al., 2019; Somma & Medel, 2019; Von Bülow et al., 2019). Here digitality worked against the dispersal of community (i.e. the academic community); rather, digital activism provided the opportunities to form (new) strategic political alliances and to organize for change. In these instances we are also dealing with crises, socio-political rather than epidemiological ones, and with the academic community going online to come together for the purposes of resistance. Here the posthuman university understood as the imbrication of materiality, the human and the non-human, manifests itself as responsive to crisis by mobilizing, just as at times of epidemiological crisis, digital tools and technologies to react against (rather than to) a given situation. Edwards et al. (2013) define 'digital activism as an organized public effort, making collective claim(s) on a target authority(s), in which civic initiators or supporters use digital media' (4). Their research suggests that 'Facebook, Twitter and YouTube' are 'the most popular tools for digital activism' with regional variations around the world regarding preferred tools such as e-petitions, dependent on infrastructure, access, levels of income, etc.

University staff and students, as well as others of course, then use different digital tools in cases of political rather than epidemiological crisis, and to different ends: one to disperse community, the other to bring community together. In both cases, however, similar questions are raised, for instance, what is the purpose of using digital tools in the learning or activist context (see e.g. Ciszek, 2016), what are the most effective digital tools in any given situation, how can you ensure substantial engagement by the users (Lăzăroiu, 2018) and how can you ensure that online engagement translates into meaningful offline action or learning (e.g. Melki & Mallat, 2014), what are the (long-term) benefits of, and problems with, online media?

In 2020 there are no easy answers to these questions, not least because we live in an age of rapid technological advancement and change, in which the current generation of decision-makers, that is anybody over the age of 45, at most levels and in most contexts, are digital autodidacts, meaning that they were adult by the time digital tools such as blogs (1994), Skype (2003), Twitter (2006) and the IPhone (2007) appeared, with no ready education in their use. This means that their relation to digital tools is rather different from that of 'digital natives' who grew up with social media as part of their digital tool socialization. Further, from the late 1990s onwards continuing professional education (CPE) as it was called in some contexts, or staff training, here in new technologies, in universities as much as elsewhere receded as part of the general casualization of academic staff who were expected instead to find things out

by themselves, learn on the job, or not at all (as the YouTuber mentioned in endnote one also ironically comments on).

Those aged 40 and below, by contrast, have grown up in an extensively technologized world, and it shows in their use of digital tools (Mora, 2014; https://ourworldindata.org/rise-of-social-media. Accessed 24 March 2020). Many, especially in affluent societies, have grown up using social media as tools for networking; this has prepared them for being part of 'networked publics' (Boyd, 2010), a useful prerequisite to becoming digital activists (Palfrey et al., 2011). The opportunities this affords to seek to influence diverse kinds of social justice issues have been extensively documented (see e.g. the essays in Joyce, 2010). They show how a whole range of digital tools bring people together with the potential of acting in consort, for example, through signing e-petitions, or through gathering for the purposes of demonstrations. In affluent countries university staff and students who have access to the requisite hardware and software, have frequently and extensively been involved in digital activism (see Cabrera et al., 2017; Costa, 2018; Lipton, 2019; Suwana, 2019; Treré, 2018). The affordances of the internet and mobile phones—easy, instant communication with potentially vast numbers of others, the replicability of messages and their globalized spread—has made online engagement a ready means of reaching out to others. Phrases such as 'smart mobs' (Rheingold, 2007) and 'crowd-sourcing' reference the very fact of the potentially large numbers of people involved. They say, however, little about the relations among those who form part of that crowd. They highlight that certain issues, topics, or foci—whether these be state or police corruption, election fraud, individuals' need for support (fiscal or otherwise) to help with medical interventions, education, etc.—capture the imagination of many people and engage them sufficiently to respond to a call to contribute by signing something, in monetary form, through advice, or by participating in offline actions. Mora (2014: 3) cites Brodock et al. (2009) who 'in a study of activists around the world… found that social networks are the preferred point of entry or gateway of digital activism'. In other words, digital activists use pre-existing connections or communities to spread the word about their concerns. Edwards et al. (2013) also found that social networks were the most popular applications used for digital activism. This is important because it signals the production of a building-block effect in digital activism, where such activism proceeds from a prior connection and a related implicit trust-of-source derived from that prior connection to effect activist responses.

Nonetheless, as many commentators on digital activism indicate, we know little as yet about how online and offline activism inter-relate even if, as Edwards et al. (2013) suggest, 'Digital activism has a demonstrated, positive impact on drawing people to the streets to protest, especially when civil society groups use digital tools and changing government policy is the goal' (4). Indeed, Etling et al. (2010) distinguish between the role digital tools play 'in facilitating the flow of *information*' and their role in 'social *organizing* for activist groups, for example linking together individuals via Facebook' (38; emphasis as in original). Etling et al.'s comment concerns online social organizing, but Edwards et al.'s point above implies a desirable connection between online digital activism and in-the-street protest. And indeed, in the context

of political and social justice campaigns, the question of online consumption and interaction *versus* offline action and engagement looms large.

5.7 Online and Offline: A Complex Interrelation

Edwards et al.'s assertion that 'Digital activism has a demonstrated, positive impact on drawing people to the streets to protest…' entails the notion that digital activism is about getting people out, getting them to move offline 'to the streets to protest'. Similar comments can be found in discussions of election campaigns and their (un)successful use of online media (e.g. McGuire, 2018; Melki & Mallat, 2014). The implication is that online activism alone, the physio-spatially dispersed, atomized engagement of individuals is insufficient to further whatever cause adequately. As Karpf (2017), writing about the use of data analytics in various forms of digital activism, puts it: 'analytic activism can certainly help you mobilize a crowd, but (at least so far) it is less useful for organizing that crowd into a movement or converting that movement energy into long-term victories' (Karpf, 2017: 22) In Karpf's terms organizing is about the depth of engagement which, he argues, cannot necessarily be measured adequately by certain kinds of digital analytics such as numbers of clicks. This is partly because of the fact that clicktivism is a solitary activity. It is not about community. Karpf argues that 'The bulk of digital activism does not rely on repeated interaction or collaboration within a community of interest. It instead consists of watching a tragedy unfold on our screens and receiving a missive from an activist organization inviting us to take action through our screens… They generate political activity, but little political interactivity, which in turn limits the community-building and deep, identity-based ties that social movements generally rely on' (Karpf, 2017: 137). And there is the rub—for only through community building and interactivity do sustained, deep engagement and commitment manifest themselves. Karpf cites the organizer Cesar Chavez who said: '"I only know one way to organize, and that's to talk to one person, then another person, and then another." Organizing, in other words, is about relationship-building through intentional conversation' (Karpf, 2017: 165)'. One might describe learning and teaching in a similar way, as being about 'relationship-building through intentional conversation'. And this, I would argue, can get lost when situations such as epidemiological crises encourage HEIs to demand instant online solutions to their students' teaching and learning needs from staff largely untrained and unpractised in the effective use of such tools.

Karpf does not dis digital tools; rather, he seeks to produce a complex picture of the relation between online work/effects and offline work/effects. The two are entangled in the ways in which the posthuman has been understood since Donna Haraway's (1991) groundbreaking *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women.* That entanglement, however, also has to entail a community—of practice, of enquiry, of knowledge—not merely the atomization of click experiences. Online social sharing—the number of times a

message or video is liked or retweeted—is useful but not enough; the use of the word 'social' here only too readily gives the impression of a community where there is in fact none. 'Technologies of refraction' (Karpf, 2017: 10) do just that—they do not necessarily bind. This is why Zhu et al. (2012) argue for the need to foster group identification when seeking to engage people online, and McGuire (2018: 27) states that 'For every Tahrir Square, many more movements like Kony 2012 and Occupy Wall Street grew to massive scale but faded and disappeared…'.

5.8 By Way of Conclusion: Lessons for the Posthuman University

Online media allow the re-formation of community in ways that are still relatively new to us. Their most important feature is the ability to reach large numbers simultaneously and instantaneously. This has been more effective in cases of political than in cases of epidemiological crisis, as the comparison of the effectivity of MOOCS compared to, say, electoral campaigns makes clear. Karpf has argued that 'Social sharing is not an alternative to traditional media. It is an access point into the hybrid media system...' (Karpf, 2017: 121) We might take this statement by Karpf as one of the lessons for the posthuman university. The dispersal of community in spacetime effected by the use of online media for teaching and learning or activist purposes needs a counterbalance in real-life interaction, whether this be some form of in-class engagement or in-the-street action. Even distance-learning HEIs, for instance, tend to have summer schools or weekend seminars to support their students' learning experience. 'Blended learning' (Mackey, 2012; Aladwan et al., 2019) therefore has become one answer to the issue of creating engagement and commitment in education that (also) relies on online media. 'Posthuman', then, cannot mean depopulated, a personless space. Most people can only endure so much social distancing as studies of solitary confinement show (Grassian, 1983; Haney, 2018, 2019). 'Putting everything online' is hence not the straightforward solution HEIs might be hoping for in times of epidemiological crisis, and it is also not a long-term solution to the demands of neoliberalism.

An important lesson from the use of online media in political activism is its basis in pre-existing networks and established relationships. In many university education systems interactive group learning is undertaken only in very limited ways (sitting through a frontal lecture together does not foster group interactivity). But if HEIs want to create the bases for using online media in times of epidemiological crisis among their students, this requires re-thinking pedagogical techniques (Appana, 2008) to foster much greater face-to-face group interactivity among students at times of non-crisis so that these groupings can then be mobilized when emergencies occur. The swift succession of SARS by Covid-19 indicates that in a globalized world such epidemiological crises are likely to recur, and HEIs need to be better prepared for this.

This also means taking another hard look at staff's continuing professional development, importantly regarding digital teaching tools. Expecting everybody to go online with everything within 24 hours is simply unrealistic. As I write many questions regarding issues such as examinations in times of epidemiological crisis etc. remain unresolved because the need for remote examinations and all that this might entail had simply not been considered by HEIs.

Managers who make decisions regarding these issues often have little or no, or very remote understandings of what the practicalities of these processes involve. Spending a prescribed amount of time per year at the academic coalface might help them gain a better understanding of what their frontline colleagues have to deal with on a day-by-day basis. Such understanding might also aid the re-formation of academic communities, bringing management staff and academics closer together and with a shared understanding of what a posthuman university fit for the twenty-first century might demand of everyone.

Notes

1. For an ironic take on this, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CCe5PaeAeew where an academic staff member elaborates on this.
2. SARS was first identified in 2003 (see https://www.who.int/csr/sars/en/. Accessed 17 March 2020).

References

Ahmed, F., Zviedrite, N., & Uzicanin, A. (2018). Effectiveness of workplace social distancing measures in reducing influenza transmission: A systematic review. *BMC Public Health, 18*(1), 518.

Aladwan, F., Al-Shboul, M., & Al Awamrah, A. (2019). Distance education, blended learning, and e-learning: Predictions and possibilities. *Modern Applied Science*, *13*(2).

Appana, S. (2008). A review of benefits and limitations of online learning in the context of the student, the instructor and the tenured faculty. *International Journal on E-Learning, 7*(1), 5–22.

Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the universe halfway.* Duke UP.

Baum, N. M., Jacobson, P. D., & Goold, S. D. (2009). "Listen to the people": Public deliberation about social distancing measures in a pandemic. *The American Journal of Bioethics, 9*(11), 4–14.

Berardi, F. B. (2017). *Futurability: The age of impotence and the horizon of possibility*. Verso.

Bond, S., & Grussendorf, S. (2013). Staff attitudes to lecture capture. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/54870/1/libfile_REPOSITORY_Content_Bond,%20Stephen_Staff%20attitudes_Bond_Staff%20attitudes_2013.pdf. Accessed 18 March 2020.

Bosshardt, W., & Chiang, E. P. (2016). Targeting teaching lecture capture learning: Do students perform better compared to face-to-face classes? *Southern Economic Journal, 82*(3), 1021–1038.

Boyd, D. (2010). Social network sites as networked publics: Affordances, dynamics, and implications. In Z. Papacharissi (Ed.), *A networked self* (pp. 47–66). Routledge.

Braidotti, R. (2013). *The posthuman.* Polity Press.

Brodock, K., Joyce, M., & Zaeck, T. (2009). Digital activism survey report 2009. *DigiActive Research Series: DigiActive.*

Cabrera, N. L., Matias, C. E., & Montoya, R. (2017). Activism or slacktivism? The potential and pitfalls of social media in contemporary student activism. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 10*(4), 400.

Caley, P., Philp, D. J., & McCracken, K. (2008). Quantifying social distancing arising from pandemic influenza. *Journal of the Royal Society Interface, 5*(23), 631–639.

Costa, C. (2018). Digital scholars: A feeling for the academic game. In Y. Taylor & K. Lahad (Eds.), *Feeling Academic in the neoliberal university: Feminist flights, fights and failures* (pp. 345–368). Palgrave Macmillan.

Cho, M. H., Kim, Y., & Choi, D. (2017). The effect of self-regulated learning on college students' perceptions of community of inquiry and affective outcomes in online learning. *The Internet and Higher Education, 34*, 10–17.

Ciszek, E. L. (2016). Digital activism: How social media and dissensus inform theory and practice. *Public Relations Review, 42*(2), 314–321.

Dabner, N. (2012). 'Breaking Ground' in the use of social media: A case study of a university earthquake response to inform educational design with Facebook. *The Internet and Higher Education*, *15*(1), 69–78.

Deterala, S., & Villar, E. B. (2019). Knowing from a Distance. *PRISM: Casting New Light on Learning, Theory and Practice*, *2*(2), 4–19.

Dey, A. (2019). Sites of exception: Gender violence, digital activism, and Nirbhaya's zone of anomie in India. *Violence Against Women.* https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1077801219862633. Accessed 18 March 2020.

Dommett, E. J., Gardner, B., & van Tilburg, W. (2019). Staff and student views of lecture capture: A qualitative study. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education, 16*(1), 1–12.

Edwards, M. R., & Clinton, M. E. (2019). A study exploring the impact of lecture capture availability and lecture capture usage on student attendance and attainment. *Higher Education, 77*(3), 403–421.

Edwards, F., Howard, P. N., & Joyce, M. (2013). Digital activism and non-violent conflict. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2595115. Accessed 21 March 2020.

Etling, B., Faris, R., & Palfrey, J. (2010). Political change in the digital age: The fragility and promise of online organizing. *SAIS Review of International Affairs, 30*(2), 37–49.

Evans, G., & Luke, K. (2020). Lecture capture and peer working: Exploring study practices through staff-student partnerships. *Research in Learning Technology*, *28.* http://orca.cf.ac.uk/129824/1/2314-Article%20Text-14086-1-10-20200219.pdf. Accessed 18 March 2020.

Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison.* Random House.

Glass, R. J., Glass, L. M., Beyeler, W. E., & Min, H. J. (2006). Targeted social distancing designs for pandemic influenza. *Emerging Infectious Diseases, 12*(11), 1671.

Grassian, S. (1983). Psychopathological effects of solitary confinement. *American Journal of Psychiatry, 140*(11), 1450–1454.

Gray, J. A., & DiLoreto, M. (2016). The effects of student engagement, student satisfaction, and perceived learning in online learning environments. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation, 11*(1), n1.

Haney, C. (2018). The psychological effects of solitary confinement: A systematic critique. *Crime and Justice, 47*(1), 365–416.

Haney, C. (2019). Solitary confinement, loneliness, and psychological harm. In J. Lobel & P. Scharff Smith (Eds.), *Solitary confinement: Effects, practices, and pathways toward reform* (pp. 129–152). Oxford University Press.

Haraway, D. J. (1991). *Simians, cyborgs, and women: The reinvention of nature*. Free Association Books.

Hernández-Sellés, N., Muñoz-Carril, P. C., & González-Sanmamed, M. (2019). Computer-supported collaborative learning: An analysis of the relationship between interaction, emotional support and online collaborative tools. *Computers & Education, 138*, 1–12.

Joyce, M. (Ed.). (2010). *Digital activism decoded: The new mechanics of change* (p. 2010). New York.

Karpf, D. (2017). *Analytic activism: Digital listening and the new political strategy*. Oxford University Press.

Kelso, J. K., Milne, G. J., & Kelly, H. (2009). Simulation suggests that rapid activation of social distancing can arrest epidemic development due to a novel strain of influenza. *BMC Public Health, 9*(1), 117.

Lau, J. & Ross, J. (2020, February 17). Universities brace for lasting impact of coronavirus outbreak. *The Times Higher Education Supplement*. https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/universities-brace-lasting-impact-coronavirus-outbreak. Accessed 17 March 2020.

Law, W.-W. (2019). *Politics, managerialism, and university governance: Lessons from Hong Kong under China's rule since 1997*. Springer.

Lăzăroiu, G. (2018). Participation environments, collective identities, and online political behavior: The role of media technologies for social protest campaigns. *Geopolitics, History, and International Relations, 10*(2), 58–63.

Lee, C. K., & Sing, M. (Eds.). (2019). *Take back our future: An eventful sociology of the Hong Kong umbrella movement*. Cornell University Press.

Lipton, B. (2019). Academics anonymous: Blogging and feminist 'be/longings' in the neoliberal university. In A. Tsalapatanis, M. Bruce, D. Bissell, & H. Keane (Eds.), *Social beings, future belongings* (pp. 43–58). Routledge.

Luo, N., Zhang, M., & Qi, D. (2017). Effects of different interactions on students' sense of community in e-learning environment. *Computers & Education, 115*, 153–160.

Mackey, J., Gilmore, F., Dabner, N., Breeze, D., & Buckley, P. (2012). Blended learning for academic resilience in times of disaster or crisis. *MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, *8*(2), 35–48.

McGuire, B. (2018). Political organizing in the digital age: why campaigns need to integrate traditional and digital organizing. *Kennedy School Review, 18*, 25–33.

Mega, E. R. (2019). What the protests and violence in Chile mean for science. *Nature, 575*(7782), 265–266.

Melki, J., & Mallat, S. (2014). Digital activism: Efficacies and burdens of social media for civic activism. *Arab Media and Society, 19*, 1–14.

Milić, A., Ranđelović, A., & Devetak, S. M. (2019). Training of command staff for the use of units in crisis situations based on the application of modern technology. *Vojno Delo, 71*(5), 26–40.

Mora, F. A. (2014). Emergent digital activism: The generational/technological connection. *The Journal of Community Informatics, 10*(1), 1–19.

Normile, D. (2019). Hong Kong protests hit universities. https://science.sciencemag.org/content/366/6468/935. Accessed 18 March 2020.

O'Connor, L. (2020). Digital activism and the increased role of Dalit activism in intersectional feminism in India. *Undergraduate Journal of Politics, Policy and Society, 3*(1), 134–155.

Okopi, F. O., & Pindar, J. (2013). Motivators of students' persistence on distance learning programmes in ethno-religious crisis states in Nigeria: Implications for counselling. http://oasis.col.org/bitstream/handle/11599/1914/2013_Okopi&Pindar_Motivators.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y. Accessed 29 March 2020.

Palfrey, J., Gasser, U., Maclay, C., & Beger, G. (2011). Digital natives and the three divides to bridge. In *The state of the world's children*, 50–70. https://www.unicef.org/sowc2011/pdfs/Digital-Natives.pdf. Accessed 24 March 2020.

Qi, H., Jiang, H., Bu, W., Zhang, C., & Shim, K. J. (2019, December). Tracking political events in social media: A case study of Hong Kong protests. In *2019 IEEE International Conference on Big Data (Big Data)* (pp. 6192–6194). IEEE. https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/abstract/document/9006462. Accessed 18 March 2020.

Ranasinghe, L., & Wright, L. (2019). Video lectures versus live lectures: Competing or complementary? https://spiral.imperial.ac.uk/bitstream/10044/1/67111/2/Video%20lectures%20versus%20live%20lectures%20competing%20or%20complementary.pdf. Accessed 18 March 2020.

Reluga, T. C. (2010). Game theory of social distancing in response to an epidemic. *PLoS Computational Biology*, *6*(5). https://www-ncbi-nlm-nih-gov.ezproxy.its.uu.se/pmc/articles/PMC2877723/. Accessed 29 March 2020.

Rheingold, H. (2007). *Smart mobs: The next social revolution.* Basic Books.

Secker, J., Bond, S., & Grussendorf, S. (2010). Lecture capture: Rich and strange, or a dark art? http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/29184/2/Lecture_capture_(LSERO_version).pdf. Accessed 18 March 2020.

Siemens, G. (2015). The role of MOOCs in the future of education. In C. J. Bonk, M. M. Lee, T. C. Reeves & T. H. Reynolds (Eds.), *MOOCs and open education around the world* (pp. viii–xvii). Routledge.

Siemens, G., Gašević, D., & Dawson, S. (2015, January). Preparing for the digital university: A review of the history and current state of distance, blended, and online learning. Technical report. https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.3515.8483. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/284023691_Preparing_for_the_digital_university_a_review_of_the_history_and_current_state_of_distance_blended_and_online_learning. Accessed 17 March 2020.

Strathern, M. (Ed.). (2000). *Audit cultures*. Routledge.

Strom, K., Mills, T., Abrams, L., & Dacey, C. (2018). Putting posthuman theory to work in collaborative self-study. In D. Garbett & A. Ovens (Eds.), *Pushing boundaries and crossing borders* (pp. 35–41). Creative Commons. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Esther_Enright/publication/334174219_It's_a_Balancing_Act_A_Self-Study_of_Teacher_Educators'_Feedback_Practices_and_the_Underlying_Tensions/links/5d1bd20ca6fdcc2462bac9ca/Its-a-Balancing-Act-A-Self-Study-of-Teacher-Educators-Feedback-Practices-and-the-Underlying-Tensions.pdf#page=35. Accessed 17 March 2020.

Somma, N. M., & Medel, R. M. (2019). What makes a big demonstration? Exploring the impact of mobilization strategies on the size of demonstrations. *Social Movement Studies, 18*(2), 233–251.

Sun, C., Yang, W., Arino, J., & Khan, K. (2011). Effect of media-induced social distancing on disease transmission in a two patch setting. *Mathematical Biosciences, 230*(2), 87–95.

Suwana, F. (2019). What motivates digital activism? The case of the Save KPK movement in Indonesia. *Information, Communication & Society*, 1–16.

Treré, E. (2018). The sublime of digital activism: Hybrid media ecologies and the new grammar of protest. *Journalism & Communication Monographs, 20*(2), 137–148.

Von Bülow, M., Vilaça, L., & Abelin, P. H. (2019). Varieties of digital activist practices: Students and mobilization in Chile. *Information, Communication & Society, 22*(12), 1770–1788.

Williams, B., Pfeifer, J., & Waller, V. (2013). Lecture capture: Student hopes, instructor fears. In *ASCILITE-Australian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education Annual Conference* (pp. 913–924). Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education. https://www.ascilite.org/conferences/sydney13/program/papers/Williams.pdf. Accessed 18 March 2020.

Wood, A., Symons, K., Falisse, J. B., Gray, H., & Mkony, A. (2020). Lecture Capture in Online Learning: A Community of Inquiry Perspective. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338953199_Lecture_Capture_in_Online_Learning_A_Community_of_Inquiry_Perspective. Accessed 18 March 2020.

Zhu, H., Kraut, R., & Kittur, A. (2012, February). Organizing without formal organization: group identification, goal setting and social modeling in directing online production. In *Proceedings of the ACM 2012 Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work* (pp. 935–944).

Dr. Gabriele Griffin is Professor of Gender Research at the Centre for Gender Research and Extraordinary Professor of Gender and Africa Studies at the University of the Free State, South Africa. Her research focuses on women in research and innovation, gender and technology, female entrepreneurs, women's cultural production, feminist research methodologies, non-normative

identities, and higher education and disciplinization. From 2017–2022 she was Coordinator of the Nordforsk-funded Nordic Centre of Excellence NORDWIT. She also coordinates the SIDA-funded capacity-building project on gender mainstreaming, with the partners Eduardo Mondlane University, Mozambique and Free State University, South Africa. In 2016 she completed a reference work on Gender Studies for Oxford University Press.

Chapter 6
Who's Zoomin' Who? A Slightly Farcical Take on the Rush to Online Learning in the Managerial Academic Era

Kip Jones and Mark Vicars

Abstract Online learning is in no way the holy grail, though some university's now think so. The Covid-19 pandemic has provided yet another opportunity for higher education management to work its magic behind smoke and mirrors—this time, the smoke and mirrors being the virtual environment. Well-meaning academics' online teaching efforts during the pandemic have been surreptitiously commandeered by university management to change their playing field.

They've recycled these early make-do attempts at online delivery into a feasible and applicable educational plan. They use their resurrected virtual classroom concept to convince the market of 18-year-olds that this online activity portends a glorious university future for all—and that future for the most part will be online.

6.1 Introduction

A faculty Dean subsequently informed his flock that online teaching during the lockdown had been so successful that it would be continued ad infinitum as the best solution since sliced bread for future engagement with students. A university in England is moving one of its faculties into its largest ever new build—its design is based entirely on principles of the open office, shared workspace and hot desking. Plan ahead, right?

The following report appeared online about students' anxieties as expressed on Twitter as they wondered if there will ever be a return to learning on campus:

K. Jones
Bournemouth University, Poole, England

M. Vicars (✉)
Victoria University, Melbourne, VIC, Australia
e-mail: Mark.Vicars@vu.edu.au

M. Vicars and L. Pelosi (eds.), *Storying Pedagogy as Critical Praxis in the Neoliberal University*, Rethinking Higher Education,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-4246-6_6

We've been forced out of accommodation we have paid for, lectures either online or just completely cancelled and there's a chance we will miss out an entire year to online uni like at Cambridge University. £9250 for a zoom call (Woodham, 2020). From listening to students on the ground, it seems to me that they want the full uni experience, in a physical environment, with all the bells and whistles. That means an interactive involvement with their lecturers, yes, but also with their peers. What students actually expect and look forward to is what Tansy Jessop expressed so well:

Students in face to face contexts (enjoying) an expansive experience of chatting on the way to class, in the library and laboratory, and in various hang outs, where so many deep conversations take place. These (encounters) shape who students are and who they will become (Jessup, 2020).

All this scheming and planning for online universities is happening by means of incessant Zoom meetings. Meanwhile, early reports of extreme stress and burnout are coming back from academics about Zoom specifically—from both its use in teaching during the pandemic and from those too many, 'all-so-necessary', meetings (Jiang, 2020).

Meanwhile, youth, always ahead of the game, know how to creatively invent their own online doppelganger and feign attendance in an online classroom, change screens, and go have a wank. The whole point to an 18-year-old leaving home to go to uni is just that. Going away, not living in your parent's basement with a laptop ad infinitum like so many of the previous generation did following graduation. Listen to the customer. They will never pay full whack for this online education dreamt up by uni management without meaningful consultation with their consumers.

On the darker side of the omnipresent university staff/management struggle is the constant and consistent use of a kind of therapeutic advisory role (the 'Agony Auntie') that management has conjured up to handle any staff complaint or resistance to their operational methods. They use a technique known as 'gaslighting'. In other words, instead of responding to any complaint or criticism, their response is to advise the complainants that perhaps something is amiss with them and how they might go about 'fixing themselves'. This is never done directly by senior management. Rather a committee or team is set up with the sole purpose of 'promoting' these kinds of self-awareness-as-fix-it schemes. This is often done using social media to disseminate this 'advice'. Lifelong practices such as mindfulness—a Zen Buddhist concept—are reduced to hashtags. Use of other feel-good touchy-feely musings follows, posted on Facebook and Twitter platforms. Hashtags abound, morphing into what I call a murmuration of 'happiness hashtags'. What began as concerns, complaints or even suggestions to improve workplace practices evolve into instruction on how the complainants can solve their problems by mending their ways, simply being happier, repeating a mantra (retweet the hashtag) and practising being more 'human', whatever that means.

6.1.1 Writing 'Zoom'

We often recommend that academics read the contemporary fiction of conceptual novelists such as Michael Kimball (*Big Ray, Dear Everybody*) in order to unleash creativity and a new, uncluttered way of using language in their academic writing. His lean style and exquisite choice of phrase attracted me because it is similar to the necessity of brevity in scriptwriting. I often recommend that academics try writing their narrative in an alternative format—a play, a poem or a film script.

> *I believe that, on the whole, the writing up of our projects should be ancillary …; the text should never be the main output. For me, more interesting as documents are the scripts themselves, the notes or the diagrammatic evidence that our projects leave behind as a kind of trail, trace or map. When we do publish, these sorts of records certainly hold more relevance for me. I am more and more convinced these days that any academic written texts reporting our (research) efforts … should be supporting ancillary documents to our productions, not the other way around and certainly not the final results or raison d'êtres of our investigative efforts.* (Jones, 2012)

We began by experimenting with formats from other disciplines such as the humanities and arts, including poetry, scriptwriting, advertising and journalism. This then evolved into writing more clearly, more simply and even more creatively when writing for academic publications. This doesn't mean that we simply join in these arts-led methods by routinely repeating what are by now shop-worn words in our academic outpourings such as 'rigour', 'robust', 'thick', 'embodied' and 'evocative' to express our emotive tendencies. Most of those words have been repeated ad infinitum in academic outpourings for more than 20 years now, degenerating into no more than code words signalling membership in a particular scholarly community. They have become words without force.

In what follows, a script takes you on a light-hearted romp through an early virtual meeting on 'Zoom' in the era of Covid-19. Try as they might, managers are not equal to human nature, which takes over the session. There is a reference to a famous film and the two characters from it. See if you recognise them. Take the script, use it, perform it yourself or especially with others. Our work is meant to end up in the hands of the audience or reader, not on a shelf.

Zoom

By Kip Jones

Hal

(In his best presentational voice)

Okay. Ready for our regular meeting.

Using Zoom today.

Everybody ready and willing?

(*laughs to himself*)

Tracy

Hello? You there?

Can you hear me?

Dick

I'M HERE! CAN YOU SEE ME?

Ethel

My screen just went dark. Are you still there?
(*beat*) Oh, never mind.
There you all are!

Hal

Is the whole team assembled?
There should be about 12 of us, but I am only seeing
five of you.

Tracy

Yeah. You have to have your photo turned on …
Or something.

Dick

Is it working now? I wore a tie for this!

Bev

Sorry I'm late. I have brought the little one
along. She's colicky.

Gladys

Oh, that's always a difficult time.
Turn your camera on, Bev! I can't see the baby.

Hal

We have a lot to get through this morning.
Could we get started?

Tracy

I was going to ask if I could bring at least one
of the kids. We're home schooling them.

Dave

Yes. I have been working on numeracy
with mine already today.

Hal

Could you all turn your cameras on?
We can't see you.

Dave

Oh. I haven't really dressed yet.
I thought this was more like texting.

Bev

What are you wearing, Dave?

(giggles)

Dave

Well, PJ bottoms and a T shirt.

Oh. And slippers.

Bev

Very sexy!

Hal

(*clears throat*)

As I said, the agenda is quite full.

Gladys

Is that your kitchen, Hal?

We were thinking of those kinds of cabinets.

Hal

Yes.

Gladys

They look good in glossy white.

What did you use for backsplashes?

Hal

(annoyed)

Another time, perhaps?

Tracy

Dick, are you in an office?

Dick

Yeah, it's my home office. I built it under the stairs.

Mostly to have a place away from the kids.

Tracy

Yes, I can hear them in the background.

Screaming, are they?

Dick

Yes. It's part of a game I think. (*beat*)

Oh, fuck! The dog just bolted in!

Tracy

What kind is it? It looks like a Lab?

Dick

It's a mix. Lab and Collie I think.

Sorry for saying 'fuck'.

Hal

No need for apologies, but could we get on?

Elenore

Hello, everybody! Can you see me?
(*Hellos, etc*)
Sorry I'm late. I finally booked a food delivery.
And they just came.

Tracy

You look shattered, Elenore.
Everything okay?

Elenore

Yes, mostly. It's just getting used to all of this.
I get a bit teary at times.

Tracy

Yes. Seems never to end.

Hal

And we are the lucky ones.
Working at home and still getting full pay.

Dave

You say that. I'm not so sure.
The anxiety level is miles high.

Hal

Well, maybe if you washed and dressed, Dave.

Dave

Thanks boss. I'll take that on board.

Hal

Sorry. I didn't mean to sound harsh.
It's hard times for all of us.
(*pauses, then*)
We've written a short paper about
maintaining our mental health.
Should I circulate it again?
(*muttering and unclear voices*)

Bev

I've just realised how many
books are on the shelves behind you, Tom!

Dave

Yes, running out of room!

Bev

Have you read them all? *(beat)*
Or are they just for show?

Hal

Okay, gang! That's about enough
chit chat. Shall we make a start?
The clock is ticking, and we have a lot
to cover today.

(more mumbling, then)

ON SCREEN: "We are sorry but your allotted free time on Zoom has expired. If you would like to pay for more time and continue, please click 'continue' at the top of the page".

Hello?
Are we still on? What do I do now?
I can't see any of you.
My screen has gone black!
I didn't get to wave good-bye!
I always wave good-bye!
Your voice is fading, Dave!
(*beat*)
Hello, Hal? Do you read me?
The End.

References

Jessup, T. (2020, June 2). Let's loose the deficit language about online education. *WONKHE*. Available at https://wonkhe.com/blogs/lets-lose-the-deficit-language-about-online-education/

Jiang, M. (2020, April 22). The reason Zoom calls drain your energy. *BBC Worklife*. Available at https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20200421-why-zoom-video-chats-are-so-exhausting

Jones, K. (2012). Ch. Short film as performative social science: The story behind 'princess margaret'". In P. Vannini (Ed.), *Popularizing research*. Peter Lang Publishing.

Woodham, L. (2020, April). Students are full freaking out at the idea of uni lectures being online next year. *The Tab*. Available at https://thetab.com/uk/2020/05/21/lectures-being-online-next-year-student-reaction-157898

Dr. Kip Jones was a Reader in Performative Social Science/Director Centre for Qualitative Research at Bournemouth University A pioneer in Performative Social Science, Kip Jones corpus of work made a compelling case for the potential of arts-based social science to reach audiences and engage communities. Kip sadly passed away in November 2021.

Mark Vicars Ph.D. is an Associate Professor in the College of Arts and Education at Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia and Honorary Adjunct Professor at the Research Institute of language and culture of Asia, Mahidol University, Thailand. Following 24 years of working in education in several countries, with 15 of those in higher education, Mark has extensive international, multi-sector experience of teaching and learning, embodied, blended and online, as well as a solid track record of team and curriculum leadership. He is highly experienced in developing international strategy on teaching and learning in Australia, Asia and the UK, generating international opportunities for collaborative partnerships focused on the teaching/research nexus. He has developed research affiliations and education partnerships internationally to deliver educational workplace training and research. Mark's philosophy of praxis is underpinned by principles of social justice and he has proven success in leadership in tertiary educative contexts and has substantial experience in providing quality and innovation in learning. As a scholar, researcher, teacher Mark is dedicated, innovative, and passionate about creative, research-oriented professional journeys and community engagement. He is intrinsically motivated and enjoys working collaboratively in dynamic, creative environments. Mark's teaching is highly evaluated, based on a commitment to working with students from diverse countries, cultures, socio-economic and educational backgrounds. Throughout his career, Mark has produced an integrated body of work that has fundamentally been focused upon engaging with teacher-learners through a transformative student experience.

Chapter 7
Higher Education Under the Siege of Neoliberalism

Pierre Orelus

Abstract Neoliberalism is ideologically pervasive permeating public and academic discourses and many institutions, including higher education (Morrish and Sauntson, Academic irregularities: language and neoliberalism in higher education, Routledge, 2019). Since the late 1970s, neoliberalism has been part of debates revolving around institutional reforms (Harvey, 2007; Stiglitz, 2019). These reforms include transforming public schools into charter schools for corporate interests (Darder, 2018; Giroux, 2018; Giroux, 2019). Neoliberalism has also been part of renovation discourse in higher education justifying the takeover of college and university campuses by *Starbucks, Barns and Noble*, and *Dunkin Donut,* as well as the construction of fancy buildings, particularly business schools, sponsored by corporate banks and other corporate institutions (Schugurensky, Arnove and Torres (eds), Comparative education: The dialectic of the global and the local, Roman & Littlefield, 2007; Stiglitz, 2019). On a larger scale, neoliberalism has also been loosely used in conversations centred around the economic prosperity of both Western and non-Western countries. For example, the so-called fair trade agreement between the United States, Canada—two powerful developed countries—and Mexico—a developing country—has been part of neoliberal debates focused on the development of developing countries (Chomsky, Hegemony or survival: America's quest for global dominance, Holt Paperbacks, 2004; Harvey, 2007). This is to say that economic and political progress has been associated with neoliberalism. Finally, elitism, classism, gentrification, exploitation of the vulnerable, and the destruction of the environment through so-called technological renovation are part of the conversations centred around neoliberalism (Kelly, 2019).

P. Orelus (✉)
Fairfield University, Fairfield, CT, USA
e-mail: porelus@fairfield.edu

M. Vicars and L. Pelosi (eds.), *Storying Pedagogy as Critical Praxis in the Neoliberal University*, Rethinking Higher Education,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-4246-6_7

7.1 Introduction

This chapter draws from relevant literature and excerpts from interviews conducted with various expert scholars on neoliberalism to examine its effects on people's lives, including those labouring in the academy. Specifically, this chapter unravels the manner in which neoliberalism has impacted the culture of higher education, including the priorities and executive neoliberal decisions of university presidents, provosts, and deans to allow private companies owned by the corporations aforementioned to take over the consumerism and capitalism culture, including the omnipresence of corporate bookstores, dining rooms, and other arenas so as to increase revenues for the colleges and universities they are serving. In examining such culture, including the manner in which it has affected faculty, students, and administrators, the chapter offers an alternative perspective on higher education along with suggestions to combat it that might serve readers across race, gender, ethnicity, social class, and nationality.

7.2 Rethinking Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism has been brought up in political debates for decades. Since the 1970s, neoliberal discourses have been crafted and sold to Third World Nations to make them believe in the Western version of economic prosperity (Chomsky, 1999, 2004). In more recent history, particularly soon after Mao Zedung died in 1976, the so-called communist Chinese government started implementing neoliberal policies in all of China. Ever since, China has been expanding such policies in Africa and the Caribbean leading to the economic dependency and subordination of these regions and the exploitation of vulnerable workers there (Antwi-Boateng, 2017). This is to say that neoliberalism has been central to the economic prosperity of powerful countries, like the United States, the UK, Germany, France, Russia, and, more recently, China (Antwi-Boateng, 2017).

Neoliberal policies have served mainly the rich, namely the CEOs of major corporations like *Disney, Walmart, and Nike*, while workers from the masses have been exploited in factories around the world. In other other words, neoliberal policies have led to the economic misery of millions around the world, while enriching a few. These policies have enriched the few by supporting wars alongside the gun industry leading to millions of deaths of innocent people in the world, including the United States. Masked through economic progress empty speeches, neoliberalism has been infiltrating educational, socio-economic, and political institutions, including schools and the workplace, resulting in inequitable and unequal distributions of resources among people, including students and workers (Rogers-Vaughn, 2016). Indeed, neoliberalism has affected the school system and many countries' economies, particularly

those of formerly colonised and currently occupied countries. The educational, socio-economic, and political disaster that neoliberalism has caused around the world need to be an outcry, as the world has been affected by it, but sadly the ones controlling the wealth of the world have refused to listen, as such disaster serves them.

In her acclaimed book, *Disaster Capitalism*, Klein (2010) argues that the architects of neoliberalism, including the CEOS of major corporations aforementioned, have used institutions, like higher education and the corporate media, as pawns to sell and promote neoliberal ideology in business/economic schools particularly. As a result of the neoliberal model that colleges and universities have been following, professors have been hard-pressed to write grants that have financially benefited these institutions—they receive a percentage roughly up 20% of each grant secured by faculty and/or administrator. Neoliberalism primarily works for corporations and institutions, including higher education, and the rich CEOS while severely impacting poor factory and sweatshop workers (Morrish & Sauntson, 2019). As this chapter underscores, although these workers might be the most affected by the cruel effects of neoliberalism, students, faculty, administrators, and staff labouring in colleges and universities around the world have, too, been affected (Moriarty, 2019; Orelus, 2018, 2020).

7.3 The Corporate Model of Higher Education Exposed

Over the last two decades or more, universities and colleges have been following and implementing an externally imposed corporate and militarist model of education (Aronowitz, 2001; Schugurensky, 2007). The corporate takeover of higher education and the intensified focus on using the knowledge factory in the service of military innovations can best be understood as a consequence of competition between capitals. That is, since before Columbus washed up on the shores of Haiti in 1492, European powers used military force to conquer lands and gain access to resources, labor, and potential markets (Malott & Orelus, 2015).

This militarist and corporate atmosphere at many universities and colleges is what many educators, including the author herein, have witnessed and experienced. Doors of many universities and colleges have been widely opened to corporations, that is, the business world (Aronowitz, 2001). In his breakthrough book *Knowledge Factory,* Aronowitz (2001) eloquently describes the way many universities have followed a corporate model of education aiming to prepare students for the labor force, thus making it much more challenging for progressive educators to do critical work. According to Aronowitz, the content of the curriculum in many schools and the choice students make regarding their majors reflect the logic of the market. Aronowitz argues, "In most cases, their choices of major and minor fields are informed by a rudimentary understanding of the nature of the job market rather than by intellectuals, let alone intellectual passion" (p. 10).

Since higher education began feeling the neoliberal pinch around the mid-1990s, there has been increasing pressure for professors to engage in profitable research.

Consequently, professors who bring capital (i.e., grant money) to their institutions are more often the ones who are rewarded and held in high esteem. Those who refuse to sell their souls and minds to corporations but instead decide to question the status quo often do not receive the credit and respect they deserve, even when they are prolific writers, great researchers, and profoundly committed to teaching and helping students to become critical citizens (Orelus, 2018, 2020). Worse yet, they are too often the first ones to be denied tenure and promotion.

With regard to the ongoing presence of militarism on college and university campuses, McLaren (2011), a dissident voice in academia, argues There is increasing militarism in the universities, much stronger links to military projects and programs, with officers training programs, with the Pentagon providing funds for research; we can all agree that public funding for universities is drying up, that the quality of our universities is suffering in its overall academic programs, especially the liberal arts sector, that, in effect, the universities are abandoning the public sphere and embracing the market-based neoliberal rationality that powers the private sphere.

As McLaren's statement indicates, programs designed to recruit students for the U.S. Army have indeed increased nationwide from secondary to higher education. For example, at the community and liberal college where I taught, I witnessed and experienced firsthand the aggressive way in which military personnel, who had their own offices at this institution, tried to recruit students, particularly minority and poor white students. Several military personnel approached me numerous times on campus and tried to convince me to sign up for the army. They told me that my college tuition will be paid for and that I will have great benefits, not clearly explained.

When I informed them that I was an instructor, not a student, they responded saying, "Oh! I am sorry. Do you know any student in your class who might be interested in joining the army? The army offers great benefits".

Furthermore, as I was teaching at a community college in western Massachusetts, my boss invited some people who represented Bank of America to visit the college. Confused, I decided to ask her what those who represented this bank were doing at the college. She informed me that Bank of America had donated money for the computer lab and the tutoring program at the college, so they wanted to see if the donation money was being used properly. She also stated that she had to write a report and submit it to the bank as part of the college's agreement with this bank. This information helped me understand why students that I was teaching and tutoring were strongly advised by their advisors to pursue an associate degree in business. Some of these advisors received grant money from Bank of America. It is safe to argue these students succumbed to the pressure from their advisors.

While Bank of America was donating money to this community college, I witnessed rampant racial and gender inequalities there. Three single female mothers enrolled in his classes had to miss classes because they did not have transportation to make it to school. In fact, many had to discontinue their schooling because of a lack of support and resources. Specifically, they had to get a second job in the midst of the semester to make ends meet; consequently, they withdrew from their classes. These were committed and serious students of colour that I witnessed dropping out of college because of a lack of support and financial resources.

I ask: why can't the government allocate resources to create programs at colleges, particularly at community colleges, which most poor working people attend, to support single mothers so they can stay in and finish college? Why does the government spend billions of dollars on wars and yet refuse to allocate adequate resources to educate working-class women? Should we talk about democracy and social justice in a country where certain groups of people have the resources to attend elite colleges and receive high-quality education while others do not even have the opportunity to finish an associate degree at a community college?

I share the view of scholars, such as Chomsky (1994, 1999, 2004), who argues that democracy was never really intended to exist in the United States because it requires maximal participation, and capitalism, which this country was founded on, requires minimal participation. Similarly, questioning the U.S.'s notion of democracy, Steinberg (2012) asked, Can democracy be possible? Steinberg went on to say, I am not sure. In light of the past forty years, I don't know what democracy is. I see it as a buzzword, which means *we* are right (democracy) and *they* are wrong (everyone else). And no, if democracy can exist, it will not be in a capitalist country. The Darwinian essence of capitalism precludes democracy (Steinberg, as cited in Orelus and Malott, p. 30). Chomsky's and Steinberg's statements unveil lies that have been circulated in the media and schools. These lies are intended to make people believe that we are living in a democratic country, and poverty is the consequence of individual deficiencies rather than a structural requirement of capital.

As a professor, I have witnessed many business-driven administrators, who have been appointed as deans, provosts, and vice provosts at many universities to implement neoliberal educational policies, including pressuring faculty, both junior and senior, to write and secure grants, from which colleges and universities have greatly benefited. They have been mostly powerful heterosexual, Christian, and able-bodied White males. Like at many other universities, these White males have been the ones who decide whether or not universities should follow a corporate model of education. They have also been the ones who decide whether universities and colleges should be under academic censorship and surveillance, or should be a public sphere where academic freedom is valued and embraced. In most cases, I have witnessed they have opted for the former. These are decisions that female faculty, faculty, and administrators of color as well as queer faculty and administrators, as a minority group in higher education, may not be in a position to make, as they have often been denied opportunities to hold key positions in higher education, like their privileged White male counterparts (Orelus, 2018, 2020).

These decisions have been made on their behalf and often at the expense of their career and academic freedom. Yet, the empty talk about academic freedom continues to be circulated through colleges and universities in the United States. These two notions, embedded in the U.S. pledge of allegiance, have been a daily ritual in schools.

Elementary, middle school, and high-school students alike are expected to recite this allegiance like a parrot. The empty discourse of democracy, freedom, and social justice has also run through many departments and programs at universities that often attempt to silence the voice of dissident and progressive educators (Darder,

2019). Orelus et al. (2011) stated, "What becomes apparent is that the advent of neoliberalism and the on-going existence of colonialism render the safe spaces within the academy that have been liberated by critical scholars must be defended because they are increasingly under attack—as are the common more generally (p. 45)".

Progressive scholars whose voices are incorporated in this chapter have critically examined these issues (Darder, 2019). To further shed light on these issues, the remainder of the chapter draws from data stemming from interviews conducted over the last several years from scholars who have written and spoken on the effects of neoliberalism on higher education and other institutions. Specifically, I used excerpts from interviews conducted with 5 noted scholars, namely Noam Chomsky, Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren, Antonia Darder, and Vije Prashad, to highlight their stances on, and experiences with, neoliberalism in higher education and beyond.

7.4 Context

The excerpts below stemmed from several interviews that I conducted with the scholars aforementioned starting in 2012 and ending in 2016. I used the following main question to conduct the interviews: *Could you address both how neoliberal capitalism is affecting the school culture and curriculum, students, professors, administrators and staff?* As should be expected, the interviewees went beyond the question they were asked to engage in order to connect neoliberalism to a larger educational and socio-political context. Their responses underscore their positions on the cruel effects of neoliberalism on higher education in particular and on people's lives in general. A brief account of each scholar's background is provided, which is followed by their positions highlighting their stances on neoliberalism, which are, then, cross-examined.

7.5 The Interviewees' Stances Interviewee One

Noam Chomsky is an American linguist, philosopher cognitive scientist, logician, political commentator, social justice activist, and anarcho-syndicalist advocate. Sometimes described as the "father of modern linguistics", Chomsky is also a major figure in analytic philosophy· He has spent most of his career at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), where he is currently Professor Emeritus, and has authored over 100 books. He has been described as a prominent cultural figure and was voted the "world's top public intellectual" in a 2005 poll. The following excerpt speaks to his stance on neoliberalism as a dissident professor in the academy:

We should notice that where neoliberal policies have been adopted, including in the West, they have been harmful to most of the population. To some extent the neoliberal policies have been applied in the United States. In fact, that's the nature of the economic stagnation for much of the population that's taken place over 30 years

with the deregulation of the economy and the hollowing out of domestic production. These are pretty standard neoliberal proposals. The population has been getting by with debt and asset inflation, like the housing bubble, which is substantially the result of kind of a deep loss of regulation linked to neoliberal prescriptions. On the other hand, the rich and the powerful are protected. They don't subject themselves to market pressures. So they're doing fine by and large, including the rich in the Third World. These policies don't have much of a future. They have just been too harmful. And the countries that are developing didn't abide by them. East Asia developed an economic model essentially rejecting the neoliberal principles. If they accepted them like financial deregulation, this would lead very quickly to financial crises.

7.6 Interviewee Two

Antonia Darder is a scholar, artist, poet, activist, and public intellectual. Darder holds the Leavey Presidential Endowed Chair in Ethics and Moral Leadership in the School of Education at Loyola Marymount University. She also is Professor Emerita of Educational Policy, Organization, and Leadership at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Professor Darder has written various articles, books, and book chapters on neoliberalism and its effects on poor working class families and students, here in the United States and abroad. She addresses issues of inequities associated with neoliberalism in what follows:

Let me begin with a quote by Stefano Harvey (2009), who states "Whatever [neoliberalism] cannot contain, desocialise, deracinate through regulation it will expel through extreme externalization, into the dead zones, prisons, and borderlands of privatization". At the heart of neoliberal policies in higher education is a veiled pursuit to destroy any tacit expectation that people of the United States may have once had with the government about the importance of the common good and, with that, public education as a human right. Instead, just as all aspects of public services have been tossed underhandedly into the up-for-grabs conservative arena of privatisation and deregulation, so too have all notions of equality and public responsibility been subsumed by an unrelenting neoliberal culture of rampant greed, wholesale surveillance, and the regulation of our humanity. In the process, critical notions of multiculturalism and diversity within the university and scholarship anchored in community concerns have been pushed back by an economic ethos that has rendered difference a whore to its own utilitarian pursuits or an enemy of the state. In the process, scholarship and activism for structural equality, political inclusion, and economic access has given way to an emphasis on multiculturalised market niches, management of an international workforce, and the occasional portrayal for public relations pamphlets and websites. In the efficient and cost-effective neoliberal world, issues of difference are now fundamentally attached to "coding the wealth, mobility, and political power" of its beneficiaries. Those "deficient" subjects of difference, unable to march to the homogenising and bootstrap neoliberal refrain, are simply tossed aside to the margins of society or criminalised and held behind iron bars, without concern for

their number or consequence. This disregard and lack of concern for those who do not keep in step with the bootstrap accountability system that neoliberalism demands are as much at work within the culture of the university, as they are in the corporate world today. There is no question that we are in the midst of a disastrous internationalising project of neoliberalism, which simply constitutes the most recent generation of capitalist relations.

7.7 Interviewee Three

Born and raised in Canada, **Peter McLaren** is a Distinguished Professor in Critical Studies, College of Educational Studies Chapman University, where he is Co-Director of the Paulo Freire Democratic Project and International Ambassador for Global Ethics and Social Justice. He is also an Emeritus Professor of Urban Education the University of California, Los Angeles, and Emeritus Professor of Educational Leadership, Miami University of Ohio. He is the author and editor of nearly 50 books and hundreds of scholarly articles and chapters, including those that explore issues of neoliberalism. In the *excerpt* that follows, Professor McLaren brings to the fore the damaging effects of neoliberalism on higher education:

In a nutshell, neoliberalism does a lot of damage to the education by allowing the needs of the economy to dictate the principal aims of school education; by suppressing the teaching of oppositional and critical thought that would challenge the rule of capital; by supporting a curriculum and pedagogy that produces compliant, pro-capitalist workers; and by creating the conditions necessary for education to ensure the ideological and economic reproduction that benefits the ruling class. Students are taught within given capitalist social relations and objective forms of thought that emerge from categories of bourgeois social economy, which themselves are bound up with the structural characteristics of stages of social development. So we begin to think in neoliberal terms, even though we are not aware of it. As I have noted elsewhere: "The ideological formations intergenerationally reproduced within schools betray a pragmatic efficacy and validity of apologetic purpose as well as the fetishistic character of everyday thinking. Such formations help to orient students into an unreflexive acceptance of the capitalist social world. Of course, the accession into the social order has always been incomplete, always in process, in that there has always been a space between self-formation and its dismemberment. Critical pedagogy seizes upon this space as its major terrain of struggle." When you tether teaching and learning to the machinery of capital, to the rise of industrial business partnerships, to the movement of research into the commercial arena of profit or to the service of trade organisations and academic-corporate consortia you are going to get certain kinds of knowledges that are valued over others, and it is precisely those knowledges that will help grease the wheels of the capitalist that will be given pride of place in the neoliberal state. One result is that teachers are being re- proletarianised and labor isbeing disciplined, displaced, and deskilled. Teacher autonomy, independence, and control over work are being severely reduced, while

workplace knowledge and control is given over more and more to the hands of the administration.

7.8 Interviewee Four

Vijay Prashad is an Indian historian, journalist, commentator, and a Marxist intellectual. He is an executive director of tricontinental: institute for social research and the chief History and a professor of International Studies at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, United States from 1996 to 2017. He was born in Calcutta, India. He lived in many different places in India, including during my years in boarding school in Dehra Dun, and in Delhi. His family was well-off, largely because of the efforts of his father. The roots of his family, however, are in the intellectual world and the state bureaucracy. His paternal grandfather ran the Indian Museum in Calcutta, was a zoologist, a pioneer in marine biology in India, and remarkably spent his evenings translating old books from Persian, Turkish, and Arabic. When I shared a few damaging effects of neoliberalism on higher education aforementioned, he quickly concurred stating the following:

This is exactly the consequence of neo-liberalism. You're going to have places of higher education collapsing and losing their ability to survive. Consequently, you're going to have to internalise the neo-liberal model. You're going to have to figure out how to better deliver their own budgets. If they don't get people's money as tax money, they have to increase fees. Essentially, all those are consequences of the neo-liberal class attack. There's very little that differentiates the corporatisation of the university from the fact that old people don't get somebody to come into their house and read to them. This is all the same thing. I don't see this corporatisation of the university as separate from the end of welfare. They are all part of the same process. If you see it differently then you think universities are special. But they are not. They are just like the little kids who no longer have breakfast at school in the morning. I mean there is one solution. That solution is class power of the elites has to be overthrown. That's the ultimate solution. But I don't live on Mars. I'm not a juvenile. I understand that's not a simple solution because that solution is a final goal as it were. Until that point we have to have a program of struggles, so that we understand that the small struggles we conduct now lead somewhere. They're shifting class power on a global scale. We have to have a program. We need build on smaller fights to head towards bigger fights. Immediate fights, for instance, in the United States should be against militarism. It's a big fight. Militarized border, militarized cities. Militarized budget. The fight against the military inside the United States is a principal fight. I oppose how much money the state budget goes into the military (Prashad, as cited in Orelus, 2011, p. 23).

7.9 Interviewee Five

Henry A. Giroux is an American and Canadian scholar and cultural critic. One of the founding theorists of critical pedagogy in the United States, he is best known for his pioneering work in public pedagogy, cultural studies, youth studies, higher education, media studies, and critical theory. In 2002, Routledge named Giroux as one of the top fifty educational thinkers of the modern period. A high-school social studies teacher in Barrington, Rhode Island, for six years, Giroux has held positions at Boston University, Miami University, and Penn State University. In 2005, Giroux began serving as the Global TV Network Chair in English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. He states the following:

Many public schools are being transformed in ways that allow these kinds of conditions to be produced. Schools are no longer about educating kids. They are either about training them for the workforce or making them critically illiterate through an ongoing culture of testing and measurement, a pedagogy of repression, or by criminalising their behaviours and putting them in the school-to-prison pipeline. So the question that has to be raised is: what are the larger forces at work that have produced this dystopian vision of schooling as either a workstation for the workplace or a conveyor belt to the criminal justice system? This is an especially important question in light of the fact that under the regime of neoliberalism, we have seen the collapse of the social state, the social contract, and a massive political flight from the notion of the school as a public good and democratic public sphere. What we are witnessing are the consequences of the collapse of a social investment in young people and in public spheres that are central to a substantive democracy. Schools that produce civic literacy, teach students how to be critical agents, view knowledge as a foundation for personal and social development are considered dangerous and subversive in a country largely run by religious, political, and economic conservatives. Consequently, what's left is the emergence of a punishing state in which very rigid disciplinary prapractices now become the norm. School is not about learning but about disciplining youth; hence, it's no surprise that zero tolerance policies now define the character of American schooling.

7.10 Analytical Examination

The scholars above provide a broader context of neoliberalism underscoring its global socio-economic, educational, and political effects on people, particularly working-class people. While most of them focus on the wide range of impacts of neoliberalism on higher education, some account in their analysis of its influence on other institutions, like the media. Altogether, these progressive and radical scholars offer an alternative window to examine neoliberalism in its totality, including in connection with voucher capitalism and Western imperialism.

McLaren, for example, denounces the complicity of college and university presidents that have been pushing for the implementation of neoliberal policies at their institutions. McLaren takes his analysis beyond the university walls to expose the eminent socio-economic danger of neoliberalism on a world scale looking at its damaging effects on workers living in both developing and developed countries. In short, McLaren unpacks social inequality in schools and the American society at large caused by neoliberal policies, which have led to people's increasing appetite for consumerism.

Likewise, the dissident intellectual, Noam Chomsky, points out the darker side of Western neoliberalism looking at its catastrophic effects on the economy of developing countries. Chomsky argues that the power elite in developing countries have embraced and implemented Western neoliberal policies in their countries because such policies have served their corporate interests. The prominent dissident linguist maintains that the masses have the power to reverse the course of their lives by refuting the implementation of the neoliberal agenda in their lands.

Like Chomsky, professors Darder and Prashad similarly argue that people have agency, and can use it to not only denounce neoliberalism but also change their socio-economic and political conditions. Prashad particularly maintains that one should not expect much, if anything, of neoliberalism, which was designed to do exactly what it has been doing, that is creating and maintaining inequalities. The neoliberal system, according to the noted South Asian historian and Marxist scholar, has led to militarism from which the rich and the powerful in the corporate world have benefited. Similarly, Darder argues that neoliberalism has only served the very few who have ripen and controlled the wealth of the planet. The Dissident Scholar provides a Marxist analysis of neoliberalism highlighting its damaging impact on vulnerable students as well as workers. Professor Darder examines the root and a wide range of effects of neoliberalism on working-class families, including working students and female workers.

All in all, the scholars, whose views are incorporated and analysed in this chapter, look at different historical phases and effects of neoliberalism on people's lives, particularly those who have been economically marginalised. Their diverse points of views on neoliberalism provide a solid theoretical foundation conducive to a deeper understanding of the ways in which neoliberal policies have affected higher education and people across social class, race, and gender.

7.11 Conclusion

This chapter unpacked various forms of neoliberal policies that have been implemented in institutions, like higher education, leading to inequitable and unequal distribution of resources and pay. These effects on the lives of workers, including university professors and administrators labouring higher education, is an urgent issue that needs to be addressed as they can no longer be ignored. Indeed, as higher education becomes neoliberal, such effects will, too, become move pervasive and

visible, specifically on vulnerable groups of students, faculty, and staff. These issues need to be taken seriously, particularly as neoliberalism propaganda is becoming the common thread not only infiltrating academic discourses but also influencing policies and practices that serve corporate interests in higher education. This chapter exposed the fairness of neoliberalism leading to the marginalisation and exploitation of vulnerable groups, including poor working-class students attending community colleges. In tandem, the views *expressed* by scholars and professors on neoliberalism might unveiled its vicious nature benefiting the few at the expense of the poor majority, who have been bombarded by, and historically sold, the neoliberal ideal of economic progress, which, as Stiglitz (2019) eloquently put it, has proven to be nothing but an illusion.

References

Antwi-Boateng, O. (2017). New world order neo-colonialism: A contextual comparison of contemporary China and European colonization in Africa. *Journal of Pan African Studies*, *10*(2).

Aronowitz, S. (2001). *The knowledge factory: Dismantling the corporate university and creating true higher learning*. Beacon Press.

Chomsky, N. (1994). *Secrets, lies and democracy*. Odonian Press.

Chomsky, N. (1999). *Profit over people: Neoliberalism and global order*. Seven Stories.

Chomsky, N. (2004). *Hegemony or survival: America's quest for global dominance*. Holt Paperbacks.

Darder, A. (2019). Educational reform and exclusion in the age of neoliberalism. *Confronting educational policy in neoliberal times* (pp. 61–74). Routledge.

Giroux, H. A. (2018). *Terror of neoliberalism: Authoritarianism and the eclipse of democracy*. Routledge.

Giroux, H. A. (2019). The terror of neoliberalism: Rethinking the significance of cultural politics. In H. A. Giroux (Ed.), *The New Henry Giroux reader: The role of the public intellectual in a time of tyranny* (pp. 192–207). Myers Education Press.

Harvey, D. (2007). *A brief history of neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press.

Kelly, C. (2019). Revitalising teacher education through feminist praxis: A reflection on challenging systems of patriarchy, class and colonialism. In D. Bottrell (Ed.), *Resisting neoliberalism in higher education* (Vol. I, pp. 259–282). Springer.

Malott, C., & Orelus, P. W. (2015). Marxist historiography in the history of education: From colonial to neocolonial schooling in the United States. *Postcolonial Directions in Education, 4*(2), 141–195.

Moriarty, J. (Ed.). (2019). *Autoethnographies from the neoliberal academy: Rewilding, writing and resistance in higher education.* Routledge.

Morrish, L., & Sauntson, H. (2019). *Academic irregularities: Language and neoliberalism in higher education.* Routledge.

Orelus, P. W. (2018). Can subaltern professors speak? Examining micro-aggressions and lack of inclusion in the academy. *Qualitative Research Journal, 18*(2), 169–179.

Orelus, P. W. (2020). The cost of being professors and administrators of color in predominantly white institutions: Unpacking microagression, isolation, exclusion, and unfairness through a critical race lens. *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education, 14*(2), 117–132.

Rogers-Vaughn, B. (2016). Neoliberalism, inequality, and the erosion of social well-being. *Caring for souls in a neoliberal age* (pp. 35–65). Palgrave Macmillan.

Schugurensky, D. (2007). Higher education restructuring in the era of globalisation: Toward a heteronomous model? In R. F. Arnove & C. A. Torres (Eds.), *Comparative education: The dialectic of the global and the local* (pp. 257–276). Roman & Littlefield.

Pierre Orelus is a tenured associate professor at Fairfield University and the director of the Teaching and Foundation Master program housed in the Educational Studies and Teacher Preparation Department. He also served as chair of this department. Before joining Fairfield University, he was an associate professor and the coordinator of the bilingual Education and TESOL programs in the Curriculum and Instruction department at New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, New Mexico.

Chapter 8
I Paid for This, So Now Give It to Me: University as Retailer, Knowledge as Product, Student as Customer

Ligia Pelosi

Abstract In this chapter, the new university is framed as a market-driven, corporatised organisation that is in stark contrast with an older university model based on Humboldtian principles of culture. The neoliberal imperative in Western nations has heralded many changes to the way modern academics perform and has made demands that have fundamentally changed the experience of both teaching and learning in higher education. The chapter unpacks the consumer/product relationships between students and academics in higher education through personal narratives. The approach adopted in the two vignettes falls under the umbrella of autoethnography. From a critical standpoint, the narratives tap into the affective dimension of lived experience and focus on both academics and students as they grapple with the challenges of the neoliberal university. The academic in the new university is caught at the crossroad of educative purpose and service provision, a standpoint from which to look ahead and occupy positive spaces of scope and possibility.

8.1 Introduction

The new university has heralded many changes to the way modern academics perform and has made demands that have fundamentally changed the experience of both teaching and learning in higher education. In my university, a dual-sector institution with a particular focus on social justice values, the Humboldtian principles of culture as a central organising philosophy seem to have been lost in translation. Alongside the realities of our financial imperatives (we are not a large and wealthy university), we still espouse as our drivers a commitment to honour the diversity of our student cohort (our moral purpose). Central to this is a commitment to access and opportunity for the communities in the West of Melbourne. Regardless of our vision, and as a direct result of the adoption of marketisation (and consumerism as its logical extension), a new

L. Pelosi (✉)
Victoria University, Melbourne, VIC, Australia
e-mail: Ligia.Pelosi@vu.edu.au

M. Vicars and L. Pelosi (eds.), *Storying Pedagogy as Critical Praxis in the Neoliberal University*, Rethinking Higher Education,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-4246-6_8

way of life has emerged. With it, 'the (Humboldtian) idea of culture has dropped out of the discourse purporting to give the university a foundation or, at least, no longer appears serviceable' (Peters & Roberts, 1999, p. 48).

An increasingly managerial and hierarchical approach to running universities seems necessary in surviving the vagaries of government funding. A recent funding change saw student fees for arts courses doubling, while courses more closely tied to vocational outcomes were substantially reduced. 'The policy effectively reduces the overall government contribution to degrees from 58% to 52%, with student contributions lifting from 42% to 48% to pay for more places without extra government funding' (Karp, 2020). It was a win-win for the government: managing to reshuffle funding for courses in the interests of a pandemic-hit economy while pocketing substantial savings. The result: the curriculum is increasingly politicised and continues to be skewed towards the middle class, with students left footing the bill.

In a previous era, the goal of the Humboldtian University was to grow minds and capabilities in order to enhance life opportunities. At the core was the notion that a university education should be transformational. A university education continues to be marketed as insurance for an aspirational life (Maisuria & Helmes, 2020). But in the wake of Covid-19, with changes in government funding, student fees, or *bums-on-seats*, becomes all-important, setting up the notion of the student as a consumer of goods. The power balance has shifted. So much hinges on students' perceptions of *value for money* in their education. The student as consumer and the academic as the service provider turns the process of education into a commodity rather than the transformational experience to which it aspires as noted by Maisuria and Helmes (2020)

> While previously the "power" to lead and guide was in the hands of the lecturer, in this new arrangement, the student as a consumer gains power by paying for a commodity. Thus, there is a risk that he or she is potentially un/satisfied with the "quality", leaving the lecturer in a vulnerable position. With so much focus on generating income through recruitment, it can be questioned whether the university can, in reality, prioritise the students' needs and perceive them as more than an essential funding stream. For the academic, the neoliberal university has become something akin to a "sausage factory"'. (p. 22)

8.2 Context: Neoliberalism and the Marketisation of the University

Through neoliberalism's earlier origins in Europe (Cahill & Konings, 2017), past its bloody entry into Chile in the early 70s (Chodor, 2015), then coming of age through the Thatcher and Reagan governments (Eagleton-Pierce, 2016), we continue to wrestle with its pervasive influences. Though the roots of neoliberalism date back to the time between the World Wars, it was the politics of Thatcher and Reagan in the 80s that led us to where we are now and have created a *There Is No Alternative* mindset (Steger, 2010). We see a stubborn and irrevocable sense of inevitability in the policies of the two political leaders, resulting from the philosophies of Keynes and Hayek. Thatcher and Reagan were zealous and unbending in adhering to their agendas, driven

by a strong sense of purpose (ibid.). Such was the force of conviction of the leaders of these two powerful nations that their political opponents were unable to mount effective challenges, thereby failing to provide alternative visions that would defeat or at least weaken the prevailing rise of neoliberal ideals (ibid.). Indeed, Chodor (2015) has acknowledged the difficulties faced by the opponents of neoliberalism, as exemplified by the recent phenomenon of various Occupy movements across the world. Such movements, adopting a *horizontal,* values-driven approach rather than rational political projects, illustrate the 'deeply ingrained nature of neoliberal common sense, which makes alternatives difficult to conceive' (p. 178). Academics, too, find themselves in this position, as power in the new university has shifted from a horizontal to a vertical axis of hierarchy and managerialism. The economic priorities of the university are difficult, if not impossible, to rail against with academic discourse alone. Therefore, choices made by the new university are motivated at the lowest end by economic viability (survival) and the highest end by the possibility of an economic boom. It's clear that at either end, economic priorities trump all. But many choices based on economics alone come with potentially diabolical flip sides for both academics and students.

In analysing the wisdom of the political choices made in Thatcher's England, Judt (2013) was primarily concerned about the 'high social costs of such policy' (p. 196). He outlined how any decision towards something that works inevitably involves forgoing other options that have value. There is no such thing as a decision where everybody wins but a series of workable options, each of which in turn mistakenly denies a number of other options of substantial virtue. In regard to Hayek's economic vision, which contributed to the entrenchment of neoliberalism, Judt (ibid.) frames the notion of inevitable loss as extending beyond a mere consequence: 'From a Hayekian perspective, you cannot preserve right A by sacrificing or compromising right B, however much you gain by so doing. Sooner or later you will lose both rights' (p. 247). The inescapable lesson here is that there are no decisions that are free of some kind of significant loss, and in this, the university is not immune.

In recent times, Giroux (2016) has framed neoliberalism as the 'celebration of self-interest, the ruthless accumulation of capital, the survival-of-the-fittest ethos and the financialisation and market-driven corruption of the political system'. Capitalism is an intrinsic component of neoliberal principles and Maisuria and Helmes (2020) state that it 'circumscribes the autonomy and freedom of educators by, inter alia, an audit culture and surveillance' (p. 5). They point to the 2008 Global Financial Crisis as the point of deepening the neoliberalisation of higher education. The GFC was a catalyst for the financial priorities of higher education to become intensified; which led to a competitive reconfiguring of universities into corporate entities, causing them to be run like businesses.

Indeed, the neoliberal university is framed within the context of competitive performativity, which, influenced by neoliberal governmentality, has an effect on academic identity (Tülübas & Göktürk, 2020). This has meant that 'the front and centring of the finances aspect of universities has changed their very nature, with a concomitant prioritisation of marketing the university as a product to attract customers and to build the university as a brand for consumption' (p. 15). In keeping

with the notion of learning as a product, Mayo (2015) has noted that universities are managed as corporate entities by leadership focused more on economic growth than education. The outcome of the marketisation of education: a widespread preoccupation with benchmarking, league tables, and measures. It has particularly impacted younger generations, raised in this environment by parents schooled on the same principles.

8.3 Methodology

In the tradition of Laurel Richardson's (1997) narrative examination of academic life, this chapter will aim to unpack recent developments in the university sector through a personal narrative approach. As Richardson (ibid.) has noted, language is a social construct, and it is through the language in narratives that a particular view of reality is created. I have attempted to provide such a view in two narrative vignettes and their analyses as glimpses into my personal and professional experience of life in the new university.

This approach falls under the umbrella of auto-ethnography, and as life writing, provides a response along the lines of Van Maanen's (2011) tales, in part realist, critical, impressionist and confessional. Through my own narratives in the vignettes, I intend to tap into the affective dimension of personal stories of lived experience (Beatty, 2010). The affective dimension is relevant in this context, as 'not only do emotions, in a quite obvious way, belong to stories; they also build on, allude to, and echo other emotions and events; they refer to interwoven lives' (Beatty, 2010, p. 430).

The vignettes presented in this chapter provide glimpses of the neoliberal university through an affective dialectic that aims to unpack the changing environment and structures of the new university. The vignettes are subjective and contemplative. Their analysis provides a glimpse of how affect guides our knowledge, in that 'the settings we occupy and pass through in our day-to-day lives are immersed in affective economies. Our history, our present and our future converge; situational encounters create the feelings and emotions that drive our everyday practice' (Threadgold, 2020, p. 3). Leavitt (1996) has affirmed the importance of affective associations, for they, 'like semantic ones, are collective as well as individual; they operate through common or similar experience among members of a group living in similar circumstances, through cultural stereotyping of experience, and through shared expectations, memories, and fantasies' (p. 527).

Through the creation of personal narratives, we contribute to a critical standpoint that aligns with Gramsci's analysis of hegemony in the global political economy (Cahill & Konings, 2017; Morton, 2007; Wilson, 2017b). It is through the concept of hegemony that neoliberalism can be viewed and understood. The Italian Marxist was 'keen to account for the definitive role that culture played in legitimising and sustaining capitalism and its exploitation of the working classes' (Wilson, 2017c, p. 22). Specifically, he questioned how the working class were complicit in a political

system that produced wealth from their collective efforts, but that did not allow them to benefit from this wealth; rather, appropriating it for the benefit of the rich (ibid.). Echoes of Gramsci's question reverberate in the fact that many working-class voters elected both Thatcher and Reagan. Therefore, the basic principle of neoliberal hegemony works on removing a society that exists with clearly delineated boundaries between public and private realms, replacing it with one based on private, market-driven competition.

Consequently, the vignettes work to provide a critical standpoint on the affective experience of being an academic in the new university: caught at the crossroad of educative purpose and service provision. It is a standpoint from which we can understand what came before, recognise what we have now (and call it!), and look ahead with a plan to be more agentic, continuing to occupy positive spaces of scope and possibility.

8.4 Vignettes

The behaviour of Millennials, adults born between 1981 and 1996, and those adults born in subsequent years have been the subject of much analysis and criticism. A Time Magazine article (Stein & Sanburn, 2013) listed among other unfounded stereotypes that Millennials were narcissistic, lazy, coddled and a little delusional. On the one hand, they get blamed for spending too much on smashed avocado brunches, but not spending enough as consumers of goods; they are reportedly committed to planetary health and favour recycling rather than consuming as their parents did (Hancock, 2011; Judd-Lam, 2017; Ross & Rouse, 2020; Rouse & Ross, 2018).

Millennials entered the world at a time when the seeds of neoliberalism had borne their full fruit, which included the marketisation and commoditisation of young people (Giroux, 2000). We are thus faced with a classic chicken and egg dilemma: is it a case of university students behaving like consumers, treating the organisation, its services and its educators as a purchased product, or is it that the university is behaving more like a consumable than it ever has in its history?

Enter the student satisfaction survey and the student evaluations of units and of teaching. Unlike research-based findings, the quantification of the quality of units and teaching seem easy and accessible. It can, however, be problematic in terms of accuracy of representation. Kallio et al. (2017) have noted that:

> universities' internal PM practices have resulted in the quantification of quality and probably, also, to sub-optimising and free-riding. Moreover, and perhaps even more alarming than the fact that the indicators of quality are being one-sidedly quantified, is that the easiest way of meeting targets is by lowering quality—for instance, by letting students pass exams more easily and granting degrees with looser criteria. (p. 299)

The first vignette provides a glimpse of the rollercoaster of opinions and emotions represented in the student evaluation of unit and teaching surveys. The second focuses on my reaction to the surveys, a profoundly personal account of how affect can significantly impact perceptions of one's work, prompting philosophical realignment.

Vignette 1

The student knocks on my door and asks if I'm not busy. I'm always busy, but I smile and ask them to take a seat. Face-to-face, the students are almost always extremely polite. They say please and thank you; courteous to a fault. This might be why I am taken aback by the ferocity of some of the responses students give in the Student Evaluation of Unit (SEU) and Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET). I don't know what it is about the SEUs and SETs that turns some of the students into angry beasts. Is it that the online (and anonymous) space emboldens, much like travelling in a sealed and separate vehicle leads some drivers to commit acts of road rage?

Some of the comments are personal, aimed straight at me as though they are holding a weapon, and using my name, just to make sure I take the hit as directly as it's meant:

> *I got given no feedback from Ligia—And was so disappointed.*
> *Students ask lecturers for assistance and got an answer from Ligia, which was borderline unprofessional and created more uncertainty on assessments.*

My first instinct is to get defensive: *I didn't! Unfair!* Or go into denial: *Not true!* Or disbelief, a la John McEnroe: *You cannot be serious!* Often, the views expressed by individual students are diametrically opposed to those of their peers. Whose truth do we see here? Overall, survey responses are relatively few, which leads me to think that only those who are really pleased, or really pissed off, bother to respond. I presume the silent majority is generally satisfied. But that presumption does not really help.

No sooner has a positive comment puffed me up:

> *During these challenging times, Ligia made me feel confident during every lesson making sure the class understood what was expected of them each lesson. She guided us through every assessment and made sure the whole class had a great understanding of the work. We were provided with so many resources for this unit which helped a lot as we don't get to go into uni and have that access to books physically. I feel like a lot of the stress I was feeling before doing a core unit online was lifted through her amazing teaching efforts. I was very pleased with Ligia for this unit.*

…than I am totally deflated by the drubbing I get in the following one:

> *Ligia is a harsh marker who has a lot of trouble explaining things and needs to get her teaching priorities in order. Excessive time was spent on activities that did not directly relate to the assessments, with less time allocated for actually explaining the assessments and how to best approach them. Flatly refusing to provide a student-accessible template or example for Assessment 3 (worth half the mark for this unit) to "not limit creative freedom"... When the assessment is left too open-ended, is when you run into the all-too-frequent issue of a lack of direction about just what the university is looking for. I am a student who works two jobs, at wildly varying hours, just to stay afloat in today's fucked up economy. I do not have the time, energy or patience to beat around the bush, trying to play guessing games about what my assessments should look like, because we were told: "it's up to you". No, it is not up to me, it is up to YOU, the lecturers, who will be marking the assessment. It is not what I want, it is what YOU want because if it is not what you want, then I do not get a good mark!*

It's like I am two completely different tutors. On the one hand, I inspire confidence and support students to enhance their learning. On the other, I am an incompetent, hard-arsed bitch. I want to explain the notion of how learning takes place, how creativity

flourishes, but it sometimes feels like students aren't listening. The assessments are a bugbear for students. They don't like doing creative tasks because they find them risky. I go on the defensive: risk-taking and making mistakes is an integral part of the learning process. It's clear this student just wanted to be told how to do it right and was angry that *I* got it completely wrong.

I'm left with a grudging appreciation of one student's clever, creative criticism:

> *When questioning Ligia about why this unit had such an intense literacy focus, her answers were so evasive it made Fidel Castro's evasion of the US assassination attempts look like the overweight kid in PE attempting to dodge the fifteen balls being hurled at him during a round of Run The Gauntlet.*

Despite the positive endorsements, negative feedback sticks. And hurts. I can't help but wonder about any student I encounter, 'Was it you writing that stuff?'

8.4.1 Analysis: Competition at the Heart

Young people have been affected by neoliberalism in ways they do not fully understand, or of which they are not aware. This affectation manifests primarily as anxiety (Wilson, 2017a). The pressure to out-perform peers, to get a spot, to be the best, to succeed, takes its toll. One of the fundamental challenges that has emerged is that young people may not understand what is causing their anxiety and that it is not primarily their fault. Neoliberalism believes that social infrastructures that offer support to citizens breed dependency and bureaucracy. Competition is seen as the antidote to this dependency, instead of creating productivity, efficiency and creativity (Wilson, 2017a).

This anxiety, this competition to be the best, to succeed at all costs or be shamed by family, friends or peers, may be the reason behind the ferocity of some students' responses in the surveys. Competition defines who we are, how we perceive ourselves—and is almost always driven by comparisons. But while in a pre-neoliberal world, the comparison may have been acknowledged as more arbitrary, focused on personal subjectivities, descriptions and opinions, it has now entered a stage of absolutes. These absolutes come to us in definitions that are shaped by data. In a variety of quantitative representations, numbers come to define who we are through what are supposed to be infallible judgments of performance. The PISA league tables for schools have been described by Robinson (2016) as a 'beauty contest for education ministers across the world, who pose around according to where they are on the rankings or get depressed if they are too low down'. To further accentuate their banality, Robinson referred with consternation to PISA as the *Eurovision song contest of education*: 'We all know what the Eurovision song contest has done for the quality of popular music—not very much'.

Wolfe and Mayes (2019, p. 280) have identified the rule of metrics as a feature of the neoliberal university; student evaluation surveys are included as part of a more

comprehensive system of quantifying everything. But such systems of quantification can be deeply flawed, especially when it comes to perceptions of quality in teaching practices. Epstein (2019), in his exploration of effective pedagogical approaches in education, stated that 'it is difficult to accept that the best learning road is slow and that doing poorly now is essential for better performance later' (p. 90). Rather than fostering learning through repetitive practices (rote learning, with frequent testing), which is referred to as *blocked* practice and leads to excellent and immediate results, the focus should be on varied or mixed practice. Mixed practice, which involves learning under varied conditions, leads to flexible understandings of knowledge applied in different settings and situations: a richer, deeper type of learning. This type of learning is referred to by researchers as *interleaving*. Another factor that improves the quality of learning in terms of its longevity and durability (knowledge being able to be used and expanded upon at a later time as part of a continuum) is *spacing* (Epstein, 2019):

> Desirable difficulties like testing and spacing make knowledge stick. It becomes durable. Desirable difficulties like making connections and interleaving makes knowledge flexible, useful for problems that never appeared in training. All slow down learning and make performance suffer, in the short term. (p. 96)

Ironically, the best type of learning happens when students are not getting immediate satisfaction in terms of understandings or results. *Interleaving* practices make students feel as though they have not been successful in their learning, unlike how they are made to feel when they have experienced *blocked* learning practices. Immediate results and apparent progress fools students into believing they have achieved deep learning even when they, in fact, have not. Epstein (2019) noted the difficulties teachers and students face accepting that 'the best learning road is slow, and that doing poorly now is essential for better performance later. It is so deeply counterintuitive that it fools the learners themselves, both about their own progress and their teachers' skill' (p. 90). This idea was tested in a unique study involving the US Air Force Academy. Students were judged on performance in two calculus subjects (Calculus I and Calculus II). The first subject prepared the students for the second, which would take place at a later time. The study involved more than ten thousand cadets randomly assigned to calculus sections taught over a decade by close to a hundred professors.

The study is interesting in terms of identifying superior practices in education; highlighting students' perceptions of their learning and how these perceptions were subsequently expressed as student evaluation of the professors involved. Some professors boosted performance on the Calculus I exam, and others did not. Students unsurprisingly scored this latter group of professors more harshly in their evaluations, effectively punishing them for providing the best long-term benefit. Early results, however, did not turn out to be an indicator of long-term learning. Those professors whose students struggled in the short term were, in fact, engaging them in deep learning through connection-making. Conversely:

> The Calculus I teachers who were the best at promoting student overachievement in their own class were somehow not great for their students in the long run... What looked like a head start evaporated... Students evaluated their instructors based on how they performed on tests right now—a poor measure of how well the teachers set them up for later development—so they gave the best marks to professors who provided them with the least long-term benefit.
>
> A similar study was conducted at Italy's Bocconi University on twelve hundred first-year students who were randomised into introductory course sections in management, economics, or law, and then the courses that followed them in a prescribed sequence over four years. It showed precisely the same pattern. Teachers who guided students to overachievement in their own course were rated highly and undermined student performance in the long run. (Epstein, 2019, pp. 91–92)

This suggests that student evaluations of their tutors should be viewed with a degree of criticality or even scepticism. Such evaluation measures are clearly not that useful in accurately defining achievement, yet universities depend on them as reputable and reliable measures of the performance of their teaching staff. It is expected that any academic member of staff involved in teaching duties must use this data in any application for promotion. Staff who perform below expectations on such student-driven measures must also justify their performance to senior management. Consistently low scores in these student evaluations can and do lead to termination. I stress this is not an argument for completely dismissing the evaluation of teaching practice. Still, it is a call for practices as they are to be interrogated more deeply, analysed, and ultimately overhauled.

Vignette 2

The week after my father died, reading the Student Evaluation Survey for the unit I had been teaching at the time of his death brought me to tears.

My father was 95 and living in a nursing home. Death was caused by a heart attack. It came at the end of May when we were nearing the end of the first Covid-19 lockdown in Melbourne. The nursing home had banned face-to-face visits since the 18th of March. As a result, the only contact we'd had in the last two months of his life was on Skype. On a Wednesday, the day before I had been scheduled for my first face-to-face visit with my father, I got a call from the nursing home to tell me he'd had a heart attack and had been transferred to hospital. Because he was experiencing shortness of breath, hospital protocol demanded he be placed in the Covid-19 ward until he returned a negative test. That meant we lost a day. When the test came back negative the next day, I was told I would be allowed in to see him. Though at the time we did not know it, we had one *good* day left.

That *good* day was the Thursday. I slept in his room that night, and I continue to draw comfort from having been able to calm him the many times he woke up restless and disoriented. The next day, Friday, he was in more discomfort and lost the ability to speak. He seemed stable, though, and I thought he would go much longer than he did. During the afternoon, in order to make sure everything would continue smoothly for students in my absence, I took some work calls from colleagues. I stepped out of my father's room so as not to disturb him, and in the corridor, spent an hour or two briefing them on details of what had to be seen to in coming days. Only two hours after I ended

the phone calls, my father took his last breath. I was grateful to have been there with him in that intimate and terrible moment.

Straight back at work after the funeral, I was down to teach a unit two weeks later and did not take any time off. I felt spent and emotionally raw, but I pushed on. It was around this time that the results from the student evaluation surveys from the previous teaching block came in—the unit I had been teaching at the time my father died. The students' responses were a mixed bag; there were some gorgeous, warm and fuzzy evaluations, but many were dissatisfied. Angry, even. When sharing these results with one colleague who I consider a close friend, I had another good cry and thought I'd got it out of my system. Later, still fragile, in a meeting with two other colleagues, one of them my superior, I couldn't manage to keep the emotion out of my voice when I expressed how I felt about the evaluation results. In reference to the hours I wasted that afternoon in the hospital, I said, 'The reason I did that was that I care about the students, and I care about the university. And I care about doing my job well', I sniffled, trying not to spiral into a full-blown howl. 'I shouldn't have done that. I wish I could have those few hours back so I could sit by my father's side'. My colleagues listened, muttered words of understanding. It helped a little. But I will probably never forgive myself for the choices I made that afternoon—choices that were seemingly inconsequential but ultimately so utterly misjudged.

8.4.2 Analysis: Realities of the Modern University

That week following my father's death, I vowed I would never open myself up to be hurt so arbitrarily by students. I resolved never again to read student evaluations. While there were not many scathing evaluations, each of these dug into me like a rusty nail. Months later, the sting I felt at the time has dulled. However, my reaction is something that will stay with me. The thought that after I had not seen my father for two months, I chose to spend precious last moments on the phone to work instead of sitting by his side really made me question my priorities. I understood why I took the results personally; I was still fresh in my grief, overwhelmed and exhausted. And I continue to realise that in the new university, students are the customers, equating their relationship to study to that of customers to a product. They see the university as the retailer, and if the service is not to their liking, they will complain. The message that the customer is always right is loud and clear; a maxim that now fits educators as it once did only shopkeepers. Universities have hence become akin to trading corporations, with many of their graduates 'working their way through existing market structures, and *superspecialisation* has led to a high degree of fragmentation, with a primary emphasis on the individual's career, and wealth often seen as a goal in itself' (Jones, 2020, p. 326).

The nuanced nature of students' perceptions was explored in the analysis of the first vignette. In this second vignette, I must also acknowledge the role of gender. Though it is not in the scope of this chapter to examine the feminist aspects of the academic's predicament in the neoliberal university, it is one of the

factors at play in the accuracy of student evaluations. Studies in Europe have found that 'disadvantageous conditions for women in higher education are in teaching evaluations bias' (Hook, 2019, p. 46). Both male and female students rated their female tutors lower than their male counterparts—for male students, a whopping 21%. The researchers connected this gender bias to 'job market success, teaching awards, the reallocation of resources away from research towards teaching-related activities, effects of self-confidence and beliefs about teaching' (ibid., pp. 46–47).

Gender is only one factor that may skew the validity of student survey results. Heffernan (2021, p. 7) found that student evaluation of teaching survey results can be influenced by external and unrelated factors, and that 'these factors are frequently based on student demographics, and students' biases and prejudices based on the teaching academic's gender, sexuality, ethnicity, age or disability as well as other marginalising factors'.

Gender and other issues notwithstanding, the pressures on academics are considerable. Pat Thomson's (2018) experience is but one example. She has had a long career in education and has finally succumbed to the idea of retirement. Her observation of having survived in academia by doing all that was expected by being a *good girl* afforded her the luxury, in the final stages of her work, to focus not so much on what the university decided was important but on what mattered to her. It was an on-the-way-out admission, as Pat noted that the approach had not been one she had made known. But not everybody has this luxury, as Thomson noted, 'I am of course in the fortunate—read privileged, senior, and permanent—position of being able to make this choice. And it no doubt helps that what I want to do is largely of use to the institution' (Thomson, 2018, p. 243). In a separate publication, Thomson (SASPA, 2020) related a story of a colleague, a *very successful teacher*, who was ending her career in a similar way, ignoring the 'tone and demands' of the department because in the end, 'what mattered most were the school results; and if the results were sound then the school could pursue its own particular interests and educational agenda'.

The demands of the neoliberal university has one wearing multiple hats—and juggling skittles at the same time! As Shipley (2018) has noted, there is a pervasive sense of failure for academics who do not succeed in their teaching and maintaining a research profile, which must usually be cultivated outside of their working hours. It is disheartening to feel squeezed on so many fronts, as part of what Shipley calls the corporatisation of academic performance that necessitates a *churning-out* type of production rather than one that is thoughtful and high quality. It is a common theme and what Lipton (2019, p. 25) has referred to as *competitive collegiality* in academia that is increasingly teaching-focused. Students as customers do not necessarily see or appreciate research outputs. They do see and value the product they are transacting: their education and they make their views known through the student surveys.

Maisuria and Helmes (2020) emphasise the role of datafication of the university's activities for the purposes of monitoring, measurement and comparison, and the eventual publicisation of such data in league tables. The existence of and ongoing commitment to the production of league tables are in themselves the representation of a system based on neoliberal principles. Such a system is driven by Quality Assurance

(QA) measures to keep academics *working*. It is argued by Maisuria and Helmes (2020) that these measures do little more than create pointless practices for academic staff.

> The labour that is required in these practices imbibes a moral virtue—it's for the good of the students. In other words, neoliberalism has created the conditions for QA protocols to be axiomatic, rendering them almost unquestionable. These practices involve creating data to produce numerical metrics that are used as a proxy for quality and high standards…Blunt quantitative measures take precedence over any qualitative experiences, feelings and interactions, where personalised, meaningful, rich and transformational journeys cannot be easily captured. Statistics are important as 'proof' of the fact that something is worthwhile. Such 'proof', for the neoliberals, facilitates competition by creating the appearance of choice between varying degrees of 'quality'. (p. 605)

The notion of *results being sound* harks back to the marketisation and measurement inherent in methods of administration of the neoliberal university. As long as we are producing impactful research, hitting quality teaching and learning benchmarks, generating positive student evaluation responses and pulling our weight with what can sometimes be described as mindless administrative busy-work, then we earn our licence to stray a little and dabble in the elements of the job that delight us.

Keeping students happy is important to the new university. The market-driven economic reasons for this have been outlined earlier. But what does Thatcher's *There Is No Alternative* mindset mean for academics? Feeling and affect are cognition embodied, but recognition of those sensations does not necessarily change anything: So what if you're not happy? *There Is No Alternative.* The neoliberal reality is that the university must be able to compete in the market. This dialectic works on power and hierarchy and is one in which consultation does not often have a place.

8.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided some indications of how we have gone from a Humboldtian (Peters & Roberts, 1999) notion of liberalism: going to university to become accultured, to get ideas, to now viewing the university as a training factory for employability. It is undoubtedly a kind of crisis, but not certainly new, having been identified more than a century ago by Nietzsche (ibid.). Prioritising performance in a highly bureaucratised and competitive environment is the modus operandi of modern universities worldwide. 'Global capitalism renders the ideas of pursuing truth and preserving or promoting cultural enrichment problematic' (p. 47). Consequently, prioritising a managerial language has evolved, with a 'focus on strategic planning, mission statements and performance indicators' (p. 47). In such an environment, it is understandable that academics feel vulnerable. Our very existence depends on a fragile kind of dance. Pulled on the one hand by the consumer, our students, who have inhabited the latter stages of the neoliberal environment all their lives, and expect a bang for their buck, and on the other by the market-driven, measurement-focused

university, we are like paper boats in an ocean. Little able to determine our course, pulled by overwhelming forces, and struggling to keep afloat.

I have lost count of the number of times students have argued they should have received better marks in assignments and deserved to pass a unit. There are processes for such appeals, and overwhelmingly, the initial evaluation is upheld. This is now the reality of what it means to teach in a university. This experience of being a student in a university is so markedly different from my own, as a student in the 80s and 90s. Ross et al. (2020) write that students have been repositioned as customers; learning as a transaction:

> The spread of the consumer mentality among students supports the development of a culture of entitlement that creates the basis for significant conflict. Faculty members experience this in the form of students' lobbying for higher grades, driven by the view that "I paid for my A." The commodification of degrees can result in increased adversarialism between students and faculty, with the latter either disengaging or spending more time on emotional labour and expectations management. (p. 232)

Regarding the university as a business means competition abounds, not just among academics within the university but between institutions. A current television marketing campaign for Swinburne University in Melbourne promises students they can study without doing any reading—instead engaging in interactive simulations. If not outright false advertising, it is at the very least misleading. Online interactive components of courses are common at all universities and do not negate the need to read. The obvious consequence of such marketing for all universities is that courses deemed not profitable are shelved in favour of those that further narrow the field. The result? This kind of attrition limits the imagination of our universities in terms of what we can aspire to become as communities and a society.

There are some who would argue that a more widespread understanding of neoliberalism in universities, its workings and consequences, is the key to effecting change. 'Being systematic in challenging the neoliberal orientation would also provide academics with more possibilities for various kinds of agency in the whole of society' (Brunila, 2016, p. 392). Taking on the neoliberal university seems an impossibility: like an ant taking on an elephant. But if we acknowledge affect as our thoughts embodied; that anything only really means something when it's being felt, when it's visceral, then perhaps that is the point when we begin to act.

References

Beatty, A. (2010). How did it feel for you? Emotion, narrative, and the limits of ethnography. *American Anthropologist, 112*(3), 430–443.

Brunila, K. (2016). The ambivalence of becoming a professor in neoliberal academia. *Qualitative Inquiry, 22*(5), 386–394.

Cahill, D., & Konings, M. (2017). *Neoliberalism.* Polity Press.

Chodor, T. (2015). *Neoliberal hegemony and the Pink Tide in Latin America.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Eagleton-Pierce, M. (2016). *Neoliberalism: The key concepts.* Routledge.

Epstein, D. (2019). *Range: How generalists triumph in a specialised world*. Macmillan.

Giroux, H. (2000). *Stealing innocence: Corporate culture's war on children*. Palgrave.
Giroux, H. (2016). Radical politics in the age of American authoritarianism: connecting the dots. https://truthout.org/articles/radical-politics-in-the-age-of-american-authoritarianism-connecting-the-dots/
Hancock, A.-M. (2011). *Solidarity politics for millennials: A guide to ending the oppression Olympics*. Palgrave Macmillan.
Heffernan, T. (2021). Sexism, racism, prejudice, and bias: A literature review and synthesis of research surrounding student evaluations of courses and teaching. *Assessment & Evaluations in Higher Education,* 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2021.1888075
Hook, G. (2019). Feminist pedagogy: Fractures of recognition in higher education. In M. Breeze, Y. Taylor, & C. Costa (Eds.), *Time and space in the neoliberal university: Futures and fractures in higher education* (pp. 43–64). Palgrave Macmillan.
HundrED. (2016). *Sir Ken Robinson and assessment*. https://hundred.org/en/articles/5-sir-ken-robinson-compares-human-organisations-to-organisms-education-is-a-dynamic-system#31d297f4. Accessed 8 January 2020.
Jones, B. (2020). *What is to be done: Political engagement and saving the planet*. Scribe.
Judd-Lam, S. (2017). A millennial apologetic more than smart phones and smashed avocados. *Zadok Perspectives, 137*, 4–5.
Judt, T. (2013). *Thinking the twentieth century*. Vintage Books.
Kallio, K.-M., Kallio, T., & Grossi, G. (2017). Performance measurement in universities: Ambiguities in the use of quality versus quantity in performance indicators. *Public Money & Management, 37*(4), 293–300.
Karp, P. (2020, June 19). Australian university fees to double for some arts courses, but fall for Stem subjects. *The Guardian.*
Leavitt, J. (1996). Meaning and feeling in the anthropology of emotions. *American Ethnologist, 23*(3), 514–539.
Lipton, B. (2019). Closed doors: Academic collegiality, isolation, competition and resistance in the contemporary Australian university. In M. Breeze, Y. Taylor, & C. Costa (Eds.), *Time and space in the neoliberal university: Futures and fractures in higher education* (pp. 15–42). Palgrave Macmillan.
Maisuria, A., & Helmes, S. (2020). *Life for the academic in the neoliberal university*. Routledge.
Mayo, P. (2015). Introduction—Hegemony and neoliberalism: A Gramscian antidote. *Hegemony and education under neoliberalism: Insights from Gramsci* (pp. 1–17). Routledge.
Morton, A. (2007). Hegemony and world order: Neo-Gramscian perspectives and the global political economy. *Unravelling Gramsci: Hegemony and passive revolution in the global political economy* (pp. 111–136). Pluto Press.
Peters, M., & Roberts, P. (1999). Globalisation and the crisis in the concept of the modern university. *Australian Universities' Review, 42*(1), 47–55.
Richardson, L. (1997). *Fields of play: Constructing an academic life*. Rutgers University Press.
Robinson, K. (2016). *Sir Ken Robinson and assessment/Interviewer: HundrED*. 2017 Innovation Summit, HundrED.
Ross, A., & Rouse, S. (2020). (Young) generations as social identities: The role of Latino* Millennial/Generation Z in shaping attitudes about climate change. *Political Behaviour*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-020-09649-8
Ross, S., Savage, L., & Watson, J. (2020). University teachers and resistance in the neoliberal university. *Labour Studies Journal, 45*(3), 227–249.
Rouse, S., & Ross, A. (2018). Millennials to the rescue? Climate change (dis)belief in the United States and the future of environmental policy. *The politics of Millennials: Political beliefs and policy preferences of America's most diverse generation* (pp. 149–172). University of Michigan Press.
SASPA. (2020). Pat Thomson: A recent visit to South Australia. https://www.saspa.com.au/2020/04/21/pat-thomson-a-recent-visit-to-south-australia/

Shipley, H. (2018). Failure to launch? Feminist endeavours as a partial academic. In Y. Taylor, & K. Lahad (Eds.), *Feeling academic in the Neoliberal University* (pp. 1–32). Palgrave.
Steger, R. (2010). *Neoliberalism: A very short introduction.* Oxford University Press.
Stein, J., & Sanburn, J. (2013). The new greatest generation: Why millennials will save us all. *TIME Magazine, 181,* 26–35.
Thomson, P. (2018). A long goodbye to the 'Good Girl': An auto-ethnographic account. In Y. Taylor & K. Lahad (Eds.), *Feeling academic in the neoliberal university: Feminist flights, fights and failures* (pp. 243–260). Palgrave.
Threadgold, S. (2020). Introduction: Towards a Bourdieusian sociology of affective affinity. *Bourdieu and affect: Towards a theory of affective affinities* (pp. 1–28). Bristol University Press.
Tülübas, T., & Göktürk, S. (2020). Neoliberal governmentality and performativity culture in higher education: Reflections on academic identity. *Research in Educational Administration & Leadership, 5*(1), 198–232.
Van Maanen, J. (2011). *Tales of the field: On writing ethnography*. The University of Chicago Press.
Wilson, J. (2017a). Introduction: Living in competition. *Neoliberalism* (pp. 1–18). Routledge.
Wilson, J. (2017b). *Neoliberalism.* Routledge.
Wilson, J. (2017c). A new hegemony: The rise of neoliberalism. *Neoliberalism* (pp. 21–49). Routledge.
Wolfe, M., & Mayes, E. (2019). Response-ability: Re-e-valuing shameful measuring processes within the Australian academy. In M. Breeze, Y. Taylor, & C. Costa (Eds.), *Time and space in the neoliberal university: Futures and fractures in higher education* (pp. 277–298). Palgrave Macmillan.

Ligia Pelosi Ph.D. is a Senior Lecturer in the College of Arts, Business, Law, Education and Information Technology at Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia. Ligia has worked in education for over 20 years, with 11 of those spent in higher education. Her work in primary schools was as a generalist and LOTE teacher, but most extensively as a music specialist. Currently, Ligia is Associate Dean of Learning and Teaching. She teaches in the Bachelor of Education (P-12) and the Master of Teaching (Primary Education). Ligia completed her PhD as a creative project—a novel and exegesis. Her research and writing to date is positioned within qualitative narrative methodologies in the field of literacy and creativity.

Chapter 9
The Interplay of Neoliberalism and Buddhism in Thai Academic Life

Nuntiya Doungphummes, Sirintorn Bhibulbhanuvat, and Theeraphong Boonrugsa

Abstract This chapter explores the effect of neoliberalism on Thai academics in higher education through self-reflections. Narratives of lived experiences encompass questions and struggles over identity. Each academic journey depicts the tension of working under the strong influence of neoliberal capitalism that outweighed other educational goals. This chapter presents how the initial employment of either a "go with or against the flow" strategy added even more identity confusion. Experiencing such periods, inner conversations of personal and professional values as well as meditations on "reality" were instrumental in the process. Eventually, Buddhist teachings were brought into the equation. Even though each of the authors applied a different Buddhist principle (the law of karma, the four sublime states of mind and the three marks of existence), the tenet they relied on uniformly enhanced their ability to understand the changes as a natural phenomenon of the lifeworld. This helped settle their despondency and enabled them to look at the positive aspects of the neoliberal force. The principle then facilitated reconstruction of plural academic identities that accommodated certain neoliberal practices as well as individual autonomy. The projection here, with respect to those Thai academics, is the interplay of neoliberalism and Buddhism, which provides them with ideological and practical balance.

9.1 Introduction: The Interplay of Neoliberalism and Buddhism

Thailand, like many countries, is dominated by capitalism in both micro and macro contexts of living. The capitalistic notion permeates almost all aspects of Thai life, including higher education. In particular, public or state-run universities have been continuously encouraged to take on a new strategic management policy, namely university autonomy since two decades ago (Office of the National Education

N. Doungphummes (✉) · S. Bhibulbhanuvat · T. Boonrugsa
Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia, Mahidol University, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand
e-mail: nuntiya.dou@mahidol.edu

M. Vicars and L. Pelosi (eds.), *Storying Pedagogy as Critical Praxis in the Neoliberal University*, Rethinking Higher Education,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-4246-6_9

Commission, 2002). Under this policy, the state allows the university to manage its internal academic, organisational, and financial affairs, as well as human resources independently. It also means a huge reduction in the operational funding that the state used to provide them as part of its obligation to fulfil the citizens' right to education, i.e. to make higher education equally accessible for all citizens (Nitungkorn, 2001). The amount of funding has been gradually reduced until recently the state has limited its budget allocation to certain criteria of employment costs (Buasuwan, 2018). This has put great pressure on the university management team to forcefully implement a fiscal policy of "self-reliance" which means that every unit of the university (schools, colleges, institutes) has to be able to manage its own revenue. As a result, each unit has to work on its balance sheet and learn to do "education business" and "commercialised research" in order to survive in this new educational environment.

Such a neoliberal transition is alarming for Thai academics who are, in a sense, ousted from their comfort zone. Not only do they have to adjust their attitude towards students as customers and education as a business, but they also have to familiarise themselves as service providers whose work is to perform teaching to the satisfaction of stakeholders (students, labour markets, and society). They are also expected to provide academic services for income contribution as well as to publish their work and seek research funding internationally for the university's competitive advantage in the global education market. The privilege of working with a focus only on academic advancement has been replaced by a business-like competition (i.e. financial generation and contribution to university world rankings). This neoliberal saturation has led to seismic changes in Thai academic life that have affected their selfhood and professional identity.

The authors of this chapter narrate their own life experiences working as academics in two Thai universities (a state-run and an autonomous university) where the influence of neoliberalism has been permeating almost all aspects of academic work. Although they did not carry with them a "privileged past" (i.e. academic freedom and autonomy) since all previously worked in private education and the business sector, the intensity of neoliberal practices has affected their sense of self, which is linked to the interplay of their perceived and expected academic identities. This chapter illustrates how aspects of marketised education, the practice of self-reliance, and devalued academic discipline have driven them to a crossroads in their academic journeys where their identities are shaken. It outlines how Buddhist teachings embedded in their consciousness have been brought in as a moral and practical guide to balance ideological values and neoliberal practices, and importantly the reconstruction of his/her academic identity.

9.2 Neoliberalism and the Transformation of University Autonomy in Thailand

The notion of autonomous universities first manifested in Thai higher education in the establishment of the University of Moral and Political Sciences in 1934 (later changed to its current name, Thammasat University). Operating under the 1934 Thammasat and Politics University Act, the university observed its status as a legal entity to independently manage its organisational structure, academic, personnel, and financial affairs with liberty to create and draw income from any legitimate sources such as application, examination, and tuition fees, as well as stock investments (Thammasat University, 2020). After twenty-six years of autonomy, its status was reversed back to a fully state-run university in 1960 and its staff reverted to state officials, but this did not stop discussions on the idea of university autonomy among national leading academics, which consequently led to the submission of a policy for university autonomy to the government (Julintorn, 2015). The policy was approved in principle in 1971, and a new education act was drafted accordingly by the National Education Council in 1972 (Ibid., 2015). Yet, before passing the act, all universities (executives as well as academic and supporting personnel) were asked about the practical aspect of this policy, and this resulted in the cabinet's withdrawal of the draft as the disagreeing views outnumbered the supporting views (Boonchu, 1997). This, coupled with a failure of establishing a newly founded university as an autonomous entity, exhausted efforts for change, but what was brought to the foreground in Thai higher education was neoliberalism, and this concept has not faded from the academic and administrative context since (Ibid., 1997). The autonomous university concept at that time was modelled after the British education reform, emphasising flexibility of management i.e. the setting up of a university grants committee for (state) budget allocation, and the use of a participatory approach for university management (Kiranan et al, 2002), which was rather different from the current practices of autonomous universities that are fuelled by internal and external forces underpinning neoliberal economic ideology.

According to Julintorn's study of guidelines for converting all state-run universities to autonomous universities by 2021 (Julintorn, 2015), the "real" beginning of changes towards neoliberal practices for Thai universities became more evident from the re-emergence of the university autonomy concept in the first 15-year long term higher education plan (1990–2004) initiated by the Ministry of University Affairs. The plan was perceived as a proactive development towards higher education reforms, one of which was the transformation of state higher education institutions to independent, flexible, and efficient entities for academic excellence. In so doing, all state universities were to be converted to autonomous universities, and new ones to be established as self-governing entities. Consequently, the first autonomous university in the country, namely Suranaree University of Technology, was founded in 1990 (Suranaree University, 2020) followed by Walailak University in 1992 (Walailak University, 2020). Two of Thailand's Buddhist universities (Mahamakut Buddhist University and Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University) were also pioneers of

conversion from state-run to autonomous universities in 1997 (Mahachulalongkorn-rajavidyalaya University, 2020; Mahamakut Buddhist University, 2020). Although the adoption of autonomy measures has not been endorsed by other existing public universities, external and internal forces have put great pressure on the authorities to relentlessly push forward with implementing the policy up to today.

The primary force driving the government's "big push" towards neoliberalisation through the university autonomy reform was the country's economic recession in 1997–1998. The crisis compelled the government in power to accept loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Asia Development Bank (ADB), imposing specific obligations on the country to restructure its economic and social systems (ADB, 1999; IMF, 1997). One of these, imposed by ADB, related to higher education in particular and necessitated a commitment to make all state universities autonomous by the year 2002 (Nitungkorn, 2001). Another "push" was budget cuts for all state agencies and the 80 percent revocation of retired civil servant positions, which seriously affected state universities' human resource management, forcing them to adopt a new scheme replacing civil servant positions with "university employee" positions (Julintorn, 2015). This changed the employment status of academics from one of lifetime employment with a retirement pension and welfare to that of contractee for whom everything was time-bound and more importantly, the extension of their contract was dependent upon performance assessment resembling corporate human resource practices (Nitungkorn, 2001).

Even though Thailand has since recovered from the economic crisis and the 2002 goal of removing all state universities from the civil service system has not been attained, the change in global and national contexts of higher education has prompted every government to pursue this neoliberal path (Julintorn, 2015). Importantly, the process of globalisation has shifted the scope and purpose of higher education to be part of "the global knowledge economy" (Kandiko, 2010, p. 153). Such a shift affects the scope and operating procedure of higher education as it creates competitive opportunities for student recruitment and research funding that goes beyond national boundaries, traditional high school graduates, and finance agencies. This opens the way for new groups of students of various ages, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds (Schuetze & Slowey, 2002). It also creates possibilities to access research grants from international organisations and work in partnership with private sectors for commercial purposes. Moreover, advanced information and digital technology contribute to the increasing need for flexibility in university management (including admission process, teaching programmes and methods) in response to the way people now live and learn. In other words, "globalization has brought the free market into universities" (Currie & Newson, 1998, p. 6), and advanced technologies have made it all possible.

Key domestic factors that have driven such drastic university reform include the so-called Thailand 4.0 policy and changes in the national demographic structure. Since 2016, the state has been implementing a Thailand 4.0 policy focusing on a value-based and innovation-driven economy as a new national development blueprint to overcome the middle-income trap, a situation in which the country's economic growth remains at the same level without much prospect of being successful in lifting it to a higher

level (Buasuwan, 2018; Jitsuchon, 2012). One of the main reasons for Thailand being mired in the middle-income trap for decades was the failure of the higher education system to equip graduates with knowledge and skills suitable for global competition (Jitsuchon, 2012). Adding another challenge for university management is Thailand's unprecedented demographic transition in which the declining fertility and mortality rates occur simultaneously.

The fast-growing elderly population makes Thailand the third most rapidly aging society in Asia and a "complete aged society" with 16.73 percent of its citizens aged over 60, and is projected to become a "full fledged aged society" with more than 20 percent of its population defined as "aged" by 2022 (National Statistical Office, 2018; Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau, 2019). This is in contrast to the birth rate that continues to fall and is now below replacement, causing a shrinking of both the student-age and working-age population (Mala, 2019). The effect of this demographic shift on higher education becomes apparent in a growing supply–demand gap where a considerable excess of university seats has continued to increase due to the decline of student enrolments (ICEF Monitor, 2017).

In the face of these global and national challenges, the Thai government has been trying even harder to convert more state universities to autonomous entities based on the assumption that independent and flexible management will facilitate these universities to adjust and adapt to the changing landscape of higher education and the expected role of universities in this socially, demographically, and digitally disrupted era. As indicated in the latest long-term higher education plan (2018–2037), re-profiling, restructuring, return on investment, and internationalisation of higher education institutions are the main development goals under the Thailand 4.0 policy (Office of the Higher Education Commission, 2018). More specifically, the strive towards the production of knowledgeable and highly skilled graduates who are versatile in all fields, practical and demand-led research as well as innovation development is deemed the university's obligation. Thus, becoming autonomous and embracing neoliberalism (i.e. self-reliance with education business management to compete in the global education market) is seen as a core practical approach to enhance the competitive performance of Thai universities and a way forward for strengthening Thailand's higher education. Currently, the number of Thai autonomous universities reaches 26 with 57 remaining state institutions, (Office of the Higher Education Commission, 2020).

To drive the implementation of the higher education plan, the new Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation (MHESI), forged from four existing agencies (Science and Technology Ministry, Office of the Higher Education Commission, the National Research Council of Thailand, and the Thailand Research Fund) was established in May 2019 (Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation, 2020). The establishment of this new Ministry is not only a "gigantic step" towards the administrative, regulatory, and budgeting reform of Thailand's higher education, it is another means by which to enhance the competitive capacity of Thai universities in the global education context, namely by improving universities' academic capabilities, the efficiency of R&D budget spending, and high technologies and innovations development (Maesincee, 2018). Boosting the university rank

in the international ranking metrics (i.e. the QS World University Ranking based in the USA and Times Higher Education World University Ranking based in the UK), international standard accreditations and international course marketing, as well as streamlining research funding to universities concentrating on R&D in technological innovations and science fields are now becoming key performance criteria for Thai universities. To elaborate, MHESI's decision on research budget allocation is dependent on the university's performance according to these criteria. This has a chain effect on the professional lives of academics as their working culture and expected role are steered towards market-like practices more than any other aspects.

9.3 Narratives of Academic Journeys Under the Influence of Neoliberalism

Being an academic is obviously a life journey where the process of self-revision and practical decisions is constant and inevitable. There are crossroads at which one's sense of self as an individual and academic is contested and negotiated. Undergoing processes that Archer describes as "inner conversation", which involves contemplation of self and reality (Archer, 2000, p. 318), becomes a psychological mechanism, particularly prior to making any crucial decisions that will have far-reaching consequences on selfhood and professional life.

The crossroad may vary among academics in terms of degree of tension, but it often constitutes concerns over aspects of individuation—self-worth, physical and mental well-being—and professional identity (i.e. autonomy, roles and values) (Clegg, 2008; Ylijoki & Ursin, 2013). Following are the authors' narratives on their lives as academics and their experiences of working in the neoliberal context of Thai universities. Each story illustrates the interconnected sense of personal and professional self being affected by the pervasive aspects of neoliberalism "in the guise of performativity and managerialism" (van der Walt, 2017, p. 5).

9.4 Academic Integrity in the Marketised Education Context

Concerns over personal and academic aspects often coexist with changes in the workplace and/or working context. In Nuntiya's case, it was the forceful exertion of neoliberal economic practices in a state-run university that led to her questioning her academic identity. She first "tasted" the disaster of market-driven education just a few months after starting work at the university. Appointed as a doctoral thesis examiner for a student of a Ph.D. programme, which operated under the slogan "guaranteed graduation with full payment", she felt under great pressure since the Ph.D. programme was a "cash cow" programme set up with the primary goal of

income generation. However, after a few years in operation, its extreme marketised practice was widely criticised by the public and media alike for its quality deficit (i.e. production of low competent graduates). Being an examiner in this situation meant balancing between the unwritten rules of "student satisfaction" and maintaining acceptable education standards. This issue became more acute after reading the student's thesis, which was not of an acceptable standard. What made it more complicated was the need to save face—a prominent characteristic of Thai culture (Persons, 2008) and an intervening factor in this examination. To illustrate, strong criticism of the thesis would be offensive and create a loss of face for both the student (a junior lecturer at the same university) and the supervisor (a nationally renowned scholar and marketer who was initially employed as a magnet for the programme). Anticipating this scenario prompted the author to question her own value and role as an academic. Prior to the actual encounter, she inwardly revised her academic identity, which basically encompassed the interconnected concepts of the distinctive, embedded, and professional self (Henkel as cited in Vandeyar, 2010). Reflexive accounts of the distinctive individual included a revision of her personal beliefs and commitment to becoming an academic, which was to harness her knowledge and competency to help develop proficient human capital for the benefit of Thai society, as well as to contribute to her discipline through research. Her embedded sense of self derived from working within the context of a university fuelled by neoliberal practices and a strong hierarchical culture (i.e. higher academic or management position, higher status, and respect gained). The hierarchical aspect encompassed face-saving behaviour such as it being deemed inappropriate to convey negative feedback to a higher-up. In this work context, the author struggled to deconstruct and reconstruct her professional identity through a negotiation of the personal and academic values. She had to find the best way of maintaining her academic integrity and at the same time preserving the student's and supervisor's face and respect for other senior exam committee members.

At this juncture, internal dialogues were coined between the author's ideological values and the neoliberal and hierarchical working context. Reflecting on it, she turned to Buddhist teachings, particularly the law of karma, to overcome her apprehension in performing the examiner role in a way that conformed to her personal and academic values, namely giving direct and honest comments to help improve the quality of the thesis. No matter how hard she tried to contain her comments in a shroud of "softness", it still resulted in loss of face for all involved, which subsequently led to extreme collective hostility throughout and after the thesis defence session. By applying karma—a universal system of moral causation where intentional good actions bring happiness (Jackson, 2016)—to define her role as a moral one, it transcended all other cultural (face-saving, hierarchy) and business aspects (customer satisfaction). Most importantly, it gave her the strength to remain composed throughout the stressful situation. Attempts to verbally discredit and devalue her scholarship during her submission did not end with the session and were experienced thereafter in the form of slander and gossip. The slander was channelled through a press conference held by the supervisor and the widespread gossip was maneuvered by the student. The malingering comments centred mostly on the

issue of how she, the author as a junior academic, dared to challenge the work being supervised by such a well-known scholar.

The law of karma strengthened her inner academic self and assurance of having taken such a position was sought by the university's management. She went to the top (the university president) to consult about the situation, and to seek his guidance. When he failed to give her an explicit answer, she extracted from his response just how seriously the university took the education quality improvement policy. This was a way to exploit the institutional and social hierarchy for the academic good. This, coupled with her belief in the law of karma, helped reconstruct her professional identity, which was inextricably linked with her selfhood. Put simply, the author's reconstruction of her sense of professional self and academic role reflects a combination of both personal and cultural identities. It is also important to note here that the main reason that she was able to construct and perform such an academic role was that it was in accordance with the university's policy of quality control. Such a policy transferred market values into the university management system where quality checking of products (i.e. graduates) became part of the education service process.

9.5 Academic Value Beyond the Institutional Practice of "Self-Reliance"

The narrative of ideological confusion is apparent in author B's story. Moving from a private, teaching-focused university to work in an autonomous, research-based university, one of the most prestigious in the country, initially offered her the opportunity to explore her academic self as part of a research-centred community. During the first few years, she enjoyed a sense of academic freedom and autonomy as she was able to initiate and develop research projects that matched her interest in community development. She also planned to build her academic career around and expertise in the use of participatory action research approach in the area of community empowerment. However, her plan came to a halt due to the earnest implementation of the university's fiscal policy that highlighted the importance of economic independence. In fact, this neoliberal economic agenda has been looming in the university context for quite a while but its application was never vigorous. The recent strong imposition of a "self-reliance" policy on all units of the university (schools, colleges, institutes) has been the result of a drastic reduction in state financial support. This means that each unit has to be able to survive on its own revenue. Consequently, numbers of units that could not survive alone have been forced to merge with those having more economic strength, and most staff contracts were terminated. Such a practice placed the author at a crossroads where her research motivation and academic value were being challenged by this market-driven approach. Adding to this was her university's world ranking goal, which emphasised the quantity of research projects and

funding, and as a result, key performance indicators for promotion and renewal of employment contracts were set accordingly.

The "self-reliance" and world ranking condition have led the author to adopt a "go with the flow" strategy, whereby she tried to write and submit as many research proposals as possible to all available funding agencies. However, the success rate was discouraging compared to the amount of effort and energy that she had put into the work. One of the main reasons was that most funding agencies focused on technology and innovation-driven projects for economic growth and competitive advantages in line with the Thailand 4.0 policy. Criteria such as "research utilization" and "potential for commercialization" were now included in the grant approval evaluation (Buasuwan, 2018, p. 168). This meant that research grants on issues related to community participation and empowerment were very limited.

Over time, her physical fatigue and psychological struggle became salient. She gradually lost a sense of autonomy and academic value, and this has resulted in her losing interest in her research and an overwhelming feeling of hopelessness and lack of desire to advance her academic career. Simply put, neoliberalism has stifled her research passion and curtailed her career prospects.

Experiencing such cognitive dissonance, the author tried to find ways to restore her internal and external balance. She revised her own ideology and standpoint in working as an academic, which was to empower the less privileged in Thai society. However, the neoliberal economic element has lessened her opportunities to do this in the way and as much as she wanted. Aware of the situation, she revitalised the living principles that supported her—the Buddhist four sublime states of mind: loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic-joy, and equanimity (unshakable balance of mind) (Thera, 1999)—to adjust her mindset towards a change in her community of practice. This new mindset helped her cope with the nuances of contradictory experiences, i.e. the academic standpoint versus the quantity-oriented approach to research. Importantly, she embraced the notion of sympathetic joy to interpret the effect of innovation-driven research on Thai communities' economic stability in a positive manner. It is within this thinking framework that she was able to look beyond her own boundaries of practice to reconceptualise her academic values as nonattachment to any specific research approach. In her view, academic self is not tied to a sense of personal or professional autonomy or research performativity per se but rather the ability to express loving-kindness and compassion for others in every possible way.

9.6 Professional Resilience Under the Devalued Academic Discipline

The fact that the effects of neoliberalisation on all academic disciplines are not equal and that the social sciences and humanities are somewhat devalued (Vaira, 2004) impacts the professional identity of academics within these disciplines. Author C's professional dilemma reflects such an impact. The neoliberal forces from within

and outside the university coupled with personal beliefs led the author to question the value of his teaching discipline and his own positionality. Being brought up in a family of teachers, he was taught to uphold the value of respect, honesty, kindness, and sympathy as well as Buddhist teachings as a living principle. He was also raised to idealise the academic profession as a noble one, believing that it could contribute to a better society through the production of competent and "good" individuals. Thus, when he decided to change his profession from banker to lecturer at an autonomous university, it was considered the "right" move because it was a kind of work consistent with his values and Buddhist worldview. During the first decade of working at the university, he did not encounter any conflicts between his living principle and academic work. On the contrary, applying Buddhist perspectives to his lectureship through teaching subjects such as leadership development, organisational management and research methodology, as well as his research was effortless. He even introduced a new subject that blended Eastern and Buddhist philosophies with business management. In terms of research, he focused on an area related to the quality of life of minorities and vulnerable groups such as hill tribes, migrant workers, and rural communities.

However, entering the second decade of the author's academic career, his confidence in such teaching and research approaches gradually diminished. Worst of all, his sense of academic self faltered over the value of his discipline. This occurred after his university started to drastically promote medicine, science, and technology disciplines over other disciplines in response to Thailand 4.0 and the global competition policy. In so doing, his university has set as its priority to be in the top 100 world-ranked universities which means academics have to prioritise international publications and citations. Unfortunately, his community of practice (the unit he worked in) belonged to the social sciences and humanities camp concentrating on basic and applied language and culture studies for the well-being and social harmony of minorities and the less privileged. The focus of its past publications was to benefit Thai academics and stakeholders with new knowledge, hence, it was published mostly in Thai. Such a practice was regarded by those outside the discipline as detrimental to the university's goal of world-class status. The author's academic self was shaken not only by the momentum of change within his university but also by criticism of his field of academic expertise and its perceived irrelevance to the "real world" by more business-minded colleagues. The criticism centred on how the social sciences could not help solve economic problems, and producing graduates in this field was not as important as those in the areas of science, engineering, math, and technology (STEM). Clearly, university and academic roles were not characterised by whether they could create "whole" human beings and harmonious societies but rather by whether they could facilitate economic growth and so-called progress. Neoliberalism has had the effect of dividing academics and scholars along discipline lines and altering the relationship between higher education and society.

Facing this conundrum, the author reflected on the path to sustaining his professional self. He admitted that his initial reaction was defensive. The debate within him tended to revolve around the university's disproportionate focus on STEM, arguing that this would create an imbalance in society and possible conflicts. In addition,

he could not comprehend why international publications were given greater weight since they were not as useful for Thai audiences, who usually prefer to read in Thai. However, he eventually realised that constructing his academic identity along a path of resistance alone would not ease his conflictual state of mind. He then meditated on the situation using the Buddhist three marks of existence, namely impermanence (things in life are always changing), suffering (frustration or dissatisfaction), and non-selfhood (the non-existence of a real self) (Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, 2008). The law of impermanence made him aware that the changing focus of his university concerning certain academic disciplines was a natural phenomenon in the lifeworld. His diminishing academic value was seen as a kind of suffering caused by his desire to maintain the status quo (personal values and pride). Most importantly, he loosened a grip on his perceived academic value and role because there was no such "real" self. This implies that academic identity as a fixed form of incorporeal property is a false notion given that everything is constantly changing. These three realities liberated the author from academic self-indulgence and shed a more positive light on the change. Instead of rambling on about the limited utility of international publication to Thai audiences, he tried to look at the benefit it had for people in other countries. This thought motivated him to make more effort to publish his work internationally. Nevertheless, his position on working and publishing for Thai audiences was unwavering, and so he has continued his academic work along this line regardless of university pressure. He has since regained confidence in the field of social sciences, believing in its philosophy of developing the "whole" person through moral and relational development. He cited one of the most respected Buddhist monks, Phra Brahmagunabhorn (P.A. Payutto) (2013), who stated that developing the wisdom of the people is a core of development. In this light, the application of Buddhist teaching has helped the author get through a period of professional struggle, facilitated reconstruction of his academic identity, and broadened his perspective on the changing policy towards higher education. All of this demonstrates professional resilience—an important skill in the new normal era.

9.7 Conclusion

The narratives of these three academics reflect their journeys into the new, neoliberised context of Thai higher education, where tensions in their personal and professional values have intensified. Despite encountering different aspects of neoliberal practices (market-driven education, the imposition of self-reliance policy, the devalued discipline of social sciences), they all engaged in identity struggles that were the result of internal conflicts between their personal values and academic ideologies, and their "new" roles as education service providers and demand-led researchers. This was all contrary to the nature and beliefs of these academics. This initially led to psychological dissonance from which questions of self-worth and professional identity arose. Going through inner conversation processes of individual and academic self-revision and reflection using the Buddhist lens enabled

them to regain their internal and external strength and reconstruct their academic identities in a more compromised manner. In particular, they used the neoliberal practice as a motivation for knowledge and skill improvement while maintaining their academic integrity by continuing to work in a way that was consistent with their ideologies. What was interesting is that their commitment to religious practice varied, ranging from modest to high. This suggests that Buddhist teachings were embedded in their subconscious and available to them when guidance on how to resolve internal conflicts and find a balance between the values they upheld and changing realities was sought.

The reconstruction and negotiation of academic identities were determined by the perception of neoliberalism as neither good nor bad, and the application of Buddhism as a living and working principle. Notably, the academics' employment of the law of karma, the four sublime states of mind, and the three marks of existence were not unusual as these are the core Buddhist values and shields to protect against challenges to selfhood and professional life (Saisuta, 2012; Thera, 1999). These principles commonly enhanced their understanding of lifeworld as constantly changing and causes of suffering as self-attachment. The shifting selves phenomenon that these Thai academics have experienced thus reflects the interplay between the Buddhist philosophy of life and the neoliberal, capitalist world of Thai academia.

References

ADB. (1999, Dec). Interim Assessment of ADB's Lending to Thailand during the Economic Crisis. Evaluation Document, Asian Development Bank. Retrieved from https://www.adb.org/documents/interim-assessment-adbs-lending-thailand-duringeconomic-crisis

Archer, M. (2000). *Being human: The problem of agency*. Cambridge University Press.

Boonchu, N. (1997). Universities development to the autonomous university. Research report, Chiang Mai University.

Buasuwan, P. (2018). Rethinking Thai higher education for Thailand 4.0. *Asian Education and Development Studies, 7*(2), 157–173.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu. (2008). *Handbook for mankind*. Kledthai Company Limited.

Clegg, S. (2008). Academic identities under threat? *British Educational Research Journal, 34*(3), 329–345.

Currie, J., & Newson, J. (1998). *Universities and globalization: Critical perspectives*. Sage Publications.

ICEF Monitor. (2017). Thailand's growing supply-demand gap in higher education. Retrieved from https://monitor.icef.com/2017/10/thailands-growing-supply-demandgap-higher-education/

IMF. (1997, Aug). IMF approves stand-by credit for Thailand. International Monetary Fund. Press release no.97/37. Retrieved from https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2015/09/14/01/49/pr9737

Jackson, P. A. (2016). *First queer voices from Thailand: Uncle Go's advice columns for gays, lesbians and kathoeys*. Hong Kong University Press.

Jitsuchon, S. (2012). Thailand in a middle-income trap. *TDRI Quarterly Review, 27*(2), 13–20.

Julintorn, T. (2015). Guidelines for converting all state universities to autonomous universities by 2021, Research Report: King Prajadhipok's Institute.

Kandiko, C. B. (2010). Neoliberalism in higher education: A comparative approach. *International Journal of Arts and Sciences, 3*(14), 153–175.
Kiranan, T., Jamornmann, U., Visalvelthaya, T., & Jessadachatr, P. (2002). Preparing of public universities to the autonomous university. Research report. Bangkok: Office of Permanent Secretary for University Department, University Department.
Maesincee, S. (2018, 25 Oct). New ministry set up to drive reforms. The Nation. Retrieved from https://www.nationthailand.com/national/30357150
Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (MCU). (2020). Historical background. Retrieved from https://www.mcu.ac.th/pages/history
Mahamakut Buddhist University (MBU). (2020). University history. Retrieved from http://www.mbu.ac.th/index.php/2012-11-14-02-09-46/2012-11-14-02-25-49?showall=&start=3#.XzCC95ozbiw
Mala, D. (2019, 4 Jan). Higher education institutions must adapt to a rapidly ageing population and the online era in order to survive. Bangkok Post, Retrieved from https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/1604990/thai-unis-struggle-to-keepup
Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation (MHESI). (2020). Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministry_of_Higher_Education,_Science,_Research_and_Innovation
National Statistical Office. (2018). *Report on aging population in Thailand in 2018*. National Statistical Office. Retrieved from http://www.nso.go.th/sites/2014/Pages/News/2561/N10-07-61.aspx
Nitungkorn, S. (2001). Higher education reform in Thailand. *Southeast Asian Studies, 38*(4), 461–480.
Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC). (2018). The 20-year long term higher education plan (2018-2037), Prigwhan-graphic Co.: Bangkok. Retrieved from http://www.mua.go.th/users/bpp/main/download/plan/plan20yrs.pdf
Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC) (2020). http://www.mua.go.th/university-2.html
Office of the National Education Commission (ONEC). (2000). National Education Act 1999, as amended, second version, ONEC, Bangkok.
Phra Brahmagunabhorn (P.A. Payutto). (2013). (13th ed.). Sustainable development. Bangkok: Komol Press Foundation.
Persons, L. S. (2008). The Anatomy of Thai Face. *Manusaya, 11*(1), 53–75.
Saisuta, N. (2012, 12–13 Dec). The Buddhist core values and perspectives for protection challenges: Faith and protection. [additional material]. UNHCR the 5th High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges, Palais de Nations, Geneva, Switzerland. https://www.unhcr.org/50be10cb9.pdf
Schuetze, H. G., & Slowey, M. (2002). Participation and exclusion: A comparative analysis of non-traditional students and lifelong learners in higher education. *Higher Education, 44*(3), 309–327.
Suranaree University of Technology (SUT). (2020). SUT Background. Retrieved from http://web.sut.ac.th/2012/en/content/detail/SUT%20Background
Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau. (2019). The Aging Population and the Global Trend, Retrieved from https://intelligence.businesseventsthailand.com/en/insight/aging-trends-01
Thammasat University. (2020). Thammasat university's history. Retrieved from https://tu.ac.th/en/history_tu
Thera, N. (1999). *The four sublime states*. Inward Path. Retrieved from http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/4sublime_states.pdf
Vaira, M. (2004). Globalization and higher education organizational change: A framework for analysis. *Higher Education, 48*, 483–510.
van der Walt, J. L. (2017). Neoliberalism and education: A reformational-pedagogical perspective (part 1). *Bulletin for Christian Scholarship, 82*(1). https://doi.org/10.19108/KOERS.82.1.2275

Vandeyar, S. (2010). Shifting selves: Constructing and negotiating academic identities. *Unisa Press ISSN, 1011–3487*, 914–934.
Walailak University (WU). (2020). History.
Ylijoki, O., & Ursin, J. (2013). The construction of academic identity in the changes of Finnish higher education. *Studies in Higher Education, 88*(8), 1135–1149.

Dr. Nuntiya Doungphummes received her Ph.D in Journalism studies from Cardiff University, UK. Her scholarship focuses on issues of media literacy for elderly, intercultural communication competence and intercultural adaptation of migrants, sexual identity communication of LGBTQIA, health communication in communities. She is an Associate Professor in the Research Institute of Language and Cultures of Asia at Mahidol University, Thailand. Her research has been cross-disciplinary involving communications and participatory action based research. Over the past five years, she has been working on promoting media literacy for Thai elderly through a culturally responsive designed-course.

Chapter 10
Political Agency in the Era of Precision Education Governance in Higher Education

Kristiina Brunila

Abstract In this chapter, I consider academic political agency through four overlapping narratives emerging from my previous academic writing projects of consistently troubling academic encounters over the past six years while making the transition from a precarious tenure-track position to a full professorship. One of the key aims of the writing of this chapter was to draw on my academic experience as a means to politicise my experience in and of the academy. The concept of experience is central to this work and is not understood as the experiences of isolated individuals, but as academic scholars who constitute themselves and are constituted as experiencing scholars. This chapter is yet another attempt to build on experience in examining the making of academic subjects in universities in times of neoliberalism.

10.1 Introduction

This chapter is the outcome of a brainstorming process derived from a call to give a lecture in a national one-year feminist pedagogy course about political agency in academia to fellow feminist critical scholars trying to make their way in academia as teachers and researchers. I wanted to provide a forum for generating possibilities for thinking about the self in a different way in the emergence of precision higher education governance (PEG). PEG focuses on the tendency for narrow, calculable, limited individualised, and de-politicised subjectivities to blame themselves for failures. Inspired by a narrative approach, I wanted to utilise my previous academic writing projects of becoming a recognisable academic scholar in neoliberal academia, its relation to presenting oneself in the 'right way' as an academic scholar and to try to interrupt such efforts.

K. Brunila (✉)
AGORA for the Study of Social Justice and Equality Research Centre,
University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland
e-mail: kristiina.brunila@helsinki.fi

M. Vicars and L. Pelosi (eds.), *Storying Pedagogy as Critical Praxis in the Neoliberal University*, Rethinking Higher Education,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-4246-6_10

With a long history as a feminist scholar, my work has focused on issues of power and subjectification. Being familiar with hierarchies and processes of othering, I have throughout my career to build more understanding in my teaching and research in terms of political agency inspired by feminist post-structural research.

Political agency in academia has meant understanding what it actually means to be a scholar at work in a neoliberal academia, including constant problematising and trouble-making, while aiming to be more aware of the academic discourses through which people speak about themselves and engage with others. Becoming a killjoy, as I have started to call this type of political agency inspired by Sara Ahmed's famous work (Ahmed, 2017), has allowed space for critique by taking power relations seriously, but it has not come without problems, jolts, and compromises. While thinking about political agency as enacted through a narrative approach, I have been keen on scrutinising the alliance of neoliberalism and individualism/intravidualism to build an understanding of political agency in the academy. It is at this nexus where the affective dimensions and obsession with happiness, well-being, and positivity imperatives have emerged together with economic productivity (see further Cabanas & Illouz, 2018).

10.2 The Emergence of Precision Higher Education Governance

If we want to understand what is meant by neoliberal academia in a Nordic welfare state, we must take a look at the shifting role of the nation-state towards demands related to market-driven ideas of competitiveness and the production of human capital and efficiency and how these demands have reshaped Nordic welfare state policies and their institutions, including higher education. In Finland, as elsewhere, state policies have been called into question by neoliberal reforms, blurring the boundaries between the public and private sectors (e.g. Brunila & Daniel, 2023; Ball & Youdell, 2007). The neoliberal welfare state is a powerful instrument reforming institutions and individuals in ways that are compatible with a market ethos. The agreements, rights, obligations, and responsibilities between the state and its citizens are renewed through institutions. The steering effect has increased the integration of interests of various actors, such as private- and third-sector coalitions, and profitable components invested in the content and objectives of education (Brunila et al., 2019). Various types of reforms taking place in higher education and universities can be understood with the concept of precision education governance (PEG), which refers to the multi-dimensional components and ideas as well as the highly individualised and personalised attempts coming together to shape the future of the whole education sector. PEG is an umbrella concept developed in a pilot research project led by the author. It refers to the increasingly transnational nature of education governance, the emergence of new powerful partnerships and agendas influencing education, and the use of behavioural and affective (including psychological, therapeutic, neurological,

and medical) insights to deliberately shape human conduct more efficiently and thoroughly. The concept resonates with neuro liberalism, which focuses on the type of behavioural government connected to neoliberalism (see further Whitehead et al., 2018) and the OECD's new science of learning initiatives highlighting new fields of science, marketisation, and privatisation. Central to the promise of PEG is that it makes the delivery of education, knowledge, teaching, and behaviour more calculable and predictive by bringing together various types of networks and agendas related to changing educational governance. In higher education, the rise of PEG reflects a strong tendency to rationalise education to work more in line with market logic, to become more accountable and effective, and to produce evidence-based research and data for the need for more effective behavioural governance. It is important to understand just what is at stake here.

The affective dimensions of precision governance do not necessarily mean working to become a better scholar or doing good for the world through your research. They instead entail working for the legitimacy of governance itself. In terms of teaching, the demand for accountability on a behavioural basis has opened up a discursive space for new behaviourally oriented pedagogical practices based on (positive) psychology, therapeutic interventions, and neurology. One example of precision governance in higher education is precision teaching and highly individualised and personalised learning, while at the same time educational processes are shifting towards the production of predetermined learning outcomes and abstract subjectivities with specific predetermined learning abilities, skills, competences and emotions.

The tendency towards precision has become more complex and multi-directional, shaping the nature of knowledge and academic subjectivities. Increasingly, economic imperatives that shape the forms of governance and globalisation call into question the future role of the whole nation-state in securing economic growth and bringing about new demands in relation to the production of knowledge, behaviour management, and human capital. The shift from government to governance that emphasise the role of networks and the interactions between multiple public and private sectors are some of the changes related to the emergence of PEG. In addition, such governance has led to new multi-level arrangements and networks with a wide variety of interests and disciplines.

Among that new stakeholders and knowledge systems emerge and frame educational systems via imperatives to respond in new ways to problems and to foster ideas about what knowledge and forms of subjectivities are most ideal, and their worth. In other words, precision governance works by pursuing such imperatives as marketisation, privatisation, and behavioural management, transforming academic scholars into calculable, self-responsible, and predictive subjectivities.

Precision governance shapes the processes by which academics are inclined to turn themselves into manageable subjects within the context of academic life.

While precision governance has aimed to find new and more efficient ways of promoting behavioural management, feminist researchers have theorised about and challenged political injustices and devoted attention to the individualised, self-sustaining, coherent, unified, and integral ideas of the human subject for decades.

Likewise, the aim of our research group and projects has been to study more in-depth cross-sectoral policies and educational theories and practices (e.g. Brunila, 2012, 2014; Brunila & Valero, 2018, Brunila et al., 2019, 2020). Challenging the coherent subject has also been one of the central ideas of our work, especially as inspired by the philosopher Judith Butler. Butler has famously argued that the choices people make stem not so much from the individual, but from the condition of possibility, which prescribe not only what is desirable but also what is recognisable as an acceptable form of subjectivity (Butler, 2008).

Precision governance shares the idea of a coherent and suitably flexible and governable subject. To challenge this notion, it is crucial to understand just what frames a person's vision, or seeing, and how various types of conditions construct and produce 'truth', differences, and subjects. The idea of the human subject as open, shifting, and revisable might offer the possibility to work against neoliberal tendencies of creating individualised and governable subjects. Theoretically speaking, this does not mean getting rid of the subject altogether, but instead questioning notions of a stable subject as the sole focus or starting point for legitimate political struggles. In challenging PEG, our understanding of becoming relates to how power relations form subjectivity and socially constructed differences such as gender.

10.3 Data and Analysis

With the emergence of PEG on my mind, I planned my lecture for the national one-year feminist pedagogy course. I thought about situating it around narratives of political agency, as I had interpreted them in previous writing projects involving putting theory into practice in several ethically problematic academic encounters during the past six years. As a scholar interested in discursively shaped power relations, an important issue in analysing narratives is the relation between discourse and subjectivity. I have learned to think there is no access to the internal thoughts or beliefs of a person. Discourses, as well as language, cultural signs, and processes of signification constantly shape us just as much as we shape them. Discourses are in constant flux and inherently unstable, and therefore changeable. I chose a narrative approach for this chapter because I was curious to explore how academic narratives can work as pedagogic sites, with the understanding of narratives being a result of academic power relations, interaction, encounters, and exchanges and where a sense of self is embedded in the narrative construction (Goodson & Gill, 2011).

In terms of PEG in higher education and its emphasis on individualisation, a narrative approach can challenge the persistent belief in the individual and intravidual acquisition of knowledge, skills, competences, and emotions. In this chapter, the narrative approach encompasses power relations, political agency as becoming, and what is considered valuable and worthwhile. The narratives, derived from my four previous writing projects, have allowed me to politicise academic situational experiences through my teaching while providing different types of possibilities to narrate political agency. When analysing the four previous articles I have written that focused

on academic work as forms of narratives of academic political agency, I asked why these stories were told at a particular time, what were their key themes and plots, and in the end, how were they connected to each other.

10.4 Narrative 1: Political Agency as Multiple Ambivalences

The initial process of politicising my experiences as academic work began when I received a tenure-track position as a professor of social justice and equality in education at a Nordic university striving for excellence. It felt like I had been thrown into the deep end of a pool with an order to start swimming. I climbed the hierarchical ladder and, to some extent, quite suddenly became a public and visible figure with a voice. To become public and visible meant that I started to receive a vast amount of 'helpful advice' regarding my behaviour, my looks, and the way I presented myself, ranging from the need to avoid being assertive and having strong emotional reactions to how I should write emails. I was also reminded to keep a low profile with any feminist aspirations until I had achieved a permanent position. I was also reminded that I am constantly being evaluated, and in the future, it can be anyone evaluating me or members of my research group. The neoliberal ethos and behavioural management model was striking. I was aware of how a great deal of critical literature exists on the negative effects of neoliberalism, while little critical analysis has been done on how we, as academics, are deeply entangled in the very same neoliberal ethos that we point out as a 'cause' of problems. I became interested in the mode of nomadic drifting underpinning academic experiences because of the interests of my research group and wanting to write about the process of seeing what framed my seeing, how we come to think of, and recognise, particular statements as belonging to certain discourses, and how we both maintain and challenge these discourses. Accepting multiple ambivalences of academic work seemed relevant. It meant forming an understanding of how scholars generate and operate through constant ambivalences between, on the one hand, competitiveness, insufficiency, and anxiety, and on the other pride, enthusiasm, and contempt, a sweaty desire, as I mentioned at the end of my first writing project, borrowing the concept of sweaty desire from Eva Pendix Petersen (2008). The key moment for starting to write was a situation in which I was bullied by a small group of senior scholars in the faculty. The competition for the position had been severe, and for some scholars losing out to me and even my nomination were perhaps too difficult to accept. Feeling devastated by this experience, one suitable possibility for me was to start writing about my experiences, to put theory into practice. Writing gave me air to breath, the words, concepts, and space to start talking about the hiring experience; writing gave me the words to speak with, so I started to give talks about neoliberalism and academic bullying.

As I now analyse my first article (Brunila, 2016) in terms of political agency, I realise that text is a powerful narrative of multiple parallel ambivalences, one

through which PEG in academia operates in terms of generating self-blame and self-responsibilised academic subjectivities with a heightened sense of instability, social isolation, stress, and anxiety, all of which are productive for the framing of desired subjects and for centralising power. An effort to avoid some of these highly individualised tendencies when supporting political agency means understanding how power relations work and accepting both/and thinking instead of either/or thinking.

10.5 Narrative 2: Political Agency as Revealing Public Secrets

The production of research and academic work constantly binds together people and institutions in affective ways. As a result of these encounters and how they are constantly being shaped, I became interested in what is not said aloud, although widely acknowledged. Finding connections with other critical scholars abroad allowed me to share my experiences and to conceptualise them together. Issues such as what types of research were being construed as important research, how those topics emerge in existing political and economic configurations, and how they both subject and subjectivise individual researchers were some important topics of discussion.

Another colleague and I ended up giving a shared keynote talk at an academic conference to see how our approach resonated with academic colleagues. We were also aware of previous literature highlighting the importance of both individual and collective resistance in the neoliberal ethos (e.g. Davies & Bansel, 2010; Gill, 2017; Petersen, 2008), but at the same time leaving it for scholars to figure out how to do it, which formed the starting point for writing the paper. Our more exact intention was to provide a framework to think about how becoming a researchers is always entangled in the multiplicity of forces that constitute academia nowadays and what types of public secrets are involved in the process. We underscored affect as key for understanding the neoliberal subjectivation of academics.

We were inspired by The Institute of Precarious Consciousness (IPC, 2014), which proposes taking a critical stance towards the current celebration of the creative potential that capitalism supposedly unleashes in humans. We called attention to the precariousness of neoliberal capitalism's dominant reactive affect in the form of anxiety emerging through the meeting of the individual with the multiple systems of communication that bind scholars to measurements of productivity, accounting, visibilisation, and economic control. We argued that anxiety and stress have become a public secret, a kind of taboo that nobody mentions and that all hide behind such that the apparent precarity of the individual is not revealed in the 'wrong way'. The 'right way' in which this affect is enunciated is as a personal problem or deficit: the lack of strength of those who are not suited to win the competition of the fittest, and a definite sign of individual failure, one in which the intensities of affect operate as strategies of subjectivation and constitute research(ing) subjects. We began our

writing process by requesting that scholars from around the world share their stories of working in the neoliberal academia, and many did. We then built on the notion of fictional narrative as a form of research (e.g. Clough, 2002), making it possible to bring to the table events that are familiar and plausible, although not closed or finished, to dig into the details of the intensities of anxiety as an affect making research(ing) subjects. Finally, we crafted a variety of stories that map the intensities of anxiety in the discourses that crisscross research(ing) subjects. We believe that these stories open up those arrangements and respond to the question of the sites, practices, and materialities through which anxiety and its intensities steer the conduct of researching and research subjects. When I revisited the narrative of the text (Brunila & Valero, 2018), I realised that writing this article was very central for my future work, allowing me to take more critical distance from my academic work, while also allowing for more agency and for more creativity in my writing. Writing began to set me 'free' as a scholar from some of the boundaries I had felt for a long time, boundaries demanding that I perform certain types of conventions through my writing. The affective articulation of neoliberalism and anxiety that we focused on in the paper started to call for more of a critical approach, especially in terms of the constant interplay of ambivalences in academia, how academics are inclined to turn themselves into researching and teaching subjects, as well as resistance and counterpolitics.

10.6 Narrative 3: Political Agency as Deconstructing Academic Leadership

It was never my intention to become a leader, but I realised that it was a position that came with the professorship. As time passed, I learned about the relentless pursuit of individual orientation the different situations related to leadership in the project of neoliberal rationalism, where academics become human capital consisting of ungendered productive units. As the number of leadership duties grew, and with it the complexity of issues needing to be addressed, I began to critically explore leadership by analysing and politicising my experiences. A key moment in the writing process was a situation in which the dean appointed me to teach a one-year course for 'talented future leaders of the University'. By accepting the invitation, I was introduced to highly business-oriented leadership management training, networking with several companies, and behavioural management expertise, all demonstrating the rise of precision governance. We also practiced different techniques for engaging with our employees to achieve desired outcomes.

When the technique was demonstrated accordingly, we were rewarded. We were also asked to engage in reflective tasks with our research groups and employees in order to become better leaders in our communities. This was how we were made into academic leaders.

Lacking the opportunity to critically examine the process of becoming a leader I was going through, I again decided to write about my experiences. Because of my theoretical and methodological aspirations, I aimed to give up my authorial right to stand outside power relations as well as the desire for authenticity. I chose to place my experience as an academic leader at the centre of the writing process. I believed this would help me discover the fault lines in leadership discourses as well as find new discursive practices and subject positions, enabling me to continue as an educationalist and critical scholar, and politically active academic while utilising the leadership position for more collective purposes and for challenging the contemporary neoliberal order. One of the reasons to write this chapter was to point out the pervasiveness of the neoliberal order, where it is sometimes hard or nearly impossible to find room for political imaginary outside of the marketplace and market metrics, which are colonialising all spheres of academic life. Academic leaders and leadership are constituted by discourses that are under a constant process. Nowadays, academic leadership is profoundly shaped by neoliberalism's agenda of being both more governable and more able to serve the needs of marketisation. Becoming a recognisable leader in academia represents a form of cruel optimism, as noted by Lauren Berlant (2011), and it means learning how to present oneself in the 'right way'. I wanted to critically unpack the persistent individualistic approach in academic leadership discourse as a means of refusing and breaking the hold of academic leaders and leadership catering to the needs of an economically driven university. In addition, I tried to find possibilities for shifting the focus from the individualist orientation towards more unfinished, messy, contradictory, and multiple discourses.

I remain hopeful that perhaps some accounts of subject and agency could provide a way to understand agency not as the qualities possessed by a leader but as a subject-in-process and as the effect and redeployment of power. In other words, by considering leadership as a regulated process of repetition taking place through discourses (not as an act derived from individuals), we can simultaneously see that the possibility exists to define leadership differently. This kind of thinking gave me hope to find some political meaning from this work.

At the end of the book chapter (Brunila, 2023) I revisit here, I wrote that the possibility to verbalise what is happening around and between academic scholars in the neoliberal academia would allow me to find ways to act differently. However, upon revisiting the text I realised how naïve I still was when starting to write about power and leadership. When looking at my situation now, I realised that writing this article allowed me to start seeing the deceptiveness of leadership tasks while feeling relieved about starting to give up the power positions it promised to its objects. At one time, it might have led to a feeling of disappointment, given the expectations that academic leadership promises.

However, engaging with leadership entails working for the very legitimacy, pervasiveness, and power of neoliberal behaviour management itself. In terms of precision governance, leadership has become a very effective tool to control the lives of scholars and the ways in which they conduct research and teach. It is also an effective tool because scholars themselves have become servants in the pursuit of leadership and power, with precision governance demanding more efficient outcomes among

a handful of scholars, networks of experts, and professionals in motion. Leadership in academia supports precision governance in such a way that precision governance means moving from hierarchy to networks, from institutions to process, to ways of turning inwards and to self organisation.

10.7 Narrative 4: Political Agency as Enhancing Critical Thinking

I kept reading research papers that repeat findings on how academic work and teaching in academia are undergoing major changes in the neoliberal era. The word 'critical' started to look like an empty signifier, meaning just about anything and nothing. My next writing process was linked to the moment where I had been promoted to the University of Helsinki's Teachers' Academy from where I received funding to develop teaching in academia.

The precious Teachers' Academy was created in the university as a network of distinguished university teachers, and its official mission was to invest in the best university teachers and in teaching of the highest quality. The Academy sought to reward both outstanding teachers and the communities that support their work. I was repeatedly encouraged to apply for a position there, and I did so because of the funding it promised to provide for new members. The application process was long and highly competitive. I had to demonstrate teaching skills in a certain way that linked them to excellence, and I additionally had to provide a vast number of recommendations and letters lavishing praise on my teaching and research skills. The affective dimensions ranged from enthusiasm to embarrassment. The selected teachers were recognised publicly with diploma assigned by the rector and as permanent members of the Academy.

The funding accompanying the award created excitement because it represented quite a substantial amount of money along with the award, which could be used in any way one saw fit. Some used it to buy computers or to travel abroad, others for personal development, and still others gave all the money away, but I wanted to put it to use in our academic community. I gathered together a group of senior and junior critical researchers enthusiastic about making a difference. We planned a suitable strategy for how to use the grant money in a politically relevant way. We came up with what we thought was a careful and clever plan. Using the funding, we were able to conduct an international and multidisciplinary one-year workshop entitled 'Bringing Critical Thinking into Life in Academia' for a substantially large group of participants. The course was a resounding success, with the exceptionally positive feedback enhancing our ability to question the epistemological and ontological presuppositions that influence the way teachers think and act in academia. The experiment also pointed to promising future consequences: it is (still) possible to enhance critical thinking and action through teaching in academia. The workshop attracted a

high level of participation and the interest of university management, including the leaders of the Teachers' Academy.

However, the workshop was unable to gain any kind of institutionalised position in the faculty's teaching programme. The following year, when we applied for funding to continue with this programme and conduct a new one-year workshop, our application was unsuccessful. The reason was not a shortage of funds, and neither was the decision aligned with neoliberal organisational rationality: the faculty wanted new initiatives, and only completely new courses could be funded. There was no reward for a job well done, for the strengthening of existing endeavours or for a willingness to continue the proven success of the workshop. Instead, uncertainty, change, and new projects were preferred. This struggle was the key moment to write about the whole process. My colleagues and I wanted to explore, both theoretically and in practice, how to bring criticality to life through teaching in the academy and to demonstrate that it is not necessarily always a narrative of success.

The key objective of this article was to demonstrate how teaching in academia can provide opportunities for and, at best, be a condition of possibility through which critical thinking might be constituted and made sustainable in the academia. Understood in this way, power not only shapes but also produces, opportunities to engage. Those academic workers addressed by this power dynamic can move between and within discourses that serve to distinguish and create hierarchies and also see how discourses can change existing hierarchies at any given time. It was also important to highlight that human subjectivity can be understood as a subject-in-process and as the effect of power. If the practices of teaching are regulated processes of repetition taking place in the form of discourse, then this means that the option also exists to repeat them differently.

The power of the neoliberal governance of academic teaching is not directly oppressive; however, in more or less subtle ways it causes collectivity, critical thinking, and resistance to weaken or even vanish. As we wrote in the article, even if we know what to do, and even if we have proven knowledge about how to do it, it is still a constant struggle to chase down the opportunity to enhance critical thinking and maintain collectivity as well as resistance and intellectual independence. As in the case of our workshop, the resistance may remain temporary and situational and not be able to create any permanent change in academic practices or subjectivities. We still in the article wanted to believe it is important to generate even occasional cracks and interruptions in the neoliberal academic ethos and create spaces to rethink our academic subjectivities. Resistance can still have the potentiality to shift understanding by recognising the critical voices related to neoliberalism. We were not saying that resistance or pushing back against neoliberalism in other ways is dependent only on institutional support.

However, it takes a great deal of effort to maintain any kind of critical practices without collective support, not to mention if the risks of resistance threaten to undermine individual researchers' positions in academia (Ahmed, 2017). So, this article was yet another attempt to tackle the pervasive individualism imposed on academic teaching practices, while tendencies to normalise and individualise problems, policies, and practices inadvertently either fulfil or limit human subjectivity.

When revisiting the article (Brunila et al., 2020) now, I realised just how crucial are such negative feelings and learning to live with them. In terms of political agency, we wanted to highlight the idea that where there is power, there is always possible and necessary resistance or a plurality of resistances constantly taking place in ambivalent academic practices. This is what we wanted to believe, but I am not yet sure how strongly we did in fact really believe it.

Alternatively, did we even experience awkwardness or tiredness when the article's reviewer suggested that we write more about it? Perhaps the awkward feeling I felt while finishing the paper was because this type of hope can easily turn into a neoliberal type of cruel optimism, (false) optimism and belief in a brighter future in accordance to precision governance's promises. On the other hand, perhaps preferring not to have to write about hope reminded me that the irreversible had already happened.

10.8 Conclusion

I never got to give my carefully planned lecture because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The course shifted to digital-based study forum when the lockdown in Finland started. However, I was able to provide some of my articles, revisited in this chapter, for the students to read, and then later on able to attend the digital study forum and read their comments on the papers. What I noticed from the students' comments was confusion. It was somewhat difficult for the students to accept what they were reading. The students voiced much sadness, frustration, and even anger in their comments. Here is perhaps the most important point I would like to make with this chapter.

Precision governance works most effectively through affective dimensions, by turning negative feelings into the pursuit of hope, excitement, personal fulfilment, well-being, and happiness through positive psychology, a therapeutic ethos, and the happiness industry in alliance with neoliberalism.

This equates with finding more efficient ways to control our lives not only by blurring and confusing our own capacity to know the conditions that shape our existence but also by making them seem irrelevant (see also Cabanas et al., 2018). This is exactly why negative feelings become crucial. As history has taught us, dissatisfaction provides a way to make changes; when you are able to view your situation critically, you recognise the urge to transform it. Any type of social change and form of counter politics are the resulting accumulation of negative feelings, such as anger, sadness, and frustration.

The neoliberal ethos and precision governance are not instantiated in the same way in time and space. There are continuities and discontinuities in governance and in the subjectivities that governance affectively reproduces. The becoming of academic scholars means simultaneous continuities and discontinuities as well as particularities and similarities between various narratives and experiences. Based on rereading the four narratives that I produced for this paper, and which in turn produced me as an academic scholar, I could perhaps argue that academic political agency has become even more complex and ambivalent over time, leading to both making

and unmaking of the neoliberal PEG that has managed to take a stronger affective hold of academic subjectivities. The stronger hold works through confirmations, transforming our expectations about what a good life means.

The narratives discussed in this chapter forcefully demonstrate over and over again that while engaging with neoliberalism has been somehow unavoidable, a sense of power to situationally resist it has existed and is simultaneously to rethinking the idea and constant becoming of affective subjectivity in relation to PEG. In this way, we could perhaps also think of other possible imaginations for the becoming of academic subjectivities. Despite good intentions, academic subjects cannot simply choose to reconstruct themselves or focus on matter differently, because choosing is also an effect of power. The main challenge is linked to the individualist idea of an affectively engaged subjectivity and, in parallel, to tackling questions of knowledge, differences, inequalities, hierarchies, and ethics even while precision governance blurs our capacities to critically think about the surrounding world and ourselves.

References

Ahmed, S. (2017). *Living a feminist life.* Duke University Press.

Ball, S. J., & Youdell, D. (2007). *Hidden privatization in public education.* Education International.

Berlant, L. (2011). *Cruel optimism.* Duke University Press.

Brunila, K. (2012). From risk to resilience. *Education Inquiry, 3*(3), 451–464.

Brunila, K. (2014). The rise of survival discourse in the era of therapisation and marketisation of education. (Invited article by the editor Professor Evie Zambeta, special number Education in times of Crisis). *Education Inquiry, 5*(1), 7–23.

Brunila, K. (2016). The ambivalences of becoming a professor in the neoliberal academia. *Qualitative Inquiry, 22*(5), 1–9.

Brunila, K. (2023). Exploring the academic and affective leadership in academia. In D. Nehring & K. Brunila (Eds.), *Affective capitalism in academia: Revealing public secrets* (pp. 110–128). Policy Press.

Brunila, K., & Daniel, N. (2023). *The fabrication of future oriented learning human kinds through the emergence of precision education governance.* Research Papers in Education. E-pub ahead of print.

Brunila, K., Ikävalko, E., Honkasilta, J., & Isopahkala-Bouret, U. (2020). Enhancing criticality and resistance through teaching in the neoliberal academy. *Subjectivity, 13*, 200–216.

Brunila, K., Mertanen, K., Tiainen, K., Mäkelä, K., Masoud, A., Kurki, T., & Ikävalko, E. (2019). Vulnerabilising young people. Interrupting the ethos of vulnerability, the neoliberal rationality and the precision education governance. *Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society, 43*(3), 113–120.

Brunila, K., & Valero, P. (2018). Anxiety and the making of research(ing) subjects in neo-liberal academia. *Subjectivity, International Journal of Critical Psychology, 11*(1), 74–89.

Butler, J. (2008). An account of oneself. In B. Davies (Ed.) *Judith Butler in Conversation, Analyzing the Texts and Talk of Everyday Life* pp. 19–38. Routledge.

Cabanas, E., & Illouz, E. (2018). *Manufacturing happy citizens. How the science and industry of happiness control our lives.* Polity Press.

Clough, P. (2002). *Narratives and fictions in educational research* (1st ed.). Open University Press.

Davies, B., & Bansel, P. (2010). Governmentality and academic work shaping the hearts and mindsof academic workers. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing, 26*(3), 5–20.

Gill, R. (2017). Beyond individualism: The psychosocial life of the neoliberal university. In M. Spooner (Ed.), *A Critical Guide to Higher Education & the Politics of Evidence: Resisting Colonialism, Neoliberalism, & Audit Culture.* University of Regina Press. Retrieved 21.7.2020, from http://openaccess.city.ac.uk/15647/3/Beyond%20individualism.pdf

Goodson, I. & Gill, S. (2011). *Learning and narrative pedagogy. Counterpoints* (Vol. 386, pp. 113–136). AG.

IPC. (2014). Anxiety, affective struggle, and precarity consciousness-raising. *Interface: A Journal for and about Social Movements, 6*(2): 271–300.

Petersen, E. B. (2008). Passionately attached: Academic subjects of desire. In B. Davies (Ed.), *Judith Butler in conversation: Analysing texts and talk of everyday life* (pp. 69–86). Routledge.

Whitehead, M., Jones, R., Lilley, R., Pykett, J. & Howell, R. (2018). *Neuroliberalism. Behavioural Government in the Twenty-First Century.* Routledge.

Dr. Kristiina Brunila works as professor of social justice and equality in education at the University of Helsinki. Her research is focused on SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION, critical studies, POLICY STUDIES, cultural studies, feminist studies, SOCIAL JUSTICE, EDUCATION, schooling, vocational education, university, higher education, adult education, equality, equality work, projectisation, power relations, POLITICAL AGENCY, affective and subjectivation.

Chapter 11
Storying the Journey of an Academic Using Freirean Philosophy to Explore History, Race, Gender, and Class in a Globalised World

Ann Cheryl Armstrong

Abstract The story of this chapter spans two oceans, two regions, one continent, and twenty years, and it critiques the journey of an academic as she first explores teacher professional development in Small Island Developing States. For as long as I can remember, I have always been committed to ideas of social justice, diversity, and creating opportunities in developing world spaces, but, on reflection, I may also have been an idealist. I am black (mixed race) and have never had a problem with this identity in the space from which I lived and worked from the 1990s onwards. For most of my academic journey, my work has been underpinned by Freirean philosophy because notions such as 'the culture of silence', 'banking education', and so on spoke to the post-colonial experiences of people, like myself, from the Caribbean.

11.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the relevance and limitations of Freire's (1972, 1985) notion of the 'culture of silence' within the specific historical contexts of Caribbean societies, Australian society, and Pacific societies in post-colonial transformation. Freire argues that culture results from the structural relations between the dominated and the dominators. Thus, understanding the culture of silence presupposes an analysis of dependence as a relational phenomenon giving rise to different forms of being and thinking on the part of those whose voices dominate and those whose voices are silenced. Yet, Freire's own analysis is itself (statically) contextualised within time and space. Nettleford (1993), one of the more contemporary Caribbean thinkers, has argued that the Caribbean is comprised of societies at the geographical, social, and cultural crossroads of human experience and sensibility. It is a 'region of options', and interactions between those at the crossroads transform *all* who inhabit that space.

A. C. Armstrong (✉)
The University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand
e-mail: ann.cheryl.armstrong@auckland.ac.nz

M. Vicars and L. Pelosi (eds.), *Storying Pedagogy as Critical Praxis in the Neoliberal University*, Rethinking Higher Education,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-4246-6_11

All of the communities that I speak about sit at these crossroads of neo-liberal and neo-colonial paradigms and have faced dis-acknowledgement and dismissal of local knowledge.

This chapter argues that educational history in post-colonial societies is embedded in the lives of people and '…the collaborative efforts of all those at the crossroads who ma(k)e the liberation possible' (Nettleford, 1993, p. 7) and not merely in the development of formal systems of knowledge production and transmission. I also argue that the 'stories' told through educational history are often written in colonised spaces, yet these are now being contested through the processes of globalisation and the restructuring of the relationship between the centre and periphery.

From my perspective, as educators, we have a responsibility to teach the new generations of learners how to appreciate diversity, how to appreciate the strengths of all people and how to love learning. While we may strive for a more liberatory approach to research-informed learning and teaching, we need to acknowledge that inherent in our competence as pedagogues is the notion of authority. Freire has argued that this authority should never degenerate into authoritarianism, and if he was alive today, he would probably insist that this authority should rest on the strength of humility and love (Mayo, 1997). I would argue that authority should be translated into *responsibility for promoting the empowerment of others* and *respect for and valuing of diversity and difference*. If, as educators, we require our students to become critically active citizens of the 'new' society, then we need to recognise the relationship between power and knowledge and to acknowledge that power lies in the guises of history, race, gender, and class.

11.2 Me as a New Female Immigrant to Australia

Moving forward 15 years, I had a very disconcerting experience when as a new immigrant to Australia, I had an encounter where I was told that I was not black but 'actually latte' (I assumed that this person wanted to convey that I was much more refined than how she saw the blacks she had encountered elsewhere—I am middle-class, my 'main accessory', my husband, had a fairly senior role in a leading Australian University, I am well educated, and I was referred to as 'exotic'). I felt like a cross between a fruit and a fruitcake. Hmm! How should I feel when I'm described as 'latte' when in my head and my skin I'm black with a deep sense of black pride, despite the ancestral scars of a heritage descended from slaves, indentured labourers and Indigenous dispossession. Politically, I align my racial identity with being black, so I was intrigued that someone chooses to engage with me not as a black person but as someone 'more refined', more acceptable to their white sensibilities. Experiences like this where people attempted to obliterate my racialised identity led me to question my place in Australian society, to explore ideas of history, race, gender and class in Australian society, and to question my role as an education facilitator within that society. Not being able to appreciate me as a black person actually represented an unwillingness to engage with my own sense of self and recognise my personhood,

a disavowal of my own life and the history of my ancestors, a disavowal of racism itself by assumptions that because of my social status, I could be a part of white society. They could not come to terms with the political concept of my blackness and felt that I should redefine myself to fit into their levels of white acceptability. If I asked any of my white colleagues about their racial identity, they might explain that they were of European or British heritage but would they ever say 'peach'?

11.3 Locating Australia

Australia, while being physically large, is really a small country with a population of approximately 25 million living mostly in coastal regions. It is a post-colonial country with a history of being a British penal colony, though some states such as South Australia pride themselves as being free from such affiliations. Throughout its history, 'whiteness' has been built into its national identity, with the 'White Australia' policy only being put aside in the 1970s. The heritage of supposed racial purity has characterised so much of cultural practices of modern Australia, despite its Indigenous history (mostly ignored) and its more recent demographic transformation into a multi-cultural society (a transformation that one can see on the streets of the major population centres but barely so in the institutions and cultural representation of Australian- ness). Institutional racism is a feature of Australian society about which any immigrant becomes quickly and often painfully familiar aware. Political alignment with the US as the protector-ally is also important for understanding how Australia perceives itself, as are the founding myths of colonisation and the ANZAC spirit of battlefields, wars and mateship (mostly against dark-skinned peoples from far-flung places) that are used to speak about each other and to 'ourselves' as Australians. This is part of Australia's colonial heritage, and it is not going to disappear unless we learn to unpack and de-construct labels associated with post-colonialism, racism, and the attendant practices which support their perpetuation in a negative manner.

11.4 Colonialism and Education

Traditionally, tertiary education has been delivered by academics from within the hallowed walls of the university. Academics have often been perceived as having an expertise that legitimates their role and responsibility for the delivery of education. Academics structure their teaching to suit their own particular styles, and the traditional lecture format of delivery continues to play a major role in modern tertiary institutions. Freire has suggested that the lecture format, where the teacher regurgitates knowledge and either pours that knowledge into the students' waiting heads or allows students to absorb information, possibly through osmosis, should be replaced by the 'culture circle' where teachers and students are able to meet one another

and discuss issues of concern or problems in their own lives, discuss their causes and propose actions that could be taken to solve and or resolve them (Freire, 1972, 1973; Wallerstein, 1983). In order to break the post-colonial cycle and promote decolonisation, it is important to teach in a manner that creates '…possibilities for the construction and production of knowledge rather than to be engaged simply in a game of transferring knowledge', especially when the knowledge is solely from the global North (Freire, 1998, p, 49). Through his writings and his face-to-face interactions, Freire encouraged stakeholders in education to participate in dialogue as 'co-learners'. This is where people grapple with their 'culture', and through *conscientisation* or critical thinking, they are able to recognise that they make decisions that shape their lives and are able to participate in transforming their lives either individually or collectively.

11.5 Culture

Culture, which can be interpreted as a non-static, dynamic process of transformation based on the individual and collective choices made by individuals and communities, forms the root of Freire's pedagogy. Shor (1993, pp. 30–31) describes Freire's understanding of culture as being: '… what ordinary people do everyday, how they behave, speak, relate and make things. Everyone has and makes a culture, not only aesthetic specialists or members of the elite. Culture is the speech and behavior in everyday life, which liberating educators study anthropologically before they can offer effective critical learning'.

I would like to think of teacher education as a collaborative effort between students and lecturers/tutors. It is a negotiation for space for the contestation of ideas and the sharing of ideologies. It is about breaking down barriers and creating a space where the 'new' environment supports learning for both the student as well as the educator. The educator is transformed and not merely a transmitter of knowledge. Michael Apple (1993, p. 33) has argued that there must be a 'recognition of the different social positionings and cultural repertoires in the classrooms, and the power relations between them'. Learners and educators need to engage in dialogue about differences rather than in controversies about differences. As part of the critical citizenry, they are required to not only read texts but to also understand the complexities of contexts (McLaren, 1995). While neo-liberalism promises prosperity in all areas of work and life, it forces people into lives of dependency (Hamilton, 2019).

In my travels to different locations, I have endeavoured to engage in problem-posing dialogue with students in an effort to encourage them to reflect on their particular professional circumstance(s) within their culture and to adopt a reflective stance by becoming critical examiners of their experiences, questioning and constantly engaging in acts of re-interpretation of life (Shor, 1993, p. 31). Students from societies emerging from a culture of colonialism must grow into an understanding that lecturers and tutors are not fountains of knowledge who can pour

quantities of information into waiting heads. It is through the exploration of questions that dialogue continues, and the 'culture of silence', which is so much a part of the colonial heritage, is broken along with the shackles of new Western ideologies of domination and control such as neo-liberalism.

11.6 The Pacific Experience

Eleven years after first coming to Australia, my journey continued to the Pacific, a journey that raised new questions and challenges about post-colonial identity. I'm clearly NOT a Pacific Islander, and I'm definitely NOT white. In some ways, I found myself appearing once again as an oddity of sorts. I learn, I observe, I compare, and I make efforts to contribute as I continue to explore the relationship between the colonies and the colonisers.

Chandra (1995: online), in his presentation at an International Symposium on *Small Islands and Sustainable Development,* explained that the historical link between Small Island Developing States (SIDS) that have been colonies and their colonisers have continued to this day, resulting in a heavy dependence '…on metropolitan countries in a number of crucial areas, such as aid, including budgetary support, markets, imports, technology… education and military support'. He also commented that this type of dependence also '…affects countries irrespective of size, but its consequences are more debilitating and inescapable' for SIDS (Chandra, 1995: online). This view is also supported by Bray and Packer (1993). In 'The Poverty of Philosophy' Marx (1976, p. 167) argued: 'It is slavery that gave the colonies their value; it is the colonies that have created world trade, and it is world trade that is the precondition of large-scale industry. Thus slavery is an economic category of the greatest importance'.

Martin Khor (1995) (as cited in Scholte, 1999), a former Director of Third World Network, suggested that globalisation and the attendant neo-liberalism are what peoples of the 'Third World' have referred to as colonisation for several centuries. The link between colonisation and neo-liberalism appears to be colonisation re-formed.

11.7 Developing Educational Programmes for Small States

The educational challenges faced by post-colonial societies are many. Because of the ravages of history, increased travel, technological advancement and other media where ideas and practices are exchanged, no nation or culture is truly independent in terms of intellectual life, and all depend to some extent on an exchange of knowledge. It follows, therefore, that the more 'modern' a nation is in terms of its involvement with technology, degree of industrialisation, and current political and social thought, the more dependent it tends to be on international networks for the creation and distribution of knowledge through books, films, consultants, students, translations

of publications (Altbach, 1978, p. 301). The intellectual hub of this modern world revolves around the developed countries mostly located in the northern hemisphere. Around this hub, there is a periphery of lesser developed and developing countries which are seen as eagerly trying to access the latest book, the latest film, and/or the latest items of technology.

Inherent in the structure and ideology of teacher education programmes are contradictions that reflect both their social context and perceived moral obligation of providing social welfare support, as well as an endorsement of their allegiance to the maintenance of the status quo of capitalist society. However, it is within the 'political space' created by this contradiction that their autonomy lies (Giroux, 1980, p. 20). Possibilities are created for new educational approaches and alliances. As Giroux (1980, p. 21) explains, 'knowledge is a socially constructed phenomenon'.

Taufe'ulungaki (1987), a Tongan educator, elucidated the specific post-colonial challenges faced by the newly emerging states of the Pacific region with regard to the reconstruction of an education system by stating that:

> (t)o revolutionise an entire education system from its structure, to administration, to its curricula, to its training, to its goals, requires capital and professional expertise, neither of which was available in any appreciable quantity or number in any of the small countries of the region. To continue to maintain colonial practices was emotionally abhorrent, but any major revolutionary change was equally unaffordable. (pp. 88–89)

Like the countries of the Pacific, the education systems of the Caribbean countries were fashioned after the education systems of the colonisers. Relevance only became an issue after Independence when people began to question the appropriateness of the material to the needs of the emerging societies.

The developing world, then, has escaped colonial bondage only to enter into an era of neo-colonialism, dependency layered with neo-liberal architecture. Neo-colonialism in this context refers to the continuing domination, direct or indirect, of the industrialised nations over the lesser developed countries of the world. The post-colonial situation is, of course, much more complicated than traditional colonialism since, in theory, these developing countries have the freedom to shape their own destinies. However, in the real world, the rules of political and economic interactions are largely determined by the global north and emerging economic powers, and so, the developing countries of the world are still in myriad ways under the influence of former colonial powers and other industrialised nations (Altbach, 1978, p. 301).

Globalisation paradoxically opens up new spaces for transnational capitalism whilst imposing new economic, social, and cultural boundaries on the world, which reinforce the domination of the First World centre, around which all else is sucked into and bled dry. Globalisation, then, is about new forms of economic organisation and the spread worldwide of cultural messages through new information and communications technology (Edwards & Usher, 1997). It is about the colonisation of signs, symbols, language, and culture and, as such, has encouraged new structures of penetration and domination. As the world has physically contracted through the growth of new communication and transport networks, 'knowledge' has become a commodity that is traded on an international scale. The standardisation of ideas is a

central requirement of the commodification of knowledge. For ideas to have value as commodities in the marketplace, they must be capable of mass consumption, and therefore produced and exported cheaply. The commodification of ideas does not lend itself easily to the development of educational structures through which the intersection between the global and the local can be examined. In consequence, local context, including local intellectual and cultural life, can be seen as increasingly irrelevant to knowledge production.

The globalisation of knowledge has not, of course, been taking place in a political vacuum. The history of colonialism has given rise to 'ways of thinking' that frequently lock people into an 'underdeveloped' world of dependency. With the end of colonialism, the domination of the rich countries over the poorer countries has continued through the structures of neo-colonialism, which in part reflect the planned policy of former colonial powers to maintain their influence in the underdeveloped world, but in part also reflect the continuing impact of the structures and attitudes of dependency created by years of colonial domination (Watson, 1982).

Freire has discussed the character of the dependency of the developing world on the global North in terms of a 'culture of silence': He explains that the culture of silence can be attributed to 'the relationship between the Third World and the metropolis' who is perceived as the powerful entity that imposes its culture on those being dominated determining what is 'right' and what is to be pursued. These pressures arise out of the systems of control initiated by the more powerful metropolis and the structural relations between the two groups…

Thus, understanding the culture of silence presupposes an analysis of dependence as a relational phenomenon that gives rise to different forms of being, of thinking, of expression, to those of the culture of silence and those of the culture that 'has a voice' (Freire, 1985, p. 72).

The inequality of knowledge production is evidence of this 'culture of silence'. First World countries as centres of education and research, especially in the areas of science and technology, and through foreign aid programmes, technical assistance training, publishing firms, newspaper ownership, and media control, recognition of examinations and the accreditation of qualifications reproduce their cultures and values as a universal voice that silences all others.

Though possibilities are presented for the symbiotic sharing of professional concerns and expertise while working with people across national and cultural boundaries, globalisation continues to be a double-edged sword for the weaker countries who may find themselves being continuously marginalised. Already, one sees the widening gap between those who are: '… the information poor and the information rich. For this reason, public policy makers must continue to insist upon goals of universal access and affordability, wherever possible. In the absence of such a vision, much of the investment needed to create new services is likely to be targeted at wealthy neighbourhoods, at the expense of the urban poor and those in rural areas' (UN, 1996, para. 54: online).

There may be challenges in correctly interpreting the modes of communication, and there is the interference that takes place as a result of geographical distance,

globalisation, and differing agendas at various levels within the societies (institutional, governmental, and personal). As Michael Apple (1993, p. 68) graphically states, '…knowledge is filtered through a complicated set of political screens and decisions before it gets to be declared legitimate'. This will undoubtedly affect what knowledge is selected for transmission, what knowledge is interpreted and accepted as well as what is taught, learnt, and negotiated between groups of adult learners separated by geographical and cultural distances.

The globalisation of educational provision, through textbook production, media management of knowledge, and the growth of distance learning, may each function as colonising and controlling forces. However, it can also be argued that globalisation offers genuine opportunities for engaging in collaborative yet critical initiatives and interventions based on a theoretical and practical engagement with the politics of post-colonialism and drawing upon the mutual analysis of the lived experience of educators and students in different locations. Freire (1985) has discussed the nature of the history of colonialism and viewed the inequality of knowledge production as evidence of a 'culture of silence'. The argument, however, seems to focus on institutional relations of power and does not adequately address the complexity of conflict within the dominant societies and how this opens up the possibility of new alliances being forged across cultures through engagements that challenge the culture of silence in both dominated and dominant societies (Armstrong & Namsoo, 2000, p. 211).

While it is acknowledged that there is a hegemonic aspect to globalisation, it may be wrong to make such sweeping generalisations without carefully examining the character of specific interactions and alliances. Freire's argument assumes a homogeneous First World ideology. He does not make any allowances for the possibility of critical engagements across different geographical locations and historical experiences, which may politically ground alliances between educators in the north and south. These sorts of assumptions would only serve to undermine the role of teachers who enter into such alliances to shape their own professional identities. As Giroux (1980) advocates:

> … prospective teachers be given the concepts and methods to delve into their own biographies, to look at the sedimented history they carry around, and to learn how one's own cultural capital represents a dialectical interplay between private experience and history. Methods of curriculum design, implementation, and evaluation must be seen as a construction in values and ideology. This approach provides the foundation for future teachers to analyse how their own values mediate the classroom structures and student experiences they work with. (p. 23)

History must be used as a tool for critical thinking, which can assist in mapping out the development of knowledge and help to recognise how schools have been organised based on specific social assumptions and maintained to service specific political and economic interests. Only then can there be an open dialogue about possible educational reform.

In these technologically advanced times, higher education, whether it is by traditional face-to-face methods or distance learning, is about crossing cultural, historical, and economic borders. This can only be successfully accomplished by subjecting the intersections between those colonial histories and post-colonial futures to critique.

It cannot simply be about 'banking' knowledge from one setting into another. When collaborations are forged between educators from the north and south, there is a need to first identify the tensions that might exist. Issues relating to the possible eurocentric nature of the curriculum and its materials are of paramount importance to countries that have a history of colonial rule. To break the 'culture of silence', we as educators should be concerned with understanding and also with contesting the role of education through the notion of collaboration. Collaboration in this sense means much more than co-operation and sharing. It is about challenging our own histories, constructing our own futures, and developing radical philosophies of education. In collaborations around higher education, for instance, it is about the development of a practical philosophy which reconceptualises the 'political' character of the University, not as the producer of knowledge for consumption but as a partner in critical enquiry and transformative action.

For education to be meaningful in a post-colonial world requires thinking about cultural transformation and not simply about social repositioning. The social commentary of the CALYPSO folk songs and the cathartic experiences of the CARNIVAL celebration that takes place in the Caribbean or the cultural festivals that take place in the Pacific provide an example of how education might engage meaningfully with the concerns and needs of people within those communities. In their different ways, they embody both local knowledge and a transformational engagement between those local communities and the dominant forms of knowledge imposed on these worlds through the actions of neo-liberal globalisation. Traditional and local cultural heritages embody resistance and transformation and should not be seen in simplistic terms as representing no more than expressions of continuity and conservativism. Indeed this dichotomy is of little use to an understanding of the post-colonial experience in these communities and risks idealising and mythologising an indigenous past at the expense of experiences of ongoing transformations which are constituted by '…the collaborative efforts of all those at the crossroads who made the liberation possible' (Nettleford, 1993, p. 7). Thus, exposure to, and participation in, radical thinking about the role, purposes, and future of education in the Pacific region is liberating only when grounded in a thorough appreciation of and engagement with local histories, cultures, and local and indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing.

11.8 Using a Freirean Model to Support Social Justice

It is through his philosophy of hope that Freire firmly established himself in the international history of education and left the peoples of the world a legacy of radical thoughts on education and social justice. His approach to adult education also referred to as the problem-posing approach (Wallerstein, 1983) and the liberatory approach (Shor & Freire, 1987) was based on the cultural and personal experiences of learners in a humanist philosophy. This philosophy revolves around 'the ontological vocation of humans to become more fully human' (McLaren & Leonard, 1993, p. 3). This

is visible in his correspondence to literacy teachers in Chile advising them that: To be a good liberating educator, you need above all to have faith in human beings. … You must be convinced that the fundamental effort of education is to help with the liberation of people, never their domestication. (Freire 1971 as quoted in Shor, 1993, p. 25).

If education is to be meaningful to a people, it must be contextualised, and learning should be initiated out of the very real experiences of the learner through dialogue which is developed around themes of significant importance to these learners. Learners have their own history and culture, which impinges on their learning, and so the voice of the learner must be situated within a historical and cultural context because it is moulded by their experiences. This should be the starting point for any educative process which seeks social transformation as its goal. The role of the educator is not to accept the 'stories' of the students without question but to enable students to reflect on their various situations and be able to critique their own experiences. In this way, they could begin to identify the various imagery which has been created by the ideological hegemony to domesticate the masses.

Freire states that '…to achieve the goals of transformation, dialogue implies responsibility, directiveness, determination, discipline and objectives'. Dialogue encourages collaborative learning by limiting 'teacher-talk'. It allows people to name their experience and encourages them to find their voice within the context (Shor, 1993, p. 25).

All humans are nurtured within a culture—so there is a starting point to learning about other things. As an adult educator, it is important to remember that people do not all see or even experience the world in the same way and that all individuals bring multiple perspectives to any learning situation as a result of their gender, age, class, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, and so on.

Jean Piaget, the Swiss biologist, and psychologist who was well known for his contribution to learning theories suggested that learning took place as a result of making connections between what is known or facts and new information resulting in a 'new' understanding in students. Therefore, at all levels, educators need to use the experiences (inclusive of culture) of the students as a springboard in order to make that critical link to the new information. Similarly, according to the model of 'social cognition learning' proposed by Vygotsky, culture is the prime determinant of the individual's development. Therefore, in the teaching process, one cannot simply divorce a learner from his culture.

Though constructivism supports the use of reflection to 'construct' a unique understanding of the world, I would contend that this construction can only take place within the context of culture. Like Freire, constructivists support the view that the purpose of learning is the construction of an understanding of life, not merely the regurgitation of 'banked' information, which is usually someone else's interpretation of the world. Habermas (1972) argues that all human knowledge is a social construction that is corrupted by the various ideologies which serve various interest groups and individuals. Therefore, by engaging in critical thinking around these various interests and by being able to discern the limitations and potentials of the various kinds of knowledge, empowerment and creation of new knowledge become possible.

Thus, the strength of critical pedagogy is the application of critical social science to education.

It is through action and the reflection on that action that '…knowledge emerges [and it is] only through intervention and re-intervention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful enquiry' (Freire, 1972, p. 46) that men become truly human. Praxis, therefore, is about reflection, which embodies the qualities of respect for the personhood of others, a never-ending quest for the 'truth' and a commitment to the well-being of humans. Carr and Kemmis (1986, p. 190) acknowledge that this is tricky because it requires a person to make 'wise and prudent practical judgement about how to act in this situation'. Reflection within a Freirean context would begin with the recognition of educational dilemmas or emotional discomforts resulting in a cyclical process where information circulates and is acted upon, analysed, and revised until meaning is arrived at. This would need to be explored within a framework of respect and commitment.

Education as a Form of Intervention in the World Freire argued that too much education (if there can be such a thing) involves *'banking',* which means that the learner is taught in a passive mode, and so receives deposits of pre-selected, approved knowledge from an educator. He strongly believed that education was the pathway to permanent liberation and that liberation resulted in empowerment. Freirean education is a symbiotic process of reflecting upon and developing insights into the students' evolving culture.

Freire (1998, pp. 90–91) describes education as a '… specifically human experience, is a form of intervention in the world. In addition to contents either well or badly taught, this type of intervention also implies both the reproduction of the dominant ideology and its unmasking. The dialectical nature of the education process does not allow it to be only one or the other of these things'. In his final writings, Freire (1998, p. 91) observed that 'As men and women, we are not simply determined by facts and events. At the same time, we are subject to genetic, cultural, social, class, sexual, and historical conditionings that mark us profoundly and that constitute for us a centre of reference'.

However, the use of critical pedagogy, being emancipatory in nature, would attempt to empower educators and learners alike, de-mystifying language and unmasking mainstream pedagogic claims to democracy and critical enquiry and recognising how both pedagogy and curriculum represent forms of cultural politics. This recognition creates the possibility for the overriding goal of education to be the creation of conditions for social transformation and liberation from ignorance and oppression.

11.9 Conclusion

Freire recognised that de-colonisation was an ongoing process—a lifelong struggle that required injections of a critical intervention which would include compassionate dialogue, honesty, a willingness to be creative and insightful, common sense understanding with praxis (McLaren, 1999, p. 52) transitions from critical thought to critical practice. In my own life and practice as an educator, I refuse to be daunted by the challenges I have faced because it is exactly this space of pedagogical challenge that I can be creative, recognising that I, like Freire, can be a co-creator of paths to critical research and pedagogy in spite of the personal impacts and experiences of neo-liberalism, history, race, class, and gender.

To my mind, Freire's philosophy teaches about the importance of context, but in a significant way, it also transcends the boundaries of time and geography, socio-political and economic status. Concepts that are now considered politically correct and refer to issues on human rights can establish real links with Freirean philosophy. Clear examples of these are issues related to the voicing of difference, feminism, socially and economically marginalised groups, and disabled groups. The fact that Freire does not fully articulate his position on current issues of oppression under the banners of ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and religion is in its own way liberating because what his philosophy does is provide a set of guidelines and tools that allows me the freedom to explore the works of others, which in itself is an education.

If critical pedagogy results in critical consciousness, then the goal of education would be to prepare citizens to think holistically and critically about their particular situation; feel empowered to think and act on the conditions to effect change; and be able to contextualise those conditions within the wider contexts of power within society. To that effect, Freire (1997, pp. 307–308) proposes '… a profound respect for the cultural identity of students – a cultural identity that implies respect for the language of the other, the colour of the other, the gender of the other, the class of the other, the sexual orientation of the other, the intellectual capacity of the other; that implies the ability to stimulate the creativity of the other'.

These situations do not take place in a vacuum; they take place in social and historical contexts and become part of the record of history. Breaking into Australian academia was not easy, despite the racially demeaning 'flattery' of those early encounters reported earlier in this chapter. The explanation that I was given several times over was that employers would prefer to hire someone who they knew to be less qualified but *who they know* than to hire an unknown. I began to question things further when some of my colleagues who are white and emigrated from the UK were able to get jobs within a few months of their arrival. Again, I begin to question my racial heritage and my place within Australian society. Speaking to others who are not white and have had similar experiences to mine, this is not a coincidence—the white Australia policy still exists, albeit in more subtle and less legalistic forms within society. Whiteness is not just a colour, and because it is not just a colour, as I discovered in my own Australian interactions, it allows forms of incorporation which are themselves colonising of the spirit and which generate their own forms

of post-colonial subjugation and resistances. Leonardo (2002, p. 31) has offered an insightful perspective on this, arguing that 'Whiteness' does not literally translate into 'white people' and that: 'Whiteness' is a racial discourse, whereas the category 'white people' represents a socially constructed identity, usually based on 'skin color'.

David Gillborn (2019) further explains thus:

> White*ness*' refers to a system of beliefs, practices and assumptions that constantly centre the interests of White people, especially White elites. People who identify themselves and/or are identified by others as 'White' may act in the interests of Whiteness, but it is not automatic or inevitable. White- identified people can challenge Whiteness, just as people of colour can sometimes become vocal advocates for Whiteness. (p. 113)

During my time in Australia, I looked at the images around me and thought about ways that I did and did not fit into Australian society. I have asked my friends and some colleagues what does it mean to be an Australian so that I could work out the semiotic codes within society and see whether they sit comfortably within my psyche. There is a common saying about my birth country of Trinidad and Tobago that it is a place where 'every creed and race find an equal place' (Castagne, 1962). More sharply, I might contend that in my travels around the countries of the so-called developed world (my years of living in England and later in Australia) that I have endeavoured to engage in a practice of 'colonisation in reverse' (Bennett, 1966)—but this time not of exploitation and oppression but rather of critique and challenge to the cultural assumptions of superiority that so readily are attached to the colonial project. In my more recent sojourn in the Pacific, I have come to understand not just the connections between the different experiences of post-colonial societies but also gain deeper insight into how local and indigenous knowledge systems and cultures provide alternative pathways of engagement for those like myself whose heritage lies in slavery and the despoliation of traditional cultures in the interests of 'whiteness'.

My own story of education is a story of working at the intersection of boundaries. At times this has been painful, and at other times, it has opened up new vistas of understanding and human to human empathy. But my story has always been located in a context of post-colonial realities that have defined my identity just as I have fought to challenge and overturn them. The richness and joy of this experience have come from the opportunity to cross different boundaries. Sometimes that has been uncomfortable. As an educator, learning is very much a product of discomfort. Yet, crossing boundaries, engaging and learning from new experiences, forging new understanding and new ways of knowing in the face of systems and processes that seek to control lies at the very heart of education as a project of emancipation.

References

Altbach, P. G. (1978). The distribution of knowledge in the third world: A case study in neocolonialism. In P. G. Altbach & G. P. Kelly (eds.), *Education and colonialism*. Longman.

Altbach, P. G., & Kelly, G. P. (Eds.). (1978). *Education and colonialism*. Longman.

Apple, M. (1993). *Official knowledge: Democratic education in a conservative age*. Routledge.

Armstrong, D. J., & Namsoo, A. C. (2000). NEW MARKETS or NEW ALLIANCES? distance education, globalisation & postcolonial challenges. *Distance Education in Small States: Conference Proceedings* (pp. 207–212). University of the West Indies Distance Education Centre (UWIDEC).

Bennett, L. (1966). Poem: Colonization in Reverse ©. *Selected Poems* (106–107). Sangster's, 1983.

Bray, M., & Packer, S. (1993). *Education in small states: Concepts, challenges and strategies*. Pergamon Press Ltd.

Carr, W., & Kemmis, S. (1986). *Becoming critical: Education, knowledge and action research*. Falmer Press.

Castagne, P. S. (1962). *Forged from the Love of Liberty*. Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Chandra, R. (1995). Planning for sustainable development in the Pacific Islands. In *United Nations University and the National Land Agency of Japan International Symposium: Small islands and sustainable development*. Retrieved from http://www.geic.or.jp/docs/rajesh.html/

Edwards, R., & Usher, R. (1997). Final frontiers? Globalisation, pedagogy and (dis)location. *Curriculum Studies, 5*(3), 253–268.

Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Penguin Books Limited.

Freire, P. (1973). *Education for critical consciousness*. Sheed and Ward.

Freire, P. (1985). *The politics of education: Culture, power, and liberation*. Bergin & Garvey.

Freire, P. (1997). A response. In P. Freire, J. W. Fraser, D. Macedo, T. McKinnon, & W. T. Stokes (Eds.), *Mentoring the mentor: A critical dialogue with Paulo Freire* (pp. 303–329). Peter Lang Publishers.

Freire, P. (1998). *A pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy and civic courage*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc.

Gillborn, D. (2019). Hiding in plain sight: Understanding and addressing whiteness and color. *Blind Ideology in Education, Kappa Delta Pi Record, 55*(3), 112–117. https://doi.org/10.1080/00228958.2019.1622376

Giroux, H. (1980). Teacher education and the ideology of social control. *Journal of Education. Boston University., 162*(1), 5–27.

Habermas, J. (1972). *Knowledge and human interests*. Heinemann.

Hamilton, D. (2019, Summer). Neoliberalism and race. *Democracy: A Journal of Ideas, 53*.

Khor, M. (1995). as cited in Scholte, J. A. "The Globalization of World Politics", in J. Baylis & S. Smith (eds.), *The Globalization of world politics, an introduction to international relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 15.

Leonardo, Z. (2002). The souls of white folk: Critical pedagogy, whiteness studies, and globalisation discourse. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 5*(1), 29–50.

Marx, K. (1976). *The poverty of philosophy, Marx-Engels collected works: Volume 6: Marx and Engels, 1845–1848*. International Publishers.

Mayo, P. (1997). Paulo Freire 1921–1997: An appreciation'. *Convergence, 30*, 4–8.

McLaren, P. L. (1995). *Critical pedagogy and predatory culture: Oppositional politics in a postmodern era*. Routledge.

McLaren, P. L. (1999). A pedagogy of possibility: Reflecting upon Freire's politics of education: In memory of Paulo Freire'. *Educational Researcher, 28*(2), 52.

McLaren, P. L., & Leonard, P. (1993). Editors' introduction – Absent discourses: Paulo Freire and the dangerous memories of liberation. In P. L. McLaren & P. Leonard (eds.), *paulo FREIRE: A Critical Encounter*. Routledge.

Nettleford, R. (1993). *Inward stretch, outward reach*. Macmillan Press.

Shor, I. (1993). Education is politics: Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy. In P. L. McLaren & P. Leonard (eds.), *paulo FREIRE: A critical encounter*. Routledge.

Shor, I., & Freire, P. (1987). *A pedagogy for liberation: Dialogues on transforming education.* Macmillan Education Limited.

Taufe'ulungaki, A. (1987). Educational provision and operation: Regional dimensions in the South Pacific. In K. Bacchus & C. Brock (eds.), *The challenge of scale: Educational development in the small states of the Commmonwealth* (pp. 88–89). The Commonwealth Secretariat.

United Nations Document E/CN.17/1996/20/Add.6 of 29 February 1996 incorporating corr.1 of 30 April 1996. *Development of communications in small island developing states.* Retrieved from: http://islands.unep.ch/d96-20a6.htm

Wallerstein, N. (1983). *Language and culture in conflict: Problem-posing in the ESL classroom.* Addison-Wesley.

Watson, K. (1982). *Education in the third world*. Croom Helm.

Dr. Ann Cheryl Armstrong is an Honorary Professor in the Faculty of Education and Social Work, Critical Studies in Education, New Zealand. Ann Cheryl's research interests include: trans-disciplinary research which focuses on the intersectionality of the creative arts and education, Inclusive Education, Teacher Education, Cultural Competence, Development Issues in Small Island Developing States, Social Inclusion, Professional Learning/Development. Her current projects are: * 'Building Teaching Capacity for Inclusive Education (MFAT Funded Project)'; (CITED) Consortium of Inclusive Teacher Education and Development.

Chapter 12
"Critical Storytelling" as an Endowed Teacher Educator

Nicholas D. Hartlep

Abstract This chapter draws on a concept that my colleague Brandon Hensley and I have called "critical storytelling." I share my experiences in teacher education, experiences riven within a field that is neoliberal, and my path to finding a non-neoliberal liberal arts college where I am happy. Further, I reflect on the deeply complicated interrelationships I have as a department chair who is committed to social justice working with state and national accreditors.

12.1 Introduction: A Little Background…

Prior to Berea College, I had never attended or worked for a private or "independent" school. The only interaction I had with private/independent schooling was when my first daughter (then a 3-year-old) attended an independent, tuition-based, Montessori pre-school in Milwaukee while I was working on my Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. Two years later, after I finished my Ph.D. and had taken my first tenure-track faculty position at Illinois State University, she played in a violin "strings" academy at Illinois Wesleyan University, an independent, liberal arts college in Bloomington, Illinois. Other than these brief brushes as a parent/client, I have had little experience with private education and schools.

I was raised in Green Bay, Wisconsin, and I took pride in the fact that the Green Bay Packers were owned by the "people." Citizens owned shares of stock in their professional football teams. The Packers epitomised my station in life growing up: the working class. I thought working-class people were kind, while the wealthy were entitled, arrogant, and mean-spirited. I attended "public" schools, attended "public" institutions of higher education, socialised with the working class and poorer people, and up until I began working at Berea College during the fall of 2019, I have only attended or taught in "public" P–12 schools and public state universities. The fact that I did not attend or work for private schools was a badge of honour for me

N. D. Hartlep (✉)
Berea College, Berea, KY, USA
e-mail: hartlepn@berea.edu

M. Vicars and L. Pelosi (eds.), *Storying Pedagogy as Critical Praxis in the Neoliberal University*, Rethinking Higher Education,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-4246-6_12

because I thought "private" institutions were places that served only well-to-do or "wealthy," "arrogant" people. I perceived these private institutions in narrow ways: that their "rich" traditions were patriarchal, elitist, and abhorrent because it was not my reality nor something I desired. In the end, I came to realise my perspectives were ill-formed. They were misperceptions based on limited life experiences. A little more background would help…

12.2 A Little More Background…

When I taught in the public schools in Rochester, Minnesota, and then in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, I trusted that it would be only temporary. Deep down, I knew I wanted to be a college professor. In addition to needing a terminal degree (usually a Ph.D.), I knew you had to have a minimum of 3–4 years of P–12 teaching experience to be a Social Foundations of Education professor. So that is how long I taught (the minimum) while I completed my doctorate. The path to the professoriate is the road I travelled.

When I began my first tenure-track position at Illinois State University, I began to teach my Social Foundations of Education courses and attempted to establish my research agenda. I had been in the P–12 classroom long enough to understand how schooling reproduced the inequities that I saw as a citizen in the greater society, but I sought to write scholarly papers. I internalised the "publish or perish" mantra. I worked so hard because I did not want to "perish."

The Sociology of Education scholars, Education Studies scholars, and other experts that I read wrote voluminous amounts of literature explaining how and why outcomes were as they were. Explanations were proposed, and counter-responses were given. However, while I was living a life of the mind, I saw and experienced things that tired me. Mostly these tiring experiences stemmed from the "adultism" and "racial battle fatigue" I was experiencing as a young scholar of colour (see Hartlep, 2015). Racism from my teacher educator colleagues, tied to institutional pressures that seemed to benefit the institution but led to no systematic change, made me to feel as though Illinois State University was not the place I would stay to further build my career. So when I saw an opening for a position at Metropolitan State University, a public state university in St. Paul, Minnesota, I applied. Metropolitan State University was a "public" university, and it was also an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI). It served older students; the average age of the student body was older than I was when I began teaching there (33), and I was excited to be in a School of Urban Education working with pre-service teachers who were diverse—not the middle-class, White, mostly female students I had worked with at Illinois State University. Moreover, my Ph.D. in Urban Education aligned well with the work I would be doing at Metropolitan State University. I still experienced "adultism" and "racial battle fatigue" (see Hartlep & Ball, 2020), but I did receive opportunities due to a supportive dean, something I write about elsewhere (see Hartlep & Antrop-González, 2019). Ultimately, though, the drawbacks were too

many—an accretion of straws that broke the camel's back, and convinced me that again, it was time to look for work at a different institution of higher education.

Working at a minority-serving institution did nothing to insulate me as a professor of colour from institutional exploitation. I began to see some of the similarly problematic things that I saw at Illinois State University occurring at Metropolitan State University. White racial resentment by colleagues, institutional racism, lack of transparency, and problematic colleagues of colour, again, caused me to reflect on my work and the impact I was (or was not) making when it came to teacher education and broader society. I had a sabbatical coming up during which I was looking to finish my book *What Can Be Learned From Work Colleges? An Education that Works* (Hartlep, Forthcoming), when I saw a position for a Department Chair position in the Department of Education Studies at Berea College, in Berea, Kentucky. Berea College is a "private" college. I knew a little about Berea College, only because Berea College happens to be a Work College, and I had a trip planned for *What Can Be Learned From Work Colleges?* for my sabbatical project. I applied for the Department Chair position, and—lo and behold!—they offered me the position.

It was an easy choice for my family and me to pack our bags and head south. Berea College had so much to offer, and I was excited about new possibilities. The move was not me being a "free agent" trying to get a sweeter deal. I had just earned tenure, and I was a Department Chair. My family was settled, and uprooting them would be stressful for the whole family. But after thinking about my campus visit, the experience I had, and the people I encountered, I ended up declining my sabbatical just months before it was to start in order to begin my new position at Berea College during the fall of 2019. In addition to being department chair, I learned that I would also be named an endowed professor in the department: the Robert Charles Billings Chair in Education. What an honour!

Some readers of my story will ask, "How do you know things won't deteriorate at Berea College?" "What will you do if your new Berea College colleagues express racism? What then?" "Racism exists everywhere. How is Berea College any different?" These are thoughtful questions and questions to which I have no answers. I truly believe that those who are not good, decent people leave Berea College. It is not a place that racists feel comfortable working at, but that's just my impression.

* * *

Why have I elected to write these vignettes to begin this chapter on storying pedagogy? It is because I have always been a lover of stories, and I now work at an institution that values people's stories. During its fall 2019 commencement, Berea College's President, Lyle Roelofs, stated that he was not simply the president, but that he was the Chief Storyteller. Bereans, myself included, all have stories to tell. My students during spring 2020 all contributed stories that were published in Stories from Berea College: Opportunities of Attending a Work College. The focus of the volume was on how they experienced the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as their thoughts about Berea College's response and decisive action to close the college (see Neelakantan, 2020).

Fig. 12.1 Billboard sign https://www.kare11.com/article/news/verify/verify-are-minnesota-schools-worst-in-nation-for-students-of-color/89-aff38b41-5412-4967-9bca-967d1b3cf987

It may seem ironic to begin a chapter on working at a private institution by sharing the story of how little I knew about such institutions, but the irony is embedded in the fact that my notions of "private" and "public" were so narrow and misinformed. In my co-edited volume *Racial Battle Fatigue in Faculty: Perspectives and Lessons From Higher Education,* I share a story about how the mostly White union at Metropolitan State University was racist and seemed to only make matters more challenging for racial equity work (Hartlep & Ball, 2020). Metropolitan State University was, on paper, the perfect place for me to do the work my heart and head wished to do. I worked with non-traditional students, mostly non-traditional students of colour, in St. Paul, a seemingly diverse capital of Minnesota, a "blue" state. Yet, the institution, a "public" one, was not one where doing this work was easy or impactful, in my experience. The narrative that the midwest is a great place to work and raise a family is pervasive, and one I thought I believed, but the everyday racism I experienced made me question the veracity of this belief. Driving the highways of Minnesota, I would see signs that said, "Minnesota schools are worst in the nation for our children of color" (see Fig. 12.1).

Moving to the South was not something I had envisioned would ever happen. I had never been to Kentucky before my campus interview. Moreover, I would never have thought that I would work at a "private" liberal arts college, where a large percentage of students are White (but economically poor), much less find myself to be happiest there. But let me explain why I am happy and why I believe I can do equity, inclusion, and justice-oriented work at a "private" liberal arts college. My explanation will require me to unpack how Berea College is a unique institution of higher education.

12.3 The Berea Bubble: Irony, Complicatedness, but the Importance of Ethics and Transparency

I also see the irony in the fact that I now work at an arguably radical, progressive, private, "green" or eco-friendly, liberal arts, federally recognised work college in a "red" state. When I began writing this chapter, President Donald J. Trump had just been impeached by the House of Representatives. A week or two prior, the incumbent Republican Governor Matt Bevin was ousted in his re-election bid by Andy Beshear. Kentucky has been "red" for quite some time and is highly partisan. For example, in 2016, Trump won Kentucky by 29.84 points. Based on this result, a senator was statistically predicted to vote with his positions roughly 88% of the time. However, Senator McConnell (R) voted with Trump's position 94% of the time. And based on Trump's election, a House Representative was predicted to vote with Trump's position 86% of the time, yet Representative Barr voted with Trump's position 96% of the time.

So how does a college like Berea, in the midst of a sea of so much red, exist? While this question is outside the scope of this chapter, a great article that does address that question is "Berea College—Coeducationally and Racially Integrated: An Unlikely Contingency in the 1850s," written by Richard Day, Roger Cleveland, June O. Hyndman, and Don C. Offutt and published in 2013 in the *Journal of Negro Education.*

And how, exactly, is Berea College a "green" campus? The administration, as well as the faculty and staff here, are committed to being environmentally conscious. I heard an anecdote about the college trying to use "used" recycled oil in the elevator mechanisms. That, according to the story floating around, was why the elevators had to be serviced so much. That might scare some who might think, *Is that even safe?* I think it shows how authentic the college is when it comes to sustainability and earth consciousness. I also read on our website the following: https://www.berea.edu/news/berea-college-cited-as-top-performer-in-sustainability.

Berea College gained the No. 1 spot in the nation for Campus Engagement in the *2019 Sustainable Campus Index* (SCI). The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) recognises top-performing colleges and universities in 17 sustainability impact areas and overall by institution type, as measured by the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS) reporting system. Berea, long-known for a strong commitment to sustainability, was recognised with a perfect score for campus engagement. Since 2017, Berea College has had a "gold" STARS rating.

12.4 Facile Renderings and Readings of Neoliberalism

The history of Berea College is something that breaks many stereotypes of private colleges. While it has an endowment currently over $1 Billion (although this was impacted by the COVID-19 situation, just like in 2008 when its endowment was impacted negatively by the great recession), it uses virtually all of it directly on its students. Students do not pay tuition and the great majority graduate from Berea College with little-to-no student loan debt. In 2017 Berea College was named as the Number 1 College with Lowest Average Graduating Debt by *Kiplinger*. The fact that Berea College graduates its students with so little debt testifies that it deplores student loan debt and understands that graduating indebted students does not serve them well at all.

To me, working at Berea College as a department chair is complicated because while we are a Department of Education Studies, we also have a teacher certification programme, which means we must remain accredited by the state and the national accreditation body, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). Gorlewski and Tuck (2019) are worth being quoted at length when in their introduction to their edited book *Who Decides Who Becomes a Teacher?: Schools of Education as Sites of Resistance,* they stated the following:

> An irony about the field of education is that it is such a contested terrain that what it is, from one perspective, a policy "solution" represents, from a different perspective, the "problem." Attend a major education conference, and in one session, the architects of a high-profile neoliberal education policy may be praising their invention, while in the session next door, critical scholars are sharing findings that refute the effectiveness of that same policy. Often these contestations have to do with the way that what constitutes the problem needing research intervention, itself, is framed. (p. 4)

Another complicating factor in maintaining national accreditation is its high cost financially. The immense costs that go into maintaining these accreditations and the neoliberal machinery we must placate also create mental fatigue. Consequential and expensive teacher examinations are just one cog in the machine.

Costs of accreditation are more than financial. There are also mental and emotional costs for department chairs such as myself. Maintaining accreditation is a complicated and time-consuming task because of some of the regulations we must abide by (such as high-stakes teacher certification examinations that serve both as gatekeepers and guarantors on who can become a certified teacher in the state of Kentucky). A further complication stems from the fact that I, as an endowed teacher educator (and critical pedagogue), know very well how these consequential examinations are problematic, and yet I must actively perpetuate them because our programmes' students must take and pass them.

Now it could be said that I am resisting the examinations because I am part of a working group that wants to propose alternatives to the high-stakes examinations. If that is the case, then, yes, I am raging against the machine as best I can. However, it could also be argued I am not doing enough to push back; it could be argued that I am raging with the machine. According to King and Hampel (2018), "Some

2,300 colleges and universities, or one third of all postsecondary institutions, award degrees and/or certificates in education" (p. 7). If so many postsecondary institutions award degrees and/or certificates in education, then couldn't it be argued that we—a collective we—have ceded our power to high-stakes testing companies that are enriching themselves and their shareholders by making the rules by which we must abide? This conundrum of wrestling with compromise is a timeless and universal part of the human condition: Often, instigators of change exercise their agency most effectively on the inside—not raging against the machine or with the machine, but labouring to change the machine from within.

I chose to work at Berea College because the students who attend the college have their education paid for, and they must be financially "poor." That is the mission and the history of the college. Yes, the students work on campus, but they do not need to engage with the neoliberal higher education marketplace that a student at the University of Kentucky, the state's public flagship, or the University of Louisville, the state's urban university, have to because of decreased state funding of higher education, which leads to increasing tuition for students (Spalding, 2019). In fact, in 2019, Berea College was number one in the state in terms of the debt that its graduates left with. That means it is better than the sports universities mentioned previously. Berea College relies on its endowment to make all of this good happen. And an endowment's health and financial value depend on neoliberal machinations, namely returns on investments and stock portfolios. Then isn't Berea College part of the neoliberal network and tapestry?

When scholars invoke the term neoliberalism, it is typically in order to critique "privatisation" in overly cut-and-dried lines of reasoning and logic. From a purity standpoint, Berea College muddies the lens by which we make these anti-neoliberal critiques. But to me, it is clear that I have found my spiritual home. Although I work in Berea, Kentucky, my children attend schools in Fayette County Public Schools (in Lexington, Kentucky). FCPS has been the first school district in which my children have had teachers of colour, counsellors of colour, and a superintendent of colour (Manny Caulk was named superintendent of the year in 2019)[1]. When I worked at Metropolitan State University, my family and I lived in Hudson, Wisconsin. My children did not have a single teacher of colour. The narrative of "the Midwest has great schools" cannot be entirely true if there are elementary schools that don't have a single teacher of colour. Can it be? At least not for the students of colour who go through their entire early education without seeing a single adult instructor who looks like them.

And now we return to the facile belief I harboured. There are no "good" or "bad" categories of institutions per se. The publics are not necessarily better than the privates, or vice versa. Minority-Serving Institutions are not necessarily better than Primarily White Institutions or vice versa. However, I do think that some institutions are more neoliberal than others, and I do not think bigger is always better, even though our society may reinforce that view. Berea College, I would argue, is less neoliberal than my former employer, Metropolitan State University, but Minnesota is a union

[1] Manny Caulk died unexpectedly in 2020. He was 49 years old.

state while Kentucky is a right-to-work state. Although the former is "public" and the latter is "private," it is a false equivalency to believe public is non-neoliberal or less neoliberal than "private." Let me unpack why. Berea College's endowment very much relies on the "market" and on returns. If the endowment does not grow, Berea College is harmed. So, Berea College is neoliberal under that definition.

Metropolitan State University, a public institution, also is neoliberal insofar as the less it receives from the state of Minnesota, the more it must ensure it covers its costs through more efficient budgeting and raising student tuition and fees. However, the bulk of students at Berea College leave debt free because they do not pay tuition. And in the Department of Education Studies, students do not pay for their teacher licensure examinations; the department does that on their behalf. The fact that someone can graduate with a teaching degree and licensure from a public college or university carrying huge student loan debt is a neoliberal problem (Hartlep et al., 2017). The idea that someone can graduate from a private liberal arts college with a degree in teaching and be certified by the state with little-to-no student loan debt is remarkable and not a neoliberal phenomenon.

The critical storytelling I would like to share is that as an endowed teacher educator, I believe in walking the talk and embracing the outcomes. I think that outcomes are the true litmus test for value and ethics. Metropolitan State University had a radical legacy (see Bute, 2017), one deeply personal and anti-racist, but it was far from those aspirational legacies when I worked there.

And what do we make of Berea College's endowment? Harvard University and Stanford University are both "private" institutions of higher learning that have massive endowments. They both have expressed concern about their endowments being taxed. While an endowment tax may be a liability for them, I would label their liabilities far more neoliberal than, say, an institution like Berea College, which also has tax liability due to the fact that its endowment is over a billion dollars. I cannot support the historical legacies and foundings of the former institutions; I can support the latter. Harvard was created with slave labour. Berea College is a "labour" college, one that worked to educate slaves and recently freed slaves as well as poor whites (see Day et al., 2013). Stanford College, named after Leland Stanford, a notorious sinophobe, xenophobe, and racist, was built with the labour of Chinese, who were later excluded. As Janet Lorin (2020) wrote in her *Bloomberg* story, "Stanford University faces as much as $43 million in taxes under a new levy on college endowments included in President Donald Trump's tax overhaul, the first time private colleges will pay such a fee" (para. 1). Stanford's legacy and the way it has conducted its business is a far different reality than how Berea College has maintained and grown its endowment. In my opinion, "Stanford – the third-richest U.S. private college with an endowment of $27.7 billion" (Lorin, 2020, para. 2) should pay a tax, whereas Berea College ought not to have to pay such a tax.

12.5 "Critical Storytelling" as an Endowed Teacher Educator

The purpose of this chapter has been to share critical storytelling experiences I have had as a teacher educator who traversed two institutions of higher education before I could finally be "home." In my research on endowed professors, the fact that all of the endowed and distinguished faculty didn't seek their endowed positions is fascinating and true of my own path. I would never have believed that I would be teaching at a liberal arts college. I actively write, despite the fact that at liberal arts colleges like Berea, the focus is on teaching. But I don't write necessarily out of forced compliance or obligation to institutional dictates. Rather, I write because I am a critical storyteller, and I have thoughts I wish to share with a broader audience. As a teacher educator who chairs an education studies department, I'd like to conclude this chapter with a last story: a story about fear.

12.6 Fearless Leadership

I am fearful. The stakes are too high to not be afraid. Early in my career, I wrote about my fear that educational studies would go extinct. The patterns of its marginalisation were clear, something colleagues and I documented (see Hartlep & Porfilio, 2015a, 2015b; Hartlep et al., 2015).

My first academic position was at a predominantly white institution in a Foundations of Education Department. I wrote about the marginalisation our field was experiencing. I left that department for a School of Urban Education. I wrote less about the foundations of education issues. Now, as I write this chapter, I am back in the Education Studies Department. I am finally where I need to be. I am finally happy.

As a leader, I am fearful that the more things change, the more they stay the same. I am afraid that our students at Berea College won't have access to diverse clinical field placements due to the fact Berea is rural and remote. As I wrote earlier, I am currently untenured. I am afraid that the Praxis is racially and class-biased and harms our students at Berea College. I am afraid that I will make a major error as department chair. I am afraid … but I will continue to do my best. I will continue to write my stories and share them with the world.

References

Bute, M. (2017). A Riverboat Gambler's Utopian Experiment. *The Journal of Educational Foundations, 30*(1–4), 7–32. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1173231.pdf

Day, R., Cleveland, R., Hyndman, J. O., & Offutt, D. C. (2013). Berea College—Coeducationally and racially integrated: An unlikely contingency in the 1850s. *Journal of Negro Education, 82*(1), 35–46.

Gorlewski, J., & Tuck, E. (Eds.). (2019). *Who decides who becomes a teacher? Schools of education as sites of resistance.* Routledge.

Hartlep, N. D. (2015). An adopted Korean speaks out about his racialised experiences as a faculty member at a predominantly white institution. In K. J. Fasching-Varner, K. A. Albert, R. W. Mitchell, & C. M. Allen (Eds.), *Racial battle fatigue in higher education* (pp. 115–122). Rowman & Littlefield.

Hartlep, N. D. (Forthcoming). *What can be learned from work colleges? An education that works.* State University of New York Press.

Hartlep, N. D., & Porfilio, B. J. (2015a). From the editors: The extinction of educational foundations. *Journal of Educational Foundations, 28*, 1–8.

Hartlep, N. D., & Porfilio, B. J. (2015b). Revitalizing the field of educational foundations and PK–20 educators' commitment to social justice and issues of equity in an age of neoliberalism. *Educational Studies, 51*(4), 1–17.

Hartlep, N. D., & Antrop-González, R. (2019). An effective model of mentorship and capacity building: Lessons learned and lived out at a Midwest AANAPISI. In R. T. Palmer, D. Preston, & A. Assalone (Eds.), *Effective leadership practices for minority-serving institutions* (pp. 179–197). Palgrave Macmillan.

Hartlep, N. D., & Ball, D. (Eds.). (2020). *Racial battle fatigue in faculty: Perspectives and lessons from higher education.* Routledge.

Hartlep, N. D., Porfilio, B. J., Otto, S., & O'Brien, K. (2015). What we stand for, not against: Presenting our teacher-education colleagues with the case for social foundations in PK–12, teacher-preparation programs. *Journal of Educational Foundations, 28*, 145–160.

Hartlep, N. D., Eckrich, L. L. T., & Hensley, B. O. (Eds.). (2017). *The neoliberal agenda and the student debt crisis in U.S. higher education.* Routledge.

King, J. E., & Hampel, R. (2018). *Colleges of education: A national portrait*. AACTE. Retrieved from https://aacte.org/resources/colleges-of-education-a-national-portrait

Lorin, J. (2020, February 11). Stanford Faces $43 Million Tab in Trump Endowment Tax. *Bloomberg.* Retrieved from https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-02-11/stanford-faces-43-million-tab-in-new-endowment-tax-under-trump

Neelakantan, S. (2020, March 12). Berea College praised for coronavirus response. *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education.* Retrieved from https://diverseeducation.com/article/169731/

Spalding, A. (2019, August 26). Impact of cuts to public higher education in Kentucky continues as students begin classes. *KYPolicy.* Retrieved from https://kypolicy.org/impact-of-cuts-to-public-higher-education-in-kentucky-continueas-students-begin-classes/

Dr. Nicholas D. Hartlep holds the Robert Billings Endowed Chair in Education at Berea College where he chairs the Education Studies Department. Hartlep began his career as a first grade teacher in Rochester, Minnesota, before receiving a doctoral degree in urban education at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He was named a 2020 Emerging Scholar by *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*, a national magazine focused on diverse issues in higher education.

Chapter 13
Beyond the Backlash: Autotheory as Resistance to Neoliberalism

Roz Ward

Abstract As a co-founder of the Safe Schools programme in Australia, then located at La Trobe University, I became the human lightning rod for a right-wing backlash against LGBTI+ inclusion in education in 2016. Political, mainstream, and social media commentators focused on the combination of my political views and activism with what they saw as my physical embodiment of gender nonconformity. As an active Marxist, commentators claimed that my role in Safe Schools was driven by a desire to 'destroy the family and civilisation'. The neoliberal priorities of my own university were highlighted through their response to this media-driven political pressure as management refused to take a stand for academic freedom either publicly or privately. This chapter presents an autotheoretical account of experiences that form part of a much broader convergence of crises. The emerging genre of autotheory combines personal narrative, poetic description, intimate language, and complex theory in a form that offers accessibility and pedagogical opportunities for an audience outside academia. Stitching together an assemblage of prose and poetics in the spirit of generations of feminist practice that makes the personal political, I theorise from the first person. Revitalising Marxist theory in particular, this autotheoretical work offers a potential site within which to respond to and resist the corporate standardisation of the neoliberal university. Lifting our horizons, our aim can be not just to survive crises but to find hope for a future beyond the backlash.

13.1 Introduction

> In a fractured age, when cynicism is god, here is a possible heresy: we live by stories, we also live in them. One way or another we are living the stories planted in us early or—knowingly or unknowingly—in ourselves. We live stories that either give our lives meaning or negate it with meaninglessness. If we change the stories we live by, quite possibly we change our lives. (Okri, 1997, as cited in King, 2003, p. 153)

R. Ward (✉)
Melbourne, Australia
e-mail: roztward@gmail.com

M. Vicars and L. Pelosi (eds.), *Storying Pedagogy as Critical Praxis in the Neoliberal University*, Rethinking Higher Education,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-4246-6_13

Stories shape, impact, and change our lives. As workers and students within the neoliberal university, we are told stories that have a series of recurring and repeating themes—tales of efficiency, cuts, consolidations, production, and competition. Academic standards, practices, and governance methods within universities have standardised quality criteria and limited our collective imagination on a global scale. As Rebecca Lund argues, 'these changes have strengthened hierarchies, competition and institutional bullying, promoting and naturalising stress, anxiety, envy, burn-out, precariousness and de-professionalisation' (Lund, 2020, p. 467). Kenway and colleagues (2014) argue that universities in the neoliberal era produce a new breed of 'techno-preneur' who are expected to 'produce' knowledge that is commercially viable and competitive with other (corporate) institutions in the knowledge 'market' it has been noted how 'The neoliberal university is marketised, privatised, commercialised, franchised, corporatised, managerialised, vocationalised, technologised, surveilled and securitised, and increasingly individualised, infantilised and casualised' (Kenway et al., 2014, p. 262).

In-depth interviews with academics conducted as part of an international project titled '*The Changing Nature of University Academic Work*' found three dominant themes: 'the rise of managerialism, the push to anti-intellectualism and the subservience of academic work to economic imperatives' (Banfield et al., 2016, p. 5). It is in this restricted and constrained space that creative methodologies and practices are offered as an attempt to break through the established neoliberal mold/mould. Following Raymond Williams' claim that 'to be truly radical is to make hope possible rather than despair convincing' (1989, p. 118), Kenway and colleagues (2014) gathered together a collection of 'Resources for Hope' in the neoliberal university that includes finding spaces and figures for hope, engaging in intergenerational work, student activism, taking collective action, hoping with others, and looking towards images of hope. Kenway et al. (2014) claim that:

> Hope requires identifications and imaginations that take us well beyond the techno-preneurial subjectivities so favoured and the acts of compliance that we have come to practise so reluctantly but nonetheless so expertly. It involves using our own ideas and developing alternative mechanisms for the distribution of hope; it involves becoming insurgent and defiant and a changed 'structures of feeling'. (p. 281)

In this chapter, I propose that working creatively with autotheoretical non-fiction can be added to these resources as a way of offering new spaces of hope and pedagogical engagement. Autotheory provides a challenge to standard expectations of both the form and content of what is considered academic 'output' that pressures the boundaries of neoliberal standards of academic production.

Beginning with first-person storytelling, autotheory points towards or directly discusses aspects of critical theory as a way of opening readers up to potential theoretical insights. To demonstrate the use of this genre I have included two *Inserts* in this chapter from my own unpublished autotheoretcial work on the experience of the Safe Schools backlash. My own experiences as the central figure in the media and political narratives that drove a public backlash against Safe Schools coalition, have given me an opportunity to draw out the connections between my personal experiences and critical social theory.

My particular theoretical interest is in contributing to a renewed dialogue between Marxism, Feminism, and Queer Theory that, in this case, is focused on the role of the heteronormative nuclear family within capitalism. In particular, in my Ph.D. research, from which this chapter emerges, I engage with how the material and ideological role of the family shapes and embeds heteronormativity within formal education spaces. Social Reproduction Theory (Bhattacharya, 2017; Vogel, 1984/2013) is one theoretical platform upon which to begin to build these enquiries. Making connections between personal embodiment, experience, and theory also allows for the possibility that these stories can play a unique pedagogical role beyond their immediate content. These stories can be offered to a broader audience as a contribution to a radical praxis that provides new and unique understandings of particular actions, decisions, or events in relation to Safe Schools and its broader implications for constructs of gender, sexuality, relationships, and family.

13.2 Autotheory as Method

Autotheory as a genre sets out to deliberately trouble the strict division between writing fiction and non-fiction. Autotheory has become an increasingly popular genre particularly with queer/LGBTI+ authors and readers since *The Argonauts* (Nelson, 2015) became a *Publishers Weekly* Top Ten Book of the Year, a *New York Times* Bestseller, and was nominated for a National Book Critics Circle Award for Criticism (Allerton, 2019). Nelson was described as 'among the sharpest and most supple thinkers of her generation' and *The Argonauts* as 'generative and generous' (Laing, 2015). Paul B. Preciado's pharmacological adventures make *Testo Junkie* (2013) another key work in this field. These works combine personal narrative, poetic description, and intimate language in a form that offers accessibility to critical theory to a broader audience. In *The Argonauts*, Nelson writes explicitly about her life and intimate relationships while reflecting on the work of social theorists to help her understand and deal with challenges in life. *The Argonauts* is non-linear in form and include references laid out in a side panel that runs across the 143 pages of text. *Testo Junkie* is also highly personal, a 427-page essay that explores bio-sexual transformation and the impact it can have on personal relationships, pleasure, and agency. Both works are examples of embodied writing that engage and challenge their readers to think more deeply.

Creative autotheoretical non-fiction offers a challenge to standard academic expectations of both form and content. The genre aims to take the reader on a journey that creatively combines stories with theoretical markers, insights, and sometimes academic references. In my work, the personal experiences I had been employed to narrate and tell the stories of key moments within the Safe Schools debates. These episodes then provide the basis for a discussion of social theory in relation to the nuclear family and heteronormativity. Through the creation of new connections with theory, the stories also offer to play a pedagogical role in providing potentially new

and unique explanations or understandings of particular actions, decisions, or events in relation to Safe Schools and its broader implications.

Contemporary memoir or life writing (Machado, 2019; Nelson, 2015; Preciado, 2013; Tumarkin, 2018) hybridises genres and borrows elements from literary forms by extending its reach across boundaries. In my research, I revisit a wide range of text—photos, social media posts, and emails—to assist the work of remembering. These processes, along with discussions with those who worked with Safe Schools and were part of my world at the time, have helped to provoke and clarify memories. Writing in this way also serves as a thinking process and a literary means of re/production. The particular 'epiphany' moments discovered through the process of writing are recognised by Ellis et al. (2011) as compelling the writer to reflect on what may be considered the most transformative of their lived experiences.

The narrative could begin with the scene as we launched Safe Schools in October 2010. None of the seats were empty in the high-rise corporate function room. The audience listened attentively to the excited speeches of students and greeted them with smiles and emphatic nods. An official photographer captured proud school principals posing with their framed Safe Schools membership certificates. There were tears in the eyes of those in the room who remembered their own school experiences when 'coming out' was an unimaginable option. After the formalities, scones were served with fresh cream and jam and friendly debates took place next to the buffet table about which item should be added first, with no need to reach a particular conclusion.

For many, the story of Safe Schools started when they witnessed or experienced the first real blows of the backlash against the programme in early 2016. Beginning in February of that year, *The Australian* and other News Corps publications ran a series of articles exclusively revealing my identity and personal political views. I was the co-founder of a government-funded programme designed to support schools to become more inclusive spaces for LGBTI+ students, teachers, and families. These news stories, columns, and opinion pieces framed Safe Schools as driven by my own personal 'gay agenda' to 'promote homosexuality'. Former Labor party leader Mark Latham went as far as arguing that through the work of Safe Schools, I was attempting to 'destroy the family and civilisation' (Ward, 2017).

In the research community, this story could begin in 1998 when a team of scholars from the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society at La Trobe University asked 'same-sex attracted' young people in Australia to complete a survey and return it in the mail that could help document their experiences of homophobia, school, and family life. The research report titled *Writing Themselves In* was the first time LGB young people had been able to tell their own stories as part of a national research project in Australia. The research revealed extremely high numbers of young people had experienced verbal and physical homophobia, particularly at school (Hillier et al., 1998). I was to join this team of researchers on a 0.2-fraction fixed-term contract in 2008. This research, and my position within a university research centre, laid the groundwork for what was to become Safe Schools Coalition in 2010.

Finally, I could explore the story of my own individual experience as a student in school in the UK in the 1980s and 90 s where a culture of silence around 'homosexuality' in the classroom was driven by introduction of a Thatcher government

amendment to the Local Government Act. The amendment known as 'Section 28', passed through parliament in 1988, stated that:

> A local authority shall not—(a) intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality; (b) promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship.

For many educators, LGBTI+ or not, this legislation meant that they felt unable to discuss non-heterosexual relationships and sexualities in schools (Lee, 2019). In my own experience as a student, this meant that my teachers would not even answer factual questions about being gay or lesbian or teach basic non-offensive terminology that could help students even make sense of, or tell their own stories about, sexual diversity.

Here though, the story begins with two autotheory 'inserts' provided below. These inserts have been chosen with the aim of presenting an embodied and personal perspective on the impact of neoliberal managerial decision-making and to provide a picture of the kind of affective work that happened as part of the Safe Schools program. Insert one is a scene taken from the day the Safe Schools team were informed by that the contract for funding the programme was being ended by the Victorian Government. Insert two is centred around a gender affirmation process in a primary school in Victoria.

Insert one

5.15 p.m. Friday 16th December 2016 (Melbourne, Australia)
2244 days after the launch of Safe Schools Coalition Victoria

Our thoughts immediately jumped to the students we were midway through supporting in their process of gender affirmation. We knew the names and stories of four young people who were gearing up to finally be themselves in term one. My phone lit up on the table. It was a journalist from The Age newspaper calling to say that the contract with La Trobe to deliver Safe Schools in Victoria was going to be terminated at the end of the year. Smart move. Right before the long summer holidays so nobody could kick up a fuss. Yeah, I have a comment, my comment is what the fuck are you talking about? Scratch that. My comment is 'I don't think backing down helps, it's like giving a drop of blood to a bunch of sharks'.

It is a warm and blustery December afternoon and we are several drinks into our end-of-year party. We'd chosen a convenient and overly colourful concrete indoor/outdoor taco place in the city. The cheese on the last few Nachos from our late lunch was starting to congeal in the plastic baskets lined with checked white and red paper. I was more interested in drinking than eating. I felt like we were all on the same page that day. I was halfway through a satisfyingly cold pint of lager, and Matt had just lined up two jugs of some sugary icey lime and mint cocktail. Me and Joel leaned on the other side of the plant box that made a makeshift divider between eating and smoking.

Now feeling very sober, we sat down together at the picnic-style table and started to talk through the implications. Even after everything that had happened as part of the backlash against the program, this felt like a particularly heavy blow. What

would happen at the start of next term? Students were waiting for their chance to be themselves. They were marking days off one by one on their calendars, I had seen their countdowns myself. Throughout these journeys, I always made a point of trying to emphasise the easy. I would say that teachers get into the profession because they actually want to see their students thrive and be happy; we knew the effect of affirmation. Not just the effect, but the affect. It was emotional.

We all told the adults in a school that when they could do something as simple as saying he instead of she, or them instead of him, and make that much of a difference, why wouldn't they? Life could be changed forever. But of course I also knew it wasn't always easy. We did our best to untangle all the complications, calmly answer all the questions, and address any doubts so that we could focus on the person at the centre of it all. We saw our job as trying to make young people feel good about themselves. And we knew we had learnt to do that pretty well.

Mel put her head in her hands, staring at the table, she sighed and when she looked up again there were tears in her eyes. It's ok Mel, we will work something out, said Matt, always thinking about practicalities and plans. The colour had been wiped off Joel's normally ruddy face leaving it a yellowy grey. I'm going to get Don to come here after he finishes work he said, getting out his phone to send a text. Yeah good idea, I'll message Jess too, I said. I can't believe nobody else has called us, I added. It was just dawning on me that we had heard the news from a journalist, not from La Trobe or anyone from the government. Bloody cowards. I filled everyone's glasses from the nearest jug. What do they think they're going to do? She said they were bringing it in house to the department, but I don't know who that means is going to do the work? Maybe they will employ all of us? Matt said, half serious but with a smile. Fuck that and fuck them, said Mel, and put her head back in her hands.

Insert two

10.15 a.m. Wednesday 28th May 2014 (Victoria, Australia)
639 days before the review of the appropriateness of the Safe Schools program

When we first met to plan Blake's affirmation process, we asked what he wanted, if anything, to mark the occasion when the school began to use his name and pronouns. His gaze drifted into the middle distance for a few seconds. 'Can I put a banner across the school gate with my new name on it?' His mum laughed and the principal said that it might be a bit hard to organise. He eventually settled for a party with his classmates.

I spoke to his teacher at the beginning of the week to see how the preparations were going. She told me Blake could barely contain himself. He'd been going around making sure every adult at the school knew what was happening—from the canteen workers to the woman who came in once a week to run the gardening club.

The arrangement was for Blake and his parents to arrive during the morning break. 'We wanted to make sure everyone had the chance to ask any questions before we set up for the party', the teacher said. She was talking to me, but with the word 'party' a ripple of noise broke across the class, as the children fidgeted and clutched each other's arms in anticipation. It was quickly apparent that the only questions they had

were about the food and drinks, and how soon they'd be allowed to eat the cake. Clearly, they didn't feel confused or worried about what they were being asked to do. 'Yeah, we get it', one cut in as I reminded them for the final time about using 'Blake' and 'he/him/his' from now on, and how if you make a mistake it's ok to say sorry and try again. 'Is it time for the party now?'.

As if on cue, Blake appeared in the doorway, holding his dad's hand, his mum following with a big cardboard box from the bakery. The whole class broke into spontaneous applause. The expression on Blake's face was like a child's drawing of a beaming grin: bold primary colours filling the page.

The noise of chairs scraping and small bodies shuffling went up a notch as Blake stood in front of everyone to open a present from the class. It was a trucker cap with netting around the sides and snap fastenings. Across the front, the word 'Blake' was written graffiti style in fluro colours. He put it on and spread his arms to the room, showmanlike, to take another round of applause.

I helped cut up the cake—two layers of sponge with chocolate fondant and white icing that spelled out 'BLAKE' in wobbly capital letters. 'Is it his birthday?' a small voice asked. 'Not quite', I replied, 'but something very special like that'.

13.3 Neoliberalism and Marxist Praxis

Neoliberalism is understood by classical Marxists as a 'class-based project' (Davidson, 2018). Within the broader framework of Marxism, if neoliberalism is understood as a variant of capitalism, many of the same critiques of the fundamental economic system still stand and can be expanded. Davidson and others argue that as the post-war boom ended and a decline in profitability of capitalism began in the 1970s, there was a need to impose structural changes in the economy and class relations in order to attempt to restore economic growth and transfer wealth back to the ruling class.

The key analytical tools at the heart of any Marxist analysis of society are historical materialism and dialectics. For Marx, the material essentials of human life—shelter, food, clothes etc.—were the starting point for understanding how society operates (Marx & Engels, 1846/1970). This means that any critique or analysis of society cannot be separated from an understanding of material production within that society. According to Giroux (1981).

> the concept of the dialectic is defined here as a critical mode of reasoning and behaviour, one that represents both a part as well as a critique of the conflicts and solutions that define the nature of human existence … Similarly, the categories themselves both reflect and develop from those aspects of human knowledge that reflect and critically penetrate 'the process of natural and social development'. (p. 114)

It is then possible that 'knowledge' and ideology as constructed reality can be recognised as inherently connected with the historical development of society, and subject to the underpinning class dynamics of that society.

It is in the chapters of the first volume of Capital (Marx, 1867/1976) that Marx provides his most thorough account of the structures of capitalism. The work begins with an analysis of the 'commodity', a term used to describe all items, including labour power (human work), that is sold for exchange value rather than use value. This understanding of the development of production of the commodity, made only in order to extract a profit, is used as the foundation of an explanation of how competition is inherent to the production of these commodities. This exploitative profit motive then becomes essential in driving a system that has little interest in the quality or decency of human life as everything in the system is subordinated to profit. In *The Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels (1845/1965) poetically describe the anarchic ramifications that result from this form of social structure: 'Modern bourgeois society, with its relations of production, of exchange and of property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, is like the sorcerer who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells' (p. 37).

The centrality of class in a Marxist dialectical approach should not be viewed as a 'reduction' of all aspects of analysis to vectors of class. Rather, it is an argument to embed research in specific historical, geographical and cultural contexts. Without a class lens, all other aspects of difference—e.g., gender, race, ability, sexuality—can be more easily obscured, ignored, promoted, or reified.

As Starzmann (2012) reflects in the field of anthropology

> It is indeed considered methodologically rigorous and analytically sound to fashion oneself as the post-political anthropologist who merely collects and projects traits of a shared human past … Under the pretence of being completely apolitical, the post-political anthropologist or academic in the wider sense simply commits to politics that do not "dwell on the issues" and will never ask the question, "who has power and why?" (p. 40)

The perspective that power should be uncovered and addressed is also key to this methodological approach. This means that research framed by Marxist theory does not intend to only describe or understand the world, it attempts to play a role in changing it. This bringing together of theory and practice is encapsulated in the term praxis. The history of praxis in philosophy dates well before Marx but is used here in the Marxist sense of being a simultaneous and continuously active interpenetrating combination of theory and practice (Chretien, 2013). The methodology of autotheory fits with this concept of praxis in reaching a broader audience and putting into use my lived experience at the centre of a political and cultural backlash as data.

Davidson (2018) observed that in the decade after the Global Financial Crisis in 2008, the political project of neoliberalism was coming under pressure as the 'centre' of political life and organisation struggled to relate to popular resentment towards growing economic inequality. Davidson (2018) notes:

> The revival of the far right as a serious electoral force is based on the apparent solutions it offers to what are now two successive waves of crisis, which have left the working class in the West increasingly fragmented and disorganised, and susceptible to appeals to blood and nation as the only viable form of collectivism still available, particularly in a context where the systemic alternative to capitalism—however false it may have been—had apparently collapsed in 1989–91. The political implications are ominous. (p. 66)

It is from within this context that far-right groups and political parties along with their centre-right allies, have attempted to (re)ignite a series of global 'culture wars' that draw attention to questions of sexuality, gender diversity, feminism, and the family (Kováts, 2017; Pető, 2015). These culture wars are used to shift political focus away from economic or class issues and enhance nationalist perspectives.

13.4 Conclusion

In Australia, the backlash against Safe Schools in 2016/7 has been a major skirmishes in these cultural and political battles. Former Liberal Prime Minister Tony Abbott described Safe Schools as 'social engineering' (Anderson, 2016), while conservative Senator Cory Bernardi appeared on Sky News (2016) to argue that the teaching materials provided in the *All of Us* resource were 'straight out of Marx 101' despite having all the hallmarks of Queer Theory. This provoked two questions: Can Marxism help us understand these events in the context of neoliberal capitalism and the crisis it now faces? And does autotheory offer a methodological approach that can contribute to a new political and cultural praxis.

In the first Insert above, I tell the story of our response to the moment the team found out that our work with Safe Schools was about to come to an end. The state government had made a decision, possibly together with, or at least accepted by, the executive team of our university. While formal histories tend to erase emotional responses, an autotheoretical account centres on the embodied physical and affective experiences of the pivotal moments. Driven by efficiency imperatives, the neoliberal university churns onwards without regard for the types of personal connections that were so key to the success of the Safe Schools program. Further attention is then drawn in the second insert to the importance of Safe Schools interventions on the lives of individual children, their families, classmates, and teachers. The telling of these embodied stories of transformation challenge the negative narratives about Safe Schools while also raising questions about how the organised backlash against the programme sought to reinforce heteronormativity are part of defending and maintaining the current social and economic system.

The COVID-19 pandemic, still unfolding as this chapter is being written, has forced open the cracks that already existed across the increasingly decrepit structures of capitalism. The specific architectural changes designed as part of the neoliberal project are coming under increasing pressure, particularly from the right-wing of politics as governments around the world scramble to meet the challenge of the pandemic. COVID-19 is not just a threat to human life and health, it threatens serious global economic collapse (Tooze, 2020). Government neglect and underfunding of health services around the world, much of which has occurred under the guise of neoliberal efficiencies, has contributed to the deaths of numbers of people we are yet to have the ability to even count (McCartney et al., 2020). Wealth inequalities have become an immediate matter of life and death as those who can afford to, adapt easily to the constraints of 'social distancing', while 'essential' workers, migrants,

and the poor are forced into life-threatening situations on crowded public transport and at work. Millions of workers have been driven by economic necessity to work in hazardous conditions without adequate, or often any, protective equipment (Ahmed et al., 2020).

The global environmental crisis that existed before COVID-19 continues in parallel with the health and economic crises. The United Nations General Assembly resolution on the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015 recognised the breadth and depth of these challenges:

> We are meeting at a time of immense challenges to sustainable development. Billions of our citizens continue to live in poverty and are denied a life of dignity. There are rising inequalities within and among countries. There are enormous disparities of opportunity, wealth and power. Gender inequality remains a key challenge … The survival of many societies, and of the biological support systems of the planet, is at risk. (United Nations, 2019)

Within this context of deep crisis, social divisions and oppressions that existed before the pandemic have been pushed even further into the spotlight. Public health academics have observed that 'COVID-19 has sharpened the focus on structural and societal inequalities that have long existed in the UK, the USA, and other countries' (Bhala et al., 2020, p. 2). In part as an ideological response to the unfolding horror, nationalism is being driven from the top down and new fronts are opening up in the 'culture wars' around gender, race, and sexuality (Shrimsley, 2020).

Working from inside the neoliberal university, we have witnessed a process of standardisation in provision of teaching and research that has been accompanied by an assertion of 'standards' in relation to the behaviour of workers and their expected outputs. These standards have the effect of limiting not just content, but pedagogical approaches and creative practice outside the official confines of officially designated subject areas (those with the word 'creative' in their titles). In Simon Cooper's (2017) analysis of the University that 'does not think', he highlights the dumbing impact of increased auditing and standardisation in an attempt to meet expectation of minimum quality requirements. Cooper (2017, p. 37) has suggested how:

> The rise of audit schemes and regulations to guarantee 'quality', together with a standardisation of teaching methods, means that unorthodox content or pedagogical methods become marginalised. (p. 37)

Market-based social relations are not a new feature of capitalist production. The mediation of our social relationships through the production of commodities for sale on the market, including our own individual 'labour power' were the central themes of Marx's Capital (1974). Alienation through standardised labour is also an ongoing feature of lives lived in a system that relies on human productivity to generate profits in a structure when failing to compete in the market means failure to survive in business.

Following Giroux (2012), I propose that we lift our horizons through autotheory and new creative forms of praxis towards a re-imagining and re-creation of our universities as a 'democratic public sphere' in which:

> critique, dialogue, critical theory and informed judgement constituted a pedagogical necessity through which the institution could develop a public awareness of itself and empower administrators, researchers, teachers, and students to act in socially responsible ways that made such an awareness to those both inside and outside the institution meaningful. (p. 113)

And perhaps even, to contribute to the project of transforming the world.

Acknowledgements I would like to acknowledge the people of the Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung language groups of the eastern Kulin Nations on whose stolen lands I have conducted this research as a student at RMIT University. I respectfully acknowledge Ancestors and Elders, past and present. I also acknowledge that for the First Nations people of Australia, the experience of invasion, ongoing occupation, and lack of a treaty are barriers to genuine inclusion of any form, particularly for those who may be further marginalised as a result of their gender identity or sexuality.

This chapter uses the acronym LGBTI+. In the Australian policy and research context, these letters formally represent the terms lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex. However, the intent is to include all people whose sexuality or gender identity is non-normative and therefore potentially subject to discrimination and oppression, which is why I add the plus symbol. I also acknowledge that there are significant cultural differences across this field and recognise that there are communities where the term LGBTI+ is not commonly used or may be inappropriate.

Further, the language used in research and activist communities is a site of constant contestation and debate. I support the self-determination of language in relation to gender identities and sexualities.

References

Ahmed, F., Ahmed, N. E., Pissarides, C., & Stiglitz, J. (2020). Why inequality could spread COVID-19. *The Lancet Public Health, 5*(5), e240.

Allerton, J. (2019). *'Book review/The Argonauts by Maggie Nelson', writing NSW*. Accessed 15 January 2020. https://writingnsw.org.au/the-argonauts-by-maggie-nelson/

Anderson, S. (2016). Tony Abbott calls for safe schools 'Social Engineering Program' to be axed. *ABC Online.* Accessed July 1, 2018. http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-03-01/abbott-calls-for-end-to-safe-schools/7209766

Banfield, G., Haduntz, H., & Maisuria, A. (2016). The (im) possibility of the intellectual worker inside the neoliberal university. *Educação & Formação, 1*(3 set/dez), 3–19.

Bhala, N., Curry, G., Martineau, A. R., Agyemang, C., & Bhopal, R. (2020). Sharpening the global focus on ethnicity and race in the time of COVID-19. *The Lancet*.

Bhattacharya, T. (2017). *Social reproduction theory: Remapping class, recentering oppression.* Pluto Press.

Cooper, S. (2017). The university does not think. *Arena Magazine (fitzroy, Vic), 147*, 36.

Chretien, T. (2013, March 26). Praxis makes perfect. *Socialist Worker*. https://socialistworker.org/2013/03/26/praxis-makes-perfect

Davidson, N. (2018). Neoliberalism as a class-based project. In *The SAGE handbook of neoliberalism* (pp. 55–68). SAGE.

Ellis, C., Adams, T. E., & Bochner, A. P. (2011). Autoethnography: An overview. *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung*, *36*(4), 273-290.

Giroux, H. (1981). *Ideology culture & the process of schooling*. The Falmer Press

Giroux, H. (2012). When hope is subversive. *Tikkun*, *19*(6), 38–39.

Hillier, L., Dempsey, D., Harrison, L., Beale, L., Matthews, L., & Rosenthal, D. (1998). *Writing themselves in a national report on the sexuality, health and well-being of same-sex attracted young people*. La Trobe University.

Kenway, J., Boden, R., & Fahey, J. C. (2014). Seeking the necessary resources of hope in the neoliberal university. In *Through a glass darkly. The social sciences look at the Neoliberal University* (pp. 259–281). ANU Press.

King, T. (2003). *The truth about stories: A native narrative*. House of Anansi Press

Kováts E. (2017) The emergence of powerful anti-gender movements in Europe and the crisis of liberal democracy. In M. Köttig, R. Bitzan & Petö A. (Eds.), *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe, Gender and Politics*, (pp. 175-189). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-43533-6_12

Laing, O. (2015). The Argonauts by Maggie Nelson review—'One of the sharpest thinkers of her generation'. *The Guardian.* Accessed 2 January 2020. https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/apr/23/the-argonauts-maggie-nelson-review-harry-%20dodge-transgender

Lee, C. (2019). Fifteen years on: The legacy of section 28 for LGBT+ teachers in English schools. *Sex Education*, 1–16.

Lund, R. (2020). The social organisation of boasting in the neoliberal university. *Gender and Education, 32*(4), 466–485.

Marx, K. (1867/1976). Capital Vol. 1. *Modern Library*.

Marx, K. (1974). *Capital: A critique of political economy. A critical analysis of capitalist production*, Translated from the third German Edition by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling. Lawrence and Wishart.

Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1845/1965). *Manifesto of the communist party*. Progress Publishers

Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1846/1970). *The German ideology*. International Publishers.

McCartney, G., Leyland, A., Walsh, D., & Dundas, R. (2020). *Scaling COVID-19 against inequalities: Should the policy response consistently match the mortality challenge?* medRxiv.

Pető, A. (2015). Anti-gender mobilisational discourse of conservative and far right parties as a challenge to progressive politics. In E. Kováts & Põim M. (Eds.), *Gender as symbolic glue: The position and role of conservative and far right parties in the anti-gender mobilisationymbolic in Europe*, (pp. 126-131). Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS).

Nelson, M. (2015). *The Argonauts*. Graywolf Press.

Preciado, P. B. (2013). *Testo Junkie: Sex, drugs, and biopolitics in the pharmacopornographic era.* The Feminist Press at CUNY.

Shrimsley, R. (2020, April 21). Culture wars are infecting the UK's pandemic strategy. *Financial Times*. https://www.ft.com/content/ff54be82-82ec-11ea-b872-8db45d5f6714. Accessed 15 May 2020.

Starzmann, M. (2012). Rethinking revolution in the Middle East, *Z Magazine*, *25*(2), 37-40.

Tooze, A. (2020, April 9). The normal economy is never coming back. *Foreign Policy*. Accessed 30 April 2020. https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/04/09/unemployment-coronavirus-%20pandemic-normal-economy-is-never-coming-back/

Tumarkin, M. (2018). *Axiomatic*. Brow Books.

United Nations. (2019). SDGs Main Contributions and Challenges UN.

Vogel, L. (1984/2013). *Marxism and the oppression of women: Toward a unitary theory*. Brill.

Ward, R. (2017). I will never give up fighting for a more free and joyful world. *The Guardian*. Accessed 2 January 2020. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/sep/01/roz-ward-i-%20will-never-give-up-fighting-for-a-more-free-and-joyful-world

Williams, R., & Gable, R. (Eds.). (1989). *Resources of hope: Culture, democracy, socialism*. Verso.

Dr. Roz Ward was the co-founder of gender and sexuality inclusion initiative Safe Schools Coalition at the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society at La Trobe University. Roz continues to work internationally in education and social justice.

Chapter 14
"Self-Ishly" Enacting Social Justice: Self-Care as Political Warfare in the Neoliberal Academy

Tricia M. Kress

Abstract This chapter takes an autoethnographic approach to theorizing about the embodied dimensions being a social justice educator in the neoliberalizing university. Specifically, I recount my twelve years of working as a doctoral educator on the edge of burnout in two institutions. By contrasting personal experiences of working in an urban public university and a suburban private college, I trace the effects of neoliberalism in theory and practice through the psychological and physiological effects on my body and how this filtered into the way I thought about and approached my work. Namely, how in the name of social justice, I also reproduced and enacted the neoliberal project. Using the idea of selflessness as a fulcrum, I illustrate how within the neoliberalizing university, selflessness is an act of giving of yourself while also losing yourself, which opens the door for exploitation of self and others even when attempting to embody social justice practices. As a counterweight, I offer self-ishness, starting with self-awareness and self-care, as forms of resistance and refusal that have transformative potential for engaging in teaching and research.

The burnout hit somewhere about mid-semester. I had felt run down before, but this was different. It was a screeching, grinding, halting until I simply … stopped. My brain and body refused to do anymore. The machine had finally broken … (December 2019, personal journal). By the time my mind and body had finally shut down, I had been teaching in higher education for over twenty years with most of those years in doctoral programs with espoused missions to further social justice in schools and societies. For a long time, this work sustained me because I was able to see near immediate positive effects in my students and the K-12 schools in which they work. As a critical educator, this bolstered my commitment to furthering my work, and as a person, I suppose it provided me with a sense of purpose and fulfillment. So when my body-mind finally arrived at a place where it could give no more of itself to others and the institution, I was forced to reconsider my work and life in university

T. M. Kress (✉)
Molloy University, Rockville Centre, New York, NY, USA
e-mail: tkress@molloy.edu

M. Vicars and L. Pelosi (eds.), *Storying Pedagogy as Critical Praxis in the Neoliberal University*, Rethinking Higher Education,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-4246-6_14

spaces. How was it that work I found to be personally rewarding could also bring me to an unhealthy place of physical and mental paralysis? In my reflections since that mid-semester burnout, I have begun to understand that while my work is often personally rewarding, I am always acting within the boundaries of institutions that, for the most part, are more concerned with people's brains than they are with their bodies. Furthermore, higher education institutions, when taken as whole entities are often more concerned with productivity and capital accumulation than they are with human thriving, despite what mission statements may say. They are also rarely self-conscious about institutionalized power dynamics that disproportionately locate the burdens of academic labor on some bodies more than others. On the individual level, people like me may philosophically disagree with the neoliberal capitalist tendencies that undergird institutional priorities. However, simply participating within these structures reifies and upholds neoliberal structures, and in retrospect, it is clear that I was complicit in supporting aspects of what Smyth (2017) calls the "toxic university". I have many times sacrificed my own health and well-being while assuming I was fighting social injustice in other ways that were bigger than myself.

This chapter takes up the paradox of striving to be a critical teacher and researcher committed to social justice while also working within and for institutional structures that perpetuate social injustices. I take an autoethnographic approach to theorizing about the embodied dimensions of being a social justice educator in the neoliberalizing university and what it is like when scholars sacrifice their own body–minds and become complicit in their own exploitation, thus perpetuating injustice in the name of justice. By combining critical pedagogy and feminist theories, I recount and analyze the bodily effects of my twelve years of working as a doctoral educator on the edge of burnout. I trace the effects of neoliberalism in theory and practice through the psychological and physiological effects on (1) my physical body and psycho-emotional experiences of my work and (2) how this filtered into the way I thought about and approached being an academic. I bring to the forefront how in the name of social justice, I also reproduced and enacted the neoliberal project. I illustrate how within the neoliberalizing university, selflessness for the university mission is an act of giving of yourself while also losing yourself, which opens the door for exploitation of self and others even when attempting to embody social justice practices. As a counterweight, I offer self-ishness for justice, starting with self-awareness and self-care, as forms of resistance and refusal that have transformative potential.

14.1 Contortion or Destruction: Performing Female in the Neoliberal Academy

Scholars such as Lipman (2011), Giroux (2014), and Smyth (2017) identify neoliberalism as a social, cultural, and economic force that has structured the organization of institutions in countries around the world for the past 40 years. Lipman (2011) explains, neoliberalism as "an ensemble of economic and social policies, forms of

governance, and discourses and ideologies that promote individual self-interest, unrestricted flows of capital, deep reductions in the cost of labor, and sharp retrenchment of the public sphere" (p. 6). In higher education spaces neoliberalism manifests itself in various ways. The neoliberal university reduces tenure-track faculty lines and replaces them with contingent faculty (Kezar et al., 2019). It slashes departmental budgets and investment in research activities while demanding the procurement of grants to supplement operations. It creates public–private partnerships that prioritize entrepreneurship and venture capital projects to generate revenue (Ward, 2012). It aggressively recruits out-of-state and international students to exploit revenue from students who pay higher tuition. It engages in rapid expansion to position itself as a more competitive institution in order to generate additional revenue flows. From a faculty labor perspective, neoliberalism fuels the "publish or perish" adage for those on the tenure track (Ivancheva, 2015). Moreover, neoliberalism positions faculty labor (teaching, research, and service) within a capitalist framework of continuous expansion that is unrealistic and generally unsustainable, especially for junior faculty who are just starting to build their scholarly agendas and for faculty whose disciplines or scholarly expertise don't lead to easily procuring grant funding and financially supporting scholarship via graduate assistants, course buyouts, and other resources.

Neoliberalism demands that individuals and academic units do more with less, and as an organizing force in higher education in general, it creates an environment of staunch individualism and competition for scarce resources which Rhoades and Slaughter (1997) explain is not an abstract phenomenon. Academic capitalism and supply-side higher education policies are "lived experiences, deeply embedded in people's daily worlds in colleges and universities […] They occur to varying degrees across the full spectrum of higher education from community colleges to research universities" (Rhoades & Slaughter, 1997, p. 9). Hence, neoliberalism as it is enacted on the ground has a felt impact on the physical bodies and mental well-being of people who perform academic labor. In my case, as a female in a patriarchal society and male-dominated profession, I experience the effects of neoliberalism in my body and mind in particular ways that are tied to the social and cultural expectations of my gender and age.

When I began my first tenure track position, I was keenly aware of my body in relation to the academic space and other bodies within that space. I was young, only 31 at the time, and visibly the youngest person on our staff. I was also younger than nearly all of my doctoral students who were all in-service K-12 teachers and administrators. Besides that, I am petite and often perceived as being younger than I actually am. At the time, I would still be mistaken for being under 21 years of age when at bars or if buying alcohol at a store. My body and the image it projected were not representative of what is expected in academic spaces, troves of knowledge that they ostensibly are. This can be understood as an effect of what happens when the Western knowledge archive, which has for centuries been dominated by White male bodies (Patel, 2015), must accommodate "Others" who don't belong there. As Jamieson (1995) describes, in Western culture women are bound by ideology and rhetoric that regulate the spaces they are allowed or not allowed to occupy and how they ought to conduct themselves when in those spaces. For several years

until I established credibility among my colleagues and students, I intentionally compensated for my inability to physically embody the academy by performing an image that was closer to what might be deemed the academic ideal for a woman as I understood it at the time. I wore a suit daily, though no one else did. I wore shoes with three-inch heels to make me taller, though they hurt like hell and were hard to walk in across campus. I toted my belongings in an expensive shoulder bag, the weight of my laptop and books digging into my shoulder and pulling my neck and back. My thinking was: if I couldn't actually change my age or stature, at least I could project an image of professionalism, authority, and yes, even elitism. With my fancy clothes and shoes that I bought on clearance or was gifted by family, I could almost be the academy. Almost.

While new to the academy, I already understood that a young woman like me could never *really* be the academy. In the neoliberal university, bodies are (in)convenient. Women's bodies, Black bodies, Brown bodies, trans bodies, disabled bodies, we are necessary, but we get in the way. I have been told as much in many ways, from my tacit understanding of the need to project an academy-worthy image to a year-long fight over chronic poor air quality in my office that ended in me being relocated into a mouse-infested space instead. A neoliberal university with the social justice mission, like the one I worked in, needs diverse bodies for credibility, but it also needs them to behave and embody the ideals of the neoliberal academic space. Bodies that don't are subject to contortion (change yourself) or destruction (become discredited or be removed).

But not all bodies bear the brunt of neoliberal expectations in the same way. For instance, White male bodies can go to work in denim jeans and worn sneakers, while young-looking female bodies cannot. Darder (2016) explains the knowledge of the body is essential to emancipation and social change. Darder underscores those things our bodies know simply by being bodies among bodies in particular space-times. My body, because of the physical toll that academic work has taken on it, holds knowledge about what it means to do this kind of work in a space that by and large regards my body as inconvenient and disposable. My lungs coughing at night because of chronic bad air, my shoulder stiff and in chronic pain from sitting too long in one place, my heart racing from anxiety when I am afraid to express a dissenting opinion during a meeting, my pregnant mid-section pressed tightly under clothes that would hide from others the new human growing inside me.

Feminist authors have written at length about the "double bind" and the impossibility of being a woman in a position of authority (Jamieson, 1995). I wore clothes to project academia, but in doing so, I also received whispered comments about how I was a "New York Princess" because I was dressed up and held high expectations of myself and others around me. Yet, I also knew I needed to tempor how I approached critique or dissent when around superiors. I intentionally performed a caricature that in my mind I called "the stupid girl". The stupid girl was the one in the faculty meeting that asked silly questions like, "can someone tell me what standardization means and why we need to standardize [insert curriculum or other activity here]?" The stupid girl made people around her laugh, put them at ease, and relinquished power to others who could explain to her "how it was". Judith Butler (1988) theorizes

gender as a performative act. For Butler (1988), gender and its performance is not automatic; rather, it is a possibility that emerges from historical formations over time. Performing female in the academy was for me one possibility of a persona I might embody given my understanding of (a) the history of female bodies in U.S. society and academia and (b) the regulatory social gaze upon female bodies and what was expected of me to not trigger backlash for being an interloper in a space I was not entitled to occupy.

The irony of needing to perform naivete in a place where I was getting paid to be knowledgeable was not lost on me. I was infuriated and humiliated whenever I felt compelled to perform the role of "stupid girl" in order to gain an advantage without threatening people around me. That performance was on the one hand degrading, but at the same time, it compelled others to reveal the contours of the neoliberal agenda being put forth, even if they were not overtly aware of the agenda themselves. My body couldn't simply speak what I was thinking; my body had to perform particular identities to elicit reactions and responses. A senior colleague and mentor from another institution once wondered aloud to me how I had managed to fly under the radar and not get flagged as a critical theory troublemaker. The stupid girl was my protection, but I resented her too. I resented having to play dumb while doing work behind the scenes while a senior male colleague got credit for it. I resented when senior male colleagues would practically pat me on the head for being young and submissive. And I was embarrassed and enraged (while remaining silent and still with a smile) when a senior male colleague actually kissed my forehead as he would a grandchild or beloved niece at a public event in front of my students. At this moment while I am typing these words, I can feel my heart pounding and hands trembling even though nearly a decade has passed since that moment. The emotional and physical effects of that seven-year performance still linger in my body.

14.2 Losing Self for Mission

According to Sarah Ahmed (2015), rather than psychological interior states of being, emotions are actually processes of cultural politics and worldmaking that amount to transactive experiences between the interior of the individual and the exterior of the social. Emotions are productive and delineate the boundaries between people and social structures while also binding objects together. Ahmed (2015) explains, "What moves us, what makes us feel, is also that which holds us in place, or gives us a dwelling place. Hence movement does not cut off the body from the 'where' of its inhabitance, but connects bodies to other bodies: attachment takes place through movement, through being moved by the proximity of others" (p. 11). My emotional reaction of resentment was a response to feeling compelled to physically contort myself into an acceptable identity so I could "fit" in the academy while also being entirely complicit in my own exploitation. I did my own work and the work of other more established faculty too without receiving recognition for that work, and I was angry that I needed to pretend I was stupid in order to survive the tenure track. This

was tied to very real concerns of destroying my career if I didn't contort myself to others' expectations. As a pre-tenured faculty member, I felt extremely vulnerable. I was in constant fear of being dismissed from the university if I wasn't able to perform up to the university's standards for achieving tenure. I felt as if I was perpetually running on a treadmill while under duress. What made the process especially grueling was the neoliberalizing that was taking place while I was trying to establish myself as a scholar. I had figured out the publishing game, and then the university began moving the goalposts. They wanted to see grantsmanship, too, but there was no mentoring provided, and my dissertation advising and service loads were exceptionally heavy so I didn't have time to try to teach myself. At some point, I was clocking 14–15 h of work daily for weeks on end. I was physically exhausted, emotionally fragile, and I felt trapped and alone. Over time, my fear and resentment grew into rage and disgust.

The year I was awarded tenure, my department was in a state of expansion. We had hired four new junior faculty members without any plan in place for how to support them. Having gone through the hazing of the tenure process myself and having watched others also do so, I began to channel my anger into the social justice mission of the university. I was committed to trying to root out the hypocrisy of an institution that exploits and dehumanizes faculty in order to further its own image. I wanted to push back on and change the calcified institutional norms and structures that reproduced oppressive conditions for junior faculty. I wanted to stop the cycle of abuse and create a space that lived up to the social justice mission I believed in. My biggest mistake was assuming that I could actually affect change in any systematic way in order to have a widespread and lasting impact. First, I had few allies who were seniors in the institution who would support me in this goal, and those who I did have were also working long hours and were as tired as I was. But I was fired up and determined to not allow what happened to me to happen to others. Second, the same year I received tenure, our director retired and I filled his shoes. There was no infrastructure for the program, so there was no way to hand off the administration to a junior colleague without it being incredibly burdensome and having the exact opposite effect of what I wanted when supporting my new colleagues while on the tenure track. Looking at the situation, I decided to delay my sabbatical for two years to create an infrastructure for the program and give my colleagues some time to get comfortable before I took a leave. And yet again, I fell into the same trap of being complicit in my own exploitation. But this time, I had "a cause" that made me feel good about my decision to delay my hard-earned time away from the institution.

While I couldn't see it at the time, those two years were a tipping point for me. By allowing myself to be exploited again, I did create space for my junior colleagues to begin to thrive, but the hole I was in kept getting deeper to the point where I began to feel my sense of self slipping away. While I had performed "stupid girl" to fly under the radar and safely get my tenure, at this point in time I began to operate like a human shield. I would insert my body into the line of fire to protect my colleagues from the awfulness I had experienced. Mostly, I had been succefvssful in shielding them from the worst parts of the university's underbelly. As just one example, I found myself having to advocate on behalf of vulnerable colleagues during tenure and promotion committee meetings. In one particularly disturbing meeting, I defended a colleague

who had taken two parental leaves while on the tenure track. A senior colleague on the committee was counting those leaves as part of the tenure clock, saying the junior colleague being considered for tenure actually had an extra two years to publish because of their time away during parental leaves, and because of that the quantity of their scholarship was insufficient for tenure. I was horrified that I needed to point out that this assessment was discriminatory and potentially illegal, never mind the fact that it had zero regards for social justice or equity in the workplace.

Acting as a human shield effectively solidified my objectification. I wasn't sure who I was anymore aside from damage-control: I was the person who put out all the fires and tried to fix everyone's problems while silently suppressing my own. During this time, I endured a miscarriage and was called out sick from work for the first time in eight years. It was so uncharacteristic of me that a junior colleague emailed to ask if I was okay because my absence scared her. And through that horrible time, that colleague was the only person at the university who ever knew of my loss.

A year later, I finally applied for my sabbatical leave. Shortly after, I learned I was pregnant again. Because of the precedent I had established of being omnipresent and disembodied, rather than feeling able to share this news with others, I was afraid to tell anyone. Because of the timing, my parental leave would need to take place the semester before the sabbatical leave I had just applied for. I was scared the administration would not approve my sabbatical if they knew that I would be away for an entire year with back-to-back leaves. I hid my body under layers of clothing and didn't announce my pregnancy until I received official confirmation that my sabbatical had been approved. By then I was nearly seven months along, yet none of my coworkers even noticed my changing body. I actually remember the moment when one colleague suspected. I passed by her in the hall and she did a double-take as she was entering her office. I could see the suspicion on her face, and she opened her mouth to speak but then thought better of it and didn't say anything. This happened to be the same colleague who contacted me when I lost my first pregnancy. By then, there were colleagues whom I had worked with for nine years who never suspected anything until I announced I would be on leave for a year. And while my colleagues expressed congratulations, my news also set off a panic because no one knew who would take over as director in my absence. By then it was clear to me: I was no longer a person with a life independent of the university. I had become fixed in place like a piece of furniture.

14.3 Self-Care for Justice

Key to Paulo Freire's philosophy of liberating education is the notion of "dehumanization" (Freire, 2018). While often Freire's philosophy is applied to situations of teaching and learning in the classroom, critical pedagogy is wider-reaching than simply what happens inside the walls of schools. Critical pedagogy as a philosophy draws from various scholarly disciplines (sociology, psychology, anthropology, political science, economics) to make sense of the role of education in maintaining or

transforming oppressive social conditions. When people are treated as objects and denied agency, they are dehumanized. This is true whether we are talking about students in classrooms or exploited workers in societies. The condition of dehumanization is what maintains oppression. When people see themselves as subjects and no longer objects, liberation is made possible. Neoliberal universities, regardless of their expressed missions, are dehumanizing spaces. This is not accidental, it is by design. Neoliberal ideology dictates bodies are expendable. They are inconvenient. They are necessary but problematic. As I reflect on my own disregard for my body as I worked in, for, and against the neoliberalizing university, I understand how I was not just complicit in my exploitation (which I was), I was also complicit in my own dehumanization. I treated my body like a teaching and publishing machine, and I used my body as armor to shield others without changing the university in any way. I denied the presence of my body as anything other than an object of the institution whether working in harmony toward the university's goals or in opposition to its oppressive structures. While I thought I was doing all this with a greater good in mind, my individual efforts only succeeded in maintaining the oppressive conditions that already existed, though perhaps they were experienced as a little less painful for some of my colleagues. This realization, that I was participating in dehumanization, is nauseating.

Elsewhere, I have described neoliberalism as cannibalistic (Kress & Lake, 2019). As an ideology, neoliberalism requires perpetual consumption. Since the neoliberal goal is always outward expansion, neoliberalism devours anything in its path: land, animals, natural resources, and even people. As part of the neoliberal expansion project at my university, my body felt at first like a cog in a big machine. Eventually, the experience felt more like being in a meat grinder. As the labor power of bodies is extracted, it is fed into and energizes the further extraction of labor power from more bodies. If one body leaves or is expelled, another body can quickly take its place. Individually and collectively people feed off the labor power of people (themselves and others) in order to keep the neoliberal beast thriving. But the hunger for neoliberalism will never subside; on the contrary, the more the neoliberal organization eats, the more ravenous it becomes.

There is no end to the growth of its appetite; hence, the more productive people are, the more the university will devour, in the process, eating its own young who are on the tenure track and therefore most vulnerable. Ahmed (2015) explains some emotions are "sticky", and once they attach to an object they begin to stick to other things associated with that object, thereby binding the objects together. Ahmed uses the emotion of disgust as an example of the stickiness of emotions. The revulsion I felt at making the connection between neoliberalism and cannibalism was more than I could bear, and it began to stick to everything around me. The unique effect of disgust as an emotion is this: it repels bodies from one another. The one that is disgusted pushes away from the source of disgust as if avoiding a poison, vermin, or contagion (Ahmed, 2015). In my final two years at the university, I relocated to another state and commuted by plane twice monthly because I felt disgusted and physically ill when I was in or near the university. In my last year, for two weeks leading up to the start of the fall semester, I experienced daily migraine headaches.

My body was rejecting my return to the university. More than that, I believe I was also making a subconscious attempt to regain my power, which Ahmed also says is embedded in the emotion of disgust. The disgusted party feels superior to that which triggers the disgust. On a societal level, disgust can translate into discrimination and oppression of some groups by others (Ahmed, 2015). On an individual level, disgust was what enabled me to begin to move away from a toxic relationship. I needed to believe I was better than that, and I would not reduce myself to participating in the consumption of others. I had finally accepted that I could not stop what was happening even if I sacrificed my physical and mental health. And I could not be a neoliberal cannibal furthering the neoliberal agenda by allowing the exploitation of myself and others to continue. There was no other choice but to leave.

In the years since then, I have had to relearn what academia could be aside from the neoliberalizing beast I left. I needed to rekindle the optimism and hope that had drawn me to the university with the social justice mission in the first place. It wasn't an easy feat, I was accustomed to burning myself out, living an impossibly unhealthy imbalance of work and life, and feeling resentful and indignant, all in the name of ostensibly contributing to some sort of social good. So when the mid-semester burnout hit that October, when my body–mind simply wouldn't do anymore, I retreated inward to a place of contemplation, and I retreated outward to outdoor activities and family life. I collaborated with a new doctoral student whose research is about teacher burnout, and I began to reclaim myself and my life while resetting my relationship with academia. In my collaborative work with my student (Kress & Somma-Coughlin, 2022), we discovered how neoliberal ideology distorts the way we see everything. It makes us feel like life is nothing but production, and there is never enough time to do anything. Bit by bit, as we give more of ourselves and take less of what we need to sustain ourselves, we lose ourselves and our humanity. As we are dehumanized, we cannot participate in the struggle for humanization because we ourselves are no longer fully human. My student and I pondered about time, how precious it feels, but how artificial it is as a construct that organizes societies, workplaces, and lives. We calculated how much time we each took to care for ourselves in comparison to caring for others or working for our institutions, and we were both equally appalled that it was usually less than 2% of our total waking hours per week. Without even conferring with each other, my student and I both stopped being complicit in giving ourselves away and we began to take more time for ourselves.

Prior to this experience, I could not buy into the "self-care" trends that have exploded in popular culture. Self-care rhetoric made me angry because I was so exploited and overworked. Self-care was telling me to "take time" for myself, like taking a spa day, doing something fun, or reading a mindless novel. In my mind, I never had enough time, and having to schedule one more activity would put me over the edge. But once my body–mind halted and I began self-examining, I began to see the world differently. I especially saw myself, my colleagues, and my students in a new light. I developed a deeper sense of empathy and connection, I began encouraging others to give themselves the space and time they needed in order to claim their humanity too. What began emerging was my desire for a collective

sense of support and encouragement which begins with a refusal to participate in exploitation and dehumanization in community with others. I found myself drawn to Audre Lorde (1988) who famously stated, "Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare" (p. 130). My time in the neoliberal university with the social justice mission taught me that on an individual level struggle against powerful structures is futile and simply serves to perpetuate dehumanization. But I had not yet been exposed to a discourse of collective refusal and self-preservation. I had thought refusal was selfish because I needed to be selfless, to give of myself to further the mission. But in the end, being self-ish, conscious of, and intentional about refusal and self-care is resistance in a space that demands selflessness. Self-ishness is radical and transformational. When I encourage others to also be self-ish, together we are justified in our refusal. This is the self-care I desire: to engage in a political warfare of refusal. And, I offer an open invitation for you to self-ishly join me.

References

Ahmed, S. (2015). *The cultural politics of emotion.* Routledge.

Butler, J. (1988). Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory. *Theatre Journal, 40*(4), 519–531.

Darder, A. (2016). Freire and the body. In M. A. Peters (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of educational philosophy and theory* (pp. 1–6). Springer.

Freire, P. (2018). *Pedagogy of the oppressed, 50th anniversary ed*. Bloomsbury.

Giroux, H. (2014). The swindle of democracy in the neoliberal university and the responsibility of intellectuals. *Democratic Theory, 1*(1), 9–37.

Ivancheva, M. P. (2015). The age of precarity and the new challenges to the academic profession. *Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai—Studia Europaea, 60*(1), 39–48.

Jamieson, K. H. (1995). *Beyond the double bind: Women and leadership.* Oxford University Press.

Kezar, A., DePaola, T., & Scott, D. (2019). *The gig academy: Mapping labor in the neoliberal University.* Johns Hopkins University Press.

Kress, T. M., & Lake, R. (2019). Dreaming of 'nowhere': A co-autoethnographic exploration of Utopia-dystopia in the academy. *Educational Philosophy and Theory, 52*(9), 937–946.

Kress, T. M., & Somma-Coughlin, J. (2022). Mindfully running the course(s): Self-care and mindfulness as praxis. In T. Kress, C. Emdin & R. Lake (Eds.), *Critical pedagogy for healing: Paths beyond "wellness," toward a sould revival of teaching and learning* (pp. 1–58). Bloomsbury Press.

Lipman, P. (2011). *The new political economy of urban education: Neoliberalism, race, and the right to the city.* Routledge.

Lorde, A. (1988). *A burst of light and other essays.* Ixia Press.

Patel, L. (2015). *Decolonizing educational research: From ownership to answerability.* Routledge.

Rhoades, G., & Slaughter, S. (1997). Academc capitalism, managed professionals, and supply- side higher education. *Social Text, 51*, 9–38.

Smyth, J. (2017). *The toxic university: Zombie leadership, academic rock stars and neoliberal ideology.* Springer.

Ward, S. (2012). *Neoliberalism and the global restructuring of knowledge and education.* Routledge.

Dr. Tricia M. Kress is a Professor in Educational Leadership for Diverse Learning Communities at Molloy University in Rockville Centre, NY, USA. She is co-editor of *Paulo Freire's Intellectual Roots* (Bloomsbury, 2013).