Subjectivity (2022) 15:205–222
https://doi.org/10.1057/s41286-022-00141-8

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The affective-discursive 'pruning' of neoliberal selves: introducing the notion of self-othering

Nilima Chowdhury[1]

Accepted: 21 August 2022 / Published online: 27 September 2022

Abstract

In this article, I develop the notion of *self-othering* defined as the affective orchestration of different voices-of-the-self as an important self-constitutive practice of neoliberal subjectivity. I posit that neoliberal subjectification relies on *othering* those facets—skills, attributes, bodily properties—that do not conform to idealised notions of the self. By applying this conceptual lens to empirical material drawn from a qualitative research project on women's identity negotiations, my aim is to show that affect, notably what feels right/wrong, plays a crucial role in aligning the body with neoliberal culture. The affective-discursive approach to analysing the dialogical self I propose is based on a problematisation of neoliberal logic and thus draws attention to the normativity of affect. The analysis of practices of self-othering lays bare how certain voices and ways of being *become unsayable.* However, their presence in people's self-constructions also suggests that they could be re-articulated to formulate a counter ideal.

Keywords Subjectification · Neoliberalism · Affect · Psycho-discursive practice · Dialogical self · Self-othering

Introduction

There exists an extensive body of both conceptual and empirical work on (neoliberal) subjectification, that is, the processes or technologies by which persons transform themselves into subjects (Atasay 2014; Binkley 2011; Davies et al. 2001; Houghton 2019; Papadopoulos 2008; Staunæs 2003). In studies which draw on Foucault's concept of governmentality, analysing the production of neoliberal subjecthood commonly entails an investigation of how the subject positions provided by discourse are taken up, contested and reconstituted by social actors in different social

✉ Nilima Chowdhury
nilima.chowdhury@unisg.ch

[1] Research Institute for Organizational Psychology, University of St. Gallen, Girtannerstrasse 6, 9010 St. Gallen, Switzerland

contexts (Varman et al. 2011). While this research has shed light on the discursive 'conditions of possibility' of neoliberal self-government, more recent work—often following Butler's interest in "how subjection works on and in the psychic life of the subject" (Davies 2006, p. 426)—has begun to investigate its embodied, affective dimension. In this article, I make the case for bringing an affective-discursive lens to empirical work investigating everyday processes of neoliberal subjectification. Drawing on Wetherell's and Edley's (1999) concept of psycho-discursive practices and dialogical self-theory (Hermans et al. 1992), I propose the notion of *self-othering* as an important self-constitutive practice of neoliberal subjectivity. Self-othering refers to the affective orchestration of dialogical self-constructions in reference to an ideal subject. It consists of voices-of-the-self associated with idealised notions of what it means to be a 'good subject' devaluing voices-of-the-self that deviate from this ideal. While such 'positive subject models' (Reckwitz 2006) presumably are always mobilised or referred to within processes of subject formation to some degree, neoliberal culture is characterised by a focus on *improving* the self and thus especially likely to elicit self-othering practices. Furthermore, I posit that it is the affective pulls and pushes which are central to moving the body (in)to acting like good neoliberal subjects. By paying attention to the minutiae of the affective-discursive back-and-forth between different voices or I-positions, it is possible to trace how neoliberal ideals such as constant self-measurement and self-optimisation are practised in everyday identity work. My contribution is thus both methodological and theoretical. As a conceptual tool, the notion of self-othering adds analytic insights into how neoliberal subjecthood is produced within the middle ranges of agency (see also Martinussen and Wetherell 2019). More specifically, it attempts to capture what happens in a cultural context that incites people to constantly evaluate and improve themselves. As a methodological approach, combining an affective-discursive lens with dialogical self-theory provides a framework for the empirical investigation of how neoliberal self-making contains and at the same time reigns in resistant voices.

The article is structured as follows. First, I give an overview of scholarship on theorising and investigating neoliberal subjectification, with a particular focus on work concerning the 'psychic life' (Butler 1997) of neoliberal governmentality. I then discuss literature that theorises and problematises the ideal neoliberal subject followed by an outline of the conceptual apparatus I have developed for investigating the psycho-discursive practice of self-othering. The final two sections introduce the notion of neoliberal self-othering illustrated by an example from my empirical research on women's identity negotiations and discuss its theoretical import and implications.

Investigating the processes of neoliberal subjectification

> [I]ndividuals can be understood as active subjects who construct themselves through processes of self-constitution, recognition and reflection – or what Foucault terms *technologies of the self*. (Houghton 2019, p. 617)

Neoliberal subjectification is based on an active process of self-making. Social actors continuously perform work on themselves—not because they are coerced into doing so by state authorities under threat of violence but because they are drawn *towards* something: happiness, the idea of a good life, the promise of success. According to Rose (1996), this is enabled by perceiving and constructing ourselves as "profoundly psychological beings" (p. 96), that is, as possessing a self or interior consisting of motives, desires, beliefs, emotions etc. From the perspective of the neoliberal state, the 'psychologisation' of life—be it work, intimate relationships or education—renders individuals calculable whilst simultaneously carrying the promise

> to free the self we truly are, to make it possible for us each to make a project of our own lives, to fulfill ourselves through the choices we make, and to shape our existence according to an ethics of autonomy. (Rose 1996, p. 97)

Good lives, within neoliberalism, are defined as happy lives (Binkley 2011) and it is this 'promise of happiness' (Ahmed 2010) which acts as a guidepost for the good neoliberal subject. Thus, being guided by and managing one's own feelings not only promises achieving happiness but is itself a hallmark of the successful neoliberal subject (Teo 2018). It seems, then, that 'listening' to the affective perturbations of the body plays a crucial role in achieving neoliberal subjecthood; but how can affect as part of self-making activities be theorised and empirically investigated? Anthropologists Analiese Richard and Daromir Rudnyckyj (2009, p. 59) employ the concept 'economies of affect' to explore the "types of conduct through which government is realized" and posit that affect is "a medium in which subjects circulate." Their ethnographic research, conducted in Mexico and Indonesia, draws attention to the intersubjective, relational and embodied work affect does in creating economic communities with particular identity slots on offer for their members. Contrary to research on the affective atmospheres or geographies of neoliberalism which tries to capture and analyse affect as something *pre*-discursive and non-human which *affects* human actors by working on their bodies (Anderson 2014, 2016), Richard and Rudnyckyj are interested in the entanglement of, for example, the physical-material aspects of communal spaces, i.e. lighting and temperature of a room, with the discursive such as participants speaking of the necessity of a 'change of heart' for producing solidarity.

Drawing on Butler, Davies' (2006) analysis of the simultaneity of mastery and submission in the process of students achieving subjecthood, too, focuses on the interchanges between students and teachers; for instance, primary school students being positioned as 'naughty boys' by the teacher and subverting while at the same time accepting this categorisation by chanting 'we are the naughty boys' (p. 428). By attending to the emotional struggles involved in gaining mastery and, thus, becoming recognizable subjects, she demonstrates how "meaning systems and bodily affect are both constituted through the conditions of possibility made available within any culture" (p. 435). That which is 'abject', be it a bodily property, a social position or a feeling, must be rendered intelligible through being

spoken and performed within the boundaries of the available meaning frameworks (Ringrose and Walkerdine 2008).

Feminist empirical research on the production of gendered, neoliberal bodies investigates the regulatory effects of affect and feeling. Drawing on Ngai's (2005) concept of 'ugly feelings', Coffey (2020) shows how young women's body concerns reinforce "the centrality of physical appearance in normative feminine subjectivity" (p. 645). In this Spinoza-inspired reading, being worried about their physical appearance restricts the women's capacity to relate—to friends, food, or exercising, for instance—and thus acts as an affective burden. In her work on 'feeling class', Skeggs (2012) allocates a similar role to affect in the process of generating classed subjectivities where negative feelings in anticipation of adverse social judgements and denigration reduce working-class women's capacity to enter certain social spaces. This affective *lack* of entitlement thus not only restricts their mobility but also reproduces classed difference and power relations.

This work convincingly demonstrates that affect plays a crucial role in "cultivating the 'right' kinds of dispositions" (Gill 2017, p. 610) for the successful navigation of neoliberal environments. In the next section, I explore what these 'right kinds of dispositions' are and problematise this idealised psychological 'profile' neoliberal subjects are incited to strive towards.

Problematising the ideal neoliberal subject

For many critics of neoliberal culture, the metaphor of the self as a business enterprise, which is underpinned and fuelled by the notion of human capital (Paltrinieri 2017), has come to stand for the ills of neoliberalism (Bröckling 2015; Kelly 2006; Peters 2001; Scharff 2016). To conceive of oneself as a business, and to thus apply market rationality to how one relates to oneself, is said to produce neoliberal 'subject[s] of value' (Van Doorn 2014) primarily concerned with raising their market value (Elias and Gill 2018; Gill 2008). Numerous studies of such self-making activities have shown that the neoliberal subject works toward this goal through an ongoing effort of quantifying, measuring and ranking her achievements, skills and psychological attributes (Apple 2005; Holmwood 2010; Shore 2008; Sparkes 2007). This 'audit culture' (Shore and Write 1999, 2015) thus produces selves that continuously position themselves in relation to real and idealised others to gauge their value and identify areas for optimisation. Empirical investigations of psychological qualities which are deemed desirable within neoliberal culture sketch the ideal neoliberal subject as having a positive attitude (Cabanas 2018; Ehrenreich 2010; Favaro and Gill 2019), being confident (Dobson and Kanai 2019; Favaro 2017; Gill and Orgad 2017), balanced (Adamson 2017; Rottenberg 2014), flexible (Freeman 2007), and striving for perfection (Curran and Hill 2019; McRobbie 2015). The individualising logic underpinning this ideal has been widely critiqued for turning social problems into personal (psychological) deficits as a result of which political and structural critiques become silenced—or rather unspeakable. Because the narrative of the autonomous, freely choosing, responsible subject who skilfully builds and manages her life is positioned as the only desirable and recognisable 'success story', the

individual has no one but herself to blame if she does not succeed (Horton 2020). Constantly chasing what many critics deem an unachievable ideal produces innumerable 'failing subjects' (Walkerdine 2003, p. 241) propelled by the fear of being left behind in a relentlessly competitive market (Brunila and Valero 2018). While the ability to hide one's injuries and distress has variously been described as a core feature of the ideal neoliberal subject (Chowdhury 2020; Gill 2009; Scharff 2016), recent work purports that weaknesses and emotional struggles *can* be avowed but only if coupled with the active effort to become more resilient (Gill and Donaghue 2016; Joseph, 2013). Negative feelings and distress thus become something that needs to be overcome and 'survived' (Orgad 2009) by way of self-management and self-development. In the following section, I outline a conceptual framework for the empirical investigation of how these demands and expectations are lived out within neoliberalism.

A practice-based approach to investigating neoliberal subjectification

A practice-based approach to theorising and researching subjectivity investigates how socio-cultural norms and moral orders are performed in and through context-specific self-making activities and routines. In making sense of their experiences, to others and to themselves, social actors draw on culturally appropriate discursive resources by means of which individual psychologies are produced. The self takes the form of a "dialogue of voices" (Gregg 1991, p. ixv), a concept akin to subject positions (Davies and Harré 1990). According to dialogical self-theory (Hermans et al. 1992), these voices or I-positions arise in response to situational and relational demands and dynamics and often represent the perspectives of particular social groups/identities (Buitelaar 2006; Hermans 2001). Self-making, whether it is accomplished in dialogues with others or in the form of internal conversations or 'micro-dialogues' (Burkitt 2010), is thus seen to have been learned through (linguistic) socialisation. Billig (1997, p. 156) claims that because "language-in-interaction creates moral imperatives … in learning how to use language the child is learning lessons of repression." Individuals thus habitually 'repress', that is, "prevent the utterance of [particular] themes/accounts/questionings" (p. 152), in interactions with others to avoid social shame—which is said to produce the 'dialogic unconscious'. I would argue that this also applies to self-constructions: While certain self-narrations are morally and socially sanctioned, others are not.

Such voices-of-the-self can be thought to form part of what Wetherell and Edley (1999) have termed *psycho-discursive practices* defined as

> recognizable, conventional, collective and social procedures through which character, self, identity, the psychological, the emotional, motives, intentions and beliefs are performed, formulated and constituted. (Wetherell 2008, p. 80)

Those psycho-discursive practices a person habitually engages in overtime coalesce to make up her 'personal order' (Wetherell 2003) and thus "become a guide for how to go on in the present" (Wetherell 2007, p. 668). Past experience and

socialisation thus sediment into recognisable patterns of self-constitutive activities derived from shared practices but performed and lived out in variegated, idiosyncratic ways. Psycho-discursive practices thus serve as 'local resources' (Taylor 2010) which "acquire additional affect-laden associations through the personal contexts in which they have been encountered" (Taylor 2015, p. 15). Such an approach to analysing identity work acknowledges and takes into account both its situatedness and its psycho-biographical 'rootedness' by conceiving of self-narratives as "repetition[s] and re-cycling[s] of previous versions" (Taylor 2015, p. 15). Contextualised instances of self-constructions (as part of talk-in-interaction), if recurrently found within one participant's sense-making activities as well as across larger data-sets, can thus be seen as indicative, even representative, of contemporary psychologies.

As laid out earlier, neoliberal 'cultures of subjectivity' (Reckwitz 2006) formulate the affective as a key site of the self. Thinking of affect as a kind of practice (Walkerdine and Jimenez 2012) emphasizes its socialised dimension. Wetherell (2012, 2013) has convincingly argued that the attempt to analytically divide human affect from discourse and meaning making is conceptually problematic and empirically flawed not least because communicating the findings of affect research necessarily involves the representational medium of language.

The advantage of employing an affective-discursive lens for exploring how bodily resonances and meaning-making intertwine to produce neoliberal subjects is that it draws attention to the normativity of affect and its embeddedness in power relations. While strong affect, conventionally perceived and formulated as emotions like anger or joy, often manifests in observable ways (blushing, smiling, high-pitched voice), within everyday sense-making activities, it is likely to register as mostly unnoticeable, mild bodily perturbations.

> Affective practice typically implicates a large, non-conscious hinterland of associations, habits, ingrained relational patterns and semiotic links. Clearly, sometimes we are not aware of what we are doing as we do it. (Wetherell 2012, p. 21)

Because affect, for the most part, shapes our actions through habitual, routine engagements with the environment, its import cannot be measured in any straightforward way. Its motivational force often only becomes apparent when it is lacking or rather does not travel in the usual pathways as in the case of severe emotional distress (Ratcliffe 2014). In everyday experience, affect forms an inherent part of the ongoing flow of meaning making activities and thus can be made 'visible' only as part of this entanglement.

In her genealogical work on early psychological concepts and research topics, Blackman (2008) argues that the phenomenon of suggestibility enables the theorisation of affect as a form of 'radical relationality'. Drawing on William James to describe the "boundaries between self and other" as "fragile, porous, and permeable" (p. 39), she claims that we get affectively entangled in relational connections and dynamics "that exhibit a psychic or intensive pull" (p. 41). Similarly, Burkitt (2014) emphasizes the relational communication affect conveys, feelings being the "*patterns of relationships* between self and others" (p. 2, emphasis in the original).

Feelings of chivalry, for example, might prompt a man to offer to carry a woman's heavy suitcase thus reproducing a particular gendered dynamic between them which positions the woman as weak and therefore in need of help. In this way, affect and emotion are implicated in constructing social positions and relations. While the idea that affect is central to producing neoliberal subjecthood, notably through cultivating the 'right kind of dispositions' such as confidence and positivity, is not new, my aim in this article is to show that neoliberal subjectivity entails an affectively fuelled 'pruning' of undesirable voices-of-the-self. That is, neoliberal self-making requires an ongoing evaluation of one's feelings, impulses, desires etc. to gauge whether they are the 'right' ones by reference to an ideal neoliberal subject. I posit that this evaluative-reflexive process which I call self-othering takes the form of an affective-discursive back-and-forth within dialogical self-constructions and can be thought of as a kind of social practice.

Introducing self-othering

The notion of Othering has played an important role in postcolonial and feminist theory as well as in critical writings on mental health/illness (Maccallum 2002). It refers to the process of defining the self in opposition to a discursively constructed, negatively evaluated 'other' (Wilkinson and Kitzinger 1996). The self emerges due to a dualistic gaze which divides the world into 'us' and 'them'. Defining certain groups of people—i.e., non-whites, women, the insane—as inherently flawed, alien and abject is thus said to constitute the basis for identity formation. I define *self-othering* as a psycho-discursive practice (Wetherell and Edley 1999; Wetherell 2008) consisting of I-positions associated with idealised identities/selves—usually associated with dominant groups—devaluing voices-of-the-self that articulate experiences, feelings, thoughts, desires etc. which do not fit this ideal. While this phenomenon of marginalised groups viewing themselves through the eyes of those in power and thus internalising oppression has been discussed by critical scholars, notably in feminist writings (Bartky 1975; LaGuardia-LoBianco 2019) and postcolonial/racism studies (Fanon 1965; Memmi 1965), the psychological processes involved remain under-explored (David et al. 2019).

Neoliberal subjectification is based on conceiving of the self as a malleable stock of capital, a set of social and other skills, psychological attributes and bodily properties which can and should be efficiently managed and constantly optimised. I posit that this work on the self relies on an ongoing process of *othering* those facets—skills, attributes, bodily properties—that do not conform to the image of the ideal neoliberal subject. The aim of these dialogical self-activities is to produce a socially valued psychology—confident, positive, resilient, flexible, etc.—and thus to claim neoliberal subjecthood. As I will go on to show, this process is affectively fuelled and sustained through being guided by what *feels* right/wrong. In previous work on young professional women's experiences of depression, my colleagues and I have demonstrated how 'demanding voices' typically subdue and override voices-of-the-self that articulate emotional pain (Chowdhury, Gibson and Wetherell 2020). The focus of participants' accounts lies on constructing a resilient 'I',

capable of controlling her distress and maintaining high productivity levels, by narrating depression as something unreasonable. Similarly, my analysis of the 'ideal depressed self' (Chowdhury 2020) the women feel pressured to aspire to via active self-management evidences that their self-making activities are shaped in reference to the ideal neoliberal subject as a positive, autonomous and responsible person.

I propose that this kind of dialogical self-construction which revolves around repudiating facets of subjectivity as inappropriate, undesirable, deficient, immature etc. can be defined as a psycho-discursive and thus social practice. This conceptual move brings to the fore the *social* origins of the voices-of-the-self (Richardson et al. 1998) as well as the *habitual* and *learned* nature of the dialogical interplay. As I will go on to show in the next section, the psycho-discursive practice of self-othering displays a particular structure of unfolding dialogical relationships between different voices-of-the-self.

The everyday practice of neoliberal self-othering

The extract I have chosen to illustrate the notion of self-othering comes from a qualitative research project I conducted in Aotearoa New Zealand on how women make sense of workplace struggles, particularly in relation to gender ([…] indicates omissions):

> **Nilima**: Have you ever had any issues in terms of relationships with co-workers or something like that?
> **Rosie**: Yes, there's been times when I've gone or have been upset about something and I maybe needed to vent and I've been able to Sandy [her manager] she's given me advice. And I guess that was when I was a bit younger as well and maybe didn't understand or wasn't used to being spoken to in a certain way or how the dynamics worked in the office. But that hasn't happened in a very long time. I've always been able to go to her
> **Nilima**: Could you just go into a bit more detail about what that might have looked like?
> **Rosie**: It was quite a while ago actually and I was - do you want the full story? (*laughs*)
> **Nilima**: Yes please
> **Rosie**: It's actually quite minor […] I think someone needed some details for staff that we didn't have […] so nothing that huge but I think the person was just quite stressed and spoke to me in a quite not aggressive but it was quite rude and abrupt and I hadn't really experienced that before. You know from family or a friend it's different but from a co-worker I didn't know how to handle it and I was a bit embarrassed because other people had heard. So I didn't really know how to handle it in the moment and then afterwards I got quite upset so Sandy and I went for a walk and we talked about it (*laughs*) and it was all fine in the end. It was just you know people have bad days but I took it quite personal at the time but now you know things like that can happen and I just brush it off. But I think the first few times I wasn't used to it

Nilima: So you didn't raise it with that person?
Rosie: No no I believe it was quite a while ago but I believe Sandy may have but I didn't raise it and it's one of those things and I'm quite an emotional person so it was probably better I didn't raise it cos I would probably just get upset (*laughs*).

Rosie's account of how she felt about and dealt with having been treated in a 'rude and abrupt' manner by a co-worker highlights several key facets of the psycho-discursive practice of self-othering. Her narration is framed by a negative self-evaluation of immaturity or inexperience and over-emotionality ("that was when I was a bit younger as well and maybe didn't understand … how the dynamics worked in the office", "it's actually quite minor", "it's probably better I didn't raise it cos I would probably just get upset"). This voice speaks from a kind of meta-perspective and is temporally located in the here and now reflecting back on this incident and who she was in the past suggesting that she has thought and possibly talked about this experience with others before. It is this voice which sets the tone for our dialogical exchange and invites me to co-construct this occurrence as something 'minor' in response to my question about whether there have been 'issues in terms of relationships with co-workers'. Not only is "the dialogical self … always tied to a particular position in space and time" (Hermans 2001, p. 249), it is also tied to the social context in which it is produced, in this case a research interview. Rosie knows that I will draw conclusions from her account about the workplace culture and is evidently guided by a desire to portray her employer and particularly her manager Sandy in a positive light ('it was all fine in the end'). Thus, the fact that the dominant voice in her account is one that constructs her relational difficulties at work as having happened 'quite a while ago' and not currently affecting her adversely needs to be understood within this context. It is quite possible that the I-positions Rosie moves through to construct her past self, which draw on an affective vocabulary ("I didn't know how to handle it", "I was a bit embarrassed", "I got quite upset") and clearly suggest a strong emotional reaction to having been treated disrespectfully by a co-worker, would have been given more space, had she told this story to a close friend. However, as Kelan (2009) has shown in a study on women's accounts of gender discrimination at work, this tendency to narrate structural and relational issues as individual deficits is a hallmark of neoliberal (and postfeminist) culture. Through the conceptual lens of the dialogical self, such an individualising reading becomes dominant because the voices-of-the-self articulating hurt and frustration are reined in by I-positions which reformulate Rosie's distress as inexperience and a lack of maturity: "I didn't really know how to handle it in the moment", "I took it quite personal at the time but now you know things like that can happen and I just brush it off". This last formulation most clearly evidences the temporal dimension of the dialogical self, where a past (immature) self is juxtaposed with a (mature) present self. The present self is thus able to tell a tale of self-development and becoming more resilient by 'othering' what she constructs as her former/younger self. This I-position clearly references an idealised neoliberal subject who can 'brush off' interpersonal difficulties. At the same time, this perspective or voice 'excuses' her co-worker's behaviour ("the person was quite stressed", "people have bad days"). Thus,

while her colleague is positioned as someone who has the right to let their behaviour towards others be governed by emotion, Rosie's emotional reaction is othered and, therefore, cannot fuel self-defensive actions, i.e., raising the issue. The fact that this double standard likely, at least in part, flows from status differences and power relations within the organisational hierarchy—Rosie holds a lower-level administrative role—remains unspoken. Instead, the dominant voice in Rosie's account narrates her problem as a personality, that is, psychological issue which can only be remedied through self-improvement.

The affect associated with this I-position is harder to pin down than the feelings ascribed to her past self, elicited by the co-worker's disrespectful behaviour which are formulated by means of emotion words such as 'upset' or 'embarrassed'. It is conveyed predominantly by the tone of her voice which I would describe, listening back to the audio recording, as measured and calm, as well as occasional bursts of laughter. She laughs when she asks me if I want 'the full story', then again when she says that she talked to her manager Sandy about the incident and finally at the very end of her account when she explains why she did not raise the issue ('I would probably just get upset'). Thus, the laughter seems to indicate a feeling of embarrassment with regards to her initial strong emotional reaction to this 'minor' incident. Together with her measured and careful manner of speaking, it formulates what might be termed a kind of professional affect which superimposes her past feelings of hurt and upset. The fact that the maintenance of this affectivity is likely an ongoing effort or practice is conveyed by her use of the present tense at the end of her story ('I'm quite an emotional person'). In order to achieve neoliberal subjecthood—here associated with being resilient, able to shrug off negative feelings and deal with upsetting incidents alone without having to bother her manager Sandy—Rosie needs to affective-discursively devaluate (other) and thus reign in her (inappropriately) emotional self.

With the preceding example, I have attempted to show that the psycho-discursive practice of self-othering is a structured, dialogical, affective-discursive interplay between different voices-of-the-self. As I-positions which are associated with neoliberal ideals such as resilience subdue and devalue I-positions that voice deviant feelings or desires—for instance, by relegating them to the past—dominate self-narratives, a positively connotated self-image is constructed. Affects and discursive resources intertwine to author a contextually bound, yet habitually practised, multi-voiced self. The voices originate from numerous past relational exchanges and conversations, both real and imagined, as well as other textual materials (e.g., social media posts) and carry affective evaluations. For example, it is conceivable that Sandy, Rosie's manager, encouraged her to not take the matter to heart, maybe even offering an explanation for her co-worker's behaviour ("stressed", "people have bad days") that would allow her to do so. This interpretation was likely reinforced by other interlocutors, more 'versed' in neoliberal thinking, feeling and behaving in the workplace than Rosie was at the time. The notion of psycho-discursive and thus social practice highlights that self-othering is a *learned* and *continuously reproduced* affective-discursive pattern embedded in neoliberal relationality and materiality. For instance, the spatial organisation of Rosie's workplace as a big, open plan office without visible hierarchical divisions makes it difficult to perceive let alone

articulate power differentials. Similarly, the affective atmosphere permeating office relations which I experienced as light-hearted, 'fun' and upbeat means that strong negative affects appear intrusive and inappropriate thereby silencing critique.

The aim of the preceding illustration of the notion of self-othering was to empirically demonstrate how paying detailed attention to the affective-discursive interplay between different voices of the dialogically produced self can contribute to a better understanding of neoliberal subjectivity. In particular, I posit that neoliberal subjectification entails an ongoing process of evaluating one's feelings, emotional reactions, desires, actions etc. with reference to an ideal neoliberal self and of affective-discursively devaluing and thus reigning in deviant facets. This empirical demonstration is limited in that it focuses on work-related self-othering and could, in future, usefully be extended to other areas, notably the family context which plays a central role in producing neoliberal subjects (Cooper 2017). Furthermore, it does not contain a detailed analysis of the socio-material contexts which elicit and reinforce self-othering such as everyday work practices or the structural organisation of the workplace.

In the concluding section of this article, I discuss the implications of habitual self-othering with a focus on possibilities for resistance.

Concluding discussion

In this article, I developed the notion of self-othering as a form of dialogue between different voices-of-the-self, notably between idealised identities and socio-culturally devalued aspects of the self. More specifically, I argued that self-othering is a central psycho-discursive practice of neoliberal subjecthood and that affect and what feels right/wrong form a crucial element of self-making processes within neoliberalism.

Within common sense understandings, feelings and emotions are frequently constructed as representing our 'true selves', of being authentic expressions of who we are. In line with recent critical re-theorisations of affect (Ahmed 2014; Burkitt 2014; Scheer 2012; Wetherell 2012, 2013), I posit that what feels right/wrong is not our real selves speaking but forms part of neoliberal self-governance. Just like social actors learn which behaviours and discursive strategies are appropriate for different social contexts, socialisation also entails embodying the 'feeling rules' (Hochschild 1983) of society. By acquiring and 'interiorising' particular affective-discursive practices—be it within the family context, in educational sites or at work—individuals become invested in (dominant) socio-cultural norms. This affective attachment can be thought of as a tendency or inclination towards constructing oneself and acting in alignment with societal ideals of what it means to be a good person/citizen. Resistance to being governed by these affective perturbations is hampered by two mechanisms. Because neoliberal subjectivity is enabled and underpinned by a psychologisation of life (Rose 1996) and thus allocates the feeling body a central role in defining who we are, the act of disregarding what 'our feelings tell us' itself goes against neoliberal logic (Teo 2018) and consequently carries the risk of abjection. Matters are further complicated by the fact that in the case of conflictual feelings, there are no hard and fast criteria for adjudicating which affective urge to follow.

However, as I have attempted to show, habitual self-othering within neoliberal contexts is a kind of meta-affective practice which clearly differentiates between 'good' and 'bad' feelings or rather articulates such feelings in reference to the ideal neoliberal subject. In the process of becoming a good neoliberal subject, affective attachments to practices and self-constructions which oppose or deviate from this ideal, such as getting upset at a co-worker's behaviour, are rendered invalid and are thus disconnected from individual agency. In other words, these affective attachments cannot move the body into action because they are perceived and re-narrated as misguided or even pathological.

In the dialogical back-and-forth of self-making, affect and meaning making are inextricably entangled as "affect powers and intertwines with cultural circuits of value" (Wetherell 2012, p. 16), for example, in the form of discursive repertoires and positionings. While this renders the assumption of any straightforward connection between feeling and personal authenticity untenable, it also creates space for resistance. Instead of aiming for authenticity, we can ask about the ethical and political implications of othering certain feelings, wishes and sensations by discursively framing them as invalid or undesirable. As many critics of the positivity and happiness imperative of neoliberalism have pointed out, positioning these psychological qualities as the (only) adequate dispositions is a mechanism for silencing structural and social critique (Ahmed 2010; Berlant 2011; Cabanas 2018; Ehrenreich 2010; Favaro and Gill 2019). Paying attention to the minutiae of everyday self-making by employing an affective-discursive lens, visibilises the *work* involved in producing oneself as a good neoliberal subject. But what exactly is the psychological cost of engaging in self-othering? If we conceive of the self as polyphonic, relational and distributed across different contexts (Bruner 1990), the systematic devaluation of certain (emotionally loaded) I-positions is likely to have adverse consequences. While it is to be expected that different social contexts require different ways of being, the normative tensions which arise between these 'plural selves' (Lahire 2011) can be experienced as painful because they "are products of numerous conflicting relationships, relationships with different degrees of power to approve or disapprove, to give or withhold love" (Layton 1998, p. 16). The act of othering facets of the self which do not conform to the ideal neoliberal subject is enabled by constructing these desires and thoughts as unreasonable, immature, weak etc. The self is treated like a warehouse where the damaged goods need to be weeded out to create a near-perfect selection for the market. But what happens to these 'damaged goods', these unwanted impulses, phantasies, needs? What is the consequence of these voices-of-the-self remaining unheard or ignored?

Billig's (1997) notion of the dialogic unconscious provides a discursive account of the Freudian concept of repression defined as a socio-linguistic activity and thus "a fundamental feature by which orders of power and inequality are routinely reproduced" (2006, p. 23). Such a reading allows for combining ideological analysis with psychological analysis: what is repressed in collective consciousness tends to be repressed in individual consciousness too. While his argument focuses on utterances or voices that are habitually and normatively *not* expressed, both within 'big discourse' as well as interactive discursive activity, self-othering reveals the affective-discursive process of rendering certain ways of being abject. In the case of

neoliberal self-othering, this devaluation is accomplished or fuelled by comparing the self to an ideal neoliberal subject. While Billig's dialogism juxtaposes what is said/sayable aka 'conscious' and not said/not sayable aka 'unconscious', the notion of self-othering lays bare how certain "themes/accounts/questionings" (Billig 1997, p. 152) are invalidated *within* dialogical self-activities. Thus, it is not so much about the distinction between socially acceptable and repressed but between dominant voices (with the 'right' kind affect) and subdued voices (which do not 'feel right'). For instance, feeling upset about a co-worker's rude behaviour can be narrated—but only as part of a tale of self-improvement not as a voice of its own right. This approach to dialogical analysis focuses on the affective relationship between different voices-of-the-self and how they are produced by neoliberal logic.

Udah and Singh (2019) claim that processes of othering, through engendering social exclusion and marginalisation, produce a diminished sense of belonging. If self-othering flows from not being aligned with neoliberal self-making ideals, then it stands to reason that those individuals whose 'personal order' (Wetherell 2003) most strongly deviates from said ideals are more likely to feel that they are deficient or wrong and thus do not belong. The notion of self-othering, defined as a social practice, learned and reproduced in relational exchanges and neoliberal material contexts, opens up the possibility for conceptually linking the experience of inequality and emotional distress (see, for example, Yu 2018). On a political level, self-othering represents a loss of voice (Couldry 2010), or rather, of particular voices, namely those that challenge neoliberal common sense. The notion of voice goes beyond mere discursive positions as it is always embodied and thus materially grounded. Furthermore, 'the experienced voice of a significant other … [enables] the movement from other to self: a meaningful and embodied social form tied to another person' (Bertau 2008, p. 92). In contrast to Billig's (1997) notion of repression which investigates what is absent or unsaid, the analysis of practices of self-othering lays bare how certain voices and ways of being *become unsayable*. It illuminates the ongoing process of excluding particular voices from the societal polyphony. How can this process be resisted? As Lorenzini (2018, p. 161, emphasis in the original) points out,

> the problem is not exactly how to be *more free*, but how to create *alternate forms of subjectivity and life*, that is, alternate ways of establishing relations to oneself and to others, distinct from the kinds of relations encouraged and structured by neoliberal technologies of government.

The voices excluded by neoliberal self-othering practices are tied to such 'alternate forms of subjectivity and life.' For instance, Rosie's othered emotional reaction contains the possibility of *relating* differently to her co-worker, i.e., by getting angry at being treated disrespectfully, which would in turn challenge or disrupt hierarchical forms of organising work and work relations. While becoming aware of the voices we routinely mute, be it at work or in our familial life, can feel liberating, it is not enough to disrupt neoliberalism. Self-othering forms part of a complex web of discourses, structures, institutions and social practices which produce neoliberal subjectivities. Listening closely to these voices and asking ourselves how we would

need to re-organise our current life forms to reintegrate them might be a fruitful first step towards alternate subjectivities.

My contribution to the extant literature on neoliberal subjectification consists of arguing that claiming neoliberal subjecthood requires an affective-discursive 'pruning' of undesirable facets of the self. By combining dialogical-self theory with a practice-based approach to investigating self-making activities, I can empirically demonstrate how neoliberal subjectivity contains *and* reigns in resistance. As a methodological tool, this approach thus highlights the processual nature of being (becoming) a good neoliberal subject where critical voices, feelings, and desires exist but are made irrelevant or inappropriate by dominant voices. By paying attention to the affective dimension of dialogical self-making, the crucial role of the feeling body both as resistor as well as upholder of the status quo becomes clear. At the same time, this analytic lens makes visible possibilities for resistance by drawing attention to the socio-relational origins and context-boundedness of self-othering.

Funding Open access funding provided by University of St.Gallen.

References

Adamson, M. 2017. Postfeminism, neoliberalism and a 'successfully' balanced femininity in celebrity CEO autobiographies. *Gender, Work and Organization* 24 (3): 314–327.

Ahmed, S. 2010. *The promise of happiness*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Ahmed, S. 2014. *Cultural politics of emotion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Anderson, B. 2014. *Encountering affect: Capacities, apparatuses, conditions*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Anderson, B. 2016. Neoliberal affects. *Progress in Human Geography* 40 (6): 734–753.

Apple, M.W. 2005. Education, markets, and an audit culture. *Critical Quarterly* 47 (1–2): 11–29.

Atasay, E. 2014. Neoliberal schooling and subjectivity: Learning to desire lack. *Subjectivity* 7 (3): 288–307.

Bartky, S.L. 1975. Toward a phenomenology of feminist consciousness. *Social Theory and Practice* 3 (4): 425–439.

Bauman, Z. 2000. *Liquid modernity*. Oxford: Polity Press.

Beck, U., and E. Beck-Gernsheim. 2002. *Individualization: Institutional individualism and its social and political consequences*. London: Sage.

Berlant, L.G. 2011. *Cruel optimism*, vol. 226. Durham: Duke University Press.

Bertau, M. C. 2008. Voice: A Pathway to Consciousness as "Social Contact to Oneself". *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science* 42 (1): 92–113. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-007-9041-8.

Billig, M. 1997. The dialogic unconscious: Psychoanalysis, discursive psychology and the nature of repression. *British Journal of Social Psychology* 36 (2): 139–159.

Billig, M. 2006. A psychoanalytic discursive psychology: From consciousness to unconsciousness. *Discourse Studies* 8 (1): 17–24.
Binkley, S. 2011. Happiness, positive psychology and the program of neoliberal governmentality. *Subjectivity* 4 (4): 371–394.
Blackman, L. 2008. Affect, relationality and the problem of personality. *Theory, Culture & Society* 25 (1): 23–47.
Bröckling, U. 2015. *The entrepreneurial self: Fabricating a new type of subject*. London: Sage.
Bruner, J. 1990. *Acts of meaning*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
Brunila, K., and P. Valero. 2018. Anxiety and the making of research(ing) subjects in neoliberal academia. *Subjectivity* 11 (1): 74–89.
Buitelaar, M. 2006. 'I am the ultimate challenge': Accounts of intersectionality in the life story of a well-known daughter of Moroccan migrant workers in the Netherlands. *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13 (3): 259–276.
Burkitt, I. 2010. Dialogues with self and others: Communication, miscommunication, and the dialogical unconscious. *Theory & Psychology* 20 (3): 305–321.
Burkitt, I. 2014. *Emotions and social relations*. London: Sage.
Butler, J. 1997. *The psychic life of power: Theories in subjection*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Cabanas, E. 2018. Positive psychology and the legitimation of individualism. *Theory & Psychology* 28 (1): 3–19.
Chowdhury, N. 2020. Practicing the Ideal Depressed Self: Young Professional Women's Accounts of Managing Depression. *Qualitative Health Research* 30 (9): 1349–1361. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732320917929
Chowdhury, N., K. Gibson, and M. Wetherell. 2020. Polyphonies of depression: The relationship between voices-of-the-self in young professional women aka 'top girls'. *Health: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Social Study of Health Illness and Medicine* 24 (6): 773–790. https://doi.org/10.1177/1363459319846934
Coffey, J. 2020. Ugly feelings: Gender, neoliberalism and the affective relations of body concerns. *Journal of Gender Studies* 29 (6): 636–650.
Cooper, M. 2017. *Family values: Between neoliberalism and social conservatism*. New York: Zone Books.
Couldry, N. 2010. *Why voice matters: Culture and politics after neoliberalism*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.
Curran, T., and A.P. Hill. 2019. Perfectionism is increasing over time: A meta-analysis of birth cohort differences from 1989 to 2016. *Psychological Bulletin* 145 (4): 410–429.
David, E.J.R., T.M. Schroeder, and J. Fernandez. 2019. Internalized racism: A systematic review of the psychological literature on racism's most insidious consequence. *Journal of Social Issues* 75 (4): 1057–1086.
Davies, B. 2006. Subjectification: The relevance of Butler's analysis for education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 27 (4): 425–438.
Davies, B., and R. Harré. 1990. Positioning: The discursive production of selves. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 20 (1): 43–63.
Davies, B., and E.B. Petersen. 2005a. Intellectual workers (un)doing neoliberal discourse. *International Journal of Critical Psychology* 13 (1): 32–54.
Davies, B., and E.B. Petersen. 2005b. Neo-liberal discourse in the academy: The forestalling of (collective) resistance. *Learning & Teaching in the Social Sciences* 2 (2): 77–98.
Davies, B., and R.Harré. 1990. Positioning: The Discursive Production of Selves. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 20(1):43–63. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5914.1990.tb00174.x
Davies, B., S. Dormer, S. Gannon, C. Laws, S. Rocco, H.L. Taguchi, and H. McCann. 2001. Becoming schoolgirls: The ambivalent project of subjectification. *Gender and Education* 13 (2): 167–182.
Dobson, A.S., and A. Kanai. 2019. From "can-do" girls to insecure and angry: Affective dissonances in young women's post-recessional media. *Feminist Media Studies* 19 (6): 771–786.
Ehrenreich, B. 2010. *Smile or die: How positive thinking fooled America and the world*. London: Granta.
Elias, A.S., and R. Gill. 2018. Beauty surveillance: The digital self-monitoring cultures of neoliberalism. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 21 (1): 59–77.
Fanon, F. 1965. *The wretched of the earth*. New York: Grove.
Favaro, L. (ed.). 2017. 'Just be confident girls!': Confidence chic as neoliberal governmentality. In *Aesthetic Labour*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 283–299.

Favaro, L., and R. Gill. 2019. 'Pump up the positivity': neoliberalism, affective entrepreneurship and the victimhood/agency debate. In *Re-writing women as victims: From theory to practice*, ed. M.J.G. Fuentes, S.N. Puente, and E.G. Nicolau, 153–166. London: Routledge.
Foucault, M. 1980. *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972–1977*. New York: Pantheon Books.
Freeman, C. 2007. The "reputation" of neoliberalism. *American Ethnologist* 34 (2): 252–267.
Gill, R. 2008. Culture and subjectivity in neoliberal and postfeminist times. *Subjectivity* 25 (1): 432–445.
Gill, R. 2009. Breaking the silence: The hidden injuries of neo-liberal academia. In *Secrecy and silence in the research process: Feminist reflections*, ed. R. Ryan-Flood and R. Gill, 228–244. London: Routledge.
Gill, R. 2017. The affective, cultural and psychic life of postfeminism: A postfeminist sensibility 10 years on. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 20 (6): 606–626.
Gill, R., and N. Donaghue. 2016. Resilience, apps and reluctant individualism: Technologies of self in the neoliberal academy. *Women's Studies International Forum* 54: 91–99.
Gill, R., and S. Orgad. 2017. Confidence culture and the remaking of feminism. *New Formations* 91 (91): 16–34.
Gregg, G.S. 1991. *Self-representation: Life narrative studies in identity and ideology*. New York: Greenwood Press.
Hermans, H.J. 2001. Conceptions of self and identity: Toward a dialogical view. *International Journal of Education and Religion* 2 (1): 43–62.
Hermans, H.J., H.J. Kempen, and R.J. Van Loon. 1992. The dialogical self: Beyond individualism and rationalism. *American Psychologist* 47 (1): 23–33.
Hochschild, A. 1983. *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Holmwood, J. 2010. Sociology's misfortune: Disciplines, interdisciplinarity and the impact of audit culture. *The British Journal of Sociology* 61 (4): 639–658.
Horton, J. 2020. Failure failure failure failure failure failure: Six types of failure within the neoliberal academy. *Emotion, Space and Society* 35: 100672.
Houghton, E. 2019. Becoming a neoliberal subject. *Ephemera* 19 (3): 615–626.
Joseph, J. 2013. Resilience as embedded neoliberalism: A governmentality approach. *Resilience* 1 (1): 38–52.
Kelan, E. K. 2009. Gender fatigue: The ideological dilemma of gender neutrality and discrimination in organizations. *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences / Revue Canadienne des Sciences de l'Administration* 26 (3): 197–210. https://doi.org/10.1002/cjas.106.
Kelly, P. 2006. The entrepreneurial self and 'youth at-risk': Exploring the horizons of identity in the twenty-first century. *Journal of Youth Studies* 9 (1): 17–32.
LaGuardia-LoBianco, A.W. 2019. Understanding self-injury through body shame and internalized oppression. *Philosophy, Psychiatry and Psychology* 26 (4): 295–313.
Lahire, B. 2011. *The plural actor*. Oxford: Polity Press.
Layton, L. 1998. *Who's that girl? Who's that boy? Clinical practice meets postmodern gender theory*. Northvale: J. Aronson.
Lorenzini, D. 2018. Governmentality, subjectivity, and the neoliberal form of life. *Journal for Cultural Research* 22 (2): 154–166.
MacCallum, E.J. 2002. Othering and psychiatric nursing. *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing* 9 (1): 87–94.
Martinussen, M., and M. Wetherell. 2019. Affect practice and contingency: critical discursive psychology and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. *Subjectivity* 12 (2): 101–116. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41286-019-00071-y
McRobbie, A. 2015. Notes on the perfect: Competitive femininity in neoliberal times. *Australian Feminist Studies* 30 (83): 3–20.
Memmi, A. 1965. *The colonizer and the colonized*. Boston: Beacon.
Ngai, S. 2005. *Ugly feelings*, vol. 6. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
Paltrinieri, L. 2017. Managing subjectivity: Neoliberalism, human capital and empowerment. *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences* 10 (4): 459–471.
Orgad, S. 2009. The survivor in contemporary culture and public discourse: A genealogy. *The Communication Review* 12 (2): 132–161.
Papadopoulos, D. 2008. In the ruins of representation: Identity, individuality, subjectification. *British Journal of Social Psychology* 47 (1): 139–165.

Peters, M. 2001. Education, enterprise culture and the entrepreneurial self: A Foucauldian perspective. *The Journal of Educational Enquiry* 2 (2): 58–71.
Ratcliffe, M. 2014. The phenomenology of depression and the nature of empathy. *Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy* 17 (2): 269–280.
Reckwitz, A. 2006. *Das hybride Subjekt: Eine Theorie der Subjektkulturen von der bürgerlichen Moderne zur Postmoderne*. Weilerswist: Velbrück Wissenschaft.
Richard, A., and D. Rudnyckyj. 2009. Economies of affect. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15 (1): 57–77.
Richardson, F. C., A. Rogers, and J. McCarroll. 1998. Toward a Dialogical Self. *American Behavioral Scientist* 41 (4): 496–515. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764298041004004.
Ringrose, J., and V. Walkerdine. 2008. Regulating the abject: The TV make-over as site of neo-liberal reinvention toward bourgeois femininity. *Feminist Media Studies* 8 (3): 227–246.
Rose, N. 1996. *Inventing our selves: Psychology, power, and personhood*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Rottenberg, C. 2014. Happiness and the liberal imagination: How superwoman became balanced. *Feminist Studies* 40 (1): 144–168.
Scharff, C. 2016. The psychic life of neoliberalism: Mapping the contours of entrepreneurial subjectivity. *Theory, Culture & Society* 33 (6): 107–122.
Scheer, M. 2012. Are emotions a kind of practice (and is that what makes them have a history)? A Bourdieuian approach to understanding emotion. *History and Theory* 51 (2): 193–220.
Shore, C. 2008. Audit culture and illiberal governance: Universities and the politics of accountability. *Anthropological Theory* 8 (3): 278–298.
Shore, C., and S. Wright. 1999. Audit culture and anthropology: Neo-liberalism in British higher education. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 5 (4): 557–575.
Shore, C., and S. Wright. 2015. Governing by numbers: Audit culture, rankings and the new world order. *Social Anthropology* 23 (1): 22–28.
Skeggs, B. 2012. Feeling class. In *The Wiley-Blackwell companion to sociology*, ed. G. Ritzer, 269–286. Malden: Wiley.
Sparkes, A.C. 2007. Embodiment, academics, and the audit culture: A story seeking consideration. *Qualitative Research* 7 (4): 521–550.
Staunæs, D. 2003. Where have all the subjects gone? Bringing together the concepts of intersectionality and subjectification. *NORA: Nordic Journal of Women's Studies* 11 (2): 101–110.
Taylor, S. 2010. *Narratives of identity and place*. Hove: Routledge.
Taylor, S. 2015. Discursive and psychosocial? Theorising a complex contemporary subject. *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 12 (1): 8–21.
Teo, T. 2018. Homo neoliberalus: From personality to forms of subjectivity. *Theory & Psychology* 28 (5): 581–599.
Udah, H., and P. Singh. 2019. Identity, othering and belonging: Toward an understanding of difference and the experiences of African immigrants to Australia. *Social Identities* 25 (6): 843–859.
Van Doorn, N. 2014. The neoliberal subject of value: Measuring human capital in information economies. *Cultural Politics* 10 (3): 354–375.
Varman, R., B. Saha, and P. Skålén. 2011. Market subjectivity and neoliberal governmentality in higher education. *Journal of Marketing Management* 27 (11–12): 1163–1185.
Walkerdine, V. 2003. Reclassifying upward mobility: Femininity and the neo-liberal subject. *Gender and Education* 15 (3): 237–248.
Walkerdine, V., and L. Jimenez. 2012. *Gender, work and community after de-industrialisation: A psychosocial approach to affect*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Wetherell, M. 2003. Paranoia, ambivalence and discursive practices: concepts of position and positioning in psychoanalysis and discursive psychology. In *The self and others: Positioning individuals and groups in personal, political and cultural contexts*, ed. R. Harre and F. Moghaddam, 99–121. New York: Praeger/Greenwood Publishers.
Wetherell, M. 2007. A step too far: Discursive psychology, linguistic ethnography and questions of identity. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 11 (5): 661–681.
Wetherell, M. 2008. Subjectivity or psycho-discursive practices? *Investigating Complex Intersectional Identities. Subjectivity* 22 (1): 73–81.
Wetherell, M. 2012. *Affect and emotion: A new social science understanding*. London: Sage.
Wetherell, M. 2013. Affect and discourse—what's the problem? From affect as excess to affective/discursive practice. *Subjectivity* 6 (4): 349–368.

Wetherell, M., and N. Edley. 1999. Negotiating hegemonic masculinity: Imaginary positions and psycho-discursive practices. *Feminism and Psychology* 9 (3): 335–356.
Wilkinson, S., and C. Kitzinger, eds. 1996. *Representing the other: A feminism and psychology reader*. London: Sage.
Yu, S. 2018. Uncovering the hidden impacts of inequality on mental health: A global study. *Translational Psychiatry* 8: 1–10.

Nilima Chowdhury interdisciplinary, critical qualitative research focuses on the affective-discursive production of gendered subjectivities within neoliberal contexts. She is particularly interested in theorising and investigating the intersections between wider socio-cultural norms and the intrapsychic, notably experiences of emotional distress, and feels strongly about integrating a social justice perspective into her research.