Remembering and honouring Rosemary Crompton

Precarity, inequality, austerity:
Work, Class and Gender in Neoliberalism
Rosalind Gill
Employment and the family
2006

Restructuring Gender Relations and Employment
1999

Women and work in modern Britain
1997

Changing Forms of Employment
1996

Class and Stratification
1993

White-collar Proletariat: Deskilling and Gender in Clerical Work
1984

Economy and class structure
1977

Workers' Attitudes and Technology
1972
Rosemary Crompton’s work

• Long-standing interest in inequalities
  • Refused to separate
    • Gender from class
    • Work from household/family
    • Productive from reproductive labour

• prescient about proletarianization
• her work speaks to debates about the gig economy
• breakdown of stable distinctions between production and consumption
• e.g. ‘playbour’, ‘produsage’, ‘prosumption’
What Would Rosemary Think? (WWRT?)
Rosemary’s legendary collegiality
Thinking with other feminist scholars

• Bev Skeggs
• Imogen Tyler
• Ursula Huws
• Sara de Benedictis
• Kim Allen
• Jo Littler
• Tracey Jensen
• Sara Ahmed
• Shani Orgad
• Helen Wood
• Heather Mendick
• Rachel O’Neill

• Laura Harvey
• Angela McRobbie
• Anita Biressi
• Heather Nunn
• Elisabeth Kelan
• Christina Scharff
• Bridget Conor
• Stephanie Taylor
• Aisha Ahmad
• Melissa Gregg
• Anna Bull
Neoliberalism plus Austerity: thinking about the ‘current conjuncture’ or social formation

• ‘a mode of political and economic rationality characterized by privatization, deregulation and a rolling back and withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provision’

• ‘market exchange as an ethic in itself- capable of guiding all human action’

• But also insinuated itself into ‘nooks and crannies of everyday life’ (Jo Littler, 2017)

• And into subjectivity – it has a ‘psychic life’ (Christina Scharff, 2015)

• And even into our emotions- delimiting what it is appropriate to feel

• ‘Neoliberal feeling rules’ (with Akane Kanai, after Arlie Hochschild)
Austerity neoliberalism

- Tracey Jensen, and Kim Allen et al: ‘the objectives of “austerity” align neatly with those of neoliberalism: to discipline labour, to reduce the role of the state and to redistribute income, wealth and power from labour to capital’
- Massively increasing inequalities- changes to welfare provisions like bedroom tax and cuts to disability and sickness benefits
- Cut backs to services and corresponding increases in homelessness, food bank usage and many other stark indicators of deprivation
- But austerity not just about economics but also site of a cultural or ideological battle imposing neoliberal values at the heart of society (e.g Biressi & Nunn, 2013)
‘Aspiration nation’ and ‘May-ritocracy’

• ‘What I want to see is a more socially mobile Britain, where no matter where you come from, you can get to the top in television, the judiciary, armed services, politics...You’ve got to get out there and find people, win them over, get them to raise aspirations and get them to think that they can get all the way to the top’ (David Cameron, 2015)

• ‘I want Britain to be the world’s great meritocracy – a country where everyone has a fair chance to go as far as their talent and their hard work will allow’ (Theresa May, 2016)

• Notion of meritocracy is underpinning idea of (austerity) neoliberalism (Jo Littler)

• Aspiration becomes ‘a rhetorical device that seeks to whitewash a neoliberal economic and political project and the staggering inequalities it produces’ (Tyler & Bennett, 2015:6)

• Structural inequalities are reformulated as personal failures
The turn to ‘character’ and positive psychology

• Education, employability and leadership training all focus on developing the qualities and dispositions needed to survive and flourish in employment: grit, resilience, confidence, positive mental attitude, etc etc

• Resilience is neoliberal trait par excellence for surviving austerity or unliveable working lives- stress resilience, military resilience, burnout resilience, resilience against compassion fatigue or caring too much

• ‘Good subjects will “survive and thrive in any situation”, they will “achieve balance" across several insecure and part-time jobs, they have “overcome life's hurdles" such as facing retirement without a pension to speak of, and just “bounce back" from whatever life throws, whether it be cuts to benefits, wage freezes or global economic meltdown’ (Mark Neocleous)
Positive Penguins
By HR INSIDE PTY LTD
Open iTunes to buy and download apps.

Description
** PREVIOUS TOP 10 PAID EDUCATION and APP WINNER Apps For All Challenge 20. 
Positive Penguins app is a resilience-building app for all children.

HR INSIDE PTY LTD Web Site › Positive Penguins Support › Application Licer

What's New in Version 2.0
Added a simple 5-minute guided meditation for children to learn to sit, relax and come into their heads.

£0.49
Category: Education
Updated: 19 February 2016
Version: 2.0
Size: 31.9 MB
Language: English
Developer: HR INSIDE PTY LTD
© Positive Penguins (2013)
Rated 4+
Made For Ages 9–11

Compatibility: Requires iOS 6.0 or later. Compatible with iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch.

Customer Ratings

Screenshots
The cult of confidence: wherever there is talk of gender inequality, the word confidence won’t be far behind
What do they argue?

- Both are warm, affirmative, feminist books- absolutely committed to women’s equality, and YET...
- They entirely EXCULPATE institutions, structures, histories, culture
- They BLAME women for their poor position in the workplace relative to men
- They treat the INJURIES or damage caused by social injustice as superficial
- They see the SOLUTION to inequality in women’s psychological strategies
Amy Cuddy’s power poses

Your body language shapes who you are

TEDGlobal 2012 • 21:02 • Filmed Jun 2012

49 subtitle languages
View interactive transcript

Share this Idea

Facebook LinkedIn Twitter

40,684,231 Total Views
Just Not Sorry

Just Not Sorry -- the Gmail Plug-in

Plan for the future

Dear Mr. President,

I'm just writing to say that I'm sorry for taking so long to get back to you. I think I have a plan for the strategic direction of the company in the coming year. I'm no expert but...

--

Steve Brudz
Lead Consultant @ Cyrus Innovation
Agile Software Development and Consulting

Using "Sorry" frequently undermines your gravitas and makes you appear unfit for leadership. -- Sylvia Ann Hewlett

We're Just NOT Sorry! Let's build awareness of how we qualify our message and diminish our voice. Inspired by the writings of Tara Mohr and others, this Chrome Extension for Gmail and Inbox will warn you when you use words or phrases that undermine your message. Commonly used qualifying words and phrases are underlined for you to choose how you want to address them. Hover over the underline to see additional information about how using the phrase is perceived. (Don't worry, the underline won't get sent as part of your email if you decide...
Confidence apps

- **Self Confidence...**
  - Lifestyle
  - "What are affirmations? An affirmation is a statement or a set of..."

- **Get Self Confidence...**
  - Lifestyle
  - "One of the Most Professional Hypnosis Apps I’ve seen" ??? No...

- **Self-Confidence...**
  - Lifestyle
  - "Develop your self-confidence in all areas of your life with this..."

- **Self Confidence...**
  - Lifestyle
  - "Powerful hypnotherapy recording to increase self confidence...."
Role of media and policy in creating ‘anti-welfare common-sense’ (Tracey Jensen)

- Entanglement of media and policy discourses - fictional characters such as ‘Vicky Pollard’ cited in political speeches about welfare dependency, and reality TV show stars also invoked

- Every time TV or politician ‘names the crisis of social immobility as one of parental indulgence, failure to set boundaries, moral laxity and disciplinary incompetence’ we see the responsibility for class inequalities placed on the individual (Jensen)

- TV and political rhetoric ‘is diverting the blame for structural inequality onto personal, individualized failure’ (Bev Skeggs and Helen Wood, 2011)

- Key role of media in helping to win ‘consent’ for excoriating cutbacks
Poverty porn?
Reality TV and ‘game-docs’

Episode 1

BBC TWO HD, 7:00 P.M., MON 22 AUG
1 HR [S] [HD]

20 volunteers test their skills against some of the jobs in Britain's low-wage sector. In this episode, they do our dirty work - cleaning hot dog stands, sluicing through garbage, pulling a lorry with a hydraulic lift.
The job aspirations of young people

1986
1. Teacher
2. Scientist
3. Footballer

2016
1. Writer
2. YouTube sensation
3. Artist
4. Photographer
5. Fashion Designer
The reality for most is a little different
From ‘White Collar Proletariat’ to ‘No Collar Precariat’ (Andrew Ross/ Guy Standing)

• Temporary, precarious employment becoming the norm – sociologists have long been discussing The Brave New World of Work (Ulrich Beck)

• 1.1 million people work in the ‘gig economy’ (ie get their work from online platform- roughly equivalent to the staff of the NHS)

• Many, many more also work gigs or freelance

• 910,000 people are on zero hours contracts

• “The bedrock of security for most people – nine to five employment – is disappearing” (RSA, 2017)
Contrasting views of work in austerity Britain
When your boss is an algorithm...

• UberEats initially offered to pay £20/ hour (June 2016)
• By August they changed the pay formula entirely:
  • £3.30 per delivery, plus £1/mile, minus a 25% “uber service fee”, plus a £5 “trip reward”
• Then one day “the couriers woke up to find the app had been updated again and the trip reward reduced to £4- £3 on weekday lunch times”
• Wildcat strikes of 2016 in London: Workers without a workplace, striking against a company that does not employ them. They are managed not by people but by an algorithm that communicates with them via their smartphones. And what they are rebelling against is an app update.
• Numerous other issues: response times, driver times, feedback scores, etc= “Taylorism on steroids”

  • Source: O’Connor, 2016
Issues include: low pay, unclear employment status, job insecurity, discrimination
Cultural workers

• Unpaid internships, but also often working for free throughout careers (in ‘reputation economy’)
• Long hours, and ’bulimic’ work patterns (Pratt, 2007)
• ‘Crunch times’ becoming normalised, plus ‘always on’ culture (Gregg, 2010)
• Stark class, gender and racial inequalities masked by a myth of “creative workplaces” as egalitarian and bohemian
• For large proportion of cultural workers, endemic precariousness-working multiple jobs, never sure where the next job is coming from
YOUR F**KING LIFE?

NEVER OWN A HOUSE IN
5
DO YOU THINK YOU WILL
PROMISED DONE OFF?

HAS THE CARROT YOU WERE
AT NIGHT?
THE DAY AND SLEEPLESS
3
ARE YOU ANXIOUS DURING
YOU DON'T FEEL FREE?
2
DO YOU FREELANCE BUT
3 MONTHS?
JOB YOU WILL BE DOING IN
1
ARE YOU UNSURE WHAT

PWB
Schizophrenic selfhood

• Called on to be entrepreneurs, to promote yourself, to see every opportunity as opportunity for work

• Yet hard to imagine the future – “hanging on by my fingernails”

• “I will be sipping cocktails by my swimming pool in the Carribean” versus “I don’t know if I can carry on. I might have to get out and train to become a teacher or something”
The growing middle class precariat

• *Casualization and the academic precariat*
• Q: How many PhDs does it take to change a lightbulb?
  • A: One but 500 applied.
  • A: None because changing a lightbulb is a job and there are no jobs for PhDs currently.
  • A: None. The broken bulb has tenure (ref: Twitter)

• More than 50% of academics now on short term contracts- only the hospitality industry has more ‘casuals’ (source: The Guardian).
• Hourly paid teaching contracts (TAs and VLs) sit alongside the ‘official’ temporary contracts
The (not so) hidden injuries of casualization

• Disposable staff and ‘hope labour’ (Kuehn & Corrigan, 2013) ‘autobiographies of uncertainty’ (Morgan & Nelligan, 2017)

• Intergenerational inequalities: younger academics likely to be 30% worse off over career (Goddard, 2014)

• And it’s not just casualization that’s an issue: long hours, audit cultures, serious stress and ill-health (letters I have received)

• ‘It is no longer a (thinly veiled) secret that in contemporary universities many scholars, both junior and senior, are struggling – struggling to manage their workloads; struggling to keep up with insistent institutional demands to produce more, better and faster; struggling to reconcile professional demands with family responsibilities and personal interests; and struggling to maintain their physical and psychological health and emotional wellbeing’. (Maria do Mar Pereira, 2016:100)
WWRT?

• Profound individualization
• Growing focus on psychologization
• Intensification of work
• Devastating increase in inequality
• Casualization
• Erosion/near collapse of welfare system
  • What would ‘good work’ look like?
  • How can we value ‘care’?
  • How do we avoid the ‘race to the bottom’?
  • What does solidarity look like in an age of precarity?