

Pastoral Care in Education

An International Journal of Personal, Social and Emotional Development

ISSN: 0264-3944 (Print) 1468-0122 (Online) Journal homepage: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rped20>

From collusion to collective compassion: putting heart back into the neoliberal university

Carol Mutch & Jennifer Tatebe

To cite this article: Carol Mutch & Jennifer Tatebe (2017) From collusion to collective compassion: putting heart back into the neoliberal university, *Pastoral Care in Education*, 35:3, 221-234, DOI: [10.1080/02643944.2017.1363814](https://doi.org/10.1080/02643944.2017.1363814)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02643944.2017.1363814>



Published online: 01 Sep 2017.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 62



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



From collusion to collective compassion: putting *heart* back into the neoliberal university

Carol Mutch and Jennifer Tatebe

School of Critical Studies in Education, Faculty of Education and Social Work, University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand

ABSTRACT

As neoliberal ideology has come to dominate higher education, the roles and relationships of managers, academics and students have changed radically. This article outlines ways in which neoliberalism and its companion ideology, neoconservatism, have impacted on higher education through a move to individualism, managerialism, measurement and accountability. While the context for this article is New Zealand, the experiences will resonate with academics worldwide. Using a conceptual framework highlighting conscious, unwitting and coercive complicity, the authors analyse their experiences of teaching in the neoliberal university. They discuss three themes to emerge from their findings: (a) universities as instruments of neoliberalism; (b) academics as managed subjects; and (c) students as entitled consumers. They conclude by offering examples of ways to resist the competitive and individualising regime by creating a culture of care and compassion.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 3 July 2017
Accepted 24 July 2017

KEYWORDS

Neoliberalism;
neoconservatism; higher
education; universities;
New Zealand

Introduction

In this article, two academics discuss their experiences of being confronted by the harsh realities the neoliberal university and the ways in which they sought to find solace for themselves and their colleagues through a culture of collective compassion. The impetus for this article came from experiences they shared when co-teaching a course. The events left them emotionally bruised and questioning their beliefs about teaching and learning. In order to make sense of what had happened, they wrote individual reflections and began to analyse and theorise their experiences. While that course was the catalyst for them both beginning to reconceptualise what it meant to be an academic in the *heartless* world of the neoliberal university, they continued to observe and record further experiences. In order to not *lose heart*, they each found ways to create pockets of resistance. In this article, they first outline the impact of neoliberalism on higher education

and in New Zealand in particular. They follow with annotated selections from their own personal reflections, which are discussed using Shore and Davidson's (2014) descriptors of *conscious*, *unwitting* and *coercive* complicity, before sharing some ways in which they have each tried to put *heart* back into their work and that of their colleagues by creating safe havens of collective compassion.

Neoliberalism as a thought collective

Neoliberalism has come to have a multiplicity of contradictory definitions. Dean (2014, p. 150) claims it is an 'overblown notion' while Shore and Davidson (2014) state it is 'neither uniform nor homogenous' (p. 13). Ball (2012) notes that it is, 'one of those terms which is so widely and so loosely used it is in danger of becoming a detached signifier' (p. 18). Cupples and Pawson (2012) caution that it is important not 'to reify neoliberalism as something monolithic, inevitable and stable' (p. 16) as it 'reinvents itself in startlingly new and innovative ways' (p. 20). In order to employ the term usefully in this article, we use Dean's (2014) notion of neoliberalism as a 'thought collective' (p. 150) where individuals share ideas within a common framework. 'Such a view,' he claims, 'allows for a multiplicity of viewpoints and different national and transnational developments, borrowings and mutations' (p. 151).

Within these multiplicities, we describe neoliberalism as an ideology, that is, a comprehensive world view where the underpinning assumptions and discourses are portrayed authoritatively yet unquestioningly. It is one of the pair of influential economic and political ideologies (the other being neoconservatism) that came to prominence in the market-driven reforms of the 1980s and 1990s. Understanding the two complementary ideologies helps to make sense of the contradictory nature of many subsequent education policies. Neoliberal ideology has as some of its key tenets: favouring individualism over collectivism, encouraging competition, deregulation and privatisation, and allowing market forces to shape government decision-making. Neoconservatism, on the other hand, favours traditional values, hierarchy, authoritarianism, accountability and excellence (Mutch, 2003; Shore, 2007). These two ideologies have led to both an opening up of educational policies, such as the promotion of school choice, charter schools and vouchers yet the tightening of control through national curricula, standards and testing.

In our review of the literature, few writers acknowledged the influence of neoconservatism. Most subsumed neoconservative ideas under the term neoliberalism. To lessen confusion, we will use the term neoliberalism as shorthand for both sets of ideas, except where we wish to make a particular point. We will employ the concept of a 'thought collective' (Dean, 2014) to portray neoliberalism as a range of loosely connected ideas brought together to explain a trend in education policy and decision-making towards individualism, competitiveness, commodification and managerialism.

Neoliberalism and higher education

Using discourses, such as an ‘economic emergency’ (Morrissey, 2013, p. 800), the ‘tentacles of the market’ (Roberts, 2007, p. 350) infiltrated higher education moving from a focus on public good to private investment. There was a push for public disinvestment in higher education and calls for accountability, efficiency and excellence. Hierarchical and corporate forms of leadership were instituted. Vice Chancellors became CEOs. A divide appeared between managers and academics. Unions were weakened and labour was casualised. Academics became entrenched in an audit culture with its ‘strategic planning, performance indicators, quality assurance measures and academic audits’ (Olssen & Peters, 2005, p. 313) and ‘perpetual measurement and evaluation of teaching “outputs” and research “inputs”’ (Shore & Davidson, 2014, p. 354). Teaching, research and service became commodities that could be measured and compared. The role of the scholar, and of intellectual debate, was devalued. Mountz et al. (2015) also noted the changing conception of time where, ‘The neoliberal university requires high productivity in compressed timeframes’ (p. 1236). The compression of time, combined with the audit culture, was ‘designed to elicit compliance without resistance’ (p. 1242).

The two threads of neoliberalism and neoconservatism can be clearly seen in the higher education literature. Neoliberal ideology is reflected in a focus on the university as a corporate enterprise where individual customers (students) make choices of products (course, qualifications or credentials) in order to secure their own and the country’s economic security. Because the state provides less financial support to the business of higher education, the products need to be of high quality to compete in a free market environment. This requires efficient and cost-effective production through the commodification of academic labour. Universities develop a brand and market their niche products, in order to attract fee-paying international students. Research turns its focus to innovation, entrepreneurialism and commercialisation through patents and consultancies. The neoconservative thread can be seen in the mantra of excellence and the building of hierarchies of authoritative management needed to oversee the complex layers of a low-trust auditing culture (Ball & Olmedo, 2013; Cupples & Pawson, 2012; Grey & Scott, 2012; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Shore, 2007; Shore & Davidson, 2014; Smeltzer & Hearn, 2015). Caught in this system like a mice on a treadmill, are academics with increasing workloads, larger classes, more administrative requirements and less time to undertake the kind of scholarship they thought they had signed up to.

Neoliberalism and higher education in New Zealand

There appear to be three distinct phases in the establishment of a neoliberal culture in higher education in New Zealand (Grey & Scott, 2012; Larner & Le Heron, 2005; Shore, 2007). From 1984 to 1989, the Labour government began the review of state funding of different social, health and educational enterprises. The review of

higher education (Hawke, 1998) recommended radical changes to the sector. The 1989 Education Amendment Act put some of these policies in motion, signalling the second phase from 1989 to 1996 in which corporatisation, commodification, competition and marketisation were to increase. The third phase, from 1997 to the present, has seen the rise of accountability measures, internationalisation and commercialisation. Two key mechanisms for control of the behaviour of academics were the establishment of the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) in 2003, under whose umbrella came all tertiary institutions, including universities, and the implementation of the first national research assessment exercise.

Many New Zealand scholars see the research assessment exercise, known as the Performance Based Research Fund (PBRF), by which the government measures the quality of research conducted in tertiary sector and apportions funding to the institutions, as the epitome of neoliberalism in higher education (Cupples & Pawson, 2012; Larner & Le Heron, 2005; Lewis & Ross, 2011; Middleton, 2008; Roberts, 2013; Shore, 2010; Strathdee, 2011; Waitere, Wright, Tremaine, Brown, & Pausé, 2011). It requires every research-active academic in a tertiary institution to submit a portfolio of research activities to a panel of peers every six years. Academics time their publication cycles to maximise the possibility of a higher grading. The ratings given are: A (international esteem), B (national standing), C (research-active) or R (not-research active) and serve to 'signify or reify' academics' identity (Middleton, 2008, p. 134). It becomes a time of pressure from management to secure the highest grading possible in order that the institution gains the most funding from the government's fixed pool.

Collusion as a conceptual framework

The impetus for this article came from the two authors, C (a senior academic) and J (a newly appointed academic) as we reflected on a course that we co-taught. It was a compulsory course on diversity and social justice for a teacher preparation programme. Our enjoyment at teaching material we were passionate about, our anticipation of working together and our hope to make difference to the lives of children and young people that would be taught by these soon-to-be-teachers was short-lived. The full-weight of the neoliberal university turned our enjoyment to disbelief, our anticipation to anxiety and our hope to despair. We had taught this course content before. It was designed to get students to recognise the privileges and opportunities they had experienced that might be different from the children they would teach in the lower socio-economic school communities that the programme was preparing them for. Despite tentative beginnings in prior courses, we had generally been able to move students along the continuum from denial of issues of privilege to recognition and acceptance. With the new cohort, we trod an equally cautious path, knowing that the material was confronting to some of them. Instead, this cohort was led by a group of self-appointed leaders who refused to believe that poverty or racism existed in our country. When we gave them a quiz

to pre-test their knowledge of such topics, they accused us of setting them up to fail. When we tried to get particular students to share their ideas or experiences, they were cowed into silence by the others. When we entered the lecture room one day, a large group of students physically turned their backs on us and refused to participate. No matter what we tried, the dominant group aggressively resisted the content and treated us, and their fellow students, with contempt. Unhappy with their grades, they punished us with low ratings on the course evaluation, to the point that our course was 'red-flagged' and we were required to explain to the Deputy Vice Chancellor. At the time, C wrote:

When did it happen? When did I lose my touch? What has happened that after twenty years in tertiary education I can't make that connection or light that spark? Never, ever, even with the toughest intermediate school class I taught did students turn their backs to me as I entered the classroom. Where has this sense of entitlement come from? When did students come to think that their individual rights were more important than showing respect for the content of the course, their fellow students and lecturers?

One way to deal with our experience was to write about it – individually to deal with our emotions, then collaboratively to make sense of it conceptually and theoretically. Over the next year as we touched base with each other, we kept coming back to that basic qualitative research question, 'what's really going on here?' In our teaching of another course on philosophy and politics in education, we recognised that many of the forces at play in wider government policy also played out in our workplace – the neoliberal university. From a thematic analysis of our reflections, three themes emerged: (a) universities as instruments of neoliberalism; (b) academics as managed subjects; and (c) students as entitled consumers.

As we reviewed the literature, we found Shore and Davidson's (2014) framework of *conscious*, *unwitting* and *coercive* complicity and immediately saw the resonance between our themes and these ideas. Shore and Davidson (2014) claim, 'Many academics express concern that despite their intellectual critiques of neoliberalism, when neoliberal practices reach their own workplace, they can find themselves as accomplices in various ways.' From their research they devised three descriptors – *conscious complicity*, which pertains especially to those who willingly buy in to the subjugation and subjectification of their colleagues; *unwitting complicity* which describes those who fail to see 'the structural violence and webs of domination in which they are suspended' (p. 14); and *coercive complicity*, which is where academics either collude in order to strengthen their resistance or where the system puts their employment or advancement at risk if they dare show any act of defiance or resistance.

Collusion in the neoliberal university

We created a diagrammatic representation of how these themes and ideas correspond and intersect with each other in relation to our experience (Figure 1). Our analysed reflections revealed many illustrative examples of *conscious complicity*,

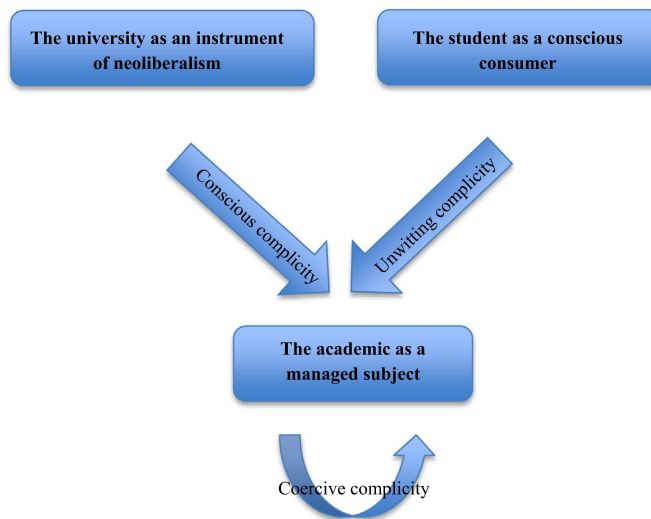


Figure 1. Collusion in the neoliberal university. Source: Adapted from Shore and Davidson (2014).

especially from those in management or administrative positions; *unwitting complicity* from well-intentioned lower managers, colleagues and many of our students; and *coercive complicity* as we, and our colleagues, found ways to attempt to push back against numerous structural changes and technological innovations and to create instead a more caring and compassionate culture in our school.

What follows are our annotated reflections, under the headings of our three themes, noting examples of relevant complicity.

The university as an instrument of neoliberalism

The literature review revealed ‘a significant shift away from the nation-state, trust-based, model of the university’ (Larner & Le Heron, 2005, p. 843). One of J’s reflections resonates with issues raised by other writers:

Our work as academics at our large research-intensive university is influenced by neoliberal policies in multiple ways. Most often, neoliberal influences are discussed within a research context. The stern warning of ‘publish or perish’ reflects the harsh realities of performativity and accountability where research is reduced to measurable publication ‘outputs’. This emphasis on publishing cultivates a culture of competition and individualism. The outcomes are bleak.

Olszen and Peters (2005) echo J’s concerns. They describe education under neoliberalism, ‘as an input-output model which can be reduced to an economic production system’ (p. 324). Even though J mentions the focus on research, it is not the slow scholarly research that Mountz et al. (2015) promote, which ‘requires time to think, to write, read, research, analyse [and] edit.’ It is a model that forces academics to think in the short term (Larner & Le Heron, 2005) and to view every project with an eye to how many outputs it might generate. Roberts (2007) notes,

'The complex, multilayered time-consuming, often uneven process of research becomes invisibilized, trivialized, or distorted ...' (p. 358). J continues her reflections on the status of research over teaching and service.

Publications have emerged as the 'currency' of research and academic life creating a three-tiered hierarchy where research is firmly perched in the prized position. Meanwhile, teaching and service hold significantly lower status due to their distant placement as second and third rungs on the ladder. In my own experience as an early career researcher I have consistently received the same advice from well-intentioned seasoned academics: 'Focus on your research, and just get through your teaching. What is clear is what really "counts".'

The advice J received from well-meaning academics reinforces the primacy of research. Teaching is viewed as a chore and service is not even discussed. It is unclear as to whether the advice givers are *consciously* colluding with the performativity culture or *unwittingly* steering J to focus on her outputs so she can secure her continuation and promotion. Either way, the manipulation of the system is clear. Academics are 'maintaining fabrications' and 'playing the ratings game' (Shore, 2007, p. 28). J also notes the tensions and contradictions in the neoliberal university trying to please its multiple masters:

On the other hand, competition and individualism are, by definition, at odds the values of collaboration and cooperation. At our institution, this tension is visible in new initiatives for international collaboration, which has fuelled internal competition for research status, funding and recognition. This outcome is somewhat unsurprising as promotion and tenure policies promote international recognition of international research and collaborative projects.

Shore (2007) calls this the 'schizophrenic university' in which institutions are expected to undertake a range of different, often conflicting, functions. Grant (2017) describes the situation as 'fractured institutional cultures that make incoherent claims on their subjects' (pp. 138–139).

One of C's reflections after attending a PBRF training session highlights her frustration at the way in which her colleagues were buying in to the research outputs game – focusing on what would count rather than what would matter:

No you cannot enact your symbolic violence on my head and on my heart
 Like Maya Angelou, 'still I rise'
 No you can't turn me away from my passion and my joy
 With your promises and your lies
 I can resist your accountability, performativity and mistrust
 By looking deep into your eyes
 You can measure, you can count, you can sort and you can rank
 But I know your electronic spies
 Call it neoliberalism, marketization or NPM
 Oh, yes, we know – we are wise
 To your sham of excellence, efficiency and effectiveness
 No more, no more – I cut those ties!

The PBRF process highlights both *conscious complicity*, as some academics with an eye for promotion take on the role of policing their colleague's PBRF

compliance, and *unwitting complicity* as other academics do not, or are unwilling to, acknowledge the inequities sets up by a culture of and self-promotion and competition. Cupples and Pawson (2012) note the way in which the hierarchical audit culture requires academics to monitor each other: 'Workplace collegiality and responsibility are threatened by the way in which the top-down surveillance of the PBRF is matched by lateral surveillance as we not only begin to responsibly monitor ourselves but also our peers and colleagues' (p. 18). They claim this is not an accidental outcome but 'an essential and necessary component of governing at a distance' (p. 18).

The academic as a managed subject

Shifts in research culture in the neoliberal university, especially mechanisms, such as PBRF, demonstrate the way in which the instruments of neoliberalism manage academics. What J notes is that this management pervades all aspects of academic life. Here, she discusses teaching:

Neoliberalism's influence also extends to teaching. On the surface, teaching is arguably less competitive than research. We are seeing the development of competition and individualism encroaching into the teaching sphere at our institution. Teaching awards, although still of lower status than major research grants, are awarded to individuals through a competitive application process. Teaching awards, like research grants and other forms of recognition also count for promotion and tenure. Thus, everyday teaching practices have not escaped the impact of neoliberalism.

In order to promote excellence and innovation, our university has many ways of recognising these values through awards, fellowships and funding grants. With scarce resources, however, these awards become highly competitive and discourage sharing and collaboration in teaching. As J describes:

The individualistic and competitive face of teaching can also be experienced by what I view as 'hoarding' reflective of a larger anti-collaborative stance of some colleagues. I refer to hoarding as the process of withholding teaching resources and a general lack of collaboration.

Surveillance of performance can also be seen in the way that all courses at our university have gone to an online student management system where the number of logins, length of time spent on the site, quality of notes provided to students, timeliness of marking and depth of feedback can be monitored by course directors, heads of department and deans. Yet, this material does not always remain private. Online evaluations provide students with complete anonymity but are able to be read by all members of a course teaching team:

I present a cautionary tale of online evaluations. In my view the anonymity of online evaluations has led us into uncharted territory by blurring the lines between personal and professional feedback platforms. We saw a sharp increase in blunt and unprofessional feedback on ourselves as people rather than on our professional and teaching practice. This kind of personal rather than professional feedback is recorded and viewable to all course teaching staff making it an uncomfortable and arguably less collaborative space.

Rather than increasing openness, these auditing mechanisms encourage 'lateral surveillance' (Cupples & Pawson, 2012) and *conscious complicity* as academics monitor each other, and *coercive complicity* as the academics under surveillance fear for their reputations, positions and futures. Roberts (2013) claims, 'Such a regime is one of terror (p. 5).'

Another surveillance mechanism is the move to a standard teaching hours formula in our faculty. Each aspect of a course on which an academic teaches, tutors or marks is given an hour equivalent. This also applies to research supervision, practicum observation and course preparation, coordination and the like. Academics are expected to achieve the median of 720 teaching hours per annum. This has changed the way in which teaching is seen. It becomes another commodification game to be played. C notes:

Whereas in the past, an academic willingly taught a guest lecture, took a class when a colleague was sick or helped out with exam marking when needed, many academics now expect to be rewarded with workload hours for such tasks. And in a culture of scarce resources, the hours are then taken off the academic whose class it should have been. Would the system be so heartless that someone would have to make up workload hours when they returned from their dialysis or chemotherapy!

This formula also means that if you choose to co-teach, you are only given half the workload – another mechanism that reduces collaboration and increases competition. Mountz et al. (2015) state that this 'counting culture leads to intense insidious forms of institutional sharing, subject-making, and self surveillance' (p. 1222).

The student as an entitled consumer

In Grant's (2017) research, she found that students in the neoliberal university have a heightened need for instant gratification, an unwillingness to feel uncertainty, fear or risk, and 'an impatience, even fury towards that which is not useful' (p. 151). J gives an example:

Neoliberal policies have also ushered in a new wave of students to the university who have embraced their role as consumers. In our co-taught course, we observed students demanding high grades. When dissatisfied with their grades they reminded us that they were 'paying thousands of dollars' for their education.

Grant sees that neoliberal university as leading to 'collisions' between the student and the teacher as they are each managed in different ways by the 'affective economy of consumerism.' J gives another example:

At the end of the course we witnessed used book sale price fixing. We observed one student lead a pricing discussion, which resulted in an agreed price for the cost recovery process of selling their used text books to future course cohorts. A better example of competition, choice and consumerism could not have been found.

How else might they be expected to behave when the 'ontological heart of neoliberalism is the idea of self-interested, utility maximising individual who is

expected to make continuous consumer-style choices in a competitive world' (Roberts, 2013, p. 18)? Students' self-interest is reflected in the way they used anonymous evaluations as a tool for disciplining academics, as J explains:

... students took the liberty of providing detailed and often confronting feedback that often was neither helpful nor constructive. As consumers of the course, they felt entitled to do so and, at several times, enquired about when they could evaluate the course, signalling a shift in power to the students as consumers of knowledge.

J also notes how the student-consumers were not willing to engage in a curriculum that might challenge their assumptions or cause them discomfort. In this case, it was getting students to recognise the social capital that they might have accumulated and how different their experiences could be from the children they might teach.

We acknowledge that issues of ethnicity, class, culture, gender, sexuality, ability and privilege are challenging topics. This group resisted learning about these concepts in different ways. They questioned our knowledge and expertise as experienced teachers and academics who research, teach and practice in these fields; they queried the course material by drawing on exceptional cases in attempts to refute the material being presented; they refused to fully participate in some course activities; and finally, they turned their backs on us and refused to respond to our questions.

As noted earlier, this experience left us emotionally bruised and we worried about our future teaching of the course. In the end, we decided that our belief in teaching as an ethical activity must prevail as J explains:

We began to question the possibility of altering the course material to be less confronting. We quickly realised that to do so would call into question our ethical and moral duty to prepare future teachers for educational contexts that would involve working with children, young people and adults across this spectrum of identities. One positive outcome of this experience was the confirmation of our values and commitment to teaching for social justice. This work is important to us and for the teaching profession. It would be a disservice to the profession to reduce our work to appease students' sense of self and entitlement.

Another entitlement issue we faced was the length students would go to for a higher grade. Here C shares her experience:

I received an email titled, 'Begging for a higher grade.' The email soon turned to emotional blackmail as I was told I would be held responsible for the student not being able to meet the entry requirements for the programme he wanted to get into. I replied politely explaining why the assignment did not meet the criteria for a higher grade. Several days later, the student appeared in the corridor thrusting the assignment in my face and asking me to look at it again. I explained I was on my way to a meeting. Today I received another email insisting on an appointment. What has happened to our students? Why are they under so much pressure to succeed – and to succeed with nothing less than an A?

Grant comments, 'Whoever that kind of imagined student might have been s/ he has been displaced by the student-as-customer who has the right above all else, to be *satisfied*' (p. 150). Roberts, however, sympathises with students as, 'they have come to be seen as disposable servants of late capitalist economies. They

have built up huge debts seeking the gains promised to them by higher education and they have been let down (2013, p. 21).'

From collusion to compassion

The literature on neoliberalism in higher education is not all bleak. Some writers see that mechanisms such as PBRF have increased the number of research outputs and improved course and degree completions (Grey & Scott, 2012; Smart, 2009). Grey and Scott caution, however, that such improvements come at a cost, such as placing a higher priority on research rather than on teaching. They also claim that there is a 'hollowing out' (p. 9) of the non-academic aims of higher education, such as acting as critic and conscience, nurturing good citizens and facilitating broader social and environmental goals.

Other writers see that within the system are inbuilt flaws or spaces that allow for resistance. Cupples and Pawson (2012) suggest the increasingly top-heavy management regime and 'dispersal of power leads to a fragmented, disjointed and messy outcome' (p. 20) where we can begin to reinterpret and exploit the ambiguities in the system. They suggest that we use, for example, the PBRF process as place to critique neoliberalism and the PBRF regime itself. Waitere et al. (2011, p. 214) did just this:

We also found that creating a writing group helped develop a sense of community within an increasingly fragmented, individual and individualising environment. Not only were we speaking back, but we were acting back as a community of practice through this cooperative inquiry. We were aware of the irony of producing a PBRF output in the same moment in time and space as we worked to highlight its pitfalls.

Mountz et al. (2015) recommend a slowing down as, 'a commitment to good scholarship, teaching and service and a collective feminist ethics of care' (p. 1236). Grant (2017) encourages us to use affective interactions, such as delight or humour that turn us towards each other rather than anger or shame that turn us away from each other.

The lessons from our co-teaching experience and other encounters with the neoliberal university have in the end strengthened our resolve to resist being coerced into compliance. What follows are some of the strategies we adopted, individually and collectively to put *heart* back into the neoliberal university.

We are committed to co-teaching where possible, even if we are not fully recompensed in workload hours. As an experienced academic co-teaching with a newer academic, we demonstrated it was possible to work in reciprocal ways. This is only one example of *coercive collusion* against the system. As we planned our first course together, we used a Dropbox file in which we shared all our resources. We planned the course to highlight each person's strengths and interests so we could learn from each other. During the course, we modelled supportive co-teaching. We took turns at taking the lead while the other chipped in a conversational manner. C, as the experienced teacher, supported J's development by modelling different

approaches. J was able to try these and receive non-threatening feedback. When we faced student resistance we supported each other to debrief and plan a way forward. We shared the marking equally and used the opportunity to moderate each other's grades. We resisted the individualistic and competitive expectations promoted by current workload and evaluation models and made our teaching *heartfelt* and *heartening*. J writes:

... we truly appreciated having the support of another colleague to help moving forward. We supported each other by listening to each other's experiences, reflecting on our teaching as a team, and by identifying the best way forward with a challenging group facing issues that were confronting to them. Teaching alone would have been an isolating and more devastating experience.

J went on to become the coordinator of a large compulsory undergraduate course and continued working in *heartening* ways, for example, holding planning and 'drop-in' sessions for the course lecturers and tutors or providing refreshments as part of collaborative moderation and exam marking days. When she became chair of the school's teaching and learning committee, she instituted an award to be given to a team of teachers who best exemplified working in affirming and supportive ways. As Mountz et al. (2015, p. 1238) state, 'Care work is work. It is not self-indulgent; it is radical and necessary.'

C, as a Head of School, held a position of relative power. It was important for her to model 'practices of alternative subjectivity, self-identity, ethics, leadership and academic citizenship' (Morrissey, 2013, p. 806). She chose to model *coercive complicity* in very overt ways – advocating for academics in Senior Leadership meetings, supporting academics to resist *heartless* policies – encouraging them to write submissions, represent the school's view on committees, find ways to subvert harmful practices and, at times, refuse to comply. Ball and Olmedo (2013, p. 88) call this 'acting irresponsibly' through resistance, flight or deception in order to reverse the emotional damage of neoliberalism. One example of colluding coercively to resist neoliberal subjectification was to view PBRF preparation differently. We could not avoid PBRF – it was a clear example of the institution's *conscious* and *coercive* tactics to make us comply. Instead, we held an off-site school retreat where participants could collaboratively and supportively help each other prepare for PBRF. C was determined that we would make it about celebrating who we were and what we valued. Retreat participants would interview their colleagues and help them write their justificatory statements, review and select their most relevant outputs. All this was done in a restful bush setting with a roaring fire, amidst good food and laughter. We would not let the PBRF determine our worth. Our worth would be recognised by each other in our culture of care and compassion.

In conclusion, the evidence is clear that the move to a neoliberal university has had many hurtful unintended consequences. It has pitted managers against academics and academics against each other. In order to reverse the harm, we need to resist by colluding to demonstrate alternative conceptions of what it means to be an academic. Grey and Scott (2012, p. 13) remind us that, 'Fatigue, apathy and

fear can be overcome if we fight collectively'. We suggest that we start by putting *heartfulness* not *hurtfulness* at the centre of our work to build a culture of care and compassion. Finally, reflecting on our personal experience, J concludes, 'I think we both learned even in the smallest of forms, resistance through compassion is powerful.'

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

References

- Ball, S. (2012). Performativity, commodification and commitment: An I-Spy guide to the neoliberal university. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 60, 17–28. doi:10.1080/00071005.2011.650940
- Ball, S., & Olmedo, A. (2013). Care of the self, resistance and subjectivity under neoliberal governmentalities. *Critical Studies in Education*, 54, 85–96. doi:10.1080/17508487.2013.740678
- Cupples, J., & Pawson, E. (2012). Giving account of oneself: The PBRF and the neoliberal university. *New Zealand Geographer*, 68, 14–23. doi:10.1111/j.1745-7939.2012.01217
- Dean, M. (2014). Rethinking neoliberalism. *Journal of Sociology*, 50, 150–163. doi:10.1177/1440783312442256
- Grant, B. (2017). On delivering the consumer-citizen: New pedagogies and their affective economies. In C. Shore & S. Wright (Eds.), *Death of the public university? Uncertain futures for higher education in the knowledge economy*. New York & Oxford: Bergahn Books.
- Grey, S., & Scott, J. (2012, February 22–23). When the government steers the market: Implications for the New Zealand tertiary education system. *A working paper for NTEU's Future of Higher Education Conference*, University of Sydney, Sydney.
- Hawke, G. (1998). *Report of the working group on post compulsory education and training*. Wellington: Department of Education.
- Larner, W., & Le Heron, R. (2005). Neo-liberalizing spaces and subjectivities: Reinventing New Zealand universities. *Organization*, 12, 843–862. doi:10.1177/1350508405057473
- Lewis, J., & Ross, S. (2011). Research funding systems in Australia, New Zealand and the UK: Policy settings and perceived effects. *The Policy Press*, 39, 379–398. doi:10.1332/030557310X520270
- Middleton, S. (2008). Research assessment as a pedagogic device: Bernstein, professional identity and education in New Zealand. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 29, 125–136. doi:10.1080/01425690701835152
- Morrissey, J. (2013). Governing the academic subject: Foucault, governmentality and the performing university. *Oxford Review of Education*, 39, 797–810. doi:10.1080/03054985.2013.860891
- Mountz, A., Bonds, A., Mansfield, B., Loyd, J., Hyndman, J., Walton-Roberts, M., ... Curran, W. (2015). For slow scholarship: A feminist politics of resistance through collective action in the neoliberal university. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 14, 1235–1259.
- Mutch, C. (2003). One context, two outcomes: A comparison of Te Whariki and the New Zealand Curriculum Framework. In J. Nuttall (Ed.), *Weaving Te Whariki: Aotearoa New Zealand's early childhood document in theory and practice*. Wellington: NZCER Press.
- Olssen, M., & Peters, M. (2005). Neoliberalism, higher education and the knowledge economy: From the free market to knowledge capitalism. *Journal of Education Policy*, 20, 313–345.
- Roberts, P. (2007). Neoliberalism, performativity and research. *Review of Education*, 23, 349–365. doi:10.1007/s11159-007-9049-9

- Roberts, P. (2013). Academic dystopia: Knowledge, performativity and tertiary education. *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, 35, 27–43.
- Shore, C. (2007). 'After neoliberalism'? *The reform of New Zealand's university system* (Working Papers on University Reform, No. 6). Copenhagen/Auckland: Department of Educational Anthropology, Danish University of Education/University of Auckland.
- Shore, C. (2010). Beyond the multiversity: Neoliberalism and the rise of the schizophrenic university. *Social Anthropology*, 18, 15–29. doi:10.1111/j.1469-8676.2009.00094.x
- Shore, C., & Davidson, M. (2014). Beyond collusion and resistance: Academic-management relations within the neoliberal university. *Learning and Teaching*, 7, 12–28. doi:10.3167/latiss.2014.070102
- Smart, W. (2009). The impact of the performance-based research fund on the research productivity of New Zealand universities. *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, 34, 136–151.
- Smeltzer, S., & Hearn, A. (2015). Student rights in an age of austerity? 'Security', freedom of expression and the neoliberal university. *Social Movement Studies*, 14, 352–358. doi:10.1080/14742837.2014.945077
- Strathdee, R. (2011). Educational reform, inequality and the structure of higher education in New Zealand. *Journal of Education and Work*, 24, 27–48. doi:10.1080/13639080.2010.528380
- Waitere, H., Wright, J., Tremaine, M., Brown, S., & Pausé, C. (2011). Choosing whether to resist or reinforce the new managerialism: The impact of performance-based research funding on academic identity. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 30, 205–217. doi:10.1080/07