

'No, I'm not OK': disrupting 'psy' discourses of university mental health awareness campaigns

Author: Sue Saltmarsh, Australian Catholic University

Happiness, emotional labour and mental-health awareness campaigns

The unmet mental health needs of university students is widely considered to be a serious public health concern (Hyun, Quinn & Madon, 2007; Eisenberg, Gollust, Golberstein & Hefner, 2007; Stanley & Manthorpe, 2002), with research showing that university students' self-rated emotional health has been steadily declining in recent years (Eagan, Stolzenberg, Ramirez, Aragon, Suchard & Hurtado, 2014). That notwithstanding, access to and up-take of mental health services among university students have been shown to be relatively poor, with lack of perceived needs and lack of awareness about the availability of services among the predictors for whether students actually access them (Eisenberg, Golberstein & Gollust, 2007). Perhaps not surprisingly, mental health awareness campaigns have therefore become a regular feature of campus life at Australian universities, and include events and activities associated with initiatives such as World Mental Health Day, National Mental Health Awareness Week, RUOK? Day, Stress Less Day, and the *beyondblue* National Roadshow.

Mental health awareness promotions of this sort are held at universities around the country, with outreach to campus communities being seen as an important way of providing information to potentially vulnerable populations and reaching significant numbers of young adults (Eisenberg, Gollust, Golberstein & Hefner, 2007), as well as a way of reducing social stigmas and taboos regarding mental health issues (Dunne & Somerset, 2004). As noted by the World Health Organisation, 'Well-planned public awareness and education campaigns can reduce stigma and discrimination, increase the use of mental health services, and bring mental and physical health care closer to each other' (World Health Organisation[WHO], 2001: 111). These types of campaigns thus attempt to raise collective awareness of mental health issues, to provide information about and promote supports and services that are available, to encourage sufferers of depression, anxiety or other mental health issues to seek

support, and to remind others of the importance of being aware of and sensitive to the mental health needs of those around them.

Despite their potential benefits in providing information and changing public attitudes (WHO, 2001), in this chapter I consider how mental health awareness campaigns can also be understood as sites for the reiteration of norms of self-governance and the discursive regulation of university students and staff. Utilising recent examples of events immediately preceding, during and following one such campaign, I query the ways that 'psy' discourses of mental health coalesce with 'emotional labour' (Hochschild, 1983/2012) and 'affective economies' (Ahmed, 2004) to construct notions of happiness, well-being and work-life balance as desirable and attainable. In these discourses, mental ill-health is invoked as an avoidable or manageable malaise, the containment of which is constituted as both devolved responsibility and celebratory occasion. Mental well-being, on the other hand, is constituted as a form of happiness that is simultaneously an unmarked, albeit obligatory duty, as well as a protection against personal crises, relational instability and institutional risk. I argue that these types of university-based mental health awareness campaigns operate as a technology for harnessing mental health toward organisational gains, meanwhile ignoring or over-simplifying the systemic and social pressures which place the well-being of students and university workers under significant pressure.

The activities associated with campus-based mental-health campaigns can take a number of forms, ranging from seminars, workshops and professional development sessions for university staff, to hosting barbeques, crafts, games and other social events for students on campus. Posters and promotional materials, the wearing of brightly coloured themed t-shirts and participation in social activities lend an air of informality and fun to heightening awareness of what are generally recognised as serious issues. Together, these festive elements contribute a sense of what literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin refers to as *carnavalesque*, through which established social norms and hierarchies are temporarily disrupted and queried.

We have already said that during carnival there is a temporary suspension of all hierarchic distinctions and barriers among men and of certain norms and prohibitions of usual life. We added that an ideal and at the same time real type of communication, impossible in ordinary life, is established. (Bakhtin, 1941: 15-16)

Bakhtin's notion of carnival as a means of challenging the status quo theorises not only the political nature of humour and playfulness, but emphasises as well their communicative and transformative potential. In this sense, the carnivalesque is dialogic, and its effectiveness relies in part on the playful recognition and suspension of everyday norms, rather than on binaries set in strict opposition (Hall, 2009). Importantly for the purposes of this chapter, the festive atmosphere of some mental health awareness campaigns provides an interesting example of the way that suspending certain norms and prohibitions might be potentially productive – offering, for example, informal approaches to learning about and attending to issues around which there are numerous cultural silences, stigmas and taboos (Eisenberg, Downs, Golberstein, Zivin, 2009; WHO, 2001; Wade, 2002).

In another sense, however, such approaches can be seen as trivialising the serious nature of mental health issues, or as offering a panacea that rests on the premise that greater awareness (irrespective of whether adequate resources and supports are available) can by itself signify or effect a positive change in attitudes and experiences. While research with university students has shown that students themselves tend to regard mental health promotions positively (Dunne & Somerset, 2004), carnivalesque approaches promoting mental health awareness also speak to Sara Ahmed's (2007) contention regarding the popularity of self-help and therapeutic discourses available through a vast array of books, courses, instructions, therapies, philosophies and practices that promise happiness as an effect or outcome. Happiness as a goal or object of desire is not only an industry, it is also, for Ahmed, a site of consensus around which truths about that which is good, valuable and meaningful are maintained. Thus the 'promise of happiness' (Ahmed, 2007; 2010) undertakes particular kinds of subjective and cultural work that insinuates happiness into shared meanings about the 'good life'.

For Ahmed, this cultural work is profoundly political, such that 'Ideas of happiness involve social as well as moral distinctions insofar as they rest on ideas of who is worthy as well as capable of being happy "in the right way"' (2007: 11) These distinctions and the power relations they demarcate circulate within 'affective economies' (Ahmed, 2004: 44) that 'refer to relations, practices, and discourses about emotions, how they are constructed, and how they constantly change' (Zembylas, 2009: 98). Thus emotion is understood neither in terms of internal structures and characteristics residing within the individual, nor as socially constructed, but rather as political, as something that is 'circulated, and one of the effects of this circulation is that some bodies, objects, or events are endowed with particular emotional meanings and values' (Zembylas, 2009: 98). The circulation of emotions within affective economies produces differentiations between individuals and groups, shaping and producing effects on their encounters with others. Affective economies, as Zembylas points out, 'may establish, assert, subvert or reinforce power differentials, because affectivity separates us from others as well as connects us to others; this is why it functions as an economy' (2009: 101).

Within this framing, happiness circulates as a kind of currency, becoming indicative of subjective meaning and worth that accrues to those who are seen to be oriented toward, striving for and achieving that which is 'good', or as Ahmed puts it, 'happiness is located in certain places, as being what you get for being a certain kind of being' (Ahmed, 2007: 11). In the context of universities, this cultural politics of emotion is played out in the power relations between institutions, staff and students. For the audiences and participants of mental health awareness campaigns, there is an obligation to be/become aware of and to make adequate use of mental health needs, issues, support services, and so on, as a means of making oneself and/or others happy (or at the very least, to improve the chances of being happy) through greater mental well-being. In this sense:

Happiness becomes a measure of progress – a performance indicator – as well as a criterion for making decisions about resources. The presumption here is that the happier you are, the better you are doing, whether the 'you' is an individual or collective actor (Ahmed, 2007: 8).

Importantly, this ‘happiness duty’ (Ahmed, 2010: 7) as it occurs within places of work and study can be understood not just as an individual or social obligation, but also as a form of emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983/2012), in which emotions are mobilised, managed and discursively mediated ‘in ways that meet the performative needs of post-modern governmentalities, another element in the commodification of everyday life of post-modern subjectivities’ (Blackmore, 2009: 112). This has particular implications for female academics and students, for as feminist scholars of higher education (Blackmore, 2014; Koster, 2011; Morley, 2005; Leathwood & Read, 2008; Ward, K., & Wolf-Wendel, 2004) have pointed out, as in other educational settings, ‘women do much of the emotional labour in the academy’ (Blackmore, 2014: 89).

This emotional labour is both subjective and intersubjective, involving work on the self as well as managing the affective dimensions of pedagogic, administrative, leadership and collegial relations. In one sense, we might think of mental health awareness campaigns as one of so many organisational technologies that ‘attempt to eliminate the effects of affect’ (Wallace, 2009: 174) – promising or offering to relieve the affective dimensions of academic study and work. However, hosting campus-based awareness campaigns can also overlook and invisibilise institutional factors that contribute significantly to the wellbeing or otherwise of those who make up university communities. Such campaigns can also be understood as another ‘cog’ in what Eva Bendix Petersen and Zsusa Millei refer to as the panoptic psy-gaze of the initial teacher education machine that ‘works to internalize rules, to rehabilitate, to ensure (self) surveillance into so-called private aspects of life and to relay power efficiently.’ (Petersen & Millei, 2015:130) In the case, the psy-gaze of campus-based mental health awareness campaigns locates responsibility for mental wellbeing within the individual and the affective relations between those who are co-located within the institutional setting. Emotion thus ‘operates as a constitutively reciprocal component in the interaction/transaction of the *individual* and the *social*’ (Zembylas, 2009: 99, original emphasis), with the institution’s role confined to raising awareness of its detrimental effects among those individuals expected to manage and address it. For those individuals, then, an affective

investment in the wellbeing of self and other is thus also an investment of emotional labour, a contribution to '*institutional therapy culture*' (Ahmed, 2012:47, original emphasis).

Such cultures, and institutional attempts to manage them through strategies such as work-life balance policies, wellbeing seminars, and mental health awareness campaigns, can be understood as attempts on the part of institutions to minimise the risks posed by 'the risky humanity' (Saltmarsh & Randell-Moon, 2015) of students and staff. Risky humanity refers in part to embodied subjects who are always/already at risk of illness or injury, and whose physical, emotional and mental health and wellbeing can be negatively affected by the conditions within which they study and work. But it also refers to the risks posed *by* embodied subjects *to* institutions. These risks may take the form of absenteeism and loss of productivity when students or employees suffer from illness or injury, financial costs associated with preventative measures such as counseling services and insurances, as well as compensation claims, or they may come about in the form of loss of expertise and organisational knowledge when employees leave an institution to seek better conditions elsewhere.

The vignettes in the following sections provide provocations for considering the subjectivating practices through which affective economies of mental health operate on university campuses. In some regards the events recounted in each vignette can be understood as a finding, something found while following the narratives, traces and histories of another object (see Ahmed, 2015). In recent years my research in higher education has engaged more explicitly with the nature of the economic subject within institutional cultures, and it is from this particular pursuit that my interest in work-life balance and academic well-being took shape as a research focus (Saltmarsh & Randell-Moon, 2014, 2015). That the three events recalled from my everyday working notes happened to take place during a single week in which a university mental health campaign was taking place both is, and is not, coincidental. It *is* coincidental in the sense that none were orchestrated by me to coincide with the *RUOK? Day* campaign that was underway at my workplace. It is *not* coincidental

in the sense that as the events began to unfold across the three days that preceded, occurred during and followed *RUOK? Day*, I attended more carefully to the ways that the awareness-raising activities for staff and students on campus constructed a particular kind of subject of mental ill/health and un/happiness. In this way, my notes turned toward the subject of mental health discourse prevalent in the 'psy' disciplines, as well as toward the subject of academic and institutional accountabilities that so persistently articulate meanings of well-being and work-life balance in terms of risk, choice and responsibility. The vignettes included here, then, can also be understood as staging a 'research encounter' (Pollock 2007) between academic and student subjectivities, mental health discourse, and the policy and organisational context within which the events recounted took place.

Tomorrow is RUOK? Day on campus

The student's voice and hands are trembling, and we are anxious about how this meeting might turn out. The student's conduct has recently been described to us by other students and colleagues in terms ranging from 'concerning' to 'disturbing' and 'bizarre'. Recognizing our duty of care toward all involved, we have arranged to discuss the student's progress and support needs for the remainder of the semester. In line with a raft of policies and procedures, we have taken steps to minimize any perceived risks and to provide a supportive environment, and have agreed in advance on strategies for managing the tone of the meeting. The student perspires and shakes while describing recent pressures that have exacerbated an existing mental illness, and struggles to explain complex learning needs without divulging deeply personal and confidential information regarding mental states and personal circumstances. The student emphasizes a desire to complete the course and achieve a professional qualification, and we orient our advice toward that goal. Tomorrow *RUOK? Day* is being celebrated on campus, and we later reflect on our concerns for this particular student's wellbeing, as well as our complicity in adding to an already distressing situation.

The above meeting was a somber affair, with potentially far-reaching implications for a student who feared that mental illness was jeopardizing a long-held dream of educational and professional success. While the three staff members (myself included) in attendance espouse commitments to social justice and equal opportunity, the 'psy' discourses of mental illness that underpin cultural practices and institutional policies are pervasive and can be difficult to disentangle from discourses of risk and responsibility. I see the meeting as situated at the convergence

of these discourses, within the context of institutional climates whose emphasis on 'quality' and 'excellence' in policy and practice 'is actualized through the affective, embodied and intersubjective practices of the academic workforce' (Saltmarsh & Randell-Moon, 2014: 241). This is emotional labour that involves affective investments and embodied responses to a complex and difficult situation, in which I and my colleagues share professional responsibilities to the student, to one another, and to our employing institution.

However, when various types 'of emotional labour are institutionally invisible we have to engage in coping strategies to 'self-manage' this emotional labour' (Koster, 2011: 75). In this regard, our pedagogic approach to the meeting merits consideration as a strategy for managing our own place within this affective economy. Offering encouragement and learning support to the student fulfills a duty of care to a student deemed 'at risk' of failing, and ensures compliance with university policies and procedures regarding assessment, course progression, disability and student equity. However, it also renders us complicit in a form of government, in the sense that Nikolas Rose uses the term, to describe 'all those more or less rationalized programs, strategies, and tactics for the 'conduct of conduct', for acting upon the actions of others in order to achieve certain ends' (Rose, 1998: 12). Our pedagogic focus presumes a power relation within which the student's desire to succeed is tethered to an obligation to the governance of self according to specified professional norms. Our role as educators, within a discipline profoundly shaped by 'psy' discourse, is in no small measure to 'nurture and direct these individual strivings in the most appropriate and productive fashions' (Rose, 1998: 17). Yet our dialogue is also situated within the happiness discourse of our field, in which accomplishing both the student's and our pedagogic goals is seen as that which makes 'good' educators happy. The promise of happiness, in other words, 'is what makes things promising; the promise is always "ahead" of itself. Anticipation is affective as an orientation toward the future, as that which is ahead of us, as that which is to come' (Ahmed, 2010: 181)

Our concerns and responsibilities regarding the student's self-governance are co-constitutive of norms of conduct prescribed by institutional policies and professional standards. These norms determine what is possible and intelligible within the social order (Butler, 2004; Foucault, 1978), and function in the operation of disciplinary power within which psychology has established truth claims and normative practices about what 'counts' as un/desirable, in/appropriate, or un/acceptable conduct. These are in part professional grids of intelligibility. But they are also implicated in everyday understandings and practices, wherein the power dynamic between self and other is construed 'in psychological terms of adjustment, fulfillment, good relationships, self-actualization, and so forth' such that 'we have tied ourselves 'voluntarily' to the knowledges that experts profess, and to their promises to assist us in the personal quests for happiness that we 'freely' undertake' (Rose, 1008: 77). These collective, tacit knowledges and everyday understandings shape our own, our students' and our institution's expectations about what is being provided in this particular educational context.

Today is RUOK? Day on campus

On my way to the videoconference room, I walk past a barbeque stall and craft tent manned by student support staff wearing bright yellow t-shirts. Two fellow staff members on their way to the same professional development seminar glance at me in surprise then look away, taking up seats on the opposite side of the room. When the seminar was announced to staff, the email subject line read: Worklife Balance Seminar Invitation – Workshop 3 – RUOK – Monitoring Your Mental Wellbeing. My current research on university work-life balance policies, makes me curious about what will be said about the effects of work-life balance on mental well-being, and what advice will be offered regarding how to maintain that balance in ways that protect mental health. However, the presentation assumes instead that those in attendance (or someone close to them) are already struggling with mental health issues. Definitions of mental illness and examples of its impact on people are provided, along with a case study about a professional couple whose marriage breaks down following a series of changes and unanticipated events in their lives that leads one of them to go through a period of depression. We are asked to discuss how we would react if something like that happened to us, and admonished by fellow attendees to seek counseling just as they have done when contending with depression and other mental health issues. The session concludes with quotes from famous people, a list of things we can do to look after ourselves, and an

admonishment to do nice things for others as a way of looking after ourselves.

The scene above is framed by the carnivalesque atmosphere of the celebratory activities taking place outside, in which carnival functions as 'a metaphor for the temporary licensed suspension and reversal of order' (Hall, 1996: 290) amid ordinary university activities. Despite the slogans, posters and other public messages declaring mental health a serious matter that merits individual and collective responsibility, the gravity of this call for concern is simultaneously suspended by the fun and festivity of barbecues, balloons and brightly coloured themed t-shirts. As Stuart Hall, informed by the work of literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, points out, 'Based on studies of the importance of fairs, festivals, *mardi gras*, and other forms of popular festivity', carnival can be used 'to signal all those forms, tropes and effects in which the symbolic categories of hierarchy and value are inverted' (Hall, 1996: 290). In this instance, the seriousness of mental health concerns is superseded by the call of festivities to align oneself to others through desire for and seeking of happiness and pleasure. Happiness, in other words, becomes the panacea for the implied *unhappiness* associated with mental ill-health.

The Bakhtinian notion of carnival has been widely used to consider how popular culture subverts and calls into question dominant social hierarchies, orders and power relations. Here, however, it is the formal institutional structures within the university that mobilise the perceived playfulness of student culture through frivolous activities that symbolize, but do not operationalize, a meaningful institutional response to serious matters. Importantly, while the vignette above refers to a specific day and its associated activities, there is nothing particularly unique in the use of carnival in mental health awareness campaigns. For example, another campaign later in the same year announced in an email to the university community that Stress Less Day would include a range of similarly carnivalesque activities:

For Stress Less Day, a range of stress-busting activities will be on offer on the main quadrangle between 10am and 3pm including: cookie decorating, badge-making, free yoga and boxercise classes (both held at 12 noon), free

Greek BBQ, Silent Disco, Carnival Rides, Slushie Machine, free coffee and gelato cones, Photo booth, volley ball and more.....

Such uses of festive atmosphere and activities invert their place in a hierarchy of concerns, and subverts formal calls for taking mental health seriously. It does this in part by conscripting mental-health awareness into the consumerist agenda of the enterprise university (Marginson & Considine, 2000) with commercial imperatives to offer consumers a positive student experience. But it also does so under a banner of legitimacy brought about by publicly espousing concern for the mental wellbeing of those for whom it has a formal duty of care. These claims of concern and support enable the institution to be seen (or to claim to be seen) as part of the solution to a perceived problem, while simultaneously attempting to manage the risky humanity of university students and staff. In addition, the carnivalesque atmosphere allows students and staff to be cheerfully reminded of both the risk to happiness that mental ill-health purportedly poses, as well as of their duty or obligation to happiness. For, as Ahmed observes of contemporary obligations, 'If we have a duty to promote what causes happiness, then happiness itself becomes a duty' (Ahmed, 2010: 7).

This duty is reiterated more succinctly in the professional development seminar, as attendees are invited to consider the unhappy circumstances of others, notably in the example provided by the presenter of a professional couple (who are recent counseling clients of the presenter, so we are told) whose marriage has broken down after one of them goes through a period of depression. Interestingly, he points to certain decisions this couple has made – to relocate in the pursuit of job opportunities and career advancements, to work in high-paying but demanding professions, and to not appropriately heed the warning signs of depression. Happiness, in other words, 'is assumed to follow from some life choices and not others' (Ahmed, 2010: 54). The presenter paints a scenario that equates this couple's pursuit of the good life with choices that permit ill-health to undo the promise of happiness.

The seminar presents this example as both a cautionary tale and a technique for elicitation. How would attendees at the seminar feel in a similar situation? The ensuing discussion invites those present to identify those objects, pursuits and decisions that contributed to the couple's unhappiness, thereby inciting attendees to publicly disavow the likelihood of making similar choices. 'Psy' circulates among the attendees as a form of shared 'expertise', described by Nikolas Rose as 'a particular kind of social *authority*, characteristically deployed around *problems*, exercising a certain *diagnostic* gaze, grounded in a claim to *truth*, asserting technical *efficacy*, and avowing *humane* ethical virtues (Rose, 1998: 86, original emphasis). It is not necessary for the presenter/counselor to be the only person with access to this expertise – on the contrary, the case for avoiding and appropriately managing the effects of mental ill-health is strengthened by the testimonials of attendees who contribute their own experiences.

The pursuit of happiness as both goal and antidote for mental ill-health gains considerable currency precisely because, as Ahmed would have it, 'We align ourselves to others by investing in the same objects as the cause of happiness' (Ahmed, 2010: 38). 'Psy' discourse becomes the organizing language within a particular grid of intelligibility within this confessional scene, offering attendees both a 'way of justification and a guide to action' (Rose, 1998: 87). The solution to the problem of work-life balance, featured prominently in the title of the workshop, lies not with institutions that place increasingly excessive demands on its workforce, but rather with individuals. As Holly Randell-Moon and I have argued, 'The application of work-life balance policies and rhetoric towards techniques and strategies of self-management...functions as a way of shifting employees' attention away from the structural conditions of academic work that produce ill-health' (2015: 9). Seminars such as the one described here can be understood as subjectivating practices that produce affective economies in which happiness, well-being and work-life balance are constructed as desirable and attainable, and invoke mental ill-health as an avoidable or manageable malaise. As Petersen and Millei (2015) argue, university-based mental health psy-discourses construct happiness and a stress-free life as the responsibility of the individual, even though it may be the institution itself that

produces the stress being experienced. Organisational solutions are thus proposed in terms of monitoring one's own (and others') mental health through the shared knowledge of 'psy' expertise. To do so is to share in the implied promise of happiness as both object and outcome of individual choices when appropriately guided by 'psy' expertise.

Yesterday was RUOK? Day on campus

Things on campus are quiet today – no marquee in the courtyard, no student barbeque, no music blaring from loudspeakers. It is Friday afternoon, nearby office doors are closed and lights switched off, and I work quietly at my desk until a colleague from another building hurries frantically past my office door. 'Are you OK? Is there anything I can do?' I ask. "No, I'm not OK!" she replies. A student has arrived for a routine meeting in an extremely distressed state, having suffered a domestic violence attack the day before. My colleague, too, is distressed – the student's situation is upsetting, and she does not consider herself trained for managing critical incidents of this sort. While my colleague returns to the student, I rush off to find the (already occupied) counselor, relay messages, and offer hollow-sounding reassurances that someone will come as quickly as they can. Afterward, we privately lament the irony of a student suffering such an ordeal on a day when fellow students had been celebrating a national day of awareness with balloons and barbeques. Before exchanging pleasantries and heading home, we commiserate that our Friday afternoon's work would now have to be completed at the weekend.

As in the first vignette, discursive hierarchies and norms of conduct shape ways of relating between university lecturers and students. In the first example, hierarchical power relations and behavioural norms are maintained, managed and mediated through recourse to institutional policy and procedure. The carefully planned meeting allowed time for preparation and putting supports and protections in place should those norms be placed under threat. Yet here, they are disrupted by the student's sudden and unanticipated display of emotion of a sort that might usually be contained within more private domains of what Rose refers to as 'the therapeutic culture of the self and its experts of subjectivity' (1998: 164). The pedagogic relationship and the professional boundaries with students understood by my colleague as appropriate to her role and expertise, are unsettled by the student's tearful revelation of a traumatic personal experience. While the student has entrusted her lecturer with this deeply personal information, it is ultimately

psychological knowledge, in the form of counselling expertise, that is sought to bring the encounter into an 'ethical scenario' from within which:

...the diverse apparatuses and contexts in which a particular relation to the self is administered, enjoined, and assembled, and where therapeutic attention can be paid to those who are rendered uneasy by the distance between their experience of their lives and the images of freedom and selfhood to which they aspire (Rose, 1998: 194).

The discomfort experienced by the lecturer through the sudden shift in the pedagogic intent and register of her meeting with the student is mediated by the availability of counsellors. This offers the prospect of maintaining the distinctions between relations of power organised around either pedagogic or therapeutic discourse, by directing the student into what is seen as an 'appropriately' therapeutic space.

Scenes such as this one illustrate how emotional labour is woven into the everyday pedagogic work of university lecturers. Often this work is invisibilised, neither part of the official work of teaching, curriculum planning and assessment, nor able to be 'counted' in the measures and metrics so typically used these days to calculate academic work in terms of 'output'. Unable to be quantified, this work 'remains largely invisible although of value to the institution in terms of student welfare and retention' (Koster, 2011: 63). Instead, it is a form of labour that circulates through affective 'processes of life and vitality which circulate and pass between bodies and which are difficult to capture or study in any conventional methodological sense' (Blackman, 2012: 4). As noted in the introduction, emotional labour is also profoundly gendered, seen in forms of 'academic motherhood' (Ward and Wolf-Wendel, 2004), and in 'the way [women] are expected to be enthusiastic, cheerful, caring' (Koster, 2011: 67). Even when such positioning is resisted, or shifted into the terrain of 'psy' and therapeutic discourse, 'emotions involve investments in social norms' (Ahmed, 2004: 196) that can make it difficult to negotiate the dissonance encountered when those norms are unexpectedly disrupted.

My and my colleague's commiseration about completing unfinished work at the weekend speaks to questions of work-life balance, the topic of the staff

development seminar on the previous day. As our working day concludes, neither of us seems happy about the afternoon's events, or about impending deadlines that now require us to complete pressing work in personal time. We nonetheless conclude our encounter with smiles and well-wishes, and some optimistic commentary and reassurance that things will work out. As 'the ultimate performance indicator' (Ahmed, 2010: 4), happiness is mobilised here – as it is in higher education discourse more generally - as 'a rationale for work-life balance policies, as an indicator of academic well-being and as a signifier of compliant productivity' all of which 'carry a tacit demand that employees at least give the appearance of being happy' about the conditions within which they work (Saltmarsh & Randell-Moon, 2014: 245). As academic workers, we recognise and understand the obligations to happiness expected within our workplace and profession. We simultaneously long for and undo the possibility (at least in this instance) of 'balance', precisely because it has become 'a bio-cultural mode of laboring that academics are positioned as ultimately responsible for' (Saltmarsh & Randell-Moon, 2015: 11).

Conclusion

This chapter's reading of everyday encounters during a university-based mental health awareness campaign highlight ways that mental health and therapeutic discourse intersect with educational and professional discourse. These encounters between academics and students illustrate endeavors to deliver on the promise of happiness in the affective economies of the university, and the emotional labour that is required to manage and neutralize potential risks to that promise. Yet education, as Gert Biesta points out, 'always involves a *risk*' (Biesta, 2014: 1) of one sort or another. In the vignettes discussed here, mental health awareness is presented and practiced as way of minimizing the risk of failure among students with mental health issues, and as a way of managing the potential effects of mental health on the productivity and wellbeing among academic workers. In other words, mental health awareness campaigns function as one means by which institutions actively designate responsibility for mental health and wellbeing to individuals, while simultaneously benefiting in organisational terms from the productivity and

wellbeing of those who effectively monitor and manage their own (and each others') mental health.

Yet as Biesta's discussion of the many risks associated with education attests, 'The desire to make education strong, secure, predictable, and risk-free is in a sense an attempt...to deny that education always deals with living 'material,' that is, with human subjects, not with inanimate objects' (Biesta, 2014: 2). I understand much of what takes place in the vignettes analysed here in terms of attempts to manage (in largely superficial ways) the perceived risks associated with mental health issues, while offering little outside 'psy' inflected therapeutic, pedagogic and professional responses that might contribute to or improve the lived experience of those who study and work whilst grappling with mental health issues. This does more, I would suggest, to harness mental health agendas toward institutional gains, than to meaningfully engage with the complex, and at times difficult and painful mental health issues with which the human subjects of university communities grapple.

References

- Ahmed, S. (2004) *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, New York: Taylor and Francis
- Ahmed, S. (2007) The happiness turn, *New Formations*, Winter 2007/2008(63): 7-14
- Ahmed, S. (2010) *The Promise of Happiness*, Durham and London: Duke University Press
- Ahmed, S. (2012) *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*, Durham and London: Duke University Press
- Bakhtin, M. (1941) *Rabelais and His World*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press
- Biesta, G. (2014) *The Beautiful Risk of Education*, Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers
- Blackman, L. (2012) *Immaterial Bodies: Affect, Embodiment, Mediation*, London: Sage
- Blackmore, J. (2009) Measures of hope and despair: emotionality, politics, and education, in E. Samier and M. Schmidt (Eds.) *Emotional Dimensions of Educational Administration and Leadership*, (pp. 109-124) New York: Routledge

Blackmore, J. (2014) 'Wasting talent'? Gender and the problematics of academic disenchantment and disengagement with leadership, *Higher Education Research and Development*, 33(1): 86-99

Butler, J. (2004) *Undoing Gender*, New York: Routledge

Dunne, C. and Somerset, M. (2004) Health promotion in university: what do students want? *Health Education*, 104(6): 360-370

Eagan, K., Stolzenberg, E.B., Ramirez, J., Aragon, M., Suchard, M. R. & Hurtado, S. (2014) *The American Freshman: National Norms Fall 2014*, Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA

Eisenberg, D., Gollust, S., Golberstein, E. and Hefner, J. (2007) Prevalence and correlates of depression, anxiety, and suicidality among university students, *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, Mental Health and Social Justice*, 77(4): 534-542

Eisenberg, D., Golberstein, E. and Gollust, S. (2007) Help-seeking and access to mental health care in a university student population, *Medical Care*, 45(7): 594-601

Eisenberg, D., Downs, M., Golberstein, E., Zivin, K. (2009) Stigma and help-seeking for mental health among college students, *Medical Care Research and Review*, 66(5): 522-541

Foucault, M. (1978) *The History of Sexuality: Volume One*, (Translated by R. Hurley), Harmondsworth: Penguin

Hall, S. (1996) For Allon White: metaphors of transformation, in D. Morley and K-H. Chen (Eds.) *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, (pp. 286-305), London: Routledge

Hall, S. (2009) Harlow, What is this 'Black' in black popular culture?, in J. Storey (Ed.) *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader, 4th Edition* (pp. 374-382) UK: Pearson Education

Hochschild, A. (1983/2012) *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press

Hyun, J., Quinn, B. and Madon, T. (2007) Mental health need, awareness, and use of counselling services among international graduate students, *Journal of American College of Health*, 56(2): 109-118

Koster, S. (2011) The self-managed heart: teaching gender and doing emotional labour in a higher education institution, *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, 19(1): 61-77

- Leathwood, C., and Read, B. (2008) *Gender and the Changing Face of Higher Education*, Maidenhead, UK: Open University Press
- Marginson, S. and Considine, M. (2000) *The Enterprise University: Power, Governance and Reinvention in Australia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Morley, L. 2005. Opportunity or exploitation? Women and quality assurance in higher education. *Gender and Education* 17: 411–29
- Petersen, E. B. and Millei, Z. (2015) Psy-disciplinary cogs in the teacher education machine, *Knowledge Cultures*, 3(2): 127–145
- Pollock, Griselda (2007), 'New encounters: Arts, cultures, concepts', in G. Pollock (Ed.), (pp. xiii–xvii), *Conceptual Odysseys: Passages to Cultural Analysis*, London: I.B. Tauris
- Rose, N. (1998) *Inventing Ourselves: Psychology, Power and Personhood*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Saltmarsh, S. and Randell-Moon, H. (2014) Work, life and im/balance: policies, practices and performativities of academic well-being, *Somatechnics*, 4(2): 236-252
- Saltmarsh, S. and Randell-Moon, H. (2015) Managing the risky humanity of academic workers: risk and reciprocity in university work-life balance policies, *Policy Futures in Education*, (published online 15 April 2015), DOI: 10.1177/1478210315579552
- Stanley, N. and Manthorpe, J. (Eds.) (2002) *Students' Mental Health Needs: Problems and Responses*, London & Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers
- Wade, J. (2002) Students' perspectives, in N. Stanley and J. Manthorpe (Eds.) *Students' Mental Health Needs: Problems and Responses*, London & Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers (pp.52-64)
- Wallace, J. (2009) 'Let's get personal': disrupting gender norms in educational organisations, in E. Samier and M. Schmidt (Eds.) *Emotional Dimensions of Educational Administration and Leadership*, (pp. 174-186) New York: Routledge
- Ward, K., & Wolf-Wendel, L. (2004). Academic motherhood: Managing complex roles in research universities, *The Review of Higher Education*, 27(2): 233–257.
- World Health Organisation (2001) *The World Health Report 2001, Mental Health: New Understanding, New Hope*, Geneva: World Health Organisation
- Zembylas, M. (2009) The politics of emotions: affective economies, ambivalence, and transformation, in E. Samier and M. Schmidt (Eds.) *Emotional Dimensions of Educational Administration and Leadership*, (pp. 97-108), New York: Routledge

