CORA Cork Open Research Archive
Cartlann Taighde Oscailte Chorcaí

Title	Care-full academia: From autoethnographic narratives to political manifestos for collective action
Authors	MagShamhráin, Rachel
Publication date	2024
Original Citation	MagShamhráin, R. (2024) 'Care-full academia: From autoethnographic narratives to political manifestos for collective action', Access: Critical explorations of equity in higher education, 12(1), pp. 29-47. Available at: https://novaojs.newcastle.edu.au/ceehe/index.php/iswp/article/view/218 (Accessed: 2 December 2024)
Type of publication	Article (peer-reviewed)
Rights	© 2024, the Author. Licensed under CC BY-NC-ND-4.0 - https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/
Download date	2026-11-04 21:00:22
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/16620



UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Care-full academia: From autoethnographic narratives to political manifestos for collective action

Rachel MagShamhráin*, University College Cork, Ireland

To cite this article:
MagShamhráin, R 2024, 'Care-full academia: From autoethnographic narratives to political manifestos for collective action', *Access: Critical explorations of equity in higher education*, Vol. 12, Issue 1, pp. 29–47.

* r.magshamhrain@ucc.ie

Building on sociolinguistic analyses of the speech-act of coming out in relation to sexual or gender identity (for example, Livia & Hall 1997) which explored the identity-declaring and identity-making aspects and the consequences of such an utterance, this paper examines the speech act of 'coming out as a carer' within the academy, whereby workers declare to their professional community that those acts of care which are generally relegated to the private sphere have a bearing on their professional performances. This illocutionary act of self-definition, which radically and problematically breaches the fourth wall of the private-public divide at work, has several important consequences both negative and positive, for the individual carer but also potentially for the institution and its practices. As in the case of coming out in terms of sexuality or gender, this paper takes the position that such illocutionary acts 'have the potential force of altering reality for both the speaker and the listener' (Chirrey 2003). In other words, they have perlocutionary effect.

In this case, taking an autoethnographic approach at first, I examine the cost such a personally and politically radical act has upon the individual carer who thereby publicly puts into question her own professionalism and capacity for excellence in an arena in which excellence is embodied by the old monastic model of the university as once populated by single, male scholars, who, by definition, are free of all such care (Moreau 2016). The personal cost of this breach of the division between public and private, which Hanna Arendt (1958) saw as 'perverse', and correctly articulated to questions of freedom and slavery, appears to be the price of institutional change with regard to carers, and, given the personal cost, is usually undertaken only in extremis and in despair rather than voluntarily.

This paper proposes, as the most effective way of moving beyond the cost-heavy act of individual comings-out, a study of institutional attitudes to such revelations and narratives at their most obvious (although simultaneously most concealed), suggesting that one particularly appropriate arena for such a study might be the academic interview in which normative ideas of excellence are
most rigorously and obviously reiterated and reenforced because of the structure of the interview and the consequences of the hiring act for the politics and practices of the university,

Published by the Centre of Excellence for Equity in Higher Education, the Pathways and Academic Learning Support Centre at the University of Newcastle, Australia, and the Centre for Education Research on Identities and Inequalities at Anglia Ruskin University, UK.

ISSN 2653-245X © 2024 The Author. Licensed under CC BY-NC-ND-4.0

despite institutions' commitments to achieve inclusion, including through hiring practices and attendant strategies for interview practice (see for instance Tulshyan 2024. It proposes that an examination of attitudes towards care self-outing in interview contexts, often acts of explanation regarding non-normative aspects of the vita, might reveal entrenched ideas about care in the institution itself. On such data, more effective strategies of mitigation might be built.

Keywords: *Carers; Academia; Policy; Work-Life Balance; Autoethnography; the Post-Confessional; Manifestos*

Introduction

Academia as a 'greedy' profession

Borrowing the term from sociologist Catherine Hakim who pioneered preference theory, Sarah-Jane Aiston was the first to characterise academia as a uniquely 'greedy' profession (Aiston 2011, p. 282). Both scholars understood that this had gender implications. Hakim, for her part, had claimed that many professions could be seen as 'greedy', and controversially ascribed specifically women's professional success or otherwise in academia as elsewhere to their individual choices or preferences, claiming that in 'prosperous modern societies, women's preferences become a central determinant of life choices, in particular the choice between an emphasis on activities related to children and family life or an emphasis on employment and competitive activities in the public sphere' (Hakim 2006, p. 286). Hakim further sees the uniqueness of academia as lying in the 'flexibilities' it offers, claiming that '[t]he degree of flexibility that academics have is beyond the wildest dreams of people in the private sector. Academics have far more flexibility than any other profession in the whole of society. It even fits in with the school timetable,' and claims that it is the 'serious sex differential in ambition' (Hakim in Oxford 2008) that poses the impediment to female academic success. Aiston, however, considers academia to be structured in such a way that its particularly acute form of time-greed (what Hakim called flexibility, Aiston sees as the tendency of work to leach into all possible free time) predestines certain categories (and genders) of worker to failure and others (generally men) to success. Whereas for Hakim '[i]n the long run, it is work-centred people who are most likely to survive, and become high achievers, in greedy occupations,' (Hakim 2006, p. 289) as Aiston notes, this ignores three fundamental and intertwined factors (i.e. gender, caring, and time), pointing out that: 'Many women have child-care responsibilities that restrict the time that, by comparison with men, they could devote to academic work' (2011, p. 285). What she claims of child-care, I argue, applies *mutatis mutandis* and *a fortiori* to all support activities in which carers (also predominantly female)[1] are involved. As the term care(r) can prove confusing, here and throughout, I use the Irish Health Service Executive definition of carer as 'someone who is providing an ongoing significant level of care to a person who is in need of care in the home due to illness or disability or frailty' (Health Service Executive, n.d.). She further crucially notes that the unique problem in academic work is the use of research outputs as the ultimate measure of success:

> Any life choices that detract from this 24/7 dedication are seen as the responsibility of the individual to manage. In effect what this means is that men have the opportunity to advance their careers by carrying out what in reality is unpaid overtime. Research

[1] Many studies have established that the preponderance of care (both formal and informal) is undertaken by women. For a useful introduction to and overview of the gendered nature of care and its implications, see for example Cancun & Oliker (2000).

> predominantly takes place in overtime, and it is precisely this activity that contributes towards the prestige of those who undertake it. (Aiston 2011, p. 286).

As a profession which promotes academics based on the fruits of this out-of-hours work, Aiston argues that academia needs to refocus its remedial actions, which as yet largely target the individual, and consider instead its reward economy in which prestige activities favour one gender more than another.[2] If the application of Aiston's claims about women in academia to the situation of carers in academia seems like a leap, we need only consider the empirical data, such as that collected by Family Carers Ireland (2003) and published in their *Analysis of Gender in the State of Caring Survey 2022*, which shows that care is distinctly female gendered. If we add the gendering of care to the gender biases built into neoliberal academia, then the double disadvantage of the female carer in academia should be apparent.

Quoting Benschop and Bruns, Aiston reiterates that:

> It is important not to see women as the problem, lagging behind men and in need of special treatment: 'it is our sincere conviction that it is not women, but the academic organisation that should be the object of remedial programmes'. (2011, p. 288).

If remedial action in academic institutions is largely relegated nowadays to Athena Swan (AS)[3] actions, unfortunately, as recent criticism has pointed out, AS itself replicates rather than addresses the neoliberal system within which these inequalities are embedded. For example, it has been pointed out that the burden of AS activity, which is largely unrewarded and low-prestige academic labour, falls to precisely those categories of staff who are already disadvantaged by the academy's punitive work temporalities. As Yarrow and Johnston (2023) recently found in a detailed analysis of academic staff who had served as AS 'champions':

> While [AS] has been a driver for positive change in several institutions, it is also becoming increasingly clear that the values that AS espouses have been captured as a part of the neoliberal agenda in higher education. AS has become a valuable commodity for institutions to peacock that they are doing the 'right thing'. However, the labor behind the gaining of awards is carried out disproportionately by women, LGBTQA+ people, and others who may also disproportionately be burdened by equality work, while institutions profit from their goodwill and efforts to build institutional reputation and income. (p. 769)

[2] Here we should note that this over-time is not the over-time performed by the most precariously employed within our system. That over-time, while sharing a name, is a different variety. In this case, by over-time, Aiston means the freedom to work and network in those hours when, traditionally, women are performing their non-professional duties, in other words care.

[3] Emanating from the Athena Project spearheaded by the UK Labour government in 1999 with the aim of increasing the number of women involved in the so-called STEMM fields, the initiative led to the creation of SWAN, a Scientific Women's Academic Network. From this network, a charter of principles emerged, and was launched in 2005. The Athena SWAN Charter led to the formation of a multi-institutional group of HEIs whose membership of Athena SWAN bespoke a commitment to gender equality. Part of the success of the Athena SWAN brand can be attributed to its expansion of remit in 2014-15 to include all academic subject areas. As with many UK HE initiatives, it was soon adopted by both Ireland and Australia as a measure and mark of gender equality excellence. The now internationally recognised scheme allows member institutions to benchmark themselves against certain evolving criteria, which self-evaluation is then assessed by national committee resulting in the award of badges of achievement (Bronze, Silver, Gold) both at institutional and unit level. The brand has been criticized as 'a product of neoliberalization within […] academic environments, reflecting the tendency towards accountability, metrics and the performative "doing" of equality work', and as 'moderate feminism in the neoliberal university'. (Tzanakou and Pearce, 2017, p. 1191 & 1193).

The problem here is AS' complicity in gendered neoliberal institutional practices which focus on (and therefore problematise) individuals and their personal situations or narratives rather than on reforming the reward structure of the university itself, or which approach such structural problems through the impacted individuals (who act as AS champions, for example).

This article seeks to critique a specific strand of discourse within such individualising approaches to the problem of inequality in academia, namely autoethnographic accounts of disadvantage and discrimination, and suggesting that the proliferation of such accounts[4] is paradoxically just another manifestation of the larger problem of the neoliberal logic of individualisation (including ideas of individualised success or failure in academia) identified by Benschop and Bruns (2003, p. 207). Whereas other critics of autoethnography (AE) have focused on the various ethical issues involved in such self-revelatory modes, with, for example, Sara Delamont (2009) baldly declaring that 'autoethnography is almost impossible to write and publish ethically' (p. 59), I contend that the problem is that such accounts do not offer the solution to academic injustice they may seem to because their focalisation of problems through the individual replicates the ideology of individualisation of the neoliberalist ethos itself. This is not a rejection of autobiography, but rather a warning against a naïve belief in the transformative political potential of AE. Here I am agreeing to an extent with Donald Shields, who argued in 2000 that AE lacked the authority to shift oppressive power relations. My argument, however, ascribes this shortcoming to the problems that beset the neoliberal life-narrative, as discussed by Leigh Gilmore, which she defines as '[promoting] individual life experiences as examples of a generic humanity and eschew[ing] historical and political analysis or contextualisation' (Gilmore 2017, p. 93). While autoethnographic research is not ahistorical and decontextualised, I argue that its focus on individual life experiences is a cause of political impotence because of its individualised focalisation, which, for all stylistic differences, is the same as that of the self-help narrative.

Mis-framing the question

This research began with what had long seemed to be the author's personal problem: the insoluble yet intractable question of work-life balance (which is, in fact, a masked question about the time and over-time of work), and how this professional scholar might attempt to reconcile two apparently discrete aspects of her existence: the private demands of her impossibly challenging personal life as a long-term carer and her professional being in the public sphere of the university.
However, notwithstanding the proliferation of the language of reconciliation in the discourse on this matter,[5] which suggests that the individual academic can theoretically align the two

[4] The rise of autoethnographic approaches across a number of disciplines from the mid-1990s onwards has been discussed in detail, for example, by Kim (2016). The start of the autoethnographic turn is generally associated with the publication in 1996 of a landmark book edited by Ellis and Bochner (1996) which explored a then experimental approach to ethnographic scholarship in which personal narration is deployed. The volume's introduction sets the tone, consisting of a transcribed dialogue between the two editors in which they describe their new (confessional-autobiographical) ethnographic methodology as 'the kind that helps readers use other people's sorrows and triumphs as a way to reflect on or recontextualise their own, enhancing their capacity to cope with life's contingencies' (p. 28).

[5] Examples of the use of 'reconcile' and all its cognates in the word family abound in the literature of academic work-life balance. See for example 'As defined initially work-life balance means a 'fulfilled life inside and outside paid work'. Some regulations to reconcile the demands of the workplace with a fulfilled life already exist […]'. Notably and more generally, the 15-page European Parliament and Council of the European Union Directive 2019/1158 on Work-Life Balance of 20 June 2019 also uses the language of reconciliation no fewer than four times: 'to reconcile family and professional life', 'facilitating the reconciliation of work and family life', 'with a view to fostering the reconciliation of work and private life', 'by facilitating the reconciliation of work and family life'.

parts of her life, there is actually no way to resolve this dilemma, since in reality, as Aiston notes, '[a]cademia keeps the public sphere separate from the private one and expects an academic to be willing to cope' (Aiston 2011, p. 285).

What Monroe et al. (2008) call academia's 'cult of individual responsibility' (p. 224) paradoxically seems to predetermine that remedies to the problem of such individualisation begin with individualisation of the problem itself. As such, this article is critically and unhappily autoethnographic in part, requiring a declaration of positionality at its start. But as that declaration personalises a dilemma which is not personal to begin with, let us attempt to resist and subvert the course of that logic with repeated interruptions which address the more general matrix in which this private-public dilemma is embedded.

While recognising the particularly acute conditions prevailing in academia, the question of the academic-carer is, effectively, a rearticulation a fortiori of a much older and more general division affecting the human seen as individual: the public-private caesura is a general schism in the human condition for all labouring animals.[6] While that very ancient distinction between public and private, the polis and the oikos, seems to have been elided in our era of self-exposure through such broadcast technologies as Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram and Facebook, this split has not been resolved. In the era of the corporation,[7] in which the metaphors of embodiment which haunt the anthropocentric imagination have undergone an expansion ad absurdum, the corporate university[8] has adopted a vague sort of stance on the bifurcation of the individual into public and private parts with its lip-service to something called work-life balance. For instance, University College Cork (UCC) avers that it champions a 'healthy work-life balance', continuing:

> You have interests and commitments outside of work and we recognise the importance of flexible work arrangements and wellness in the workplace to help maintain this balance. [E]mployee benefits include generous time off, pension and savings schemes, bike to work scheme and discounted gym membership (UCC 2022).

The idea of a hyphenated thing called work-life balance (often abbreviated in the relevant literature to WLB) has been traced back to Robert Owen's early nineteenth-century idea of a balanced tripartite day of eight hours of work, leisure, and sleep (Marks, Mallet & Skountridaki 2024, p. 200). At its most useful, the term is used to highlight the complex interdependence of what are often imagined as but do not strictly operate as discrete and interlocking spheres of an individual's social experience. Some of the earliest publications to use the phrase 'work-life balance' and to examine it as a unique phenomenon emerged in the 1970s precisely when large numbers of women were entering the professional workforce,[9] but without, however, absolving women who were making careers from their disproportionate shouldering of domestic duties.

[6] Arendt (1958) describes Karl Marx's definition of man as an 'animal laborans'.

[7] The history of the modern corporation stretches back at least to the Middle Ages. See for example Germain Sicard's (1953) tracing of the historic origins of corporations to medieval Toulouse. But in the current age of the corporation, '[b]ehind almost every product and service that we use, aspire to, and fear is a soulless, lifeless, bodiless legal person known as a corporation' (Davoudi, McKenna & Olegario 2018, p.19). Indeed, Colin Mayer (2016) has argued that we are now in a 'sixth age of the corporation […] the most remarkable period of our existence. It is […] a corporation sans machines, sans man, sans money, sans everything' (p. 56)..

[8] The corporate university has been succinctly and damningly defined as the point in the second half of the twentieth century when universities 'no longer collude[d] with big business; they have become increasingly identity to business' (Johnson, Kavanaugh & Mattson 2003, p. 12).

[9] For a succinct account of the particular shift in women's labour that occurred in the 1970s, when women increasingly were pursuing higher education and professions, see Sernau (2023).

Joseph Pleck's 1977 article 'The Work-Family Role System', for example, argued 'the need for greater examination of work and family roles in relation to each other […] to describe how individual; functioning in either of these spheres is affected by their involvement in the other' (p. 417). This complex question, however, of how work intersects with life, has often been reduced, for better or for worse, to what we see in an illustrative chart from University College Dublin (UCD) in which life is imagined as a balanceable set of interconnected[10] demands held in perfect equilibrium by such simple tactics as 'set[ting] boundaries' and 'shorter working year'. Moreover, it suggests that life is not work and vice versa, a claim any carer or person with a disability would immediately dispute.

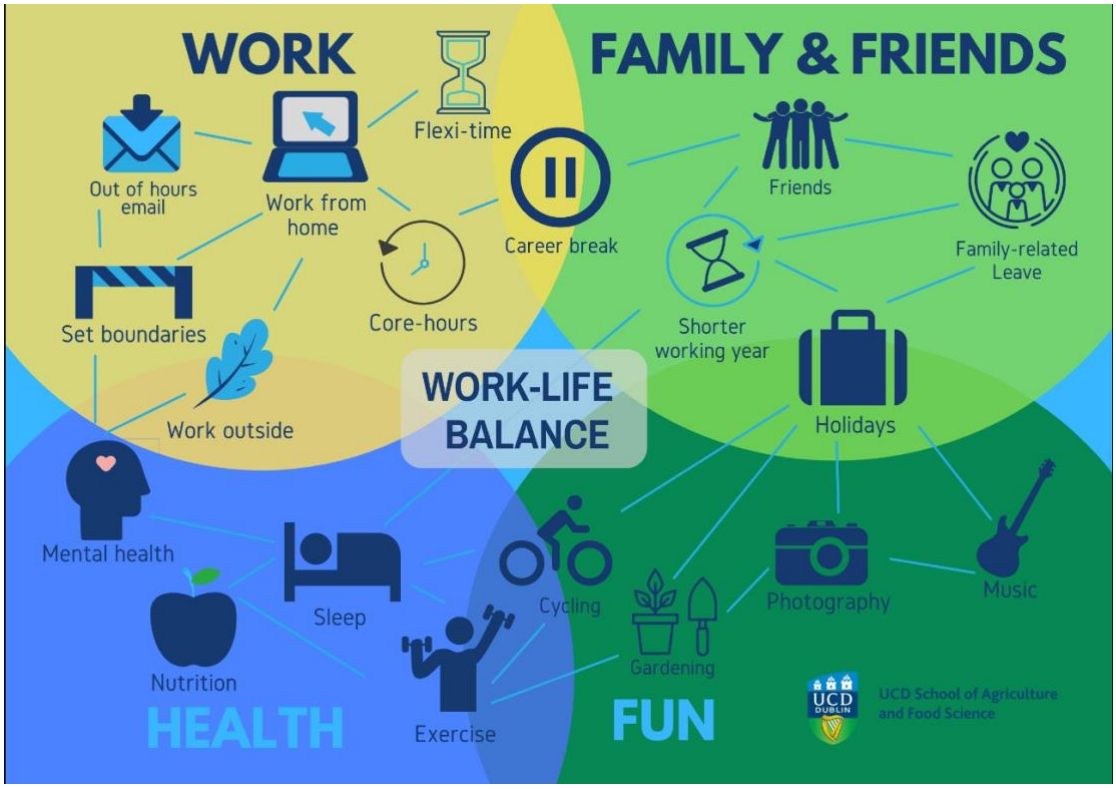


Fig. 1. UCD School of Agriculture and Food Science Work-Life Balance Charter

In these systems, there is no illness, no ageing, no financial concern, no accident, no turbulence, and the hourglass notwithstanding, no actual temporality. A harmless depiction in many ways, but with profound implications for how we think of ourselves as professionals, as workers.[11] This imaginary closed system places the labouring animal in a zero-sum game in which labour and leisure (family, health and fun in this infographic; but presumably also activities like reading, as this is a university infographic) compete for time and attention, with the individual worker deciding (see Hakim's [2000] preference theory approach to professional success) on how and whether to apportion time to each area. A still much-quoted 1998 article from the *Harvard Business Review* suggested that this zero-sum view of labour and leisure was slowly being changed by a radical new generation of managers who were rethinking how these two

[10] At least two university human relations websites use the rather literal image of the jigsaw pieces of 'life' and 'work' to represent this intersection (see University of South Florida n.d.; University of Houston Downtown n.d.).

[11] It is interesting to me at least that the bicycle features in many of these infographics on work-life balance, perhaps in some unconscious homage to Vittorio De Sica's 1948 work, *Bicycle Thieves*, which embedded the symbol of the bicycle in our cultural imaginary as a cipher for social advancement through work. The symbol features in both UCC and UCD articulations of WBL, but also in others (see Missouri University of Science and Technology n.d.)

aspects of a worker's existence intermeshed. It claimed that the 'work versus personal life […] zero-sum game' was being rewritten as 'the assumption that work and personal life are not competing priorities but complementary ones' (Friedman, Christensen & DeGroot 1998, p. 119). Of course, this changes nothing, for work still stands over and against leisure, but now work explicitly leaches into leisure time too.

WLB and the demand for confessions

The existence of this mythical beast, the WLB, implying as it does that there is a way to subdivide a 24-hour day into ideal portions, regardless of the situation of the person involved, has not been disputed in the recent critical literature either. As McDonald and Hatcher put it in their introduction to a 2023 edited volume on WLB, this balance is a necessity, albeit one which they concede is 'notoriously hard to achieve' (McDonald & Hatcher 2023, p. 1). They also note of the following chapters an interesting tendency towards an 'auto-ethnographic approach' to the question of balance, in which contributors 'present their own stories in a raw truthfulness that is seldom in career reflections within the academy' (p. 3). There seems to be something about the question of WLB that compels us into confessional mode (see Dillon 2012; Cohen, Duberley & Musson 2009; Izak, Shortt & Case 2002). Aiston, agreeing with German sociologist Ulrich Beck's theory of reflexive modernism, would presumably see this autoethnographic turn as a further symptom of our 'post-industrial society [in which] individuals [are] freed from the constraining and social ordering of industrial society and [encouraged to] see themselves as the centre of their own biographies' (Aiston 2011, p. 281). Although Beck used the term 'individual biography' in the loosest sense (indicating all the ways in which we are forced to imagine that we are authors of our own destinies), the idea of a discursive autobiographicalisation of modern life in the sense of an individual being forced to provide a narrative account of herself (both Catholic confession and the academic cover letter are examples) goes a step further than Beck's idea that 'in the individualised society the individual must […] learn, on pain of permanent disadvantage, to conceive of himself or herself as the centre of action, as the planning office with respect to his/her own biography […]' (Beck 1992, p. 135). Here I am extrapolating from Beck's concept and critique of the 'choice biography' with its central premise that individuals forge their own fate, and claiming that neoliberalism does not just make us the authors of our fate in that metaphorical sense, but also in the literal sense that we are additionally forced to narrate it. Just as William Philip (1999) argued that late nineteenth-century biography was an individualising narrative form that provided the language and value systems that 'legitimate[d] the domination of the economy by corporate interests', noting that 'the genre lent itself well to the promotion of individualistic interests' (p. 17), I am claiming that the autoethnographic turn, despite its continued deployment as an instrument of social reform, reinscribes the social structures of neoliberalism, including when harnessed for the purposes of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in academia. Philip had however argued that satirical biography offered some potential for criticism of the economic and ideological status quo. The same might apply to AE as I have argued elsewhere (MagShamhráin 2024).[12]

[12] In this paper, I argue that if autoethnographic accounts are to effect social change, they should be inflected by what Sarah Hagaman (2023) has called the 'post-confessional', a term she uses to describe the deliberately humorous and non-therapeutic approach of *Fleabag* in the eponymous tv series who, while appearing to confess everything 'uses parody and evasion while pretending to share intimate details about herself'. According to Hagaman, while '[t]he confessional mode emphasises authenticity and a desire for healing […] [p]ostconfessions, on the other hand, are a parodical mode of revelation that refuse the authenticity and intimacy elicited by therapy and traditional confessional modes' (p. 650).

Yet, however reluctant one might be to explore the private-public question of the 'caregiver in academia' auto/biographically, as this article proposes to (in post-confessional mode, at least), I argue that one is driven into confessional or autoethnographic mode by the problem itself.[13] However, as I hope to show, the real political challenge would be to force this question beyond the exposures and concomitant personal liabilities of such account-giving and self-exposure, on the grounds that the slight critical distance introduced by the autoethnographic voice is not enough. These dangers, including the forfeiture of a right to privacy, have haunted that methodology for at least a decade, particularly as many who use this approach are (unsurprisingly) doing so from a personal position of vulnerability (Chang 2016). It has been suggested that collaborative autoethnography offers some group protection from the risks of self-revelation, particularly in professional contexts like the university where specific autonarratives of success (Mazak 2019)[14] are an integral part of the professional persona (Miyahara & Fukao 2022). Chang et al. (2013) posit this as one of the benefits of the collective approach of what they call Critical Autoethnography, or CAE, over the individualisations of AE, claiming that 'in cases of collaborative research teams formed with pre-existing power differentials, it is noticeable that power among researchers is diffused through collaboration. For example, such a shift has been observed in CAE teams made up of professors and graduate students' (p. 26). But, while they claim a levelling of hierarchies within such research groups, how this method offers a non-(self-) exploitative alternative to autoethnographic approaches remains unclear.

The obscenity of self-exposure: Post-confessional anecdote I

For now, let us be uniquely personal: Recently, I have been forced to think more and more about the relationship between my public and private selves, tetrangulated between three households, each in a state of necessity, and the public sphere of my work at the university, thinking being the one luxury of long drives back and forth between [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], as I try to connect the coordinates of my life, spread as they are across all three of these locations. As a result of the tetrangulation, I am neither here nor there, never fully leaving one or arriving at the other, and constantly dreaming about lost luggage and carparks, and missed classes and deadlines. These days, as the life-long carer for [REDACTED], the later-life carer for [REDACTED], and now juggling care for [REDACTED] after a [REDACTED] diagnosis,[15] I am always on the move, and always both looking after someone else while trying against the odds to, if not adopt then project, that rugged success-making self-sufficiency that is idolised, all university EDI and Athena Swan 'peacocking' notwithstanding, by the neoliberal academy. The more tired I have become on the road, the more my ageing and unruly body has continued to insert itself between me and several wonderful potential monographs, the more I have felt the need to confess and explain myself and my many failures at work, because with such a penetrating private life disrupting my public life at work, confession seems the only place left to go. In fact, I did report myself

[13] Often attributed to David Hayano, who used the term in an article of 1979 which looked at ethnographic research undertaken by members of the group under study, Hayano however makes it clear in his article that he had in fact borrowed the term from a lecture by anthropologist Raymond Firth who used it to describe research conducted by Jomo Kenyata on his own Kikuyu people.

[14] Catherine Mazak (2019) has characterised academic narratives of success as patriarchal discourses which 'prize solitude and glorify family-less-ness'. However, a certain brand of male white academic fatherhood is perfectly compatible with academic stylings of success, and the particularly tricky domain of collegiality which is prized in academia places itself over and against solitude, and can act as an insurmountable barrier to those whose social time is severely circumscribed.

[15] I have removed the previously disclosed facts of my life here as they are simultaneously the facts, experienced from my perspective as a carer, of other people's lives, people who are not practicing autoethnographers. The self-harm potential of AE is always intertwined with the potential of harm to others. As Bochner (2017) pointed out: 'Human beings are relational beings, and thus every story of the self is a story of relations with others' (p. 76).

to human relations (HR) once in 2017, happily meeting with bafflement from their side on the basis that complaints to HR can only be accepted from a third-party. Spontaneous confessions of personal shortcomings inhabit a very problematic space in academia, it seems. *Gnothi se auton* may be a fine basis for doing science. *Ekthéste se auton* (expose yourself) is quite another matter.

If we understand Augustine's *Confessions* as the prototype for the kind of self-exposing narrative that this article both reflects upon and engages in, then it is important to note that for Augustine the autobiographic mode involved 'accusation of oneself, praise of God' (Brown 2013, p. 169). If then we have recourse to autoethnographic explorations of one's work-life imbalance, this too must retain traces of accusation and praise. Presumably, accusation of the worker, praise of the work? The second Augustinian assumption is that such narrative self-exposure will result in some redemption. Whatever about Beck's 'choice biographies', AE's claim to political and social transformative power has yet to be substantiated, but it is a core claim about the methodology.[16]

Anecdote II

I was struck by a quote recently while cram-reading a review essay by Shmuel Lederman (2023) on the 'Enduring Radicality of Hannah Arendt' in the *German Studies Review*. I was hurriedly preparing for a botched interview for the position of reviews editorship of the same journal, an interview in which I performed in extreme self-revelatory mode, revealing, perhaps unwisely, that the reason I was so impressed by the reviews section of that publication was that I recently rarely had the time to read a sufficient number of full monographs, and the reviews served as fabulous digests. At any rate, in that particular essay, Samantha Hill, whose biography of Arendt I had of course not read, insists, according to Lederman, on Arendt's 'sharp distinction between the private and public spheres' (p. 146).

According to Lederman:

> Hill suggests that Arendt insisted on this distinction because 'she believed that when we lose the ability to distinguish between private and public life, freedom is restricted, and when freedom is restricted, movement is no longer possible […]'. [W]ithout the separation between the public and the private there is nowhere to move, and a space for movement is the condition of possibility for both freedom and intimacy (p. 146).

If the review essay seemed to contain a warning, it was one I did not heed in the subsequent interview in which I perversely and consistently failed to separate the public and private, narrating unprompted my personal care burden and many academic failures, and leaving myself nowhere to move, which is some achievement for someone who was then and still is driving between 700 and 900 kilometres a week for care purposes. After the interview, with the Lederman quote still in mind, and my own unnecessarily honest performance weighing heavily on me (was it self-sabotage; was it something else?), I wondered whether that compulsively confessional mode was something Arendt had shed light upon when talking about the consequences of blurring the lines between public and private life. And so, I read the

[16] See, for example, the claim that '[t]his approach challenges canonical ways of doing research and representing others […] and treats research as a political, socially-just and socially-conscious act' (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011, p. 1).

original Arendt text in question. As you will see, it did not cure me of confessionalism, but in the case of this article, I think it has helped me to fail slightly better.

To illustrate more clearly the confusing relationship between the public and private realms, or the households and the university in my case, and the relationship to confessions, I will offer a final personal anecdote in which I repeated the error: I came out as a carer in an email to an all-employees mailing list at my university in 2019. It was an act that bridged the private and public in a deeply problematic way, and I still feel very ambivalent about it, primarily because I used my family as a means to a professional end, entirely without their permission. The reason for this stepping forth from the chorus of workers as a carer and shedding a generally quite pitiless public light on the obscurity of what should be a private part of my life was not entirely clear to me then. It was not the case that I particularly wanted to make a public spectacle of what was private, but rather that I was despairing in my failure to regulate the private part of my life sufficiently to let me perform excellently publicly. I had failed to be promoted, failed at a job interview in [REDACTED] at which I had tried to explain the anomalies in my profile with reference to my private situation and thereby, according to the feedback received, had unnecessarily drawn attention to them. It seemed to me that, due to my unruly private life, my professional behaviour was increasingly looking like a lack of competence and, perhaps more importantly, a lack of that amorphous commodity: collegiality.

Dear All,

Forgive the intrusion.

As some of you may know, [redacted] They are everything to me, and have made me humane in ways that I might otherwise have not been. I am proud of them.

However, the burden of care is often enormous, and comes at great personal and professional cost because institutions do not recognize or cater properly to the needs of carers.

With this in mind, I was thinking of setting up a mutual support group for staff members with significant care duties. If you would like to be involved, I would be very happy to hear from you.

Kind regards,

Rachel

Fig. 2. Coming out as a carer, email

The email in which I came out was perhaps an attempt to make a virtue of necessity in the very sense, it turns out, that Arendt uses these terms in the 'The Public and Private Realm' chapter of her 1958 *The Human Condition*, to which Lederman (2023) was referring, and which gives an account of how human action (and inaction) have been conceptualised through history. As she points out of the pre-modern period:

> [E]xcellence itself, *areté* as the Greeks, *virtus* as the Romans would have called it, has always been assigned to the public realm where one could excel,

> could distinguish oneself from all others. Every activity performed in public can attain an excellence never matched in privacy; for excellence, by definition, the presence of others is always required […]. (p. 48-49).

In this sense, the act of coming out as a carer on an academic emailing list, shows a rudimentary understanding of and crude attempt to bypass that fundamental and ancient distinction whereby, as Arendt puts it:

> Necessity ruled over all activities performed in [the household]. The realm of the polis, on the contrary, was the sphere of freedom, and if there was a relationship between these two spheres, it was a matter of course that the mastering of the necessities of life in the household was the condition for freedom of the polis. (p. 30-31).

Rather than mastering the necessities of my unruly home lives as a carer, I had sought to import that necessity into public life, thereby attempting to make a virtue of it. This failure to observe the ancient distinction between public and private is something that Arendt considers a signum of modernity and describes as 'the rise of the social' (p. 68). By such desegregation, the freedom of public life is subjected to the necessity of private life. Arendt calls this new disposition 'society'.

This merger may seem to suggest liberation, at least for those previously enslaved to the hearth and home. And a liberation in the sense that we are free to ignore any distinction between public and private because the private life is now everywhere. Arendt correctly sees this as the age of Rousseau, the author of the first modern autobiography, and master of the literary confession. However, to Arendt it is also to be understood as a 'perversion' whereby society now 'intru[des] upon an innermost region in man which until then had needed no special protection' (p. 39). Moreover, this new state 'excludes the possibility of action, which formerly was excluded [only] from the household' (p. 40). In other words, the tyranny of private necessities had now breached the bulwark and consumed the public sphere, immobilising it. Now action is no longer possible, only that thing called behaviour which can be measured in statistics.

And, lest one imagine, as I did, that the insertion of my private household necessities into the public sphere of my work might somehow serve the demands of EDI by individualising the worker and freeing her from a set of standardised expectations, Arendt notes that, if anything, society (that is the new merged public and private realms) 'expects from each of its members a certain kind of behaviour, imposing innumerable and various rules, all of which tend to "normalize" its members, to make them behave, to exclude spontaneous action or outstanding achievement' (p. 40). Ironically, then, while swamping the public sphere with the base necessities of the private, society becomes more, not less, conformist.

And, if further evidence of this were needed, wikiHow's drearily predictable guide to being at work suggests that conformity is very much the order of the day: 'by establishing some sensible boundaries [it does not locate these, but they appear to be within the self] exercising self-control and separating your work and home worlds, you can keep your private life private without being considered aloof at work' (Krasny n.d.). It proposes, amongst other strategies, taking a short walk so that you can 'mentally separate these two spheres of your life'. Arendt had noticed the transition in the age of society from the separation of household and public sphere, oikos and polis in ancient Athens, to a modern internalisation of that separation, a state which

she expressed as 'Jean-Jacques rebel[ling] against a man called Rousseau,' (p. 39) dividing him into two selves.

Returning to my personal history, the hastily written and even more hastily sent 2019 email to all exchange users at UCC (Fig. 2) similarly proposed two competing versions of myself which finally propose to reconcile into a third semi-political figure: first, the carer who has been humanised by her private care burden; second, a half-private half-public perverse entity who is railing somewhat illogically at the university's non-recognition of carers as a category as though this were the core problem, a thing composed of burdens and costs, probably too tired to think straight, who seems to wish to dump large amounts of dirty carer's laundry at the door of the president's office; and third, a disembodied political voice emerging from that irresolvable dilemma of Rachel versus MagShamhráin, suggesting the need for a mobilisation of the similarly disenfranchised. However, true transition to that state of political mobilisation remains in abeyance to this day. What I mean by inviting people to 'get involved' is still unclear to me.

Un-becoming the story: Leaving the confessional mode behind

In response to the email, a number of colleagues from across the university did get in touch to say that they were this thing I had called carer. However, the diverse nature of those responses revealed immediately a problem of definition. To some, carer meant being a parent, to others it was associated with caring for their now elderly parents, in some sandwich generationers it meant both, while to me and others again, it was associated with disability and/or illnesses, along with all the other facts of life-stages/life-choices care duties, by which I cruelly mean the common-or-garden situation of having children and parents. At the time I had just newly identified my situation both to myself and my professional community as caregiving, and so had never come across what is called 'caregiver identity theory' (see Eifert et al. 2015) which recognises the high degree of variability of situation among 'informal caregivers', an unfortunate collocation that makes the situation sound somehow leisurely and relaxed. The theory recognises that there are:

> Common elements of the caregiver role while acknowledging that for each individual the caregiver role is uniquely defined by cultural and familial experiences. The theory is grounded in the fundamental observation that there is no single generic caregiver role. It also takes into account great diversity among caregivers as to the type and quantity of tasks they undertake and the duration of time over which they serve in this role. (Montgomery & Kosloski 2013, p. 131).

The idea behind this is that more nuanced profiling of caregivers means that supports can be tailored to their different needs. To me, it meant that the first meeting of the university carers group was a disaster. I had imagined that we would immediately identify with one another, and that a clear picture would emerge of the actions needed to gain access to the sunlit academic uplands of work-life balance. Instead, it became something which we later compared to an alcoholics anonymous meeting.[17] We each introduced ourselves and then narrated, often tearfully, our entirely unique care situations and unique sets of pressures this put us under at work, and our many failings to live up to professional standards. What could be extrapolated

[17] This is not a criticism of AA meetings. We literally sat in a circle, introduced ourselves, and added 'And I am a carer for…' The similarities to AA meetings were interesting.

from all the narratives was the intractable conundrum that the greater the care burden, the more difficult it was to behave 'normatively' at work, but the more pressing the financial concerns were, the more we needed to succeed at work. For reference, in the case of disability, the 2021 INDECON report to the Department of Social Protection on the financial impact of disability estimated the cost per person per annum at an average of 11,000 Euro (IDRE, 2021). Multiply this by several family members across half a century. Two main strategies of coping among the people who attended the meeting emerged: say nothing, tell no colleague anything (see the wikiHow suggestion); tell everything, constantly remind people that you are a carer. Which of the two modes a person was in often depended on how near breaking point she or he was. Often the confessional mode was adopted as a later strategy when work arrangements began to break down. In either case, help was contingent upon self-exposure, and self-exposure came at a cost. Once labelled as a carer, the label itself became part of the problem. The help offered often took the form of reducing working hours, relieving people of onerous and therefore prestige-carrying tasks, or the offer of unpaid care leave with its concomitant financial implications. Many felt that caring responsibilities had affected their career progression because they were not viewed as committed enough or reliable.

So, we sat and narrated. And by the end, no clear action was identifiable. The only thing that was clear was that the confessional mode was somehow a symptom of our vulnerability and often perpetuated it, rather than a solution. In a different context, Brandt et al. (2001) had expressed a similar unease at personal disclosures in a work context, noting 'current professional pressures/invitations to […] narrate the personal… We are concerned about some of the uncritical celebration of personal narrative in recent years and the concomitant critical scrutiny given to those of us who do not wish to represent / live the personal in our work' (p. 42). While the push towards personal narratives seems to suggest a valorisation of personal experience, the carer's personal narrative in a professional setting illustrates exactly why Brandt et al. have reservations about this phenomenon. The carer, for instance, tells colleagues about her or his problems, and, graciously and paternalistically, the institution may make allowances, putting the beneficiary of this accommodation into a position of deficit. The carer becomes an exception, allowances have been made, and in the belief that work is a zero-sum game, the assumption is that some other colleague must now bear the burden of that work. The personal narrative has the two-pronged negative effect of singling the worker/academic in question out as a lamentable exception, incapable of proper work, as well as of reinforcing normative ideas of what work and workers are. Worst of all perhaps was the well-meaning advice on self-care, which reinforces the loneliness of the carers who are now being reminded that they are also responsible for themselves.

Explaining their unease at this intrusion of the personal, Brandt et al. add that 'disclosure is less important to me than inclusiveness. […] While many people have been trying to figure out how to get the personal more responsibly into their published work, I have been trying to figure out how responsibly to get it out' (p. 42). Their attitude to autobiographical testimony which they study is that they should be 'dehumanised' to the point that 'the people in my study would not recognise themselves […]. What such disclosures yield and what they contribute to the larger public causes are what count for me' (p. 43).

From self-narration to manifestos

In the final part of this article, I want to suggest a way forward that involves structural change in working practices for everyone in academia so that the carer (as just one individualised example of disadvantage in our particular system) is not the foreign body at work. I have called this universal design for work, riffing on universal design for learning.

Importantly, what the UCD chart on WLB does not show is the amount of time involved in the activities it represents. It suggests with its hour clock, the measurement of our days into balanced portions, but cleverly avoids any actual amount of time. But we need to remember that in the famously 'greedy' profession of academia, time of work is not nine-to-five clock time, but rather, as a study conducted by John Ziker et al. (2013) found (results which were re-confirmed subsequently), the academic working week is usually a 61-hour week. Of these working hours, many are not spent in the office or in the classroom. The standing joke is: 'The great thing about academia is the flexibility. You can work whatever 80 hours a week you want!' These are reading hours, catch-up hours, hours building relationships within and beyond the institution, hours travelling to archives and conferences and graduations, reading PhDs as extern, organising events, attending the staff party, and constantly going above and beyond. A former colleague once said she knew a woman in academia who had worn out two spouses in the process of progressing her career. A joke, of course, but being an academic on such extortionate terms necessitates outside support. It means being cared for. A carer is generally not cared for. Disabled or ill family members cannot provide that support.

There are many helpful tips out there on how to balance your hours as an academic. Notably, one is always absent: stop rewarding the 61-hour working week. This is what I mean by universal design for working. If we reward excess (and I mean excess rather than excellence), rewarding active participation in multiple committees, PhD supervision to completion, publications, invited talks, externing, and everything that reasonably MUST amount to more than a 40-hour week, then inequality is built into the system, and it is the privilege conferred by time-wealth rather than ability or competence that is rewarded, and the carer always remains in self-reproachful confessional mode.[18]

With this goal in mind, I suggested, following discussion with several brilliant colleagues, the following to the Women in German Studies committee meeting of the 2024 conference in UCC, a manifesto to which members of this and other cognate professional associations are asked to commit for one year in the first instance. This commitment involves:

(1) Collectively, as members of the Women in German Studies or other Association, providing letters of reference, no questions asked, thereby mitigating a lack of socialising, networking time / ability which is crucial to the accumulation of referees[19]
(2) Collectively inviting one another to give keynotes regardless of academic standing, inverting prestige hierarchies
(3) Collectively inviting one another to co-supervise PhDs across career stages and institutions on a 'the more the merrier basis'
(4) Holding anti-conferences with a commitment to hybrid models and other constellations which facilitate inclusion

[18] The author does not wish for one moment to suggest that others are not also equally and more severely disadvantaged by the academic work system. How many professors with disabilities do you know? However, this individual author is a carer. And, as this article attempts in part performatively to deconstruct autoethnographic approaches, the focus here is on her particular experiences.

[19] This was inspired by a senior colleague's recently having to provide twelve references for a certain process. A better suggestion, also considered, might be to abolish letters of reference altogether, but it was unclear how the Women in German Studies Association might effect this broader change without actually disadvantaging those who request letters of reference from us. A flat refusal or boycott would need to be profession-wide.

(5) Refusing to serve on interview panels, selection committees, and similar unless the committee undertakes to rethink markers of prestige which are actually markers of over-time capacity and other privilege[20]
(6) Collectively undertaking to disseminate this manifesto beyond our local subject areas and institutions
(7) Collectively undertaking to identify rewards of time-richness, and to refuse to reward these by strategies as above.

The manifesto is proposed here as an alternative discursive practice to the autoethnographic-confessional mode. Unlike AE, it does not particularise or individualise, although it might of course be inspired by knowledge of and sympathy with particular situations. Its narrative voice is categorically not that of an individual subject, but a chorus. This article also proposes that the manifesto effects change, while the narratives of AE replicate an individualising problem at the heart of neoliberalism. In Teun van Dijk's (2023) discourse analysis of the manifesto, he offers a useful if, to this author's mind, not entirely accurate characterisation of the manifesto:

> Speakers or authors of manifestos generally are collectives, such as social movements in our case, or artistic movements or political parties, even when manifestos may be originally composed by leaders or secretaries. They are published as manifestos of the collective, and not of an individual person. Even though individual authors have published texts they called 'manifestos', they are not so interpreted by the public at large as recipients, but rather as literature, confessions, autobiographies, and so on (p. 116).

While it is patently not the case that single-authored manifestos are generally not understood as such by 'the public' (Luther and Marx come to mind), van Dijk's typology of the manifesto correctly differentiates between collective plurivocal texts (manifestos) and individualised monovocal texts. What one might further add to his discourse analysis is that it is the plurivocality which, in my view, makes the manifesto politically charged in a way that any individualised narrative or collection of individualised narratives cannot be. It is no doubt for this reason that the Care Collective (2021) published its recommendations for care and carers not as a set of arguments based on autoethnographically-individualised confessions, but as a general manifesto. Its undertakings are perhaps not concrete enough for this author, calling as it does for such vague practices as 'promiscuous care' (p. 35). This article offers the open-ended Care in Academia Manifesto above in the same politicised discursive mode.

References

Aiston, SJ 2011, 'Equality, justice and gender. Barriers to the ethical university for women', *Ethics and Education*, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 279-291, doi: 10.1080/17449642.2011.632721

Arendt, H 1958, *The Human Condition*, 2nd edn, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Beck, U 1992, *Risk society: Towards a new modernity*, Sage, London.

[20] The open question of what might be more appropriate markers of prestige which do not simply reward time-wealth, I leave to the reader to consider. A way to go about answering the question might be to ask of each such marker: am I rewarding quantity, which is a measure mainly of time-wealth, or quality, which is a measure of ability?

Chang, H 2016, 'Autoethnography in health research: Growing pains?' *Qualitative Health Research,* vol. 26, no. 4, pp. 443-451, doi: 10.1177/1049732315627432

Benschop, Y & Brouns, M 2003, 'Crumbling ivory towers: Academic organising and its gender effects', *Gender, Work and Organization,* vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 194-212, doi: 10.1111/1468-0432.t01-1-00011

Brandt, D, Cushman, E, Ruggles Gere, A, Herrington, A, Miller, RE, Villanueva, V, Lu, M-Z & Kirsch, G 2001, 'The politics of the personal. Storying our lives against the grain', *College English,* vol. 64, no. 1, pp. 41-62, doi: 10.58680/ce20011239

Brown, P 2013, *Augustine of Hippo: A biography,* University of California Press, Berkeley.

Cancun, FM & Oliker, SJ 2000, *Caring and gender,* Pine Forge Press, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Care Collective (Chatzidakis, A, Hakim, J, Littler, J, Rottenberg, C & Segal, L) 2021, *The care manifesto: The politics of interdependence,* Verso, London.

Chang, H 2016, 'Autoethnography in health research: Growing pains?' *Qualitative Health Research,* vol. 26, no. 4, pp. 443-451, doi: 10.1177/1049732315627432

Chang, H, Ngunjiri, F& Hernandez KC 2013, *Collaborative autoethnography,* Routledge, Abingdon.

Chirrey, D 2003, '"I hereby come out": What sort of speech act is coming out?', *Journal of Sociolinguistics,* vol. 7, pp. 24-37, doi: 10.1111/1467-9481.00209

Cohen, L, Duberley J & Musson, G 2009, 'Work-life balance? An autoethnographic exploration of everyday home-work dynamics', *Journal of Management Inquiry,* vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 229-241, doi: 10.1177/1056492609332316

Davoudi, L, McKenna, C & Olegario, R 2018, 'The historical role of the corporation in society', *Journal of the British Academy,* vol. 6, no.1, pp. 17–47, doi: 10.5871/jba/006s1.017

Delamont, S 2009, 'The only honest thing: Ethnography, reflexivity and small crises in fieldwork', *Ethnography and Education,* vol. 4, no. 1 pp. 51-63, doi: 10.1080/17457820802703507

Dillon, PJ 2012, 'Unbalanced: An autoethnography of fatherhood in academe', *Journal of Family Communication,* vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 284-299, doi: 10.1080/15267431.2012.686945

Eifert, EK, Adams, R, Dudley, W & Perko M 2015, 'Family caregiver identity: A literature review', *American Journal of Health Education,* vol. 46, no. 6, pp. 357-367, 10.1080/19325037.2015.1099482

Ellis, C, Adams, TE & Bochner AP 2011, 'Autoethnography: An overview', *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung [Forum: Qualitative Social Research],* vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 1–18, doi: 10.17169/fqs-12.1.1589

Ellis, C & Bochner A 1996, Composing ethnography: Alternative forms of qualitative writing, AltaMira Press, Walnut Creek, CA:.

European Parliament and Council of the European Union, *Directive (EU) 2019/1158 on Work-Life Balance of 20 June 2019,* viewed 10 October 2024, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019L1158&from=EN

Family Carers Ireland 2023, *Analysis of gender in the state of caring survey 2022*, viewed 10 October 2024, https://familycarers.ie/media/3369/analysis-of-gender-in-the-state-of-caring-survey-2022-family-carers-ireland.pdf

Friedman, SD, Christensen, P & DeGroot, J 1998, 'Work and life: The end of the zero-sum game', *Harvard Business Review,* vol. 76, no. 6, pp. 119-129, PMID: 10187242

Gilmore, L 2017, *Tainted witness: Why we doubt what women say about their lives*, Columbia University Press, New York.

Hagaman, S 2023, '(Post)confessional mode and psychological surveillance in *The Crown* and *Fleabag*', *Medical Humanities,* vol. 49, no.4, pp. 650–658, doi: 10.1136/medhum-2022-012598

Hakim, C 2000, *Work-lifestyle choices in the twenty-first century: preference theory*, Oxford University Press, New York.

Hakim, C 2006, 'Women, careers, and work-life preferences', *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling,* vol. 34, no. 3, pp. 270–294, doi: 10.1080/03069880600769118

Hayano, DM 1979, 'Auto-ethnography: Paradigms, problems, and prospects', *Human Organization*, vol. 38, no. 1, pp. 99–104, doi: 10.17730/humo.38.1.u761n5601t4g318v

Health Service Executive n.d., *Carers support*, viewed 19 August 2024, https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/3/carerssupport/

Izak, M, Shortt, H & Case, P 2002, 'Learning to inhabit the liquid liminal world of work: An auto-ethnographic visual study of work-life boundary transitions', *Management Learning,* vol. 54, no. 2, pp. 198-222, doi: 10.1177/13505076211070359

Johnson, B, Kavanagh P & Mattson K 2003, Steal this university: The rise of the corporate university and the academic labour movement, Routledge, New York.

Kim, J-H 2016, *Understanding narrative inquiry: The crafting and analysis of stories as research*, SAGE, Los Angeles.

Krasny, L n.d., 'How to keep your personal life private at work', *WikiHow*, viewed 20 August 2024, https://www.wikihow.com/Keep-Your-Personal-Life-Private-at-Work

Lederman, S 2023, 'The enduring radicality of Hannah Arendt', *German Studies Review,* vol. 46, no. 1, pp. 145–151, doi: 10.1353/gsr.2023.0016

Livia, A & Hall, K 1997, *Queerly phrased: Language, gender, and sexuality*, Oxford University Press, doi: 10.13140/2.1.4286.8801

MagShamhráin, R 2024, 'Post-confession: What to do with carers in academia', Keynote address, *Trinity College Dublin Medical Humanities Symposium*.

Marks A, Mallet, O & Skountridaki, L 2024, 'The (over) burden of work', in S Proctor (ed.), *A research agenda for work and employment*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, pp. 198–205.

Mazak, CM 2019, 'Babies taught me how to "do" academia: Crafting a career in an institution that was not built for mothers', in R Murray & D Mifsud (eds.), *The positioning and making of female professors: Pushing career advancement open*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, pp. 75–87.

McDonald, BD & Hatcher, W 2023, *Work-life balance in higher education*, Routledge, Abingdon.

Miyahara, M & Fukao, A 2022, 'Exploring the use of collaborative autoethnography as a tool for facilitating the development of researcher reflexivity', *System*, vol. 105, no. 10, doi: 10.1016/j.system.2022.102751

Mayer, C 2016, 'Reinventing the corporation', *Journal of the British Academy*, vol. 4, pp. 53–72, doi: 10.85871/jba/004.053

Missouri University of Science and Technology, *Work/life balance*, viewed 24 June 2024, https://hr.mst.edu/total-rewards/work-life-balance/

Monroe K, Ozyurt S, Wrigley T & Alexander A 2008, 'Gender equality in academia: Bad news from the trenches, and some possible solutions', *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 215-233, doi:10.1017/S1537592708080572

Moreau M-P 2016, 'Regulating the student body/ies: University policies and student parents', *British Educational Research Journal*, vol. 42, no. 5, pp. 906-925, doi: 10.1002/berj.3234

Montgomery, R & Kosloski, K 2013, 'Pathways to a caregiver identity and implications for support services', in R Talley & R Montgomery (eds.), *Caregiving across the lifespan: Research, practice, policy*, Springer, New York, pp. 131–156.

Oxford, E 2008, 'Still second among equals', *Times Higher Education*, 27 March 2008, viewed 24 June 2024, https://www.timeshighereducation.com/features/still-second-among-equals/401204.article

Philip, W 1999, 'Tropes and parodies of capitalist biography: Carnegie's "Gospel of Wealth" vs. Herrick's "Memoirs"', *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, vol. 32, no.1, pp. 17–34, (Online JSTOR http://www.jstor.org/stable/44029417)

Pleck, JH 1977, 'The work-family role system', *Social Problems*, vol. 24, no. 4, pp. 417-427, doi: 10.1525/sp.1977.24.4.03a00040

Sernau, S 2023, *Social inequality in a global age*, 7th edn, Sage, Thousand Oaks.

Shields D 2000, 'Symbolic convergence and special communication theories: Sensing and examining dis/enchantment with the theoretical robustness of critical autoethnography', *Communication Monographs*, vol. 67, no. 4, pp. 392-421, doi: 10.1080/03637750009376519

Sicard, G 1953, *Germain Sicard: Aux origines des sociétés anonymes: Les moulins de Toulouse au Moyen Age [The origins of corporations: The mills of Toulouse in the Middle Ages]*, Armand Colin, Paris.

van Dijk, T 2023, 'Manifestos as social movement discourse', in C-R Caldas Coulthard & M Coulthard (eds.), *Text and practices revisited: Essential readings in critical discourse analysis*, 2nd edn, Routledge, London, pp. 113–133.

Tulshyan, R 2024, *Inclusion on purpose: An intersectional approach to creating a culture of belonging at work*, MIT Press, Cambridge.

Tzanakou, C & Pearce, R 2019, 'Moderate feminism within or against the neoliberal university? The example of Athena SWAN', *Gender, Work and Organization*, vol. 26, no. 8, pp. 1191-1211, doi: 10.1111/gwao.12336

University College Cork 2022, *People and culture*, viewed 24 June 2024, https://www.ucc.ie/en/academy/people-culture/

University College Dublin n.d., *Worklife charter*, viewed 24 June 2024, https://www.ucd.ie/agfood/t4media/WorkLifeBalance_P1_V2.jpg

University of Houston Downtown n.d., *Healthy boundaries and work life balance*, viewed 24 June 2024, https://www.uhd.edu/documents/hr/work-life/spring-2023-staff-retreat-presentations.pdf

University of South Florida n.d., *Work-life integration*, viewed 24 June 2024, https://myusf.usfca.edu/human-resources/learning-and-development/work-life-integration

Yarrow, E & Johnston, K 2023, 'Athena SWAN: "Institutional peacocking" in the neoliberal university', *Gender, Work and Organization*, vol. 30, no. 3, pp. 757–772, doi: 10.1111/gwao.12941

Ziker, J, Demps, K, Nolin, D & Genuchi, M 2013, *Time Allocation Workload Knowledge Study, Phase 1 Report*, viewed 10 October 2024, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/308761975_Time_Allocation_Workload_Knowledge_Study_Phase_1_Report