

Palgrave Studies in Gender and Education

Series Editor

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This Series aims to provide a comprehensive space for an increasingly diverse and complex area of interdisciplinary social science research: gender and education. Because the field of women and gender studies is developing rapidly and becoming ‘internationalised’ – as are traditional social science disciplines such as sociology, educational studies, social geography, and so on – there is a greater need for this dynamic, global Series that plots emerging definitions and debates and monitors critical complexities of gender and education. This Series has an explicitly feminist approach and orientation and attends to key theoretical and methodological debates, ensuring a continued conversation and relevance within the well-established, inter-disciplinary field of gender and education.

The Series combines renewed and revitalised feminist research methods and theories with emergent and salient public policy issues. These include pre-compulsory and post-compulsory education; ‘early years’ and ‘lifelong’ education; educational (dis)engagements of pupils, students and staff; trajectories and intersectional inequalities including race, class, sexuality, age and disability; policy and practice across educational landscapes; diversity and difference, including institutional (schools, colleges, universities), locational and embodied (in ‘teacher’–‘learner’ positions); varied global activism in and beyond the classroom and the ‘public university’; educational technologies and transitions and the (ir)relevance of (in) formal educational settings; and emergent educational mainstreams and margins. In using a critical approach to gender and education, the Series recognises the importance of probing beyond the boundaries of specific territorial-legislative domains in order to develop a more international, intersectional focus. In addressing varied conceptual and methodological questions, the Series combines an intersectional focus on competing – and sometimes colliding – strands of educational provisioning and equality and ‘diversity’, and provides insightful reflections on the continuing critical shift of gender and feminism within (and beyond) the academy.

More information about this series at
<http://www.springer.com/series/14626>

Briony Lipton • Elizabeth Mackinlay

We Only Talk Feminist Here

Feminist Academics, Voice and Agency
in the Neoliberal University

palgrave
macmillan

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*This book is dedicated to
all those academics who
dare to talk feminist
in the contemporary university*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank friends and colleagues who have talked feminist with us, who have shared secrets and spoken into the silence, who have revealed disturbing accounts of misogyny, and given voice to stories of great determination. Our conversations with you became the flesh of life on the bones of writing this book and your courage and bravery continues to inspire us in our lifelong endeavour to destroy the joint. This book began as a shared desire to tell a different story about the neoliberal university from our perspectives as feminist academics. This yearning soon took shape as a conference paper presented first at the 2015 Gender and Education Association conference at the University of Roehampton, and then at the 2015 Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia conference in Melbourne. We are grateful for the feedback we received from conference delegates and reviewers to go further and ask more difficult and uncomfortable kinds of questions. Standing alongside us are our partners, children, families, and friends who speak feminist too, and whose belief in our project has never wavered. We cannot tell you how much we value the space you have made in your lives for us to write our feminist selves. Liz thanks Gordon, Macsen, and Hamish for the fresh pots of coffee waking her in the morning, conversations which helped her work through our confusions late at night, cuddles in the morning from small and big arms that simply wanted to show her their love, and nourishing meals placed on the table to provide her with food for her body, mind, and soul. She would also like to thank those who stand alongside in her workplace to proudly say the ‘f’ word. Briony gives heartfelt thanks to her colleagues and companions at the Australian National University for their

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INTERLUDES

In the contemporary university there can be upwards of 30,000 beings crammed into one campus. Some will rise to the top of the tower in just a few decades, for some, it only takes a few years. At the top, these individuals will grow in strength, while down below, on the forest floor, younger saplings are less restrained. Every new generation fights it out. These are battles we can only see by accelerating time. They must get light if they are to survive. They squeeze, crush, and even cut one another in order to reach it. Despite the thick canopy above, some light does filter down and allows a few low light specialists to bloom near the forest floor.

*

Eastern grey kangaroos live out on the grassy Australian plains. Last season's joeys are fast approaching independence, which means they will soon be early career roos (ECRs) and their supervisors will be ready to find new doctoral students. This is how these macropods are able to secure more government funding and live within the commercial harvest areas of Australia. The most dominant kangaroo is likely to 'father' the next generation of research that can be exported and patented, and that is something individuals are taught is worth fighting for. Joeys also fight but it is just a form of play fighting. It's a way of learning skills important later in their careers. But it's not always a fair fight. Fortunately some little ones have supportive peers to help them fend off the university bullies. Here we see a female kangaroo down by the watering hole, awaiting her take-away skinny latte amongst the troop of undergraduates hopping to and from lectures, and the other academics, like herself, meeting their mates and seeking out rivals for meetings and interviews.

*

Academia. Here, every living thing must fight for its space. Such beauty, but the flower is self-serving, enticing animals to unwitting alliance. Stingless bees. They have to work hard. The forest flowers make them do so by rationing their nectar, forcing each bee to visit, and so, pollinate a thousand blooms each day. For the bees, it is worth the effort, for they need the nectar to make honey. It's so precious they keep it hidden behind lock and key; password protected technologies, and publishing contracts. But their secret is out. Nothing is safe in this university. The honey badger. Homo academicus-economicus. The ideal academic. He is *The Man of Reason* (Lloyd 1984). He is Benchmark Man, and he loves honey. He seems oblivious to danger. A fall from the top of the ivory tower could be fatal. But he only needs a bigger stick. Only he has the ability to sneak into a stingless bees nest. Academics are extremely intelligent but none are born with the skill. Youngsters must learn by watching. The honey badger uses tools to get to the honey, and in doing so, destroys what took the stingless bees years to create. In academia, nothing is safe.