

## BIROn - Birkbeck Institutional Research Online

Chatrakul Na ayudhya, Uracha and Kunter, A. and Woods Harley, Kayleigh and Edwards, I. and Nicholas, Holly and Habib, Isabelle and Sheath, Janet (2024) "I know I'm not going to have to heal from this": Women university workers' collective writing on 'office housework' as a space for building collective care, healing, and hope. *Gender, Work & Organization* , ISSN 0968-6673.

Downloaded from: <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/id/eprint/54399/>

*Usage Guidelines:*

Please refer to usage guidelines at <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/policies.html>

or alternatively


contact [lib-eprints@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:lib-eprints@bbk.ac.uk).

## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

WILEY

The Answer Lies in Our Humanity: Research and Methodologies That Facilitate Healing and Hope

# “I know I'm not going to have to heal from this”: Women university workers' collective writing on “office housework” as a space for building collective care, healing, and hope

Uracha Chatrakul Na Ayudhya<sup>1</sup>  | Aylin Kunter<sup>2</sup> |  
 Kayleigh Woods Harley<sup>3</sup> | Isobel Edwards<sup>4</sup> | Sarah Molyneaux<sup>5</sup> |  
 Holly Nicholas<sup>6</sup> | Isabelle Habib<sup>7</sup> | Janet Sheath<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>People, Work and Organizational Psychology, Birkbeck Business School, Birkbeck, University of London, London, UK

<sup>2</sup>Essex Business School, University of Essex, Colchester, UK

<sup>3</sup>Planning & Strategic Projects, Birkbeck, University of London, London, UK

<sup>4</sup>Student Engagement and Communications, University of London Worldwide, University of London, London, UK

<sup>5</sup>School of Creative Arts, Culture and Communication and Registry Services, Birkbeck, University of London, London, UK

<sup>6</sup>Birkbeck, University of London, London, UK

<sup>7</sup>Access and Engagement, Birkbeck, University of London, London, UK

## Correspondence

Uracha Chatrakul Na Ayudhya, People, Work and Organizational Psychology, Birkbeck Business School, Birkbeck, University of London, London, UK.

Email: [u.chatrakulnaayudhya@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:u.chatrakulnaayudhya@bbk.ac.uk)

## Abstract

How can we, as women university workers, assert collective writing as a form of resistance to embody our collective and individual struggles and convert them into words? We are a collective of five professional service and three academic women workers who came together to answer this question through writing about our performance of office housework and the gendered invisibility we experienced. We share our collective writing practices as a methodology to create connections and healing between workers divided along neoliberal and patriarchal university structures. Our work offers feminist epistemic resistance through the intentional joining of women university workers as co-producers of knowledge, following the tradition of feminist consciousness-raising groups. Our analysis problematizes the individualization of office housework. It illustrates how saying “no” individualistically is often elusive, because doing so displaces the work onto colleagues with less structural power; nor enough if we are

This is an open access article under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) License, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

© 2024 The Author(s). *Gender, Work & Organization* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

to advance the goal of collectively reimagining how this crucial, yet invisible work can be redistributed more equally amongst all workers. Our collective writing affirms the need for office housework to be recognized and revalued as important and indispensable work that sustains the functioning of our higher education institutions, especially in times of uncertainty and crisis.

#### KEYWORDS

collective care, collective writing, feminist consciousness-raising, gendered invisibility, invisible work, office housework, writing differently

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

I know I'm not going to have to heal from this.

Relief and hope filled our virtual writing room as these words were spoken and met with recognition from the group. "This" refers to our collective writing sessions that we nurtured over 15 months, where we came together to write and share our individual stories of "office housework." As a writing collective, we are eight women who work in professional service and academic roles at three UK higher education institutions. We have experienced and witnessed the harmful effects of the UK higher education sector's neoliberalization (Seymour, 2022), driven by the logics of the "free market" and managerialism (Bal & Dóci, 2018; Heijstra et al., 2017b; Nordback et al., 2022). This has led our sector to prioritize research and teaching that are "profitable for private interests, rather than (...) critical thinking and community well-being" and "views students as individual customers rather than holistic members of larger communities, and views faculty as education managers" (Richter et al., 2020, pp. 1016–1017). Competition between universities is rife. In turn, collegiality is disappearing (Heijstra et al., 2017b) and internal competition has become the name of the game, played out between individuals in the same department and between academic and professional service departments. This has led to an uncritical assumption that professional service staff are the beneficiaries of the neoliberal drive, without exploring the harms perpetrated on both sides or accounting for the inequitable effects of intersecting characteristics such as gender, race, and seniority (Richter et al., 2020; Seymour, 2022).

Within this context we offer our collective writing practices as a form of hopeful disruption to the hegemonic drive for "excellence" (Heijstra, Einarsdóttir, et al., 2017; Nordback et al., 2022) through individualistic competition that fosters division and harm (Hurd & Singh, 2021) in a sector that claims to work for the greater good. Our collective writing draws attention to the gendered invisibility we have experienced as women university workers through the concept of office housework, which is work that is often invisibilized and undervalued yet needs to be done. It differs from "glamour work", which is visible, recognized and valued (William & Multhaup, 2018), because it is rarely rewarded with progression and promotion within the organization. Examples of office housework include organizing gifts, setting up meetings, ordering refreshments and food, and other forms of background service work that entails care work as social reproductive labor. Hester (2018, p. 1) describes social reproduction as being "broadly consisted of directly caring for oneself and others". We have carved out space to engage in reflexive dialogue through writing, talking, and reflecting on our stories of office housework, and reimagining together so that "little by little, this can undermine the structures and practices of domination" (Cunliffe, 2002, p. 37). Our

collective writing practices have been developed as both a form of feminist solidarity and consciousness-raising for workers who have experienced structural oppression and as a methodology for healing and hope within and beyond the neoliberal academy.

With this article we make three contributions. The first is our epistemic resistance through the intentional joining of women university workers as co-producers of knowledge across neoliberal divides of professional service and academic. The second is through our development of collective writing practices as a methodology to create connections and healing between workers divided along organizational, professional, socio-economic, cultural, and political structures. The third is through our stories as women university workers who actively resist the oppositional binary of professional services versus academic and how we problematize the individualization of office housework by going beyond teaching ourselves and others to say “no” better. Our collective writing illuminates how our office housework contributions and roles were intricately connected to the fundamental needs of our higher education institutions and that to understand this role as a facet of the individual would be to overlook the wider and deeper information this gives us about the state of the institution and its community. Through our stories, we affirm the need for office housework to be revalued as important and indispensable care work that sustains the entire institutional and social systems (Tronto, 1987).

## 2 | COLLECTIVE WRITING AS A SPACE FOR BUILDING FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING, SOLIDARITY, AND RESISTANCE

Our writing collective serves as a feminist consciousness-raising group, which represents “the major technique of analysis, structure of organization, method of practice, and theory of social change of the women's movement” (MacKinnon, 1982, p. 519). In consciousness-raising, the importance of learning about patriarchy as a system of domination is emphasized (hooks, 2000a). Firth and Robinson (2016, p. 347) argue that feminist knowledge production today is “largely the preserve of specialist academics and media figures, who define what counts as feminist knowledge”. This has shifted from the height of the second-wave feminist movement in the 1970s, when “knowledge defined as “feminist” generally arose from the knowledge-production activities of women in consciousness-raising groups, who were not defined as intellectual specialists” (Firth & Robinson, 2016, p. 347). Our collective writing is both a symbolic and material form of resistance against the regressive practice of making women who are “not specialist knowledge-producers become objects of knowledge who are spoken “about” and “for”, rather than contributing to knowledge-production” (Firth & Robinson, 2016, p. 347).

Embedded in our collective writing is the practice of collective care based on a political notion of solidarity, activism and affective action, rather than the more commercially associated lens of “self-care” as a supplementary act to bandage over the ills of modern life (hooks, 2000a). Prasad and Prasad (2000) argue that solidarity is a socially constructed category emerging through multiple interpretations of workplace actors and academic researchers. This has led to an increase in ethnographic studies looking at acts of solidarity, which “primarily alert us to the rich and often unanticipated ways in which resistance is enacted in organizations” (Prasad & Prasad, 2000, p. 388). Therefore, solidarity can work as an interplay between individual and collective action and interpretation. Solidarity can be understood less as a rigid and fixed perspective and more as a dialectical relationship between the unsaid and untold stories that then become visible (Mumby, 2005).

Vachhani and Pullen (2019, p. 3), in their conceptualization of feminist solidarity, argue that the personal is political and yet “little consideration has been given to the ways in which public/private spaces represent flexible and fluid forms of personal resistance and whether this initiates, or diminishes, the empowerment of women at both individual and collective levels in and beyond formal organization”. Affective solidarity is particularly relevant to our collective writing as a form of resistance against the undervalued and “shitwork” that women are often asked to do (Kouki & Chatzidakis, 2021). It is also a reaction to the emotional dissonance between “who we are” and “who we are expected to be by the white supremacist patriarchal society”, shaped by gender, race, and class

(hooks, 1984). Affect exists in the form of rage, frustration, and the desire for connection (Hemmings, 2012; Segal, 2017). hooks (1984) argues that as women, we must overcome our differences to build solidarity by uniting behind our frustration and anger, toward a liberatory feminist politics and agenda. By coming together to write about our experiences of office housework, we create a safe, empathetic space for feminist solidarity in the fullness of our individual experiences of being and feeling.

## 2.1 | Our methodological inspirations

Central to our inquiry is the question of “how can we, as women across the professional services and academic divide, assert collective writing as a form of resistance, emerging from the bottom up, enabling us to embody our collective and individual struggles and convert them into words?” Writing collectively can be seen as a methodology for nurturing solidarity through raising our own and each other's voices in the hope that they are heard (Author A). Our coming together was realized through our shared experience of struggle, of (un)well-being, of feeling isolated and exploited within the neoliberal university environment. Through our collective writing practices, we are “joining the line of those who are determined to write differently” (Ahonen et al., 2020, p. 460), rooted in a deep desire to resist scientific and patriarchal norms of academic writing (Boncori & Smith, 2019; Gilmore et al., 2019). We embedded the act of “engaging in dialogue (oral or written) with self/others/other” (Cunliffe, 2002, p. 38) in our collective writing practices and the presentation of our writings by weaving extracts from our collective writing throughout this paper.

Collaborative autoethnographic writings (Nordback et al., 2022; Cruz et al., 2020; Reyes et al., 2021) inspired our collective writing practices. When writing autoethnographically, we increase our sense of familiarity by laying out a map of our “communities” and retracing the journey that brought us to them (Kondo, 1990). It enables us to delve into our own cultures, and to better understand and reflect on our experiences. According to Pink (2004), critical ethnographic approaches to understanding organizational culture do not take account of the researcher's level of immersion in the subject or wholeness of the account. We recognize “an inescapable partiality and partisanship” (Pink, 2004, p.510) in autoethnographic work. Martin (1992) puts forward a fragmentation perspective which focuses on ambiguity as the essence of culture. For instance, there may be uncertainty about an organization's concern for worker wellbeing. Formal and informal practices, as well as cultural forms, are interpreted and re-interpreted in a variety of ways and workers are unsure which interpretations are correct, and which are not. This has implications for how we, as members of the organizational culture under analysis, interpret office housework as an invisible, unspoken, unacknowledged, yet widespread organizational practice. We present our office housework stories as an ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967), which treats practical activities, circumstances, and sociological reasoning as topics of empirical study. By paying attention to the most commonplace activities of daily life usually accorded to extraordinary events, we seek to learn about them as phenomena in their own right (Garfinkel, 1967, p.1). We recognize our written stories as impressionist tales in line with Van Maanen's (1988) three types of ethnographic accounts (realist, confessional and impressionist). Impressionist tales present a personal account that does not aim to generalize or speak to a grand narrative, but rather to shed a light on a particular contextual event, in order to care for and help others in a similar situation. It asks the question, “how did this happen?” rather than “how often does it happen?” (Van Maanen, 1988). By combining ethnomethodology with the collective writing approach, we present a *collective ethnomethodology*.

## 2.2 | Contextualizing our writing collective and its formation

We begin with a chain autoethnography describing how we came to work on this project together. We have agreed to anonymize all the written accounts used throughout this work, keeping our identities as Writer 1, 2 and so on.

Edwards (2021) reminds us that care must always be taken in autoethnographic writing, because while we write about ourselves, we are relational beings, and our stories involve others. Therefore, we anonymize information about anyone included in our writing (Liu, 2019) in a way that allows us to be accountable for our stories and do no harm to ourselves and others (Sparkes, 2024).

**Writer 5:**

Who gets asked to do jobs in the organization that need to be done, yet are unrecognized and undervalued by the organization? Writer 1 urged me to think about this question for many years as fellow academic women of color who worked together in the same UK higher education institution.

**Writer 1:**

We found ourselves talking, and searching for answers. Why were certain things happening to us within this system of Higher education, work and family life. We had both obtained our PhDs almost 20 years ago. So much had happened since. We talked about gender, race, family and work-life balance. We're both mums, and we are both academics. I felt that we were confused, and perhaps, looking for answers.

**Writer 2:**

When I organized a talk on office housework for Astrea, our network for professional service women, I thought it would be quite a straightforward, informative talk for those who, like me, hadn't come across the term before. But it focused much more on how our identities interact with our treatment and behavior in the workplace. It was interactive and confessional in nature.

**Writer 5:**

We were heartened by Astrea members' willingness to write and share their stories. This was how our research evolved and expanded into a co-creation research project. We also used the session as an invitation for our colleagues to participate in a non-traditional research project, where we centered collective voices in our knowledge co-production.

**Writer 6:**

My initial pull to join this group, in all honesty, was a sense of obligation. As a member, and then Chair of Astrea, I felt it was only right that I took part. Ironically, it was exactly this sense of obligation, responsibility and conscientiousness that I found in the other members of the group, both academics and professional services, and what made the subsequent discussions so pertinent to me.

**Writer 3:**

My role at the university was solitary at the time and was missing an outlet to discuss my experiences. I was still getting to grips with the strange realities and unspoken divisions between academics and professional services. I saw it as an opportunity to reflect on the challenges and rewards of the work I had been a part of so far and a chance to meet other women who had similar but differing experiences of Higher Education.

**Writer 7:**

I was already attracted to the project as it had stemmed from the excellent and valuable women's network, and I continued to come along because it increasingly felt like a parallel universe, where initially I acted out the dynamics and culture of the workplace around us - emotions and anger felt jarring, what can and can't I say - but soon its dimensions were unlike anything I was experiencing in the workplace proper.

**Writer 8:**

I was drawn to the healing quality of the group and to the understanding that the invisible emotional demands of emotional labor which are built into the office housework role needed a safe container in which office houseworkers can process their own emotional needs. It is no surprise that we continue to meet and to share a connection which has meaning beyond the research and perhaps points to the need for a healing space for workers and houseworkers too.

### 2.3 | Our collective writing practices: What and how we wrote together

We chose office housework as a recurring topic and concept for our writing sessions and discussions as it exposes “the depths of intimate wounds” (hooks, 2000a, p. 8). We developed a practice of meeting online every few weeks from July 2021 to October 2022, where, together, we wrote, read out loud and discussed. Each meeting lasted an hour, starting with a brief check-in, where members were invited to share how their week was going. This was followed by a timed writing session of around 30 min. We muted our microphones and stayed online, optionally having our cameras on, while writing personal stories of office housework. We then rejoined our collective space, where each writer was encouraged to share their writing while the unspeaking members actively listened. We then reflected on how it felt to read aloud our stories of hurt and pain. This was followed by a group reflection on what we heard, a kind of “dialogue between comrades that is a gesture of love” (hooks, 1989, p. 16). Each collective writing session served “as a healing ritual” and enabled us to “gain the strength to challenge patriarchal forces at work” (hooks, 2000a, p. 8).

We worked toward a non-hierarchical space for reflexive (written and oral) dialogue, yet we are aware of the inherent variety of power dynamics and expectations between professional services and academic staff within the academic context. For instance, the academic members of this collective had written and published qualitative research before. We do, however, see value in how these dynamics can work in harmony, creating a new understanding of office housework. In this spirit, we aim to continue producing outputs beyond the conventional academic sphere, such as convening more collective writing groups with university workers beyond those involved in this paper.

## 3 | WHAT IS OFFICE HOUSEWORK AND WHY IS IT CONSIDERED UNDESIRABLE WORK?

Here we discuss office housework, its conceptualizations and its characterizations in public discourse and scholarly literature. First, we consider how it has been mainstreamed as a gendered, yet individualistic phenomenon. We argue that this framing risks stifling any collective reimagining of office housework as something necessary or valuable, if recognized. Second, we turn to the literature that examines the structural power dynamics manifesting office housework as unfavorable (gendered) work.

### 3.1 | The mainstreaming of office housework as “non-promotable” menial and low-level work

In recent years in the UK, the concept of office housework has entered popular public conversations, particularly its gendered and unequal distribution in the workplace. *The Guardian* describes office housework as “a never-ending list of tasks that are work-related, but not quite work. Many, if not most, working women accept it as just part of the job. But taking one for the team could be holding all women back” (Hunt, 2022). Similarly, *The Big Issue* says:

“Consider all the tasks you do each day at work, how many aren't actually part of your job description? Those bits and bobs that keep everything running smoothly, but go largely unnoticed and taken for granted are essentially ‘office housework’” (Breese, 2022).

The emerging public discourse around office housework has been shaped by academic research, most recently Babcock et al. (2017, 2022), who wrote *The No Club: Putting a Stop to Women's Dead End Work*. They have featured in newspaper and magazine articles arguing that office housework is partly what stops women achieving gender equality in the workplace (Hunt, 2022). Babcock et al. (2017) focus on “non-promotable tasks,” including office housework, because “there are dead-end jobs to be done in all industries, not just those that occupy office space” (Breese, 2022). They acknowledge the gendered nature and allocation of non-promotable tasks, having found that women spend around 200 h per year more on non-promotable tasks than men. They described three characteristics: first, they are “not instrumental to your organization's mission” and not “directly connected to the bottom line” (Babcock et al., 2022, p. 3); second, they are invisible; third, non-promotable tasks “may not require specialized skills and many can do them” (p. 4).

Babcock et al. (2022, pp. 4–5) provide two reasons why women feel pressured to say “yes” to non-promotable tasks: power differentials where “we often feel the urgency of a request, even more so if it comes from someone more powerful or higher up” and workers', especially women's, tendency to internalize other people's expectations, and feel “guilty about failing to live up to these expectations”. Their solution to the unequal distribution of non-promotable tasks is to empower women to say “no”. Despite acknowledging the structural power asymmetry in its distribution, their solution suggests that the problem is located with the individual (woman) worker, rather than neoliberal and patriarchal systems of domination. Breese (2022) points to the limitations of this individualistic approach, acknowledging that “while women should say no more often, they will continue to face backlash for this unless there is structural change”.

We argue that this conceptualization of non-promotable tasks is inherent to neoliberal logics, where “everything becomes instrumental to generate profitability, including labor and people in organizations ... people are merely instrumental to the achievement of organizational goals” (Bal & Dóci, 2018, p. 539). This logic is also reflected in Jang et al.'s (2021) quantitative study on office housework, which draws on gender role theory to ask, “does gender matter?” They report that women carried out more office housework than men and reduce office housework to “menial administrative tasks that keep an office running” (Jang et al., 2021, p. 794). They argue that their findings extend the existing literature on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) by distinguishing “low value” behaviors from “high value” ones, thereby adding a new dimension not previously considered. We contend that Jang et al.'s (2021) conceptualization of office housework as “menial” and “low value” upholds the neoliberal logic of instrumentality, compounding the devaluation and invisibility of this necessary work.

### 3.2 | When office housework fails to be counted as “real” work: An underlying problem of patriarchal and neoliberal structures

The above conceptualizations of office housework also reproduce the neoliberal logic of individualism, where “each individual is expected to be self-interested, and to pursue maximization of one's own outcomes ... The contemporary worker has the opportunity to invent her/himself, and has a free choice over how to design her/his life and career... If one makes the wrong choice, one loses the ‘freedom to choose’ itself” (Bal & Dóci, 2018, p. 539). The result is that workers who take on office housework are made to think and feel that they have the power to refuse this devalued work and that their inability to do so is down to their personal deficiencies rather than exploitative neoliberal and patriarchal structures.

As Heijstra et al. (2017b) assert, office housework surfaces structural power inequalities and asymmetries in the workplace. This requires an examination of the structural and cultural dynamics of what gets counted as “real” work. In a US-based analysis following the murder of George Floyd in May 2020, Cooper (2021) found that women leaders were more likely than men to take on the vital responsibility for diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in their



workplace. Black women, LGBTQ + women, and women with disabilities were twice as likely as other women to spend a large portion of their time advancing DEI work in addition to their day-to-day tasks. Cooper's (2021) analysis points to the failure of organizations to recognize and reward workers undertaking this critical work, and how this risks the demotion of this work to a form of office housework. This underscores her argument that "gender and race shape what gets counted as "real" work and how valuable that work is deemed to be" (Cooper, 2021, p. 3).

Drawing on Daniels' (1987) concept of "invisible work" as "forms of women's unpaid labor like housework and volunteer work that, while integral to the functioning of society, is not regarded as work and is culturally and economically devalued", Cooper theorized that "invisible work" often exhibits as office housework in the workplace (2021, p. 3). Daniels' (1987) analysis of which activity gets counted as legitimate "work" depends on whether it is carried out within "public" (paid) or "private" (unpaid) spheres; financially remunerated; and done by women or men. Daniels (1987, p. 412) argues: "the concept of work should include all the work in the private world of the home, the volunteer work in the public sphere, and the emotional work in both public and private worlds. All these activities involve real work". This connects to Walby's (1989) theorization of western patriarchy that outlines two gender regimes of private and public patriarchy. The first relates to the domestic gender regime that existed until western industrialism, where women were largely excluded from paid work in the labor market. Before the second-wave feminist movement, childcare, housework, and other forms of reproductive labor were often considered "natural" tasks for women, an expression of love and care rather than work (Star & Strauss, 1999). The second relates to the public gender regime, where women have been allowed into the labor market, but in gender segregated jobs that have historically been "conceptually and literally tied" to housework and thus seen as low-skilled, undervalued, and paid less than jobs done by men (Heijstra, Einarsdóttir, et al., 2017).

Cooper's (2021) analysis also extends to universities, where she found that academic women, especially academic women of color, carried out more service activities, including teaching, pastoral care, and efforts to increase DEI in their institutions. Heijstra et al. (2017a, 2017b) refer to this as "academic housework", "the necessary but devalued research, teaching, administrative, and service activities that are disproportionately borne by women, newcomers, and minority groups" (Seymour, 2022, p. 13). The devaluation of this work means it receives little to no recognition or reward, becoming work that is to be avoided or outsourced. Doing more academic housework means having less time to do "real" work in academia—that of research and publication, which count as markers of "excellence" in neoliberal academic career-making (Heijstra et al., 2017b). Heijstra et al. (2017b) argue that the amount of academic housework allocated is tied to power differentials, where the ability to structure one's own time is linked to power and resources. This is why academic housework comes down excessively "on the shoulders of the more marginalized academics rather than the more senior ones, or ones with more resources available" (Heijstra et al., 2017b, p. 776).

In her autoethnographic-inspired study of gendered invisibility, Seymour (2022) provides an in-depth analysis of professional services office housework at a UK business school. She examines the context of increasing neoliberalization in universities in the UK and other Anglophone countries based on New Public Management models, which gave rise to white-collar non-academic workers in a hybrid "third space" "between formerly distinct academic and administrative realms" (Seymour, 2022, p. 1). She argues for a more precise conceptualization of "invisibility", critiquing its loose definition for failing to sufficiently capture the feminization of professional services in the neoliberal university. Seymour's (2022) analysis extends the literature with a conceptual four-part schema of gendered invisible professional services housework in the third space.

The first part is "service housework," where the professional services worker carries out invisible work such as "glue work" that "keeps things going" (Szekeres, 2011, p. 687) or the labor of emotion management. The second is "professional housework", where the work is visible but not attributed to the professional services worker or is seen as less valuable because it has been performed by them. The third is "professional-academic housework: non-academic work", "when professional staff perform distinctively academic housework" (Seymour, 2022, p. 13), such as the teaching of academic skills. Seymour (2022) queries what distinguishes this teaching from teaching research methodology, illustrating the inconsistent application of such boundaries. The final form is "professional-academic housework: academic non-status," which focuses on the unrecognition of highly valued academic work performed

by professional services workers. Her extensive analysis demonstrates that the boundaries between academic and professional services labor are muddled: “Analysis of third space shows there has been a blurring of roles and realms: academics are extensively involved in management and administrative and professional services play increasingly important roles in research and teaching...Yet the divide is both constructed and has real effects, and definitions are the preserve of the powerful” (Seymour, 2022, p. 11).

Underpinning Seymour's (2022) schema are two dimensions: the nature/realm of work (professional or academic) and the object of invisibility (the work or the worker). She argues, “no work is inherently invisible but stems from judgments about what counts as economically valuable work”. Similarly, Star and Strauss (1999) ask, “what exactly is work, and to whom it might (or should) be visible or invisible”, pointing out that what counts as work is a matter of definition and changes depending on its context. They also differentiate between “what” gets made invisible: the worker or the work. In the process of making the worker invisible when the work is visible, the worker becomes a “non-person” (Star & Strauss, 1999) and our stories testify to this. On the other hand, when the work performed by a visible worker is made invisible, the work is relegated to a “background of expectation” (Star & Strauss, 1999, p. 15), the articulation of which generates more invisible work. The object of invisibility is especially relevant for the analysis of our collective writing stories as it elucidates the experienced effects of invisibility and the harm that we have felt.

#### 4 | ANALYSIS: OFFICE HOUSEWORK STORIES ACROSS OUR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES-ACADEMIC WRITING COLLECTIVE

We now turn to our collection of intimate personal stories. In analyzing our stories, we focused on the articulations of office housework, paying attention to the forms it takes and how these manifestations shape our experiences of gendered invisibility as women university workers across the professional services and academic divide. Our stories were written and embedded in the particular time and place of the Covid lockdown that transformed how we worked, from in-person to remote working and the additional work that emerged. Our stories capture how the performance of additional tasks was largely invisible to our employers, yet still needed to be done to sustain the “ordinary” business of the university. We wrote about how we felt compelled to take on the “unclaimed” extra work, creating more layers of invisibility for the work that we do and for us as workers. This often led us to experience “double invisibility,” “the invisible (unvalued) work of an invisible worker” (Seymour, 2022, p. 13).

Furthermore, in the last few months of our collective writing project, a restructure was announced and carried out at one institution. Although office housework remained a constant theme throughout the sessions, the anxiety and anger caused by the restructure gradually overtook it as the primary topic of our writings and discussions. Several of our stories capture the experiences of this turning point. The fundamental purpose of the group remained the same in that it continued to provide a space to come together, and it served the additional, rather apt, purpose of enabling us to collectively attend to our experiences of the restructuring process while it simultaneously attempted to reinforce the divide between professional services and academic staff.

We group our stories in three collections, framed around specific aspects of our experiences of office housework. In each collection, our stories are interwoven with our interpretations and analysis.

##### 4.1 | Collection 1: Office housework as sites of patriarchal and neoliberal wounds

###### *Writer 1:*

The words ‘Who would like to send the doodle poll out’ resonate in my mind, for days, and at the next meeting, when I hear them again, and again.

She is female, young(ish) and the only one in the working group without a PhD. She was chosen by a male professor. They identify as BAME. I've seen the hierarchy from within this group, as early as meeting 1. Would I be next? Next youngest/female/brown?

I want to say something. But I've already been asked in a meeting why I'm even here. 15 years of teaching, 12 years at university. 3 degrees. 'Why are you here?' I hear asked as I quietly listen to the stories and ideas of others. Apparently I hadn't talked. Is the purpose of attending a meeting to speak?

Beforehand, I'd made it my conscious purpose to listen. To understand. Is it a symptom of a patriarchal system of work, to presume that you have only contributed to a meeting if you have spoken? If men speak more than women (white men), does this make them better employees?

So, these questions continue to resonate with me. I skip meeting 3. Should I leave the group? I decide to stay. I decide that I am worthy of being there. But I do wonder, when will the task of the doodle poll come to me? Or some other, menial, administrative no one else wants to do.

The thoughts around my 'place' in the meeting seem to center around my race, and my gender. I feel that these are things I expected, but I didn't expect race to be more of an issue than gender.

My place within the 'hierarchy' that I see emerging is unsettled, as I am new to the institution, and many of the 'hidden' expectations are also new to me. As I now navigate other meetings, sometimes with the same people, sometimes with others, I can hear the words of the professor who has asked this woman to organize any subsequent meetings.

My own sense of identity is certainly fluid, as I navigate where my place might be. I can hear my parents asking me to take plates of food over to our guests as a child. I can feel that sense of duty. Should I make the tea at work?

The stories in this collection reveal the depth and manifestation of our wounds from the patriarchal and neoliberal structures and processes of our institutions. They tell us about who gets to decide what work matters and, by default, which work is devalued and invisibilized within these systems (Seymour, 2022; Star & Strauss, 1999). Above, we highlight Writer 1's story explicating the gendered and racialized nature of office housework through an encounter that echoed familiar experiences of gendered invisibility from as far back as her childhood. Her conscious choice to actively listen in a meeting made her stand out, but for the wrong reasons. When we decide to consciously listen, we enact a form of care. Yet this is not valued and thus fails to be seen as work that matters to the organization. Both caring and listening can be experienced as gendered invisible work and a form of office housework devalued by patriarchal structures. These experiences were also echoed in other stories, presented below as extracts of our writing in a conversational flow. We allow our voices to build on each other, to demonstrate the collective power of our shared narratives:

**Writer 3:** I made a conscious decision not to help with an event that sat entirely out of my remit. I did this because I was trying to wrap up my hand-over notes, and ensure my own area of work was finalized. However, on the day of the event, the person who was responsible had no idea how to organize the caterers, set up the room or even make the coffee. When this was not done, the trustee attending the event came to me to ask why it had not been done.

**Writer 2:** I wanted to ask him: What were you thinking when you asked that? Was it my small stature, my quiet voice? Was it my eyes that looked at you, wanting to please, wanting to say yes? Unable to assert myself because that would be unreasonable. I did want to please you, but only because it's a habit I've fallen into.

**Writer 3:** Although everyone tried to pitch in, you saw the same people answering to the call of 'volunteering' to take on additional responsibilities. It was painful each time the request came through and if I stayed silent, another team member who also filled this gap on a regular basis, would put themselves forward.

**Writer 2:** I did not show you my anger. I was composed. I gave you the courtesy you hadn't shown me. Should I have been authentic? Should I have said how I felt? Why can't I be angry at work? Why do I have to calm myself? Is it because I am supposed to give you the courtesy? Is it because I am supposed to be small, quiet and just say yes?

The writers articulated experiences of performing the invisible work of emotion management when asked by those with more power to undertake office housework that was not a part of their role. This involved suppressing anger and frustration felt in the moment for the sake of courtesy and professionalism, which was not reciprocated by the individuals who inflicted the office housework.

## 4.2 | Collection 2. Is it possible to say “no” to work that needs doing but nobody sees?

**Writer 7:**

I was asked to ask my colleague whom I manage if she would be able to spend some hours helping in another department as they were understaffed. Initially I thought nothing of it but then quickly realized I was deeply opposed to it and wanted to 'shield' my colleague as I knew she would say yes. It felt too radical and uncooperative to refuse to ask her though, but I wish my line manager had not asked me to ask my colleague as I felt this devolved the moral choice down to me. Before I asked my colleague I thought of a way to phrase it to convey that I thought it was wrong, to get her to say no.

**Writer 5:**

I have decided that I would not bother her with work projects that we are meant to share, unless I am absolutely desperate and cannot meet the deadline myself. This has happened a few times. And whenever it does, I feel uncomfortable. Maybe I avoid asking my friend to take on some of the workload because I want to avoid the discomfort of asking someone I care about. Why do I feel like I need to protect her from criticism and scrutiny? What does this say about me? I'm critical of people who act as 'saviors' to others and I'm not hers. I find the idea of it gross. I feel that what I try to do for my friend is an act of care. It is quiet, hidden, and unacknowledged. It is also work.

**Writer 4:**

The idea of saying 'no' assumes that a particular request has been made which in my experience is often not the case. I find myself thinking of the many birthdays I have organized, the social events, how often I am the first to instigate conversation in the team chat. I don't have to do these things, and no-one is asking me to. What happens if I don't do them? Nothing. That is the point. Teamwork is more effective when the members

of a team are engaged and when they feel valued. I think these small efforts I make are important and my team often expresses thanks when I do them. But, if others value them then why do they not do them, and I do?

In this collection, our three excerpts offer articulations of the complexities of saying “no” to office housework. Writers 7 and 5 share the instinct of “shielding” colleagues from being asked to take on undesirable extra work. Writer 4 expresses the frustration of doing work that feels valuable but is not spoken of, not asked for, and is thus not visible. This form of office housework is one of social reproduction and care, which makes others feel seen and valued—yet the work itself is not valued. Notably, all three writers failed to receive the same shielding and care from those more senior and found themselves unable to say “no.” All writers recognized that saying “no” is an option, but one they struggled to take. Sometimes when we say “no,” we are ignored, and we must do the work nevertheless, as illustrated in Writer 3’s excerpts in Collection 1.

The three stories illustrate how Babcock et al.’s (2022) “No Club” as an answer to gendered “non-promotable tasks” does not go far enough. As we argued earlier, this approach reinforces the individualization of office housework as a form of gendered invisibility and preserves patriarchal and neoliberal logics. The stories show the labor that we undertake when grappling with the option of saying ‘no’ to work that we feel and know we should not be doing. We constantly ask ourselves and the organization, “if we do not do it, then where does it go?” We inherently understand that a key consequence of saying “no” is the displacement of the tasks onto those with less power: “if the system does not account for the matrix of visible and invisible work and its questions of equity, those at the bottom will suffer” (Star & Strauss, 1999, p. 25). We call this work is one of “double internalized invisibility,” where we erase both ourselves and our work of shielding and protecting others with less power. We do this because we do not wish to reproduce the neoliberal patriarchal exploitation and domination that we have witnessed and been subjected to ourselves. We exercise our power to stop the cycle, but at a cost to ourselves.

### 4.3 | Collection 3. Caring for each other and for the organization when the organization fails to care for us

#### **Writer 4:**

When I think about my own role, there is quite a significant amount of tidying and organizing. Not of physical space, but of the team’s files and data, notes, updates, meetings - things I would hesitate to assign to others as they are not substantial, rewarding or stimulating tasks. There is work I took on when my team was severely under-resourced over a number of years and the institution closed its ears to me and offered no solutions. My manager at the time suggested that I do less or do it worse which didn’t really feel like options—so it became part of my job. Even now I have additional staff, I keep holding onto a lot of it as I am afraid of overloading them, something I have learned to cope with.

#### **Writer 6:**

##### Role model

I am a model manager.

I model only emailing during working hours.

I model taking regular breaks,

I model leaving tasks for tomorrow—“this isn’t something that’s worth staying late for”.

When things get harder, I model only emailing during working hours (by scheduling sends for the following day).

When things get harder, I model taking regular breaks (downing coffees and glasses of wine to find respite from the stress).

When things get harder, I model leaving tasks for tomorrow—"are you sure you're okay to finish that off?" What if what I'm modeling is unattainable, unsustainable?

My superiors continue to model the good life.

Or do they?

Are they too disguising the work, because everyone else seems to be coping, right?

The stories in this collection are articulations of invisible care work toward the people we work with and the work that we do and provide further examples of care work by shielding those with less power. Writer 6's story articulates her care for a junior colleague, done through modeling "good" working practices while secretly struggling with overwork. The care for her junior colleague and the work of hiding her weekend work are both invisible work, exemplifying another form of double invisibility - of work and the (self) invisibilized worker. Writer 4 similarly wrestles with overwork, including with digi-housekeeping as invisible work (Whiting & Symon, 2020), arising from care: for others in her team, for the quality of her work, and her belief that it has purpose. Both writers hide their overwork to protect others and hesitate to allocate office housework downwards.

The last two excerpts below speak directly to the experiences of the restructure and the harm inflicted. They illustrate deep feelings of disembodiment and dehumanization. Star and Strauss (1999) conceptualize a "non-person" as someone who performs a functional role in the organization and whose work is therefore visible but is themselves invisible. In this way, the work becomes disembodied. We find this concept useful in our work to describe the dehumanizing effect of the restructure, where the worker is turned into a non-person through the process of invisibilization. The care work, undertaken to maintain the functioning of the organization during a time of uncertainty, is also invisible. This was evident in how various writers expressed feeling ignored and not valued provided the usual business was getting done. It was often apparent that the "how" and "by whom" were not considered in the decision-making process. Only the "what" was important to those with decision-making power. This echoes Star and Strauss (1999, p. 15), who write: "Formal and quantitative indicators of work are abstracted away from the work setting, and become the basis for resource allocation and decision-making".

In the process of a restructure as a neoliberal cost-saving measure, work becomes rationalized, and "features of work which emerged in stable, career oriented organizational milieux now shift dramatically. The kinds of work especially affected include tacit and contextual knowledge, the expertise acquired by old hands, and long-term teamwork" (Star & Strauss, 1999, p. 11). Thus, restructuring and rationalization not only create more care work to deal with the effects of dehumanization, but they also erase the already established care work accomplished through relationship-building. As a result, the "deleted" work needs to be reallocated and re-performed in a new situation. It is dehumanizing not to acknowledge that these relationships exist in the first place.

We present these voices in conversation, speaking to each other in the wake of the restructure announcement.

**Writer 6:** I constantly go back and forth on whether personal investment at work is a good thing. Although I'm not sure it's a choice for me to care about my work, there are obvious advantages to doing so. Work feels more purposeful, the day passes quicker, and my superiors—most of the time—would say I'm doing a good job.

**Writer 5:** Being a member of this collective has been a powerful and important experience for me. Coming together and sharing our individual stories of office housework involves vulnerability and trust from each member. One of the first things that I wanted to do after the restructure announcement was to express solidarity with the collective.

**Writer 6:** As I read through the 'position paper' that outlines the future of my organization, I begin to see some downsides to personal investment. When you put an element of yourself into your work, that work turning out badly takes something out of you.

**Writer 5:** The announcement was not surprising. But it does feel like a betrayal. It feels like all the things that our employer has asked us to do to keep things going since the start of the pandemic have been taken for granted.

**Writer 6:** What does this mean when whole roles are removed, repurposed and restructured? Rejection on a scale that will impact so many and so personally. I feel fiercely loyal to my organization, but is my organization loyal to me? If our allegiances shift from people to 'the mission', is that noble? Or oddly detached?

**Writer 5:** It feels like the care we have put into keeping things going has not been mutual. It feels like the institution does not care. When did it stop caring? Did it ever care? I know individuals who care. Care for students. Care for colleagues. And I have seen individuals who have climbed the career ladder quickly by not caring for others.

## 5 | OUR CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

Our stories make an important contribution to the understanding of office housework as gendered invisibility in three ways. First, they articulate how we (are made to) feel when we are given and/or take on office housework. The act of writing our office housework stories surfaced wounds from feeling undervalued and overlooked by our organizations. The second relates to the dynamics of power. On the one hand, we experience disempowerment when we perform office housework. On the other hand, we do this work despite having the option to say "no" precisely because we understand that it risks the displacement of office housework onto colleagues with less power than us. By enacting the office housework of care, another layer of office housework is generated. Our third contribution is that office housework is real work that matters. Far from being "menial" or "low value," it is important glue work that enables our institutions to function in times of uncertainty or crisis. Yet the invisibility of our work and ourselves as workers is most deeply felt in these contexts, where the "how" and "by whom" are omitted and only the "what" is valued by senior leaders and decision-makers (Star & Strauss, 1999).

Our analysis helps us understand that feeling like our undertaking of this vital work is "shitwork" (Kouki & Chatzidakis, 2021) is due to patriarchal and neoliberal prescriptions about what counts as economically valuable work (Seymour, 2022). Yet, as our stories testify, office housework is indispensable to the day-to-day functioning of our institutions. Tronto (1987) emphasizes the importance of context in explaining the role and the taking up of office housework. This is especially crucial in the contemporary UK context of higher education sector uncertainty and crisis. Trust is important at such times, yet it is difficult for workers to maintain any in the organization, or in how their work is represented by senior decision-makers (Star & Strauss, 1999). Our stories depict how we are turned into disembodied and dehumanized (invisible) workers whose work is invisibilized in a matrix concerned only for the "bottom line."

We have examined the origins of the devaluation of certain types of work in patriarchal systems where reproductive labor and care have traditionally been regarded as women's work for the private realm (Daniels, 1987; Walby, 1989). We follow Cardozo's (2017) and Seymour's (2022) calls for the concept of "housework" to be revalued. Our analysis exposes why the "No Club" alone is not enough, as it maintains the pejorative status of office housework. As women workers, we fully advocate the power of saying "no" and its central role in developing one's critical agency. But doing so individualistically is not enough if we are to advance the call for this crucial work to be

redistributed more equally amongst all workers across divides (Seymour, 2022). Reevaluation of this work by workers, employers, institutions, and society is urgently needed to end the tainted connotation of office housework.

We started out by asking the question, “how can we, as women across the professional services and academic divide, connect the lived experiences of office housework to the possibilities of writing differently together as a form of collective care and solidarity?” Our coming together as women university workers to co-produce knowledge across neoliberal divides has enabled us to realize our ambition of epistemic resistance in two ways. The first is, through our collective writing practices, enabling the knowledge co-production activities of women in feminist consciousness-raising activities (Firth & Robinson, 2016). We contribute to the literature on “writing differently” and stand on the shoulders of those who have opened the gates for more collaborative and democratic research. We thank them and hope that we have contributed to this discussion in the spirit of collective action and solidarity.

The second is by subverting the practice of “academic excellence” through academic publication. One reviewer invited us to reflect on our decision to choose an academic forum to speak out, which might risk favoring the academic researchers among us and turning our collective feminist experience into “academic,” “respectable” work. Our collective writing sessions and stories have captured the affinity many professional services worker-members have to academia, holding postgraduate degrees and choosing to work in the university sector because of our academic backgrounds. The professional services and academic members of our group deeply believe in the importance of making visible our extensive experiences of invisible office housework as a feminist practice. Getting this paper into the academic community invites the community to be more inclusive and creative in how it brings in those outside of academia to be part of knowledge production in a way that resonates with experiences of oppression and marginalization inside and outside the university sector. By writing together differently as university women workers across the professional service-academic divide, we resist the restriction of who gets to write and make this knowledge. It has also helped us to move from feeling like invisibilized non-persons toward being seen and heard and toward healing.

## 5.1 | Lost and found

By creating space to write together and share our experiences across organizational divides, we reclaimed a collective care that enabled healing and hope. As one of us said after listening to the stories being read aloud: “To suddenly hear six versions of it is really intense. I’m reeling a bit and appropriately so. It feels incredibly important. How could it not have been heard and said before? There’s something about speaking as a collective that elevates the individual to the power of six.”

We thus conclude this paper with our collective words, which together demonstrate the possibility of collective writing practices to give hope and provide healing. After all, in the words of hooks (2000b, p. 215): “Rarely, if ever, are any of us healed in isolation. Healing is an act of communion”.

### **Writer 8:**

#### What did I hope to get out of it

A sense of making a difference in a different way

Collective action

Reflective space for myself and others

A different form of academic engagement/knowledge sharing and writing

### **Writer 7:**

I missed the space for discussion from a cross-section of the university. I felt like the pandemic reduced this space to my office group chat, whereas before you would gain small informal insights into how others were feeling in-person.



**Writer 2:**

Listening to the others read their thoughts was a moment of pure connection, of seeing and being seen for who we really are. How brave they were for being able to write such honest things and to feel able to read them aloud! I read my piece, too, and felt immediately validated by their responses to it. How often do we take the time to say something uplifting or supportive to our colleagues?

**Writer 4:**

I had not imagined the difference it would make to my wellbeing, and the effect it would have on my sense of identity and belonging at work, something that had been gradually eroded by a number of incidents which had left me questioning our institution's identity and my place in it.

**Writer 3:**

It's a space to critique and question the realities of your role and how you are being squeezed by a sector that keeps demanding more. To have the chance to do this with other higher education women practitioners has been enlightening. I have listened and learned from individuals I have only known in a professional capacity, and this has brought me comfort. I see how many amazing people there are working in the same institution and how they too are grappling with similar struggles.

**Writer 8:**What did I find

Support

Resistance

An important space in the disconnect of the reorganization

Shared experiences of office housework

**Writer 6:**

In the end, I think it's this space more than anything that has kept me coming back to the collective. The more we discuss and the more we write, the more I realize that office housework isn't a problem that can be fixed with quickfire solutions or an hour-long workshop. It's systemic, it's embedded and it's bigger than one person's ability to assertively say no. I came in the hope of hearing the secret that would somehow fix my experience. I feel the secret I needed to understand was that there is healing in being heard.

**DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT**

Research data are not shared.

**ORCID**

Uracha Chatrakul Na Ayudhya  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5144-3096>

**REFERENCES**

- Ahonen, P., A. Blomberg, K. Doerr, K. Einola, A. Elkina, G. Gao, J. Hambleton, et al. 2020. "Writing Resistance Together." *Gender, Work and Organization* 27(4): 447–70. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12441>.
- Babcock, L., B. Peyser, L. Vesterlund, and L. Weingart. 2022. "Are You Taking on Too Many Non-promotable Tasks?" *Harvard Business Review Web Article*. accessed November 11, 2022. <https://hbr.org/2022/04/are-you-taking-on-too-many-non-promotable-tasks>.
- Babcock, L., M. P. Recalde, L. Vesterlund, and L. Weingart. 2017. "Gender Differences in Accepting and Receiving Requests for Tasks with Low Promotability." *The American Economic Review* 107(3): 714–47. <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.20141734>

- Bal, P. M., and E. Dóci. 2018. "Neoliberal Ideology in Work and Organizational Psychology." *European Journal of Work & Organizational Psychology* 27(5): 536–48. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.bbk.ac.uk/10.1080/1359432X.2018.1449108>.
- Boncori, I., and C. Smith. 2019. "I Lost My Baby Today: Embodied Writing and Learning in Organizations." *Management Learning* 50(1): 74–86. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350507618784555>.
- Breese, E. 2022. "The Sexist Traditions of 'Office Housework' - and How to End Them.": The Big Issue. accessed June 6, 2024. <https://www.bigissue.com/news/employment/the-sexist-traditions-of-office-housework-and-how-to-end-them/>.
- Cardozo, K. M. 2017. "Academic Labor: Who Cares?" *Critical Sociology* 43(3): 405–28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920516641733>.
- Cooper, M. 2021. "Women Leaders Took on Even More Invisible Work during the Pandemic." *Harvard Business Review Digital Articles*: 1–6. <https://hbr.org/2021/10/research-women-took-on-even-more-invisible-work-during-the-pandemic>.
- Cruz, J., J. McDonald, K. Broadfoot, A. K.-C. Chuang, and S. Ganesh. 2020. "'Aliens' in the United States: A Collaborative Autoethnography of Foreign-Born Faculty." *Journal of Management Inquiry* 29(3): 272–85. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1056492618796561>.
- Cunliffe, A. L. 2002. "Reflexive Dialogical Practice in Management Learning." *Management Learning* 33(1): 35–61. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350507602331002>.
- Daniels, A. K. 1987. "Invisible Work." *Social Problems* 34(5): 403–15. <https://doi.org/10.2307/800538>.
- Edwards, J. 2021. "Ethical Autoethnography: Is it Possible?" *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 20: 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406921995306>.
- Firth, R., and A. Robinson. 2016. "For a Revival of Feminist Consciousness-Raising: Horizontal Transformation of Epistemologies and Transgression of Neoliberal TimeSpace." *Gender and Education* 28(3): 343–58. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2016.1166182>.
- Garfinkel, H. 1967. *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Gilmore, S., N. Harding, J. Helin, and A. Pullen. 2019. "Writing Differently." *Management Learning* 50(1): 3–10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/135050761881102>.
- Heijstra, T. M., P. Einarsdóttir, G. M. Pétursdóttir, and F. S. Steinþórsdóttir. 2017. "Testing the Concept of Academic Housework in a European Setting: Part of Academic Career-Making or Gendered Barrier to the Top?" *European Educational Research Journal* 16(2–3): 200–14. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474904116668884>.
- Heijstra, T. M., F. S. Steinþórsdóttir, and T. Einarsdóttir. 2017b. "Academic Career Making and the Double-Edged Role of Academic Housework." *Gender and Education* 29(6): 764–80. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2016.1171825>.
- Hemmings, C. 2012. "Affective Solidarity: Feminist Reflexivity and Political Transformation." *Feminist Theory* 13(2): 147–61. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.bbk.ac.uk/10.1177/1464700112442643>.
- Hester, H. 2018. "Care under Capitalism: The Crisis of 'Women's Work.'" *IPPR Progressive Review* 24(4): 343–52. <https://doi.org/10.1111/newe.12074>.
- hooks, b. 1984. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. New York, London: Routledge.
- hooks, b. 1989. "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness." *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media* 36: 15–23.
- hooks, b. 2000a. *Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*. Pluto Press.
- hooks, b. 2000b. *All about Love: New Visions*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Hunt, E. 2022. "No Reward or Recognition': Why Women Should Say No to 'office Housework'." The Guardian. accessed June 9, 2024. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/may/09/they-feel-guilty-why-women-should-say-no-to-office-housework>.
- Hurd, F., and S. Singh. 2021. "'Something Has to Change': A Collaborative Journey towards Academic Well-Being through Critical Reflexive Practice." *Management Learning* 52(3): 347–63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350507620970723>.
- Jang, S., T. D. Allen, and Joseph Regina. 2021. "Office Housework, Burnout, and Promotion: Does Gender Matter?" *Journal of Business and Psychology* 36(5): 793–805. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-020-09703-6>.
- Kondo, D. K. 1990. *Crafting Selves: Power, Gender, and Discourses of Identity in a Japanese Workplace*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Kouki, H., and A. Chatzidakis. 2021. "Implicit Feminist Solidarity(ies)? the Role of Gender in the Social Movements of the Greek Crisis." *Gender, Work and Organization* 28(3): 878–97. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12540>.
- Liu, H. 2019. "An Embarrassment of Riches: The Seduction of Postfeminism in the Academy." *Organization* 26(1): 20–37. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508418763980>.
- MacKinnon, C. A. 1982. "Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: An Agenda for Theory." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 7(3): 515–44. <https://doi.org/10.1086/493898>.
- Martin, J. 1992. *Cultures in Organizations: Three Perspectives*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Mumby, D. K. 2005. "Theorizing Resistance in Organization Studies: A Dialectical Approach." *Management Communication Quarterly* 19(1): 19–44. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318905276558>.
- Nordbäck, E., M. Hakonen, and J. Tienari. 2022. "Academic Identities and Sense of Place: A Collaborative Autoethnography in the Neoliberal University." *Management Learning* 53(2): 331–49. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13505076211006543>.
- Pink, S. 2004. "Guest Editor's Introduction: Applied Visual Anthropology Social Intervention, Visual Methodologies and Anthropology Theory." *Visual Anthropology Review* 20(1): 3–16. <https://doi.org/10.1525/var.2004.20.1.3>.
- Prasad, P., and A. Prasad. 2000. "Stretching the Iron Cage: The Constitution and Implications of Routine Workplace Resistance." *Organization Science* 11(4): 387–403. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.11.4.387.14597>.
- Reyes, N. A. S., V. D. Carales, and V. A. Sansone. 2021. "Homegrown Scholars: A Collaborative Autoethnography on Entering the Professoriate, Giving Back, and Coming Home." *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* 14(4): 480–92. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000165>.
- Richter, J., F. Faragó, B. B. Swadener, D. Roca-Servat, and K. A. Eversman. 2020. "Tempered Radicalism and Intersectionality: Scholar-activism in the Neoliberal University." *Journal of Social Issues* 76(4): 1014–35. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12401>.
- Segal, L. 2017. *Radical Happiness: Moments of Collective Joy*. London: Verso Books.
- Seymour, K. 2022. "Circling the Divide: Gendered Invisibility, Precarity, and Professional Service Work in a UK Business School." *Gender, Work and Organization* 31(5): 1–21: on-line first. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12933>.
- Sparkes, A. C. 2024. "Autoethnography as an Ethically Contested Terrain: Some Thinking Points for Consideration." *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 21(1): 107–39. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2023.2293073>.
- Star, S. L., and A. Strauss. 1999. "Layers of Silence, Arenas of Voice: The Ecology of Visible and Invisible Work." *Computer Supported Cooperative Work* 8(1–2): 9–30. <https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1008651105359>.
- Szekeres, J. 2011. "Professional Staff Carve Out a New Space." *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 33(6): 679–91. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080x.2011.621193>.
- Tronto, J. C. 1987. "Beyond Gender Difference to a Theory of Care." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 12(4): 644–63. <https://doi.org/10.1086/494360>.
- Vachhani, S. J., and A. Pullen. 2019. "Ethics, Politics and Feminist Organizing: Writing Feminist Infrapolitics and Affective Solidarity into Everyday Sexism." *Human Relations* 72(1): 23–47. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726718780988>.
- Van Maanen, J. 1998. "Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography." In *Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Walby, S. 1989. "Theorising Patriarchy." *Sociology* 23(2): 213–34. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038589023002004>.
- Whiting, R., and G. Symon. 2020. "Digi-Housekeeping: The Invisible Work of Flexibility." *Work, Employment and Society* 34(6): 1079–96. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017020916192>.
- Williams, J. C., and M. Multhaup. 2018. "For Women and Minorities to Get Ahead, Managers Must Assign Work Fairly." *Harvard Business Review Digital Articles*. accessed June 6, 2024. <https://hbr.org/2018/03/for-women-and-minorities-to-get-ahead-managers-must-assign-work-fairly>.

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

**Uracha Chatrakul Na Ayudhya** is Reader in Work and Organization at Birkbeck Business School, Birkbeck, University of London. Uracha is an educator who is committed to critical pedagogy and epistemic justice. She is an interdisciplinary qualitative researcher in equality and diversity, focusing on two research streams: advancing understandings of intersectional inequalities in contemporary working lives and the practices of doing 'diversity research' differently.

**Aylin Kunter** is an activist, Visual Sociologist and mother. Her works pertain to issues of wellbeing and decolonization in the contemporary workplace. Strands include publications around Visual Ethnography, Spirituality at Work, equality, diversity and the intersectionalities within this. Aylin has worked across private and public learning institutions teaching and researching since 2005. She lives in London.

**Kayleigh Woods Harley** has worked as a Project Manager at Birkbeck since 2017. She has held a number of professional service roles across multiple higher education institutions in the UK and Ireland. She has worked at a grassroots level to further equalities initiatives at Birkbeck, including via the professional services network for women, transgender and non-binary people, Astrea.

**Isobel Edwards** has worked in higher education communications since 2018 and was Chair of Astrea, Birkbeck's professional services network for women, transgender and non-binary people, for the 2021-22 academic year.

**Sarah Molyneaux** has built a career in university Professional Services for over 10 years, with a focus on Student Financial Support. She completed a master's degree in journalism whilst working at Birkbeck and is currently undertaking a PhD part-time. Her work focuses on food studies, feminism and social media, and she is particularly interested in how online food work can be viewed as a creative practice and interacts with everyday domestic care.

**Holly Nicholas** has worked in higher education for 10 years, and at Birkbeck for five, administrating Access and Foundation Year courses.

**Isabelle Habib** has worked at Birkbeck since 2019, leading the work with forced migrant students known as "Sanctuary". Isabelle informs the university's equality and diversity programmes through her experience of working with refugees/forced migrants.

**Janet Sheath** has taught as a part time Associate and Senior Lecturer at Birkbeck for 25 years and also works as a coach, consultant, supervisor and trainer informed by Systems-Psychodynamic thinking. Janet works on the boundary between practice and academia and is particularly interested in the way the unconscious impacts our behavior at work.

**How to cite this article:** Chatrakul Na Ayudhya, Uracha, Aylin Kunter, Kayleigh Woods Harley, Isobel Edwards, Sarah Molyneaux, Holly Nicholas, Isabelle Habib, and Janet Sheath. 2024. "I Know I'm Not Going to Have to Heal From This": Women University Workers' Collective Writing on "Office Housework" as a Space for Building Collective Care, Healing, and Hope." *Gender, Work & Organization*: 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.13211>.