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What's in a Workload?

Affect, Burnout, and Complicating Capacity in Academic Librarians

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ABSTRACT

The connections between emotional labor and emotional exhaustion are underexplored in burnout literature. This is particularly troubling for service professions and feminized fields such as librarianship where invisible labor in the form of emotional labor is often an expected aspect of the job. To better consider affective and emotional labor, we explore these concepts and their application in library literature, and we discuss the ways that burnout is gendered and raced. We consider existing literature on burnout in academic libraries, assessment of burnout among academic librarians, and proposed solutions for burnout. We present several recommendations for approaching affect, burnout, and complicating capacity in order to more holistically understand and combat burnout.

Introduction

Burnout is often described as a state of mental, physical, and/or emotional exhaustion as a result of repeated and prolonged workplace stressors (Brenninkmeijer & VanYperen, 2003). The World Health Organization (WHO) in its *International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems*, 11th edition (*ICD-11*), described burnout as

> a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It is characterised by three dimensions: 1) feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion; 2) increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job; and 3) a sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment. (WHO, 2020)

Both the first and second dimensions described include affective elements in considering an individual's feelings related to their work. Similarly, though described as a "sense of" rather than a "feeling of," the third characteristic still evaluates affect and emotion as well as an individual's own perceptions as they relate to work. In this sense, affective responses are considered a dimension or symptom of burnout while emotional labor is only rarely identified as a cause of burnout (i.e., we are cognizant of affect in relation to burnout in the effects but not the causes).

Assessment of burnout often includes affective dimensions (irritability, emotional exhaustion, frustration, etc.), but solutions may not effectively consider affective dimensions because the connections between emotional exhaustion and emotional labor are underexplored in burnout literature (Maslach et al., 1986; Kristensen et al., 2005). Furthermore, when thinking about strategies to prevent, mitigate, or recover from burnout, managers and researchers often consider multiple approaches related to workload: decreasing or assessing workload; enforcing reasonable work hours; being clear, realistic, and reasonable with work expectations; or taking time away from work for vacation (Maslach, 2017). All of these strategies rely on a definition of capacity based on quantifiable standards. However, emotional capacity resists and eludes quantification. Therefore, in the context of academic librarianship, our discussion of workload related to burnout requires an understanding of emotions as labor, drawing upon theoretical concepts like immaterial labor and affect. Furthermore, any consideration of workload requires a qualitative dimension that demands an empathetic approach to management theory and practice.

Literature Review

Our review of the literature first considers the existing literature on burnout in academic libraries and assessments of burnout among academic librarians, including use of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI), and librarians' own perceptions of burnout. We review literature that provides possible solutions to

burnout and consider how they attend to or do not attend to affective labor as a cause of burnout. To better consider affective and emotional labor, we review these concepts and how they have been used in library literature, and we consider how these lines of investigation might meet to improve the ways we discuss and consider burnout in an academic library context. Finally, we consider the way burnout is gendered and raced using gender and race critical organizational theory.

Existing Literature on Burnout Among Academic Librarians

Across the past three decades, researchers have attempted to assess and quantify burnout among academic librarians. Many earlier studies (though, as shown below, this is not limited to earlier studies) employed the MBI, an instrument for assessing burnout originally developed in 1981 by Maslach and Jackson and still in use with multiple versions for different contexts (e.g., health care and education). Each version of the MBI measures across three dimensions, pulling from five different scales (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment, cynicism, and professional efficacy). The MBI can be combined with the Areas of Worklife Survey (AWS), which measures across six scales (workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values) to assess how the workplace might contribute to burnout.

Nardine (2019) provided an example of how the combined MBI and AWS have been used to assess burnout among academic librarians. She looked specifically at liaison librarians at Association of Research Libraries (ARL) institutions and found higher levels of personal accomplishment and lower levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization than she had originally hypothesized; however, negative views of workload and fairness persisted. Interestingly, Nardine (2019) found a limited difference in burnout and work life between genders, though the study did examine gender from a binary perspective. Most recently, Colon-Aguirre & Webb (2020) have used the MBI to assess burnout in academic librarians among Association of Southeastern Research Libraries (ASERL) member institutions. While they did not find evidence of burnout, they argued for further study of burnout and factors such as sexuality, gender, and race. Togia (2005), in a study of Greek academic librarians, similarly found low levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and moderate levels of personal accomplishment with level of personal accomplishment being slightly higher for individuals who interact directly with users.

Bernice Ray's 2002 dissertation reviewed the MBI and found it reliable in measuring emotional exhaustion and depersonalization but not personal accomplishment. Relying on research from the 80s and 90s, she found that librarianship in the U.S. is a low stress profession, a claim that Sheesley (2001) took up in the introduction to her article on burnout and the academic teaching librarian, pointing specifically to the disparity between an individual's perception of stress and burnout and the rating and perception of the profession. Affleck (1996), studying burnout in bibliographic instruction librarians, found

that only 8.5% of respondents suffered from burnout (characterized by scores across all three dimensions of burnout measured by the MBI); however, 15.8% experienced negative levels in two dimensions and 52.8% in at least one dimension, suggesting the possibility for escalation or impending burnout.

Two recent studies from 2020 employed the CBI rather than the MBI, arguing that the MBI is not cross-cultural, is not public domain, and uses a multidimensional rather than unidimensional score (Demetres et al., 2020; Wood et al., 2020). The CBI was originally introduced in 2005 by Kristensen et al. (2005), including a critique of the MBI that specifically pointed to the way that the three dimensions of burnout tested in the MBI are considered separately rather than as a single score. Affleck's (1996) findings seemed to corroborate the difficulty of considering the dimensions separately and recognizing burnout only when all three dimensions occur simultaneously. This may also explain why burnout literature employing the MBI with librarians finds lower levels of burnout than anecdotal and qualitative evidence seem to suggest. Unlike many of the studies employing the MBI, Wood et al. (2020) found significant evidence of burnout, specifically an average total work-related burnout score (TWRBS) of 49.6, which is higher than any of the average scores from 15 professions tested in Kristensen et al. (2005). Additionally, unlike Nardine (2019), they did find significant differences across gender with the highest scores among nonbinary individuals. Demestres, Wright and DeRosa (2020) found a similar TWRBS among librarians performing systematic review work (an average of 46.4 across the sample) with a higher average TWRBS among those with the title "reference librarian."

Over 30 years later, we are still considering David Fisher's (1990) titular question: Are librarians burning out? Specifically, he asked for empirical evidence to answer this question and called for us to believe such evidence. Interestingly, across three decades, it appears that the data are still inconclusive, though use of the CBI rather than MBI seems to suggest that librarians are burning out; we may ask ourselves if this quantitative assessment of burnout is conducive to understanding librarian burnout and librarians' perceptions of their own burnout given the prolific nature of burnout literature in libraries. What would it mean to believe ourselves and each other when we say we are burnt out instead of asking for more data? Kendrick (2017) and Kendrick and Damasco (2019) responded explicitly to the prevalence of burnout literature that is purely quantitative and sought a qualitative understanding of burnout and workplace bullying. These two qualitative studies, one of academic librarians generally (Kendrick, 2017) and then one of academic librarians from minoritized racial and ethnic groups specifically (Kendrick & Damasco, 2019), demonstrated the causes and effects of low morale. Specifically, Kendrick and Damasco (2019) identified work related to deauthentication and stereotype threat as forms of emotional labor specific to people from minoritized racial and ethnic groups. Geary & Hickey's (2019) study compared burnout and the desire to leave the profession between those who worked in their graduate programs and those who did not. They very specifically pointed out that their study was not an application of burnout but a study of individuals' beliefs or perceptions that they have experienced burnout. Of current librarian respondents,

79.1% expressed that they have experienced burnout and 47.33% expressed that they had considered leaving the profession due to burnout. When asking librarians about their own experiences and perceptions, it seems clear that burnout is an issue. We may then ask ourselves another question: What is not being captured by inventories of burnout and other quantitative data?

Some studies do begin from the point of recognizing burnout either from personal experience or based on their view of the profession. For example, Harwell (2008) shared his personal experience with burnout and suggested personal coping strategies to deal with burnout. Solutions have taken a variety of forms that are often individual rather than structural and may place the onus on employees rather than employers: flexible scheduling, including remote work; sustainable workload; focusing on health, fitness, and relaxation; emphasizing vacation, weekends, and holidays; providing validation, support, and rewards; providing opportunities for professional involvement; including employees in organizational decision making; and learning about emotional intelligence and emotional labor (Christian, 2015; Harwell, 2008; Maslach, 2017; Sheesley, 2001).

Though the definition of burnout and assessment of burnout consider its affective dimensions, much of the burnout literature presents data analysis, suggestions for reducing burnout, and discussions of workload that are inadequately attentive to affect. Furthermore, these studies identify unwanted emotional effects (such as frustration, irritability, reduced self-esteem, etc.) as a result of burnout but ignore the converse of emotional labor and the expert management and employment of emotion. This work contributes to burnout and is often overlooked or invisible when considering workload and burnout. Among the literature reviewed, Christian (2015) was the only one to consider emotional labor, and she specifically argued for greater knowledge of emotional labor as a possible solution to burnout. Warren and Scoulas (2021) considered emotional aspects of workload but primarily from the vantage point of emotion created by excessive workload instead of considering emotional labor as part of the workload.

Affective and Emotional Labor

At this point we shall clarify definitions of the following terms: immaterial labor, emotional labor, and affective labor. The concept of immaterial labor emerged first with Marx, but here we use Mauricio Lazzarato's (1996) definition as "the labor that produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity," which he identified as the driving force of a knowledge-based, postindustrial economy (p. 133). Hardt and Negri (2000) identified further categories within immaterial labor to include work in which computers have replaced manual tools to manufacture goods, "analytical or symbolic tasks" that we might broadly call intellectual or cognitive labor, and the "*affective labor* of human contact and interaction" (pp. 292–293). They specified that affective labor "is immaterial, even if it is corporeal… in the sense that its products are intangible, a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement or passion" (p. 293). Hardt and Negri's formulation of affective labor is indebted to Marxist feminist models that sought to ascribe value to domestic labor ("women's work"), as Federici

(2013), Fortunati (2007), and Weeks (2007) pointed out. This is significant for our study in particular because of librarianship's construction as a "pink collar," or feminized, workforce (Sloniowski, 2016). Sloniowski (2016), discussed later, provided an excellent mapping of these theories to academic librarianship. We can examine the gender labor politics of academic librarians in service roles (e.g., serving faculty—buying their books, teaching their students), but also specifically the emotional labor that these kinds of roles require.

The term "emotional labor" was coined in Hochschild's (1983) landmark sociological study of the way in which those in (particularly feminized) service industries perform emotions in exchange for wages. Hochschild distinguished this work from "emotions work" (the management of one's own emotions) and defined it as emotions performed for others. However, it is clear that both kinds of work are deeply intertwined in producing affect. For example, a librarian attempts to suppress an emotional reaction to a user's angry complaint (emotions work) in order to lower the emotional response of that user (emotional labor). At risk of reduction with these nuanced and contested terms, we position emotional labor as a subcategory of affective labor, and as a further subcategory of immaterial labor. By identifying components of library work as emotional labor, we draw attention to its presence among the rest of the affective, immaterial labor, already recognized in academic librarianship, and can better start to understand how emotional labor contributes to burnout.

There has been a growing amount of LIS literature referencing affective labor, though none that specifically connects affective labor to burnout in detail. Sloniowski (2016) used feminist critiques of Marxist autonomous explications of immaterial labor (particularly Hardt & Negri, 2000) in order to produce a gendered analysis of the affective (and often unrecognized) labor performed by academic reference and liaison librarians. Following Weeks (2007), she noted that "emotional labor and care work is not valorized as highly as intellectual immaterial labor" and pointed to examples in academia in which this plays out (faculty research valued as knowledge production versus librarian curation of content as service) and within academic librarianship itself (prioritization of budgets and recognition for innovation and digital projects; p. 657). Popowich (2019) was similarly concerned with the neoliberalization of higher education and the resulting restructuring of labor within academic libraries. He contextualized immaterial labor performed in academic libraries in Lazarrato (1996, 2014) and other Marxist autonomist thinking to show that not only does this labor consist of work that produces "academic commodities" such as degrees, published research, and so on, but also that academic libraries wield cultural and intellectual influence and, importantly for our purposes, "… have a cultural effect on library workers," (p. 160). By focusing burnout research only on the work that is productive in a capitalist sense, what are we excluding? Furthermore, this is not a unidirectional line of inquiry—there is a dialectical relationship between burnout and affective labor: Galoozis (2019) analyzed the emotional and affective labor of teaching librarians in a series of interviews centering the question "What influences librarians to adopt new teaching practices?" Unsurprisingly, one of the negative motivations that emerged in this study was burnout.

Feminist and Race Critical Organizational Theory

Organizational culture in the U.S. is raced and gendered, resulting in inequitable distribution of emotional labor. Acker (1990) pointed out that organizational theory assumed organizations to be gender-neutral despite the gendered assumptions and male dominance inherent in organizational structuring. Writing 29 years later, V. Ray (2019) pointed out how organizational theory assumes organizations are race-neutral, but "racialized organizations expand or inhibit agency, legitimate the unequal distribution of resources, treat Whiteness as a credential, and decouple organizational procedures in ways that typically advantage dominant racial groups" (p. 46). He specifically pointed to the allocation of resources and the ways that racial structures determine how workers generally spend their time. In libraries, we might see this specifically through job sorting, where people of color are primarily clustered in nonlibrarian roles in access services or in librarian roles performing undervalued work. In thinking about emotion, V. Ray (2019) also called for more research on the ways that white people's emotions shape organizations and the distribution of resources.

Acker (2006), writing about inequality regimes, pointed out how expectations in informal interactions recreate gender, class, and racial inequalities in insidious ways: "[w]hite men may devalue and exclude white women and people of color by not listening to them in meetings, by not inviting them to join a group going out for a drink after work, by not seeking their opinions on workplace problems" (p. 451). Wingfield (2010), recognizing that emotion work reproduces gender inequality, examined the experiences of racialized minorities with emotion work and argued that feeling rules, social norms about acceptable ways to express emotions and the amount of emotion to express, produce racial inequality in organizations. Specifically:

> the emotional labor required of professional workers may rest on a foundation of inherently racialized feeling rules, thus creating additional emotional labor for black professionals as they struggle to bring their emotions in line with the feeling rules (congeniality, pleasantness, no anger at any costs, and concealing feelings of frustration or dissatisfaction about race related issues) that apply to them. (Wingfield, 2010, p. 266)

Recognizing the emotion work being done by minoritized individuals in primarily white organizations as a result of the privileged status of whiteness, Wingfield and Alston (2014) defined racial tasks as "broadly as the work minorities do that is associated with their position in the organizational hierarchy and reinforces Whites' position of power within the workplace" (p. 276). Critical work has been done to demonstrate how this plays out in a library context: Espinal, Sutherland, and Roh (2018) reminded us that whiteness is "maintained by policing emotions and the responses of people of color to hostility in

the workplace" (p. 154). And in a foundational piece by Ettarh (2018), the connections between a profession that demands one give one's "whole-person" in a "vocational" role to a system that propagates and maintains whiteness directly leads to consequential burnout, particularly for people of color working in libraries. This research in organizational theory demonstrated the ways that emotion work and emotional labor are raced and gendered, specifically as a result of the ways that organizations are raced and gendered, privileging whiteness and male dominance and demanding more emotional labor from people of minoritized races and gender in order to reinforce these positions of dominance. In particular, in higher education and in libraries, whiteness and male dominance are privileged. For example, despite librarianship being a predominantly female field, library leaders are primarily male, and women in leadership roles face gendered expectations (Olin & Millet, 2015). The profession also continues to be majority white with predominantly white leaders (Schonfeld & Sweeney, 2017).

Discussion

Burnout Typified in Academic Librarians: Examples of Emotional Labor

Current library literature on burnout in academic librarians presents us with many examples of possible ways that burnout occurs. However, we are interested in the ways that emotional labor is ingrained in librarianship as a feminized field and as a profession that may include many people-interactions. In the following section, we discuss three examples of emotional labor that academic librarians perform to help readers begin to reflect on the emotional labor they perform in their day-to-day work.

Emotional labor is a constant part of the work performed in library interactions. All academic librarians who interact with users and the public, to provide services, likely perform emotional labor. We do not mean, necessarily, that emotional labor is a part of all interactions with stressed students or incensed faculty (or limited only to these interactions); rather, the performance of librarianship as a profession demands emotional labor. Meeting the societal and user expectations of being a librarian requires simultaneously regulating or performing one's own emotions and interpreting, managing, and responding to the emotions of users. This is not to say that emotional users are problem users but that being a person means having emotions and doing our sort of people work inevitably involves emotion work. In this sense, all work with library users is emotion work. This does not mean that emotion work always leads to burnout, but rather that there is an invisible layer of labor and workload that is not quantifiable and needs to be considered qualitatively and individually to understand its impact on librarians. The importance of these considerations increases during times of crisis or change.

In times of crisis, such as during a global pandemic, or in light of unfavorable decisions from library administrators, academic librarians may face a greater demand for their emotional labor. In some ways, administrators rely upon public-facing or public services librarians and library staff to buffer against and manage the emotional responses of faculty, graduate students, and other researchers. This is, again, not to say that feelings of frustration or stress caused by crises or library decisions are invalid, but rather that the simple process of recognizing the validity of users' emotions is a work of emotional labor that is both skilled and invisible labor. In this case, emotional labor may be compounded as academic librarians attempt to manage a complex situation: regulating and managing their own emotions about the crisis or administrative decision so as to maintain their own professional standards and responding to and managing library users' emotions in a way that is appropriate to that user and to that library.

Finally, it is important to consider how emotional labor is exercised within the profession or between colleagues in addition to when working with users. As we have demonstrated, burnout has emotional effects, such as frustration, emotional exhaustion, and irritability, and, at least according to studies using the CBI, levels of burnout are high among academic librarians. As a result, we can conjecture that many academic librarians work with burnt-out colleagues and have to perform emotional labor to respond to and manage their frustration, emotional exhaustion, and irritability as a result of being burnt out. In this sense, burnout might have compounding effects on a library workplace.

Remote Work, Telecommuting, and "Flexibility"

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, greater attention has been paid to the distinctions between remote work and work in person and how these different modes respectively contribute to burnout. Though a comparison of remote work to working from home during a global pandemic is not advisable, it is worth noting that the ability to work from home has often been touted as a measure of flexibility in a given workplace environment. Gregg (2013) pointed out how the framework of flexible work arrangements like telecommuting map to neoliberal logic of choice providing the illusion of autonomy. Furthermore, she observed how the rise of the term "work–life balance" correlated with the rise of women in the workforce "imply[ing] that it was their particular concern" (Gregg, 2013, p. 23). What these arrangements do not take into account, she pointed out, are the types of labor (affective and domestic) that do not fit neatly into schedules and for which workers are rarely directly compensated. Gregg's interviews with information workers (including those who work in libraries) elicited striking affective responses to these arrangements: gratitude/indebtedness for the arrangement, and anxiety to prove that one is still working remotely or at different hours. These responses indicate that telecommuting does not eliminate emotion work—it merely redistributes it among different modalities (e.g., e-mail, chat messaging, etc.). Furthermore, given that telecommuting or flexible hours are often positioned as special affordances or exceptions to the rule, they

effectively draw attention away from the circumstances that create and maintain said rule. This incentivizes workers to work harder in order to prove worthiness of this precarious exception. A proposed burnout solution cannot involve demanding workers work harder, even if it is only an implicit demand.

Recommendations for Practice and Complications to Addressing Burnout

When addressing burnout, it is important not to promote one-size-fits-all solutions, but rather to explicitly name the power dynamics involved—specifically the gendered and raced dynamics of burnout. Yet this must go further than stating who is performing disproportionate amounts of emotional labor. There must be an acknowledgment of the conditions that cause that disproportion and a willingness to ameliorate those conditions at a systemic level.

It is equally important to recognize that reordering where and when the work happens does not, in fact, cause there to be less of it. Think, for example, of a "no meetings on Fridays" policy that many institutions have suggested or employed. What does this do other than pack five days' worth of meetings into four? And inevitably, Friday becomes a central meeting day because now everyone's Monday–Thursday is too heavily scheduled, and everyone has Friday "free." Additionally, there is now the added work of navigating the emotional products of this situation, such as guilt or stress if one is scheduling a Friday meeting after being discouraged from doing so by administration, or resentment at a colleague for scheduling a meeting despite the policy. The effects of such a policy prove Gregg's (2013) point about the dangers of assuming that "workplace flexibility is inherently positive" and that such an assumption often "actually disguises the amount of work that remains hidden from remuneration" (p. 90).

An interim measure suggested by several authors is to make emotional labor visible through more valued realms of immaterial labor such as scholarship. Although this suggestion will likely not result in a reduction of labor, moving the work under a category of work that is explicitly listed among job duties (e.g., scholarship or service) may provide for more professional security. Lawless (2018) advocated that academics keep assiduous documentation of the emotional labor that they do in order to have quantifiable evidence with which to argue for greater compensation. She acknowledged that, of course, this strategy is predicated upon a review/promotion system that is amenable to change, as well as the necessary emotional literacy skills to evaluate such contributions. There is also a danger with this strategy of reinforcing the idea that burnout solutions are an individual's responsibility, and thus it must be paired with more systemic changes.

A crucial strategy in diffusing burnout is identifying the components that are causing burnout as opposed to generally "doing less work" (Ettarh, 2018). To do this, we must consider the relationship between workload and capacity. Part of the issue, of course,

is that one is not always able to plan for emotional labor, which makes judging one's capacity difficult to accomplish until after one is already at the point of burnout. Though there are ways to anticipate emotional labor, managerial support is required to support decompression activities in place of conventional productivity. The literature suggests that having more control over your career and role can help prevent burnout. We extend these findings to specify that having control over your own burnout reduction strategies is also necessary—otherwise there is a risk of burnout management becoming more work, compounding the issue. However, again we must advise against providing this autonomy without simultaneously addressing the structural factors that contribute to burnout. Otherwise this approach becomes the neoliberal "hack"—the workplace phenomenon common in tech industries (Gregg, 2013, p. 78).

Because emotion work is gendered and racialized, managers need to be aware of the way this work differs and how it impacts workload. Furthermore, in the review process, we should consider specifically how women, nonbinary people, people of color, and people at these intersections will have greater emotion work as part of their workload, whether or not this is documented in the review processes. Finally, it is paramount to note that this work does not happen in isolation—we must be wary of examining burnout among academic librarians while not understanding the phenomenon in relation to burnout among other library staff, particularly concerning the race and class distinctions between these classifications. There is a danger here of a kind of academic exceptionalism (also of the "vocational awe" Ettarh, 2018, describes) that is not at all helpful in imagining a more equitable, less exhausting work environment. The conditions that exacerbate librarian burnout are not dissimilar from those impacting other knowledge workers and other types of affective labor workers, and we can learn from and in solidarity with these other fields.

Conclusion

Consideration of workload and capacity for academic librarians needs to include recognition of emotional labor in order to manage workload to be within capacity. In this sense, effective prevention of burnout requires that academic librarians be emotionally literate enough to know when they are doing emotional labor and to know what their capacity is specifically with regard to emotional labor. Similarly, library administrators need to be responsive to and supportive of librarians' emotion work, which requires their own emotional literacy and understanding of emotional labor. Additionally, academic librarians and their managers must consider the differences between capacity and workload to recognize when workload is at or exceeding capacity and to recognize that capacity for emotional labor may be different from capacity for other forms of labor, such as cognitive labor. This is a significant shift that may require managers to be more focused on empathy and care.

Similarly, library scholarship on burnout should consider the impact of emotional labor on the prevalence of this phenomenon among academic librarians. In particular, our analysis of burnout should consider the ways that invisible affective labor and emotion work are central to the work of many librarians in order to expand the depth of discussions

of findings. Furthermore, mixed methods studies that allow us to better understand both the quantitative prevalence of burnout and the qualitative reasoning for burnout among academic librarians may help us to further elucidate the role that emotional labor plays in the development of burnout for academic librarians. Not dissimilarly, burnout literature should consider the ecosystem of the library and of higher education institutions to recognize how burnout works in context and how different individuals are asked to perform emotional labor. This must at least include other library workers but might also consider support staff across campus, faculty, and student workers.

Considering how affect and burnout are intertwined is a difficult task. However, the coalescing consideration of emotional labor and burnout brings us closer to understanding capacity and workload for academic librarians more holistically. This holistic analysis makes capacity and workload more complicated, in that it makes their quantification even less valuable.

Implications for the Profession

As the profession continues to invest in gathering important data about burnout and its causes, we must employ qualitative tools such as critical theory to add dimension to these data. The theoretical frameworks introduced in this study provide a language with which to explore burnout with much-needed attention to social differences and workplace power dynamics. More broadly, we hope that by demonstrating the utility of theory in this study, qualitative gaps in burnout research will be reduced.

Further Reading

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