

# Academic Labor: Research and Artistry

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## Prioritizing Ourselves and Our Values: Intersectionality, Positionality, and Dismantling the Neoliberal University System

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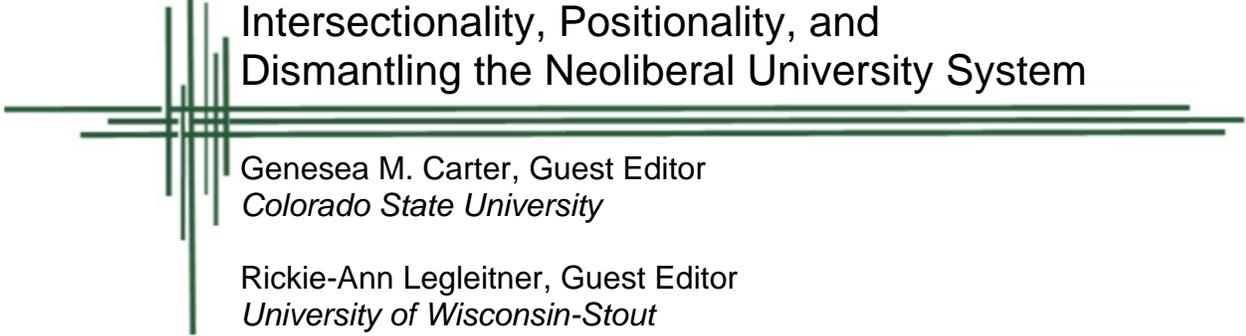
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# Academic Labor: *Research & Artistry*

*Academic Labor: Research and Artistry 5.1 (Special Issue 2021)*



## Prioritizing Ourselves and Our Values: Intersectionality, Positionality, and Dismantling the Neoliberal University System

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**I**n this special issue we extend important conversations about how non-tenure-track faculty, tenure-track faculty, and graduate students' academic labor are shaped and impacted by their positionalities and intersectionalities. In a recent Google search, there are 531 million hits on the keyword "academic labor" and 401 million hits on "academia and work." Contrast that with 692,000 hits on "academia and positionality" and 1.1 million hits on "academia and intersectionality." While the Google search results for "academia and positionality" and "academia and intersectionality" are not insignificant, academics cannot have fruitful, ethical, and messy conversations about academic labor without considering

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Rickie-Ann Legleitner is an Assistant Professor of English, Director of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and the Inclusive Excellence Action Plan Coordinator at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. She specializes in American literature and culture, women writers, identity studies, disability studies, and coming-of-age. Her first monograph, *The Artist Embodied: Female Creativity and Development in American Literature from 1850-1940*, is forthcoming from Lexington Books.

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how their positionality and/or intersectionality impacts, shapes, or informs that labor. Naming, claiming, reflecting, and analyzing one's positionality and/or intersectionality must go hand-in-hand with conversations about our academic work—teaching, administration, research, service, evaluation, etc.—as our positionality and intersectionality shape how we see the world, live in the world, experience the world, and respond to the world. We devote this special issue to topics of academic work, positionality, and intersectionality because these conversations among all academics—graduate students, non-tenure-track, tenure-track, and administrators—are critical to a well-lived and well-worked life.

Our special issue focuses on the crossroads where academic labor, positionality, intersectionality, and social justice meet. Social justice is an integral part of this conversation because, as Sarah R. Gordon, Precious Elmore-Sanders, and Delton R. Gordon write, “Social justice is the attempt to answer the question ‘How can we contribute to the creation of a more equitable, respectful, and just society for everyone?’” (69). A conversation about identity and experience without social justice is an empty conversation. We cannot dive deeply into examining how our intersectionality and positionality affect our academic labor (and vice-versa) without taking a hard look at whether our academic labor fosters equity, respect, and justice in the workplace. Additionally, many academic conversations about social justice focus on the outward, such as students and their needs. However, before we can enact social justice in our classrooms, in our committees, in our hiring practices, and in our initiatives, we need to enact social justice in our own lives by examining our own equitable working conditions, workplace boundaries, mindfulness strategies, and self-care. We cannot care for others if we do not care for ourselves first. In order to further these conversations, our special issue highlights the ways academics across the disciplines have navigated these crossroads.

We see one prominent ideology—the neoliberalization of the university—implicitly informing our contributors' research and experiences shared within this special issue. While our contributors have not explicitly engaged with neoliberalism, we believe we would be remiss by not drawing our readers' attention to how neoliberalism affects our special issue topics. Neoliberalism is a critical part of this conversation because it affects how academics use and acknowledge their positionality and intersectionality within their academic labor and academic lives (see Sekile M. Nzinga; Abby Palko, Sonalini Sapra, and Jamie Wagman). The neoliberal university, which “relies on the idealization and needs of faculty members as entrepreneurial workers,” systematizes the university to the extent that managerial processes, economic priorities, and emotional disembodiment are prized and prioritized above all else (Vazquez and Levin). A significant cost of the neoliberal university model is the professional “fragmentation” of faculty caused by neoliberal values that “den[y] the roles that personal histories or professional goals play in how

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faculty members experience their work and their academic identities” (Vazquez and Levin).

As full-time and stable academic positions dwindle, as academic labor demands increase, as burnout becomes a daily reality for many, and as higher institutions become more systematized, it is critical that academics not shy away from conversations about neoliberalism but face head-on how discourse about academic labor cannot be separated from neoliberalism, positionality, intersectionality, and social justice (see Bryan Alexander; W. Carson Byrd, Rachele J. Brunn-Bevel, and Sarah M. Ovink). As Adrianna Kezar, Tom DePaola, and Daniel T. Scott assert in *The Gig Economy: Mapping Labor in the Neoliberal University*, “[T]he higher education enterprise, at its core, is a relational and people-driven enterprise and that the exploitation of the people that support and maintain the enterprise is not sustainable or ethical” (3). Academia’s neoliberal model forces us to deny the relational and human-driven side of academia; it forces us to deny our positionality and intersectionality for the institution’s greater good. However, we are humans and not robots. And hope is not completely lost. We can create lasting change in our own lives and the lives of other academics when we first slow down and reflect upon how our positionality and intersectionality affects our work and our workplace (see Bryan E. Robinson).

The contributors in this special issue are non-tenure-track faculty, tenure-track faculty, graduate students, and faculty who have left academia. As we have come to know them through email conversations and article drafts, it is clear they are committed to honoring their positionality and intersectionality while also working towards social justice either in their own lives or in the lives of others, in their administrative roles, in their classroom teaching, in their collaborations across departments, in their scholarship and research, and in their communities. We understand each person’s positionality and intersectionality is nuanced and dynamic, so this special issue is not a one-size-fits-all approach to how one might grapple with positionality, intersectionality, academic labor, and social justice. But we do hope *ALRA* readers will be inspired by our contributors’ stories and may be able to apply or adapt our contributors’ recommendations in their own lives and academic work.

For ease of reading, we have organized our special issue into the following sections:

1. **Definitions and Editors’ Positionalities.** In this section, we define positionality and intersectionality through a brief overview of the salient scholarship. We also offer our own positionalities and how they shape our exigencies for this special issue.
2. **Acknowledgement of the Pandemic and Dire Social Context.** In this section, we discuss how the 2020 context, specifically the Covid-19 pandemic and systemic oppression reform, shaped the

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issue. We invited contributors to write statements about their experiences navigating 2020, and we offer two statements to readers: Elizabethada Wright and Asmita Ghimire's statement "As the United States" and Beth Greene's statement "GTAs in the Time of Covid-19."

3. **Article Overviews.** In this section, we summarize our contributors' chapters and highlight their salient arguments.
4. **The Importance of Metacognition and Mindfulness: Discussion Questions and Reading List.** In this final section, we offer possible reflection questions and a reading list for *ALRA* readers. We hope readers come away from this special issue feeling supported and moved to examine their own nuanced and complex identities in relation to their academic work and social justice efforts.

Finally, we must mention mindfulness and self-care. Creating change in our lives and in our institutions is not possible without attuning to ourselves and our needs first. Drawing from the mindfulness and self-care scholarship of Kye Askins and Matej Blazek, Kirsten Isgro and Mari Castañeda, Akemi Nishida and others, we call *ALRA* readers to come back to themselves and their bodies, to ground themselves in their identities and experiences, to turn their social justice work inward first and outward second, and to be inspired to challenge the methods and processes within higher education that no longer serves us, our colleagues, and our students. As you read this special issue, we hope you will:

- Be inspired to take something from each chapter that you might try in your personal life or home institution to create change.
- Contemplate how to create sustainable structures and work practices.
- Move beyond self-care emergency maintenance to sustainable and equitable living that is grounded in internal and external social justice.

### **Definitions and Editors' Positionalities**

Before we continue with our introduction, we want to define our terms and explain how intersectionality and positionality show up in our special issue. When we solicited our call for papers in 2019, we asked contributors to write about how their intersectionality and/or positionality impacted, affected, or shaped their academic labor and social justice work. We wanted to create a space for contributors to engage with their intersectionality and/or positionality as a way to destigmatize the complex identities our contributors carry with them in their academic labor. We envisioned our special issue as a space where academics could name and claim their intersectionalities and positionalities. As well, we imagined our special issue as a space where our contributors provide specific calls to

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action and recommendations. Change cannot happen without concrete action plans or recommendations for moving forward.

#### *Defining Intersectionality*

We adopt Columbia law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw's definition of "intersectionality." Crenshaw first coined the term in her 1989 paper "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics" presented at the University of Chicago Legal Forum. In her paper, Crenshaw argues that a "single-axis analysis" applied in antidiscrimination law, feminist theory, and antiracist politics oversimplifies and "distorts" the "multidimensionality of Black women's experience....Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated" ("Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex" 139-140). While Crenshaw's paper was specifically critiquing and analyzing how Black women were treated in antidiscrimination law, her term has wide application as many *ALRA* readers know. Reflecting on the application of "intersectionality" two decades later in a 2019 Columbia Law School interview, Crenshaw summarizes intersectionality as "a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It's not simply that there's a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LGBTQ problem there. Many times that [single-axis] framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things" ("Kimberlé Crenshaw on Intersectionality").

#### *Defining Positionality*

In 1988, Linda Alcott developed the concept of positionality in her article "Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory." She defines positionality through a feminist lens to show how women have been positioned and defined. Alcott writes, "I assert that the very subjectivity (or subjective experience of being a woman) and the very identity of women is constituted by women's position" (434). Alcott furthers that "the concept of woman as positionality ... shows how women use their positional perspective as a place from which values are interpreted and constructed rather than as a locus of an already determined set of values....the concept of positionality allows for a determinate though fluid identity of woman that does not fall into essentialism" (434-435). In 1993, Frances A. Maher and Mary Kay Tetreault expanded Alcott's definition of positionality: "gender, race, class, and other aspects of our identities are markers of relational *positions* rather than essential qualities" (118). The concept of positionality provides important contextual information about a person or group. Maher and Tetreault write that positionality "includes an acknowledgement of the knower's specific position in any context, because changing contextual

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and relational factors are crucial for defining identities and our knowledge in any given situation” (118). Nearly two decades later in 2010, Mitsunori Misawa succinctly explained that positionality “greatly influences the differences in what individuals have access to in society...whether we want it or not, all parts of our identities are shaped by socially constructed positions and memberships to which we belong” (26).

Our contributors draw from positionality and intersectionality scholarship in a variety of ways: through their literature reviews, through their own positionality statements, through their self-reflections, through their analysis, and through their recommendations. We encouraged contributors to apply the theories in ways that best fit the stories they were trying to tell and the research they were disseminating. We also want to acknowledge our own positionalities and motivations in putting together this special issue.

#### *Genesea's Positionality*

I asked Rickie-Ann to co-edit a special issue of *ALRA* while we were sitting in The Stanley Hotel in Estes Park, Colorado, which inspired Stephen King's *The Shining*. Rickie-Ann was in Denver for a conference, and I whisked her away to Rocky Mountain National Park to see the elk and to visit The Stanley. Sitting in the bar we drank specialty cocktails while musing about our teaching, our research, and how our positionalities and intersectionalities shaped both.

You see, I was homeschooled from kindergarten through twelfth grade in a white, conservative, evangelical part of California. Everyone read James Dobson. Christianity was synonymous with Republicanism. The Quiverfull movement was popular. Christian bands like dc Talk and Audio Adrenaline were all the rage. This upbringing, in many ways, crippled my understanding of self, as a white cisgender kid and teenager who longed to be an academic. I was not taught about my white identity, I was not taught about systematic oppression, I was not taught about white fragility, I was not taught how to transition from homeschooling to academia, I was not taught how to be a successful student, I was not taught how to build friendships/mentorships with classmates and professors. Despite my best efforts to adapt and integrate, the non-homeschooling world was unfamiliar and difficult. I regularly felt like an outsider who did not understand the rhetorical situations happening around me.

During my master's program, I started socially and politically leaning left. With every class, I leaned a little more left. By the middle of my doctorate program I was in a full-blown identity crisis: I did not know what I believed, I did not know if God existed, I did not know if Jesus brought salvation, and I did not know what to do with my whiteness. But I could not talk to anyone about my spiritual and identity upheaval—not my parents, not my best friend, not my boyfriend, not my professors, not my classmates. In getting to know Rickie-Ann after she joined the faculty at University of Wisconsin-Stout, where I was an assistant professor, I

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realized there was much I could learn about diversity, inclusion, and women's and gender studies from her. It is not an overstatement to say she helped me process my upbringing and reconsider my politics.

By 2017, when I left UW-Stout for my position at Colorado State University, I was ready to dive head-first into every campus diversity and inclusion training I could attend. I was introduced to the University of Michigan's Program on Intergroup Relations and concepts of dialogue across difference. I learned how my whiteness affects my ways of being and my ways of seeing the world. I learned to reflect on my internal racism. I learned to confront and process hard truths about my upbringing. The journey has been incredibly painful but essential. The old ways of being and believing no longer work for me.

After seven years of painful self-examination, while sitting next to Rickie-Ann in The Stanley bar, I realized this special issue was necessary. We academics need to have more conversations about how positionality, intersectionality, academic labor, and social justice affect all facets of our lives, including how they intersect with latent effects of our upbringing and our sense of who we have been and who we want to be. I hope editors and publishers continue to create space for these often difficult and risky conversations.

#### *Rickie-Ann's Positionality*

I'm a white cisgender bisexual woman who was born in Flint, Michigan. I have a middle-class background and was raised in a diverse environment where I learned to value community service, collaborative work, and education. While I'm now open about my sexuality, that wasn't always the case. Despite my liberal and private school education, sexual education was lacking both at school and at home. In the days when the internet was still new, I didn't even know what terminology I was seeking to encapsulate my identity, nor did I understand that what I was feeling was okay. My Catholic high school and undergrad taught me that it would be easier to deny the less mainstream parts of myself, and I continued to do this throughout my graduate school career, even when I was in seemingly inclusive environments.

It wasn't until I came to work for UW-Stout that I felt compelled to share my identities more publicly. I found support in colleagues like Genesee whose personal mentorship made me feel comfortable enough to be open, and I found that my students appreciated these moments of honest disclosure, and that it made them more comfortable with exploring their own personal connections to the content we analyzed together in literature, composition, and women's, gender, and sexuality courses. While my openness helps me connect with my students, it does make me feel uncomfortably vulnerable and unsafe with many of my colleagues with whom I do not have personal relationships. This is true regarding my sexuality, my position as a survivor, and with my depression and anxiety. I have faced prying and personal questions, biased assumptions, and

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countless microaggressions from those whose education supposedly means that they are informed and progressive. This complicates committee work, departmental and college meetings, and other opportunities for collaboration.

My identity is tied to helping others—specifically helping students come to understand their own positionality and role in their communities and in the world. I am increasingly frustrated with academia at large, as my ever-growing obligations take away from my ability to aid my students on their journeys of self-discovery. While I have been fortunate enough to secure a tenure-track position in an English department that also houses the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies minor that I advise, my workload involves 4/4 teaching; extensive equity, diversity, and inclusion-related service; and research obligations that are not sustainable. Moreover, I am approaching tenure at a time when universities continue to function as neoliberal patriarchal white supremacist systems. However, I remain invested in learning about identity, how we become the people we are, how we can grow, and how we perceive and can empathize and understand other identities and perspectives. I want to foster understanding so that my students can develop and contribute to our world as global citizens. These competing ideas often cause a lot of stress and distress about my employment and my continued ability to serve myself and my community. As emotional labor is a major component of my service, teaching, and research, I find myself on the brink of burnout.

This issue is significant to my own journey of finding balance, determining if and how I can help in dismantling white supremacist misogynistic capitalistic systems while building institutions based on equity and inclusion, and learning how to best serve my values in my interactions with my colleagues and students. I would not be on this journey without the support of generous friends such as Genesee, and I am grateful that she invited me to collaborate on such a meaningful project.

### **Acknowledgement of the Pandemic and Dire Social Context**

While acknowledging our positionalities is vital to framing our work on this special issue, we also want to recognize that this issue was written in the midst of an unprecedented and tumultuous year: 2020. We have experienced a global pandemic, global protest movements against police brutality and systematic oppression, global disasters due to climate change, and a tumultuous presidential election in the U.S. Despite 2020 upending our lives in many ways, there is a weirdly kairotic moment to the special issue work of our contributors, peer reviewers, and editors also happening in 2020. The global events of 2020 force us to confront more deeply how our personal and professional lives, identities, advocacy efforts, self-care, religious and spiritual beliefs, lived experiences, education, background, race, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, etc., impact us—and academics everywhere—on a daily basis.

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The events of 2020 have forced many of us to ask probing questions about our own lives, the work we do, the courses we teach, the pedagogies we adopt, the ways we interact with colleagues and students, the reading lists we assign, the expectations we manage in our academic roles, and many more. At the core, we see a few key questions arising from our contributors' articles as well as 2020-specific academic discourse emerging about who we are, who we want to be, and where work and identity fits into it all:

1. What are my values, and how can I be aligned with them?
2. What informs and shapes my values, and how can my values best serve myself, my colleagues, my students, and my community?
3. How might I be more inclusive and equitable in my everyday work and interactions with others?
4. How can my values aid me in creating more inclusive spaces that take into account intersectionality and positionality?
5. How might I pivot or adapt my academic work so that my values are aligned with the work that I do?
6. Who else on campus (offices, organizations, committees, faculty, etc.) shares my values and can work alongside me to increase collaboration and support?

As you read this special issue, we invite you to ask these questions of yourself, too. You might consider using them as personal journal prompts, in your annual evaluation reflections, and in committee discussions. The more time we spend reflecting on our values and how they (should) inform our decisions, the more conscious we will be about how our academic identities align with our personal identities.

Additionally, we did not want to ignore the context in which our contributors were writing and we were completing our editorial responsibilities. We have all been affected by Covid-19, the protest and reform movements emerging in the wake of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, David McAtee, and Rayshard Brooks' murders (and the continued police brutality and murders of BIPOC before and since the summer of 2020), the U.S. presidential election, and the national fallout of the election results. Given the strain and grief of 2020, we wanted to create a space in the special issue to make our contributors' emotional and mental labor visible. We invited contributors to address 2020 by writing a 300-500 word open-genre statement to name and claim their experiences, commitments, and/or challenges as they tried to balance their academic labor, positionalities and intersectionalities, and social justice efforts. We share with you two statements. The first is by Dr. Elizabethada Wright and Asmita Ghimire titled "As the United States." The second statement is by Beth Greene titled "GTAs in the Time of Covid-19." We invite you to lean into their statements as exhortations and calls to action for all academic faculty. You might consider using their statements for your own personal

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journaling, in graduate class conversations, and in committee meeting discussions.

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### **As the United States**

Elizabethada A. Wright, professor at University of Minnesota Duluth  
Asmita Ghimire, Ph.D. student in Rhetoric and Composition at The  
University of Texas El Paso

In the wake of George Floyd's murder as well as the disproportionate number of COVID deaths and infections among minority populations, the United States has been focusing on the systemic problems within this country's police departments and health care systems, but too little focus has been on systemic problems within this country's system of higher education.

This special issue highlights some of the many ways higher education victimizes academic labor, but there are far more ways the university promotes institutional racism. An example of the attitude entrenched in much of higher education can be seen in Tomas Hudlicky's now infamous publication in *Angewandte Chemie* declaring what is wrong with his field. Among other things, Hudlicky bemoans that encouragement of diversity in his discipline promotes mediocrity. Though many have rushed to condemn Hudlicky, few universities take concrete action to address attitudes such as his.

For example, at the University of Minnesota (UM) EOAA complaints led to findings that some departments exhibit undeniable systemic hostility toward women and minorities, but UM claims it cannot do anything beyond metaphorical slaps on the hand. Similarly, following the murder of Floyd in its state, UM made clear it supported BLM, but a year earlier its Board of Regents rejected attempts by people to rename buildings named after individuals with demonstrated racist histories.

Just as UM announces its support of BLM but does not demonstrate this support through action, it states its support for employees, but then cares little about their welfare when finances come into play. For example, at the UM, the economic exigences following the COVID crisis put untenured faculty in the unenviable position of signing contracts allowing UM to withdraw them if enrollment does not reach UM's prescribed levels. Such an offer may leave some qualified individuals without an income within an industry that hires infrequently. Additionally, it leaves these faculty with potential medical bills to be paid since their summer health insurance would be revoked with the offer.

So what are the solutions? We don't have sufficient space to address all here, but there are potential solutions which address the intersections of finances, talent, and ethics.

Certainly, institutions need talent and money to operate, and often the ethical appeal of equal opportunity may seem a luxury with these requirements. Yet considering how many contingent faculty with

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advanced degrees work for poverty level incomes, the assumption that people with talent need such high salaries seems faulty. This assumption is relevant to discussions of systemic racism when considering the fact that members of minority groups are overrepresented among contingent faculty and underrepresented in higher education's administration.

We are not suggesting, however, that everyone receive poverty level salaries, but that pay be more equitably distributed—and that we need to consider how higher education is financed. Too many decisions are made because of financial dictates. Higher education needs to find models other than its current neo-capitalist ones to create a structure that rids us of systemic racism.

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### **GTAs in the Time of COVID-19**

Beth Greene, Ph.D. candidate in the Communication, Rhetoric, and Digital Media program at North Carolina State University.

Some scholars believe that contingent faculty, including GTAs, are detrimental to students, especially traditional students in their first year of undergraduate education, the students GTAs come into contact with the most (see Jaeger and Eagan “Examining Retention and Contingent Faculty Use in a State System of Public Higher Education” for an example of such a study; see Johnson “Contingent Instructors and Student Outcomes: An Artifact or a Fact?” for a discussion of methodological flaws in such research). I think this unprecedented time has shown that part-time faculty and GTAs are just as willing—if not more so—to go above and beyond for their students as any other teacher. I’ve seen this willingness in my peers and in the GTAs I mentor through my position as the Graduate Assistant Director of First-Year Writing. According to Eric P. Bettinger et al. in “When Inputs are Outputs: The Case of Graduate Student Instructors,” [U]ndergraduate students tend to experience positive effects from taking courses with GTAs—who are typically well-acclimated to campus culture since they are students themselves—while GTAs can also gain much from the experiences offered by our assistantships. In their study, the authors found that undergraduates who take classes taught by GTAs are more likely to major in that subject and that GTAs “are more likely to complete their doctoral degree in a timely manner and more likely to be employed subsequently by a college or university” (64). This not only shows a reciprocal/symbiotic relationship between GTAs and our undergraduate students, it also refutes the idea of scholars like Jaeger and Eagan that GTAs as contingent faculty members negatively impact first-year students.

This positive impact is especially important to note during this pandemic as many of our administrators have placed faculty members and students at risk for the sake of what has been called “the first-year experience” while knowing that no matter what we do, no matter how hard

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we try to make things business-as-usual, students entering college for the first time in the 2020-2021 academic year will have an experience unlike any other. The same can be said for first-year graduate students and GTAs teaching for the first time, a stressful experience made more so by the constant changes involved in trying to hold classes with face-to-face elements.

What I am most proud of when it comes to my cohort friends and the wonderful GTAs I'm honored to mentor is how they're so focused on ensuring that their students are okay, that they feel safe in their zoomspheres, that they're doing everything they possibly can to make this time in college as painless and easy as possible. My fellow GTAs are trying to be the best teachers they can be while also trying to be the best students they can be. It hasn't been easy for any of us, but that level of dedication and care is so admirable.

### **Article Overviews**

*ALRA* is an open-genre journal, and in this special issue we share with readers several genres, ranging from the lyric essay to the traditional research article, that powerfully capture academics' research, teaching, and personal experiences. These chapters capture varying experiences, positionalities, and intersectionalities, in ways that are sometimes explicit or implicit.

The labor of composing, revising, and editing these chapters was completed during a time of global and personal distress. This, combined with the intimate nature of these essays, means that an incredible amount of emotional and academic labor went into this issue. We cannot stress enough how much we value the work of our contributors, peer reviewers, and editors in making this issue come to life so that we might have a larger conversation about the academy, positionality, intersectionality, and labor. Moreover, these chapters speak to each other, and we are impressed with both the diversity and unity that we find in this issue. We also value that each of our contributors shared not only their experiences but also looked forward, offering calls to action and/or practical next steps and solutions.

In "Surviving Communicative Labor: Theoretical Exploration of the (In)Visibility of Gendered Faculty Work/Life Struggle," Angela N. Gist-Mackey, Adrienne Kunkel, and Jennifer A. Guthrie introduce the concept of "communicative labor" to better explain "how communication (i.e., literally listening, speaking, writing, etc.) becomes emotionally-laden work amid research, teaching, and service in ways that threaten healthy work/life norms," particularly for women. Their scholarly examination of communicative labor is reinforced with compelling personal narratives, and they conclude by offering practical next steps and calls to action to ensure more equitable hiring, compensation, and evaluative processes that make all types of labor valued and visible.

Beth Greene moves into exploring the unique role that graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) serve in academia as both students and faculty,

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and the difficulties that come with trying to navigate these sometimes disparate roles, especially when also trying to manage the marginality that comes with disability. In “Studenting and Teaching with Chronic Pain: Accessibility at the Intersection of Contingency and Disability,” Greene introduces the concept of “transparent vulnerability” to “confront issues of accessibility faced by GTAs, particularly those with disabilities, and what we as an academic community can do to improve the situation” as she offers guidance for more open discussions of disability in order to create more accessible and inclusive environments.

In her personal investigation of positionality, Peggy Johnson ruminates on the marginalization she experienced “at a workplace dominated by a strongly established white male hierarchical power structure with deep religious overtones.” In “Through a Glass, Darkly: The Hidden Injury of Ageism in the Academy,” Johnson uses a mixed genre lyric essay form in order to help readers better process their own experiences with and of marginalization. Johnson additionally offers next steps towards more equitable and inclusive practices that aim to combat ageism and other acts of discrimination.

In their examination of the biases they’ve experienced as Non-Native English Speaking Teachers (NNEST) working in the field of rhetoric and composition, Elizabethada A. Wright and Asmita Ghimire argue that NNEST “are ideally positioned to advantage the first-year composition class by incorporating their multidimensional perspectives to help first-year students respond to rhetorical situations.” In “FYC’s Unrealized NNEST Egg: Why Non-Native English Speaking Teachers belong in the First-Year Composition Classroom,” they analyze multilingual pedagogical practices as well as threshold concepts, positing that while composition studies have evolved to value multiple “Englishes” in student writing, the field must also progress to valuing what NNEST teachers have to offer students. As such, the editors of this journal have opted to engage the CCCC’s “Statement on Second Language Writing and Multilingual Writers” and “recognize and support multilingual writers’ practices of integrating their unique linguistic and cultural resources into writing” by preserving the unique linguistic expressions that strengthen this piece.

Moving abroad, Anuj Gupta considers how a student’s trauma expressed in a literacy narrative assignment disrupted his own positionality and led to “strong convictions about the need to reposition academic writing and labor in Indian universities in a manner that sees the epistemic value of emotions in academic writing and the ethical value of care-work in academia as essential ingredients required to create a socially just world.” In “Emotions in Academic Writing/ Care-work in Academia: Notes Towards a Repositioning of Academic Labour in India (& Beyond),” Gupta offers deep personal reflection and a call to action to empower marginalized students by ultimately challenging the power structures and hierarchies that perpetuate this trauma.

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In “We Could Convert the Lines, But Not The People: A Postmortem on Changing Working Conditions in a Writing Program,” Jamie White-Farnham critically analyzes her positionality and expounds on her seemingly successful work as a writing program administrator (WPA) in converting “part-time adjunct positions to full-time lecturer positions on my small branch campus of a state university.” Her personal and theoretical analysis shows how structural success may not lead to improved morale if the desires of those laboring in the impacted roles are not considered, and she warns against making shared value assumptions, especially in academic hierarchies.

Further examining the positionality of administrators (specifically WPAs) and their relationships with part-time faculty, Melvin E. Beavers posits that mindfulness can help administrators see themselves as agents of change and justice, advocating for and supporting contingent faculty—faculty whose positionalities and intersectional identities must be considered, and who ultimately must be empowered to reject that very advocacy if it does not serve their needs or desires. “Administrative Rhetorical Mindfulness: A Professional Development Framework for Administrators in Higher Education” breaks down a professional development program utilized in the spring of 2020 that was enacted with the ARM framework and is grounded in detailed doctoral research and personal experience.

Expanding our discussion of contingency and positionality, Sarah Bartlett Wilson and C. Veronica Smith assert in “Contingent Faculty Performing Scholarship and Service: Examining Academic Labor and Identity at a Public Flagship University,” the importance of acknowledging the positionality of NTTF, especially in regard to their unacknowledged or unvalued labor, and the dissonance between the enjoyment found in the classroom and their marginalized positions within the university. Their study is grounded in both theory and personal experience, and it aims to “to provide important local data that can inform our more global conversations around contingent faculty labor and their often-overlooked contributions to scholarship and service.”

Each of these pieces offers scholarly and personally driven examinations of positionality, intersectionality, and labor that we hope sparks reflection, conversation, and, ultimately, action to promote more equitable, inclusive, and inspiring academic environments.

### **The Importance of Metacognition and Mindfulness: Reflection Questions and Reading List**

In this final section, we want to again draw attention to our humanness: as much as this collection is scholarly and theory-based, we do not want to ignore that we are humans first and scholars second (see David Mills and Mette Louise Berg; Esther O. Ohito). Too often academic conversations, conferences, collections, issues, and articles ignore our human needs and personal identities and focus on our academic roles as if “academic,”

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“teacher,” “scholar,” “researcher,” “administrator,” “non-tenure-track,” “tenure-track,” “graduate student,” etc., are the only identity(ies) we hold.

With a mindful eye to the cognitive and emotional labor of academic work, we offer reflection questions and a curated reading list to support *ALRA* readers in their own personal and professional work. Reflection and reading are both exercises in metacognition. Metacognition is the act of purposefully and meaningfully thinking about thinking. Engaging in metacognition on a regular basis is critical to changing behavior as it disrupts automatic actions and ingrained beliefs that have become commonplace from repeated action (Gollwitzer and Schaal 125). As Dilwar Hussain explains, “A person can regulate cognitions only when he/she has categorized knowledge about cognition” (133). Metacognition asks us to slow down, process, and move forward with new understanding.

We encourage readers to use the following questions and reading list to reflect upon automatic actions, such as not setting workplace boundaries or suppressing emotions around identity. Readers might consider using the following questions and reading list for a faculty reading group, a professional development workshop, or to spur conversations among faculty, administrators, graduate students, friends, and family.

### Reflection Questions

- How does your positionality and/or intersectionality influence and affect your work?
- How does the positionality and/or intersectionality of your colleagues influence and affect their professional lives and lived experiences?
- What are the driving neoliberal values creating personal and professional fragmentation in your own life?
- How do your identities and/or positionalities make you more inclined to take on additional work that exceeds the work of your colleagues or goes beyond your job description?
- How might you make visible the invisible labor of your work?
- How do your social and political identities create discrimination and/or power?
- What boundaries do you need to set in your teaching, research, and administrative work that honor your positionalities and/or intersectionalities?
- How might you need to communicate more clearly to your students and colleagues how your positionalities and/or intersectionalities inform or affect your teaching, research, and administrative work?
- How do you balance the labor of social justice with sustainable self-care practices?
- What might a sustainable, inclusive, and equitable university look like at all levels?

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- What might you do to create more sustainable and equitable models in your program, departments, colleges, etc.?
- How do you align your values and the tenets of social justice with your everyday labor? And how might you use that alignment to shift the goals of your program or department?

#### Curated Reading List

- Abby Palko, Sonalini Sapra, and Jamie Wagman's *Feminist Responses to the Neoliberalization of the University: From Surviving to Thriving*
- Anne Helen Petersen's *Can't Even: How Millennials Became the Burnout Generation*
- Bill Burnett and Dave Evans' *Designing Your Work Life: How to Thrive and Change and Find Happiness at Work*
- Connie Burk and Laura van Dernoot Lipsky's *Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others*
- Damon Zahariades' *The Art of Saying No: How to Stand Your Ground, Reclaim Your Time and Energy, and Refuse to Be Taken for Granted (Without Feeling Guilty!)*
- Elizabeth Flynn and Tiffany Bourelle's *Women's Professional Lives in Rhetoric and Composition*
- Ellen C. Maycock and Domnica Radulescu's *Feminist Activism in Academia: Essays on Personal, Political and Professional Change*
- Emily Nagoski and Amelia Nagoski's *Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle*
- Gabriella Gutiérrez y Muhs, Yolanda Flores Niemann, Carmen G. Gonzalez, and Angela P. Harris' *The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia*
- Gaëtane Jean-Marie, Cosette M. Grant, and Beverly Irby's *The Duality of Women Scholars of Color: Transforming and Being Transformed in the Academy*
- Jennifer J. Edwards and Ndidi Amutah-Onukagha's *The Black Woman's Guide to Advancing in Academia*
- Khara Croswaite Brindle's *Perfectioneur From Workaholic to Well-Balanced: One Therapist's Guide to Get You There*
- Kimberlé Crenshaw's *On Intersectionality: Essential Writings*
- Kirsti Cole and Holly Hassel's *Surviving Sexism in Academia: Strategies for Feminist Leadership*
- la paperson's *A Third University is Possible: Uncovering the Decolonizing Ghost in the Colonizing Machine*
- Maggie Berg and Barbara Seeber's *The Slow Professor*
- Margaret Price's *Mad at School: Rhetorics of Mental Disability and Academic Life*

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- Narelle Lemon and Sharon McDonough's *Mindfulness in the Academy: Practices and Perspectives from Scholars*
- Patricia A. Matthew's *Written/Unwritten: Diversity and the Hidden Truths of Tenure*
- Robert Sutton's *The No Asshole Rule* and *The Asshole Survival Guide*
- Roxane Gay's *Difficult Women* and *How to Be Heard*
- Sue Jackson's *Differently Academic?: Developing Lifelong Learning for Women in Higher Education*
- William B. Rouse's *Universities as Complex Enterprises: How Academia Works, Why It Works These Ways, and Where the University Enterprise Is Headed*

We recognize our discussion questions and reading list are far from exhaustive, but combined with the resources provided in each chapter, we hope they help readers on their own journeys of understanding, growth, advocacy, and balance.

### **Conclusion and Acknowledgements**

We cannot affect lasting change in the academic workspace, in our personal lives, and in our communities if we do not look deeply at how our intersectionality, positionality, and social justice efforts affect and are shaped by our academic position and work. We see a real need to have more conversations across academia—in scholarly publications, in committees, in standing groups, in departments, in colleges, and in and across institutions—about how our lives, work, and social justice efforts are shaped by our intersectionalities and positionalities. We sincerely hope our special issue will extend conversations in your department, college, university, social circles, conference panels, committees, and elsewhere.

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