

## ORIGINAL ARTICLE OPEN ACCESS

# “The Hamster Wheel Is on Fire”: How the Pandemic Amplified Inequality in the Academy

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## ABSTRACT

Institutional practices often recreate inequalities within organizations, especially in times of crisis like the COVID pandemic. Although early pandemic research expressed alarm that increased caregiving demands were reducing women's research productivity, it paid less attention to changing work demands. By contrast, this article examines whether pandemic changes in academic work demands varied across race and gender, drawing on survey data from 1198 faculty members in two university systems in the United States. Consistent with theories of institutional routines, identity taxation, and status beliefs, we find that, compared to their colleagues, women and faculty of color spent more time on service and teaching, performed more emotional labor, and experienced more burnout. Women report greater decreases than men in research productivity, but the presence of children does not fully explain these gender differences. Women are more likely to consider leaving the university, but intentions to leave are driven by their disproportionate emotional labor and service during the pandemic. Our findings provide insight into how pandemic increases in academic labor fell more heavily on some faculty members than others. They also contribute to our understanding of mechanisms that reproduce inequality in the academy.

There's no consistency and even less humility around the reality of where everyone's at: burnt out as hell, afraid for the future, yet professional expectations continue apace. The hamster wheel is on fire and no one in power seems to be invested in making responsive and humane changes to academic work culture, just “going back to normal.”

## 1 | Introduction

Not long ago, scholars expressed alarm that the COVID pandemic threatened the presence and advancement of a generation of women in academia, especially women of color (Clark

et al. 2020; Deryugina et al. 2021; Oleschuk 2020). A headline in the journal *Nature* lamented “‘It's like We're Going Back 30 Years': How the Coronavirus Is Gutting Diversity in Science” (Woolston 2020). Scholarly interest in how the pandemic affected underrepresented faculty is fading, however, as universities return to so-called normal operations. Early research about pandemic effects focused on declines in manuscript submissions by women; scholars attributed these declines to women's increased caregiving demands at home (Andersen et al. 2020; Carpenter et al. 2021; King and Frederickson 2021; Ribarovska et al. 2021; Squazzoni et al. 2021; but see Abramo et al. 2022). Focusing on caretaking responsibilities as the mechanism driving gender inequality, however, conflates women with mothers and reinforces stereotypes that women are caregivers first and workers second. It also locates the problem

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(and its resolution) solely in challenges arising from outside the academy, rather than from institutional problems within (Pereira 2021). Scholars have paid comparatively little attention to how the pandemic changed institutional demands and the likely consequences for women and faculty of color (but see Berheide et al. 2022; Docka-Filipek and Stone 2021).

How did work demands in the academy change during the pandemic? Were new work demands equally distributed, or did they fall more heavily on some faculty? Theories regarding gendered and racialized institutional routines (Acker 1990, 2006), identity taxation (Baez 2000; Hirshfield and Joseph 2012; Padilla 1994), status beliefs (Ridgeway 2011, 2014), and emotional labor (Bellas 1999; Hochschild 1983) all suggest that pandemic institutional demands may not have been distributed equally. Before the pandemic, women and faculty of color spent more time engaged in teaching, service, and mentoring tasks than their white male colleagues (Guarino and Borden 2017; Hanasono et al. 2019; O'Meara et al. 2017; Padilla 1994; Winslow 2010). Institutional demands around teaching, mentoring, and emotionally supporting students dramatically increased during the pandemic (Soria et al. 2020). At the same time, widespread protests responding to police violence against Black Americans pressured universities to ramp up their visible commitment to equity and diversity (Joseph and Hirshfield 2023; Layne et al. 2023). Given these factors, we ask whether changing work demands during the pandemic aggravated the already disproportionate workloads of women and faculty of color.

This article draws on original data from a survey of faculty members in the University of Wisconsin System (UW) and the University of California System (UC)—two large university systems in the United States—to analyze how pandemic changes in teaching and research vary across race and gender. We also examine variation in institutional demands for emotional labor and service related to COVID and to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Finally, we assess the toll of pandemic labor including burnout and intentions to leave the university. We argue that pandemic work demands exacerbated already disproportionate academic workloads for women and faculty of color. Our findings uncover how pandemic increases in academic labor were unequally distributed. They also contribute new insights about the mechanisms that reproduce inequality in the academy.

## 2 | What Drives Unequal Workloads in the Academy?

Our study builds on extensive pre-pandemic research that finds that women and faculty of color spend more time engaged in teaching, service, and mentoring tasks than their white male colleagues, who spend more time engaged in research (Carrigan et al. 2011; Link et al. 2008; Misra et al. 2011; Guarino and Borden 2017; Hanasono et al. 2019; O'Meara et al. 2017; Padilla 1994; Winslow 2010). Unlike teaching and research, service work is allocated in an essentially unregulated organizational economy that ensures key university functions get done but rarely tracks whether this work is distributed equitably (Massé and Hogan 2010). University service is often naturalized

as unselfish and altruistic, transforming it into unrecognized labor disproportionately performed by women and faculty of color (Babcock, Recalde, and Vesterlund 2017; Babcock, Recalde, Vesterlund, and Weingart 2017; Massé and Hogan 2010; Mitchell and Hesli 2013; O'Meara et al. 2017; Rideau 2021). Service and teaching take time away from research, however. Universities also undervalue service work compared to research even though it meets core institutional needs. Disproportionate service and teaching loads thus undermine the advancement of women and faculty of color relative to their colleagues (Baez 2000; Cardel et al. 2020; Griffin et al. 2013; Misra et al. 2011). In the following sections, we examine theory and research about gendered and racialized institutional routines, identity taxation, status beliefs, and demands for emotional labor to develop our argument that the pandemic exacerbated disproportionate workloads for women and faculty of color.

### 2.1 | Institutional Routines and Identity Taxation

Institutional routines in workplaces, including universities, contribute to the reproduction of gender and race inequality (Acker 1990, 2006; Misra et al. 2021; Williams 2001). These routines affect how tasks are assigned and valued within an organization, as well as the organization of work itself, such that cultural beliefs about differences among workers based on race and gender determine who can and should do the work, and who has status and power in the workplace (Acker 1990, 2006; Ridgeway 2011). Institutional routines need not be overtly discriminatory or infused with intentional bias to result in inequities. Examples from universities include assigning service through discretion or requests for volunteers, requiring representation of women and faculty of color on committees, and assigning minority faculty members to mentor students who share their identities. These routines frame service as altruistic volunteerism, well-meaning support of diversity, and efforts to ensure student success, yet all result in disproportionate service for women and faculty of color (Massé and Hogan 2010). Research shows that ad hoc service assignment has meant women perform more service, are asked to do more service, and are asked to do less prestigious and more time-consuming service tasks than those performed by their male colleagues (Babcock, Recalde, and Vesterlund 2017; Babcock, Recalde, Vesterlund, and Weingart 2017; Mitchell and Hesli 2013; O'Meara et al. 2017; Rideau 2021). Thus, studying institutional routines and work allocation matters for understanding gender and race inequality (Babcock et al. 2022).

Another factor in disproportionate service and teaching is what scholars call “identity taxation”. Scholars use this term to describe “when faculty members [are asked to] shoulder any labor—physical, mental, or emotional—because of their membership in a historically marginalized group within their department or university, beyond that which is expected of other faculty members in the same setting.” (Hirshfield and Joseph 2012, 214). Identity taxation on women and faculty of color includes disproportionate responsibility for mentoring and advising women and students of color; pressure to serve as role models; departmental requests for diverse representation at

recruitment events and on committees; and assumptions that women will take on non-academic community building work such as planning events (Baez 2000; Bellas 1999; El-Alayli et al. 2018; Hirshfield and Joseph 2012; Joseph and Hirshfield 2010; Rockquemore and Laszloffy 2008; Tierney and Bensimon 1996).

Another related form of identity-driven work allocation is how universities rely on women to fill the role of “academic mothers,” and to shoulder the lion’s share of emotional caretaking, student support, and mentoring (Bellas 1999; El-Alayli et al. 2018). Similarly, universities turn to faculty of color to serve the needs of communities of color and lean heavily on them to portray the institution’s commitment to diversity (Baez 2000; Hirshfield and Joseph 2012; Rockquemore and Laszloffy 2008; Tierney and Bensimon 1996). This “diversity work” can encompass “recruiting, mentoring, teaching, committee membership, and conducting trainings or workshops designed to, directly or indirectly, meet the institution’s stated DEI goals” (Layne et al. 2023, 2). This extra work is described as “identity taxation” because faculty members are asked to take on additional service and mentoring *because of* their identities.

Women and faculty of color face pressure to accept this extra work to avoid backlash for not being good citizens, particularly if they are untenured (Padilla 1994; Melaku and Beeman 2022). But as Joseph and Hirschfield (2010, 126) note, “the assumption that only faculty of color can effectively mentor students of color removes this task from white faculty who should also be invested in non-white students’ academic success.” To be sure, many professors of color find it rewarding to mentor students of color, and some gain personal support through this work (Baez 2000). But identity taxation also produces benefits for students and for the university. That faculty enjoy their work does not preclude appropriate recognition for valuable and necessary labor that benefits the university. Nevertheless, universities routinely devalue identity-related work relative to research, and sometimes even to other forms of teaching and service.

## 2.2 | Status Beliefs and Stereotypes

Beyond institutional routines, status beliefs affect how the contributions of each faculty member are perceived and valued. Even if identity taxation did not exist and all faculty members performed the same work, theories about status beliefs and stereotypes suggest that women and faculty of color would still be perceived more negatively than their white male colleagues (Pager 2003; Ridgeway 2009, 2014). Expectation states theory posits that evaluators apply different competence standards based on status differences between groups. Specifically, the performance of lower-status individuals is assessed by a stricter standard than similar performances by higher-status individuals (Foschi 1996, 2000). Conversely, when higher-status individuals fail, they are given the benefit of the doubt and held to a more lenient standard than lower-status individuals (Foschi 2000). Gender stereotypes and backlash also play a role when women violate social expectations for their gender or occupy traditionally male-held positions such as professor (Stewart and

Valian 2018). Experimental studies find that observers evaluate the performance of women and minorities lower than white men, even when their performance is the same (Biernat and Manis 1994; Biernat et al. 1991; Pager 2003; Ridgeway 2009). In addition, research finds that women who conform to gender stereotypes are rewarded, whereas women who do not are disliked and sometimes punished (Eagly and Karau 2002).

Different demands on women also flow from students’ stereotypical expectations that women professors should be more helpful, approachable, warm, and available than men professors (El-Alayli et al. 2018; O’Meara et al. 2017; Sprague and Massoni 2005), aligning with gender stereotypes that women are and should be warmer and more nurturing than men (Heilman 2001; Ridgeway 2001, 2009). Women who conform to gender-appropriate “nurturing” and “mothering” roles are rewarded, whereas deviations from these gender-appropriate behaviors are punished, even if these deviations are entirely appropriate for university professors (El-Alayli et al. 2018; Sprague and Massoni 2005). These stereotypical expectations also mean women face greater backlash than men for saying no, which may contribute to their willingness to accept tasks when asked (see Misra et al. 2021; Moss-Racusin and Rudman 2010).

Faculty who are both women and people of color face intersectional disadvantages. Intersectionality theory addresses how multiple systems of subordination, such as racism, sexism, and class bias, intertwine to create distinct experiences of oppression for people with multiple subordinated identities (Crenshaw 1991). Intersectionality theory suggests that the experiences of women of color will be substantively different than those of white women and men of color. Research finds that Black women professors often experience bullying and harassment based on both their race and their gender. This includes both overt and covert forms of discrimination, such as micro-aggressions, exclusion from key meetings, and being undermined by colleagues (Mizra 2018; Rollock 2019; Maylor 2018). These subtle forms of discrimination, which manifest in everyday interactions and institutional practices, contribute to the marginalization faced by Black women academics as well as feelings of isolation (Rollock 2019; Maylor 2018). In addition, research indicates that Black women experience significant barriers to career progression, including lack of mentorship and limited access to professional networks (Mizra 2006; Rollock 2019). Focusing specifically on how these faculty members experienced COVID expands knowledge about intersectionality in the academy.

The relatively sparse research regarding work demands on faculty during the pandemic is largely consistent with pre-pandemic findings. Not surprisingly, faculty overall report substantial increases in non-research related workload, in part because preparing and delivering remote instruction took more time than in-person classes (Horta et al. 2022; Kasymova et al. 2021; Shalaby et al. 2021). Shalaby et al. (2021) found that more women than men report increases in their service and non-research-related responsibilities, as well as increased time devoted to teaching, but these differences were not statistically significant. Deo (2022) found that women, especially women of color, report performing extra service at work. Górska et al. (2021) found that whereas female academics regard their role as supporting students’ general emotional well-being, male

academics consider their responsibility to be limited to course content and technical assistance.

Identity taxation may have been particularly acute during the pandemic because racial justice protests prompted universities to increase efforts to show their commitment to diversity and inclusion. Research indicates that faculty of color, including women of color, were expected to take on much of this work during the pandemic (Melaku and Beeman 2022, 2023). This work included significant time spent mentoring and supporting students of color, as well as orchestrating largely performative programs that did little to change the underlying institution (Melaku and Beeman 2023). At the same time, women of color faculty reported lukewarm commitment on the part of their institutions to make meaningful changes, and no recognition of their emotional burden and stress from taking up DEI work or from the racist events that prompted that work in the first place (Melaku and Beeman 2023).

If the mechanisms described above disproportionately assign labor associated with mentoring, student support, and teaching to women and faculty of color, then we would expect that expanded pandemic work demands will disproportionately burden women and faculty of color. To the extent that universities increased their visible commitment to equity and diversity in response to the racial justice movement, identity taxation theory suggests that this DEI work will fall disproportionately on faculty of color. Accordingly, we anticipate that:

**H1.** *Relative to their colleagues, women and faculty of color will report a greater increase in time spent on service and teaching compared to prior to the pandemic.*

*To the extent that disproportionate teaching and service take time away from research, we would anticipate that:*

**H2.** *Relative to their colleagues, women and faculty of color will report greater decreases in research productivity compared to prior to the pandemic.*

## 2.3 | Emotional Labor

Theory also suggests that increased demands for emotional labor during the pandemic would fall disproportionately on women and faculty of color. Emotional labor means managing one's emotions to meet the requirements of a job, including suppressing emotions felt but not expressed, and making efforts to manage the emotions of others (Hochschild 1983). Women and faculty of color not only spend more time on service and teaching, they also carry the burden of emotional and psychological demands placed on them. These faculty disproportionately mentor and support students psychologically and academically during their educational careers (Berheide et al. 2022). "Female professors may find that they must take on extra burdens, such as helping students cope with stress or insecurities, having to set personal boundaries with them." (El-Alayli et al. 2018, 137). Bellas (1999) points to pressure on women faculty to exhibit warm, reinforcing behavior toward students in the classroom; to counsel students on their personal

challenges outside the classroom; and to manage collegial relations between faculty on service committees.

Emotional labor also varies with race because of social and cultural expectations that track racial identity (Harlow 2003). Anthym and Tuitt (2021) explore how demands for Black faculty's emotional labor extend beyond teaching and advising into the realm of race-related service work. Faculty of color do extra-institutional service work with marginalized racial and ethnic communities, work that demands time and emotional engagement. They also take on DEI service obligations while simultaneously navigating their own experiences related to racial (in) justice, especially in predominantly white universities. This emotional labor matters to students and to the university. It can be rewarding and meaningful to the faculty who do it. Nevertheless, it diverts time and energy away from research and it is seldom recognized in promotion reviews.

COVID caused major mental health challenges, imposed enormous stress, and created significant academic challenges for college students (Wang et al. 2020; Lederer et al. 2021). These challenges dramatically increased emotional labor for educators during the pandemic. Auger and Formentin (2021) identify several pandemic-related sources of additional emotional labor: increased demands related to shifts in teaching modality; students' increased personal and mental health challenges; and faculty's own pandemic-related challenges. They find that men were less likely than women to perceive their students as facing challenges, and therefore men felt less emotional exhaustion. In contrast, women engaged in more surface acting, that is, trying to reassure and support students while feeling sad and anxious themselves. Berheide et al. (2022) find that during COVID, white cisgender men performed less emotional labor than women and gender nonconforming faculty or minority faculty. In addition, marginalized faculty were more likely to receive student requests for special favors, which in turn increased emotional labor. These dynamics increased demand for emotional labor from faculty who were themselves under stress from the pandemic (Pereira 2021). Accordingly, we expect that:

**H3.** *Relative to their colleagues, women and faculty of color will report more frequent demands for and experiences with emotional labor.*

## 2.4 | Outcomes and Consequences

How faculty members perceive their work life has a direct and powerful impact on their satisfaction and intentions to leave the academy (Rosser 2004), but the factors that affect whether faculty intend to leave vary with gender. Women are more likely than men to feel pushed from their jobs, rather than pulled toward better opportunities (Spoon et al. 2023). Despite scholars' relentless focus on academic women's childcare challenges, women consider leaving because of workplace climate more often than because of lack of work-life balance (Spoon et al. 2023). There is also evidence that stress from unequal treatment at work negatively affects faculty in ways that stress from family demands does not (Eagan and Garvey 2015). Workplace climate is a major reason women leave academia at

every career stage, but it is especially prominent among tenured women (Spoon et al. 2023). Jiang et al. (2017) find that demands of academically entitled students (those who feel deserving of success independent of effort or performance) increase instructors' stress (see also El-Alayli et al. 2018). To the extent that these students demand even more of women than of men, they disproportionately exacerbate women's stress and burnout from teaching.

Pandemic-related research suggests that work demands disproportionately added to burnout and stress for women and faculty of color. Docka-Filipek and Stone (2021) find that women's disproportionate burdens at work during the pandemic were associated with higher depression and anxiety than among their male colleagues, even after controlling for family-related pressures and financial concerns. In a survey of tenure-track faculty employed at public universities in Canada, Davis et al. (2022) find that female participants and minority-status individuals reported higher levels of stress and social isolation and lower levels of well-being in the first few months of the pandemic. Similarly, Melaku and Beeman (2022) find that women of color in academia reported feelings of exhaustion, hopelessness, hypervisibility, and exploitation when required to take up work that is not recognized, compensated, or valued in meaningful ways (see also Deo 2022). Consistent with this earlier research, we predict that:

**H4.** *Relative to their colleagues, women and faculty of color will report more burnout and mental health challenges from the pandemic.*

**H5.** *Relative to their colleagues, women and faculty of color will be more likely to consider temporarily or permanently leaving the university in light of their pandemic experiences.*

### 3 | Data and Methods

This article is part of a larger project investigating variation in faculty experiences with the pandemic and institutional responses to the extraordinary pressures the pandemic created for faculty at work and at home (see Supporting Information S1: Appendix S1). This project is based on a web survey of faculty members in UW and UC—both of which are large multi-campus public university systems located in different regions of the United States. Both universities are predominantly white institutions (72% at UW, 65% at UC), and approximately one-third of the faculty members are women (39% at UW, 32% at UC). The target population were academic workers with security of employment who had teaching or research responsibilities. Because of IRB requirements and differences between the university systems, the modes of distribution of the survey for each system differed (see Supporting Information S1: Appendix S2). This article analyzes only responses from tenured and tenure-track faculty, a total of 1198 respondents. Detailed information about the survey design, field operations, and response rates is provided in Supporting Information S1.

Studying many universities across these two systems yields several advantages. This approach generates enough respondents

to analyze differences across gender, race, and academic rank, and provides geographic variation among respondents. It also encourages participation among faculty of color, who otherwise may fear being identified given the small number of faculty of color at their institution. We do not include university or department information for quotations to protect respondents from identification. Finally, the timing of our study (March 9 to June 15, 2022), which coincided with the reopening of campuses and the return to normal operations, allows us to assess the pandemic's lingering consequences.

Nevertheless, it was a challenge to recruit respondents, many of whom suffered survey fatigue from repeated administrative surveys, and who were wary of retaliation for complaints about how their university was handling the COVID crisis. Our survey emphasized that it was a research survey conducted by independent university scholars to reduce respondents' fears of university retaliation. The survey also pointed out additional measures implemented to protect respondents' privacy, including that the researchers would avoid collecting any individual email addresses because the UW Survey Center would administer the survey. Our response rates range between 4% and 16% depending on the university system. These response rates are comparable to other online surveys of faculty (see e.g., Dykema et al. 2013; Spoon et al. 2023). Low response rates can raise concerns about potential response bias. Low response rates are not necessarily a problem, however, if the distribution of respondents' characteristics approximates the distribution of characteristics in the population surveyed. As shown in Table A1 in Supporting Information S1: Appendix S3, the distribution of our respondents by race and ethnicity follows a similar distribution as the target population, although response rates are higher for women than for men, as is typical for surveys (Clarsen et al. 2021; Dykema et al. 2023; Porter and Umbach 2006). We also note that our design improves on that of several web-based surveys of academics during the pandemic that did not have known sampling frames such as lists of faculty contact emails and, therefore, could not calculate response rates or sample representativeness.

Although self-report surveys are widely used to gather data about the experiences and perspectives of faculty members in various contexts, such data come with inherent limitations, including memory bias, response bias, and subjectivity. Our design makes efforts to mitigate these limitations in several ways. The design employs a mixed-methods approach, which combines self-reported quantitative data with open-ended qualitative responses. This approach provides the authors with a broader frame for understanding responses and data to help to identify inconsistencies. Further, the survey asked questions at an appropriate level of generality, for example, estimates by semester rather than estimates by week, to enable individuals to provide more accurate answers that can be compared across respondents. To mitigate against socially desirable responses, the survey assured anonymity to encourage truthful responses. To reduce the possibility that individuals would misunderstand vague survey questions or interpret them differently, the researchers relied on the substantial design expertise of the UW Survey Center staff to assist with question construction. Additionally, the design included a pilot test to identify potential issues with question wording and allow for revisions before the survey was administered.

### 3.1 | Dependent Variables

This article examines three sets of dependent variables from our larger study. The first includes five measures of work responsibilities measuring changes in faculty's labor in teaching, service, and research compared to before the pandemic. The second contains questions that capture the demands for emotional labor. The third includes questions about the psychological consequences of the pandemic, and respondents' intent to change their relationship with their universities in light of their pandemic experiences. Descriptive statistics for these variables are provided in Table A2 in Supporting Information S1: Appendix S3.<sup>1</sup>

#### 3.1.1 | Work Demands

**3.1.1.1 | Time Use.** Respondents used a five-point scale ("1" = "much less," "5" = "much more") to evaluate changes in their time spent on teaching, research, service, and administrative responsibilities in 2020 and 2021 compared to 2019.

**3.1.1.2 | Teaching Loads.** Respondents listed their course load from Spring 2020 through Fall 2021 and assessed whether this load was higher, the same, or lighter than the number of courses they taught prior to the pandemic. They also calculated the number of extra hours spent preparing to teach during the pandemic compared to a typical week before the pandemic.

**3.1.1.3 | Service Activities.** Respondents indicated any extra service, presentations, committee work, or programming activities they did during the pandemic from the following options: COVID's broader effects on society; the racial justice movement; equity and inclusion; the transition to remote instruction; university pandemic response related work; and other. Respondents also used a five-point scale ("1" = "much more difficult," "5" = "much easier") to evaluate whether the pandemic made it easier or more difficult to complete their service obligations.

**3.1.1.4 | Research-Related Productivity.** Respondents used a five-point scale ("1" = "much less," "5" = "much more") to evaluate how much their research or scholarship advanced in 2020 and 2021 compared to a typical period before the pandemic. For ease of interpretation, we reversed the variable scale and present the results as decreases in research productivity.

#### 3.1.2 | Emotional Labor

Respondents used a five-point scale ("1" = "never," "5" = "extremely often") to rate how frequently they had to hide their own challenges related to the pandemic while teaching or mentoring students; they were emotionally drained from teaching or mentoring students; students talked with them about emotional and mental health challenges due to the pandemic; and their employer expected them to perform an empathetic and supportive role for their students.<sup>2</sup>

### 3.1.3 | Consequences and Outcomes

**3.1.3.1 | Psychological Consequences.** Respondents used a five-point scale ("1" = "not at all," "5" = "extremely") to evaluate their level of burnout and engagement with work at the end of Fall 2021. Relatedly, respondents evaluated their degree of satisfaction with their academic position using a seven-point scale ("1" = "much less satisfied," "7" = "much more satisfied").

**3.1.3.2 | Intent to Exit.** Respondents checked all the changes to work status they considered in the context of their pandemic experiences: taking paid family or medical leave, earlier retirement, taking unpaid leave, moving to part-time work, changing jobs to a different university, and leaving the university for a position outside academia.

#### 3.1.4 | Qualitative Open-Ended Responses

We asked a set of open-ended questions to allow respondents to expand upon their experiences. In this paper, we focus on three questions: (1) Tell us about your primary COVID challenges, worries, or struggles related to meeting work responsibilities during the pandemic; (2) What, if anything, about the COVID situation has made it *harder* for you to find time to work on your research and scholarship; and (3) What, if anything, about the COVID situation has made it *easier* for you to find time to work on your research and scholarship?

### 3.2 | Independent Variables

In our analysis, we disaggregate results across academic rank, race/ethnicity, gender, and parental status. Descriptive statistics of these and other demographic and socio-economic variables are provided in Table A3 in Supporting Information S1: Appendix S3.

### 3.3 | Analytical Approach

#### 3.3.1 | Quantitative Analysis

We conducted bivariate analysis comparing the respondents' responses across gender and race/ethnicity. In a few instances, we estimated an additional set of regressions to tease out the effects of gender from the effect of having children on research productivity (Section 4.3), the compositional effect of the career stage on the intention to exit (Section 4.5.2), and how faculty experiences affect intent to exit (Section 5). We present statistically significant results at the 5% level of significance. Additional analyses are reported in Supporting Information S1.

#### 3.3.2 | Qualitative Analysis

We coded open-ended responses using MAXQDA software. Of the 1198 total respondents, we selected a subset for coding, which included comparable numbers of white faculty and

faculty of color ( $n = 300$  and  $221$ ) and men and women faculty ( $n = 244$  and  $277$ ). By sampling for range (Small 2009), we ensured that data represented the views of the subcategories of interest and could illuminate gender and race differences in faculty experiences (see Supporting Information S1: Appendix S5 for more detail). We began with deductive coding, using parent codes that mapped onto key variables from our research questions (e.g., teaching, research, service, emotional labor, psychological consequences, and intent to exit). Next, we used inductive coding to develop subcodes based on nuances that emerged in the data, as well as additional parent and subcodes that extended beyond our initial set of variables of interest.

We integrate qualitative findings to support and add richer context to quantitative findings. Although data from closed-ended survey questions reveal gender and race inequalities in academic work demands during the pandemic, open-ended responses provide deeper insights into the mechanisms through which these inequalities are reproduced (e.g., institutional routines, identity taxation, and status beliefs), and present more nuanced accounts of the distinct experiences and perspectives of faculty across gender and race categories as they navigate these disparate demands. In short, while quantitative findings show *what* inequalities exist in pandemic-era universities, qualitative findings explain *how* these inequalities are perpetuated and experienced by faculty.

## 4 | Results

### 4.1 | Work Demands Related to Teaching

Regardless of gender or race, most respondents reported that teaching demands felt heavier during the pandemic years compared to 2019 (see Table 1). As hypothesized (H1), we find that compared to time spent teaching in 2019, women reported significantly more time teaching than men in 2020 and 2021. There were no statistically significant differences between white respondents and respondents of color, however, in reported extra time spent on teaching (Table 1).

Gender differences in teaching time do not stem from differences in the number of courses taught by men and women, but rather from time spent preparing to teach. About three quarters of respondents reported that they taught the same number of courses as before the pandemic. In addition, the number of courses taught during the pandemic did not differ significantly between women and men. Women reported spending significantly more additional hours during the pandemic preparing to teach each week than men did, however (Table 1). These results are robust to the exclusion from the analysis of respondents with a special status that might have reduced their teaching, such as an administrative position, sabbatical, or visiting position at another institution. We find no statistically significant differences between white respondents and respondents of color either in the number of courses taught or in preparation time.

To provide context for these bivariate patterns, we turn to responses to open-ended questions about the challenges respondents experienced regarding teaching. We anticipated

qualitative differences, given prior research that found students expect women faculty to be more emotionally and psychologically responsive than men. Consistent with the findings of Górska et al. (2021), men's comments tended to focus on the technical or logistical challenges of adapting to online or hybrid instruction. For example, men cite difficulties with learning new technologies or lecturing online to a screen of students with their cameras off.

It took considerable effort to reimagine and redesign assignments for asynchronous class environments and for students who would not be face-to-face...Student interaction with courses and with materials changed. Some students seemingly “forgot” how to take an exam, “forgot” how to manage their schedules and due dates, “forgot” how to interact with peers in a classroom while masked, etc.

(White man, associate professor)

By contrast, although women also reported technical challenges with remote teaching, their comments tended to focus on additional work to meet students' needs rather than the technical demands of Zoom teaching.

Teaching was more difficult and more time-consuming because of students' needs... I've started using multi-tab excel sheets to track student attendance (including who's out quarantining) and traumas (such as being hospitalized, having to care for sick relatives, having to organize and pay for family members' funerals, etc.) so I could offer fair and timely accommodations and flexibility for people who were suffering.

(Black woman, associate professor)

It was important for us to be more flexible with our students, especially as we asked them to be patient with us as we were making big changes to our class formats and activities. Likewise, our students' lives were interrupted in multiple ways which we needed to take into account. While I think that flexibility was essential, it just required more work- the creation of assignment[s] in different formats, accepting work on different timelines, offering asynchronous online support while providing synchronous opportunities. This additional workload then impacted what progress I felt like I could make with research.

(White woman, assistant professor)

Consistent with quantitative findings about increased time spent preparing to teach, regardless of gender, most open-ended responses described the effort associated with implementing new pedagogical approaches during the pandemic. However, qualitative findings also offer insight into *why* there was a gap in additional time men and women spent on teaching. That is, they reveal the types of work that many women did to adapt their teaching approaches on top of baseline changes to teaching

**TABLE 1** | Changes in work compared to the year prior to the pandemic, bivariate statistics.

Variables	Total sample (N = 1198) Mean	Women (N = 700) Mean	Men (N = 445) Mean	Statistical significance	FOC (N = 203) Mean	White (N = 903) Mean	Statistical significance
Teaching time							
2020	3.91 (1.13)	4.01 (1.11)	3.75 (1.16)	*	3.85 (1.23)	3.94 (1.10)	n.s.
2021	3.74 (1.01)	3.85 (0.97)	3.56 (1.03)	*	3.73 (1.09)	3.74 (0.98)	n.s.
Reason for increased teaching time							
Num. of courses	6.37 (5.05)	6.43 (4.86)	6.27 (5.36)	n.s.	6.45 (5.83)	6.44 (4.91)	n.s.
Additional hours prep	7.24 (6.83)	7.81 (6.54)	6.34 (7.00)	*	7.29 (6.64)	7.19 (6.85)	n.s.
Service time							
2020	3.29 (1.19)	3.47 (1.19)	3.00 (1.12)	*	3.42 (1.24)	3.25 (1.17)	*
2021	3.51 (1.10)	3.71 (1.07)	3.19 (1.06)	*	3.69 (1.18)	3.46 (1.07)	*
Type of increased service							
Respondent did DEI	0.61 (0.48)	0.67 (0.46)	0.52 (0.49)	*	0.73 (0.44)	0.59 (0.49)	*
Respondent did COVID	0.73 (0.44)	0.74 (0.43)	0.70 (0.45)	n.s.	0.76 (0.42)	0.71 (0.45)	n.s.
Research productivity reduction							
2020	4.02 (1.09)	4.08 (1.12)	3.93 (1.06)	*	3.87 (1.16)	4.05 (1.07)	n.s.
2021	3.77 (1.09)	3.84 (1.09)	3.67 (1.06)	*	3.68 (1.18)	3.79 (1.06)	n.s.

Note: Standard deviation in parentheses. Teaching time, service time, and research productivity variables use a five-point scale (“1” = “much less,” “5” = “much more”). \*  $p < 0.05$ .

modality (e.g., regularly assessing and flexibly responding to students' needs)—which require additional time and effort.

Qualitative responses also illuminate why women and faculty of color may be more inclined than men or white faculty to take on this type of extra teaching-related work. Status theories predict that when women and faculty of color do not meet expectations, they will be subject to additional scrutiny by students, administration, and other faculty, putting pressure on them to overperform relative to their colleagues. Along these lines, some respondents raised concerns about unequal expectations and evaluations of teaching across race and gender.

I was repeatedly chastised for various things—any time I got sick and canceled classes, any time I pushed an assignment online, etc., it became a subject of repeated scrutiny. I have felt immense pressure to perform far above and beyond the average second-year

faculty has ever felt and have only been punished for being unable to meet absurd requirements.

(Latinx non-binary assistant professor)

The campus sent messaging that student responses to our teaching should be set in the appropriate context in our reviews. However, I do not believe this is what will happen. I believe the same people who suffer from inequitable teaching evaluations—female faculty and faculty of color—will be downgraded in promotion processes because of student criticism.

(Other race woman, professor)

All the comments about gendered dynamics were made by women and all the comments about racialized dynamics were made by respondents of color. These respondents' awareness of and worry about heightened standards may explain why they

spent more time than their colleagues on teaching given unequal expectations.

#### 4.2 | Work Demands Related to Service

Overall, respondents reported spending more time on service in 2020 and 2021 compared to 2019 (Table 1). As we anticipated (H1), women reported spending significantly more time than men on service during 2020 and 2021 as compared to 2019. We also find that respondents of color reported spending significantly more time on service than white respondents (Table 1). To emphasize, here, we are comparing the relative *increase* in time spent before and after the pandemic by each group, rather than any underlying difference between men and women in time spent on service.

Following institutional routine and identity taxation theories, we investigated additional service in two areas: extra service related to DEI and extra service related to COVID's broader effects on society, the transition to remote instruction, or university pandemic response-related work. Significantly more women than men and significantly more respondents of color than white respondents report extra service related to DEI (Table 1). Although we find similar patterns regarding extra service related to COVID, these differences are not statistically significant.

Women and faculty of color not only took on more service responsibilities during the pandemic than white male faculty—as evidenced by the quantitative data—but they talked about this work in a qualitatively different way. In open-ended responses, women and faculty of color recognize that their extra service is important for their students, but express frustration that this “academic housework” disproportionately falls to marginalized faculty.

Nothing [about the pandemic] has made [work] easier. My research was what I could sacrifice in order to meet my teaching, service, and parenting needs. Maybe I should have been selfish and sacrificed time spent on service, but it was clear my service was making an important impact on our graduate students.

(White woman, professor)

I spent so much of the 2020-21 academic year feeling crushed by inadequacy due to the ever-growing expectations of service... really highlighted how competent people are given the departmental housework. It's so crushing now to reflect on the lack of care and investment shown by both my department and this university.

(Asian woman, associate professor)

Paperwork, bureaucracy, care for students and staff, doing all the shit work the older white tenured faculty refuse to do.

(Asian man, professor)

Building on quantitative findings that faculty of color experienced the greatest increase in DEI-related service, open-ended responses shed light on the institutional routines and identity taxation that disproportionately place “diversity work” responsibilities on marginalized faculty. Among our respondents, only faculty of color discuss taking on more service around racial justice issues. This service includes formal service through committee membership or being asked to give talks on these issues, and informal service through supporting students in and outside the classroom.

I gave 18 talks on anti-racism from the summer of 2020 until spring of 2022, while nobody else in my department did anything ... The stress from perpetual racism in society and the fact that my research focuses on racism has been emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually draining. Nevertheless, I don't trust [the university's] commitment to junior faculty of color, so I kept plowing through my tenure case.

(Black man, assistant professor)

The pandemic also coincided with heightened anti-Black violence and police brutality, followed by anti-Asian hate violence too. The stress produced by these events definitely affected the learning environment, and this had to be addressed in the classroom.

(Asian woman, associate professor)

Respondents of color describe navigating their own experiences of racial injustice while shouldering extra DEI service work. Although this work can be meaningful personally, it can tokenize and burden faculty of color without valuing their labor.

#### 4.3 | Research Productivity

Much of the media concern during COVID focused on reduced faculty productivity, especially among women. To evaluate any disproportionate negative effects on research productivity (H2), we evaluate gender and race differences among faculty self-reports about their decrease in research productivity compared to before the pandemic, on a five-point scale (see dependent measure above). In 2020, 71% of all respondents reported that their research or scholarship advanced somewhat or much less than in 2019. By 2021, the situation had improved: 65% of respondents reported that their research or scholarship advanced somewhat or much less compared to 2019. These overall figures obscure gender differences, however. For both 2020 and 2021, women's mean reported drop in research progress was significantly larger than men's mean reported drop in research progress, compared to their respective research progress in 2019 (Table 1). However, we find no statistically significant differences in research progress declines between respondents of color and white respondents in either 2020 or 2021.

The mere presence of gender differences in decreased productivity compared to before the pandemic does not explain the mechanism reducing women's research productivity. Because women typically carry a disproportionate share of caregiving

responsibilities, many scholars assume that extra care responsibilities explain observed declines in women’s research productivity relative to declines in men’s productivity during the pandemic. To investigate this possibility, and to check the robustness of our findings, we estimated regressions for differences in research productivity, controlling for whether respondents have children (of any age) or children under 6 years old. We find that even after controlling for the presence of children, women report greater decreases than men in research progress in both 2020 and 2021 (Table 2). In 2020, controlling for the presence of children reduces the size of the coefficient for gender, but gender remains a significant predictor of reported reduced productivity. In 2021, however, controlling for children does not change the coefficient for gender. By 2021 (when childcare and schools reopened), the coefficient for having children is no longer significantly related to research productivity, even for respondents with children under six. These results suggest something other than caregiving drives gender differences in productivity. We also ran this analysis including measures of work demands and emotional labor (analysis available upon request). In this analysis the effect of gender was no longer significant in either 2020 or 2021, suggesting that work related demands drove gender differences in reductions in research productivity.<sup>3</sup>

We ran separate regressions for men and women predicting reductions in research productivity (Table 3) to evaluate whether the effect of children on research productivity is similar for men and women. Although women with children are more likely than women without children to report decreases in research productivity in 2020, this difference among women with and without children is no longer significant in 2021. It is never significant for men.

#### 4.4 | Emotional Labor

During the pandemic, students needed much more support and counseling, and many students experienced mental health

issues. We anticipated that these developments would increase demands on faculty members for emotional labor—especially women and faculty of color (H3). Table 4 reports several significant gender differences in emotional labor. Women report hiding their challenges when teaching or mentoring and feeling emotionally drained from teaching or mentoring significantly more often than men. Compared to men, women report experiencing significantly more pressure from both their students and their employers to provide emotional labor. Respondents of *both* genders indicated that employers expected emotional labor more frequently than students did. We also find that respondents of color reported significantly more frequent emotional labor than white respondents on all measures except for feeling emotionally drained from teaching or mentoring.

Open-ended responses support quantitative findings that emotional labor fell largely on women faculty and adds nuance to our understanding of why the gendered division of emotional labor was exacerbated during the pandemic. Women respondents were especially cognizant of the challenges students faced during this period of crisis, concerned for students’ well-being (not just their own workload), responsive to student needs, and self-aware about their limited preparedness to provide this type of support.

Students come to me with many more existential crises and mental health emergencies than at any other time in my teaching career... During the height of the pandemic, I had up to 20 students in this level of crisis at any given moment—from suicidal ideation to the sudden death of loved ones. The police shooting of a childhood friend. I am honored that students trust me enough to ask for help and spend a huge amount of unacknowledged time performing this service to my department.

(White woman, assistant professor)

**TABLE 2** | Regression model estimating gender differences in research productivity (2020 and 2021).

	2020				2021			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Gender (1 = women)	0.150*	0.141*	0.148*	0.141*	0.174*	0.174*	0.186*	0.170*
	(0.069)	(0.069)	(0.070)	(0.069)	(0.068)	(0.069)	(0.069)	(0.068)
Children (1 = yes, 0 = no)		0.185*	0.186*			0.004	0.013	
		(0.068)	(0.069)			(0.067)	(0.069)	
Children under 6 years old (1 = yes, 0 = no)				0.180*				0.093
				(0.082)				(0.081)
Constant	3.930	3.850	3.555	3.899	3.673	3.671	3.237	3.656
	(0.052)	(0.060)	(0.148)	(0.054)	(0.052)	(0.059)	(0.142)	(0.055)
Covariates (race/ethnicity, academic rank)?	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No
R <sup>2</sup>	0.0045	0.0116	0.0260	0.0089	0.0062	0.0062	0.0245	0.0074
N	1030	1030	1026	1030	1030	1030	1026	1030

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses.  
\*p < 0.05.

**TABLE 3** | Regression model estimating differences in research productivity (2020, 2021).

	2020		2021	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Children (1 = yes, 0 = no)	0.162 (0.108)	0.204* (0.089)	-0.011 (0.110)	0.028 (0.087)
Constant	3.732 (0.246)	3.367 (0.213)	3.404 (0.219)	3.173 (0.214)
Covariates (race/ethnicity, academic rank)?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R <sup>2</sup>	0.0143	0.0228	0.0052	0.0198
N	401	625	401	625

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses.  
\*  $p < 0.05$ .

**TABLE 4** | Emotional labor, psychological consequences, and intent to exit, bivariate comparisons.

	Total sample (N = 1198) Mean	Women (N = 700) Mean	Men (N = 445) Mean	Statistical significance	FOC (N = 203) Mean	White (N = 903) Mean	Statistical significance
<b>Emotional labor</b>							
Students discussed challenges	3.37 (0.97)	3.63 (0.89)	2.99 (0.94)	*	3.50 (0.99)	3.35 (0.95)	*
Employer expected supportive role	3.98 (1.02)	4.22 (0.91)	3.62 (1.08)	*	4.10 (0.98)	3.97 (1.04)	*
Hide own challenges while teaching or mentoring	3.20 (1.26)	3.52 (1.17)	2.71 (1.22)	*	3.35 (1.21)	3.16 (1.26)	*
Feeling emotionally drained from teaching or mentoring	3.65 (1.15)	3.94 (1.00)	3.22 (1.20)	*	3.72 (1.16)	3.65 (1.13)	n.s.
<b>Psychological consequences</b>							
Burnout (5-point scale)	3.78 (1.16)	3.99 (1.05)	3.44 (1.25)	*	3.90 (1.14)	3.75 (1.17)	*
Engagement with work (5-point scale)	3.18 (0.96)	3.11 (0.98)	3.29 (0.91)	*	3.25 (1.01)	3.17 (0.95)	n.s.
Satisfaction with position (7-point scale)	2.85 (1.49)	2.76 (1.49)	2.99 (1.48)	*	3.08 (1.70)	2.82 (1.45)	n.s.
<b>Intent to exit, considering (%)</b>							
Paid leave	0.17	0.20	0.13	*	0.21	0.16	n.s.
Unpaid leave	0.14	0.16	0.10	*	0.17	0.13	n.s.
Part time work	0.15	0.19	0.10	*	0.12	0.16	n.s.
Switch universities	0.38	0.40	0.34	n.s.	0.44	0.36	*
Early retirement	0.42	0.40	0.45	n.s.	0.38	0.43	n.s.
Leave academia	0.43	0.48	0.36	*	0.44	0.43	n.s.

Note: Standard deviation in parentheses. All variables use a five-point scale ("1" = "much less," "5" = "much more"), unless otherwise specified.  
\*  $p < 0.05$ .

When we had our own pandemic-related health or children issues, we were asked to take on extra duties caring for students. We were given information about how to create online community and encouraged to talk to students about their mental health. Years ago, we lost faculty administrative support and faculty recognized that we had to become our own administrators in many ways. Now we were asked to be

counselors, which is a specialized job that we are not trained for. Meanwhile, there was very little emotional support for faculty.

(Other race woman, professor)

These qualitative findings highlight the discrepancy between the increasing institutional expectations for gendered care work and the lack of institutional support and valuing of this type of work.

## 4.5 | Outcomes and Consequences for Faculty

We anticipated that women and faculty of color would report greater burnout and negative psychological effects than their colleagues (H4) because of their greater teaching, service, and emotional labor during the pandemic, and that they would be more likely to report intentions to leave the university as a result (H5).

### 4.5.1 | Burnout, Engagement, and Satisfaction With Position

Overall, the psychological consequences of the pandemic appeared to be very hard on all respondents; most report some degree of burnout. Nevertheless, we find significant variation across race and gender (Table 4). Women report significantly higher levels of burnout than men, and respondents of color report significantly higher levels of burnout than white respondents. Women also report significantly less engagement with work than men, but we find no statistically significant differences by race on this measure.

Similar patterns emerge for respondents' satisfaction with their position (Table 4). For all respondents, the mean reported level of satisfaction with their position was only 2.85, measured on a seven-point scale. Women report significantly less satisfaction than men with their positions. By contrast, respondents of color report higher satisfaction with their positions than white respondents, although both means are low, and differences are not statistically significant.

Consistent with our quantitative findings, open-ended responses across race and gender reflect burnout, disengagement from work, and mental health struggles due to COVID. Most responses about the psychological consequences of the pandemic were brief, in general terms, and described feeling burnout, exhaustion, and depression.

I'm pretty much constantly overwhelmed and exhausted  
(White woman, professor)

One word: burnout! Too many crises/emergencies/false starts  
(Latino man, professor)

Let's call it "covid depression."  
(Other race man, professor)

However, open-ended responses suggest that the specific sources of burnout, mental health issues, and disengagement vary across race and gender. Women and respondents of color often discussed in greater detail the link between (1) the types of work they do and the impact of ongoing sociopolitical events on their lives; and (2) their exhaustion, disengagement, and mental health struggles. For example, the pressures of teaching, student support, and mentoring, especially considering heightened

expectations for women, were overwhelming, discouraging, and isolating.

The challenge of dealing with everyone's mental health needs (my family, students, staff) felt overwhelming.  
(White woman, professor)

The worries about teaching, about being a successful teacher to students whom I have never met in person, became paralyzing for me....I understand that teaching is always a "work in progress," but the overlay of emotional disconnection and moral injury has been professionally isolating and discouraging.  
(White woman, associate professor)

Similar to Anthym and Tuit's (2021) findings about Black faculty's experiences with taking on DEI work while also facing racial injustices themselves, many respondents of color mentioned how ongoing racial injustices in society took a toll on their mental and emotional wellbeing.

I was very affected by police murders of Black people and other political events. I knew my students were also affected, some more than others. I wanted to hear what they had to say and also to make sure they were keeping up with class and not sacrificing the future for the present, very important moment.  
(Latina woman, professor)

Mental fatigue from all that is going on, including social justice protests.  
(Black woman, assistant professor)

To be sure, some white male respondents also discuss these sorts of struggles, but they do so less frequently than their counterparts.

It is especially concerning that many respondents across all identities expressed that their mental health struggles, burnout, and disengagement were rooted in an increasing disillusionment with academia when faced with a global pandemic. Amid so much suffering, some respondents began to question the value or necessity of their ivory tower scholarship.

General malaise at the state of the world, feeling like [research] was pointless in the face of so much death and disruption.  
(White man, assistant professor)

Lack of motivation to engage in research due to disillusionment with academia in general.  
(Multiracial woman, assistant professor)

This disillusionment was tempered for some respondents who conduct research on COVID response or racial justice. These respondents said that their research felt particularly important

at this moment, although they still reported immense mental and emotional pressure attached to doing this sort of work.

I teach courses that happen to deal with highly relevant and controversial current events (racism; police violence; punishment; health disparities; prison overcrowding and health crises), so I felt like I was having to rethink everything about my course material each day as events unfolded. That's my job as an intellectual of course, but it was so exhausting and I realize now actually kind of traumatic to the point where I could not find ways to balance how/when to turn off vs. keep delving.

(Multiracial woman, assistant professor)

Burnout. I was doing a lot of covid-related research and the pace was intense because it felt so important. But without the usual positive things about my job (in-person interactions, conferences, etc.) it was hard not to get burned out and then fall behind on all the tedious administrative tasks I couldn't bring myself to do.

(White woman, assistant professor)

This may help explain the quantitative finding that faculty of color (who report doing more social justice-related work, whether through teaching, service, or research) are more satisfied with their jobs, even in the face of burnout and mental health issues. When faculty see their work as especially timely and important, it may keep disillusionment with academic work at bay. Nevertheless, meaningful work may not be enough to counterbalance the mental and emotional challenges of performing that work under immense pressure.

#### 4.5.2 | Intent to Exit

Anticipating that women and faculty of color would disproportionately report considering some form of exit (H5), we asked respondents whether they considered any changes to their work status. Women were more likely than men to report considering taking paid and unpaid leave and moving to part-time work. Most alarming, women were much more likely than men to report considering leaving academia altogether, which suggests that pandemic fallout may be a major threat to gender diversity in academia (Table 4). We find that respondents of color are more likely than white respondents to report considering changing universities.

Gender differences could be driven by composition effects, given that women are more likely than men to be junior faculty who are in prime years of raising small children, early in their academic careers, and thus better able to shift to other career options. We evaluate this possibility by comparing logistic regression models (with exit options as dichotomic dependent variables) with and without the variable representing career stage, using the KHB decomposition method (see Breen et al. 2021).

Results of the decomposition of gender on the likelihood of taking some type of leave, moving to part-time work, or leaving academia, by career stage are presented in Table 5. The first row represents the effect of gender without the inclusion of the mediating variable of career stage. The second row shows the coefficient of the full model, and the last row shows the estimated difference between these two effects. For example, we see that being a woman increases the log odds of taking paid leave by 0.48. Controlling for career stage reduces the effect of gender to 0.44, leaving an indirect effect of 0.04 for gender. For ease of interpretation, at the bottom of the table, we present the confounding percentage, which is a measure of the degree to which career stage mediates the relationship. This measure shows that career status has a negligible mediating effect on the chances of taking unpaid leave and part-time work. In the case of paid leave, 9% of the total effect is because of career stage, and in the case of leaving academia, the percentage rises to 17%. This means that the gender effects on the likelihood of changing work status are not solely the result of compositional effects. We also note that although career stage does affect the coefficient for the likelihood of taking paid leave or leaving academia, it does not cancel the effect of gender altogether.

Open-ended responses provide important context for understanding why faculty intend to exit. They suggest that respondents considered leaving not only due to short-term stress but also because their pandemic experiences, including the pandemic's lingering aftermath, convinced them that untenable work demands have become permanent.

I feel that my work responsibilities have only increased over the pandemic and will never recede back to something more manageable. We've added duties and responsibilities and it feels like the new normal is to expect instructors and staff to always push to do more with less—it's unsustainable. As a relatively new professor I'm feeling burned out and wondering if this is really the best career for my long term happiness.

(Multiracial woman, assistant professor)

Respondents also contrasted their extraordinary efforts during the pandemic with the lack of institutional support or recognition that they received for those efforts, raising worries that their jobs may not be secure.

This was a miserable few years with little thanks and no reward. An unsustainable situation. Several committed hard-working colleagues took early retirement or quit.

(White man, professor)

I worry about having a job in the future all the time now. No one is thinking about the folks who work in academia in any substantive way. If we had a union we would not be in such a terrible situation. Administrators think of faculty as lazy or underworked. It's time to see that we are not lazy nor are we

**TABLE 5** | Decomposition of gender by career stage using the KHB method.

	<b>Paid leave</b>	<b>Unpaid leave</b>	<b>Part-time</b>	<b>Leave academia</b>
Reduced model	0.489 (0.165)	0.554 (0.185)	0.728 (0.182)	0.509 (0.126)
Full model	0.445 (0.166)	0.555 (0.186)	0.732 (0.183)	0.423 (0.126)
Difference	0.043 (0.021)	0 (0.020)	−0.003 (0.019)	0.086 (0.026)
Confounding percentage	8.97%	0%	−0.45%	17%

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. Career stage comprises the categories of assistant professor, associate professor, and full professor.

underworked. Treat those who work at the university with decency and real respect.  
(Prefer not to answer race, woman, professor)

In short, concerned about security of employment and lacking satisfaction with academic work, some faculty may be more inclined to exit. The inclination to exit seems more pronounced among women and faculty of color, who experience the greatest levels of burnout and mental health challenges—as shown by quantitative data—but receive the least institutional support. As the quote that provided our title states, “The hamster wheel is on fire and no one in power seems to be invested in making responsive and humane changes to academic work culture, just ‘going back to normal.’”

#### 4.6 | Intersectionality and Faculty Experiences During the Pandemic

Academic motherhood, status and gender stereotype bias, and identity taxation converge to affect work demands and experiences of women of color. Compared to other respondents in our study, women of color were significantly more likely to spend more time in service activities, particularly in DEI-related activities. Furthermore, we find statistically significant differences for all four measures of emotional labor between women of color and other respondents (Table A5 in Supporting Information S1: Appendix S5).

The key institutional question is whether extra work demands, and emotional burdens affect outcomes for women of color more than their colleagues. Women of color report significantly more burnout than other respondents. They are also more likely to consider taking leave: 26% of women of color considered taking paid leave and 23% considered taking unpaid leave. In addition, 45% of women of color considered switching universities (statistically significant at 10% level). We report additional intersectional findings for LGBTQ+ faculty in Supporting Information S1 (Tables A6 and A7).

In open-ended responses, women of color described the unequal expectations placed on them by their students, colleagues, and the university to perform academic care work. They also noted the difficulty of setting boundaries around the types and amount of labor they were willing to do—because of these compounding gendered and racialized expectations.

I never wanted to be a workaholic or for work to be my life, and I made a clear decision that if I got tenure, I would work in a way that was more reasonable for my high-performing self. So these shifts were generally positive for me being a human being beyond being a faculty member. They are, however, the opposite of what are expected of women of color in the academy.  
(Asian woman, associate professor)

Women of color respondents also linked their experiences of burnout to the disproportionate levels of teaching, service, and emotional labor they took on during the pandemic. This burnout was exacerbated by the lack of support or understanding offered to faculty by the university.

I felt less capable of handling work responsibilities in general, but my students needed a lot more support, as did junior faculty. Service levels went up for me even as my capacity went down. I am exhausted and teaching and service take up more time than ever.  
(Black woman, associate professor)

We received zero support of any kind, other than harassment from administrators that we should do extra work to support students...The experience was entirely demoralizing.  
(Black woman, associate professor)

#### 5 | What Affects Intent to Exit?

To understand the factors that may influence respondents' decisions to exit in some way, we conducted logistic regressions with the six exit options as dependent variables. We then incorporated independent variables such as gender, race, emotional labor, changes in work responsibilities, and feelings of burnout across a series of models (for detailed tables, please refer to Supporting Information S1: Tables A8–A13). Table 6 reports odds ratios, where ratios greater than 1 correspond to “positive effects,” those between 0 and 1 correspond to “negative effects,” and ratios of exactly 1 correspond to “no association.”

We find that women were more likely than men to consider every exit option except early retirement and changing to a

**TABLE 6** | Determinants of intent to exit.

Variables	Take paid leave	Take unpaid leave	Move to part time	Early retirement	Switch universities	Leave academia
Women	1.043 (0.252)	1.177 (0.306)	1.677* (0.436)	0.671* (0.116)	0.779 (0.143)	0.927 (0.174)
Faculty of color	0.874 (0.376)	0.665 (0.336)	0.402 (0.258)	0.553* (0.155)	1.332 (0.387)	1.054 (0.319)
Women#faculty of color	1.572 (0.794)	2.605 (1.498)	2.257 (1.612)	2.157* (0.787)	0.797 (0.297)	0.714 (0.278)
Students discussed challenges	1.153 (0.131)	1.028 (0.123)	0.961 (0.123)	1.050 (0.0915)	1.132 (0.102)	1.064 (0.101)
Employer expected supportive role	1.129 (0.132)	1.161 (0.139)	1.146 (0.130)	0.966 (0.0760)	1.243* (0.109)	1.091 (0.0948)
Hide own challenges while teaching or mentoring	1.094 (0.113)	1.283* (0.138)	1.154 (0.130)	1.007 (0.0766)	1.123 (0.0867)	1.361* (0.110)
Feeling emotionally drained from teaching or mentoring	1.027 (0.144)	1.055 (0.146)	1.075 (0.146)	0.967 (0.0961)	1.089 (0.107)	1.336* (0.140)
Increase in teaching time 2021	0.910 (0.0924)	0.742* (0.0817)	0.830 (0.0946)	1.026 (0.0771)	0.948 (0.0735)	0.889 (0.0700)
Increase in service time 2021	1.034 (0.0946)	0.820* (0.0768)	0.872 (0.0893)	0.824* (0.0566)	1.202* (0.0863)	1.020 (0.0747)
Research productivity reduction 2021	1.008 (0.0904)	0.952 (0.0897)	0.986 (0.0933)	1.132 (0.0773)	0.943 (0.0634)	1.239* (0.0888)
Burned out	1.608* (0.212)	1.609* (0.216)	1.266 (0.167)	1.347* (0.117)	1.317* (0.122)	1.417* (0.137)
Number of observations	892	892	892	892	892	892
Pseudo $R^2$	0.070	0.089	0.050	0.033	0.073	0.147

Note: Exponentiated coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses.  
\* $p < 0.05$ .

different university. The associations between gender and these exit options are no longer significant, however, after accounting for emotional labor and increased service and teaching burdens. This suggests that associations between gender and exit are mediated by the disproportionate service, teaching, and emotional labor load on women during the pandemic.

Our results regarding earlier retirement differ from other exit options. Men and white respondents are more likely to consider retiring earlier, and the gender by race interaction is also significant (see Table 6). Emotional labor factors do not have a significant impact on the decision to retire earlier and increases in service time and research progress reduce the chances of taking earlier retirement (Supporting Information S1: Table A11). When faculty rank (associate professor or full professor) is included in the regression, however, gender and race effects are no longer significant, but all other relationships to early retirement remain (analysis available upon request).

Higher levels of burnout are positively related to the likelihood of considering each of these options for exit, except moving to part time work, even after controlling for increased service and teaching time and for emotional labor. Recall that women report

higher levels of burnout than men, respondents of color reported higher levels of burnout than white respondents, and burnout was especially high among women of color. Although feelings of burnout may have been common during the pandemic, disproportionately high experiences of burnout may push underrepresented faculty to exit. Institutional factors such as enlarged service burdens and employers' expectations that faculty should play a supportive role increased respondents' likelihood of considering switching universities. By contrast, feeling emotionally drained from teaching or mentoring, and feeling required to hide one's own challenges while engaging in these activities increased respondents' likelihood of leaving academia altogether.

## 6 | Discussion and Conclusion

Our findings confirm that the pandemic amplified existing workloads for women and faculty of color, who spent more time than their colleagues on teaching, mentoring, emotional support for students, and service related to DEI. Consistent with identity taxation theories, qualitative comments from these faculty link

the extra work to their identities. Similarly, consistent with theory about status beliefs, qualitative comments expressed concern about heightened scrutiny and negative teaching evaluations among women and faculty of color. Respondents report that universities asked them to take on the enormous burden of this work, despite lack of training, yet did not recognize or reward them for it. Qualitative responses suggest that women may have been more likely to face demands for emotional labor on multiple fronts (students and family), putting pressure on them to suppress their own negative feelings to meet the needs of others.

Although women report a greater decrease in research productivity than men relative to before the pandemic, our study challenges the notion that home responsibilities fully explain women's reduced productivity. For women, children were only a significant factor for research productivity declines in 2020, not in 2021. Remarkably given the complete shutdown of school and daycare during 2020, the presence of children was never a significant factor for men.

Women and faculty of color reported the highest levels of burnout, and women reported the lowest levels of engagement and satisfaction with their position. Underrepresented respondents disproportionately reported considering exiting, either temporarily or permanently. Emotional labor and service demands are the main factors driving gender disparities in intention to leave academia, with different types of emotional labor influencing the choice of exit options. For those planning to leave academia altogether, the emotional toll of teaching and mentoring during the pandemic, and of hiding their own challenges while doing so, seems to be most relevant, whereas expectations from employers to provide support to students and increased service time are key factors for those considering changing universities.

Our findings raise important questions about why the extreme demands of COVID persist in university settings. Other sources have documented continuing stress and struggles coping with academic demands among students after COVID, and of course it benefits the university to have more responsive faculty. These ongoing concerns raise important questions about how universities did respond and will respond to disproportionate increased work demands, faculty burnout, and thoughts about exit. Space constraints prohibit a full discussion of institutional responses here, although we did collect extensive data about university policies responses to COVID-related faculty challenges and how faculty reacted to these policies. We plan a future article analyzing these data that will evaluate variations in faculty responses and desires about institutional policies, as well as concerns about uptake by faculty who fear that using policies might undermine their career progress. Those institutional questions speak to a larger literature about structural and cultural changes in the university that move it away from educational goals of civic engagement and critical thinking toward a more market and consumer-oriented culture (Giroux 2002).

This article makes several important contributions to the literature. First, it improves upon smaller studies based on web surveys or convenience samples because we start with a known

sampling frame and recruit enough respondents to investigate differences across multiple dimensions. Second, it focuses on factors within the university, rather than the home, to explain gender and race disparities in research productivity. Third, it helps illuminate how inequality is reproduced in the academy. For example, through underinvestment in mental health resources for students and reactive approaches to DEI issues, universities offload what should be institutional responsibilities onto individual faculty members—especially women and faculty of color. In these and other ways, the long shadow of the pandemic threatens to reduce diversity in the academy and with it the breadth of perspectives and ideas studied and taught within colleges and universities. Our findings emphatically underscore the need for institutional reform to create a more equitable academic environment.

Universities, colleges, departments, and promotion-and-tenure committees should translate these results into policy by crediting extraordinary service and pedagogical labor, including DEI work, crisis response, mentoring, and student support, in annual merit, retention, and promotion decisions, using transparent workload documentation and explicit weighting (Guarino and Borden 2017; Hanasono et al. 2019; Misra et al. 2011, 2021). Institutions should also broaden the definition of “merit” so that emotional labor and the other undervalued and less-visible work that sustains departments and students is recognized alongside traditional research metrics (Oleschuk 2020; Cardel et al. 2020; Stewart and Valian 2018). Finally, because crisis demands are disproportionately borne by women and faculty of color, administrations should provide concrete supports, including teaching relief, bridge research funds, and structured service tracking, to prevent compounding inequities during and after crises (Berheide et al. 2022; Auger and Formentin 2021; Deryugina et al. 2021). These institution-level steps operationalize Acker's account of gendered “inequality regimes” and better align rewards with the actual distribution of academic labor (Acker 1990, 2006). Consistent with our broader view, systemic change requires organizational accountability, not individualized coping strategies: institutions should redesign incentive structures and funding and workload allocations to match the work they require and reward. Our planned future companion paper will develop and evaluate these reforms in greater detail.

Although this study provides valuable insights, it is not without limitations. Focusing on UW and UC may limit the generalizability of the findings to other institutions or geographical locations, although our findings go well beyond one university. Additionally, self-reported data may be subject to bias, although we do not find that bias correlates with race or gender. Our cross-sectional design also precludes tracking changes in the experiences of faculty members in the future. These limitations do not undermine the value of the study's findings but suggest opportunities for further research. Our future work will draw on data from our surveys to investigate whether, and how university policies and practices mitigate institutional dynamics that generate inequality in times of crisis.

As discouraging as our findings are, sadly they are not unexpected. Work demands during the pandemic followed theoretically predictable patterns of institutional routines, identity taxation, and status beliefs about appropriate labor for certain

faculty members. As is often the case, the labor typically performed by lower-status faculty is also the academic labor that is least valued by the university, even though this academic labor played a critical role in continuing university functions during the pandemic. Yet Pereira suggests that “pandemic experiences may actually help us imagine and enact a different academic ‘normal’ less unequal and less burdensome than what was taken for granted as normal in the ‘before times’” (Pereira 2021, 505). Reflecting on how the pandemic amplified existing inequalities allows us to challenge the institutional conditions that generate them.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

## Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available because of privacy or ethical restrictions.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Inquiries about specific questions, please contact the corresponding author.

<sup>2</sup> These questions are based on the scale developed by Çukur (2009). We conducted a factor analysis to assess whether emotional labor variables and teaching loads are distinct constructs, as both relate to faculty engagement with students. The analysis revealed that the “communality”—the proportion of variance shared among the items—ranges from 5% to 13%. This supports our decision to treat teaching loads and emotional labor as separate constructs. We would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for this valuable suggestion.

<sup>3</sup> We would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for the valuable suggestion to conduct this additional analysis.

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### Supporting Information

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section.

**Supporting Information S1:** gwao70066-sup-0001-suppl-data.docx.