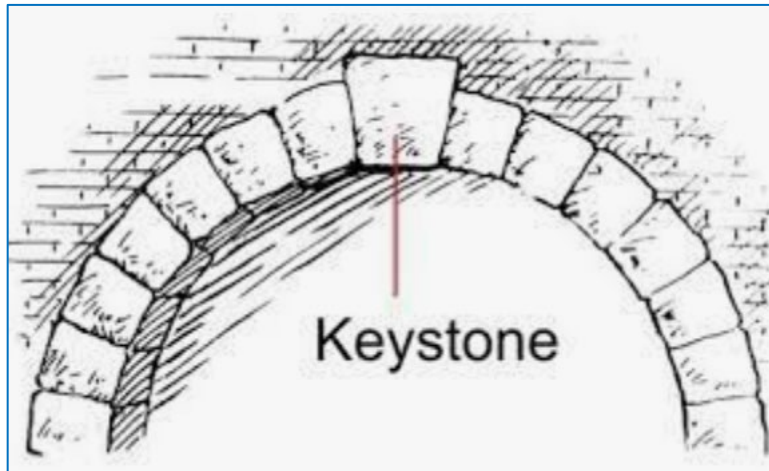


# ***Women as Undervalued Keystones: Gendered Inequities in Organizational and Familial Caregiving***

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## **Introduction**

*My husband thinks we share household tasks equally... What this means is that he cleans the kitchen in about 30 seconds... and then I follow behind and clean the kitchen correctly.*

This quote illustrates the tensions in the personal and professional lives of many women faculty as they attempt to juggle a multiplicity of diverse responsibilities. Most tellingly, it draws attention to types of labor that are both difficult to track and invisible to some key actors. The well-intended husband in this quote apparently saw the division of household labor as equitable, according to the woman we interviewed. The interviewee didn't agree. She also said, however, that she didn't like complaining because she knew he tried, she loved him, and "I could always just put down the sponge and leave the kitchen a mess, you know... it's my fault too, really." What happens, however, when the urge not to leave a mess affects one's personal and professional life? What happens when this desire to clean up institutional and familial messes shows clear gendered implications, whereby consistently more women with PhDs and faculty positions perform housekeeping labor at home and at work?

The qualitative data in this paper draws from faculty experiences at a single institution. However, other research from U.S. institutions across the country bolster our argument that the gendered trends in our university data set are found in diverse academic settings in the U.S. today – and that the effects of the pandemic have been catastrophic from a gender equity perspective.

We know from an extensive existing body of research and commentary that institutions of higher education throughout the US are beset with sociocultural prejudices and economic inequities. Research clearly indicates that institutions of higher education are riddled with many forms of gendered bias and discrimination<sup>1</sup>. Although this White Paper focuses on gendered bias and discrimination, we also draw attention to racist policies and cultures in the academy as well, because from an intersectional perspective, the overlapping effects of misogyny and racism have particularly pronounced impacts on women of color<sup>2</sup>.

Our a priori expectation was that women at Seattle University experienced inequitable "asks" for institutional labor traditionally viewed as service or teaching-mentoring and that the resulting workload was disproportionately high in areas that are poorly assessed and counted by the institution in performance evaluations. These deductive themes turned out to be powerful themes in our data. However, two further, inductive themes emerged: 1) women faculty not only faced inequitable asks at work but also at home, and 2) women did not want to complain about inequitable asks because often they were intangible and originated from loved ones and respected colleagues. Moreover, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic amplified the asks and intensified certain aspects of women's "double shift"<sup>3</sup>, while undermining the resources faculty could mobilize.

## **Methods and Institutional Context**

Importantly, for the arguments outlined in this paper, Seattle University has a strongly articulated mission around social justice and excellence in education, is liberal-leaning culturally, and is tuition dependent. The university is a primarily undergraduate serving institution with a handful of master's, professional, and doctoral programs

Our data collection occurred from 2016-2021 and included classic ethnographic methods<sup>4</sup>, as well as methods stemming from recent innovations in qualitative research, particularly around the incorporation of online forums and formats<sup>5</sup>. All research processes were approved by our institution’s Human Subjects Office. From 2016 to 2019, we collected and analyzed in-person interviews and focus groups, faculty statements from successful promotion applications, and faculty CVs. From 2019 to 2021, we collected and analyzed faculty responses to a series of questions from us about the impacts the COVID-19 crisis and shut-downs had on their work. Participants were recruited via online announcements sent to faculty listservs and word of mouth between faculty<sup>6</sup>. Ongoing participant observation was often essential in providing context for the other data.

**Table 1: An Overview of our Qualitative Research**

Activities and Products	Number of total participants	Participant Characteristics
In-depth, in-person faculty interviews	N=76	55 women, 21 men; Non-tenure track (NTT) faculty; assistant, tenure-track faculty; and tenured associate and full professors.
Faculty focus groups	N=2	11 women; Tenured full professors.
Faculty promotion statements	N=18	13 women, 5 men; Tenured associate and full professors.
Faculty CVs	N=40	20 women, 20 men; Tenured associate and full professors.
Faculty reflection statements	N=27	21 women, 6 men; NTT faculty; assistant, tenure-track faculty; and tenured associate and full professors.
Fieldnotes based on in-person participant observation in public university venues.	Variable	N/A
Fieldnotes based on online participant observation in public university forums.	Variable	N/A

We conducted extensive thematic analysis<sup>7</sup> of our different data sets. Below, we present and then discuss emergent themes from our data. These are roughly divided into three parts: themes that emerged in women’s professional experiences pre-Pandemic; themes that emerged in women’s personal lives pre-Pandemic; and themes that emerged as faculty’s professional and personal lives collapsed into each other during the Pandemic.

## **Our Results: Faculty Perspectives and Experiences** ***Institutional Asks Pre-Pandemic***

**Theme 1: Inequitable institutional asks pre-Pandemic.** An overwhelming majority of women faculty who participated in interviews and all the focus group participants noted that women faced a continuous barrage of institutional demands on their time, energy, and expertise. These demands were usually in addition to (rather than instead of) existing teaching, administrative, and/or research-related activities women were already doing. Interestingly, men faculty who participated in the interviews and who were involved in time-intensive institutional service work agreed that women tended to do more service work at the institution.

**Theme 2: Reported workloads for women are high in areas that are poorly assessed and “counted” on evaluations.** A majority of faculty interviewees and all focus group participants also noted that institutional asks mainly centered on “service work,” i.e. work that is neither traditional teaching nor traditional scholarship. Sometimes, the asks centered on intensive teaching practices that are often “invisible” in how they are viewed, valued, and assessed on faculty evaluations. This theme of invisible labor from the interviews and focus groups was bolstered by our analyses of promotion statements and CVs, where service work was accorded little space, relative to scholarship and teaching.

**Theme 3: Women worry about complaining about over-asks.** An overwhelming majority of women faculty who participated in interviews and all participants in the focus groups also noted that women encountered sociocultural norms that disproportionately penalized them if they said no to institutional asks, relative to men. This was the theme men faculty participants seemed least aware of, but it had a profound influence on many women’s institutional experiences as they continuously ran afoul of (often unconscious) assumptions that they would be institutional “good citizens” and say yes to a stream of time-intensive work asks.

**Table 2: Exemplars from our Data**

Participant	Exemplar Quote	Themes
Cindi Professor, White Faculty, Woman	After I got tenure, my service load probably quadrupled because, you know, I took on the curriculum committee and I’ve actually run every search for our department... Right, but for years I had an advising overload. I had like three times the load of advising advisors... [The chair] didn’t give me work units for that and then the first year that [a male colleague] had an overload, [he] got work unit releases, which is very interesting.	Theme 1 Theme 2
Alice Associate Professor, Faculty of Color, Woman	I think there’s some of my male colleagues in particular who are able to... stay on the periphery so they’re not really looked to for it. They are able to skate, skirt it a little. Yeah... Women and faculty of color get over-asked. And are less popular if they say no... There’s a lot of people here probably not very happy with me ‘cause I say no a lot... [My evaluations would say things like,] “She thinks too much of herself because she’s [a faculty of color]... and successful.”	Theme 1 Theme 3
Alana Assistant Professor, Faculty of Color, Woman	I’m definitely thinking about leaving... It’s really unfortunate coz I love it here... and I don’t like whining or complaining, so I’m sure that part of this is me not sort of standing up [but my teaching load has been unsustainable every year I’ve been here]... I think it’s because I’m a good teacher. They are classes where nobody wants	Theme 1 Theme 2 Theme 3

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	to teach them. They're a hard demographic to teach... I do think like, maybe gender with the teaching thing... you know, "She got the right personality," or the right – you know."	
Ava Associate Professor, Faculty of Color, Woman	Too much service took away a lot from research and things slowed down, so I'm trying to gain back some of that momentum and it's kind of hard to do [while still being tasked with significant service]...I think the biggest challenge with myself and this job is that teaching, service and research, none of them ever end... I'm frustrated with myself because I'm not really good at saying no and the reason... is sometimes I feel like, "This is important. This is more important than me right now. This is the future of the department"... I'm frustrated with the policies. I'm frustrated with the one size fits all promotion guidelines and requirements... [Watching male colleagues go up for promotion based on scholarship they have time to do because they are leaving the service to her] makes me want to scream!... [But] I'm frustrated with myself [because] I'm not really good at saying no.	Theme 1 Theme 2 Theme 3
Laura Professor, White Faculty, Woman	I now do intentionally what I was unconsciously doing for years [pre-promotion]... I choose to mentor students who are less conventionally high-achieving... but their "success" might not look as impressive as my male colleagues' [students].	Theme 2

Exemplar quotes are often used in qualitative research to illustrate themes that resonate widely across the data. The five quotes above neatly encapsulate messy realities with which women faculty, and particularly women faculty of color, reported they were constantly negotiating.

## **Family Asks Pre-Pandemic**

**Theme 1: Inequitable partner asks pre-Pandemic.** Because the focus of many of our activities was *institutional* experiences, the focus groups, promotion statements, and CVs did not yield themes around *family* experiences. The interviews, however, and specifically the interviews with women partnered with men, yielded powerful themes in this respect. Many of the women faculty interviewed mentioned a dual burden. Although some men faculty talked about "sharing" domestic and childcare duties, virtually none complained that they were doing *most* of these types of labor.

**Theme 2: Reported family labor for women is often invisible to other family members.** Women's labor for and within the family is often taken for granted as part of their family role, whereas men's is often seen as "helping" and therefore more visible. This role provides men with more leeway to say no to or underperform in doing family tasks. "Helping" and/or underperforming results in women having to "direct" or "organize" a male partner's labor, which came up repeatedly in interviews as an essential but invisible type of work.

**Theme 3: Women worry about complaining to their families.** Most women were reluctant to get too critical of their partners precisely because they loved them, believed their intentions were good, and felt they were

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trying to actively help and support their families. This appeared true not just in the context of the interviews with us, but even more so in what women said they were willing to discuss with colleagues and friends.

**Table 3: Exemplars from our Data**

Participant	Exemplar Quote	Themes
Ava Associate Professor, Faculty of Color, Woman	I feel like I just bent a lot. I did most of the childcare. In the past year, I have been a little bit more rigid. Some of it is because I have a lot more [service] work and it's not all my schedule anymore. If I have to have the meeting, then I have to have the meeting. It has helped that our kids are older... If I ask for help and he can, he will help. If I ask for help and he needs to move things around, he will push back. Then I push back and then we figure out where we fall, who can compromise... He doesn't volunteer help. Does that make sense? And he doesn't cook.	Theme 1 Theme 2
Cindi Professor, White Faculty, Woman	My husband does all the cooking. I do the shopping and the laundry and most of the cleaning... So, that I think has been fairly equitable. The childcare, though, was not equitable. I did most of that... I'm still doing most of that.	Theme 1
Leslie Professor, White Faculty, Woman	I was one of those people that would come pick them up from daycare at 4:30 pm... I would really spend time with them until 9:00 pm or 10:00 pm every day. Talking to them, playing with them, reading to them. I got a break, I [would] organize with my husband so he was actually bathing them. I got a little bit of a break for about half an hour to an hour every day. Pretty much, it was me doing most of the work. That's another thing that people need to consider, is how much of the housework falls on a professional woman versus a professional guy... I mean, we've had many discussions, my husband and I, where we would list—he would say, "What do you mean, you work more than I do? I work more than you do. Blah, blah, blah." Well, then we would list, and he would be like, "Oh, okay."	Theme 1 Theme 2
Tessa Assistant Professor, Faculty of Color, Woman	It [the work] doesn't stop when I go home. I pick up my daughter at 4:30, and so, I really wanna spend time with her. She usually goes to bed at 7:30, so I have that three hours with her. Then... I often go back, and that's my time to do grading, and catch up on stuff, and another two hours, or so after my daughter goes to bed, it's kind of standard... I'm primary caregiver and run everything and he fills in... My husband—I love him, but he's not super-observant about things, sometimes... [And he's not unusual...] My grad school class was equally male, and female, and most of the women have selected themselves out... because of the two-body problem.	Theme 1 Theme 2
Agnes Full Professor,	I don't know what my colleague's family situations are like. I can speculate about who's doing more work... You know, like it seems	Theme 1 Theme 3

White Faculty, Woman	like Alice is doing more childcare [than her husband]... but we don't discuss it... I do think men are more unapologetic about missing meetings [than their women colleagues] because of childcare demands... and we make more allowances for them.	
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When daily tasks involved in childrearing and taking care of the home and family fall unevenly on one person – and this is coupled with a suite of work-related demands – the result can feel burdensome, regardless of good intentions. The five exemplar quotes again illustrate this tension.

## ***Pandemic Asks***

Starting in February 2020, the work context at Seattle University – and at universities around the world – changed dramatically in response to the novel COVID-19 pandemic. Many universities moved to remote instruction and administration beginning in the early Spring of 2020. Many primary and secondary schools were closed in counties across the United States throughout the 2020-2021 school year, while eldercare and assisted living facilities have faced a multiplicity of challenges. The research from 2020, 2021, and early 2022 reports disproportionately high professional costs to women due to these shut downs. The increase in caregiving demands at home has negatively impacted women’s professional trajectories<sup>8</sup>. As external research has also found, most women academics are doing little discovery-based research or scholarly writing<sup>9</sup>.

The question of whether the pandemic-related institutional challenges have interacted with existing systems of inequity to produce inequitable workloads for women and faculty of color in US higher education has engaged many scholars and social commentators over the course of 2020-2022. In this regard, our own observations become important. In this paper, we focus on the first two years of the pandemic: 2020-2021. As of this writing, early in 2022, the situation continues to evolve and change.

***Theme 1: Institutional and/or community service has increased exponentially for most faculty, regardless of gender, at the expense of traditional scholarship.*** Both the COVID-19 Reflection statements and our complementary participant observation indicate that many faculty feel swamped in institutional service, especially around administrative leadership, and/or by increased needs felt in the communities with whom they work. Many faculty also noted that throughout 2020-2021, their teaching suffered not just as a result of the move to remote instruction but also because caregiving demands and the stream of pandemic-related crises kept them in a reactive stage in teaching, unable to deploy expertise in teaching pedagogy, best practices, etc.

***Theme 2: Women still tend to be performing less visible, lower prestige types of institutional labor.*** The COVID-19 Reflection statements and participant observation indicate that women faculty performed more low-prestige administrative work, such as more intensive mentoring of students and of fellow faculty.

***Theme 3: Faculty, and especially women faculty, have spent the years of the Pandemic facing a caregiving “crisis.”*** Both the COVID-19 Reflection statements and our complementary participant observation indicate that many faculty barely managed taking care of their families and especially homebound children, while also meeting work obligations, during the 2020-2021 period. Women and men respondents with children living at home were more likely to reference the challenges of their caregiving-work juggling act than those without

children at home. As of September 2021, most schools across the country have opened, which has alleviated some of the double burden, but the picture remains complex.

**Table 4: Exemplars from our Data**

Participant	Exemplar Quote	Themes
Carolyn Full Professor, White Faculty, Woman	All the women I know are doing three quarters of the childcare labor now... so, of course [they aren't as productive at work].	Theme 3
Sally NTT, Didn't Identify, Woman	I have also had to put my writing on hold because my additional time is now spent homeschooling my two daughters, ages 8 and 10.	Theme 3
Brian Assistant Professor, Faculty of Color, Man	Not at all balancing [person and professional] as professional demands are eating into 40 more hours of my personal life... Research: Non-existent at this time, so struggling is an understatement!	Theme 1
Patricia Associate Professor, Didn't Identify, Woman	Prior to the school closures, our daughter's childcare consisted of: 2 preschools (with some co-op work commitments), part-time babysitting, and my husband and I sharing childcare duties. Since the preschools and babysitting ceased to become an option, I have had less work to do with the preschools, but now am doing much more childcare and working at home with my daughter around me (frequent interruptions). My husband's work has required him to be absent some of the time, but even when he is home, my daughter's default is to seek my attention. I have to exert extra energy to get the 2 of them to do something else together so that I can get my work done. Hence, most of the childcare responsibilities fall on my shoulders... In a sense, the teaching has gotten easier because I am able to do it with my daughter around me and without having to get up super-early in the morning, leaving her to miss me. However, it is very difficult for me to do research because I don't have the time and space available to concentrate deeply. I find myself working on research during my least productive times of the day (late at night after my daughter has fallen asleep).	Theme 3
Lawrence Associate Professor, Didn't Identify, Man	I am working fewer hours than typical and interspersing my work with homeschooling my 3rd grade son. I am fortunate to have a partner who is also able to help, although she is working full time from home, so she is also trying to juggle homeschooling and work.	Theme 3
Nancy NTT, Faculty of color, Woman	I am struggling to stay engaged with my previous research and writing as my time has been <i>absolutely consumed</i> by my community obligations as the co-chair of [a variety of community	Theme 1



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	organizations]... We were busy before COVID but now it is at a whole different level... which is urgent.	
Christine Associate Professor, Didn't Identify, Woman	Here's what I do each day [with my child]: I keep up with the online work packets, finding his grade-level, printing them out, helping him make his way through math assignments and making sure he does some reading and writing every day. This, with necessary breaks, takes up every morning and then I get lunch for both of us. I get him set up to watch the required videos before his class meetings from 1-1:30pm on Mondays and Wednesdays. I get him set up on Zoom for his class. I take him outside every afternoon for at least an hour... My husband has usually been able to do something with our son most days starting at 4 or 5 pm. Sometimes I could write for nearly half an hour during my son's zoom classes or when my husband took our son for an afternoon hour. Sometimes I could get my son focused on Legos or a book for an hour or so, or I let him watch a video so I could do some writing, but there would always be interruptions.	Theme 3
Erika NTT, White Faculty, Woman	Scholarship and writing require a creative, generative mindset. Service, teaching, and administrative tasks do not require this type of mindset – I don't mean to belittle them, since I know SU ADVANCE wants to elevate these types of activities to "count" more in faculty portfolios and I do believe they require effort and expertise. But scholarship and writing are... really difficult to get in the headspace. Teaching, service, and administration have lots of non-creative busywork, communicative aspects to them that can be done with half of one's attention somewhere else and/or during 10 minute intervals that one finds in the day. Scholarship and writing don't work that way, at least for me [so I'm not able to do them right now]... [On the other hand,] I no longer have to pretend that my work and children are occurring separately – everyone else is coping with their personal and professional lives being squished together and so they are less judge-y of the fact that mine has always been hopelessly entangled. No more pretense that I am an isolated, always-available professional with nothing else going on.	Theme 1 Theme 3
Agatha Professor, White Faculty, Woman	I tell junior women, "Don't do a lot of 'housekeeping' because it won't count" ... but if no one does the housework, the institution becomes a mess! So then, I do it.	Theme 2
Jackie Professor, Didn't Identify, Woman	I am responsible for helping to homeschool three children... While I was still teaching my spring classes, this meant that I had less time to do any research. I would regularly work from home a day or two each week as my "research and writing" days, and	Theme 2 Theme 3

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	<p>that has pretty much fallen apart. In some ways, however, work has been easier. I am not driving my children everywhere, and my student and administrative duties are much more streamlined... I am trying to balance everything, but being a mother of three kids with a full-time job is always a juggling act. The impact of the pandemic on that is more emotional than anything else, as I feel like I am “caring” for so many people—students, colleagues, and my family. It is emotionally draining at times... As a woman professor, I shoulder more of the responsibility for the emotional health of our students. And, I shoulder more of the day-to-day necessary business of the school (the housekeeping, if you will). That has always impacted my ability to do research.</p>	
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One limitation of the reflection exercise was that we could not push further and ask participants to elaborate. For example, no one mentioned who cleaned the house and for how long. Participant observation was therefore invaluable in helping to establish a larger context for the reflection statements.

Participant observation also reinforced the theme from the COVID-19 Reflections that faculty in administrative positions shouldered a lot of additional work. People already serving on key university committees, as departmental chairs and program directors, and in upper administration were inundated with daily crises and longer-term emergencies stemming from the move to remote instruction in 2020, the resumption of in-person instruction in September 2021, financial shortfalls, and massive sociocultural and political economic changes in the national and academic landscapes. Several SU administrators spoke of days packed with fourteen hours’ worth of Zoom meetings, while others described bracing themselves every morning as they opened their inboxes at 6am. Data like this remind us that although women have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic (and pre-pandemic structural inequities), men also face innumerable challenges.

## **Discussion: What Do our Results Mean for Higher Education Generally?**

As we observed at the outset of this paper, a wealth of research shows that institutions of higher education are beset with gendered and racial bias and discrimination. Importantly, some discriminatory practices and attitudes have become more covert in recent years – but remain powerful. Indeed, power is the issue here: people in positions of power may wish to be equitable but they rarely want to change institutions in ways that would cause them to *relinquish* power<sup>10</sup>. In many institutions of higher education, we see some version of Sarah Ahmed’s concept of “happy talk” at play<sup>11</sup>, in which faculty are expected to focus first and foremost on the institution as a positive force working towards inclusive goals, rather than on identifying the inequalities embedded in the institution.

Intersectional norms, for example, may have contributed to Alana’s desire to be a “team player” as a woman of color faculty member and to not complain about her disproportionate workload. This represents an additional layer of inequitably felt pressure: the raced and gendered desire not to be seen as “bitchy” or “whiney.” Ava, also a faculty woman of color, did not feel empowered to complain in a serious, systemic way

about the inequitable workload she shouldered. Both examples line up with Ahmed’s observation that organizationally, anyone who critiques the practices of the university ends up feeling excluded;<sup>12</sup> this may be especially true for women of color faculty. These sorts of cues were pervasive in participants’ accounts of their institutional experiences – and just subtle enough that those not on the receiving end of such cues often didn’t notice that they occurred.

Women face persistent imbalanced workloads in intimate settings, not just in professional ones. Some of the inequity lies in the division of household labor between heteronormative male-female partners and around perceptions of whose paid labor is more important in these dual-income, heteronormative, male-female partners. One recent pre-pandemic study, for example, noted that when a man made more money than his wife, both he and his wife had no hesitation describing him as the “breadwinner,” but when a woman made more money than her husband, both she and her husband shied away from using the term, “breadwinner” to describe her status<sup>13</sup>. Furthermore, a recent study found that in dual income heterosexual households, women consistently performed more “listening” and other emotional labor at both home and at work than did their male colleagues and partners<sup>14</sup>. Allison Daminger’s<sup>15</sup> concept of “cognitive labor” is especially helpful in thinking through the often amorphous and invisible labor done in such contexts. Daminger observed how cognitive labor involves all kinds of managerial and emotional labor, such as monitoring and anticipating familial and household needs, and that such work is onerous, difficult to quantify, and is more often done by women.

The vast majority of participants, including all the men interviewed, said they wanted equality in household labor. However, when one half of the partnership does not volunteer for unassigned tasks or manage the identification of those tasks, and only performs those task in response to a direct ask, the labor is not equitable. In our data, this inequity was gendered: the woman in the household devoted time and energy to “managing” the work her husband did for the household<sup>16</sup>, whereas the husband performed more of a “one-and-done” type of household labor. As Daminger also explained, this type of elusive inequity in the division of cognitive household labor was very difficult for the person not doing it (most often men in our sample) to see, assess, and value.

Moreover, “cognitive labor,” is a useful concept for interpreting some of our data about women’s professional work within their institutions. As we pointed out, research shows systematic bias in terms of the types of service work that women faculty are often asked to perform for their university, college, and/or department<sup>17</sup>. Many of these types of activities involve managerial and emotional labor – mentoring peers, mentoring students, advising work, managing departmental staff and student workers, departmental committee work, etc. – that historically, academia has poorly assessed, evaluated, or even counted. Ava, for example, carried an enormous, ill-defined cognitive labor load for her department in terms of service and time-intensive types of teaching and mentoring.

Also interesting is the common theme of “learned helplessness” on the part of both male colleagues and male intimate partners, coupled with very powerful sociocultural and workplace norms that cue women to do more work, do more low-prestige work, absorb more emotional labor, and keep the peace – often by suppressing or invalidating feelings that are not positive – while doing so<sup>18</sup>. In scenarios like these, both women and men are often constrained by complex sociocultural norms and cues around the perceived “appropriateness” of certain

gender roles<sup>19</sup>. The power of a norm is that one can be aware and critical of it and still be profoundly influenced by it. Faculty are no exception to this influence, both at work and at home. Consider, for example, the common workplace experience<sup>20</sup>, whereby faculty colleagues praise fathers who take time off work to pick their children up from school or take them to an afterschool activity, but are critical of mothers' professional "commitment" when they do the same.

At the time of our writing, it remains difficult to say what the long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic will be on these norms and inequities. The short-term effects, however, have been catastrophic. Recent research and accompanying commentary in the general media published during the COVID-19 pandemic has focused on women's decreased professional productivity and departure from full-time jobs, relative to men, as a result of increased caregiving of young children and other family members<sup>21</sup>.

What is interesting in the context of the pandemic and a series of acute social justice crises, is that there appears to be no institutional insistence on happiness or satisfaction among our faculty – but there is certainly considerable emphasis on a "can-do, all hands-on deck" approach, both at home and at work. This appears to inhibit complaints about the status quo, both at home and at work. The fact that a significant proportion of the unequally assigned labor currently being done by women is amorphous, supportive, and viewed as low prestige further inhibits systemic complaints and potential pressures to make changes.

## **Some Concluding Comments**

A keystone is a wedge-shaped stone at the apex of a masonry arch or vault that locks all the stones into position and allows the arch or vault to bear weight<sup>22</sup>. Most people, when entering an ancient church or similar edifice, do not exclaim, "Look at what a fantastic job that keystone is doing!" Instead, they look at the stained-glass windows, the flying buttresses, and so on. Those keystones nonetheless keep the structure from collapsing into rubble and disorder.

In this paper, we have examined trends in academia, in which women faculty are systemically over-tasked with essential but often invisible labor in familial and professional settings. Women thus act as "keystones" at home and at work, inasmuch as the smooth functioning of families, households, committees, departments, and colleges rely on the labor they perform but this labor is often overlooked, discounted, and poorly evaluated.

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