ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: TO BE IN THE MIDDLE: A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY EXPLORING NEOLIBERALISM, LEARNING ANALYTICS, AND MIDDLE MANAGEMENT IN ACADEMIC RESEARCH LIBRARIES

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This dissertation explores the intersections of neoliberalism, learning analytics, and middle management within academic libraries. Utilizing a qualitative collective case study methodology, it examines how nine women-identified academic librarian middle managers at U.S. public research institutions interpreted and responded to the integration of library metrics with learning analytics. The study addresses the interplay between professional values, gender identity, and faculty status, revealing five core assertions drawn from the experience of participants: the pervasive sense of "middle-ness" in organizational hierarchies, psychosocial tensions of dual roles as administrators and practitioners, systemic setup for failure within the system, personal sacrifices required to maintain professional standards, and the high costs of resisting neoliberal directives. By positioning learning analytics as a manifestation of neoliberal ideology, this research provides critical insights into the impact of market-driven policies on academic librarianship, emphasizing

the need for ethical considerations and a balanced approach to integrating learning analytics while preserving traditional library values. The findings have significant implications for library policy, practice, and future research, highlighting the importance of ethical leadership amidst evolving market dynamics.

TO BE IN THE MIDDLE: A COLLECTIVE CASE STUDY EXPLORING NEOLIBERALISM, LEARNING ANALYTICS, AND MIDDLE MANAGEMENT IN ACADEMIC RESEARCH LIBRARIES

by

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2024

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Dedication

To my children, Henry and William,
you are the story written in the margins of these pages.
Through you, I have learned the greatest and dearest lessons of love, trust, and perseverance.
This journey was never mine alone but ours.

In loving memory of my grandmother, Mabel Wilder,
whose fierce spirit, laughter, and tenacity echo through my life's work.
Your hands planted the seeds of my resilience.
I love you dearly, always.

Acknowledgments

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to my family members, whose unwavering love has been the cornerstone of my academic journey. To my parents, Penny and Jack Gammons, for their steadfast belief in me and pride in my accomplishments. Your encouragement has fueled my determination. To my brother, Matthew Gammons, for your continual lessons in empathy and compassion. To my husband, Zachary Ellis, for your incredible support, understanding, and sacrifices. You read numerous drafts of my research, listened to my anxieties, believed in my dreams, and covered so many bedtimes with our kids to make this degree happen. I would not be here without you. Thank you for loving me so well. To my sons, Henry and William, for your empathy, resilience, creativity, and compassion. What a gift it is to be in your life, and what a joy it is to watch you become who you will be.

I am immensely grateful to my colleagues and mentors for their guidance and support. To Dr. Michelle Espino, my advisor and chair, for your expertise, mentorship, humor, and patience. You believed in my research and encouraged me to dig deeper and dream bigger. Your recommendations and insights have vastly improved my work. It has been a gift to learn from someone as intelligent, determined, and gracious as you. To my dissertation committee, Drs. Fleming-May, Klees, Ndumu, and White, for believing in my work and pushing me to be better. Special thanks to Dr. Fleming-May, for being my mentor, teacher, and friend. It was an honor to have you here at the end as you were at the beginning. I am forever indebted to you. To the SAC community, for welcoming a librarian into their program and teaching me so much about higher education, social justice, and how to be a part of a community.

Special thanks are due to my colleagues at UMD Libraries. To my colleague, classmate, and fellow parent, future Dr. Lindsay Inge Carpenter, for your invaluable feedback,

encouragement, and friendship. It has been such an honor to share this journey with you. To Yelena Luckert and Dr. Gary White, for their unwavering support and flexibility, enabling me to balance my academic dreams with full-time work and parenting. To Kate Dohe, for helping me think through my big ideas and introducing me to many scholars cited in this work. To Emily Cranwell Deinert, for showing up for me on Fridays as I did for her, and together, we moved forward with our work. To all of the colleagues whose steadfast belief in the inevitability of my success made me believe in it too.

I am grateful to my friends who have provided support and encouragement. To my dearest and best friend, Dr. Noushin Ahmed, for your unwavering belief in my dreams, love for my children, and endless support for my family and me. Your friendship is a treasure beyond measure. I am so very grateful for you. To the community of neighbors, colleagues, friends, and classmates, past and present, who have shared in my joys and allowed me to share in theirs. Your support has made this journey possible. To the individuals, too numerous to name, whose work underscores my own; to the researchers, teachers, and mentors who supported those who supported me; to the family, friends, colleagues, and communities that have loved the people who love me; to the women who came before and the women who will come after, I offer my thanks. Finally, to the nine women who shared their stories with me and trusted me with their experiences. Although your stories are yours alone, your experiences made me feel seen. You gave me words to understand things I did not know I had felt. This research is for me, but it is also for you. I hope I did us justice.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

I have been an academic librarian for more than a decade. But when I picture a library, I do not call to mind my local public library or the academic libraries where I have worked. Instead, I imagine the Rose Main Reading Room at the New York Public Library. At nearly 300 feet, the reading room is the length of two city blocks. The walls are surrounded by oak bookshelves and large casement windows that let in afternoon sunlight. Chandeliers hang from the 50-foot-high gilded ceilings, which are capped by murals of pink-hued cumulous clouds. Down the room's center aisle, long wooden tables with tall reading lamps extend to either side, providing space for library users to browse, study, read, or write. The reading room is filled with the quiet sounds of shared workspace, the flip of pages, the clicking of keyboards, and the scuff of shoes on the tile floors. It is a luxurious room that remains utilitarian. A space that can make a person feel small while also allowing them to feel connected to something bigger.

Spaces like the New York Public Library hold an outsized role in our collective memories. While the Rose Main Reading Room is beautiful and impressive, it is also an exception. Overall, libraries are small places where the collections and services are tailored to the needs of their communities. However, it can be challenging to untangle the mythology of the library from the libraries with which most of us interact. In some ways, it does not matter that I have spent significantly more time in my local public library than the New York Public Library because when I think about a library, I picture the Rose Main Reading Room. I am not alone in this. As a society, we tend to view libraries as sacred spaces and the services and resources provided by these libraries as altruistic and benevolent (Ettarh, 2018; Maxwell, 2006). When we call to mind a library, we imagine spacious reading rooms and quiet stacks of books, making it difficult to conceptualize the day-to-day challenges most libraries and librarians face. This is more than just a product of outward

public perception. The literature on professional identity development in librarianship indicates that librarians' understanding of themselves and their relationship to the profession is informed by the views that non-practitioners hold of the profession (Pierson et al., 2020). The professional identity of librarians is further shaped through professional socialization, which includes engagement with other practitioners and the internalization of professional ethics, norms, and values (Hicks, 2014, 2016; Pierson et al., 2019). Library values, discussed in detail in the following chapters, are aspirational and present an idealized and ennobled perception of libraries and library work.

Library values are encapsulated in a series of policies produced by the American Library Association (ALA), primarily the *Library Bill of Rights* (2019), which articulates the obligations of a library to its patrons, the *Code of Ethics* (2008), which delineates the responsibilities of librarians to the profession and society, and the *Core Values of Librarianship* (2004) which defines the core values for modern librarianship. Together, these policies recognize *intellectual freedom*, or the freedom to hold, receive, produce, and share ideas; *information access*, or the ability to navigate, locate, and obtain information; and *user privacy*, or the right to privacy and confidentiality in library use, as the fundamental values of the profession. The interdependent relationship between professional values, professional identity, and public perception has created a symbiotic system in which each works to influence and extend the other. Professional values and ethics reinforce what librarians believe about themselves and the profession; librarians then internalize ethics and values as stated in the ALA policy documents; and the public reifies the mission and purpose of the library to a position of sanctity that further shapes the identity, values, and perception of libraries and librarians.

This study used library values as an entry point to explore how academic librarians

navigate, understand, and respond to the ethical complexity that emerges through the incursion of neoliberalism within higher education. The aims of the study were threefold. First, to define neoliberalism within the context of higher education and investigate intersections with both academic libraries and learning analytics. Second, to connect the ethical dilemmas within academic libraries concerning learning analytics to a broader discussion of prestige, scarcity, economic competition, and rationality. Third, to explore how the pressures of neoliberalism, faculty status, and gender identity influence the experiences of women-identified mid-level manager academic librarians.

Theoretical Framework

Neoliberalism is a political and economic ideology that advocates for deregulation, free-market capitalism, competition, and economic rationality (Saunders, 2014). Among its central tenets, neoliberalism promotes the privatization of the public sector, reductions in government regulations, globalization, decreased worker protections, limiting government spending, and expansion of the free market (Olssen & Peters, 2005). Over the past three decades, neoliberalism has become the dominant hegemony in the United States, shaping everything from social services to cultural expectations and practices (Saunders, 2014). Neoliberalism has infiltrated all significant structures of American democracy, including the public education system (Apple, 2012; Klees, 2020). While critics of neoliberalism argue that education is a public good that should exist beyond the forces of market influence, proponents view public education as stymied by inefficiencies that could be improved by increasing competition within educational systems, strengthening connections to the capitalist marketplace, privatizing services, and adopting corporate structures and practices (Klees, 2020; Lakes & Carter, 2011; Olssen & Peters, 2005). In higher education, the effects of neoliberalism are apparent in the decrease in public funding (Baltodano, 2012; Klees,

2008, 2020), increased emphasis on accountability measures (Hursh & Wall, 2011; Olssen, 2016; Skolnik, 2010), and replacement of shared governance and distributed power with corporate and hierarchical organizational structures (Giroux, 2002; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Saunders, 2014).

Statement of the Problem

In higher education, neoliberalism intertwines power, prestige, and profit, creating a cycle where prestigious universities consolidate power through the expansion of neoliberal policy and practice (Slaughter & Leslie, 2001). This dynamic encourages striving institutions – or those aiming to enhance their institutional prestige – to adopt similar strategies to achieve success within a capitalist framework (O'Meara, 2007; Slaughter, 2014). Academic libraries are a mirror of higher education that reflects the values, priorities, and characteristics of the broader academic institution they serve. As neoliberalism has gained traction in higher education, it has also become institutionalized within academic libraries (Nicholson, 2015). Neoliberal academic libraries are guided by market forces and tend to exhibit specific traits such as prioritizing efficiency, control, calculability, and rationality, consolidating power upwards while limiting collaborative decision-making, and stressing the imperative for innovation, modernization, revolutionization, and adaptation to evolving market demands (Beilin, 2016; Buschman, 2020; Nicholson, 2019; Quinn, 2000). The incursion of neoliberal ideology in libraries has resulted in the "fetishization of metrics" within the profession and an emphasis on documenting and articulating the value of academic and research libraries and their contributions to institutional missions (Joseph, 2020, p. 10; Seale, 2013).

The impact of neoliberalism in education is exemplified by the rise of learning analytics, or the measurement and analysis of data collected about and from learners with the specific intent of using data to optimize academic performance and success (Clow, 2013; Society for Learning

Analytics Research, 2021). Learning analytics seek to enhance institutional competitiveness in a global marketplace by increasing efficiency and profitability around student learning (Hartman-Caverly, 2019). Within academic libraries, the debate about learning analytics centers on the willingness of the profession to compromise traditional standards of practice and values around data and user privacy by integrating library metrics – data gathered by and about academic libraries – within learning analytics systems (Jones et al., 2020). While proponents of learning analytics highlight the opportunities to prove the value of the library to the institution and demonstrate a return on investment, critics point to the incompatibility of learning analytics with library values around user privacy and intellectual freedom, invasive data collection practices, lack of informed consent, and incongruity of learning analytics with broader goals of social justice (e.g., Hwang & Hanson, 2021; Jones, 2019b; Nicholson et al., 2019; Oakleaf, 2016, 2018b; Oakleaf et al., 2017; Oliphant & Brundin, 2019; Robertshaw & Asher, 2019).

Although three-quarters of public research universities grant faculty status to librarians, the rights, responsibilities, privileges, and experiences of library faculty differ significantly from those of their academic counterparts, leading to a system of faculty equivalency rather than equality (Fleming-May & Douglass, 2014; Walters, 2016). Depending on the standards of the institution, faculty librarians may receive different access to faculty benefits such as sabbaticals, research funding, flexible schedules, nine-month contracts, shared governance, tenure protection, and grievance processes (Applegate, 2019; Coker et al., 2010; Walters, 2016). Additionally, academic libraries exhibit more diverse organizational structures than typical academic colleges, leading to a broader division and levels of labor (Schonfeld, 2016). As a result, faculty librarians tend to experience more significant variability in work types, career paths, and leadership opportunities than academic faculty (Cawthorne, 2010; Hodge et al., 2021).

As academic institutions adopt more corporate and hierarchical organizational structures, the pressures of neoliberalism are directed toward a growing class of academic managers and administrators (Deem & Brehony, 2005; Giroux, 2002; Vican et al., 2020). This is especially relevant in academic research libraries, which often have multiple layers of middle management positions (Schonfeld, 2016). Mid-level library managers face a unique set of challenges, including navigating the pressure of translating lofty administrative ideas into practical programs, communicating information to their units or teams, feeling accountable for decisions that fall outside their scope of influence, and advocating for their staff (Cawthorne, 2010; Do & Nuth, 2020; Rooney, 2010; Wong, 2017). While academic library management positions are often filled by faculty members, these roles typically require the person to provide direct supervision and management of library faculty and staff. This is uncommon in higher education, where faculty appointments typically afford a high degree of autonomy.

Each of these factors is complicated by the impacts of gender in a neoliberal higher education environment. Research shows that women faculty often bear higher advising, service, and teaching responsibilities, face limited opportunities for career advancement and promotion, receive fewer resources for research and professional development, and encounter lower pay (e.g., Buckman & Jackson, 2021; Docka-Filipek & Stone, 2021; Griffin, 2020; Pascale et al., 2024; Poggio, 2018; Sax et al., 2002; Wapman et al., 2022). In academic libraries, gender bias influences the perceptions of librarians within the organization, impacting their access to leadership roles, career progression, and professional development opportunities (Delong, 2013; Eva et al., 2021; Hildenbrand, 2000). Despite being a predominantly female field, librarianship is not immune to gender bias; women-identified academic librarians across all levels face lower pay than their male counterparts, experience higher instances of sexism or gender discrimination, and receive fewer

opportunities for professional development and career advancement (Delong, 2013; Eva et al., 2021; Howard et al., 2020; Rutledge, 2020).

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The study explored how nine women-identified middle manager academic librarians employed at U.S. public research institutions navigated their platforms of power, privilege, and professional responsibility to interpret and respond to manifestations of neoliberal ideology in higher education and how their professional values and experiences were shaped through the pressures of gender and faculty status. Because neoliberalism is notoriously abstract, ubiquitous, and invisible, I utilized learning analytics as a surrogate for neoliberal ideology. Although learning analytics are central to my study, it was not the primary focus of my inquiry; instead, learning analytics served as a conduit between case sites by offering a concrete manifestation of neoliberal ideology for participants to react to and reflect upon. Specifically, this study addressed the following research questions:

1. How do women-identified academic librarian middle managers employed at U.S. public research institutions interpret and respond to the integration of library metrics with learning analytics?
    a. How do the professional values and experiences of participants shape their perspectives, interpretations, and responses to the integration of library metrics with learning analytics?
    b. How are participants' perspectives, interpretations, and responses to the integration of library metrics with learning analytics influenced by gender identity and faculty status?

Significance of the Study

Learning analytics is a growing area of inquiry in higher education literature. The 2021

EDUCAUSE Teaching and Learning report lists learning analytics as one of six key technologies and practices shaping the higher education landscape (Pelletier et al., 2021). Within academic libraries, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) has listed learning analytics as a top trend in academic libraries in each of its bi-annual reports since 2016 (ACRL Research Planning and Review Committee, 2016, 2018, 2020, 2022). Over the last decade, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), a federal agency that provides library grants, museum grants, policy development, and research, has funded more than a dozen grants related to learning analytics and academic libraries (IMLS, 2021). Although many studies have examined how learning analytics are encountered within the library profession, research has yet to explore how library managers navigate these conversations.

Additionally, while numerous studies have examined the perceptions, experiences, career ladders, challenges, attitudes, and impacts of library deans and directors (e.g., Ashiq et al., 2021; Fagan, 2012; Fitsimmons, 2008; L. Maciel et al., 2018), relatively little research has explored the experiences of mid-level managers (e.g., Bugg, 2016; Do & Nuth, 2020). Further, existing research on mid-level managers in academic libraries tends to be heavily reliant on survey methodology (e.g., Cawthorne, 2010; Hodge et al., 2021; Rooney, 2010; Rutledge, 2020) and personal perspectives gained through individual experience (e.g., Chang & Bright, 2012; Mosley, 2009; Sullivan, 1992), resulting in a gap in the literature in robust qualitative research examining the unique experiences and constraints of mid-level academic library managers. This is significant given the outsized role that mid-level managers hold in the daily performance, trajectory, and potential of the academic library (Cawthorne, 2010; Wong, 2017).

Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative collective case study methodology, which links multiple

cases together within a bounded system (Stake, 1995). Because of its increased size and scope, a collective case study offers a more holistic exploration of a phenomenon than can be achieved in a single case study. In a collective case study, each case is treated as a *unit of analysis* (Patton, 2002). For this study, the units of analysis were individual participants, who were women-identified academic librarian middle managers employed at U.S. academic public research libraries. Because collective cases function independently and collectively, collective case studies utilize multiple data collection methods and employ a data analysis strategy that includes holistic analysis, examining themes across cases, and also embedded analysis, or the exploration of the specific and singular circumstances of the individual case (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 100).

Collective case study methodology was critical to this study. It allowed for nuance and depth in the research process, enabling me to capture individual narratives and draw conclusions across the collective experiences. Through document collection and one-on-one interviews, I gathered, understood, analyzed, and shared participant's stories. The breadth of this research enabled me to identify where participants' experiences diverged and converged, leading to cross-case findings that are both rich and balanced. The resulting findings are presented in two parts: individual case reports, which provide a close examination of individual experience, and cross-case findings, which explore the common elements that were present across cases.

Overview of Cross-Case Findings

This study uncovered five common experiences that were shared among participants. These are represented as *assertions*, or the most salient conclusions that can be drawn about the body of cases from the thematic analysis (Adams et al., 2022; Stake, 2006). Each assertion represents, to the greatest extent possible, a core experience that was highly indicated across a majority of cases, focus areas, and themes.

Middle-ness

Participants' experiences were characterized by a sense of *middle-ness*. Participants were situated in the middle of the organizational hierarchy and often found themselves in the middle of organizational tensions and conflicts. They conveyed feelings of "being squeezed from both sides" and "pulled from both ends," describing how they felt obligated to support the priorities and directives of upper-level library administrators, but also felt a responsibility to protect, advocate, and serve their units and direct reports. Many participants were in the middle of their careers and viewed their positions as a transitional phase, in which they were hesitant to move out of the middle and into higher levels of leadership because of the perceived threat of losing their connections to teaching, students, and research.

Both, and Yet Neither

While *middleness* manifested in structural and organizational pressures, the feeling of being *both and yet neither* emerged from the psychosocial dimensions of the identity schism that participants faced as a result of their positions in the middle of the organization. Participants often described their work as personally rewarding but professionally unsatisfying. As middle managers, they viewed their positions as a bridge between practice and administration; on one side lay the joy and fulfillment they found in librarianship, and on the other, the influence and power from formal leadership. They experienced ambiguity and tensions as they attempted to balance administrative responsibilities, their day-to-day work as public services librarians, and their responsibilities as faculty members. Although all of these identities were salient, the demands of one inhibited their capacity to fulfill and perform the other, which led to feelings of inadequacy, frustration, and anxiety.

Set Up to Fail

Participants described the numerous ways they were *set up to fail* or expected to perform their jobs without access to all the tools needed to do the work effectively. Participants explained how the administrative decision-making processes in their institutions often lacked transparency, leaving participants to "be the face" of administrative decisions to their teams without full insight into the issues. Although participants valued student-centered and care-oriented approaches to leadership, their organizational cultures favored competition and individual achievement over collaboration and community welfare. Participants felt constant and conflicting pressures from higher-ups and their teams, acknowledging that as middle managers, they felt they were "always disappointing someone, even if it was just [themselves]."

Sacrifice of Self

To meet the high expectations that they set for themselves as managers, participants *sacrificed themselves.* They described how they sacrificed personal ambition, flexibility, and time spent on research and scholarship to prioritize the needs of their teams and colleagues. Many participants described activities that furthered their own careers or passions as "self-serving," and they felt guilty when they were not able to be fully emotionally and physically present and engaged in the "important work" of mentorship and supervision. Although these sacrifices were difficult, they made the concessions knowingly and willingly, emphasizing the importance of being known as a caring supervisor and an advocate for their teams.

Cost of Resistance

Participants understood that *resistance comes at a cost*, both to the individual and also to the institution. They described the numerous ways that they evaluated and weighed the cost of various decisions, including the potential decrease in organizational power or political influence, possible elimination or reduction of funding for staff members, or being denied or passed over for

promotional opportunities. As middle managers, they perceived their responsibility to be that of deciding if the risk posed by a certain action was worth the cost and holding themselves accountable for those decisions. Although participants were highly principled and held strong professional values, they sometimes felt compelled to compromise their ethics to protect their teams and ensure the financial stability of their libraries.

Conclusion

The following dissertation explores the intersections of neoliberalism, learning analytics, and academic library middle management. In Chapter 1, I introduced the study, including a brief overview of the theoretical framework, literature, methodology, significance of the study, and research findings. Chapter 2 establishes the impetus, background, and basis for this study through an extensive literature review that examines library values, the context and constraints of academic libraries and librarianship, neoliberalism ideology and the impacts on higher education, and learning analytics. Chapter 3 focuses on the research methodology by offering an overview of the research method, researcher positionality, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter 4 highlights the experience of the individual participants by presenting singular case studies. Chapter 5 examines the shared experiences across the cases and provides a detailed analysis within four focus areas: professional identity, gender identity and social justice, faculty status, and learning analytics. Chapter 6 concludes the study by offering a detailed discussion that contextualizes the findings within the research questions and offers recommendations for future practice, policy, and research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This study centers on women-identified academic librarian middle managers. It explores how their professional values and experiences are shaped through the pressures of organizational power, gender identity, and faculty status in a neoliberal workplace. The following literature review is structured into five sections. First, an exploration of library values as defined through policy and practice. Second, an overview of the history, purpose, organization, and mission of an academic library. Third, a critical examination of neoliberal ideology, emphasizing the incursion of neoliberalism in public higher education. Fourth, an exploration of how neoliberalism has shaped the values and practices of academic libraries. Finally, an overview of the ideologies, standards of practice, and emerging research on learning analytics, emphasizing how learning analytics intersect with neoliberal thought, policy, and practice in higher education.

Libraries and Librarianship

Libraries are diverse institutions with varied collections, funding models, purposes, and users, ranging from private specialized collections to expansive public systems and sophisticated research facilities supporting universities or governmental bodies. While focusing on academic libraries, this dissertation acknowledges that the values, ethics, and principles of academic libraries are rooted in the broader societal views and expectations of libraries at large. It begins with an overview of library values in the U.S., highlighting the influence of professional bodies, specifically the American Library Association (ALA). The discussion then narrows to academic libraries, exploring their organization, values, and professional standards.

The American Library Association and Library Values

The ideology of U.S. libraries is intertwined with the principles of American democracy. Ettarh (2018) described this as *vocational awe* or the idea that libraries are seen as essential pillars

of democracy, inherently virtuous and beyond critique. The American Library Association (ALA), the world's oldest and largest library organization with nearly 60,000 members, has been pivotal in nurturing and promoting this link. Through numerous policies, the ALA has promoted the role of libraries in the U.S. in sustaining democracy, enabling an informed citizenry, and championing truth and justice by providing access to information (Seale, 2016). In 2021, the ALA's *State of America's Libraries* report identified libraries as the "center of some of the nation's most consequential work," including ensuring "accurate counts in the United States Census, fighting political disinformation, and facilitating free and fair elections" (p. 4).

Over the past 150 years, the ALA has played a crucial role in shaping the growth and development of U.S. libraries. Through a wide array of policies, the ALA has set the standards for everything from specific roles, such as the nomination process for the Librarian of Congress and Archivist of the United States (Policy 50.7), to broader professional standards, such as the qualifications deemed appropriate for librarians (Policy 54.2). Notable among these policies are the *Library Bill of Rights* (2019), delineating the responsibilities of libraries to their patrons; the *Code of Ethics* (2008), detailing the ethical obligations of librarians to the profession and society; and the *Core Values of Librarianship* (2004), defining the fundamental values of the profession. These policies have served as foundational guides for the profession, setting the standards for how libraries are organized, perceived, and sustained in the U.S.

Library Bill of Rights

The ALA's *Library Bill of Rights* (LBR) is a foundational document that outlines the core principles guiding libraries in serving their communities and patrons. Initially adopted in 1939 and amended several times to reflect evolving societal needs, the LBR encompasses several vital principles. First, a duty to ensure a diverse, valuable, and varied collection that offers multiple

perspectives on a given topic. Second, a responsibility to provide open access to library resources without imposing restrictions based on a user's "origin, age, background, or views" (ALA, 2019, principle 1). Third, an obligation to protect user privacy and confidentiality regarding their use of library facilities, resources, materials, and services.

Code of Ethics

The ALA's *Code of Ethics* (CoE) serves as a guiding framework for ethical decision-making and professional conduct in the library profession, emphasizing principles such as patron privacy, intellectual freedom, equity, and lifelong learning. While the LBR focuses on the obligations of libraries to their communities, the CoE sets the ethical principles and standards that govern the professional conduct of librarians and library workers. Adopted in 1939 and revised periodically to reflect changing societal norms and technological advancements, the CoE offers nine principles, each of which begins with "we" to signify the voice of the profession (see Appendix B). For example, "we distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and do not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation of the aims of our institutions or the provision of access to their information resources" (ALA, 2008, principle 7). The most recent amendment to the CoE was added in 2021 when the ALA Council – the governing body of the ALA – voted to add a principle formalizing the responsibility of librarians in confronting inequity and oppression and advancing racial and social justice in their libraries.

Core Values of Librarianship

The *Core Values of Librarianship* (2004) delineate the mission and goals of librarianship, emphasizing the profession's commitment to providing equitable access to information, fostering democracy, and supporting the public good (see Appendix C). The *Core Values* extend and deepen the values outlined in the CoE and the LBR by championing intellectual freedom, open access to

information, and user privacy. While the LBR and CoE specify the duties of libraries and librarians to their communities, the *Core Values* define the ethical obligations of librarians to the profession. They serve as a bridge between abstract policy and concrete practice, illustrating how librarians embody these ethical standards in their day-to-day work. Since their introduction in 2004, the Core Values have remained unamended but were reaffirmed by the ALA Council in 2019, underscoring their ongoing relevance and importance to the field.

Critiques of the ALA Policies

While the LBR, CoE, and *Core Values* have been foundational in establishing intellectual freedom, information access, and user privacy as the core values of American libraries and librarianship, these documents have been criticized for their rigidity, idealism, and ambiguity (Berg & Jacobs, 2016; Buschman, 2006; Fricke et al., 2000; Kendrick Davis & Echo, 2015; Seale, 2016). The deliberately broad language used in the policies makes them applicable to a wide range of library contexts, but the equivocality can be challenging for practitioners, who struggle to apply the high-minded principles to specific, real-world scenarios (Berg & Jacobs, 2016; Kendrick Davis & Echo, 2015). Furthermore, the overlap in the LBR, CoE, and *Core Values* has led to a blurring of the distinct purposes of the documents (Jones, 2019b). Rather than serving as a guide for policy and practice, the policies are often used as a "brief reference point" or a means to justify a pre-determined approach or decision, potentially enabling their use to support actions that might contradict their underlying values. (Berg & Jacobs, 2016, p. 459).

Critics also highlight the ALA's failure to adequately address racial inequalities and the complicity of libraries in sustaining systemic racism. Honma (2005) argued that the LBR and similar policies promote an "idealized vision of mythic benevolence" that allows librarians to "gloss over" the susceptibility of libraries in reinforcing, reproducing, and perpetuating racist

social structures (sec. “Omission of Color,” para. 3). The ALA membership and librarianship are pervasively White; as recently as 2022, the racial demographics of all librarians were reported at more than 85% White-identifying (Kendrick & Hulbert, 2023). As a result, the policies, services, resources, collections, and practices of librarianship are entrenched with White normativity and colonial ideologies (Hathcock, 2015). Additionally, broader policies like the LBR and CoE overlook critical considerations of race, class, and gender, failing to acknowledge how the policies might differentially impact individuals and communities based on their social identities. This disconnect underscores a broader issue in the profession wherein the “mythology of the library” as a force for social justice can obscure the social, racial, and economic inequities that exist across all types of libraries (De Jesus, 2014). Buschman (2020) articulated the need for librarians to reconcile the coexistence of libraries as spaces of both exclusion and empowerment. Although the ALA policy documents present an idealized version of librarianship, the only way to enact these values practice is to actively acknowledge, confront, and ultimately work to dismantle the systemic biases within our libraries.

Academic Libraries

Academic libraries, as defined by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics, are associated with degree-granting institutions of higher education that provide an organized collection of physical or electronic materials, expert staff, scheduled services, and essential facilities (Phan et al., 2014). Academic libraries are distinctive in their service to their home institution(s), restrictions on access and use, which are often limited to members of the institutional community, and shared missions to support the research and education enterprises at a given institution.

An academic library fulfills an essential service for an institution by providing a “third

space," or a community resource that bridges an individual's workplace and home and provides space to relax, create, and commune with others (Elmborg, 2011; Montgomery & Miller, 2011; Oldenburg & Brissett, 1982). The library *as place* is deeply intertwined with the understanding of the academic library. Although an academic library provides a range of resources and services to the community (which may or may not be connected to the library building), the library as a *place* is one of the most consistent and persistent associations patrons have with their academic library (Applegate, 2009; Cunningham & Tabur, 2012). Studies show that students who engage more with the physical library often feel a stronger sense of belonging and inclusion within their academic communities (Scoulas, 2021). While academic libraries increasingly invest in digital collections and online services, the concept of the library as a physical place continues to persist, embodying its core missions of education, empowerment, knowledge preservation, and community connection (Tancheva, 2022).

Public Academic Research Libraries

A *research library* is a specialized academic library that provides students, scholars, and researchers access to an in-depth collection covering a wide variety of topics. Research libraries include primary and secondary sources in their collections and are defined by their ability to support the research endeavors of the affiliated institutions (Levine-Clark & Dean, 2013). In North America, the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) accredits these institutions, ensuring they meet high standards for supporting research activities. As of 2022, the ARL encompasses 124 member libraries, with the majority located at public and private research universities in the United States, including a significant proportion (70%) associated with public and land-grant institutions (ARL, 2021; George & Blixrud, 2017). For this research, a *public academic research library* is one of the 71 ARL member libraries associated with public or land grant universities.

Public academic research libraries face numerous challenges, reflecting broader issues in higher education, including shrinking budgets, reduced state funding, increased demands to support academic activities, technological advancements, leadership changes, and declining enrollment (Pelletier et al., 2021). The post-pandemic landscape has layered on additional challenges, including practitioner burnout, evolving library space needs, growing reliance on open and collaborative collections, and pressures to diversify the workforce and collections (ALA, 2021; ALA, 2022b; ACRL, 2020; ACRL, 2021; ACRL Research Planning and Review Committee, 2022; ARL, 2020). In response, academic research libraries are undergoing a "radical transformation," moving from physical to digital collections, shifting services to focus on research data management, rushing to establish donor relations and alternative funding sources, addressing the structural racial and gender inequity in the library workforce, and expanding online resources and services (ARL, 2020; Schonfeld, 2016, p. 2).

Academic Librarianship

The standard terminal degree for librarians in the United States is the Master of Library Science (MLIS). This degree requirement is consistent across every branch and type of librarianship, from public to academic to special.[1] MLIS programs are accredited by the ALA and there are 64 accredited programs across the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico (ALA, 2022a). Although a few of these programs include a specialized track or program plan for academic librarianship, overall, the MLIS is a generalized degree intended to prepare librarians to serve in various roles and contexts.

Although the MLIS is recognized by the ALA and the Association of College and Research

[1] Special libraries provide specialized resources on a particular subject to a limited clientele. Special libraries include corporate, museum, law, medical, and government. For more information, see the Special Library Association at https://www.sla.org/

Libraries (ACRL) as the appropriate terminal degree for academic librarians, more than 30% of academic librarian job postings require or prefer that candidates hold a second advanced degree in a specific discipline or area of study or a more advanced terminal degree, such as a Ph.D. (Ferguson, 2016). Proponents of this system argue that additional graduate education provides academic librarians with in-depth knowledge of a specific subject area and strengthens their research and writing skills (Ridley, 2018). A preference for a second, advanced degree is most commonly seen in job postings for research universities, suggesting the closer an academic library is associated with a research function, the less sufficient an MLIS degree is in demonstrating the ability of academic librarians to perform and support that research (Bailey & Becher, 2022). Although the MLIS is the most commonly held degree among librarians, there has been debate as to whether the MLIS is necessary for library leadership positions, which may be equally, or better, served by an alternative degree such as Ph.D., Master of Business Administration (MBA), or doctorate in Education (Ed.D.) (Michalak et al., 2019).

Faculty Status

The ARL and the ACRL position academic research librarians as experts in their fields who hold unique skills, abilities, and professional expertise (Bernstein, 2009; Jones Jr., 1989; Shiflett, 1994). Academic librarians share similar responsibilities with academic faculty, including expectations for professional practice, research, and service (Fleming-May & Douglass, 2014). In the United States, slightly over half of academic librarians hold faculty appointments, which is referred to as *holding faculty status* (Bolin, 2008; Walters, 2016). The proportion of faculty appointments vs. staff appointments is highest at public teaching-focused institutions and lowest at private research universities. However, the majority of research universities (52%) and the vast majority of public research universities (76%) offer faculty status to librarians (Bolin, 2008;

Walters, 2016). The correlation between institution size and tenure eligibility for librarians suggests a link between faculty status and the institutional emphasis on undergraduate education (Applegate, 2019; Bernstein, 2009; Walters, 2016).

Although the ACRL, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), and the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) have endorsed faculty status for librarians, librarian faculty status is complicated by the need for standardization. Depending on the institution, faculty status can range from a unified system - in which librarians are included within the professorial ranks - to a separate ranking and tenure process that “parallels " academic faculty (Bolin, 2008, p. 418). While faculty status generally carries expectations for shared governance, research funding, and institutional buy-in, access to these privileges varies by institution (Bailey & Becher, 2022; Bernstein, 2009). Further, Bolin (2008) noted that though 38% of librarians are classified as staff, 70% of academic librarians are granted representation on their institution’s faculty senate, indicating that selective faculty privileges may be extended to librarians, even when faculty status itself is not.

It is important to note that while many academic librarians hold faculty status at their institutions, the day-to-day experience of faculty librarians is similar to those who hold nonfaculty or staff appointments. In fact, from outside an institution, it can be challenging to determine if librarians are included in faculty ranks. Bolin (2008) argued that even at institutions in which librarians are integrated within professorial ranks, library faculty appear to be “bred apart” from the academic faculty (p. 420). This separation is reinforced not only by the physical (librarians work in the library, while academic faculty work in their colleges and departments) but also by disparities in their respective working conditions (Bailey & Becher, 2022; Christiansen et al., 2004). Although librarians are held to similar publication and research standards as academic

faculty, most librarians hold 12-month contracts and 40-hour weeks, which afford less time for research and scholarship (Fleming-May & Douglass, 2014; Walters, 2016).

Compared to academic or teaching faculty, who are often afforded a high degree of autonomy in their day-to-day work, librarians have more restrictive schedules (Fleming-May & Douglass, 2014). Coker et al. (2010) argued that as a physical location, academic libraries differ from academic colleges in that library facilities and personnel "remain busy, even when the students have gone home" (p. 415). As a result, academic librarians are required to work when most academic faculty might otherwise be "off," such as nights, weekends, and holidays (Coker et al., 2010, p. 416). Most faculty librarians work traditional 40-hour weeks, 12 months a year, which is different from the 9-month schedule of academic faculty. Despite working more hours and having less flexibility with their schedules, librarians are paid less than academic faculty, indicating that the labor of library faculty is less valuable to the university than their academic counterparts (Fleming-May & Douglass, 2014; Walters, 2016; Wyss, 2010).

Status Equivalency, Not Equality. The incongruity between the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of library faculty and their academic peers has resulted in a system of faculty equivalency rather than equality (Fleming-May & Douglass, 2014). Christiansen et al. (2004) described the "asymmetrical disconnect" between librarians and academic faculty, where they are mutually dependent on one another but remain generally separate in their day-to-day work (p. 117). Although academic faculty express "genuine respect" for library faculty, they often view the work of librarians as distinctly separate or inferior to their work as faculty (Christiansen et al., 2004, p. 118). Church (2003) reiterated, "Faculty do not universally agree that academic librarians are their equals academically or that they should have faculty rank or status" (p. 21). Instead, faculty feel librarians should be respected as "professionals whose primary function should be to

serve faculty and students" (Church, 2003, p. 21). A recent study found that while faculty status itself did not increase how positively academic faculty members perceived librarians or library work, awareness among academic faculty of the status held by librarians was correlated with stronger collegiality and increased collaborations between librarians and faculty (Weng & Murray, 2020). Interestingly, this relationship between librarians and academic faculty is seldom discussed outside the library and information science (LIS) discipline (Phelps & Campbell, 2012). Despite holding faculty status, librarians are often excluded from broader discussions on faculty issues, such as workload, hiring and retention, research productivity, and the gender pay gap (e.g., Buckman & Jackson, 2021; Docka-Filipek & Stone, 2021; Johnson et al., 2020; O'Meara et al., 2017; Ott & Cisneros, 2015; Ryan et al., 2012; Sax et al., 2002; Wapman et al., 2022).

Ultimately, the debate around faculty status for librarians revolves less around defining the parameters of faculty work and more around power dynamics in academia (Seale & Mirza, 2019, p. 429). Research has demonstrated that beyond an increased motivation for librarians to "give extra effort in their jobs," faculty status conveys few tangible benefits to librarians (Silva et al., 2017). Faculty and nonfaculty librarians have comparable salaries, job functions, and professional development opportunities (Galbraith et al., 2016). Within the literature, the most cited defense of faculty status is that it gives librarians a "seat at the table" in governance and decision-making spaces and conveys respect for the expertise of librarianship (Applegate, 2019; Coker et al., 2010; Galbraith et al., 2016; Hoggan, 2003; McGowan & Dow, 1995). However, as many have noted, representation does not mitigate institutional inequality, which persists despite holding status (Griffin, 2020; O'Meara et al., 2017).

Librarian Faculty Status and Gender. The academic library, akin to higher education, functions as a "gendered construction," reinforcing prevailing systems of social, economic, and

political power (Arellano Douglas & Gadsby, 2017). Acker's (1990) theory of gendered organizations emphasizes that while organizational logic assumes a "congruence" between positional responsibilities, job complexity, and hierarchical position within an organization, the reality is that no organization exists independently of the societal structures in which it operates (p. 148). While in the abstract, a job can exist without a human body or gender identity, the "transformation" of an abstract job to a "concrete instance" occurs only when there is a worker to occupy the position (Acker, 1990, p. 149). This dynamic is deeply rooted in societal norms that prioritize the dominance and superiority of men while exploiting and subordinating women, leading to the inherent gendering of organization (Acker, 1990).

Librarianship is a *pink-collar profession* where about two-thirds of workers are women-identified (Arellano Douglas & Gadsby, 2017; Le, 2021; Nicholson, 2019; Wilder, 2018). In higher education, academic libraries are responsible for the intellectual caretaking of the institution, which has resulted in the relegation of academic librarianship as "women's work" (Delong, 2013; Hannigan, 1994; Hannigan & Crew, 1993; Hildenbrand, 2000). Despite the feminized nature of librarianship, it is not an inherently feminist profession, leading to complex gender dynamics and an internalized misogyny that devalues the emotional and relational components of librarianship, frequently handled by women-identifying librarians (Mirza & Seale, 2017; Seale & Mirza, 2019). Librarians have described themselves as "handmaidens of the research process," reflecting the profession's service-orientation of the profession and the hierarchical position of librarians within organizational structures (Julien & Given, 2013).

Academic Library Leadership

Within the academy, a faculty member's advancement is traditionally achieved by granting tenure and promotion up through the academic ranks. Although formal leadership roles are

available to faculty, such as faculty chair or program director, faculty leadership is nuanced and encompasses various research, teaching, curricular, advising, mentorship, and service roles. However, because the work, functions, and responsibilities of an academic library are broader than those of an academic college, library faculty members tend to experience more significant variability in the types of work, career pathways, and leadership opportunities that are available to them, particularly for faculty librarians at research libraries, where the size, scope, and scale of library work provides increased opportunities for advancement through various positional responsibilities and levels (Cawthorne, 2010; Hodge et al., 2021).

From an organizational perspective, academic libraries are often included in the division of academic affairs or equivalent (Curzon & Quinonez-Skinner, 2017). Yet, the organizational structure and division of labor within an academic library tends to more closely parallel student affairs, including multiple levels of hourly student workers, graduate assistants, non-exempt and exempt staff members, and faculty members (Schonfeld, 2016). At a research university, the library is often headed by a Dean or University Librarian, who reports to the university's senior academic officer (Bolin, 2008). Although library faculty advance through rank and tenure, it is not uncommon for a librarian to provide direct or indirect supervision to other library faculty or staff members by serving as a department head or coordinator for a specific area, such as reference or instruction (Coker et al., 2010; Wong, 2017). Although common among librarians, this direct and daily supervision of one faculty member by another is atypical in the academic environment. A close parallel for academic faculty is the *department chair*, which is a temporary managerial position in which a tenured faculty member provides guidance, oversight, support, advocacy, financial management, and administrative responsibility for the departmental faculty (Berdrow, 2010; Pascale et al., 2024). However, while a department chair is a tenured faculty member who

will likely eventually return to their faculty position, librarian administration holds their positions perpetually and rarely, if ever, return to their faculty home (Gonaim, 2016).

Academic Librarian Middle Managers

Large academic and research libraries tend to have several layers of *academic librarian middle managers* who collaborate with library administrators while supervising library faculty and staff (Schonfeld, 2016). Middle managers sit one or two reporting lines below the dean or university librarians and include assistant and associate deans, directors, unit or department heads, cross-departmental team leaders, and program managers, who provide leadership to a specific program or area (Do & Nuth, 2020; Schonfeld, 2016).

Despite being common in research libraries, mid-level manager roles pose unique challenges. Academic library middle managers play a crucial role in translating strategic goals into actionable programs. They also bear accountability for decisions that fall within their scope of operations, even when those decisions come as a directive from senior leaders (Cawthorne, 2010). They are often the first to feel the impacts of policy changes on their teams (Cawthorne, 2010) and feel a responsibility to "lead, bridge, and collaborate" across the organization (Do & Nuth, 2020, p. 45). Middle managers feel protective of their units or departments (Do & Nuth, 2020). While their emotional investment can have positive benefits, such as a strong sense of advocacy and willingness to explore new initiatives, it can also lead to challenges, including "turf wars" between middle managers, potentially diverting attention from the library's core mission (Schonfeld, 2016). Their pivotal role in daily communication between administrators, staff, and faculty can directly influence the library's trajectory and performance (Cawthorne, 2010; Wong, 2017). In fact, a survey of library directors at ARL member libraries identified divisiveness among middle managers as one of the "key obstacles towards widespread organizational change" (Schonfeld,

2016, p. 11).

Academic libraries have distinct hiring practices and promotional pathways. While most library leadership positions require the rank equivalent to associate professor with tenure, it is not uncommon for mid-level leadership positions (such as unit or department head) to be filled by junior faculty. A recent survey indicated that about a quarter of academic librarian managers assumed their roles with less than six years of experience, which is the threshold typically required for an associate professor rank (Thomas et al., 2019). Many library managers are also hired externally, often with five years or fewer of experience at their institution before moving into leadership roles (Irwin & deVries, 2019; Rooney, 2010; Rutledge, 2020). Consequently, middle managers in libraries are often new to their institutions and in the early or mid-stages of their careers. This situation can be particularly challenging for mid-level managers on a tenure track, as they must balance faculty responsibilities with management duties, and also navigate supervising faculty who may be above or below their ranks. This can require that the person evaluate and provide oversight to higher-ranked colleagues who may have a direct impact on their own promotion and tenure decision, or provide mentorship to junior faculty who are seeking promotion, a process that they themselves have not yet successfully completed.

Literature addressing the *glass ceiling*, which refers to invisible barriers hindering women and Librarians of Color from advancing into leadership positions, and the *glass cliff*, representing the trend of women being placed in risky and precarious leadership positions, highlights a concerning trend in academic librarians. While the gender gap among academic library deans and directors may be narrowing, women and Librarians of Color are disproportionately represented in lower faculty ranks, lower management or leadership positions, and management positions in which failure is more likely to be visible and public (Bladek, 2019; Irwin & deVries, 2019;

Mandeville-Gamble, 2018; Rutledge, 2020; Ryan et al., 2016; Wilder, 2018). Women academic librarians also face unique challenges, such as lower pay compared to their male counterparts, increased likelihood of experiencing sexism or gender discrimination, and limited opportunities for training and professional development related to career advancement (Delong, 2013; Eva et al., 2021; Howard et al., 2020; Rutledge, 2020).

While a wealth of rich research has been conducted on library leadership styles, career ladders, and gender and racial disparities among top-level administrators in academic libraries (e.g., Ashiq et al., 2021; Bladek, 2019; Fagan, 2012; Le, 2021; Neigel, 2015), there is a notable gap in understanding the experiences, decision-making processes, and challenges faced by middle managers, especially those below the rank of Associate Dean (Bugg, 2016; Do & Nuth, 2020; Wong, 2017). Moreover, research on mid-level managers in academic libraries tends to collapse the experiences of nonfaculty and faculty librarians and men and women managers into a single group. Despite the similar day-to-day responsibilities of faculty and nonfaculty librarians, researchers have highlighted the unique pressure and expectations surrounding faculty status for librarians (Galbraith et al., 2016; Hoggan, 2003). Similarly, while all middle managers encounter challenges, research on senior-level academic library leaders suggests that women leaders face gender-specific hurdles in their organizations (Bladek, 2019; Neigel, 2015). Neglecting to recognize the impact of these challenges on middle managers oversimplifies and undermines the complex experiences of mid-level women-identified leaders. Considering the pivotal role that middle management plays in the library's well-being, position, and future on campus, the lack of literature on their unique experiences is significant.

Theoretical Framework: Neoliberalism

At its core, *neoliberalism* is a resurgence of 19th-century classical economic liberalism,

emphasizing the benevolence of the free market and advocating for reduced government intervention through deregulation (Saunders, 2014, p. 45). Neoliberalism is a belief that the best of anything (products, systems, government, ideas) is born of competition. The "neo" aspect of neoliberalism reflects its adaptation of liberal economic principles to contemporary contexts (Saunders, 2014). While some scholars view neoliberalism as a continuation and expansion of classical liberalism (Baltodano, 2012; Lakes & Carter, 2011), others regard it as a distinct framework with policies and ideologies that draw inspiration from classical liberalism but are not strictly bound by its principles (Giroux, 2002; McCarthy & Prudham, 2004).

For the purposes of this study, neoliberalism is defined through the framework supplied by noted educational and political theorists Olssen and Peters (2005) as a "hegemonic discourse of Western nation-states" that prioritizes four tenets. First, the *self-interested individual,* viewing individuals as economically self-interested subjects capable of determining their interests and needs. Second, *free market economics,* positing that the market is the most efficient and morally superior mechanism for resource allocation. Third, *laissez-faire* principles, believing in the benevolence of the free market as a self-regulating order. Fourth, *free trade,* achieved through active deregulation, including eliminating subsidies and state-imposed protections (p. 314).

In a later work, Olssen (2016) explored Foucauldian distinctions regarding the role of state power in classical and neoliberalism. Classical liberalism holds a "negative conception of state power," viewing it as a hindrance to the functioning and expansion of a laissez-faire economy. In contrast, neoliberalism embraces a more positive view of the state regarding its ability to support the free market by providing the conditions, laws, organizations, and institutions to facilitate market operations (Olsen, 2016, p. 130). Neoliberalism promotes deregulation of the private sphere and encourages the integration of privatization within the public sphere, transforming the

societal purpose from providing for individual welfare to supporting profit pursuit (Hursh & Wall, 2011).

My understanding of neoliberalism is informed by Baltodano's (2012) examination of neoliberalism as a form of political rationality and Saunders' (2014) exploration of ideological associations between neoliberalism and patriotism in the United States. Baltodano (2012) described neoliberalism as not only a "large ideological apparatus" but also a transformation of the "nature of the state" itself, where neoliberal ideology is synonymous with good citizenship (p. 492). Under neoliberalism, the state becomes the protector of a capitalist marketplace, nourishing and supporting the market (Baltodano, 2012). Saunders (2014) argued that neoliberalism has become the dominant socio-political policy of the U.S. by eliminating rival thought and embracing the "inevitability" of a capitalist nation-state (p. 49). These perspectives suggest a symbiotic relationship between neoliberalism, U.S. patriotism, and capitalism, where the sustenance of one leads to the expansion of the other.

Hursh and Wall (2011) attribute the "inevitability" of neoliberalism to a tacit association between neoliberalism and *globalization* or the growing interdependence of the world's intellectual, social, political, and financial economies (p. 561). Like neoliberalism, globalization relies on deregulation, economic competition, and capitalist expansion. Because globalization is regarded as inexorable, so too is neoliberalism. This same argument can be applied to the U.S. adoption of neoliberalism; to support the rise of the United States as a global economic power is to support globalization; to support globalization is to believe in the economic advancement and adoption of a capitalist nation-state; and to support the advancement of a capitalist nation-state is to believe and advance the tenets of a neoliberalist economy. While it can be tempting to accept the association between globalization and neoliberalism at face value, Klees (2008) cautioned that

both are complex phenomena that deserve thoughtful and continued consideration. Making sweeping generalizations about either reduces our collective ability to critique these ideologies.

Neoliberalism in Education

Public education offers a unique convergence of public space with private interests. As a result, the effects of neoliberalism are exacerbated in educational settings. While critics argue for education as a public good immune to market forces, neoliberal reformers advocate for transforming public education into competitive markets and privatizing services to address perceived inefficiencies (Lakes & Carter, 2011). In response to the pressures placed on the U.S. educational system by neoliberal reformers, public education has gradually adopted a capitalist approach. Educational theorists point to three areas where this ideological shift is most apparent. First is the gradual decrease in public funding, which has increased the reliance on private capital to support educational programs and curricula (Klees, 2008; Lakes & Carter, 2011). Second, there is a rise in assessment and quality assurance measures to demonstrate the value of public education investments (Giroux, 2002; Hursh & Wall, 2011; Skolnik, 2010). Finally, there is a widespread embrace of corporate culture in educational settings, which treats education as a business and favors hierarchical management relationships over shared decision-making (Giroux, 2002; Olssen & Peters, 2005).

Economic Competition

Many scholars have identified the progressive underfunding of public education with state funds as an entry point for neoliberal policy and practice (Apple, 2012; Baltodano, 2012; Klees, 2008, 2020; Lakes & Carter, 2011; Saunders, 2014). In primary and secondary education, this trend is evident in the increasing availability of school vouchers, which allow parents to redirect public funding intended for public education towards private schooling, and user fees that cover

various costs like tuition, compulsory uniforms, textbooks, school activities, transportation, and associated expenses like before-and-after care (Klees, 2008; Lakes & Carter, 2011). For post-secondary public education, drastic cuts to state funding have forced higher education institutions to rely more heavily on private funding, primarily from student tuition and fees, revenue from alternative sources like grants and donors, and partnerships with private corporations (Saunders, 2014). This shift of education costs from the state to individuals erodes the implicit connection between education and the public good, fostering an educational marketplace driven by economic competition (Tilak, 2008). As a result, education is increasingly viewed as a private good to be purchased by a student who has been "redefined" from a recipient to a customer (Saunders, 2014, p. 54). Rather than focusing on "intrinsic" goals, such as developing well-informed and critically aware citizens, neoliberal education promotes financial and career-oriented measures of success (Saunders, 2014, p. 54).

Accountability and Assessment

One of the most visible impacts of neoliberalism on education is the heightened emphasis on accountability, assessment, and demonstrating returns on investment. In primary education, this was exemplified by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, which introduced a federal system for standards-based testing (Baltodano, 2012). NCLB attempted to close the academic achievement gap between minoritized students of low socio-economic status and their more economically advantaged peers through rigorous academic evaluation and reporting out of performance measures (Klein, 2015). In theory, NCLB increased federal control over educational curricula and held individual teachers and schools accountable for poor performance through merit-based teacher pay and restrictions in federal funding to low-performing schools. In practice, NCLB flattened the student experience by attempting to measure outputs, such as academic

performance, without taking into account the many different socio-economic factors that affect student achievement, including education of parents, family wealth, student aspirations and attitude, and availability of resources (Klees, 2008). NCLB also spurred the growth of an educational marketplace where families and students used standardized test results to compare schools directly (Hursh & Wall, 2011, p. 562). Despite being replaced by the Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015, NCLB's influence on U.S. educational policy persists, reflecting a shift towards a neoliberal educational framework.

In higher education, a similar trend emerged during the Bush era with the Spellings Commission, which sought to apply NCLB's accountability, transparency, efficiency, and productivity principles to post-secondary education (The Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education, 2006). The resulting Spellings Report encouraged institutions to adopt metrics such as time-to-degree, international rankings, accreditation, and learning outcomes-based assessment to enhance accountability and facilitate comparative analysis between institutions (Liu, 2017). While not as influential as NCLB, the Spellings Report has contributed to the integration of neoliberal practice in higher education, evidenced by initiatives such as the U.S. Department of Education's college scorecard (Hursh & Wall, 2011). This tool allows students to compare institutions based on graduation rates, average salaries, costs, and test scores, fostering competitive dynamics within a market-driven educational landscape. These "relations of competition" have led to institutional homogenization, with institutions prioritizing established pathways to achieve desired outcomes and mitigate economic risks (Cannella & Koro-Ljungberg, 2017; Dimaggio & Powell, 1983; Olssen & Peters, 2005).

For proponents of neoliberal educational interventions, increasing competition between post-secondary institutions increases the value of higher education to the individual by offering

higher quality lower cost educational experiences. Also, it increases the value of the individual to the capitalist market by improving their individual skills (Klees, 2020). However, critics contend that standardized measures of educational competition, such as NCLB and the USDE college scorecard, collapse measures of success and oversimplify student learning by focusing on a discrete output rather than the wide-ranging socio-emotional benefits that can result from an educational experience (Hursh & Wall, 2011). Rather than striving to meet the student's learning goals, the institution is beholden to external measures of academic success, generating an increasingly sophisticated system of educational capitalism where the consumer is a product of the capitalist system they help to create (Apple, 2000).

Corporate Culture

Neoliberalism destabilizes education at all levels by eroding distinctions between “market and the state, public and private, and individual and social” (Saunders, 2014, p. 45). Olssen (2016) argued that the effects of neoliberalism in higher education are compounded, as a single instance of neoliberal policy or practice works to strengthen others. As higher education becomes more reliant on sources of external funding (such as corporate revenue, tuition, and donations), areas of study that fail to translate directly into profit are marginalized, underfunded, or eliminated (Giroux, 2002, p. 434). In the same way that accountability measures encourage competition among institutions, neoliberal policy incites competition within the university by using financial scarcity to position colleges, schools, departments, programs, and faculty members as antagonists.

As higher education embraces capitalist and corporate values of profit, control, and efficiency, academic governance is shifting from traditional models in which power is shared among faculty and administrators to a "neoliberal governmentality" in which hierarchical line-management chains replace distributed power (Giroux, 2002). Neoliberal academic governance is

characterized by three key aspects: a move away from democratic decision-making to hierarchical systems, decreased autonomy for educators with increased management oversight, and pressure to align with market demands like competing for research grants and teaching summer courses. (Olssen & Peters, 2005). The increased focus on efficiency shifts power toward a new class of middle and upper management. It destabilizes the academic labor market by disempowering professorial labor organizations, outsourcing student affairs functions (such as the bookstore), and increasing the university's reliance on an "underclass" of part-time and adjunct faculty members, graduate students, and post-doctoral positions (Saunders, 2014, p. 58). These practices "entrench and normalize" a commercialized version of academia, in which higher education institutions replicate corporate culture to improve financial agility and economic efficiency (Saunders, 2014, p. 23).

Academic Capitalism. The impact of neoliberalism is particularly evident in public research universities, where reduced state funding and increased demands for research and development have led to the emergence of *academic capitalism*. While neoliberalism promotes competition and deregulation, academic capitalism aims to align universities with market interests (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). This trend is most noticeable in universities categorized as “Research University I” and in *striving institutions*, which are those seeking prestige through accolades, such as college rankings, advancing to higher Carnegie classification categories, or joining more prestigious institutional consortia (O’Meara, 2007, p. 125). Universities practicing academic capitalism advocate for policies supporting entrepreneurial activities, establishing corporations' networks, securing external funding, monetizing research through patents or copyrights, promoting entrepreneurial initiatives among faculty and students, and strengthening managerial capacity (Slaughter, 2014). Examples of academic capitalism encompass a range of profit-oriented

endeavors, including externally funded research centers, patenting and licensing agreements, merchandising branded products, and engaging in profit-sharing arrangements with service providers like food vendors and bookstores (Slaughter, 2014, p. 154).

Implications of Neoliberalism for Higher Education Policy and Practice

The implications of neoliberalism for higher education policy and practice are both multifaceted and deeply contested. Critics view neoliberal higher education as a tool of capitalist dominance that attacks public institutions, blurs democratic values with market fundamentalism, and erodes independent political agency (Giroux, 2002). This perspective sees neoliberalism undermining academic freedom and replacing educational ideals with corporate structures. However, adopting an overly idealized view of higher education as inherently democratic and altruistic can also be damaging. Saunders (2014) argued that, to some extent, higher education has continuously operated as a business. What is new to the neoliberal university is not the idea of catering to a capitalist marketplace but, instead, the extent and scope of profit-driven activities and the increase in the number of students, faculty, administrators, and policymakers who are supporting those activities (Saunders, 2014, p. 55).

For the reformer, neoliberal educational policies offer institutions increased financial agility, streamlined innovation, and improved responsiveness to the needs of their communities. They argue that competition fosters creativity, reduces bureaucracy, encourages entrepreneurial growth, increases transparency and accountability, and reduces the burden of higher education on the public by transferring taxpayer risks to private risks (Klees, 2008, 2020; Shore, 2010). Proponents of academic capitalism defend it as a means of aligning educational outcomes with market demands, recruiting top faculty, and enhancing institutional prestige (Baltodano, 2012; Gonzales et al., 2014). However, while neoliberal reformers seek to liberate higher education from

the fetters of academic bureaucracy, critics caution that neoliberal reforms can create a self-fulfilling cycle where market ideology justifies administrative actions, solidifying neoliberalism within institutions and rewarding performative behaviors over substantive outcomes (Slaughter & Leslie, 2001, p. 156). Though neoliberal policies may offer financial advantages to the university, they inevitably recreate the same “rent-seeking behaviors” that neoliberalism sought to dismantle by reifying market ideology and rewarding performativity over product (Olssen, 2016, p. 133).

One of the most compelling arguments against neoliberalism is the incongruity of neoliberal policy with the goals of social justice. Harvey (2007) argued that social justice requires solidarity and prioritizing social equality over individual wealth accumulation. Neoliberalism, with its emphasis on individual gain and reduced social safety nets, exacerbates economic inequality to consolidate wealth and power among the social elite (Seale, 2013, p. 58). Although neoliberals may be "well-intentioned" in believing that neoliberal policy will "make the world a better place, not just for the wealthy," they often perpetuate poverty, inequality, and marginalization, reinforcing existing power imbalances and hindering efforts to achieve genuine social justice (Klees, 2008, p. 339).

Neoliberalism in the Academic Library

Neoliberalism weaves itself into the fabric of everyday life. Nicholson (2015) argued that the pervasiveness of neoliberalism effectively renders it invisible; no longer confined to a single aspect of reality, neoliberalism has *become* the social reality. Over the past decades, neoliberalism has become "institutionalized" within academic librarianship and now serves as the defining characteristic of the profession (Seale, 2013). Neoliberal libraries are guided by the market and exhibit certain behaviors, including a need to constantly justify the existence and purpose of the library to internal and external stakeholders; increased attention on improving efficiency;

elimination of less efficient aspects of library work that rely on interpersonal relations or communication; the need to substantiate all aspects of library service as existing in service of industry need for skilled and competitive workers; and management strategies that improve value, performance, and return on investment (Beilin, 2016). These qualities are pervasive across academic libraries of all sizes and types, and to this end, all academic libraries are, to a greater or lesser extent, neoliberal libraries (Beilin, 2016).

Transformational Change

Over the past decades, libraries have existed under a constant "self-declared state of crisis" due to shifts in the purpose and mission of a library (Buschman, 2005, p. 2). Nicholson (2015) argued that the discourse is grounded in an “uncritical” adoption of neoliberal philosophy that manufactures artificial crises to justify the "solution" of neoliberal reform (p. 332). In response, libraries are presented with the choice to embrace a future built on transformational change or accept obsolescence as they cleave to past practices (Beilin, 2016). The literature often links "transformation" with the imperative to innovate, modernize, and revolutionize existing library spaces and practices. These terms are frequently used interchangeably, implying that achieving transformation relies on the library's capacity to consistently challenge current practices in pursuit of more creative and efficient approaches. Consequently, academic libraries constantly adapt their services, policies, and practices to better conform to neoliberal principles of efficiency, corporatization, and competition, which are perceived as drivers of innovation and transformation (Nicholson, 2015, p. 331).

The entrenchment of neoliberalism in academic librarianship tracks with broader trends in higher education, including a rhetorical transformation from library users to "customers"; adoption of corporate principles and organizational strategies; a growing preoccupation with assessment

and accountability; and the reorienting of library services to support innovation and entrepreneurship (Buschman, 2005; Nicholson, 2015). In recent decades, academic libraries have standardized numerous neoliberal practices, such as Patron-Driven Acquisition (a system that relies on user need to guide the purchase of materials), massification of education through online learning, and integration of commercial spaces such as coffee shops and 24-hour access to library spaces (Nicholson, 2015). Quinn (2000) termed this the “McDonaldization” of libraries, or the influx of efficiency-driven approaches to librarianship that prioritize calculability, control, and predictability over the core values and mission of libraries, such as promoting access to information, fostering intellectual freedom, and serving diverse user needs. This ideological shift has fundamentally altered the perception of libraries, transitioning from a focus on their inherent value as public goods to a transactional model based on the exchange value of resources and services (Nicholson, 2015, p. 331).

Library as Place

Elmborg (2011) argued the neoliberal tendency to view the academic library as a business moves beyond a reconceptualization of services to a redefining of the library’s role *as place*. Libraries increasingly seek to commercialize physical spaces, incorporating elements like coffee shops, computer labs, cozy reading areas, makerspaces, and popular fiction collections to create a user experience that feels "familiar" and market-oriented (p. 339). This trend leads libraries to “dominate” open spaces with prescriptive functions, reflecting an "authoritarian worldview" regarding public space usage (p. 347). Consequently, the opportunities for individuals to find personal significance in library spaces diminish, shifting the library from an absolute to an abstract place, neither wholly commercial nor fully public. By emulating commercial venues such as coffee shops, libraries risk losing their unique cultural identity and find themselves in competition with

profit-based businesses for customers. This blend of commercialism and competition steers the library away from its traditional role as a collective public good toward a space influenced by neoliberal capitalism. Considering the importance of the academic library as a "third place," the growing neoliberal dominance of library spaces could fundamentally alter the library's relationship with the academic community (Montgomery & Miller, 2011).

Information Technology

Over the last decade, the emphasis in higher education on accountability and financial constraints has led academic libraries to shift away from traditional services, such as reference, to technology and skills development, which are seen as more cost-effective and efficient (Buschman, 2020; Nicholson, 2015). Academic libraries are increasingly focused on supporting the research lifecycle through research data management tools, workshops on non-traditional bibliometrics, assisting with alternative funding sources such as research grants, and offering personalized services like copyright and patent law support. The reorientation expands libraries' offerings and caters to a clientele of researchers who would otherwise be unlikely to utilize library services.

The incursion of technology in the academic library has created an organizational segregation between digital and non-digital library work, in which technical roles are lauded as important and valuable and traditional functions of a library, such as teaching, tend to be relegated as distractions from the more important work (Joseph, 2020). Mirza and Seale (2017) argued that this divide reinforces the value of positions held predominantly by White men, such as administrators and information technologists, while undervaluing roles that involve service, care, maintenance, and manual labor, often performed by lower-paid White women and Persons of Color (p. 183). Consequently, resources, services, knowledge, and skills associated with White

masculinity are seen as more valuable, leading to disparities in pay, opportunities, and prestige across different library positions.

Library Assessment

Neoliberalism fundamentally challenges the notion of higher education as a public good, advocating instead for accountability and monitoring to ensure institutions are beholden to individual interests (Olssen, 2016). Over the past few decades, technological advancements have enabled institutions to collect increasingly granular information about everything from student academic success to faculty research impact and productivity. While this preoccupation with assessment is present across higher education, it is particularly evident in the academic library, which not only has the means to collect large amounts of data on library usage and services but also suffers from a chronic need to prove the value of its services and resources to the campus (Beilin, 2016; Drabinski, 2018; Quinn, 2000; Seale, 2013; Seale & Mirza, 2019). Professional organizations, such as the ALA, the ARL, and the ACRL, have encouraged the widespread collection and reporting of data to demonstrate the "impact" of libraries (Seale, 2013). This "fetishization with metrics" (Joseph, 2020, p. 10) has generated tension between assessment for improvement, which is a necessary and routine part of practice, and evaluation for accountability and transparency, which assumes mismanagement of fiscal or human resources on behalf of the library and positions assessment as a means to ensure responsible stewardship of fiscal resources (Matthews, 2015).

The pressure that academic libraries feel to demonstrate their value to the institution is justified by their lack of revenue generation, particularly compared to academic colleges. While colleges give back to the institution through tuition and fees, entrepreneurial activities, and research funding, libraries lack these direct streams of income (Matthews, 2015). Additionally,

libraries face increasing annual costs due to the shift from owning to licensing materials, making it more expensive to maintain the same level of resources and services (ACRL Research and Planning Committee, 2021). The "value" of the library to the institution is also less discrete than other institutional services, such as dining services or residential services. Moreover, library resources are typically utilized in concert with other campus services that contribute to student well-being and academic success, such as tutoring, student employment, academic advising, or counseling or health services, which can make it difficult to isolate and evaluate the impact of libraries on student success. Unlike colleges, which can point to direct measures of success such as time to degree, GPA, retention, or job placement, libraries often rely on relational metrics that are harder to isolate and control (Oakleaf, 2018b).

Value of Academic Libraries Report. In response to these challenges, in 2010, the ACRL produced the *Value of Academic Libraries* (VAL) report, which focused on documenting, promoting, articulating, and extending assessment measures to demonstrate the value of the academic library to the institution (Oakleaf et al., 2010). The VAL outlines ten areas in which an academic library contributes to the institutional mission: student enrollment, student retention and graduation, student success, student achievement, student learning, student experience, faculty research productivity, faculty grants, faculty teaching, and institutional reputation (p. 17). Within the VAL, *library value* is framed as a multi-faceted unit of measure that includes use (popularity of a specific product or service), return on investment (value for the money), commodity production (quantity multiplied by price), impact (how the library equips users to create value for the institution), and alternative comparison (perceptions of value as compared to competing products) (pp. 20-22). The VAL encourages librarians to focus assessment on establishing *financial value*, or the return on investment (ROI), and *impact value*, essentially the social,

emotional, intellectual, academic, or other benefit from the library service rendered (pp. 22-24). While assessing library value can improve services, resources, and practices, the primary aim is to define and communicate the value of the library to external stakeholders such as students, faculty, donors, administrators, and external organizations (pp. 23-26). To meet these goals, the VAL provides a comprehensive array of assessment practices such as "linking" the use of libraries to student retention and graduation rates, measuring the impact of the library on student job success, recording library contributions to institutional prestige, and tracking library contributions to faculty research productivity.

Many scholars have identified the VAL report as a tipping point toward neoliberalism in the academic library (Beilin, 2016; Fisher, 2018; Nicholson, 2015; Nicholson et al., 2019; Seale, 2013; Seale & Mirza, 2020). Pulling on a common neoliberal educational reform refrain, Oakleaf et al. (2010) argued that higher education institutions are “producers of the commodity of student learning” and that academic libraries can no longer rely on the “belief of their own importance” (p. 11). Instead, the VAL argues that libraries must rigorously collect and present data to demonstrate their value, with more quantifiable and specific data deemed more valuable to the library and the institution. The VAL report emphasizes assessment not as a tool for inquiry or reflective practice but as a means to showcase library value within the neoliberal academic environment (Seale, 2013). While Oakleaf et al. (2010) acknowledged potential criticisms of this approach, they dismissed these critiques as “impractical” given the “realities [that libraries] face today in our institutions” (p. 7). To engage with the practices advocated in the VAL report, one must first embrace positivism, empiricism, objectivity, and rationality, all of which align with neoliberal ideology and practice (Seale & Mirza, 2020).

The VAL report profoundly impacted academic librarianship, coinciding with a point in

history when assessment and accountability were frequent topics of conversation across all levels of education. At primary and secondary levels, the public education system was contending with the sustained impacts of NCLB and standardized testing, while higher education grappled with reduced funding, escalating student debt, and increased calls for accountability post-Spellings Commission (Aud et al., 2010). At the same time, rapid increases in technology were facilitating new forms of educational assessment that had previously been unattainable. Against this backdrop of intensified scrutiny and increased demand for accountability, the VAL report offered a rigorously researched and actionable guide for library practitioners to respond directly to these challenges. Its reception within the professional community was overwhelmingly positive, laying the groundwork for the "library value" discourse that continues to shape contemporary librarianship (Seale & Mirza, 2020, p. 5).

I argue that the success of the VAL can be attributed not only to the timing of the report but also its willingness to feed on the longstanding anxiety in academic librarianship about institutional inequity and faculty status. Although more than half of all academic librarians hold faculty appointments, the MLIS, which is the standard qualification, does not typically prepare librarians to conduct empirical research. Only half of MLIS programs mandate a single research methods course (Fleming-May & Douglass, 2014). The lack of preparation is evidenced in the field, with insufficient publication records being the most frequent reason librarians are denied tenure (Hoggan, 2003). The VAL report addressed this inadequacy directly, “some librarians have the resources to conduct rigorous research… [but] librarians who operate without the benefit of these resources can be stymied by a perceived inability to design projects of sufficient rigor” (p. 31). The report distinguished between "research," which necessitates a deep understanding of research theories and methodologies, and "library assessment," which was portrayed as a more

practical, localized, and less demanding approach to research. Library assessment presents an attractive solution for librarian faculty members who face expectations for research and publication but lack the necessary background or training to run their own research programs. By adhering to the practices outlined in the VAL report, librarians can validate their research efforts and communicate their findings in a language that resonates within academic circles without additional education or formal research training. In essence, the VAL report provided a means for librarians to earn recognition within the academy at the small cost of embracing neoliberal ideology and practices.

Library Values and Neoliberalism

It is difficult to reconcile the pervasiveness of neoliberalism in the academic library with the ethics of the profession. Professional associations, such as the ALA, emphasize core values of democracy, service, social responsibility, and intellectual freedom, framing these as public goods independent of market forces (Seale, 2013, p. 57). Conversely, neoliberalism devalues collective goods and emphasizes individual choice and market-driven solutions over public interests. One of the critical points of tension is how neoliberalism appropriates concepts such as choice and freedom, often blurring the lines between economic and political ideologies. In this framework, consumer choice is equated with democratic choice, and freedom in the market is equated with democracy. This leads to a redefinition of democracy as an economic concept rather than a political one, where individual purchasing power is reinterpreted as a form of democratic expression (Apple, 2000). In academic libraries, neoliberalism operates through semantic shifts and ideological maneuvers, exploiting the nuances between rights and choices, freedom and democracy, and access and opportunity. By inserting ambiguity and equivocation, neoliberalism is able to redefine longstanding principles such as open access, democracy, diversity, education,

intellectual freedom, and social responsibility to align with market-oriented ideologies and create footholds for sociopolitical expansion.

Learning Analytics

Learning analytics (LA) is the measurement and analysis of data collected about and from learners with the intent of using data to optimize academic performance and success (Clow, 2013; Society for Learning Analytics Research, 2021). It operates within the broader field of data analytics and aims to utilize the wealth of data available about students to optimize their educational experiences. This data encompasses a range of digital information, such as online learning management systems (LMS) like Blackboard and Canvas, biomedical information from smart devices and fitness trackers, social media profiles, and online research tools, to physical records, including swipe-access records from locations on campus, cell phone pings, or wireless internet logins (Pelletier et al., 2021). Although LA is present in all levels of education, it has gained power in higher education as institutions strive to identify data-driven pathways to reduce attrition, increase engagement, and improve academic success (Pelletier et al., 2021).

LA emerged from the academic analytics movement of the mid-2000s, which emphasized the use of large datasets, advanced statistical techniques, and predictive modeling to generate "actionable intelligence" for the institution (Campbell et al., 2007; Jones et al., 2020). Academic analytics developed in response to increased external pressure on higher education institutions for accountability and transparency and was intended to enable institutions to make data-driven decisions and effectively steward their financial resources (Campbell et al., 2007). At the time, advocates for academic analytics focused on opportunities to enhance efficiency and optimize decision-making processes. For instance, one application created a data warehouse containing information about alums and donors, with predictive models identifying potential donors likely to

contribute (Campbell et al., 2007, p. 43).

LA represents a specific focus within academic analytics, aimed specifically at leveraging data to enhance and optimize student learning outcomes. This area of research and practice is relatively new, with implementation examples varying widely across institutions. An early illustration of LA in action is the Course Signals project at Purdue University, which was early warning system in which students' demographic characteristics, academic history, interactions with learning management systems (LMS), and course performance were analyzed to generate colored “signals” indicating their likelihood of success or failure in a particular course. While a green signal indicated a high likelihood of success, a yellow or red signal triggered automatic *interventions*, such as an email prompting a student to visit academic support services on campus or a text message reminder to log in to the LMS (Clow, 2013). Another example comes from the University of Michigan’s My Learning Analytics, or “MyLA system,” which provides students with a dashboard showing their engagement with course materials, resources, assignments, and grades (Pelletier et al., 2021, p. 20). MyLA aims to promote self-awareness and self-regulated learning among students by offering analytic insights into how students' activities compare to their peers and providing guidance on assignment prioritization based on their potential impact on grades (Google for Education, 2022).

Learning Analytics Classifications

There are four levels or classifications of LA. *Descriptive analytics* describes "what is happening" in a learning environment and can be used to analyze and understand trends from the past. For instance, analyzing semester course evaluations from students to assess a specific course curriculum (Oakleaf, 2016; Society for Learning Analytics Research, 2021, p. 472). *Diagnostic analytics* build on descriptive analytics to assess what happened in the learning space and why

those things happened. For example, contextualizing course satisfaction surveys with student GPA or attendance to understand how student performance may impact a student's perception of a course instructor or course (Slade et al., 2019). *Predictive analytics* evaluate student learning data to predict the likelihood of student success or failure in a given situation (Oakleaf, 2016). For instance, the Purdue University Course Signals Project used online course engagement, grades, and demographic information to predict a student's likelihood of succeeding in a course (Clow, 2013). Finally, *prescriptive analytics* extends the capabilities of predictive analytics to predict what outcomes might occur and consider what *should* happen to achieve a specific outcome (Slade et al., 2019).

A key component of LA is the aggregation or "de-siloing" of data stored in different systems and departments to create a meaningful picture of student learning in a unified data dashboard (Salo & Jones, 2018, p. 306). A single dashboard could display a student's enrollment information, academic engagement, participation in co-curricular activities, utilization of support services, such as counseling or advising, and daily habits, such as the number of weekly visits to the campus recreation center (Oakleaf, 2016). Although proponents of LA emphasize the potential benefits to students from these integrated systems, at present, this technology remains largely speculative. A recent review found that nearly 60% of research papers on LA in higher education focused on descriptive analytics, the least sophisticated and demanding category of LA, and very few examined predictive or prescriptive analytics (Viberg et al., 2018). Another found that most LA dashboards are developed as part of exploratory work and stop at the piloting and prototype stages without moving toward actual classroom use (Kaliisa et al., 2023). While more complex systems may be in development, most of the work happening around LA focuses on better understanding student behavior or performance in a particular course or academic program, rather

than examining broad and diverse components of the student experience (Viberg et al., 2018).

Critiques of Learning Analytics

While LA systems are still in their infancy, data about students is actively being collected and stored. In recent years, LA has evolved to incorporate diverse data sources, including tracking student geolocation via cell phone pings, wireless internet usage, or ID card swipes. Additionally, monitoring personal social media accounts, analyzing biomedical data from smart devices and fitness trackers, and gathering data from educational technologies such as Turnitin and TurningPoint have become common practices (Jones et al., 2020). The technical ease and low cost of storing this data, coupled with the normalization of digital sharing, have led to the rapid adoption of practices that collect increasingly intimate details about students, even while practical applications for the data are lacking (Pea & Piety, 2018; Wilson et al., 2017).

Despite extensive research on optimizing data collection models, scant attention has been paid to interventions, which is theoretically the primary goal of LA research and practice (Wong & Li, 2020). This is reinforced by Viberg et al. (2018), who found that only 9% of empirical studies on LA in higher education demonstrated that LA led to an improvement in teaching or learning, and only 18% mentioned ethics or privacy (Viberg et al., 2018). Another found that while 80% of institutions collect LA data, less than half use it to benefit students (Tyton Partners & Every Learner, 2020). These disparities underscore the inequalities in LA. While proponents of LA justify the invasive data collection strategies by the benefits that LA offers learners, the actual advantages of these invasive data practices are rarely realized by learners, who bear the brunt of the risk to their physical, intellectual, or psychological safety (Salo & Jones, 2018).

A complicating factor in LA implementation is the reliance on third-party companies. Because higher education institutions often lack the technical expertise to develop and manage LA

platforms, they frequently rely on external companies to collect identifiable and often highly personal student data. Unlike more established educational technologies, such as Learning Management Systems (LMS), these emerging third-party companies are not bound by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) standards, which protect student data (Jones et al., 2020; Parks, 2017). Student data that is willingly shared with a third party, even if that third party is accessed through the LMS or another official university channel, can be subject to a subpoena or warrant by a government agency, sold to researchers, or shared with other corporations or entities (Parks, 2017; Rubel & Jones, 2016). Students and faculty may be unaware of the varying risks and protections across data collection systems, potentially consenting without understanding the full implications.

LA often relies on student engagement as a proxy for learning, assuming that increased interaction with course materials correlates with higher levels of learning (Gourlay, 2017). This assumes that all students begin on an equal footing and that poor performance is due to a lack of dedication by the student rather than the numerous complicating factors that may be present in a student's lived experience (Wilson et al., 2017). LA disregards the nuanced and iterative nature of learning and assumes that the elements contributing to academic and personal success can be identified, isolated, recreated, and controlled across a student population (Hartman-Caverly, 2019). Moreover, LA tends to oversimplify the learning experience into measurable activities chosen for ease of isolation and measurement by LA systems rather than their actual impact on learning outcomes.

LA relies heavily on quantitative data, often coded as neutral, which can obscure how LA exacerbates inequality in culturally constructed sites of oppression such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and disability (Nicholson et al., 2019). Oliphant and Brundin (2019) argued that LA

attempts to replicate an idealized version of academic success embodied by a cisgender, heteronormative, economically advantaged, and White college student. As a result, LA creates a "two-tiered system of intellectual segregation" that rewards students who more closely resemble the ideal student with less structured inquiry and subjects students who fall outside of this norm to increased surveillance, monitoring, and control (Nicholson et al., 2019, p. 66). As a result, LA can exacerbate existing forms of oppression and may enact disproportionate harm on students who hold marginalized identities.

Although the rapid increase in LA data collection has sparked concerns over data access, usage, retention, and disclosure, LA remains largely unregulated as a field. In a recent report on LA, the International Council for Open and Distance Education (2019) identified ten core ethical issues that should be considered before an institution embraces an LA product or practice, including transparency, data ownership and control, data accessibility, data validity and reliability, institutional responsibility to act, communication, cultural values, inclusion, informed consent, and student agency. However, the responsibility to address these concerns falls on individual institutions, leading to a wide variation in the extent, application, and even existence of LA policies. Moreover, higher education institutions tend to have decentralized organizational structures, resulting in varying attitudes toward privacy, research ethics, and data collection across institutions and within them, as research ethics and standards may differ across disciplines or departments.

Learning Analytics as an Extension of Neoliberal Ideology

LA is deeply intertwined with neoliberal principles, including reinforcing market ideology, privatizing public spheres, adopting corporate models and culture, and emphasizing individual rationality. Neoliberalism promotes an ethos of meritocracy, attributing success to individual

choice and effort (Fisher, 2018). LA aligns with this by assuming academic performance results from individual decisions rather than systemic barriers and inequalities (Nicholson et al., 2019). LA also extends and expands neoliberal ideology by assuming that student success is interchangeable with academic success; academic success is defined through an individual's ability to demonstrate success within a standardized educational marketplace; and success is a product of the metrics identified within the LA technology, rather than a reaction to the entirety of a student's complex lived experience (Viberg et al., 2018).

LA seeks to enhance an institution's competitive advantage in a global higher education market. To do so, LA relies on educational technology, which serves as an "agent of academic capitalism" that translates data about learners into actionable and profitable information for the institution (Hartman-Caverly, 2019, p. 35). LA seeks to close achievement gaps by focusing on the actor rather than the system, placing the burden and responsibility of transformation on the students who are identified as being at risk (Hartman-Caverly, 2019). Paltrinieri (2017) described this as *proficiency racism* or the idea that a neoliberal skills-based marketplace is necessarily built to exclude participants who cannot succeed in the system using the criteria for success defined by the system. Similarly, Doty (2020) identified *surveillance capitalism* as a critical component of LA or the idea that the most valuable product a student can provide an institution is information about themselves. Both concepts can be condensed to the idea that LA strives to optimize higher education for efficiency and profitability in a global market, treating students as variables in this optimization process rather than collaborative partners in their learning journey.

Learning Analytics in the Academic Library

LA is a popular and contentious topic in library and information science (LIS) literature. In the last decade, the Institute of Museum and Library (IMLS), a federal agency that provides

library grants, museum grants, policy development, and research, has funded more than a dozen grants related to LA and academic libraries (IMLS, 2021). In addition, the ACRL has listed LA as a top trend in academic libraries in each of its bi-annual reports since 2016 (ACRL Research and Planning Committee, 2016, 2018, 2020, 2022). While professional organizations have shown interest in involving academic libraries in LA, practitioners have responded with varying levels of enthusiasm. There is ongoing debate among librarians regarding whether academic libraries should actively embrace LA to "create capacity" or resist it due to the conflicting ideologies related to user privacy and intellectual freedom (Salo & Jones, 2018, p. 305).

Oliphant and Brundin (2019) argued that the history of academic libraries is intertwined with the collection and analysis of data. Academic libraries routinely collect data such as gate counts, frequency and length of reference encounters, electronic resource usage, and number of library instruction sessions (Briney, 2019; Doty, 2020). This data, known as *library metrics*, has traditionally been bounded by two criteria: de-identification and data siloing (Oliphant & Brundin, 2019; Salo & Jones, 2018). For example, while a library may track the frequency and duration of accessing a specific electronic resource, it typically cannot link this information to individual users or IP addresses (Jones, 2019a). Although library staff and administrators may use such data to make decisions impacting the campus community (e.g., discontinuing an electronic resource due to reduced usage), access to the data would be restricted even within the library. These practices align with the ALA, which has repeatedly emphasized the responsibility to safeguard users' intellectual freedom through strict confidentiality and privacy standards.

Over the past three decades, the “ethical bright lines” around library data management and privacy in libraries have been complicated by the increasing reliance on third-party systems to manage library resources and services, such as interlibrary loan, reference interactions, and website

usage (Jones, 2019b, p. 415). Because libraries are dependent on these systems to maintain day-to-day operations, they have little control over what data is collected or how that data is stored (Jones et al., 2020). These issues are exacerbated by licensing agreements between libraries and vendors, which may fluctuate over months or years (Salo & Jones, 2018). Jones et al. (2020) highlighted the distinction between "tracking that students checked out books, versus the number of books checked out, versus the type of books checked out" (p. 579). Although a library may feel more comfortable with one, all are enabled through the system. Typically, their choices boil down to either refraining from purchasing from a specific vendor or abstaining from using or analyzing the data collected by that vendor. It is rare for libraries to have the option to opt out of vendor-level data collection completely.

Proponents of LA argue that libraries will benefit by correlating the use of library resources with successful outcomes, such as a student achieving a higher GPA after attending a certain threshold of library instruction sessions (Oakleaf et al., 2017). This type of correlational data has proven difficult for libraries to obtain due to the challenges in isolating library use as a specific variable (Robertshaw & Asher, 2019). LA offers the ability to connect existing academic library metrics to specific learning outcomes in three ways: (a) sharing library-level data with the institution; (b) correlating library-level information with institutional data, such as student demographics; (c) integrating library-level data within a broader LA system (Briney, 2019). However, participation in these methods often requires libraries to compromise data privacy standards by collecting identifiable information that is then shared with a broader LA platform (Oliphant & Brundin, 2019).

Information Literacy Instruction

Information literacy is the ability to access, evaluate, use, and create information. It

encompasses how to find information, understanding how information is produced and disseminated, assessing its credibility and reliability, and using it responsibly and ethically (ACRL, 2016). Academic libraries often provide information literacy instruction through workshops, known as "one-shot sessions," in which a librarian is invited into a course by a faculty member to teach students about the relevant resources, knowledge, and skills needed to complete a particular research assignment (Hicks & Lloyd, 2021; Pagowsky, 2022). Because library resources and services are often used in concert with other campus services, such as advising and tutoring, one-shot sessions are one of the few direct connections an academic library can make between the library and student learning. As a result, information literacy instruction is the most targeted site of LA in the academic library (Jones et al., 2020). In a meta-analysis of research examining the effects of library use on academic success, Robertshaw and Asher (2019) found that three-quarters of studies that were surveyed centered on establishing a positive correlation between information literacy instruction and measures of academic success, such as GPA.

Some scholars have argued that the pressure to prove the value of information literacy instruction is self-imposed from within the profession. Pagowsky (2021) highlighted how the pressure that librarians feel to "do quantitatively more" has raised expectations for instruction librarians, leading to increased demand for library literacy instruction and a greater need to prove its value (p. 302). Similarly, Oliphant and Brundin (2019) discussed a negative feedback loop, where the assumption that library services, such as one-shot sessions, have a positive impact on academic success compels librarians to produce metrics that validate the decisions they have already made or actions they have already taken (p. 10). Whether this pressure originates internally or externally, information literacy instruction will remain an inflection point in discussions about integrating library metrics with LA.

Learning Analytics, Neoliberalism, and Library Values

Ethical critiques around library involvement in LA typically center on six broad areas. First, there is the need for informed consent from students, staff, and faculty to share their data with LA systems (Briney, 2019; Doty, 2020). Second, concerns over potential violations in intellectual freedom, encompassing not only a person's ability to freely access information but also their ability to create and control new information, including the data collected about them (Salo & Jones, 2018). Third, the issue of user profiling in LA and the degree to which it intrudes on privacy, confidentiality, and intellectual freedom (Oliphant & Brundin, 2019). Fourth, the ethical implications that emerge from tracking a person's physical, digital, or intellectual activities in the library and the potential for self-censorship when a patron is aware that their activities are being monitored (Robertshaw & Asher, 2019). Fifth, the lack of comprehensive data management policies or guidelines for guiding the development of LA systems and protecting LA data (Jones et al., 2020). Last, the normalization of LA systems and data sharing can lead individuals to believe that their performance in a learning space (either successful or unsuccessful) is solely a product of individual choice and effort rather than structural inequities, including racism, classism, sexism, or ableism (Nicholson et al., 2019). Each of these areas of concern conflict with core library values such as intellectual freedom, information access, and user privacy.

LA is further complicated by the association with neoliberal ideology and practice, which some librarians view as antithetical to the academic library's purpose, mission, and moral responsibilities. Specifically, LA is criticized for its association with Oakleaf, who has been a prominent and vocal advocate for library involvement in LA, and for its connections to the 2010 Value of Academic Libraries (VAL) report (Fisher, 2018; Jones et al., 2020; Nicholson et al., 2019; Oakleaf et al., 2017). Arguments for the integration of library metrics in LA highlight the

opportunity for academic libraries to "demonstrate their value" to the institution, "speak the language" of their deans, presidents, and provosts, and uncover correlational data between library use and student success, echoing the justifications for library assessment in the VAL (Fisher, 2018; Jones et al., 2020; Oakleaf et al., 2017). Proponents also point to the perceived "inevitability" of LA, the futility of resisting its expansion, and the necessity of academic libraries to prove their worth in a competitive economic marketplace, echoing arguments for the implementation of neoliberal practice in both academic libraries and higher education at large (Oakleaf, 2016; Pea & Piety, 2018). While there are nuanced arguments for library involvement in LA, such as the potential for librarians to contribute to privacy protection policies, the debate about LA in the profession has become polarized, with any engagement in LA research seen as passive support for neoliberal reforms in academic libraries (Briney, 2019; Jones, 2019b).

Research Gaps

This literature review establishes that neoliberalism has become a driving force in public higher education. Academic research libraries and librarians are influenced by the competing forces of neoliberal ideology and professional values, both of which are codified in policy documents produced by the ALA and other professional organizations (Buschman, 2006; Seale, 2016). The tension between these ideological constructs has produced a divide in academic librarianship between those who view neoliberalism as an opportunity to increase the efficiency, relevancy, and competitive advantage of the academic library in the higher education organization and critics who view neoliberalism as eroding the long-held values, traditions, and practices of the profession (Buschman, 2020). This conflict is encapsulated by the growing concern about integrating library metrics with LA (Nicholson et al., 2019; Oliphant & Brundin, 2019). While proponents argue that LA offers the opportunity to establish correlative value between library use

and academic success, critics point to ethical conflicts pertaining to how the data collection practices violate library values and standards of practice (Jones, 2019b).

Within this broader context, this literature review has uncovered several gaps in the research. First, the transition in higher education from shared power to corporate hierarchical organizational structure has created a new class of administrators (Giroux, 2002). While this is apparent throughout the organization, it is particularly relevant in large academic research libraries, which have broader organizational structures and more complex administrative hierarchies than academic colleges (Schonfeld, 2016). Although a broad range of management positions are available to librarians, little research has explored managers' experiences below the Dean or Associate Dean (Do & Nuth, 2020). Second, while numerous studies have examined the impact of gender identity on senior-level library leaders (e.g., Bladek, 2019; Howard et al., 2020; Le, 2021; Rutledge, 2020), comparatively few studies have scrutinized the impact of gender identity on middle managers in academic libraries, particularly outside the context of career ladders or professional development (e.g., Delong, 2013; Thomas et al., 2019). Third, while the research has demonstrated that faculty status has a significant impact on the identity and psychology of academic librarians (e.g., Christiansen et al., 2004; Coker et al., 2010; Galbraith et al., 2016), there is a lack of research on how faculty status may influence the experience of library leaders. Finally, research on middle management in academic libraries tends to be heavily reliant on survey methodology (e.g., Cawthorne, 2010; Hodge et al., 2021; Rooney, 2010; Rutledge, 2020) and auto-ethnographic approaches (e.g., Chang & Bright, 2012; Mosley, 2009; Sullivan, 1992), resulting in a gap in the literature in rigorous qualitative research that examines the shared experiences of women-identified middle manager faculty librarians. This study fills these gaps by exploring how nine women-identified middle manager academic librarians navigated their roles in

the organization to interpret and respond to manifestations of neoliberalism in their libraries and how their experiences were complicated and shaped by gender identity and faculty status.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This study explored how women-identified mid-level manager academic research librarians navigate their roles of power, privilege, and professional responsibility to interpret and respond to manifestations of neoliberal ideology in higher education, considering the complexities posed by their gender identity and faculty status. While there are numerous examples of neoliberal practice and policy in higher education, this study utilized *learning analytics*— the surveillance of the learning process by the educational system to enhance learning outcomes— as a proxy for neoliberal ideology (Hartman-Caverly, 2019). This study had three overarching goals. First, to define neoliberalism within the context of higher education and investigate intersections with both academic libraries and learning analytics. Second, to connect the ethical dilemmas within academic libraries concerning learning analytics to a broader discussion of prestige, scarcity, economic competition, and rationality. Third, to explore how the pressures of neoliberalism, faculty status, and gender identity influence the experiences of women-identified mid-level manager academic librarians. The extensive literature review in the previous chapter addressed the first two objectives. To meet the third, I conducted a qualitative collective case study, addressing the following research questions:

1. **Research Question 1:** How do women-identified academic librarian middle managers employed at U.S. public research institutions interpret and respond to the integration of library metrics with learning analytics?
    a. ***Research Question 1A:*** How do the professional values and experiences of participants shape their perspectives, interpretations, and responses to the integration of library metrics with learning analytics?
    b. ***Research Question 1B:*** How are the perspectives, interpretations, responses,

values, and experiences of participants influenced by their gender identity and relationship to faculty status?

Epistemological Approach

This study is *qualitative*, which is a research approach that employs an inductive investigation strategy, utilizes the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, and results in a final product that is richly descriptive (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative researchers do not strive for objectivity or generalizability; instead, they seek meaning and understanding through the deep exploration of social phenomena. As a qualitative researcher, I embrace subjectivity as a strength in the research process. My *epistemology*, or how I understand knowledge and truth (Mertens, 2020), is grounded in social constructivism, which is a belief that knowledge is constructed, not discovered, through human interactions and social processes. I believe that truth and power are socially situated, and that our systems of understanding are entrenched in White supremacist, capitalist, ableist, patriarchal, and hetero-normative values. As an emerging educational researcher, I affirm that learners construct knowledge through social interaction, collaboration, and engagement with their environment. As such, I believe that my inquiry as a researcher influences how participants examine their own experiences and that the process of mutual discovery between myself, as the "inquirer," and participants, as the "inquired-into," is both interactive and iterative (Mertens, 2020, p. 19).

I reject the concept of any one objective reality. Although society shares aspects of the same reality, I believe social realities are created through experience (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). While individual experience is contextual and personal, I believe each person's reality is real to them, neither a product of perception nor imagination (Mertens, 2020). Although I embrace the constructed nature of social realities, I resist the notion that constructivism cannot also be

transformative (Mertens, 2020). Further, I regard the process of comprehending and valuing an individual's experience as inherently emancipatory, as it acknowledges, elevates, and validates an individual's social reality. I believe researchers can both seek to understand how overlapping and intersecting social identities situate an individual within a web of oppression while also offering a critique of the interdependent systems of social, economic, and political power that result in this oppression (Crenshaw et al., 2013).

I claim my identity as a feminist and acknowledge how the rich history of feminist epistemic theory and practice has influenced my epistemological stance (Alcoff & Potter, 2013). I value *feminist standpoint epistemology*, which holds that while all knowledge is socially situated, exploring the experiences of those on the "margins" offers insight that is inaccessible to researchers who focus on a dominant social class (Harding, 1986). While my research focuses on the experiences of women-identified professionals in a feminized profession, academic librarians occupy a marginalized position in the organizational hierarchy of academia (Church, 2003; Silva et al., 2017). Despite strides in gender representation in upper library administrative roles, such as dean and university librarian, gender disparities in academic librarianship persist. Women-identified academic librarians are paid less than men in similar positions, are more likely to experience sexism and gender discrimination, and are less likely to receive opportunities for training or professional development around career advancement (Delong, 2013; Eva et al., 2021; Howard et al., 2020; Rutledge, 2020).

My inquiry into the experiences of women practitioners is influenced by the work of Belenky et al. (1986) around *women's ways of knowing*, or how women view themselves and their relationship to knowledge and truth. I also value Smith's (1990) critique of the "ethic of objectivity," which aims to "separate knowers from what they know" or put researchers at an

emotional distance from their area of inquiry to reduce bias and increase objectivity (p. 16). Through this research, I aim to challenge "malestream" epistemology, or knowledge constructed by, about, and at the behest of men, which constitutes the bulk of the research canon (Harding, 1986). Epistemic injustice persists even in library and information science (LIS), in which the testimonies of marginalized voices are minimized, the knowledge, experience, and practice of librarianship are devalued within the discipline, and men continue to be over-represented and over-cited in the research compared to the professional population (Ackner et al., 2023; Håkanson, 2005; Patin et al., 2020). As a woman-identified middle manager academic librarian, I acknowledge that my personal experiences deeply informed this study. Rather than serving as a limitation, I believe that my identities brought a valuable perspective to the research process and have served to enrich my understanding and interpretation of the data.

Research Method

This study employs the research methodology of case study. In the literature, there is debate about whether case study research is itself a methodology or, as Stake (2005) described, a “choice of what is to be studied” (p. 446). Thomas et al. (2019) argued that a case study is not defined by the research methods but by the “edges” placed around a case, which direct the purpose, extent, and limitations of a study (p. 21). In contrast, Yin (2009) rejected the relegation of case research to a “subset or variant of research designs used for other methods” and argued that case study is a unique method defined by its boundaries and its connections between cases (p. 25). For my research, I utilized case study as a methodology and relied on the definition supplied by Creswell and Poth (2018) as a, “qualitative approach in which the investigators explore a real-life contemporary bounded system or multiple bounded systems over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information, and reports a case description and case

themes" (p. 97). In developing my research design, I drew heavily from Merriam (2009) and Stake (1995, 2005, 2006), but also incorporated supplementary works from Becker and Ragin (1992); Creswell and Poth (2018); Jones et al. (2014); Mertens (2020); Patton (2002); Thomas et al. (2019); and Yin (2009).

Collective Case Study

A case study is an in-depth description and analysis of a "bounded system" (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). Case study research is somewhat elastic, as the "system" can vary from a single case focusing on an individual, community, or event to multiple cases linked together for analysis and comparison (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Case study research necessitates collecting various types of data to construct a rich and detailed case report (Patton, 2002). This study employs a multiple or *collective case study* methodology, a subset of case study research that connects individual cases within a bounded system, allowing for multiple perspectives on a particular issue or phenomenon (Stake, 1995).

In a collective case study, each case is viewed as a unique expression of the phenomenon while also contributing to the broader understanding of the system as a whole, which is identified as a *quintain* (Patton, 2002; Stake, 2006). Unlike single-case research, which delves deeply into a single unique circumstance, collective case study employs cross-case analysis to explore similarities and differences across cases, providing both breadth and depth to the research findings (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). This approach allows researchers to examine the phenomenon from multiple perspectives, enhancing their ability to capture both the general and particular of an issue under study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 2005). Rather than selecting cases with the aim of replicating a particular experience, collective case studies value diverse perspectives and unique

experiences, which strengthens the research by bringing understanding and meaning to the collective experience (Stake, 2006).

Bounded System

Central to any case study is the concept of a *bounded system*, which provides structure and parameters for the study. The boundedness is what distinguishes a case study from other types of qualitative research; each case is specific to a particular place, time, population, and phenomenon under study. Case studies are non-replicable because the circumstances shaping the bounded system are ephemeral and unique. Consequently, case study researchers must clearly delineate theoretical, spatial, and temporal boundaries, defining aspects such as the population under study, geographic location, duration, and other relevant limitations such as social or political ideologies, identities, or belief systems (Mertens, 2020, p. 246). These "edges," or boundaries, are essential to the study (Stake, 2006).

In a collective case study, the bounded system should exhibit enough similarity between cases to allow for comparison yet enough distinction to render each case unique (Becker & Ragin, 1992). Each case serves as a *unit of analysis,* which is the specific entity or phenomenon that is the primary focus of investigation and analysis (Patton, 2002). A unit of analysis is the "smallest piece of information that can stand by itself" or the data that can be interpretable in the absence of any additional information beyond the basic context of the research (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 345). Within the collective case study, each case should receive equal treatment - with the same depth, detail, and attention - and it should be evident to the reader how the boundaries of the case "operationally and conceptually" shape the inquiry (Stake, 1995, p. 41). Because collective cases function independently and collectively, the data analysis for a collective case study includes

holistic analysis, examining themes across cases, and *embedded analysis*, or the exploration of the specific and singular circumstances of the individual case (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 100).

Research Design

Within this study, the phenomenon, or essence of the experience being investigated, is the interpretation and responses of participants to the integration of library metrics with learning analytics (Merriam, 2009). A second consideration is how gender and faculty status shaped participants' professional values, experience, and interpretation and response to learning analytics. Both areas of inquiry are explored at the individual case level and examined across the cases as a phenomenon within the quintain. Although I did not design this study with the aim of generalizability, my hope is that this research sheds light on a particular shared experience that emerges at the nexus of gender identity, faculty status, and professional ethicality among teaching-focused middle managers in academic research libraries. To meet these goals, this study included specific boundaries for case sites and individual cases.

Case Sites

Each case site was required to fit within the following boundaries. First, the site must have been situated at a public academic research library that held current membership in the Association of Research Libraries (ARL). Second, that library must have supported a higher education institution with a large undergraduate population, which I defined as at least 10,000 undergraduate students. Third, the library must have had a dedicated teaching and learning unit (Hammons, 2023). Finally, the institution must have offered nominal faculty status to librarians, which I defined as the "designation of librarians as faculty rather than administrators or staff" (Walters, 2016, p. 162) or advancement through a formalized rank and promotion system, such as Librarian I to Librarian IV. Although I sought case sites that offered both rank and nominal faculty status to

librarians, in recognition of the fact that faculty status for librarians is both nuanced and inconsistent (Fleming-May & Douglass, 2014; Hoggan, 2003; Walters, 2016), the boundaries only specified that the case site must meet one of the two faculty criteria (see Table 1 in Appendix D).

All criteria were selected to increase favorable research conditions. Large public academic research libraries tend to have higher rates of faculty status for librarians and are more likely to have organizational hierarchies that include middle management (Schonfeld, 2016; Walters, 2016). Learning analytics tend to focus on undergraduate students, and institutions with higher undergraduate populations are more likely to be exploring or implementing learning analytics tools (Avella et al., 2016). Finally, academic public research libraries that serve large undergraduate populations are more likely to have a dedicated teaching and learning unit (Hammons, 2023), which is the organizational unit most likely to be engaged in conversations in and around learning analytics (Jones et al., 2020).

Individual Cases

The unit of analysis, or individual cases, were women-identifying mid-level academic library managers employed at public research universities. To meet the criteria for this study, each participant was required to fit within the following boundaries. First, the participant must have self-identified as a woman, which included cisgender women as well as any non-binary, transgender, or gender nonconforming person who identified themselves as a woman. Second, the participant must have been employed at an academic library that met the case site criteria for this study. Third, the participant must have held nominal faculty status and/or have advanced through a formalized rank and promotion system. Fourth, the participant must have held a leadership position in the library's teaching and learning unit. Fifth, the participant must have provided formal supervision to at least one library staff or faculty member, which I defined as managing the day-

to-day expectations and workload of any library staff, including student workers or graduate assistants. Finally, the participant must have reported to an intermediate manager who sat organizationally at least one level below the dean or university library (e.g., associate dean or associate university librarian) (see Table 1 in Appendix D).

Secondary Criteria

In addition to the formal eligibility criteria for sites and cases, this study also considered secondary criteria (see Table 1 in Appendix D). Although these criteria did not determine eligibility, they informed the recruitment and selection of participants. First, I sought to have as many geographic divisions represented in the quintain as possible. This determination was based on the U.S. state in which the participant's employing institution was located and followed the divisional designations as indicated by the Census Bureau's Regions and Divisions of the United States (see Table 3 in Appendix D). Second, I prioritized participants who held racially minoritized identities, which I defined as any participant who did not identify as White, which is the predominant racial identity of most (85%) academic librarians employed at ARL libraries (Kendrick & Hulbert, 2023). Third, I sought to include participants who represented a wide range of years of professional experience, including early--, mid-, and late-career librarians. Fourth, I aimed for variations among participants' self-described institutional, library, and individual engagement with learning analytics. Finally, I prioritized any unique organizational or individual constraints, such as faculty unionization or an uncommon educational pathway.

Recruitment and Data Collection

To develop a research sample, I used purposeful sampling or *criterion-based selection*, which begins by developing a list of attributes and locating participants who match the criteria for inclusion (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). The attributes of this study corresponded directly with the

boundaries for case site participants and secondary criteria (see Table 1 in Appendix D). The recruitment process began with compiling a list of all potential case sites, encompassing 69 ARL member libraries (excluding the University of Maryland) affiliated with public research universities supporting over 10,000 undergraduate students (see Table 2 in Appendix D). Utilizing information from library websites, I identified the head of the teaching and learning unit at 58 out of 69 potential case sites. For the remaining sites (n=11), either the presence of a teaching and learning unit or its leader could not be determined. Instead, I contacted the associate dean of public services (or equivalent) at the institution and requested they forward the recruitment email to the appropriate librarian if such a position existed in their library (see Table 2 in Appendix D). Three of these individuals responded to my request, bringing the total number of eligible case sites to 61.

Eligibility Screening Survey

To determine which of the individuals at the case sites met the criteria for inclusion, I employed an eligibility screening survey, which served as a data collection tool and a recruitment instrument (see Appendix E). The eligibility survey was created and distributed in Qualtrics, a web-based survey system. Using the functionality available in Qualtrics, I developed a distribution email list that included the names, institutions, and institutional email addresses of the 58 individuals who had been directly identified as possible participants. I also created an open-survey link, which was included in the recruitment email sent to the associate dean at the 11 case sites where I could not determine a possible participant (see “Recruitment Email for Assistant/Associate Dean” in Appendix F). In the context of this study, a "responder" refers to someone who completed the eligibility survey, while a "participant" denotes an eligible responder who participated fully in the research process.

The initial recruitment emails were sent to potential participants on March 13, 2023, which included 11 emails sent directly to the associate deans, and 58 emails that were distributed to individuals via Qualtrics. Both sets of emails contained a concise study description and a link to participate in the eligibility screening survey (see “Recruitment Email for Head of Teaching Unit” and “Recruitment Email for Assistant/Associate Dean” in Appendix F). The Qualtrics distribution email also included a link for any recipient to opt out of consideration and delete their contact information for future distributions, which three recipients utilized. Additionally, I received direct emails from three recipients expressing interest in the study but self-identifying as ineligible, prompting their removal from further consideration. Reminder emails were sent to incomplete respondents through Qualtrics on March 20 and March 23, 2023 (see “Reminder Email to Incomplete Respondents” and “Second Email Reminder to Incomplete Respondents” in Appendix F). No reminders were sent to the associate deans (n=11) who were contacted directly.

The eligibility screening survey remained open for two weeks, from March 13 to March 25, 2023. Out of the 61 potential responders, 46% (n=28) initiated the survey, and 40% (n=24) completed it. The first question in the survey outlined the goals of the research study and invited responders to express their interest in participation. Any respondent indicating disinterest was promptly directed to the end of the survey and excluded from further consideration (n=1). The second question asked responders to agree or disagree with a series of statements indicating their eligibility, such as "I am an academic librarian.” Responders indicating "no" to any eligibility requirements were routed to the end of the survey and removed from further consideration (n=2). For respondents answering "other/not sure" to eligibility questions, I allowed completion of the survey and then followed up via email to clarify their circumstances (n=3). For instance, one responder indicated that she reported directly to a dean (which would have disqualified her for the

study), but the reporting line was temporary and would be rerouted to an associate dean as soon as the position was filled. After further discussion, all of the respondents (n=3) who marked as "other/not sure" were deemed eligible for the study and included as potential participants.

Responders who met eligibility criteria (n=18) and those who were uncertain about their eligibility (n=3) were prompted to provide basic demographic information, such as their number of years of professional experience and faculty rank. They were then asked to categorize their personal, institutional, and library involvement in learning analytics on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “actively participating” to “resistant,” with a sixth option for “other / not sure how to answer this question” (see Appendix E). During post-survey analysis, I also added a data point indicating the responder’s geographic division, which was determined by the state in which their institution was located. In total, 21 responders met the eligibility criteria, comprising approximately 34% of the potential sample.

Research Sample

Since the eligibility survey served to determine responders' eligibility, participants did not receive a Consent to Participate form (see Appendix G) until they were formally invited to join the study (see "Email Invitation to Participants" in Appendix I). Approval for this research design was granted by the UMD Institutional Review Board (IRB) with the condition that data collected from ineligible or non-participating responders would be deleted and not reported in aggregate (see Appendix G). Adhering to this protocol, it can be noted that the 21 eligible responders were predominantly White-identified librarians with 16 or more years of professional experience who were situated at institutions in the South Atlantic division of the United States.

When selecting participants, I prioritized responders who represented unique attributes such as geographic location, ethnic or racial identities, professional experiences or pathways, or

levels of engagement with learning analytics. I also adhered to the criteria for selecting cases outlined by Stake (2006) by ensuring the relevance of each participant to the quintain, diversity across contexts, and opportunities to deepen understanding of the phenomenon (p. 23). Due to the complexities of case research, Stake (2006) recommended a collective case study conducted by an individual researcher include between four and ten cases, which offers sufficient "interactivity" to produce compelling findings but avoids providing "more uniqueness of interactivity than the research[er] and readers can come to understand" (p. 22). From the pool of eligible responders (n=21), nine responders were invited to participate, forming the quintain. During the research process, one participant withdrew and was replaced by a responder from the same geographic division. These participants represented the maximum variation in professional experience, geographic divisions, and engagement with and attitudes toward learning analytics (refer to Tables 4 & 5 in Appendix D). Collectively, I believe the quintain achieved *saturation*, indicating that sufficient evidence had been obtained and further data collection would yield marginal new insights in comparison to the effort expended (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

Participant Profile

All nine participants were women-identified librarians serving as mid-level managers in public academic research libraries, who were responsible for direct supervision of at least one full-time staff or faculty member. Within their organizations, each participant reported to a senior-level manager hierarchically positioned at least one level below the Dean, University Librarian, or analogous role (e.g., Associate Dean or Associate University Librarian). Four participants were early-to-mid career (5 to 10 years), five were mid-career (10 to 30 years), and one was late career (more than 30 years). The majority (n=7) of participants identified as White, while two held racially minoritized identities. Five were employed at Predominantly White Institutions (PWI),

and four at Minority Serving Institutions (MSI). Geographically, participants were distributed across divisions: West South Central (1), East South Central (1), East North Central (1), Pacific (1), Mountain (1), Middle Atlantic (1), and South Atlantic (3), reflecting proportional representation to the eligible responders' pool, in which the South Atlantic division was also overrepresented by a factor of 3:1. All participants advanced through a formalized academic rank and promotion system, but only seven were eligible for tenure (or equivalent). While most (n=7) held a rank equivalent to associate professor, 85% (n=6) were promoted to management positions before advancing from assistant professor to associate professor or equivalent rank.

Data Collection

Case study research requires gathering detailed data from various sources (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Eisenhardt, 1989). Because case studies aim to explore both commonalities and particularities, employing multiple data collection methods strengthens the research by offering a comprehensive understanding and rich insights into the research phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 2005). In this study, I utilized two methods of data collection: document collection, which involved mining data from pre-existing written material and materials generated during the research process, and one-on-one semi-structured interviews conducted with each of the participants. Each method was chosen to ensure a holistic exploration of the research questions and capture diverse perspectives and experiences.

The data collection process began with sending a formal email invitation to participate in the research study, which included details about the study and a link to sign up for a 90-minute interview slot between April 10, 2023, and May 13, 2023, through Calendly, a scheduling automation platform that integrates with Google Calendar (see “Invitation to Participate” and “Commonly Asked Questions and Answers” in Appendix I). Once an interview was scheduled,

Calendly sent a confirmation email to the participant confirming the interview date and time, which included a link to a video meeting location in Zoom. Within 24 hours of receiving the email confirmation, I sent the participant the Consent to Participate form to complete through Adobe Sign, an e-signature tool that is recommended by UMD for agreements in which at least one member of the party to a transaction is external to the university (see Appendix G).

Document Collection

In case study research, *documents* are any data apart from that which is obtained through interviews or observations (Merriam, 1988, p. 104). Documents are an important component of case study research and serve to enrich the research product by providing descriptive details, offering context, validating emerging hypotheses, monitoring changes and developments, and enhancing the internal validity of the study (Merriam, 2009). To facilitate document collection, I developed a survey in Qualtrics that explained the rationale for collecting documents and offered an option to upload or link to digital documents (see "Document Collection Survey" in Appendix I). Within 24 hours of a participant signing the Consent to Participate form, I set up an email distribution in Qualtrics that invited the participant to share documents for inclusion in the study (see "Email Request for Documents" in Appendix H). A reminder email was sent to incomplete participant seven days after the initial request (see "Reminder Email to Incomplete Respondents" in Appendix H). A thank you email was automatically sent by Qualtrics after the survey was submitted (see "Thank You Email Sent to Complete Respondents" in Appendix H). The document survey collected the following personal and public documents:

- **Position Description.** Each participant was invited to provide a *position description*, which is a formal document that outlines the duties, responsibilities, qualifications, and requirements associated with a particular position within an organization. A position

description serves as a blueprint for both the employer and candidates, providing clear expectations and guidelines for the role (Baril et al., 2021).

- **Personal Statement.** Each participant was invited to share a personal statement that was included in their application for promotion and/or tenure. Personal statements aim to contextualize a candidate's contributions within the institution's criteria for tenure and/or promotion, often including reflections on professional ethics, values, and experiences (Burnham et al., 2010; Gottlieb et al., 2022). If the participant did not have a personal statement, they were invited to share a surrogate document that communicated and contextualized their values and experiences, such as a cover letter, an annual review, or a mid-track evaluation.
- **Policies**. Each participant was invited to share institutional or library policies related to learning analytics. If these policies were unavailable, participants were invited to share any public policy document that conveyed their organization's approach to privacy, confidentiality, and/or data protection.

While sharing documents was not mandatory for participation, all participants (n=9) provided their position descriptions and personal statements (or surrogate documents). However, only two participants included institutional policies concerning data privacy (see Table 1 in Appendix K). Although I had hoped to conduct a cross-institutional analysis of these policies, this was prevented by the limited sample size. Instead, I integrated the policies into the analysis for the respective cases, utilizing the information to enhance my understanding of the institution.

While the documents are undoubtedly compelling on their own, it is the integration of document analysis within case study research that renders the information valuable. To ensure the *authenticity* and *accuracy* of each document, I adhered to the recommendations outlined by

Merriam (2009) for using documents in qualitative research. These include gathering as much information as possible about the provenance of the document and asking clarifying questions about the documents during the interview (p. 151). Given the lack of observational opportunities in my study, these documents provided crucial insights into individuals' experiences and helped to inform my understanding of institutional culture and context, which would have been difficult to ascertain solely through the single semi-structured interviews.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The primary data collection method involved conducting one-on-one 90-minute semi-structured interviews using the video communications platform Zoom. This platform enabled real-time interaction with participants and facilitated the sharing of textual information through the chat function. Each interview was guided by a written *interview guide*, which served as a communication plan for the conversation (Thomas et al., 2019) (see Appendix J). In addition to standardized questions, the interview guide also included conversation probes, which could be utilized during the discussion to steer the conversation or expand on specific topics. The semi-structured approach allowed for flexibility in probing deeper into participants' responses while ensuring consistency in addressing key areas of inquiry (Merriam, 2009).

My interview guide was organized into four thematic sections to ensure a comprehensive discussion of the research topics (see Appendix J). First, participants were asked introductory questions about their career paths, management styles, professional values, and the rewards and challenges of being librarian middle managers. Second, we explored gender identity and the feminization of the profession with a single prepared question and follow-up prompts. Third, we discussed faculty status, including the promotion and tenure process, participants' experiences with faculty status, and how their managerial roles intersect with faculty responsibilities. Fourth, we

delved into learning analytics, building on the information from the eligibility survey and using scenario-based questions. Finally, participants had the chance to share additional reflections at the end of the interview. Interviews were recorded, including computer-generated transcripts and audio/video recordings for transcription purposes (Merriam, 2009).

Positionality Statement

I identify as an *academic teaching librarian*, which is a type of librarianship that centers, aligns with, and supports the teaching mission of the university (ACRL, 2017). I believe in the mission of libraries to protect, empower, and extend an individual's capacity to use information to improve their lives and build a better world, and I have dedicated my career to developing the efficacy, confidence, and capability of students. I affirm hooks (1994) who described education as a "practice of freedom" that requires "caring for the souls of our students" (p. 13). I view connectedness and relationality as central to my *praxis*, or the process through which theory is translated into practice (Crenshaw et al., 2013). As a teacher, I seek to destabilize the inherent power inequities in a classroom by building rapport among learners, foregrounding individual experience, and creating space for grace, compassion, and building community. I embrace the learning process as complex and iterative and believe it is deserving of patience, time, and attention. Although I am a librarian by practice, I am a teacher by choice. I take the practice of teaching seriously and work hard to create caring, compassionate, and self-directed learning spaces that enable students to apply the concepts we explore in the classroom to their everyday lives. I believe students have a right to feel welcomed in the classroom and exert agency in their learning processes.

My positionality as an educator has influenced my approach to leadership and supervision. As the head of a teaching-focused unit in a large research library, I supervise a team of faculty

librarians and graduate students. My management style is informed by the theory and philosophy of *servant leadership*, which positions the goal of the leader as serving others (Greenleaf, 1977). Servant leaders take a values-oriented approach to leadership and give back to their communities by prioritizing the growth, well-being, and empowerment of employees and colleagues (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). As a leader, I value compassion, mutual respect, honesty, integrity, advocacy, and community. However, as a middle manager, I also face situations in which my professional values conflict with my positional responsibilities and expectations. While I am tasked with supporting the priorities of my library and institutional leaders, these do not always align with my own moral or ethical convictions. Although I take my responsibilities as a supervisor seriously and feel called to support and advocate for the members of my team, my ability to effect change is limited by my position in the organizational hierarchy.

My professional and personal experiences have been shaped by my social identities. I identify as a White woman, which is the pervasive racial identity (82%) among librarians in the United States (Kendrick & Hulbert, 2023). This identity is even more prevalent among librarians employed at member libraries of the ARL, in which 85% identify as White and 65% identify as women (Wilder, 2018). As a White woman-identified academic librarian, my dominant social identities are reflected and amplified throughout my library and broader organization. This has eased my transition into leadership, legitimized my work, and opened me up for increased recognition and opportunities in the organization.

Although my social identities extend organizational and social privileges, I recognize that despite being feminized, librarianship is not an inherently feminist profession in either its design or construction (Arellano Douglas & Gadsby, 2017). Academic librarianship reflects the racial and gender disparities that are endemic in higher education, including higher proportions of men in

positions of power, and lower salaries and increased service loads for women-identified practitioners and Librarians of Color, among others (e.g., Buckman & Jackson, 2021; Docka-Filipek & Stone, 2021; O'Meara et al., 2017; Poggio, 2018). As a leader of a teaching unit comprising early career faculty librarians and graduate students, my role in the organization demands emotional labor, including mentorship, career support, and advising, that often remains invisible to those outside my unit. Additionally, my work relies heavily on soft skills, such as sensitivity, communication, emotional intelligence, and compassion (Arellano Douglas & Gadsby, 2017; Mirza & Seale, 2017). While this relational work is vital for organizational success, it is often undervalued, particularly within neoliberal organizations that prioritize economic rationality, efficiency, and competition (Bladek, 2019; Mirza & Seale, 2017; Seale, 2013).

My professional journey has been further shaped by my relationship with faculty status. My first professional position was at a small public university where librarians were members of a unionized professoriate. This afforded many benefits, including clear expectations for my promotion and tenure, outlined in a contractual bargaining agreement. Later, I moved to my current institution, a large public research university library where librarians followed a parallel system for advancement, progressing through ranks from Librarian I (equivalent to instructor) to Librarian IV (equivalent to full professor). About six months after my initial appointment, I was promoted to my current position as head of my unit. Although I supervised and mentored other faculty librarians, I was not promoted to the rank of librarian III (equivalent to associate professor) until nearly four years into my tenure at the university. This experience has left me with complex feelings about librarian faculty status. While I recognize that it offers few tangible benefits (Silva et al., 2017), I feel protective of my faculty designation and would hesitate to work at an institution that did not grant faculty status to librarians. However, I am also aware that faculty status can

perpetuate inequalities by rewarding those with power and privilege while marginalizing others (Griffin, 2020). I also recognize that my support of faculty status is, in some ways, at odds with my convictions and values around social justice and equity. As a social constructivist, I believe these contradictory beliefs can co-exist and that my support for parity and representation of librarians within the faculty ranks can be present within my larger commitment to pursuing a just, equitable, informed, and democratic society.

Finally, I acknowledge how this study is motivated by my attitude toward neoliberalism and learning analytics. One of my earliest experiences with learning analytics was in 2016, when I attended a workshop at a library assessment conference. As the presenter outlined the future of learning analytics for libraries, I remember feeling a growing sense of unease. Looking around the room, I wondered if others shared my discomfort. As learning analytics has continued to gain popularity in higher education, I have discovered many librarians who share in my uneasiness about the expansion of learning analytics within our profession. As I have become more knowledgeable about learning analytics, I have also become more familiar with the scholarship and critiques around neoliberalism. I now have the perspective to see that the interest in learning analytics is linked to the integration of neoliberal ideology and practice in academic libraries and higher education, which I find troubling. This study is an attempt to explore the discomfort around learning analytics, both in my practice and the profession at large. I seek to better understand the complexity of the conversation around learning analytics in academic libraries and to propose a meaningful path forward for practitioners, which includes my own practice, as an academic librarian who may be called upon to participate in these initiatives.

Data Analysis

In qualitative research, *coding* is the systematic categorization and labeling of data to

identify patterns, themes, and meaningful insights within the collected information (Merriam, 2009). This process is integral to understanding, interpreting, and synthesizing the data. In a collective case study, coding occurs in two stages: *within-case analysis*, when each case is treated as a "comprehensive case in and of itself" (Merriam, 2009, p. 204) and *cross-case analysis*, which identifies thematic abstractions across cases (Stake, 2006). A qualitative, inductive, collective case study strives for balance between individual experience and the quintain (Stake, 2006). While the within-case analysis lays the foundation for the eventual cross-case findings, each phase is significant in the research process (Stake, 2006). Although I have presented the data analysis process as linear, the coding of a collective case study is iterative and many of these steps intersected and were also recursive (Stake, 2006).

Within-Case Analysis

I followed Patton's (2002) recommendation to compile all raw case data, or information collected about participants into *case records*, a condensed and organized version of the raw case data that is classified and edited into a manageable file (p. 450). I organized and managed all research documents and conducted the analysis in MAXQDA, a qualitative analysis software program. I established each participant as a *case* and then added their documents (e.g., eligibility survey, personal and public documents) to their case record (refer to Table 1 in Appendix K for a complete list of research materials). I also added demographic variables for each participant, including their name and institution (using pseudonyms), U.S. state in which their employing institution was located, U.S. geographic division, position title, racial identity, academic rank, years of professional experience, and the learning analytics classification for their institution, library, and individual as identified in the eligibility survey (see Appendix E).

I followed Merriam's (2009) guidance to conduct analysis "one site at a time," which

enabled me to direct my full attention toward the unique circumstances of each participant (p. 50). Approximately 24 hours before the scheduled semi-structured interview, I conducted a preliminary analysis of the documents in the participants' case records (e.g., personal statement, position description, and data privacy policies). Using an open-coding approach, I identified any segments of data that might be useful during the interview and began to general initial codes without conforming to pre-defined categories (Merriam, 2009). For example, one participant described her experience serving as interim leader of her department in her personal statement, which I noted as an area of potential significance. In another, a participant's position description indicated that the participant served as a subject liaison to several academic departments, which required clarification during the interview.

For each case, I followed a consistent protocol, which began with reviewing the participant's position description. After reviewing the document several times, I wrote a summary of their position, outlining the number of direct reports, core duties and functions, and any unique areas of responsibility (e.g., chairing a cross-departmental committee or serving as a subject liaison to an academic department). If the case record included policies related to data privacy (n=2), I reviewed the document and flagged any sections that required clarification during the interview. For instance, one participant had provided their university's policy for collecting, managing, accessing, and disposing of personally identifiable information. During the interview, I posed several clarifying questions to understand whether her library had contributed to the development of the policy and if they adhered to it when handling personally identifiable information in their library systems.

After reviewing the participant's position description, data privacy policies, and any supplementary materials (e.g., resume), I conducted open coding on their personal statement (or

surrogate document). I began the coding process by reading the document(s) several times. Then, I began identifying both *in vivo codes*, or codes using the exact words used by participants, and *thematic codes*, which capture important concepts, ideas, or patterns in the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For instance, one participant articulated in their cover letter, "As a leader, I believe that people perform best when they are given the right balance of challenge and support," which I coded in vivo as "challenge and support." In another, a participant highlighted involvement in a university-led two-week cultural exchange visit to China as evidence of their leadership within the university, which I labeled thematically as "globalization."

During the within-case coding phase, I noted identifying experiences that were unique to a participant. For instance, one participant held a leadership position in a faculty union, which was atypical among the quintain. As a result, their case record included several codes related to labor organizing. While my analysis process was primarily inductive, or driven by the data itself (Merriam, 2009), during the initial open coding, I remained mindful of the theoretical framework and research questions by noting any descriptions of participants' professional values and ethics (e.g.,, inclusivity, information freedom, and lifelong learning); management styles, leadership philosophies, or approaches to supervision (e.g., servant leadership, participatory leadership, community-building); attitudes toward data privacy or ethics; and the language they employed to delineate their faculty responsibilities (e.g., their philosophy regarding service and recurring themes in their research agenda).

After completing open coding on the documents in the case record (e.g., position description, personal statement, and supplementary materials), I wrote an analytic memo, which Saldaña (2012) described as a "brain dump" about the participants, a phenomenon, or process under investigation (p. 42). Each analytic memo contained my reactions to the materials,

reflections on the participant's experiences, observations about the documents, any emotions that arose for me during the analysis, clarifying questions about the documents requiring discussion during the interview, and any other relevant information pertinent to the research process. After writing the memo, I customized the interview guide for the respective participant (see Appendix J) by making minor alterations to the questions and conversational prompts (e.g., changing the word "supervisor" to "manager" to mirror the language used by a participant). The sole exception to this procedure was for Daphne, who did not share her documents until after the interview. As a result, I conducted her interview using the preliminary interview guide as originally drafted and initiated open coding on the documents once available.

Transcription

The semi-structured interviews provided the bulk of the data for analysis. Each interview was recorded and then transcribed. While Zoom provided a computer-generated transcript of the interviews, these transcripts needed editing before they could be considered suitable for research purposes. To remain "close to and deeply rooted in the data," I conducted the transcription myself (Saldaña, 2012, p. 37). Unlike the open coding on the documents, which occurred over two weeks as I prepared for the individual interviews, I conducted the transcription of the interviews in a condensed period. For each case, I reviewed the video recording of the interview while reading through the computer-generated transcript. As the participant spoke, I made edits to the transcript, which included rectifying words misunderstood by the auto-transcription software, adding details such as verbal pauses, and inserting necessary punctuation. The computer-generated transcript included timestamps, which I simplified to denote speaker changes for analysis purposes (see "Excerpt of Interview transcript" in Appendix J). I also anonymized identifiable information (such

as participant and institution names). Once complete, I deleted the original text file generated by Zoom and imported an anonymized version of the transcript to the case record in MAXQDA.

After completing transcription for all cases, I conducted an initial round of open coding on the transcripts, utilizing both in vivo and thematic codes. For example, one participant described their role as a middle manager as “an exercise in being squeezed from both sides,” which I coded as "squeezed from both sides." In the same interview, the participant described how the panic over potential budget shortfalls influenced her decision-making as a leader, which I coded thematically as “financial scarcity.” In each transcript, I noted professional values, such as openness, intellectual freedom, or privacy. Also, I flagged any references to specific policy documents from professional organizations (e.g., the ALA (2004) Core Values of Librarianship). I also attended to intersections between gender, faculty status, and middle management, paying particular attention to instances of emotional or invisible labor, mentorship, advocacy, faculty pressure, and positional responsibility, among others. Because this study relies on the theoretical framework of neoliberalism, I noted language relating to impact, value, efficiency, return on investment, rankings, accountability, transparency, budgets, prestige, or competition, particularly when describing pressures directed to the library by the institution. After the initial coding was complete, I returned to the transcript and highlighted any particularly poignant or insightful statements that should be incorporated in the case report.

Axial Coding

After completing open coding on all of the documents in each of the case records (see Table 1 in Appendix K), I conducted *axial coding*, which is the process of grouping open codes into categories and identifying hierarchies within those code categories (Merriam, 2009). This process was conducted one case at a time, in alphabetical order based on the pseudonym of the participant

(starting with “Audrey” and concluding with “Sophie”). Using the functionality in MAXQDA, I established four common top-level codes: “gender identity and leadership,” “faculty status,” “professional identity,” and “learning analytics,” which were derived from the preliminary interview guide (see Appendix J). Then, I examined the existing codes in a case record and began the process of aggregating and consolidating codes.

For example, in one case, the codes “push back on institutional encroachment” and “respond to an administrative directive” were merged into “institutional encroachment,” which was nested under the top-level category of “learning analytics.” In another, codes associated with a participant’s motivations for pursuing a career in librarianship were consolidated into thematic categories (“financial security,” “lifelong learning,” “support for students,” “commitment to teaching,” and “collaborative workplace”), which were grouped under “career motivations” and the top-level code “professional identity.” I also utilized a secondary code for “neoliberalism” which was layered on existing codes. Given the pervasive and abstract nature of neoliberalism, participants often referred to its impacts while recounting specific experiences or circumstances. For instance, several participants articulated the pressure they felt to produce data that would convey the “impact” of their work to campus administrators. These experiences were often contextually linked to conversations about learning analytics and/or the devaluation of feminized labor. As a result, those passages were organized within the broad focus area of learning analytics or gender identity and were also coded as “neoliberalism.”

The codes for each participant in the research study were organized as *code sets*, which is a function of MAXQDA that allows for an organized grouping of codes for analysis. Some codes, like "support for students," were common across cases, while others were specific to individual participants, like "neurodivergence" and “labor advocacy.” Although the codes were organized

within the four common top-level categories and included a shared secondary code for neoliberalism, no further effort was made to align the code sets across cases.

Case Report Construction

After conducting open coding on all documents in the case records, I prepared the individual case reports, each representing the experience of an individual participant (see Chapter 4). Following the guidance from Stake (2006) the case reports adhere to a standardized narrative structure: an opening paragraph establishing context, followed by thematic sections on professional identity, gender identity and leadership, faculty status, and learning analytics. This structure enhances clarity and comparability across cases, improving the study's reliability.

To build each case report, I followed a similar protocol. I began by drafting opening paragraphs that included selective details about the institution and participant, drawn from eligibility surveys, position descriptions, and the website for the institution. Then, I created narrative sections for each thematic category (professional identity, gender identity & leadership, faculty status, and learning analytics), using the corresponding codes as a guide. While the codes themselves are not featured prominently in the case reports, the coding process was invaluable in understanding, organizing, and interpreting the data for each case. Because the thematic sections mirror the interview guide, the case reports reflect the cadence and flow of the one-on-one interviews. While interview transcripts provided the main data for the case reports, I also included material from at least two additional documents in the case records (e.g., position descriptions, and personal statements). Although the case reports share a common narrative structure, each case report is independent, focusing on the perspectives and experiences of a single participant.

Cross-Case Analysis

After constructing the individual case reports, I initiated cross-case analysis. Following the

recommendation made by Stake (2006), I utilized the individual case reports as the primary data for the cross-case analysis. After adding each case report to MAXQDA in a new document set titled, "Quintain," I conducted open coding on the case reports. Rather than using a mix of in vivo and thematic codes, as I had when building the case reports, I focused on establishing broad categorical codes. For example, numerous participants expressed concerns about the risks that learning analytics posed to students, which were coded as "harm reduction." Others described the challenges in performing at a high level as a manager, librarian, and faculty member, which were coded as "competing expectations." Additional emerging codes included "collaboration," "emotional labor," "demonstrating impact," "partnership building," and "not feeling seen."

After completing open coding on the case reports, I moved to axial coding, in which I refined the category schema by identifying related categories and patterns in the data (Merriam, 2009). To bring consistency to the cross-case findings, I mirrored the individual case reports by establishing four top-level codes: professional identity, gender identity and leadership, faculty status, and learning analytics, with a secondary code for neoliberalism. Then, I organized and consolidated the open codes within those categories. For example, several participants described the impacts of a new performance-based budgeting process on their campus, which were consolidated under the code "financial pressures" and organized underneath the top-level codes "learning analytics," and "neoliberalism."

The axial coding process resulted in four to six thematic codes in each of the focus areas, approximately 20 codes overall. To determine my research findings, I moved to *selective coding*, which focused on establishing the most significant and recurrent themes from across the body of cases (Merriam, 2009). In a collective case study, the goal of cross-case analysis is to connect the cases to the research question(s) and build a general explanation of the research phenomenon that

fits the majority of the cases (Merriam, 2009). The cross-case findings are represented as *themes*, recurring patterns and common experiences, and *assertions*, or the most salient conclusions that can be drawn about the quintain based on the thematic analysis (Adams et al., 2022; Stake, 2006).

Developing Themes and Assertions

To determine the final themes, I drafted working definitions for the focus areas (professional identity, gender identity and leadership, faculty status, and learning analytics) and themes (see Table 3 in Appendix K), which resulted in the consolidation of a few themes. To further narrow, I followed the recommendation by Stake (2006) to employ a "utility matrix" to identify the most significant shared experiences (see Table 2 in Appendix K) (p. 48). This matrix mapped emerging themes back to the cases based on the level of *indication,* which can be understood as a combined factor of intensity and frequency (Stake, 2006). For a theme to become a finding, it needed to demonstrate high or middling indication in at least two-thirds (n=6) of the cases, indicating its salience, prevalence, and prominence within the quintain. I referenced each theme with the case's source material to determine its level of indication. A high mark required clear mention in the interview transcript and corroboration from another document in the case record, while a middling mark indicated presence but with less prominence or weaker corroboration. A low mark signified either an outlier, where the participant's experiences contradicted the overall experience of the quintain or a weak presentation of the theme within the data. As indicated by Stake (2006), collective case studies anticipate varying relationships between cases and the research phenomenon, with some cases being highly indicative and others having only incidental relationships to the research questions. Outliers are expected and do not invalidate the study; instead, they offer an opportunity for deeper understanding, enriching the overall findings and providing more nuanced insights (Stake, 2006, p. 41).

Using the utility matrix as a guide, I eliminated themes that did not meet the high or middling threshold in six of the nine cases (n=3) and consolidated themes into broader categories. For example, the faculty status focus area initially included three themes: “self-concept as scholar-practitioner,” “not fitting the mold,” and “both faculty and a manager, yet neither.” The matrix revealed that the levels of indication were identical for “not fitting the mold” and “both faculty and manager, yet neither,” which prompted me to merge them into a theme for “navigating faculty status.” This process resulted in a final list of 13 themes, outlined in Table 3 in Appendix K. The frequency of high and middling indication was lowest for “recognition and devaluation of feminized labor” and “intersectionality, racial identity, and social justice” (n=6) and highest for “dedication to teaching,” “fostering community and care,” “negotiation power and responsibility”, “navigating neoliberal pressures,” and “ethical dilemmas and privacy concerns” (n=9). Across all the cases, the mean frequency of high and middling indication was 7.77, the median was 7, and the mode was 9; all of which meet and exceed the criteria set for this study.

Following Stake's (2006) guidance, I identified five overall assertions, which are the most significant findings drawn about the quintain based on the themes. To determine the assertions, I examined the definitions of the themes to identify common patterns, words, and phrases. To be retained as an assertion, a concept had to be in at least two-thirds of the themes (n=9) and across all four focus areas (see Table 4 in Appendix K). To verify these findings, I cross-referenced them with the case reports and records, ensuring their presence and relevance across all cases. Although certain cases align more strongly with some assertions than others, each of the assertions was present in all of the cases.

Data Ethics

As an educational researcher, I view research as a transformative practice that has the

potential to disrupt power structures and foster fresh perspectives. I echo hook's (1994) recognition of theory as a platform for healing, emphasizing that theory, especially that which is born from an experience of marginalization or alienation, amplifies voices and offers space to challenge systems of oppression. I see research as a platform to counter exclusionary narratives and collaboratively construct a more comprehensive understanding of both individual and collective experiences. My research approach is influenced by Gilligan's (1982) "ethics of care," ethical theory that prioritizes the relational nature of humanity, emphasizing care as the foundation of morality and underscoring the importance of lived experiences and sensitivity toward oneself and others.

I have operationalized an ethic of care by centering humanity in my interactions with participants and recognizing how my own lived experiences shape my understanding of others' experiences. Throughout this research, I prioritized compassion and empathy, creating a safe space for participants to share their narratives without judgment or apprehension. However, it is important to note that my social and professional identities positioned me as an *insider* within my research community (Chavez, 2008). While this fostered trust with participants, I am mindful of how my personal and professional experiences, beliefs, and values may have influenced my analysis and interpretation of data.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

I recognize that empirical research can unintentionally cause harm to individuals and communities. To mitigate this risk, I critically assessed power dynamics within the research process. Participants signed a Consent to Participate agreement, and at the start of each interview, I reiterated their absolute right to refuse to answer any questions or end the interview at any time (see "Preliminary Interview Guide" in Appendix J). While participation in interviews was required, contributing documents was voluntary (see "Consent to Participate" in Appendix G). I

am grateful for the trust participants placed in the study, demonstrated by their willingness to provide supplementary documents for analysis. As a researcher, I honored this trust by protecting privacy to the fullest extent possible. I anonymized personally identifiable information in the case reports and omitted sensitive details that could compromise the well-being of participants, prioritizing the safety, security, and anonymity of participants over the potential to enhance the credibility of the study (Reich, 2021).

To enhance *internal credibility,* I ensured consistency, applicability, and dependability of my interpretations and conclusions (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). This involved maintaining reflexivity through analytic memo-writing and seeking peer examination from individuals who were knowledgeable about the research topic, which mitigated threats of confirmation bias and was invaluable to the research process (Merriam, 2009). I also verified the emerging findings by conducting *member checking*. Each participant was allowed to review and comment on their case reports. I also provided an executive summary of the emerging findings from cross-case analysis and a slide deck outlining focus areas, themes, and assertions. Participants were encouraged to provide feedback through email or schedule one-on-one conversations. Four participants engaged in this process. Through emails, they affirmed the preliminary themes and identified parallels between their experiences and emerging findings from the study.

While generalizability was not the aim of this study, I strengthened the confirmability and transferability of findings by ensuring *investigation validity* or the quality of craftsmanship (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007, pp. 235-237). Collective case study methodology facilitates *triangulation*, which is the use of three or more measurements to "converge" on a finding (Merriam, 2009, p. 215). In this study, triangulation was achieved through various methods, including employing multiple methods of data collection, conducting analyses at different levels,

integrating multiple case sites, corroborating emerging themes and assertions with diverse sources of data within the case records, and engaging in member checking. In the subsequent chapters, I aim to provide the third defining quality of qualitative research, which is to offer a *rich and thick description* (Merriam, 2009). The findings are structured into two parts: Chapter 4 presents individual case reports, while Chapter 5 focuses on cross-case analysis, highlighting the overall experience of the quintain. In the final chapter, Chapter 6, I offer a discussion and conclusion, contextualizing the findings within the research questions.

Chapter 4: Individual Case Study Reports

The findings of this study are presented in two parts: individual case reports, offered in this chapter, and cross-case findings, offered in chapter 5. Merriam (1988) argued that a defining quality of a case study is the "narrative structure" through which the researcher presents the data (p. 127). What separates case research from narrative inquiry and ethnography – also qualitative methods that employ a narrative structure - are the connections between the participants, the contexts in which their experiences occurred, and the phenomena under study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Case study research is particularistic, focused on a specific phenomenon; descriptive, the end product of a case study is a rich, thick description; and heuristic, the case illuminates the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study (Merriam, 2009, pp. 43-44). While case study researchers are encouraged to be parsimonious and pursue the simplest explanation that fits the evidence, the value of a case study is the attention to detail and the insights derived from rich descriptions of the cases (Merriam, 1988). This chapter adheres to the recommendations to present each case as self-contained, which allows the "unique patterns" (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 540) of each case to emerge before searching for patterns across cases (Merriam, 1988).

Participant Profile

At the time of their involvement, all of the participants (n=9) held positions as middle managers in public academic research libraries and identified themselves as educators. Although their supervisory responsibilities varied, each participant was responsible for supervising at least one full-time staff or faculty member and, in some cases, numerous librarians, staff, and hourly workers. Organizationally, each participant reported to an intermediate manager – most often, an Associate Dean – who sat hierarchically at least one level below the Dean, University Librarian, or analogous position. All of the participants identified as women. Seven participants identified as

White, and two participants held a minoritized racial identity. Racial identity shapes how a person understands their world, and how they are perceived and treated by others, and alters the economic, social, and organizational resources, privileges, and opportunities to which they have access. Race is a significant component of self-identity and understanding, both individually and organizationally (Ray, 2019). Because librarianship is more than 80% White-identified and the sample size for this study was limited, disclosing participants' specific racial identities would pose a risk to their anonymity. Instead, I use the descriptor “minoritized racial identity.” This decision was made in consultation with participants who hold those identities and is not an attempt to flatten their rich experiences around race – particularly as experienced within a pervasively White profession - but to acknowledge the complexities of race and the impact of racial identity on experience, while respecting participant privacy.

Case Study Reports

Case reports are presented with minimal external analysis and rely on the voices of the participants to convey their experiences. Pseudonyms for personal and institutional names are used throughout. I also made small changes to position titles, unit and department names, educational degrees, and other minor details if and when the specific phrase or title posed a risk to participant anonymity. Although participants held various faculty ranks (e.g., Associate Librarian or Librarian III) for concision and clarity, I have used the closest standard tenure-track faculty rank as a proxy (e.g., associate professor with tenure, full professor). Direct quotes were slightly edited for concision, with verbal pauses and extraneous words removed as long as the meaning remained intact. Any additions or substitutions to direct quotes are noted in brackets, and elements that were removed are indicated with an ellipsis. While efforts were made to highlight important elements, some aspects of an individual's experiences or values may not be included. Each case report offers

a snapshot of the participants' complex lived experiences and should not be viewed as a comprehensive account of their values, identities, or memories.

This chapter presents case study reports in order of the participant's proximity to learning analytics, beginning with those who self-identified as most resistant to learning analytics and ending with those who were most accepting, as indicated by their eligibility screening surveys (see Tables 5 & 6 in Appendix D). Each case report follows a standardized structure aligned with the interview guide (see Appendix J). They begin with an introduction establishing the individual and institutional context, followed by four thematic sections that explore professional identity, gender identity and leadership, faculty status, and learning analytics. The case reports include direct quotes and paraphrases, with source material references provided in brackets.

Case Report 1: Audrey

Audrey (she/her) is a White-identified mid-career professional with just over a decade of experience as an academic librarian, gained at various institutions. As the Coordinator of Student Success and Education for the University of the Middle Atlantic (UMA) Libraries, Audrey coordinates the Libraries' instructional program for first-year writing and learning assessment program; provides professional development to the UMA librarians and staff around teaching; serves as a subject liaison to disciplinary areas; teaches information literacy instruction sessions; leads a cross-unit team that focuses on information literacy and education; develops library programming to support student success; and provides formal supervision to an exempt staff member (Position Description, 2023).

The UMA is a predominately white institution (PWI) that supports a student population of approximately 25,000 undergraduate and 10,000 graduate students. UMA librarians, academic faculty, and academic professionals are represented by a labor union and their work is covered

under a contractual bargaining agreement (CBA). UMA librarians participate in a parallel faculty system that includes promotion through librarian ranks and a tenure equivalent. Audrey holds a rank equivalent to associate professor with tenure. In her eligibility survey, Audrey identified herself as "resistant to learning analytics," the UMA Libraries as "hesitant to engage in learning analytics," and the institution as "emergent/beginning to explore learning analytics" (see Tables 5-6 in Appendix D). The documents in Audrey's case record include her eligibility survey, the transcript of our 90-minute interview, the personal statement she submitted in support of her application for promotion and tenure, her position description, and the CBA for the UMA faculty union (see Table 1 in Appendix K).

Professional Identity

During her undergraduate study, Audrey held positions as an hourly student employee in her campus library and undergraduate writing center, which introduced her to academic libraries. Audrey admired the academic librarians she worked with, noting their diverse responsibilities and direct interaction with students. This exposure influenced her decision to pursue a Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS) degree. Although she considered a career in archives, Audrey was drawn to academic teaching librarianship by her desire to engage directly with undergraduate students, particularly first-year students, and participate in teaching. Audrey graduated with her MLIS shortly after the recession of 2008 and described how her decision to pursue academic librarianship was also shaped by the economic precarity gripping the nation,

> It was 2009 - searches were being canceled and everywhere was in a hiring freeze. The first position I was offered was in instruction [at a medium-sized public institution in the Southeast]. It was not the first place I wanted to move, but… it ended up being a great job and I learned a lot. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

This role marked the beginning of her journey in academic librarianship, shaping the trajectory of her career. Over the years, Audrey has held multiple positions in various academic libraries, all

centered around “instruction, reference services, and serving as the primary contact for composition, writing, and library support in those areas” (Interview Transcript, 2023).

During the interview, Audrey emphasized her dedication to students and the importance of the library in supporting student’s success “on their own terms,” whether that be academically or providing a safe space for rest (Interview Transcript, 2023). Part of what drew Audrey to librarianship was the alignment between her personal ethics and the values of the profession, which centered on intellectual freedom, equity, empowerment, collaboration, justice, creativity, innovation, and representation (Personal Statement, 2020). For Audrey, being an instruction librarian offered an opportunity to empower students, amplify their voices on campus, and contribute to the educational mission of the university by fostering connections and community (Personal Statement, 2020). She was driven by a passion for integrating information literacy with social justice, aiming to enhance the student experiences through her work (Interview Transcript, 2023). As an example, she described an important initiative she had undertaken to improve the UMA undergraduate student research awards to reduce barriers for applicants by streamlining the submission process and reducing bias among reviewers (Personal Statement, 2020).

Although Audrey expressed satisfaction with her work and position in the organization, she identified a growing disconnect between herself and library administrators,

> I’ve struggled with [administrators] thinking what I do is very small and not seeing the total picture…. I think there's a real fetishization of the new by [library administrators, and] there are ideas about technology that are not aligned with those on the ground. [For example] that the library needs to be an innovator that is always producing more and more stuff, rather than doing supporting work…. Our [administration] is dismissive of librarianship and more interested in bringing in new people with subject matter Ph.D.s to do disciplinary work [in the library] because there is an assumption that people with Ph.D.s are more valuable than library workers. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Audrey noted that the “disconnect” between herself and administrators extended to the focus on "rankings and prestige," which she saw as diverging from the university's mission of providing

accessible, quality education to the local community (Interview Transcript, 2023). As a teaching librarian, Audrey perceived the growing emphasis on technology and innovation to be in conflict with the mission of the library to support students and foster learning. She also interpreted the administration's preference for hiring librarians with subject matter Ph.D. to be an attempt to "legitimize" the library on campus, which came at the expense of devaluing the knowledge, expertise, and education of librarianship (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Gender Identity and Leadership

Because Audrey only supervised one staff member, she described herself as "middle-managery." She viewed her role as a supervisor as an opportunity to "demystify" the libraries for her direct report, who lacked an MLIS degree or prior library work experience (Interview Transcript, 2023). Audrey spoke passionately about her commitment to protecting her supervisee from overwork, viewing supervision as an extension of her feminist identity and a way to integrate care into her work. As she described, "I feel a responsibility to shield the person I supervise… I try to figure out ways to protect them that are not paternalistic or gatekeeping information." Despite her dedication, Audrey found the inherent "power differential" in her supervisory role to be challenging (Interview Transcript, 2023). Although she had supervised student workers in past positions, her current role was the first in which she had provided formal supervision to a full-time employee. She recalled feeling uneasy about assuming the role, as it conflicted with her self-perception as a collaborator rather than an authority figure,

> I remember when I was first going to supervise somebody, I was sort of having an existential crisis about it and was asking friends for resources like, 'How do you be a boss? I don't want to be a boss.' I have always thought of myself as a collaborator. And being in this weird power relationship felt very uncomfortable to me. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Audrey struggled to reconcile her desire to effect positive change in the organization - which she saw as dependent on the power that comes with formal leadership positions - with her desire to

maintain close community ties in the organization. Although she "really wants to see more women in leadership in libraries," she acknowledged internal barriers that were preventing her advancement,

> I find myself wishing I could be more involved in decision-making processes. These [power] structures are real, and they make a big difference. And look, it is not like people are throwing leadership positions at me all the time, but it is something I've thought about. I like being a cohort of librarians and I do think [academic librarianship] is a career where you can grow and learn and not have to climb the ladder, necessarily. That has always appealed to me. So, I feel some conflict there. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

This internal conflict was compounded by Audrey's involvement in the faculty labor union. Audrey had recently accepted a leadership position in the union and had found her service to the organization to be "very meaningful" (Interview Transcript, 2023). However, the contractual bargaining agreement (CBA) for the union prohibited union members from supervising others within the union, thereby limiting her career trajectory (UMA Faculty Union CBA, 2019). For Audrey, advancing into higher levels of management would not only mean sacrificing the community she had found in the labor union, but would also jeopardize her job security and put her in a "more precarious position where there would be no guarantee of a [salary] raise." As she described,

> I want to be at the table to make decisions. But I don't see how it could work in my current organization. It is like I have these two paths before me [to stay at my current level and remain in the union, or advance and leave the union protections], and either way, I lose something. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Audrey's understanding of herself was bound on one side by her commitment to the community and on the other by her ambition to effect positive change, particularly around issues of social justice and equity, which she saw as dependent on her access to positions of power (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Faculty Status

Throughout her career, Audrey encountered various faculty systems for librarians, each with its own dynamics and hierarchies. At her first institution, librarians were full faculty who were integrated into the professorial ranks on campus. At the second, librarians were classified as staff without access to any faculty privileges. At UMA, Audrey found herself in an “in-between” system, where librarians participated in governance with academic faculty and shared many of the same privileges and responsibilities, but also had unique provisions in their job structures (Interview Transcript, 2023). When asked about the importance of faculty status to her, Audrey emphasized that it was not the "status itself" that mattered but the way librarians were treated by academic faculty. Based on her experiences, she felt that her work had been more valued in positions where she held faculty status, which was evidenced by how librarians were integrated into governance and decision-making groups on campus, partnered with academic faculty around curriculum and program development, and the increased collegiality and comradery with faculty members outside of the library (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Although Audrey held a rank equivalent to an associate professor with tenure, she had been promoted to her current middle manager position before achieving tenure. Reflecting on this period, she described feeling vulnerable,

> Looking back, it was a scary place to be. I would be in a meeting with [an administrator] and strongly disagree with something that they said. [Because I was in the meeting,] I had an opportunity to speak directly to them and challenge that perspective, but I did not have the protections of tenure, which was scary. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Audrey also faced the challenge of limited peer support in similar management roles. She was only aware of one other librarian who had gone through promotion while holding a management position. As a junior faculty member, Audrey found herself balancing the demands of middle management with the aggressive scholarship and service requirements necessary to obtain promotion and tenure (Interview Transcript, 2023). Because her dual position as a manager and

junior faculty member was uncommon, she was left to contextualize her work as a manager in her promotional dossier without successful examples to guide her work. In her personal statement, she described her role as a unit head as "developing her capacity for leadership" and "carving out a new role" in the organization and framed her supervisory work as an act of service to the library and the organization (Personal Statement, 2020).

Learning Analytics

Audrey strongly opposed the integration of learning analytics and was "very wary" of the growing interest on her campus (Eligibility Survey, 2023; Interview Transcript, 2023). At the time of our conversation, UMA had launched a pilot program to use an integration in their Learning Management System (LMS) called "dropout detective," aimed at increasing retention by identifying "behaviors and patterns that lead to high student attrition" (Interview Transcript, 2023). Audrey had been a member of campus groups where this program had been discussed and was disappointed to hear campus and library administrators make broad claims such as, "students don't care about privacy; they have already given up all of their data and it is not something we should even care about anymore." Audrey's resistance toward learning analytics emerged directly from her personal and professional values. As she described, "I take very seriously the part of the mission of our profession to protect users, their privacy, and let them make choices about their own data" (Interview Transcript, 2023). For Audrey, this "mission" is codified by the ALA in their policy documents,

> I'm thinking of the ALA Code of Ethics…. As a profession, we have made privacy one of our *things*…. Sometimes, I feel like there is no separation between my personal and professional [values], but in this case, it seems so straightforwardly professional. Like for years and years, we have reified these documents. Other things have shifted, but [our commitment to protecting privacy] has not changed or gone away. Maybe this is my need to point to something higher above me because I do not feel that my personal thoughts around this are going to be compelling enough to act on. But in my estimation, [privacy] seems like such an integral part of our profession. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

The connection between values and policies held significance for Audrey. In her role at UMA Libraries, Audrey led a cross-departmental interest group around teaching and learning. This group is responsible for developing its own "charge document," which Audrey viewed as an opportunity to articulate her and her colleagues' concerns about learning analytics. She described,

> I was really concerned that [the UMA Libraries] were going to be approached and asked to participate in learning analytics. So, as part of that charge document, I made sure to [state] how we are 'wary of learning analytics and that while we want to support student learning, at the same time, we want to uphold students' privacy'… if [the Libraries] are approached about learning analytics, it is something we can point to and say 'Look, we spelled out our values. We are not interested in doing that.' I think that kind of structure can be important, and I so helped create it. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Audrey described a growing tension between "those on the ground" who were wary of learning analytics, and library administrators, who were interested in exploring the application of learning analytics. She attributed the interest among library administrators to UMA's recent adoption of a "responsibility-centered" budget model, which bases funding on service usage. As she described, "[There's concern that] the library will be asked to provide hard numbers, like, 'the business students use the library this much, so the library needs XYZ amount of funding from them" (Interview Transcript, 2023). Learning analytics provided a solution by connecting students with specific data points that could potentially demonstrate not only who used the library but also how their usage may correlate with retention and academic success. However, for Audrey, the "panic" around the budget was an "anxiety response" to a hypothetical future in which the library might be asked to produce this data, rather than "an actual request from campus to justify our existence in any real way" (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Audrey approached those who held more lenient views around learning analytics with understanding rather than vilification, recognizing that some colleagues were intrigued by the potential of data to promote library services and demonstrate impact. However, she maintained

that the pursuit of evidence-based decision-making did not negate the responsibility of the library to safeguard user privacy (Interview Transcript, 2023). She also questioned if the data gained from learning analytics would be worth the risk that data collection posed to students,

> At the end of the day, I think we could [make learning analytics work.] We are creative enough. We could figure out ways to… collect data that could be meaningful for us and also not invade the privacy of our users. Or at the very least, allow [users] to opt in in an informed way. While I obviously believe that the library contributes to student's success, I'm not sure that we can use [learning analytics] to prove that. It is very hard to extrapolate the library's contribution to the student experience (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Although Audrey was concerned about data ethics, her primary concern regarding learning analytics were the lack of adequate student support services at UMA. While learning analytics aimed to intervene and provide resources to students in crisis, she highlighted the ongoing underfunding of student success services at UMA, particularly counseling services, which often left students without sufficient support. Audrey questioned the value of identifying students at risk academically when the university fails to provide sufficient support for them,

> What are faculty supposed to do when they hear a student is struggling? If they try to reach out and the student doesn't respond? There aren't resources that exist to help that student… What is the value in identifying students who are 'at risk' if the university isn't willing to help them? (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Audrey admitted that she finds learning analytics "creepy," and she certainly questioned if the data collection practices in learning analytics are compatible with the values of the profession. However, the question she kept coming back to was, "What is the value of identifying students who are at risk if the university isn't willing to help them?"

Case Report 2: Nicole

Nicole (she/her) is a mid-career professional who holds a minoritized racial identity. She has more than fifteen years of experience as an academic librarian, gained at various institutions. As the Head of Teaching and Learning at University of West South Central (UWSC) Libraries,

Nicole oversees curricular and co-curricular information literacy education programs for undergraduate students; leads professional development for library staff around teaching and pedagogy; manages the Libraries' classroom spaces; provides overall leadership and vision for information literacy in support of student learning and success; leads the Libraries' information literacy education assessment program; and provides mentorship, support, and supervision to the Teaching and Learning department, which includes seven faculty librarians (Position Description, 2022).

UWSC is a Minority Serving Institution (MSI) that supports a student population of approximately 37,000 undergraduate and 7,000 graduate students. At UWSC Libraries, librarians participate in a "quasi" faculty process that includes promotion through librarian ranks and a tenure equivalent (Interview Transcript, 2023). Nicole holds a rank equivalent to associate professor with tenure. In her eligibility survey, Nicole identified herself and the UWSC Libraries as "resistant to learning analytics" and the institution as "actively participating in learning analytics" (see Tables 5-6 in Appendix D). The documents in Nicole's case record include her eligibility survey, the transcript of our 90-minute interview, the personal statement she submitted in support of her application for promotion and tenure, and her current position description (see Table 1 in Appendix K).

Professional Identity

Nicole was an English major in college. Although she considered pursuing a graduate school program in literature, after graduating with her BA, she opted for a job in student affairs at her alma mater, where she started working with academic librarians regularly. Nicole admired the librarians and appreciated their commitment to students. Inspired by those interactions, she applied for and completed an MLIS degree while working full-time. Although she initially considered

public librarianship, she ultimately chose academic librarianship for its alignment with her passion for teaching, student engagement, and learning, finding it to be a better fit for her interests and strengths (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Nicole's identity as a librarian has served as a grounding force in her life. She described librarianship as "one of the pieces of the world she inhabits," and her practice and scholarship as a librarian some of the ways that she makes "sense of the world" (Personal Statement, 2019). Throughout her career, Nicole has emphasized critical inquiry, self-reflection, empowerment, education, creativity, community building, and care (Personal Statement, 2019). In 2018, a change in her personal circumstances prompted her to leave her tenured position at another institution to join UCSW Libraries as an Instruction Coordinator. A year later, an organizational restructuring within UCSW Libraries led to the establishment of a new teaching and learning department, with Nicole appointed as head of the department. As she has taken on more managerial responsibilities, Nicole has noticed a shift in her focus from direct teaching and student interaction to activities such as "coaching, mentorship, and big-picture planning." While she recognized the importance of these responsibilities, she admitted feeling uneasy at being distanced from the hands-on work of teaching (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Gender Identity and Leadership

In her previous role, Nicole served as the instruction coordinator for her library, which conveyed organizational responsibility but lacked positional authority. As she described, it was an "exercise in trying to get a bunch of people [she] did not supervise and who do not care a lot about teaching to be on board and caring about teaching" (Interview Transcript, 2023). As Head of the Teaching and Learning department at UCSW Libraries, Nicole now oversees a team of librarians who have "actively chosen to be [a part of the department] and are deeply invested in improving

their teaching" (Interview Transcript, 2023). Despite initially believing that positional authority would be the primary driver of change, Nicole has found the collective dedication and passion of her team members to have been far more impactful than positional power in creating a positive work environment. As she described, "It is not necessarily the power, but the shared experience and this common desire to want to go deeply into the work [that makes the difference]" (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Although Nicole had never envisioned herself in a supervisory role, she takes her responsibilities as a manager seriously. She explained that over the last few years, the UCSW Libraries have experienced significant leadership and organizational changes, which has created a tumultuous work environment. One of her first tasks as department head was to collaborate with her team to develop a "community agreement" to set healthy boundaries and guide how they would interact with one another in the workplace (Interview Transcript, 2023). Nicole dedicated significant time and effort to building community within her department, viewing it as a crucial service provided to her team. However, she felt the "weight" of responsibility in creating and fostering a supportive environment, especially when those values were not always reciprocated at the organizational level. She expressed,

> The people in my department say to me, 'We feel like we're in this bubble where things are good.' And I am like yes, great. But that is *because of me*. I am the one who has to deal with the outside… but what else [am I] here for other than to support people and make sure they can do their job well? (Interview Transcript, 2023)

At the same time, Nicole struggled to be everything that everyone needed and found herself slipping into the role of "de facto therapist" for her supervisees (Interview Transcript, 2023). While she appreciated that her team members felt comfortable enough to confide in her, she also recognized the importance of establishing and maintaining her boundaries. Reflecting on her growth in this area, she offered,

> I have gotten better at noticing when someone needs space and suggesting that they take time to attend to themselves. That is not to say that people aren't still crying in my office. That is definitely still happening. But I do think I am better at saying, 'You know, you seem upset right now. Why don't you take some time. We'll meet a little bit later and come back to it?' As opposed to saying, 'Tell me what is wrong," which is what I did before. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

When asked about her approach to management, Nicole attributed her style to a former supervisor who served as a role model in leading from a "democratic and socialist management style" (Interview Transcript, 2023). She acknowledged that this approach to leadership requires a significant relational investment, with much of her time dedicated to conversations with her team members. She described most of her day as being focused on supervision and mentorship,

> Most of my hours go to talking to people. I am asking, 'How are you doing? How is your workload? Are you feeling stuck? Where are you stuck? What kind of feedback can I offer you? Have you thought about it this way? That way? Maybe you could try this activity or approach a lesson this way?' (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Nicole found the role of a middle manager to be complex. Not only the day-to-day work, which was demanding, but also the way that leadership required her to navigate, and sometimes compromise her feminist values,

> There is something about this job and the focus on productivity and innovation that feels deeply unfeminist. I think because it does not value maintenance work, which requires a lot of care and attention. And it is more about, 'Can we get this grant? What are we going to make that's new? What can we show the Provost?' (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Nicole recognized the challenge of conveying the value of her department's work to campus administrators. She described an instance where her team spent a month creating a one-minute video. When asked to create a report on their accomplishments to share with the provost, she struggled to articulate the significance of the video or why it required so much time to create. Instead, she opted to focus on quantifiable metrics like the number of classes taught and student attendance, as she perceived these to be more easily comprehensible and valued by administrators (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Nicole observed that her role as a department head conveyed "limited political power" in the organization (Interview Transcript, 2023). As a middle manager, she had to navigate tough decisions about when and how to wield that power, considering the potential consequences for herself and her team members, whom she felt a duty to safeguard. Her leadership philosophy revolved around minimizing harm, asking probing questions, advocating when empowered to do so, and fostering a safe environment for her team (Personal Statement, 2019). Even so, becoming a manager forced Nicole to adopt a neoliberal way of thinking, validating, and evaluating her work and the collective work of her department. For Nicole, who has a long history of "writing, thinking, talking, and caring about relational work," this capitalist and corporate paradigm felt antithetical to her identity as a feminist manager (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Nicole also spoke to the challenges of navigating her racial and ethnic identities in predominantly White spaces and the extent to which her intersectionality impacted the way that she was perceived and treated by others, particularly as a leader:

> [There was another male-identified] department head, who immediately upon me taking on this [new department head] role wanted to tell me what my team should be doing, how I should be working, and that I needed to do this or that. I found myself wondering… 'Is this because I'm new? Is it because I am a woman? Is it because I [hold a minoritized racial identity]? Which one is it?' (Interview Transcript, 2023)

For Nicole, her gender and racial identities were visible aspects of her personhood, and she questioned when decisions, statements, or questions from colleagues might be shaped by those social identities. Nicole holds a personal commitment to fostering inclusion and equity, which extends throughout her practice and scholarship (Personal Statement, 2019). Although those values are (at least in theory) shared by the organization, she felt the burden of being the only one to speak up for those values in library leadership spaces.

> When we have a leadership meeting, I'm often the only one who expresses concern about inclusion, about equity. We are a very diverse library on a very diverse campus, but

> inclusion and equity are not necessarily things people are thinking about. There are only a few other [managers] who are Women of Color, but they do not often ask questions or speak up, and that is hard. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Faculty Status

In Nicole's previous position, she held faculty rank at associate professor with tenure. When she joined the UWSC Libraries, Nicole was a well-established professional with a strong track record of continued teaching, service, and scholarship. During salary negotiations for her position at UWSC, she advocated strongly for the rank of associate professor. Instead, she was appointed at the rank of assistant professor and given "five years of credit," which meant that she had to reapply for promotion and tenure a year into her position. She explained,

> I pushed back and pushed back, and it didn't change. [One of the administrators] at the time was just notoriously sexist and kept saying, 'Well, you know, if we [offered] you Associate you wouldn't get a pay raise when you get promoted.' It was so discouraging and demoralizing. I was also told, informally, that my promotion packet when I applied for associate looked more like somebody who is applying for full [professor], which made me so upset. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

The decision to appoint Nicole to the rank of assistant professor put her in a challenging position of supervising librarians at and above her rank while simultaneously navigating her first year as a new manager and also compiling a dossier to apply for promotion and tenure. The timeline also impacted her eligibility to apply for promotion to full professor. Despite having a strong record in service and scholarship and over a decade of professional experience, she was informed that she could not apply for full status until she had been with the institution longer because "that was just not how it is done here" (Interview Transcript, 2023). From Nicole's perspective, the devaluation of her scholarly record was motivated by her race, gender, and a general disregard for the work and scholarship of teaching. Nicole expressed her desire to apply for full professor as a point of pride,

> I have worked really hard and part of me wants to be recognized for that. There are also

> really very few people with the status [of full professor] in our library, and some of those were legacied [into the rank] when it was easier to do. I do not begrudge anybody [their rank]. But, I think it is important that librarians do their own scholarship and demonstrate to faculty outside of the library about this side of our work. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

To meet the expectations for full professor, Nicole had to maintain an aggressive agenda of scholarship and service while also managing the demanding responsibilities of building out a newly formed department and supervising a team of faculty librarians. When asked how she managed her portfolio and made time for research and scholarship, Nicole explained that it was a constant challenge. She described squeezing in writing sessions in short 30-minute chunks of time throughout her workday, as well as dedicating evenings and weekends to writing after her child went to bed. As Nicole described, the work of a middle manager left very little time for writing, but even beyond this, it left limited time for the "important work of thinking" (Interview Transcript, 2023). Her time felt like a finite resource and she found it difficult to create space for things that felt "selfish," which to Nicole, was her research and scholarship. She described,

> I am forcing [research and scholarship] to happen. And it is super hard….There is just no time. Not even just writing. I also do not have time to read, either professionally or just for myself, which would inform things I would write about. So, I'm forcing it. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

To address these challenges, Nicole sought accountability by involving colleagues in her research projects, blocking space on her calendar for writing, and pursuing opportunities with firm deadlines, such as special issues in journals and book chapters. Even so, she admitted that her research program had taken a "back seat" to supervision (Interview Transcript, 2023).

For Nicole, the concept of faculty status for librarians was complex and fraught with uncertainty. During our discussion, she expressed concerns about a potential threat at the state level to eliminate tenure for faculty at public universities. If that occurred, there was speculation that librarians at her institution would be reclassified as staff. Although Nicole valued her identity

as a scholar-practitioner and believed her research and writing contributed positively to her work, her worth as a scholar felt constantly under scrutiny; both within the library, and also the academy at large (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Learning Analytics

Nicole was resistant to learning analytics and opposed library involvement (Eligibility Screening Survey, 2023; Interview Transcript, 2023). At the time of our conversation, UWSC was involved in a "predictive analytics" program to identify students who might be in need of academic intervention and connect them with services. As she described,

> The [predictive analytics] system is supposed to identify students [who] potentially need additional support and then reach out to them and try to connect them to mental health intervention, tutoring programs, or an emerging scholar program (which is a kind of intensive tutoring). But it is a bunch of data that is collected from students in ways that I don't know if they realize their data is being collected. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Nicole raised doubts about the effectiveness and underlying intentions of the predictive analytics system. While it was presented to the campus community as a beneficial tool aimed at assisting students who might require additional support, she believed the primary objective was to raise graduation rates, thereby improving the university's rankings in publications like the US News and World Report (Interview Transcript, 2023). Moreover, Nicole questioned whether students identified as needing support through the system would be able to access the assistance they required. She expressed concerns about the lack of follow-up care and long-term support for students flagged by the system, particularly in light of inadequate mental health resources on campus. She explained,

> We had two student suicides within a month of one another at the same location on campus. It was awful… but one of the things that came out of the situation was the realization of how few mental health counselors we have on campus for the student population that we have…. There are just so many unchecked barriers to getting services. So, you flag [a student] in this system. And then what? They may have one session, one crisis intervention, and then they are on their own to figure it out. What is even the point? (Interview

Transcript, 2023)

Nicole expressed deep concerns about the potential harms and risks associated with learning analytics, particularly for students at UWSC who hold minoritized identities. She highlighted the lack of consideration for factors such as students' immigration status, particularly for Dreamers or undocumented individuals and their families. Nicole questioned whether the benefits of learning analytics outweighed the potential risks and harms to students and questioned whether the institution prioritized the monetary value of the data about students over the well-being of the students themselves (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Nicole's skepticism about learning analytics was informed by her encounters with learning analytics in professional settings. She recounted a conference presentation she attended, where presenters discussed library involvement in learning analytics,

> I will never forget [one of the presenters] saying 'Our students' lives are at stake.' And I was just stunned. I mean, what are we doing with this? Are you giving students stipends for food? Are we paying for their books? You are collecting all of this data and for what? You are not making their lives instrumentally better. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

While Nicole recognized the importance of privacy, she believed there were reasonable trade-offs to be made and emphasized the importance of informed choice. She also expressed concern about the tendency in librarianship to prioritize privacy above all else,

> Of course, I think privacy is important, but… we wouldn't be able to function in this world without our reliance on digital tools and software…. I'm more concerned about having a choice and making an informed choice than I am about protecting privacy above all else, which might make me a bad librarian. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Nicole was frustrated by the reactionary approach in librarianship, which extended beyond learning analytics to encompass numerous issues within the profession. She described academic libraries as "constantly chasing the next trend," without a clear direction or end goal (Interview Transcript, 2023). From Nicole's perspective, this reactivity was a destabilizing force that led to

schisms around core ethical issues. Despite existing professional documents like the ALA Core Values of Librarianship, Nicole felt that these frameworks were insufficient in addressing the nuanced and evolving challenges faced by librarians. She sought a deeper understanding of the profession's role and responsibilities to navigate complex conversations and make informed decisions on issues such as learning analytics (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Nicole's perspective on learning analytics was also shaped by her role as a manager. When asked to consider how she would respond if the library were directed to participate in a campus learning analytics program, Nicole acknowledged the limited political power of the library within the university. She explained,

> The Libraries is not the College of Engineering that brings millions of dollars every year in research revenue. I think in our case, the best [the library] could do would be to try to mitigate harm and ask, 'Okay, but tell us what your data management policy is?'… But, if it was a directive [to contribute data to learning analytics], I don't think the library has enough clout to be able to say no. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

As a middle manager, Nicole understood that refusing to participate in a campus-wide program – even if that program raised ethical concerns – might have material consequences for the libraries. When facing a complex ethical situation, Nicole would aim to alleviate the burden on her team by actively seeking answers to their questions, even if she could not guarantee satisfactory resolutions to their concerns:

> I try to reduce [the people on my team] having to seek out answers on their own…. I can't promise that I will have all the answers, or that the answers they give me will satisfy, but I want to hear all of the questions and concerns that my team might have, and I want to communicate those with people in power. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Case Report 3: Fiona

Fiona (she/her) is a White-identified mid-career professional with just under a decade of experience as an academic librarian, gained at various institutions. As Head of Student Success at the University of the Mid-South Atlantic (UMSA) Libraries, Fiona provides strategic direction for

the UMSA Library's teaching program; leads professional development around teaching librarians and library staff; collaborates with academic faculty to integrate information literacy in the curriculum; manages the library classroom spaces; provides reference services to the campus community; chairs a cross-departmental team related to teaching and learning; and provides mentorship, support, and supervision to six librarians (Position Description, 2022).

The UMSA is a PWI that supports a student population of approximately 18,000 undergraduate and 4,000 graduate students. UMSA librarians participate in a parallel faculty process that includes promotion through librarian ranks but does not convey tenure or an equivalent. Fiona holds a rank equivalent to associate professor without Tenure. In her eligibility survey, Fiona identified herself as "hesitant to engage in learning analytics," the UMSA Library as "engaged in small-scale learning analytics activities," and the institution as "actively participating in learning analytics" (See Tables 5-6 in Appendix D). The documents in Fiona's case record include her eligibility survey, the transcript of our 90-minute interview, the cover letter she submitted in support of her application for her position at UMSA Library, her current position description, and the Personally Identifiable Information Privacy Policy for UMSA (see Table 1 in Appendix K).

Professional Identity

Fiona's journey into librarianship began during her undergraduate studies in a Women's Studies program, where she became fascinated with the concept of information access. After earning her BA, Fiona enrolled in an MLIS program with the goal of becoming an academic librarian. However, it was her graduate assistantship in Residence Life that sparked her passion for working with students. Fiona found herself particularly inspired by her work with first-year students, describing them as enthusiastic, creative, thoughtful, and curious (Interview Transcript,

2023). Alongside her graduate assistantship, Fiona also held an hourly position in the academic library, which allowed her to discover teaching and information literacy. Together, these experiences helped her to integrate her interests and skills and ultimately solidified her path in academic instruction librarianship (Interview Transcript, 2023).

After completing her MLIS degree, Fiona held positions as an instruction librarian at two different institutions. Although she had always heard that there is a "ceiling" in instruction librarianship, she "never thought it would happen to her." Yet, a few years into her second teaching focused position, she found herself asking, "Can I really do what I am doing for the rest of my career?" (Interview Transcript, 2023). Despite exploring other pathways in academic librarianship, such as serving as a subject librarian, she kept returning to how inspired she had felt by a department head in a previous position, who had made a significant impact on her work life. She began looking at position postings for department head roles and realized that she had many of the skills and experiences that were required for the jobs. When a position opened up for a teaching and learning department head at a university library located near family, she felt ready to embark on the next chapter, "I remember thinking, I am ready. I have done everything I wanted and needed to do here" (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Gender Identity and Leadership

Fiona described her identity as a manager as being intertwined with her identities as a feminist and a librarian. She values community, inquiry, advocacy, inclusivity, collaboration, creativity, communication, and information access in her professional practice (Cover Letter, 2022; Interview Transcript, 2023). As a department head, Fiona has prioritized creating an environment where her team feels equipped to do their work and safe to share thoughts, ideas, and feedback (Cover Letter, 2022). She explained,

> It is important to me that people have the things they need…. Recently, one of the things I did for someone was buy an air filter, but that felt important. It feels important to be able to give my team the things they physically or emotionally need to do their job the way they feel the best doing it. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

However, Fiona acknowledged the challenges of balancing her "care-centered leadership approach" with the day-to-day demands of supervision. While she endeavored to create space for difficult conversations and prioritize emotional well-being, she recognized that this approach sometimes led to additional work or unexpected challenges. She explained,

> Sometimes when I make space in a difficult conversation to ask, 'How are you feeling about all this?' that can open up a whole can of worms… but then I remember that is what's important to me. To be able to do that makes the work feel good and know that [my work as a manager] aligns with my values. Both professionally and personally. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

For Fiona, the most fulfilling aspect of her role as a manager was individual supervision. She found joy in helping her team members navigate difficult situations, brainstorm solutions, and feel appreciated (Interview Transcript, 2023). Fiona perceived these one-on-one interactions as opportunities to support and uplift her team, contributing to a positive and nurturing work environment where everyone can thrive (Cover Letter, 2022).

Transitioning into a management position has been a complex journey for Fiona, marked by both intentional career advancement but also personal sacrifice. She explained, "Growth is loss. To be the manager I want to be, I am giving up flexibility. I am giving up research. I am saying no to opportunities that I might have said yes to before." When asked if she identified as a middle manager, she shared, "I feel my middleness deeply…. That is the only way I could describe it. To be in the middle" (Interview Transcript, 2023). As a department head, Fiona was situated between administrators and her direct reports. She felt a sense of loyalty to both of these levels and found it difficult to prioritize whose needs were the most important in a given situation (Interview Transcript, 2023). Unlike her previous position, where the focus of her work had been narrower

and the scope of her decision-making power limited, as a manager, Fiona grappled with the broader implications of her decisions,

> I just think back to there was a time when it was not my problem to think about these things…. I now find myself in a management position and I have new knowledge and new perspective. I see a bigger world out there. In my previous position… not doing a great job with my very specific first-year writing program did not have implications for the entire teaching program at the university. [But now] I see that higher level, I feel those bigger stakes. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Despite the challenges, Fiona described her management position as meaningful and articulated how she found supporting the well-being and success of her team members to be especially rewarding. She explained, "On my whiteboard, I have written the names of each person in my department… If something is going on that feels more important, I look over at that and I remember that they are the job" (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Faculty Status

Fiona left her previous position for her job at UMSA a few months before her eligibility to apply for promotion from assistant to associate professor with tenure. Although she was hired at UMSA in a rank equivalent to associate professor, the lack of tenure for librarians within the university system felt distinct from her prior experiences, where librarians had been integrated within the professorial ranks and tenure across the campus. She explained,

> When I was in a tenure system, the hoops I was jumping through felt worth it because I had this faculty status on campus. I admit that I am struggling a little bit with how rigorous the process is [at UMSA] for something that we only use internally [to the library]. I think that is something that I'm still working through. It was honestly surprising to me that the [promotion process without tenure] is just as rigorous and just as much work. So, I am still working through that and trying to figure it out for myself. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

For Fiona, one of the benefits of the faculty promotion and tenure process at her prior institution had been that it connected her to faculty outside of the library and provided recognition and visibility for the librarians on campus. Without that integration into the university system, the rank

and promotion process at UMSA felt hollow (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Even though Fiona is no longer in a tenure system, she appreciated that UMSA decided to advertise and hire her position at the associate level. Fiona questioned if she would have applied for the position if she had known in advance that it would be ranked as assistant professor. She explained, "I cannot imagine having been brought in as an Assistant. Not only in terms of adapting to a new promotional system but just the lack of time that I have for research and writing" (Interview Transcript, 2023). Fiona emphasized the scarcity of time as a department head and how she had to prioritize tasks that would benefit her unit over activities that felt "self-serving." She shared,

> It feels like time is such a finite resource in a management position…. Research and writing are important to me, but … I find that I have to be incredibly thoughtful and protective of how I spend those precious moments. Even from a time perspective, it takes a lot of time to even just read articles for lit review….I've just come to the conclusion that this is not the time [in my career] for scholarship. And that has been a sad development that I am still coming to terms with, but I have had to take a step back from [research and scholarship] to create space for supervision. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Rather than focusing on her scholarship, Fiona has found fulfillment in supporting the research and scholarly endeavors of junior librarians in her department. She viewed this as a service to the profession and recognized the importance of nurturing the professional development of her team members (Cover Letter, 2022; Interview Transcript, 2023). While Fiona valued her identity as a scholar-practitioner, she acknowledged that her scholarly pursuits have been overshadowed by the day-to-day responsibilities of leadership. Despite this, she remained optimistic about re-engaging with research in the future, "Maybe I'll get [that part of myself] back, but this is where I need to be right now" (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Learning Analytics

Fiona's new role as a manager has brought a sense of urgency to the conversation around learning analytics. She explained, “I feel like I’m struggling [with how to approach learning analytics]. This is the first time I’m in a place to influence things, which is exciting and scary. And I feel it deeply” (Interview Transcript, 2023). Part of Fiona’s discomfort with learning analytics stemmed from the “tension” she felt in the field between learning analytics advocates, who wanted student data to “prove library value,” and more traditional librarians, who identified strongly with the ethical foundations of the profession and were reluctant to compromise their standards of practice. She shared,

> I really struggle [with academic] libraries wanting to be noticed and wanting to be thought of as collaborators and partners. We don’t want to be left out of the conversation; I get that. But also, is [learning analytics] really the thing we want to do? It feels like this moment of deciding [for the profession]. If learning analytics were able to magically fix some things, that would be something different, but I'm not getting that from any of the conversations I'm hearing. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Fiona expressed that the national conversation about learning analytics lacked nuance and depth, despite being heavily “value-laden” (Interview Transcript, 2023). She described conference presentations she had attended where presenters used hyperbolic and "fearmongering" rhetoric in an attempt to persuade colleagues that learning analytics was the only path forward for libraries. She also emphasized how the broader discourse around learning analytics seemed to be missing “core principles around research ethics” (Interview Transcript, 2023). Fiona had experience conducting empirical research with human subjects and found the lack of meaningful informed consent in learning analytics to be “deeply problematic,” indicating that the profession would need to address these disparities before there “could, or should be, any conversation about moving forward” (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Fiona's response in the eligibility screening survey indicated that UMSA was actively

involved in learning analytics. However, upon further discussion, it was revealed that the learning analytics programs at the university were decentralized, with varying levels of interest and engagement across campus. While the UMSA General Counsel had developed a policy around personally identifiable information, the policy gave wide latitude for information that was "necessary to carry out the academic, research, and administrative functions of the university" (UMSA Personally Identifiable Information Privacy Policy, 2022). Without a clear direction about learning analytics and data collection standards at a campus level, Fiona looked to the library leadership for guidance but had received "mixed messages" about how committed the library was to pursuing learning analytics or what types of data they would be prepared to share (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Fiona's concerns around learning analytics extended beyond research standards to include broader implications for budgetary decisions and organizational values. She expressed concern about the finite nature of resources in public higher education and how decisions about funding one initiative often meant cuts or compromises in others. She explained,

> I have a lot of feelings about higher education as a business, which is a whole separate conversation. But look, the money is not infinite. Right now, we're renovating our [library] classroom and to do that we're cutting laptops. I'm now in a position to be able to see what it costs. Both financially but also, 'what are we going to have to lose, to be able to do this other thing?'...What if I'm in a situation where we have to make budget cuts? I have six people who rely on me to make sure that they have jobs. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Fiona described how her decision-making power was limited by the constraints of the neoliberal organization in which she worked. She described, "As a middle manager, I have to demonstrate that I am a 'responsible steward' of our finances. I have to demonstrate 'impact' and 'value' to the provost because she holds the purse strings" (Interview Transcript, 2023). Despite concerns about how participating in learning analytics might not align perfectly with her or her team's professional values, she recognized that her "highest priority" was to "protect" her team,

> If at some point, [the library dean] said to me, '[Fiona] we are doing this thing. We are collecting whatever data for whoever's purpose.' I would be happy to hear concerns from my team. Their opinions are very important to me… but I also know when a call needs to be made.... Would that be super fun? Probably not. Would it come as a detriment to our relationships? Possibly. Is that the job I signed up for? Yeah, I guess so. It is challenging, all around. But, like I said, the money is not infinite, and I have a responsibility to my team. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Case Report 4: Molly

Molly (she/they) is a White-identified early-to-mid career professional with seven years of experience in libraries, gained at her current institution. As the Assistant Director of Teaching and Learning for the South Atlantic University (SAU) Libraries, Molly provides leadership to the Libraries' teaching and learning programs; develops and sustains relationships with campus partners; manages departmental budgets; leads professional development for SAU librarians and staff around teaching; advocates for usability and accessibility through service on committees in the library and across campus; and provides direct supervision to three librarians and one staff member, and indirect supervision to several librarians and staff members who report to those individuals (Position Description, 2021).

The SAU is a PWI that supports a student population of approximately 30,000 undergraduate and 7,000 graduate students. At SAU, librarians participate in a parallel faculty system that includes promotion through professorial ranks and a tenure equivalent. Molly holds an MA in English and is currently a Ph.D. Candidate in the College of Education at SAU but does not hold an MLIS degree. They are ranked at the level of Instructor in a non-tenure track appointment. In their eligibility survey, Molly identified themselves and the SAU Libraries as "emergent/beginning to explore learning analytics" and the SAU as "engaged in small-scale learning analytics activities" (See Tables 5-6 in Appendix D). The documents in Molly's case record include their eligibility survey, the transcript of our 90-minute interview, the cover letter

they submitted in support of their application for their current position at SAU Libraries, their current position description, their resume, a Statement on Privacy of Personally Identifiable Information issued by SAU, and the SAU Faculty Handbook (see Table 1 in Appendix K).

Professional Identity

Molly's professional journey began during her undergraduate studies when she worked part-time at the campus writing center. Although they were majoring in business administration, Molly developed a “fascination” with rhetoric, composition, and pedagogy (Interview Transcript, 2023). After graduating with a BS, Molly applied for doctoral programs, ultimately accepting an offer in the Ph.D. program in Composition at SAU, which was the closest geographically to their extended family. A few years into the program, Molly realized the degree did not focus on pedagogy as much as she had hoped, which led her to transfer to a Ph.D. program in Instructional Design at SAU.

During their Ph.D. coursework, Molly worked in the library as an hourly student worker, which allowed them to gain insight into the "back end" of library work. This experience eventually led to a full-time position developing online learning objects for the SAU Libraries (Interview Transcript, 2023; Resume, 2022). A year later, a position leading the Libraries’ teaching and learning unit opened up. Although Molly did not hold an MLIS, their experience with instructional design and successful record of collaboration with librarians made them a strong contender for the position, and they were appointed to the position in 2021 (Cover Letter, 2021; Interview Transcript, 2023).

Despite holding a management position in an academic library and supervising librarians, Molly did not identify as a librarian. When asked to expand on this, she offered,

> In my head being a librarian is more about the credential than about the activity. Being an educator and an instructor, [I] do a lot of the same things that librarians do. [I’m] working

> with students one on one and helping them build out research. But probably because I identified as a teacher first, that's [the identity] I gravitate back to…. I am conversant in a lot of the terminology… and ethos of librarianship. [But calling myself a librarian feels like] claiming something that I haven't worked for. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Molly's perspective on professional identity highlights the importance of formal credentials and socialization in shaping how librarians perceive and legitimize themselves within the profession. For Molly, librarianship was intertwined with the MLIS degree and their lack of appropriate "credentials" precluded them from adopting that identity (Interview Transcript, 2023). When asked when they would feel comfortable adopting the title, Molly acknowledged that they would need the foundational knowledge and confidence that comes from completing a formal library science program to feel comfortable assuming the identity (Interview Transcript, 2023). Even so, Molly felt comfortable among librarians, who shared her professional and personal values around collaboration, inclusion, collegiality, innovation, education, and openness, and was committed to the mission of the library, which she viewed as supporting the academic and research needs of the campus community (Cover Letter, 2021; Interview Transcript, 2023).

Gender Identity and Leadership

Although Molly identifies as a woman and describes themselves as "femme," they have a nuanced relationship with gender. When asked to describe their gender identity, Molly shared,

> I don't feel like identifying as female has ever been of benefit to me. Why am I going to cling to a gender identity that effectually [marginalizes me]? That is kind of like the foundation of my identity at this point. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Molly highlighted how gender identity operated differently in the library, which is a "woman-centered space," compared to broader masculinized spaces in academia (Interview Transcript, 2023). They recounted experiences as a graduate assistant in the writing center, where their gender presentation influenced interactions with faculty in male-dominated fields like engineering. Despite their education and expertise in composition, Molly felt their contributions were devalued

by male-identified faculty, especially when compared to male-presenting peers (Interview Transcript, 2023). Although Molly did not perceive that her gender presentation "held her back" in the libraries, she faced challenges stemming from the intersection of her gender identity with academic credentials and professional experiences, especially in dealings with male-identified administrators. They explained,

> I have been in feminized spaces where it felt like it more effectively bridged that feminist space. [In the Library,] there have been some conversations [with male administrators] … where it felt like [the man was saying,] 'Ok, young lady,' you know? That sort of patronizing patriarchal energy…. I do not know that a man in that position would have gotten the same response… or even a woman if she was well established and had the right degrees. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Molly's experience underscores how organizational tension arises at the intersections of social identities. It was not solely her identity as a woman, her early career stage, or her lack of an MLIS degree that caused challenges. Instead, it was the combination of these identities that opened space for disenfranchisement and marginalization in the workplace.

As a middle manager, Molly felt a strong sense of responsibility towards her unit, striving to be perceived as responsible, trustworthy, transparent, open, honest, and available by her direct reports (Interview Transcript, 2023). However, they found it challenging to maintain these high standards when the organization did not always offer or recognize the necessary tools for this care-centered work (Interview Transcript, 2023). This included issues such as the limited access that middle managers have to full information about administrative priorities, their exclusion from decision-making processes within the libraries, and their lack of positional authority to provide job stability to contractual and hourly workers whose positions were often at risk due to budgetary constraints, all of which hindered Molly's ability to fully support and advocate for their team (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Molly's approach to management was informed by her educational background in business

administration, which included studying management and organizational behavior theories. Although Molly admitted that the leadership and governance models in higher education can be challenging, she felt that "all organizations, regardless of type or structure need to be able to manage change" (Interview Transcript, 2023). They explained,

> There was a while when there was a lot of change, uncertainty, and lower morale within [the SAU Libraries]. It felt meaningful to be able to have a conversation with my supervisor and say, 'There are ways that the change management was not done well… and I'm seeing impacts on our morale, on the work that we're doing, and in relationships that we are aren't building together'…. Without my background [in business administration], I would have struggled to qualify what I was seeing. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Although Molly's background in business has meant that some components of management have come "a little bit more easily" to them, they struggled with the expectations placed on middle managers. They explained,

> Being in this [middle management] space, I feel like I have just enough power to let people down on both sides. On all sides. I'm just influential enough that I feel like I could make really great change and impact for my team, but I also have just enough power to let them down, which is hard…. I think that really is what it means to be in middle management, to kind of always be disappointing someone, even if it is just yourself. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

As a department head, Molly's position granted them access to organizational power but also constrained their ability to drive significant change. To be successful, Molly had to be adaptive and responsive to new information. One of her greatest challenges stemmed from the lack of transparency from the upper administration. Molly articulated,

> I don't necessarily feel like I'm being lied to or misled from above, but I don't know everything, and I am not told everything, and… I don't always agree with [upper administration] on what we need to prioritize. But then I'm the face of that for the team, you know? I'm the one with the bad answers. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

When asked how she navigated this challenging organizational space, which was fraught with opportunity for misunderstanding and confusion, Molly replied, "Anxiously. I've tried to be more intentional with my words… but my most palpable strategy has just been to be present. I'm trying

to be around. Show up and be known" (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Faculty Status

The faculty system at SAU included tenured, tenure-track, and non-tenure-track appointments, which conveyed distinct expectations for teaching, research, and service. Despite being "all but dissertation" (ABD) in a Ph.D. program and holding an MA in English, Molly did not possess the required terminal degree for librarians, which was specified as an MLIS or a Ph.D. (SAU Faculty Handbook, 2023). As a result, Molly was appointed to her management position at the rank of instructor in a non-tenure track faculty appointment. Although Molly would be offered an opportunity to transition to a tenure-track position upon completing her Ph.D., the lack of clear incentives made her uncertain about pursuing this path. They explained,

> Some people who transitioned into a tenure-track appointment did get a pay bump, but I know of at least one person who did not. So being what it is, [the tenure system] does not feel entirely worth it for me. To put in that additional effort, and why?... Maybe if I were under a supervisor who didn't allow [me to participate in research and scholarship] … that might potentially push me over the edge. But [at least right now] it doesn't feel particularly pressing. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Molly's skepticism about the benefits of the tenure system stemmed from the different privileges, responsibilities, and expectations associated with varying ranks of faculty in the Libraries, which ultimately led to "mistrust and distrust" among colleagues (Interview Transcript, 2023).

As a department head, Molly directly and indirectly supervised tenured, tenure-track, and non-tenure-track faculty librarians (Resume, 2022). However, due to her non-tenure track appointment, Molly was unable to vote on tenure decisions for candidates she directly supervised (Interview Transcript, 2023). This created a complex situation where they were responsible for certain aspects of the faculty process, such as writing annual evaluations and providing input on certain promotion cases, but lacked voting power or access to the full dossiers when those individuals applied for promotion and tenure (SAU Faculty Handbook, 2023). Molly described

how the intricacies of the faculty system at SAU contributed to a generalized sense of inequity among various position ranks, types, and classifications, which complicated her work as a manager (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Learning Analytics

At SAU, campus administrators were interested in developing a "data lake," which Molly described as the process of gathering extensive data from various sources (Interview Transcript, 2023). The aim was to use this data to assess predictors of student success, ultimately enhancing retention rates and boosting graduation rates. However, in practice, the focus seemed to be more on data collection than on utilizing the data effectively for meaningful outcomes. Molly and her colleagues felt pressure from higher-ups to contribute data to this endeavor,

> There is pressure from the Provost to contribute to the 'lake,' which filters down to the Library Dean, then to my Associate Dean, and eventually to me and my peers. While there have been pushes for different initiatives, the challenge lies in [figuring out how to gather and analyze data while adhering to data privacy standards] and producing reports that make the Provost happy.... Within our department, we've faced significant pushback because we haven't felt like there are a lot of approaches that have been presented that we feel are ethical. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Molly's ethics around data collection and learning analytics were rooted in principles of informed consent and minimizing harm. They emphasized the importance of gathering active consent for participation from individuals who "own the data," whether they are students, faculty members, or community patrons (Interview Transcript, 2023).

SAU library administrators had expressed interest in pursuing learning analytics within the libraries, which Molly linked to the institution's recent adoption of a "performance-based budget" system, which had inhibited Libraries' ability to advocating for funding because of their lack of access to traditional metrics of success. They explained,

> The system works for academic colleges because it is a direct line from how many students are majors, how many are in a minor, and how many are non-majors = funding... For the

> Libraries, it is hard to say, 'This college uses this journal, or this faculty used the library XYZ times, or this student is better at research because of whatever.' (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Learning analytics offered a potential solution to this challenge by providing correlative data about library resources and services associated with individual users. Molly understood why library administrators would be interested in collecting data about individual users, but they stressed the need to engage in a careful conversation about data collection practices, to determine which data points would be meaningful to the Libraries and how to minimize potential harm to users (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Molly's attitude toward learning analytics was nuanced and they made distinctions in collecting data in certain educational settings. For example, Molly found it acceptable to collect aggregate data about groups, such as how many first-year students attended a welcome event, or what subject a student was majoring in when they asked a reference question (Interview Transcript, 2023). However, her views on personally identifiable information about individual students were more conservative. For instance, they perceived confirming attendance for an instruction session associated with a formal class of record to be permissible, while collecting personally identifiable information from voluntary events, such as open film screenings or Pride month celebrations, crossed ethical boundaries because it posed a greater risk (Interview Transcript, 2023). From Molly's perspective, the conversation in librarianship oversimplified ethical considerations and could benefit from a more robust and detailed discussion about the potential harms and benefits of specific actions. She explained,

> Being conversant in this space requires a set of professional ethics that we just have not defined. Engaging in real and productive conversations about learning analytics will require bringing together people who have not traditionally been at the forefront of libraries. We need librarians working with people who have specialized knowledge in coding and database management and combining that with the intensive lines of questioning you get when you look into human and computer interactions. This

conversation is bigger than just libraries. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Case Report 5: Sophie

Sophie (she/her) is a White-identified early-to-mid career professional with just under ten years of experience as an academic librarian, gained at her current institution. As the Head of Teaching and Learning at the University of East South Central (UESC) Libraries, Sophie provides vision, direction, and support for the Libraries' teaching programs; oversees programs related to student success; manages the information literacy instruction program for general education; leads professional development around teaching for librarian and library staff; supports strategic initiatives related to outreach and teaching; serves as a subject liaison; and supervises five librarians and two staff members (Position Description, 2022).

The UESC is a PWI that supports a student population of approximately 29,000 undergraduate and 7,000 graduate students. UESC librarians are integrated into the professorial system for the university, which includes promotion through the faculty ranks and tenure. Sophie holds the rank of associate professor with tenure. In her eligibility survey, Sophie identified herself, the UESC Libraries, and the UESC as an institution as "emergent/beginning to explore learning analytics" (See Tables 5-6 in Appendix D). The documents in Sophie's case record include her eligibility survey, the transcript of our 90-minute interview, the personal statement she submitted in support of her application for promotion and tenure, and her current position description (see Table 1 in Appendix K).

Professional Identity

Sophie graduated with a BS in Journalism during the 2008 recession. Her aspirations to "travel the world and write things" were set aside as she entered the field of corporate and financial communications (Interview Transcript, 2023). In this role, she focused on distilling complex

information into digestible formats and sharing people's stories. A turning point came when a friend transitioning to school librarianship suggested that Sophie consider pursuing an MLIS degree. Although she initially considered special librarianship (such as working in a corporate archive), she ended up accepting a graduate assistantship in user experience at her university's academic library. This experience exposed her to information literacy and undergraduate education, which set the trajectory for her career (Interview Transcript, 2023).

After graduating with her MLIS and entering the job market, Sophie was drawn to student success librarian positions, which was a novel concept at the time. After a national job search, she accepted a position as a student success librarian at UESC Libraries (Interview Transcript, 2023). She appreciated that her student success role allowed her to work directly with students and included teaching and reference (Personal Statement, 2019). A few years later, a reorganization within UESC's libraries led to the creation of a new teaching and learning department, and Sophie was asked to lead it on an interim basis. A year later, after an internal search, Sophie was appointed as the Head of the Teaching and Learning Department (Interview Transcript, 2023). Although Sophie had worked hard to “be a good manager,” she admitted that she had not initially aspired to leadership, and her transition into management felt like a "top-down decision" that was imposed on her, rather than driven by a personal interest (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Gender Identity and Leadership

As a manager, Sophie valued honesty, transparency, authenticity, presence, support, advocacy, and "appreciative inquiry," which she defined as being seen, acknowledged, and understood (Personal Statement, 2019; Interview Transcript, 2023). As a new manager, Sophie found it challenging to find her identity. She expressed feeling the need to read management books or attend leadership institutes to “do leadership perfectly.” She explained that when she started as

a supervisor, she struggled “so much” with wanting to be seen [by her direct reports] “as a nice person” (Interview Transcript, 2023). However, experience leading her unit taught her that kindness is more valued than niceness, and that being clear and direct with her language and actions was a form of kindness. Sophie shared how her management approach had been shaped by her own experiences with a previous manager,

> I had a manager once who… was never around to ask questions or solve problems, but she would always leave cookies on my desk. And that seemed like a sweet thing to do, but I would much rather have had her show up. I’ve tried to get away from being like ‘I will bring cookies to every meeting’ and more of it being like, what do my people need? (Interview Transcript, 2023)

For Sophie, the term “middle management” has helped her to understand her work and given her a framework for her own experience, “The way our Libraries describe things is that I am a ‘part of leadership,’ but I don’t always feel that. So, the term ‘middle manager’ has helped me to be [understand my role and position in the organization]” (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Sophie assumed her leadership position shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic, and her experience as a manager has been deeply intertwined with crisis management. She shared how she felt "both the perpetrator and the victim of change” (Interview Transcript, 2023). Sophie described how her work required her to constantly move between physical, emotional, and intellectual spaces. She would leave a meeting that was held online and go immediately to another one that was in person; go from leading a meeting for her department to attending one as a librarian; and move from “route administrative tasks like disentangling a travel request” to “trying to be strategic and plan longer-term things” (Interview Transcript, 2023). This feeling of moving in and out also extended to the work of her department, which is cyclical and tied to the academic calendar. She explained, “In an ideal world, I would spend more time being strategic but in the actual world, it’s a lot more of getting through the day-to-day, and then pinning your hopes and dreams on the

summer" (Interview Transcript, 2023).

As a middle manager, Sophie felt "supported, but not always seen" by her supervisor and library administrators (Interview Transcript, 2023). One of the challenges she faced was the limited access to information about administrative priorities and decisions, which hindered her ability to guide her team effectively and provide proper supervision. She explained,

> I don't think it happens intentionally, but I'll be in a meeting with [my supervisor] and they will say 'Oh, I had this interesting conversation, I'm going to share notes with you' and those notes never materialize…. I feel like our campus is not always transparent… and so, if I'm not in the room, which I'm often not, I rely on the person in the room to pass things along. [So I] need that person above me. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Sophie saw her leadership role as advocating for her unit and ensuring that her team members felt valued and heard (Personal Statement, 2023). She emphasized the importance of respecting her direct reports by diligently preparing for meetings, following up on commitments, keeping promises, and actively seeking information from the administration to address her team's questions and concerns. Sophie sought to create a more inclusive and transparent work environment by bringing her team's voices into discussions where they might not have a presence (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Sophie described how gender dynamics contributed to a minimization of support work in the Libraries and reinforced a general dismissiveness around teaching. She explained,

> I think sometimes, people see [teaching] librarians as 'less than.' Like, 'Oh, isn't that cute, you work with the undergrads, and we deal with the serious researchers and graduate students'.... They imagine the work we do is simple or easy because it's 'just teaching,' or it is 'just undergrads' but it is not. We have an extra layer of accountability because we are not just working with campus constituents but are expected to be experts within our library about teaching and we have this accountability to colleagues. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Sophie highlighted the intersecting dynamics of gender, age, and experience that contributed to the disempowerment of her unit within the organization. She observed that teaching librarians were often women in the early stages of their careers, while subject and technology-focused librarians

tended to be more established and often held tenure. This disparity led to a perception that teaching librarians carried “less weight” in the organization (Interview Transcript, 2023). As the leader of a teaching unit, Sophie considered it her responsibility to validate and enhance the regard for teaching within the Libraries (Personal Statement, 2019).

Sophie also identified a gendered aspect in the expectations and behaviors associated with managerial roles, noting different norms for men and women managers. She described feeling pressured to handle tasks like coordinating catering, sending email reminders, and organizing meetings, which were not expected of her male peers. Sophie explained,

> I think there's a gender component in terms of busyness, like who's allowed to be busy and who has to be the one to move on their calendar…. My male peers feel very comfortable, saying things like, 'Oh, I'm just not good at catering'…. I feel like I have to advocate for myself to be at the table versus like, 'Oh, of course you're here!' (Interview Transcript, 2023)

This pattern reflects how broader societal patterns around gender roles extend into feminized organizations, such as libraries. Additionally, Sophie noted a disparity in both recognition and compensation between men and women managers in the Libraries. She explained, "There are not a lot of penalties for being a bad or uncaring manager, but there is not a lot of incentive or value for the care that the work takes either" (Interview Transcript, 2023). She articulated how she invested significant time, effort, and energy into coaching her supervisees and writing thoughtful annual evaluations, only to look over and see a man who is “doing a similar job but with half the amount of work that [she] put into just breathing,” and yet, she shared, “he is paid the same as me, or maybe even more” (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Faculty Status

When Sophie had started the interim department head position, she was in the process of applying for promotion from Assistant to associate professor with tenure. At that time, Sophie was

the only tenure-track faculty member in the Libraries supervising other untenured faculty. This situation posed challenges for Sophie, and she felt uneasy mentoring her direct reports through retention reviews and promotions before she had successfully navigated the process. She questioned, “I’m what, maybe two years ahead of someone I’m supervising? How am I supposed to support people on their second retention review when I’m still new to it myself?” (Interview Transcript, 2023). She also struggled to contextualize her management experience in her dossier, describing her supervisory responsibilities as service and leadership to the Libraries and campus community (Personal Statement, 2019).

Sophie shared the complexity of balancing her roles as a manager and a faculty member, highlighting how the dueling expectations felt particularly salient during her faculty promotion process. She expressed that being a "good manager is a full-time job," yet she also had meet obligations as a faculty member, emphasizing that she could not “stop doing one to fulfill the other” (Interview Transcript, 2023). This dual role required her to manage the invisible emotional labor of caring for her team while also meeting the expectations of her faculty position, including research and publishing. While supervision felt “meaningful” to Sophie because it supported and enabled the work of others, pursuing her own research felt “selfish,” yet as a faculty member, she had to fulfill both roles without compromising her values or standards in either (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Now tenured and ranked as an associate professor, Sophie has found it challenging to maintain momentum in her research and publishing. She explained how “personal scholarship is always the thing that takes the back seat” to the more “important” work of supervising and management (Interview Transcript, 2023). Although Sophie will be eligible to apply for full professor in a few years, she admitted that the expectations of management do not “fit naturally”

with the responsibilities of a faculty member. She also explained how this situation felt unique to librarians,

> Maybe [an academic faculty member is] a department chair for 2 or 3 years. But [in] libraries, once you move into management, you don't move back out…. [Librarians] call ourselves faculty, but I don't know that… faculty in a discipline see us as 'faculty' in the same way.... I feel that [identity crisis around being a] manager versus a faculty member, and [I wonder] where do I fit? (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Learning Analytics

Sophie's perspective on learning analytics stemmed from her experience teaching full-semester academic courses. She noted the vast amount of data collected about students in the Learning Management System (LMS), such as their time spent engaging with course materials. Although Sophie understood the interest and enthusiasm around learning analytics, she was wary of reducing students to numbers and questioned the ethical implications of such practices. She explained, "When you turn students into numbers, it erodes beneficence and justice and respect for the person and becomes easier and easier to do that. It sets a precedent for what you do next" (Interview Transcript, 2023). She expressed concerns about learning analytics positioning engagement as a proxy for learning, highlighting that a student may have a browser open without actively engaging with the content.

Although there was interest at UESC among university and library administrators in learning analytics, there was no clear direction or program in place. Sophie explained,

> I have this very clear memory of going to a session about [learning analytics software] and the Provost announcing, 'We are doing this!'… and then I never heard about it again. But that has kind of been how the university has operated…. There is no closure, and then it is on to another thing. So, it feels like we are in a holding pattern. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Sophie described how this "holding pattern" also extended to the professional community, where there has been "a lot of discussion [about learning analytics], but not a lot of direction about what to actually do in [a situation involving learning analytics]." She offered, "I can imagine myself

saying, ‘This is what I value,’ but then looking at the tools available to me and not being able to honor those values” (Interview Transcript, 2023). Even so, if the library was asked to contribute personally identified data to a learning analytics system, she questioned if she, or the leaders above her, would be able to resist. Although she recognized that there were limits to the political and social capital that library administrators could expend, she questioned how the implications of the decisions about learning analytics might shape future policy and practice,

> [Learning analytics] is presented as a technical consideration, like 'What data [is the library] able to collect?' But coming from a teaching background, it feels like an ethical consideration because the data is not just data, it is students… but my question would be, how are we centering humanity in this conversation? What does this set a precedent for next? (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Case Report 6: Madison

Madison (she/her) is a White-identified mid-career professional with fifteen years of experience as an academic librarian, gained at various institutions. As the Head of the Teaching and Learning Department for the University of East North Central (UENC) Libraries, Madison oversees the Libraries’ online and in-person instructional program for undergraduate students; designs and delivers professional development around teaching for librarians and library staff; provides leadership in the areas of teaching and assessment of student learning; works with academic faculty to integrate information literacy in their courses; collaborates with leadership to support strategic initiatives for the Libraries; and supervises a team of nine faculty librarians and staff (Position Description, 2022).

The UNEC is a PWI that supports a student population of 50,000 undergraduate and 15,000 graduate students. UENC librarians are integrated into the professorial system for the university, which includes promotion through the faculty ranks and tenure. Madison holds the rank of associate professor with tenure. In her eligibility survey, Madison identified herself and the UENC

institution as “emergent/beginning to explore learning analytics” and she was unsure of how to classify the UENC Libraries' relationship to learning analytics (See Tables 5-6 in Appendix D). The documents in Madison’s case record include her eligibility survey, the transcript of our 90-minute interview, the personal statement she submitted in support of her application for promotion and tenure, and her current position description (see Table 1 in Appendix K).

Professional Identity

Madison’s journey into librarianship began as an hourly student employee at her campus library, where she first encountered academic librarians. After graduating with her bachelors degree, she completed an MA in Religious Studies program before deciding to further her education with an MLIS degree. After completing her MLIS, Madison accepted a position as the head of technical services in a small public library. A year later, she transitioned back to academia, taking a collection development role at a small liberal arts college, where she remained for several years. Subsequently, Madison moved into a reference librarian position at a regional campus of a larger university, gradually progressing to become the director of the branch library.

Madison faced challenges when transitioning from a “peer and colleague to supervisor,” and described inherent power differential as "weird and uncomfortable" (Interview Transcript, 2023). Despite maintaining positive relationships with her colleagues, the shift in the dynamics of their relationships was difficult. Eventually, Madison relocated to accept her current position as Head of the Teaching and Learning Department at UENC Libraries. Madison found the experience of being hired into a management role from outside of the institution “less complicated” than being promoted internally, which made her feel more comfortable navigating the expectations and responsibilities of management (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Madison identified herself as a “lifelong student,” and earned a Ph.D. in Education while

working full-time as an academic librarian. She was drawn to a career in academia because she "enjoys being in a community of scholars at multiple levels," which included colleagues, students, and the broader professional community (Interview Transcript, 2023). Although she appreciated her early career experience in a public library, she has found the most meaningful and rewarding aspect of her career to be working with undergraduate students. She explained,

> I have pretty much always specialized in undergraduate students…. My own scholarship reflects this as well, [I like] helping students to become part of a scholarly community, even if it's transient in nature.… I find supporting [student] learning to be personally and professionally satisfying and intellectually fulfilling. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Madison views herself as a scholar-practitioner and described her research as "understanding how students whose identities have traditionally been marginalized to experience the library, and develop their information literacy, with a desire to enable success for these students" (Personal Statement, 2021). Madison identified herself as an "interpreter, mediator, and coach," and explained how teaching intersected with and amplified her personal values around critical thinking, interrogating and deconstructing systems of power, supporting information access and freedom, individual identity and experience, and lifelong learning (Personal Statement, 2021; Interview Transcript, 2023).

Gender Identity and Leadership

When asked if her current position as a department head at UENC Libraries is the "job she imagined for herself" at the start of her career, Madison replied,

> I actually do think so. I was talking to a [friend from library school] last week and we were both stressed out about [our work], but we looked at each other and said, 'But this is exactly what we wanted.' This is what we dreamed about when we were in library school and sending out 45 applications hoping we would hear back from anyone. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Madison's journey as a manager has been marked by valuable lessons and a growing comfort in her managerial identity. One of her early realizations as supervisor was that "not everyone thinks

or is motivated in the same way," which prompted her to adapt her management approach to accommodate the diverse perspectives and expectations of her team (Interview Transcript, 2023). Madison described her guiding principles around management as ensuring that her team feels supported and advocated for and creating a work environment where the members of her team feel safe to take risks without fear of punishment if things do not go as planned (Interview Transcript, 2023). She emphasized the importance of being a resource and sounding board for her supervisees, ensuring they know they have someone to turn to in challenging situations. Ultimately, her goal was for each member of her team to feel valued, understood, and "confident that everything will work out" (Interview Transcript, 2023).

For Madison, the most fulfilling aspect of supervision was assisting her direct reports in achieving their goals. She drew parallels between the joy she felt helping a student discover a research topic and the satisfaction she gained from guiding her team through a challenging professional situation. She explained, "I love helping people determine what they are going to say yes to and to figure out their 'why'…. I find that problem-solving and strategy, both individually and collectively, to be rewarding" (Interview Transcript, 2023). Because UENC was a large institution with more than 60,000 students, it was impossible for the UENC Libraries to meet the needs of every student. For Madison, the joy was in the puzzle of strategizing and problem-solving to identify projects that aligned with the Libraries' goals and also met the individual needs, ambitions, and interests of the members of her team (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Madison identified herself as a "people leader" and described how her gender identity felt most salient in the intersection in her work between "people and services." She explained, "A lot of the work [my department does] is service and educationally oriented and, of course, education and teaching has always been a feminized profession" (Interview Transcript, 2023). As the leader

of a teaching-focused unit, Madison felt a sense of responsibility to raise the profile of teaching in the Libraries and the broader institution. Consequently, it was important to Madison that her unit be perceived as “thriving and successful,” particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic in which financial resources were limited. One way that she measured success was through her ability to secure resources for her unit, such as obtaining new staff and faculty lines, or funding new programs and initiatives (Interview Transcript, 2023). Madison also leveraged research and scholarship to elevate the unit's work, viewing inquiry into teaching and learning as a “rich” area for both practical application and academic exploration. In a field where service-oriented roles are often undervalued, Madison has taken a calculated approach; using the levers of neoliberalism, namely profit and prestige, to garner recognition and respect for her unit's contributions and achievements (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Although Madison had “always envisioned” herself advantaging into higher levels of leadership, her career aspirations were tempered after experiencing challenges related to long COVID-19, including persistent brain fog and fatigue. Despite receiving work accommodations, such as limiting her meeting participation, Madison struggled to place boundaries around her work to attend to her health and well-being. She noted that pursuing higher leadership roles would likely require physical relocation and a shift away from direct involvement with students, which she deeply valued. She explained,

> I had always envisioned myself [in higher levels of leadership], but at this point, I have no desire to do so…. Aside from just being unwell… [advancing in] academics requires relocation, and I love where I live and do not want to move. To advance, even to the associate dean level, I would have to give up [working with students]…. If I were to have that taken away,… I would be absolutely miserable. Maybe there will come a point in my life when that is okay, but I haven’t reached that point. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

As a middle manager, Madison appreciated the “balance” of her position, which offered some of the advantages of leadership but maintained her connections to the "hands-on work.” Although

advancement offered opportunities, it would also require personal and professional sacrifices that she was not yet prepared to make (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Faculty Status

Madison's work as a scholar-practitioner is a crucial aspect of her professional identity (Personal Statement, 2021). At UENC Libraries, librarian faculty are allotted research days or unassigned professional time, with an expectation of dedicating one day per week to scholarship. As a manager, Madison is especially protective of this time, recognizing that her scholarly identity is integral to her job satisfaction and overall well-being. She explained, "I'm protective of that [time] because if I had that scholarly identity taken away from me, I'm going to be miserable" (Interview Transcript, 2023). For Madison, one of the benefits of remaining at her current level in the organization is that it enables her to carve out time for research, which would be "nearly impossible" at higher levels of leadership. However, protecting that time has been challenging and requires ongoing negotiation and effort (Interview Transcript, 2023).

In Madison's previous position, she held faculty rank equivalent to associate professor with tenure. When she joined the UENC Libraries, Madison was a well-established professional with a strong track record of continued teaching, service, and scholarship. She had reached the candidacy stage in her Ph.D. program and was also serving as Editor-in-Chief of a prominent journal in her field. During salary negotiations for her position at UENC, Madison advocated strongly for the rank of associate professor. However, she was informed that the institution "does not bring anyone in at the associate professor rank, ever, except for associate deans" (Interview Transcript, 2023). Instead, Madison was appointed at the rank of assistant professor with a standard timeline for promotion set at six years. She explained,

> Since I started in December of the year, my tenure clock started on January 1st of the previous year. [During negotiations, I requested that I receive credit for 3 publications that

> had been published that year]. They said, 'You can negotiate that when you get here with the Appointment, Promotion, and Tenure committee.' So, I came here, and then I was told, 'Oh, no. Prior service credits had to be put into your offer letter.' So, I started at square one. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

For Madison, her appointment at a lowered rank was motivated by her gender identity and the general devaluation of the work and scholarship of teaching. She recounted an incident where UNEC Libraries brought in a visiting professor, a male-identified librarian, who was appointed at the associate professor level with tenure. She explained,

> I have no negative feelings towards him. He didn't cause any of this… but I spent 5 years in the tenure track as a department head while finishing my Ph.D. and having to pump out scholarship… only to find out that our [policies] allowed them to bring me in at the associate professor Level. I felt like I had been completely misled (Interview Transcript, 2023).

As an assistant professor in a department head position, Madison supervised faculty at and above her rank, while balancing the responsibilities of her managerial role with scholarly expectations for promotion. Despite successfully earning tenure and promotion to associate professor, Madison now faces additional hurdles in applying for promotion to full professor. She described, "It is not the work I did before I got promoted [to associate] doesn't count anymore. But I have to work so much harder now because many of my big achievements were pre-tenure" (Interview Transcript, 2023). She also highlighted the time and effort required to demonstrate impact as a department head, emphasizing that her contributions are often realized through the long-term development of programs and initiatives, which is difficult to quantify and communicate in a promotional dossier (Personal Statement, 2021; Interview transcript, 2023). If Madison's initial appointment in the Libraries had been at associate professor, her professional accomplishments and publications since joining UENC would likely have already qualified her to apply for full professor. Instead, she has to "move mountains to meet this completely unrealistic bar because, at the beginning of it all, they did not value [her] work or worth" (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Learning Analytics

Madison explained that a few years ago, the UENC Libraries showed interest in learning analytics and took steps to find potential partners for a multi-institutional project on this topic. However, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to several staff departures and a need to focus on more immediate tasks, this enthusiasm waned (Interview Transcript, 2023). While the university was part of a national consortium actively engaged in learning analytics research and programs, there has not been a consistent or concerted effort within the institution to pursue learning analytics (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Madison raised concerns about the divisive nature of discussions surrounding learning analytics in the profession, noting a disproportionate focus on individual success predictors over broader systemic factors. Coming from an educational research background, she emphasized the importance of understanding the societal and educational systems that can either enable or hinder student success (Personal Statement, 2021). While she recognized the potential of learning analytics in uncovering patterns and trends related to student success, Madison highlighted the need for a middle ground that considers both individual and systemic factors (Interview Transcript, 2023). She noted that research on student success tends to focus on understanding and "disentangling" the underlying societal, economic, and political mechanisms that impact student behavior, rather than attempting to direct or redirect an individual student's actions. Even so, Madison expressed a nuanced stance on learning analytics, emphasizing the importance of using technology to advance social and educational research while also holding high standards for ethical data collection, storage, and usage practices (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Madison expressed concerns about learning analytics, highlighting potential issues such as privacy violations and a deficit orientation that places undue scrutiny on individuals, rather than

examining institutional accountability. She critiqued “normative practices” in research, noting that they often favor privileged identities, which may lead to increased surveillance and punitive measures for students who hold marginalized identities (Interview Transcript, 2023). She also questioned how frequently learning analytics would be used to analyze institutional shortcomings, rather than solely focusing on student behavior. She explained,

> I see the [current learning analytics conversation] coming from a deficit perspective, where we're telling students that they need to be fixed or remediated to be ‘successful.’ I want to know how often this data [is being] turned to look at what's going wrong at the institutional level? [Are we examining how] the institution is failing the learner? Instead, [learning analytics seems to be focused on] ‘here are all the ways the learner is behaving badly, and thus creating poor outcomes.’ (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Despite her reservations, Madison acknowledged the importance of engaging in conversations about learning analytics within the professional community. She emphasized the need for librarians to actively participate in these discussions, even if they are not fully supportive of learning analytics. She advocated for finding compromises to navigate the challenges posed by learning analytics and emphasized the necessity of being proactive and strategic in addressing ethical concerns while recognizing the reality of operating within neoliberal institutional frameworks. She explained,

> [Learning analytics] is going to happen with or without us. If [librarians] are the constant [antagonist] in these conversations, we are not going to be effective in making any kind of transformation or compromise. We are not going to stop the train…. I'm not saying we shouldn't attempt to slow the train down and be more intentional, strategic, and ethical, but I think we have to show up. Sitting at the top of an ethical ivory tower and glaring down doesn’t help anybody (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Case Report 7: Bailey

Bailey (she/her) is a mid-career professional who holds a minoritized racial identity. She has nearly 20 years of experience as an academic librarian, gained at various institutions. As the Head of Teaching and Outreach at the University of Pacific West Coast (UPWC), Bailey manages

the Libraries' information literacy instruction program for undergraduate students; serves as coordinator to lower division writing programs; leads information literacy instruction sessions; delivers professional development around teaching and learning for librarians and library staff; develops and sustains partnerships with campus programs; coordinates outreach programming; provides reference services; and supervises four librarians, two full-time staff members, and several hourly student workers (Position Description, 2022).

UPWC is an MSI that supports a student population of 28,000 undergraduate and 6,000 graduate students. UPWC librarians, academic faculty, and academic professionals are represented by a labor union and their work is covered under a contractual bargaining agreement (CBA). UPWC librarians participate in a parallel faculty system that includes promotion through librarian ranks and a tenure equivalent. In her eligibility survey, Bailey identified the UPWC institution as "engaged in small-scale learning analytics activities" and was unsure of how to classify her or the UPWC Libraries' relationships to learning analytics (See Tables 5-6 in Appendix D). The documents in Bailey's case record include her eligibility survey, the transcript of our 90-minute interview, the cover letter and diversity statement she submitted in support of her application for her current position, her current position description, and the CBA for the Librarians unit of the UPWC faculty union (see Table 1 in Appendix K).

Professional Identity

Bailey's journey into academic librarianship began by "being a Ph.D. program dropout" (Interview Transcript, 2023). After earning a bachelor's degree in English and spending a few years teaching abroad, she wrote to her academic advisors to ask for career advice, and they recommended that she go to graduate school in Literature. During her doctoral studies, Bailey worked as a student worker at her university library, which is how she discovered librarianship.

She appreciated that the academic librarians she worked with supported learning through reference and teaching. The experience prompted her to take a leave of absence from her Ph.D. program and pursue an MLIS, which she completed after permanently leaving the Ph.D. program (Interview Transcript, 2023).

After earning her MLIS, Bailey taught writing courses as an adjunct instructor and volunteered at a local academic library, which eventually led to her being hired as the head of a branch library for the institution. As she described, "I think this was unusual, because my first actual professional position was a management-level position. My title was just to be a liaison librarian, but I was supervising two full-time staff, about ten student workers, and a whole facility" (Interview Transcript, 2023). After more than a decade in that position, Bailey began looking for opportunities that would bring her closer to her family, which is how she became the Head of Teaching and Outreach at UPWC Libraries.

Throughout her career, Bailey has emphasized the importance of the library in supporting student success, especially for students who hold under-represented identities (Cover Letter, 2016). Her personal ethics center on mentorship, care, lifelong learning, accountability, vulnerability, advocacy, transparency, trust, and active listening (Diversity Statement, 2016; Interview Transcript, 2023). As an educator in libraries, Bailey has led credit-bearing courses, one-shot information literacy sessions, workshops, and other educational programs. Her work as a librarian, encompassing roles as both a middle manager and a teacher, focuses on learning, growth, inquiry, curiosity, and inclusion (Cover Letter, 2016).

Bailey perceived her role as a middle manager as being delineated into two main areas: proactive planning and reactive responses (Interview Transcript, 2023). As a manager, Bailey prioritized setting and working toward long-term goals for her department. However, the daily

reality of her positional responsibilities meant that she was often pulled away from "strategic" work to focus on "putting out fires." She explained, "Every day, things come up. We are short-staffed to the [extent] that middle managers, like me, are still doing reference and teaching" (Interview Transcript, 2023). Bailey described how her management role felt like a “constant balancing act” between leadership and librarianship, which often felt incompatible (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Gender Identity and Leadership

For Bailey, the work of middle management centered on communication, which included day-to-day communications with direct reports and also the work of “communicating up” to leadership and “managing expectations back down” to her department (Interview Transcript, 2023). She relied on informal communication networks with peers to exchange information, navigate cultural norms, and ensure effective communication across departments, which she perceived as an act of care and advocacy for her department. It was important to Bailey that her colleagues felt seen, heard, and valued. As a manager, she prioritized developing relationships with direct reports and worked hard to foster an environment where individual perspectives were acknowledged and considered (Interview Transcript, 2023). Bailey viewed her role as a manager as translating the concerns, aspirations, and questions of her direct reports into actionable steps, whether by elevating concerns to higher levels of management or providing a new perspective on a particular issue or challenge (Interview Transcript, 2023).

At the same time, Bailey described how it could be “difficult to offer perspective” to her direct reports when she was not always given full access to information about priorities and decision-making by library leaders (Interview Transcript, 2023). She noted that when leadership does not make a “concerted effort to share power back down,” it hinders the ability of middle

managers to effectively lead their teams and articulated how the lack of transparency can hinder decision-making and strategic planning at all levels of the organization (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Bailey recognized the diversity of experiences within her organization, noting that each individual can have a unique perspective on the same issue. She emphasized the importance of not just "allowing differing opinions to exist," but genuinely valuing and considering different points of view (Interview Transcript, 2023; Diversity Statement, 2016). While she believed the UPWC Libraries' shared her values around advocacy, mentorship, and transparency, she observed a reluctance to change established practices among higher levels of library leaders, which she found frustrating (Interview Transcript, 2023). As a manager, Bailey drew from the example her parents had set in managing their small business, which she defined as "nobody gets stuck with the dirty work." For Bailey, this ethos has manifested in "being the person that says yes." She explained, "I carry that legacy [from my parents into my work].… If somebody can't teach their class, of course, I'm going to volunteer. If I can do it, I am going to pitch in" (Interview Transcript, 2023). While this approach sometimes diverted her time and energy away from strategic thinking, Bailey viewed her acts of service as investments in fostering long-term community and camaraderie within her team.

Bailey discussed the gendered and racial dynamics she encounters when navigating the profession. She described how her minoritized racial identity felt particularly salient at an MSI and highlighted the additional labor she undertakes as a Librarian of Color in providing mentorship and support to students. Bailey articulated how racially minoritized students would "seek her out" at a reference desk or stay after a class to ask for additional support, and how this was both a privilege and a responsibility that she carried that was distinct from her White-identified colleagues

(Interview Transcript, 2023). She also expressed frustration at being tokenized by colleagues, who expected her to carry the responsibility of diversity initiatives. She offered,

> I'm cognizant of my representation in the workforce…. In my previous PWI, I felt my race and ethnicity even more. I was one of four non-White librarians in the entire institution. *Four*. And so, [White colleagues would ask me,] 'Why don't you be on the Diversity team? And why don't you lead this diversity thing?' It was tiring being the one to hold that space. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Bailey emphasized her commitment to social justice, the importance of actively engaging in meaningful conversations about social identity, and her commitment to acknowledging, understanding, and dismantling systems of oppression (Diversity Statement, 2016). Although social justice work was important to Bailey, she experienced racial battle fatigue from the micro- and macro-aggressions she encountered in her workplace and the broader profession (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Because many of the UPWC library leaders were women-identified, Bailey did not "feel gender" as often in her day-to-day work, although she saw the impacts of gender at an organizational level. She described how feminized professions, like librarianship, focus on communal well-being over individual ambitions and this could be weaponized against the library in a neoliberal organization. She explained,

> It is challenging to determine the role on campus. We are not an academic unit, so we are regarded as 'less than.' Our University Librarian is not a dean, so we are somehow less dominant…. I feel [the inequity] in the attitude of faculty being like, 'Oh librarians, they are our service sisters over there.' (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Bailey described the devaluation of librarianship as a "service-oriented profession," and how it was difficult for the library to garner respect and advocate for increased resources, especially in comparison to academic colleges that had easy access to more tangible metrics of success, like student enrollment or graduation rates (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Although Bailey "would like to have more of a say at a campus level," she was hesitant to

pursue higher levels of leadership because of her perception that advancement would move her "even further from the work" (Interview Transcript, 2023). While she saw leadership as valuable, particularly in the opportunities it would offer to create a positive and inclusive work environment, she was reticent to lose her connection to teaching and mentorship. She explained,

> My favorite thing about [leading a] teaching and learning unit… [is that] we tend to have a lot of early-career librarians…. [I value] learning together and sharing what I know. I also like working with students [and] teaching…. When you get to a higher level, it gets into more donor relations and development. I'm not that interested in that…. I really love working with students, especially undergraduates, and that would be hard for me to lose. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Despite finding the dual nature of her middle management position challenging, Bailey valued the close interactions she had with students and colleagues that was afforded by her position. Although she sees herself advancing in the future, she did not feel ready to trade her connection with students for the donor relations, development responsibilities, and political bureaucracy that higher leadership positions often entail (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Faculty Status

Although librarians at UPWC are represented by a faculty union, the provisions of the CBA state that managers cannot oversee other members of the union. As a result, administrators, supervisors, and managers, including Bailey, hold "non-represented" positions. In an effort to ensure fairness in compensation and benefits across the ranks, the faculty union negotiates contracts for both represented and non-represented librarians. The CBA also outlines the policies for faculty work for librarians, including the expectations for appointment, promotion, and tenure equivalent, which guides the work of both parties (CBA for UPWC Librarians, 2019; Interview Transcript, 2023).

Bailey was appointed into her current position at the rank of associate professor without tenure. She noted this situation was common at her institution, where it was rare for librarians to

be appointed with tenure. The UPWC librarian faculty system also differed slightly from traditional systems. While most faculty processes carry expectations for three areas (teaching/librarianship, research, and service), her institution included a "fourth bucket" for professional activity outside of the library, which encompassed various activities, such as contributions to professional organizations or creative endeavors that benefited the profession (CBA for UPWC Librarians, 2019). Bailey observed that the flexibility of the criterion allowed for a more diverse range of contributions and did not require librarians to excel equally in all areas at all times. As a result, there had been “seasons” when Bailey was more focused on service, and others when she was more focused on scholarship (Interview Transcript, 2023).

As a manager, Bailey perceived faculty mentorship and supervision as complementary, rather than separate or competing expectations. Most of the librarians in Bailey’s department were early in their careers, and she described mentorship as an integral and rewarding component of her job. However, prioritizing mentorship often meant setting aside her personal and professional goals to make space to develop those relationships. Bailey explained, “I have personal goals, but those are not on fire. They are in the background and can be addressed anytime. Or I could take my Saturday off to devote time” (Interview Transcript, 2023). While Bailey valued opportunities for personal scholarship, she emphasized that mentorship and supervision were more significant priorities and that she perceived her own scholarship to be less important than leading her unit (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Learning Analytics

Bailey faced challenges in navigating the emerging discussions around learning analytics on her campus. Despite being perceived as the “go-to person” for educational technologies in the library, she often found herself excluded from the decision-making process regarding these

technologies (Interview Transcript, 2023). She also noted discrepancies between the rhetoric of prioritizing student success and the actual allocation of resources within the institution and the Libraries. Bailey explained, “I hear all the time that student success is super important. Is it though? Because I don’t see my department growing. I see the departments growing that get research grants and do data curation. So, who is succeeding here?” (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Bailey expressed skepticism about the intentions behind learning analytics, seeing them as part of a broader trend to commodify education and mold students into a predefined model of “success” that was aligned with neoliberal and capitalist goals (Interview Transcript, 2023). She also questioned the effectiveness of measuring academic success through traditional metrics such as GPA. She explained, “I help a lot of students who I know are failing. But that doesn’t mean that the service I’m providing is not worthwhile. Just because it isn’t correlated with GPA doesn’t mean it doesn’t hold value” (Interview Transcript, 2023). Although she understood the “pressure” that university leaders are under to “provide accountability” she observed, "every time we've done this to any kind of education, K-12 or otherwise when we have tried to quantify and define success by quantitative metrics, we’ve messed it up” (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Despite her reservations, Bailey was concerned about the library being “left out” of the conversation around learning analytics on her campus. Bailey described how UPWC was in the process of adopting Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) cards for students, which would expand the institution's ability to track and monitor student locations. Although there were discussions about "linking" library systems with the broader information being collected by the RFIDs, there were concerns from some librarians and staff about how those decisions might compromise user data privacy (Interview Transcript, 2023). Even so, Bailey expressed concerns about the fallout if the library elected not to participate in the system. She offered,

> My concern is if the institution decides they are going to define student success in this very particular way using this data that they have or don't have access to…. If [the Libraries] aren't a part of the conversation, does that mean we are going to be shut out? We eventually lose importance on campus and maybe funding after that? (Interview Transcript, 2023)

While Bailey expressed a reluctance to let "external metrics and numbers" drive the values, mission, and services of the library, she worried that resistance, especially in this early stage of learning analytics discussion, might have long-term ramifications, reducing the organizational power and compromising the financial stability of the library (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Case Report 8: Daphne

Daphne (she/her) is a White-identified late-career professional with thirty years of experience as an academic librarian gained at various institutions. As the Head of the Online Teaching and Learning Department for Mountain University (MU) Libraries, Daphne oversees student instruction and outreach programs; liaises with campus partners around the teaching and learning needs of the campus community; oversees the information literacy first-year writing and composition program; manages the Libraries' information literacy assessment program; develops online learning tools and resources; and supervises four librarians, three instructional designers, and several student workers (Position Description, 2022).

MU is an MSI that supports a student population of 70,000 undergraduate and 30,000 graduate students. At MU, librarians participate in a parallel faculty system that includes promotion through librarian ranks and a tenure equivalent. Daphne holds the rank of full professor with tenure. In her eligibility survey, Daphne identified herself and the MU Libraries as "engaged in small-scale learning analytics activities" and the MU institution as "actively participating in learning analytics" (See Tables 5-6 in Appendix D). The documents in Daphne's case record include her eligibility survey, the transcript of our 90-minute interview, the instructional charter she drafted for the MU Libraries teaching program, and her current position description (see Table

1 in Appendix K).

Professional Identity

Daphne's journey into librarianship began during her undergraduate studies in secondary education. Although she had intended to teach K-12 social studies, a one-hour library science class completely shifted her perspective. She found it incredibly powerful, realizing the potential of information to empower individuals in various aspects of life (Interview Transcript, 2023). Daphne took additional library science courses out of curiosity, especially drawn to the capacity of librarianship to supplement traditional education with valuable resources and knowledge. Her interest in library science deepened when she secured an hourly research assistant position at the university library, spending significant time at the reference desk. This experience solidified her passion for librarianship, leading her to pursue an MLIS and eventually an Ed.D. in Education. Throughout her career, Daphne has been a subject liaison for social science disciplines, always emphasizing the importance of teaching and supporting students (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Daphne has decades of experience as a subject librarian and has also held various managerial and leadership roles in reference and other public service functions. Just before the COVID-19 pandemic, she was asked to lead a new department at MU Libraries focused on online learning and teaching. Throughout her career, Daphne has maintained a commitment to inclusivity and empowerment of users through information resources and services. She perceived online learning as being connected to this broader mission and emphasized the importance of providing equitable library services to students, regardless of the modality of their learning environment (Interview Transcript, 2023). Daphne explained how she had developed a "charter" for the Libraries' online instruction program that included the statement, "We define ourselves by who we

include, not who we exclude," which had become a guiding mantra for the department (MU Libraries Instructional Charter, 2020).

Daphne's professional ethos revolved around inclusivity, equity, advocacy, connection, community, engagement, communication, and empowerment (Interview Transcript, 2020; MU Libraries Instructional Charter, 2020). She described how librarians must be responsive to the "realities" of the world they operate in, which included identifying areas of need and making meaningful and sustainable contributions to their communities. As a middle manager, Daphne sought to create an organizational environment where everyone could have "agency over their actions and voices" (Interview Transcript, 2023). Her leadership philosophy centered on equipping her team with the resources and support to "make cool stuff," that was meaningful, practical, sustainable, and creative (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Gender Identity and Leadership

Daphne embraced a "servant leader" philosophy, defining her role as helping her direct reports to understand their current position and guiding them toward their desired goals using organizational resources at her disposal (Interview Transcript, 2023). While her responsibilities as a manager were situated "functionally and structurally in the middle of the organization," she felt the impact of her position most acutely in the decrease in her teaching load in recent years. Though her position as a manager has brought "new joys" and fulfillment, particularly through one-on-one supervision, Daphne sometimes found it challenging to balance the responsibilities of leadership with her desire to remain actively involved in teaching, which is the "heart" of her professional identity (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Daphne viewed a crucial aspect of her role as focusing on staff development and growth (Interview Transcript, 2023). Although she observed that many library administrators "slow down

tremendously" in scholarship once they reached the later stages of their careers, she viewed the integration of research and practice as one of the most fulfilling, meaningful, and rewarding components of her career as a librarian (Interview Transcript, 2023). Daphne emphasized that as a full professor, her work was "no longer about [individual achievements]." Instead, she focused on cultivating the professional growth of her team. She expressed a willingness to support junior librarians, staff, and students in establishing their scholarly identities, even if it meant taking a back seat in terms of authorship credit (Interview Transcript, 2023). Daphne worked hard to instill a sense of curiosity and commitment to continuous improvement in her team, emphasizing the importance of scholarly inquiry in enhancing practice and contributing to professional development (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Daphne emphasized the significance of relationality, support, mentorship, compassion, communication, and advocacy in her managerial approach (Interview Transcript, 2023). She also reflected on the "profound" impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on the profession, noting that it led many individuals to realize the importance of prioritizing personal well-being and making decisions aligned with their values and goals. She explained, "I think people have come to understand, maybe at a sooner point in their lives than they needed to, that life is short, and we must prioritize what is best for ourselves" (Interview Transcript, 2023). In her role as a manager, Daphne supported her staff in making decisions that may not always align perfectly with institutional goals but were right for the individual. She viewed this as a fundamental aspect of her role, stating, "That is the job. I mean what else is there, right? People have to do what they need to do [for themselves]" (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Faculty Status

As a full professor, Daphne had a well-established and respected record of scholarship.

However, at the beginning of her career, she found the expectations of faculty work challenging, particularly due to her neurodivergence, which she discovered later in life. This “barrier” had led to a reduced confidence in her identity as a scholar, especially around her ability to write and present the results of her research. She shared, “It really wasn't that I couldn't [do research and publish]. It was that I didn’t have the confidence to know that I could” (Interview Transcript, 2023). Daphne's perspective shifted once she realized that research was about learning, improving, and guiding the development of future practice. The connection between scholarship and practice now held immense value for Daphne, and she described it as a grounding force in her approach to both librarianship and management (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Daphne highlighted the benefits of faculty status for librarians, noting that it provided increased opportunities for deep reflection on the profession and enabled advocacy by ensuring librarian representation in campus governance groups (Interview Transcript, 2023). Despite recognizing the benefits, Daphne also acknowledged the inherent flaws of the faculty system, particularly the unequal privileges and power dynamics it created within the institution. She expressed deep concerns about equity, especially regarding fixed-term appointments and non-tenure track faculty lines, as well as the lack of representation for faculty in such positions in governance and decision-making bodies (Interview Transcript, 2023). Daphne advocated for fairness and inclusivity within the organizational structure, advocating for opportunities for multi-year contracts and ensuring that everyone had a voice in shaping their professional path. She used the political and social capital she had earned through her decades of service to the institution to be a vocal advocate for these changes and was heavily involved in efforts to organize and push for fair labor practices (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Learning Analytics

MU has a well-developed learning analytics program that Daphne described as “highly sophisticated” in its’ ability to provide detailed insights into the "student experience” (Interview Transcript, 2023). As Daphne described, the learning analytics program included a compliance officer and a team of analysts who meticulously review data from learning management systems and other educational sources to set alerts for concerning trends, such as high course drop rates among specific demographic groups, as well as targeting individual "interventions" to support students who are struggling academically. These interventions could range from prompting faculty members to reach out to individual students to providing recommendations to students on how to prioritize assignments to maximize their time efficiency (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Daphne highlighted a gap between the well-established learning analytics program at MU and the lack of integration of library metrics within this system. She explained this disconnect stemmed from both institutional disinterest in library information and a cautious approach among library staff regarding the use of student data without a clear understanding of its implications (Interview Transcript, 2023). Daphne shared her own concerns around personally identifiable information included in learning analytics and stressed the importance of IRB training, strong methodological rigor, and adherence to research ethics in any research involving human subjects (Interview Transcript, 2023). Despite her reservations, Daphne expressed a strong desire for the library to be included in conversations around learning analytics on campus. She noted the enthusiasm and energy surrounding data analytics and questioned the long-term consequences for the library if they continued to be excluded from these programs She explained,

> At MU, there is not an interest in including [library metrics in the learning analytics program] in any way, shape, or form.… I just want us to be in that conversation. I want us to be at that table…. Research is imperfect and sometimes it takes experimentation to get to the perfect space… but if metrics become a surrogate for success, what does it say if the

> libraries are not at the table? What kind of future does that leave for us? (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Case Report 9: Hazel

Hazel (she/her) is a White-identified mid-career professional with slightly over ten years of experience as a librarian, gained in various public libraries and academic institutions. As the Head of Teaching and Student Success at the University of South Atlantic (USA) Libraries, Hazel leads information literacy teaching and learning outcomes assessment programs; oversees the development of online instructional materials; provides professional development around teaching for librarians and staff; oversees outreach to campus partners around undergraduate student learning; and supervises a team of four librarians and one staff member (Position Description, 2022).

The USA is an MSI that supports a student population of 21,000 undergraduate and 7,000 graduate students. Although USA librarians are integrated into the professorial system for the university, including promotion through the faculty ranks, they are not eligible for tenure. Hazel was ranked as an assistant professor but had recently submitted her application for promotion to associate professor. In her eligibility survey, she identified the USA institution as "actively participating in learning analytics" and herself and the USA Libraries as "emergent/beginning to explore learning analytics" (See Tables 5-6 in Appendix D). The documents in Hazel's case record include her eligibility survey, the transcript of our 90-minute interview, the personal statement she submitted in support of her application for faculty promotion, and her current position description (see Table 1 in Appendix K).

Professional Identity

Although Hazel planned to become a secondary English teacher, after completing her student teaching, she realized that the K-12 path was not the right fit. During college, while

working as a residence assistant (RA), she discovered a passion for working with undergraduates, especially first- and second-year students. Reflecting on her RA experience, Hazel identified parallels with librarianship, “Being an RA is quite a lot like being a librarian, [especially at a] small liberal arts college [where] the RA was the first person you went to if you had questions… about campus resources… or college life” (Interview Transcript, 2023). After graduating with her BA, Hazel explored her interest in libraries by applying for various library positions, eventually securing a paraprofessional position at a small liberal arts college library. The director of the library recognized her interest in librarianship and encouraged her to pursue an MLIS degree. Throughout her MLIS program, Hazel continued her paraprofessional work and also gained experience in community colleges and public libraries through volunteering. After graduating, Hazel accepted an assistant branch manager position in a large public library. Although she valued the public library's connection to the community, she missed working directly with students.

Although Hazel had a strong desire to work in an academic library, she faced challenges in “breaking into” academic librarianship. She was limited geographically and it was difficult for her to find a local position that fit her experiences and interests (Interview Transcript, 2023). Fortunately, a professional contact from a national service organization was able to offer her an adjunct position at USA Libraries, which was located nearby. Although the position was part-time and held a limited-term contract, Hazel was grateful for any opportunity to get “back in academic libraries” (Interview Transcript, 2023). Over time, Hazel progressed within the organization, advancing from an adjunct to a full-time teaching librarian, to assistant head of her department, and eventually to Head of Teaching and Learning. As a “teaching-focused librarian,” Hazel has dedicated her career to “supporting the learning and success of students” (Interview Transcript,

2023). Although her time in the classroom has been reduced since moving into management, she described her commitment to teaching as a guiding force in her career (Personal Statement, 2022).

Gender Identity and Leadership

As a manager, Hazel valued equity, accountability, support, agency, transparency, and advocacy. She viewed her role in the organization as facilitating the success of her team by providing a vision, setting them up for success, and removing obstacles in their way (Personal Statement, 2022). Hazel perceived the work of a manager to be less of "telling people what to do," instead focusing her efforts on consulting with her direct reports to help them determine the best outcomes for her situations (Interview Transcript, 2023). However, Hazel sometimes found it difficult to find a balance between her desire to extend autonomy to members of her team and the accountability she felt toward the organization. She explained how she felt squeezed between her desire to give a "wide latitude" to her direct reports, and the responsibility to "demonstrate impact" about the work of her unit to library and campus administrators, describing it as "being squeezed from both sides" (Interview Transcript, 2023).

As a department head, Hazel felt like a "mother hen" who was "trying to protect her team from things that might be encroaching on their time." She found it difficult to find a "middle ground" in her position, which required long-term vision and planning but also necessitated near constant logistical and administrative tasks, such as signing off on timesheets and approving travel requests (Interview Transcript, 2023). Despite the challenges, Hazel had "found a lot of meaning" in her management work and aspired to higher leadership positions, hoping to have positional power to effect positive change in the organization by creating a more equitable, just, and inclusive work environment (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Hazel also reflected on how gender dynamics shaped the USA Libraries, particularly

around the expectations for service. She observed that her teaching-focused unit was primarily composed of women-identifying librarians who were in the early stages of their careers, while units that supported faculty research and technology tended to have more male-identifying librarians who were more established in their careers. As a result, the members of her unit carried a disproportionate amount of the "service work," in the library, which included staffing in-person outreach events, performing reference shifts, serving on social and award committees, and participating in governance committees (Interview Transcript, 2023). Hazel also described the responsibility she felt to legitimize and elevate the scholarship and practice of teaching, which she saw as being devalued in the libraries and the organization (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Faculty Status

Hazel had recently submitted her dossier for promotion to associate professor. One of the challenges she faced when compiling her promotion packet was the lack of clarity in the USA faculty promotion guidelines around the responsibilities and expectations for faculty managers. She explained,

> One of the major things I do as a manager is to supervise. But I can't put in my [promotion dossier] 'Oh, I worked through a major performance issue with a member of my staff,' even if it really strongly indicates the strength of my leadership and management. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Hazel described the “tension” in the faculty process for managers and how it was difficult to contextualize, quantify, and articulate the "time-consuming" tasks that went into management, such as leading department meetings, conducting annual reviews, and overseeing the day-to-day work of the unit (Interview Transcript, 2023). She also identified a "disconnect" in the guidelines around the expectations for scholarship, which did not "account for the reality that the scholarly output of managers might be less than someone who is on the frontline" (Interview Transcript, 2023). Hazel observed that it was difficult to find answers to her questions about promotion, noting

that the Appointment, Promotion, and Tenure committee for the library had not had representation from managers in recent years. She explained, "If they can't answer my questions [or] understand my work, how are they going to evaluate it?" (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Hazel expressed frustrations regarding the promotion guidelines that prioritize "highly visible" service and scholarship that takes place at a national level, which made it challenging to solicit volunteers for essential library and institutional service roles (Interview Transcript, 2023). This situation had been compounded by the recent adoption of the faculty promotion guidelines as the standard for annual evaluations. She explained,

> We have started using the [promotion] guidelines for our annual evaluations but there is a lot of tension there, because [to] get an ‘excellent’ in service, you have to have evidence of a national or international reputation. In the span of one year, how do you demonstrate that? It makes sense for a promotion dossier, where you have 6 years' worth of work, but in a single year, how do you translate that? (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Hazel observed that the emphasis on prestige-related activities in the faculty guidelines devalues the necessary but less visible work that contributes to the organization's stability and well-being. She described a recent situation in which one of her direct reports was asked to serve on seven university committees as a direct result of their expertise in online learning. She explained that if she had evaluated that person using the faculty guidelines, their service contributions would have been rated as fair, rather than excellent (Interview Transcript, 2023). Although Hazel found the situation frustrating and discouraging, she felt responsible for following institutional standards of practice and policy, even when they went against her own values. She shared, “It feels like I’m not the final arbiter [on these kinds of decisions]. I make a recommendation, but that is the best I can do” (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Hazel also articulated challenges that emerged from being a junior faculty member who provided direct supervision to other junior faculty members. She highlighted a recent experience

in which she had applied for promotion simultaneously with two librarians in her department. As their supervisor, Hazel was expected to provide mentorship during their promotion journey and provide a formal evaluation of their accomplishments as faculty members for inclusion in their promotion dossiers. This situation felt "incredibly complicated" to Hazel, especially given that she had not yet successfully navigated the promotion process herself (Interview Transcript, 2023). Additionally, Hazel found it challenging to articulate these responsibilities and challenges in her personal statement for promotion. Instead, her personal statement primarily focused on specific markers of her individual success, such as her partnerships with campus units, the number of instruction sessions she had led, the development of specific policies and online learning objects, and her record of presentations and publications (Personal Statement, 2022).

Although Hazel valued the “trappings” of faculty status, including annual funding for professional development, increased opportunities to participate in service and scholarship, and the potential for higher merit rates and promotional increases, she was more concerned with the quality of the relationships between faculty in academic colleges and librarians than “what we are called.” Hazel explained how library work “does not look like other faculty work. It is not worse, or less important, it is just very, very different” (Interview Transcript, 2023). She also observed there are different models for leadership in libraries compared to academic colleges,

> I have observed that among department chairs and other academic units, there is typically a rotating model and the management position is generally not intended to be permanent. So, although they are still maintaining some instructional responsibilities, they are often tenured and have already gone through their promotional process. Whereas for [librarians] it is permanent. Management is not a temporary cessation of our ‘normal teaching responsibilities.’ It supersedes all of our responsibilities (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Hazel articulated that within the profession, “faculty status” is often considered a “proxy for how librarians are viewed. However, as she said, “proxy is not synonymous, right?” (Interview Transcript, 2023). Although she valued her identity as a scholar-practitioner and found many

components of faculty work to be rewarding and meaningful, she questioned if the rewards offered by faculty status were worth the frustrations that she and her colleagues faced in trying to fit their work into the confines of a "faculty mold" (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Learning Analytics

The USA is a *striving* institution, which meant that the university was seeking to increase prestige through increasing institutional rankings (O'Meara, 2007). Hazel explained that a newly appointed campus leader was reshaping the university's culture by prioritizing research and development activities over undergraduate education:

> Right now, the [university administration] is very focused on what graduate students and faculty are doing, and less so on undergraduates. [At the same time,] undergraduate retention numbers have been going down. Nearly a third of our undergraduate students are first-generation [and a] third are Pell-Grant eligible… the nature of students who we are supporting requires that we invest more resources [in student support]. But now we have this conflict with [university administration] who are very focused on research, and not interested in undergraduates. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

At the same time, the institution had recently implemented a university-wide learning analytics platform that could provide detailed analysis of student performance, engagement with support services, and potential relationships between these factors and student success indicators, such as GPA and retention (Interview Transcript, 2023). While the USA Libraries were not currently contributing data to the platform, Hazel believed that participation could enhance the Libraries' ability to make data-driven decisions and allocate resources more effectively, which was crucial amid reductions in funding for student support services (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Hazel is a Ph.D. candidate, and her dissertation research focused on developing a mixed-methods approach to program evaluation and student learning assessment in libraries (Personal Statement, 2022). She was well-versed in LIS research and expressed dissatisfaction with the rigor of the research methods and the strength of the claims around library usage and student success.

She explained, “There is an entire body of research trying to prove the relationship between a single library instruction session, or a single [reference] consultation, and increased GPA [but the relationship] doesn’t exist.” (Interview Transcript, 2023). Hazel recognized the potential value of learning analytics in strengthening the rigor of LIS research by collecting more data and using advanced analysis methods to better determine and communicate how the library contributes to predictors of student success (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Hazel was also motivated by the “reality” that “eventually, the USA Libraries might not have a choice [about whether or not to participate in learning analytics].” She explained,

> It hasn't come down to the point of the [campus administrators] manually checking with all the student success units on campus to ask, 'Have you done this yet?' but I wouldn't be surprised if we got to that point. I don't know that we are going to have a choice politically, or even practically [about our involvement] …. If [campus leadership] says, 'we expect that Libraries to participate [in learning analytics],' What are we supposed to do? (Interview Transcript, 2023)

Hazel expressed frustration with internal discussions about learning analytics in the libraries. She noted having to "control the message” around learning analytics, due to colleagues outside of her department raising “privacy flags” despite not being directly impacted or involved with students (Interview Transcript, 2023). While she acknowledged and understood concerns around privacy as a “central tenant of librarianship,” Hazel believed the potential benefits of learning analytics warranted a thorough discussion (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Hazel also described how her attitude toward learning analytics was shaped by her role in the organization. She shared,

> I understand that people feel deeply [about privacy] and are wary of ‘tracking students.’ But I feel like, [those highly resistant people] are sometimes separated from the [fiscal reality of the university]…. It is just easier to be opposed when you aren’t seeing colleagues getting laid off…. [Learning analytics] has been proven to be a way to help keep students on track, help them to succeed, and be retained, which saves jobs. So, for me, that is motivation to do whatever it takes to keep students enrolled. (Interview Transcript, 2023)

As a manager, Hazel felt responsible for her team, and learning analytics offered a solution to a problem she was facing in the organization. She observed that the university was under-resourcing student success offices but was willing to invest in expanding and strengthening the learning analytics program (Interview Transcript, 2023). From her perspective, participating in the program could help the Libraries to make evidence-based decisions about where to direct their limited fiscal and human resources to best support students in need, and in so doing, strengthen the organizational stability and financial security of the Libraries. She explained, “We can’t steer the conversation [around learning analytics] if we aren’t a part of it. If we are a part of the process, maybe we can make sure it is done right” (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Hazel acknowledged the potential benefits of learning analytics for the Libraries but raised concerns, particularly regarding equity and social justice. She expressed awareness of how her positionality and social identities influenced her positive perspective on learning analytics. Hazel noted that learning analytics often focuses on individual actors, potentially diverting attention from broader institutional and systemic inequalities. She also highlighted research indicating that students who held marginalized identities had heightened concerns about data privacy. While she acknowledged these “real, legitimate, and important concerns,” Hazel viewed the Libraries' future involvement in learning analytics as unavoidable, stating, “Ultimately, are we even going to have a choice? To a certain extent, this future, it is inevitable” (Interview Transcript, 2023).

Chapter 5: Cross Case Findings

In determining findings for this study, I drew from the methodological frameworks of Merriam (1988, 2009) and Stake (1995, 2006). From a Stakeian perspective, qualitative researchers create rather than uncover new knowledge and work with their case(s) to co-construct truth. Each case study is situational and contextual, informed by both the "inquirer" and the "inquired-into" (Mertens, 2020, p. 19). Case studies rely heavily on a researcher's "intuition and interpretation," which are shaped by their individual experiences, proximity to the research subjects, and understanding of the research question(s) (Stake, 1995, p. 47). Although a case study could be presented from many different vantages, there is "no way to establish, beyond contention, the best view" (Stake, 1995, p. 108). As a result, a case study is unique to the researcher and research subjects; if two researchers were presented with the same data, which had been collected and analyzed in the same way, the resulting case reports and findings would necessarily differ. The beauty of case research is its inimitability; the circumstances and boundaries of a case can be neither replicated nor reconstructed.

The cross-case findings mirror the individual case reports by offering four thematic sections focusing on professional identity, gender identity and leadership, faculty status, and learning analytics. Structuring the cross-case findings in this manner was an intentional choice aimed at improving readability, facilitating comparisons between the cross-case findings and individual cases, and maintaining focus on the research questions and theoretical framework guiding the study. This iterative approach allows readers to leverage insights from individual cases and generate deeper understandings at the cross-case level, enhancing the internal validity and strengthening the overall findings from this study.

Each focus area includes *themes*, identified by their overall *indication* among the cases,

which can be understood as a combined factor of intensity and frequency (Stake, 2006). Each theme was categorized as low, middling, or high in each case (see "Table 2" in Appendix L). To be elevated to a cross-case finding, a theme must have been identified as high or "middling" in two-thirds (n=6) of the cases; signifying the salience, prevalence, and prominence of the theme within the quintain (Stake, 2006). Following the discussion of the themes, I present five *assertions*, which capture a core experience shared by all participants, indicated prominently across all cases, focus areas, and themes. A research matrix that presents each theme and the levels of indication within and across cases is presented in Appendix L; these can also be referenced with the individual case reports in Chapter 4. Most quotes and paraphrases are from Chapter 4, but the case records have additional valuable material not included in the reports. The cross-case findings incorporate selected quotes from this broader source, especially when a quote adds depth to a theme but could pose a risk to the participant if included in their case report.

Focus Area 1: Exploring Professional Identity in Academic Librarianship

In this study, professional identity refers to how participants encounter, conceptualize, understand, construct, extend, and evaluate themselves as professionals, including their career decisions, professional and educational pathways, and ethical frameworks (Walter, 2008). All nine participants were employed in academic research libraries, with eight identifying as academic librarians. Across the cases, three common themes emerged: respect for library values, dedication to teaching, reticence to advance in their careers due to their identities as practitioners, and the dual roles of librarians and managers.

Embracing Library Values

The American Library Association (2004) identifies the core values of librarianship as information privacy, information access, democracy, education and lifelong learning, intellectual

freedom, diversity, preservation, professionalism, the public good, service, social responsibility, and sustainability (see Appendix C). Participants in this study embraced these principles alongside personal values such as trust, advocacy, creativity, community, collaboration, and transparency, which are drawn from the interviews and their personal statements. Professional values influenced participants' decision-making processes, placed boundaries around how they spent their time and energy, influenced their willingness to support library and campus programs, and shaped the way they understood themselves and others. Their integration of these values was evidenced by how they employed value-laden language to describe even routinized administrative tasks, such as purchasing equipment for staff or completing expense reports. For example, a participant explained how purchasing an air filter for a staff member "aligned" with her personal and professional values around reciprocity and service. Another described the time she spent preparing for meetings with direct reports as an act of "service" that demonstrated respect for the time, labor, and energy of that individual. One participant went so far as to explain how she felt "no separation between the personal and the professional," and how it was difficult for her to establish where her ethical convictions ended, and the moral principles of the profession began.

Although this level of integration might suggest a tendency toward *vocational awe*, or the belief that libraries are inherently good and that personal sacrifice by library workers is necessary to enable and extend the sacred work of libraries (Ettarh, 2018), participants were highly self-aware and circumspect about the extent to which the values of the profession influenced their beliefs and behaviors. Participants in this study believed in the mission of libraries, felt that their work contributed positively to that mission, *and* expressed wariness about how these beliefs could be weaponized against workers; both themselves and members of their teams. They spoke often about how they worked hard to avoid mission creep, advocated for resources, and tried to "protect"

their direct reports from overwork and exploitation by the organization. It was notable that although they integrated the ethics of the profession into their personal value systems, they expressed suspicion about how professional ideology could be manipulated by the profession and the organization to justify behaviors incongruent with their beliefs, such as learning analytics.

Dedication to Teaching

Librarianship has been described as an "accidental profession," with many individuals finding their way to the field while detouring from another professional path (Martin, 1995, p. 198). This fits participants, who discovered librarianship while pursuing or diverting from Ph.D. programs, teaching at primary or secondary levels, transitioning from roles in adjacent fields like student affairs, or seeking refuge from corporate environments. Despite diverse backgrounds and career paths, all participants (n=9) shared a dedication to teaching, especially to undergraduate students. The realization that academic librarians support and teach undergraduate students often served as their initial impetus toward librarianship. They described undergraduates, particularly first-year students, as creative, inspiring, interesting, engaging, and thoughtful.

Some participants described themselves as "teachers first," and understood their identities as librarians to be subsumed within their self-concept as teachers. One participant described teaching as the "heart and soul" of her identity and the responsibility she felt to advocate on behalf of students in the organization. Many participants identified teaching as the "best part" of their jobs and their interactions with students at a reference desk or classroom as one of the most rewarding and fulfilling aspects of their work. Another participant described the salience of her "teacher identity" and how she conceptualized her work as the manager of a teaching-focused unit as helping others to develop that facet of their identities. Many participants articulated the creative approaches they implemented to "scale" library teaching to meet the needs of the large

undergraduate student population, such as developing online instructional tools. There was a prevailing sense among participants that teaching was important and worthy of their time and energy. Across the cases, all participants expressed deep concern about the welfare, success, and belonging of undergraduate students and identified their dedication to teaching as a grounding force in their scholarship, professional identities, and ethics.

Reticence to Advance

If participants' commitment to teaching was what led them to the profession, it was also why they stayed in their positions. Many participants recognized that "every step up" in management moved them further from teaching and supporting students. Although a few participants had intentionally sought their management positions, most had "found their way" to management as a byproduct of external forces, such as relocation or organizational restructuring. Many participants struggled with "wanting to see more women in leadership in libraries," but also wanting to "hold on" to their work as teachers and librarians. They understood that leadership offered access to power and that power would enable them to effect positive change in the organization, but most participants were reticent to advance, at least in the near term. One participant explained that "growth is loss" – to become a manager, she had already given up many of the things that had served as cornerstones of her identity, including teaching, working with students, flexibility with her time, and the capacity for scholarly research. Another offered, "It is like I have these two paths before me, and either way, I lose something." Participants understood that the "cost" of advancement would be a further distancing from the work they "got into librarianship to do," and an increase in managerial responsibilities, such as development and donor relations. It would also reduce the time they could spend on research and scholarship, which several participants identified as a core component of their professional identities. Although most

participants understood this sacrifice as eventual, and in some ways inevitable, they did not feel ready to "let go of the work" to attain advancement.

Navigating Dual Roles as Librarians and Managers

Across the cases, participants expressed a generalized sense of ambiguity around their positions. Many participants described their work as being in the "middle of the organization" and their positions as being subsumed by a prevailing sense of liminality or feeling of being caught in the "in-between." This was true in the metaphorical sense, but also in their literal movement between physical and intellectual spaces. Their work required code-switching as they moved between their dual identities as librarians and managers. Participants would leave a meeting that was held online and go immediately to another meeting in person; transition from leading a meeting as the manager of their unit to attending another as a rank-and-file librarian; or shift from "administrative tasks like disentangling a travel request," to planning the long-term work of their unit, to responding to a reference question from a student. Participants felt dual responsibilities of "communicating up" to library leadership and "managing expectations back down" to their units. Some participants described how they were constantly managing change; from beneath, as their staff moved in and out of positions, and also above, as they reacted to administrative directives and policies.

While participants identified as both librarians and managers, neither identity alone fully encapsulated the breadth of their responsibilities. As middle managers, they shouldered administrative duties like strategic planning, budgeting, supervision, and hiring and training. Concurrently, in their librarian roles, most engaged in traditional public service tasks such as teaching and reference. Some also served as liaisons to subject areas, which entailed additional responsibilities like outreach and collection development. One participant articulated, "The way

our Libraries describe things [is] ‘Oh, you are a part of leadership.’ But I don’t always feel that. So, I feel like ‘middle manager’ has helped me to be like ok, that is what I am.” Despite their strong identification as practitioners and educators, participants acutely felt the managerial aspects of their roles, which required stepping away from the work that mattered to them to fulfill management expectations. Throughout the cases, participants' experiences reflected an identity schism, in which they were both librarians and managers, yet not wholly either one.

Focus Area 2: Gender Identity, Leadership, and Social Justice in Academic Librarianship

Research on gender and academic library leadership indicates that the experiences of women library leaders are uniquely shaped by their gender identity (Bladek, 2019; Neigel, 2015). This includes how women understand themselves and their work, and how women leaders are perceived, promoted, and paid in comparison to their male counterparts (Bladek, 2019; Buckman & Jackson, 2021; Deyrup, 2004; Irwin & deVries, 2019). Participants described their experiences as library managers as being necessarily shaped by their gender identities and the intersection of their gender with other social identities, such as race and age. Across the cases, four themes around gender identity and leadership emerged: shared commitment to community, relationships, and care; the devaluation of feminized labor; interactions with organizational power, advocacy, and positional responsibility; and the intersection of gender with racial identity and connections to a broader arc of social justice.

Fostering Community and Care

Across the cases, participants unanimously expressed how their positions as middle managers required community building, sustenance of relationships, and care for colleagues. Participants fostered collegiality in their departments by developing community guidelines, being clear with expectations, showing “appreciation” by valuing team members as “individuals, outside

of the work they do," engaging in active listening, and offering to "pitch in" with work, such as taking on additional teaching or reference responsibilities. Most participants identified one-on-one supervision and mentorship, particularly of early career librarians, as especially rewarding. Some went so far as to describe direct supervision as "making the job feel worth it." They felt "useful" when they could help a direct report "brainstorm how to get out of a difficult situation," chart a new direction in their scholarship, resolve a conflict with colleagues, or manage their day-to-day workload. Many participants recognized the positive influence that a middle manager can have on an individual and credited previous supervisors (for better and worse) for influencing their own management styles. One participant described how she tried to "be what I needed when I was starting out" by extending the support, advocacy, and leadership she wished she had received from her managers early in her career. All of the participants worked to center equity, compassion, and care in their work and described their management styles as built around collaboration, affirmation, coaching, and consensus building.

Although participants felt it was important to build and foster a supportive community of practice, they found it difficult when their relationships with direct reports or mentees slipped into that of a "de facto therapist." Participants described the processes for setting and holding boundaries, which included creating space for colleagues to process their feelings, redirecting a conversation when it "crossed a line" from professional to personal, prioritizing clarity and concision over ambiguous or euphemistic language, and being honest about the limitations of their position and the extent whether they could alter a decision. Some participants described the "weight," of maintaining a positive and supportive work environment for their unit when the broader organization did not always share or exhibit those same values. One participant described this as creating a "bubble," where she protected her team from damaging forces above and beyond

her unit.

Most participants viewed their role as middle managers as an extension of their "feminist identity" and conceptualized a variety of management responsibilities as expressions of care. These included conventional care-taking work of support and supervision, as well as advocacy for their staff, communication across the organization, collaboration in research and scholarship, and ensuring equity among their team member's workloads. Many participants endeavored to "center care in their work," by making sure that their direct reports had access to the tools and resources necessary to do their work. Sometimes, this required advocating for material items, such as professional development funding. But often, the most valuable resource participants could offer their units was information. However, "tracking down information" could prove elusive. Although most participants did not feel "misled" or "lied to" by library leadership, they did not feel that they were given full access to information about organizational priorities or decisions. To fill those "communication gaps," participants went outside the formal chain of command to gather information from informal networks, such as seeking positions in campus governance committees or organizing peer groups in their libraries. Across the cases, participants described this intelligence gathering as an intentional act of care that they performed on behalf of their units.

Recognition and Devaluation of Feminized Labor

While all of the participants valued care, community, and relationship building, their roles as middle managers often required a "deeply unfeminist" focus on productivity, impact, efficiency, and innovation. This capitalist framework felt antithetical to their professional and personal values and contributed to the devaluation of feminized labor in the organization, which manifested for participants in two ways: (a) lack of organizational incentivization around the time-intensive work of being a supportive manager, and (b) a disregard for the labor and skill of "teaching" and

devaluation of the unit's work by library colleagues.

Across all cases, participants dedicated significant energy to coaching, mentoring, supporting, affirming, and fostering community among their direct reports. While a few observed the "dividends" of this effort when senior administrators met the needs of their teaching and learning unit, such as funding new staff positions, many felt that their supervisory care labor went unacknowledged by the organization. As one participant noted, there are "no penalties for being a bad or uncaring manager, but there is not a lot of incentive or value for the care that the work takes either." Some participants noted a disparity between the effort they invested in management compared to male peers, who often saw commensurate or increased rank and salaries. While participants generally felt "supported" by library leadership, they did not always feel "seen," and there was a prevailing sense that compassionate and caring leadership was not valued throughout the organizational structure.

Most participants began their careers as teaching or instruction librarians. Although their responsibilities as middle managers had reduced their classroom time, their identity as teachers remained central to their professional identities. All participants recognized that effective teaching requires expertise, training, skill, time, and energy, and many expressed frustrations with how their library colleagues often undervalued this work. As one participant expressed, "I've had to push back against the bias against teaching and the idea that this work we do in teaching and learning is easy." Participants articulated how the work of teaching librarians requires "external accountability" to students, as well as an "extra layer of accountability" as they are expected to serve as experts on pedagogy within the library, which was evidenced by the unilateral expectation in participants' position descriptions to provide professional development support around teaching to colleagues. This observation aligns with the literature, which suggests that the pedagogical

expertise of instruction librarians is crucial for legitimizing libraries' educational roles in academic communities (Sproles & Detmering, 2016). Many participants acknowledged that dismissiveness toward teaching is prevalent in research universities, linking it to the historical relegation of teaching to "support work" and the devaluation of feminized labor in academia (Arellano Douglas & Gadsby, 2017; Hildenbrand, 2000).

Participants also highlighted a well-documented phenomenon in the literature in which library teaching units are predominantly comprised of women-identifying non-tenured and early-career librarians (Iglesias et al., 2023). According to some participants, the division between tenured and tenure-track faculty could be exploited by senior library colleagues. One participant described a perceived "tension" between (often tenured) subject librarians and (often untenured) instruction librarians. She explained, "There's an [attitude of] 'we deal with the serious researchers and graduate students and you deal with undergrads, isn't that cute?'" As a result, many participants felt responsible for advocating for the value of their work and validating the significance of their units within the organization.

Negotiating Power and Responsibility

Participants' experiences were shaped by their proximity to organizational power. While they shared a collective commitment to protecting, supporting, and advocating for their units, they internalized their relationships with power differently. Some found the "power differential" inherent in supervisory roles uncomfortable, struggling to balance protecting their direct reports without adopting a paternalistic stance. Others viewed leadership as a platform to challenge authority and champion their units, departments, or teams, especially concerning equity and social justice issues. Many participants utilized their proximity to organizational power to gather information, offering to address their team's questions with senior leadership directly. As one

participant articulated, "I try to reduce [my team's] need to seek out answers independently. Let me handle that. Give me your questions and I'll find the answers." They recognized that power granted access, which came with responsibilities. When not present in decision-making spaces, participants relied on those “in the room” to convey relevant information. When given the opportunity to advocate for their teams, they embraced the responsibility, striving to fulfill the expectations they had of leaders above them.

While participants felt responsible for the welfare and well-being of the members of their unit, several described how they felt “pulled at both ends,” or torn between the responsibility they felt to their team and the accountability they “owed” the organization. As middle managers, they understood themselves to be both agents and targets of organizational power. Although participants held positional authority over their direct report(s), they often conceptualized their power to be primarily “soft power,” or the power to influence, sway, support, or legitimize (Bell & Kennan, 2022). As a result, they understood the importance of “choosing their battles.” As one participant explained, “I feel like I have just enough power to let people down on both sides.” Across the cases, participants understood there were “limits to the political and social capital” afforded by their positions; limits to the power that the library could exert in a neoliberal institution; and that resistance – either from the worker to the library, or from the library to the institution – came “at a price.”

Intersectionality, Racial Identity, and Social Justice

The experiences of participants were also shaped by the power dynamics resulting from their intersecting social identities. Although several participants spoke about the impacts of racialized identity, salience of that identity to their experiences varied. Among the participants, the majority (n=7) identified as White and two participants held minoritized racial identities. Notably,

four participants, including both individuals with minoritized racial identities, worked at Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) and five were employed at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). Though a few participants directly engaged with their racial and ethnic identities during interviews, most indirectly addressed race in their documents, particularly in personal statements for promotion and/or tenure. They often discussed racial disparities as a broader context of privilege, power, and oppression, framing their work within a commitment to social justice.

The two participants who held minoritized racial identities spoke about how these identities shaped their lived experiences. Both were employed at MSIs and described how they fostered a sense of community with students, who shared aspects of their racial identities. Both participants described how their racialized identities intersected with their other social identities, resulting in micro and macro aggressions in the workplace. One participant described how she processed an incidence of discriminatory behavior from an upper administrator by questioning, “Is this because I’m new? Is it because I am a woman? Is it because I [hold a minoritized racial identity]? Which one is it?” Both participants described how they felt pressured by colleagues to serve as a spokesperson for inclusion and equity within the pervasively White spaces of librarianship and how it was “tiring to be the one to hold that space.” One participant explained, “It feels like a lot of our leadership is comprised of women, so I don’t feel gender as much. But in terms of race and ethnicity, I do feel that…. I’m very cognizant of representation in the workforce.”

Though a few White-identified participants (n=3) directly addressed race as a locus of power and privilege, most engaged indirectly with these concepts. One White-identifying participant at an MSI acknowledged their positionality, stating, "I am hyper-aware of my positionality. I am not a first-time student. I am not an under-represented minority. I don't have those lived experiences, so I try to hold that at all times and be aware of my positionality.” Another

recognized their privileged identities and emphasized their responsibility to listen and learn, sharing, "There are parts of this social justice work that… I haven't had to experience, so that is on me to learn." Although a few participants explicitly mentioned their racial identity as a factor in their own experiences, most demonstrated awareness of the various forms of social, political, racial, and economic capital they possessed and how these identities shaped their interactions with colleagues. Several described how they utilized their capital to push for more equitable and just policies, organize anti-racist reading and discussion groups, call out instances of discrimination and bias in the workplace, and serve as allies to minoritized colleagues.

All of the participants identified social justice as a significant component of their personal and professional value systems. This was particularly evident in personal statements, in which several participants identified themselves as “critical practitioners” and articulated how various critical theory shaped their perspectives and practice. One participant explained how she applied a “critical perspective” to her examination of learning analytics. Another described how she viewed her work in the faculty labor union as a specific act of resistance against capitalist oppression. Other participants offered examples of implementing feminist pedagogy in the classroom, applying socialist frameworks for management, investing time in service work that centered on equity and justice, centering critical theory in their research and scholarship, and investing time in deepening their knowledge of critical theory and practice.

Focus Area 3: Faculty Status in Academic Librarianship

Research on faculty status for librarians indicates that incongruity between the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of library faculty and their academic peers has resulted in a system of faculty equivalency, rather than equality (Bailey & Becher, 2022; Fleming-May & Douglass, 2014). While librarians often “hold faculty status,” their experiences are uniquely shaped by the

confines of their work, including 40-hour weeks, 12-month contracts, and the need to maintain the physical collection and library facilities (Silva et al., 2017). In the context of this study, all participants (n=9) were in faculty systems that conveyed academic rank to librarians, but only seven of the institutions offered tenure to librarians. Although most participants (n=7) held a rank equivalent to associate professor with tenure, two-thirds of participants (n=6) had been promoted to their management positions before or during their application for promotion and tenure, which includes one participant who had applied but had not yet received promotion from assistant to associate professor. Additionally, two participants received a lowered rank upon appointment to their management-level positions. Although the salience of faculty status for participants varied across the cases, two themes emerged: participants' self-concept as scholar-practitioners and the experience of "not fitting the mold" around faculty status.

Scholar-Practitioner Identity

Scholar-practitioner is a multi-faceted identity that includes the integration of research with practice, genesis of research from practice, and co-habitation within the dual spheres of research and practice (Kupo, 2014). Although some participants (n=3) identified themselves as "scholar-practitioners," most used softer language to define the importance of their "scholarly identity" to their self-concept and professional identity. Many participants recognized critical inquiry, intellectual curiosity, and lifelong learning as core components of their professional values and identities and articulated a deep respect for the role of libraries and librarians in supporting the research, education, generation, and dissemination of new knowledge. Many participants appreciated that "faculty status" allowed them to "learn and grow" in a diverse higher education community that included students, colleagues, and research collaborators. One participant described the academic community as "central" to her practice and scholarship, which focused on

“helping students to become a part of their own scholarly communities, even if it is transient in nature.”

Participants also described the importance of “staying well-versed” in emerging research around student success and the strategies they employed to maintain momentum in their scholarship. These included collaborating with colleagues as a form of accountability, working on scholarship in the “off-hours” of nights and weekends, and reframing the goal of engaging in research as the improvement of their practice, rather than a scholarly publication. Although many participants identified scholarship as essential to their praxis, or the integrative relationship between reflection, theory, practice, and action, they described how managerial responsibilities conflicted with the time, tasks, and attention needed for scholarly productivity. As middle managers, it was difficult for participants to “find time” for research - not only the time to conduct research and write but also the intellectual “space” they needed for the “important work of thinking.” Several participants explained how their administrative work reduced their capacity for reading, which left them disconnected from the scholarly discourse. Nearly all participants described their day-to-day work as “putting out fires,” which left little time for deep thinking.

Some participants dismissed their desires to “hold on” to their scholarly identities as “selfish,” or “self-promoting,” and explained how their scholarship was “always the thing that gets pushed to the back burner” to make space for the time-sensitive and “important” work of supervision and management. One participant shared, “It feels like time is such a finite resource in a management position… Research and writing are important to me but there are literally just not enough hours in a day.” Another explained that although she “valued research” and felt that her scholarly identity enhanced her abilities as a manager, investing time in her scholarship felt like a “luxury” that she “could not afford.” Across all cases, participants described their scholarly

identities as being important to their understanding of themselves as professionals, but also the difficulties they faced in developing and sustaining that identity as middle managers.

Navigating Faculty Status

All participants held faculty status, but experiences varied: some (n=3) were integrated into the academic faculty system on campus, while most (n=6) were "held apart" in a parallel process specific to the library. At most sites (n=6) an internal Appointment, Promotion, and Tenure (APT) committee (or equivalent) evaluated promotional materials, while others (n=3) relied on collective decision-making by eligible librarians. Faculty systems typically emphasized librarianship service, scholarship, and professional service, though one institution had a distinct "fourth bucket" for professional service.

While participants valued their role as faculty, most prioritized the relationship between librarians and academic faculty and were more concerned with equity and the degree of collaboration than whether librarians "held status." Participants felt valued when academic faculty partnered with librarians on curriculum development and research projects, advocated on behalf of the library for increased funding, and voiced appreciation for the contributions made by librarians and shared governance. However, several participants noted how faculty equivalency could be weaponized against librarians, despite holding status. Librarians felt undervalued compared to faculty in academic colleges and described receiving fewer faculty benefits and privileges than their academic peers. Faculty status typically afforded participation in campus governance, yet participants often felt overlooked or diminished in policies directed at faculty. One participant explained, "Just last week, there was a [campus] policy… about remote work for faculty, but there was no mention of librarians at all. Sometimes, it feels like we don't even exist." Although faculty status is often considered a "proxy for how librarians are viewed," as one

participant explained, “proxy is not synonymous with parity.”

Balancing managerial and faculty roles posed challenges for participants, especially for those promoted to middle management before achieving tenure (n=6). Participants struggled to showcase the scope and impact of their management work in promotion dossiers. Several participants noted that library managers were rarely represented on the APT committees in their libraries, which made it difficult for them to find guidance on how to best describe and articulate their work. One participant explained that although a substantial portion of her work was dedicated to supervision, she could not include in my dossier that she “worked through a performance issue with a member of [her] staff.” Others commented on how the expectations for promotion and tenure failed to account for how the scholarly output of managers may differ from frontline faculty, who have less time and energy to devote to research.

Faculty status exacerbated inequities within libraries, creating tension between faculty and staff, tenured and non-tenured faculty, and those eligible and ineligible for tenure. Some participants (n=5) shared the experience of being untenured faculty members tasked with supervising other untenured faculty. One participant described the "major tension" this created: "Department heads are responsible for coaching folks to go through the promotion process when we have often not gone through those promotion processes ourselves.” Another questioned, "I’m two years ahead of someone I’m supervising... How am I supposed to [advise them on building a tenure portfolio] … when I’m still new to it myself?" Others faced the complex dynamic of supervising tenured faculty, placing them in a precarious position as their promotion and tenure case would be evaluated by these senior faculty members. This experience, while prevalent among participants, diverges from the norm in academic colleges, where obtaining the rank of associate professor with tenure typically precedes assuming an academic management position, such as

department chair (Pascale et al., 2024).

Additionally, two participants held a rank equivalent to associate professor with tenure at their prior institutions but were appointed to a lower rank without tenure upon being hired into their management positions at their current institutions. Both participants identified gender and the devaluation of their teaching as contributing to their lowered rank and described how the decision disadvantaged their careers by delaying their eligibility to apply for a rank equivalent to full professor. One participant explained, “I have to work so much harder now because many of my big achievements were pre-tenure… I have to meet this completely unrealistic bar because, at the beginning of it all, they did not value my work or worth.” In navigating the complexities of faculty status within libraries, participants encountered multifaceted challenges that underscored the need for ongoing examination and reevaluation of institutional structures to promote equity and inclusivity across all levels of library faculty.

Focus Area 4: Exploring the Impact of Learning Analytics in Academic Libraries

Learning analytics (LA) is the surveillance of the learning process by the educational system to improve learning outcomes (Hartman-Caverly, 2019). LA works as a form of “individually focused behavior management” guiding learners toward actions that are rewarded by the system (Selwyn, 2019). Research has indicated that the library profession is at a “critical juncture” on whether to oppose or embrace library involvement in LA (Jones, 2019b, p. 422). Advocates assert that librarians hold a moral duty to steer the future of LA towards fairer, ethically sound, and well-informed data collection methods (Hwang & Hanson, 2021; Jones & Hinchliffe, 2023) and argue that participating in LA could solidify librarians' role as “key players” in the educational experience (Oakleaf, 2018a; Oakleaf et al., 2017). Critics counter that library values around data privacy and intellectual freedom are incongruent with LA, which censors learners by

subjecting them to involuntary self-knowledge (Doty, 2020); compromises professional standards around data collection and use (Jones, 2019b; Oliphant & Brundin, 2019); and undermines social justice by “erasing” questions around power, politics, history, and social inequalities to reproduce favorable outcomes (Nicholson et al., 2019).

Recent literature presents LA as a “divisive third rail” in the profession, indicating that most librarians are either adamantly opposed or indiscriminately accepting of the practice (Jones, 2019b; Jones & Hinchliffe, 2023). However, findings from this study reveal that participant attitudes around LA were nuanced, informed by their professional values and ethics, their proximity to organizational power, and the responsibility they felt toward their institutions, organizations, units, and direct reports. While some participants expressed strong ideological opposition to LA, all participants (even those who held strong moral reservations) described LA as a complex and multifaceted issue and understood there to be no definitive right or wrong path forward. Across the cases, three themes around LA emerged. First, an awareness of higher education as a business and an understanding of how neoliberalism inhibits or extends organizational power to institutional actors. Second, the importance of research ethics, in particular, the principles of minimizing harm to research subjects and ensuring informed consent from participants. Third, a conflict between the “hard” moral lines around LA and a lack of guidance on how to navigate the issues in practice.

Navigating Neoliberal Pressures

While only a few participants (n=3) explicitly cited neoliberalism as having a direct influence on their experiences, many indirectly discussed the impacts of neoliberal ideology on their work. The effects included the adoption "performance-based" or "responsibility-centered" budget models that disadvantaged service-oriented units like the library (n=4); the pressure from

campus administrators to enhance retention and elevate university rankings (n=3); institutional obsession with technology and innovation (n=4); and pressure from library administrators to demonstrate "impact" to university leadership (n=9). Several participants emphasized the reality of higher education “operating as a business.” They highlighted their unique position in the middle of the organization, which allowed them to recognize the costs associated with every action and decision. One participant explained, "I'm now in a position to be able to see… what [things] cost. Both financially but also like, what are we going to have to lose, to be able to do this other thing?" Participants expressed a sense of responsibility for the members of their units and teams. As managers, they felt obliged to safeguard the livelihood and financial well-being of their units, even if it meant acting in opposition to their professional values. One participant stated, "I have six people who rely on me to make sure that they have a job…. The money is not infinite, and I have a responsibility to [protect my] team."

Many participants viewed the library's mission as supporting students and perceived their roles as teaching librarians to be at odds with the notion of "success" defined by a neoliberal organization. Across the cases, participants described their libraries as being in a precarious financial situation and the pressures they were under to “demonstrate impact” to library and campus administrators who “held the purse strings.” Several explained how their libraries lacked the “easily quantifiable” data available to an academic college, such as the number of students enrolled in a major, time-to-degree, external grant funding, and alumni. Without these data points, it was more difficult for libraries to “communicate the impact” of library resources and services to campus administrators, which reduced the political and social capital that library administrators were able to wield in a neoliberal organization. One participant explained, “It is hard to say that this college uses this journal, this faculty used the library XYZ times, or this student is better at

research because of a [specific library program].” Another shared, “The Libraries is not the College of Engineering that brings in however many millions of dollars every year in research revenue.... [We] do not have the clout.” While some participants objected to LA, they understood they “might not have a choice politically or even practically” about their involvement. If they were given a “directive” to contribute library data to LA systems, their only recourse would be to attempt to “ask questions” and “minimize harm.”

Some participants noted a disconnect between the objectives of LA and the institution's investment in student affairs programs, such as counseling, tutoring, and advising. One participant highlighted the understaffing and long wait times at the counseling center on her campus, juxtaposed with the university's reliance on these resources in times of student crisis. Another pointed out various barriers preventing students from accessing support, including lack of insurance, caregiving responsibilities, financial insecurity, and difficulty navigating service systems. Participants expressed frustration with identifying students in need of help when the university failed to adequately fund support services, and questioned the value of interventions if students were left to navigate challenges on their own. One participant questioned, “So, you flag [a student] in this system. And then what? They may have one session, one crisis intervention, and then they are on their own to figure it out. What is the point?” Another asked, “What is the value of identifying students who are at risk if the university isn’t willing to help them?”

Although LA is intended to bolster student success and improve learning outcomes, many participants described how LA oversimplified learning by focusing on “discrete” indicators of “success,” such as time-to-degree and grade point average. Some described LA as a thinly veiled attempt to achieve external markers of institutional prestige, such as elevating the institution’s position in the US News and World Report rankings. Others questioned if the “unspoken” goal of

LA was not to “support student success” but instead, to “weed out” underperforming students. As one participant explained, “I help a lot of students who I know are failing. But that doesn’t mean that the service I’m providing is not worthwhile. Just because it is not correlated with GPA doesn’t mean it doesn’t hold value.” Across the cases, participants described the numerous ways their ability to support the academic success and well-being of students were inhibited by neoliberal organizational behavior, which rewarded activities that led to prestige and profit and undervalued the “relational” work typified by their units.

Ethical Dilemmas and Privacy Concerns

While some participants expressed resistance to LA, their objections were not solely based on concerns about privacy and intellectual freedom. Instead, participants voiced frustration with their institutions' willingness to compromise student privacy without offering meaningful interventions. One participant articulated, “Privacy is not black and white, in or out. We need to ask the hard questions of, ‘who are we sacrificing, or potentially sacrificing, or hurting, to be able to make some amount of progress a little bit faster?’” Another explained, “I think privacy is important. But I think too there are reasonable trade-offs, and we make those every day…. I’m more concerned about having a choice and making an informed choice than I am about protecting privacy above all else.” Across the cases, participants questioned if LA data collection practices met the ethical standards for human-subjects research and if the “risks” posed to students from those practices were worth the “rewards” offered by the systems.

Across the cases, participants articulated a nuanced understanding of LA that centered on mitigating harm. One participant explained how she viewed “tracking attendance” at a voluntary library workshop as posing a greater threat to students than collecting data from a library instruction session that is associated with a class of record. From her perspective, attendance

records were already being collected for the class and “confirming” that data did not increase the risk to a student, whereas disclosing attendance records for voluntary events taking place after-hours could compromise a student, opening them up for punitive or corrective actions or critique. Another participant differentiated between an “opt-in” vs. an “opt-out” data collection policy. For her, an opt-in system foregrounded informed consent, while an opt-out relied on the “illusion of individual agency” and was more likely to “benefit students who had access to cultural, social, economic, and political capital.” Across the cases, participants articulated a sophisticated and deliberate chain of decision-making that required them to calculate risk on multiple levels, including the risks of compromising ethical standards and how their actions and affect the safety and well-being of their colleagues and community.

Many participants were concerned by the lack of informed consent from students in LA research. One participant explained the importance of gaining “active consent from the folks who are going to be involved in the process.” Another participant emphasized that even if LA is conducted with the intention of improving services and not for publication purposes, obtaining consent from the students whose data is being examined is essential. Several participants highlighted the importance of educating users about their role in deciding whether and how their data is shared. Several participants also highlighted the disproportionate harm that LA poses to minoritized students. They made a distinction between an "ethical" approach and a "normative" one, noting that the latter may perpetuate social injustice by focusing solely on modifying the behaviors of individual actors, rather than addressing the systemic inequities within educational systems.

Although the literature suggests that librarians lack the methodological training necessary to “navigate ethically sticky methodological concerns” (Jones & Hinchliffe, 2023, p. 3), findings

revealed that participants were aware of emerging research on LA, had sufficiently analyzed and considered the implications of that research, and were dissatisfied with the attention given to research ethics. One participant shared, "When you turn students into numbers, it erodes beneficence and justice and respect for the person, and it becomes easier and easier to do that. It sets a precedent for what you do next." For most participants, their resistance was not an outright rejection of LA participation but rather a demand for clarity on its purpose and potential impact. They sought to understand the objectives of data collection and advocated for clear boundaries and criteria for determining which data was relevant and ethical to collect. As one participant asked, "How do we draw lines around the data? How do we decide which data counts?"

Compellingly, none of the participants exhibited the hardline response to LA indicated by the literature (Jones, 2019b; Jones & Hinchliffe, 2023). Instead, participants demonstrated a nuanced understanding of LA that was informed by their identities as scholar-practitioners. For those who were resistant, their reluctance was often grounded in dissatisfaction with the data collection methods, which they perceived as overly permissive. They were also troubled by the lack of compelling causational data that had emerged from current LA research and the lack of meaningful interventions for students, who bore most of the risk from permissive data practices. For participants who were open or even enthusiastic about LA, their attitudes were informed by an awareness that the library "already collects a lot of data in the systems on each student," and a desire to use data to make evidence-based decisions about where to direct limited fiscal and human resources to best support students who were most in need. In all cases, participants' attitudes were informed by the research, not despite it.

Navigating Ethical Complexity

LA has been described as a "divisive issue" that has pitted librarians who are pursuing LA

against privacy advocates in an ethical standoff (Jones, 2019b, p. 418). However, this existing research does not differentiate between the attitudes held by the “boots on the ground” librarians and library managers (Jones, 2019b; Jones & Hinchliffe, 2023). It is meaningful that participants in this study identified as mid-level managers who held formal supervisory authority over at least one faculty or staff member. Perhaps, as a result, participants' attitudes toward LA were informed by their professional values, and also their proximity to organizational power and positional responsibility. As one participant explained, “I am responsible for other people’s livelihoods. I don’t have the luxury of throwing up a ‘privacy flag’ and ending the conversation.”

Across the cases, participants expressed frustration with the “with us, or against us,” attitude that has been levied from both sides of the conversation around LA. This is reinforced by the literature, which argues that in lauding privacy as “inviolable,” the profession has established an “ineffective ethical heuristic” for navigating the complex questions of morality that emerge from LA (Jones, 2019b, p. 420). Many participants described themselves as occupying a middle space between campus administrators, who held more “elastic” standards around data privacy and ethicality, and their colleagues who were “opposed” to LA on “principle.” As leaders of teaching and learning units, they felt responsible for “threading the needle” – or executing an LA program that satisfied requests from administrators without compromising members of their team who may hold strong reservations about using identifiable data. Even participants who expressed strong opposition to integrating library metrics with LA indicated that they would be willing to participate in LA under certain circumstances, particularly if resistance might compromise job security for anyone under their purview. One participant explained, “It is easier to be opposed [to LA] when you aren’t seeing colleagues getting laid off.”

Several participants expressed feeling "set up to fail" by the library profession, which

upheld user privacy as a moral imperative while also embracing neoliberal principles of innovation, accountability, and economic competition. This ethical dissonance left participants feeling unable to succeed; they either upheld the moral standards of the profession but fell short of meeting neoliberal benchmarks of success, or they compromised their professional values in order to be rewarded by the system. One participant summed up this dilemma, saying, "I can imagine myself saying 'This is what I value.' But then looking at the tools available to me and not being able to honor those values."

Across the cases, participants articulated how the values of the library profession were insufficient to meet the challenges they faced with LA, particularly in their capacity as managers, which require "a set of ethics that we just have not defined." As one participant explained, "There was a time when I was [not a manager] and it was not my problem to think about these things… [but] I see that higher level, I feel those bigger stakes." As managers, their personal convictions around LA were secondary to their need to "protect their team." To succeed in one area required them to compromise another, which meant that they were "constantly letting someone down, even if it was just [themselves]." Participants did not necessarily want to participate in LA, but they also did not want their Libraries to be excluded; particularly if resistance compromised the financial security. One participant offered, "If metrics become a surrogate for success, what does it say if the libraries are not at the table? What kind of future does that leave us?" Another echoed, "If we aren't part of the conversation… does that mean we will be shut out? We lose importance on campus and maybe funding after that?" Participants highlighted the limited political capital of libraries within the organization and acknowledged that refusing to participate in LA might necessitate agreeing to something even more detrimental in the future. Regardless of their stance on LA, all participants viewed their decision to support or resist it as a calculated risk aimed at

minimizing harm. As one participant put it, “No one wins here. The question is not if we will say yes, but when. Then, I will [ask] ‘OK, how do we do the least harm? How do I protect the most people?’”

Cross-Case Assertions

Across the focus areas and themes, five common experiences emerged. These are represented as *assertions*, or the most salient conclusions that can be drawn about the quintain based on the thematic analysis (Adams et al., 2022; Stake, 2006). The assertions are intended to convey the highest-level concepts that may be generalizable to the broader population, with the understanding that case studies are necessarily limited by the boundaries placed around the case and are neither intended to capture nor convey a universal experience. Each assertion represents, to the greatest extent possible, a core experience that was highly indicated across a majority of cases, focus areas, and themes. These include, “middle-ness,” “both and yet neither,” “set up to fail,” “sacrifice of self,” and “cost of resistance.”

Middle-ness

Participants experienced a state of liminality as middle managers, existing in the transitional space between organizational power, personal responsibility, and professional accountability. Situated midway in the organizational hierarchy, they felt torn between the obligations to support administrative priorities and the responsibility to safeguard their team members and units, often finding themselves in the middle of conflicts and difficult decisions. They perceived their authority as reliant on community building and authenticity, fostering a shared sense of being "in-it-together" with their direct reports. Participants' experiences were shaped by both neoliberalism and gender. Although they sought to use compassion and care as a counterbalance to neoliberal practice and policy, which emphasizes individual responsibility and

competition, they often felt pulled between these two competing forces. Many participants were in the middle of their careers and viewed their positions as a temporary respite before advancing to the next phase, hesitant to leave the liminal space they occupied.

Both, and Yet Neither

Connected to middle-ness was the distinct experience of feeling *both, and yet neither*, or straddling the space between competing identities. As middle managers, participants viewed their positions as bridging practice and administration; on one side lay the joy and fulfillment that they found in librarianship, and on the other, the influence and power that came from formal leadership. While their positions offered access to both areas, the responsibilities of librarianship hindered their abilities to be managers, and the obligations of management reduced the time they could spend on librarianship. Participants described their work as personally rewarding but professionally unsatisfying. They spent most of their day on the invisible but time-consuming labor of "putting out fires," gathering information, and supervising. Participants described how their positions required that they understand and contribute to "the work" of the unit, but also necessitated the strategic planning, advocacy, and administrative responsibilities that came with leadership. The incursion of neoliberalism in their organizations exacerbated these tensions by rewarding activities that led to profitability and devaluing the interpersonal and relational work that typified their careers. Their work required constant code-switching as they moved between librarian, manager, and faculty spaces. Participants felt the salience of all of these identities, yet the demands of one rendered them unable to fully inhabit another.

Set Up to Fail

Participants described the numerous ways they were *set up to fail* or expected to perform their jobs without access to all the tools needed to do the work. Although participants were rarely

offered full transparency about decision-making processes, they felt responsible for “being the face” of administrative decisions to their direct reports, which put them in the difficult position of defending decisions that did not align with their personal and professional values. Although participants valued student-centeredness and care, their organizations rewarded competition over collaboration, and individual success over community well-being. They explained how they struggled to do and be everything that everyone needed, and how as middle managers, they were “always disappointing someone, even if it was just [themselves].”

Sacrifice of Self

Participants identified care, compassion, and community-building as integral to their leadership approaches. However, acting out these values required them to *sacrifice aspects of their personal and professional lives*. This included relinquishing flexibility in their schedules; reducing the time they spent on research, professional development, and scholarship; turning down professional and personal opportunities; and deprioritizing projects that felt self-serving. Participants often labeled activities that resulted in self-advancement as "selfish" and instead emphasized the importance of being known as a caring supervisor. Despite grieving the losses, participants made these concessions willingly, choosing to prioritize supporting their team members over personal and professional achievements. Participants valued the close-knit community with colleagues and students that their positions afforded and perceived teaching, supervision, and mentorship to be the most meaningful and rewarding aspects of their work. One participant explained, “on my whiteboard, I have the names of each person in my department… if something is going on that feels more important, I look over and remember that they are the job.”

Cost of Resistance

Participants understood that *resistance comes at a cost*, both to the individual and also to

the institution. They described the reality of higher education as a business, where every action has its price, whether it be the "detriment" of a relationship; decrease in organizational power or political influence; elimination or reduction of funding for staff members; or being denied or passed over for future professional opportunities. As middle managers, they perceived their role in the organization as navigating these costs and evaluating if the risk posed by a decision was worth the reward. Participants also contextualized their understanding of learning analytics within this broader framework around neoliberal resistance. Although most participants were wary of learning analytics, all expressed concern over what resistance to learning analytics might "cost" their libraries. They shared an anxiety about a future in which "metrics become a surrogate for success" and how that might impact the financial stability of their libraries. Although they held their professional values in high regard, they acknowledged that protecting their units and fulfilling their managerial responsibilities sometimes required compromising their own ethics.

Conclusion

The cross-case analysis uncovered 13 themes and five assertions that capture the complex workplace dynamics, personal ambitions, professional values, social identities, and positional responsibilities shaping the experience of participants. Across the cases, participants grappled with a sense of organizational liminality, wherein the demands of faculty status, management, and librarianship intersected but often conflicted, hindering their ability to fully engage in one role without sacrificing aspects of another. They navigated the challenges of performing at high levels in a resource-constrained environment, often sacrificing personal and professional pursuits to embody caring and compassionate leadership. Moreover, they navigated the ethical dilemmas inherent in a neoliberal context, weighing the consequences of resistance while striving to uphold their values. These findings underscore the intricate balance between professional fulfillment and

institutional expectations within academic librarianship, setting the stage for a deeper exploration of these dynamics in the subsequent chapter, in which I explore the themes in the context of the research questions, shedding light on the nuanced intersections of gender identity, professional values, faculty status, and the integration of library metrics with learning analytics.

Chapter 6: Discussion

The primary objective of this research was to explore how women-identified middle manager academic research librarians navigate their platforms of power, privilege, and professional responsibility to interpret and respond to manifestations of neoliberal ideology in higher education – in this case, learning analytics - and how their professional identities, values, and experiences were shaped through the pressures of gender and faculty status. While there are numerous examples of neoliberal practice and policy in higher education, this study relied on *learning analytics*, or the surveillance of the learning process by the educational system to improve learning outcomes, as the surrogate for neoliberal ideology (Hartman-Caverly, 2019). Although learning analytics was central to my study, it was not the focus of the inquiry. Instead, learning analytics served as a conduit between case-study sites; offering a concrete and common issue for participants to react to and reflect upon. This chapter provides an overview of the study, including the theoretical framework, relevant literature, research methods, findings, and a discussion linking the findings to the research questions and offering implications for future practice, policy, and research.

Research Questions

This research addressed the following questions,

1) How do women-identified academic librarian middle managers employed at U.S. public research institutions interpret and respond to the integration of library metrics with learning analytics?
    a) How do the professional values and experiences of participants shape their perspectives, interpretations, and responses to the integration of library metrics with learning analytics?
    b) How are participants' perspectives, interpretations, and responses to the integration of

library metrics with learning analytics influenced by gender identity and faculty status?

Theoretical Framework

Neoliberalism is a political and economic philosophy characterized by the belief that greater economic freedom and decreased government regulation lead to individual social and economic prosperity (Harvey, 2007). Neoliberal reformers advocate for reducing government oversight and regulations, promoting free trade, privatizing state-owned enterprises, and implementing market-oriented reforms (Giroux, 2002; Olssen & Peters, 2005). Over the past thirty years, neoliberalism has become the dominant hegemony in the United States; shaping everything from social services and programs to cultural expectations and practices (Saunders, 2014). Neoliberalism has infiltrated all major structures of American democracy, including the public education system (Apple, 2012; Klees, 2020). Within higher education, the impacts of neoliberal ideology are seen in the prominence of fair market ideology, increase in privatization, emphasis on accountability measures, reductions in state funding, and the adoption of corporate structures, policies, and behaviors, among others (Klees, 2020; Olssen, 2021; Saunders, 2014; Shore, 2010).

Within the framework of neoliberalism, prestige, power, and profit feed one another in a virtuous cycle: prestige begets power, power begets profit, and profit begets increased power and prestige. Universities that have amassed high levels of prestige hoard power through the expansion of neoliberal policy and practice, and *striving* institutions emulate those behaviors and values to achieve success as defined through capitalist and neoliberal epistemology (O'Meara, 2007; Slaughter, 2014). The impacts of neoliberal ideology are amplified in public research universities where the increased pressures for research and development coupled with a decrease in state funds have engendered a subset of neoliberal behavior identified as *academic capitalism*, or the application of business principles and practices to research institutions, with a focus on generating

profit through entrepreneurialism, attracting private funding, and enhancing the institution's competitive position in the education marketplace (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). In the research university, the convergence of academic capitalism and corporate organizational structure has created a new class of *academic managers,* who occupy professorial positions and perform mid-line managerial responsibilities, such as director of a research center or head of a department (Deem & Brehony, 2005; Vican et al., 2020; Winter, 2009). Manager academics are uniquely subject to the pressures and perils of neoliberalism and offer a microcosm to study and explore how neoliberalism is shaping the current landscape and future directions of the public research university.

Summary of the Literature

Modern librarianship is guided by a set of ethics that situate intellectual freedom, the freedom to hold, receive, produce, and share ideas; information access, the ability to navigate, locate; and obtain information, and user privacy, the right to privacy and confidentiality in using library resources and services, as the fundamental values of the profession (ALA, 2004; Berg & Jacobs, 2016; Hansson, 2017; Koehler, 2015). Although library values center on openness, equality, justice, access, and freedom, neoliberalism has become "entangled" in the policy and practices of U.S. libraries (Cope, 2014, p. 73). As a result, libraries are bracketed by "uneasily coexisting values and practices" (Tanner & Andersen, 2018, p. 57). The impacts of neoliberalism on libraries have been widespread, shaping the nature of library services and also the broader role and value of libraries to society.

In academic libraries, the effects of neoliberalism are seen in the widespread professional panic to justify the existence and purpose of the library to stakeholders, the ardent pursuit of economic efficiency in library services, the devaluation of interpersonal services (such as teaching

and reference) in favor of technical and research-aligned work, the pressure to substantiate all aspects of library work as existing in service of industry need for skilled and competitive workers, and the increased adoption of corporate structure and management strategies (Beilin, 2016). The impacts of neoliberalism in the academic library are particularly evidenced by the growing "fetishization of metrics and trend reports" (Joseph, 2020, p. 10) and relentless fixation on "documenting and articulating the value of academic and research libraries and their contributions to institutional missions" (Oakleaf et al., 2010, p. 6); both of which emerge from the neoliberal push for accountability and assessment in higher education.

Although numerous examples of neoliberal practice and policy in higher education exist, this study utilized learning analytics as a surrogate for neoliberal ideology. Learning analytics seek to strengthen an institution's ability to maintain a competitive advantage in a global education marketplace by increasing efficiency and profitability around student learning (Hartman-Caverly, 2019). In academic libraries, the debate over learning analytics revolves around whether the profession is willing to adjust traditional practices and values concerning data and user privacy to allow the integration of library metrics—data collected by and about academic libraries—into learning analytics systems, which aim to de-silo and consolidate data from various systems and departments to form a comprehensive view of student learning (Jones et al., 2020). While proponents of learning analytics point to the opportunities to prove the value of the library to the institution and demonstrate a return on investment (Oakleaf, 2016, 2018a, 2018b; Oakleaf et al., 2017), critics cite the incompatibility of learning analytics with library values around user privacy and intellectual freedom, invasive data collection practices, lack of informed consent, and incongruity with the aims of learning analytics and the broader goals of social justice (Jones, 2019b; Nicholson et al., 2019; Oliphant & Brundin, 2019; Robertshaw & Asher, 2019).

Within this study, participants' experiences were informed by their relationship to *faculty status*, which is an organizational structure in which librarians hold faculty appointments that are either integrated into the professorial ranks for the university or held apart in a parallel rank and tenure process (Bolin, 2008). Although most public research universities (76%) offer faculty status to librarians (Walters, 2016), the rights, responsibilities, privileges, and experiences of librarian faculty are distinct from their academic peers (Fleming-May & Douglass, 2014). For example, while tenured and tenure-track academic faculty receive 9-month appointments, academic librarians typically hold 12-month appointments and are often denied full access to faculty benefits, such as sabbaticals, research funding, flexible schedules, protections of tenure, and access to faculty grievance processes (Applegate, 2019; Coker et al., 2010; Walters, 2016). P

The perceived need among research universities to align themselves with corporate values and structures has resulted in a new class of academic managers and administrators (Deem & Brehony, 2005; Giroux, 2002). While these positions are common in higher education, middle managers in academic libraries tend to experience unique challenges. First, academic research libraries tend to have more diverse organizational structures than academic colleges, which results in more layers of mid-level managers (Schonfeld, 2016). Second, while associate rank and tenure are typically prerequisites for holding academic manager appointments (Pascale et al., 2024), faculty librarians are more likely to be promoted to management positions before receiving tenure (Thomas et al., 2019). Also, while academic managers may return to their faculty roles (Gonaim, 2016), once a librarian advances into management, they rarely return to the faculty ranks (Rutledge, 2020). Finally, because the work of an academic library is inherently team-based and collaborative, librarian managers are often tasked with providing administrative direction and leadership to an organizational unit, which includes providing daily supervision, evaluation, and

task management of other library faculty and staff (Schonfeld, 2016). Because academic faculty positions typically convey a high degree of autonomy, the direct oversight of one faculty to another is uncommon. It represents a unique challenge for academic library middle managers.

All of these factors are compounded by the impacts of gender in a neoliberal organization (Acker, 1990; Poggio, 2018). Academic librarians are responsible for the institution's intellectual caretaking. Many scholars have asserted that inequities between librarians and academic faculty stem from the relegation of librarianship as “women’s work” (e.g., Delong, 2013; Hannigan, 1994; Hannigan & Crew, 1993; Hildenbrand, 2000). Research on the glass ceiling—the unseen barriers that block women and Librarians of Color from ascending to leadership roles—and the glass cliff—the phenomenon where women are more likely to be appointed to leadership roles in risky and unstable situations—shows that women and Librarians of Color are disproportionately found in lower faculty ranks, lower management or leadership roles, and in management positions where failure is more visible and public (Bladek, 2019; Irwin & deVries, 2019; Mandeville-Gamble, 2018; Rutledge, 2020; Ryan et al., 2016; Wilder, 2018). Further, women-identified academic librarians at all levels tend to be paid less than their male counterparts, are more likely to experience sexism or gender discrimination, and are less likely to receive opportunities for training or professional development around career advancement (Delong, 2013; Eva et al., 2021; Howard et al., 2020; Rutledge, 2020)

Research Gaps

Although research has demonstrated that faculty status significantly impacts the identity and psychology of academic librarians (e.g., Coker et al., 2010; Galbraith et al., 2016; Silva et al., 2017), little research has explored how faculty status shapes the experiences of library leaders at any rank or level. While numerous studies have examined the experiences, career ladders,

challenges, and attitudes of library deans and directors (e.g., Ashiq et al., 2021; Fagan, 2012; Fitsimmons, 2008; L. Maciel et al., 2018) , few have studied the experiences of mid-level managers (e.g., Bugg, 2016; Do & Nuth, 2020). Additionally, while ample research has examined the impact of gender identity on senior-level library leaders, [illegible] little research has considered if or how these impacts may translate to mid-level managers, which is significant given that women tend to be over-represented among lower management ranks (Rutledge, 2020; Wilder, 2018). Further, research on middle management in academic libraries tends to be heavily reliant on survey methodology (e.g., Cawthorne, 2010; Hodge et al., 2021; Rooney, 2010; Rutledge, 2020) and perspectives gained through individual experience (e.g., Chang & Bright, 2012; Leebaw & Tomlinson, 2023; Mosley, 2009; Sullivan, 1992), resulting in a gap in the literature in rigorous qualitative research that examines the experiences of women-identified middle manager faculty librarians.

This research also addresses a secondary gap in the literature regarding the experiences, professional identities, and career pathways of academic librarians who provide formal leadership to teaching and learning units. Although many librarians participate in teaching, there is often a specific librarian or unit tasked with coordinating the teaching activities for the library (Arellano Douglas & Gadsby, 2017; Behler, 2023). Most large academic and research libraries have a dedicated teaching and learning unit that is led by a middle manager who provides supervision to the librarians and staff under their purview (Hammons, 2023). This role is challenging, requiring the supervision of early-career teaching librarians, the management of a large undergraduate teaching program, and the "quasi-official" coordination of teaching efforts that take place outside of the unit (Arellano Douglas & Gadsby, 2017, p. 266). Although there is emerging research on the *instruction coordinator* (who does not provide supervision for faculty or staff) (e.g., Arellano

Douglas & Gadsby, 2017; Behler, 2023) there is a gap in the literature about the experiences of department head librarians who are tasked with overseeing a formalized teaching and learning unit.

Research Method

To address the research questions, this study utilized a *collective case study* methodology, which is a qualitative research method that seeks to better understand a collective experience through the examination of individual cases (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2006). Unlike a single case study, which focuses on a particular instance, location, experience, or person, a collective case study examines cases together, with the intent of drawing broader conclusions or insights on a phenomenon (Stake, 2005). In a collective case study, each case is treated as a unit of analysis. The selection of cases is determined using three primary criteria: (a) the relevance of the case to the quintain (or group of cases); (b) the potential of the case to demonstrate diversity across the research context; and (c) the opportunity afforded by the case to complicate the researcher's understanding of the research phenomenon (Stake, 2006, p. 23). Because of its increased size and scope, a collective case study offers a more holistic exploration of a phenomenon than can be achieved in a single case study.

Bounded System

Collective case studies begin by establishing the bounded system, or the limits defined for the study (Merriam, 2009). Case boundaries enable the researcher to define what is included and excluded from the study and offer clarity on the extent of the investigation (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). In the context of this study, the bounded system included criteria for case sites and potential participants (see Table 1 in Appendix D). Eligible case sites included Association of Research Libraries (ARL) libraries situated at public universities that supported an undergraduate population of at least 10,000 students, had a dedicated teaching and learning unit, and offered nominal faculty

status and/or advancement through a formalized rank and promotion system to librarians (see Table 2 in Appendix D). Eligible participants included women-identified academic librarians employed at a potential case site who held nominal faculty status and/or advanced through a formal rank and promotion system, occupied a formal leadership position in a teaching and learning unit, provided formal supervision to at least one library staff or faculty member, and reported to an intermediate manager who sat in the organizational hierarchy at least one level below the dean or university librarian (e.g., associate dean, associate university librarian, or director). This study also included secondary criteria that did not establish participant eligibility but played a role in shaping the composition of the quintain, or group of cases (see Table 1 in Appendix D). These included seeking a group of cases that represented maximum diversity in geographic location, years of professional experience, racialized identities, engagement in learning analytics, and unique individual or institutional qualities (e.g., faculty unionization) (see Tables 3-5 in Appendix D).

Profile of Participants

In the context of this study, each participant represented an individual case. All of the participants (n=9) were women-identified librarians who held positions as mid-level managers in public academic research libraries and were responsible for providing direct supervision to at least one full-time staff or faculty member. Within their organizations, each participant reported to a senior-level manager who sat hierarchically at least one level below the dean, university librarian, or analogous position (e.g., associate dean or associate university librarian). Four participants were early-to-mid career (5 to 10 years), five participants were mid-career (10 to 30 years), and one participant was late career (more than 30 years). The majority of participants (n=7) identified as White and two participants held a minoritized racial identity. Five participants were employed at Predominately White Institutions (PWI) and four at Minority Serving Institutions (MSI). All

participants (n=9) advanced through a formalized rank and promotion system but only seven participants were in faculty systems that extended tenure or a tenure-equivalent to librarians. Five participants held a rank equivalent to associate professor with tenure, one was an assistant in the process of applying for tenure, one was an associate professor without tenure, and one held a non-tenure track appointment as an instructor. Six participants were promoted or hired into their management positions before their promotion through the ranks from assistant professor to associate professor, or equivalent (see Table 4 in Appendix D).

Data Collection

Case study research necessitates the collection of detailed data acquired from multiple sources of information (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Eisenhardt, 1989; Stake, 1995). As a component of this research, participants were encouraged to share personal and public documents to aid in data analysis (see Appendices G-J). All participants (n=9) shared a position description and at least one additional document that contextualized their personal values and professional impact, which included five personal statements that were submitted in their promotional dossiers, three cover letters, one diversity statement, and one mission statement for their Libraries' teaching program. Additionally, two participants submitted institutional policies related to data privacy and one participant submitted a resume (see Table 1 in Appendix L).

The primary data source consisted of 90-minute one-on-one interviews conducted via Zoom. Each interview adhered to an interview guide that included structured questions and discussion prompts (refer to "Interview Guide" in Appendix K). With participant consent, I recorded the interviews to aid in transcription. To maintain proximity to the data, I personally transcribed each interview (Saldaña, 2012). While reviewing the video recordings for each case, I corrected computer-generated transcripts to ensure accuracy and usability (refer to "Excerpt of

Interview Transcript" in Appendix K). These finalized transcripts were integrated into each participant's case record in MAXQDA, a qualitative analysis software. In addition to the transcripts and personal documents, case records also included ancillary materials, including analytic memos, email correspondence with the participant, and consent to participate forms. For a comprehensive list of research materials, refer to "Table 1" in Appendix L.

Data Analysis

When formulating the data analysis plan for this study, I drew heavily from Stake (2006), Mertens (2020), and Merriam (2009). From the perspective of these theorists, qualitative case study researchers collaborate with their cases to co-construct new knowledge. The contextual nature of each case study is shaped by the interaction between the "inquirer" and the "inquired-into" (Mertens, 2020, p. 19). These studies heavily rely on intuition and interpretation, which are influenced by the researcher's personal experiences, proximity to the subjects, and grasp of the research questions (Stake, 2006). In a collective case study, the researcher aims to balance individual cases and the collective case study; both are integral to the research process, and each extends and complicates the understanding of the other.

In case study research, the data analysis process entails systematically categorizing data to reveal patterns, themes, and meaningful insights. *Coding*, or categorizing the data, is a significant part of this process, enabling the researcher to understand, interpret, and synthesize the data. Stake (2006) outlines the coding process for qualitative, inductive, collective case study research, including two stages of analysis: *within-case* and *cross-case* analysis. Following this guidance, I utilized a progressive coding process. For each case, I conducted *open coding* on the research materials (see Table 1 in Appendix L) and consolidated codes into hierarchical categories using an *axial* approach that focused on identifying themes and patterns in the data (Merriam, 2009).

This resulted in an individual code set for each case.

After completing the within-case coding, I constructed individual case reports for each participant, focusing on synthesizing the findings derived from the code sets for each case. The second phase of analysis centered on identifying cross-case themes. Using the case reports as the primary form of data, I conducted *selective* coding on the case reports, which identified recurring patterns, connections, and relationships among the cases. I consolidated the codes into *themes* using a cross-case data analysis matrix (see Table 2 in Appendix L). From those themes, I drew five over-arching *assertions*, which represent a core experience that was indicated prominently across all cases, focus areas, and themes. To strengthen internal validity, I conducted *member-checking* by sharing the preliminary findings with the participants. Four participants elected to participate in this process, all of whom affirmed the preliminary themes and assertions, and identified parallels between their own experiences and the conclusions drawn from the study.

Research Findings

This dissertation includes individual case reports and cross-case findings. Each case report ranges from four to six pages and focuses on a single participant (refer to "Chapter 4"). Each case report is highly individual and relies on the participant's own words to convey their experiences. While the content included in each case report is independent, the reports share a common structure, including an introduction and four thematic sections focusing on professional identity, gender identity and leadership, faculty status, and learning analytics. As indicated by Stake (2006) structuring case reports in a standardized format brings clarity and coherence to the research process and enhances the researcher's ability to draw comparisons across cases, thereby strengthening the reliability and consistency of the study.

In addition to the individual case reports, this study includes cross-case findings, which

focus on drawing abstractions across the cases. These are represented as themes, which are recurring patterns and common experiences represented in a majority of cases, and assertions, which are the most salient conclusions drawn about the quintain (or group of cases) based on the thematic analysis (Adams et al., 2022; Stake, 2006). Themes were identified by their overall *indication* among the cases, which can be understood as a combined factor of intensity and frequency (Stake, 2006). Themes were identified as high or middling in two-thirds (n=6) of the cases; signifying the salience, prevalence, and prominence of the theme within the quintain (see "Table 2" in Appendix L). Assertions were highly indicated across all cases, focus areas, and themes. While each is described in detail in "Chapter 5" (see also "Table 3" in Appendix L), the subsequent discussion focuses on contextualizing findings within the research questions.

Discussion

This study explores how women-identified middle manager academic research librarians navigate their social identities, organizational power, and positional constraints to respond to the integration of library metrics with learning analytics. Through interviews and document analysis, this research uncovers how middle managers in academic libraries navigate constraints of their positions in the organization with the demands of their professional responsibilities, paying particular attention to how their experiences are shaped and complicated by professional values, faculty status, and gender identity.

Research Question 1: How do women-identified academic librarian middle managers employed at U.S. public research institutions interpret and respond to the integration of library metrics with learning analytics?

Findings from this study problematize existing research on learning analytics and academic libraries, which presents learning analytics as a "divisive third rail" in the profession (Jones,

2019b; Jones & Hinchliffe, 2023). Though some participants expressed strong ideological opposition to learning analytics, all participants described learning analytics as a complex and multifaceted issue and understood that there was no definitive right or wrong path forward. Although the literature suggests that librarians lack the methodological expertise to "navigate ethically sticky methodological concerns" (Jones & Hinchliffe, 2023, p. 3), findings reveal that participants were aware of emerging research on learning analytics, had sufficiently analyzed and considered the implications of that research, and were dissatisfied with both the rigor and the results.

In particular, participants were troubled by: (a) the lack of meaningful interventions to emerge from existing learning analytics programs; (b) how the permissive data collection methods in learning analytics posed an increased risk to students who held marginalized identities; and (c) how learning analytics systems might direct accountability away from the educational system and toward "low performing" actors, who would be punished with increased scrutiny and surveillance. Many participants described the risks learning analytics posed to students as not being worth the rewards offered by the system. As evidence, several participants cited a chronic institutional underfunding of services oriented toward supporting student success, such as counseling and advising. For many participants, their primary concern about learning analytics emerged from this incongruity; learning analytics was intended to identify and address educational inequities, but the institution was not willing to fund the services to meet those needs. Therefore, "what was even the point of identifying students in need?" For participants who were open or even enthusiastic about learning analytics, their attitudes were underscored by a desire to use data to make evidence-based decisions about where to direct the limited fiscal and human resources they had at their disposal to support students who were most in need.

It is meaningful that participants identified as mid-level managers. As a result, their attitudes toward learning analytics were informed by their professional values, and also their proximity to organizational power and positional responsibility. Participants were highly attentive to how their actions might impact the well-being, financial security, opportunities, and stability of their colleagues and direct reports, which shaped their responses to learning analytics. Many participants shared a common anxiety about how resistance to learning analytics might impact the financial security of the library. They feared a future in which analytics became a "surrogate for success" and expressed concerns that excluding library metrics from learning analytics systems might damage the reputation and importance of the library to the institution. Although, in some cases, this perceived risk was tied to specific past experiences in which the library had lost credibility or experienced reductions in funding, for most participants, the threat was largely speculative and emerged from the longstanding "state of crisis" in the profession regarding the future of the academic library (Buschman, 2005).

Research Question 1A: How do the professional values and ethics of participants shape their perspectives, interpretations, and responses to the integration of library metrics with learning analytics?

Participants in this study were deeply influenced by both personal and professional values, while also demonstrating an acute awareness of how these values could be weaponized within a neoliberal organizational framework. It was noteworthy that despite integrating the ethics of their profession into their personal value systems, they expressed wariness about how professional ideology could be exploited by both the profession and the organization to rationalize actions incongruent with their beliefs. Many participants explained how their libraries hoped to garner credibility and importance on campus, underscoring the willingness of library administrators to

compromise and change standards of practice to meet that goal. They described institutional prestige as a perpetually moving target, noting how their libraries were constantly switching tactics, changing priorities, and chasing innovations in an attempt to align with activities that were highly valued in a neoliberal organization, such as research enterprise, development and donors, and grant funding.

Participants' interpretations and responses to learning analytics were shaped by their position in the organizational hierarchy and influenced by their dual identities as librarians and managers. Many saw themselves as occupying a middle ground between senior administrators, who held more lenient standards regarding data privacy and ethics, and their colleagues, who adamantly opposed learning analytics based on the perceived incompatibility of data collection practices with professional ethics. They expressed frustration with the "with us, or against us," mentality that has been levied from both sides of the conversation around learning analytics. Despite their unease with learning analytics, participants detailed intricate heuristics to discern which activities fell within acceptable ethical boundaries. For instance, they differentiated between opt-in and opt-out data collection policies; gathering attendance for courses versus workshops; categorizing reference questions thematically, rather than capturing specifics; and utilizing non-identifying data to assess smaller student groups instead of targeting individual actors. Contrary to the hardline and hyperbolic rhetoric depicted in the literature (e.g., Jones, 2019b; Jones & Hinchliffe, 2023; Salo & Jones, 2018), participants' reactions to learning analytics were measured, thoughtful, and sophisticated.

Participants' reactions to learning analytics were also shaped by the accountability and responsibility they felt toward their units. They described the pressures they felt to protect the stability, well-being, and security of the staff and faculty under their purview. All participants,

even those who expressed strong resistance to learning analytics, indicated that they would be willing to integrate library metrics in learning analytics systems if their resistance compromised individuals under their supervision. Throughout the cases, participants outlined a response to learning analytics that centered on informed consent and minimizing harm, both to the students and the library. As middle managers, they understood their responsibility to make difficult decisions, decide a course of action, and be accountable for those decisions to individuals within the organization. Although participants were highly principled, they recognized that their ethics operated within a larger ideological framework and that any decisions, even those aimed at upholding values, could lead to tangible consequences.

Research Question 1B: How are participants 'perspectives, interpretations, and responses to the integration of library metrics with learning analytics influenced by gender identity and faculty status?

Participants in this study unanimously conveyed how their roles as middle managers were centered on fostering community and prioritizing care. They articulated their leadership style as an embodiment of their feminist identities, striving to emphasize transparency, compassion, self-reflection, inclusivity, and collaboration. However, their responsibilities as middle managers also necessitated a focus on productivity, impact, efficiency, and innovation that they perceived as conflicting with their convictions and inherently "unfeminist." Participants felt torn between the responsibility they felt toward their team and the responsibility they "owed"' the organization, experiencing a sense of being "pulled at both ends" or "squeezed from both sides." To navigate this tension, they often sacrificed aspects of their personal and professional lives. They were willing to compromise their values to safeguard the staff under their purview and consistently prioritized the interests, ambitions, and passions of others, relegating their own needs to the "back

burner" to accommodate what they perceived as the more crucial work of supervision.

In the context of learning analytics, participants' perceptions and anxieties arose directly from their identity as educators. Many noted the devaluation of teaching in neoliberal research universities, linking it to the historical relegation of teaching to "support work" (Arellano Douglas & Gadsby, 2017). Participants held a high regard for teaching and learning, which they viewed as interactive, relational, and inherently based on connection and growth. For many, these qualities were incompatible with learning analytics, which focused on rationalizing, analyzing, and commodifying learning to reinforce neoliberal markers of success. While participants believed that library teaching was meaningful and contributed to student success, they were skeptical of the notion that learning analytics could generate data to conclusively demonstrate this correlation. Further, they were frustrated by the expectation that teaching needed to be validated in this way. For many, learning analytics was a continuation of the longstanding devaluation of feminized labor in academia and the desire to reshape education in service of capitalism (Hildenbrand, 2000).

As faculty members, participants grappled with meeting the productivity and rigor standards valued in a neoliberal institution. Their challenges were not due to an inability to produce high-quality research but arose from competing role expectations and their own high standards, making it difficult to dedicate enough time and effort to research endeavors. In the context of learning analytics, participants' responses were shaped by their identities as scholar-practitioners and informed by the research, not despite it. They demonstrated a high fluency in the existing literature and were critical of how previous research attended to research ethics, informed consent, and data collection. Participants also highlighted a strained relationship between the library and the institution, where librarians felt their faculty roles were precarious. This led to constant efforts to justify their work within a faculty system that did not set them up for success. Many participants

noted that academic librarians' interest in learning analytics stemmed more from a desire for the library to be seen as a serious academic entity than from a genuine interest in using data to assess and improve practices.

Implications for Practice

The literature presents learning analytics as a “divisive third rail” in the profession and librarians as lacking the expertise to navigate ethically sticky methodological concerns (Jones & Hinchliffe, 2023). This research approaches librarianship from a deficit perspective and assumes that librarians are reticent to engage in learning analytics because they are ill-equipped to make complicated decisions. However, the compelling findings from this study indicate that librarian reticence around learning analytics is more complex than portrayed in the literature. Participants in this study were not incapable of navigating the ethical situations, nor were they uninformed about the potential benefits of learning analytics. Instead, they expressed frustration at how the professional discourse relied on hyperbolic and coercive rhetoric around the inevitability of learning analytics and the futility of resistance. Although most participants were wary of the potential risks that learning analytics posed to students, all participants were able to detail sophisticated strategies for integrating library metrics in learning analytics, including opt-in vs. opt-out data collection policies, tracking attendance in courses of record but not voluntary events, such as workshops, and conducting concentrated periods of data collection followed by more extended periods of analysis and reflection. These findings suggest that librarians are eager to move away from the all-or-nothing conversations around learning analytics and that, despite the implications in the literature, they are knowledgeable, prepared, and equipped to engage in nuanced discussions around data collection, management, and ethics.

However, this research also uncovers a need for more robust ethical decision-making

frameworks in the profession. Although professional organizations, particularly the ALA, offer policies that articulate library values and set the standards for library practice, these documents are not equipped to support practitioners in navigating increasingly complex ethical dilemmas emerging from rapidly advancing technological capabilities. I echo the participant who identified that "being conversant in [learning analytics] requires a set of professional ethics that we just have not defined." Findings from this study indicate that there is a need for robust interdisciplinary ethical frameworks that combine the principled foundations of librarianship with the professional values of allied disciplines, including the ethical implications of technology design and use that emerge through Human-Computer Interaction, the emphasis on transparency and accountability in information systems that emerges in Information Sciences, and the focus on algorithmic fairness and the mitigation of biases in algorithmic decision-making systems that emerges through Data Science. Professional organizations are necessarily limited by their alignment with a specific discipline. To address this gap, the profession will need to move beyond library organizations to seek interdisciplinary collaboration across institutions and professional divisions.

Additionally, findings suggest that academic librarians could benefit from increased partnerships with student affairs practitioners, particularly around professional development, community engagement, and advocacy. Because academic libraries are organized in the division of academic affairs, they tend to mimic the policies and practices of an academic college and identify academic faculty members as their peer groups. However, participants in this study described their libraries as being organizationally isolated, distinct from an academic college in the organization's structure, and lacking the types of metrics, data, and funding sources readily accessible to an academic college. Increasing collaboration with student affairs practitioners could help to bridge this space by developing strong networks of support and cross-divisional advocacy

that extend beyond academic colleges. Many participants exhibited an ideological alignment with the values of student affairs, including student-centeredness, identity development, inclusivity, diversity, advocacy, cultural competence, and collaboration. There are opportunities for mutual allyship and advocacy between student affairs and academic librarians. I encourage librarians to seek partnerships with student affairs and consider integrating common standards of practice in student affairs research and practice, including alternative pathways to assessing student learning, fostering community development and engagement, crisis management, and leadership development.

Implications for Policy

The findings from this study uncovered a disconnect between the stated goals of learning analytics and the policies and funding structures in the institution. Current research positions the primary obstacle to library involvement in learning analytics as the perceived incompatibility of learning analytics with library values (e.g., Jones, 2019b; Jones et al., 2020; Jones & Hinchliffe, 2023; Nicholson et al., 2019; Oliphant & Brundin, 2019). However, while participants expressed concerns over permissive data collection in learning analytics and the risks posed to students by those practices, they indicated a willingness to compromise ethical standards if learning analytics resulted in meaningful interventions for students and the institution. Findings from this study suggest that to increase library engagement in learning analytics, institutions must (a) commit to providing adequate funding for student support services (such as advising, tutoring, and counseling); (b) establish protocols for meaningful informed consent from participants; and (c) demonstrate how learning analytics will be used to address educational disparities in the system and enhance the learning experience for all students. While ethical policy development was significant, participants emphasized the importance of tangible actions from the institution to

utilize data for student improvement.

Additionally, findings indicate a need for more equitable Appointment, Promotion, and Tenure (APT) policies that acknowledge and accommodate the specific demands of library managers. Within this study, six participants were promoted to management positions before promotion to associate professor and tenure. As a result, they struggled to articulate how the demands of their management positions (such as supervision, evaluation, and administration) fit within the expectations for faculty promotion. Some participants indicated how the time-consuming nature of their positions made it difficult for them to maintain the research and publication standards necessary for promotion and tenure. These challenges were compounded by the lack of representation by library managers on APT committees, which left participants with limited resources to address their specific questions. In addition to expanding the APT policies, libraries should encourage the representation of library managers on the library APT or faculty governance committee and institute faculty workload policies that allow library managers, particularly those seeking promotion, to allocate time for research and scholarship without undue burden.

Findings also indicate a need for improved and equitable faculty mentorship models. Several participants shared an experience of being an untenured faculty member tasked with supervising other untenured faculty, which put them in the problematic situation of serving as an unofficial mentor on a promotion process that they had not yet successfully navigated. Although a few case sites offered formal faculty mentors to untenured librarians outside of direct reporting lines, others did not, which placed a heavy burden on the participant to serve as both supervisor and faculty mentor. The prevalence of this experience among participants indicates that this situation may be common in the profession. If a library offers management opportunities to

untenured faculty librarians, the organization should also provide structured mentorship models that offer managers and supervisees adequate support and expertise to guide their promotion and tenure processes.

Unfortunately, this study also uncovered instances of blatant misogyny and sexism in the faculty promotion process. Three participants in this study were hired into management positions at their institutions. Of these, two were appointed into lowered faculty ranks. Both participants identified gender and the devaluation of their teaching as contributing to their lowered rank. They described how the decision disadvantaged their careers by delaying their eligibility to apply for a rank equivalent to full professor. Their experiences reinforce findings in the literature indicating that although librarianship is a feminized profession, gender inequities and discrimination in the profession persist (e.g., Delong, 2013; Eva et al., 2021; Hildenbrand, 2000; Rutledge, 2020). Although there is more gender parity among library leaders compared to previous decades, this research indicates that there is work to be done to achieve equity. The study underscores the need for detailed, transparent policies in faculty hiring, promotion, and evaluation, ensuring accessibility of the policies to stakeholders within the institution and prospective candidates and equitable application of those policies across appointment and promotion decisions.

Implications for Research

This collective case study explored how women-identified middle manager academic teaching librarians responded to neoliberalism in their workplaces, using learning analytics as a proxy for neoliberal ideology. While this study focused on public research libraries, it did not examine how the experiences of middle manager librarians may differ at smaller or less research-intensive universities. Future research should consider how the impacts of neoliberalism may vary based on the context, constraints, and mission of the institution, considering factors such as

Minority serving versus predominantly White institutions, public versus private institutions, research versus teaching institutions, and community colleges versus four-year colleges and universities, among others.

The study found that several participants were promoted or hired into management positions before achieving tenure as associate professors, highlighting a potential trend in academic librarianship among mid-level managers. Due to the limited sample size, further research is needed to validate these findings. Additionally, the findings from this study indicate that middle-manager librarians may offer a perspective distinct from front-line librarians and upper-level administrators due to their proximity to organizational power and positional responsibility. While LIS research often collects and reports demographic information that includes a participant's years of service in the profession, I encourage researchers to recruit middle managers in their future studies specifically and include a participant's hierarchy in the organization or position level as a unit of analysis.

This dissertation offers a rigorous approach to qualitative inductive case study research in its design, implementation, and analysis. In the past, LIS literature has been criticized for an overreliance on survey methodology and lack of methodological rigor (Hildreth & Aytac, 2007; Turcios et al., 2014). While case study is well-represented in LIS literature, case study methodology is often conflated with other qualitative methods such as action-based research, historical analysis, field study, and auto-ethnographic research that focuses on the personal, descriptive, and reflective (Chu, 2015; Lund & Wang, 2021; Ullah & Ameen, 2018). In systematic reviews of research methods in LIS, "case study" is generally used to describe less rigorous qualitative research that focuses on a single site or individual (Hider & Pymm, 2008; Ullah & Ameen, 2018). In fact, a recent decline in the use of case study methods in top LIS journals over

the last decade has been cited as evidence of increasing methodological rigor within LIS (Lund & Wang, 2021). I encourage future case study researchers to pull from the rich body of educational research methodology, in particular Stake (1995), Yin (2009), and Merriam (1988), to develop rich and thoughtful case studies that utilize intentional approaches to data collection and analysis that combine the thorough investigation of a specific context that is indicative of case study research with methodological precision.

While several studies have examined the career paths of upper-level academic library leaders to identify successful strategies for advancement (e.g., Banush, 2020; Fought, 2019), research also highlights external barriers to librarian career advancement, including limited access to mentorship and professional networks, organizational constraints, gendered and racial discrimination, and limited professional development opportunities, among others (e.g., Bladek, 2019; Bugg, 2016; Delong, 2013; Le, 2021; Rutledge, 2020). However, the findings from this study suggest that a significant barrier to advancement was self-imposed and emerged from the reluctance of participants to "let go of the work." Future research could explore how a perceived decline in professional joy at higher levels of leadership may act as a self-imposed barrier to advancement for women-identified librarians and consider ways to enhance job satisfaction in these roles to encourage upper mobility.

As a component of this dissertation, I intended to analyze learning analytics policies to assess how library involvement influenced policy development. However, this analysis was not feasible due to the limited sample (see Table 1 in Appendix K). Future studies should collect and analyze these policies more extensively. Additionally, only one of the case study sites was associated with a university that offered an ALA-accredited MLIS program. Further research is

needed to explore how MLIS education shapes the socialization and professionalization of middle manager librarians in neoliberal academic settings.

Where do we go from here?

As a mid-level woman-identified manager in a research library, I share the frustrations, challenges, and concerns voiced by participants. I feel the tensions in the profession around learning analytics and share anxieties about the future of libraries and librarians. Traditionally, librarianship has relied on national professional organizations, such as the ALA and the ACRL, to establish our core values and standards. While these "narratives of clarity" (Hudson, 2017, p. 210) provide a common language, they often reinforce neoliberal ideology by prioritizing practicality, action, and solutions over dialogue and consideration (Cope, 2014; Hudson, 2017; Seale, 2016). Participants in this study were drawn to librarianship to serve their communities, particularly students, but found that the expectations and constraints of their neoliberal workplaces diverted their time and attention away from this work. As mid-level managers, they faced challenges in integrating care deeply into their roles, often feeling that existing professional standards did not fully address the ethical complexities of care. As a result, they attempted to "create space" for care by sacrificing their own ambitions, passions, and career aspirations. Moving forward, an ethical framework that centers care is needed, one that recognizes the many dimensions of and pathways through which care can be actualized.

In her formative work on feminist care ethics, Joan Tronto (1993) offers a framework for understanding the political dynamics of caregiving. She argues that enacting care as practice requires recognizing care as a form of social activism and that *care-giving* and *care-receiving* are forms of political power that can be wielded even within oppressive and unequal systems of social power. Rather than being absolute or universal, ethical responsibilities are situational and informed

by the needs, norms, expectations, and limitations of our communities. In determining our ethical obligations, Tronto (1993) offers four moral boundaries: (a) *inclusion*, which calls us to consider who is worthy of care and who may be systematically excluded from our moral calculations; (b) *exemption*, which scrutinizes social and cultural assumptions about caregiving and calls into question who is exempt from performing the responsibilities of care; (c) *concern*, which delimits which issues are seen as morally significant and encourages us to expand our ethical concerns to include less visible components of care, such as environmental stewardship or mental health; and (d) *responsibility*, which examines whether our ethical obligations should be to be limited to our immediate social circle or extend to our wider communities. Together, these moral boundaries offer a framework to examine the ethical and organizational dimensions of care.

In this study, learning analytics served as a manifestation of the tensions between utility and care. Participants felt both convicted and conflicted by learning analytics, caught between the desire to protect students, the obligation they felt to support the financial stability of their organizations, and the responsibility they felt to ensure the well-being of their teams. As a result, many participants viewed learning analytics as antithetical to their core values of care. However, Tronto's (1993) framework challenges us to view care not as self-contained, but as an integral part of our organizational strategies. It prompts us to question who benefits from and who is burdened by our practices and how these practices shape organizational and power structures. In the context of learning analytics, adopting a framework of moral boundaries would require us to question who is overlooked in these systems, who is carrying the burden of care, and how the language of care might be used to perpetuate power imbalances. While this study was explicitly focused on learning analytics, the ethical questions that emerge through learning analytics are present throughout libraries. Our professional guidelines outline the core values of librarianship. However, an ethical

framework centered on care would bridge the gap between values and practice, providing a platform to consider the multiple dimensions, impacts, obligations, and implications of care. I believe that such a framework is needed, necessary, and would prove vital to the work.

In concluding this dissertation, I echo Tronto's (1993) call to action, "since the task of care is to maintain, continue, and repair the world so that we can live in it as well as possible, we should do what will best achieve this end" (p. 145). Even in systems of oppression and inequity, even amid spaces of darkness, I believe that care can exist; that light can pierce the deepest shadows and illuminate the darkest corners of our lives. Although the adoption of learning analytics may be inevitable, I argue that an ethic of care is integral, not ancillary, to this work. I reiterate Tronto's (1993) assertion that care cannot exist apart from its moral and political context (p. 125). I offer that, as librarians, our shared commitment to care compels us to engage with these challenges head-on, armed with empathy and determination. The future may be uncertain, but I believe that the role of librarians in higher education remains vital. These conversations are intricate, and the work is demanding, but we have navigated difficult terrain before. I believe that we will rise to the occasion once more. It has been my privilege to be a part of this professional community. It was my honor to hold and share the stories of the participants. Librarianship has given so much to me; I am deeply indebted to the women who came before, whose research and practice have made my work possible. I see this research as a beginning, not an end. My hope is that we move bravely toward the future, armed with courage and conviction, steadfast in our commitment to care, and trusting that even amid darkness, we can and will create space for light.

Appendix A

American Library Association (2019) Library Bill of Rights

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

1. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

2. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

3. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

4. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

5. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

6. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

7. All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use. Libraries should advocate for, educate about, and protect people's privacy, safeguarding all library use data, including personally identifiable information.

Appendix B

American Library Association (2008) Code of Ethics

As members of the American Library Association, we recognize the importance of codifying and making known to the profession and to the general public the ethical principles that guide the work of librarians, other professionals providing information services, library trustees and library staffs. Ethical dilemmas occur when values are in conflict. The American Library Association Code of Ethics states the values to which we are committed, and embodies the ethical responsibilities of the profession in this changing information environment.

1. We significantly influence or control the selection, organization, preservation, and dissemination of information. In a political system grounded in an informed citizenry, we are members of a profession explicitly committed to intellectual freedom and the freedom of access to information. We have a special obligation to ensure the free flow of information and ideas to present and future generations.

2. The principles of this Code are expressed in broad statements to guide ethical decision making. These statements provide a framework; they cannot and do not dictate conduct to cover particular situations.

3. We provide the highest level of service to all library users through appropriate and usefully organized resources; equitable service policies; equitable access; and accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests.

4. We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources.

5. We protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired or transmitted.

6. We respect intellectual property rights and advocate balance between the interests of information users and rights holders.

7. We treat co-workers and other colleagues with respect, fairness, and good faith, and advocate conditions of employment that safeguard the rights and welfare of all employees of our institutions.

8. We do not advance private interests at the expense of library users, colleagues, or our employing institutions.

9. We distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and do not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation of the aims of our institutions or the provision of access to their information resources.

10. We strive for excellence in the profession by maintaining and enhancing our own

knowledge and skills, by encouraging the professional development of co-workers, and by fostering the aspirations of potential members of the profession.

11. We affirm the inherent dignity and rights of every person. We work to recognize and dismantle systemic and individual biases; to confront inequity and oppression; to enhance diversity and inclusion; and to advance racial and social justice in our libraries, communities, profession, and associations through awareness, advocacy, education, collaboration, services, and allocation of resources and spaces.

Appendix C

American Library Association (2004) Core Values of Librarianship

The foundation of modern librarianship rests on an essential set of core values that define, inform, and guide our professional practice. These values reflect the history and ongoing development of the profession and have been advanced, expanded, and refined by numerous policy statements of the American Library Association. Among these are: access, confidentiality/privacy, democracy, diversity, education and lifelong learning, intellectual freedom, preservation, the public good, professionalism, service, social responsibility, and sustainability.

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to express our values more eloquently than ALA already has in the Freedom to Read statement, the Library Bill of Rights, the ALA Mission Statement, Libraries: An American Value, and other documents. These policies have been carefully thought out, articulated, debated, and approved by the ALA Council. They are interpreted, revised or expanded when necessary. Over time, the values embodied in these policies have been embraced by the majority of librarians as the foundations of their practice. These selections are direct quotes from the ALA Policy Manual.

- **Access**. All information resources that are provided directly or indirectly by the library, regardless of technology, format, or methods of delivery, should be readily, equally, and equitably accessible to all library users. *ALA Policy Manual B.2.1.14 Economic Barriers to Information Access*

- **Confidentiality/Privacy.** Protecting user privacy and confidentiality is necessary for intellectual freedom and fundamental to the ethics and practice of librarianship. *ALA Policy Manual B.2.1.17 Privacy*

- **Democracy.** A democracy presupposes an informed citizenry. The First Amendment mandates the right of all persons to free expression, and the corollary right to receive the constitutionally protected expression of others. The publicly supported library provides free and equal access to information for all people of the community the library serves. *Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights, Economic Barriers to Information Access.*

- **Diversity.** We value our nation's diversity and strive to reflect that diversity by providing a full spectrum of resources and services to the communities we serve. *ALA Policy Manual B.3 Diversity, Libraries: An American Value*

- **Education and Lifelong Learning**. ALA promotes the creation, maintenance, and enhancement of a learning society, encouraging its members to work with educators, government officials, and organizations in coalitions to initiate and support comprehensive efforts to ensure that school, public, academic, and special libraries in every community cooperate to provide lifelong learning services to all. *ALA Policy Manual A.1.1 Introduction*

- **Intellectual Freedom.** We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources. *ALA Policy Manual B.2 Intellectual Freedom, ALA Code of Ethics, Article II*

- **The Public Good.** ALA reaffirms the following fundamental values of libraries in the context of discussing outsourcing and privatization of library services. These values include that libraries are an essential public good and are fundamental institutions in democratic societies. *1998-99 CD#24.1, Motion #1*

- **Preservation.** The Association supports the preservation of information published in all media and formats. The association affirms that the preservation of information resources is central to libraries and librarianship. *ALA Policy Manual B.8.3. Preservation, Preservation Policy.*

- **Professionalism.** The American Library Association supports the provision of library services by professionally qualified personnel who have been educated in graduate programs within institutions of higher education. It is of vital importance that there be professional education available to meet the social needs and goals of library services. *ALA Policy Manual B.7.1 Graduate Programs in Library and Information Studies.*

- **Service.** We provide the highest level of service to all library users. We strive for excellence in the profession by maintaining and enhancing our own knowledge and skills, by encouraging the professional development of co-workers, and by fostering the aspirations of potential members of the profession. *ALA Code of Ethics.*

- **Social Responsibility.** ALA recognizes its broad social responsibilities. The broad social responsibilities of the American Library Association are defined in terms of the contribution that librarianship can make in ameliorating or solving the critical problems of society; support for efforts to help inform and educate the people of the United States on these problems and to encourage them to examine the many views on and the facts regarding each problem; and the willingness of ALA to take a position on current critical issues with the relationship to libraries and library service set forth in the position statement. *ALA Policy Manual A.1.1 Mission Priority Areas, Goals.*

- **Sustainability.** ALA is supporting the library community by showing its commitment to assisting in the development of sustainable libraries with the addition of sustainability as a core value of librarianship. This consists of practices that are environmentally sound, economically feasible and socially equitable. Libraries play an important and unique role in promoting community awareness about resilience, climate change and a sustainable future. They are also leading by example by taking steps to reduce their environmental footprint. *ALA Policy Manual A.1.4 Core Organizational Values.*

Appendix D

Recruitment and Participant Selection

Table 1 - Case Site and Participant Boundaries and Secondary Criteria

Case Sites *Public academic research library that…*	**Participants** *Academic library professional who…*	**Quintain** *Group of participants who are representative of…*
Holds current membership in the Association of Research Libraries (ARL).	Is employed at an eligible case site.	As many geographic divisions of the U.S. as possible.
Supports an institution with an undergraduate population at or over 10,000 students.	Identifies as a woman.	As many racial identities as possible.
Offers nominal faculty status to librarians and/or advancement through a rank and promotion system.	Holds nominal faculty status and/or advances through a rank and promotion system.	As wide a range of years of professional experience as possible (i.e., early-, mid-, and late-career librarians)
Has a dedicated team or unit of teaching or instructional librarians.	Occupies a leadership position in a teaching focused organizational team or unit	As wide a range of engagement with learning as possible.
	Provides formal supervision to library staff and/or faculty.	As many unique institutional or individual qualities possible (i.e., unionization)
	Reports to an intermediate manager at least one level below the Dean or University Librarian.	

Table 2 - Public University Members of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL)

Institution Name	Eligible	Ineligible	Potential participant identified	Potential participant NOT identified
Arizona State University Libraries	✓		✓	
Auburn University Libraries	✓		✓	
Colorado State University Libraries	✓		✓	
Florida State University Libraries	✓			✓
Georgia Institute of Technology Library	✓			✓
Indiana University Libraries Bloomington	✓		✓	
Iowa State University Library	✓		✓	
Kent State University Libraries	✓			✓
Louisiana State University Libraries	✓		✓	
Michigan State University Libraries	✓		✓	
North Carolina State University Libraries	✓		✓	
Ohio State University Libraries	✓		✓	
Ohio University Libraries	✓		✓	

Oklahoma State University Library	✓		✓	
Pennsylvania State University Libraries	✓		✓	
Purdue University Libraries	✓		✓	
Rutgers University Libraries	✓			✓
Southern Illinois University Carbondale Library		✓	✓	
Stony Brook University, SUNY, Libraries	✓		✓	
Temple University Libraries	✓		✓	
Texas A&M University Libraries	✓		✓	
Texas State University	✓		✓	
Texas Tech University Libraries	✓		✓	
University at Albany, SUNY, Libraries	✓		✓	
University at Buffalo, SUNY, Libraries	✓		✓	
University of Alabama Libraries	✓		✓	
University of Arizona Libraries	✓		✓	
University of California, Berkeley Library	✓		✓	
University of California, Davis Library	✓		✓	
University of California, Irvine Libraries	✓		✓	
University of California, Los Angeles Library	✓		✓	
University of California, Riverside Libraries	✓		✓	
University of California, San Diego Libraries	✓			✓
University of California, Santa Barbara Libraries	✓		✓	
University of California, Santa Cruz	✓		✓	
University of Cincinnati Libraries	✓		✓	
University of Colorado at Boulder Libraries	✓		✓	
University of Connecticut Libraries	✓		✓	
University of Delaware Library	✓		✓	
University of Florida Libraries	✓			✓
University of Georgia Libraries	✓		✓	
University of Hawai'i at Manoa Libraries	✓		✓	
University of Houston Libraries	✓		✓	
University of Illinois at Chicago Library	✓		✓	
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library	✓		✓	
University of Iowa Libraries	✓		✓	
University of Kansas Libraries	✓			✓
University of Kentucky Libraries	✓			✓
University of Louisville Libraries	✓		✓	
University of Maryland Libraries		✓	✓	
University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries	✓			✓
University of Michigan Library	✓		✓	
University of Minnesota Libraries	✓		✓	
University of Missouri-Columbia Libraries	✓		✓	
University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries	✓			✓
University of New Mexico Libraries	✓		✓	
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Libraries	✓		✓	
University of Oklahoma Libraries	✓		✓	
University of Oregon Libraries	✓		✓	

University of Pittsburgh Libraries	✓		✓	
University of South Carolina Libraries	✓		✓	
University of Tennessee Libraries	✓		✓	
University of Texas at Austin Libraries	✓		✓	
University of Utah Library	✓		✓	
University of Virginia Library	✓		✓	
University of Washington Libraries	✓		✓	
University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries	✓		✓	
Virginia Commonwealth University	✓		✓	
Virginia Tech Libraries	✓		✓	
Washington State University Libraries	✓		✓	
Wayne State University Libraries	✓			✓
Total N	69	2	58	11

Table 3 - United States Census Bureau Designated Regions and Divisions

Region	**Division**	**States**
Northeast	(1) New England	Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont
	(2) Middle Atlantic	New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania
Midwest	(3) East North Central	Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin
	(4) West North Central	Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota
South	(5) South Atlantic	Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Washington, D.C., West Virginia
	(6) East South Central	Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee
	(7) West South Central	Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas
West	(8) Mountain	Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming
	(9) Pacific	Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington

Table 4 - Demographics of Participants(n=9)

Division	Count	**Years of Prof. Exp.**	Count	**Rank (Junior Faculty)**	Count
Middle Atlantic	1	Early-to-mid (5-10)	3	Lecturer	1
East North Central	1	Mid (10-30)	5	Assist. Prof. (or equiv.)	2
South Atlantic	3	Late (30+)	1		
East South Central	1			**Rank (Senior Faculty)**	
West South Central	1	**Type of Institution**		Assoc. Prof. (or equiv.)	4
Mountain	1	PWI	5	Full Librarian	2
Pacific	1	MSI	4		

Table 5 – Quintain - Self-Reported Involvement in Learning Analytics

"How would you describe your ____ involvement in learning analytics (LA)?"			
	University	Library	Participant
"Actively participating in LA"	4	0	0
"Engaged in small-scale LA activities"	2	2	1
"Emergent / beginning to explore LA"	3	3	4
"Hesitant to engage in LA"	0	1	1
"Resistant to LA"	0	1	2
"Other (I don't know)	0	2	1

Table 6 - Participant - Self-Reported Involvement in Learning Analytics

	Individual	**Library**	**University**
Audrey	Resistant	Hesitant	Emergent
Nicole	Resistant	Resistant	Active
Fiona	Hesitant	Engaged	Active
Molly	Emergent	Emergent	Engaged
Sophie	Emergent	Emergent	Emergent
Madison	Emergent	Other	Emergent
Bailey	Other	Other	Engaged
Daphne	Engaged	Engaged	Active
Hazel	Emergent	Emergent	Active

Appendix E

Eligibility Screening Survey

This dissertation research is being conducted by Rachel Gammons at the University of Maryland, College Park. The primary objective of this study is to better understand how middle manager academic research librarians navigate their platforms of power, privilege, and positional responsibility to respond to ethical complexity. A second area of interest is how these experiences may intersect or be shaped by gender identity and faculty status. For the purpose of this research, the issue of ethical complexity will be the integration of *library metrics* (traditional data collected by and about libraries) with learning analytics (data collected by, about, and from learners with the intent of optimizing academic performance). However, no experience with learning analytics is required for participation.

Participants in the study would engage in a 60 to 90-minute semi-structured interview with the researcher, which will be conducted via Zoom. As the leader of a teaching-focused unit at an ARL library, you have been identified as a possible participant.

Q1: Does this sound like something you might be interested in?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If This dissertation research is being conducted by … = No thanks

Page Break ----------

Q2: First things first, let's make sure you meet the eligibility requirements. Which of the following statements apply to you? *If you aren't sure how to respond to any of the below, mark "not sure" in the right-hand column and the researcher will follow up to verify eligibility.*	Yes	No	Not sure / Other
I identify as a woman.			
I am an academic librarian.			
I hold a leadership position in a teaching or instruction-focused organizational unit within my library.			
I provide formal supervision to library staff and/or faculty members (which may include librarians, paraprofessional staff, and/or student workers).			
I report to an intermediate manager who is at least one level below the Dean or University Librarian (e.g., Associate Dean or Director).			
I hold nominal faculty status (my position is designated as faculty rather than staff) **AND/OR** academic rank at my institution (my position offers advancement through a ranking system, such as Assistant to Associate Librarian, or Librarian I to Librarian II).			

Display This Question: *If any of the above = "No"*

Skip To: End of Survey "If Thanks so much for your interest!"... Is Displayed

Thanks so much for your interest! This study is focused on a very narrow subset of the library profession, and it looks like you do not currently meet the eligibility requirements. If you have any questions about your eligibility or this research project, please feel free to contact me: [Contact information included]

Start of Block: Demographics

Display This Question: If First things first, let's make sure you meet the eligibility requirements. Which of the following is NOT identify as a woman = [Yes]

Q2A: How would you describe your gender identity? _____

Display This Question:

If First things first, let's make sure you meet the eligibility requirements. Which of the following... = I provide formal supervision to library staff and/or faculty members (which may include librarians, paraprofessional staff, and/or student workers)= [Yes]

Q2B: Which of the following types of employees do you typically supervise?

- ☐ Faculty librarian(s)
- ☐ Staff librarian(s)
- ☐ Exempt staff member(s)
- ☐ Non-exempt staff member(s)
- ☐ Part-time staff member(s)
- ☐ Contractual worker(s)
- ☐ Graduate assistant(s)
- ☐ Student worker(s)

Display This Question:

If First things first, let's make sure you meet the eligibility requirements. Which of the following... = I hold nominal faculty status (my position is designated as faculty rather than staff) AND/OR academic rank at my institution (my position offers advancement through a formal ranking system, such as Assistant to Associate Librarian, or Librarian I to Librarian II) = [Yes]

Q2C: What is your current faculty or academic rank? _____

Page Break ----------

Q3: It looks like you might be eligible for this study! Tell me a little more about yourself:

Name:	
Email:	
Position Title:	
Institution:	
Briefly describe your positional responsibilities:	
Race and/or ethnic identity:	

Q4: Years of professional experience:

- ○ 0 to 4 (2)
- ○ 5 to 7 (3)
- ○ 8 to 10 (4)
- ○ 11 to 15 (5)
- ○ 16 or more (6)

Page Break ----------

Start of Block: Learning Analytics

Q5: How would you describe your university's current involvement in learning analytics?

- ○ Actively participating (1)
- ○ Engaged in small-scale activities (2)
- ○ Emergent / beginning to explore learning analytics (3)
- ○ Hesitant to engage in learning analytics (4)
- ○ Resistant to learning analytics (5)
- ○ Other (I don't know how to answer this question) (6)

Q6: How would you describe your library's current involvement in learning analytics?

- ○ Actively participating (1)
- ○ Engaged in small-scale activities (2)
- ○ Emergent / beginning to explore learning analytics (3)
- ○ Hesitant to engage in learning analytics (4)
- ○ Resistant to learning analytics (5)
- ○ Other (I don't know how to answer this question) (6)

Q7: How would you describe your own involvement in learning analytics?

- ○ Actively participating (1)
- ○ Engaged in small-scale activities (2)
- ○ Emergent / beginning to explore learning analytics (3)
- ○ Hesitant to engage in learning analytics (4)
- ○ Resistant to learning analytics (5)
- ○ Other (I don't know how to answer this question) (6)

End of Survey

Thank you for your time in completing this eligibility screening survey! Your response has been recorded. If you have questions or would like to follow up, please feel free to contact the researcher at,

Rachel Gammons
[Email, phone #, address included]
Note: Data for ineligible participants and those who are eligible but choose not to participate in the study or are not selected for participation will be deleted and will not be used for research purposes.

Appendix F

Recruitment Communications

Recruitment Email for Head of Teaching Unit

From	Rachel Gammons [via Qualtrics]
To	[Head of Teaching Unit]
Sent on	13 Mar 2023 9:00 AM EDT
Subject	Invitation to Participate in Dissertation Research

Dear [FirstName],

Good morning! My name is Rachel Gammons, and I am the Head of Teaching and Learning Services at the University of Maryland Libraries. I am also a doctoral student at the University of Maryland College of Education.

I am currently recruiting participants for my dissertation research, "Collective Case Study on How Middle Manager Academic Librarians Navigate Ethical Complexity in the Workplace" (IRB Package 1963320-1). My study will explore how women-identified academic librarians who lead teaching units at research libraries (whew!) understand and respond to the integration of library metrics (traditional data collected by and about libraries) with learning analytics (data collected by, about, and from learners with the intent of optimizing academic performance). This research will fill a gap in the literature around the experiences and identities of middle manager librarians in academic libraries. It will also consider how attitudes, experiences, and expectations of leadership may be shaped by gender identity and faculty status. Having direct experience with learning analytics is not required for participation in this study.

As the leader of a teaching-focused unit, department, or team at an ARL library, you have been identified as a possible participant in this study. As a participant, you would engage in a 60 to 90-minute video interview* with the researcher (me!). Topics would focus on your career trajectory; professional values; experiences as a supervisor/manager; experiences, and perceptions of faculty work and the appointment, promotion, and tenure process (if applicable); and experience and/or perceptions with learning analytics and/or library metrics. You would also be invited to share select documents, such as a position description.

If you are interested in participating in this research, please complete this short eligibility screening survey** at the link below: [SurveyLink]

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser: [SurveyURL]

Thank you so much for considering!

Rachel W. Gammons
Teaching and Learning Services Unit, Head @ University of Maryland Libraries
Ph.D. Candidate - Higher Education, Student Affairs, and International Education Policy @ University of Maryland College of Education

Not into this research project? No worries! Click the link below to be removed from my contact list. [OptOutLink]

**To be eligible for the study, the participant must agree to the video-chat interview being recorded and*

the auto-generated transcript saved for research purposes. Access to the research materials will be restricted to the researcher and will not be shared with the participant's home institution.

***The information gathered in the screening survey will only be used to confirm eligibility and, later, to inform the interview processes for selected participants. None of the information from the survey will be reported in aggregate. Data for ineligible participants or those who are eligible but either choose not to participate in the study or are not selected for participation will be deleted and will not be used for research purposes. Both qualified and ineligible participants will be notified of their status at the survey's close on March 25, 2023."*

Reminder Email to Incomplete Respondents

From	Rachel Gammons [via Qualtrics]
To	Incomplete Respondents
Sent on	20 Mar 2023 9:00 AM EDT
Subject	Reminder: Invitation to Participate in Dissertation Research

Dear [FirstName],

Last week, you were contacted about participation in my dissertation research, "Collective Case Study on How Middle Manager Academic Librarians Navigate Ethical Complexity in the Workplace" (IRB Package 1963320-1) at the University of Maryland College of Education. Recruitment is open through March 25, 2023. If you are interested in participating in this research, please complete this short eligibility survey at the link below: [SurveyLink]

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:[SurveyURL]

Not into this research project, or know that you are ineligible? No worries! Click the link below to be removed from my contact list. [OptOutLink]

Thank you so much for considering and feel free to reach out with any questions!

Warm regards,

Rachel W. Gammons
Teaching and Learning Services Unit, Head @ University of Maryland Libraries
Ph.D. Candidate - Higher Education, Student Affairs, and International Education Policy @ University of Maryland College of Education

Second Reminder Email to Incomplete Respondents

From	Rachel Gammons [via Qualtrics]
To	Incomplete Respondents
Sent on	23 Mar 2023 9:00 AM EDT
Subject	Final Reminder: Invitation to Participate in Dissertation Research

Dear [FirstName],

I know we are all so busy - so this is the last (hopefully gentle nudge) that I am currently recruiting for my dissertation research study: "Collective Case Study on How Middle Manager Academic Librarians Navigate Ethical Complexity in the Workplace" (IRB Package 1963320-1) at the University of Maryland College of Education. Recruitment is open through March 25, 2023. If you are interested in participating in this research, please complete this short eligibility survey at the link below:
[SurveyLink]

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:
[SurveyURL]

Thank you so much for considering and feel free to reach out with any questions!

Rachel W. Gammons
Teaching and Learning Services Unit, Head @ University of Maryland Libraries
Ph.D. Candidate - Higher Education, Student Affairs, and International Education Policy @ University of Maryland College of Education

Recruitment Email for Assistant/Associate Dean

From	Rachel Gammons
To	Incomplete Respondents
Sent on	20 Mar 2023 9:00 AM EDT
Subject	Final Reminder: Invitation to Participate in Dissertation Research

Dear [First Name]

My name is Rachel Gammons and I am the Head of Teaching and Learning Services at the University of Maryland Libraries. I am also a doctoral student at the University of Maryland College of Education completing my dissertation research on middle manager academic librarians and their experiences navigating ethical complexity in the workplace.

I am currently recruiting participants for my dissertation study, which will explore how **women-identified academic librarians who lead teaching units at research libraries** understand and respond to the integration of library metrics with learning analytics. Based on the information available on your institutional website, I was unable to determine if such a position exists at your library.

If your library organization includes a teaching unit and that unit is led by a unit or department head, would you please forward the below invitation to participate in my study? Thank you so much for considering, and please be in touch with any questions!

Rachel Gammons
Teaching and Learning Services Unit, Head @ University of Maryland Libraries
Ph.D. Candidate - Higher Education, Student Affairs, and International Education Policy @ University of Maryland College of Education

--
[Slightly modified version of “Recruitment Email for Head of Teaching Unit” appended to email]

Appendix G

Consent to Participate Form

Initials: _____ Date: _____

Institutional Review Board
1204 Marie Mount Hall • 7814 Regents Drive • College Park, MD 20742 • 301-405-4212 • irb@umd.edu

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Project Title	Collective Case Study on How Middle Manager Academic Librarians Navigate Ethical Complexity in the Workplace
Purpose of the Study	This research is being conducted by Rachel Gammons at the University of Maryland, College Park. You were identified as a participant based not only on your position as a middle manager academic librarian faculty, but also as a person who has insight and important perspectives to share on the integration of library metrics (traditional data collected by and about libraries) with learning analytics (data collected by, about, and from learners with the intent of optimizing academic performance). This study seeks to better understand the unique experiences of women-identified middle manager academic research librarians and to explore how women in these positions may navigate their platforms of power, privilege, and positional responsibility to respond to ethical complexity. A second area of interest is to learn more about how your management responsibilities may intersect with your gender identity and responsibilities as a faculty member. This study does not aim to evaluate or assess your management techniques or professional experiences, but rather, to better understand the challenges, opportunities, support networks, and decision-making processes that you face in your position. As a participant, you will be one of 8 to 10 people being interviewed for this study.
Procedures	This study requires you to participate in a semi-structured one-on-one interview with the researcher, which will be conducted via video conferencing software *Zoom* and last approximately 60 to 90 minutes. The video interview will be recorded and automated transcript from the interview will be saved for analysis by the researcher but will not be accessible or shared with individuals at your home institution. An example of an interview question is, "Would you describe yourself as a middle manager? Can you tell me more about your pathway into management?" Topics for the interview would focus on your career trajectory; professional values; experiences as a supervisor/manager; experiences, and perceptions of faculty work and the appointment, promotion, and tenure process; and experience with learning analytics and/or library metrics. You will also be invited to share documents to aid in analysis, including: 1) a position description for your current position of employment; 2) personal statement that was used in your application for promotion for rank and/or tenure (or equivalent at a given institution); 3) any policies,

	procedures, or guidelines related to your institution's engagement with learning analytics. Documents will be collected via email. You may elect to share any, all, or none of the above documentation and still be eligible for the study. The only requirements for participation are (1) the eligibility screening survey (which you have already completed), (2) semi-structured interview and, (3) consent to video record the interview and save the autogenerated transcript. Both the documents and transcript(s) from the interview will be analyzed using the qualitative analysis software NVivo. Any reports from the research study will be anonymized and direct quotes and/or paraphrases will be disguised to protect participant confidentiality. After I have completed interviews with all these participants, I will engage in member-checking by providing the preliminary themes identified through the cross-case coding with you for review. To be respectful of your time, I will conduct member checking over email, but will also be available for follow up discussions by request.
Potential Risks and Discomforts	There may be some risks from participating in this research study. Although every effort will be made to protect and maintain your privacy and confidentiality, there is an unlikely risk of information loss and/or breach in privacy. This will be mitigated by anonymizing data using a research key for your identity and storing research materials on a secure server. Because this study focuses on professional values and identity, which impact how you view and understand yourself, there is a risk that you may experience psychological discomfort during the interview process. This will be mitigated by warning you in advance of the interview topics, reminding you of your right to decline to answer any questions and/or end the interview, and maintaining an awareness of your attitudes and body language to proactively detect and address discomfort during the interview process.
Potential Benefits	This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the investigator learn more about the experiences, beliefs, and values of women-identified middle manager academic librarians, which is a population that has been under-researched in the literature.
Confidentiality	Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by storing research materials (including interview video recordings, transcripts, interview notes, documents, and NVivo project data) exclusively in UMD Box which requires authentication with a UMD directory ID and password to access. Box is rated by the University of Maryland Division of IT for 'High Risk Data,' defined by IT-2 University of Maryland Classification Standard. Records will be categorized in Box according to this standard and deleted according to institutional record management policies defined by DIT. After eligibility is verified, your name will be removed and replaced with a

	code, which will be used in the survey, transcript, and any other collected data. Using an identification key, I will be able to link research data to your identity. I am the only person who will have access to the identification key, which will be stored in separate, password protected/encrypted file saved on my university issued laptop. If I write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. All identifiable information (including video recordings, linking key, transcripts with identifiers, documents obtained with identifiers, etc.) will be retained for five years and then destroyed in accordance with institutional record management policies.
Right to Withdraw and Questions	Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify. If you are an employee, your standing or employability at your institution will not be positively or negatively affected by your participation or non-participation in this study If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator: **Rachel Gammons** **rgammons@umd.edu** **301-405-9120** **4100C McKeldin Library** **7649 Library Lane, College Park, MD 20742**
Participant Rights	If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact: University of Maryland College Park Institutional Review Board Office 1204 Marie Mount Hall College Park, Maryland, 20742 E-mail: irb@umd.edu Telephone: 301-405-0678 For more information regarding participant rights, please visit: https://research.umd.edu/research-resources/research-compliance/institutional-review-board-irb/research-participants This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.

Statement of Consent	Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You will receive an electronic copy of this signed consent form. If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.	
Signature and Date	**NAME OF PARTICIPANT**	
	SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT	
	DATE	

Appendix H

Communications with Participants

Invitation to Participate in Research Study

Email distributed to eligible participants who were selected for interviews (n=9)

From	Rachel Gammons
To	Identified Responder
Sent on	13 Mar 2023 9:00 AM EDT
Subject	Formal Invitation to Interview

Dear [First Name],

Thank you so much for your interest in participating in my dissertation research on middle manager academic librarians and their experiences navigating ethical complexity in the workplace. I would love to include your perspective in the study!

About this time, you might be asking yourself, *wow do I really want to spend 90 minutes being interviewed? That sounds terrible!* Check out the answer to that and other great questions here!

If you are still interested, here is an overview of what would happen next:

- **STEP 1:** Sign up for an interview slot (90 minutes) [included hyperlink to Calendly signup] anytime between April 10 and May 19. (If these dates/times don't work for you, let me know! I'm happy to work around your schedule).

- **STEP 2:** After you sign up for an interview spot, I'll send you a copy of the informed consent document for you to sign via Adobe Sign. This is a very quick way to sign documents and you'll be able to complete the form from the link in your email.

- **STEP 3:** Once you've selected a date and signed the form, I'll follow up to ask if you'd be willing to share a few documents: (1) a position description; (2) a copy of a personal statement used for promotion and/or tenure (or equivalent); (3) any library or institutional policies related to learning analytics and/or data privacy. Sharing documentation is optional. You can read more about why I'm requesting documents here.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out. Thanks so much for your consideration and for your time!

Rachel

Teaching and Learning Services Unit, Head @ University of Maryland Libraries
Ph.D. Candidate - Higher Education, Student Affairs, and International Education Policy @ University of Maryland College of Education

Commonly Asked Questions and Answers

Brief document that provided answers to questions that participants might have about the research process. This was linked in the email invitation to participate (see above)

Research Basics:

Being interviewed for 90 minutes sounds super stressful! Why would I want to do this?
This will be as low stress an experience as possible. As a fellow teaching librarian, I'm genuinely curious about your experience and I am sure we will have a lot to chat about! I have taken part in research studies as a participant several times and some of my best library friends have come from the experience. I promise I won't make it weird!

I'm pretty busy right now - is this going to require that I do a lot of extra work?
Definitely not. There is no preparation that you need to do ahead of the interview; just show up and share your thoughts. As a part of the research process, I will invite you to share a few documents (if you wish) - but there is no pressure to do so. If all you have time for is the interview and that is it, I completely get that and I will be grateful for the time you can share!

I'm uncomfortable with the interview being recorded. Does it have to be recorded?
I totally get that! The interview is only being recorded to facilitate transcription. The recordings will not be shared with anyone outside of the research team (which is only me! I am a team of one!). Nothing that identifies you or your institution will be shared in any publications that might emerge from this research. I want to focus on you during the interview and not on my notes. Recording our conversation takes the pressure off and allows me to be in the moment.

What kind of questions will you ask during the interview?
The interview isn't intended to be a test; I just want to learn more about you and your work! Here are some examples of questions I might ask: (1) Would you describe yourself as a middle manager? (2) Can you tell me more about your pathway into management? (3) What drew you to librarianship, and in particular research librarianship?

Document Analysis:

Why are you asking me to share my position description?
Although all the participants in this study lead teaching departments, there are always differences in our work. Reading your position description will help me to understand your role and help me to tailor the interview questions to your experiences. If you don't have a position description or don't want to share it, that is fine!

Why are you asking me to share a personal statement that was used in my application for promotion for rank and/or tenure?
A personal statement is an essential component of the promotional dossier and allows a librarian to directly communicate and contextualize their professional accomplishments. Personal statements are unique and often include reflections on the person's professional ethics, values, and experiences. Since the focus of this study is on ethics, I believe that reading these statements will provide a deeper insight into your experiences and help to contextualize the information you share during your interview. If you don't have a personal statement or don't want to share it, that is fine!

Why are you asking me to share any policies, procedures, or guidelines related to my library and/or institution's engagement with learning analytics?
I'm interested in these policies for two reasons. First, the literature suggests that including librarians in learning analytics policy development would protect privacy and lead to more ethical data management

(Jones, 2019b; Salo & Jones, 2018). I am interested to learn if library involvement (or lack thereof) is indicated within the policies themselves. Second, research shows that policy documents are often aspirational and that gaps appear in the translation of policy to practice (Briney, 2019). I'm hoping that reading these policies will provide additional context for your interview. If you don't have any policies, don't know where to find the policies and don't want to spend the time looking for them, or just don't want to share them with me, that is fine!

Won't sharing policies from my institution compromise my anonymity?
Protecting your privacy is super important to me! Everything that you share - including policies – will be anonymized. Any language that could identify you or your institution will be omitted from any publications that might emerge from this research.

Email Request for Documents

This email was sent to participants after they 1) signed up for an interview slot, and 2) completed the consent to participate form (see Appendix

From	Rachel Gammons [via Qualtrics]
To	[Participant who had schedule an interview]
Sent on	[24 hours after Consent to Participate is Signed]
Subject	Invitation to share documents for use in research study

Dear [FirstName],

Hello! Thanks so much for completing the Informed Consent Form. Ahead of our conversation, I'd like to collect a few documents. To make it easy, I've set up a form with instructions which is linked here.

If you don't have it or don't want to share any or all of the documents, no worries! Thanks so much for considering. Feel free to reach out if you have any questions at all. Otherwise, I'll follow up the day or two before the interview to make sure we are all set.

Thanks again for your time! I know how busy everyone is and it means a lot to have you take time of out your life to be a part of this research.

Follow this link to the Form: [Survey URL]

Rachel W. Gammons
Teaching and Learning Services Unit, Head @ University of Maryland Libraries
Ph.D. Candidate - Higher Education, Student Affairs, and International Education Policy @ University of Maryland College of Education

Reminder Email to Incomplete Respondents

From	Rachel Gammons [via Qualtrics]
To	Incomplete Respondents
Sent on	[7 days after initial request]

Subject	Reminder: Document Collection

Dear [FirstName],

Hello! This is a friendly reminder that if you'd like to share any documents the form is still open! Thanks for considering!

Follow this link to the Form: [Survey Link]

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser: [Survey URL]

Rachel W. Gammons
Teaching and Learning Services Unit, Head @ University of Maryland Libraries
Ph.D. Candidate - Higher Education, Student Affairs, and International Education Policy @ University of Maryland College of Education

Thank You Email Sent to Complete Respondents

From	Rachel Gammons [via Qualtrics]
To	Incomplete Respondents
Sent on	[7 days after initial request]
Subject	Reminder: Document Collection

Thank you so much for submitting your documents and the informed consent form! I have everything I need from you to prepare for the interview. I'll be in touch a couple of days before our conversation to make sure everything is set on both of our ends. I look forward to speaking with you soon!

Best,

Rachel W. Gammons
Teaching and Learning Services Unit, Head @ University of Maryland Libraries
Ph.D. Candidate - Higher Education, Student Affairs, and International Education Policy @ University of Maryland College of Education

Appendix I

Document Collection Survey

After participants signed up for an interview slot, this email was sent to participants inviting them to share their documents (see "Email Request" in Appendix H)

Start of Block: Document Collection

This dissertation research is being conducted by Rachel Gammons at the University of Maryland, College Park. To help me keep my life (and research) organized - I've set up this quick form to collect documents to aid in analysis. Sharing documents is optional, but encouraged! Anything you can share will help me to better prepare for our interview conversation and will add more depth to your experience.

Why am I asking for documents? Check out the answer to that and other great questions on this doc [link to Q &A Doc] Reminder: I will treat your documents with respect, which includes protecting your privacy to the maximum extent possible. Anything that is shared from these documents will be completely and anything that could reveal you or your institution (including specific language or a unique turn of phrase) will be removed.

Q1: Position Description:
Although all the participants in this study lead teaching departments, there are always differences in our work. Reading your position description will help me to understand your role and help me to tailor the interview questions to your experiences. If you'd be willing to share, please upload or link to a copy of your position or job description.

[Space to upload document(s)]

If you'd prefer to link to a digital document, drop the link(s) here:

- ☐ URL _____
- ☐ URL _____

Q2: Personal Statement:
A personal statement is an essential component of the promotional dossier and allows a librarian to directly communicate and contextualize their professional accomplishments. Personal statements are unique and often include reflections on professional ethics, values, and experiences. Your personal statement will help to contextualize the information you share during your interview.

If you'd be willing to share, please upload a copy of the personal statement that you used to apply for promotion from one rank to the next and/or tenure (or equivalent). If you don't have a personal statement, feel free to upload something else that might stand in (such as a cover letter that you used to apply for your current position and/or reappointment or annual review).

[Space to upload document(s)]

Links If you'd prefer to link to a digital document, drop the link(s) here:

- ☐ URL _____
- ☐ URL _____

Q3: Policy Documents
If your library has developed a specific policy or guidelines around learning analytics or data privacy, I would love to see them! If your library hasn't developed policies yet (neither has mine!) - I'd be interested in any institutional policy related to learning analytics and/or data privacy. Don't have those either? Don't

feel like searching the institutional website to find them? No worries! I'll take anything you are able to share (which can include nothing :D).

[Space to upload document(s)]

Links If you'd prefer to link to a digital document, drop the link(s) here:

- URL _____
- URL _____

End of survey.

Appendix J

Interview Materials

Preliminary Interview Guide

Research Question 1: How do women-identified academic librarian middle managers employed at U.S. public research institutions interpret and respond to the integration of library metrics with learning analytics? **Research Question 1A:** How do the professional values and experiences of participants shape their interpretations and responses to integration of library metrics with learning analytics? **Research Question 1B:** How are the interpretations, responses, values, and/or experiences of participants influenced by their gender identity and/or relationship to faculty status?

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. You were identified as a participant based not only on your position as a middle manager academic librarian faculty, but also as a person who has insight and important perspectives to share on the integration of library metrics (traditional data collected by and about libraries) with learning analytics (data collected by, about, and from learners with the intent of optimizing academic performance). This research study focuses on the unique experiences of women who hold middle management positions and how academic research librarians in these positions navigate their platforms of power, privilege, and positional responsibility to respond to ethical complexity. A second area of interest is to learn more about your management responsibilities may intersect with your gender identity and responsibilities as a faculty member. This study does not aim to evaluate or assess your techniques or experiences, but rather, to learn more about the unique challenges, opportunities, support networks, and decision-making that you face as a middle manager in a teaching-focused unit in a research library. I would also like to remind you of your rights to refuse to answer any questions or conclude the interview at any point. No explanation is required, and we can resume the interview when you are ready or end our conversation at any point.

Thank you for signing the Consent to Participate form through Adobe Sign. Just to reiterate, to facilitate notetaking and transcription of this interview, I would like to record this conversation. Do you give consent to record the interview?

Introductory Questions

1. [RQ1A] To get us started, I would like to learn more about you and your career. I know from the information you have already shared that you have been a librarian for [insert #] of years. What drew you to librarianship, and in particular **research librarianship?**

   Probes: Have your views on librarianship changed over the course of your career? How

does the career you have now differ from the one you imagined as an entry level librarian?

2. [RQ1] Would you describe yourself as a middle manager? Can you tell me more about your pathway into management?

3. [RQ1B] I am going to paste a list of management styles into the chat box in Zoom [*authoritative, persuasive, paternalistic, consultative, participative/democratic, collaborative, transformational, coaching, delegative*]. None of these are better than another, they are merely descriptive. Which one resonates most closely with your own leadership style? Why? What has informed your approach to management and leadership?

4. [RQ1B] What is important to you as a manager? What is important to your organization/ administration? Are those the same? Are they ever in conflict?

   Probes: Which aspects of your job do you find the most rewarding? The most challenging? Which aspects of your work take the most time and attention?

Gender Identity

5. [RQ1B] I'd like to dig in a little more into your work as a supervisor [*could also use the words mentor, manager, leader, or other vocabulary pulled from their responses to Q2*]. Librarianship has been described as a feminized profession, but not a feminist profession. Does this resonate with your experience as a librarian? As a manager?

   Probes: Is your experience as a manager influenced by your gender identity? In the literature, there has been growing attention on the academic library instruction coordinator and the emotional labor required of this type of interpersonal and relational work, which demands positional responsibility without necessarily conferring positional authority. Does this resonate with your experience as the leader of a teaching unit?

Faculty Status

6. [RQ1B] Shifting gears, I'm interested to learn more about your work as a faculty member. Can you tell me more about the appointment, promotion, and/or tenure process at your library? [If the individual holds rank but not tenure or equivalent – *tell me more about the rank and promotion process at your institution?]*

7. [RQ1B] What is your current rank? When were you appointed and/or promoted? What was that process like for you? Is faculty status something that is important to you as a librarian?

   Probes: What do you find challenging about serving in a faculty role? What do you find rewarding about serving in a faculty role? How have your perspectives changed over time?

8. [RQ1B] The literature shows that librarians are somewhat unique in that they can hold a position as both faculty member and manager; an academic faculty might manage a lab or chair a department, but providing direct supervision to another faculty member is uncommon. How do you see those two facets of your identity, faculty member and manager, intersecting [*could also use the words mentor, supervisor, leader, or other vocabulary pulled from their responses to Q2*]? Do the responsibilities of one ever conflict with the other?

   Probes: How do you balance the responsibilities of meeting the expectations of your own faculty position while also supporting early career librarians in your unit?

Learning Analytics

9. [RQ1] In your intake information, you described your institution as [actively participating, interested, unsure, hesitant, or resistant] to learning analytics. Can you tell me more about how you made that determination? What is motivating your institution's approach at this time?

   Probes: How does this reinforce/come into conflict with your libraries' attitude toward learning analytics? What is motivating the library's approach at this time?

10. [RQ1A] Do you have personal experience with learning analytics, either as a researcher or a participant?

11. [RQ1A] I really enjoyed reading the personal statement that you shared ahead of this interview. In that document, you describe [insert characteristics / values] as being important to your career [or identity as a librarian]. In the intake form, you described yourself as [actively participating, interested, unsure, hesitant, or resistant] to learning analytics. Have your professional values shaped your attitude toward learning analytics? How so?

    Probes: What else contributes to your attitude toward the integration of library metrics with learning analytics?

12. [RQ1] Let's imagine a scenario in which your dean/director asks library teachers in your unit to collect the ID numbers for each student who attends a library instruction session and share that information with the campus research office. What questions would you have about that project? What concerns would you have? If you felt uncomfortable with the request, would you feel empowered to push back? What if the someone you supervised felt uncomfortable, how would you approach that conversation?

13. [RQ1] One of the arguments often cited for involving libraries in learning analytics or integrating library metrics with learning analytics is that this type of data collection and analysis is inevitable. Do you see this future as

Conclusion

14. [RQ1B] We have covered a lot of ground today and I'd like to thank you again for your willingness to share your perspectives and experiences with me. We have talked about gender identity, faculty status, your work as a manager, and how these interact with one another. Do you see any connections between these three concepts that we haven't yet discussed? Are there other facets of your identity that are particularly salient to you that may influence your work?

Is there anything else you'd like to share?

Excerpt of Interview Transcript

Name (Pseudonym): Audrey
Institution (Pseudonym): University Middle Atlantic
Rank: Associate Librarian
Date/Time of Interview: Monday, 3:00 – 4:30pm

[Rachel Gammons] 15:06:12

So, to get us started. I would love to just to get the like the timeline of your career. So, I know that you have been a librarian, or, you've been at your current institutions since 2014? But when did you graduate with your MLS?

[Audrey] 15:06:28

I graduated in 2009. So, this is that this current job is my third professional position.

[Rachel Gammons] 15:06:30

Okay. And what drew you to librarianship, in particular research librarianship?

[Audrey] 15:06:45

When I was in college, I got a student work study job at the library, and I think like a lot of people. I thought I knew what librarians did, but I ended up in that position like just learning a lot about how librarians get to work with different types of topics and interact with students and faculty.

[Rachel Gammons] 15:07:15

Set the stage for me. It's like a liberal arts college?

[Audrey] 15:07:16

Yeah, yes, I went to, or I'm from [state redacted]. I went to [institution redacted] at, which is a smaller about, at the time at least [redacted]. It's sort of the designated like "small liberal arts college" in the [redacted] System, and it's in the mountains, and very pretty. So, yeah, and I had a job doing like circulation. I met some of the reference and instruction librarians and looked up to them. I also worked in the writing center, which moved into the library at some point. So, yeah, I just kind of learned more about like, Higher Ed. And I enjoyed being in that environment but didn't really want to pursue like a Ph.D. I was like concerned about having a job.

Appendix K

Data Analysis

Table 1 - Research Materials Collected for Each Participant

	Audrey	Nicole	Fiona	Molly	Sophie	Madison	Bailey	Daphne	Hazel
Case record materials - Analyzed									
Demographic Variables	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Personal Statement	✓	✓			✓	✓			✓
Cover Letter			✓	✓			✓		
Position Description	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Data Policies			✓	✓					
Interview Transcript	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Response to Member Checking			✓		✓	✓			✓
Other							✓**	✓***	
Case record materials - NOT Analyzed									
Analytic Memo(s)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eligibility Survey	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Email Correspondence w/Participant	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Consent to Participate Form	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Contractual Bargaining Agreement (CBA)	✓						✓		
Faculty Handbook or Policies				✓					
Resume/CV				✓					

✓** Diversity Statement
✓*** Instructional Charter for the Library

Table 2 - Themes and Levels of Indication Within Individual Cases

H = High Indication M = Middling Indication L = Low Indication	Audrey	Nicole	Fiona	Molly	Sophie	Madison	Bailey	Daphne	Hazel	Total H	Total M	Total L
Focus Area 1: Exploring Professional Identity in Academic Librarianship												
Embracing library values	H	H	H	M	H	M	M	M	L	4	4	1
Dedication to teaching and undergraduate students	H	H	H	H	H	M	H	M	H	7	2	0
Reticence to advance	H	M	M	H	H	H	H	L	L	5	2	2
Navigating dual identities as librarians and managers	H	H	M	L	H	M	M	L	H	4	3	2
Focus Area 2: Gender Identity, Leadership, and Social Justice in Academic Librarianship												
Fostering community and care	H	H	H	M	H	M	H	M	M	5	4	0
Recognition and devaluation of feminized labor	M	H	H	L	H	L	M	L	H	4	2	3
Negotiating power and responsibility	M	H	H	H	H	M	H	H	H	7	2	0
Intersectionality, racial identity, and social justice	M	H	L	L	L	M	H	M	M	2	4	3
Focus Area 3: Faculty Status in Academic Librarianship												
Scholar-practitioner identity	H	H	H	L	M	H	L	H	H	6	1	2
Navigating faculty status	H	H	L	L	H	H	H	H	H	7	0	2
Focus Area 4: Exploring the Impact of Learning Analytics in Academic Libraries												
Navigating neoliberal pressures	H	H	H	H	M	H	H	M	H	7	2	0
Ethical dilemmas and privacy concerns	H	H	H	H	H	M	M	M	M	5	4	0
Navigating ethical complexity	H	H	H	M	M	M	M	L	L	3	5	1

Table 3 - Consolidated List of Themes with Definitions

Exploring Professional Identity in Academic Librarianship *How participants encounter, conceptualize, understand, construct, extend, and evaluate themselves as professionals, including their career decisions, professional and educational pathways, and ethical frameworks.*	
1.1. Embracing library values	Participants integrated professional and personal values into their work as managers and librarians, aligning their actions with principles such as information justice and intellectual freedom.
1.2. Dedication to teaching and students	Participants shared a commitment to teaching and supporting undergraduate students, viewing it as a central aspect of their professional identity and finding fulfillment in creative approaches to instruction.
1.3. Reticence to advance	Participants acknowledged that each progression in management distanced them "further from the work." They were reluctant to advance due to the perceived loss of connection to teaching and research, highlighting the inherent tension between career progression and professional fulfillment.
1.4. Navigating dual roles as librarians and managers	Participants experienced ambiguity and tension as they attempted to balance administrative responsibilities with their day-to-day work as librarians. The demands of one often inhibited their capacity to fulfill and perform the other.
Gender Identity, Leadership, and Social Justice in Academic Librarianship *How participants experiences as library managers were shaped by their gender identity and the intersection of their gender with other social identities, such as race and age.*	
2.1. Fostering community and care	Participants emphasized the importance of community building, relationships, and care in their roles as middle managers, striving to create supportive environments while holding boundaries to protect their time.
2.2. Recognition and devaluation of feminized labor	Participants grappled with the organizational devaluation of care-oriented labor, which was a core component of their approaches to leadership. They felt teaching was undervalued in a neoliberal organization and associated this with the historical relegation of feminized labor.
2.3. Negotiating power and responsibility	Participants' experiences were shaped by their proximity to organizational power. While they shared a commitment to protecting, supporting, and advocating for their units, their abilities to perform this work were inhibited by the power dynamics in the organization.
2.4. Intersectionality, racial identity, and social justice	Participants' experiences were shaped by intersecting social identities, including gender and racial identities. These identities played a significant role in shaping their perceptions of power, privilege, and social justice within the context of academic librarianship.
Faculty Status in Academic Librarianship *How participants experiences as "faculty members" were shaped by their roles as managers and librarians.*	
3.1. Scholar-practitioner identity	Participants struggled to strike a balance between their managerial duties and their scholarly identities. Although they valued research and writing, they found it challenging to allocate time and resources to that component of their work.
3.2. Navigating faculty status	Participants' experiences with faculty status were complex. Although they valued faculty status, they also

	experienced challenges faculty status that were unique to academic libraries, including the perception of receiving fewer faculty benefits than their academic peers and articulating the impact of their management work in a promotional dossier
Exploring the Impact of Learning Analytics in Academic Libraries *How participants attitudes toward learning analytics were shaped by their proximity to organizational power, professional values, and the sense of responsibility they felt toward their institutions, organizations, units and direct reports.*	
4.1. Navigating neoliberal pressures	Participants discussed the influence of neoliberal ideology on their work, highlighting the pressures from performance-based budget models, institutional rankings, and the expectation to demonstrate impact. They felt a sense of responsibility to safeguard their units' financial well-being while grappling with the tension between library values and organizational demands.
4.2. Ethical dilemmas and privacy concerns	Participants expressed nuanced views on learning analytics, weighing concerns about privacy and ethical data collection against the potential benefits for student success. They emphasized the importance of informed consent, ethical decision-making, and the disproportionate impact of learning analytics on marginalized students
4.3. Navigating ethical complexity	Participants, particularly mid-level managers, felt caught between opposing viewpoints on learning analytics within the profession. They struggled to reconcile library values with organizational pressures, often feeling obligated to prioritize job security and institutional demands over personal convictions

Table 4 - *Cross-Case Assertions with Summaries*

Cross-Case Assertions	
Middle-ness	Participants found themselves situated in the middle of organizational hierarchies, responsibilities, and conflicts. They described feelings of "being squeezed from both sides," or "pulled from both ends," in which they felt obligated to support administrative priorities while also feeling a responsibility to protect and advocate for their units. They viewed their roles as a transitional phase, in which they were hesitant to move out of the middle and into higher positions of leadership because of the perceived threat of losing their connections to teaching, students, and research.
Both, and yet neither	Participants experienced ambiguity and tension as they attempted to balance administrative responsibilities, day-to-day work as librarians, and their responsibilities as faculty members. Although all of these identities were salient, the demands of one often inhibited their capacity to fulfill and perform the other, which led to feelings of inadequacy and frustration.
Set up to fail	Participants often described the ways they were set up to fail or expected to perform their jobs without access to all the tools needed to do the work. As middle managers, they struggled to do and be everything that everyone needed and described how they were "always disappointing someone, even if it was just [themselves]."
Sacrifice of self	To fulfill their roles as leaders, participants sacrificed personal ambitions, flexibility, and time spent on research and scholarship. They prioritized the needs of their teams and colleagues over their own, often feeling guilty about activities that felt self-serving. This sacrifice was integral to their professional identities and sense of responsibility as supervisors.
Cost of resistance	Participants understood that resistance to organizational demands came with a cost, both personally and institutionally. As middle managers, they saw their "job" as deciding if the risk was worth the cost. Despite holding strong professional values, participants sometimes felt compelled to act against their ethics to protect their teams and ensure the stability of their libraries.

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