

Sociology 1130: Higher Education Policy and Service at Harvard and Beyond: Action
Research Capstone Project

**Self-CARE:
How to Manage Emotional Labor as Student Leaders**

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ABSTRACT

As the Director of Operations for CARE (Consent Advocates and Relationship Educators), my main responsibilities, in addition to facilitating educational workshops to students that all CAREs take part in, include acting as a liaison between administrators, faculty, deans, and tutors who want to work with CARE and accept, decline, or consider requests for co-sponsorship and event help depending on CAREs' capacities. This role is rewarding but also challenging. The purpose of this study was to examine how leaders in peer-education and peer-counseling groups balance the emotional labor needed to accomplish all of their role's responsibilities and tend to other members, all while leaving time for self-care. The sample for this study consisted of Harvard University peer-education and peer-counseling group affiliations, including 2 CARE supervisors and 18 students. Data was collected through a qualitative survey and in-depth interviews. I found three main findings: (1) Emotional Activation is mainly spurred by the consistent type of work and content members interact with when being a resource for their fellow peers; (2) Emotionally-activating work can easily cause burnout of members because it is difficult to stay invested in the well-being of peers when it is often a one-way relationship and little explicit measure of impact; and (3) An individual's ability to handle the emotional activation from their work and still perform at their best is dependent on how much self-care they do outside of their organization.

* I am willing to share this paper on www.husrhe.fas.harvard.edu.

HONOR CODE

“I affirm my awareness of the standards of the Harvard College Honor Code.” – Kimaya Cole

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

My research project focuses on the management of emotional labor in peer-education and peer-counseling groups. My findings are comprised of interview and survey data collected from members of 6 of the 11 organizations on Harvard's campus. Over the course of my data collection, I realized that "emotional labor" provided a negative connotation with the word "labor" that is not always true within this field, so I decided to change the expression to "emotional activation" or "emotionally activated work."

Results of this study lead me to three main findings. First, emotional activation is largely prompted by the consistent type of work and content that peer-education and peer-counseling members interact with when supporting and being a resource for their fellow peers on campus. Next, emotionally activating work can easily cause burnout of members because it is hard to stay invested in the well being of peers when it is often a one-way relationship and rarely any clear measure of impact. And finally, an individual's ability to handle the emotional activation from their work and still perform at their best is contingent on how much self-care they do outside of their organization to self-regulate and manage their emotions.

Considering these common themes amongst peer-education and peer-counseling groups, I propose 3 recommendations for action. First, you must ensure that every member has a role they believe will make an impact in the community you are serving. The most frequent response individuals reported for staying in an organization and pushing through the emotional activation that occurs is the belief in the mission and values of their group and feeling like they are leaving a positive impact on their peers. This can be achieved through confirming that all members have some ownership over an initiative, project, or event. Second, you must hold consistent and intentional check-ins. The prerequisite to this is building a strong friendship with members outside of the organization setting so everyone feels comfortable being honest about their mental state. Check-ins can be formal (i.e. feedback forms or individual meetings) or informal (i.e. quick round of question before a group meeting). And lastly, you must integrate self-care activities into your own personal, weekly schedule. Whether it is a quick 5-minute meditation or a 20-minute craft session, allow time for self-care activities as a group, and reiterate the importance of self-care for top performance by encouraging members to self-care on their own on a regular basis. These action steps will help members give them meaning to their roles, thereby producing a ripple effect, allowing them to support in-need peers on campus and beyond.

INTRODUCTION

I was first exposed to the Consent Advocates and Relationship Educators (CARE) my freshman year, like every other freshmen, through the Opening Days workshop. I had previously received a short sexual education “class” during eighth grade, but had never experienced sexual education like the one I was provided with in Harvard’s peer-led workshop. As the current Director of Operations for CARE, my main responsibilities, in addition to facilitating educational workshops to students that all CAREs take part in, include acting as a liaison between administrators, faculty, deans, and CARE tutors who want to work with CARE and accept, decline, or consider requests for co-sponsorship and event help depending on CAREs’ capacities and workload. While this role can be taxing, I love being an outlet for people to go to, inspiring a shared vision of enthusiastic consent and unacceptable tolerance toward sexual violence, and feeling like I can leave a lasting impact on CARE and those we educate. The immediate impact CARE and I personally have is the education we provide for students through our workshops to take away and apply to their own lives. More unknown is the implicit impact we have on people, whether that be saying something in a workshop or conversation that inspires someone else to become educated and trained as a CARE or the discussions that spark in other communities as a result of our informative workshops given to someone in their circle. I love fighting for a mission I truly believe in with other similarly passionate people. However, while a lot of focus is geared toward how student leaders can serve and influence other students, little attention is given to the support-giving leaders and how to best care for their needs.

This topic is relevant because students in positions like mine (i.e. peer-education and peer-counseling groups) are dealt with the boundless responsibility of supplying support, care, and resources for their peers in-need without much support in return from the institution. With this, I question: how do leaders in peer-education and peer-counseling groups balance the emotional labor needed to accomplish all of their role’s responsibilities and tend to other members, all while leaving time for self-care? I define “leaders” as any peer-education and peer-counseling member, from being the president to a regular member, because I believe they are all student leaders by being in this privileged role of educating and supporting fellow peers on campus. As mentioned previously, this role is rewarding but can also be challenging when trying to balance the emotional labor of the role with fulfilling all of the responsibilities, especially

when dealing with personal, heavy topics like those discussed in the boundaries of these groups (i.e. sexual assault, eating disorders, identity crisis, relationship complications, health issues, etc.). I define ‘emotional labor’ as the invisible work we do, the process of managing one’s feelings and emotions, while trying to fulfill our obligations, care for everyone else around us, and live up to the social and personal expectations of ourselves. With CARE, I understand that the work we do can be emotionally draining, but I also want to be able to educate and reach as many students as possible which calls for all members to be active and present. This can be challenging to address and overcome when I do not know what every person is going through or they are not honest with me when I am checking-in. Personally, I want to set a great example and make sure things are always running smoothly, but on the days that I feel emotionally inapt, I struggle with wanting to be a dependable leader and putting myself first. Knowing that many other leaders are in a similar situation inspired me to examine this issue further and develop a possible solution to ensure leaders in these roles are being supported and encouraged just as much as they do for others.

Student leaders, especially at Harvard, tend to feel a sense of pride and accountability to look like they have it all together, fearing to show weakness and potentially admitting that they cannot handle the task at hand. This is an important problem because those in leadership roles, cannot fully help the people around them to the best of their abilities if they are personally struggling, as well. This also applies to members who may not have the emotional capacity to be present or carry their weight in their organization, but how can a leader support them, instead of demand more from them, if they are not transparent about it? Moreover, what are ways that organizations and leaders of these groups can check-in with their members on a consistent basis before waiting until the tipping point? And finally, how can leaders ensure that members recognize the value they add to the organization, ascertaining that the emotional labor they endure is worth it? This is an important issue because we can all relate in some form, whether we are students struggling in school, employees in a mundane work environment, or just dealing with personal problems that we feel like set us back from performing at our best. We all want to feel that we belong to whatever group we are a part of, can leave a positive impact, and, through it all, will be emotionally stable enough to fulfill all of our responsibilities at the highest level. In this paper, I provide an overview on the existing literature on this topic, analyze how my own

conducted qualitative interviews and survey contribute to this work, and finally, reveal how my findings hold implications for peer-education and peer-counseling members in the future struggling to fulfill their role and balance the emotional labor that comes with it.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There has been a plethora of research on how to combat emotional labor in the workforce for employees, but less has been focused on revolving handling emotional labor in leadership positions for service-oriented, non-work roles. And even less research has honed in on student organization roles, in particular. First, I will present how emotional labor has been discussed in the current theoretical landscape, and then I will explore how emotional labor is utilized in leadership.

To begin, emotional labor has been discussed and defined in various ways. Emotional labor is important to manage as a leader because leadership can strongly impact the behavior, attitude, and emotional response of members. Grandey (2000) explains emotional labor as the process of managing one's own emotions and expressions to be consistent with the organizational or occupational display rules (p. 95). This may take place as expression (smiles and good humor as in customer service) or suppression (lacking emotional reaction as a therapist would do listening to a client). Researchers name this process "surface acting," referring to an individual's insincere presentation of the given emotion without trying to change their authentic feelings (Hochschild, 1983; Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993; and Grandey, 2000). While Grandey (2000) proposes that emotional labor can be beneficial to the organization, she recognizes the opposite stance held by Hochschild (1983), which states that sustaining emotional labor, or feelings, can lead to stress and burnout of an individual because it takes a lot of effort (p. 95). This is where the idea of "deep acting" comes into play, demonstrating the process in which individuals alter their true emotions in order to achieve consistency between their internal experience and the emotional requirements of their role (Hochschild, 1983; Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993; and Grandey, 2000). Ashforth and Humphrey (1993), on the other hand, view emotional labor as the observable expressions, rather than feelings, that impact task effectiveness (Grandey, 2000: 96). And finally, Morris and Feldman (1996) define emotional labor as "the organizational expectations for employees in their interactions with customers (how long, how

intense, how often), as well as the internal state of tension that occurs when a person must display emotions that are discrepant from his or her true feelings” (Grandey, 2000: 97). Hochschild (1983) proclaims that the enactment of emotional labor can be seen in situations where employees are: (a) expected to make facial or voice contact with the public, (b) required to produce an emotional state in a client, or (c) given an opportunity to employ some control over the emotional activities of other workers. Research has both supported and condemned employees’ choice of acting on or suppressing the emotional labor they experience within their role, showing it to have both positive and negative outcomes on their mood, performance, and quality of service. Since the research is split between the most productive way to combat emotional labor, I intend to further understand peer-education and peer-counselors’ method for handling their emotional labor in order to still produce effective service for their peers and organization.

It is proposed that leaders’ emotional labor will directly influence their members’ attitude and behavior (Humphrey, 2012). An emerging type of leadership, authentic leadership, shows to have a connection with emotional labor. More specifically, authentic leadership calls for self-awareness and regulation, which helps manage emotions in response to situational demands (Buckner and Mahoney, 2012: 3). Similarly, Grandey (2000) argues that employees with high emotional intelligence, opposed to low emotional intelligence, are more able to comprehend, monitor and express their emotions. However, with regards to altering one’s emotions in order to generate a particular emotional display, emotional labor can also have a negative impact that results in individuals feeling less genuine (Buckner and Mahoney, 2012: 3). Just as workers invest their resources into meeting certain job demands, with the expectation of receiving positive outcomes in return, leaders devote their capital toward meeting the responsibilities of their role in hopes of running a team and producing impactful results (Brotheridge and Lee, 2002: 58). Brotheridge and Lee (2002) find that “emotional exhaustion predicted turnover through job performance,” and leaders will either find additional ways to increase performance or look for ways to withdraw (p. 64). Does just a feeling of worth and influence from a leader’s work and role counter the impact of emotional labor? Although emotional labor can lead to burnout, Brotheridge and Lee (2002) claim that rewarding relationships and felt authenticity can mediate this exhausting work of emotional labor (p. 57). Many researchers also emphasize the

importance of support for those dealing with emotional labor. For my research, I plan to expand on this sentiment to understand *ways* in which student leaders can best be supported when struggling with emotional labor and *who* is the best outlet for support.

Ultimately, there has been plenty of literature on emotional labor in the workforce and how leaders can suppress these emotions to carry out the organizational functions needed of them. And while most current research discusses ways in which emotional labor affects other members' emotions and attitude, there is still not efficient enough literature to explain how balancing emotional labor affects leaders and members' ability to fulfill their role responsibilities at the highest level and how to best support these individuals to prevent breakdown and disassociation from their role. Through this paper, I look to fill the void in current literature through exploring these questions and uncovering answers as to when student leaders should manage their emotions for the productivity of their group and when they need to take a step back to focus on self-care.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

To analyze my research question, I sought out current CARE members and supervisors, as well as other Harvard peer-education and peer-counseling groups on campus that deal with constant student interaction and management of heavy, personal topics. I chose this type of participant pool because I believe they are the most similar student groups on Harvard's campus that mirror CARE's role in student life. My findings are comprised of interview and survey data collected from six of the eleven peer-education and peer-counseling organizations on Harvard's campus, including: CARE, Response, SMHLs (Student Mental Health Liaisons), Indigo, HealthPALs (Peer Advisors and Liaisons), and SHARC (Sexual Health Awareness & Health Communication).

Table 1. Sample Organizations (N=6)

Organization	Type	Description
CARE	Peer-Education	Liaisons between Office of Sexual Assault Prevention and Response; Topics: consent, power dynamic, relationships
HealthPALs	Peer-Education	Liaisons between Harvard University Health Services;

		Topics: health and well-being of students
SHARC	Peer-Education	Topics: sexual health, contraceptives, STIs
SMHLs	Peer-Education	Topics: mental health and wellness of students
Response	Peer-Counseling	Topics: relationship issues, dating, sexual assault
Indigo	Peer-Counseling	Topics: Identity (race, class, citizenship status, sexuality, etc.) affect on mental health

First, I sent an anonymous qualitative survey to these groups via email and personal outreach. Only two of the five peer-counseling groups responded. A valid concern of the peer-counseling groups is that they are a confidential resource and have strict policies on what they can and cannot share about their experience working as a peer-counselor. This survey included questions on how students manage emotional labor, their definition of emotional labor, why they stay in their organization, whether their performance is affected, and if and how they self-care. I received fifteen responses on the survey from six CAREs, five SMHLs, two HealthPALs, one SHARC, and one Response. This was an anonymous survey to provide a platform for people to still voice their experiences although they may not feel comfortable discussing these issues publicly.

After initial survey data and through convenience and snowball sampling, I conducted 20-minute in-depth interviews with leaders and members of these organizations. The interviews were semi-structured and mostly went along with the flow of the conversation. Since the topic of emotional labor can bring about sensitive subjects and understanding the scope of the work peer-education and peer-counseling groups handle, I knew conducting face-to-face, in-depth interviews would best permit me to get to know the individuals and allow them to feel comfortable opening up about their process, management, and perspective on emotional labor in their roles. I interviewed two CARE supervisors who work for the Office of Sexual Assault and Prevention (OSAPR), one CARE member, one Response, and one Indigo. To preserve anonymity, each interviewee will be given a pseudonym. The interview guide was a product of questions that arose after exploring existing research and reading through the survey data. The interviews helped me explore individual decision processes and behaviors, affirm common themes from the survey results, and provide me a space to discuss potential action steps. The

interview process worked well because, as a fellow Harvard student in a peer-education role in a student organization, interviewees felt comfortable and connected to me and, therefore, were more willing to open up and provide honest answers. Additionally, since I am familiar with how the Harvard system works, I could easily understand their references and stories of experience.

As part of my action research, I used the data collected from the survey and interviews to implement an action plan for peer-education and peer-counselors' management of emotional labor for their members and within their organizations. To do this, I analyzed and summarized my interview data by reading and re-reading my field notes, listened to each audiotape, wrote down important quotations and themes that emerged, and then interpreted the data. These recommendations were established through learning about processes that some groups currently utilize, referring to my own personal experiences in these settings, and aiming to create a system that is accessible for all.

When drawing conclusions from this study, a few things should be addressed first. While I believe I have found compelling findings through my choice of methodology, I understand that my research has its limitations. The CARE supervisors and undergraduate peer-education and peer-counseling students I interviewed and surveyed all attend Harvard University, and I did not interview or survey other students or supervisors who do not attend an elite university with similar demands. At a university, like Harvard, all students are both expected and internally driven to be involved academically, extracurricularly, and socially. With this in mind, it may be the case that these students have influences, internal or external, that impact how they approach their decisions to stay or withdraw from an organization and how they choose to manage the emotional labor that comes with all of these involvements, and therefore I cannot infer that all students, especially peer-education and peer-counseling members, think and act as described throughout this paper. Additionally, I only received fifteen survey responses and interviewed three students and two supervisors across six different organizations, out of the six peer-education and five peer-counseling organizations on Harvard's campus. Therefore, I also cannot generalize my findings because I did not have the time or capacity to talk to all different types of organizations and members. Further research would need to include a larger pool of interviewees. By having a larger sample, research could incorporate data on how diverse socioeconomic status, race, culture, and personal values impact individual thoughts on emotional

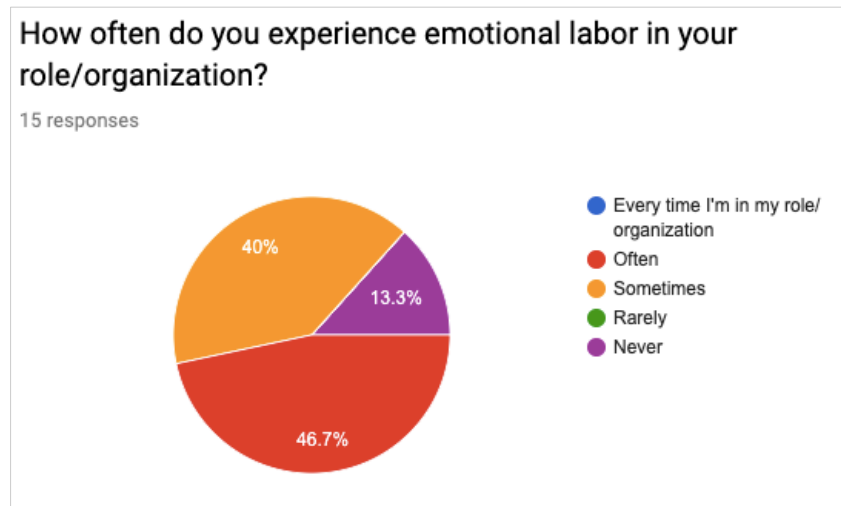
labor and choices on how to manage this process. Since my sample size was small, I could not organize any findings by demographics. A larger sample would also strengthen the emerging patterns found throughout my research. My sample was not large enough to make these types of claims. Despite these limitations I do believe the findings of my survey and interviews will be helpful in contributing to the current scope and will be explained next.

FINDINGS

The data I gathered from these student leaders provides insight into peer-education and peer-counselors' journey, motivations, struggles, and perspective on the relationship between emotional labor, being in a care-giving role, and self-care. The first finding that I did not expect and need to address is the dismay surrounding the phrase "emotional labor." Nora, one of the CARE supervisor's and long-term employee in sexual assault work, expressed this sentiment articulately well, asserting, "the term emotional labor has been overused and the meaning is now obscured." She points out that there is a difference between "emotional labor" and "emotionally-activated work." Another student counselor, Sarah, supported this claim, reflecting that while there can be an emotional side of this work that can take a toll on you, "labor infers it is always work and always negative which is not the case." With this in mind, I have decided to now use "emotional activation" or "emotionally activated work" when referring to emotional labor.

Overall, I found three major themes throughout my survey and interviews. First, emotional activation is mainly spurred by the consistent type of work and content members interact with when being a resource for their fellow peers. When asked explicitly, students defined emotional labor in a variety of ways all pertaining to the investment of one's self into something or someone that leads to having to manage the different types of emotions that arise in the process. In the anonymous survey, some respondents said emotional labor is: "Investing as a leader, friend, elder, etc. in someone else's life or problems emotionally and expending energy focusing on them" (CARE); "the mental effort that goes into completing a task, with the potential to have those resources exhausted after a certain point" (HealthPALs); and "the behind-the-scenes management of one's emotions in order to fulfill their requirements and expectations in a professional capacity" (SMHL). This finding correlates to the idea that this phrase should not be coined "labor" but more so an emotional *experience* because it is attached to the type of

work these students are constantly engaging in. Out of the fifteen respondents, 46.7% (seven people) of them said they often experience emotional activation from their work or role, while only two people said they never do.



An Indigo peer-counselor explained that, for her, it is the build-up of emotions that she experiences. She expressed:

“It is difficult hearing the content that people come with and just forgetting about it the moment they leave. It stays with you. And then you have another student come in with something different, so overtime it adds up. This cycle continue most of the time that you are in your role. I love what being a peer-counselor, but the emotions definitely add up.”

This experience demonstrates that even if a student loves their position, it is the consistency of the content and the type of work they do (i.e. supporting, care-giving, informing) that leads to the emotional activation. For service organizations employees, they interact with several customers every day. Rathi (2014) demonstrates that interactions like these are “highly emotionally demanding for employees as they have to control their emotions and express organizationally required emotions in service transactions” (p. 59). While Rathi (2014) is discussing “service organization employees” as in teachers or consumer-giving positions, this is very similar to how peer-education and peer-counselors function on a day-to-day basis, with having to constantly serve their community of peers and deal with emotionally activated topics. Another peer-counselor adds that, “it is more so the combination of the time, the constant support, and the heavy topics that peers come in with that truly makes you feel all of the emotions and weight of

it.” From similar stories to these of peer-counselors’, I found that the sentiment might be different for these students if they were only asked to be invested and engaged in this type of content one time, once a month, or less. However, the reality is they are in this position and organization on a weekly, sometimes daily, basis, and it is the regularity of this that really activates these emotions. Additionally, the three students I interviewed all agreed that it is hard for them to leave the mindset of their role when they are outside of the organization. A CARE member, reflected: “I have to remind myself that it is okay to just be a friend and not perform as a peer-educator when I am outside of the walls of my organization.” This adds another layer to the consistency of this type of work stretching beyond the required time. With this mindset, it would seem as though students in these roles can never truly take a break to self-regulate their emotions.

The next finding is that emotionally activating work can easily cause burnout of members because it is difficult to stay invested in the well being of peers when it is often a one-way relationship and little explicit measure of impact. Speaking from personal experience, being a CARE is rewarding because we are granted the privilege of giving educational workshops to every incoming freshmen class at Harvard. However, more unknown is the actual impact we have on individual students because there is no system in place to measure this. This can make the work we do seem hopeless and never ending because there is no way to confirm we are making explicit change in the community and on campus. I found that many others shared this same feeling. An SMHL educator reported on the survey that, “It can be difficult to invest in the wellness and wellbeing of all of our peers, especially if there is no immediate feedback or knowledge of whether or not your work successfully helped them.” A SHARC responded, “I think I have a tendency to ignore my own needs if I feel like the well-being of the group as a whole is better served by me just pushing through. But sometimes I question how helpful I am actually being.” The danger is rooted in this idea of “just keep pushing through,” which eventually turns into burnout of individuals, especially if there is no support system in place to check-in with them or provide a space where they can debrief and refocus. Another survey response reflected the reality about trying to balance the emotional activation of their work, stating, “Sometimes I am so overwhelmed by having to manage my own emotions in this larger role as SMHL Co-President that I subconsciously find myself distancing myself from the

organization/the work that needs to be done.” A once excited, energetic individual may find themselves exhausted and turned off by the same thing that excited them initially. These students demonstrate the reality of the role of a peer-educator and peer-counselor.

The relationship between a peer-educator or –counselor and a fellow peer is one-way. The person constantly supporting and being a resource for other rarely has any reciprocation of care. Considering this framework, an Indigo peer-counselor revealed, “Unfortunately it’s not equal when you’re a counselor. It’s not a two-way streak and it can easily become draining.” Nora, one of the CARE supervisor’s reflected that in the years that she’s been involved in this work, the most burnout comes when “individuals feel completely overwhelmed with someone’s pain coupled with a sense of helplessness [to fix their problems or to cope with it].” And Rachel, another CARE supervisor shared that “if this work [peer-education and peer-counseling] was truly valued, they [institutions] wouldn’t keep burning people out and replacing them with new ones. This statement portrays the need for members to know that, if their work is truly invaluable, their emotional stability and mental capacity should also be valued with resources and systems in place to support them, in order to stay invested and committed to the cause.

Last but not least, the third main finding is that an individual’s ability to handle the emotional activation from their work and still perform at their best is dependent on how much self-care they do outside of their organization in order to self-regulate and manage their emotions. As seen in the figure below, it is split (seven and eight people) between the people whose performance is *not* affected by managing the emotional activation of their work or role and the people whose performance *is* affected.



What this graph does not show is the reasoning behind this dichotomy. Through the survey responses, I found that an individual's performance metric is highly contingent on and correlated with the amount of time they dedicate to self-care. For the individual's who reported that handling the emotional activation from their work does not affect their performance also reported engaging in self-care activities incorporated into their organization's agenda. A HealthPAL from the survey reported that their organization is focused on wellness and makes sure to set time aside for friends. Another Indigo counselor said the way their counseling sessions are structured with two people at all times makes it easier to "have balanced support and debrief afterwards with someone who can relate." She said that this specific structure is like "a built-in self-care measure to ensure members are not bottling up their emotions, especially after dealing with heavy topics."

In contrast, individuals who reported that handling the emotional activation does affect their performance in their role also reported "sometimes" or "rarely" engaging in self-care, with the exception of two people who reported "always" to self-care. It is the lack of consistent, regular self-care that enables individuals to stay regulated and more able to manage the emotional activation that arises throughout their work or within their role. Maria, a CARE educator, admitted, "self-care is definitely not built into my weekly schedule," but rather, "I only do [self-care] when it comes to a certain point and its needed." Another CARE member reported on the survey, "There are many times in which I feel that I need to check my emotions to stay grounded, and it certainly affects how I experience my role in CARE." It should not be the case that individuals wait until their breaking point to set aside time for self-care, but it should be a constant, on-going process that allows for self-regulation of emotions and the ability to perform at the highest, most productive level.

The three main themes that emerged in my data paved the way for me to establish a concise blueprint for action for peer-education and peer-counseling organizations and members to refer to. Just as self-care should be approached, these action steps are to be looked at and put into action proactively, before any issues or struggles arise. First, student leaders of these organizations must ensure that every member has a role they believe will leave a positive impact in the community they are serving. The most frequent response individuals reported for staying in an organization and pushing through the emotional activation that occurs is the belief in the

mission and values of their group and feeling like they are leaving a positive impact on their peers. When prompted, “What keeps you in your organization?,” students on the survey reported:

“The idea that I am making Harvard a safer place for all” (CARE); “The belief that the work we do can help people through difficult situations, even if it is only a small amount of help” (Response); “Passionate about de-stigmatizing mental health and hearing positive feedback from Harvard’s campus” (SMHL); and “I am very interested and engaged in what my organization does, and I feel that it is important work” (HealthPALs).

This can be achieved through confirming that all members have some ownership over an initiative, project, or event. A SMHL responded on the survey that she has the greatest “sense of fulfillment” with the one-on-one interactions she has with peers in which it feels like she has helped them and was able to be that resource for them. Georgia, an Indigo counselor, shared her tactic, explaining, “I like to set personal responsibilities for each member at the beginning of each semester so as not to overwhelm them.” However, this method is also a great way to hold members responsible for being present and confirming that every member has something to look forward to during the semester for the organization. Additionally, this allows members to be able to plan their schedule around their designated project or task, thus preparing them to be ready to function at their best. Another important factor that incentivized people to initially join or stay in their organization is the opportunity to get involved with a new community because, at the end of the day, we all want to feel that we belong somewhere and have meaning in a space that we care about.

Second, it is essential to hold consistent and intentional check-ins. The prerequisite to this is building a strong friendship with members, outside of the organization setting, so everyone feels comfortable being honest about their mental state. Georgia, an Indigo counselor, agreed, commenting, “You have to make sure to have solid relationships with members to be able to have those discussions that are open and up front.” Check-ins can be formal (i.e. feedback forms or individual meetings) or informal (i.e. quick round of questions before a group meeting – “How are you feeling in this moment? Thumbs up, down, or sideways.”). Social support shows to have a positive effect on emotional labor (Nur Iplik, Topsakal, & Iplik, 2014). By checking-in with your members, it shows that you care about their well-being and understand that they may need a break. Most of the respondents in my survey said they appreciated having a community

that understands what each person is going through and understands how to deal with specific sensitive issues. Consistent check-ins are essential because it is important to catch people before burnout occurs where they feel too overwhelmed to continue.

And finally, you must integrate self-care activities into your weekly schedule, both as an organization and individually. Whether it is a quick 5-minute meditation break or a 20-minute craft session, allow time for self-care activities as a group, but also reiterate the importance of self-care for top performance, encouraging members to self-care on their own regular basis. Given the nature of these groups, including constant peer-to-peer social interaction, listening to a wide variety of topics from others' stories, and being expected to provide top-notch counseling or educational services, it is crucial for these groups and student leaders to recognize the need to take a step back and prioritize the members' needs. Rachel, a CARE supervisor, advised that self-care does not have to be an extravagant activity, but something as simple as "write a list about how can you best invest yourself in those things [that feed you] and drop back – not fully drop, but just step back – in those other things to give you peace of mind." This allows individuals to feel prepared for what is coming and gives them the opportunity to be 100% present at the things that fulfill them instead of just going through the motions. Ultimately, these action steps will help support members in giving meaning to their roles and work, thereby producing a ripple effect that will allow them to best support in-need peers on campus and beyond.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

My data is significant and contributes to current research on the complex relationship between emotionally activated work and self-care for student leaders. More specifically, this research expands on individuals', specifically those in care-giving roles like peer-education and peer-counseling groups, process of managing the emotional activation of their work and role coupled with balancing time for self-care and caring for others in their community. These findings and blueprint for action hold implications for how peer-education and peer-counseling organizations, as well as other similar groups, should tend to and manage their members, being cognizant of the complex relationship between emotionally activated work and self-care. Regular, ongoing performance management processes, including efficient communication,

rewards, and recognition procedures, should incorporate identification and positive reinforcement of emotional activation management strategies that enhance members' performance and satisfaction. My research demonstrates that student leaders' and organizations' strategies and processes for managing the emotional activation produced from specific caregiving roles and corresponding work, do in fact impact organizational outcomes and experiences, a result with substantial implications for the type of service the targeted community will receive.

So after analyzing, I circle back to the question: how do leaders in peer-education and peer-counseling groups balance the emotional activation and management needed to accomplish all of their role's responsibilities and tend to other members, all while leaving time for self-care? I argue that student leaders, referring to all peer-education and peer-counseling students, must be engaged in a role they believe has meaning and could leave a positive impact, create a community within the organization they are a part of, in order to feel comfortable reaching out for help or asking for time away to manage the emotional activation of their work, and also integrate regular self-care activities throughout their schedule to ensure for self-regulation of emotions and recovered energy to continue performing at their best.

While my research has contributed to the gap in the current theoretical landscape, research still needs to be done to reveal additional findings. First, another research study should be conducted with a larger sample size and more time to be able to analyze multiple factors related to emotionally activated work. Next, research is needed to investigate the mediating effects of emotionally activated work, with regards to the correlation between emotional intelligence (i.e. the innate ability to be self-aware and self-regulatory over one's emotions) and member performance and experience. Similarly, the association between personality traits and types, like extraversion and empathy, can be further studied with relation to emotionally activated work. It could be the case that extroverts are more likely to talk to others about their struggle to manage the constant emotional activation of their work more than others, or that individuals with more empathy have a harder time letting go of the sensitive topics they deal with when counseling peers, prohibiting them from self-regulating their emotions after the fact. While I uncovered that self-care aids in managing and regulating the emotional activation produced from one's service role, more needs to be researched on whether there are specific types of self-care activities that generate better results and performance metrics.

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