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We have all heard about Zoom fatigue; most of us are perhaps experiencing it on an everyday basis. The literature on combating Zoom fatigue continues to abound, with new perspectives and ideas in each article. [1] [2] However, what can we think of the potent combination of research and academic work when combined with a virtual model of productivity? This article tries to explore the implications of remote work for academia, not to question the necessity of the work-from-home model under present circumstances, but to wonder what future academic work will look like if we continue as we do today.

So, what is Zoom fatigue? This phenomenon moves away from technical and mechanical malfunctions of videoconferencing forums that are handling increased traffic to look at the experience of people as feelings of tiredness, anxiety, stress, or worry are being attributed to the overuse of virtual videoconferencing platforms (qtd. in Wiederhold 437).

To be able to access international research conferences online is certainly an unprecedented privilege for struggling academics. The digital videoconferencing options allow people from different time zones to save travel costs and attend panel discussions, present their own work, and engage in a global scholarly network. Yet, as we participate in this hyper-accessibility of research productivity, how do we determine when to stop? What constitutes rest in this overstimulated participatory model? For academics, especially PhD students and postdocs in the early stages of their careers, virtual conferences present the option of enhancing their CVs, accompanied by a desire to cram in a high quantity of paper presentations. After all, we cannot just do nothing as we wait for the vaccine and international mobility. Though a natural impulse, it overestimates our capacities for constant productivity and exposes us to potential burnout.

In part, it is true that writers and scholars are well-suited for the demands of this global pandemic. With distractions of social engagements thrust aside, it might appear as though time has expanded for more work. This is true, though it is more so because we have fewer external avenues for leisure and social interaction. The catch is that there are few ways to create boundaries for oneself from research work at this point, as sleep schedules need to be balanced with the desire to attend a talk or a panel discussion in a different time zone. In various Zoom conversations and sessions about improving mental health and avoiding burnout, I have recently heard this phrase a lot: "It feels as though we never stop working." And this is perhaps truer now than ever before, the

irony being that we kept working even as global mobility came to a staggering halt. The phrase “publish or perish,” first coined by Coolidge in 1932 [3], has hardly ceased to be relevant as we hasten to catch up with the rising demands of our new normal. For young researchers who hold low-income teaching or research assistantships, the increased accessibility creates more possibilities for intellectual labor with few monetary benefits. As Chris Bailey states in his Tedx Talk on getting our brains to focus [4], we must wander away from the workspace and any work associations and do unrelated activities for new ideas to emerge. It is precisely this possibility of *wandering* that has been curtailed into a non-reality since Covid-19.

The exhaustion of video calls is real: it is our somatic dissonance, a constant acknowledging of each other’s absence in a virtual presence (Petriglieri 641). The exhaustion is beyond the video call, though, as spaces have been shrinking since the beginning of the pandemic. Most of us can no longer take our light reading to a café and sit in that lighter space for hours at a time. When minds are constrained by physical spaces, it is no surprise that creative capacities feel limited. The idea of rest and leisure is radically transformed since the collective began to work from home. Perhaps in thinking of rest, we need new notions of rest, as the crumbling of the divide between home and the working world has already taken place.

Works Cited

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