Non-Tenure Track Women Faculty: Opening the Door

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Abstract: *This qualitative case study explores the departmental work life experiences of non-tenure track women faculty at one research university. Their voices articulate three distinct departmental experiences that create obstacles and opportunities for their academic success. The experiences of these women have implications for department heads, faculty, and university policy makers, and ultimately for the retention of a high quality institutional workforce that continues to include more non-tenure track faculty. While the women in this study do not identify gender as a salient characteristic in terms of how they experience their work lives, the reality is that women are more often employed in non-tenure track positions which suggests, that the issue is gendered.*

In academe, women assume a disproportionate number of non-tenure track positions as compared to their tenured and tenure track colleagues. When the numbers of full-time faculty are disaggregated, women make up more than half of faculty (52%) who are full-time, but ineligible for tenure (West & Curtis, 2006). Ultimately, "women are significantly over-represented in these non-tenure track positions, [which are] the least secure, least remunerative, and least prestigious jobs among the full-time faculty" (West & Curtis, 2006, p. 9).

On the surface, increasing the numbers of women faculty may not seem problematic. However, non tenure-track faculty, as a category of academic workers, are far too often treated as peripheral (Chronister & Baldwin, 1999; Gappa, 2000; German, 1996; Tolbert, 1998). And, women non-tenure track faculty, who often experience discrimination due to gender as well (Astin & Cress, 1998; Bain & Cummings, 2000; Glazer-Raymo, 1999), comprise a category of academic workers who

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experience a potentially hostile working environment. To consider these faculty as marginal or insignificant would be erroneous; yet, research on non-tenure track faculty remains somewhat limited (Antony & Valadez, 2002; Harper, Baldwin, Gansneder, & Chronister, 2001). Further, scholarship on the experiences of women in non-tenure track positions is even smaller. Given the clustering of women in these positions and the degree to which they have become a significant portion of the instructional workforce in academe, it is critical that the work life experiences of these women are better understood in order to create and/or maintain a climate for academic success.

Literature Review

Non-Tenure Track Faculty

One in five full-time faculty at four year institutions are non-tenure track faculty (Harper, Baldwin, Gansneder, & Chronister, 2001). Finkelstein (2003) likens these numbers, along with the fact that in 2001, three-fourths of new faculty appointments in 2001 were contingent (or non-tenure track faculty) to a "silent faculty revolution" (p.6). Moreover, the research that does focus on non-tenure track faculty often showed that while they feel satisfied in their jobs, they also feel marginalized (Chronister & Baldwin, 1999; Gappa, 2000; Tolbert, 1998). In addition, some scholars have disaggregated the work life experiences of faculty who are not on the tenure track by gender to provide a more complete picture of the work life experiences of these contingent faculty. The review of the literature that follows synthesizes related scholarship about this burgeoning group of faculty.

In their study, Chronister and Baldwin (1999) and Baldwin and Chronister (2001) explored the work life of full-time non-tenure track faculty (men and women) at four-year institutions through the use of surveys, secondary data National Survey of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF), and faculty interviews at 12 institutions. They found that non-tenure track faculty experienced boredom in teaching the same classes each semester, raised concerns about not being able to participate in faculty governance, and were frustrated at the lack of support for conducting research. Although non-tenure track positions rarely included the expectation of scholarly productivity, "[a]t universities, there is also the necessity for conducting research, both as an ethical duty to the profession and as a means to raise the status of the institution" (Burgan,

Weisbuch, & Lowry, 1999, p. 14). Thus, when any faculty experience a lack of support for scholarly engagement, it is problematic. Chronister and Baldwin (1999) also discussed the inconsistent application of policies and procedures for non-tenure track faculty. For example, particular department chairs may use discretionary money to support professional development opportunities for non-tenure track faculty, but those cases are usually cases of goodwill and not departmental or institutional policy. Ultimately, Chronister and Baldwin (1999), like a previous study by Baldwin, Chronister, Rivera, and Bailey (1993), found that colleges and universities have not done a good job at supporting non-tenure track faculty and that considering these faculty as an afterthought will undermine the best work of the academic enterprise.

Gappa (2000) reinforced other studies that demonstrated the exploitation of non-tenure track faculty, despite being satisfied in their academic roles. Like Chronister and Baldwin (1999), she saw the academic department as one place that could significantly influence the climate these faculty experience. She blamed a lack of departmental leadership and a hostile departmental culture for the mistreatment of non-tenure track faculty. While she stated that the experiences of full-time non-tenure track faculty are better than those of part-time faculty, the full-time tenure-ineligible faculty did experience status differences when it comes to issues of academic governance, sabbaticals, and job security (Gappa, 2000).

Women Non-Tenure Track Faculty

German (1996) makes a compelling case to explain why women are more often found in non-tenure track, and particularly part-time faculty positions. She points out a number of conclusions in the extant literature about women that contribute to stereotypes about women and ultimately work to maintain inequities within faculty ranks. She reports that these inequities exist at both the institutional and departmental levels. It is because of these inequities and the proliferation of non-tenure track faculty positions in the future that German calls for research about non-tenure track faculty, including those who are part-time, and their development and support.

Harper, Baldwin, Gansneder, and Chronister. (2001) provides one answer to German's (1996) call. In a mixed methods study that included an analysis of the NSOPF data for full-time non-tenure track women,

interviews, and analysis of policies related to non-tenure track faculty, they debunked the myth that women self-select into tenure-ineligible positions because of family responsibilities, i.e., child care. The study did not specify whether elder care played a role in deciding to pursue a tenure-ineligible position; future research using NSOPF should consider this variable as well, given the growing need for elder care nationally (Sax, Hagedorn, Arrendondo, & Dicrisi, 2002). When considering partner status and children, tenure status did not matter for women— women were twice as likely to be single and childless as men. Additional findings from this study addressed job satisfaction. Overall, full-time non-tenure track women were satisfied with their jobs. They appreciated the flexibility and enjoyed teaching and the decreased pressure to publish. However, these non-tenure track women also wanted job security. They saw their positions as undervalued and they have little or no opportunity for advancement (Harper et al., 2001).

Perna (2001) used a different approach to explore some of the same issues that Harper et al. (2001) examined with regard to women in non-tenure track positions. She used a human capital and structural approach to analyze the NSOPF: 93 data and found that women hold a higher proportion of full-time non-tenure track positions than full-time tenure track positions. Further, she found that women hold lower status contingent positions even after controlling for differences in family responsibilities, marital status, and other human and structural characteristics. As a result of her findings, Perna presented strong recommendations in order to improve the experiences for non-tenure track women. For example, she argued that institutional policies should not force women to choose between the tenure track and motherhood. Such policies are few and far between and the lack of such policies provide some explanation for her findings and for the findings in the Harper et al. study.

Theoretical Framework

I am interested in whether women, and in the case of the current study, women in non-tenure track positions, continue to be marginalized in academe because of their gender. To that end, this study is informed by feminist theory. I see academe as entrenched in the power of patriarchy. This point of view is not to deny the progress that women have made in the academy; rather, it is to reinforce my belief that the academy is male-

centered in such a way that makes it difficult for women to achieve success, access, and equity at the same rates as men. Further, my understanding of feminism is rooted in the belief that while power within the academy may be patriarchal, it can be transformed (Ropers-Huilman, 1998; Safarik, 2003). Socially constructed systems can change and power can be redistributed. One small way to begin the process of change is through consciousness raising, and exploratory research like the current study is a fundamental tool in consciousness raising. Moreover, while feminism provides a lens to view this study, it is critical to note that interlocking oppressions can and do contribute to a fuller understanding of phenomena, like the work lives of women non-tenure track faculty. Race, social class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender expression, and other characteristics complicate and contribute to the richness of my interpretation of the data; however, gender will be the primary lens through which these data will be considered.

Methods

Data Collection

Forty female non-tenure track faculty (17.6% of the overall population of non-tenure track women faculty at this institution) were invited to participate in this phenomenological case study. These names were randomly generated by the staff at the university's institutional research office. Each individual was invited to participate in a focus group; however, several individual interview slots were made available to potential participants if they were unable to make the designated time for the focus group but were still interested in participating in the study. Fourteen of those invited agreed to participate; eight participated in individual semi-structured interviews and six participated in a focus group that used the same semi-structured interview protocol. For the purpose of data presentation, pseudonyms were used to identify particular participants in order to provide a certain degree of confidentiality. However, for the data collected in the focus group, there was no systematic way to identify individual speakers, so in the findings, no name or pseudonym were used to distinguish a particular participant. In addition, the name of the institution was masked to further enhance confidentiality of all participants.

All participants were full-time university employees who came from departments throughout the university, including the main and health

libraries, music, extension, family and consumer sciences, English as a second language, physiology, pediatrics, epidemiology and biostatistics, English, Judaic studies, nursing, and the liberal arts college. The liberal arts college functions much like a department and it is the only unit at this university that is entirely comprised of non-tenure eligible faculty. The participants also came from a diversity of races/ethnicities that include white, non-Hispanic; Asian; Hispanic; Native American; and African American. It is important to note that these participants and the data generated from them were part of a much larger, university-wide climate study for all faculty, including those who were tenured and on the tenure track. As such, the protocol interview questions were not tailored to individual faculty ranks, departments, or disciplines; rather they were broadly constructed to address climate issues of faculty in any department, discipline, or rank. The interview protocol was designed to address factors that contributed to or hindered a faculty member's professional success. Probes were provided to explore these broad issues in greater depth, but the direction of the conversation was guided by the participants, rather than assuring that every probe was presented in the course of a focus group or interview.

Conceptual Framework

Given the extant research that identified the salience of the academic department for non-tenure track faculty (Chronister & Baldwin, 1999; Gappa, 2000; German, 1996) and the concentration of women in these positions, it was important to find an analytical framework from which to best make meaning of the experiences of non-tenure track women. For this study, I used work by Packer (1989) as the conceptual framework that guided the interpretation of data. Packer conducted a study to look at faculty engaged in feminist research. She examined the role of the department in gender equity development and identified four stages: closed door (women were not hired at all); revolving door (junior women were hired but not supported in their advancement toward tenure); door ajar (women may have tenure but unlikely to be promoted to full professor); and open door (departments rewarded women for their involvement in gender issues and provided equitable treatment toward promotion and tenure). The focus of the current study was to understand the work lives of non-tenure track women faculty and the role gender played to that end. Packer's (1989) work was also centered on faculty work lives and gender equity, thus her framework served to inform the interpretation of the data in this study. The patterns and themes that

emerged from this study fit within a framework reminiscent of Packer's (1989) work; however, this study modified Packer's research to demonstrate how departments support the work of non-tenure track faculty (rather than tenure track faculty) women at one large public research university.

Data Analysis

Each individual interview and the focus group interview were audio taped and transcribed verbatim. The interview transcripts were analyzed and interpreted using the constant comparative approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), looking for convergence and divergence in the data (Patton, 1990). These categories were modified as each transcript was analyzed. This process is described by Lincoln and Guba (1986) as the "saturation of categories" or the "emergence of regularities" (p. 350). Comparative pattern analysis was used to illuminate recurring patterns in the data. To accomplish this, I searched for patterns that converged into categories exhibiting "internal homogeneity" and "external heterogeneity" (Patton, 1990, p. 403). Data were analyzed for each interview (a single case) as well as across cases in order to identify both similarities and differences among patterns and themes. Ultimately, the goal of the phenomenological analysis was to capture the "essence of the experience" (Patton, 1990, p. 69) of these women faculty, and the patterns and themes found served to make sense of these women viewed their academic lives.

I used NVivo, a qualitative data management software package, to assist in the organization of the data analysis process. NVivo is a powerful software program designed to aid researchers in working with qualitative data. It supports data processing, indexing, searching, and theorizing. By combining text searches and indexing, it allows thorough manipulation and rigorous examination of data in various contexts.

Trustworthiness

To address issues of trustworthiness, independent investigators validated the data analysis. I asked two colleagues who were familiar with the institution and with the issues of non-tenure track faculty to reflect upon my analysis and provide feedback on the extent to which my interpretations were plausible and were not overly influenced by bias (Merriam, 1998). Each independent investigator had minor suggestions

that I then incorporated into my analysis to enhance the trustworthiness of this study.

Limitations

One of the limitations to this study was that the study was conducted at a large, non-unionized, research university in the southwest. At this public university, there were 1,994 full-time faculty employed during the time in which data were collected. Of that number, 504, or 25%, were tenure-ineligible, or non-tenure track faculty. Twenty-seven percent of the tenured and tenure-eligible faculty were women; however, when looking at the gender breakdown for the non-tenure track faculty, 45% were women (Research University, 2001), reflecting national trends that position women in less prestigious ranks within postsecondary faculty (Clark, 1998; German, 1996; Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Harper et al., 2001, Perna, 2001). While the numbers of non-tenure track women faculty mirror larger trends, the characteristics of this particular institution do make the experiences of these faculty unique. The experiences of female faculty at different institution types (e.g., liberal arts colleges, community colleges, comprehensive institutions, private institutions, etc.) may be quite different. However, it is not the intent of qualitative inquiry to provide generalizations. Rather, this research method is to help us understand how insiders make meaning of their life experiences (Merriam, 1998). The patterns and themes that emerge from the voices of the women in this study help us better understand their reality. Their thick description pushes us to truly discover the work lives of these non-tenure track women. Moreover, it contributes to a highly quantitative body of literature (Baldwin et al., 1993; Chronister & Baldwin, 1999; Harper et al., 2001; Perna, 2001) to better understand the experiences of non-tenure track women faculty so that administrative leaders, other faculty, and policy makers can make more informed decisions regarding these faculty.

Findings

Originally intended to incorporate the gendered component within the framework, the emergent data revealed that gender and feminist perspectives were pertinent in ways quite different from those in Packer's (1989) work. Although the participants were aware that the study was originally designed to explore the work climate for academic *women*, and specific open-ended questions were posed about the role of gender in their work life, the issues that helped or hindered their

academic success were more related to their role as non-tenure track faculty than from their gender. Further, other aspects of diversity as they related to unfair treatment, while of critical importance to the experiences of individuals, were not explored in depth in the findings that follow, as they were beyond the scope of this study.

As a result, Packer's (1989) concepts were modified and realigned to address the role of the department in terms of support for non-tenure track faculty work. From this perspective, closed door departments are those in which non-tenure track faculty were not considered as participating faculty in the department; revolving door departments support the participation of non-tenure track faculty within the department, but put limits on how they can participate; and open door departments are those that allow full participation of non-tenure track faculty who are also encouraged to advance professionally within the department and university.

The data showed that the work climate for non-tenure track women faculty was disparate. Faculty experienced their work lives in differing ways, depending upon the department in which they were housed. In some cases, the departments were described as closed doors. In others, the department was a revolving door. Finally, some faculty experienced their department as an open door. In all cases, the description of the department was constructed based upon the non-tenure track position of the women faculty.

Only one faculty member, Akiba in the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, had no comments related to either a revolving or open door experience in her department and in her role as a non-tenure track faculty member. Likewise, only one faculty member, Carmen, in the Liberal Arts College, had comments clustered in the open door category. The rest of the women who participated in either a focus group or an individual interview about their work life as non tenure track faculty experienced situations in more than one category, meaning that overall, they had a revolving door experience—sometimes the door was open to them and other times, the door was shut. While each woman's academic life is unique, Carmen had a position unlike any of the other women interviewed. Carmen had an academic appointment in a college that had no faculty who were tenured or tenure-eligible. In this way, she was on a more level playing field with departmental colleagues than the other

women who participated in the study. For example, she did not attend department meetings where some faculty (tenured and tenure-eligible) could vote and others (non-tenure track) could not. Thus, there was not a clear cut distinction between the haves and have-nots that so many non tenure track faculty articulate.

Packer's (1989) modified framework provides the conceptual lens through which the climate of these non-tenure track women faculty is interpreted. What follows is a synthesis of the themes (closed door, revolving door, and open door) and how these themes explain the work lives of these women. In the case of the closed door climate, several elements contribute to how that was understood: (a) treatment as a second class citizen, (b) lack of resources, (c) lack of recognition, and (d) lack of job security. For climate categorized as a revolving door, there were positive aspects that contributed to work lives of these women, but there were also negative characteristics that informed this theme related to the following: (a) resources, (b) role of department chair, (c) autonomy, (d) employment, (e) inclusion in the academic enterprise. Finally, for those women faculty who encountered an open door climate in their department, the experiences were shaped by positive aspects of the same elements embedded in the two other lived realities described: (a) resources, (b) role of department chair, (c) autonomy, (d) job security, (e) inclusion in the academic enterprise. The nuances of the lives of the non-tenure track women faculty in this study were detailed below, using the participants' own words, to better understand the emergent patterns and themes.

Closed Door

Second-class citizen. The literature reviewed for this study expressed the sense that non-tenure track faculty feel marginalized and less-than their tenure track colleagues (Baldwin et al., 1993; Chronister & Baldwin, 1999; Gappa, 2000; Tolbert, 1998). Many of the women in this study also described feeling like a second-class citizen. For example, two different focus group members articulated their perceived status through the following: "It's very much a status thing at the university and I think that's why it's spread across the university and I'm always very aware that I am a second-class citizen..." and "I didn't like study for like 20 years to just teach and go home and be treated like the *untermensch* at the university."

While these women faculty may point to specific behaviors or experiences, the overall climate is one where they feel peripheral. They point to their position as one that is inferior in the eyes of many in their departments and throughout the university. These non-tenure track faculty feel like their perceived status is a hindrance to their work—for them, their status reminds them that the door is closed and that there is little hope to feel included as a true member of the department's faculty. Kat, an English as a Second Language faculty member, expressed her separateness this way: "I really have felt for my whole career at the university divorced and disempowered."

Resources. The women in this study frequently pointed to situations where the ability to do their job and to become better at their job was limited due to the fact that resources were unavailable to them as non-tenure track faculty, particularly when it comes to research support, office space, and faculty development. The resources are clearly available to those on the tenure track in their departments, but when it comes to providing support for non-tenure track faculty, the door is shut. The following findings illustrate how the door is shut in terms of resources. A focus group member whose primary job is doing research but has teaching responsibilities described how the opportunities are different for her, as compared to her tenured and tenure-track colleagues, making it difficult to maintain the same scholarly demands as them: "I'm doing research. I'd like to be bought out for a semester; all kinds of [resources like] that are not available to adjunct faculty. We don't have any negotiations." Another focus group member in the Music department shared how even the basic tools necessary for academic success were substandard. She said: "You're talking about offices, yeah, but it's not in the same building as the one I teach in so I have a locker from when I was a student that's more useful. I don't even have a piano. They have a piano next door. It can't be played because it's in State Hall and it will disrupt everybody…" Julie, a faculty member in Pediatrics, illustrated how a lack of resources served to keep the door closed within her department and within her career:

> I have no resources. I have never gotten any special anything, travel monies or anything because I am low person on the totem and yet in order to go up the totem pole you need some resources but you can't have any resources because you're here. I don't think we use developmental resources well and I think we need to do that. There

ought to be special resources for people that are trying to move along, that are trying to improve themselves, whereas, I don't think those exist. So, if I want to go to a conference that will help me to get to the next step, if I want to be participants in something that would really help move me along, I'm always pushed back because of rank and because of the visibility of what I'm doing. That has happened several times in the last year.

Recognition. In addition to feeling like their work is not supported through departmental resources, some of the non-tenure track women in this study voiced concerns about not being able to fully participate in opportunities for recognizing their good work, nor in opportunities to recognize and support students with whom they work. These women feel that they work hard and should be able to participate and be acknowledged for the work that they do; however, the opportunities for such accolades are limited. Julie, the Pediatrics faculty member, reinforced this theme, as she described how her work with students cannot be rewarded. She shared: "The fact that I do a lot of work with students on dissertations and I can never be their dissertation chair. I can never hood them even though I've been very involved with all of it. That's a discrimination of a different sort that I think does exist."

Job security. The issue that was the most prevalent among the non-tenure track women in this study was the lack of job security. This issue is also one that is often considered in the supporting scholarship of all non-tenure track faculty (Breneman, 1997; Chronister & Baldwin, 1999; Gappa, 2000) and particularly of women non-tenure track faculty (German, 1996; Harper et al., 2001; Perna, 2001). The women in this study feared that their jobs may not be viable from year-to-year, which does not translate into feeling like a valued member of the department and institution. Comments from focus group members highlighted this pattern:

I personally decided from day one that I'm going to outlive this and get beyond it at some point come hell or high water, whatever it takes. So, I research, I give papers, I write articles, I get articles published. I teach really well, I hold another half time job because the university is insecure and I can't really rely on it. I get my contract renewed in May if I'm lucky for the upcoming year so.

> I now teach a range of courses that's probably three times the range of any faculty that I teach with and what it gets me, in May, the letters say that I can work under the same rotten conditions that I worked under the last year if I'm lucky in May, it might be July, it might be the beginning of August so that having done a thousand times more than the people that I work with and I don't think anyone would even disagree with that…I could be replaced by your water bottle tomorrow and truthfully, I don't think there would even be a person who would raise a voice in my defense.

> I think things could have been improved over the years and they could improve in the future which is why I persist but the truth is that none of us, indispensable as we all may be, in what we do have absolutely no protection whatsoever. We don't even have the protection of the administrative staff who get 90% if they're fired.

> But it's difficult how much would you invest in an a university that if you open your mouth you're likely not be rehired, you don't have the job security in any way shape or form to even go out and advocate for something different and you may not have the time. I teach three classes each semester and I hold another job because I have no job security so exactly which part of my life would I give up to do this job which I feel is really important and I'm going to somehow do something.

The women who shared experiences of working in a department where the door is closed do not have opportunities for advancement. In many cases, they are not included in departmental meetings and feel like second-class citizens. Many see themselves as having been trained to be on a tenure track, and have chosen a non-tenure track position just to have a job in their intended field. They do not see their department as a welcoming place. In fact, if a position on the tenure track would open, they feel that others in their department would not consider them as a viable candidate for that position. Moreover, for those who are looking for a position on the tenure track at this university or another, they are compelled to conduct research and seek outside grants in order to remain competitive in the national faculty market. However, for them, departmental research support and professional development money are not accessible, unless they are on the tenure track.

Revolving Door

For women in this study who experienced their departments as ones with revolving doors, there are some opportunities for their work to be supported. However, there is always a downside. In fact, it seems that when one door opens related to their jobs, another closes—but sometimes the reverse is also true. These women can point to aspects of their jobs that allow them to (a) have access to resources, have support from their department chairs, (c) experience a certain level of autonomy, (d) feel some security in their job, and (e) be treated as a contributing member of their departments. However, in the same breath, they also share instances where these aspects of their work lives are being compromised or devalued.

   Resources. Above, some of the women in this study shared experiences where resources were limited, to the point where opportunities for professional growth were hindered. Women who saw aspects of their department as more of a revolving door describe more access to resources, but temper their opportunities with experiences where they were hindered in other aspects of their jobs. Julie, the Pediatrics faculty member, explained that she did get some support in terms of technical resources, while other resources were less available. She said:

> I can keep up with the technology. I think we have very good support, when I call somebody because there's something wrong with my computer or I've done something stupid, the help is there within minutes. That kind of resource is here…but I think we need more cognitive or the more emotional kinds of resources.

A focus group member was grateful for the resources she did receive to travel; however she also shared that it was not enough to support the travel expected for her job when she said:

> Yet, you're supposed to be meeting requirements for service to present at major conferences, its part of what you're expected to do and you can't go to major centers like Philadelphia and New York and L.A. inexpensively. It costs a lot of money to go there, to stay there and to do what is an expectation for you as a professional and there's just very little in it for us. There's some and we're grateful

for any but I would really like to see us have very adequate support for the travel we do in this profession.

Another focus group member shared how she had to ally herself with a tenured colleague in order to qualify for any sort of funding. She had to work strategically, using loopholes in the granting process to garner internal support. She expressed, "The only grant I've been able to get was to have my co-author, who's tenured, write it."

Supportive chair. In some cases, the resources that these women were able to access came as a result of a supportive department head. Other times, it was due to other people on campus. In this section, women specifically identify the powerful role their department head has had in helping them open the door, but like the other evidence under this theme, the supportive role a chair may play is not iron-clad. Kat, who is an English as a Second Language faculty member, recounts how her chair has fought to increase her salary. However, she also shares that her expectations of her chair are not exceedingly high because she sees that her status means she is not eligible for the same sort of support. She explains:

> Let's face it for what this job pays, which he's also been militant, not militant but very professionally assertive in trying to get salary raises for us but for what that pays, in my non-tenure track position, you can't expect a whole helluva lot from people.

A focus group member shared a similar sentiment when describing her chair. She articulated that such support is bounded when she said: "I have this very supportive department head and I just know if I start rocking the boat, I'll be a nuisance and he has no patience for that and I'll be out of there."

Autonomy. Non-tenure track women faculty shared stories where they have been able to do meaningful work because there are mechanisms in place to encourage creativity and autonomy. In one case, for example as Beth, a Physiology faculty member, described, there was an ill-defined policy in one college that has afforded her the opportunity to create courses for them. Ultimately, a bad policy has helped her grow professionally. She said:

It's a policy that I don't think should exist in that I think that people in the College of Medicine and basic sciences should be contributing significantly more but because of that, because of this obvious need, it made it much easier for me to suggest and then develop various courses and other kinds of interactions that are improved. So now I'm sort of a pioneer in that area but only because of this other, this other policy.

For other women who address issues of autonomy, they saw their position as double-edged—the lack of job security can give them an "out" should they decide to leave without having made significant investments, but it also allowed them the flexibility to do other things in their lives while still doing important and challenging work. Kat sought out her non-tenure track job, despite its limitations, so that she could find a better balance with work, family, and travel. She related the following:

I decided years ago when I went into this field, that it was a way to have children, stay home and have the world come to me because I loved traveling and am increasingly becoming a citizen of the world, it seemed to me. I didn't want to be just stuck in America, so the world comes to me. I made some sacrifices to do that, knowingly, I knew that if I entered this interesting career, I would not have much job security nor would I earn a lot of money. That has turned out to be true so I'm not bitter about it as some people are.

Inez, a faculty member in Family and Consumer Science, recognized the parameters that she faces in a non-tenure track position and thinks about looking for a position on the tenure track, but she also described the opportunities she has had to advance her career in her own terms. She conveyed:

I think that people move on because they may not feel that the environment is conducive to moving ahead. I've been different because I've been here for a while but it's because I've tried to improve myself in different ways and tried to change jobs within my department. But, if I had a chance and an offer I think I would go, too.

Having a job. Patterns that emerged in the data related to this theme did support the earlier theme of the lack of job security. However,

these data differ slightly because they showed that while the women in these positions did have concerns that their job was less secure, they also articulated a sincere love for the work that they do. This tension between job insecurity and a job they love created a departmental environment that was a revolving door. The door was open due to the sheer pleasure they experienced in their work, but the door could close at any moment due to the vulnerability about whether the job will continue to be there. Two focus group members described this revolving door experience this way:

> I love what I'm doing. I've told my boss in my annual review, that I feel fortunate that there's a job I can do that's exactly what I want to be doing at this point in my life but I think I also feel a little bit intimidated just because I feel like, fine all the other faculty in my department are tenure track or tenured and they're all male. Yeah, they like what I do and I'm indispensable but....I'm not faculty and what I do is not as valuable as what they do and they don't say that. It's not an overt kind of position.

> I'm still in the profession. I'm one of the lucky ones. I'm a musician that's actually employed. I might not be doing what I ultimately want to do but I am doing something and that's nice but I feel personally with my private life and everything, it's all on hold because I don't know where I'm going to be next year.

Another member of the focus group relayed her revolving door experience as one where she was able to achieve success, but she was unappreciated. She said, "I'm very successful at what I do but I'm not acknowledged for what I do, but I love my job." Again, for these women, having a job, even if they were unappreciated as faculty or if their job might be less than permanent, was central to how they embraced their work life experience within their particular academic unit.

Feeling included. While some faculty in the closed door departments expressed a feeling of exclusion among their faculty colleagues, particularly those on the tenure-track, some of the women shared that faculty colleagues did help non-tenure track faculty feel like full contributors to their departments, despite other difficulties in their jobs. Those other difficulties continued to be salient as these non-tenure track faculty explained their work situations; yet, the degree of isolation

they felt was mediated because some colleagues embraced them as full members of their departments. A focus group member voiced this revolving door circumstance best when she said:

> In my department I've had to sort of crawl my way up. They liked to see me as a student, but…yesterday we had our last faculty meeting and I felt like I was a member of the club, finally, right? I know there are people there that would like to treat me otherwise but I won't let them so I think that if you stand up and say okay, this is what I need in order to respect myself than that's the bottom line. Even, I hate to say this, I will find a way to survive.

The women whose experiences are categorized as working in a revolving department faced some of the obstacles described in the closed door departments (e.g., no access to funding, low salaries, lack of benefits). However, these faculty did see some advantages in their position and in their department to their personal and professional success and growth. Many non-tenure track faculty have a position that is dedicated to teaching, and some of these faculty are beginning to see rewards for teaching within their department. In addition, women in the revolving door departments have found support from other faculty who have served as mentors and have facilitated access to grant and research money. While these faculty articulated the challenges that are part of their position as a non-tenure track faculty members, they also enjoyed aspects of their job and the climate in which they work.

Open Door

An open door department was one that was the most supportive of its non-tenure track faculty. In fact, for those departments that also had tenure track faculty, there was little or no differentiation between them in terms of treatment. The non-tenure track faculty who experienced a department with an open door shared narratives of equally distributed resources; departmental leaders who had been extremely supportive of non-tenure track faculty professional growth and advancement; a position that had allowed for autonomy; in one case, a sense of job security on par with tenured colleagues; and feelings of inclusion within the department and academic community.

     Resources. With regard to the allocation of resources, Beth, a faculty member in Physiology, and Karen, a faculty member in

Agricultural Extension, described situations in their departments where those who were tenured or on the tenure track had the same experiences as those who were non-tenure track faculty. The door was as open to Beth and Karen as it appeared to be to any other faculty in their departments, specifically as it related to certain resources. While others who shared closed door or revolving door situations regarding resources, Beth shared an instance where professional development opportunities were not afforded to faculty on a differential basis. She said:

> We have a weekly colloquium and an interactive seminar that I coordinate…It's not something that I set up but something has been ongoing for 20 years. It enables people to get together and do these kinds of brainstorming so that has definitely been an academically supported university supported kind of thing.

Karen echoed a similar experience where she felt she was on equal footing with all others in her department. She revealed the following:

> It's [the department and college] real techie-oriented and they offer a lot of support classes and things like that, if you can find the time. Sometimes it's just getting there but they offer them off campus for people and the state, which I think is a great benefit for faculty out there. I have taken advantage of that.

Supportive chair. As voiced within the theme of the revolving door departments, often the department chair can be influential in creating an environment where non-tenure track faculty can be successful. Within the open door theme, however, the women did not discuss the chair's support in the context of challenges they faced as a non-tenure track faculty member within the department. Kat described the support she, and all those who were working hard in her English as a Second Language department received:

> I'm publishing books, serving on national committees and that's fine. I'm also a full-time teacher. Some people really don't choose to put so much of themselves into their careers as I do and keep studying and taking courses and stuff but they're very good teachers and they speak to the programs in their own ways, so, you know, he [the department chair] sees…there are many different talents and they all go together to make an effective team. So, anybody who wants to

publish is going to get some help from him. Anybody who wants to present at conferences is going to get some money from him, so yes, I think that his standards have been equitably applied.

A member of the focus group shared how her department chair demonstrated fairness in how the faculty in the department were evaluated. Rather than taking the non-tenure track-faculty for granted, as was reported in the context of the closed door theme especially, this faculty woman had a different experience. She said:

> My boss, for example, just looked at what I did, well, you know you're 100% teaching but you do a significant amount of research and you do admissions and stuff. He said, I'm gonna put you down now as teaching and service because clearly we need to give you credit for the other things you are doing.

Autonomy. In some cases, non-tenure track women felt that they had the chance to make the most out of their jobs and also lead a balanced life due to the autonomy they had in their positions. For one focus group member, the autonomy she experienced was due to how her non-tenure track job was understood. She explained:

> I was sick of writing grant applications and we sort of decided late in our lives to become parents and so for me it was a conscious decision to do this and I wanted to teach and it's really worked remarkably well at a university that isn't set up around teaching faculty.

Beth, a Physiology faculty member, also felt that her position was crafted in such a way she had the latitude to do what she really enjoyed. She also felt no interference from other faculty or administrators to develop a position for which she was best-suited. Beth explained this experience when she said:

> Even though I am a lecturer by title, I designed as part of my job that I would do 20% service. I said that I would do that. Eighty percent would be teaching and 20% would be service. Nobody asked me about that so I have that as my own, because I was already doing that and very interested in doing that and I felt that I wanted that to be part of my ongoing job description.

Like Beth, Carmen, who was housed in the Liberal Arts College, described an autonomous work setting where she felt an implicit hands-off policy existed, allowing her to grow as a faculty member. She shared:

> I think I did well in my career as an undergrad, and as a graduate student and now as a professor—the Liberal Arts College has really opened its doors to me. I can do whatever I want as far as teaching-related or research, going out to the community working with them so I feel no obstacles or limits.

Job security. Often, within the literature and within this study, the lack of job security has been highlighted as one of the most concerning aspects of a non-tenure track position. Contrary to the experiences of many, Beth shared that she actually felt quite secure in her job when she expressed, "I can't say at this point in my career, after having been in this position now for almost eight years, that I feel any less permanent than someone who may be tenured." However, it must be noted that Beth was the only participant who felt the security of her job was on par with her tenured colleagues, but her unique experience did contribute to the broader theme of those faculty who found themselves in an open door department.

Feeling included. The women who expressed experience of being on a level playing field within their work setting were both library professionals, classified at this institution as non-tenure track faculty. They experienced an open door within their department, and felt that they had as much of an opportunity to succeed as any other faculty member. The sense that the unit was flat and that there was not a significant status difference among any of the faculty led to a camaraderie and collegium that most of the other faculty interviewed did not share. A focus group member who worked in the Health Science Library and Sandy, who worked in the main campus library, evidenced this theme in the following:

> I feel as an academic professional that this is my niche within the university. I don't want anything else and I feel that I am well, relatively well-paid. For being in technology, I'm not at all well-paid, but that's my choice, I'm working at a university. I make that trade off and I don't have lower status than my colleagues.

> There's very little between the rank and file person working in the library and the dean. There is a team leader. Team leaders are all on a cabinet that meets with the dean and included on this cabinet is a representative, an elected representative of the librarians and an elected representative of the staff so that rank and file people are involved in all levels of conversation.

Overall, the faculty who work in open door departments often tended to choose a non-tenure track position because of the nature of that position, not because there were no tenure track positions available when they were applying for academic jobs. As a result, they tended to be more satisfied with their departmental experiences and felt supported in the role they chose. But, the faculty in these departments had experiences that were unique. For example, some department heads rewrote job descriptions for particular non-tenure track faculty members. By doing so, these faculty members felt their job expectations were more reasonable and that they felt they were more fairly evaluated. In another instance, the department head recognized the contributions that a non-tenure track woman made to the department, so he worked with the university to make sure that she was retained and supported. Going to such lengths for a non-tenure track faculty member was seen as rather unusual, but it contributed greatly to the positive work experience of this faculty member and others in her department. The department was considered a place that was supportive, both personally and professionally and the non-tenure track position was viewed by the department as a career position, not just a job.

In this study, some women saw their positions housed in departments with open doors. These positions were those in which they could grow and feel like a vibrant, included member of the academy. Yet, too many faculty in this study shared powerful examples of how their success had been compromised. Sometimes, they were stories of working in departments with revolving doors, where women reported opportunities to succeed, but then followed them with reports of departmentally- or institutionally-created obstacles that ultimately limited their achievements; other times, the stories departments with closed doors where it is difficult, if not impossible, for women to feel like they were a contributing and respected part of their departments.

Discussion

The findings from the current study support the previous research conducted by Harper et al. (2001) that found while women non-tenure track faculty were primarily satisfied, they were often treated inequitably. Differential treatment existed between departments, providing evidence for German's (1996) speculation—with some academic administrators finding discretionary support (albeit often inconsistently) for non-tenure track faculty, while others ignored these faculty altogether. In addition, faculty in this study shared experiences where their departments either pushed them into revolving doors or closed the doors completely, which reinforced the less-than status that Harper et al. described.

Harper et al. (2001) captured the stories of non-tenure track faculty as a classed experience, particularly in terms of teaching work load and salary—these faculty are second-class academic citizens. While this study also supports categorizing the experiences of the non-tenure track women as classed, as a feminist scholar, I must assert that gender also plays an important role although rarely mentioned by the participants in this investigation. There is a critical mass of women in non-tenure track positions, and based upon the findings from this study and evidence from others (Clark, 1998; Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Harper et al., 2001, Perna, 2001), they were not being treated fairly. Satisfaction is not a proxy for fair treatment, and to systematically treat one category of faculty (and in this case, one that is highly feminized) as marginal is unethical, and possibly even illegal. In fact, no longer should "women as scholars…face what seems to be an almost overwhelming lack of interest in their progress from a system that has been dominated culturally and socially by, for the most part, white men of economic and social privilege" (Clark, 1998, p. 84).

Those ineligible for tenure are in the riskiest job category for faculty. Whether pursuing these positions is a first choice or one due to the lack of availability of tenure track options, treating these faculty as marginal is unacceptable. Moreover, women who are faculty are clustered in these non-tenure track positions and share stories that when one door opens for them professionally, another shuts—keeping them in the constant motion of the revolving door. This system reinforces the glass ceiling notion of academe. The non-tenure track positions continue to proliferate; these are

not temporary fixes in our colleges and universities (Antony & Valadez, 2002; Harper et al., 2001). As such, we have a responsibility to support our non-tenure track colleagues (women and men) in their work, to eliminate the sense of marginality they face. Those of us in positions of power, including tenure track faculty, have a responsibility to see that the situation improves so that the door can be open to all faculty who want to work in a more equitable and healthy academic community.

The participants in this study raised concerns about inequitable treatment and the lack of job security. However, they did not raise these issues as specifically related to gender. This finding mirrors Clark's (1987) supposition that gender is less important than the structural frameworks of the institution and department. However, by presenting this perspective, I do not mean to suggest that there is a hierarchy of oppression that is operating. Instead, the classed and gendered perspectives, among others, are interlocking. Given the fact that women are clustered in non-tenure track positions, their concerns *are* gendered (Perna, 2001). However, women in this study felt their experiences were influenced more by their non-tenure track position, not by their gender. The marginalization they felt due to their non-tenure track status was most salient to them and is the context in which their experiences were conceptualized using Packer's (1989) adapted framework; yet, because of the reality of interlocking oppressions, it is critical that this analysis considers the position of gender as well.

Implications

This research contributes to a body of primarily quantitative work to understand the work lives and departmental experiences of women in non-tenure track positions. However, further research is necessary. For example, larger qualitative studies, with populations that extend beyond a single case study, should be conducted to help scholars and practitioners theorize and support contingent faculty and other feminized groups of academic workers. In addition, researchers need to continue to conduct quantitative and mixed-methods studies about the work lives of non-tenure track faculty that explore the multi-faceted aspects of who they are and the work they do.

While additional inquiry is necessary, the current study does provide a different lens to look at the experiences of these non-tenure track women. What this study found is that these faculty experiences varied depending

upon their department and the people with whom they work most closely. Some saw themselves as second-class citizens, with little opportunity to advance their careers in their current position and department. Others saw obstacles, but also saw opportunities and experience their jobs as places where they can make some inroads as academics. Still others saw their departments and their roles within those departments as supporting who they were personally and professionally. The categories exist on a continuum. It is actually unlikely that the purest form of the categories on the end of the continuum truly exist, but by including them, it gives a richer picture of the extent to which these non-tenure track faculty experience their departmental work lives.

Given the numbers of women in undergraduate and graduate programs, coupled with the increasing openings for faculty in non-tenure track positions, institutions have, at the very least, a moral responsibility to address the inequities and poor treatment of these faculty. Harper et al. (2001) established seven policy implications from their study on women non-tenure track faculty. The findings from my study reinforce the call to those carefully considered issues. In addition to the broad policy ideas developed by Harper et al., and consistent with my feminist perspective that institutions can change, the findings from the current study advocate for departments, colleges, and universities to consider the following.

First, faculty and institutions must establish and monitor clear guidelines about the roles and expectations of non-tenure track faculty. The experiences of the women in this study showed that treatment and expectations different greatly by department. Disciplinary and human differences will continue to exist. However, institutions can do a better job at ensuring that non-tenure track faculty have the same rights and responsibilities in terms of participation in governance and other academic activities. Second, departments, colleges, and universities must provide opportunities for faculty development and related resources, including internal research support, conference travel money, involvement in colloquia, and access to teaching and grant writing workshops. Third, faculty mentoring programs are crucial. Faculty should be asked whether they wish to be paired or grouped (providing multiple mentors is often very beneficial) with more seasoned non-tenure track faculty and/or tenured faculty. Mentoring programs can help support, socialize, and create access to professional and personal networks. Fourth, non-tenure track faculty should be considered in all

departmental, college, and university award opportunities. Many times, non-tenure track faculty are ineligible for internal awards for teaching, research, and service, as was the case for the faculty participating in this study. Creating ways to recognize non-tenure track faculty for their contributions to the academic enterprise is critical—both in informal, and in the case of awards, formal ways. Moreover, these awards should celebrate faculty accomplishment and not send a message that reinforces the second-class status of non-tenure track faculty. For example, creating a separate award for faculty not on the tenure track *may* send a message that those faculty are not as important.

The preceding recommendations, coupled with others (Harper et al., 2001; Perna, 2001), can begin to improve equity for all non-tenure track faculty, and women non-tenure track faculty in particular. Not only should institutions consider implementing such recommendations, but scholars should also study the impact of such policies. These policy implications, emerging from the findings from this study, provide a deeper understanding of how some non-tenure track women can and do experience their jobs. With this knowledge, I hope that departments, department heads, other faculty, and university policy makers can think more critically about this feminized group of faculty and perhaps construct policies and practices that can open the door as widely as possible for the non-tenure track faculty in their department and their university.

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