Social Science Research on Faculty Workload, Gender and Race


Time is a valuable resource in academic careers. Empirical evidence suggests women faculty spend more time in campus service than men. Yet some studies show no difference when relevant variables are included. The primary source of data for most workload studies is cross-sectional surveys that have several weaknesses. This study investigated campus service inequality and factors that predict it at 1 research university using a novel and more comprehensive source of data - annual faculty reports. The investigation was guided by Kanter’s work on the role of power and representation and Lewis and Simpson’s rereading of Kanter’s work to focus on gender, power, and representation. The authors examined 1,146 records of faculty campus service during 2 years. In both years, women faculty reported more total campus service than men while controlling for race, rank, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), and the critical mass of women in a department. When considering levels of service, women reported higher numbers of service activities at the department and university levels. Women in male-dominated fields tended to have service workloads more like their peers and less like women in non-STEM fields. The article concludes with considerations regarding implications for organizing practices that maintain inequity between men and women in campus service.


This paper investigates the amount of academic service performed by female versus male faculty. We use 2014 data from a large national survey of faculty at more than 140 institutions as well as 2012 data from an online annual performance reporting system for tenured and tenure-track faculty at two campuses of a large public, Midwestern University. We find evidence in both data sources that, on average, women faculty perform significantly more service than men, controlling for rank, race/ethnicity, and field or department. Our analyses suggest that the male–female differential is driven more by internal service—i.e., service to the university, campus, or department—than external service—i.e., service to the local, national, and international communities—although significant heterogeneity exists across field and discipline in the way gender differentials play out.


This report summarizes the key findings of a national survey of college and university faculty conducted by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) at the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) for the 2010–2011 academic year. There were significant gender differences in teaching practices with women faculty more likely to practice student-centered pedagogy. Women were also much less likely than men to use extensive lecturing as an instructional method in their classes (34.1% vs. 54.6%). However, both women and men faculty increased their use of class discussions (88.0% for women and 78.3% for men), cooperative learning (68.8% and 48.5%, respectively), and student presentations (53.8% and 36.9%, respectively) in “all” or “most” of their courses. Gender differences also appear when disciplinary field is taken into account. Both men (69.7%) and women (50.4%) teaching in STEM fields were more likely to use extensive lecturing in all or most of their courses compared to their male (43.7%) and female (27.8%) colleagues in all other fields. The majority of women in all other fields (71.8%) use cooperative learning techniques in all or most of their courses, while 60.3% of women teaching in STEM use cooperative learning in the classroom, a figure that exceeds both men in STEM (40.7%) and men in all other fields (52.6%).

This study compared the work experiences of women faculty in disciplines considered “traditional” for women and those working in “nontraditional” disciplines. “Nontraditional” disciplines were classified as programs where 0-24% of the faculty were women. Data for 140 academic programs were obtained from 1993, 1999, and 2004 NSOPF data from a survey program sponsored by the National Center of Educational Statistics (NCES). Bayesian Network analyses reveal the major differences in the work experience of women faculty in disciplines of various gender compositions are shown in their teaching assignments, time committed to research activities, career total refereed publications, and satisfaction with research support. Overall, women in nontraditional fields spend more time on research, less time on teaching, have more publications, and earned the highest salary among the four groups. However, women still earned lower salaries in comparison to their male colleagues. Across all disciplines, women faculty experience the similar inequity: they are less likely to achieve tenure and to be promoted to higher ranks.


This paper considers theories of women academics’ disproportionate career progression within the profession, and relates them to current workload allocation practices within UK universities. The management of workloads can disadvantage women through a number of interactive and cumulative factors including interruptions in continuity of employment and fractional contracts that exclude or hinder research activity, the tendency to engage in teaching roles thus creating unbalanced work portfolios, the tendency to take on weighty roles such as service, and expectations that research work be conducted after hours at home, a feature that women may find more difficult. Lastly a lack of transparency can allow discrimination to go undetected through the skewed allocation of types of work not strongly associated with promotion. The authors suggest a series of measures that might improve this situation.


This study examined academic faculty job satisfaction by focusing on three different sets of variables: characteristics of the individual, the work context and institutional interactions. Data are from the Survey of Academic Researchers conducted in 2004–2005. Regression analyses revealed faculty members overall spend the majority of their time on research (18.65 hours per week), followed by undergraduate teaching (9.76 hours), and then grant writing (4.28 hours). Men spend an hour and a half more per week on research than do women; by contrast, women spend almost an hour and a half more on undergraduate teaching than men. Those devoting more time to grant writing include the un-tenured, women, and engineers. Faculty men are more satisfied with their jobs than faculty women, with the strongest predictor of job satisfaction being recognized by departmental colleagues for research.


This study explored whether there is a gendered division of labor for faculty in academic science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) at research universities and examined the connections between time allocation and satisfaction for STEM faculty within the context of a critical mass of women in the discipline. Using a weighted sample of 13,884 faculty from the 2004 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF:04), it found a gendered division of labor that is mitigated by a critical mass of women faculty in the discipline. Independent samples T tests were used to explore differences between men and women faculty and between women in disciplines with 15% or higher women faculty (i.e., with critical mass) and women in disciplines without critical mass. Women in disciplines with a critical mass of women allocate their time in ways that are more equivalent to their male colleagues than their counterparts in disciplines with fewer women, with implications for greater equity in productivity and advancement.
This article summarized findings from surveys and focus groups with 350 faculty members at the University of Massachusetts Amherst in 2008–09. On average, male associate professors spent 37 percent of their time on research and 20 percent of their time on service, while women associate professors spent 25 percent of their time on research and 27 percent of their time on service. Similar patterns were found in STEM fields, despite the fact that faculty members in these fields, overall, have lower teaching loads and therefore more time to spend on research. Results indicate that women are less likely to be promoted than men, and when they are promoted, the process takes longer. Focus-group participants directly related the pressure on associate professors to do service and the imbalance of service to difficulties in attaining promotion.

This article focused on faculty members’ allocation of time to teaching and research, conceptualizing these—and the mismatch between preferred and actual time allocations—as examples of gender inequality in academic employment. Data were obtained from the 1999 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty. Results indicate women faculty prefer to spend a greater percentage of their time on teaching, while men prefer to spend more time on research, although these preferences are themselves constrained; women faculty members also spend a greater percentage of their workweek on teaching and a smaller percentage on research than men, which cannot be explained by preferences or educational and institutional attributes; and women faculty members have larger time allocation mismatches than men—that is, their actual time allocations to both teaching and research diverge more from their preferred time allocations than those of men. The author concludes that these findings shed light on how gender inequality is both produced and maintained in this aspect of academic employment and have implications for job satisfaction, productivity, and the recruitment and retention of current and future faculty members, especially women.

This study investigated the at-work allocation of time among teaching, research, grant writing and service by science and engineering faculty at 150 top research universities, and its relation to tenure and promotion. The data for this study come from the 2004-2005 National Science Foundation/Department of Energy Survey of Academic Researchers. Regression analyses indicate that tenure and promotion do affect the allocation of time, with specific trade-offs related to particular career paths. Full professors that spend increasing time on service do so at the expense of teaching and research, while longer-term associate professors who have not been promoted to full professor spend significantly more time teaching at the expense of research time. Additionally, the results suggest that women, on average, allocate more hours to university service and less time to research than do men.

This article was based on the findings of a qualitative study of sixteen faculty of color at a private research university. While engagement in service activities tends to negatively impact the promotion and retention of faculty of color, the author argues that it actually may set the stage for a critical agency that resists and redefines academic structures that hinder faculty success. The majority of faculty interviewed viewed race-related service as an opportunity to represent and advance the interests of a “traditionally-subordinated group”. Examples include participation on institutional committees that focus on retention, affirmative action, teacher training and engagement in the community. Interviews also revealed a preference for linking service with teaching and research in order to engage in a form of activism and bring about social justice. The author concludes by stating that faculty of color, in particular, may engage in service to promote the success of racial minorities in the academy and elsewhere.
**Why? Differences in Who Gets Asked to Do What and Who Volunteers**


Guided by research on gendered organizations and faculty careers, we examined gender differences in how research university faculty spend their work time. We used time-diary methods to understand faculty work activities at a microlevel of detail, as recorded by faculty themselves over 4 weeks. We also explored workplace interactions that shape faculty workload. Similar to past studies, we found women faculty spending more time on campus service, student advising, and teaching-related activities and men spending more time on research. We also found that women received more new work requests than men and that men and women received different kinds of work requests. We consider implications for future research and the career advancement of women faculty in research universities.

**O'Meara, K. (2016).** Whoe problem is it? Gender differences in faculty thinking about campus service. *Teachers College Record, 118*(080306), 1-38.

**Background/Context:** Empirical evidence suggests women faculty spend more time in campus service than men, which perpetuates inequality between men and women because research is valued more than service in academic reward systems, especially at research universities. **Purpose/Focus of Study:** In this study I apply insights from research on gender inequality to examine whether women and men faculty at a research university were thinking about their campus service differently. I add to the literature by (1) making faculty thinking about campus service visible, (2) examining how this thinking is constrained by gender, and the gendered nature of organizations, and (3) revealing how individualistic and cosmopolitan orientations, and communal and local orientations appear together in faculty thinking about campus service. **Research Design:** My research assistants and I conducted 60–75 minute-long, semi-structured interviews with 88 faculty including 34 men and 54 women on their work environment experiences. Interview questions focused on choices that faculty had made to emphasize different kinds of work (teaching, research, service), balance work priorities, and succeed. **Findings/Results:** Overall, more women framed campus service in communal terms and expressed local orientations toward campus service; more men positioned service as a campus problem, and noted their own interests to avoid or minimize involvement in campus service so as not to hurt their career. In a smaller group of cases, (e.g., four men and five women) the faculty member expressed the dominant pattern for the other gender; however, even in these cases participants provided examples of the dominant pattern for their gender as well. In all cases, women and men were influenced by gendered ways of thinking about work, and gendered organizational practices that permeated their socialization and work environments. **Conclusions/Recommendations:** Findings suggest that interventions are needed to affect thinking about campus service within university environments, as thinking shapes gendered divisions of labor. Sharing campus service data transparently, developing department consensus about appropriate levels of service contributions, and developing a sense of collective ownership for academic programs are examples of organizing practices that could generate change toward more gender neutral divisions of labor. Addressing the complex issue of inequality in campus service is not only about counting the numbers of service activities, although this is important. It is also critical to understand how faculty may be approaching the issue, the forces shaping their thinking, and the consequences of their thinking for individual careers and the future of the academic community.


This study examined the dual problems of “women don’t ask” and “women don’t say no” in the academic profession. Data were drawn from a 2009 APSA survey of 1,399 faculty members of US political science departments. Findings regarding gender and bargaining patterns goes against the conventional wisdom given that women were more likely to ask for resources than men when considering most categories of bargaining issues. Empirically derived results also indicate that women were asked to provide more service, and that they agree to serve more frequently, than men. Additionally, the service women tended to provide is more typically “token” service, as women are less likely to be asked by their colleagues to serve as department chair, to chair committees, or to lead academic programs.

Gender differences in task allocations may sustain vertical gender segregation in labor markets. We examine the allocation of a task that everyone prefers be completed by someone else (writing a report, serving on a committee, etc.) and find evidence that women, more than men, volunteer, are asked to volunteer, and accept requests to volunteer for such tasks. Beliefs that women, more than men, say yes to tasks with low promotability appear as an important driver of these differences. If women hold tasks that are less promotable than those held by men, then women will progress more slowly in organizations.

To what end? Consequences


This study examined the connections among race, gender, sources of stress, and productivity in the areas of research, teaching, and service for 21,840 full-time, undergraduate faculty across 411 four-year institutions. Data was obtained from the Higher Education Research Institute’s (HERI) 2010–2011 Faculty Survey. Multilevel modeling revealed that stress due to discrimination had a negative impact on research productivity for faculty of color. Stress due to family obligations however, was found to significantly and positively impact faculty’s adoption of student-centered teaching practices and participation in civic-minded activities. When other variables in the model were controlled for, female faculty tended to incorporate student-centered practices into their teaching with significantly greater regularity than their male counterparts—nearly a quarter of a standard deviation higher. The authors conclude that as faculty experienced greater stress due to changes in work responsibilities and family obligations, they seemed to rise to the challenge with regard to their use of evidence-based teaching practices in their classrooms.


This selection of summary tables from COACHE survey results was prepared for the University of California ADVANCE PAID roundtable. The tables display the mean and frequency distributions of selected dimensions in faculty workplace climate by discipline, race/ethnicity, and gender. Overall, women faculty were more dissatisfied than men with equitability of teaching workload distribution (women 34% dissatisfied, versus 26% of men) and equitability of committee assignments distribution (41% of women dissatisfied, 28% of men). In STEM fields in particular, tenure track/tenured women faculty members, across all racial demographics, expressed less satisfaction compared to men on equitability of teaching workload distribution and equitability of committee assignment distribution committees, particularly those dealing with diversity. These roles can lead African American faculty to be over-taxed and feel stressed.


This report summarizes the key findings of a national survey of college and university faculty conducted by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) at the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) for the 2010–2011 academic year. Analyses indicate that women faculty are generally experiencing more work-related stress than their male colleagues. More women than men reported the tenure review and promotion process as a source of stress (65.3% vs. 52.8%), and women were also significantly more likely than men to report changes in work responsibilities as a prevalent source of stress in the last two years (58.4% vs. 43.8%). Women faculty were also twice as likely as men (40.0% vs. 20.2%) to report subtle discrimination (e.g., prejudice, racism, sexism) as a source of stress.

A systematic review of the literature was conducted to evaluate the extent of burnout for university teaching staff and reveal predictive variables that may explain this experience. Six databases were searched for relevant, peer-reviewed empirical papers, and twelve papers met the criteria and were included in the review. The review revealed that staff exposure to high numbers of students strongly predicts the experience of burnout. Other predictive variables included gender with higher depersonalization scores found in male teachers and female teachers typically scoring higher on the emotional exhaustion dimension. Age also demonstrated an association, with younger staff appearing more vulnerable to emotional exhaustion. Burnout in university teachers was comparable with other service sector employees such as school teachers and healthcare professionals.


This study examined how faculty women on one campus experience stress in their work lives. Quantitative and qualitative data about gender and stress, which was a subset of extensive data collection on other aspects of faculty work life and campus climate issues from a large public research university, were analyzed using the constant-comparative method. Results indicate females were far more likely than their male counterparts to indicate that teaching loads, students, publishing/research demands, the review and promotion process, and committee work were stress-producing.


This study applies Kalleberg’s framework to better understand the effects of diverse demographic faculty characteristics, and the contextual effects of academic disciplines, on dimensions of job satisfaction. Using data from the 1999 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty the authors utilized hierarchical linear modeling techniques to examine the variables. Findings indicate that women are consistently less satisfied than their male colleagues and that the effect of being female varies by discipline on levels of job satisfaction. Additionally, race/ethnicity was found to have mixed effects on dimensions of job satisfaction, but these effects tend to be constant across discipline. In terms of the convenience dimension of job satisfaction, defined as the time available to advise students, prepare for class, keep current in the field, and work load, women reported lower levels of satisfaction than their male peers. This finding supports previous research which has found women shoulder a greater workload in terms of advising and other caretaking roles (Aguirre 2000; Turner 2002) as well as play the part of “academic mommies” (Ropers-Huilman 2000). In contrast to previous research however, African American faculty were found to be more satisfied with the convenience dimension of job satisfaction than their White colleagues.


This article argues that there is dearth of recent literature on the struggles of women academics, even though the underlying structures and ideologies that work to the disadvantage of women in academe continue to exert a strong impact. The results of two qualitative studies conducted by the authors were examined to highlight the problems that still persist. Specifically, the ‘old’ norms that associate women with family and childcare are still operating in a way that makes it difficult to be both a mother and a faculty member. The authors conclude that while women are no longer expected to interrupt their careers and stay at home when children are young, they seem unsettled and exhausted, trying to keep up high academic standards and care for children. Women are also experiencing high levels of stress and illness as a result of their work conditions. Women who were members of a minority group felt they faced additional pressures related to ‘cultural taxation’- extra work that is expected of these academics in trying to mentor and support minority students and themselves serves as a symbol of achievement.
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