The experience of being a junior minority female faculty member
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Abstract

Much has been written about the trials and tribulations of junior tenure-track faculty; much has also been written about the difficulties faced by women and minority faculty. However, there is very little research about the experiences of minority women faculty who are also tenure-earning, but untenured; what little research does exist tends to focus on African-American females. This gap in the literature is problematic given the persistent inability of the academy to retain and promote significant numbers of minority women to the senior ranks. Even more troubling, some researchers hypothesize that being a women, being a minority and being a junior faculty member interacts synergistically—and destructively.

This research uses personal narrative analysis to identify and explore issues of being a junior minority female faculty on the tenure track at an American university. Common themes, particularly those related to marginalization and alienation, are extracted from the narratives and discussed in detail. This research serves as an exploratory study conducted in advance of larger research project.

Introduction

According to the 2010 *Almanac of Higher Education* (published by the *Chronicle of Higher Education*), in Fall 2007 there were 703,463 faculty members of all ranks, both tenured/tenure-earning and non-tenure-earning. Of that number only 119,906 (17%) were minority faculty; among the minority faculty, 53,661 (7.6%) were Asian, 37,930 (5.4%) were black, 24,975 (3.55%) were Hispanic and 3340 (.47%) were Native American. Among senior tenured faculty (Associate Professor and Professor) the numbers are even bleaker; of the 317,087 faculty at those ranks, 23,321 (7.35%) were Asian, 13,694 (4.3%) were black, 8842 (2.8%) were Hispanic and a mere 1132 (.35%) were Native American. Collectively, tenured, senior minority faculty (not including foreign nationals) comprise a paltry 6.68% (46,989) of the professoriate. Without exception, men outnumber women in every racial category in the senior ranks; minority women account for only 15,347 senior, tenured faculty, which equals only 4.8% of the senior faculty and an abysmal 2.18% of the professoriate (*Almanac* 2010).

For minority women who are tenure-earning (Assistant Professors), these numbers are daunting, and the numbers at their own rank are not encouraging either. In Fall 2007 there were 168,508 assistant professors, 79,767 (47.3%) of them women. Of those 79,767 women, 7253 (9.1%) were Asian, 6035 (7.6%) were black, 3064 (3.8%) were Hispanic and only 381 (.48%) were Native American (A*lmanac* 2010). Not only do minority women who are tenure-earning

have few contemporaries with whom to form friendships and support networks, there are even fewer senior minority women faculty to serve as professional exemplars, mentors or advisors.

This lack of senior faculty who are minority females has been well documented in recent years through national surveys such as the National Survey of Post-Secondary Faculty (NSOPF) in 1988, 1993, 1999 and 2004 and the Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education (COACHE) Surveys. Trends over the last 20 years show that women persistently: earn less than men; hold more part-time and non-tenure-earning jobs; are less likely to be tenured and less clear about tenure and promotion criteria; spend more time on teaching and service, and less time on research; are less satisfied with their departments and their institutions; and are more likely to be employed at teaching institutions, particularly community colleges (Nettles, et. al. 2000; Bradburn, Sikora and Zimbler 2002; Cataldi, et. al. 2005; Trower and Gallagher 2008; COACHE 2008; Lee 2001; Chait 2002; Aguirre 2000; Glazer-Raymo 1999). Similar discrepancies also persist for minority faculty, including: lower salaries than white faculty; being less likely to be senior faculty and less likely to be tenured; less clarity about tenure and promotion criteria; spending more time on service activities (except Asian faculty); being less satisfied with the climate in their department and the collegiality of their fellow faculty members; and being more likely to work at a community college (Nettles, et. al. 2000; Bradburn, Sikora and Zimbler 2002; Cataldi, et. al. 2005; Trower and Gallagher 2008; COACHE 2008; Lee 2001; Aguirre 2000).

In 1992, only 15% of women in the professoriate held the rank of full professor compared to 39% of male faculty (Nettles, et. al. 2000); in 2007 the percentage of women in academe who had achieved the rank of full professor was only 15.6%, while the percentage of men who held that rank was 31.2% (*Almanac* 2010)—still double the percentage of women. For black faculty, 21% held the rank of full professor in 1992 (Nettles, et. al. 2000); by 2007 that percentage had slipped to 15.4% (*Almanac* 2010).

It would seem we still lack either the information or the will—or both—to remediate the problem of poor minority female faculty retention effectively. The information presented above, while meticulously researched and excruciatingly descriptive, tell us *what* the current faculty situation is, without telling us *why* or *how* it came to be that way. While women and minorities have historically been excluded from the academy, over the last half-century or so there have been numerous, intensive policy and structural interventions (i.e., Civil Rights, Title IX, Affirmative Action). Perhaps we would be better served examining this problem from the faculty's perspective rather than the institution's; this research project seeks to do just that.

Literature Review

Research on women in higher education, including white women
There is a growing body of research on the experience of women in academia, though it is not as robust it could be. Women face multiple obstacles in their pursuit of an academic career. In general, women in academia are less likely to be tenured or to be senior faculty than men, less

likely to earn the same salary as men in a comparable position and they are less likely to work at a research university (Curtis 2005; West and Curtis 2006; Cooper 2009; Glazer-Raymo 1999). They spend a disproportionate amount of their time in teaching, advising and service activities, which negatively impacts research productivity; tenure dimensions are less clear for women than for men and the expectations of faculty work are less reasonable for women than for men (Ward and Wolf-Wendel 2004; Johnsrud and Des Jarlais 1994; Tierney and Bensimon 1996; Philipsen 2008; Glazer-Raymo 1999; Lie and O'Leary 1990).

The difficulty with tenure seems to be symptomatic of a larger lack of institutional support for women, particularly with respect to familial responsibilities, and leads to the perception, by women, of the academy as a much less welcoming institution to them than it is to men; this in turn leads to a lower level of satisfaction with work/life balance than men (Ward and Wolf-Wendel 2004; West and Curtis 2006; Finkel and Olswang 1994; Gibson 2006; June 2010; Tierney and Bensimon 1996; Aguirre 2000; Philipsen 2008; Glazer-Raymo 1999; Sandler and Hall 1986).

Research on minorities in higher education, including men
There is also a growing body of research on racial/ethnic minorities in academia, though this body of literature disproportionately represents the African-American experience. For minorities in higher education, they tend to find tenure criteria unclear, inappropriate and/or unrealistic (Williams and Williams 2006; Tierney and Bensimon 1996; Aguirre 2000; Moody 2004; Justin, et. al. 1994); they are typically dissatisfied with the relative weights assigned to research, teaching and service; their research is devalued, particularly for being less rigorous and less academic than mainstream research; and minority scholars tend to be much less convinced that tenure decisions are based on professional performance than white faculty (June 2008; Moody 2004).

Also, minority faculty are burdened with more service activities and committee appointments, largely because it is assumed they are experts on culture and cultural differences; they continue to perceive both individual and institutional racism, particularly when they perceive negative reactions to their being an affirmative action hire (Singh, et. al. 1995; Luna 2000; Baez 1998; Moody 2004); they are likely to be lower paid, to be untenured and to be junior or adjunct faculty; they perceive too few programs and/or policies to support minority retention and promotion (Williams and Williams 2006; Moody 2004); and overall are less satisfied with the academic climate than white faculty (Singh, et. al. 1995; Tierney and Bensimon 1996; Aguirre 2000).

Research on women and minorities, though not necessarily minority women, in higher education
Because there is a fair amount of overlap between the challenges faced by women and minorities in academia, as evidenced in the paragraphs above, there has been some work done on the shared experiences of women and minorities in higher education. Typically, women and minorities both experience difficulties with holding joint appointments, such as a joint appointment in the

anthropology and women's studies departments, that require them to respond to multiple demands from multiple masters (Johnsrud and Des Jarlais 1994; Menges and Exum 1983; Tierney and Bensimon 1996); they share a frustration with the dominance of white male definitions of scholarship in higher education, particularly the rationalist paradigm; their research is criticized and questioned (Menges and Exum 1983); they have disproportionately high teaching and service loads; they experience difficulty in gaining recognition for their work; and they lack clarity on the tenure process and procedures (Erickson and Rodriguez 1999; Smith 2007; Phillips 2002; Olsen, Maple and Stage 1995; Tierney and Bensimon 1996; Chait 2002; Aguirre 2000).

Furthermore, they are stymied by a lack of mentoring and support networks and an inability to penetrate the "good ole boys" networks on campus (Menges and Exum 1983; Tierney and Bensimon 1996), as well as the attitude that recruitment and hiring are sufficient to satisfy affirmative action—they are particularly frustrated with the belief that support and retention are not necessary for their success (Diggs, et. al. 2009). They are subject to a host of exclusions, including salary and research support exclusions, that leave them feeling lonely and isolated on campus (Johnsrud and Des Jarlais 1994; Curtis 2005), and they have difficulty adapting to university life; they frequently experience academia as unwelcoming and chilly (Johnsrud and Des Jarlais 1994; Menges and Exum 1983; Erickson and Rodriguez 1999; Phillips 2002; Tierney and Bensimon 1996; Aguirre 2000).

Research on minority women
The body of research that focuses on minority women is the scantest of all, and is even more dominated by research on African-Americans than is the research on minority faculty in general. Nonetheless, there are important aspects of being both a woman and a minority that can be extracted from the small body of work. Minority women in academia tend to overpopulate the lower academic ranks; they experience "double discrimination" and "tokenism" as well as the feeling that they owe their allegiance to two different subgroups (Fox ????; Wyche and Graves 1992; Luna 2000; Lie and O'Leary 1990; Sandler and Hall 1986); they perceive differential and more negative treatment by their colleagues and consequently experience a greater sense of isolation on campus, including minimal opportunities to collaborate with other faculty and a lack of support networks and mentoring opportunities (Fox ????; Alexander-Snow and Johnson 1998; Skachkova 2007; Turner 2002; Thomas and Hollenshead 2001; Vargas 2002; Lie and O'Leary 1990; Sandler and Hall 1986; Welch 1992). They lack knowledge about tenure requirements, their research is segregated and devalued, they are overburdened with teaching and advising responsibilities, they feel their performance evaluations are negatively impacted by racial and gender stereotypes, and they are excluded from administration and leadership positions (Alexander-Snow and Johnson 1998; Skachkova 2007; Aguirre 2000; Battle and Doswell 2004; Sandler and Hall 1986). The institution does not understand the importance of familial structure and responsibilities in their lives, and they frequently feel torn between their responsibilities to their families, their communities and their careers (Skachkova 2007; Turner 2002).

Cross-Cutting Themes
There were five themes distilled from the literature review on women and minorities, and it was these five themes that provided the organizational framework for the questionnaire used as the writing prompt for the personal narrative analyses. First, culture is of critical importance for minority faculty; they are frequently expected to be experts on their own culture, they are frequently expected to engage in substantial culturally-related service activities, but their research on culture and cultural ways of knowing is often discounted and/or unduly criticized. Second, gender continues to loom large in the professional lives of women academicians. In particular, women routinely find themselves overburdened with a disproportionately heavy teaching and/or service load, their research on gender is usually subjected to criticisms similar to minority research and they feel unsupported by institutional policies, particularly those relating to leave policies and family obligations.

Third, both women and minorities experience the institution as unwelcoming, both at the university and the department level. It is not uncommon for women and/or minorities to be the only member of their gender or ethnic group in the department, there are minimal opportunities for collaboration with other faculty and the sense of isolation is particularly acute in the absence of networking opportunities or mentoring programs. Furthermore, many women and minorities have reported negative responses to their presence as an "affirmative action hire." Fourth, tenure is problematic for most faculty, but it is especially troublesome for women and minority faculty; tenure and promotion criteria and procedures are unclear, research activity is compromised by both heavy teaching/service loads and discounting gender or minority research and both women and minorities perceive they receive less administrative support for research than do majority male faculty.

Fifth and finally, for minority women in particular, there is the problem of tokenism, of people believing you were hired because you fill diversity requirements for both minorities and women, as well as the sense of "double discrimination" that accompanies it. Minority women can feel torn between their allegiance to women's issues and the allegiance to minority issues. They tend to experience greater isolation on campus than either white women or minority men and they frequently experience academia as being more unwelcoming and less supportive than either white women or minority men do.

Methodology
A small program, comprised of three minority women within a college of education at a university in the southeastern United States, was identified for this exploratory study. None of the women were tenured at the time the research was conducted; two women held the rank of assistant professor and the third held the rank of associate professor. All three women are referred to by pseudonyms in this article.

All three respondents were given a questionnaire and instructed to write their responses to the questions; they were encouraged to be as expansive and descriptive as possible with their responses, though they had the option to write as much or as little as they liked and could choose not to answer any question(s) they found uncomfortable. The questions were purposively written

as complex interrogatives, designed to let the respondent agree or disagree with a finding from the literature, and then explain how or why they responded as they did.

The personal narratives were analyzed using feminist content analysis. The written documents were treated as cultural artifacts used to study the women as individuals as well as to study the experiences of their lives in relation to their race, gender and profession (Reinharz 1992, Riessman 1993). Once the written narratives were analyzed and themes extracted from them, the results were presented to the respondents for corroboration as well as to allow the respondents the opportunity to clarify or supplement previously raised points. Any corrections, modifications or points of clarification that the respondents submitted were incorporated into this paper.

The questionnaire grouped questions into five categories: culture, gender, institution, tenure (with subsections for teaching, research and service) and junior minority female faculty. The complete questionnaire is included as Appendix A.

Results

Culture

All three women stated that their natal culture does not match academic culture. In describing how their cultures differed, two of the three respondents were very particular about the fact that their idea of respect differs greatly from the academy's. Diana stated, "I do not recognize anything that looks like respect (willingness to yield, or at least to listen; absence of selfishness; putting the group before yourself)," and Maria stated, "My culture emphasizes cooperation, respect, knowing your place. I have found that in order to be successful in the academy one must applaud and publicize ones' own behavior, discount the Others (my opinion or knowledge is more important or relevant than that of others)." While all three women understand respect a bit differently, the differences between their cultures' notions of respect are miniscule compared to how their cultures differ from academic culture.

Furthermore, all three women agreed that they experienced isolation at work, but they felt isolated for different reasons. Laura felt isolated because "My department reflects little interest in my research and a senior faculty, focused on their own pursuits unmindful of their apathy as impacting my professional development. I thought I was coming into a department that would embrace the energy and optimism most junior faculty brings to a program. Instead I have met indifference, which at times presents itself as a smug arrogance." Diana stated,

> I absolutely feel isolated at work. Part of the isolation is of my own making—I am a very introverted person who needs quiet and space…lots of quiet and space—part of it is that I am the newest person in a very small program that is peripheral to my college and my university, but the saddest part is that I have not found any other Native Americans on campus yet! I know there must be at least a

few somewhere, but they are not close or even particularly visible at my university.

Maria also experienced isolation, but

> [t]he isolation I experience is out of choice. I am a private person who has a very extrovert personality at work but in reality I am an introvert who enjoys total solitude or an ideal group of 2! When it comes to the academy part of my isolation is related to issues of trust. Trusting involves sharing with people at some intimate levels. I have seen so much back-stabbing that I am reluctant to share my very heart. I am paranoid? No, I have seen how personal or intimate info is used against people. Sad.

Even though some of their isolation is self-imposed, all three women experienced some degree of mismatch between their needs as an individual and institutional resources capable of meeting those needs.

The three women did not agree, however, on whether or not the differences between their cultures and the academy's were a liability. Laura, who felt her culture was a liability, stated, *"Being an African American is more of a liability. My culture is not valued, and therefore my contributions are negligible if at all acknowledged. I often feel isolated, alienated, and an 'outsider.'"* Maria, who did not believe her culture was a liability, stated, *"I have not thought of my culture as a liability. I have learned to live in both cultures and at this point in my career I think I have been successful at this type of cultural or organizational biculturalism."* And Diana, who simply saw difference without attaching value to it, stated, *"I do not think my culture has been an asset or a liability. I recognize that I am frequently out of step with most of my colleagues—I typically think of it as 'square peg, round hole'—but that is not to say that the lack of fit is good or bad, that my culture is a help or a hindrance. It is just different."* This response is intriguing, given the trend described in the literature for cultural dissonance to be perceived as a liability, and especially given that the two people who do not see their culture as a liability are the two people who felt compelled to address the lack of respect (as they understand respect) that they perceive in the academy.

The women also did not agree on whether or not they were expected to be a model minority/expert on their culture. Maria, who felt she was expected to be an expert on her culture, stated,

> In the early 70s and 80s I was expected (and indeed became) an expert in my culture. This was accentuated by the fact that I lived in communities where there were not too many educated people of my culture. Most communities were identified by having low rates of education. Thus, I was a big fish in a small pond. I became well known for the 'expertise' I had on my culture. I was able to build a career partly based on this knowledge for the first 10-15 years of my career.

Diana, who frequently encountered more personal curiosity than professional expectation, stated, "There is not an explicit, voiced expectation that I be an expert on Native Americans, but I get questions about what tribe I am from and what it is like to be Native American all the time. I get more questions from students than from co-workers, but most people express some curiosity

about my ethnicity." Laura, in response to the question on expertise and expectation to be a model minority, simply stated, *"no."* It is interesting to note that the younger faculty do not perceive any overt expectation to capitalize on their ethnicity—or to allow the institution to capitalize on their ethnicity—but Diana, who as a Native American is a member of the smallest racial/ethnic group in academia, does deal with a fair amount of curiosity from students and co-workers alike.

Gender

The three faculty members were in much greater agreement about gendered experiences and expectations than they were about cultural ones. All three agreed that there is a lack of institutional support for family responsibilities. Laura, who is married and has two young children, stated,

> As an assistant faculty member, with a young family, working in a community where women have chosen to not have a family or joined the professoriate after their children were grown or made their work a priority over that of their family, there is little support. In fact there is an underlying resentment toward faculty such as myself who wish to be academic, wife, and mother. In such an environment meetings and events are scheduled during my family time creating conflicts in which I must choose.

Maria, who is also married and has a teenage daughter, stated,

> Yes, as a young mother I experienced the institution as totally oblivious to my needs (breastfeeding schedule, day care, etc). But I also hesitated to verbalize my needs as a mom because I internalized the version of men as academicians. I wanted not to be perceived as needing things that men did not need. Today in retrospect I see how mistaken and how much BS I believed in!

Diana, who is single and childless, stated, "*I do sense a lack of support, but through problems I have seen co-workers experience—I myself have not had any issues at this institution.*"

Furthermore, all three agreed that they do not maintain a healthy work/life balance, that work is given first priority and that their needs as individuals come last. Diana stated,

> Absolutely not [I do not have a healthy work/life balance]. This job has taken over most of my life. I do not socialize with many people outside of work—and those I do socialize with I know from work—I rarely engage in any activity that is not work-related and I almost never interact with my family and friends back home unless it is to address some sort of problem or emergency.

Laura, whose experiences were similar, stated, *"No I do not have a healthy balance between life and work. I get on average 4-5 hours of rest a night. I neglect my personal life and time with my husband and children (in that order)."* Maria also did not claim to have a healthy work/life balance, but this lack of balance was less problematic for her; she stated,

> No, I have never maintained a balance. I am a workaholic. Most of my psychological needs are met by my definition as a worker. Pitiful! I have discussed this issue with therapists as well as my husband. The latter has always been a gentleman and has allowed me to be a replica of 'men of the 50s.' That is,

he has dedicated most of his time to the care of our child while I have developed a successful career.

It should be noted that even though Maria self-identifies as a workaholic she seems uncomfortable, or at best undecided, about that aspect of herself.

Finally, all three agreed that they are not subjected to gendered expectations, but two of the three discussed keeping a low profile or simply disregarding expectations of them as junior faculty, not as women. Maria stated, *"Back when I was an assistant professor I think I kept a low profile. As I gained more confidence in my role as a faculty and sensed the support of my colleagues I became more assertive about my career."* Diana stated,

> Most of the gendered norms I have noticed relate to men acting like men. I am sure there are expectations of how I should act as a woman (be caring, be the peacemaker, let the senior faculty—who happen to be almost all men—take the lead, etc.), but for the most part I refuse to register them…my home culture is matriarchal, and as an elder for my generation I am accustomed to being listened to and deferred to; I know there is not a snowball's chance in Hades of that happening here, so most of the time I simply disengage.

Institution

The level of agreement on questions of institutional and departmental culture was astounding, even greater than the level of agreement on gender issues. All three respondents were emphatic about the lack of support and the unwelcoming climate at the institutional and departmental level. Laura described the institutional climate best: *"On the surface the institutional climate is welcoming with well intentioned persons; however, as you begin to become acculturated to the institutional and collegial cultures there are underlying currents of 'denial' about policies and procedures, structures as affecting performance."* Diana described the institutional culture as a clash over shifting institutional priorities, with faculty—particularly junior faculty—caught in the crossfire:

> This university used to be a teaching institution and is transitioning to a research institution, but the administration wants the recognition and prestige of a research institution while maintaining the level of central administration control typical of a teaching institution. It is unsustainable and fairly hostile to faculty in general— and when they bring in new faculty who were trained at research institutions and expect to behave like faculty at a research institution, the clashes can be pretty fierce. And the expectations of faculty—the teaching load of a teaching institution and the research load of a research institution—is neither realistic nor sustainable.

Maria went on to describe the departmental culture *"There is not a climate in my department. If [there is] any climate it is one of confusion, chaos, change, complete anomy! It is one that promotes the preservation of the individual. Well, I guess this is sort of a culture…the worst type?"*

The respondents were equally agreed and adamant about the lack of socialization, integration and support at both the institutional and department levels. Diana, who wrote in a

much more conversational and informal style than the other two respondents, described her introduction to the institution: *"I attended the first day of a three day orientation (the last two days were cancelled because of bad weather) and I have my friend from a previous university who helps me out as needed. That's it!"* and the department: *"I was introduced to the faculty at the start-of-the-semester meeting. Does that count? I know the faculty in educational studies (whose offices are in the same hall as mine) better than I know the faculty in my own department, with the exception of the other two women in my program."* Laura came to her faculty position from an administrative position within the same university and did not face many of the new-hire issues common to new faculty. Maria made the choice not to participate in any introductory or orientation activities because *"This is my fifth institution. I pretty much do not participate in any socialization meetings. I went to a couple of them and found them too basic to where I was in my career."*

All three women were also agreed on the lack of mentoring and faculty development at their institution. When asked about their support network, all three stated very clearly—and very succinctly—that their support network does *not* come from their department and their most valued colleagues are outside their current university. When asked if they have a mentor, Diana responded *"No. I have a friend that I consider a mentor, but I do not participate in any sort of faculty mentoring program."* Maria and Laura both stated they had faculty mentors. Laura's faculty mentors came from within the university: *"My mentors are senior level successful faculty and administrators who can provide me with support for negotiating the political process of the university."* Maria's faculty mentors were outside the university: *"I have 2 or 3 mentors. One is a white male and the other two are white women."*

The one point of dissent on institutional culture dealt with discrimination. In response to the question about "double discrimination" (being discriminated against for being both a woman and a minority), only Laura answered with an unequivocal yes: *"Yes, yes. I also believe I have suffered age discrimination. And as such have been treated differently."* Diana did not feel as though she had suffered *more* discrimination for being a minority female, though she did perceive differential treatment: *"I do not feel like I suffer from double discrimination for being both a woman and a minority, though I am treated differently than white women and minority men."* Maria did not perceive discrimination as much as *"...the present environment is full with macro and micro aggressions!"* When asked about backlash from being an "affirmative action hire," it was again Laura who perceived the strongest negative reaction.

> …the provost has set aside resources for diversity hires. This is the opportunity for departments to identify faculty of color who have promise for success. Our department has historically refused to have diversity hires, and actually has prided themselves on not having diversity hires. Recently, my line was made a diversity hire line. For the most part all has been well, except in this time of budget cuts. The Dean announced diversity hires as an expensive drain on the college budget. This created an icy climate, now exacerbating the already tenuous relations within the department. Not only was I not wanted, but also I am now taking away resources.

Diana noted the same faculty behavior toward diversity hires, but did not internalize the response as Laura did.

> There is absolutely backlash, especially with the current budget crisis in Florida. The only new tenure-track hires for the last two or three years in the college have been "diversity" hires—minority faculty that the provost supports for their first three years and who are intended to increase the diversity of the university. At the start-of-the-year meeting this year the dean was discussing budget issues and how much money the college would have to cut from its budget, and she singled out the diversity hires, stating that the college would need additional funds to pay for those faculty when they transitioned from the provost's payroll to the college's. I noticed in a meeting a few weeks ago that the dollar amount the college needs had fallen from the August meeting—it would seem that at least one diversity hire has decided to leave.

> Having said that, I do not feel like I am a token on this campus—the administration is making a campus-wide effort to increase the diversity of the whole faculty, across as many academic units as possible. And fortunately, I am not the only minority woman in my department though I am the only Native American.

Maria was the only faculty member who did not perceive any backlash: *"No. I have always been very upfront on being an affirmative action hire. Proud of it!"*

Tenure

The three women were asked to respond to questions about the tenure process in general; they were also asked to respond to specific questions about perceptions of their teaching, research and service. All three agreed that the tenure process and the criteria for promotion and tenure are problematic at best. Two of the three respondents went on to state that the administration was as confusing and contradictory with their directives regarding tenure as were the policies and procedures faculty are expected to follow. Diana described the process thusly:

> The tenure and promotion requirements could not be any more confusing if they tried! I have a 20-page rubric I fill out every January (and the idea of reducing tenure evaluation to a rubric is insulting enough), though what I am expected to report to my department on that form bears minimal resemblance to the activities I am asked to engage in on behalf of the university; neither the form nor my activities matches what the dean has stated she wants; and what the provost has indicated is important to him is just one more set of unrelated and confusing criteria I have to contend with. At times I wonder if a coin toss to decide tenure would not be more sensible—it would certainly be less anxiety-ridden!

Additionally, all three women agreed that the relative weights assigned to teaching, research and service were unsatisfactory and unrealistic; in particular they were frustrated with the heavy teaching load. Maria stated, *"This is a teaching institution which would like to become a research place without understanding what the big teaching load does to research."* Diana described this phenomenon in a bit more detail. *"... I am contracted to spend 75% of my time*

teaching, but I am evaluated as though I should spend 75% of my time on research. The 'voluntary' summer teaching assignments are also frustrating."

Finally, all three women agreed that networking and collaborating opportunities did not exist beyond what they had created for themselves. Laura stated, *"There are collaboration opportunities with junior faculty such as myself. Collaborative opportunities are non-existent with senior faculty."*

The three respondents were sharply divided, however, in their evaluation of teaching and the classroom climate. Laura felt alienated from the classroom:

> …students question my expertise and knowledge. I have had students ask my age and older students have asked to review my CV. When I tell other faculty, particularly senior faculty of color, they do not reflect surprise. Rather many will recount their own stories about the challenges in the academy as rarely just learning and instruction. It is always something much more. Additionally, the courses I teach reflect multicultural perspectives and challenge understandings about self, and other cultures, and their own cultural orientations. I am having to find common ground with students in a way that faculty of the dominant culture do not have to establish for credibility. The interesting phenomenon are my student evaluation, in which students reflect the classroom climate as warm towards them; however, I find the classroom climate to be at times hostile, confrontational, and disrespectful of me.

Maria, however, had her classroom firmly under control; she stated, *"I am too old for this game. My students know I will not put up with this lack of respect…I am very satisfied with my classroom. I create the environment and I control it…from my perspective it is great. Evaluations from students support this statement."* Diana, meanwhile, greatly enjoyed sharing the classroom with her students:

> No, my students do not challenge me in class! We have a great time! I tell my students up front that I share the classroom with them, that they are expected to come in prepared, not only with the assigned reading completed, but prepared with their histories, their experiences and their stories; we all learn from each other, and so far the students have enjoyed that very much. I hope they have learned as much from each other as I have learned from them…My classroom is collegial, thoughtful and respectful. And we enjoy each other's company!

The respondents were asked if they engaged in research on women and if so, did they feel it was disproportionately scrutinized. All three women stated that they had conducted gender research at some point in time, though they did not feel it was subjected to any greater scrutiny than mainstream research. The respondents were also asked if they conducted research on race/ethnicity and if that research was unfairly scrutinized; like gender research they all stated that they had conducted research on race/ethnicity but that it was not subjected to any undue scrutiny. The only point of division was in their perception of support for research. When asked if they received the same level of support for their research as other faculty in their department, Laura simply stated, *"Yes."* Diana stated, *"I do not know what level of support other department members have. I have a graduate assistant, but no external funding (though I have written a*

grant that is pending a decision) and certainly no course release! I would have to characterize my research support as minimal, especially since I only have my graduate assistant for one more semester!" And Maria emphatically stated, *"No way Jose! I think older or senior faculty get more support but it is not public knowledge. I have found that a lot of these 'fringe benefits' are parcel out under the table. If and when I have found out of this important type of academic capital it has been because of a comment and more than likely because one of the secretaries has mentioned it to me. Secretaries have been my most trusted source of orientation, mentoring and support!"*

The respondents were asked about their service load and distribution; in particular, were they asked to engage in more service than others in the department, were they asked to engage in service targeted at women or specific minority groups and if they had students who were not on their advising load coming to them for assistance. All three respondents stated that they were not asked to take on additional or specific service activities because of gender or race. Additionally, all three women stated that their advising loads were comparable within the program, but they had a higher advising load than the other programs in the department. The only facet of service they did not agree on was students who were not advisees coming to them for assistance. All three women noted that the program is entirely female so no one came to see them because of their gender, and Maria and Diana additionally stated that students not on their advising load did not seek them out. Laura, however, stated *"Yes, I have an advising relationship with most of the minority students in the program and find myself advising students outside my program area, which learned about me from my advisees."*

Junior Minority Female Faculty

In the final section of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to discuss their experiences as minority women who are junior faculty. Maria, who holds the rank of associate professor and was previously tenured at another university (though she is currently tenure-earning), did not respond to the questions in this section.

The first question asked if being a woman or being a minority posed greater challenge— or if they were equally challenging. Diana stated, *"I suppose I see being a woman being the greater challenge on campus—most people are curious about my Native American heritage but they do not really see how it impacts being a faculty member. Of course, my notions of what it means to be a woman and how a woman should act are absolutely culturally bound."* Laura felt neither was as great a challenge as being a young faculty member.

The respondents were then asked how being a minority woman interacted with being a faculty member. Laura felt the interaction was a positive one: *"Both inform my research interest and help guide me in my work with female students of color. I strive to provide my students, particularly students of color and females, with boost to their academic esteem and express appreciation for their presence in the class."* Diana, on the other hand, did not perceive any interaction between being a minority woman and being a faculty member; *"I have not noticed that being a woman or being a minority impacts my work; I have good classes and good*

relationships with my students, I have several research projects that are moving forward and I am happy with my level of service."

The respondents were then asked how being a minority woman interacts with being a junior faculty member; both women agreed that the interaction is demoralizing and destructive. Laura stated, *"I either am perceived as not competent or I am invisible. This leads to none to little opportunity for me to engage in research with senior faculty or for them to think of including me."* Diana described the perceived marginalization in even starker language:

> Oh, being a minority woman definitely complicates being a junior faculty member in the worst way. Junior faculty are marginalized enough on campuses—we get the worst committee assignments, the worst teaching assignments, we have to be careful not to commit an unforgivable sin in the eyes of senior faculty or we can kiss their tenure votes goodbye—but when you add being a woman and being a minority in on top of that…talk about fuel to a fire. We are expected to be the most subservient and the most sycophantic of the whole invisible, non-confrontational junior faculty population. And I do not have a subservient or sycophantic bone in my body…

The next question asked if the respondents employed resistance strategies, and both women answered yes. Laura's favored resistance strategies, succinctly stated, were to *"keep to my work; work with my students."* Diana expounded at length on her favored resistance strategies, disengagement and what she termed "civil disobedience."

The respondents were then asked if they would make the decision to be a faculty member again. Laura stated she would decide to be a faculty member again, but *"I just would do it an institution that was a better fit for my faculty perspectives and me."* Diana, however, doubted she would choose to be a faculty member again:

> Deciding whether or not to be a faculty member again would be a tough decision and a very close call, but I would have to say that as of right now I would not make the decision to be a faculty member again. There is too much of what it means to be a faculty member—belonging to a community of learners, being assured of academic freedom, having autonomy in your work—that has been compromised…When you combine that with how poor a fit the academy is with who I am and what I value as a Native American woman…it does not seem sensible—it does not seem sane—to choose to go through this frustrating, maddening experience again…That is not to say that being a faculty member has been all bad. If I left I would miss my students, I would miss the flexibility I have in my schedule (although it would be nice to get away from work for one weekend) and I would miss my colleagues. But it seems like there has to be a better fit for what is important to me and what I hold in high regard (community, cooperation, respect) out there somewhere…

Finally the respondents were given the opportunity to make any additional comments. Only Diana responded, and she discussed the complication age can present to a junior faculty member.

> Age is an additional complicating factor for me. As I stated earlier I am accustomed to being the oldest and being regarded as an elder, but here I am one

of the youngest and I do not know how to respond to that! Many of my colleagues seem to be more preoccupied with me being a "kid" than with me being a minority woman. And when your graduate assistant is five years older than you I can see how that concern might be a valid one…

It should be noted that both Maria and Laura discussed age as a liability in other sections of their narratives.

Findings

Culture

There were a couple of important themes brought up in the narratives on culture. Firstly, all three women come from cultures that are more communal than individualistic, where everyone has a role and a purpose that benefits the collective. Group members work to advance the collective as a whole, not any particular individual—and their cultures certainly do not advance any member at the *expense* of the collective. The requirement to aggrandize your own achievements at professional conferences, in journal publications, among the faculty on your home campus, and particularly for promotion and tenure is deeply uncomfortable and frequently offensive. Perhaps most problematic of all, none of the women perceived the academy as valuing, or even being particularly accepting of, silence—and silence is highly valued by the participants for a multitude of reasons. First and foremost, silence and disengagement are used by all three women as resistance strategies, and not just as protective strategies—for the participants, silence does *not* equal acquiescence, although that is how it is typically perceived. Furthermore, silence is an important aspect of both group cohesion *and* cultural notions of respect for all three respondents.

And the women do understand respect much differently than the academy does. Specifically, in their cultures respect is conferred rather than won. Grandiose efforts to stand out from the group are not appreciated; furthermore selfishness, putting yourself before others or trumpeting your own accomplishments, especially, is not tolerated. It is your family and your community's job to be proud of you and your accomplishments, not yours. And *your* job is to lift your family and your community with you, not climb over them on your way to the top.

Finally, this cultural disjunction has led all three of the respondents, in different ways, to isolate themselves from the academy and the activities it requires. Whether it is keeping a low profile in department and college meetings, escaping into research projects, or simply choosing not to participate in institutional activities, all three women have repeatedly made the choice to minimize their exposure to the institution.

Gender

There were also significant themes from the responses on gender. First, and for the respondents most importantly, the academy's hostility towards female faculty members as caregivers—particularly as mothers—persists. All three women were very clear that the institution is *not* supportive of family responsibilities. Furthermore, the beliefs and behaviors of some faculty

members were hostile to caregivers; in fact, there seemed to be an element of faculty resentment being *fueled* by the presence of faculty with families—especially young children.

This hostility contributes to their lack of a work/life balance; when both work and home are of primary importance, taking care of yourself takes a backseat. Furthermore, as mentioned above in culture, work becomes a form of escape. And when work expectations are fairly overwhelming in and of themselves, it is very easy for work to become all-consuming. The women had varying levels of comfort with their work/life imbalance, but all three readily acknowledged that work loomed disproportionately large in their lives.

Finally, the disconnect between their responsibilities as caregivers and their responsibilities as faculty further fueled the withdraw from the academy mentioned above. This behavior is exacerbated by being junior faculty, particularly being young and being new to the professoriate.

Institution

In tandem with the lack of support for family responsibilities, the three women perceived a lack of professional support and an unwelcoming climate at both the department and university level. Two of the women spoke at length about an institutional program to increase diversity, which in theory should make the institution a more welcoming place, but in reality created a nasty backlash against "diversity hires" worse than the backlash against faculty with families. The women internalized that backlash to varying degrees—but whether they took the resentment personally or not, all three women were very clear about the lack of support for them as professionals. All three women also commented on the fact that their institution is growing and transitioning from a teaching institution to a research institution, and characterized these "growing pains" as a complicating factor for institutional support.

One important aspect about the lack of support the women perceived was the lack of socialization initiatives at their institution. All three women felt the institution was sorely lacking in mentoring and faculty development, and in the section on tenure all three women also spoke about the lack of opportunities to collaborative with other faculty, particularly senior faculty. This probably relates back to the women's cultural traditions of collaborative and communal efforts, as well as advancing the collective (in this case the three untenured women), not the individual. Their desire for collaborative initiatives and professional support was so great, the women found their own mentors and created their own work groups when none were forthcoming from the institution.

Tenure

All three respondents were adamant about the chaos and confusion surrounding promotion and tenure. They all agreed that tenure and promotion criteria and procedures were inconsistent and confusing; that their teaching load was too high, despite the fact that most of them enjoyed the classroom; that the primacy assigned research in promotion and tenure evaluations was not in keeping with their workload; and that their advising loads were too large. Additionally, the lack of opportunity to collaborate with senior faculty in any capacity made tenure and promotion that

much more problematic. The questions regarding tenure prompted the most emphatically negative comments from the participants, and the straight-jacketed pursuit of promotion and tenure is arguably the most isolating, culturally dissonant activity in which the women engage.

Having said that, none of the women perceived any unfair scrutiny of their research and publishing on either gender or ethnicity. In fact, the only problem they had with research (aside from never having enough time to conduct it) was the perception that senior faculty received much more and much better support for research (graduate assistants, course releases, etc.) than did junior faculty.

Junior Minority Female Faculty

Perhaps the most interesting finding of the whole study was that none of the respondents perceived being a woman, being a minority, or being a minority woman as particularly problematic with respect to being a faculty member—but they felt the interaction between being a minority woman and being a *junior* faculty member was catastrophic. There were several apparent reasons for this communicated in the responses, though not necessarily the responses in this section. First, these women lack champions among the senior faculty in their department. As was stated earlier, the three respondents constitute the whole program in higher education at their university and there is no one among the senior faculty in their department who understands and can explain their work to other senior faculty, no one among the senior faculty who is willing to collaborate on research and writing projects with them, and no one who is willing or even particularly capable of serving as a mentor or role model who understands the challenges these women face. For many other minority women who are junior faculty, they may be the only woman, the only minority or the only minority woman in their department, making their isolation and marginalization that much more acute.

Second, because the challenges the participants face are poorly understood, the women's responses—particularly their resistance strategies—are poorly understood. Just because these women are not agitators about problematic practices and policies, that does *not* mean that they are capitulating to the ways and means of the academy—in fact it frequently means the opposite. Disengagement and silence are used as resistance strategies by the participants, not cooperative ones. For example, if the respondents were to miss a department meeting it is probably not because they were up to their eyeballs in research and writing (or in their case, teaching and advising); it is much more likely that they chose not to attend the meeting because the department was not a supportive, welcoming collective and the women were tired of being ignored or patronized—in other words their absence was resistance, not acquiescence. Among a population that consistently reiterates the need for collaboration and supportive networks, opting out of a group activity (even one as banal as a department meeting) is tantamount to broadcasting in stereo they are in crisis; unfortunately, most administrators and senior faculty are tuned in to the wrong frequency and consequently misunderstand the message—or miss the message altogether.

Third, minority women who are junior faculty are rarely in a position to effect a change in policy—or to effect a change in senior faculty's perception of policy. For example, while

there is not any overt hostility toward women or minorities that the respondents felt they must contend with, there *is* backlash against caregivers and diversity hires (people who apparently feel entitled to special treatment like institutional leave policies or preferential hiring practices). To make matters worse, the policies are wrongly perceived to be much more robust and permissive than they actually are, leaving minority women in the untenable position of defending their "benefits" from policies that are underwhelming and frequently inadequate.

Fourth and finally, one important complicating factor mentioned by all three women was age, specifically youth. Being perceived as an "other" is difficult enough; being perceived as a young, inexperienced (read "incompetent") "other" seems to embolden the worst aspects of faculty behavior. All three women reported having their professionalism or their ability to do their job questioned because of their age. And the fact that being junior faculty occurs during childbearing years makes age more problematic still.

Minority women are the most marginalized and most imperiled of the whole junior faculty population, at least according to their experience. And for untenured minority women, the lack of champions, the inability of the academy to articulate with their culture, the fallout from institutional policies and practices, and their young age, combined with their relatively powerless position in the professorial hierarchy *and* the lack of fit between their priorities and the academy's priorities, makes for a workplace that is extremely difficult at the very best of times, and usually demoralizing on a day-to-day basis.

Despite all of this, two of the three women surveyed would make the choice to be a faculty member again, without hesitation. The potential to serve their families and communities, to advance knowledge in their chosen specializations and to have a positive impact on the lives of their students easily outweigh the frustrations that come with being a minority female junior faculty member. But surely the academy could find a way to take advantage of this call to serve without taking advantage of the servant.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In closing, there are several comments on the research methodology and the findings that need to be made.

This questionnaire held too closely to the literature; the questions asked the women to agree or disagree with trends noted in the literature, but did not ask for their *responses* to these issues, only whether or not they had experienced them. Two of the three respondents created opportunities to describe their responses to these situations/issues anyway, which indicate that the expansion of this research project should include questions about resistance and refusal on the part of respondents, and not just marginalization and oppression. None of the study participants accepted the situation at their institution passively. Also, the questions will need to be unbundled and more explicit encouragement to write at length will need to be supplied.

Research is also desperately needed to explore further the interaction of being minority, female and junior faculty. Additionally, age must be taken into account—all three respondents discussed age in their narratives, and the two younger faculty members made it a point to address the liability inherent in being a young faculty member on top of everything else.

Additionally, the broader context matters and should be explored beyond the department and institution. For this pilot study, the survey was completed at a time when the chair of the department had left (there was an interim chair who was later promoted to department chair), there was extremely high anxiety about the current economic recession and its potential to close programs and terminate faculty at the university (fueled by monthly "updates" from the Provost's Office), and the faculty members who responded to this survey were being asked to engage in multiple recruitment efforts to bring new students into the program (thereby increasing student credit hour production, a criterion that is a holdover from this university's past as a teaching institution) that did not count on Form A and were of no value with regards to earning tenure. Beyond this study, there are other factors that need to be taken into account. For example, none of the respondents could speak to the experience of being the only minority woman in their program or department. Also, education tends to have more women in faculty positions than many science and technology departments.

Finally, expanded research on this topic should generate policy recommendations to better support underrepresented faculty, to facilitate their growth and retention—not to mention their promotion to senior faculty ranks. Even this modest pilot study generated data that suggest several beneficial policy initiatives. First and most importantly, recruitment alone is not enough for growing junior minority female faculty into successful, flourishing senior minority female faculty; institutional efforts to retain and develop minority women also need to be enshrined in policy. For example, strong mentoring and socialization programs are needed, as well as incentives for senior faculty to collaborate with junior faculty. Furthermore, policies supporting family leave, and in particular stopping the tenure clock because of familial obligations, need to be instituted. Additionally, qualitative and non-traditional research needs to be recognized and valued in the promotion and tenure process. And finally, gender and/or race should *not* be the determining criteria for teaching and service assignments, particularly overload assignments.

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Appendix A

Personal narrative questionnaire

Minority Women Junior Faculty Questionnaire

Culture
How does your culture match academic culture? How does your culture differ from academic culture? Do you feel your culture is more of an asset or a liability in academia? Why?

Are you expected to be an expert on your culture/ethnic group? Are you expected to conform to any racial/ethnical stereotypes (i.e., be the "model minority" for your ethnic group)?

Do you experience a sense of isolation at work?

Gender
Do you perceive a lack of institutional support for family issues/responsibilities?

Do you feel you maintain a healthy balance between life and work? If not, what area(s) of your life do you believe you neglect?

Are you expected to conform to any gendered norms (i.e., be silent or subservient, "mother" problem students)? How do you respond to those expectations?

Institution
Please describe how you experience the institutional climate at your university. Would you describe it as welcoming and accepting or as unwelcoming and chilly? Why? What about the climate in your department?

Describe your socialization/integration into your institution.

Describe your socialization/integration into your department.

Describe your support network. Do you feel you can access the informal and/or "good ole boys" networks at your institution? Why or why not?

Do you have a mentor? If so, is your mentor able to help you with the challenges you face as a minority woman?

Do you feel you suffer "double discrimination" (discrimination for being both a woman and a minority? Are you treated differently than white women? Are you treated differently than minority men?

Have you experienced any stigma or backlash for being an "affirmative action hire"? Do you feel you are a token diversity hire at your campus?

Tenure
Are the requirements for tenure and promotion clear?

Are you satisfied with the relative weights assigned to teaching, research and service?

How would you describe your collaboration opportunities? Networking opportunities?

Teaching
Do you feel your students challenge or question your legitimacy as a faculty member?

How would you describe the classroom climate?

Research
Do you conduct research on gender? If so, do you believe it is subject to greater critique than "mainstream" research? Is it valued as much as "mainstream" research?

Do you conduct research on race/ethnicity? If so, do you believe it is subject to greater critique than "mainstream" research? Is it valued as much as "mainstream" research?

Do you receive the same level of support for your research (graduate assistants, help with external funding, course releases, etc.) as other faculty members in your department?

Service
Are you asked, because of your race and/or gender, to take on additional responsibilities at work? Are these additional duties considered for tenure, or do they take away from tenure-earning activities? Please give specific examples.

Do you perform more service activities than your colleagues? Have you ever been advised to reduce your service activities?

How would you describe your advising loads relative to other department members?

Do you find female and/or minority students coming to you for advising even though you are not their assigned advisor?

Junior Minority Female Faculty
Do you experience more or greater challenges as a woman or as a minority—or are both equally challenging?

How do being a woman and being a minority interact in your work as a faculty member?

How does being a minority woman interact, positively or negatively, with being a junior faculty member?

Do you employ any resistance strategies? If so, please describe them.

Would you make the decision to be a faculty member again? Why or why not?

Any additional comments you would like to make?