Research Paper

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Women faculty in journalism and mass communication

How do early-career scholars fare in the U.S. academy?

Abstract: **Women make up more than half the U.S. population and comprise two-thirds of the graduates of college and university communications schools today (York 2017), but they are often not represented in the same proportions in faculty and leadership roles in those colleges and universities across the country. To address gender disparity and leadership pipeline issues among faculty in journalism and mass communication programs in higher education, the Lillian Lodge Kopenhaver Center for the Advancement of Women in Communication at Florida International University conducted its first national study of participants in its Women Faculty Moving Forward (WFMF) program in 2019 to examine how effective the WFMF program has been in helping women advance in the field of journalism and mass communication in higher education. While respondents said they appreciated the mentoring program, they cited the need to address work/family/life tensions, more research time, more mentoring opportunities, as well as more transparency on salary/pay equity issues as primary concerns.**

Keywords: women, communication, scholars, research, mentors, equity

Introduction

Women make up more than half the United States population and comprise two-thirds of the graduates of college and university journalism and mass communications schools today (York, 2017) across all majors in the field. A 2021 survey of journalism and mass communication enrollments in the United States, showed

that »females were granted 67.5% of bachelor's degrees, 71.3% of master's degrees, and 60.4% of doctorate degrees« of the 154 programs responding to the survey (Cummins/Gotlieb/McLaughlin 2023: 73). However, women often are not represented in the same proportions in faculty and leadership roles in those colleges and universities, which educate them for their careers in the communications industries. Due to the understudied body of knowledge regarding the number of women faculty in journalism and mass communication schools and colleges, the study was designed to add to that body of knowledge. Getting good data has proven to be challenging over the years as the number of women faculty in this field are often buried in the liberal arts and social science disciplines of many institutions in the U.S. In the early 1990s, »the ratio of men to women members of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) was about 3:1« (Creedon/Wackwitz/Andsager, 2023: 53). Membership demographic tracking by AEJMC, the world's largest journalism and mass communication education association in higher education, has improved in recent years and membership data in the fall 2023 showed there were 1,966 members with more than half of them (1,067 members) living in the United States, 152 members living outside of the U.S. and 717 members didn't share a location descriptor (Brown 2023). The 2023 demographic snapshot showed the AEJMC membership is becoming more diverse although whites still dominate the organizations' membership. According to 2023 data collected from members, 822 members identified as white; 415 provided no racial ethnic data; 359 members identified as Asian/Asian American; 158 identified as Black/African American; 55 identified as Hispanic/Latino; 47 preferred not to disclose; and less than 25 people identified with one of the other categories: American Indian/Alaska native; Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander; International or self-described otherwise (Brown 2023). As for gender representation of AEJMC members, women reportedly dominate the AEJMC membership with 916 women members reported vs. 670 men in 2023 (Brown 2023). However, it is important to note that 332 AEJMC members did not provide gender specific data, 9 people preferred not to disclose and less than 10 people described themselves as gender fluid, non-binary or transgender in 2023. Keep in mind the AEJMC data only represents those who choose to join the organization and shared their gender data. Research presented at the August 2023 AEJMC conference by scholars Ramirez/ Subervi/Oshagan/ Guajardo showed »white females and more recently, Asian males, have been well represented in the organization's highest leadership positions« (2023 abstract: para. 1) between 2011 and 2022, and they argue there is still work needed to diversify AEJMC's leadership as well as address long-term gender and race/ethnic disparity issues in the academy. To address gender disparity and leadership pipeline issues among faculty in journalism and mass communication programs in higher education, the Lillian Lodge Kopenhaver Center for the Advancement

of Women in Communication at Florida International University conducted its first national study of participants in its Women Faculty Moving Forward (WFMF) program to examine how effective the WFMF program has been in helping women advance in the field of journalism and mass communication higher education. The WFMF workshop has been held annually since 2013 as part of the AEJMC annual conference, co-sponsored by the Kopenhaver Center and AEJMC's Commission on the Status of Women. The center offers this workshop as part of its mission »to empower both women professionals and academics in all the fields of communication to develop visionaries and leaders who can make a difference in their communities and in their professions« (Kopenhaver 2013: 1).

From 2013 to 2019, 193 women faculty members participated in the WFMF workshop and were surveyed for this study. Most work in the United States, although the program also has attracted international participants from Switzerland, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and Canada. The intent from the beginning was to keep the number of participants around 25 per workshop, but in some years so many women applied that the numbers grew, and in 2019 the cohort included 45 participants. The application process for the workshop requires faculty to submit a 500-word essay explaining why they want to participate in the professional development workshop. They are then judged on their essay and on their status of being an early career scholar, with the requirement that they be on the tenure track.

Sessions during the four hours of the workshop and a one-hour networking session are led by more established professors and researchers and include discussions relating to moving up the academic leadership ladder, addressing work/family/life tensions, preparing for tenure and promotion, negotiating work duties, navigating the field of research and service, and being better advocates for themselves. The goal is to empower them to become academic leaders of the future and to succeed in the academy. The necessity for such a workshop is profound as indicated by the significance of the study. Research from Cardel and colleagues shows that »Even with significant progress in recent decades, the advancement, and promotion of female faculty in academia remain low. Women represent a large portion of the talent pool in academia and receive >50% of all PhDs! (Cardel/Dhurandhar/Yarar-Fisher/ Foster/Hidalgo/ McClure/Angelini 2020: 741): yet women remain underrepresented in higher education leadership roles (Gangone/Lennon 2014; Hannum et al. 2015)« (Judson/Ross/Glassmeyer 2019: 1028).

Due to the understudied body of current knowledge about women in the academy and the field of journalism and mass communication and the deficit of statistical information on the professional development of women in the academy, this qualitative study adds to the literature by integrating new knowledge and exploring the experiences of our respondents who are women faculty in

journalism and mass communication, currently working at accredited higher education institutions across the United States. Key findings from the study identified juggling work/family/ life tensions, tenure and promotion, and research and service as the leading challenges facing women in the academy in the field of journalism and mass communication. Respondents also expressed secondary challenges related to gender inequities in pay and racial and ethnic diversity in faculty ranks.

Significance Of The Study

Research is continually accumulating on the many inequities that influence the careers of women in the academy. Studies show that women faculty are viewed as less competent, rated lower on teaching evaluations, comprise less than one-third of recipients of major federal grantees, and are cited less often (Cardel et. al 2020: 722). Research on faculty career advancement and satisfaction has documented a broad range of inequities that include structural salary gaps (Porter/Toutkoushian/Moore 2008), the use of teaching evaluations despite research showing biases in evaluating instructors (Boring/Ottoboni/Stark 2016); inequities regarding work/family/life tensions and policies and practices related to the allocation of resources and rewards persist (O'Meara/Jaeger/Misra/Lennartz/Kuvaeva 2018), as well as micro-level relational processes such as harassment, discrimination, and biases that affect interpersonal interactions critical for advancement (Morimoto/Zajicek 2014).

Most large-scale gender disparity and leadership pipeline studies in the academy are highly concentrated on women in the sciences, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM), and medicine disciplines, and most of the research focuses on a particular area relevant to the field. While there are a variety of studies documenting concerns about gender and workplace climate issues affecting women faculty members in the academy overall, there appears to be a gap in the literature regarding women faculty members in journalism and mass communication regarding their perceptions and experiences of workplace challenges and job satisfaction. Approaches suggested to address gender imbalance in higher education leadership roles include mentorship programs, early leadership experiences, highlighting role models, and formal leadership development (Hannum/Muhly/Shockley-Zalabak/White 2015; Manfredi 2017). Yet, despite multiple prescribed initiatives to increase women's representation in leadership roles in higher education, progress has been sluggish (Shepherd 2017).

Literature Review

Work/family/life tensions

Research has clearly shown that gender is a key factor when it comes to work-life tensions in the academy, »with women experiencing noticeably more challenges than men (Mason/Wolfinger/Goulden 2013; Misra/Hicke/Lundquist/Holmes/Agi-omavrtis 2011; Szelényi/Denson 2019)« (Denson & Szelenyi 2020: 262). Traditions and roles have evolved over centuries in the academy to be oriented toward men faculty. Indeed, it is only in the last half century or so that women have moved into more prominent roles in colleges and universities in the United States, and policies and procedures dealing with defining a balance between academic responsibilities as they relate to research, and responsibilities outside the institution as they relate to family life are only now slowly catching up. In fact, research that compared women to men found that »women with children are less likely to achieve tenure during the same timeframe... and women mention challenges related to work-family balance as their number one academic career struggle« (Lisnic et al., 2019: 342). With regard to institutional traditions and policies, Bowering and Reed further make the point that »components of the decision process are gendered, since the intersection of work environment, role conflict, and work-life balance disadvantages women. acknowledging that many objective institutional norms are male-oriented and these norms should be challenged« (Bowering/Reed, 2021: 16).

Today, in addition to having responsibilities for childcare, many faculty, including non-binary, gender-fluid, and gender-non-conforming faculty members, are faced with elder care for aging parents. So, there are increasing demands on their time in trying to balance their careers and home life, but the reality is that these responsibilities place more demands on women's time (Carr et al. 1998; Ash et al. 2004; Ward/Wolf-Wendel 2012; Lisnic et al., 2019). Denson/Szeleny (2020) suggest that there has been a substantial amount of research discussing the difficulties faculty members continue to experience in maintaining a healthy balance between their professional and personal lives, given high workload demands and a culture of academy that often remains unsupportive of faculty taking advantage of policies related to workplace flexibility, even when those policies exist at a higher education institution in the U.S. (Eddie/Gaston-Gayles 2008; Mason/Wolfinger/Goulden 2013; Misra/Lundquist/Templer 2012; Ward/Wolf-Wendel, 2004).

In fact, Lisnic and colleagues cite research showing that where there are policies in place for parental and other leave in the United States, »the implementation of these policies is far from adequate, especially at the departmental level where women faculty may still be told by the department head/chair that they

should not use the policies during their probationary years because it will count against them« (Lisnic, et al., 2019: p. 351). The reality of the tenure clock in the U.S. context and the increasing reliance on securing grants, in addition to the reality of significant teaching loads and service assignments as well as the fact that there are long wait times for journal responses to publish peer-reviewed research have an impact on women who are also trying to address work/family/ life tensions. Denson and colleagues summarize a number of studies that point to work/family/life tension balance and note that they indicate »significant gender differences, with women faculty reporting lower levels of job satisfaction; more difficulty balancing teaching, research, and service responsibilities; and less work-family life tensions balance« (Denson/Szelényi/Bresonis, 2018: 228).

Tenure and Promotion

The »Publish or Perish« mantra is a reality in the U.S. academy. Faculty face the challenge of increasingly having to secure external grants to support their research and finding time to conduct that research. The trajectory to tenure and promotion is fraught with intense pressure, challenges, and, frequently, setbacks. Cardell notes that across the science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medicine (STEMM) fields in the U.S, women make up half of those earning the Ph.D. and, »as of 2015, 51.5% of assistant professors« but that »women are generally less likely to achieve tenure than men and constitute only 32.4% of full professors« (Cardel et al., 2020: 721). The aforementioned sample only studies a cross-section of women in the academy in prominent fields of science and adds to the contention that women in other disciplines such as journalism and mass communication and in the academy are highly likely to be experiencing greater disparities. Box-Steffensmeier and colleagues (2015) also found that men are more likely to be tenured and promoted from assistant to associate professor rank than women. Several studies have also suggested that »family responsibilities are closely associated with a lower proportion of women (compared with men) among the tenured« (Ahmad 2017: 205). Lisnic and colleagues also report studies that affirm that »most women who achieve tenure are unmarried and childless…and women who have children often consider giving up their academic careers« (Lisnic et al., 2019: 342). Achieving tenure and promotion is the first victory for young women faculty on the long journey to a career in the academy. However, as research has illustrated, women face more obstacles and intense pressures, as well as expectations of the role of women, as they take that journey.

Time for Research

Studies by numerous scholars suggest that women take on more service and teaching-related duties (Guarino/Borden 2017; Dengate/Peter/Forenhorst 2019) undermining the time they have to invest in research. Specifically, women scholars in the U.S. are more frequently asked to volunteer for tasks that carry no or only little potential for being promoted; volunteer themselves more often for such tasks due to gendered expectations and are being sanctioned more harshly when they say no after being asked to volunteer (Babcock/Peyser/ Vesterlund/ Weingart 2022). Hence, women scholars face numerous challenges in being able to engage in scholarly research evidenced by the demands of the job in the academy and familial obligations.

Gopaul and colleagues (2016: 69) suggest that scholars in the academy juggle teaching, research, and service commitments that require in excess of 50 hours per week, which is in keeping with the findings that performing research is a labor-intensive process. Ample research also demonstrates gender-based inequities for women scholars conducting scientific investigations, including a lack of visibility for women scientists' work regardless of their career stage (Vasarhelyi/ Zaklebin/Milojevic/Horvat 2021). There is an understudied body of knowledge evaluating women's engagement opportunities in scientific investigative scholarship, considering more of their time is being spent on teaching and service compared to men colleagues. There is also a gap in the literature as to the trends of opportunities and resources made available to women scholars who are actively trying to pursue scientific investigations within the academy, and if they are being appropriately compensated for their time conducting research, in addition to the other demands and expectations. It is speculated that these answers are unclear and vary by institution of higher education, as to how exactly research-related role /job criteria might especially penalize women, who underperform in this area. Inaccurate benchmarking of progress, when combined with the high service and student demands that women receive may lead women to give away their most precious commodity for promotion: time for research (El-Alayli/Hansel Brown/Ceynar 2018; Guarino/ Borden 2017; Bowering/Reed 2021). Furthermore, a study of 2,329 Elsevier journals during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic found a gender gap with women submitting fewer manuscripts than men and scholars suggest »the demands of familial duties may have penalized the scientific productivity of women« Squazzoni/Bravo/Grimaldo/Garcia-Costa/Farjam/Mehmani 2021)

Service equity issues

Women fear negative consequences and are being penalized for saying no to service work. In the academy, service is a time-consuming required feature of the job and is factored into performance reviews, generally ranked after research and teaching in importance (Babcock et al. 2017; El-Alayli/Hansen-Brown/Ceynar 2018; Mamiseishvili/Lee 2018; Ward 2003; Bird et al. 2004; Guarino/Bowden, 2016). Working to serve students, the institution, and the community is important work and expected of faculty. However, if the faculty member spends extra time on service, it can take away from time spent on an area such as research, and, if the service is not equitably valued by the institution, that can have a negative impact when the faculty member is evaluated at the end of the year (Misra/Lundquist/Holmes/ Agiomavritis 2011).

Service work, despite its critical significance, is less valued and tends to be carried out by women (Bird/Litt/Wang 2004; Guarino/Borden 2017; Babcock et al. 2022). On average, women faculty spend more time engaging in service, teaching, and mentoring, while men spend more time on research (Guarino/Borden 2017; Link/Swann/Bozeman 2008; Misra/ Lundquist/Templer, 2012; Misra et al., 2011) Misra and colleagues (2011) suggest, disparate workload may result in an »ivory ceiling« that is similar to the »glass ceiling,« with women finding it more difficult to advance in their academic careers. In closing »service loads likely have an impact on productivity in other areas of faculty effort such as research and teaching, and these latter activities can lead directly to salary differentials and overall success in academia« (Guarino/Borden 2017: 19).

Salary equity issues

Several studies have shown that women and men employed in academia experience their work environments differently—largely in ways that are less favorable to women. Research has indicated women faculty in the U.S. receive lower salaries (Carr/Gunn/Kaplan/ Raj/ Freund 2015); (Toutkoushian/Conley 2005) and fewer resources such as research space (Chisholm et al. 1999). Salaries also contribute to the gender divide in journalism and mass communication programs in higher education as well as in the journalism profession. For example, the 2017-18 Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication Faculty Survey gathered data representing faculty members from 38 universities and colleges in the U.S. and found the mean salary for a female assistant professor was $67,271 vs. $71,550 for a male assistant professor, and the gap widened substantially for journalism mass communication administrators as the mean salary for female administrators was $151,089 vs. $172,344 for male administrators (Cummins/Gotlieb/McLaughlin 2018). Although the study by Cummins et al. (2018) represented

only 38 journalism and mass communication programs, it is important to note that the salary survey included 938 respondents, 122 women assistant professors, the same number of men assistant professors, (116) men full professors, and (79) men full professors (p. 14).

Lack of diversity in gender and race/ethnicity in faculty ranks

In higher education circles, women are not representative of their percentage in the general population. For example, the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics (updated May 2020) found that: Of all full-time faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions in the fall of 2018, 40 percent were white males; 35 percent were white females; 7% percent were Asian/Pacific Islander males; 5 percent were Asian/Pacific Islander females; and 3 percent each were Black males, Black females, Hispanic males, and Hispanic females. Those who were American Indian/Alaska Native and those of two or more races each made up 1 percent or less of full-time faculty (para. 2). The data above show that 75% of full-time faculty are white in the United States. Given the nation's growing diversity, this is a major issue for higher education. »While the nation's student population is becoming increasingly diverse, the overwhelming majority of full-time faculty positions continue to be filled by white men and women« (Gutiérrez y Muhs, Niemann/Gonzalez/Harris, 2012).

There is a growing body of literature about women of color experiences in the academy, including the *Presumed Incompetent* (Gutierrez y Muhs/Niemann/Gonzalez/Harris, 2012) and *Presumed Incompetent II* books (Niemann/Gutierrez y Muhs/Gonzalez, 2020) that address issues of race, class, power, and resistance to women of color in academia. National Center for Educatåion Statistics (NCES) racial/ethnic data for the fall of 2018 also showed that white men represented the largest single group of full-time professors at 53% followed by white women at 27%; 8% were Asian-Pacific Islander men; 3% were Asian-Pacific Islander women. Black men, Black women, and Hispanic men each represented about 2% of full-time professors. About 1% or less of the following groups were identified as full-time professors: Hispanic females, American Indian/Alaska Native people, and people of two or more races.

A national study on campus climate, retention, and satisfaction found that 75% of faculty of underrepresented backgrounds described their campus climates as moderate to high negative with low job satisfaction and a desire to leave the academy (Jayakumar/Howard/ Allen/Han 2009). Becker and his research team at the University of Georgia have generated several reports on gender and racial/ethnic diversity in journalism and mass communication education. For example, a study by Becker et al. (2003) found that female and minority faculty members often were concentrated in the lower academic levels with less job

security and influence. The Becker and colleagues (2015) study found that »journalism and mass communication faculties have become more balanced in terms of gender,« as females represented 34.8% of faculty in the Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication (ASJMC) Faculty Survey in 1999 vs. 45.3% in 2013, but men still dominate most dean positions.

Numerous factors affect women as they climb the ladder to success in the academic world. Durodoye et. al. (2020: 629) cite »a new level of exposure to the different experiences of females and people of color in academia and the relatively small gains in representation in tenured positions at highly ranked universities.« Several scholars also mention in their studies that women faculty »exhibit lower retention rates than their male counterparts and consistently report on disproportionate childcare and family responsibilities, a lack of adequate mentoring, and workplace exclusion (Clark/Corcoran, 1986; Ehrenberg et al. 1990; Mason et al. 2013). Dorodoye and colleagues (2020) also comment on special challenges faced by ethnic and minority faculty who »are in instances disproportionately tasked with service duties in support of students from their own racial or ethnic group and must navigate the academic environment without the same support and mentorship as majority group colleagues.« Even though women continually strive to be acknowledged as serious scholars who add to the body of knowledge in their field and to be recognized as such by their male colleagues, Davis asserts that this can »prove more arduous for Black women whose professional and personal lives are mitigated by the intersectionality of race and sex as well as the navigational implications that derive from conflated racism and sexism« (2011: 32).

Theoretical Framework

Feminist theory often focuses on the oppression of women and has become the subject of a growing body of interdisciplinary scholarship about gender inequities in society. Using this theoretical lens is appropriate as the study focuses on early career women scholars working in journalism and mass communication units in the academy. A variety of feminist scholars in the journalism and mass communication field have written about gender bias and misogyny since at least the middle of the 20th century (e.g. Marron, 2020, Vickery/Everbach, 2019, Carter/Steiner/McLaughlin, 2014; Armstrong, 2013). Most recently, Schuller (2021) and women scholars of color such as Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 2017), who coined the term intersectionality, and bell hooks (2015) have stressed the importance of widening the lens and being more inclusive. Schuller (2021) argues feminism has been fractured for centuries and »white feminist politics promote the theory that women should fight for the full political and economic advantages that wealthy

white men enjoy within a capitalist empire« and approaches the lives of people of color and the poor as »raw resources that can fuel« white women's rise in status (p. 4). Furthermore, hooks (2015) wrote:

> Racist stereotypes of the strong, superhuman black woman are operative myths in the minds of many white women, allowing them to ignore the extent to which black women are likely to be victimized in this society, and the role white women may play in the maintenance and perpetuation of that victimization...Privileged feminists have largely been unable to speak to, with, and for diverse groups of women because they either do not understand fully the interrelatedness of sex, race, and class oppression or refuse to take this interrelatedness seriously. (p 15).

Simmons (2020) explored power structures and gender issues in higher education and found:

> The women most conspicuously absent from the ranks of senior faculty, chairs, directors, deans, provosts, and presidents are those whose intersectional identities include affiliation with the African American, Hispanic American Native American, or LGBTQ communities, and other groups traditionally marginalized within our culture.« (p 8)

Castaneda, Flores, and Flores Niemann (2020) are psychologists and their work validated Simmons's comments as they work at the intersection of Chicana feminist theory and Latina/o critical race theory with a focus on overcoming sexist oppression at the intersection of »gender, race, and social class« as well as addressing »routines, policies, and practices that keep traditionally underrepresented groups in subordinate positions« (p. 83). Furthermore, Nichols and Stahl (2019) reviewed 50 papers in higher education research and found that »multiple systems of (dis)advantage are intertwined with social and personal aspects« of the higher education experience.

Daufin (2017) explored »White supremacist and patriarchal obstacles to success for Black women faculty at (PWIs) Predominantly White Institutions and HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities.)« (p. 57) Rather than using the term »women and minorities,« she argues the »more accurate and intersectional term« should be »White women and minority people/people of color« or »women of all ethnic /races and men of color« (p. 57). Therefore, it is through the lenses of feminist theory and intersectionality that the study's participants' comments are analyzed.

Methodology

Study sample and selection

From 2013 to 2019, 193 women faculty members who research and teach in the journalism and mass communication programs participated in the Women

Faculty Moving Forward (WFMF) program and were surveyed for this study. Most work in the United States, although the program also has attracted international participants from Switzerland, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and Canada. Since the WFMF program participants are spread across the United States and at least three other continents, an online survey was the most appropriate instrument to collect data. By the fall of 2019, there were 193 graduates of the Women Faculty Moving Forward program. A Qualtrics survey was administered via email to all 193 program participants in the fall of 2019 and the study commenced with an initial sample of (N=193). Survey notices to participate were emailed to those who did not respond to the first mailing in October 2019. Final notices were sent again in November 2019 to attempt to capture the entire universe of the sample. Due to attrition, a total of 82 (N=82) women responded to the survey with about a 42.3% response rate. Even though the total sample yielded 82 respondents, these respondents could voluntarily refuse to reply to questions they did not want to respond to in the survey.

For this study findings were compartmentalized into primary and secondary findings. Primary findings were derived from the data yielded from the survey. The secondary findings were data gathered from the roundtables conducted in the WFMF program roundtables and not the qualitative survey. The Qualtrics survey contained questions about participants' academic experience, geographical location, whether they had been promoted or received tenure, challenges the participants faced in their universities or colleges, the value of the WFMF program workshop, and basic demographic questions such as race/ethnicity and age. The study was limited to women who have participated in the WFMF program and took the initiative to apply for the program. This study represents a small sample of early-career women faculty, with most of them working in U.S. journalism and mass communication programs at institutions of higher education. Also, participants were not segmented by areas of expertise such as journalism, advertising, broadcasting, digital news, public relations, or strategic communication. It would be useful to have representation from international participants to see if there are substantial differences based on the countries involved.

Results

Demographics

The total sample of the study yielded 82 respondents. Throughout the study, respondents could voluntarily refuse to reply to questions they did not want to respond to in the survey. The data collected provide valuable insights from the perspectives of women faculty in journalism and mass communication

programs who are in the early stages of their academic careers: 59 of 79 (or 69.6%) respondents said they had fewer than five years of experience in the academy before participating in the WFMF program. The racial/ethnic identity of the 72 participants who shared information on race/ethnicity showed that 53 women (or 73.51%) identified as white/non-Hispanic, 10 women (or 13.89%) identified as African-American, six women (or 6.33%) identified as Asian, one woman identified as Hispanic, one identified as Native American/Pacific Islander, and one preferred not to disclose. Even though the total sample of the study yielded 82 respondents, these respondents could voluntarily refuse to reply to questions they did not want to respond to in the survey. As for the geographical distribution of study participants, 34 women, or about 48.5% of the 70 respondents to that question are in the Midwest, Southwest, or Southeast United States. About 68% of those who responded to a question on the type of institution they were affiliated with reported they work at public institutions. Those in the study who reported their academic rank identified as assistant professors (61.3%), associate professors (21.3%), and the remaining (17.3%) did not identify their rank. Of those who identified their age, 81% were under the age of 50 and that included 43.2% who were under the age of 40. All participants were tenure-track-earning professors.

Primary Findings

Survey respondents consistently said that expanding their networks was the biggest takeaway from the annual WFMF program workshop. »Really, it was valuable to be in a room with other women who are trying to navigate what's often a bizarre and unfair world. Our personal stories vary, but our goals are basically the same. I really liked hearing about the successes,« wrote one respondent. Another woman who responded to the survey wrote, »This workshop was the best professional development experience I have had while on the tenure track. I just submitted my tenure portfolio, and this group made me much more confident and supported.« Yet, another participant wrote, »I just enjoyed hearing first-hand accounts of challenges facing women in academia. It's nice to know we are not alone!« It is important to note that 62 of 78 respondents (or 79.4%) agreed that the WFMF program workshop contributed to their professional growth, and 56 of 77 respondents (or 72.7%) agreed that the WFMF program workshop contributed to their personal growth. Many respondents saw the workshop as a safe place to talk about anything without fear that it would return to their workplace.

Time for Research

The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education is an authority in American higher education institutions, which introduces a tier-based research

classification system, namely the R1, R2, and R3 classification, to assess research activity at universities. This system is pivotal to researchers as it informs the depth and breadth of a university's commitment to research. These institutions are at the forefront of research and innovation, and they receive federal and/or private funding specifically for their academic research and are recognized as the best research universities. Institutions of higher education and members of the academy pursuing research in the U.S. aspire to join the ranks of these universities R1, R2, and R3 systems in the U.S. and welcome members in the academy pursuing high impact creative research endeavors, with R1 institutions being the most competitive. But institutions of higher education continue to overlook the need to offer sustained support for faculty time for research, considering this is such a lucrative component of the business of academia. This study did not investigate what institutions the respondents were employed at the time of completing the survey, nor if they were employed by a Carnegie classified institution. Nevertheless, respondents stated repeated themes pointing to their inability to conduct research due to teaching and service workloads.

When asked to identify the most significant problem they face in their current work situation, the top response was »time for research« with 25 of the 74 respondents (or 33%) identifying that as a major concern. One respondent wrote, »We're focused on teaching, so we have heavy course loads and little (time) for research. This is the case for all profs, though I noticed that the women (me included) tend to be assigned or volunteer to do a lot of the service work. It means a lot of our downtime from teaching is already busy.« Another respondent wrote: »At our university, we talk about how there is a service imbalance that disadvantages women assistant professors. This then lies with the lack of time for research, especially as we also have very few research assistants to help.« Another respondent wrote that women colleagues get asked to »do more tedious tasks such as organizing a conference which takes up their time. Male faculty are not asked to do such things and they can focus on research.« Another respondent cited frequently changing expectations and »not knowing how to publish in a high-quality journal AND not having a mentor to teach me about this process.«

Work/Family/Life Tensions

Scholars and advocates concerned about work/family/life tensions in the academy have long advocated for the changing of social structures in the workplaces by way of policies, practices, and reward systems. Demands posed by the intersection of work, family, and life tensions within the academy require workplace interventions from both within the hierarchy of the institution and the supervisory systems within the academy. Additional research is needed to understand how the work/family/life tensions are dealt with in the workplace and how

institutions of higher education tackle this problem and face organizational changes under active implementation, and how men and women fare under these workforce practices.

The second most popular response in the study was a concern about the work/family/life tensions: with 16 of the 75 (or nearly 22%) bringing up related issues. One respondent wrote, »All the women in my department are tenured, but I see challenges in work-life balance.« Another respondent wrote, »juggling demands of motherhood« and lack of »familial support« are major issues. Another respondent wrote, »In my department, women do well, but generally I would say we are asked to do more service and mentor students more, which takes away from precious research time, which I then make up at home, cutting into my personal time.«

Tenure and promotion

Most of the survey respondents had not been promoted or received tenure since participating in the WFMF program workshop. This is not surprising since most of the survey respondents had less than five years of experience in the academy, and it takes typically six years before a person moves from assistant to associate professor in most universities and colleges in the United States. Ten women, or nearly 13% of respondents, said they have been promoted since participating in the WFMF program workshop; that includes four who have moved to associate professor ranks, two who have been promoted to full professor, and one who became a department chair. Also, it is important to note that 16 of 77 (or 20.8%) responding to the tenure question said they have received tenure since participating in the WFMF program workshop.

In contrast, three quarters (53 out of 71 or 74.6%) responding to a question about the culture of their unit, reported it is conducive to their advancement. When asked about the most significant necessity for advancement for women in their workplaces, key themes that emerged were the need for more support networks, promotion, and the need for more salary/pay equity. One study participant wrote, »I wish there was more open and honest discussion around pay in academia. I feel like women will do anything to get the tenure track position and then are discriminated (against) by how little they receive in compensation.« Another participant wrote, »We can lean in and go to workshops all we want, but we need legislative action (e.g., quotas like in some Scandinavian countries) for something to change.«

Mentoring and professional development

The need for stronger ongoing mentorship networks was a major theme that emerged from the study participants. For example, one participant suggested more time for speed dating during the annual conference of the Association of Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, and another wrote, »The fellowship program was a one-day thing. I wish there were a real network of help when we need it.« Another participant suggested, »an ongoing mentorship network where we could meet over the internet and ask questions to scholars in our field.« While most respondents are currently employed in academia, one respondent wrote she chose to leave a tenure-track position after one year because »I was incredibly lonely and poor. I was working 60 hours a week and couldn't get by on my professor's salary. But more than anything, I wanted friends and a romantic partner and that just wasn't supported by the academy.« That former assistant professor added she is happier now after she left a university in the Western United States because she has »friends, family and a support network to surround me to have a real impact on social justice in the world. I also have a salary that I can afford to live on«.

Secondary Findings

Workplace Culture

The annual WFMF workshop involves discussion on a variety of career-related topics such as moving up in the tenure system or mentoring. Sixty women responded to a survey question asking them to identify the roundtable discussion topics that they found the most useful, leading to the following top five survey responses:

1. being a woman of color in academia (6.88)
2. dealing with problematic students (6.73)
3. moving into administration (6.05)
4. applying for grants (5.27)
5. handling service duties (4.73)

A less frequent response hinted at another issue, as for instance one participant wrote, »Deans that tend to be overbearing, very traditional, arrogant, dismissive« can be challenging.

Faculty Assignments and Service

When asked about the most significant problem they faced in their workplaces, key themes that emerged were lack of time for research and high expectation for service. One study participant cited »constantly changing expectations for amount of research, quality of research, etc.« Service and assignment issues also were among the top themes that emerged when study participants were asked to identify the most significant barrier to advancement for women in their workplaces. One study participant wrote:

> Because we are so effective as teachers and colleagues, we get more work – more students seeking us out for mentoring, recommendations, independent studies; more colleagues seeking us out for service and leadership. We do a lot of clean-up work left from others who aren't willing or are difficult (frankly, usually older male colleagues).

> Another study participant wrote:

> At our university we talk about how there is a service imbalance that disadvantages especially women assistant professors. Tying this sentiment with the lack of time for research, especially as we have very few research assistants to help. Most Ph.D. students are assigned to teach, unless getting [a] special university grant or a very rare full research scholarship, we do not get assigned research assistants to help with conducting studies.

Racial and Ethnic Equity

While the majority of survey participants were white, the survey results are an indication that intersectional challenges facing women of color in the U.S. academia related to race/ethnicity are significant issues in the 21st century. This is not surprising given the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data cited in the literature review shows people of color are less likely to be professors although the student population is increasingly diverse.

Discussion and conclusion

Extant literature and this study show women have made some progress as faculty members in journalism and mass communication programs at universities in the United States over the past three decades. Yet, data for this study points to the need for further exploration to ascertain if there is a gap between the number of women enrolled in journalism and mass communication programs vs. similar numbers of women representation in faculty and leadership roles. This study provides evidence that stronger support systems or ongoing mentoring networks are needed to nurture and grow more early-career women faculty members. Nearly 13% of survey respondents said they have been promoted since

participating in the WFMF program, and nearly 21% have received tenure. However, survey respondents consistently said women academics still face barriers to advancement and cited high service expectations, juggling work/family/life tensions, and the lack of mentoring, and lack of research time as significant issues in the 21st century.

While all study participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to join the WFMF program, some participants said they want and need more than a four-hour workshop to help them navigate their academic careers. Given technology and the rise of remote mentoring networks, at least two Zoom workshops with senior scholars on topics identified by the cohort gathered during the annual AEJMC conference should be developed in the year that follows. Also, it is recommended that the Kopenhaver Center considers developing a digital peer mentoring model or coaching service for early career academic faculty members similar to digitalwomenleaders.com, which was founded by Katie Hawkins-Gaar and targets women working in digital news. More than 120 women around the world now serve as coaches with digitalwomenleaders.com, and they provide half-hour counseling sessions on a variety of issues ranging from how to negotiate a raise to a career transition. Women who have served as Kopenhaver Center Fellows or speakers could be recruited to serve as mentors by topic or scholarly area of expertise to help address the needs of junior faculty.

Feedback from early-career women faculty who have participated in the WFMF program at the annual AEJMC pre-conference workshop suggests the WFMF program has helped them grow professionally and personally. Some of the findings could be indicative of the concerns of the group as a whole since those participating in the workshops represent a small sample of colleges and universities nationally. This study does provide a baseline history and documents how effective the Kopenhaver Center Fellows perceive the WFMF program, which is an annual workshop, after seven years of operation.

The top topics identified by study participants can help inform future programming, and a Slack channel or some other social media forum would be useful to help those navigating issues ranging from grant writing to moving into administration. Future research opportunities should include tracking the accomplishments, career paths (including tenure, promotions, job titles), and salaries of cohort participants over the next decade or so. This information would be beneficial to administrators, faculty members, students, and potential sponsors interested in workforce equity and progress in journalism and mass communication programs in U.S. colleges and universities.

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