Research Articles

Female Faculty in Higher Education
The Politics of Hope

Chantell LaPan
Camilla Hodge
Deidre Peroff
Karla A. Henderson
North Carolina State University

Abstract

The number of women in higher education is growing. Yet, challenges exist for female faculty in the academy. The purpose of this study is to examine the strategies used by female faculty in parks, recreation, sport, tourism, and leisure programs as they negotiate their careers in higher education. Data were collected using an online survey that was distributed to university women who subscribed to recreation-related listservs. Responses to open-ended questions in the survey indicate that female faculty negotiate three types of politics associated with careers in higher education: charting a career path (i.e., the politics of higher education), addressing workplace dynamics (i.e., the politics of gender), and having it all (i.e., the politics of caring). Together, the means for negotiating these politics were associated with hope and with the importance of faculty members' acquisition of social capital.

Keywords: *Academia, discrimination, grounded theory, life balance, networks*

Although changes have occurred, the status and equal opportunity of women in society continues to be an issue. For example, a recent report by the U.S. Department of Commerce (2011) documented that younger women are more likely than younger men to have a college or a master's degree. These gains in education and labor force involvement, however, have not translated into wage equity as women at all levels of education only earned about 75% of what their male colleagues earned in 2009. Further, women continue to bear major responsibility for raising and supporting children, which affects opportunities in the workplace regardless of the jobs or occupations women hold (O'Neil, Hopkins, & Bilimoria, 2008).

Within college and university settings, the number of female faculty is growing (Sussman & Yssaad, 2005). Although women in higher education are privileged in many ways not only in the U.S. and Canada but also around the world, they appear to struggle with the same issues faced by other women in society (e.g., lower wages, lack of status, and work/life balance; Shapiro, Ingols, & Blake-Beard, 2008). Commonalities among female faculty may be important to examine in identifying how these women negotiate their career development, which may be useful for other women in the academy as well as the next generation of female faculty entering into higher education.

The purpose of this study was to examine the strategies used by female faculty in parks, recreation, sport, tourism, and leisure programs as they negotiated their careers in higher education. A women's career development model, which acknowledges the complexities of women's lives related to work and life balance, provided the guiding framework for our study. This study was a follow-up to quantitative research done by Henderson, Rich, Harrolle, and Moretz (2011). Henderson et al. found that female faculty in parks and recreation were generally satisfied with their careers, but also described concerns about life balance as well as gender equity. Our study used qualitative data to further examine the strategies that women used to negotiate the issues they faced. Moving beyond the description uncovered by Henderson et al., this qualitative study provided an opportunity for women faculty to explain in their own words how their career development had unfolded as well as to offer suggestions for women in, or aspiring to be in, faculty positions.

Background

Career development for women often is complicated because of the complex factors that embed their lives in a larger context of work and family (O'Neil et al., 2008). Career development generally has been based on dominant male-defined constructions of work and career success (Shapiro et al., 2008). Shapiro et al. further suggested that career success traditionally focuses on the primacy of work in people's lives and the idea of leadership and upward mobility. In higher education, career success often is marked by a fast track to tenure and promotion and the assumption of administrative leadership (Ferber, 2003).

A women's career development model often is influenced by current position, family responsibilities, organizational structures and policies, academic and cultural background, and individual situations (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1995). These aspects take into account the complexities of most women's lives regarding work and family. For example, women's social roles associated with family are an important part of this model as are work issues such as mentoring, networking, sexual harassment, the glass ceiling, personal development, relational development, leadership, and human resources policies (O'Neil et al., 2008). O'Neil et al. noted that women's careers represented a variety of patterns regardless of the profession.

This career model is also connected to an implicit feminist framework. Feminism is about social change and empowering women as well as other traditionally disenfranchised groups to obtain equity in political, social, and economic opportunities (Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw, & Freysinger, 1996). Feminist research related to aspects of leisure as well as professional development has gone

through stages ranging from the invisibility of women to the use of a gender analysis for interpreting all research about women and girls (Henderson, 1994). The outcome of feminism applied to research regardless of the topic is the potential for social change. Thus, identifying problems is a necessary first step, but moving beyond the descriptions to possible negotiation strategies and social change is essential.

Some of the problems that female faculty face in higher education include the tendency to devalue female scholars and their work, the dearth of successful role models, and the unequal distribution of women in different departments (Ferber, 2003; Roach & El-Khawas, 2010). Additional challenges relate to overcoming stereotypes and the resultant gender bias, finding women who have successfully balanced work and family, having a supportive spouse, and finding collaborators. Having supportive environments has emerged in much of the literature about women in higher education (Hartley & Dobele, 2009). Easterly and Ricard (2011), for example, examined why female faculty leave academia and discovered that unconscious bias and gender schemas were the major reasons, which required deliberate interventions such as modifying the promotion and tenure process, providing support groups, and educating everyone that gender bias continues to exist even though these issues have been evident for some time.

Gerdes (2003) asked senior female faculty what advice they would give female students and women beginning careers in higher education. The advice was categorized as cautions, facts of life, life choices, coping strategies, and personal wisdom. These senior women were optimistic about the progress that had been made and saw themselves as able to help younger colleagues to be successful in higher education. They suggested that women have much more control over their lives than they sometimes think regarding their career development.

In the parks, recreation, sports, tourism, and leisure fields, exploratory quantitative research with a smaller sample of female faculty who were members of the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) provided a catalyst for beginning to explain women's career development (Henderson et al., 2011). Similarities were found across the NRPA faculty ranks related to job satisfaction, attitudes toward job, life balance perceptions, and gender equity. Henderson et al. recommended that further research should be conducted to understand more about what their findings might mean. Their recommendation was the impetus for our study.

Methods

Our study design employed an online survey to examine female faculty members' strategies used to negotiate their careers in higher education. The focus of this study, however, addressed only the qualitative responses from the online survey. The two questions that provided the most insight were:

1. What have been the greatest challenges/barriers to you as a woman in higher education, and how have you negotiated them?
2. What advice would you give to women faculty entering higher education?

Since the survey included other close-ended questions, the responses are summarized below to provide a context for the interpretive focus of our analysis.

Participants

All female faculty members that could be identified from available listservs (i.e., SPREnet, WomenLeisure, TRInet, and a Sports Management list) were invited to participate in the study. Since

a listserv for women did not exist related to recreation resource management, additional women in this area were also identified and invited. Unfortunately the sports list did not get distributed widely so the respondents were mostly from parks, recreation, tourism, and leisure specialties. Individuals were invited to respond if they identified as a woman who held a full-time faculty position at any level at an institution of higher education. For this study we chose not to include part-time/adjunct faculty or graduate students unless they were also full-time faculty members. The total number of listserv contacts could not be determined so a response rate was not calculated. Because the focus was on the qualitative data, the patterns that were uncovered were of more importance than the response rate.

A total of 196 female faculty members completed the online survey. The average age was 46 years with a range from 28-75 years. Three-fourths indicated they were from North America (i.e., U.S., Canada) with the remainder representing other countries around the world. The vast majority (90%) self-identified as *White*. More than half (56%) lived with a male partner with 10% who lived with a female partner, and 26% who were single. The average range for their yearly salary was U.S. $70,000-80,000. The rank (i.e., rank systems are not the same worldwide but have an equivalency to the North American system) was 18% full-time instructors/lecturers, 31% assistant professors, 29% associate professors, and 22% full professors. More than half (57%) were tenured with almost an equal number in tenure track (20%) or non-tenure track (22%) positions. The respondents indicated that they worked an average of 50 hours a week. The average household size was two people, and three-fourths of the women did not have children living in their homes. Almost one in five faculty members regularly cared for an older or disabled relative. While these statistics provide an overview of the women who responded, our data were not analyzed to compare demographic characteristics. All quantitative data from the online survey were statistically analyzed with virtually no differences found related to rank or type of university (i.e., public or private; research intensive or teaching intensive; Henderson, 2012a, 2012b).

Other statistical findings from the quantitative data provide an additional context for understanding more about this sample and the results of the qualitative analyses. About 76% said they were satisfied or very satisfied with their current position, with 14% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, and 10% neither. About half (51%) said they occasionally thought about leaving higher education while one-third indicated that they never thought about leaving. More than half (56%) of the women believed that they had had the same opportunities to advance as men (Henderson, 2012a; 2012b).

Procedures and Data Analysis

Data were collected in fall 2011 via Survey Monkey. An email was sent to all members of the identified lists with instructions for accessing the survey. A follow-up reminder was sent 10 days after the first email to encourage individuals to respond.

The open-ended responses were downloaded into an Excel file and then uploaded into MAXQDA for data organization and analysis. Methodological techniques for coding and analysis suggested by Charmaz (2006) and Henderson (2006) were used. We applied inductive analysis and used line-by-line open coding to begin the analysis. All data were coded by at least two researchers to ensure coding dependability. Once we agreed on our interpretation of the coding, the open codes were discussed collectively, which led to axial coding. Memos also were used to organize the analysis. During axial coding, 12 preliminary categories emerged: negotiating politics of higher education, negotiating bias/discrimination, choosing to stay, thinking about leaving higher education, negotiating change, feeling conflicted, no perceived challenges due to being a woman, feeling constrained, feeling valued, balancing responsibilities, providing support, and finding support. These data as well as coder diagrams and memos set the foundation for selective coding to identify the overarching themes and

potential theoretical frameworks that were common to the data regarding career development.

Trustworthiness of the analyses was addressed in several ways. The research team for this project was all female and included both a faculty member and graduate students. Potential biases within the research team (i.e., all members either had direct experience or were aspiring to careers in higher education) were acknowledged and discussed. These biases were minimized by the systematic approach to coding, which involved both independent and collective coding, and the frequent discussions among the researchers regarding the emerging themes. We felt having an experienced faculty member as well as newer perspectives from future faculty provided a balance in the data analysis.

Results

Three broad themes emerged related to strategies for negotiating the careers of female faculty. We concluded that each of these themes related to politics. We interpreted politics as the relationships between people and/or organizations that involve power, influence, and conflict. The three themes related to charting a career path (i.e., the politics of higher education), addressing workplace dynamics (i.e., the politics of gender), and having it all (i.e., work and life balance referred to as the politics of caring). These themes resulted in theorizing about the politics of hope (Parry, 2003) related to social capital (Putnam, 2000) for women faculty members. Figure 1 provides a summary diagram of our themes, descriptions of the themes, and integration of the results.

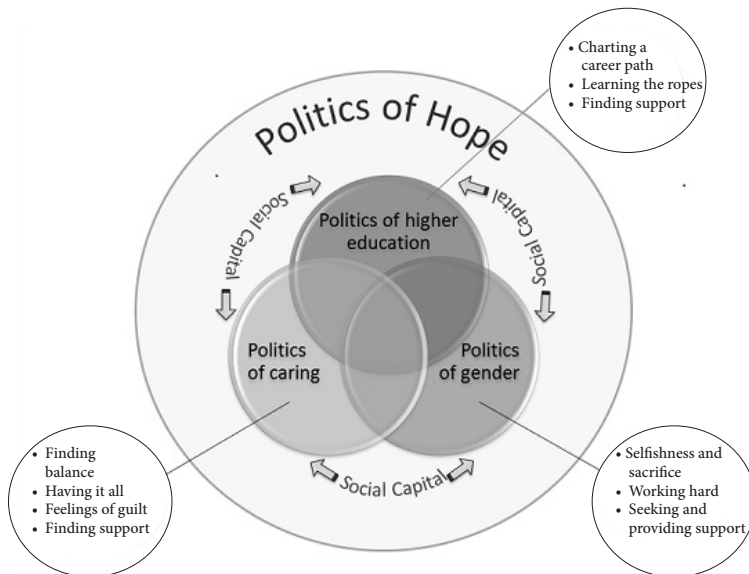*Figure 1.* Model of the Politics of Hope for Women Faculty Members

Charting a Career Path: Politics of Higher Education

The politics of higher education defined as power, influence, and conflict may pose a challenge for both men and women. However, for women the power relationships that exist may be exacerbated due to expectations regarding career paths. For example, one 40-year-old associate professor wrote:

> I think that I would also want a woman to know that you cannot expect to have the same career trajectory as a man (particularly if you have a family) and you should fight not to be evaluated on the trajectory of a man.

A 28-year-old assistant professor observed, "The standard of tenure was made when men were the workers but tenure has not been renegotiated as women have become more prominent in the field." Sometimes women perceived that they had to give up more to advance than men. According to a 42-year-old research associate professor, "I do not have an equal opportunity to be promoted [to full professor] because I am not willing to spend the extra time away from family to write more publications."

In addition, female faculty members saw both the positive and negative aspects of working in higher education as a career choice. A 42-year-old lecturer noted:

> Flexibility and time off are great perks, but understand that advancement is difficult if you are a mom. If you can negotiate tenure "hold" until your children are in middle school, then do it. Good luck with that.

Similarly, a 59-year-old associate professor said that she had negotiated "…charting a career path that would allow me to develop a rewarding career as a faculty member and be an active participant in my children's lives."

In traversing their career paths, female faculty found "learning the ropes" to be a challenge, but "successfully" doing so helped them to navigate their career trajectory. *What* women needed to learn about working in higher education and *how* they learned appeared essential. Respondents identified "knowing what you are getting into" and getting a "good handle on the 'rules of the road'" as fundamental aspects of higher education. The amount of time that was devoted to being a faculty member was discussed. An associate professor advised:

> Before getting into higher education, you need to have a clear picture of what is expected …and what it takes to get tenure at a university. The job is not just teaching a few classes, advising students, and going to a few committee meetings. While a university schedule has built in flexibility, the demands to get grants and publish can make the hours a faculty member spends on her job go well over 40 hours a week.

Finding professional and personal support emerged as a strategy that cut across the politics women faced in higher education. A 50-year-old full professor described how her department was composed entirely of men so she formed a support group on campus for faculty members who were mothers. In addition to finding support, respondents suggested that finding mentors to guide them through learning the ropes was an important strategy. Some female faculty recommended approaching both male and female colleagues (e.g., "find good mentors, male and female!" and "make sure you are socialized well and possibly by a male"). Other respondents focused on networking as suggested by this 37-year-old associate professor, "Find a network of female faculty to support you. Seek out women in leadership positions and get their advice on how to navigate the system." A 48-year-old associate professor suggested that if one's department was not supportive, "find mentors (both male and female) outside your department." Thus, an ideal support for charting a career in higher education seemed to combine support from peers and administrators both within and outside the home department.

Many women emphasized "working hard" to meet the expectations of academia, and one female faculty member claimed, "you have to work harder as a woman to prove yourself." Working hard related to career development for women sometimes resulted in a tension between selfishness and sacrifice. Women defined selfishness in a sense that, "in the end, no one will take care of you; you have to take care of yourself." An example of sacrifice was illustrated in this statement, "the personal/family/social networks/friends sacrifices are more or less expected to be made [in order] to succeed." Some female faculty members also mentioned foregoing personal care and needs like exercise, sleep, personal time, and leisure to achieve tenure. Specifically, one assistant professor noted that trying to meet the expectations of tenure-track work (i.e., teaching and writing) while pregnant and raising children had been her greatest challenge. She explained, "I have negotiated by continuing to press on!" while simultaneously admitting, "I do the best I can but have had to lower my professional aspirations/expectations."

The politics of higher education that expect faculty members to be selfish and make sacrifices to achieve tenure and career advancement sometimes resulted in feelings of guilt. A 31-year-old assistant professor described her situation:

> If anything I would say that I feel a lot of "work guilt" at not spending more time with my partner or being irritable when I am stressed out (and uprooting him and moving him halfway across the world just to find a job).

Another 42-year-old post doc noted she was "always feeling guilty if at work and should be at home. And feeling guilty when at home knowing I have more work to do." One strategy for negotiating feelings of guilt was offered from a 38-year-old assistant professor who wrote, "just do the things that count and ignore the rest (don't feel guilty as plenty of men do this, too). Sell yourself beyond embarrassment as men do this all the time."

Charting a career path and navigating the politics of higher education and career advancement had no instant solutions. The opportunities in higher education provided greater flexibility than in many other professional careers, but the threat of not getting tenure or even getting rehired as is the case for faculty members who are not on tenure track, required paying attention to the politics as well as dynamics in the workplace related to gender.

Addressing Workplace Dynamics: The Politics of Gender

The politics of gender were present in structural and organizational challenges in higher education workplaces. Many of these challenges appeared to stem from unconscious and conscious bias and discrimination. As noted in the literature review, discrimination issues are not exclusive to female faculty, but many people expect higher education to be an enlightened environment. Unfortunately, despite the gains women faculty have made with greater numbers in PRSTL (Bialeschki & Irven, 2001), the women in our study perceived that colleges and universities are dominated by men.

Regardless of the rank, many women had similar perceptions about workplace dynamics. For example, a 42-year-old assistant professor stated that the "system is still run by men who tend to promote men." A 62-year-old full professor added, "There still exists the good ol' boy mentality--men often do not take women seriously." Further, a 30-year-old assistant professor observed a "good ole boy network where men could get away with bullying, teaching fewer classes, and coopting power within the department."

Women also encountered persistent gender inequalities in the workplace most often in the form of fighting for equal pay, coming up against a glass ceiling, and confronting female stereotypes.

Perceptions about unequal pay differed among the respondents. Some faculty did not see differences in pay based on gender. However, one 61-year-old instructor described her experiences:

> My greatest challenge has been handling a department chair who doesn't relate professionally to women. I once asked why I had been overlooked for a raise, and his response was, "I didn't know you needed the money. He then added that he'd heard that my husband did some kind of social work...and added that real men support their families.

Being single was not an advantage regarding salary equity issues. A full professor noted, "Single women are often taken advantage of since many administrators feel we do not need the money and have no life and responsibility. Therefore, we can work more for less." This same woman observed, "Merit appears to be distributed to males more often than females." Salary appeared to be contingent on each department's or each university's political climate.

Several women also perceived that a glass ceiling or even worse, a concrete ceiling, existed regarding promotion and advancement. A 59-year-old associate professor wrote that the "concrete ceiling still prevents qualified women from tenured, leadership and higher-salaried positions." Another associate professor argued that women being "pushed toward administration and away from research positions" represented "a reverse glass ceiling." Interestingly, one woman felt pressured to take on administrative roles she did not necessarily want. This assistant professor felt "forced into an administrative position without title, recognition or compensation because 'She is nice enough to do it.'" It appears in this case that this woman was given a service role with no real influence or power rather than a meaningful administrative position.

Gender stereotypes were mentioned by respondents and often resulted in not being recognized or taken seriously. A 39-year-old associate professor felt she had "to be 10 times better at my job because I am a woman and can never outwardly struggle or fail because it will be dismissed as incompetence." Another associate professor described:

> …male faculty who had to leave the office in the afternoon to pick up children ("what a good dad!") received department support for their actions. Conversely, the scholastic seriousness of women who did the same or took time off to adopt children was questioned.

Stereotypes related to gender biases and discrimination, and the politics of gender appeared to influence women's career trajectory as well as their abilities to maintain a satisfying life.

Many female faculty members, however, described ways they had addressed some of the workplace dynamics related to gender politics. Many women sought out other women in higher education in an effort to build social networks to create a community and to obtain guidance. These networks enabled women to address and negotiate gender bias, stereotypes, and discrimination. Several women noted that addressing perceived discrimination took time away from other personal and professional duties including research productivity and home-based responsibilities. Nevertheless, finding support was perceived as critical to success.

Not only did female faculty members seek support, but several expounded on the importance of *providing* support. A 62-year-old full professor recommended, "Help other women be successful. Work hard! Be compassionate and friendly." Another respondent dealt with the glass/concrete ceiling by mentoring other female colleagues. A 34-year-old assistant professor found that giving support helped to navigate biases due to gender and sexual identity:

I'm the only out faculty at a small private school. To be the only GLBT person on campus as well as a woman has been lonely at times. I've continued to be supportive of the student group and have tried to be a good role model. I have also put together a proposal for partner benefits. There are a number of other faculty who are supportive, but are also hesitant to upset the apple cart.

Most of the respondents noted, however, that finding or giving support as well as mentoring needed to be intentional and purposive. Aligning with some women who were perceived as "bitter," who "buck the system," or who "harp on their old experiences" was perceived as being more harmful than good when trying to cope with workplace dynamics. Women in this study recognized that "the old girls" could be "as destructive as the old boys." One woman emphasized avoiding getting "entangled in their [other women's] past" but instead to move forward with a positive attitude.

Many women emphasized the importance of being mentored, but also expressed the difficulty in finding female mentors. One young faculty member lamented "not having well rounded female role models in academics" had been her biggest challenge. Further, a few female faculty members believed their female colleagues could occasionally be unsupportive especially if they felt they had made it on their own and believed others should do the same. Some women felt other women could be their own worst enemy if they followed a model of competition. A full professor offered, "Until women begin to mentor and assist other women we will continue to look like 'a cat fight' and won't be taken seriously."

Nevertheless, some women were able to use their status or position to confront the politics of gender at their respective institutions. The politics of gender that emerged in addressing workplace dynamics in higher education were complex. The mere presence of female faculty in academia or in positions of power did not necessarily lead to better experiences for women in the academy. More role models who had successfully negotiated their professional and personal careers were desired. Further, one woman summed up a sentiment by stating that she hoped to see more women in higher education, "redefine power, promote collegiality and interdisciplinary work, and support their colleagues, both male and female." Addressing workplace dynamics, however, was incomplete without also considering all aspects of the career development model.

Having it All: The Politics of Caring

Despite social change in the past decades, many women, including academics, continue to work a *double shift* (Hochschild, 1989). In addition to professional paid responsibilities (i.e., teaching, research, and service), many female faculty have unpaid personal work responsibilities at home (e.g., child rearing, housekeeping, caring for aging relative) or in the community (e.g., school volunteer; church work). Even if partners or children are not part of a woman's home life, everyone has the need for a life outside of work related to taking care of and preserving one's mental health. We considered these dilemmas as examples of the politics of caring. Therefore, we defined the politics of caring as maintaining high levels of personal and professional investment that often resulted in perceived tension between sacrifice and selfishness.

The concept of *having it all* appeared in many responses with a range of perceptions regarding whether it was possible or not. Respondents defined having it all as succeeding professionally (i.e., publishing, earning tenure, being a good teacher and advisor) while simultaneously being an invested mom, spouse, partner, caregiver, friend, and/or community citizen. One 52-year-old associate professor admitted, "Finding work/life balance will be increasingly challenging, especially with a family at an R1 institution—hats off to those who have managed it all!"

Many women wondered whether it was possible to have it all while others stated it was not possible. Yet, some faculty members hoped that by seeing other women succeed in the concurrent caring roles of faculty members, moms, partners, or caregivers, they could reach the same level of achievement. For example, one woman stated that she wanted to see "a female role model who has done it all…kids, family, career, tenure, research, broken the glass ceiling…I want to know that I can do it all and I want to see someone who has done it all."

The politics of caring for women in higher education also seemed to raise issues of guilt, as was described earlier, in coming to terms with the balance between sacrifice and selfishness at work and at home. One respondent who described herself as a "mom and a professor" reported "feeling guilty about not being at work or not being with my kids." Similarly a 52-year-old professor indicated that her greatest challenge in higher education had been balancing home and work and indicated that "this balance needs to be monitored continuously." Another middle-aged professor cautioned, "I hate to even say this, but if you haven't had kids yet, wait until after tenure. Juggling both has been very difficult for many people." One woman recognized, however, that "if I end up too unbalanced or sacrificing too much for my career, then I will leave academia." Another respondent reported contracting for "services such as cleaning and gardening" as a way to guard her personal time.

Similar to addressing career paths and workplace dynamics, many female academics explained that finding balance and attempting to have it all was facilitated by support networks both on campus as well as externally. An associate professor stated she "had to develop a support structure that would allow [her] to carry out faculty duties as well as family responsibilities." A 60-year-old associate professor argued, "You must have a supportive environment at home and work to be successful." Similarly, another respondent's advice to future female faculty was that it is, "difficult to combine [work] with child-raising, but possible with a supportive partner."

Perceiving oneself as having it all and feeling satisfied with both work and home environments often meant seeking work climates that created a supportive environment. For example, one individual recommended:

> At hiring time, be more intentional about aligning with a faculty group that embraces similar values—find out before you are hired what the underlying values are in a department and whether that university has any progressive committees such as work-life balance.

A 40-year-old associate professor summed her perspective on having it all by stating, "Find a balance that works for you and your situation and own it." All female faculty in higher education need to consider all the politics (i.e., power and relationships) influencing their academic life.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the strategies used by female faculty in parks, recreation, sport, tourism, and leisure programs as they negotiated their careers in higher education. The results indicated that the politics of higher education, gender, and caring had to be negotiated by female faculty in higher education. Many women felt challenged by the traditional career development model in higher education, the dynamics of the university workplace, and in finding work and life balance in their lives.

We acknowledge that some of the expressed perceptions of the women regarding higher education appeared to be applicable to both women and men such as negotiating the tenure process. Further, a few women did not feel the challenges they faced in higher education were due to gender. Many commonalities, nevertheless, were described related to how these female faculty members

addressed the challenges of higher education. The three themes overlapped and collectively they were better understood by theorizing the strategies and negotiation processes. Two frameworks seemed most appropriate in interpreting these results: the politics of hope and securing social capital.

The Politics of Hope

The findings indicated that many female faculty members perceived that they were constrained and challenged in their careers, but most women also offered coping strategies associated with the concerns surrounding career paths, workplace dynamics, and balancing life. The politics of hope can be understood as the social change that is possible in higher education to address power, influence, and conflict, which have provided challenges for academic women. Our findings suggested to us that a politics of hope was implicit in the voices of the female faculty members.

Parry (2003) described the politics of hope as a possible sixth emerging phase of feminist research in leisure studies. Beyond scholarship focused on gender analysis, she suggested that research should not focus only on understanding how women live their lives, but should focus on how to break down and challenge the structures imposed on women. We interpreted Parry's recommendation liberally to mean that social change is possible within higher education. Further, the focus should not only be on describing the issues surrounding women's career development, but also how to constructively address the challenges. We believe this study has offered a direction that can give hope for the future, even though more work needs to be done on the part of the faculty members, their life partners, male colleagues, and university administrators (Henderson et al., 2011). Several possibilities for hope were evident through these analyses.

First, career development models have traditionally focused on the centrality of paid work in people's lives. This model of linear, hierarchical progression has been imposed on women, and has often been an uncomfortable fit because of outside demands on their lives. The reality is that these outside demands also impact men, but have usually been discounted since paid work is supposed to be their central focus. This male model has also imposed the notion that women have to choose between being professionally successful on a career ladder or personally fulfilled. *Having it all* is a challenge for both women and men, but it is not insurmountable if structural support is in place in higher education for everyone.

Second, gender politics remain in higher education as evidenced by the majority of female faculty who indicated that although conscious discrimination had been addressed to some extent, unconscious discrimination remained somewhat insidious. A career in academia has universal expectations for most women and men (e.g., earning tenure, being productive), but women appeared to experience and perceive these challenges differently than men because of the gender implications. The ways that female faculty made sense of their gendered situation in higher education can lead to what Sexwale (1994) called "more holistic strategies for transformation" (p. 58). The strategies that women articulated had implications for making universities humane places for female and male faculty as well as students (e.g., mentoring opportunities). The politics of hope were embodied frequently in the ways that gaining social support from other professionals as well as family and friends was described related to social capital.

Securing Social Capital

In our study, academic women leaned heavily on the social support networks and mentor relationships they had developed, or hoped to develop, as they negotiated the challenges of higher education. Mentoring and building social support networks generally fall within the construct of social capital, or the creation of personal contacts and career-based relationships and attachments (Cocchiara, Kwesiga, Bell, & Baruch, 2010). Both professional and personal relationships seemed

to provide female faculty with resources to address career opportunities, workplace dynamics, and personal balance. A sense of empowerment existed in knowing and interacting with other women who had similar experiences in higher education.

Putnam (2000) discussed two types of social capital that women implicitly referred to in their responses: bonding and bridging ties. Bonding ties are those relationships and connections established among individuals or groups who are generally similar. For example, female faculty who noted the importance of purposively seeking out other women for mentoring or support were engaging in building bonding ties. Bonding ties also applied to family relationships, and were crucial to perceived social support and a sense of identity professionally and personally.

Bridging ties are the connections and relationships that are formed across socially different individuals or groups (i.e., social class, race, or religion). Examples of bridging ties included women seeking male mentors, or relationships with faculty in other departments. According to Thieme and Siegmann (2010), "bridging relations between friends, colleagues and associates may play a crucial role in strengthening resilience" (p. 721). Bonding and bridging ties seem to be correlated because individuals who are high in bonding ties are also likely to be high in bridging ties (Halpern, 2005). Social capital can provide female academics with benefits such as physical and emotional well-being as well as academic and professional advantages that enabled them to address the challenges they faced in their academic careers (Steinfield, Ellison, & Lampe, 2008).

The results of our study confirmed previous findings regarding the challenges of being a professional woman as well as working in higher education (e.g., Easterly & Ricard, 2011; Gerdes, 2003; Henderson et al., 2011). Although men were not asked to participate in this study, many women compared themselves to men and saw their experiences in higher education differently. However, our study explicated the problems women saw—and more importantly offered some possibilities for the future related to the role of social capital and the potential for social change within a politics of hope. Acknowledging that politics exist in numerous ways in higher education can provide a means to examine not only what individuals can do to address the situation but also what groups of women as well as the social climate of the workplace (e.g., organizational structures and policies) can contribute.

Implications

The women in our study described how they experienced and negotiated the challenges associated with their careers in higher education. Although they believed their experiences were different than men's, the suggestions they offered for themselves also could make higher education institutions better for everyone. The admonition to create a more supportive and adaptive academic environment is not new. However, since these problems continue to exist, some specific suggestions might be offered based on the lived experiences of our respondents.

First, the concept of charting a career path suggested a need for creating a pathway to career success (e.g., tenure) that accounts for the female career model rather than focusing solely on the traditional male-centric career model. Specific applications would be allowing tenure hold for caregiving (i.e., for young children or disabled/elderly family members) without penalty either implied or explicit.

Second, establishing clear guidelines and expectations for performance that explain provisions like *stopping the tenure clock* could benefit both men and women. Based on the responses we analyzed, female faculty wanted to understand the expectations and requirements so they could prioritize and flex their work and home responsibilities. In other words, women who clearly understand their professional responsibilities may be more successful in balancing with their personal responsibilities, and may have greater ability to spend time in other roles such as mother, spouse, or partner.

Third, administrators as well as all faculty members (i.e., women and men) might consider how they can create a supportive work environment in which men and women have access to professional and collegial networks within and outside departments. The typical model of higher education assumes that all faculty members are responsible for themselves. The female faculty members in our study, however, recognized they could not be successful without others. Asking for help is not a weakness and the development of bonding and bridging social capital must be encouraged. Finding meaningful mentor-mentee relationships with other faculty and being intentional in selecting relationships with others can create avenues for personal and professional interaction.

Finally, providing structural support for interdisciplinary or team research and rewarding such research accordingly could also create a more supportive environment for female faculty, especially in research intensive universities. As noted in the earlier discussion of social capital, building bridging ties across social structures that typically divide groups of people (i.e., academic departments) not only can create opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration, but also can facilitate the creation and maintenance of professional networks, mentoring opportunities, and relationships outside of the department. From a practical perspective, establishing research centers that focus on social problems or creating research circles that involve collaboration with faculty from departments may serve as potential solutions to these challenges.

Limitations and Future Research

This research examined the strategies used by female faculty as they negotiated their careers in higher education. Several limitations, however, were evident in the study, and some of these limitations could be addressed in future research. One drawback to this study was the inability to follow-up regarding responses. The inherent design of online surveys does not allow researchers to probe, clarify, or revisit comments made by respondents. In addition, using listservs as the population for online surveys make determining the response rate difficult, if not impossible. Nevertheless, recent research (Ward, Clark, Zabriskie, & Morris, 2012) in leisure studies has shown that online surveys are as effective as paper/pencil versions, and individuals often feel their anonymity is better protected with online questionnaires. We feel this study contributed to a deeper understanding of female faculty members' perceptions of higher education because of the opportunities for anonymous written responses. Future research that involved face-to-face interviews with female faculty would allow for further follow-up and perhaps deeper probing.

Another limitation was that the data came only from faculty in PRSTL positions. Although the data seemed to confirm what other studies have found about female faculty in higher education (e.g., Easterly & Ricard, 2011; Ferber, 2003; Gerdes, 2003; Hartley & Dobele, 2009; Roach & El-Khawas, 2010), our study was focused only on PRSTL faculty who may or may not be distinct from other curricula in higher education. In addition, male faculty members were not included in this study. Women often compared themselves to men, but how men might view these issues was not part of this study. Future researchers may find that exploring the perceived challenges of male faculty members in PRSTL and other fields can provide additional information that would be useful in further understanding the collective experiences of faculty in higher education.

Further, these data were collected only from female faculty who had chosen to stay in higher education in spite of the perceived challenges. These respondents had persevered with at least some level of acceptance of the problems with higher education, and had chosen to be proactive in their strategies to address the issues. Future research, therefore, could examine the population of women who left higher education to better understand why they were unsuccessful, or chose not to try to negotiate the challenges of higher education.

In conclusion, despite academic women's gains in higher education, persistent challenges continue that were associated with charting career paths, addressing workplace dynamics, and achieving personal balance. The female faculty members recognized that these challenges related to the politics associated with higher education, gender, and caring. Nevertheless, the data supported a politics of hope suggesting that changes are occurring and strategies exist to negotiate the challenges. The possibilities of social capital seem to be a key element to addressing power and influence for women in higher education into the future. The female faculty members recognized that they needed to be proactive in their careers, but also embraced the importance of personal and professional support. Our study showed not only the commitment women had to their own success in higher education, but also showed how they were invested in ensuring that other female colleagues *learned the ropes* and had the social capital necessary to find meanings in their academic work and personal lives.

References

Bialeschki, M. D., & Irven, J. (2001). The status of professional preparation curricula in parks, recreation, and leisure studies in the United States and Canada in 2000. In M. E. Havitz & M. F. Floyd (Eds.), *Book of Abstracts 2001 Leisure Research Symposium* (p. 104). Ashburn, VA: National Recreation and Park Association.

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Sage Publications Limited.

Cocchiara, F. K., Kwesiga, E., Bell, M. P., & Baruch, Y. (2010). Influences on perceived career success: Findings from U.S. graduate business degree alumni. *Career Development International, 15*(1), 39-58.

Easterly, D. M., & Ricard, C. S. (2011). Conscious efforts to end unconscious bias: Why women leave academic research. *Journal of Research Administration, 62*, 61-73.

Ferber, M. A. (2003). Women's uneven progress in academia: Problems and solutions. In L. S. Horning, (Ed.), *Equal rites, unequal outcomes: Women in American research universities,* (pp. 281-309). Amherst, NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

Gerdes, E. P. (2003). Do it your way: Advice from senior academic women. *Innovative Higher Education, 27*(4), 253-275.

Halpern, D. (2005). *Social capital*. Malden, MA: Polity.

Hartley, N., & Dobele, A. (2009). Feathers in the nest: Establishing a supportive environment for women researchers. *The Australian Educational Researcher, 36*(1), 43-58.

Henderson, K. A. (1994). Broadening an understanding of women, gender, and leisure. *Journal of Leisure Research, 26*, 1-7.

Henderson, K. A. (2006). *Dimensions of choice: A qualitative approach to recreation, parks, and leisure research* (2nd Ed.). Venture Publishing, Inc.

Henderson, K. A. (February 2012a). *The career development of women faculty*. Workshop presented as part of the College of Natural Resources Diversity Series in Raleigh, NC.

Henderson, K. A. (October, 2012b). *Women faculty and the social-cultural nexus in higher education*. Paper presented at the National Recreation and Park Association Leisure Research Symposium in Anaheim, CA.

Henderson, K. A., & Bialeschki, D. (1995). Career development and women in the leisure services profession. *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration, 13*(1), 26-42.

Henderson, K. A., Bialeschki, M. D., Shaw, S. M., & Freysinger, V. (1996). *Both gains and gaps: Feminist perspectives on women's leisure*. State College, PA: Venture Publishing.

Henderson, K. A., Rich, S., Harrolle, M., & Moretz, J. (2011). Women faculty, higher education, and the recreation/leisure field. *Schole, 26*(2), 14-27.

Hochschild, A. (1989). *The second shift*. New York: Viking Press.

O'Neil, D. A., Hopkins, M. M., & Bilimoria, D. (2008). Women's career at the start of the 21st century: Patterns and paradoxes. *Journal of Business Ethics, 80*, 727-743.

Parry, D. C. (2003). Towards a "politics of hope": Advocating a sixth phase of feminist leisure research. *Society and Leisure/Loisir et Societe, 26*, 49-67.

Putnam, R. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Roach, V., & El-Khawas, E. (March, 2010). *Gender equity in the university: The unmet agenda*. Paper presented at the Oxford Roundtable: Women in the Academy, Oxford, England.

Sexwale, B. M. M. (1994). The politics of gender training. *Agenda, 23*, 57-63.

Shapiro, M., Ingols, C., & Blake-Beard, S. (2008). Confronting career double binds: Implications for women, organizations, and career practitioners. *Journal of Career Development, 34*, 309-333.

Steinfield, C., Ellison, N. & Lampe, C. (2008). Social capital, self-esteem, and use of online social network sites: A longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 29*(6), 434-445.

Sussman, D., & Yssaad, L. (2005). The rising profile of women academics. *Perspectives, 75-001-XIE*, 6-19. Retrieved from http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-001-x/10205/7782-eng.pdf

Thieme, S. & Siegmann, K. A. (2010). Coping on women's backs: Social capital-vulnerability links through a gender lens. *Current Sociology, 58*(5), 715-737.

US Department of Commerce (March, 2011). Women in America: Indicators of social and economic well-being. Retrieved from http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/Women_in_America.pdf

Ward, P., Clark, T., Zabriskie, & Morris, T. (2012). Paper/pencil versus online data collection: An exploratory study. *Journal of Leisure Research, 44*, 507-530.