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ABSTRACT

Higher education institutions and faculty have vested interests in fair tenure processes. We explored perceptions of fairness from the perspective of faculty who did not obtain tenure. Our 22 participants indicated that they experienced organizational justice violations related to distributive justice (fairness of decisions), procedural justice (fairness of processes), and interactional justice (fairness of interpersonal treatment), which they reported hindered their ability to succeed on the tenure track. Recognizing that women and Black, Indigenous, and people of color faculty face unique barriers on the tenure track, we explore how race and gender shaped participants' experiences in an effort to understand issues of inequity in higher education tenure and promotion processes. We conclude with a discussion of reforms that could improve perceived and actual experiences of organizational justice and equity while on the tenure track.

Recent tenure denials of faculty who identify as Black, Indigenous, or people of color (BIPOC), such as Lorgia García Peña at Harvard University, Tolu Odumosu at the University of Virginia, Ashley Woodson at the University of Missouri–Columbia, and Sibrina Collins at The College of Wooster, have reignited discussions about the fairness of the tenure process (Freeman & Ford, 2020). Achieving tenure is an important milestone in a US faculty member's career. Although many faculty successfully obtain tenure, not all do. One analysis estimates that four out of five faculty who start on the tenure track will achieve tenure (National Education Association & American Federation of Teachers, 2015). Women are less likely to be tenured and promoted than men and more likely to leave the institution pre-tenure (Chen et al., 2021; Gumpertz et al., 2017). Comparing BIPOC faculty's tenure and promotion rates with those of their white peers is more difficult due to low numbers (Gumpertz et al., 2017), but research has indicated that BIPOC faculty face unique barriers in achieving tenure (Griffin et al., 2011; Villalpando & Delgado Bernal, 2002). BIPOC faculty also continue to be under-represented at tenured ranks, with less than 12% of associate professors and less than 8% of full professors identifying as Black, Hispanic, or Indigenous/Native American (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020).

In this study, using the lens of *organizational justice*—people's perceptions of fairness in organizations (Colquitt & Greenberg, 2003)—we explored what happened for faculty who were unable to obtain tenure and promotion. Recognizing that women and BIPOC faculty face unique barriers to success (Cress & Hart, 2009; Drame et al., 2011; Turner & Myers, 2000), in an effort to better understand issues of equity in tenure and promotion, we also considered how race, gender, and the intersections of race and gender impacted our participants' experiences.

High tenure standards are in the best interest of research universities because they compete with other institutions for prestige and resources, but so is having equitable tenure and promotion processes that allow all faculty to achieve these standards (Trower, 2012). Academic programs can suffer in course offerings, rankings, and workload when faculty leave (O'Meara, 2014). Institutions lose investments from faculty recruitment and start-up packages when faculty depart before having time to offset such expenditures with grants or other productivity gains (Trower, 2012). There are also reverberations from tenure denials, particularly ones that are viewed as inequitable. Current tenure-track faculty and potential candidates for new positions may question whether they could be successful in a department that recently had a tenure denial. Thus, as institutions strive to diversify their faculty ranks, having an equitable tenure and promotion process is essential.

Our study provides important insights for creating a more equitable tenure and promotion process. We examined the experiences of an understudied group: faculty who left the university because they (1) did not get tenure or (2) resigned because they thought they would not get tenure. Few studies of faculty departure have included interviews with faculty who left an institution without tenure (for exceptions, see Matthew, 2016; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). Institutions that conduct exit interviews often shy away from interviewing faculty who did not get tenure because of legal concerns or the sensitive nature of the situation. However, by gaining insights into unsuccessful tenure cases, institutional leaders and fellow faculty can learn how to better support colleagues on the tenure track. Considering the unique barriers that women and BIPOC faculty face in obtaining tenure (Chen et al., 2021; Gumpertz et al., 2017; Villalpando & Delgado Bernal, 2002), an understanding of how race, gender, and the intersections of race and gender shape faculty's experience on the tenure track could help in developing reforms needed to recruit, retain, and advance a diverse faculty. Finally, applying the lens of organizational justice to faculty experiences allows us to explore what role equity, or inequity, played in faculty's experiences on the tenure track.

Studying the tenure process is, however, not without its limitations and challenges. Situating our study at a public research institution in the United States limited our participant pool to the faculty on the tenure track at that institution, the majority of whom identify as white. Thus, in research studies such as ours, the voices of white faculty, particularly white women, may be more present than those of BIPOC faculty. Although our study provides valuable insights into the experiences of faculty from various backgrounds who did not obtain tenure at their institution, the low representation of BIPOC faculty in research such as ours limited our ability to understand issues of inequity in tenure and promotion processes. Exploring and addressing the issues we highlight in this study is only one small step toward addressing the inequities BIPOC faculty face on the tenure track and in academia more broadly.

Organizational justice in the tenure process

Research on organizational justice and the application of this work to faculty careers and work settings (Colquitt & Greenberg, 2003; Daly & Dee, 2006; Lawrence et al., 2014) guided our work. Organizational justice has three forms: distributive justice, the perceived fairness of *decision outcomes*; procedural justice, the perceived fairness of formal or informal *processes* used to make decisions or create outcomes; and interactional justice, the perceived fairness of how one is *interpersonally treated* during the execution of organizational procedures and decisions (see Table 1 for examples; Colquitt & Greenberg, 2003).

Fairness theory arose as an attempt to integrate the three distinct components of organizational justice (distributive, procedural, and interpersonal) and broadly posits that social injustice occurs when a person is able to hold others accountable for a situation in which the person's well-being was threatened (Folger & Cropanzano, 2001). Scholars have built on fairness theory to consider global fairness because perceptions of particular situations often include more than one form (e.g., procedure and outcome; Ambrose & Schminke, 2009). We parse differences between types of organizational justice violation experienced to shed light on potential reforms but recognize that our participants

Table 1 Forms of organizational justice.

Form	Definition	Example(s)
Distributive justice	Perceived fairness of decision outcomes	Perceived fairness of whether someone was awarded tenure; perceived fairness of one's service workload
Procedural justice	Perceived fairness of the formal or informal processes used to make decisions or create outcomes	Perceived fairness of the process used to evaluate whether someone should receive tenure; perceived fairness of the way service commitments are assigned to faculty
Interactional justice	Perceived fairness of how one is interpersonally treated during the execution of organizational procedures and decisions	Perceived fairness of how a dean or department chair treats a faculty member; perceived fairness of who senior faculty ask to collaborate with them on research projects

most often experienced multiple violations simultaneously, a sort of global, general unfairness. Perceptions of fairness are also subjective. For example, faculty may disagree on who should get priority in assigning faculty to class times. Some may argue that faculty with small children need flexibility to accommodate childcare responsibilities, whereas others may believe that using seniority, a criterion everyone has the potential to achieve, is fairer.

Perceptions of the fairness of tenure policies and practices are shaped by various aspects of faculty work environments, such as equitable treatment of junior faculty, the offering of useful feedback, workplace autonomy, collegial relationships, and satisfaction with resources and support services (Lawrence et al., 2014). Most faculty literature to date has focused on procedural and distributive justice (Daly & Dee, 2006; Lawrence et al., 2014) rather than interactional justice. The issue of joint or partial responsibility of involved parties complicates the idea of interactional justice. For example, if a junior faculty perceived a lack of research collaborations as an interactional justice violation, one may ask whether senior faculty invited the junior faculty to join research collaborations. One may also question whether the junior faculty member assumed agency in reaching out to colleagues. By *agency*, we refer to assuming perspectives and taking actions to achieve a goal in a particular domain (e.g., work-life integration) and given individual, organizational, and field constraints (Campbell & O'Meara, 2014). Often, when a violation of interactional justice occurs, multiple players are implicated (O'Meara et al., 2018). Thus, any discussion of organizational justice as a whole, and interactional justice in particular, needs to consider what each involved party did to mitigate or change the situation.

Race and gender complicate perceptions of fairness, as women and BIPOC faculty face unique barriers when navigating gendered and racialized academic work environments (Cress & Hart, 2009; Drame et al., 2011; Griffin et al., 2011; Turner & Myers, 2000). Research has shown that women are less likely to perceive the tenure process as fair and are less satisfied with various aspects of their work environment (Lawrence et al., 2014). Faculty of color have reported engaging in more diversity, equity, and inclusion work than white faculty, work that is often not counted in promotion and tenure evaluation (Jimenez et al., 2019). Because perceptions of the work environment and of the tenure process are intertwined, it is important to explore not only faculty's thoughts on the tenure process, by itself, but also their overall experiences at an institution.

In this study, we wanted to understand perceptions of organizational justice, including procedural, distributive, and interactional justice, from the perspectives of faculty who left their institutions without tenure. We also considered how race and gender shaped participants' experiences, and explored whether participants assumed agency in addressing perceived injustices.

The research site: land grant university

Institutional contexts influence faculty experiences. To hold the context constant, we chose a single-case study design (Yin, 2009). Our case, Land Grant University (LGU), was in many ways representative of US public research universities. LGU was highly selective in terms of admissions, serving approximately 41,000 students (roughly 70% undergraduate), and had research expenditures of over

$500 million. At the time of this study, LGU employed approximately 2,000 full-time faculty, 59% of whom were tenured, 15% on the tenure track, and 25% in non-tenure-track positions. Sixty-four percent of tenure-track/tenured faculty identified as white, 15% as Asian American, and 11% as Black, Hispanic or American Indian/Alaska Native, and 10% as other (mixed/multi-racial, international, or did not indicate their race/ethnicity in their personnel information). Approximately 36% of tenure-track/tenured faculty were women. In a cohort analysis conducted by the institution, Black and Hispanic faculty were more likely than white and Asian faculty to be denied tenure or to withdraw during the tenure process. Once women went up for tenure, they had the same chances as men to be tenured. However, women were more likely to leave the institution pre-tenure.

LGU had an ADVANCE program funded initially by a National Science Foundation grant to support the recruitment, retention, and advancement of women and historically minoritized faculty. With approval of the institutional review board, the ADVANCE program's social science research team collected data on faculty retention and advancement, including exit interviews with faculty. We drew the data for this study from these interviews with the consent of both the institution and the participants.

Method

Interviews are a particularly effective way to understand how individuals make meaning of phenomena in their work environments (Jones et al., 2014; Maxwell, 2012). To identify potential participants, we engaged in snowball sampling utilizing a network of tenured, senior women faculty mentors to identify, on a rolling basis, faculty who had publicly announced their departure. We invited 78 leaving faculty, and 62 said yes (79% response rate). No obvious demographic pattern existed among faculty who did not respond or declined participation (e.g., they were not all women, faculty of color, or from STEM disciplines).

We conducted 60–75-minute, semi-structured interviews focused on understanding faculty's overall experiences at LGU and their decision to leave. We chose 22 of these interviews for this study because they involved faculty who were leaving LGU due to not receiving tenure or believing that they would likely not receive tenure. The 22 participants represented 12 different disciplines (STEM and non-STEM); only three (14%) identified as white men. Other participants were either white women or faculty of color (see Table 2)[1]. Eleven participants were denied tenure or withdrew during the process after a negative vote at the first level, one participant had been denied a promotion, and ten left because of their perceived poor likelihood of obtaining tenure (see Table 3).

Data analysis was concurrent with data collection, iterative, and included multiple stages of coding (Jones et al., 2014; Maxwell, 2012). We first went through transcripts to mark aspects of faculty experiences on the tenure track or related to their tenure that participants described as unfair. Drawing

Table 2 Demographics of participants.

Participant Demographics	Women		Men		Total	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Total	16	72.7	6	27.3	22	100
Race/ethnicity						
American Indian/Alaska native	0	0	0	0	0	0
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	4.5	0	0	1	4.5
Black/African American	2	9.1	2	9.1	4	18.2
Hispanic	1	4.5	1	4.5	2	9.1
White/Caucasian	11	50.0	3	13.6	14	63.6
Two or more races	1	4.5	0	0	1	4.5

Table 3 Time on tenure track and reason for leaving (*N* = 22).

Participant Demographics	2–4 Years: Perceived Poor Likelihood of Obtaining Tenure	6 Years: Perceived Poor Likelihood of Obtaining Tenure	6 Years: Denied Tenure or Withdrew After Negative Vote at Level 1	15+ Years at Associate Rank: Denied Promotion to Full
Gender				
Women	3	3	9	1
Men	2	2	2	0
Race/ethnicity				
American Indian/Alaska native	0	0	0	0
Asian/Pacific Islander	0	0	1	0
Black/African American	2	0	2	0
Hispanic	0	1	1	0
White/Caucasian	3	3	7	1
Two or more races	0	1	0	0

on our conceptual framework, we then coded these aspects as distributive, procedural, or interactional justice violations. Next, we identified the aspect of faculty work or work environment where this violation occurred (e.g., workload, relationships with colleagues, etc.). We counted the prevalence of violations in each work environment area. Finally, we identified the gender and race/ethnicity of the participants experiencing the different types of organizational justice violations.

To strengthen trustworthiness, we separately analyzed data before comparing conclusions (Maxwell, 2012). We also engaged in peer review (Maxwell, 2012) by soliciting feedback from colleagues who conduct research on faculty careers. We masked participants' identities by using pseudonyms and not sharing disciplines or specifying position titles or unique committee assignments (Jones et al., 2014). Whereas masking participants' identity was essential to maintain confidentiality, it limited our ability to share relevant contexts for some of our findings.

Our study has several limitations. First, we focused on one institution; there may be unique aspects of the work environment at LGU that shape faculty experiences. Future research should examine experiences of faculty who left an institution without obtaining tenure across different institution types. Second, 64% of our participants identified as white (50% white women and 14% white men). This is not surprising considering that 64% of tenure-track/tenured faculty at LGU identified as white. However, the low number of BIPOC faculty made it difficult to consider intersectionality in our research. Future research might focus specifically on BIPOC faculty who do not obtain tenure, to allow for a more in-depth analysis of ways race and intersections of race and other identities shape faculty experiences. Third, we have only one perspective on what happened, the faculty member's. Colleagues and administrators may have a different perspective on why someone was unsuccessful in obtaining tenure. Review of tenure portfolios and comparison of successful and unsuccessful bids would provide another view. Future research may consider getting a variety of perspectives and data points on an unsuccessful tenure bid. Finally, we explored organizational justice violations within existing tenure and promotion processes; we did not question larger structural issues related to tenure and promotion, and what is valued and rewarded in higher education systems. Future research should consider how measurements of excellence of research institutions limit the inclusion and advancement of a diverse faculty.

Perceived violations of organizational justice

Our participants experienced organizational justice violations that they felt contributed to their lack of success on the tenure track. These justice violations fell in four areas: workload, professional relationships, recognition of research, and clarity of promotion and tenure standards. We present our findings

by these areas. Within each subsection, we outline when and how faculty experienced interactional, distributive, or procedural justice violations, as well as how race and gender influenced the work environment.

Workload allocation

Eleven of the 22 participants (50%) indicated that unfair workloads created a major barrier in their success on the tenure track. Of these 11 participants, six were white women, three were women of color, and two were men of color. Some felt that their workloads were unmanageable or heavier than those of colleagues, a perceived violation of distributive justice. Others questioned the fairness of procedures used to allocate workloads or the factors considered when making workload decisions, which violated their sense of procedural justice.

Mario, a Hispanic man, shared, "I can tell you that my teaching loads were always more than the contractual loads. Service in the first couple of years was just insane. [laughs] I was put on every possible committee that you can think of." Having higher teaching loads than the contractual load and serving on more committees than others, while being expected to produce the same amount of research, made Mario perceive a distributive justice violation. Similarly, Maureen, a white woman, felt that her teaching workload was unfairly heavy. She was asked to teach honors courses and serve as the director of the graduate program while being an assistant professor. Maureen noted, "I enjoyed the . . . program, but I grew to feel some resentment that other people were not also working with students in that program, at least not other assistant professors." Like Mario, Maureen perceived her heavy workload as a distributive justice violation. However, whereas Maureen felt that her workload was unfair as compared with those of colleagues, Mario noted that all faculty in his department faced this challenge. He said, "I think it also has to do with the size of the school. We're not too many full-time faculty." Mario thus felt that this was unfair in comparison with faculty in other parts of the university.

Some participants felt unfairness present in the amount of work and the process of assigning workloads. Rachel, a white woman, highlighted two factors that she believed influenced workload assignments:

> It is very clear to me that this department is divided into the star researchers, and there is a big emphasis on the star researchers in the professors. And then there are the people who aren't respected, and we'll let them do all the other work. . . . I think it's really important to know that a woman was given these jobs because she's perceived as nurturing. . . . Willing to do the work, afraid to say no because, after all, I'm pre-tenure.

Rachel believed that her heavier workload came about because she was not viewed as a star researcher and because of her gender. She perceived both distributive and procedural justice violations because she saw unfairness in the process and outcome of workload assignments.

One might wonder why participants did not refuse workload assignments they thought were unfair or would disadvantage them in achieving tenure. Participants recognized their partial responsibility in taking on too many tasks but believed that they had limited choices, which hindered their ability to assume agency. For example, Rachel agreed to serve as the undergraduate program director "because I'm good at it, and nobody else who was around could do it." A colleague told Rachel to do the bare minimum, but Rachel said, "I can't do the bare minimum. It's a job that's important." Rachel's commitment to her students and the quality of the program conflicted with her need to spend more time on research. Similarly, Norm, a Black man, experienced a conflict between his values and what was recognized in the tenure process. He explained, "I'm unwilling to say no when a student of color comes to me . . . but that doesn't count in the tenure process, but it's important." Norm, like Rachel, felt that university leadership put him in an impossible situation and should have recognized the importance of the work he was doing.

Others tried to advocate for themselves but were unsuccessful. For example, Monica, a Hispanic woman with a heavy advising workload due to limited faculty in her program, asked the department chair for, at least, a half-time clinical faculty member for the program but was told that there were no

resources. Instead she was given a graduate assistant for ten hours a week. Monica explained, "Looking back at it, I get kind of angry because, on the one hand, this chair was very supportive of me, but on the other hand, her practices were not very supportive of me." Thus, although participants recognized their partial responsibility in taking on heavy workloads, they attributed more responsibility to the institution for leaving them with limited, unfair choices.

Professional colleague relationships

Fifteen of the 22 participants (68%) perceived organizational justice violations in their professional interactions with colleagues or administrators. Seven were white women, four were women of color, three were white men, and one identified as a man of color. Participants felt isolated, struggled to develop research collaborations, and experienced negative collegial relationships, which they perceived as impacting their ability to succeed. Many of the white women and BIPOC faculty also encountered microaggressions. These experiences seemed to fall primarily within the area of interactional justice violations, although some faculty also highlighted perceived procedural justice violations. For example, Jackson, a white man, had positive relationships with colleagues, but these did not lead to the anticipated research collaborations:

> [My mentor and I] didn't do research in the same areas. It would have been better if someone said, "Hey, let's do something. Let's get something in a journal." . . . I think that would be a more productive approach to mentoring as opposed to just sort of saying, "How's it going? How's your research going?"

Jackson believed that his department should have connected him with researchers who do similar work; he questioned the fairness of the process of setting up mentors, a procedural justice violation.

Most participants, however, particularly women and BIPOC faculty, highlighted interactional justice violations in relationships with their professional colleagues, which they often experienced as related to their identity. Justine, a Black woman, reported being discussed as a "target hire" by department colleagues and believed that colleagues saw her as having "less value" because of this. Alyssa, a white woman, recalled a conversation with an administrator after her tenure denial: "And he said, 'Well, you know, I know this tenure process has been hard on you, especially because you are a woman and you're emotional.'" Alyssa and Justine experienced these interactions as interactional justice violations because their colleagues exhibited biases against them based on an aspect of their identity.

Participants also recalled biases in their colleagues' actions. Monica, a Hispanic woman, shared that an administrator called an editor to check whether a manuscript that was in press actually existed. She recalled,

> And I was so angry. And he's like, "I know this is whatever, but [name of other colleague] told me to do this because there are some people who cheat and lie about what they've actually done or not done." But that was so insulting as a woman.

Monica experienced this mistreatment as an interactional justice violation because it was not the norm to question the validity of publications, a violation she perceived as related to her gender. She also highlighted differences in the mentoring provided to two assistant professors, both men. She said, "[Department chair] had mentored them very carefully, and nobody had mentored me very carefully." Monica again believed that the differential treatment was due to gender.

Just as with challenges related to workload, participants recognized their responsibility in establishing positive relationships, finding collaborators, and addressing interactions that they perceived as unfair. For example, Ralph, a white man who struggled to find research collaborators, said, "I'll take some amount of that blame, but I think others should get some blame, too." Ralph recognized that he could have been more proactive in seeking collaborators, but questioned his colleagues' interest in collaboration and the effectiveness of the mentoring process, which led him to place some blame on colleagues and the institution as well.

Justine, a Black woman, assumed agency by talking to her department chair about the "toxic work environment" she experienced, created by two warring colleagues, one of whom tried to get Justine to take her side. The department chair listened but, rather than addressing the situation, asked Justine what she wanted her to do. Justine shared, "You're asking a third-year professor what to do? [laughs] I'm in trouble. . . . That's when I knew that her intent wasn't to actually do something." Justine's comments show that she questioned the fairness not only of the situation but also of the way her chair responded. Justine experienced interactional justice violations with both her colleagues and with the department chair. Thus, although participants recognized their partial responsibility in creating positive and productive professional relationships, they also assigned blame to colleagues, departmental leadership, and the institution as a whole for creating unwelcoming environments, failing to address concerns, or setting up mentoring relationships in an ineffective way.

Recognition of research and scholarship

Thirteen of the 22 participants (59%) experienced a lack of recognition of their research and scholarship. Six were white women, two were women of color, two were white men, and three were men of color. Participants shared that colleagues undervalued, diminished, and disrespected their work and held narrow conceptualizations of the scholarship that qualified as legitimate for tenure, which violated their expectations of both interactional and procedural justice.

Norm, a Black man, shared a conversation about potential new hires that occurred at a faculty meeting: "Some of my colleagues were—I mean, as they usually do—saying some really disparaging things about the nature of [the candidate's] work because it was primarily qualitative and, you know, like, what could one learn from this, etc." Such conversations left Norm questioning his ability to succeed, as his work was primarily qualitative in nature.

Many participants perceived their colleagues' undervaluing of their research as particularly unfair because they had been transparent about the nature of their work during the hiring process, but women and BIPOC faculty often also wondered whether their identities impacted colleagues' perceptions of their research. For example, Emily, a white woman who identified as queer and utilized queer theory in her work, recalled,

> I even remember saying this to a male professor I was coteaching with: "Why in the hell would you all hire me if who I am is such a conflict with what you all do here on a daily basis?"

Emily felt she was treated unfairly after having been recruited, she thought, because of the nature and quality of her work but then told to change her focus. She further questioned whether her colleagues' dismissal of her work related to aspects of her identity. Likewise, Justine, a Black woman, wondered whether her identity played into colleagues' opinions of her research: "When you do critical perspectives, oftentimes, it's the stories of the people themselves, and it is dismissed. . . . it is hard to know. Are they biased because you're a person of color? A woman? [They ask,] 'Where's your theoretical framework?'" Justine felt that her work was devalued because of both its nature and content and because of her identity, an interactional justice violation.

Alyssa, a white woman, experienced violations of not only interactional but also procedural justice with regard to recognition of her research. She shared, "I was asked to put together a list of journals in my field that were top journals that I wanted to publish in, and everyone in my department was asked to do that because it is interdisciplinary." Alyssa believed that she was setting herself up for success by following departmental procedures but later found out that that was not the case. She explained, "It wasn't made clear to me until my third-year review that I was expected to publish in social science journals," not the journals she found most appropriate for her work. Alyssa, thus, also questioned the procedural justice of disregarding an established process.

Participants showed individual agency in addressing the lack of respect for their research. For example, Mario, a Hispanic man, tried to align his research with colleagues' expectations. He shared, "And so, I had to basically leave my practice aside to focus on more traditional research." Although the

traditional research was not his passion, Mario did not see another way to obtain tenure at LGU. In contrast, Norm, a Black man, tried to confront colleagues about their narrow conceptualization of good research: "During a faculty meeting, I basically said publicly, 'You know, when people make these comments about qualitative research, it makes someone who does qualitative research, like me, feel like how can I possibly be successful in this environment.'" Norm's colleagues, however, did not acknowledge that there was an issue, and the problem continued. In his third-year review, Norm received feedback suggesting that he might not get tenure. Given this and another opportunity, he decided to leave LGU. Thus, although participants like Mario and Norm showed agency in addressing the situation, they were not always successful in doing so. More importantly, participants perceived the choices they had as unfair, as they had been transparent about the nature of their work during the hiring process.

Ambiguous and changing tenure criteria

Ten of the 22 participants (45%) experienced what they considered unclear or unfair tenure criteria. Five were white women, three were women of color, and two were men of color. Participants shared that tenure criteria were unclear, continuously changing, and/or unevenly applied, which violated their perception of procedural and interactional justice.

Mario, a Hispanic man, explained, "Expectations are not clear. Tenure criteria [reform] has been in the works for, like, ever." He shared that colleagues disagreed on appropriate tenure criteria: "There's an internal conflict between people that think that you need to publish books and articles . . . that's why the expectations are not clear." Another participant, Sarah, a white woman, noted that criteria were continually changing. She explained, "Tenure in [department name] is a game with shifting goal posts, in which you as a player have limited amounts of agency, and the rules have no discernible logic." Sarah and Mario both felt that the ambiguous and changing tenure guidelines made it difficult for faculty to know what to strive for, which they perceived as a procedural justice violation.

In some departments, certain senior faculty were seen as having the ability to influence, and even sabotage, an individual's tenure process. For example, Laura, an Asian woman, shared that in small departments like hers, there is a "huge power concentration," with one or two senior faculty making decisions about others' tenure. Laura explained that in her department, it was important not only to achieve the written-down tenure criteria but also whether "you were a person that was useful to them [senior faculty]." Justine, a Black woman, heard that a senior colleague was known to have disproportionate sway on tenure decisions. She shared, "Somebody . . . took me to lunch last year . . . and said to me, 'How's it going with her? Are you making it? And oh, by the way, you can't get through the tenure process without her.'" Faculty like Laura and Justine perceived a lack of procedural justice because of certain faculty's ability to sabotage tenure processes, as well as a lack of interactional justice, as favoritism or dislike seemed to be influential in tenure decisions.

Several participants noted instances of bias or irregularity in how the process was carried out, which they perceived as occurring because of their identity. Rachel, a white woman, was told that one of her external letters "wasn't considered valid." Rachel believed that her identity influenced people's perception of the letter:

> I think the fact that [it] was not given credence has a lot to do with the fact that this person [the letter writer] is an older man who no doubt felt very kindly towards me and wanted to protect me, right? A father figure, right? He's not a father figure to me anymore than he is to his younger, male colleagues, but that's the perception.

Rachel felt that her case was disadvantaged because colleagues made biased assumptions about her relationship with a colleague, which she experienced as an interactional justice violation.

Participants often felt that they had little control over what criteria would be used to judge their work and that the criteria kept shifting. Nevertheless, many exerted agency by consulting colleagues and department chairs to clarify tenure criteria. These individuals did not always help faculty understand the tenure process better, which increased perception of the process as unfair and limited

individual agency. John, a Black man, had conversations with two department chairs about his tenure prospects, and neither expressed concerns. After these conversations, the tenure denial came as a shock to John. He explained, "I had no signs that I would not get tenured."

Other participants asked for and received guidance from colleagues and department chairs, but later found that they had been given bad advice. For example, Monica, a Hispanic woman, recalled a conversation with a colleague:

> He said, since I already had [a certain kind of scholarship] not to worry about my second [kind of scholarship]. . . . But when it came to the tenure time, they were like, "Well, where is your second [kind of scholarship]?" OK. And when I kind of confronted him . . . he said, "I don't want to talk to you anymore."

After she did not receive tenure, Monica's colleague did not want to admit that he had given her bad advice. Consequently, Monica experienced procedural and interactional justice violations, as she perceived the tenure process as unfair because of unclear criteria and felt mistreated by colleagues who provided poor guidance. Although participants like John and Monica showed agency by trying to clarify tenure standards, they felt that much of the responsibility fell with the institution and their colleagues because of unclear, ever-changing tenure standards, certain faculty's ability to sabotage the process, and unreliable advice from colleagues.

Conditions that support and undermine faculty experiences of fairness

One may argue that faculty who did not obtain tenure will be predisposed to perceive inequities in their pre-tenure experiences, especially if asked to reflect retrospectively. Perceptions of organizational justice are subjective, and in our study, we only included perspectives from one side of complex stories. In fact, participants acknowledged partial responsibility for what occurred by indicating that they could have said no to unfair workload requests, asked for collaborations, or engaged in traditional forms of research. However, similar to findings of related research on faculty careers (O'Meara, 2014), participants in our study emphasized that situations were out of their control; that circumstances made it difficult, if not impossible, to show agency; and that efforts to advocate for themselves were unsuccessful. In this section, we draw on fairness theory and theories of organizational justice to consider the conditions shaping participants' perceptions of organizational justice violations. We also consider the unique challenges faced by women and BIPOC faculty on the tenure track.

Generally, fairness theory holds that individuals deem a situation unfair when (1) they perceive a harm was done to them, (2) they feel that a different outcome would have been better, and (3) the accountable person(s) or organization could and should have done something differently (Folger & Cropanzano, 2001). Certain conditions, such as a lack of consistency, make it more likely that organizational justice violations will occur. When people expect a certain process, deviations from that process will negatively shape perceptions of fairness (Colquitt & Greenberg, 2003). Our participants described many deviations from expected procedures, such as discounting an external letter because of perceived favoritism or assigning heavier than usual teaching or service workloads. Organizational members also expect consistency in resource allocations and social justice, which Cook (1990) defined as the fair allocation of benefits and rights across dominant and nondominant groups. Our participants experienced situations as unfair when, for example, women received less mentoring than men. Consistency, however, does not mean that everyone is treated the same. Equitable processes acknowledge differences in contexts through built-in systems of flexibility (Rousseau, 2005). It is possible to have consistency when evaluating the same activity by using the same process and still take different contexts into account.

Other conditions within research university cultures that make it harder to experience fairness include a lack of clarity, transparency, and accountability. Faculty on the tenure track often crave reliable tenure criteria and instead face ambiguity (Beddoes et al., 2014; O'Meara, 2014). These faculty crave transparency about decision-making processes, whether related to their tenure decision, workload, or invitations for research collaborations (Daly & Dee, 2006; O'Meara et al., 2019,

2018), but encounter few formal processes and little or no information from their colleagues. Moreover, many different actors are involved in their work experience, from department chairs and subcommittee chairs to external letter writers. Few mechanisms exist to hold any one party accountable for things such as bad advice, rescinded invitations to collaborate, or overloaded workloads. In fact, academic reward systems have long been recognized as panopticons (Foucault, 1977; O'Meara, 2011), as faculty lack clear ways to measure their experience against others' (O'Meara et al., 2019). As such, our participants' experiences of organizational justice violations occurred when, at least from their perspective, there was a lack of consistency, clarity, and transparency. These conditions led to harm, and the university ecosystem made obtaining any accountability for that harm next to impossible.

Gender and race, and the intersection of the two, shaped the experiences of our participants. Experiences of white men differed from those of other participants in our study. Most importantly, none of the white men shared challenges related to workload or tenure criteria. Moreover, they did not encounter bias or microaggressions in collegial relationships. Two of the white men even highlighted that they had positive relationships with colleagues in their department, although these did not lead to the expected support through research collaborations. Thus, similar to existing research findings, our study highlighted unique barriers that white women and BIPOC faculty face, such as higher workload expectations connected to race and gender (Cress & Hart, 2009; Griffin et al., 2011; O'Meara et al., 2017), experiences of microaggressions related to race and gender (Griffin et al., 2011; Turner & Myers, 2000; Villalpando & Delgado Bernal, 2002), and a lack of respect for research addressing issues related to gender and race (Drame et al., 2011; Griffin et al., 2011). Our study adds to this literature by linking such experiences to unsuccessful tenure bids and thus shedding light on the serious consequences that these barriers can have on personal and professional lives.

Several of our women and BIPOC participants encountered not only barriers on the way to tenure but also inequitable, biased tenure criteria and processes. BIPOC participants, in particular, shared stories of ambiguous tenure criteria or unwritten rules set by powerful senior colleagues or administrators who were reported as disproportionately shaping tenure decisions. Such unwritten expectations, which allow discrimination and bias to enter the tenure process, can result in BIPOC faculty with outstanding research, teaching, and service records struggling on the tenure track (Matthew, 2016).

What is valued and measured in the tenure process often did not align with the work that women and BIPOC faculty were asked or felt compelled to do, which led to heavy workloads. Gender and race shaped these workloads in different ways. Being seen as "nurturing" or "good at it" meant women were asked to take on or assigned heavier teaching and service workloads (O'Meara et al., 2017). BIPOC faculty reported being asked to serve on committees to add to the committees' diversity (Brayboy, 2003; Jimenez et al., 2019). BIPOC women, thus, were particularly vulnerable to being assigned heavy workloads due to their gender and race and the intersection of the two. Race also shaped faculty's reasons for agreeing to heavier workloads. Whereas white women and BIPOC faculty emphasized their commitment to students, a program, or other "important" work, faculty of color also emphasized a commitment to supporting students of color at their institution. Considering the low representation of BIPOC faculty at LGU, such a commitment could add considerable time to one's workload.

Gender and race seemed to be particularly salient in interactional justice violations. Similar to other stories of women and BIPOC faculty (e.g., Niemann et al., 2020; O'Meara et al., 2020), our white women and BIPOC participants shared many instances of perceived interactional justice violations, including microaggressions. Such microaggressions not only took a toll on participants' emotional well-being but, at times, led to very real consequences on the tenure track, such as the value of one's research being questioned.

Overall, race, gender, and the intersection of race and gender shaped participants' organizational justice experiences on the tenure track. To retain and advance a diverse faculty, higher education institutions should carefully consider the conditions our participants outlined that led to justice violations and how those conditions can disproportionately impact women and BIPOC faculty.

Reforms that could increase faculty experiences of organizational justice on the tenure track

Our findings indicate a need for changes in underlying organizational conditions to increase perceived and actual fairness on the tenure track. Specifically, we argue for increased consistency, transparency, and accountability in the tenure-track experience and in tenure decisions. Such conditions are important for improving chances of obtaining tenure, and the lack of them are widely associated with intention to leave. These conditions also contribute to faculty satisfaction, productivity, and success (Daly & Dee, 2006; O'Meara et al., 2019). We provide illustrative examples of the kind of reforms that could improve these conditions.

Consistency and clarity
- Revise department tenure and promotion criteria to be as clear as possible (e.g., kinds of eligible publication outlets, number of publications)
- Make faculty contributions to teaching, mentoring, service, and diversity and inclusion work count in discernible ways in tenure criteria
- Improve onboarding for new faculty mentors, promotion and tenure committee members, and chairs on tenure criteria and procedures so everyone understands what is expected of them in the process
- Ensure that workload policies are enforced consistently but with flexibility; Rousseau (2005) introduced the concept of *i-deals*, or personalized employment arrangements negotiated between an employer and employee, to create a fair way to consider individual circumstances.

Transparency
- Collect and share faculty workload data so faculty know how much teaching, mentoring, and service others are doing and so individual workloads can be calibrated to be different, but fair (O'Meara et al., 2017)
- Encourage mentors to develop mutual sets of expectations with their mentees as is done in many graduate student and postdoc relationships; Note specific research collaborations or tasks that the pair will complete together

Accountability
- Note how faculty can appeal when procedures are not followed appropriately
- Review and revise tenure appeal policies to ensure that grounds for appeal include nonprocedural but nonetheless substantive fairness concerns (i.e., interactional and distributive justice violations), not only procedural violations

Awareness of implicit bias and strategies to mitigate it
- Pair bias awareness trainings with mitigation strategies (Beddoes et al., 2014; Griffin, 2019); Such trainings should take place on a regular basis, be interactive, involve discussions on concrete domains of work, and be required for faculty mentors and promotion and tenure committees, if not all faculty.
- Audit promotion and tenure policies for ambiguous language or criteria that advantage privileged groups, and make changes in policies to disrupt bias
- Develop culturally appropriate mentoring; Learn how to support faculty from BIPOC faculty peer-mentoring efforts (e.g., *muxerista* mentoring; Alarcón & Bettez, 2017).

Higher education institutions, like all organizations, are subject to organizational justice violations. The tenure decision is a high-stakes, symbolic, and resource-intensive decision. The legitimacy of our institutions is at risk when faculty and the public experience tenure decisions as arbitrary, biased, or inequitable. Through the experiences of faculty who did not receive tenure, we revealed particular spaces where organizational justice and fairness might be questioned and outlined specific kinds of

justice at issue (procedural, distributive, and interactional). By understanding the experiences of faculty for whom the tenure process was undone, we see more of what needs to be remade in the academy to create a just, inclusive, and equitable workplace.

Note

1. Participants' gender and race/ethnicity were based on how the faculty identified at hire in the university's Human Resources database; thus, throughout this article, the used terminology is based on categories defined by Human Resources and selected by participants.

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