

HOW FAR FROM INCOME EQUITY ARE FACULTY IN FOUR-YEAR, NON-DOCTORIAL UNIVERSITIES?

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ABSTRACT

Increasingly, scholars in academia as well as journalists are noting vast pay discrepancies among professorial ranks. This study is an attempt to examine how gender, rank, and scholarly output influence faculty members' income from their institutions. Using equity theory as a conceptual framework, the 2004 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF04) is used for data analysis purposes. Descriptive, associational, and inferential statistics are employed; specifically, linear regressions were conducted to examine the factors that predict income from the institution. The findings of this study are discussed as they align with the reports of others who study the glaring income gap in the American professoriate. As Kezar & Sam (2010) have argued, there is a new faculty majority, and it is comprised of individuals who are significantly less salaried and secure in their positions, while at the same time being called on to teach more fundamental/core classes across campuses. In short, they are not being compensated equitably for their contributions and importance to the "front line" of educating college students (many of them in freshman/sophomore level classes).

INTRODUCTION

Higher education in the United States has long been a shifting and evolving enterprise, with changes coming quickly in some areas (i.e. the proliferation of online degree programs and for-profit institutions) and slowly in other aspects, such as vaunted rituals of commencement and tenure of professors. One of the movements that has seemed to move at a snails pace is that of fair and equitable compensation for all faculty members, regardless of gender, tenure, or rank. *The New York Times* (2013, April 8) reported that 76% of American college faculty are adjunct professors – an all-time high. Unlike tenured faculty, whose annual salaries can top \$160,000, adjunct professors make an average of \$2,700 per course and receive no health care or other benefits (Lewin, "Gap Widens for Faculty at Colleges").

Kezar (2012) traces the recent drastic faculty workforce shift from primarily full-time tenured faculty to non-tenure track faculty and part-time appointments. As this change in the employment landscape is taking place, several problems have emerged: the faculty system has become caste-based with great disparities in job security and pay, short-term solutions are often pursued for long-term problems, and educational quality has become an issue as non-tenure track faculty are relegated in terms of policies and compensation (Kezar, 2012, p. xi).

Although there are more issues at stake than pay, the income that faculty members receive from their institutions is one glaring indicator in which gender, rank, and other variables are shown to influence a significant discrepancy in compensation. This research study will focus on faculty members' institutional income at four-year non-doctorial universities to examine how much it varies with regard to gender, faculty status (including part-time, full-time, tenured, and rank considered), and scholarly output (in terms of publications in refereed journals and conference presentations).

First, a brief literature review will illustrate the income imbalance among faculty and integrate equity theory (Adams, 1965; Walster & Bersheid, 1978) as a framework to inform a discussion of statistical analyses from a large faculty survey. Based on the statistical analyses, I will advance discussion and implications of the data with regard to equity theory and call for more quantitative and qualitative inquiry to investigate the extent to which people are (and aren't) given equitable income for the outputs they produce as faculty. Last, limitations of the study and policy implications will be discussed.

Faculty Income and Equity Theory

The literature surrounding faculty compensation reveals that female faculty members tend to have lower salaries and are less likely to be tenured (or full professors) than

their male colleagues (Kezar & Sam, 2010; Nettles, Perna, Bradburn, & Zimble, 2000). Lin, Pearce, and Wang (2009) note, "The findings overwhelmingly suggest that female and minority faculty have a long way to go before reaching equity" (p. 707).

Many have argued that the corporatization of higher education in recent decades has increased income inequity. Cosco and Longmate (2012) lament "the disparity of rights and entitlements between the tenured and tenure-track, on the one hand, and the majority (the adjunct class) on the other, to say nothing of grossly unfair pay structures" (p. 72). Not only are income divides evident along the lines of gender and minority status, but also in the growing trend of hiring adjunct instructors for annually contracted, non-tenure track appointments that offer significantly less in compensation, benefits, and job security.

Although equity can be measured along many variables other than payment, the focus of this study will be on total income from the institution and the extent to which it seems to be equitable and based on scholarly "merit" (publication in academic journals and conference presentations) and other variables. Closely bound to faculty status, salaries reflect many aspects of faculty achievement; however, female and minority faculty tend to make lower salaries than do male and white faculty (Kezar, 2012; Lin et al., 2009; Nettles et al., 2000), reinforcing a system of inequality that tends to monetarily privilege the shrinking upper caste of tenured professors while relegating adjunct and non-tenure track instructors, especially in terms of pay (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001).

Equity theory, the framework that informs the current study, was advanced by Adams (1965) and later extended by Walster and Berscheid (1978). Considered a social justice theory, equity theory attempts to explain organizational satisfaction in terms of perceived fair/unfair distributions of resources, proposing that individuals' self-perceptions of being under-rewarded or over-rewarded lead to experiences of distress, and this dissonance often involves efforts to restore equity within the relationship. As noted by Spector (2008), anger is typically induced by underpayment inequity while guilt is usually induced with overpayment inequity.

The overarching focus of equity theory is payment, whether as a wage or salary, so income from the institution becomes a central concern when examining equitable compensation in higher education. As in other service industries, in any faculty position, one wants to feel that her/his contributions and work performance are being rewarded with fair returns (the "equity norm" principle). Walster and Berscheid (1978) posit if an employee feels underpaid, s/he will likely report feeling hostile towards

the organization and perhaps colleagues, possibly impacting performance in the work setting and interpersonal relations with others.

Research Method

The current study examines income discrepancies and equity theory further, using the 2004 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF04). Specifically, the aim is to examine the compensation of faculty at all levels of status at four year, non-doctorial universities (X38q0). After narrowing the larger sample to exclude respondents from other Carnegie classifications, descriptive, associational, and inferential statistics were employed to explore relationships and differences between total income from the university and other variables. Specifically, linear regressions were conducted to examine the factors that predict income from the institution (X03Q66), introduced as a dependent variable.

The independent variables selected include full-time/part-time (q5add), tenure status (q12), rank (q10add), career articles in refereed journals (q52aa), career conference presentations (x04q52), and sex (q71add). The variables of career conference presentations and articles published in refereed journals were selected to represent scholastic output of respondents in accordance with literature indicating the emphasis placed on publishing research reports (Green, 1998; Skolnik, 2000). Sex was selected because, as is evident in the literature, women are paid less even when producing scholarship at the same rate as their male colleagues (Park, 1996).

Demographics, ANOVA and regression statistics illuminate the sample in the NSOPF04 from the Carnegie classification of four-year non-doctorial institutions. It should be noted that some of the variables were recoded for the purposes of the data analysis, and one case was removed from the data subsample, as the income reported was a likely typographical error.

Results

Table 1 demonstrates that 43% of the respondents are female, the mean total income from institution is around \$40,000 dollars (with a wide discrepancy between the range); 58% of respondents reported as full-time; 30% reported as holding tenure at their institutions; and rank, career published articles, and career total presentations are also reported. Notable in this table, among other things, is the large standard deviation in terms of total income from the institution as well as rank. Career articles and presentations ranged from 0-200 and 0-900, respectively, so the standard deviation scores for those variables were to be expected.

**TABLE 1
DEMOGRAPHICS
NSOPF04: FACULTY AT NON-DOCTORAL GRANTING UNIVERSITIES (X38q0)**

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Total income from the institution	4040	500	250000	40608.47	33007.338
Sex	4040	0	1	.43	.495
Full-time or part-time	4040	0	1	.58	.493
Tenure status	4040	0	1	.30	.459
Rank	3990	1	6	3.59	1.828
Career articles, refereed journals	4040	0	200	6.20	15.026
Career total presentations, exhibitions, or performances	4040	0	900	41.27	90.086

Notes: For sex variable, (0=M, 1=F); for full-/part-time, (Full-time=1, Part-time=0); for tenure status, (0=non-tenured, 1=tenured); for rank, (1=(full) professor, 2=associate professor, 3=assistant professor, 4=instructor, 5=lecturer, 6=other)

However, the empirical evidence depicted in the descriptive statistics suggests significant disparities in total income from the institution, which can be further explained through linear regression analysis examining the factors that predict income from the institution. Table 2 displays the results of the regression analysis. According to the model summary, $R=.750$ and adjusted $R\text{ squared}=.562$, indicating a robust correlation and explanatory power of the variance in total income from the institution.

As Table 2 indicates, all of the independent variables are significant at the $p<.001$ level, with full-time/part-time status, career articles, and rank having the strongest influence on total income from an institution according to the Beta scores. To test for significance of regression differences and relationships between normal distribution

and the results found from the NSOPF04 data, a two-way ANOVA was also conducted, displayed in Table 3.

According to the ANOVA output, the regression differences are significant at the $p<.001$ level, and the F value large enough to support the tentative argument that faculty status, career output and gender do have an effect on total income from an institution. Although the ANOVA does not indicate what the relationship is, it does indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship.

Conclusion and Discussion

The findings of this study align with the reports of other scholars who study, among other things, the glaring income gap in the American professoriate (if lecturers and

**TABLE 2
LINEAR REGRESSION RESULTS**

Independent Variables	Beta	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Full-time / part-time	.485	61.996	.000	42905.572	45707.288
Tenure status	.058	7.128	.000	4056.602	7134.151
Rank	.158	17.864	.000	3573.140	4453.914
Career articles, refereed journals	.232	33.452	.000	353.091	397.046
Career total presentations, exhibitions, or performances	.021	3.265	.001	4.622	18.502
Gender	-.057	-9.122	.000	-6353.313	-4105.909

Notes: Dependent variable: x03Q66, total income from the institution.

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	13195320496100.576	6	2199220082683.42	2495.089	.000 ^b
Residual	10271180709023.752	11653	881419331.847		
Total	23466501205124.330	11659			

Notes: (a.) Dependent Variable: Total income from the institution
(b.) Predictors: (Constant), Gender, Career total presentations, exhibitions, or performances, recoded dummy variable full/part time, Career articles, refereed journals, recoded dummy variable tenure status, reverse recoded variable rank

instructors are counted in that term). As Kezar & Sam (2010) have argued, there is a new faculty majority, and it is comprised of individuals who are significantly less salaried and secure in their positions, while at the same time being called on to teach more fundamental/core classes across campuses. In short, they are not being compensated equitably for their contributions and importance to the “front line” of educating college students (many of them in freshman/sophomore level classes).

Equity theorists and organizational scholars have advanced that when employees report feeling underpaid, they also tend to report feeling hostile towards the organization (Walster and Berscheid, 1978; Spector, 2008). Anger and feelings of devalue (or no commitment from the institution) are detrimental to faculty relations and arguably impact the quality of instruction that students are receiving (Umbach, 2008). More research needs to be conducted on the extent to which faculty report being less productive, unmotivated, and unsatisfied, specifically regarding their income from the institution.

This study contributes to the academic discussion that is flaring up in higher education regarding fair compensation and treatment of non-tenure track faculty, adjunct appointments, and part-time positions. However, the current study represents only a partial glance, as the focus was narrowed to four-year, non-doctorial institutions. A wider sampling and comparative analysis to include all Carnegie classifications would be useful and insightful in broadening the explanatory power, reliability, and validity of the findings. Also, as things can change rapidly in higher education, the latest National Study of Postsecondary Faculty should be used to account for the most recent data gathered on this drastically shifting workforce.

The argument that there exists an unequal caste structure in the professoriate is not a new one. However, as a decreasing number of tenured and full professors are paid a lion's share of the resources allotted to departments, the issue of fair compensation among non-tenure faculty becomes particularly salient as they now occupy the majority

of postsecondary workers. A growing mass of hostile and undervalued faculty does not bode well for the cultures of campuses or the students who enter their classrooms, whether online or brick-and-mortar.

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