

Gender and the Role of Directors of Public Administration and Policy Programs

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the role of gender as it relates to director positions in Master of Public Administration (MPA) and Master of Public Policy (MPP) programs. It specifically investigates whether women are more likely than men to serve as MPA and MPP program directors and whether men and women report different experiences in the role, such as length of service, rewards and burdens, and possible constraints on research and teaching and thus promotion potential. We surveyed schools offering MPA and MPP degrees and found that women served as program directors proportional to their representation among the faculty, at about 35%. Interview findings suggest that while some gendered characterizations of women's leadership persist, men and women program directors and faculty experience similar struggles in balancing their administrative roles with the demands of teaching and research, both of which are likely to suffer during their service.

KEYWORDS

Gender, academic service, public affairs

Management of Master of Public Administration (MPA) and Master of Public Policy (MPP) programs is a central form of university service with important implications for curriculum development, student recruitment, alumni engagement, and relationships with employers of graduates and the community at large. Some recent scholarship has focused on the degree to which women, while underrepresented in full-time faculty roles across academia, may disproportionately fill service roles of various types in

university settings, with potential repercussions for their research output and career trajectories (Masse & Hogan, 2010; Misra, Lundquist, Holmes, & Agiomavritis, 2011). Women seem to experience undue service burdens that may inhibit their career development. This may, paradoxically, be an unintended consequence of schools encouraging representation of women and minorities in visible positions in response to calls for diversity and inclusion. Since this phenomenon has been observed in

the humanities and sciences, it seemed worth considering if similar forces might be at play in the realm of public affairs education.

The diversity report of the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) shows that the percentage of female faculty at schools with accredited programs almost tripled, from 12% to 34%, between 2000 and 2013 (Primo, 2013). Though this reveals a clear upward trajectory, women remain a minority in faculty ranks, which is important in its own right as a matter of equity within the academy and as a signal to current and future public sector leaders, who make up the majority of the student body in schools of public affairs. Current graduates are likely to find women's underrepresentation even more evident in the public sphere, where women hold 25% and 20% of state and federal elective offices, respectively, and just 30% of local government department leadership and federal Senior Executive Service positions (Moss, 2015).

We surveyed schools of public affairs to first identify current MPA and MPP program directors and then assess the extent to which women are occupying these positions as part of their university service relative to their male counterparts. We then interviewed a sample of program directors to elicit their experiences in the role, such as length of service, rewards and burdens, and possible constraints on research and teaching and thus promotion potential.

LITERATURE REVIEW: WOMEN AND ACADEMIC SERVICE

Research, teaching, and service are the three criteria by which tenure candidates are evaluated. Masse and Hogan (2010, p. 1) refer to these as "the trinity of promotion and tenure criteria," but as most academics can attest, they "are not equally weighted" (Park, 1996, p. 47). Both women and men view research as the "real work" of faculty and say that research is the work most frequently recognized and rewarded (O'Meara, 2016). Candidates with strong research and publication outputs are highly valued and often see their lack of service to the university pardoned, while candidates with strong or primarily

service-oriented résumés are not similarly rewarded if their scholarly output is less than prolific compared to their service contributions (Park, 1996, p. 48). In other words, type of service is significant. Professional service (chairing a national professional organization) is considered of greater importance than university service, and campus and community service are held in the least esteem. The only exception, according to Park (1996), concerns administrative posts, such as dean and research chair, which "carry far more weight than membership on university committees" (p. 49).

The literature about the question of differential participation and valuation of women in university service roles examines the quantity, type, and prestige of that service and its relationship to promotion potential. One of the earliest such studies found that female faculty were more likely than their male counterparts to devote time to service (Park 1996). Women have been and continue to be underrepresented in higher education (Cama, Jorge, & Andrades Pena, 2016, p. 68). They are outnumbered by men at every faculty rank, and the gender gap grows with each step up the ladder (Pyke, 2011, p. 85). Yet, while there are fewer women among faculty, they fill more service positions. A higher percentage of female professors fill major administrative positions in their departments campus-wide, for example, directing undergraduate or graduate programs or working as associate chair or chair (Misra et al., 2011, p. 24). In political science departments more specifically, women faculty members engage in more service than men do (Mitchell & Hesli, 2013).

Several scholars have examined why this disparity in service occurs. One reason seems to be that women and minorities are often sought to fill seats on boards and oversee student groups to fulfill diversity requirements (Pyke, 2011, pp. 85–86) and in so doing to serve as "positive role models" for other women or minority members (Park, 1996). The smaller number of female professors places a higher burden on this group to fill seats on committees and boards earlier in their careers (Pyke, 2011). Research also suggests that women are approached for

service more frequently because they are often considered to be more “caring and sensitive than men” (Park, 1996, p. 54), and they are more “reluctant to refuse” because they “are socialized to be cooperative” (Pyke, 2011, p. 86). In keeping with these traditional gender stereotypes, many women feel guilt at refusing a service request, as they expect that the request will simply be passed on to another female faculty member (Pyke, 2011, p. 86).

O’Meara (2016, p. 15) found that women and men have distinct visions of service; women take a more local and communal approach to campus service and men view it as impeding their ability to pursue individual priorities and goals. In her campus-wide review of faculty across 12 disciplines at a “typical” land grant university, she further found that women felt unable to refuse service assignments because of their belief that “there was no one else to do the task, or do it well” (O’Meara, 2016, p. 16). Women also expressed the importance of their service to furthering campus/institutional goals. This “sense of mission” gave them some satisfaction in engaging in service efforts and commitments (O’Meara, 2016, p. 17). Though women engage in more service and, as a group, hold differing views of service than men, they do not prefer this type of work over academic research. Rather, Misra et al. (2011) found that both women and men faculty members “overwhelmingly...express a preference for research” (p. 25).

Female faculty members turned down service requests less frequently than their male colleagues, who consistently described campus service as a distraction or burden, and women were also less likely to negotiate offsets to relieve their workload (O’Meara, 2016, p. 20). As a demonstration of what O’Meara (2016) calls “individualistic thinking,” she quotes one male interviewee who says that female colleagues fail to establish critical boundaries to limit time spent on service endeavors and thus miss promotion opportunities (p. 21). Indeed, female professors report feeling more “pressured by the demands of service, mentoring, and teaching” (Misra et al., 2011, p. 25) and they

are, in fact, more frequently asked to serve than men (Mitchell & Hesli, 2013).

In addition to establishing that women bear the brunt of the university service workload, the literature also considers the type of service assigned to each gender. For instance, women surpass their male counterparts in number of undergraduate advisees, while men lead in postdoc supervision (Mitchell & Hesli, 2013, p. 361). Among faculty directing undergraduate or graduate programs or working as associate chair or chair, a third of women have served as undergraduate program director compared with 17% of male faculty (Misra et al., 2011, p. 24). Where committee service is concerned, women’s involvement centers on “nominating, membership, awards, graduate students, and steering committees,” while men report higher levels of committee participation in leadership and policy (Twale & Shannon, 1996, pp. 120–121). “Women academics tend to provide service of a more ‘token’ nature” and are more likely to serve on professional committees, while male professors are more frequently approached to chair a program or department” (Mitchell & Hesli, 2013, pp. 361–362).

In short, female professors shoulder a greater service burden but do not reap the same compensation, research, and teaching benefits as their male colleagues, whose service tends to be more “prestigious” and offer greater career advancement opportunities and salary increases (Mitchell & Hesli, 2013, pp. 362–363). Cama et al. (2016) observe disparities in tenure and promotion between women and men faculty, fewer numbers of women in leadership and management positions, and a pay gap. Women have a perception that service activities are not valued or considered in terms of promotion, and point to the differences in types of service. For example, “women at times characterized their service as ‘grunt work’” and noted that “time spent in ‘nurturing’ activities (advising, mentoring students at both graduate and undergraduate levels) is certainly less valued, or less documentable, than chairing a department or an all-campus committee” (Modern Language Association [MLA], 2009, p. 22).

Their more student-focused agenda correlates with women spending less time on research and writing and more time on grading, course preparation, and interfacing with students, activities that are rarely recognized in terms of pay or promotion (Misra et al., 2011, p. 24). Though both female and male professors work on average 64 hours per week, women associate professors spend more time teaching and mentoring and an additional 5 hours per week in service, while male associate faculty devote 7 more hours to research (Misra et al., 2011, p. 24). This translates to 27% of female professors' time spent on service compared to 20% of male professors' time.

Service is not rewarded relative to research. It can also detract from time available to engage in more valued activities (MLA, 2009, p. 11) and contribute to gender gaps in research productivity, affording women decreased access to resources like graduate assistants, lab equipment, and research funding (Park, 1996, p. 54). Many faculty might attest that research is nearly the sole criterion for promotion, but service work often stands in the way. This creates a double bind for female professors: refusing service assignments can be seen as disrespectful to higher-ranking faculty, possibly those who will later decide promotion, pay, and tenure. But engaging in disproportionate amounts of service pulls female faculty away from research. And there is no forgiveness given to faculty overworked by service; rather "individual women... are blamed and punished when their service workload hurts their research productivity," and they are often charged as having "mismanag[ed] their career[s]" (Pyke, 2011, p. 86).

In fact, female professors who serve as undergraduate program directors take an additional five years to receive tenure than their male counterparts serving in the same role. This is referred to as the "service gully," in which many women get stuck (Misra et al., 2011, p. 24). An examination of English, modern language, and literature faculty across 50 states also found that while women and men take an average of 7.4 years to progress beyond the associate professor rank, women take anywhere from

1–3.5 years longer to achieve this promotion (MLA, 2009, p. 5).

If disparate and disproportional service burdens on female faculty can inhibit women's promotion potential within individual institutions, it might also have repercussions for their advancement in the wider discipline of public affairs. Feeney (2015) examines data from nine leading public administration journals and notes a distinct lack of women in journal editor positions. She points out that fewer female faculty in public administration overall, as well as even fewer women in senior positions, can lead to a scarcity of female journal editors (pp. 9–10). Since journal editors are responsible for setting "priorities and preferences for what will be reviewed and by whom and ultimately what gets published" (p. 2), editorship is a critical gatekeeping role in the profession.

Finally, the literature also considers both additional causes and potential solutions to the disproportionate burdens and career stagnation experienced by female faculty, including whether childcare demands, service burden, or systemic/structural challenges hold women back (MLA, 2009, p. 4). Park (1996, p. 63) recommends that to better incorporate teaching and service into tenure decisions, committees should consider quantity in addition to quality, including such things as number of classes taught annually, number of student advisees and students in each class, number of student theses supervised, and number of new courses developed. Feeney (2015, p. 15) offers nine suggestions for incorporating more women into journal editing work, advocating that editorial boards "more actively recruit and consider women candidates for editorial positions" and that departments more actively support women in these roles.

The literature describes widely observed disparities between women and men throughout academia with regard to representation in faculty ranks, type and amount of service work performed, compensation and benefits, time spent on teaching and research, and length of time to promotion and tenure. The following

section describes the methods we employed in this study to examine the extent to which these disparities might be generalizable to schools of public affairs, particularly pertaining to those serving in the role of MPP or MPA program director.

METHODS

We administered a survey and conducted interviews in order to investigate the question of whether and how gender might be a factor in the role of MPP or MPA program director in schools of public affairs in the United States. We sent surveys to all schools in NASPAA's listing of professional schools offering MPA and MPP programs, and we conducted interviews with a convenience sample of program directors from schools that responded to the initial survey.

Survey of MPP and MPA Programs

After compiling a list of NASPAA-accredited schools using the NASPAA website, we identified a contact person for each of the 276 schools through a review of program websites. Where possible, MPP and MPA program directors served as contacts; program coordinators and assistants to the dean also comprised a significant portion of the total contacts. We then e-mailed each contact survey questions and a request to respond. The survey asked for the name of the current and most recent program director and that person's faculty rank and time in service in the director position. Some universities had both an MPP and MPA program; those without one or the other were simply instructed to answer the questions applicable to their program. We recorded each response in a spreadsheet.

After five weeks, we sent a general e-mail to all nonresponsive schools in an effort to yield additional responses. Those replies were again recorded. If current program directors were identifiable from the website alone, we included them in the program director count for the purposes of assessing the gender of current program directors, though information on faculty rank, time in service, or predecessor's identity was recorded as missing. In total, 140 of 276 schools responded. A *t*-test for differ-

ences of means showed that the sample was representative of regional and national schools. Of the 276 schools in our initial sample, 63 were ranked within the top 100 public affairs programs by *US News & World Report*, and we also included 17 of the 73 land grant institutions in the United States.

For each school responding to the survey with MPP and MPA program director information, we counted full- and part-time faculty using the school's website. We classified these positions as full-time faculty: professor, associate professor, assistant professor, research professor, clinical professor, lecturer or instructor. We included adjuncts and other faculty ranks called "part-time" in the part time faculty count. We did not include fellows, research associates, visiting professors of various ranks, practitioners in residence, emeritus faculty, and staff in the faculty counts, because faculty in these categories are not regularly expected to fulfill service responsibilities.

Interviews

We invited current MPA/MPA program directors at all schools that responded to the original survey to participate in interviews. We conducted interviews with 21 of the 26 program directors who replied and offered to be interviewed by phone between November 17 and 22, 2016. The interview subjects included 14 male and 7 female program directors. The appendix lists open-ended interview questions and responses. Table 3 shows the tallied responses according to the questions posed (e.g. length of service, whether the role was considered more rewarding or burdensome). We identified emergent themes by reviewing open-ended responses, for instance, in answer to the question of whether program directors had ever thought about gender differences as they relate to the role and its responsibilities; and extemporaneous elaboration offered in response to the other questions, such as whether program directors found the demands of the role manageable, or the degree to which they perceived the program director role as a constraint on time for other responsibilities and activities.

Limitations of the Study

Though we made every effort to be meticulous in counting program faculties, some websites of schools or units of which MPA and MPP programs are a part may not be up to date, and not all websites include listings of all categories of faculty, including part-time or adjunct faculty. The small number of interview responses limits the generalizability of any conclusions drawn from them. Also, program directorship is just one form of faculty service that might be measured.

FINDINGS

Survey

Of the 140 schools that responded to our original survey, schools had a mean of 27 full- and part-time faculty and an average of 10 (35.86%) female faculty and 18 (64.59%) male faculty. In terms of program directorships, 52 schools in our sample had female program directors and 83 schools had male program directors. An unequal variances *t*-test indicates that the overall percentage of female faculty members (35.86%) is not statistically different ($\alpha=0.05$) from the percentage of females in program directorship positions (35.54%). Similarly, there was no statistical difference ($\alpha=0.05$) between the proportion of female full-time faculty members (35.85%) and the percentage of females in program directorship positions (35.54%). In other words, it does not appear that women hold a disproportionate number of program directorships in light of their faculty representation (both overall and in terms of those holding only full-time status).

Of these 140 schools, 17 were land grant institutions;¹ 103 have numbered rankings in *US News & World Report*² and 63 are in the top 100; and 46 are classified as regional schools by *US News & World Report*. Table 2 contains cross-tabulations and the relevant associated chi-square statistics. In all of these cases, there is no statistical relationship ($\alpha = 0.05$) between any of these institution types and female program directorship.

The pie chart in Figure 1 shows faculty gender by position type—full- and part-time. In terms

of both whole numbers and percentages, full-time male faculty make up the majority of faculty positions. While the vast majority of programs (104) are led by tenure-track faculty, other program governance structures include having two directors—one tenure-track, the other administrative staff, administrative faculty, or senior lecturers on term contracts. There was no relationship between female program directorship and position type.

Interviews

Who Serves and for How Long? When asked how they became program director, 6 of the 21 respondents (1F, 5M) indicated that “no one else would do it,” and 2 of these 6 were serving in a dual administrative role (one woman was also serving as an associate dean and one man was also serving as program chair). Five other respondents (5M) said that they wanted or actively sought the position. One had held the same leadership role at two previous institutions; another declared that, as a former military officer, he “always wanted to be in charge.” Two had offered to fill an existing need: one, who had offered to step in for a year, was serving his second year as program director; the other had approached his department chair offering to help if, he said, he was sure “to get credit” for his efforts. One had applied for and gotten the role of MPA director after an internal search. Ten faculty members (5 F, 5M) said that they had been hired specifically for the position: two were elected (1F, 1M); two (F) were recruited from outside the school; two (M) assumed the role after the previous program director had filled the position for a decade or more; and two (1F, 1M) were appointed or named after serving as acting or interim program director. One woman described herself as having been “groomed” for the position after having first served as graduate studies coordinator.

Eight current program directors (2F, 6M) indicated that they would serve in the role for a defined period of time, and virtually all noted a time period of between three and five years. Nevertheless, five of the eight expressed that they or their predecessor had extended or would exceed the intended tenure for the role.

TABLE 1.
Gender Breakdown of Faculties

	Mean (min-max)	SD	Percentage as part of the program unit (min-max)	SD	Program directorships ^a (% of sample)
Female faculty members	9.69 (0-79)	11.89	35.86% (0%-80%)	12.96%	52 (35.54%)
Male faculty members	17.96 (1-192)	25.72	64.59% (20%-100%)	13.45%	83 (61.48%)

^aFive schools reported having no program directors.

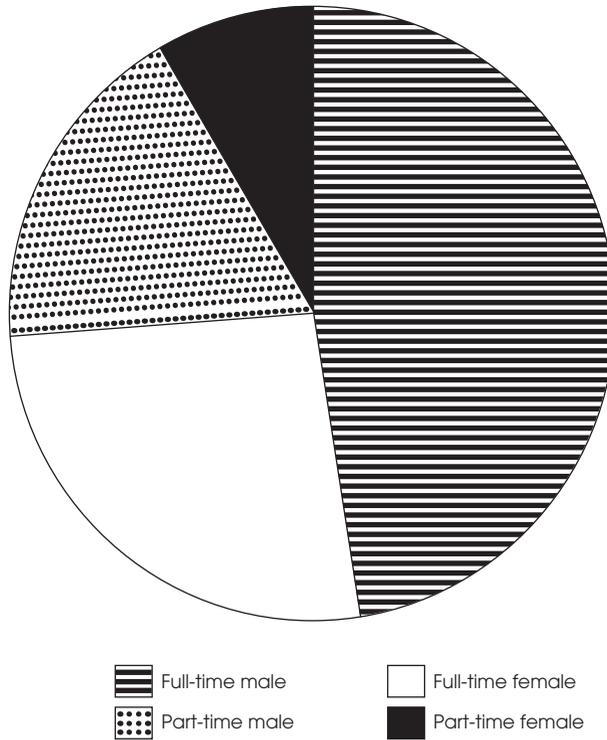
TABLE 2.
Type of Institution

Program directorships	Land grant institutions		Total
	No	Yes	
Female	46	6	52
Male	72	11	83
Chi ² (1) = 0.085 (p = .77)			135

Program directorships	Regional institutions		Total
	No	Yes	
Female	37	15	52
Male	54	29	83
Chi ² (1) = 0.54 (p = .462)			135

Program directorships	US News & World Report Top 100 rankings		Total
	No	Yes	
Female	28	24	52
Male	46	37	83
Chi ² (1) = 0.032 (p = .858)			135

FIGURE 1.
Average Number of Faculty by Gender and Position Type



One woman, getting ready to go on sabbatical and relinquish the role after more than five years, said she “wouldn’t be surprised” if she “took it on again as an interim program director at some point in the future” noting that, in her late 40s, “I’m still pretty young” relative to other members of the department. Two male program directors said they had finished their five-year and three-year terms but would “do another three or so to see us through reaccreditation.” A tenured faculty member himself, one said that most of his colleagues were assistant professors, and having to fill this position could undermine their careers by cutting into the time available to do research and publish.

Eleven interview subjects said that their tenure in the program director position was open-ended (4F, 7M). Two women had been in their

positions for about six and 11 years, respectively, while a third had occupied the position for the better part of two decades, except when she had served a brief stint as department chair.

Benefits and Burdens. Almost two thirds of the interview subjects found the program director position to be more beneficial or rewarding than burdensome (6F, 7M for beneficial versus 1F, 6M for burdensome). Of seven women responding, only one reported that she found the position burdensome. Of the seven respondents who reported the position to be more burdensome than beneficial, six were men. One woman program director said, “I enjoy it—it’s not just a duty,” adding that she had expanded the program and developed a new business model, new curriculum, and cross-campus initiatives. Two male program directors also

TABLE 3.
JPAE MPP/MPA Program Director Interview Questions with Response Tallies

	Female	Male
1. How did you become program director?		
a. No one else would do it	1F	5M
b. I wanted/sought out the position	—	5M
c. I was hired specifically for the position	5F	5M
d. Everyone has to take a turn	—	—
2. Do you know how long you will serve in the role?		
a. Defined period of time	2F	6M
b. Open-ended	4F	7M
3. What has your experience as director been like?		
a. Beneficial/rewarding	6F	7M
b. Burdensome	1F	6M
4. Are there any benefits to the position? (Yes)		
a. Course buyout	7/7F	8/11M
b. Extra compensation	6/6F	8/12M
c. Status	3/3F	7/7M
d. Graduate research assistant or other administrative support	5/6F	10/11M
5. Are the demands of the role manageable? (Yes)		
	3/3F	4/8M
6. Does the director role constrain available time for other responsibilities or roles?		
a. Teaching (Yes)	0/2F	4/6M
b. Researching (Yes)	4/4F	6/7M
c. Writing (Yes)	2/2F	2/2M
d. Consulting (No responses given in this category)	—	—
e. Family (yes)	0/1F	2/3M
7. Have you ever thought about gender differences as they relate to the role and its responsibilities? (Questions offered as prompts, not addressed specifically by respondents)		
a. Are women more or less likely to act as program directors?		
b. Do men and women approach the role differently?		
c. Does the position affect the career paths of men and women in different ways?		

Note. There were 21 respondents (7 women, 14 men); not all respondents answered all questions.

expressed satisfaction in their accomplishments in the position, one saying he was beginning to think in terms of having some kind of legacy now that he was over 60; the other saying that trying new initiatives and seeing positive results—such as moving up in national rankings during his tenure—was “kind of fun.” Both of these program directors mentioned being in leadership roles during the NASPAA accreditation process.

Of those who said they enjoy the role, four (1F, 3M) brought up that they “like working with students.” One program director (F) described meeting with current or prospective students as getting to “deal with the happy stuff” (recruiting, encouraging, graduation) and another (M) described serving in the role as a “net positive,” saying that it offered the chance to be remembered by students due to roles in recruiting and advising. While one male program director described it “as the best job I’ve ever had...very rewarding,” others were more measured, calling it “mostly positive” (M) or saying “it’s fine, since I have administrative proclivities” (M). Another said, “I view it as a form of service to the school. I’ll be happy when it is done...not intellectually interesting to me” (M).

A few described their experience as program director in overtly negative terms. “I’ll be honest, we’ve had a lot of problems—fiscal challenges, conflicts in the department, grievances from multiple students,” said one program director (F). “Absolutely a train wreck,” said another (M) who, not being tenured, said he found it hard trying to get people to move: “I don’t have a lot of carrots and sticks—not a whole lot of incentives.” Another junior faculty member (M) said that he found the position to be “somewhat painful,” like “herding cats” or a “painful death by a thousand cuts”; every day, he said, tasks crop up that he effectively doesn’t have formal authority to deal with, as he “can’t force faculty to do anything.”

As for more tangible benefits associated with the role of program director, the majority of program directors—18 of 21—received a course

release of one or two courses per academic year for assuming the role. Two of the three who did not indicated that there had been such a benefit in the previous year or for their predecessor. Similarly, all but two respondents said that they receive some form of extra compensation for being program director, either in the form of a stipend, summer salary, or a percentage of salary (8%, 9%, and 10% were mentioned). Two program directors (1F, 1M) mentioned having to “fight for summer compensation,” as summer work was required in their roles for recruiting and admissions. In the face of tough financial times, with the governor being aggressive about reducing funds, “a bit of gamesmanship is needed,” according to one (M) who waged such a fight, who asserted, “I don’t work for free” and expressed that “our sense of public service and commitment to the program is sometimes taken advantage of.” A final form of material benefit for the program director role is administrative support; all but two (1F, 1M) indicated that they have access to such support in the form of an administrative or graduate assistant, though about half indicated that such staff are shared with other faculty in the department.

Ten program directors (3F, 7M) mentioned that they think the role confers some form of status, either within the university or department or externally. One (M) mentioned that he was at the helm of a highly regarded graduate program that has a strong statewide reputation and that he was “naturally the face of the program.” Another (M) expressed that as program director at a Tier 1 university, he has status, especially with governmental entities. Others noted that any status associated with the position was more internal, whether through recognition of leadership on campus (M), in the department (M), or among students or alumni (F). One program director (M), on whose watch the program received accreditation, said it was instrumental in his getting tenure and it provided him with a voice in his department.

In answer to the question of whether the demands of the program director role were manageable, 11 offered responses (3F, 8M) and

most admitted to at least some challenges. Six responses could be classified as measured, in that respondents sounded somewhat put upon while trying not to be completely negative. "I'm not going to jump out of a building," replied one female program director; "I go home, hang out with my kids, then work 'til 11pm." "I stay busy but enjoy it," said one male program director, declaring that the role was "not a burden" and joking that, as academics, we "have influence over which of the 80 hours a week we want to work"; "I could be a lot less busy," he said, "but wouldn't want to be." Said one (F), with some sense of resignation, "I'm an administrator now—that's what I am every day, all day—it doesn't feel part-time."

Four responses, all from men, could be classified as overtly negative. One (M) called the role "barely" manageable, saying, "I'm struggling" and bemoaning that there had not been "a whole lot of mentoring" for him in taking on the program, with only a "data dump from the last director" to build upon. "University politics wear me down," said another (M), while a different program director (M) more ominously stated that he was "trying to be careful that it's not wreaking havoc on my person." Only one program director (M) responded with unmitigated enthusiasm, saying that the dean had delegated authority over the curriculum to the MPA coordinator, so in his view he held a position of significant power; "When I come up with ideas," he said, "I get a lot of support."

When asked whether the program director role constrained time for other responsibilities such as teaching, researching, writing, or family/personal time, some general responses included "all of the above" (M), "yes, of course" (M) and "now, that's the \$64,000 question!" (M). Just over half of respondents specifically mentioned teaching and researching (2F, 9M). Four (M) elaborated by saying that the program directorship meant having less time to reinvent courses, review new texts and materials, and maintain integrity as a scholar and teacher. One declared, "I'm on autopilot," while another lamented having "less time to update and do

cool new things" in the classroom. Two program directors (1F, 1M), on the other hand, said the course release fairly balanced their workload, enabling adequate time for program director duties such as requests for information, meetings, advising, hiring adjuncts, and curricular issues.

Only two (M) of 11 respondents (4F, 7M) who elaborated on research as it pertains to their role as program director did not discuss the role as a detriment to their research agendas. In one case, this seems to be because the individual (M) had just moved to a research-focused institution from one with far fewer research opportunities; the other (M) said that the "over \$1 million in grants" he brought in meant that he was always involved in research activity, which also informed his teaching. Most others (4F, 5M) asserted that directing the MPP or MPA program "definitely has an impact on my ability to complete research projects in a timely way." In the words of one program director (M), the demands of the job are "less flexible than research, so research gets pushed." Yet another (M) said, "I'd like to do research" but "have only managed to write two papers in six years." Four (2F, 2M) brought up writing and publishing in particular. One female program director indicated that she "continues to publish, but not as much as before I wore the director's hat." Recounting her efforts to finish a book the previous summer, another woman called it "really painful and stressful."

Only four program directors (1F, 3M) chose to expound on the role as it relates to their family or personal time. One woman said that it was not an issue for her because she had "no small children" and her job time, home time, and personal time were all one and the same, resulting in "a really good work/life balance." A male program director said he looked forward to retirement, when he expected to have more time for his wife, church, and community; in the meantime, he said that the fact that the role encroached on family time was "the nature of the business." One father of a young family declared setting aside family time as "nonnegotiable."

Perceived Gender Differences in Experience of the Program Director Role. When asked whether they had ever thought about gender differences as they relate to the role and its responsibilities, only three (1F, 2M) replied that they never had. One male program director answered tersely that he had not and ended the conversation, while the other, in saying that he had not considered it, noted that he himself was 70 years old, had two daughters, and had observed that about 65% of his students were female. Two other male program directors mentioned that students are predominantly female, one saying “70% of students in the MPA program are female, maybe 100% in non-profit leadership.” Another offered, “I think being a white male makes a difference with female students. ...Female pre-service students need women mentors.” He added that “ASPAA and NASPAA have had numerous female presidents,” saying this is “a potent symbolic message.” Along these lines, one female program director noted that her university president was a woman who promoted women’s leadership; when this director was quoted in the press after local elections, the university president called to congratulate her. Offering further encouragement, their state has an active “women leading government” initiative.

Regarding women in leadership roles, four male program directors noted the presence of women predecessors in the program director role or as chair of their departments. One said his department had a “long tradition of female leadership” and that the “last three chairs were women.” Another noted that “of the last six directors, half were men, half women—they were equally likely to be asked.” He added that at his research-focused university “almost no one wants to do the job” but that the role brings some esteem from colleagues — “it’s not seen as academic housework.”

In noting that his predecessor in the program director role had been female, one director said, “She did a good job” but was viewed as “a mother versus a mentor” because “she felt personally

responsible for students.” His colleagues applied the term *mother* pejoratively to her, he said, because she went “above and beyond being professional in and out of the classroom,” so “she burnt out” because “she invested too high a level of emotion and energy—not learning skills.” Of the current female chair of his department, one male program director said that she is “harder on” his female faculty colleague who is preparing for tenure and that she wants “to work with her to be sure she is ready.” Of the junior women faculty in general, he said, “I get concerned about them a bit... there are pay inequities in the department, and I’m an ally in that conversation.”

One other program director, a woman, cited an instance of a female chair being less understanding than a male chair, in this instance saying that it was not gender that likely accounted for leadership differences but other factors such as whether one had a family (the female chair in question did not, while the “more understanding” male chair did). While as program director she herself did “get some pushback from faculty,” she felt this was more likely attributable to her being in her 40s, while many of her colleagues were in their 60s. On the whole, she characterized the men in her department as “kind of enlightened” where gender issues were concerned.

Other program directors explicitly attributed different experiences in or approaches to the director role to factors such as “philosophical differences” (1M), “personal inclination and preparedness” (1F), or “administrative inclination” (1F) rather than gender. A self-described “civil servant of 20 years...accustomed to administration,” one woman program director recounted that her predecessor, a man, had been “hideously unqualified—made a wreck of the records and failed at everything else, in the classroom and as a mentor,” so she was hired to do the job and teach. Of her aspirations for the role she said, “I wanted to raise the next generation.” Another female program director had a male predecessor who “didn’t work out”

because he was “less suited to some of the administrative skill set” and was “happy to get back to his research,” while she “chose to take on advising for all Master’s students” upon assuming the role. “I’m a boundary spanner,” she said. “I see the role as that of a connector.”

The male program director who cited “philosophical differences” in how people approached the role said that the leadership style espoused by social worker and management consultant Mary Parker Follett—whom he described as an early feminist who said “that collaboration and discussing things are important”—was “fine for lots of things . . . but I’m more in military 101 mode. . . I’ve got objectives I want to get to—can’t let it get protracted—I do things on an ordered basis.” Saying that “sometimes we have to make black and white decisions,” he described his predecessor as “well loved but not effective,” ostensibly due to this “philosophical” difference in approaches. Musing further on program director duties he added, “I’ve heard that women are more accepting—males are more likely to say ‘not gonna do it.’” Summing up her own approach to the program director role, one woman said, “I try to be cooperative. I like consensus. Some are savvier about saying no, but I’ll suck it up.”

Interviews with current program directors revealed several things that they believe women have had to “suck up” or endure, such as getting “more pushback negotiating a raise and salary.” According to one woman—the first female in the position at her school—the interim dean tried to downgrade the position in giving it to her, but, she said, “I’m not a shrinking violet kind of person. . . They were like, ‘How dare I ask for money?’ I said, ‘I won’t do it unless I get the same support offered to my predecessor.’ . . . I was willing to walk away.” In addition to this and the previously cited pay inequity, one male program director observed that “women are talked over in meetings,” while another recounted that when a woman “agreed to chair our self-study team, one of the male members responded negatively to her and the department head

had to intervene.” One female program director said that it was, in two instances, students who had given her “a hard time because I am a woman.” In the first it was Saudi students who “went over her head to the chair”—something “not experienced by my male colleagues”; and in the second case she felt threatened by a student who had been suspended for cheating during an exam she was proctoring, an incident she described as being the only time she “felt not OK being a woman.”

A few interviewees (1F, 2M) mentioned the importance of “protecting assistant professors from administrative duties so they can get tenure” as a reason for not accepting or giving such a junior faculty member the role or for proceeding with caution in assuming the role. A woman who volunteered “to step up to be MPA director” said that her department chair asked, “Are you sure? I don’t want to slow you down” as far as research productivity was concerned. Values such as protecting junior faculty, though, can sometimes be challenged by practical concerns, such as a paucity of faculty available to serve in this and other positions within a department. So, too, can the aspiration of “attracting female professors”; as one male program director related, “Our program has difficulty” in this regard. The top two candidates for the position that opened in his department last year were women, but both accepted positions elsewhere. In this program director’s view, new women graduates have an advantage in the current market relative to their male peers, as departments are striving to hire more women, partly in response, according to another male program director, to self-studies looking at gender diversity. “There are lots of women on the public administration faculty,” opined one male program director from a department where six of the seven full-time faculty are male. “Lot’s of diversity among adjuncts.”

DISCUSSION

We undertook this study to assess whether women faculty were disproportionately represented in the role of director of graduate programs in public administration and public policy and whether

their experience in taking on or serving in those roles differed in substance or approach from that of their male colleagues. Because women are underrepresented among faculty of schools of public affairs, and because the differential demands of service work have been implicated in inhibiting women's career advancement in other academic disciplines, it seemed worth examining whether this particular form of academic service has a similar effect in public affairs programs.

Findings from the brief survey and subsequent faculty count indicate that the percentage of female faculty (35.86%) is not statistically different from the percentage of females in program directorship positions (35.54%), so it does not appear that women hold a disproportionate number of program directorships in light of their faculty representation. This finding remains constant across types of institutions, including land grant and regional universities and those in the top 100 public affairs schools as ranked by *US News & World Report*.

Park's (1996) finding that female faculty are more likely than their male counterparts to devote time to service is not borne out with regard to the program director role. Park's (1996, p. 49) point that administrative posts, such as dean and research chair, "carry far more weight" and thus status "than membership on university committees," where women are disproportionately represented in other disciplines, may carry over to the MPA/MPP program director roles, making men more amenable to filling this particular post. Twale and Shannon's (1996) finding that men do not perform less service overall but are more likely to fill leadership type roles to fulfill their university service might also explain why men are not underrepresented in this service role, which, while not as prestigious as dean or department chair, nonetheless has a leadership quality to it. Mitchell and Hesli (2013) also find that "male professors are more frequently approached to chair a program or department" (pp. 361–362) and are more likely to chair departments or run a program (pp. 362–363); and while women

are doing more service, the type of service they engage in does not translate toward career advancements or salary increases (pp. 362–363). Most program director roles, though, do include a stipend or some, though usually modest, form of compensation.

The interview responses highlight many commonalities of experience between women and men in their recruitment to and experience of the role of MPP or MPA program director. There were no discernable differences along gender lines with regard to length of time in service or benefits associated with the position. The majority of program directors reported receiving a course release and extra compensation and having access to administrative support. About half of respondents elaborated on the demands of the role as they relate to their research agendas, and they complained of what they described as considerable constraints on their research output. About a quarter discussed having to curtail their classroom preparation, making their teaching less innovative and interesting due to their program director duties.

One difference of note between women and men was in their descriptions of the program director role as predominantly beneficial/rewarding or burdensome. Though respondents split just about evenly in calling the position mostly rewarding—six women and seven men characterized it that way—of those labeling the position as mostly burdensome, six of the seven respondents were men. O'Meara's (2016, p. 15) finding that men view service as impeding their ability to pursue individual priorities and goals is borne out here to the extent that men seem more likely to speak negatively about their service responsibilities as program director. Men also either described themselves, or were discussed as, being glad when their term of service was over so that they could get back to the "real" work of research, another characterization found by O'Meara (2016, p. 20).

Though not the intended focus of this study, interviews revealed some implicitly gendered characterizations of service. Some descriptions

of the role offered by men included phrasings like being “in charge,” being “in military mode,” and leaving a “legacy” or employing “gamesmanship” (Brands, 2014; Lewis, 2014). One male program director spoke dismissively of collaboration and discussion, both organizational approaches commonly associated with women (Benko & Pelster, 2013). Another noted that running the MPA program was not seen as mere “academic housework,” implicitly acknowledging the lower status of work typically attributed to women. Finally, one male program director spoke of his female predecessor as being seen as a “mother” rather than a mentor. He critiqued her relationships with students as involving “too much emotion,” conjuring references to women’s service as “academic mothering” (O’Meara, 2016, p. 2), women’s disproportionately performing “care labor” (Pyke, 2011, p. 85), and the disparagement of women’s labor along traditional lines of hierarchy, which Park (1996, p. 77) argues are replicated in the university setting. Indeed “nurturing” activities such as “advising” and “mentoring students at both graduate and undergraduate levels” are acknowledged by many to be “less valued” than more prestigious service work such as “chairing a department” (MLA, 2009, p. 21).

One female program director described herself as having been “groomed” for the role. Another defined her duties as “raising the next generation” and characterized herself as a “connector” or “boundary spanner.” These descriptions are in line with characterizations from the literature of women as more nurturing and attuned to being “cooperative” or as using more such techniques in teaching and negotiating (Mitchell & Hesli, 2013, p. 357; Park, 1996, pp. 56–57; Pyke, 2011, p. 85). One of our interview subjects described herself by saying, “I like consensus,” and that is the quintessential encapsulation of women’s leadership style (Benko & Pelster, 2013; Jackman, 2013; Kristof, 2008). Women further described men as being bad at administration and themselves as having a natural inclination for it, which also reflects

gender roles and stereotypes identified by business scholar Rosabeth Moss Kanter in the 1970s (O’Meara, 2016, p. 2).

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

We undertook this analysis to investigate whether women are disproportionately represented in service roles in schools of public affairs, as they are elsewhere throughout higher education. The findings are heartening to a degree, since we did not uncover disproportionate shouldering of service burdens by women faculty, which can hamper their career advancement. Women are represented proportionally in the faculty ranks as MPA and MPP program directors, at about 35%, and their numbers among program affairs faculties have nearly tripled since 2000. Any advancement toward equity is to be celebrated.

Nonetheless, women remain underrepresented in public affairs faculties, and the metric selected for service here—program directorship—may not capture less prestigious forms of service, such as committee membership, that the literature indicates women are more likely to engage in than men and for which they are less rewarded. Subsequent studies should investigate whether such service disparities are likely to inhibit women’s advancement or compensation, thus delaying accomplishment of the broader goal of achieving faculty gender balance.

The scope of this concern transcends women’s advancement within individual institutions, which was the primary focus of this study. Often, onerous service burdens that inhibit the promotion of female faculty within institutions may also impede women’s ability to advance by moving between institutions of higher education. A deep commitment to time-consuming service by any individual faculty member on a given campus is likely to be undervalued in terms of pay and promotion. And to the extent that service constrains available time for the more highly valued pursuits of research and writing, it diminishes a faculty member’s worth on the job market and limits opportunities to burnish credentials in the wider discipline,

such as by assuming key gatekeeping roles like journal editorship (Feeney 2015).

The persistence of some gendered characterizations that emerged from the interviews suggests that work remains to be done to bring awareness to stereotypes, for instance, of men as being better at research or of women as being more suited to teaching and administration. Though we might imagine that such beliefs are more commonly held by older faculty members, and thus likely to eventually disappear by attrition, we ought not be complacent in accepting such slow, uncertain advancement. This is especially true in the short term, when senior faculty have significant influence in promotion and tenure decisions, which holds serious implications for women's advancement potential.

The responsibilities of research, teaching, and service that make up "the trinity of promotion and tenure criteria" should be shouldered and rewarded equitably, as a value in their own right. Gender equity among faculty also has important symbolic and practical value for student bodies as well as campus and wider communities. As noted by interview subjects, female students may be more comfortable with faculty advisors of their own gender. Further research could do more to investigate the importance of female faculty role models for students' educational experience and workforce preparation.

Interviews reveal that women share similar experiences with their male colleagues, both beneficial and burdensome, of the program director role. Interviews also brought to light several hopeful instances of senior faculty actively seeking to protect junior faculty from onerous service demands in order to help them bolster research output in preparation for tenure review. The assessments offered by MPA and MPP program directors overall can serve to inform the thinking of university presidents, deans, and department chairs in enhancing faculty equity with regard to types of service performed, research opportunities, compensation and benefits afforded, and promotion trajectories achieved.

NOTES

- 1 According to Higher-ed.org, there are 73 land grant institutions in the United States (www.higher-ed.org/resources/land_grant_colleges.htm).
- 2 The 2016 *US News & World Report* rankings of public affairs schools number up to 168 (some schools are tied for a specific rank) (www.usnews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-public-affairs-schools/public-affairs-rankings).

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APPENDIX

SELECTED INTERVIEW RESPONSES

On Taking on Program Director Role:

I "always wanted to be in charge" (M)

Agreed to take on role when assured I'd "get credit." (M)

Thinking in terms of having a "legacy" (M)

"I view it as a form of service to the school. I'll be happy when it is done... not intellectually interesting to me" (M)

Responses to and Views of Program Director Role:

"Almost no one wants to do the job" but "it's not seen as academic housework" (M)

"Absolutely a train wreck"; "I don't have a lot of carrots and sticks—not a whole lot of incentives" (M)

"Somewhat painful," like "herding cats" or a "painful death by a thousand cuts"; "can't force faculty to do anything" (M)

"A bit of gamesmanship is needed" to negotiate extra compensation for the role. "I don't work for free"; "our sense of public service and commitment to the program is sometimes taken advantage of" (M)

"I'm struggling... not a whole lot of mentoring," only a "data dump from the last director." (M)

"University politics wear me down" (M)

"Trying to be careful that it's not wreaking havoc on my person" (M)

"I'm on autopilot" (M)

"When I come up with ideas, I get a lot of support" (M)

"I'm a boundary spanner. I see the role as that of a connector." (F)

On Whether Demands of the Role are Manageable:

"I'm not going to jump out of a building... I go home, hang out with my kids, then work 'til 11pm" (F)

"I stay busy but enjoy it... not a burden... we have influence over which of the 80 hours a

week we want to work"; "I could be a lot less busy, but wouldn't want to be" (M)

"I'm an administrator now—that's what I am every day, all day—it doesn't feel part-time" (F)

Role's Effect on Time for Teaching and Research:

"Less time to update and do cool new things" in the classroom (M)

"Definitely has an impact on my ability to complete research projects in a timely way" (F)

Demands of the job are "less flexible than research, so research gets pushed" (M)

I "continue to publish, but not as much as before I wore the director's hat" (F)

"Really painful and stressful" to finish book project (F)

"Have only managed to write two papers in six years" (M)

Gender Differences Observed or Considered:

"Women are talked over in meetings" (M)

"She did a good job," but she was viewed as "a mother versus a mentor" because "she felt personally responsible for students" (M)

"She burnt out" because "she invested too high a level of emotion and energy—not learning skills" (M)

"I wanted to raise the next generation" (F)

"I try to be cooperative. I like consensus. Some are savvier about saying no, but I'll suck it up." (F)

Women get "more pushback negotiating raise and salary" (F)

He was "less suited to some of the administrative skill set" and was "happy to get back to his research" (Current program director about her predecessor) (F)

She was "well-loved, but not effective" (Current program director about his predecessor) (M)