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## Every Pawn is a Potential Queen: How Female Early-Career Faculty Play the Game of Tenure

Bethany Lisi

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Every Pawn is a Potential Queen:  
How Female Early-Career Faculty Play the Game of Tenure

A Dissertation Presented

by

BETHANY M. LISI

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

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Higher Education

College of Education



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## DEDICATION

In many ways, writing this dissertation forced me to examine my approach to life and identify areas that bring me happiness. Intrinsic motivation—derived from a sense of autonomy, competence, and connection to others—propels us to engage in a task for the sheer joy of doing it. In searching for the influences of my own intrinsic motivation, I look no further than my three grandparents who, along with my own parents Frank and Pauline, raised me to be who I am today.

I dedicate this dissertation to Margaret Morgan (Nanny Peg), who learned how to drive a car when she was in her late fifties, traveled all over Rhode Island to visit her friends, and subsequently went to bed later than any of us; I hope to maintain her strong sense of autonomy. I dedicate this dissertation to Arthur Lisi (Poppy), who taught all of his grandchildren that if you are going to do a job, you do it the right way, give 110%, and never take a shortcut; I strive to carry on his strong work ethic and mastery over the task at hand. And finally, I dedicate this dissertation to Eleanor Lisi (Nanny), who welcomes everyone into her home, gives them a hug, and makes sure they have at least one meatball; I hope to forever replicate her strong connection to others and effortless community-building wherever my career may take me.

## EPIGRAPH

Whenever humanity seems condemned to heaviness, I think I should fly like Perseus into a different space. I don't mean escaping into dreams or into the irrational. I mean that I have to change my approach, look at the world from a different perspective, with a different logic and with fresh methods of cognition and verification.

—Italo Calvino, *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, 1988

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I often joked that I was very lucky to receive a partial scholarship to fund this doctorate from the “Pauline and Frank Lisi Foundation.” To Mom and Dad: Thank you for 36 years of loving support, and for being the ultimate superstar parents by showing me the importance of working hard and with integrity. I also thank my sister and brother-in-law, Sarah and Josh, for supporting me (and putting up with me) over the 5+ years in this program.

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This dissertation would not have been written without binging on *Harry Potter* during the literature review phase (to maintain levity while sifting through all the research); reading Jane Austen's novels during the data collection phase (all of the participants' names came from these novels); watching reruns of *Downton Abbey* during the data analysis phase (*Masterpiece Theater* makes me feel smart); and reading John McPhee's *Draft No. 4* and Stephen Pinker's *Sense of Style* before I sat down to compose a single thought.

Finally, I thank my husband Christopher Slemp—the Ben Wyatt to my Leslie Knope. You not only stuck with me during these years, but also went so far as to marry me. You have the patience of all of the saints combined (and if I paid more attention in Sunday school, I would go so far as to name them all here). Thank you for being my partner-in-crime, devil's advocate, and strongest critic. I am excited to spend so many “dissertation-free” years with you.



ABSTRACT

EVERY PAWN IS A POTENTIAL QUEEN:

HOW FEMALE EARLY-CAREER FACULTY PLAY THE GAME OF TENURE

FEBRUARY 2019

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The research on early-career faculty on the tenure track suggests they are surviving amidst low job satisfaction. Scholars found that early-career faculty lack the skills and preparation needed for the job, perceive the tenure process to be vague or unclear, feel isolated or disenchanted with their work, and struggle with time management (Austin, 2002; Austin, Sorcinelli, & McDaniels, 2007; Batille & Brown, 2006; Ponjuan, Conley, & Trower, 2011; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). Female early-career faculty are susceptible to additional gendered and biased challenges (Gappa, Austin, & Trice, 2007). Missing from the literature are the positive experiences of early-career faculty. The purpose of this study is to describe the professional approaches of six female early-career faculty who work at selective liberal arts colleges and how those approaches are similar or different from four of their peers at a large research university, using theories of intrinsic motivation (Pink, 2009), agency (Bandura, 2001), and positive deviance (Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2003) to frame the inquiry. A secondary purpose of

this study is to describe the strategies to faculty work that deviate positively from the typical early-career faculty behaviors articulated in the existing research.

Using a qualitative embedded multi-case study design, data was collected from ten female early-career faculty from three different institutions. Using constant comparative analysis and pattern matching, the theme of tenure as a game emerged, as well as the greater metaphor that participants approach their work like they are playing a challenging, but gratifying, game of chess. There were four major insights that surfaced from the findings. First, female early-career faculty assess their skills to play the game and take subsequent actions to improve their positions within the first few years of their appointments. Second, female early-career faculty seize opportunities to advance quickly by the middle of the probationary period. Third, female early-career faculty incorporate moves that reinforce their passions throughout their appointments. And finally, positive-deviant approaches combined participants' skills, awareness of opportunity, and passion into a single move at the onset, which ultimately positioned participants for success.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Sometimes when we play a game, we are lost in the moment; we experience deep satisfaction or we feel we have an advantage. And yet, there are times when we cannot wait for the game to be over; we persist and we struggle. Sometimes we win and other times we lose. Why do some game experiences differ from others? They each have the same core components: rules, goals, conflict, challenges, and chance. Perhaps the properties of these game elements lead to an unsatisfying experience: vague rules, unrealistic goals, high stakes, unhealthy conflict, and too many challenges. Or maybe the player's level of skill or knowledge of strategy influences the game experience. Simply put, a game is a problem-solving activity in which players make decisions and take action in order to achieve the goal and win. How *easy* the problem-solving activity is for the players depends on their knowledge of the game, understanding of the rules, acquiring and playing the resources, and accumulating points. How *enjoyable* the problem-solving activity is for players depends on their reasons for playing, their confidence in playing, with whom they are playing—and sometimes luck. Indeed, the aspect of chance, which brings uncertainty and surprise to a game, often arises from the interactions between the game board, objects, obstacles, rules, and the player's skill.

In higher education, early-career faculty in the rank of assistant professor engage in their own problem-solving activity: achieving tenure. The American Association of University Professors (1990) defines tenure as a permanent relationship between faculty and their institutions. To achieve tenure, early-career faculty demonstrate excellence in their core roles of teacher, researcher, and citizen of the community (also known as

service within and outside the institution) (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). To demonstrate excellence in these roles, early-career faculty must amass articles of prestige like they are accumulating points in a game. Valuable articles of prestige include strong teaching evaluations, publications, external funding, fellowships, invited presentations, committee work, and memberships on professional boards.

To successfully maneuver through the tenure and review process, early-career faculty must understand the standards of excellence defined by departmental colleagues, deans, and provosts. Unfortunately, early-career faculty often report that the rules of tenure—the standards applied during the review process—are vague. One reason for ambiguous rules is that colleagues and administrators determine the individual worth of each article of prestige and sometimes their assessments differ (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). Early-career faculty report they lack substantive professional feedback from peers leading into the tenure review (Austin et al., 2007), making the experience stressful.

In addition to unclear rules, early-career faculty face obstacles during the six-year pre-tenure period. Within the first month of employment, faculty learn the realities of designing courses, developing a research agenda, securing funding to perform the research, managing conflict in and out of the classroom, and finding the time to allocate towards personal obligations (Austin et al., 2007). Many early-career faculty struggle to balance teaching, research, service, administrative tasks, and student advising (Austin, 2002; Austin & Rice, 1998; Batile & Brown, 2006; Coleman et al., 2006; Hershberger et al., 2005; León, 2014; Olsen & Crawford, 1998; Reddick, 2015). They may experience isolation and competition in their departments as they strain to find community, locate mentors, and establish networks (Austin et al., 2007). Female early-career faculty

experience additional gender-informed obstacles: they take on more service work at the expense of research (Gappa et al., 2007; Griffin, Bennett, & Harris, 2013; Porter, 2007), navigate discriminatory and biased cultures, policies, and practices of their institutions (Gappa et al., 2007; O’Meara & Strombquist, 2015), deliberate as to whether to start a family during this tenuous time period (Austin et al., 2007; Gappa et al., 2007) or cope with the majority of their familial caretaking responsibilities while working full-time as a faculty member (Misra, Lundquist, & Templer, 2012).

The experience of achieving tenure has changed over the decades: while the overarching goal remains the same, the rules, conflicts, and challenges are dramatically different from those of professors in the past (Ward, 2003). Fiscal constraints and inter-institutional competition, increased student enrollments, and a more diverse student body has transformed the nature of faculty work (Gappa et al., 2007). The demand—and desire—to support a diverse student body requires new faculty to adapt their teaching to reach the learning needs of all students (Terenzini & Reason, 2005). Beyond the responsibilities in the classroom, faculty must find time for co-curricular collaboration and governance. “Faculty are challenged to teach more, collaborate more, and to engage in activities for which the traditional faculty reward structures have little regard” (O’Meara, Kaufman, & Kuntz, 2003, p. 19). Moreover, publishing pressures—including expectations for number of publications and quality of the publications—have only increased (Braxton & Del Favero, 2002).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The contemporary conversation concerning early-career faculty on the tenure track suggests they are surviving the experience amidst low job satisfaction. Some faculty

persisted and ultimately achieved the goal of tenure, but did not enjoy the overall pre-tenure experience, while other faculty either did not achieve tenure or left academia before the tenure review. In some ways, the pre-tenure experience is similar to that endless round of *Monopoly*, in which players desperately want to win and conclude the game or decide to abandon the game completely.

There are four overarching themes to the recent literature on early-career faculty experiences. First, researchers find that graduate school did not prepare aspiring professors for the realities of faculty work, causing early-career faculty to develop the skills needed to successfully engage in their work (Austin, 2002; Austin et al., 2007; Golde & Dore, 2004; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). Second, early-career faculty report that the rules of tenure—particularly how colleagues define the tenure standards—are vague or unclear, and thereby anxiety provoking (Austin & Rice, 1998; Batile & Brown, 2006; Olsen & Crawford, 1998; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). Third, early-career faculty work in isolating or competitive environments, which can create hostile or toxic conflicts with colleagues (Batile & Brown, 2006; Hernandez, Sancho, Creus, & Montane, 2010; Lindholm, 2003; Mullen & Forbes, 2000; Ponjuan et al., 2011). Finally, early-career faculty face obstacles around time management; they wrestle to juggle their work tasks, as well as balance their personal and professional lives (Diggs, Garrison-Wade, Estrada, & Galindo, 2009; Finnegan & Hyle, 2009; Hershberger et al., 2005; Toews & Yazedjian, 2007).

To confront this impressive list of obstacles, early-career faculty have opportunities to develop their skills and learn strategies to reach their goals. They may participate in formal mentoring and professional development programs to advance their

knowledge of their institutions or to acquire a deeper understanding of teaching and research approaches (Cowin, Cohen, Ciechanowski, & Orozco, 2011; Ellis & Ortquist-Ahrens, 2010; Light, Calkins, Luna, & Drane, 2009; Reder, 2010). Both types of support fill an information void and we assume that only faculty who are struggling with their teaching or research will need professional development. However, early-career faculty may engage in these opportunities, as well as pursue other means for skill and strategy development, for both their own sense of enjoyment *and* to achieve the goal. These faculty, who play by the same vague rules and face the same obstacles as the stressed and dissatisfied faculty reported in the literature, approach the pre-tenure experience from a different perspective.

There are three key positions missing from the literature on early-career faculty. First, we need to incorporate assets-oriented approaches to studying pre-tenured faculty and change the narrative around achieving tenure as an experience full of strife, competition, and discontent. Analogous to games, sometimes we are dealt an unfortunate hand, but there is always an opportunity to play that hand to the best of our advantage. Second, much of the literature on early-career faculty experiences—even the few optimistic studies—are retrospective (Conway, 2012; Jones, Hwang, & Bustamante, 2015; Soto, 2014); a real-time study of how early-career faculty approach their professional work would offer a new perspective. Third, the literature obscures the particular stories of professors at liberal arts colleges, as researchers aggregate these data with faculty responses at other institution types (Austin & Rice, 1998; Walzer, 2010). While liberal arts colleges have a reputation as teaching institutions with little support for scholarship (Ghodsee, 2008), there is evidence that research productivity is just as

important as teaching at selective liberal arts colleges (Baker, Pifer, & Lunsford, 2016; Marston & Brunetti, 2009). Studies at large research universities provide greater sample sizes, but we miss understanding the nuances of the liberal arts college faculty experience.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this multi-case study is two-fold. First, I aim to describe the professional approaches of six female early-career faculty who work at selective liberal arts colleges and how those approaches are similar or different from four of their peers at a large research university. I chose to focus specifically on a female population because of the number of obstacles they face during the pre-tenure years. Second, I seek to identify and describe strategies that deviate positively from the typical early-career faculty behaviors articulated in the existing research; I call these strategies positive-deviant approaches.

### **Theoretical Framework**

A game of *Monopoly* may feel endless because all players go through the same steps and take similar actions; the pre-tenure experience may feel isolating, stressful, and overwhelming because faculty engage in a specific set of behaviors and hold negative perspectives about the process. In fact, to make a game more enjoyable, we can be creative with our actions and decisions while adhering to the rules. Tenure is both a goal and a reward for early-career faculty; therefore, tenure is a strong extrinsic motivator. Faculty will persist and struggle, despite low levels of job satisfaction, to attain such a prize. According to the research on job satisfaction, extrinsic rewards have limits on determination and enthusiasm, whereas intrinsic motivation—engaging in an activity



because we enjoy doing it—maintains gratification over time (Lechuga & Lechuga, 2012). Preparing for the tenure review by a different set of rules means increasing intrinsic motivation while maintaining extrinsic motivation over the six-year probationary period.

I drew upon the theories of motivation (Pink, 2009), agency and environmental perception (Bandura, 2001), and positive deviance (Spreitzer and Sonenshein, 2003) to frame my inquiry into how female early-career faculty approach their work. In his theory of motivation, Pink argues that if individuals possess autonomy in their work, a sense of mastery over their tasks, and purpose for participating in activities, they will have higher levels of job satisfaction. These three factors—autonomy, mastery, and purpose—comprise intrinsic motivation. When individuals exercise agency over their lives, according to Bandura (2001), they play an active role in their development and adaptation. They are able to grow and change based on how they perceive their environments; those people who selectively see the positive attributes of their existing environments, or construct their own environments to foster their personal development, are able to exercise more agency over their behaviors. Individuals will only find the intrinsic motivation to take action and persevere in difficult environments if they think they can ultimately achieve a desired result.

Intrinsic motivation and agency are closely entwined. Having autonomy over our work means we can be intentional about our actions (what we do). Feeling a sense of mastery over our work means we can be reflective about our actions, question whether we need to develop our skills for a task, and determine our level of confidence in executing the task (how we do it). Finding purpose in our work means we have

meaningful goals (why we do it). Intrinsic motivation and agency affect the actions we take, how we take them, and why we take them. Higher levels of intrinsic motivation and agency facilitate a greater chance for positive-deviant approaches—behaviors that depart from the norm in honorable ways (Spreitzer and Sonenshein, 2003). To say it differently: positive-deviant approaches are actions that are intentional (they did not happen by chance) and significant (they must be noteworthy enough to capture attention) and deviate constructively from the typical behaviors people use for the same task.

### **Research Questions and Research Design**

I integrated the components of intrinsic motivation, agency and environmental perception, and positive deviance to craft the following central research questions for this study:

1. How do female early-career faculty approach their professional work?
  - How do female early-career faculty at selective liberal arts colleges approach their professional work in ways that are different than female early-career faculty at research-intensive universities?
2. How do female early-career faculty use positive-deviant approaches in their professional work?
  - How does environmental perception shape the use of positive-deviant approaches?

To answer these questions, I used a multi-case study design that involved units of analysis at two levels: the individual level (each female early-career faculty participant) and at an intermediate level of grouping selective liberal arts college faculty participants and research university faculty participants, in order to make comparisons. Yin (2014)

defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context” (p. 16). In terms of this study, the phenomenon or case is the experiences of female early-career faculty; specifically, how these participants approach their professional work and whether those approaches diverge at different institution types.

### **Significance**

There are several noteworthy reasons for studying how female early-career faculty approach their work and are strategically positioning themselves for success. First, this study would offer a counter-narrative to the prolific negative stories of early-career faculty experiences, thereby filling a gap in the literature and providing a greater understanding of how early-career faculty can engage in gratifying professional activities. Second, aspiring faculty members, particularly graduate students enrolled in doctoral programs, may find the information helpful in thinking about how they, too, would construct positive and satisfying careers. Third, the findings from this study could inform future faculty development programming that highlights the approaches of “agents of learning” instead of trainings that cater to faculty deficits.

### **The Metaphor of Tenure as a Game**

Throughout this research, I apply the metaphor of “playing a game” to depict the process of achieving (or winning) tenure. The use of metaphor in qualitative research serves as a tool—an approach to present various concepts as a complete picture or map (Lakoff, 1993). Referring to an activity as a game can sometimes have a negative connotation: mind games and war games are just two examples. Calling a set of actions a game can also suggest the endeavor is frivolous or inconsequential. When I refer to

tenure as “a game” or the participants in this study as “playing the game”, I assume a neutral connotation, and use the literal meaning of a game as a problem-solving activity (Schell, 2015). The concept of tenure as a game directly came from two participants in this study, who told me: “She [graduate advisor] taught me how to play the game” and “Everyone else was playing the boys game except her [graduate mentor].” Other participants subtly suggested that their actions were similar to playing a game: “connect the dots,” “changing goal posts,” and “it’s kind of like a puzzle.” No metaphor can perfectly describe a phenomenon; it will—at times—be asymmetrical or partial. For example, in the high-stakes “game of tenure” there can be multiple winners, whereas for most board games there can only be one victor. I implore readers to interpret the metaphor in a figurative—not literal—manner. In Chapter 3, I explain in more detail how the participants’ data informed and guided the overarching game metaphor.

### **Definition of Terms**

To assist in making certain terms referenced in this study as clear and explicit as possible, I have defined these concepts for purposes of this research, though I realize they may have alternative meanings in other contexts.

*Early-career faculty* are defined as full-time faculty members on a tenure-track appointment who have probationary status and are in the first six years of their appointment (Austin et al., 2007).

*Female early-career faculty* are defined as full-time faculty members who self-identify their gender as female. While the term “female” is often associated with biological sex, I use the term as an adjective to describe the gender of the participants in this study.

*Liberal arts colleges* in this study are four-year, selective, residential baccalaureate colleges, with an undergraduate enrollment of approximately 2,000 students. The education delivered from a liberal arts college focuses on the development of the “whole person,” where students learn how to participate responsibly in a democratic society (Pascarella, Wolniak, Seifert, Cruce, & Blaich, 2005). Not all liberal arts colleges are created or viewed as equals. The liberal arts colleges that serve as the sites for this multi-case embedded study have reputations as elite institutions. Their combined endowments average at \$1.9 billion, and all three institutions rank in the top 15 best liberal arts colleges according to the *U.S. News and World Report*.

### **Study Overview**

A critical gap in the literature on early-career faculty is the absence of inquiries into the positive experiences of this particular population; instead, the literature focuses on a “narrative of constraint” (O’Meara, Terosky, & Neumann, 2008), where stories of struggle, competition, stress, and exhaustion dominate the six years preparing for the tenure review. I came at this study from a different perspective, to fly like Perseus above the heaviness of the world and approach the research with “fresh methods of cognition and verification” (Calvino, 1988, p. 7). When I embarked on this journey to talk with young female faculty about their experiences, I hoped I would find at least one optimistic story of an early-career faculty member who, despite all the obstacles, found a way to be strategic in her work and possess a positive outlook on her journey. Instead, I found positive stories of autonomy, mastery, purpose, and agency from all ten female early-career faculty—cut from different cloth but joined by some common threads.

The variation in the participants' stories is due to who they are as individuals, what experiences they had prior to their current academic appointments, how they learned to play the game, and why they decided to play the game in the first place. In Chapter 2, I present a review of the literature that mirrors the components of game design, otherwise known as game mechanics. I outline the tenure review process (the formal rules) and the common challenges early-career faculty confront during the first few years in their appointments (the obstacles). I report how graduate school preparation, professional identity development, and participation in professional development programs helps faculty to develop their skills for the game. Just like chess experts have particular strategies they may suggest to novice players to help them win the game, scholars in the areas of faculty development suggest strategies to early-career faculty to help them balance their responsibilities and attain tenure. I conclude the chapter with the strategies scholars recommend, based on their observations of pre-tenure faculty obstacles.

The broader theme of tenure as a game and how faculty play the game came from discussions with participants, their drawings and diagrams, and their curriculum vitae. In Chapter 3, I provide an in-depth explanation of the theoretical framework that informed the research questions, the method I used to identify the ten participants for this multi-case study, and how I analyzed their data to understand their approaches. Through my interactions with participants over the course of five months, it became increasingly important to me to be true to their experiences. I followed the ethical procedures encouraged by qualitative researchers: sharing interview transcripts with participants, checking with participants to confirm I understood their experiences, and debriefing with

my own peers during analysis. And still, these procedures did not seem like enough.

Upon reflection, I decided to fully document my analytical methods in Chapter 3 to not only substantiate why the metaphor of the game is appropriate, but also walk through the choices I made and create an opportunity for the reader to see what I saw in the data.

Every participant is unique, just like every player comes to a game with her own foundational knowledge, experience, and individual perspective. In Chapter 4, I depict the particular approaches of the participants—the individual players. Through data analysis, I determined that each participant is playing the game of tenure, but the approach to the game differs in the particular actions she takes. Such specificity implies that each participant is actually playing a different game; for example, one participant approaches her tenure review like it is a game of *Clue*, while another participant plays the game like she is trying to win a round of *Jenga*. In this chapter, I focus on within-case analysis to construct participant narratives describing the distinct game strategies each female early-career faculty member uses to achieve her goal.

The findings of a case study include the particulars and the general: the fine details and broad brushstrokes. If I provide the fine details in the previous chapter (the individual narratives), then I offer the broad brushstrokes in Chapter 5. To construct generalizations across all ten experiences, I examined the specific actions each participant takes in her game and sorted the actions into common categories, broadening my interpretation of the approaches taken to achieve tenure. By removing certain contextual factors that make each individual experience unique, I began to see common behaviors across all experiences, often informed by time: the beginning, middle, and end of the tenure appointment. By uncovering common themes—the essential approaches that all

participants use—I was able to identify a shared game they are all playing: chess. Using the chess game analogy to frame this chapter, I explain the approaches taken in the beginning, middle, and end of the tenure-track appointments.

Finally, in Chapter 6 I discuss the four major insights that surfaced from the findings. I rephrase the insights as “advisory rules” or suggestions to help early-career faculty in the game of tenure. These rules include taking a skills assessment early in the game and identifying ways for improvement; seizing opportunities to quickly advance towards the middle of the game, and incorporating moves that integrate personal passions throughout the game. These three rules, incorporated into female early-career faculty’s approaches to professional work, contributed to their overall job satisfaction. Positive-deviant approaches to professional work *combined* these rules at the onset in the game—the first year of a tenure-track appointment—and ultimately positioned the cases for success. I conclude this chapter with implications for practice and policy and suggestions for future research.



## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

Games are made up of many elements, but one component that is the most critical is the structure: the rules and procedures. Game designers refer to this structure as the game mechanics. Schell (2015) defines mechanics as “the interactions and relationships that remain when all of the aesthetics, technology, and story are stripped away” (p. 130). Schell developed a taxonomy of game mechanics made up of six categories: *game space* or where the game occurs; *time*; *objects* or characters; *actions*; *rules* that include the written guidelines that come with the game, behavioral rules around good sportsmanship, and advisory rules that suggest particular strategies; and the *skill* that the player brings to the game or develops while playing the game. Game mechanics mirror the elements female early-career faculty come in contact with during pre-tenure experiences: they develop their initial *skills* for the game and their understanding of the *rules* of tenure in graduate school; they face various obstacles, some of which are brought on by their interactions with *objects* (colleagues, students, department chairs) in the *game space* (institutional environment); and they subsequently decide what actions to take in response to those obstacles within the six-year *time* frame of the probationary period. The goal of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive overview of the research conducted on faculty work, or as I see it, the mechanics associated with the game of tenure.

#### Socialization to the Profession

When people learn the acceptable knowledge, norms, values, and behaviors identified by a group of people they wish to join, they become socialized (Gardner &

Blackstone, 2013). For aspiring professors, socialization to the academic profession begins in graduate school, where doctoral students first learn about the responsibilities of faculty work (Austin, 2002; Gardner & Blackstone, 2013; Golde, 2008; O'Meara et al., 2008). Graduate students undergo the process of sensemaking: understanding why faculty engage in certain activities (Weick, 1995). They watch faculty perform their expected roles of teaching and research, and perhaps hear faculty speak about their committee work.

Through informal, formal, and social interactions with other faculty, graduate students start to construct mental images of themselves as future professors (Yee & Hargis, 2012). Graduate students engage in their own scholarship at this time, perhaps working in a lab or clinical setting or writing manuscripts for publication (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). Some students may learn about faculty lives indirectly by noticing and subsequently mimicking how their professors act in and out of the classroom. They may observe some of their faculty describing themselves as “more oriented towards research than teaching”; female faculty spending more time on teaching than their male counterparts; and more faculty of color serving on committees and informally advising students (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). Graduate students may also look to formal mentors as guides in navigating a life in academia (Golde, 2008). According to the 2001-2002 Higher Education Research Institute national survey, 41 percent of faculty note that their graduate school advisor was “very influential” in their decision to pursue a career in the academy, as the advisors assisted them in developing their skills for the profession (Cardelle-Elawar & Sanz de Acedo Lizarraga, 2010; Lindholm, 2004).

## **Professional Identity Development**

Through observing faculty, graduate students soon realize what the job of a professor entails; in some ways, this early socialization serves as a filter. Graduate students begin to determine what type of faculty member they wish to become through their own professional identity development. Reybold (2003) found five different identity pathways graduate students assume as they make their way through their studies and search for academic positions. Some graduate students identify strongly with the research component of faculty life, and work closely with advisors to co-author publications in order to gain an inside track and position them for a job at a research-intensive university. Other graduate students embrace the broad goals of research, teaching, and service and plan every step of their graduate careers in ways that allow them to gain experience in these responsibilities and increase their marketability. Another group of graduate students in Reybold's study chose to become faculty either because they believe the job can help achieve social change, or they see the work as an opportunity to assist them in their own personal quest for growth. Finally, Reybold found a fifth group of graduate students who had no singular commitment to academia, were unsure if they want to be professors, but pursued job opportunities because they did not know what other career options were available to them.

Uncertainty about the life of an academic is a strong theme throughout the literature on graduate school experiences. Students who decide not to pursue a career in academia cited that they observed professors' higher levels of stress and lower levels of happiness and work/life balance (Austin et al., 2007; Helm, Campa III, & Moretto, 2012). Graduate students frequently report concerns about faculty work. While their interest in

becoming an academic was high when they begin their graduate program, it gradually declined when they understood the difficulties around workload, hear about problematic tenure reviews, or experience isolating, competitive, or dysfunctional cultures (Clarke, Hyde, & Drennan, 2013; Golde & Dore, 2004).

### **Preparation for Faculty Work**

Many early-career faculty note that their graduate experience was a pivotal factor in developing self-efficacy and feeling prepared for the job (Major & Dolly, 2003). Yet, after a decade of research examining how graduate school trains new faculty, findings show a limited amount of preparation (Golde & Dore, 2004). While graduate students said they felt confident in designing empirical research studies, they were still unsure of how to secure research funding and needed more experience in designing research questions, receiving feedback, and presenting their findings (Austin & McDaniels, 2006; Austin et al., 2007). Although some graduate students hold teaching assistantships, many feel they have little teaching experience when it comes to designing courses, managing classrooms, advising students, incorporating classroom technology, and assessing student work (Austin, 2002; Austin et al., 2007; Helm et al., 2012). Ironically, while graduate students may feel unprepared to teach, many of them express a strong inclination to secure their first appointment at a liberal arts college. In a study of graduate education and preparation of chemistry and English doctoral students, Golde and Dore (2004) found that students in both disciplines identified a strong preference to teach at a liberal arts college, yet, only the English concentrators reported high levels of confidence to teach. Golde and Dore speculated that the participants assumed the workload and research expectations were less intensive at liberal arts colleges.

In the last decade, researchers have started to propose interventions to effectively prepare graduate students for academia (Austin & McDaniels, 2006; Golde, 2008). Austin, Sorcinelli, and McDaniels (2007) suggest that graduate school program directors develop a systematized preparation experience, instead of relying on students to observe the skills they need from their faculty mentors. A structured preparation experience for graduate students would include targeted opportunities to develop skills in all facets of teaching (e.g., course design, teaching diverse students, assessment) and research (e.g., developing research questions, proposal writing, designing projects, analyzing findings, and communicating results to stakeholders). Program administrators should also consider building in opportunities for self-assessment and reflection, helping to develop graduate students' professional identities.

Interventions to help graduate students form professional skills, competencies, and attitudes are often programmatic in nature, with trainings on research methodologies or external funding. Such workshops can be narrow in scope and ignore graduate students' own motivation and agency for self-development. Haley (2013) found that female graduate students needed to take more initiative in order to get the most out of their graduate school programs. While faculty mentors certainly played a role in offering support and guidance, female graduate students noted that they were self-aware of what they needed to do to succeed and took it upon themselves to seek out opportunities to develop their skills and marketability, such as volunteering to co-teach courses with faculty in order to gain teaching experience. In the case of Haley's study, female graduate students were intentional in finding experiences that would position them for future success.

Doctoral students learn about faculty work through direct observation or mentorship by graduate advisors. During these formative years, graduate students also discern how faculty allocate time towards particular responsibilities and which activities faculty may value more than other tasks. Because graduate experiences are often reflective in the literature, many early-career faculty report that their particular programs did not prepare them for the life of an academic. These retrospective accounts interrelate with stories of early-career faculty experiences; negative reflection upon how graduate school did not prepare early-career faculty *for* the job may feed into their current experience *on* the job. However, even in this brief review of the literature on graduate school socialization and preparation, there are positive experiences. Students who exercise agency in identifying opportunities for professional growth are strategic in how they allocate their time in graduate school. By taking initiative, some graduate students have clear, intentional objectives for their time in their programs, and the forethought to seek out activities that will help them achieve their goals.

### **Expectations for Early-Career Faculty**

Early-career faculty bring their beliefs about the academic profession, formed in graduate school, to their initial and subsequent appointments. Administrators and colleagues continue to socialize early-career faculty to the norms, values, and culture of the institution, often through formal channels like new faculty orientations (Gardner & Blackstone, 2013; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). Early-career faculty also undergo informal socialization, comprised of idiosyncratic interactions with peers, administrators, and students, and through trial and error in their day-to-day work. Through these formal and informal means, early-career faculty develop a better sense of their responsibilities in

this role than perhaps they had in graduate school, but continue to interpret how their colleagues and administrators perceive and value their work.

### **Faculty Work**

The job description appears simple: teach your assigned courses, conduct research, serve as a good citizen to the institution. The trifecta of faculty work—teaching, research, and service—suggests straightforward expectations of the job. Yet colleagues, department chairs, and deans sometimes placing differing values on particular work expectations. Other times, these colleagues have unrealistic expectations for what early-career faculty can accomplish in the six years leading into the tenure review.

In terms of teaching, faculty are expected to remain current in their discipline and integrate new knowledge into their courses (O’Meara et al., 2008). At smaller institutions like liberal arts colleges, professors are accountable to the students and judged on their accessibility, often through teaching evaluations (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). How much time colleagues and administrators expect early-career faculty to devote to teaching depends on the underlying assumptions of the institution. Teaching is a local phenomenon for many institutions with impacts felt by an internal constituency; early-career faculty can build a reputation at their institution as an excellent teacher, but it will rarely result in external recognition (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995).

Scholarship expectations for early-career faculty, which often include a record number of publications and securing external funding, are more prominent and demanding. Research can contribute more to an early-career faculty member’s reputation than strong teaching evaluations—it can increase salary, offer national recognition through prizes and awards, and augment the diversity of a faculty member’s network

(Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995). Administrators and colleagues also have high expectations for research because it may add to the institution's reputation in national rankings. These scholarship expectations are no different across institution type; even faculty at liberal arts colleges report they feel the pressure to secure external funding and publish during their pre-tenure years (Lechuga & Lechuga, 2012).

Service expectations, often fewer and less significant than teaching and research obligations, also demand time. Departmental and institutional committee work provides an opportunity for early-career faculty to have a voice in decision-making—if they want it (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995). Beyond service directly to the institution, early-career faculty can engage in external service, such as offering public talks to the community, representing the institution on local associations, and serving on boards of national organizations (Macfarlane, 2005). While there are aspirations for early-career faculty to participate in service, research has found that service is the least esteemed of the faculty roles (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). The lesser value placed on service makes it difficult for early-career faculty to want to devote time to such activities. Service commitments are even more difficult for early-career faculty at liberal arts colleges, where they sit on more committees due to the smaller number of professors across ranks (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996).

Student advising, while not considered part of the “Holy Trinity” of faculty work, is a faculty responsibility at liberal arts colleges and research universities. Most often, student advising is not evaluated separately, but considered a form of teaching or service (Johnson et al., 2016). Perspective advising and developmental advising are the two most common forms of student advising, each with its own time commitment (Crocker, Kahla,



& Allen, 2014). Perspective advising is a process in which a faculty member directs a student on the sequence of courses to take for a degree. For new faculty, perspective advising can be challenging, particularly when they are just learning the course requirements and policies of the institution. When faculty engage in developmental advising, they offer guidance on why courses may help students achieve their goals, suggest internship opportunities that may complement a student's program of study, or engage in discussion about career objectives. Developmental advising draws more on faculty's disciplinary expertise. Most institutions have no mechanism to evaluate effective student advising.

### **The Tenure Process**

Expectations for early-career faculty feed into the tenure process. The first six years of an initial faculty appointment focuses on preparing for the tenure review, which occurs early in the seventh and final year of the probationary period. Tenure is a critical step towards attaining a permanent position at the institution, while acquiring the specific protections of academic freedom and the right to due process (Eichler, 2015). Public scrutiny over the tenure system has increased the rigor of the practice. Today, early-career faculty must prepare tenure dossiers that typically include a letter from their department chair that outlines the candidate's strengths and areas for growth, evidence of their productivity and success in their faculty roles in teaching, scholarship, and service, as well as external letters from scholars in their field attesting to the quality of the research (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996).

Evidence of excellent teaching often includes course syllabi and course assessments, student evaluations, and assessments of teaching from peers or department

chairs through classroom observation. Student ratings of courses are the most influential measure of teaching performance used in promotion and tenure decisions (Berk, 2005). Research on student evaluations shows that administrators over-rely on this data, which may be biased, to make personnel decisions. In addition to poor questionnaire construction and administration, administrators may also misinterpret the data collected through student evaluations, making unfounded generalizations from the ratings and failing to acknowledge the information provided through the evaluations may not offer applicable insight into effective teaching practices (Franklin, 2001). Peer observations of teaching, including observations made by the department chair, provides another perspective on teaching effectiveness by an audience who is more intimately knowledgeable of content, teaching methods, and learning activities than the student population. Unfortunately, the time commitment needed for peer observation means that it is unlikely to consistently occur, and the use of peer observation in summative assessments of teaching effectiveness has its own limitations, including subjectivity of the observer and low inter-reviewer reliability (Berk, 2005).

Evidence of scholarship in a tenure dossier typically includes publications, conference presentations, or patents. Historically, such publications are historically peer-reviewed works of empirical research. Boyer (1990), in his seminal work, *Scholarship Reconsidered*, urged academic leaders to consider a full range of faculty scholarly work. To Boyer, the work of the professoriate has four separate, but overlapping, functions: scholarship of discovery (empirical research), scholarship of integration (making connections across disciplines), scholarship of application (engagement), and scholarship of teaching. Boyer (1990) encouraged administrators to emphasize the forms of

scholarship most appropriate to their missions. Whether institutional leaders heeded this advice remains to be seen. O'Meara (2005a) found that most comprehensive colleges and universities made formal changes to their reward systems to encourage multiple forms of scholarship, while many baccalaureates, including liberal arts colleges, and research universities did not. Chief academic officers of liberal arts colleges and research universities stated that faculty were concerned that if the change was made, there would be unrealistic expectations to excel in all four areas of scholarship at the same time, and even greater confusion about what counts. Braxton and Del Favero (2002) found that publication outlets across disciplines publish more examples of scholarship of discovery than any other scholarship identified by Boyer (1990). This finding has tremendous impact on where faculty decide to allocate their efforts when it concerns scholarship, even those faculty employed by "teaching institutions."

Finally, early-career faculty demonstrate service through work on or off campus (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). Evidence of service includes the number of campus committees or external boards of national organizations. Despite clear quantitative measures of service, demonstrated by the number of committees and boards, service is the hardest to measure for impact when it comes to promotion (Macfarlane, 2005). Moreover, service requires a considerable amount of faculty time, despite its limited weight in tenure decisions.

Once early-career faculty begin their jobs at an institution, they may find a dissonance between how they interpreted their work responsibilities and the work expectations held by the members of the institution. For example, early-career faculty who take positions at liberal arts colleges may arrive with the idealistic notion that their

primary focus should be to teach undergraduates, only to learn that their peers expect that they allocate some of their time towards research and securing external funding.

Conversely, the diversion of attention towards departmental politics or administrative tasks can frustrate those faculty motivated by scholarly achievements (Reybold, 2005).

When such a discord occurs, the choice is to either adapt to the norms of the institution or stay true to individual beliefs; either options presents an opportunity for internal conflict.

### **Early-Career Faculty Challenges**

The obstacles early-career faculty face dominates the literature. The challenges fall into three broad categories: structural complications found across institutions related to the tenure process, problematic departmental cultures that impede faculty satisfaction, and an incongruity between early-career faculty's skills coming into their appointments and the expectations placed on new faculty. I explain each broad category in this section to demonstrate the negative experiences of early-career faculty found in the research, and conclude with a discussion of the challenges unique to female early-career faculty.

### **Structural Complications of the Tenure Process**

Early-career faculty report that vague or conflicting expectations for tenure is a major problem with the system (Batille & Brown, 2006). While faculty may have a better sense of what kinds of scholarship to produce—scholarship of discovery—they struggle with questions of, “How much is enough?” and “With whom should I conduct this scholarship?” Faculty lean towards producing scholarship skewed towards what their colleagues deem important and not grounded in their own interests (O’Meara et al., 2008). In a survey of untenured faculty, Mullen and Forbes (2000) found that little formal discussion happens between early-career faculty and their chairs concerning what is

involved in attaining tenure. The inconsistency between what department chairs and colleagues say they value and what deans and provosts expect early-career faculty to produce is another problematic finding (Austin et al., 2007). For example, senior colleagues and department chairs may encourage early-career faculty to collaborate with their colleagues and students on research projects in order to use their limited time wisely, but early-career faculty worry that collaborative scholarship will not hold enough weight when it comes to the tenure review by the provost (Austin & Rice, 1998; Walzer, 2010).

Liberal arts college faculty frequently report vague tenure expectations. While messages around teaching were clear, expectations for scholarship were mixed (Austin & Rice, 1998). Provosts stress that teaching is the highest priority, but peers and department chairs emphasize that scholarship is the most important for tenure (Menges, 1999). Since tenured faculty are the evaluators of those individuals seeking tenure, it is imperative for early-career faculty to heed all messages, making the tenure expectations frustrating and stressful to interpret (Eichler, 2015).

Early-career faculty also report that a lack of consistent feedback prior to the tenure review is discouraging (Austin et al., 2007; Batile & Brown, 2006). Past research highlights early-career faculty's apprehension with teaching, due to their lack of exposure to instructional experiences in graduate school. Feedback on their teaching practices throughout the probationary period would be helpful, particularly since the evidence of superior teaching for tenure relies on student evaluations. Yet, consistent and systematic feedback from department chairs or senior colleagues is lacking. While most institutions use a third year, "mini-tenure" review as a check-in and opportunity to seek clarification

from the department chair, early-career faculty note that even this opportunity provides limited feedback on their work (Menges, 1999). If feedback is provided, it is often not sufficiently specific or explicit to be helpful (Austin & Rice, 1998).

Finally, the actual tenure practice is fraught with problems. Rotating department chairs and the frequent turnover of the departmental personnel committee membership makes the process very inconsistent (Batille & Brown, 2006; Gappa et al., 2007).

Furthermore, those colleagues who are on the committee may not truly understand the early-career faculty member's research focus, which could impact the evaluation of scholarly work (Austin & Rice, 1998). The tenure timeline is also challenging: the six-year period does not work with the real-life time constraints of starting a lab, beginning research projects, and deadlines for journal publications (Gappa et al., 2007).

### **Problematic Departmental Cultures**

Departmental culture, described as “what is done, how it is done, and who is involved in doing it,” impacts faculty work (Tierney, 1988, p. 3). Professionals create a work culture by their actions and how they talk about what they do (Eckel, Hill, & Green, 1998). Actions, such as how to distribute resources or treating colleagues with respect, as well as how we talk about the tenure process, transparency about expectations, and climate, comprise the departmental context (Campbell & O'Meara, 2012). Faculty determine their fit with their departments early in their appointments, more so than their fit with the institution as a whole. Departmental cultures can be the main drivers for faculty achievement and purpose. Having like-minded peers with similar approaches to research and teaching has the potential to increase job satisfaction (Lindholm, 2003; Pifer, Baker, & Lunsford, 2015).

While perceptions of departmental climate play a leading role in early-career faculty's decisions to accept a position at an institution, access to resources is another critical component contributing to person-organization fit. Structural support like funding for research or professional development and access to physical space, assist early-career faculty in achieving their professional goals (Lindholm, 2003). In a study of how departmental contexts influence faculty agency, Campbell and O'Meara (2012) found that how the department allocates resources, its work-life climate, and recognition of faculty achievement by colleagues affected the way faculty perceived their abilities to achieve their goals.

A chair is a pivotal player in helping early-career faculty make sense of the institution, department, and their individual roles within both environments. Transparent communication and demonstrating supportive behaviors to early-career faculty are two major responsibilities of a department chair (Sorcinelli, 2000). Clearly stating work expectations and providing consistent feedback on performance assist early-career faculty in preparing for the tenure review. Chairs demonstrate investment and care in their faculty by establishing opportunities for mentoring, teaching and scholarship development, and encouraging behaviors that seek to balance work and personal life.

Since the departmental context and the role of the department chair influence early-career faculty work, problematic departmental cultures have the potential to impede faculty in achieving their goals. One major theme in the literature on difficult departmental cultures that affect faculty productivity is aggressive or isolating work environments. Finding community with peers is difficult, particularly if the culture encourages competition (Austin et al., 2007; Batille & Brown, 2006; Berg & Seeber,

2016; Walzer, 2010). When early-career faculty believe their senior faculty peers do not understand or forget the time pressures associated with the probationary period, isolation increases (Gappa et al., 2007). These feelings may turn to resentment if early-career faculty view senior faculty as less productive post-tenure (Menges, 1999). Social support tends to decrease over the first three years of an appointment as well (Walker & Hale, 1999), an alarming finding if the baseline level for collegial community is already low.

### **Individual Struggles**

Where to allocate their time is an ongoing problem for early-career faculty. Despite a profession with high levels of autonomy, early-career academics feel like they cannot accomplish all of their responsibilities within their deadlines (Berg & Seeber, 2016). There is little time to do scholarship in the first three years of an appointment, which makes developing a scholarly agenda difficult to achieve (Walker & Hale, 1999). For many, a lack of time to conduct research and write up the findings is frustrating. Part of this hardship in the very early years of an appointment is due to teaching preparation. Many new faculty allocate much of their attention to heavy teaching loads (O'Meara, 2005a; Trower & Gallagher, 2010). Boice (2000) found that assistant professors overprepare for their courses by 4:1, due to a lack of teacher training in graduate school and overcompensating in their tenure-track appointments. In a study of newly hired faculty at liberal arts colleges, teaching duties comprised over half of the faculty's time, while time spent on scholarship was twenty percent (Menges, 1999); a worrisome statistic, given that so many liberal arts faculty report that they should allocate fifty percent of their time towards research in order to get tenure.



A lack of time also leads to a lack of balance. Early-career faculty report the difficulties in achieving equilibrium among their work responsibilities, as well as between their professional and personal lives (Austin & Rice, 1998; Austin et al., 2007). Workload is a comprehensive issue, with teaching, research, service, advising, and administrative tasks occupying most of faculty's attention (Gappa et al., 2007). If a given task is particularly difficult—preparing lectures, teaching, and grading in the first year—there is more pressure to get everything done under limited time constraints (Berg & Seeber, 2016). Menges (1999) found that new faculty at liberal arts colleges reported the highest levels of work-related stress across teaching, research, and service responsibilities and noted that their stress increased over the duration of their probationary period.

### **Challenges Specific to Female Early-Career Faculty**

Female faculty in the early years of an appointment cite additional challenges not often experienced by their male peers. In fact, female faculty report that institutional policies, processes, and politics are their biggest sources of job stress (Gappa et al., 2007). A multi-institutional survey of tenure-track faculty found that female faculty considered the tenure process to be less fair to women than to their male peers due to the additional and gendered work expectations placed upon them (Lawrence, Celis, & Ott, 2014). They are asked to do more within their departments around teaching and service than their male colleagues, resulting in less time to allocate towards conducting and publishing research, a critical expectation for tenure (Battile & Brown, 2006; Guarino & Borden, 2017).

The tenure timeline also creates a unique set of problems for female faculty concerning professional and personal goals. In the literature, this conflict is referred to as

the tenure clock versus the biological clock. Many female faculty choose to wait to have children until after they get tenure, choose to have smaller families in order to return to work to prepare for the tenure review, or opt to not have children at all (Gappa et al., 2007). Despite the fact that institutions have “stop the clock” policies that protect tenure-track female faculty by extending the tenure timeline, colleagues may have differing views of a females’ choices to take leave. In a study of faculty’s sense of agency in making decisions about work and family, O’Meara and Campbell (2011) found that if departmental norms were supportive of parental leave, faculty felt more empowered to take it. If the department promoted flexible standards, such as working from home, or extending the tenure clock, faculty reported higher levels of agency in making the decision to have a family (Gappa et al., 2007; O’Meara & Campbell, 2011).

Unfortunately, if the departmental culture does not support leave, female faculty have a difficult time deciding how and when to advance their professional and personal lives. While parental leave and “stop the clock” policies exist, few faculty actually take leave due to the stigma placed upon the policies by their peers (Lester, 2013).

The challenges early-career faculty face prior to attaining tenure create an aura of negativity so frequently conveyed in the literature. Specifically, these obstacles include: a misunderstanding, miscommunication, or a misinterpretation of tenure expectations and the tenure process; conflicts with colleagues around work responsibilities that create chilly and isolating departmental cultures; and the tension between multiple work responsibilities and personal obligations and desires. For female faculty, departmental climate has a tremendous impact on whether they feel empowered and supported to take parental leave while on the tenure-track.

## **Approaches to Early-Career Faculty Support**

There are opportunities that early-career faculty may take advantage of to further develop their skills and confront obstacles. Institutional supports are the formal programs colleges and universities put in place to assist early-career faculty with overcoming hurdles most often associated with teaching, research, and understanding organizational culture. Individual strategies are the behaviors identified in the literature—either as suggested actions or actual measures shared by early-career faculty—as helpful ways to achieve their professional and personal goals.

### **Institutional Supports**

#### **Faculty Development Programs**

Faculty development centers—located at large research universities and small liberal arts colleges—house programming that supports the teaching, learning, and scholarly activities performed at institutions of higher education. Today, the focus of programming includes teaching development, work/life balance, assessment, technology, and student diversity (Ouellett, 2010). Faculty developers have the ability to create a culture of support through their programs that may serve as a remedy to early-career faculty's departmental cultures. Many faculty developers take the lead in organizing new faculty orientation, an event that plays a major role in socializing new faculty to the institution, as well as workshops, individual consultations, and classroom observations for formative feedback on teaching (Lee, 2010).

A program series, like teaching circles and faculty learning committees, creates a community of practice. Simmons (2011) found that early-career pre-tenured faculty engaged in faculty development workshops, not necessarily to learn something new, but

to connect with peers and form networks. Getting to know colleagues from a variety of disciplines through workshops creates an intellectual community of varying perspectives (Gillespie et al., 2005; Hershberger et al., 2005), and offers opportunities to explore teaching and research collaboration (Baldwin & Chang, 2007). Interactive activities with other early-career faculty members could result in collaborative research and the possibility of a publications or grants to include in a tenure dossier. Faculty development communities increase the motivation and job commitment of individual participants, due to the culture of support they find in these activities (Girardeau, Rud, & Trevisan, 2014; O'Meara, 2005b)

Teaching development programming enhances early-career faculty skills in instruction, classroom technology, assessments, and facilitation (Seldin, 2006). Some programs incorporate peer observations or peer visits to observe teaching practices *in situ* (Light et al., 2009). Faculty who participate in teaching-focused professional development report higher levels of self-confidence in instruction and find that they are more pedagogically aware of what they are doing in the classroom (O'Meara, 2005b).

Research development programs, like research circles or internal research fellowships, bring together faculty across disciplines to create social support in scholarship and provide an accountability structure. Faculty develop research projects and bring drafts of manuscripts or grant proposals for peer feedback (Gillespie et al., 2005). Some programs incorporate structured writing time (Girardeau et al., 2014). Since many research development programs are interdisciplinary, the feedback faculty receive helps them to develop skills in writing beyond traditional audiences or disciplinary-specific populations. The community structure of the circles assists in building the

confidence to develop a solid research agenda (Jones & Osborne-Lampkin, 2013). Other institutional structures available to early-career faculty include workshops on grant writing or internal grants and travel funds to consult with potential colleagues on research projects (Baldwin & Chang, 2007; Porter, 2007).

Faculty learning communities can also focus on how to combine research and teaching in order to balance the time needed for both responsibilities. Hershberger et al. (2005) created a faculty learning community where a small number of early-career faculty members were asked to select a research project that may be critical to tenure, and how the new research could inform the courses they teach or will teach. This integration would allow faculty to work on both aspects of their professional work in tandem.

### **Formal Mentoring Programs**

An increasing number of department chairs are exploring the need for formal mentoring programs to create supportive environments for early-career faculty. There are various models of formal mentoring programs, though many involve pairing an experienced tenured faculty member with an early-career tenure-track faculty member (Davis, Boyer, & Russell, 2011). Senior faculty serve as a guides to junior faculty, socializing them to departmental and institutional norms, and helping them develop competence in teaching and research (Lechuga, 2014). The most successful senior-early-career pairs share a similar vision on faculty work, and experience the greatest benefits from mentoring if they have demographic (gender, race or ethnicity) or disciplinary commonalities (Davis et al., 2011).

Group mentoring is another formal model, in which a cohort of early-career faculty get together to hear presentations on topics of interest. Many group mentoring

meetings focus on course design, developing grant proposals, and new faculty topics on the tenure process and annual goal setting (Otieno, 2010). Group mentoring also provides opportunities for early-career faculty to create community and learn from each other (Rees & Shaw, 2014).

For many faculty, formal mentoring programs are a coping strategy. The advice early-career faculty receive from senior peers—when the mentoring partnership works—is valuable. Female faculty, in particular, find that formal mentors help to level to playing field (Hyers, Syphan, Cochran, & Brown, 2012). Many faculty who participate in formal programs report they spent most of their time with their mentor discussing tenure and promotion policies and strategies (Davis et al., 2011). Mentors assume the role of wise sage; they can advise on teaching approaches, provide feedback on classes or drafts of publications, suggest strategies for managing work, caution against serving on time-intensive committees, or provide additional information on parental leave and child-care policies (Lumpkin, 2014). Not only do early-career faculty benefit from formal mentoring, but, so too, does the institution, as research on mentoring programs show a reduction in faculty turnover (Otieno, 2010).

Of course, formal mentoring programs are not without their issues. Some faculty have more fruitful experiences than others. When formal mentoring works well, early-career faculty report a greater sense of ownership over their careers, deeper knowledge of their professorial roles at the institution, and higher job satisfaction (Hyers et al., 2012). When formal mentoring does not work, faculty are no better off than when they began their appointments. The reasons why formal mentoring pairs malfunction vary from lack of interaction between the mentor and protégé due to time conflicts, lack of rapport with

each other, awkward power dynamics (particularly when the mentor works in the same department), or conflicting views of faculty work (Cowin et al., 2011; Davis et al., 2011; Lechuga, 2014). Thus, while an early-career faculty member might opt in to a formal mentoring program, the result may not be the support she would have selected.

### **Individual Strategies**

Understanding how faculty approach their own development and the strategies they use to achieve success has been a longstanding interest for some researchers. The fascination in faculty vitality and well-being began in the 1970s and lasted for roughly twenty years, with narrative studies of highly productive faculty, survey research to compare the behaviors of highly successful and less successful faculty, and retrospective analyses of faculty members' initial expectations of the profession and the realities they experienced (Finkelstein, 2006). Although the studies on faculty vitality during 1970-1990 defined vitality in terms of research productivity for faculty across career stages. Finkelstein (2006) notes, "Vital faculty create opportunities for themselves or manage to find opportunity in their immediate environment when they feel competent and an internal locus of control. Non-vital faculty typically see obstacles rather than opportunities" (p. 186).

Feeling in control, mastering responsibilities, finding sources of support, and identifying challenging but meaningful goals comprise the behaviors that increase a sense of well-being. Early-career faculty, then, must be active participants in their career management and employ such behaviors (O'Meara, Kaufman, & Kuntz, 2003; Walker & Hale, 1999). They cannot passively rely on the institution to create the only opportunities for growth and advancement. Rather, they must take ownership and demonstrate

behaviors that would position them for future success, however they define success (Dowd & Kaplan, 2005). The following strategies are the recommendations made by scholars who have studied the challenges of early-career faculty.

### **Mastering Responsibilities**

Early-career faculty can use the resources available to them to meet the challenges of managing teaching and research. Faculty can deliberately develop their teaching expertise by incorporating past material from graduate school into new courses or asking colleagues to see their teaching materials for guidance and inspiration (Toews & Yazedjian, 2007). Research strategies include staggering scholarship so they are managing projects at different stages of development (data collection, analysis, writing); implementing research projects that require minimal funding during the first few years; and using conference proposals as a foundation for future manuscripts in order to develop a scholarly agenda (Toews & Yazedjian, 2007). Strategies particularly useful for liberal arts college faculty include identifying quality undergraduate students to serve as research assistants through independent studies, and engaging in the scholarship of teaching if their department values this type of research (Baldwin & Chang, 2007; Toews & Yazedjian, 2007).

### **Time Allocation**

Early-career faculty take ownership over their careers and direct their work by making calculated decisions about how they allocate their time across their responsibilities. Faculty should be mindful of how much time they are putting into class preparation (Toews & Yazedjian, 2007). Boice (2000) suggests early-career faculty spend equal amounts of time preparing for a class and teaching the class. In terms of time



allocated to research, faculty should consider devoting designated time to their research agenda, break down the research into manageable parts, and slow down the pace of their projects (Toews & Yazedjian, 2007; Wilson, 2000). Integrating research with teaching by growing research ideas out of class projects or incorporating individual research into the classroom curriculum creates more space in a faculty member's schedule (Colbeck, 1998; O'Meara et al., 2008; Simmons, 2011; Tollefson-Hall, Pfeiler-Wunder, Hsieh, & Henry, 2013; Wilson, 2000). Finally, to protect their time from service activities, early-career faculty should know the time commitment before agreeing to be on a particular committee (Jones et al., 2015; Toews & Yazedjian, 2007).

Female early-career faculty realize they must say "no" to certain service requests as a way to achieve balance between professional and personal obligations (Young & Wright, 2001). Prioritizing their personal lives during the beginning of their appointments and then dedicating more of their time to their careers after their children were grown, was one approach female early-career faculty took to balancing work and life (Damiano-Teixeira, 2006). Of course, this prioritization came with trade-offs; the female early-career faculty who prioritized their families over their careers had lower productivity levels than their peers at the same career stage. To make up for the delay, Young and Wright (2001) found that female early-career faculty with families were more inclined to find projects that incorporate scholarship, teaching, and service in order to positively position them for a tenure review.

### **Identifying Sources of Support**

Seeking out informal mentors and creating professional networks are two ways early-career faculty can develop sources of support to help them achieve their goals.

Similar to the model of formal mentoring programs, informal mentors can include senior colleagues within or outside an early-career faculty members' departments, or at a different college or university. Some early-career faculty find continual mentorship with prior graduate school friends or advisors (Mullen & Forbes, 2000). Mentors external to the institution provide additional and alternative opinions than those held within the faculty member's department (Davis et al., 2011). Having connections outside of the academy—former coworkers, friends, family—also serve as informal mentors and assist in alleviating stress that comes with the profession (Lechuga, 2014).

In other situations, informal mentors can demonstrate to early-career faculty what not to do or model behaviors to avoid. Reddick (2015) noted that during his journey through the tenure process, he sought out mentors outside of his institution and a support system of friends and family. He also acknowledged the help of “troll models” or those scholars who navigated the academy in ways that were incongruent to his personal values. For Reddick, avoiding such behaviors was actually helpful in his journey.

Establishing a professional network is another helpful strategy. Forging relationships enhances an individual's social capital, self-confidence, and agency (Niehaus & O'Meara, 2015; O'Meara & Strombquist, 2015). Some early-career faculty may have diverse networks; meaning, they have relationships with individuals who are part of an array of locations (large range) and the individuals in the network do not know each other (low density). In a study of professional networks, Niehaus and O'Meara (2015) found that assistant professors were more likely to have on-campus networks, suggesting that their networks had a smaller range and higher density. These on-campus networks can be extremely beneficial to early-career faculty, particularly if the network

was created with specific goals in mind. For example, an informal community of practice to support early-career faculty in achieving academic research and writing goals provides a structure of accountability and an interdisciplinary community (Rees & Shaw, 2014). A peer network of female early-career faculty who consistently met to discuss challenges and strategies affirmed that they could be successful in attaining tenure (O'Meara & Strombquist, 2015). Another informal peer network, created by early-career faculty for early-career faculty, used a writing retreat format to provide feedback on drafts and space to talk about accessing resources and external collaborators (Pegg et al., 2014). Through the creation of informal mentor channels and peer networks, faculty are actively constructing their environments that will likely provide them with a greater sense of agency.

### **Goal Setting**

Setting personal goals to achieve future outcomes creates a sense of control. Early-career faculty who intentionally set goals and exercised agency had higher levels of personal integrity (Jones et al., 2015). Through self-regulating behaviors—time management and prioritization—early-career faculty begin to learn the patterns of their own work and research styles (Finnegan & Hyle, 2009). They also choose to seek feedback from peers on how their behaviors are positioning them for success (Tollefson-Hall et al., 2013).

Many of the individual strategies recommended to faculty are to help them attain tenure—the extrinsic reward. Yet, early-career faculty can also use these behaviors to maintain higher levels of happiness, well-being, job satisfaction, and intrinsic motivation. Faculty can try out certain tactical approaches in the company of their peers through

faculty development programs, such as developing strategies for teaching and research and seeking feedback from a community of practice. Yet, once the faculty development programming ends, it is up to faculty to continue these individual behaviors or find other approaches to maintain extrinsic and intrinsic motivation.

### **Studies of Positive Early-Career Faculty Experiences**

Perhaps the earliest study on happiness among early-career faculty was Walker and Hale's (1999) research into the traits of professors who demonstrate high levels of well-being. Using data from the New Faculty Project, a longitudinal study of faculty in their first three years at five different institutions, Walker and Hale found eight actions that reflected happiness in the profession: staying up-to-date in the discipline; building confidence in instructional approaches; establishing positive classroom environments; setting goals; exercising autonomy and investing in activities that matter; developing a network of social support; getting recognition for their teaching by colleagues and administrators; and receiving meaningful feedback from students on their teaching. Faculty participants who worked at liberal arts colleges reported higher levels of well-being because they were often recognized by colleagues for their teaching and felt the immediate impact their teaching had on students due to the smaller class sizes.

Almost a decade after the Walker and Hale (1999) study was published, O'Meara, Terosky, and Neumann (2008) argued that the research on faculty work as taken on a "narrative of constraint" and depicted faculty as professionals who encountered barriers in developing their personal identities, limits to available resources, rigidity around the tenure system, and a lack of control over work/life balance. The research on early-career faculty's negative experiences has been helpful, shedding light on the fact that faculty are

surviving the system. Unfortunately, the constant pessimism obscures the positive aspects of faculty work: creativity, innovation, and professional growth.

In concluding their analysis, O'Meara, Terosky, and Neumann (2008) called for new studies that offer counter-narratives to the refrain of early-career struggle and dissatisfaction. Female faculty and faculty of color, depicted as victims of the system in the literature, are really agents of learning who activate resources and exercise agency in tackling their work and pursuing their interests. We should look for stories of faculty as actors who work within contextualized webs, instead of telling tales of isolated artists. The narrative of "how much?" should change to "how meaningful?" with regards to the quality of teaching, advising, and scholarship. Researchers should move away from examining faculty satisfaction levels as an aggregated response and look at whether faculty feel fulfilled in particular areas of their work. Finally, the focus of faculty development programs should be shaped around how faculty grow in their careers, rather than getting faculty to use particular approaches that are popular in the moment.

Over the past five years, researchers answered the call to highlight the positive aspects of faculty work. Conway (2012) sought to uncover how faculty who flourish describe their careers in terms of personal engagement in their scholarly work and the strategies they use to accomplish their tasks in order to attain tenure. Using a narrative research design to interview 30 faculty who were four years post-tenure at two elite research-intensive universities, Conway discovered that the "flourishing faculty" found ways to focus on their scholarship even in the face of institutional demands. They were able to do so by prioritizing onerous tasks if they believed the perceived outcome from completing the task would help them attain their goals, and turned down requests that did

not align with their scholarly work. Flourishing faculty also managed their anxiety about tenure by coming up with career contingency plans, should their tenure review result in a disappointing outcome. Flourishing female faculty found ways to integrate their personal lives, which allowed them to be attentive to their families while at work; however, most of the participants acknowledged that the pre-tenure period was a challenging time to have children. The strategies flourishing faculty used to accomplish their work included prioritizing what is important to them, using relationships outside of the institution to help navigate decisions, and focusing on self-assessment measures of success instead of evaluations by department chairs. Finally, Conway found that flourishing faculty discovered ways to integrate their personal passions into their scholarship, thereby increasing their levels of job satisfaction.

Soto (2014) examined the factors and strategies that contributed to successful career advancement of female faculty of color in STEM fields. Using a qualitative research design, Soto interviewed 13 faculty working in predominately White research-intensive institutions. At the time of the interviews, six of the participants were at the rank of full professor and seven participants were associate professors. Soto found that female faculty of color who exercised agency in making choices were able to do so because they had high levels of self-efficacy. Many female faculty noted they felt confident in their abilities prior to taking their tenure-track job. Participants also depended on supportive colleagues and external networks (family and professional colleagues outside of their institutions) to confront challenges related to scholarship and service pressures, as well as navigating gendered and racialized cultures.

Finally, in a phenomenological study, Jones, Hwang, and Bustamante (2015) identified the supports used by a select group of five African American female professors who successfully achieved tenure and promotion at predominately White institutions (PWIs) in Texas. The findings were grouped into external supports and internal coping mechanisms. Participants stated the external supports that were helpful in navigating the systematic oppression at PWIs (i.e., devalued research agenda, extra workload, being set up to fail) included informal and formal mentoring, networking through professional associations, and transparent communication from their department chair. The internal coping mechanisms participants used to confront institutional challenges included setting aspirational but attainable goals, engaging in spiritual or religious practices, managing time by declining certain requests, and maintaining high levels of personal integrity.

Across these three studies of faculty growth and development there are common strategies faculty employed to attain their goals that are also recommended in the literature. Specifically, faculty cited the crucial role relationships and networks in and outside the institution played in their probationary period leading to tenure (Conway, 2012; Jones et al., 2015; Soto, 2014). Faculty who thrive in the academy also exercised their agency and autonomy by intentionally choosing which activities to allocate their time towards and declining requests that would take their focus away from achieving their goals. Finally, Conway and Soto found their study participants discovered ways to make their research more meaningful by either incorporating their personal passions or purpose beyond individual objectives (i.e., the public good) into their scholarship.

Each study did profile unique differences among the positive experiences of faculty careers. Soto (2014), in particular, found that faculty who had high levels of self-

efficacy and confidence in their abilities were able to identify strategies to address the challenges of the pre-tenured period. The faculty in Soto (2014) and Jones et al.'s (2015) studies, however, made no mention of using faculty development programs to develop their skills as faculty. Conway's (2012) flourishing faculty only utilized institutional supports, such as faculty development and mentoring programs, when the supports allowed them to focus on the work they viewed as most important. In other words, flourishing faculty did not make use of all the institutional supports available to them, but only participated in those development programs that helped them achieve their targeted goals. Moreover, those faculty whom Conway identified as flourishing sought mentors outside of the institution on their own, and did not rely on the formal mentoring programs available to them. Jones et al.'s study also highlighted the importance of religious or spiritual practices as a behavior African American female professors used during the probationary period to combat stress.

While identifying effective strategies employed by early-career faculty during the probationary period was an objective for all three studies, only Conway's (2012) research looked at this topic using appreciative inquiry. In other words, Conway wanted to identify what worked for early-career faculty by looking at strengths and not deficits during the probationary period. I used a similar approach, adding to the limited research on this topic using an assets-oriented lens. Except for one participant in the Jones et al. (2015) study, the findings from these three research projects were from early-career faculty at research-intensive universities. My study adds to this literature with experiences from early-career faculty at liberal arts colleges. Finally, all three positive accounts of early-career faculty were recorded retrospectively, with the possibility of



collecting biased or inaccurate stories due to the lapse in time. I wanted to tell the experiences of early-career faculty in real time, and grounds the findings in the retrospective narratives of Conway (2012), Jones et al. (2015), and Soto (2014) as a means for comparison.

### **Conclusion**

Returning to the discussion of game mechanics, the literature states that early-career faculty have opportunities to develop their *skills* for the game through graduate schools or faculty development programs, or from graduate school advisors, colleagues at their institution, and formal or informal mentors. Early-career faculty learn the *rules* of the game from observing the behaviors of professors in graduate school, from the written guidelines for the tenure process, and from their colleagues, chairs, and formal mentors. Perhaps a different way of looking at the “narrative of constraint” that appears in most of the research is that the existing scholarship on early-career faculty experiences focuses on the *obstacles* of the game: struggling to develop confidence and self-efficacy in executing their professional roles; navigating unclear expectations of colleagues, vague tenure expectations, and tricky departmental cultures; lacking of ownership over their time; and experiencing feelings of isolation and competition. When research emphasizes the conflict, it conceals the *actions*—the strategies—of the players. In that sense, this study provides a counter-narrative to the research, because I explicitly seek to describe the behaviors of female early-career faculty who are playing under the same set of rules, in comparable game spaces, under parallel time constraints, and facing similar obstacles.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

The literature on the experiences of pre-tenure early-career faculty describes the game of tenure as one in which the players possess limited skills to play it effectively; vague rules and unclear expectations; a lack of collegiality among peers at the institution; and internal conflicts with managing time, multiple responsibilities, and personal obligations (Austin, 2002; Austin & Rice, 1998; Batille & Brown, 2006; Coleman et al., 2006; Hershberger et al., 2005; León, 2014; Olsen & Crawford, 1998; Reddick, 2015). Reflecting widespread faculty dissatisfaction, which is in fact more pronounced among female faculty who face additional responsibilities in their professional and personal lives, the research on faculty life focuses principally on negative experiences (Austin et al., 2007; Gappa et al., 2007; Griffin et al., 2013; O’Meara & Strombquist, 2015; Porter, 2007). But what if there were other stories, hidden, that speak to the strategies faculty take to increase their job satisfaction and a sense of ownership over their work? How could we uncover those narratives?

In this study, I recount the stories of six female early-career faculty at two selective liberal arts colleges, and compare their experiences to four female early-career faculty at a research university; I describe how each of these female early-career faculty play the game. By talking to each participant, I also identify new behaviors—actions that are intentional and significant—that deviate positively from the typical early-career faculty strategies so often shared in the literature. In this chapter, I describe my approach to the research design, participant identification, data collection, and data analysis.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Qualitative research, like this embedded multi-case study, uses an inductive process to discover meaning and understanding. However, a researcher can identify theories to inform and focus the study and data collection—a theoretical framework (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2014). Attaining tenure is a strong extrinsic motivator for female early-career faculty (Lechuga & Lechuga, 2012). Yet, in order to maintain well-being and satisfaction over the six-year probationary period, these faculty must also develop intrinsic motivation and feel like they have agency in their work. An increase in intrinsic motivation can facilitate opportunities for faculty to use behaviors that deviant positively from the majority of their peers. I used the following theoretical framework, which incorporates theories of motivation (Pink, 2009), agency and environmental perception (Bandura, 2001) and positive deviance (Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2003), as a lens to analyze the data.

## **Intrinsic Motivation**

Common knowledge about motivation separates the concept into two categories: extrinsic and intrinsic. External sources of reward are the catalyst for individuals' extrinsic motivation (Lechuga & Lechuga, 2012). Earning tenure is an extrinsic motivator, and faculty will decide which actions to take to help them achieve this prize. The familiar carrot/stick method of extrinsic motivation states: if you want individuals to behave in a particular way, give them a reward; if you want individuals to abstain from a specific behavior, use a stick. If applying the carrot/stick analogy loosely to tenure, faculty will act in particular (correct) ways that will help them achieve tenure (the carrot). Such actions typically include receiving strong teaching evaluations, producing an

appropriate number of scholarly publications, and serving on committees or external boards. Whether faculty enjoy engaging in these actions to achieve tenure is a different matter.

Faculty may use extrinsic motivation to find immediate gratification, but often need internal or intrinsic motivation to maintain satisfaction in their work (Lechuga & Lechuga, 2012). Intrinsic motivation is finding pleasure in an activity without necessarily focusing on the external rewards the activity may bring. Sustained intrinsic motivation must draw on an individual's beliefs and behaviors about a given situation. Pink (2009) argues that if individuals engage in autonomy, mastery, and purpose—otherwise known as Motivation 3.0—they will see higher levels of well-being and personal fulfillment.

Autonomy is acting with choice; individuals exercise autonomy when they decide what task they want to accomplish (choice in what to do), when they will complete the task (choice in time allocation), with whom they collaborate with on the task (choice in peer networks), and what behaviors they will use to go about completing the task (choice in how to do it) (Pink, 2009). Autonomy is strong when interest is relevant. If the task is not stimulating to people, it is either ignored, people begrudgingly complete the task, or they change their outlook on the task to make it tolerable.

Mastery is developing competence in a given area. Ryan and Deci (2002) state that competence is “feeling effective in one's ongoing interactions with the social environment and experiencing opportunities to exercise and express one's capacities” (p. 7). We see our abilities as improvable and through deliberate effort and practice, we can achieve our goals. People may set goals and identify the necessary skills they need to achieve these goals. For example, if I want to learn how to play chess, I will read the

game rules and play a few games with someone knowledgeable. People can also gauge their existing skill level and set appropriate subsequent goals. If I know how to play a basic game of chess but I want to be better at strategy, I may read books about Bobby Fischer and watch videos of experts playing chess. If an individual's skill level is too high for the activity and the challenge level is too low, the individual becomes bored. Conversely, if an individual's skill level is too low for the activity and the challenge level is too high, the individual becomes anxious. Based on existing literature, early-career faculty possess limited skills in balancing their responsibilities and the performative aspects of "being a professor," and high levels of challenge in the profession (Austin et al., 2007; Hershberger et al., 2005; Menges, 1999; Reybold, 2005). A reasonable conclusion is that early-career faculty must develop their skillset in order to evenly match a task that may be seen as a challenge, which can lead to greater satisfaction and enjoyment in performing that task in the future.

The third and final component of Motivation 3.0 is purpose. Individuals participate in a task that serves to be meaningful beyond themselves (Pink, 2009). When work has importance, people view their profession favorably. For faculty, meaning may come from working with students and watching them grow as learners, discovering something new through research, or engaging in service that helps their internal or external communities. If individuals can find meaning in their work, they will increase their levels of work satisfaction and feel like their work is having an impact.

The three components of Motivation 3.0—autonomy, mastery, and purpose—comprise sustained intrinsic motivation. Concentrating on developing and maintaining these three components moves us away from using extrinsic rewards to motivate people.

A focus on developing intrinsic motivation instead of relying only on extrinsic motivation to achieve tenure offers early-career faculty opportunities to find optimal and enjoyable moments in their day-to-day work.

### **Agency and Environmental Perception**

Agency is critical for intrinsic motivation and can be viewed as a complimentary attribute. Bandura (2001) posits that personal agency allows people to play an active role in their “self-development, adaptation, and self-renewal” (p. 2). Yet people grow and change within particular contexts or environments. How we perceive the environments we interact with affects the levels of agency we are able to use.

Bandura theorizes people perceive three types of environmental structures: imposed, selected, and constructed. *Imposed* environments are the situations we must interact with, in which there is little control. Imposed environments for faculty may include the required responsibilities of teaching, researching, and serving, and the populations they must engage with—their coworkers, department chairs or the students who enroll in a class. Faculty can, however, *selectively* choose how to interpret and react to those environments. Some faculty will selectively interpret their environment as positive and take advantage of its rewarding features, while others will focus only on the environment’s debilitating aspects, selectively interpreting their environment as negative (Bandura, 1997). Finally, faculty can also create their own environments by building social systems that help them to have greater control over their lives. People who are resilient are able to find and construct environments that foster their own growth. Thus, faculty who *construct* their environments exercise the most agency.

## Positive Deviance

The word deviance, in organizational terms, is “intentional behavior that significantly departs from the norms (i.e., shared understandings, patterns, ways of doing things)” of a social group (Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2003, p. 210-11). Three key concepts contribute to this definition: norms, intentionality, and significance. A social (or referent) group determines accepted norms or the behaviors expected in a particular context. In order for behaviors to deviate from the norms of the referent group, they must be intentional (purposeful) and significant (noteworthy). Suppose an accepted norm of Western society is to pay money for goods and services. If I want the new iPhone 8, society (including employees at the Apple Store and the local police) expects me to pay the \$700 value of the product. If I decide, however to steal the iPhone, I am breaking away from the norm. Conversely, if I paid the \$700 for the iPhone and gave it to my coworker who recently confronted financial troubles, I would again be breaking away from the norm. Society would most likely view the act of theft in a negative light, while the donation to my coworker would likely be viewed in favorable terms. Both behaviors—the theft and the donation—are intentional in that neither happened by chance. Both behaviors are also significant; the monetary value of an iPhone is high, while the theft or donation of a ballpoint pen would not gather the same attention and judgement by society.

Traditionally, sociologists classified deviant behaviors in a negative light, the iPhone theft being one example (Merton, 1968). Robinson and Bennett (1995) researched deviant behaviors in the workplace and found that those actions that rated intentional and significant were related to robbery, sabotage, harassment, absenteeism or extreme

withdrawal from the job. More recently, researchers focusing on positive psychology noted the existence of positive-deviant behaviors. By identifying intentional and significant positive behaviors, we can focus on the best of human action and interaction. Spretizer and Sonenshein (2003) identified particular psychological factors that can facilitate positive-deviant behaviors that align with intrinsic motivation and agency: finding personal meaning in work tasks, empathizing with the needs of others, developing personal efficacy, using self-determination, and showing courage.

No one wants to play a game of *Jenga* with its creator, Leslie Scott, because she is a cheater—or at least, her fellow players accuse her of cheating. To play *Jenga*, individuals take turns removing one block at a time from a tower that is constructed of the very same blocks. Leslie likes to keep her elbow on the table and use her forearm to steady the tower as she removes a block; a strategy frowned upon by her fellow gamers. She insists her strategy is not cheating, as there are only three simple formal rules to the game: you must only use one hand; you cannot take a brick out from the penultimate row until the top row is complete; and if a brick hits the floor, you have lost the game (Whipple, 2015). Leslie is not breaking the rules; she is coming at the game from a new perspective and deviating from the normal approaches of most players. Leslie is using a positive-deviant approach.

For this study, I had to determine the accepted norms of a referent group who is playing the game of tenure. At the organizational level, shared understandings of work values and behaviors are the referent group (Spretizer & Sonenshein, 2003). Using the early-career behaviors from my review of the literature, faculty lead professional lives wrought with struggle as they try to navigate their multiple responsibilities during their



first six years. To manage the tasks required of a professor, early-career faculty engage in the same activities as their senior colleagues carried out to attain tenure, but at an amplified rate: demonstrate teaching excellence through positive teaching evaluations; establish a scholarly record by the number of publications, grants, or fellowships; and show a commitment to service by sitting on an appropriate number of committees or boards. The environmental perceptions held by tenure-track early-career faculty, according to the literature, are selectively negative: faculty are surviving the game by focusing on productivity at the expense of job satisfaction, performing their work in isolation with limited networks and resources, and struggling to balance responsibilities at work and at home.

Now that I have defined the norms of my referent group, I can imagine that negative deviance would have to be intentional and significant behaviors that are frowned upon by members of the academy. Such behaviors may include academic sabotage, theft or plagiarism, or withdrawing completely from their responsibilities (such as not showing up to teach classes, holding office hours, or perpetually ignoring emails by students and colleagues). Conversely, I can identify the potential for positive-deviant behaviors by first looking for signs of agency (Bandura, 2001) and intrinsic motivation (Pink, 2009). From there, I can determine whether the behaviors—the strategies—are intentional *and* significant in an honorable way. Figure 1 summarizes the integration of the three theories presented in the framework.

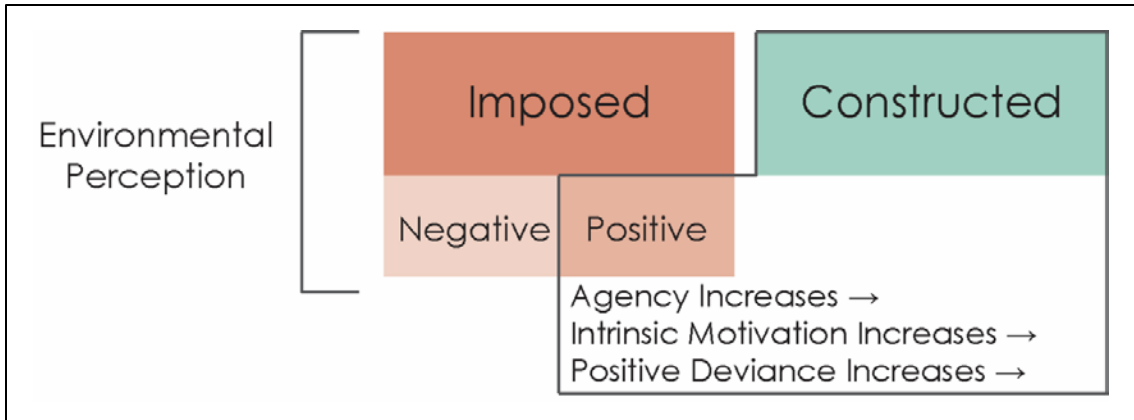


Figure 1. Theoretical framework.

Players need motivation to engage in a game, just as people need motivation to accomplish their tasks in everyday life. In a game, the extrinsic motivator is winning, usually by the acquisition of more points or resources. However, game creators argue that a good design fosters intrinsic motivation: games should provide the right amount of challenge where the experience is enjoyable, but engaging; players should feel in control of the decisions they make while playing a game; and players need to have a reason—a purpose—to play (Schell, 2015). By choosing which actions to take and when, players also exercise agency: they alter their strategy accordingly, based on how to advance in the game. Creativity, according to chess king Bobby Fischer, is "what makes games fun. Learning perfect strategy does not make a game more fun; it just makes it more likely that you will win" (Ernest, 2011, p. 63). I choose to think of positive-deviant approaches as another way to think about creative actions that increase satisfaction and well-being while playing the game.

### **Research Questions**

The theoretical framework informed by Pink (2009), Bandura (2001), and Spreitzer and Sonenshein (2003) guide the following central research questions for this study:

1. How do female early-career faculty approach their professional work?
  - How do female early-career faculty at selective liberal arts colleges approach their professional work in ways that are different than female early-career faculty at research-intensive universities?
2. How do female early-career faculty use positive-deviant approaches in their professional work?
  - How does environmental perception shape the use of positive-deviant approaches?

### **Research Design**

Yin (2014) defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and within its real-world context” (p. 16). Researchers who use case study methodology, like other qualitative research designs, look for meaning and understanding through data collection, use inductive reasoning to analyze the data, and convey the findings through rich description (Merriam, 2009). Yet, there are certain defining and differentiating features of a qualitative case study design. First, researchers must describe certain parameters for the case: identifying the time and place for data collection to occur. Setting case boundaries makes for a manageable research design and assists in gathering accurate information (Creswell, 2013). Second, researchers use purposeful sampling, again to make the study manageable and accurate (Merriam, 2009). Third, researchers share the findings of a multi-case case study through a description of each case and themes that surface across cases, respectfully called within-case and cross-case syntheses (Creswell, 2013).

In this study, I used an embedded multi-case study design that involved units of analysis at more than one level (Yin, 2014). At the primary level, each case is the experience of an individual female early-career faculty member in her fourth or fifth year of a tenure-track appointment. Individual cases were chosen from two selective liberal arts colleges and one research intensive university, with all three institutions located in the Northeast region. Since the cases were selected because of their highly specific criteria (i.e., location, institutional type, career stage) only a finite number of cases exist, the critical case strategy is an appropriate sampling mechanism (Merriam, 2009). At the secondary level of analysis, I grouped common individual cases together into two intermediate units: experiences of selective liberal arts college faculty and experiences of research university faculty to make comparisons. Figure 2 depicts the two units of analysis in the embedded multi-case design.

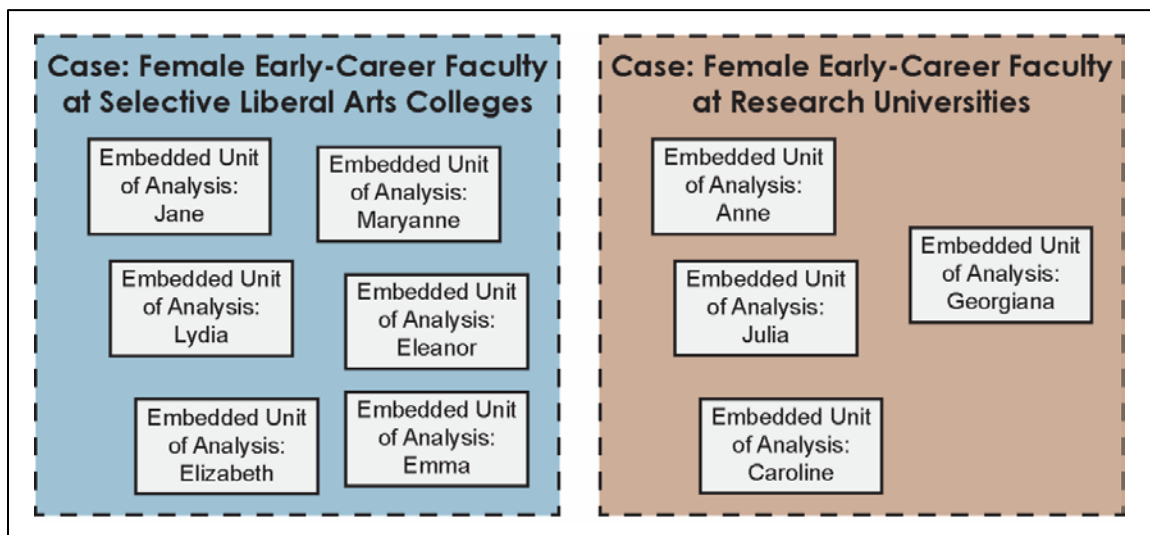


Figure 2. Multi-case embedded design.

### Site Selection

Games take place in a space or a context. The geographic location and the cultural artifacts and basic underlying assumptions of an institution make up its context (Lane,

Brown, & Christopher, 2004). Artifacts are the most visible aspects of institutional culture, and may include ceremonies and rituals, or the language and technology used by the people who work at the institution (Schein, 1995). Underlying assumptions are the beliefs and behaviors of the people who belong to the institution—they describe how work gets done at the institution (Lane et al., 2004). Understanding the context assists in interpreting data, particularly when the primary source of data are interviews, because I am able to place participants' perspectives and actions within the larger setting.

I selected the two liberal arts colleges and a research university for a number of reasons. First, the embedded cases at the primary level in this multi-case study are the unique experiences of individuals, each possessing an array of variables and situated within diverse departmental cultures, so I chose two selective liberal arts colleges that were similar in scope and scale. Second, most of the existing studies that examine the experiences of female early-career faculty take place at research universities, and these stories are predominantly negative in tone and perspective. However, I included a research university in this study to attempt to find positive experiences within this particular context. I also wanted to contextualize my findings from all three institutions in the prior literature, which focuses on female early-career faculty experiences at institutions that emphasize research. Third, research universities culturally underscore the importance of scholarship, particularly as a faculty requirement for attaining tenure. While liberal arts colleges traditionally place an emphasis on teaching, tenure-track faculty at selective liberal arts colleges are held to high research and publication standards (Baker et al., 2016; Kelsky, 2016; Lam, 2015; Rifkin, 2006). Research expectations are lofty at all three sites, making this a controlled comparison sample, as

the level of prestige is likely to attract candidates with similar academic preparation and qualifications.

I used the Carnegie Classification of baccalaureate colleges (four-year colleges) that award at least 50 percent of degrees at the undergraduate level in the arts and sciences as a first step in identifying potential liberal arts colleges for the study (Pascarella et al., 2005). Next, I looked at a list of college rankings from *U.S. News and World Report*, which includes student selectivity in its criteria for ranking. Finally, I chose sites located in the same geographic location, which is the primary reason why the particular research university with a Carnegie Classification of very high research activity (RU/VH) was chosen as a site. I refer to the two selective liberal arts colleges as Netherfield College and Pemberley College, and the research-intensive university as Highbury University. What follows is a description of each site to provide context, including the criteria and policies for tenure.

### **Netherfield College**

In 2017, Netherfield College was listed as one of the top 15 liberal arts colleges by *U.S. News and World Reports* with a student acceptance rate of just under 20%. The institution is a private liberal arts college with approximately 2,000 students enrolled in classes each year, creating a 7:1 student-to-faculty ratio. Just under 300 full-time instructional faculty work at the institution and just over half are female. According to the institution's policy on reappointment and promotion, pre-tenure faculty are to meet with their department chair for annual reviews and their personnel committee for a third-year "mini-tenure" review, leading up to the actual tenure review. Netherfield College's criteria for tenure are excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service. Faculty at

Netherfield College are given the option to “stop the tenure clock” and delay their tenure review by one year due to events such as parental leave. Female faculty can take one semester of paid parental leave, while their partners, if also employed by the institution, receive a course release during the semester the child is born. Faculty have access to teaching and research resources at Netherfield College, including professional development workshops, assistance with grant writing, and a semester-long research leave.

### **Pemberley College**

Like Netherfield College, Pemberley College was listed as one of the top liberal arts colleges by *U.S. News and World Report* in 2017, with a student acceptance rate of just under 40%. It is a private institution that enrolls approximately 2,400 students. The student-to-faculty ratio at the institution is 9:1, reflecting a small class size and high student-faculty interaction. Over 300 full-time instructional faculty work at the institution and more than half are female. According to the institution’s policy on reappointment and promotion, pre-tenure faculty are to meet with their department chair for annual reviews and their personnel committee for a third-year “mini-tenure” review, leading up to the tenure review. Criteria for tenure include evidence of superior teaching, scholarship, and service; though, administrators consider service a secondary criteria. However, if a faculty member is subjected to an abnormal service load, it will be taken into consideration in comparison to the faculty member’s scholarly record. Female faculty receive a one-year extension on their tenure clock if they take parental leave during the probationary period. Their partners, if also employed by the institution, receive a course release during the semester the child is born. Pemberley College faculty have access to

teaching development—workshops, formative assessments of their teaching, and online resources—as well as research support through their sponsored research office.

### **Highbury University**

Finally, Highbury University has a Carnegie Classification of R1, meaning it is a doctoral university with a very high research activity. A public institution with a student acceptance rate of nearly 60%, Highbury University enrolls just under 23,000 undergraduate students. The student-to-faculty ratio is 18:1 and more than half of the courses offered at Highbury University enroll under 20 students. There are approximately 1,300 full-time instructional faculty who work at the institution, and just under half are female. Similar to the two liberal arts colleges, Highbury University's policy on reappointment and promotion suggests that pre-tenure faculty should meet with their department chair for annual reviews and their personnel committee for a third-year "mini-tenure" review, leading up to the actual tenure review.

Of the three sites, Highbury University has the most extensive policies on the tenure process, including a comprehensive tenure checklist to evaluate each candidate, which is completed by a departmental committee, department chair, college committee, and dean, prior to submission to the provost. In order to be a strong candidate for tenure, early-career faculty must demonstrate excellence in two areas (either teaching, research, or service) and strength in a third area. Unlike the three liberal arts colleges, who list teaching as the first criteria for tenure, Highbury University lists research. Tenure-track faculty are offered one semester of paid parental leave and have the option to delay their tenure timeline by one year. Faculty can participate in teaching development workshops, fellowships, and mid-semester formative feedback assessments, take part in research



fellowships, and seek grant writing support, among many other resources available at the institution.

While there are clearly some differences among the three sites, there are also some commonalities. The most prominent difference between Highbury University and Netherfield and Pemberley Colleges is the size and scope of the institutions. The small student-to-faculty ratio at the selective liberal arts colleges suggests a good portion of faculty time is devoted to teaching and that there is value in faculty-student interactions. Conversely, the fact that the selective liberal arts college sites have structures to promote scholarship—structures that are similar to those of Highbury University—indicate that all three institutions value faculty research. Moreover, the tenure criteria for research, based on institutional documents, are relatively similar across the three sites, as are the tenure criteria for teaching. The parallels across tenure criteria establishes a common general context for the cases. Multiple sites provide a variety of data, which I believe is an asset, as the true point of a case study is to be generalizable to theoretical propositions, and not necessarily to populations (Yin, 2014). Table 1 depicts the similarities and differences across the three sites

Table 1.  
*Cross-site comparison of contextual components.*

	<b>Netherfield College</b>	<b>Pemberley College</b>	<b>Highbury University</b>
Classification	Baccalaureate: Private	Baccalaureate: Private	Research University: Public
Resources for Teaching	Teaching Lunches	Teaching Lunches	Teaching Lunches
	Teaching Seminars	Teaching Seminars	Teaching Seminars
	Online Resources	Online Resources	Online Resources
		Center for Teaching Staff	Center for Teaching Staff
		Mid-Semester Assessments of Teaching	Mid-Semester Assessments of Teaching
Resources for Research	Sponsored Research Office	Sponsored Research Office	Sponsored Research Office
	Professional Development Funding	Professional Development Funding	Professional Development Funding
	Research Leave	Research Leave	Research Leave
	Writing Retreats		Writing Retreats
	Funding for Manuscript Review		Internal Research Fellowships
Resources for Mentoring	Formal Mentor outside Department	Formal Mentor inside Department	Department-Initiated Formal Mentors
Criteria for Tenure: Research	Publications	Publications	Publications
	Grants	Grants	Grants
	4 External Letters	4 External Letters	5-6 External Letters
		Unpublished Papers	
Criteria for Tenure: Teaching	Student Interviews	Course Syllabi	Course Syllabi
	Student Evaluations	Student Evaluations	Student Evaluations
	Peer Observation	Peer Observation	Peer Observation
Criteria for Tenure: Service	Advising	Advising	Advising
	Department & Institutional Committees	Department & Institutional Committees	Department & Institutional Committees
			Positions on external boards/scholarly associations
Structures for Formative Feedback	Annual Reviews with Chair	Annual Reviews with Chair	Annual Reviews with Chair
	Third Year “Mini-Tenure” Review	Third Year “Mini-Tenure” Review	Third Year “Mini-Tenure” Review
“Stop the Clock” Practices	1-year delay	1-year delay	1-year delay
Parental Leave Policy	1 semester paid leave for primary caretaker; 1 course release during one semester for non-primary caretaker.	1 semester paid leave for primary caretaker; 1 course release during one semester for non-primary caretaker.	1 semester paid leave (both parents)

## Case Selection

Every case study needs boundaries. A researcher must define the case (the phenomenon) by individuals, events, or organizations, contain the case by determining who or what is include or excluded, and set time limits (Yin, 2014). From the three sites, I sampled female early-career faculty holding tenure track appointments who were either in their fourth or fifth year of the probationary period. I set the boundaries of each case during the later years of the probationary period for a few reasons. First, Walker and Hale (1999) found that early-career faculty said they had little time to conduct scholarship in the first three years and did not feel that they had autonomy in their work beyond developing courses. Second, Simmons (2011) found that by the fourth year of an academic appointment, faculty had higher levels of self-esteem related to their teaching and research abilities than they had during the initial years of the appointment. Simmons also noted that early-career faculty during this time sought opportunities to enhance their performance. Third, Schechner and Poslusny (2010) found that in creating a faculty development program for new faculty, the first three years of an appointment focus more on socializing faculty to the institution than growing their teaching and research identities. Finally, interviewing faculty who are in the process of approaching their tenure review in years four and five provides a new perspective to the literature on early-career faculty.

To find early-career female faculty participants at the three sites, I used purposeful sampling to “intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon” (Creswell, 2012, p. 206). I chose potential participants who fit the parameters of appointment year through information provided on the college and

university websites and purposely did not involve faculty whose discipline is likely to have different types of scholarship to include in a tenure dossier. For example, I did not recruit faculty from Highbury University who are in public health or nursing, since these disciplines are not found at liberal arts colleges and these particular faculty are likely to have different tenure expectations related to research. Likewise, I did not enlist faculty in fine arts or theater because of the types of scholarship—most likely exhibitions—that are required for tenure. Finally, I did include faculty in education and engineering, as both disciplines are found in liberal arts college settings.

To determine an appropriate number of cases to include in the study, I turned to the literature on case study design. Merriam (2009) offers little guidance on an appropriate number of cases in a multi-case study, though she does caution against too many cases that make the project unmanageable. Creswell (2012) cites two collective case studies that each focused on four individuals. Yin (2014) advises a researcher to carefully select cases in a multiple case study in order to replicate the results. “The ability to conduct 6 or 10 case studies, arranged effectively within a multiple-case design, is analogous to the ability to conduct 6 to 10 experiments on related topics; a few cases (2 or 3) would be literal replications, whereas a few other cases (4 to 6) might be designed to pursue two different patterns of theoretical replications” (Yin, 2014, p. 57). I eventually settled on 8-12 cases as my target number.

I emailed all early-career faculty who self-identify as female at the two selective liberal arts college sites who were in their fourth or fifth years of their tenure-track appointments. Potential participants received the introductory email inviting them to take part in the study (See Appendix A). Seventeen early-career female faculty at the liberal

arts colleges were contacted and six agreed to participate (a response rate of 35%). Once I secured a number of participants from the liberal arts colleges, I sent targeted recruitment letters to early-career faculty who self-identify as female at Highbury University who teach in similar disciplines to my six liberal arts college participants. Twelve Highbury University faculty were contacted and four agreed to participate (a response rate of 33%). Figure 3 is a data portrait of each participant, based on demographic information provided during data collection.

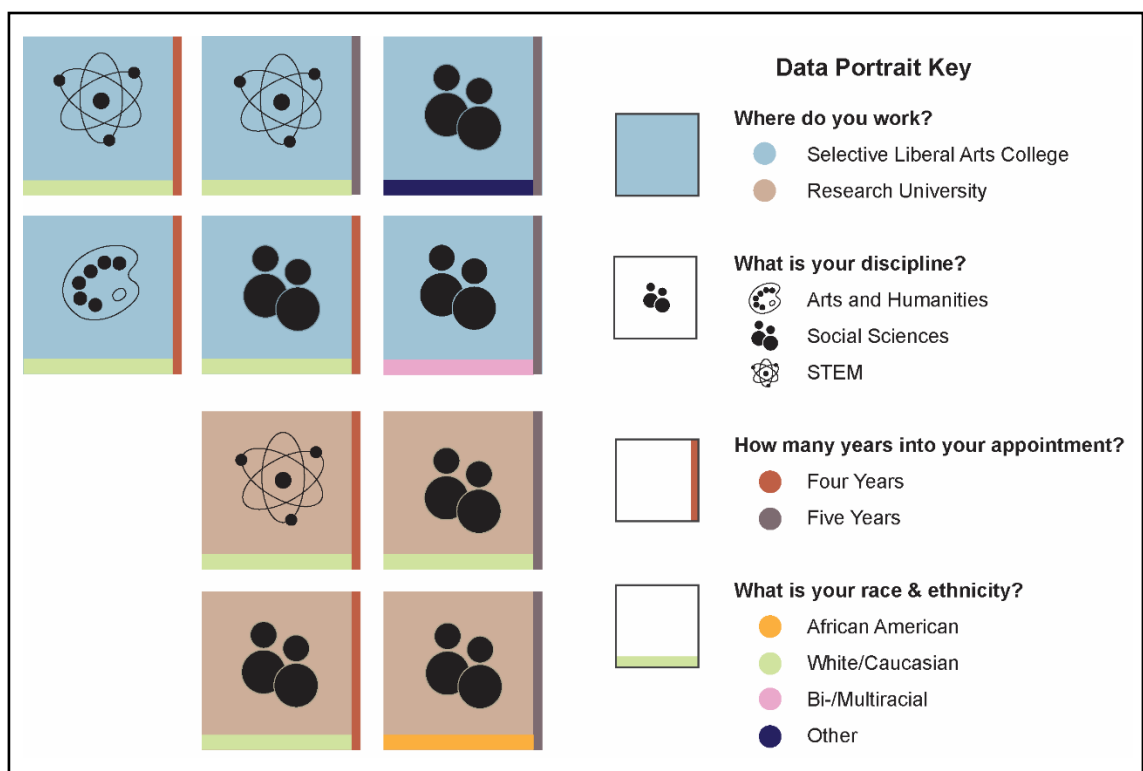


Figure 3. Data portraits of participants.

### Data Collection

In addition to the research questions guiding this study's design, Yin (2014) recommends developing a set of data collection questions for the researcher to use to keep the data collection process on track. The study's data collection questions, otherwise known as the questions to be answered by each case, are:

1. What role does past experience play in developing female early-career faculty's beliefs about the profession and their abilities?
2. What types of challenges do female early-career faculty face in the profession?
3. What strategies do female early-career faculty use to overcome challenges?
4. What types of experiences prompt behaviors that aim to improve professional abilities or skills?
5. Why do female early-career faculty engage in specific tasks?
6. How does the perception of the work environment relate to beliefs and behaviors?
7. What kinds of support systems do female early-career faculty create?

Yin suggests that each question should link to potential sources of data that will answer each question. For this study, I used three sources of evidence in order to triangulate the data and strengthen construct validity.

### **Sources of Evidence**

#### **Interviews**

The primary piece of evidence came from two interviews, which provided targeted and insightful explanations into participants' personal views of their world (Yin, 2014), as well as descriptive data about their decision-making during the probationary period. The first interview, which was conducted in the 2017 fall semester, was reflective: I asked participants to tell me about their previous experiences prior to becoming a faculty member and how their first three to four years at the institution were with regards to teaching, research, and service. I also administered a short demographic questionnaire at the start of the first interview in order to capture the intersectionality of participants' identities. With the second interview, I aimed to uncover the motivating

factors or strategies that influence behaviors in particular aspects of faculty work. I also focused on how female early-career faculty find meaning in their work. The second interview was conducted 2-3 months after the initial interview with participants and occurred in the 2018 spring semester.

The first interview and second interview each lasted approximately 60-90 minutes. Both interviews were conducted in the participants' offices or by Skype. I used a semi-structured interview protocol to guide both conversations. The interview protocol incorporated the study's theoretical framework and Patton's (2002) suggestions for question types that engage the participant's behaviors, opinions, feelings, knowledge, and senses. The second interview guide was purposely shorter than the first guide because I wanted to build in flexibility if I needed to add clarifying questions about the data from the participants' first interviews. (See Appendix B for interview guides.)

### **Participant-Generated Visuals**

Visuals tap into parts of the human consciousness that may lie dormant in purely verbal interviews (Bagnoli, 2009). Using visuals as a projective technique to stimulate conversation helps to build rapport with study participants and deepen their emotional engagement (Comi, Bischof, & Eppler, 2014). In the first interview, I used a completion approach as a projective technique and asked participants to draw a diagram of peaks and valleys that reflects their experiences in their tenure-track appointments during the first year (see Appendix C for an example). This activity allowed me to begin to understand how the participant perceives her professional experience and environment and ask questions around the actions she took to address the challenges. Asking participants to just focus on charting their first year also set a benchmark; I was able to ask them to

compare their subsequent years to those initial experiences. In response, some participants said that their years improved after the first two semesters, while others said that the fourth or fifth years were worse because the pressure around tenure increased.

In the second interview, I asked participants to sketch a series of pictures that depicted the aspects in their work they find satisfying and frustrating. These drawings helped me to gather corroborating data on participants' perception of work environment prior to asking direct questions about these themes in the interview. The drawings were revealing: there was a clear trend between which participants enjoyed solo activities and the participants who need more interaction and collaboration. This visual exercise also helped to establish rapport at the beginning of the second interview.

### **Documents**

The final piece of evidence came from document analysis. Yin (2014) argues that documentation provides stable, unobtrusive data for a study. I asked for copies of each participant's curriculum vitae (CV). The CV was used in three ways: first, I examined the participants' experience in teaching, scholarship, and service in graduate school, which provided a baseline for understanding how previous experiences shape the beliefs and behaviors of the participants; second, I used the CV as a tool during the second interview to probe into which particular activities (i.e., courses, research, service) the participants were particularly proud of to determine how they find meaning in their work; and third, I used the CV to uncover what future actions the participants seek to take before their tenure review.



## **Data Management**

All sources of evidence and memos were stored and organized in two case study databases. The primary database was in the software program NVivo 11 for Windows, which was loaded on an encrypted and password-protected laptop computer. All data coding and memo writing was conducted in NVivo. The secondary (backup) database was an encrypted BOX folder that requires a password to access the files. Within the main BOX folder I had sub-folders organized by each case that contained case-specific data. I created a password-protected Excel file that served as the key identifier sheet, which matches the participant with her pseudonym, site, and broad discipline. The key identifier sheet was saved in a separate BOX folder. I also maintained a data inventory Excel file that documented the data collected by date, type, and sorted by participant. I used a hierarchical naming system for all files that adheres the following naming convention: Case Pseudonym\_Site Pseudonym\_Document Type\_Document Number\_Date Collected. Only I had access to both the primary and secondary password-protected databases. The signed informed consent documents (paper copies) were stored in a locked location away from any paper copies of the data.

Each interview was audio-taped, transcribed, and coded (see Data Analysis section for coding techniques). I hired a transcriptionist to type up the recorded interviews, but I reviewed each transcript against the recording for accuracy once I received the documents. The demographic survey data was recorded for each participant in an excel spreadsheet and stored in my case study databases. The peaks and valleys diagram, participated-generated drawings, and CVs were scanned and saved in the databases.

## **Human Subjects Protection**

Due to the nature of this research, the study was submitted for expedited review by the University of Massachusetts Amherst Institutional Review Board (IRB). In order to obtain IRB approval, I designed the study to certify the participants' identities would be kept confidential and private. I completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) program prior to this study. As indicated previously in this chapter, I assigned each participant a pseudonym, which was used to name all files and in reference to the participants in all writing. During the interviews I asked the participants if there were other details or information that must be kept confidential, in addition to their names and sites, in order to maintain privacy. Interview transcripts were shared with each participant in order to confirm that the information recorded was correct and I asked each participant to email or call me with any corrections. Two participants significantly redacted their transcripts. All participants reviewed and signed an Informed Consent document (see Appendix D). The IRB process presented an added challenge to participant recruitment. In order to obtain approval on my IRB protocol, I was required to contact the IRB at each liberal arts college to determine whether I needed institutional approval, due to the fact that I may be interviewing their faculty on site. This requirement resulted in two IRBs choosing to prohibit contact with their faculty.

## **Data Analysis**

I present the findings of this multi-case study in Chapter 4 as individual case narratives and in Chapter 5 as a cross-case syntheses, in which I compare and contrast faculty behaviors at liberal arts colleges with faculty behaviors at research universities. I used inductive and deductive approaches in data analysis to come to these conclusions:

constant comparative analysis to understand how faculty approach their work and pattern matching to identify positive-deviant behaviors. Miles and Huberman (1994) describe three flows of concurrent activity during data analysis: data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. During data reduction, the researcher is selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the data. In the following sections, I detail how I engaged in data reduction, the first activity in data analysis. I incorporated data display and conclusion drawing in the findings.

### **Constant Comparative Analysis**

I began with using an inductive strategy of constant comparative analysis (CCA) to understand how female early-career faculty at liberal arts colleges approach their work and how those approaches may differ from those of their peers at research universities. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) note “the constant comparative method involves comparing one segment of data with another to determine similarities and differences. Data are grouped together on a similar dimension. The dimension is similarly given a name; it then becomes a category” (p. 32). In doing so, I identified patterns within and across the data. Constant comparative analysis required me to work with my data from the “ground up” and remain open to all possibilities of what the data may tell me (Merriam, 2009).

To begin the process of CCA, I engaged in open coding of my interview data paragraph-by-paragraph, choosing one-word action verbs in most circumstances to indicate what is happening in the data. I took my initial codes from the data and created analytical codes, which are codes that reflect meaning and come from the researcher’s interpretation of the initial codes (Merriam, 2009). During analytical coding, where the

codes represent the most frequent or significant ideas in the data, I referred back to data collection questions (otherwise known as the questions to be answered by each case):

1. What role does past experience play in developing female early-career faculty's beliefs about the profession and their abilities?
2. What types of challenges do female early-career faculty face in the profession?
3. What strategies do female early-career faculty use to overcome challenges?
4. What types of experiences prompt behaviors that aim to improve professional abilities or skills?
5. Why do female early-career faculty engage in specific tasks?
6. How does the perception of the work environment relate to beliefs and behaviors?
7. What kinds of support systems do female early-career faculty create?

When I first starting analyzing the data, I grouped the codes based on how they answered my case questions, creating larger categorical clusters from my analytical codes. Table 2 shows my first attempt of creating categorical codes organized by my case questions. I have also included the operational definitions for each code. There were approximately three to four analytical sub-codes for each categorical code (not shown).

During this phase I engaged in extensive descriptive and analytical memo writing. Since the majority of my categorical codes were interpretative and therefore more abstract than my analytical codes, writing down what I meant when I use a code to label data, as well as picking up excerpts from the data to substantiate the code, helped to increase the analytical strength of my coding scheme (Charmaz, 2014).

Table 2.  
*Preliminary categorical codes based on case questions.*

<b>Case Questions</b>	<b>Categorical Codes</b>
1. Past Experiences	<b>False Starts:</b> <i>Experiences that lead to developing agency over time, usually conveying a sense of negativity or struggle that leads to a positive outcome or a life realization.</i>
	<b>Influencers:</b> <i>People who have an effect early in educational career to pursue either a career in academia, pursue the discipline, or become people to (or not to) emulate.</i>
	<b>Mastery Opportunities:</b> <i>Experiences that lead to developing competency in the discipline or faculty responsibilities.</i>
	<b>Professional Purpose:</b> <i>Reasons for becoming a faculty member.</i>
2. Challenges	<b>Colleagues:</b> <i>Struggles related to other people who play a role in the job.</i>
	<b>Lack of Control:</b> <i>Weak locus of control over particular areas of work.</i>
	<b>Personal:</b> <i>Personal Struggle (e.g., childcare, isolation).</i>
	<b>Students:</b> <i>Struggles instigated by student behavior.</i>
3. Strategies	<b>Time Issues:</b> <i>Allocating time, managing time, wasting time.</i>
	<b>Intelligence:</b> <i>Gathering and using information.</i>
	<b>Networks:</b> <i>Building new or using existing relationships.</i>
	<b>Preemptive:</b> <i>Strategies to circumvent a possible challenge.</i>
4. Professional Development	<b>Self-Awareness:</b> <i>Recalibrating expectations and creating structures or boundaries.</i>
	<b>Teaching:</b> <i>Fellowships, workshops, teaching development services.</i>
	<b>Research:</b> <i>Fellowships, workshops, writing retreats.</i>
	<b>Time Management:</b> <i>Structured professional development event.</i>
5. Reasons for Acting	<b>Positioning:</b> <i>Actions directly related to tenure expectations.</i>
	<b>Advocating:</b> <i>Actions that support what the participant needs and wants.</i>
	<b>Protecting:</b> <i>Actions that seek to maintain balance.</i>
	<b>Rewarding:</b> <i>Actions that bring gratification.</i>
6. Work Environment	<b>Developing:</b> <i>Actions that grow capacity and confidence.</i>
	<b>Cultivating:</b> <i>Department chairs verbally state they want faculty member to get tenure.</i>
	<b>Fostering:</b> <i>Promoting the growth and development of new faculty.</i>
	<b>Welcoming:</b> <i>Productive, supportive colleagues.</i>
	<b>Discouraging:</b> <i>Isolating, suffocating, and contaminating environment.</i>
	<b>Discriminating:</b> <i>Negative experiences associated with gender, race, and/or age.</i>
7. Support Systems	<b>Hindering:</b> <i>Impeding or ignoring work issues affecting the faculty member.</i>
	<b>Family:</b> <i>Partner, children, extended family.</i>
	<b>Social Network:</b> <i>Friends outside of work.</i>
	<b>Peer Cohort/Gripe Group:</b> <i>Supportive colleagues at work.</i>
	<b>Professional Backstops:</b> <i>Professional colleagues outside of the home institution.</i>

I organized my codes for each data collection table into word tables, which I then combined into a “master matrix” (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I formatted the master

matrix by listing the cases by column, the data collection questions by row, and populated the matrix with my categorical codes. Using the master matrix, I was able to read down a column and understand how each case answered the questions and read across a row to look for similarities and differences across cases with regards to a particular data collection question.

In addition to choosing descriptive and analytical terms as codes, I also used *in vivo* codes—participants' own words—to label what was happening in the data. It was through *in vivo* coding that I started to see the pattern of tenure as a game, as well as participants' approaches to work as playing a game (see Table 3).

Once I started to see this theme reappear in the data, I turned to literature on game design. I wanted to know more about the components of games. Schell's (2015) book on game design was particularly helpful in this regard and I came to realize that my initial wave of categorical coding, based on the case questions, closely reflected game mechanics. Table 4 depicts the integration of game mechanics with my categorical codes; there were about 3-4 sub-codes for each new categorical code (not shown). The game space was the work environment. Objects are the people the players (my participants) interact with: colleagues, students, collaborators, department chairs, mentors, and players' own support systems. Challenges are obstacles, and actions become the strategies female early-career faculty use to confront the obstacles as well as the underlying reasons for their behaviors. Skills are the talents female early-career faculty bring to the game from previous experiences as well as the abilities they developed while working at their institutions.

Table 3.  
Participant references to games.

Code	Quote
Contest	<p><i>“In academia, it’s like winning an ice cream contest where the prize is more ice cream.” —Anne</i></p> <p><i>“You have to jump through all of these hoops.” —Georgiana</i></p> <p><i>“There are so many different obstacles, but again, some people are closer to the finishing line than others.” —Lydia</i></p>
Competition among Players	<p><i>“One thing that’s interesting is competition amongst junior faculty in the same department.” —Maryanne</i></p> <p><i>“My first two years I feel like it was just spinning wheels and nothing worked, which was intimidating because again, the guy who’s two years ahead of me had been really successful. He’d gotten a publication almost right away.” —Jane</i></p>
Game Strategy	<p><i>“I think I’m more positive about things now, but in part because I feel like I have a game plan.” —Caroline</i></p> <p><i>“She [graduate advisor] did teach me some really good things. She was very cutthroat and she taught me how to play the game.” —Eleanor</i></p> <p><i>“So outside of that mentor, everybody else was playing a boys game except her.” —Elizabeth</i></p> <p><i>“Evernote was a huge game changer.” —Georgiana</i></p>
Puzzles	<p><i>“I like computational problems and mathematical problems. My brain just likes to think about them.” —Anne</i></p> <p><i>“I personally have felt like the time when I’ve been the happiest have been not necessarily times when I think everything is going right, not times that aren’t filled with some sort of struggle. Because in some ways I enjoy some amount of struggle.” —Eleanor</i></p> <p><i>“One thing that I really like about my research process is that in some ways, it’s like a puzzle.” —Lydia</i></p>
Winning the Game	<p><i>“The other LAC [liberal arts college] was definitely a struggle, in the sense that I didn’t know what I needed to do. Once I kind of knew what I needed to do, I didn’t know how to achieve the objectives.” —Emma</i></p> <p><i>“Acknowledging that there’s potential for changing goal posts if another new leadership comes in.” —Julia</i></p>

Table 4.

*Alignment between game mechanics and categorical codes.*

<b>Game Mechanics</b>	<b>Categorical Codes</b>
Game Space	<b>Cultivating:</b> <i>Department chairs verbally state they want faculty member to get tenure.</i>
	<b>Fostering:</b> <i>Promoting the growth and development of new faculty.</i>
	<b>Welcoming:</b> <i>Productive, supportive colleagues.</i>
	<b>Discouraging:</b> <i>Isolating, suffocating, and contaminating environment.</i>
	<b>Discriminating:</b> <i>Negative experiences associated with gender, race, and/or age.</i>
	<b>Hindering:</b> <i>Impeding or ignoring work issues affecting the faculty member.</i>
Game Time	<b>Deadlines:</b> <i>Work dictated by external deadlines.</i>
	<b>Going Up Early:</b> <i>Moving up the tenure review.</i>
	<b>Postponing:</b> <i>Delaying the tenure review.</i>
	<b>Reset:</b> <i>Leaving one institution and starting the tenure timeline over at another college.</i>
Objects/ Characters	<b>Collaborators:</b> <i>Research partnerships (fruitful or stressful).</i>
	<b>Colleagues:</b> <i>Coworkers in department (positive or negative attributes).</i>
	<b>Chair:</b> <i>Department chair (positive or negative attributes, rotating).</i>
	<b>Formal Mentors:</b> <i>Assigned mentor at institution (helpful, not helpful, none).</i>
	<b>Other Mentors:</b> <i>Graduate advisors, role models.</i>
	<b>Students:</b> <i>In the classroom or as advisees (challenging or encouraging attributes).</i>
	<b>Troll Models:</b> <i>Graduate advisors who did not display replicable qualities.</i>
	<b>Support Systems:</b> <i>People who assist in the well-being of the player.</i>
Obstacles	<b>Bad Fit:</b> <i>Struggles related to feelings of belonging at the institution.</i>
	<b>Research Setback:</b> <i>Weak locus of control over research.</i>
	<b>Mixed Messages:</b> <i>Conflicting guidance around tenure expectations.</i>
	<b>Personal:</b> <i>Personal Struggle (e.g., childcare, isolation).</i>
	<b>Time Issues:</b> <i>Allocating time, managing time, wasting time.</i>
Player Actions	<b>Reasons to Play the Game:</b> <i>Similar to professional purpose (autonomy/freedom, change research paradigms, change teaching paradigms, to make an impact).</i>
	<b>Reasons for Acting:</b> <i>Positioning, advocating, protecting, rewarding, developing behaviors or no reason for acting/gut reaction.</i>
	<b>Strategies:</b> <i>Building a pipeline, dividing and conquering, gathering intelligence, hustling, networks, self-awareness.</i>
Skill	<b>Past Experiences:</b> <i>Skill was developed prior to faculty appointment.</i>
	<b>During the Game:</b> <i>Skill was developed during the probationary period.</i>
	<b>Still Developing:</b> <i>Participant does not feel confident yet with current skillset.</i>
	<b>A Knack:</b> <i>Participant never needed to develop skills in a particular area.</i>
Chance	<b>Luck of the Draw</b>



Originally, I had not coded the data for time references or for examples of chance in decision making. I returned to the interview transcripts to look for these two concepts, using more of a deductive approach to coding to complement my inductive process. The overarching metaphor of playing a game as a way to describe how the participants in this study approach their work begins to answer my first research question.

### **Pattern Matching**

To answer my second research question, I used a deductive strategy called pattern matching to categorize data according to a set of *a priori* codes. Miles and Huberman (1994) refer to these codes as a “start list” that allows the coding of data to be a manageable process (p. 58). Pattern matching is an appropriate analytic technique for an exploratory study, as long as the pattern was defined prior to data collection (Yin, 2014). Using my theoretical framework as a guide, I created a set of *a priori* codes based on the psychological factors that facilitate positive deviance, intentional behaviors and significant actions (see Table 5).

Early early-career faculty who use positive-deviant behaviors act in ways that are different than what researchers report in the literature (the “norm”). The chance of such strategies existing increases if particular motivational factors are present. If the greater early-career faculty population reports a lack of preparation for the job, then seeking out opportunities to build skills would help facilitate positive-deviant behaviors. If the greater early-career faculty population reports difficulty prioritizing or finding time, then exercising agency and ownership over their work would help facilitate positive-deviant behaviors. If the greater early-career faculty population reports dissatisfaction in the profession, then finding meaning in their work would help facilitate positive-deviant

behaviors. For purposes of this study, in order for a behavior to classify as deviating positively from the norm, it must be notable and different than the behaviors and strategies recommended to early-career faculty found in the literature. Once I identified a positive-deviant behavior, I cross-referenced the positive-deviant codes with the game space codes, thereby answering my final research question about the role the work environment plays in the use of positive-deviant behaviors.

Table 5.  
*A priori codes for positive deviance.*

<b>A Priori Code</b>	<b>Operational Definition</b>	<b>Example from the Data</b>
Self-Determination	Autonomy, choice, control	<i>"I guess part of the long term plan is, even knowing what are the things that I'm submitting to, and applying to, that give me those deadlines."</i>
Personal Efficacy	Hunger to grow	<i>"I keep working on it as I have and making lectures and improving things, but I just have a better framework here that's supporting me."</i>
Meaning	Purpose to take action	<i>"So I think one of the best pieces of advice that I got...you have to do service, but make sure that you choose things that you really enjoy doing."</i>
Other-Focus	Empathizing with the needs of others	<i>"I think they could still be better about figuring out how to incorporate new faculty into the fold, and, actually, I need to be better about that, too, as a junior faculty member."</i>
Courage	Openness to taking risks	<i>"I just feel really alone on that as well, because I'm kind of just trying things. And to my credit, I do take risks. And sometimes they don't pan out."</i>
Intentional Behavior	Planned actions with a particular outcome in mind. Actions are honorable.	<i>"Yes, that [a peer mentoring group] would be something that I very much thought existed. And then was like, 'Oh, never mind. That doesn't exist. So I'm just gonna make it.'"</i>
Significant Behavior	Actions that are noteworthy; have not been identified in the literature. Actions have a positive perception.	<i>"So my strategy was, I can incorporate students into other work, but I need to have a research line that is just mine and a colleague of mine—preferably someone who has graduate students who can help us write papers."</i>

## **Trustworthiness**

Yin (2014) identifies three levels of verification to ensure the trustworthiness of a descriptive case study: construct validity, external validity, and reliability. To maintain construct validity, I operationalized all of my initial, analytical, and categorical codes during analysis, as well as my *a priori* codes before data analysis. I also collected multiple sources of evidence (interviews, documents, diagrams and drawings) and engaged in memo writing as a way to establish a chain of evidence. I shared interview transcripts with each participant to confirm that I captured the data correctly. Finally, I used peer debriefing to discuss my analysis of each case. My theoretical framework provides the groundwork for the study and its propositions define the domain for transferability, which maintains external validity. Through my case study protocol and the creation and maintenance of a case study database, other researchers could replicate this study, warranting the reliability of this research.

## **Limitations**

### **Case Variation**

Three types of variation occur in the data: variation of institution type, variation in faculty disciplinary expertise, and variations professional experience prior to starting tenure-track appointments. While I purposely chose my three sites, I cannot control their institutional contexts. Moreover, tenure expectations of the faculty participants will differ based on discipline. While an English professor may be expected to publish a book and perhaps three to four journal articles as evidence of scholarship for tenure, a chemistry professor may be expected to secure a large external research grant and publish one research study in a top tier journal. Finally, the experiences each participant brings to her

tenure-track appointment will vary. While all of the potential faculty participants in STEM fields held at least one post-doc prior to their tenure-track appointment, some faculty in other disciplines—most notably the social science faculty—attained their tenure-track position immediately after defending their dissertations. Two liberal arts college faculty in this study held tenure-track appointments at other institutions prior to arriving at Pemberley College. Having experiences at institutions of higher education, whether a post-doc or previous faculty appointments, certainly helps those faculty develop their skills and knowledge of the profession. To address these potential variations in the data, I use rich, thick description for each case, and acknowledge the specific and unique characteristics of the cases during within-case and cross-case synthesis. While I highlight these variations in the data as limitations, the variations can also serve as an asset, in that it offers a more compelling interpretation (Merriam, 2009).

### **Role of the Researcher**

In terms of my own philosophy and epistemological beliefs in research, I believe the researcher cannot separate herself from the research and assume a constructivist position. Thus, incorporating reflexive practices throughout the research process is my strategy for interpretation. While my role in this research is etic—I am not a tenure-track faculty member, nor am I in a position to develop my professional identity as a faculty member—I do bring potential bias to this study. I have my own assumptions about institutional culture and how it supports or inhibits the positive perspectives of tenure-track faculty. As a doctoral student, I, too, have contemplated how female early-career faculty develop their approaches to work in potentially unsupportive environments. To

counter this bias, and in addition to my memo writing as a means to maintain reflexivity, I also used peer debriefing throughout the research study.

### **Transferability**

Due to the small number of participants in this study, the conclusions of this inquiry are transferable, but not generalizable, to other contexts or populations. Since my site selection included two selective liberal arts colleges and one research university with very high research productivity, it is improbable for me to generalize the broad behaviors of the female early-career faculty sample to other female early-career faculty in various higher education contexts, though further research in these contexts would be fruitful. Yet, one purpose of a case study is not necessarily to generalize to populations, but rather, to expand upon the theories that guide the data collection (Yin, 2014). Therefore, in the results of this study, I strive to not only broadly describe female early-career faculty approaches to their professional work and positive-deviant behaviors I identified in my sample, but also describe how such behaviors align to my theoretical framework, based on theories of motivation (Pink, 2009) and agency and environmental perception (Bandura, 2001), and positive deviance (Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2003). The theoretical framework, then, may be transferable and used in future research at other institutions.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study is to add to the existing literature by broadly sharing the stories of female early-career faculty and identify positive-deviant behaviors. Theories about intrinsic motivation (Pink, 2009), agency and environmental perception (Bandura, 2001), and positive deviance (Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2003) informed my data collection and data analysis. Using a multi-case embedded design, I selected each case at the

individual level by only including female early-career faculty in their fourth or fifth year in a tenure-track appointment who work at two selective liberal arts colleges and one research-intensive university. Interviews, participant-generated drawings and diagrams, and documents were the three sources of evidence. I analyzed the data using the inductive approach of constant comparative analysis (CCA) and a deductive approach of pattern matching. Through CCA I saw the larger overarching theme across cases: tenure is a game and faculty play this game by interacting with characters and facing different obstacles—under particular time constraints—drawing on their particular skillsets and strategies.

## CHAPTER 4

### PARTICIPANT NARRATIVES

Every participant in this study is unique and their approach to their professional work is distinct. Before identifying similar and disparate approaches to the game of tenure, I immersed myself in the stories of each participant in this study. I wanted to explain the contextual variables that have bearing on the individual cases: game spaces (the environment), game time (the six-year probationary period), the particular obstacles (challenges) and game objects (people) each participant encountered, and the skills she brought to the game. I looked at the game mechanics of each participant narrative. By reading through the interview transcripts, I immediately found overt meaning through the participants' words, and took time to uncover nuanced meaning that I corroborated with the visual data and documents provided by each individual. In other words, I looked for relationships between obvious and subtle concepts that I identified during data analysis and noted those connections (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

In this chapter, I share the descriptive conclusions I drew from within-case analysis and present them as participant narratives. Through these stories, I lay the groundwork to answer my first research question by describing how each participant engages in her professional work. I selected a particular game as an analogy to each participant's approach; these specific games reflect the strongest themes that surfaced in each person's narrative—the combination of overt and nuanced meaning derived from the data. Analysis of the data in qualitative research can go in different directions; each researcher analyzes the data through his or her particular lens. The game approach chosen

to describe each participant’s experience is how I made meaning from analyzing each experience.

In determining how to present the ten individual narratives, I considered organizing the stories in a variety of ways: alphabetical order, grouped by institutional type, or segmented by discipline. Instead, I chose to cluster the narratives by their most prominent game strategy, which include: strategies that attempt to understand the game environment, strategies that attempt to respond to the game environment, strategies to collaborate in the game environment, and strategies to manipulate the game environment. Figure 4 provides a visual overview of the sequence of narratives, arranged by these four approaches to professional work.

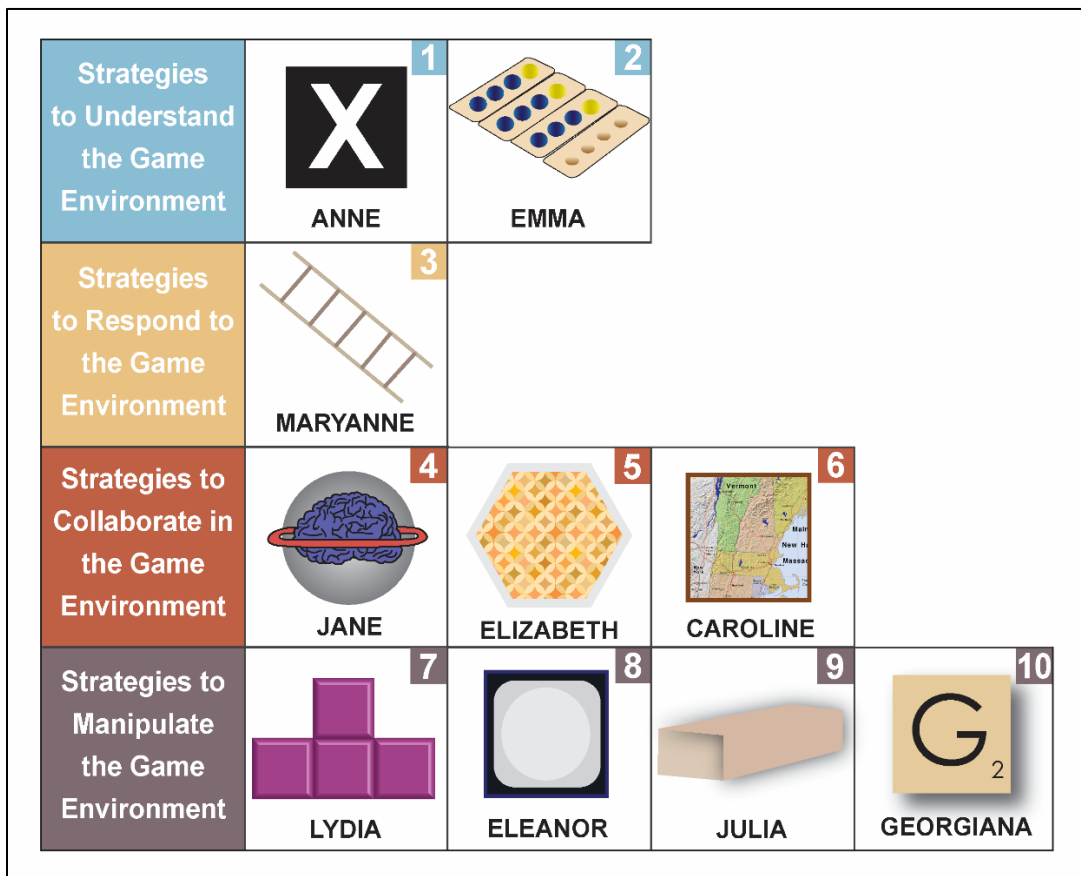


Figure 4. Visual depiction of the sequence of narratives described in this chapter.



### Anne's *Clue* Approach

Anne found the first mouse in the basement. The weather had just started to turn and the trees looked to be on fire, reflecting a typical New England autumn. Anne, a first-time homeowner and in her first year at Highbury University, thought the mouse was a fluke. The woods, months later blanketed by snow, were no match for the attractive shelter of Anne's home; the mice persisted. When she continued to find them in her basement, Anne reasoned it was getting colder. When her cat began presenting his "kills" in the living room, kitchen, and bedroom—early holiday presents—she realized her new house was infested. "I would never know when I walked into a room whether I would see a half-dead mouse and then I would have to, given that it was only me, I would have to take care of it. And that pretty much represented my personal life." That first mouse in the basement should have been Anne's clue that something was wrong. But she rationalized it as a coincidence or that an environmental condition was the cause. Anne's experience in her tenure-track position mirrored that of her experience as a first-time home owner: the initial signs were small and isolated until they were impossible to ignore. For Anne, approaching her work as an early-career faculty member was similar to the murder mystery game *Clue*, in which she relied on deduction and formulating hypotheses in order to try and understand how to act within her environment.

The objective of *Clue* is to accurately determine the suspect, the weapon, and the location of a crime. The suspect is one of the game "objects" who does harm, while the weapon is the instrument of choice in conducting damage. Learning about where the murder took place—the game space—is a core strategy to win *Clue*. Anne spent her first few years at Highbury University learning about her game space: the house, the

department, the classroom, and the research lab. Within each area, Anne made a hypothesis about how she should play the game, observing the individuals she interacted with, which informed her subsequent moves. Her deductions over her first three years ultimately lead her to conclude that she would need to leave and begin playing a new game at a different institution.

### **Seclusion in Suburbia**

Anne had recently broken up with her long-term boyfriend who was not interested in moving to New England. She decided to attend a “single faculty” event in her first semester as a way to meet new people in the area, but was ultimately disappointed by the experience. “It turns out the town is a very ... I don't wanna say insular, but everyone's in a couple, they have families. There's literally zero single faculty.” Anne did not go to the event thinking she would find a date for Friday night; rather, she was looking to make connections with people and create a network in an unfamiliar place. “I didn't have any friends there, I didn't have any family there, so that was very stressful.”

Anne knew she was going to have to take an active role in finding those supports outside of any existing structures—get-togethers, social outings, mixers—hosted by the institution. Fortunately, she learned that two alums from her undergraduate institution were also faculty at Highbury University and reached out to them to gather intelligence about the institution. “You have someone you can complain to and can advise you, and you can get information outside the department because they're in other departments.” Anne also participated in a women's mentoring group, which brought STEM faculty across departments together to strategize and support each other. “It was really helpful,

and particularly because if I had some problems with students, you could bring those problems and people could give you advice.”

Perhaps Anne’s biggest source of support came from her (now) husband, whom she met at the end of her first year. A Dr. Watson to Anne’s Detective Holmes, her husband is her perfect foil: with a slower-paced job, he was able to help with the house and take on some of the burdens of her personal life. “It would help free me up where I could spend a little bit more devoted time on my research.” Anne’s scholarship is her lifeblood: an area where she feels in total control for which she receives recognition, external funding, and prestigious awards. And while her research success is solely her own—the result of prioritization, hard work, and extensive training—Anne does credit her husband for assuming tasks that would otherwise demand her attention. “He would take on some of that mental burden of planning and thinking about things, which was just really incredible cause it would help free me up.”

### **Death by Departmental Obligations**

Anne opted to serve on multiple departmental committees in her first few years at Highbury. Her time was constantly broken up by meetings, which she likened to a death by a thousand paper cuts. “I made up this law of conservation of meetings, which means that if one meeting gets canceled, an equal meeting will arise to take its place.” Anne abetted in her own suffering because she saw committee work as her way of understanding the community and integrating into her department. While her chair was a well-meaning man, he was a bit of a pushover: some influential colleagues would refuse to participate in service, leaving the committee work to the other faculty who were more conscientious in the department. In order to acquire information about the rules of the

game, and lacking a formal mentor, Anne elected to sit on five committees during her first few years at Highbury University: the graduate admissions committee, the graduate program committee, the department's curriculum committee, the colloquium committee, and the personnel committee. "I was doing my due diligence to try to understand the community and integrate into the department." Like a gumshoe stealthily looking for clues, she chose each committee with intention.

Anne needed a cadre of graduate students for her research, but funding was sparse. The graduate students she was able to support proved to be unproductive in her lab:

Grad students, you can't really—after six weeks or a year even—say, 'Okay I'm done, I can't advise you anymore.' You just don't get that opportunity, and if you do, there's only a very small number that you can work with, and both of you are stuck with each other.

So Anne decided to serve on the Graduate Admissions Committee and the Graduate Program Committee to have more control over the incoming cohort of students each year and be able to track down potential research assistants for her lab. Participating in the Curriculum Committee allowed her to propose a new graduate course she could teach with a smaller student enrollment and another venue to identify research assistants.

Tenure was on Anne's mind in the very first year. Through the Colloquium Committee, she had input on guest presenters and she used that opportunity to bring in her research collaborators. Yet the Personnel Committee was probably her most useful and telling service work. The committee members review the annual evaluations of faculty, and Anne learned what activities were highly regarded by her peers—an interior view of how her colleagues perceive each other's work. She also developed a greater

awareness of what her colleagues were doing in terms of research, teaching, and service. “Every single committee was very useful to me. Irritating, but useful.”

### **Scrutiny in the Classroom**

When Anne arrived at Highbury University, she had an idea of how she wanted to teach because her two post-docs at prestigious universities provided her with a solid foundation in STEM instruction. “I was thinking about being an effective teacher. So, it wasn't like I came in and I had no experience or no ideas.” Her department chair kindly offered his materials for the introductory course, which saved her time. “I could at least try to work on presenting the material, and spend less time trying to just make the slides frantically, and put in things that I was excited about.” Anne took the free time afforded by having these ready-made resources and put it towards her research.

Despite teaching a course that enrolled over a hundred students, Anne was given only one half-time graduate assistant to help with teaching and grading. Assigning daily homework was problematic, so Anne decided to use an online book—authored by her department chair—and accompanying online homework platform as a solution to the grading challenge. This particular choice was flawed: Anne learned halfway through the semester that the platform’s grading system was broken, marking students’ responses as incorrect when they were actually right. “I think that was really soul-sucking to put so much time and energy into it, and have the students be really resentful and angry.” With no power to fix the system immediately, and complete dependence on the publisher to make the adjustment, Anne felt helpless.

The other challenges Anne faced in the classroom were more subtle. Since her STEM course was a 100-level class, taken by majors and non-majors, her students

walked into the lecture hall with various skills. “I kind of expected students would be able to do algebra, they'd be able to plug in numbers.” But the feedback Anne received mid-semester from her students reflected their frustration with the course, which was echoed in her student evaluations that first semester. With the online grading platform issue rectified, Anne took this feedback and hypothesized that she should make the course easier the following semester to accommodate the array of abilities in the room.

Unfortunately, she continued to get scathing reviews from her students, despite her modifications to the course. She had a senior colleague sit in on her class, who later told Anne she had made her course too easy. She still could not find an approach that worked with her undergraduate students:

I couldn't make my students want to learn. I couldn't make my students work on things. So no matter what you do, you'll always have people that don't want to be there and don't want to spend time thinking about it and then kind of take out their frustration on you.

Anne was concerned how her student evaluations would affect her tenure decision. She expressed her frustration about her reviews to her department chair, who was not particularly reassuring. He told her that tough evaluations in the first few years was a common problem and at some point teaching “just clicks.” When Anne explained that her students were complaining about the difficulty of the course, her chair admitted that he had gotten similar comments when he taught the course—except her chair did not get the same biting reviews, which Anne deduced was due to being a male in STEM.

Anne received some critical feedback in her mid-tenure review concerning her teaching record: a recommendation that she spend more time on her instruction and that she needed to show improvement. “Considering the unconscious bias that also goes into the evaluations, I was pretty furious about that. I mean, they could've at least said she's

doing a fantastic job with the graduate teaching.” In talking with other female faculty, Anne learned that her fellow colleagues also felt students were biased in their summative feedback and there was no process to correct for it in the department. “There's no women on the college personnel committee. I asked the deans about unconscious bias in teaching evaluations and they're like, ‘We do training,’ but they weren't addressing it.”

Like in a game of *Clue*, Anne tried to surface a solution by eliminating possibilities. She tried to lessen the negative effects of her evaluations by adjusting her course to accommodate student abilities, talking with her department chair about her concerns, and attempting to confirm that the personnel committee responsible for tenure decisions would consider student bias. Unfortunately, Anne’s tactics did not provide the evidence she needed to feel supported in her teaching.

### **Incompetence in the Research Lab**

Anne had her first breakfast with the Chancellor after an exasperating few months of dealing with the staff of a multi-institution computing center she bought into with her research start-up funds. The breakfast was arranged by Anne’s dean after she expressed her frustration about the situation to him and the head of information technology. She acknowledged that the computing center staff meant well, but were inept in managing the infrastructure. “When you buy equipment, the first thing you do is you test it, and in computing that takes a particular form, where you run benchmark tests. And they never did this.” Anne explained to the Chancellor that other faculty had complained, but their concerns were ignored. A true Herculean task, Anne’s efforts to rectify this problem transcended beyond her department or her college, or even her home campus—she was navigating politics at a consortia level.

In retrospect, Anne made a bad decision by buying into the multi-institution computing center. The other option—to purchase space in a departmental computer cluster—appeared to be more challenging at the time she need to make her decision:

If you look at the web page, it belongs to the department, but if you talk to people in the department it belongs to faculty members, and they didn't want you to use it, or your students to use it, unless you bought into it. So I had to choose between this one choice where the people were clearly intelligent, amazing individuals, but extremely difficult, and where I might not have control over what was happening, versus what turned out to be the other option, which was the nice and well-meaning people who were completely incompetent.

Anne made an educated guess and it did not result in her favor.

Despite sharing her concerns with the Chancellor, Anne did not feel like any immediate change was going to happen after that breakfast. So she took it upon herself to collect data—clues—to prove that her interaction with the computing center staff was not her own contained incident, but that it was a pervasive problem:

I basically went behind the administration's back—kind of—and figured out who was using the cluster among these multi-institutions and took a poll. And then, basically took that data to them [the administration] and said here's what the people told me on the survey. This is not my problem, this is every one of these people on the survey whose problem it is.”

But bureaucratic shortcomings are difficult to remedy. Fortunately for Anne, she had a network to tap into: her most recent post-doc appointment was at a nearby institution and she was able to use its facilities to conduct her research. “I had time to figure this out. It would've been a total disaster if I hadn't had that.”

The issues with the computing center was Anne's final indication that staying at Highbury University was not in her best interest:

The reason why I ended up leaving is because you ask yourself, ‘Alright, well why am I doing this? Why aren't the senior faculty doing this?’ And the answer is that they're tired. They're tired of fighting the system and they've given up. And



so, this is a really terrible thing to be in because I'm already tired, because I had to deal with this, and it's not my job tell them how to run a computing center.

Just like the issues with her house, the obstacles Anne faced at Highbury University were predominately structural: limited resources to hire quality graduate students, no training around bias in student evaluations, and a lack of confidence in the staff's ability to run an effective computing center. By prioritizing her research in her first three years, despite the challenges, Anne was in a position to go back on the market and ultimately accepted a position at another research university.

### **Starting a New Game**

The playing cards were shuffled and Anne was dealt a new hand. Her fourth year as a tenure-track faculty member began an entirely new game at another institution across the country. When I last spoke with her, she was just about to finish her initial year in her new game space, and had an optimistic impression about her overall experience. First, she noted that her colleagues in her department are relatively young and proactive; there is a greater sense of camaraderie in the group which deterred any sense of initial isolation when Anne arrived. Second, she redesigned the large undergraduate general education course she taught at Highbury University and is teaching a comparable class at her new institution, but with the support of four graduate assistants who help with teaching and grading. As a result, she was able to give tailored homework—not canned experiences delivered on an online platform—and received better evaluations from her students in the fall semester. She has more confidence in the computing center at the institution and had no issues buying time to use the equipment.

Anne took what she learned at Highbury University and applied that knowledge to her new game space. She continues to work within the system she was handed. She was

assigned a formal teaching mentor who came and observed her courses and gave her feedback on her teaching, providing another data point in her tenure package. She also had someone from the institution's teaching center observe her teach. "She sat in my class and she did not have a single negative thing to say, not a single suggestion. And she said, 'This is textbook excellent teaching.'" Anne attempted to go up for tenure early—to speed up her game time—but was advised to wait and add to her teaching record at the university. And while her evaluations have certainly improved and she feels like there is a better infrastructure of support at her new institution, Anne continues to reevaluate her relationship with teaching. "I would really like to really enjoy it and often I, especially for the intro classes, I don't always feel that I'm enjoying it."

Anne is a scientist by training and her approach to the game follows the scientific method: form a hypothesis about a given problem, collect and analyze data, and either confirm the prediction or reject the theory. Figure 5 depicts Anne's deductive reasoning in each round of the game at Highbury University. This approach is comparable to a detective's procedure of gathering evidence to confirm or disprove criminal acts by suspects in a game of *Clue*. Anne spent her three years at Highbury University gathering evidence about the culture of the institution, the value her peers placed on particular types of faculty work, how work gets done in the department, what students like about her classes, and the effectiveness of the research facility staff. Ultimately, she took her analysis of these clues and confirmed that Highbury University was not an institution where she could develop as a rising academic. However, her experience at Highbury University gave her some important intelligence about how to navigate her new

surroundings at her current institution. She acknowledged, “I learned a lot about how universities work there. The hierarchy, and how things get done.”

*“I was doing my due diligence to try to understand the community.”*

Score Sheet				
<b>SUSPECT</b>				
	1	2	3	4
Families/Couples	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Department Chair	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Colleagues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lab Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Chancellor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Administrators	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>WEAPON</b>				
	1	2	3	4
Isolation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No Resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evaluations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Incompetence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>LOCATION</b>				
	1	2	3	4
New England	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Department	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Chancellor's Office	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Research Lab	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Post-Doc Lab	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>DEDUCTION</b>				
	1	2	3	4
Use Networks	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Work the System	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make It Easier	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Collect Feedback	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Present the Case	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Figure 5. Anne’s Clue approach to the game of tenure.

**Emma’s Mastermind Approach**

For almost three weeks, Emma had tried to lead discussions about the case studies she had assigned for homework over the sound of a jackhammer. The construction of the new library was taking place right outside her building and she had a perfect view of its progress from her classroom window. There was an empty classroom on the other side of

the building, and Emma considered contacting the registrar to ask for a room reassignment, but she knew better. After months of interacting with her new department chair—her second chair since arriving at Pemberley College—Emma understood the unwritten rules: if you want support, ask for permission. “I need to take zero initiative, not speak, and if I want to do something, I need to ask her first. If I do this, then the relationship is going to be peaceful.” Essentially, Emma cracked the code on how to interact with her new chair through a process of observation, guess-and-check, and learning from missteps. The process was one that Emma slowly developed over the course of her four years at Pemberley College, as well as at her previous liberal arts institution.

Emma, a faculty member in the social sciences, approaches her work like a game of *Mastermind*, breaking new codes with every academic year. *Mastermind* is a two player game in which one player, the codemaker, develops a secret sequence of variously-colored pegs. The other player, the codebreaker, must guess the correct sequence and the correct color of the pegs in less than eight turns. When the codebreaker makes a guess, the codemaker provides feedback by placing white pegs in the feedback square if the color is correct but the sequence is wrong, or black pegs if the color and sequence are correct. In Emma’s game, the codemaker is a composite of her colleagues, department chairs, and students at both Pemberley College and her previous institution. *Mastermind*, like a game of *Clue*, is about deduction: Emma makes a guess as to how she should proceed in her job, receives feedback from her environment, and adjusts accordingly.

## **The Teaching Message**

Emma was shocked when her department chair handed her the pre-made syllabus. “Basically, I was told, ‘Okay, this is the syllabus; teach it.’ It didn’t correspond to my training or my mindset. There was the material that, by itself, was new to me. No one trained me in the new material.” Emma had accepted a tenure-track faculty position at a liberal arts college in the Midwest right after she earned her doctorate. Unfamiliar with the culture of liberal arts colleges, Emma did not anticipate the demands placed on faculty. “The expectations of the students and expectations in the classroom and outside the classroom. The kind of teaching style that they were used to versus what I teaching at my graduate school, which was a very different.” Perhaps one interpretation of getting handed a fully-developed syllabus for an introductory course is that the chair was providing a time-saving resource; the topics for each week, the readings, and the guest speakers were clearly outlined in the document. Emma translated the interaction differently. She had pursued academia instead of nonprofit work because she inferred that faculty had more autonomy. “I thought that it was a better career path for me, that it could maybe give me more freedom of action.”

Emma had no understanding of the teaching expectations at a liberal arts college before she started her appointment. In graduate school, she served as a co-PI on two federal grants, and spent most of her time conducting research during her final years as a doctoral student. She did not prioritize teaching, as a result. “Teaching, I don’t think I realized when I started, how important teaching was, and the kind of teaching I was supposed to deliver.” She saw the effects of her misinterpretation of the environment in her student evaluations. The comments were disparaging, and Emma felt strongly that the

criticism was informed by the evaluation form that only her department used. “The questions were very narrow. They were not really focused on how the students were learning; they were more focused on, ‘Did the instructor do these kind of things?’ If you didn’t fit into that model, it wouldn’t work.” Emma felt constrained. The freedom she expected to have in this job vanished and was replaced with migraines and illness throughout her first few years. In her mid-tenure review Emma was told, “If you don’t improve your teaching, then you’re not going to get tenure.” The following year, Emma took a sabbatical in the fall and parental leave in the spring; during that time she went on the market and was offered a tenure-track job at Pemberley College.

Emma’s teaching approach at Pemberley College was entirely informed by her experience at her previous liberal arts college, where she struggled to break the teaching code. She took the knowledge she learned at her other institution and applied it to Pemberley College. “Here, the teaching needs to be better than passable. It needs to be excellent. It needs to be improving constantly. Although, they say, ‘Well, we don’t care about evaluation numbers,’ this is what they look at.” Emma spent her first two years at Pemberley College looking for ways to enhance her teaching, a Rosetta Stone for instruction. “I read a lot of books. I attended classes of colleagues. I used the teaching center and I had colleagues come to my classes. Also, reviewing my evaluations with colleagues. I’ve done, I think, everything that you can possibly do.” Her student evaluations were strong and continue to be positive, reflecting and reinforcing the efforts she has taken to enrich her teaching style.

Emma’s change of environment contributed to her ability to break the teaching code. She knew her colleagues at Pemberley College trusted her to develop her own

courses. When she redesigned one of the intro classes that was historically co-taught by two of her peers, she showed them her syllabus and they were pleased with her work. Her read on her students has also changed; she no longer sees them as antagonistic critics but as amicable partners in learning. “I feel like my approach to teaching changes all the time. I feel more confident now.” It took Emma time and experience—specifically in liberal arts college environments—to understand what good teaching looks like and how to meet the expectations of her colleagues and students.

### **The Research Message**

Emma was confident in her research training when she started her tenure-track position at her liberal arts college in the Midwest. She brought with her two research grants from graduate school and spent her time in those first two years finishing her sponsored research, which was primarily conducted at a research site in Africa. But a deteriorating political situation at her site resulted in an aborted research trip she had scheduled with her undergraduate students. When she arrived at Pemberley College, Emma knew she was going to have to rethink her scholarship. “I was kind of in an in-between position; they were asking me to start a new research program.” Now with two children, Emma decided she would develop a US-based agenda to balance her research responsibilities with a personal life that did not involve travel in contentious locations. Despite receiving protection from many service commitments, Emma still felt like she was never able to truly work on her research during the academic year while teaching two courses each semester. “When you're teaching in the semester, your time for research is fairly limited and constrained.” So she also knew she was going to need a research program that was not time intensive.

Emma made some major shifts in her approach, informed by her experience at her previous institution. First, she moved away from qualitative research and towards large-scale datasets as a way to save time in data analysis and increase her publication pipeline. Emma had limited statistical training, so she worked with a consultant who could help with analysis. She also hired an editor to assist her with manuscript preparation. Second, she started tracking the time she spent on writing and doggedly prioritized her manuscripts, attending scheduled writing events with colleagues or planning her own solo retreats. Third, Emma learned that publishing with students is not an efficient process. “You invest a lot of time, and the return on your investment is limited.” Even though Emma admits that having student co-authors on papers would look nice, her research productivity; she ultimately decided not to pursue student collaborations because it was not going to get her tenure.

While Emma’s previous experience at a liberal arts college informed her subsequent approaches to research, the expectations of her Pemberley College colleagues also directed her actions. Emma believes her disciplinary field, broadly speaking, embraces collaboration. At Pemberley College, she is part of an interdisciplinary program, but does not have a departmental affiliation. Her colleagues in the program, who come from a variety of disciplines, have mixed feelings about collaborative research: some colleagues embrace co-authored projects, while others have expressed their desire that Emma only work on single-authored research until she achieves tenure. A subset from the latter group of colleagues sit on the program’s personnel committee. She explained, “Expectations are very different in different disciplines. Many of them are scientists, and scientists have different type of production than social scientists. They



don't agree on first authorship, second authorship..." The committee members have encouraged Emma to just work on solo research projects. "I'm basically doing what they're asking me to do. They're not clear about everything; but what they say, I'm just doing it. I don't want to go against the flow." Emma sees herself as an "obedient faculty member."

Yet, what her committee is not telling her is a concrete number of publications she should have for tenure; this information remains an enigma—a code she is still trying to break. Because Emma taught at another institution for four years prior to her appointment at Pemberley College, she was able to apply some of that work to her tenure timeline. But she does not understand whether her committee will look at everything she published over the last eight years or just what she published at Pemberley College. Her previous program chair, who continues to be a mentor to her, said that the committee would expect fewer papers because she has not been at the institution for the full six years. Yet her new chair told Emma that if she was going up early, she would need to publish as much as a faculty member who has been at the college for the full probationary period. Emma continues to be aggravated by these conflicting recommendations:

You're expected to do research, like in a R1 school. But if I was working at an R1 school, I would have post-docs, I would have PhD students, and I would have undergrad students. I would have an army working for me. This just doesn't make any sense—that you're asked to produce the same amount of scholarship.

To mitigate these scrambled messages, Emma decided to take the baseline estimate of one paper per year over the course of her two appointments and add one more publication.

## The Culture Message

Emma describes her chair at her first institution as “a huge asshole.” When she arrived at Pemberley College, she was welcomed by an encouraging chair. “I think that I had a very, very supportive chair, who told me from the first day, ‘My goal is for you to get tenure.’” While Emma was assigned a formal mentor at the college whom she only met with once, she viewed her first chair as her primary advisor who could answer all of her questions. She has also developed a group of colleagues who served as informal mentors—in some ways cryptologists—who could translate the culture of Pemberley College. Unfortunately, when a different faculty member assumed the role of chair of her program, the messages got muddled.

The first few meetings with the new chair were difficult for Emma until she worked out an approach that could serve her needs: fly under the radar and stay quiet. Her method meant that she did not engage in behaviors that would call attention, particularly in program meetings. “I think the director is happier when I don’t speak. I just go and I don’t speak, and it’s for an hour, and it’s painful, and then I’m out of there, and that’s it. It just took me a while to understand.” Even if a minor decision needs to be made—like requesting a room change due to construction noise—Emma knows that she must run it by her new chair in order to keep the signals straight.

Emma decided to keep a low profile across the institution as well. She understands that any senior faculty member could review her tenure case and they may judge her on any interactions she has with them. “You’re still expected to take initiative and do things and speak up, but in a context where basically everybody on campus is senior to you and could have an impact on your tenure decision....there’s a lot of

uncertainty.” Emma admits that she is uncomfortable with knowing how exactly to behave as an early-career faculty member; accordingly, her chosen maneuver is to exercise restraint in all communication with her colleagues to avoid any misinterpretations.

### **The Work-Life Message**

When I first sat down to talk with Emma, she told me how she recently was able to host the school potluck after four years of living in the area. Her sabbatical gave her space and dedicated time to be an active researcher, but it also gave her an opportunity to be a more active parent to her two children. “I went to parents’ night—I had never been before. In two weeks, I’m going on a field trip with my son’s class, which I have never done before.” Emma admits that a lack of downtime to be present with her family is the expense that comes with faculty life.

She knew finding the right balance between work and family was going to be a problem. Emma did not see many female role models in graduate school, and many of the female faculty she knew were constantly stressed and unhappy. Emma did note that her graduate advisor showed her the time demands of being an academic. She explained:

His wife was an attorney, but who didn't work because she was raising the children. He was a great mentor in many aspects...I've seen him evolve, when I was there, and taking a hold of his personal life.

Her graduate advisor was transparent about the challenges of having a personal life; granted, he is a male whose wife chose not to work as an attorney and stay home and raise their children. Emma’s husband plays an equal role in raising their children, as both he and Emma are academics. “My husband is really...I don’t want to say helpful because it sounds so pejorative—but he’s there. Without him, I couldn’t do it. We’re partners.”

After her sabbatical, Emma realized that concentrating on her family and making time for herself contributes to her happiness. She now prioritizes these activities along with her faculty responsibilities.

Emma finds calmness among the chaos by discovering ways to conform to her surroundings. “I’m trying to do my best. On the one hand, I accept that I have shortcomings. On the other hand, like most faculty, I’m very perfectionistic. I’m not going to change the universe, so I just have to adapt to it.” Emma spent her eight years on the tenure track at two different liberal arts colleges developing skills for the game:

Well, the other LAC [liberal arts college] was definitely a struggle, in the sense that I didn't know what I needed to do. Once I kind of knew what I needed to do, I didn't know how to achieve the objectives. Here, I mean, it's hard because it's lot of work, but I know what I need to do.”

These experiences equipped Emma with the knowledge to crack the codes that will lead to a successful tenure review.

In a very general sense, codes are encrypted messages. A person can translate a message by discovering how the coding system works, or finding a translation key. Figure 6 depicts Emma’s *Mastermind* process of cracking the code of teaching, research, culture, and work-life balance with regards to priority and importance in her environment. Emma finally understands that teaching takes precedence and research should be a solo venture with limited student involvement. In order to sail smoothly into a post-tenure career, she must covertly play the game without detection. She also recognizes that allocating some of her attention to her family and her health will only improve her satisfaction with her job.

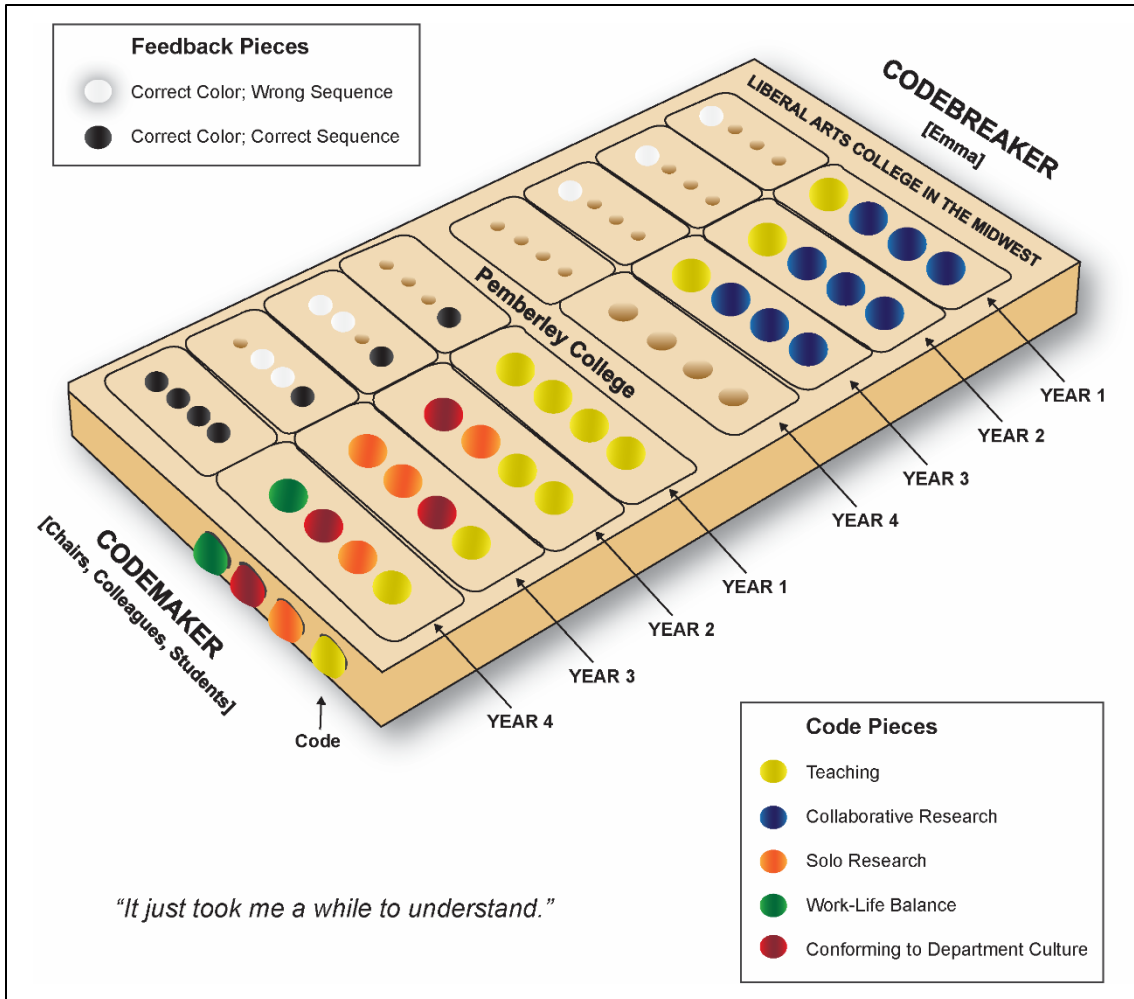


Figure 6. Emma's Mastermind approach to tenure.

### Maryanne's Chutes and Ladders Approach

Maryanne finds that meditating every morning is a productive way to start her day. The habit began out of necessity—to lower her stress—but she has since embraced meditating as an inherent behavior, much like laughing or crying. “I have this really high level of self-care. I sleep, like, eight and half to nine hours.” She makes time to exercise three mornings each week and keeps a pair of yoga blocks under a chair in her office. A lot had changed for Maryanne when she started her fifth year at Pemberley College:

I think where I was—before I made the transition to half-time—I was really bad. I just don't think, for me, with the mental health stuff and the kids, I would be doing this well if I was working full-time. I don't think I could cut it.

Today, Maryanne is in the office from ten in the morning to four in the afternoon and rarely works on weekends. When she is at work, she has a structured list of tasks to tackle that usually includes emailing research collaborators, reviewing her course materials, and analyzing her research data.

All games have some aspect of chance, which can result in a gain or loss for the player, depending on how the objects, obstacles, rules, and game space interact and affect the player's actions. However, there are some games that have a higher percentage of chance or luck than others. For example, in a game of *Chutes and Ladders*, players must roll the dice and move their game piece along a grid of squares. Some squares allow the player to advance up a ladder and get closer to the finish, while other squares correspond with a chute and force the player to begin again on the game board. When Maryanne talked with me about her five years at Pemberley College, her experience reflected the unreliable nature of *Chutes and Ladders*: once she would breakthrough a particular challenge, a setback would happen to pull her back down. For Maryanne, her approach to work focused less on her actions to advance forward, and more on managing her reaction to obstacles that crossed her path.

### **The First Roll**

Maryanne purposely chose to play the game at Pemberley College because she thought working at a liberal arts college would be less stressful than being a faculty member at a research-intensive university. She formed these assumptions in graduate school:

I think my perception of how faculty, junior faculty at my research institute, they all seemed pretty stressed out and overwhelmed so I kind of got that data point. I didn't really have data about liberal arts professors and what their experience was like because I didn't go to liberal arts as an undergrad.

Her faculty were so consumed with finding funding for their research and publishing that Maryanne experienced very little mentoring. “I had two kids in grad school so I feel like that kind of took up a lot of my time and didn’t connect me with my professors, who were all men who didn’t have primary kid-raising responsibilities.” Maryanne realized that becoming a professor in the social sciences at a research university did not interest her.

During her interview, Maryanne got the impression from her future colleagues that the research expectations would be less severe than those at a research university. Most of the faculty in her department are senior and full professors; they did not appear stressed. Even in the interview, the search committee members expressed their intention that whomever they gave the position to would be a strong candidate for tenure. Every interaction at Pemberley College during the interview was a positive sign to Maryanne: achievable research expectations, supportive department, and a manageable job. But she misjudged her roll of the dice. “I think I maybe didn’t factor in how much higher the teaching expectations are. And also, the fact that actually their research expectations—they’re actually there, they just are not as up front.” The position was much more demanding than Maryanne anticipated.

### **The Plummet**

In her first semester, Maryanne juggled two new courses with taking care of two young children. She was able to keep up with her work during the week, but every

weekend she found herself in the same position: feeling overwhelmed on a Sunday night, convinced she was either failing as a professor or a parent. Maryanne was constantly sliding down time management chutes as she progressed in her tenure-track appointment. While she led discussion sections in graduate school, the demands on her time seemed more manageable back then and the pressure was less intense. “I think I didn’t feel secure enough to go in without having read the chapter with detailed notes.” Maryanne could not constrain her job, but her job had the ability to constrain her.

Service and research also restricted Maryanne’s limited time. Unlike other liberal arts college faculty in this study, Maryanne was extensively involved in service during her first year and responsible for organizing a high-profile panel during commencement. One of the esteemed panelists dropped out at the last minute, and the spike in stress crashed Maryanne’s spirit. She only had one paper coming out of her dissertation that was submitted for publication and rejected. Over the next three years, Maryanne tried to get some projects moving forward, but she did not feel like she was advancing her research. In her second year she joined a peer accountability group, which had an adverse effect on her morale because she did not feel like she was accomplishing as much as her colleagues. By her third year, Maryanne enrolled in a national faculty development program that provided structures she deeply needed: a schedule for writing and built-in time to reflect on what was holding her back. Maryanne finished the program feeling like she had a better sense of what she needed to do. By her fourth year, she was able to take a research leave to dedicate time to her scholarship and writing, but she struggled with her focus. While she experienced some highs—spending less time on teaching preparation



and more time on writing—she overwhelmingly felt like she was in a perpetual nadir when it came to managing her work.

### **The Seesaw**

When Maryanne and I last spoke, she was having problems with one of her collaborators. They had recently engaged in a tense email exchange about authorship. Her collaborator, a male colleague who had left academia for a research position, did not have the same tenure pressures Maryanne was facing. Her frustration with him stemmed from their very different communication styles and her lack of control over the project, leaving its progress more up to chance than she would like. He was unresponsive to her emails for months, so she took it upon herself to do the data analysis and write up the findings. When she sent her work to him for review, he responded by saying that the analysis was wrong and they would have to go about it in a different way. She responded by suggesting that she write the manuscript herself, since she had done most of the work and she needed this paper to be read and reviewed. “I thought maybe I just wouldn’t hear back from him, but he wrote back being like, ‘I’m not comfortable with you solo-authoring it. I really want to do this a different way.’” He offered to do another round of analysis and revise some of the text to make it stronger. Maryanne agreed to try it his way. “I’m just trying to be really Buddhist and Zen about it. I just tried to acknowledge that I don’t have perfect control and I can’t get him to follow my deadlines.” Her response to the conflict was in fact, the only thing she could control about the situation.

Maryanne’s experience with research collaborations vacillated between provoking and productive. Unlike Emma, another Pemberley College faculty member in the social sciences, Maryanne’s department values collaborative work. “I think it’s viewed upon

positively because people realize liberal arts—you need a network and you need resources from other people.” Luckily, Maryanne’s first collaboration with a female colleague in her department was encouraging and fruitful. “We just work together really well, so it was really seamless. There was a lot of iterating on our model and our technical side that we integrated really well.” Maryanne describes the collaboration as “no drama” and that she grew as a researcher through this project by learning a new methodology. In a seemingly random turn of events, Maryanne began another collaboration with a female academic in Europe, all thanks to one of Maryanne’s students who was doing an internship with her new collaborator and mentioned Maryanne’s work. “She [collaborator] was an editor at the journal where one of my papers got published and she wanted to do something related to that.” Maryanne was shocked and pleased to be scouted out in such a way from someone so prestigious. “I think it’s a karmic balance or something.”

Maryanne’s record with research collaborations was more variable than her experience with time management. She had some tumbles with one collaborator who approaches work very differently than her, but for the most part, her joint projects are driving her research career and knowledge of the field to new places. Generally, Maryanne’s collaborations have come to her: one colleague was already in her department at Pemberley College, other faculty have contacted Maryanne directly after seeing her present at conferences, and her most recent partnership was brokered by a student. Accordingly, Maryanne’s environment plays a leading role in the formation of these research relationships.

## The Ascent

Friday classes were always Maryanne's favorite because she could just take a seat and let her students run the show. Each week, a group of sophomores gave presentations on the content and led the discussion. The students were pleased with the format and Maryanne was pleased that she could "come in and just sit down and chill out." She enjoyed watching her students engage in the content and connect it to their own experiences. While course preparation always appeared to be more of a "chute" to Maryanne during the first few years, the in-class aspects of the job were a rewarding experience; teaching was always a ladder.

Maryanne admitted that she was not able to give up that control over her class in her first year. She commented, "I didn't have any of this "have the students teach our class" thing." However, with time, Maryanne gained confidence in her ability to lead a class and eventually noticed that she spent less time on teaching preparation. "One of the classes I taught [in the first year], I taught that three times in a row. By the third time, my prep time was like nothing 'cause I had all the lecture notes and the problem sets.

Pemberley College students, in Maryanne's opinion, are motivated and hardworking. In turn, her students have judged Maryanne to be very clear, nice, and full of energy. Her evaluations have always been strong, which has furthered developed her self-confidence as a teacher. She is comfortable with her classes, both in content and instruction. "I think the main reason that I like teaching is just that it feels like a really good way to connect to people. I think a lot of it is the relationship with the students." The positive reinforcement Maryanne has received from her students has increased her dedication to them.

## **Taking a Chance**

Despite having some ladders in her game, Maryanne classified her first four years at Pemberley College as a struggle:

I think what would be a good way of describing it is: new problems arose it would be like, ‘Okay, I’m now able to confidently teach the two classes, but now, yikes, I have a research project and I’m figuring out how to deal with that.

Once Maryanne felt like she had a handle on some aspect of her work, a new challenge would present itself and she would labor over how to manage it. “There’s been times in the last year where I’d say things like, ‘It’s mathematically not possible for me to get tenure.’” Despite Maryanne’s actions, every turn felt like a chute.

And yet currently, Maryanne has a much more positive view of her career. What changed? By the end of her fourth year, Maryanne decided to disclose a chronic health issue to her department chair and colleagues. She took a chance on her environment and the result was auspicious. She was able to switch to part-time work until her tenure review and added a year to her probationary period. She now teaches one course each semester, focuses on her research, and has minimal advising and service responsibilities.

The switch has substantially changed her outlook on life and work. With a contained schedule, Maryanne can prioritize her two children and husband and look at her faculty position as more of a 9-5 job. She checks her email once a day so she can maintain focus and stay organized on her important tasks. Teaching continues to be one of her strengths and she feels like her research is moving at a pace that will position her well for tenure. She also feels in more control over how she reacts to any future challenges:

I just read this yoga quote that I’m super into that I think is perfect for pre-tenure faculty, which is, “Self-possessed and resolute. Act without thoughts of results.

Open to success or failure. This equanimity is yoga.” I just love that, because it’s just—go for it, and don’t be worrying about it all.

After she shared the information about her health condition and took back her life with a part-time schedule, Maryanne felt a sense of liberation.

*Chutes and Ladders* is a game of chance, and players often have little control over how they can advance. There are few opportunities to take preemptive action. However, players do have control over how they react to the ups and downs of the game. By her fifth year, Maryanne was able to react to the challenges with intentionality and self-reflection; but for so many years, she only focused on the negative aspects of her job. Good things may have happened to her—she may have come across a ladder or two—but she was too anxious to notice them (see Figure 7). Today, Maryanne actively looks for the good things. “I used to spend a lot of time worrying. My default mental state would be worrying about the list of things that I have to do that day.” She would question how she would get it all done. With her newfound time, Maryanne has embraced mindfulness. “I’ve retrained my brain to focus on the present moment and on positive things.” With her new approach to work, Maryanne accepts that she may confront a chute in the future, but she will always be looking for a ladder.

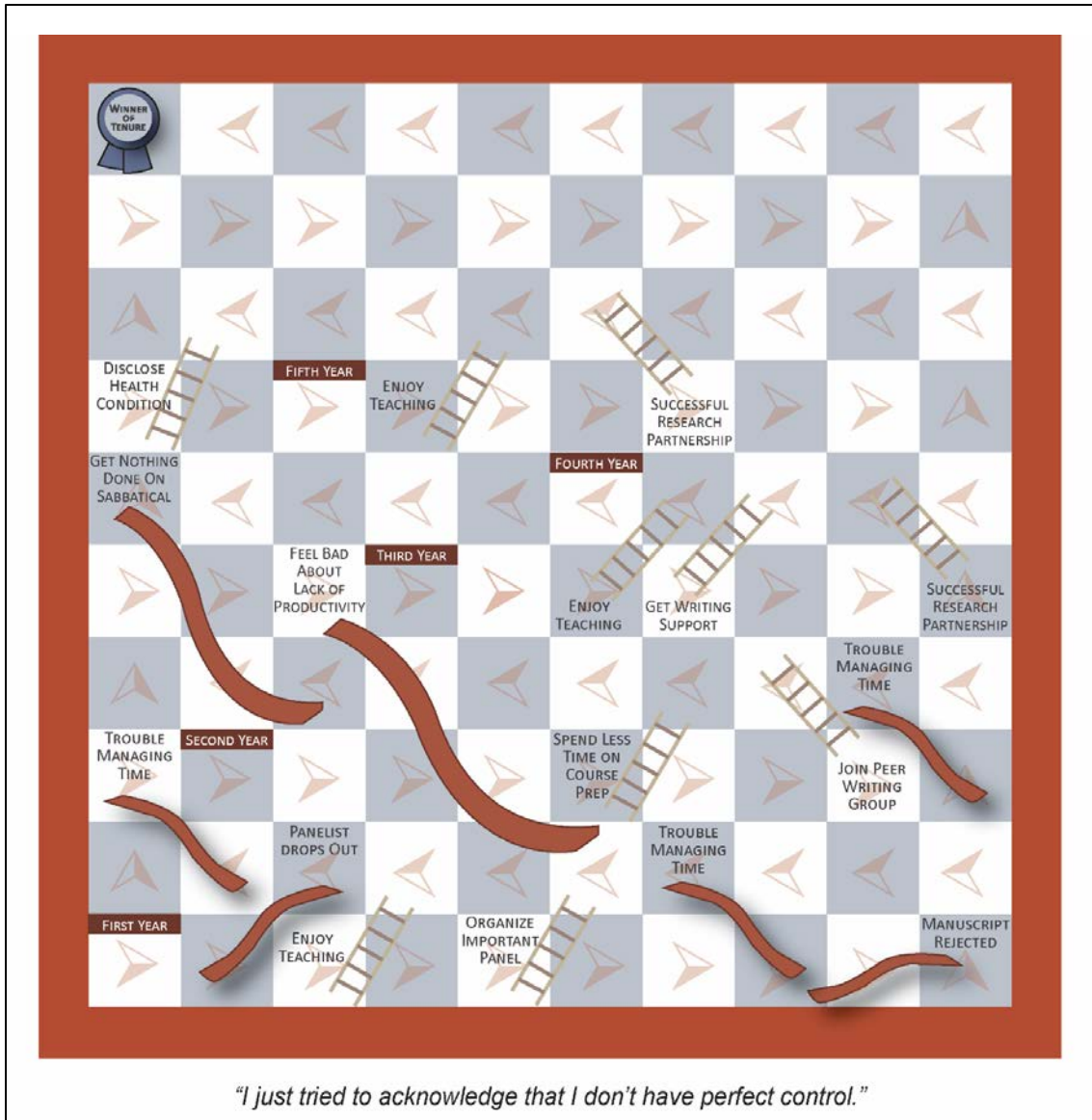


Figure 7. Maryanne's *Chutes and Ladders* approach to tenure.

### Jane's Cranium Approach

Jane was teaching in the basement of an old building when the lights suddenly cut out and the space went pitch black. The room had no windows, but the emergency lights out in the hallway provided a tiny bit of light. While the class waited for the power to return, a student decided to take the opportunity to ask Jane why she became a faculty member in STEM. The blackout gave space to Jane's vulnerability:

Because it was dark, it was easy for me to sort of express myself and I felt like it was a really formative moment in my ability to sort of help students. Part of that was because, one student in particular, had told me about a difficult situation she was dealing with related to being a woman and she later told me it meant so much to her that I shared my own experiences.

Jane has found she always had the ability to effortlessly form relationships with her students through teaching. She has fun, keeps it light and authentic, and has always viewed herself and her students as a team.

Jane approaches her work like she is playing *Cranium*, a game in which teams of players respond to a series prompts depending on where they land on the board. If players land on a “Star Performer” space, they must act out prompts. “Data Head” spaces force a team to answer trivia questions. Teams must draw or sculpt when they land on a “Creative Cat” space or unscramble messages and solve word puzzles if they land on a “Word Worm” space. Players on a team have the opportunity to find a category in which they excel: one player may be great with remembering facts and excel at Data Head challenges, while another is a natural artist and prefers to take the lead on a “Creative Cat” task. While the overall objective of the game is to make it around the board to the finish, an underlying goal is to tap into the strengths of the people on the team in order to progress to the end.

### **Star Performer**

Teaching has always been an area where Jane shines—even in the darkness of a basement classroom. Jane talks about having a knack for connecting with her students. “I don’t mean that in an arrogant way. I can teach the same set of students as somebody else my age, my gender, and I can connect with them in a way my colleagues can’t.” As an undergraduate at a liberal arts college, she had a professor who was a mentor and she

models her teaching approach after him. “He was my inspiration. I saw how much he loved what he did and I think that affected me and how much I enjoyed it.”

Despite being a faculty member in a STEM department known for its innovative teaching, Jane chooses to use a lecture format for her courses. She experimented with different techniques like recording her lectures and flipping her classroom, but she found that her traditional approach worked best for her. Her students responded well to Jane’s style and continue to give her positive teaching evaluations. She is “goofy in class” and engages her students in the content. She was always comfortable delivering the material—the performative aspects of teaching—but she spent most of her time in the early years preparing for class and grading. Jane prioritized her teaching during her first three years at Pemberley College because it was the aspect of her job that brought her sincere satisfaction; she was a “star performer.”

Her students find her very approachable, which can mean that they are a little too casual. She commented, “They also see me as their best friend. They do things to me or say things to me that they would never do to my older colleagues.” In some ways, they are like her teammates in the classroom and they draw upon each other. And like most group activities, Jane does not want to disappoint her team. “I hate grading more than anything and I hate giving bad grades to students. It’s really hard for me because I feel like it’s my fault.” Jane is an empathetic partner in her students’ learning; she interprets her students’ struggle as failing her team.

### **Data Head**

Jane wanted to be a professor at a liberal arts college because she liked the balance between teaching and research. She knew she didn’t want to be in her office



“stressing out about grant money.” Graduate school was challenging for Jane: she was getting her doctorate in a field slightly different from her undergraduate degree. Her advisor was pre-tenure and intense, and Jane was his only female graduate student. While they had awkward interactions in the beginning, their relationship was ultimately a positive influence in Jane’s life. She explained:

I think my assumption—and I could be totally wrong on this—was that he wasn't quite sure how to handle a female at first, because I was his first ever. He used to talk to the other grad students as if he were ... He would be talking to me, but he'd be looking at somebody else. It was awkward at first, but then towards the end he was like my biggest champion. He spent a lot of extra time with me training me to continue on in academia.

Today, Jane feels like she is a strong teacher and researcher, but she chooses to let teaching take up more of her time because it is a role that is more rewarding.

When Jane started her position at Pemberley College, she assumed that undergraduate students would be effective research assistants. She was wrong. After spending her first summer on her research, she realized that her students did not have the knowledge to engage in the type of research Jane does:

Particularly for my work, there's a lot of recognizing what good images look like, and they just don't have the experience to see that. So, they can do the experiment, but to get publication quality data takes a practiced eye. I felt like I had to go back and do everything.

In a game of *Cranium*, a player may be really strong with executing a task—acting out a charade or drawing a picture—but there needs to be synergy across the team so the other players can participate. Jane believed that having students on her “teaching team” was effective, and she could replicate the success with a student-professor research team. Once she understood that students were not viable research partners, Jane felt guilty about having to turn students away who wanted to work with her. “The number of

students who want to do research with me is untenable for me. Every time I see an email with the subject title, 'Interested in research.' I just cringe because I hate saying no."

Jane was the only liberal arts college faculty member who was told an explicit number of expected publications for tenure. She elaborated, "They've [personnel committee] always told me at least two. I'm aiming for two and if I can get three, awesome, but I would feel comfortable going up for tenure with two. My research requires more of my time than other people's does." After returning from parental leave in her fourth year, Jane was able to publish one research paper with collaborators. Knowing that she needs one more publication before her tenure review, she reached out to colleagues in other departments at Pemberley College because they had the knowledge and expertise to engage in her research; while she was a "star performer" in the classroom, she knew she was going to need the help of other "data heads" in order to publish. Jane needed to diversify her team. She talked positively about the collaboration and about the boundaries she had to set with her students so she could prioritize her research:

I think I'm feeling incrementally better than I did maybe in October. Especially now because I've sort of set myself up well for limiting the number of students I have this summer, making sure that I have the time to do the work myself so that I have the data and get the papers done.

When we last spoke, Jane was seven months pregnant with her second child. Jane's plan was to use the months leading up to the birth to work on data collection and analysis, so she could potentially write the manuscript while she is on leave.

### **Club Cranium**

Because of its team structure and amusing obstacles, competition is not a core component of *Cranium*. Yet one of the interesting twists in the game is when a team

lands on a “Club Cranium” space on the board, prompting all of the teams to compete against each other on the same activity. The atmosphere changes from congenial to contentious. While Jane does not consider the majority of her colleagues to be difficult, there has been one faculty member who has consistently challenged her as a teacher, increasing the level of competition in Jane’s job.

One interesting aspect of her department’s curriculum is that two faculty members co-teach an introductory course every fall. Each faculty member has his or her own section, the content is the same but the way it is taught is separate, and the two professors co-write the exams. When Jane was in her first year at Pemberley College, she taught this course with a male colleague who was two years ahead of her. She describes him as an intense person with very strong views. When I first spoke with her in the fall, she told me about her latest interaction with him in composing the first exam:

I just never felt like I was able to have my own say. For example, on this last exam we gave, he wrote half of it I wrote half of it. He didn't like the questions I wrote and so he would sort of rewrite them. Really in my first year I felt very little ability to push back on that, and even this year I didn't push back like I should've. We gave the exam and it was much more tailored to what he had taught. Even though we teach the same content, we teach it differently, emphasize different points and so my students did really poorly on it. I feel an incredible amount of guilt for that and frustration, irritation with myself for not standing my ground more.

Jane said she was going to do a better job advocating for her questions and her students on the next exam. When I followed up with her the following spring, she told me that the process went better. She held her position, despite the fact that he continued to challenge the questions she wrote. “I still think I could have done more. I still feel nervous and—I’m not as good as the colleague I teach with, and so I feel very uncomfortable sort of pushing back against his views.” Jane admitted that this particular colleague has been

recognized for his research in the department; his reputation adds to her discomfort. She elaborated, “He’s been wildly successful in research and I feel a little bit, because I’m two years behind, like I’m walking in his shadow.”

*Cranium* is typically a lighthearted game in which most people can boost their egos by engaging in tasks where they naturally excel. For these reasons, *Cranium* is particularly great for individuals who dislike the rivalry that comes with most other games. The Club *Cranium* obstacle has the potential to amplify the carefree fun or breed competition among teams. These diverging approaches appear in the situation of Jane’s co-taught course. She and her colleague could have used a cooperative method with this task; unfortunately, her colleague chose to be antagonistic in his approach. Fortunately for Jane, her method of dealing with a Club *Cranium* improved with time because she gained the self-confidence to stand by her opinions.

### **Creative Cat**

Players who love the spotlight relish *Cranium*; they have no problem humming a song, miming a famous actor, or guessing wildly at clues. But the game is not for the humble or shy. When a player who may be uncomfortable with drawing picks a Creative Cat card, inevitably the response is, “I’m not a good artist,” and the player quickly passes off the challenge to another teammate. Jane, while feeling completely comfortable with her students in the classroom, has the opposite response when she must express herself to her colleagues. “I suffer intensely from imposter syndrome, and I just feel like I’m not good enough to be here and it’s a fluke that I’m here.” Jane’s colleagues have consistently told her that they want to hear her voice more in meetings, but she is uncomfortable with feeling so exposed:

My ideas are never gonna be as good as my colleagues. I take disagreement personally sometimes, and I'm working really hard to remember that differences in opinion are good. But it's really hard for me when they don't agree. That tends to shut me down for a while.

Jane is working on trusting herself and her views. And part of that self-reflection depends on Jane's embracing of discomfort.

Luckily, she has colleagues whom she considers friends and two different department chairs over the duration of her appointment who have been incredibly supportive by expressing their desire to give her tenure. "I felt very much like I can ask them anything. I will be taking an extension on my clock for maternity leave and I feel no pressure or criticism for that." Sometimes Jane admits that she should have done more with her research and compares her research trajectory with those of her male peers. Recently, Jane has shown some self-compassion with regards to her productivity. She admits that having her first child halfway through her probationary period was harder than she expected:

My male colleagues don't have to deal with the mental health side of managing pregnancy and postpartum stuff and that was hard for me. I would say hard work and self-care have been really important. Getting my first paper out was ... I don't think anyone in my department will ever know how hard, psychologically it was for me, but I did what I needed to do to get it done.

And in the same breath, Jane acknowledge how satisfying it was to get that publication. The entire experience—from collecting and analyzing the data, to having her first child in the middle of the research process, and subsequently finding time to raise her son while writing her findings for publication, gave her a strong sense of resiliency. She commented, "I've written, from grad school, much better papers. But this one a personal struggle for me, so getting it done and out was a really gratifying moment."

## Word Worm

Prioritizing life outside of work has contributed to Jane's overall happiness and job satisfaction. Like a Word Worm challenge, it took Jane some time to unscramble this important message. In the beginning of her appointment, she was working all the time preparing for her courses. When she had her first child in her fourth year, she suddenly felt the pressure of finding time to get everything done. When she returned from parental leave and was teaching a full course load, she said she was "somehow making it work" but that she felt like she was not "pulling her weight at home." As the year went by, and Jane decided to have a second child, she has eased up on putting so much pressure on herself to be perfect.

Like playing a game of *Cranium*, she tries to find fun where she can. If she has spare minutes in her schedule she will get in a workout, and she spends time with her husband and family as much as she can:

I feel the ability to find a work/life balance. A lot people, junior colleagues, say all they do is work. There's a small part of me that is like, "Am I doing something wrong?" But I just feel like I get one shot at this. I want to enjoy it. I want to spend time with my kid.

For Jane, the important messages are not around teaching evaluations or research publications, but on her family. "If I don't get the big, prestigious grants, there is a 24 hour period in which I cry, it really is terrible, but I always go home to a wonderful family, a wonderful husband who supports me and that's okay."

In most games, there is always a pressure to win, and that pressure—the extrinsic motivator—can drive some individuals. Other players can understand the elation in winning, but actually see delight in the process of the game. *Cranium* is the type of game where joy can be found in the act of winning and through the process of trying to win.

Jane’s approach to her work has been to find the areas where she finds delight and increasing the opportunities to stay in those spaces (see Figure 8). She finds her joy with the process: supporting her students, watching them grow, and spending time in her lab. The same can be said about her satisfaction with the process of raising a family: supporting her children, watching them grow, and spending time with her husband. Jane wants to be a strong team player; she does not want to let anyone down, including her students, her colleagues, or her family. But she realizes that in order to be a happy team member, she needs to keep engaging in the activities that bring her fulfillment.

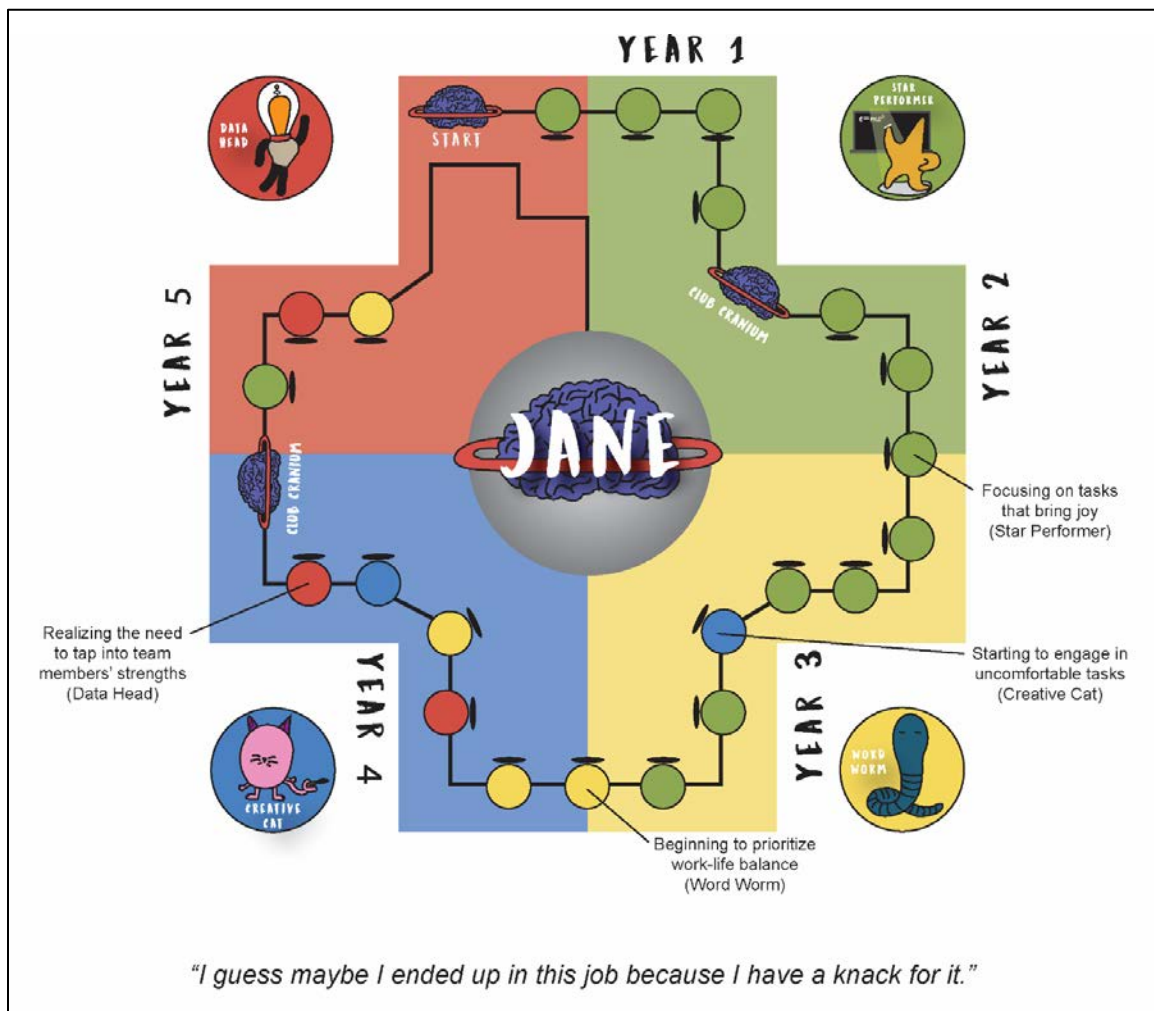


Figure 8. Jane’s Cranium approach to tenure.

### **Elizabeth's *Settlers of Catan* Approach**

Elizabeth needed a win while she was on research leave. She had three months to gather interview data in North Africa and nothing was going the way she planned. Most faculty would have been discouraged by the situation, but not Elizabeth. “When shit hits the fan, I know how to start moving fast. I’m not ashamed to ask for help. I know how to make lemonade out of lemons.” She went to a conference in the region and met someone who was doing similar research. She asked to partner on the project and she was able to get the interview subjects she needed through a different channel. Elizabeth considers herself a creative person and is able to brainstorm solutions to challenges. “You have to be really hyper-aware of all the opportunities that are out there. I tried to do that for myself and my colleagues and for my students. I’m not sitting on my laurels. I’m not expecting any handouts.”

Scanning the environment, acting on openings, and creating new opportunities is how Elizabeth approaches her work. Her process is very similar to playing *Settlers of Catan*, a game with the objective of establishing colonies on the island of Catan (similar to building houses and hotels in *Monopoly*) and amass a certain number of points. Players construct their settlements by spending resources: brick, lumber, wool, grain, and ore. They have access to particular resources depending on where they build their settlements on the game board; in other words, specific environments produce corresponding resources. But players can also trade resources with each other, which means that players need to cooperate in order to advance in the game. To put *Settlers of Catan* in the context of faculty life: accumulating points is similar to publishing manuscripts, obtaining grants,



and receiving strong teaching evaluations, and faculty must build structures by developing networks or acquiring resources in order to increase their points.

### **Understanding the Terrain**

The environment or game space plays a major role in *Settlers of Catan*, as particular terrain creates opportunities for players to receive the associated resources. Prior to her appointment at Pemberley College, Elizabeth was a faculty member in a social sciences department at a research university in the western region of the United States. Overall, her view of the three years she spent at the university was positive:

I wound up really, really loving it. I felt really supported and I really liked everybody there. Hands down, they do the best orientation of junior faculty I've ever experienced or heard of. It's a really good department. Whenever crap happened, somebody had my back. We even associated with each other outside of the department too. Still, I have three or four people who are my closest friends.

Elizabeth spent much of her time on service. She led a graduate student group and hosted workshops to help prepare them for careers in academia. Her department was understaffed and they had a high attrition rate with faculty. By the time Elizabeth left the university, she had designed and taught seven different classes because of the limited number of instructors. "There wasn't a lot of time for me to actually learn how to teach a course. My reviews weren't that good for a lot of my courses because I would teach it once, and then I'd have to teach another course." Between committee work, student advising, and teaching, Elizabeth was not allocating any time to her research. While she had some projects in progress, she was not publishing as much as she should have at a research university.

Despite the lack of resources and time, Elizabeth was really happy at this institution. It was not until a colleague, whom she considered a mentor, put her in a

difficult situation concerning a graduate student that Elizabeth began looking for new jobs. “I thought they had gone back on their word in terms of how we had scheduled research assistant shifts and teaching schedules.” In *Settlers of Catan*, players start the game by choosing a space on the board to begin building their settlement, where they establish roads and buildings. Other players can potentially block the building of their opponents’ settlements by laying down their own roads. Elizabeth’s experience with her colleague was like someone blocking her settlement; her colleague, focused on moving her own agenda forward, took away some of Elizabeth’s power over her own work.

Elizabeth decided to abandon her initial settlement at the research university and move to new terrain. In retrospect, she admits this was a rash decision. She landed at Pemberley College, a liberal arts institution with dramatically more resources, including a better paycheck. She remarked, “We had salary issues at [the research university] too. There was faculty compression, all sorts of other stuff. It was a lot more money, to be honest. [Pemberley College] paid me almost close to \$20,000 to \$30,000 more.” And yet, Elizabeth had trouble adapting to this new environment. “I felt it was really rarefied and just kind of stuffy and stuck up and really elite. Honestly, I don’t know what I was thinking—of course it was.” She liked the colleagues in her department, but since so many of them were full professors, she felt like they were in different point in their lives that made it harder for her to connect. “People were nice, but I think that their experience had been to be more hands off, and I think I just needed more hands-on mentorship, because it really was a complete shift from where I’d been before, from going to a public university to a liberal arts college.” Her first chair was pretty absent and distracted and Elizabeth feels like she floundered the first year. Her second chair, who assumed the role

in Elizabeth's second year, was drastically different and made sure to give Elizabeth advice on her trajectory.

Unlike her senior colleagues at her previous institution, her Pemberley College colleagues were hardworking and assumed more service obligations so the early-career faculty could concentrate on their research. They also were adamant about making sure Elizabeth was on the right track for tenure. She was assigned two teaching mentors through Pemberley College's teaching center, one of whom took an active role in reviewing her teaching evaluations and mid-tenure materials and providing feedback. By the time Elizabeth had her mid-tenure review, which went very well, she had a greater sense of belonging in the department. She finally had friends in the area, though it took her longer to make them than at her first institution. "It was kind of a learning process, but I'm really glad that, at some point, I decided to embrace it instead of just working against it." Once Elizabeth felt like she understood her surroundings and the possibilities it presented, she seized on them and began to build her settlement.

### **Hustling Resources**

In *Settlers of Catan*, spending resources like they are currency helps to build settlements and amass more points. Often times, a player needs to trade resources with other players in order to advance in the game. Finding and bartering resources—collaborating—is what Elizabeth does in order to be successful; she calls this process hustling. Take Elizabeth's experience on her research leave. When she could not generate enough interview participants on her own, she turned to colleagues she met at a nearby conference and collaborated with them to generate enough data for both of their research

projects. On the other hand, some partnerships can result in tension, as if Elizabeth traded her resources and got stuck with a rotten deal:

I had a really rough year on this co-authored project, which is my first book. Part of it was working with somebody else. The other thing was because I was collaborating with three of my really close friends, and one of them was my closest friend, and we had issues over authorship. The dynamic was not good.

Yet Elizabeth has engaged in other fruitful collaborations. She talks about putting “a premium on collegiality” and credits her collaborations as the key to her success, like they are roads to many different research ideas. She has senior mentors outside of Pemberley College who share opportunities for Elizabeth to present her research and expand her network. She is part of a separate peer cohort of social science scholars in the New England area who periodically gather to read and give feedback on working papers. “To be honest, it’s a model of how this should be done across fields.” Elizabeth knows these opportunities would not have been available to her at her first institution; the resources at Pemberley College have facilitated the growth of her network.

Finally, Elizabeth has found ways to collaborate with her students on research that advances both of their goals. She encourages them to look into research projects that she does not have time to explore and asks them to write literature reviews and gather preliminary data. The end goal is a potential publication. Unlike other liberal arts faculty I spoke with for this study, Elizabeth really enjoys engaging students in research. “Why wouldn't I want to work with students? They're inquisitive. They're interested. My attitude really is I feel like most people rise to the challenge.”

## **The Longest Road**

Building the longest road in a game of *Settlers of Catan* is one way for a player to earn extra points. Elizabeth's longest road is her pipeline of research. She intends for this long-term plan for publications to hopefully lead to a successful tenure review:

I feel like I have a real research agenda. I feel like I got one big project out of the way successfully. The book is coming out. [My collaborators and I have] two articles that are out in respectable presses. I've got two other articles that are out, and right now, I'm sitting here and planning out what I'm going to do over the next three years to really recalibrate my scholarship.

Elizabeth formed this research vision while she was participating in a writing development program, which held her accountable to daily writing, setting goals, and having check-in meetings on her weekly progress with other early-career faculty members across the country. Since the program ended ten months ago, Elizabeth keeps in contact with this group, whom she calls her "boot camp peeps" and they have been holding each other responsible for their writing habits. "I consider them my mentors." Elizabeth has laid down her road and has a vision for where it needs to expand.

## **Developing the Settlement**

Elizabeth decided to intentionally put time towards to developing her teaching skills when she arrived at Pemberley College. At her first institution she acknowledges she was "half-assing it" and was told in her annual reviews that she needed to work on her teaching. She confronted a similar obstacle at Pemberley College; her students gave her some truly critical reviews in her first few years. "I had some of the faculty take me aside and say, 'Stop offering to teach every course we have on the roster. Just teach these six courses and get good at them.'" Elizabeth's inclination to pitch in and help out is a behavior she exhibited at her previous institution, where she needed to fulfill the teaching

needs of an under-resourced department. Conversely, at the well-endowed Pemberley College, Elizabeth had the time and support to dedicate towards improving as a teacher.

Because Elizabeth's colleagues stepped forward and took on more service in the department, she finally had the time to sit down and reflect on her performance:

In my second and in my third year, I actually started going to workshops. I started applying for different kinds of grants to actually go to teaching workshops to improve my craft. I actually starting thinking about teaching as a craft.

She began taking notes and organizing her ideas on how to redesign her courses for the next semester. She also took a step back and thought about how her courses and her teaching impact her students. "I really like it when we have some kind of an epiphany in class and the students are like, 'Oh, my God. This is so cool. This is so interesting.' I'm excited that I get to rock somebody's world." Elizabeth feels like she is a better teacher because she used the resources available at Pemberley College: talking with peers, attending workshops, and applying for teaching development grants.

### **Good Sportsmanship**

There may be only one winner in *Settlers of Catan*, but a player cannot reach victory without help and assistance from others. Good sportsmanship, fairness, and generosity, are core tenets of the game. Elizabeth applies a similar ethos to being a faculty member. "I think you reap what you sow. I'm a pretty nice person. I help other people out, and it's come back to me in spades." Elizabeth adopted this outlook on academia by watching how senior and early-career scholars behaved. She noted less than collegial behaviors in graduate school. While her primary advisor was nice, most of the other male faculty were hostile to each other. One female faculty member emerged as

Elizabeth's mentor and secondary advisor. "My field is a boys club and a lot of women fall into that trap. So outside of that mentor, everybody else was playing the boys' game."

Elizabeth was an underdog in graduate school. She fell into a career in academia and it was a difficult adjustment; she did not enter her program ready to play the game. "I'm not really a Type A personality. I'm kind of a Type B person. I'm very curious about stuff, but it was really competitive." For a while Elizabeth did not think she was making the right moves. She explained:

I think there's also a really cutthroat environment among the graduate students. On one level, we were all very supportive, and we all still communicate with each other, but another level, there was a lot of secret jealousy and backstabbing. People were taking bets on when I was going to leave or when I was going to get kicked out.

When Elizabeth was awarded a Fulbright and multiple other grants, her perspective on her career and her ability to excel changed. She was the star of her department and her aptitude for playing the game improved.

Over the past seven years, four of which were at Pemberley College, Elizabeth's confidence in her talents as a teacher and researcher increased. While she credits collaboration as a key reason she has been able to accomplish her work, she knows that she can move projects forward without the assistance of others. "You have these horrible imposter syndromes, and I think one of the things that happened, at least when I was on sabbatical, is I realized that I'm capable of doing these things alone. I just choose not to."

Elizabeth struggled her first few years at Pemberley College, not really understanding the new terrain and how she could see herself fitting in it. Once she decided to actively seek advice and build collaborations, her attitude changed. She settled into her environment, tapped into the resources it offered, and began building roads to

new opportunities in teaching and research (see Figure 9). “Once I decided to be more of an agent within my institution, it made a huge difference.” Elizabeth now feels like she is more of an effective force within the environment.

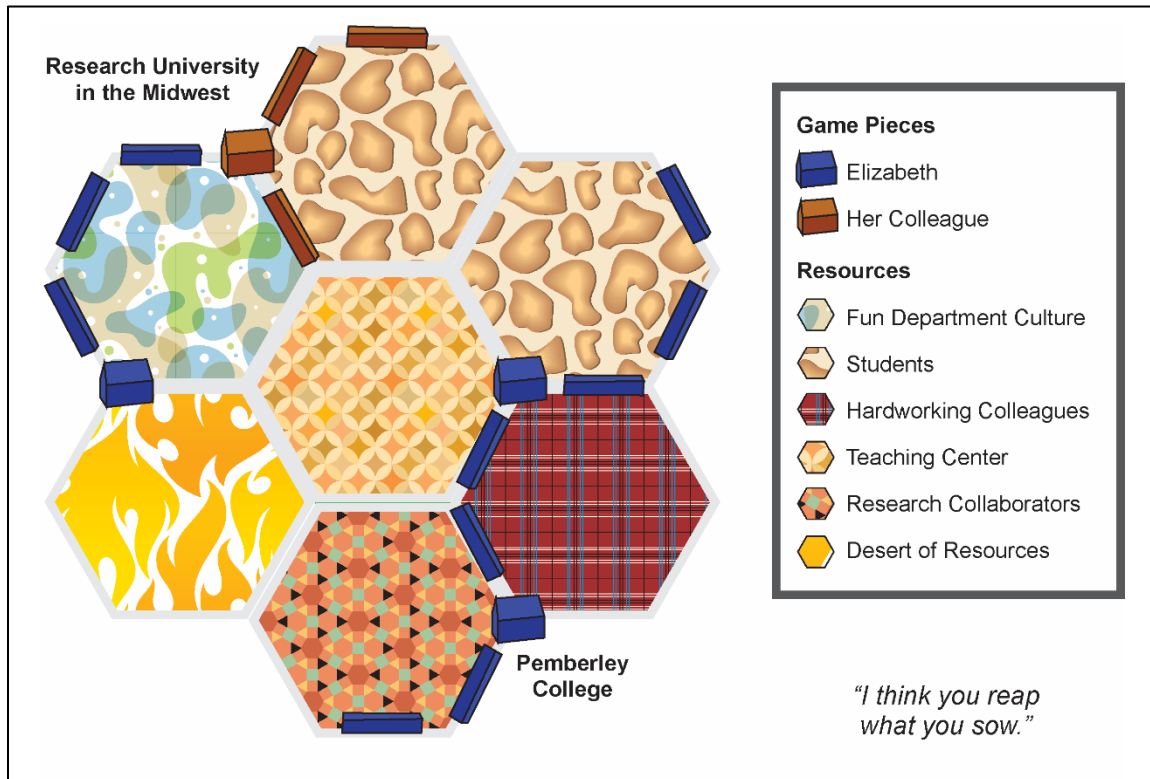


Figure 9. Elizabeth’s *Settlers of Catan* approach to tenure.

### Caroline’s Oregon Trail Approach

Caroline needed a room with a lock for which only she had the key. She was in her second year at Highbury University and desperately trying to get her research program started. She was one step away from obtaining a large restricted dataset from the federal government, but she needed to confirm that she had a secure location to store the information. “Every building here, maintenance has a key to at the end of the night, and so it was like almost impossible.” She trekked across the campus looking for help, tapping into the network she was just beginning to build for herself on campus. At that



time, Caroline was a research fellow at one of the university's institutes and she was able to get one of the institute staff members to rekey a room for her during the year of her fellowship.

In the computer game *Oregon Trail*, the “wagon leader” must guide her family of settlers across the trail—from Missouri to Oregon—stopping at landmarks along the way. Players begin the game with an occupation and supplies, and as they embark on their travel they face various challenges, which they overcome by drawing on their skills and resources. At its core, *Oregon Trail* is a game about pacing, using resources purposefully, choosing the right action to take at a particular crossroad, and keeping the family healthy. Caroline employs these same strategies in her approach to achieving tenure.

### **Set Up the Game**

Before a player sets off on her journey on the *Oregon Trail*, she must make particular decisions at the onset that will set her up for success: choosing an occupation and a pace. Caroline was unsure about a career in academia. She did not finish her first graduate program at a top tier Ivy League institution and left with a Master's degree in the social sciences and joined the corporate workforce for a few years. “I don't believe I was ready to enter a PhD program as far as being able to advocate for myself. Professors aren't going to come to you like they might have as an undergrad. I wasn't ready to do that.” Caroline did not form connections with her graduate faculty and could not find someone who would mentor her, so she left. Five years later, she was encouraged by a professor she met as an undergrad to return to graduate school. “He was like, ‘You should come back to doing research. This field needs someone with your background.’” She eventually applied to a graduate program at the institution where this professor

worked and he became her advisor. This was Caroline's first critical decision that would set her up for the game.

Caroline sought out other allies and made connections with two female early-career faculty in her graduate program. She became their research assistant and has continued to co-author publications with them. "Through them, I think I saw some of the stresses. But I also saw—they had this great working relationship where they were able to support each other." These young mentors modeled resiliency to Caroline. She saw their frustrations with senior faculty, demands on their time, and the pressures to find funding. But she also witnessed their joys: getting a paper published or a grant awarded.

Caroline's second critical decision was selecting a favorable environment for her journey to tenure. She was particularly discerning on the location of her job, wanting to stay close to family who help her and her husband raise their two young children. She chose Highbury University because her job would be a joint position between departments in the humanities and the social sciences. She viewed both departments as progressive and non-traditional. "I was like, this is where I want to be. It seemed liked people were happy to be working with each other. The two departments like each other." Caroline has always felt like her colleagues were a source of help, like trail guides in her journey to understand the terrain of the departments, the institution, and the students. They gave her advice on how to handle service requests and managing teaching assistants. And while she has had two different chairs during her five years at the university, both have been very open and supportive.

The final decision Caroline made was setting a steady pace over the course of her probationary period. She knew that moving at a grueling pace would run the risk of

expending too much energy at the start, but traveling too slow could mean that she would not advance as far as she needed to by her tenure review. Caroline sensed that both extremes increase the chances of losing the game:

For me, it's a lot of just putting one foot in front of the other. There is some larger plan in work, but most days it's just like, 'Okay, get to the next thing. What's the next thing? What's the next thing?'

Caroline certainly feels pressure to successfully reach the finish, but she knows that keeping to a steady tempo makes the journey manageable, and keeps her sane while handling so many responsibilities between her work life and family life.

### **Locate Resources**

Caroline never had the opportunity to teach in graduate school; her first semester at Highbury University was the first time she assumed the role of instructor. Luckily, she was offered a course release and was only tasked with teaching a small seminar focused on her research. At first glance, the option to teach what she researches should have felt like an easy win for Caroline. But she soon found herself spending an exorbitant amount of time preparing each week because she had such high expectations for herself:

Part of it was like just get through it. Don't get sort of panned in your reviews so, but also, I mean I wanted to enjoy it. The course I was teaching were related to my research and fun, right? So it was like, "Enjoy talking with students about these issues because these are things you like to study." So I think that might've even made it more filled with anxiety. If I were just teaching like an intro, it kind of would've been like, 'Come up with interesting ways to convey the information,' but it's not like, "This is your work; you want them to be interested in it."

One of Caroline's goals was to appreciate her teaching experience—she wanted to reach this landmark. To get there, she set out to acquire resources by participating in teaching development programs. She decided to meet with the university's teaching center staff to get advice:

It's kind of a service to my students for me to get better. So, rather than spinning my wheels and saying, "How should I come up with creative ways to introduce this topic?" Well, why not talk to the people who know something about it?

Caroline had syllabus consultations and attended workshops to learn new instructional strategies that would engage her students. Her efforts paid off: she consistently receives strong teaching evaluations and has found teaching to be a rewarding experience. She notes that sharing and talking through ideas and concepts with her students is one of her favorite aspects of her job.

But on occasion, Caroline has had taxing interactions with students. One particular experience was an affront to her credentials as a qualified expert in her field, and an offense to her identity as a young, African-American female professor. She acknowledged that for four years at Highbury University, she had heard her colleagues discuss experiences of racial discrimination and microaggressions in the classroom, but she had been fortunate to have never encountered similar situations. She recounted the incident in a course where she was covering academic achievement gaps:

This particular person [a graduate student] wanted to come in with lots of evidence demonstrating that blacks are intellectually inferior. And so, as a professor of this class, I had all of my research evidence that demonstrates the opposite and sort of allowed the class to look at the research evidence. A lot of the students themselves were able to sort of kind of try to address the issue, but I don't think he was convinced.

The graduate student ultimately dropped the class. Caroline admits that she thought she handled the situation well, and that she was able to do so because it happened later on in her appointment and she felt much more comfortable in the classroom and confident in her skills as a teacher.

While teaching may have fueled Caroline's journey as an early-career faculty member, she hit nothing but roadblocks in her research during her first few years. She

took time in her second year to amass resources by applying for a research fellowship at Highbury University. Caroline worked on crafting a grant proposal during her fellowship, and was able to get feedback from a community of peers:

The goal of that program is to help you develop a research proposal for submitting to outside funding sources. The process helps you think through that research. And so the paper that I have under review now was a result of that whole process. Now, I mean I have other proposals kind of stemming off of that, so I think it was like sitting down with people. And the other fellows were all from different disciplines, and so being able to sit down and say like, "This is what I'm thinking of," and getting their opinions like, "What does that even mean? You need to be more specific about this."

Participating in the fellowship gave Caroline a stockpile of future research ideas and she credits the experience with developing smaller research studies from her main project.

Another resource Caroline tapped into were strategic collaborations with colleagues. Her first research collaboration with her two informal mentors from graduate school resulted in a publication in a top-tier journal. Caroline was paired with an external mentor through a National Science Foundation program who told her, "Oh, you're at the same campus as my [doctoral] student. You guys should think about working together on something." So Caroline reached out to her colleague at Highbury University and shared a research idea that came out of her fellowship. The collaboration was productive and they recently submitted a manuscript for publication.

Buying supplies might be one of the most important strategies in *Oregon Trail*, as the type and amount of resources affects the game and what obstacles a player may face. The supplies Caroline bought—teaching and research support—reflects the difference between wants and needs. Caroline did not necessarily need to engage in teaching development, but she wanted to be an effective instructor as a service to her students. Conversely, Caroline needed scholarship support after a difficult first year starting her

research program. For both areas, her resource accumulation was gradual, like the steady pace she set for her journey.

### **Navigate Rough Waters**

Caroline viewed her dual appointment in the humanities and social sciences as a positive aspect of the job. However, the dual position meant Caroline would have service responsibilities for both departments. Her humanities department is lacking in resources and faculty hires; for this reason, Caroline often feels the need to step up and help out, even at the expense of her research:

I think my chairs tried. It's very hard with joint appointments. Even if they are able to say, "Okay. You'll do minimal service in this department," there's two faculty meetings every month. They both told me to feel free to say no. Anything I say no to, one of them is going to end up doing it, and they're already doing the work of like three other people. So I personally feel bad.

Caroline continues to feel pressure to serve in both departments and does more service than most of her peers as a result. In her “mini-tenure” review she was advised to do less. Her response was, “Great. I will try. But how?”

On the way to Oregon, a player will often come upon a river and must make a decision: caulk the wagon and float across or pay to cross. The obvious and safest choice, when supplies are plentiful, is to pay for the ride. But if there are no resources, the player floats the wagon across the river and hopes for the best. Caroline, under-resourced when it comes to service, tries to be strategic with the types of service she does and trusts that it is enough. She realizes that organizing a panel of outside scholars is a networking opportunity, as they could be potential reviewers of her tenure case, but she chooses to engage in activities that demand less of her time:

Even though I described the benefits of doing something like organizing a workshop—so there are benefits—but that, for me, is actually much more

involved than if I were on a search committee or on a grad selection committee. I can sit at home and read applications, right? When you're doing this workshop, I have to be here for all the presentations. I have to be the host of the person during the day. It's much more involved. It's way too heavy for the benefit.

What informs Caroline's decision-making around her service obligation are her children. She lives two hours away from Highbury University, and it is not in her family's best interest for her to be at the university, late in the evening, organizing a workshop panel.

### **Balance the Load**

Hunting is a critical action in *Oregon Trail* because it is a primary way to feed the family. However, there is a limit for how much food a player may bring on the journey, and players can expend unnecessary resources hunting only to leave the food behind. Taking an intentional approach to hunting in which a player only uses as much as she can take, is a proper analogy to instilling balance between work and personal life. For Caroline, having a personal life is critical. Besides her goal to win the game, she also knows she does not want to achieve that objective by ignoring her family:

It's interesting because, like, if somebody asked me if I feel like I have work-life balance, I would probably say no, but it's not because I let life suffer. But because of that, I do feel like I'm not maybe as productive as I could be, right? I'm not of the mind to work myself to death at the expense of family.

Caroline insists on being a presence in her children's lives. Even when work feels stressful and she thinks she should be doing more writing, she prioritizes spending time with her family. "You can let the frustrations of work bleed into your family. So I think it's having a bit of healthy compartmentalization, and part of that helps having the distance between work and home."

At the end of *Oregon Trail*, there is a sense of relief about making it through an arduous journey while maintaining the health of the family. Since Caroline has not yet

come to the finish of her game, she continues on her journey by monitoring her progress like a dashboard (see Figure 10). There were some challenging aspects of her journey, and there were times when more resources would have been helpful. But by setting a pace, finding ways to work with the materials she had, balancing her load, buying supplies when she could, and checking in on her status, she is able to make progress moving forward.

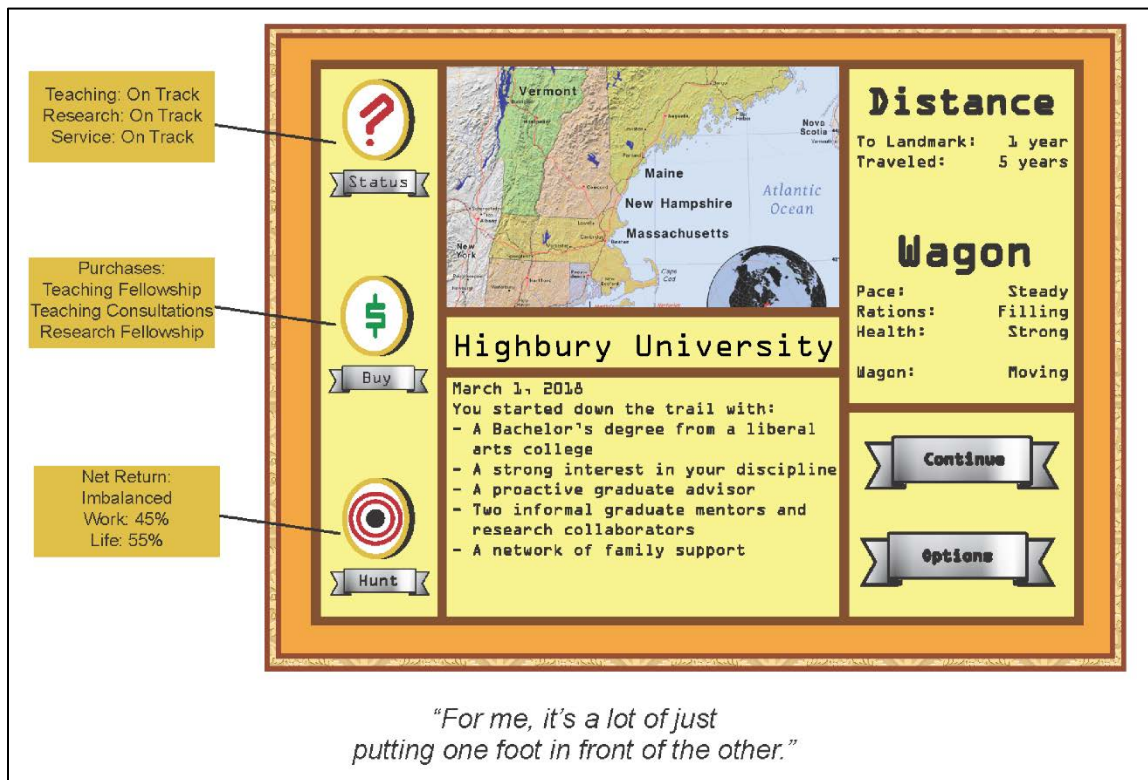


Figure 10. Caroline's Oregon Trail approach to tenure.

### Lydia's Tetris Approach

Lydia's method to writing a book begins with 600 pages of notes. To most people, the sheer amount of text for a publication would be overwhelming, a once exciting endeavor now a burden towering over them. But to Lydia, it is just part of her process: take the information and winnow it down until a master outline emerges for each book chapter. Lydia sorts the notes into categories—she tackles history in the first chapter,



theory in the next, and then moves on to case studies. She puts a star next to particular soundbites that reinforces a major theme, compiles those items into a 60-page document, and then pulls out some of the main points that ultimately becomes her outline for the introduction. “One thing that I really like about my research process is that it’s kind of like a puzzle—trying to figure out how things go together.” Lydia has fine-tuned this fractal process since graduate school and applies it to all of her writing projects.

In the videogame *Tetris*, players must manipulate seven differently-shaped blocks as they fall from the top of the matrix towards the bottom. Once the block hits the bottom of the matrix it remains, forcing blocks to pile up and fill the empty space. The objective is for the player to form a line of blocks across the matrix without any gaps by rotating the falling blocks so they perfectly fit together like a puzzle. When a line forms it disappears and creates more empty space; this action is called “clearing a line.” If a player cannot clear a line, the blocks continue to stack upwards, taking up space and decreasing the amount of time the player has to turn the blocks to make them fit. Lydia has been playing a game of *Tetris* since she arrived at Netherfield College four years ago. She manipulates work tasks to make them fit with her personal life in such ways that they actually complement each other. She constantly clears lines, and in doing so, has amassed more points in the game than most of her fellow early-career faculty.

### **A Hard Drop Approach to Research**

Lydia always enjoyed the writing retreats hosted by Netherfield College and saw their frequency as a quiet cue that administrators expect faculty to conduct research. Unlike some of her peers, she has never struggled to make time for writing. When Lydia goes up for tenure, she will have two books, numerous articles, and various external

grants and fellowships—a successful record for a humanities faculty member. She credits her high work ethic as the key to her success. “So in my department, there are tenured faculty members who’ve never published a book because it hasn’t been stressed at [Netherfield College]—even publishing *a* book, just like, wow.” Lydia has ambition, but she was able to be so prolific because she took advantage of the resources made available to her by the institution: frequent writing retreats and financial support to hire editors, gather information on research trips, or purchase images for her publications.

Lydia arrived at Netherfield College with this work ethic, which she developed during her time in a rather volatile graduate program. Her advisor, a generally moody early-career faculty member, learned that he would not get tenure when Lydia was in her third year of the program. He reacted with paranoia and anger:

He was convinced that there’s just this university-wide conspiracy against him. Among the junior faculty members—I don’t have absolute proof—but I think there was some sabotage. I know one of the junior faculty members was actually trying to steal graduate students from another junior faculty member. There really wasn’t a whole lot of support—everyone was very much an island.

The sense of isolation found its way to Lydia as well. Without an advisor, Lydia crafted her own dissertation proposal and applied for grants. “It was basically kind of a choose-my-own-adventure kind of situation.” She taught herself to be self-sufficient and how to organize her work and her time in a way that made sense to her; essentially, she taught herself how to be a faculty member.

Lydia continues to assume a leading role in her own faculty development, but she also draws upon two informal mentors at Netherfield College for advice. She seeks out the perspective of one faculty member who will comment on her research trajectory: how much she published in a given year, what grants she applied for, what conferences she

attended. “He’ll be like, ‘Okay. This is good. You may want to work on this a little bit more, you’re in good shape here.’ He’s my technical manager.” When it comes to bouncing ideas off of someone or getting inspiration on writing, Lydia turns to a female colleague:

Everything she says is just so damn poetic, and she hits the nail on the head every single time. And it pisses me off, because I’m just sitting here, just madly writing all of it down and just hoping that someday I can be like her.

Despite having this pair of mentors, Lydia does most of her research alone and has a high level of control over the process.

The various blocks in a game of *Tetris* fall at a leisurely pace, which helps a novice player examine the game space and find a suitable place to situate any given piece. When a player gains experience, she has the option of taking a “hard drop” approach: the player gets the block in position and with a simple press of a button the block will fall straight down to the bottom of the screen at a rapid speed. Expert players prefer the hard drop approach in a timed game because they can stack their blocks into position quickly and amass a maximum number of points. Lydia’s ambition and self-confidence in her abilities as a scholar fuels her hard drop approach to research, stacking up her publications, grants, and fellowships in time for her tenure review.

### **A Line-by-Line Approach to Teaching**

Lydia has advised one of her thesis students at the gym while the two of them walked on treadmills. She always preferred getting a workout in and finding ways to cross off two items on her to-do list at once. Lydia finds that there is a natural connection between her and the students, but when she began her position she had wondered how she would establish some boundaries. “I hadn’t figured out who I wanted to be to them yet.

I'm very much an older sister mentor." Lydia is one of the younger faculty in her department and her students soon recognized that their relationship with her would not be as rigid as their interactions with other faculty:

With me, there can be debate, there can be negotiation with regards to themes that we're talking about. It's taken me three years to get there—in my first year, I was awkward. I think I've finally found my niche in terms of how I can relate to students in a way that does my own personality justice, but also doesn't usurp the student-professor hierarchy.

Unlike the hard drop approach Lydia uses with research, her process for teaching and advising was more controlled; instead of stacking her *Tetris* blocks quickly and aggressively, she built up her points line-by-line until she could determine who she wanted to be as a teacher.

Just like with research, Lydia developed her teaching skills in graduate school. She quickly assumed an independent course of action in her own professional development. She created syllabi for courses she taught as a teaching assistant, and also had experience as an adjunct lecturer at a museum and at a research university prior to her position at Netherfield College. She was able to use three of her existing course syllabi at the college.

*Tetris* is a forgiving game. Sometimes a player will get flustered and press the wrong button, placing a block in an inopportune location. Fortunately, a player can correct the course if she knows how to fix the mistake. Lydia taught a graduate seminar during her first year at Netherfield College. She found the twelve second-year masters students to be snarky and pretentious, critical of every reading she assigned, and writing belittling comments on their discussion board about the major theorists in the field. Lydia got to the point where she knew she needed to address their comments directly. She

explained to them that it is easy to tear something apart, but the real challenge comes with being able to identify something from the reading and to use it constructively in their own research. After this confrontation, the course improved, but Lydia was disheartened by the experience. “I’m still fairly intimidated by the upper level. I really can’t tell you how much that graduate course traumatized me.” Sometimes a faculty member needs to just get through a tough group of students and wait out the semester until an opening—a fresh start—presents itself.

One opening that created a strategic move for Lydia and increased her work satisfaction was teaching a large introductory humanities class. The survey course emphasizes breadth over depth and serves as an entree into the field. Every topic is new and exciting. “It’s like candy. It tastes good and it’s easy to digest—you want more of it. Teaching is incredibly performative. It’s so much easier to perform candy.” Conversely, Lydia sees her upper level courses as “straight-up broccoli” since students have to really wade through the readings and dig deep into the concepts and their applications. “It requires a lot of mental leg work, not on the students’ part, but also on my part. Because I’m the one who’s supposed to be the expert, and therefore in some ways have to be prepared for almost anything.” Lydia consistently receives high evaluations for her intro course every year and it is her favorite class to teach. Even if other courses present holes in Lydia’s game, she always has this course to provide an opportunity to clear a line in the future.

### **The Time Management T-Spin**

When Lydia’s inbox hits 45 emails, she knows it is time to triage. She has perfected a system to give her maximum control over her email:

My rule is that I only have 40 messages at a time in my inbox, and if it starts getting over 40, I either delete or respond or ask them to email me back just so I can get them off my page. Forty emails is exactly the length of my screen. It's just stupid shit like that, at a glance probably doesn't seem to make a difference, but it does.

In the past, Lydia had watched how email could be a black hole that sucks up her colleagues' time and she was determined to not get drawn into the undercurrent.

Lydia figured out a way to fit all of her professional pieces together: research, writing, teaching, advising, and service. She is able to take ownership over her time through an intensive scheduling process, which she started using in graduate school while she was raising two young children:

If I did not get my stuff done at 11 o'clock at night, it just wasn't going to get done. Everything gets written down. I would pencil in lunch, I would pencil in dinner, I would pencil in grocery shopping. Even now, I am a list-maker.

Lydia prefers to buy a Cambridge planner every year and still has her planners from previous years on a shelf. She admits that her process is “almost obsessive” but it works for her.

Besides schedules and email tricks, Lydia has also perfected an efficient way to give substantive feedback to her students on assignments. “I found that what really kind of bumps your student evaluations is if you put personal comments in those exams.” Since students seem to make the same mistakes time after time, Lydia created a series of comments for every test question so she did not have to repeat herself when she grades:

So, basically what I do for each question—I have a little graph. If they got certain things right, I put a check in that graph. If they didn't, I leave that part blank. Then after that, I go through and basically create a document about that question that has been filtered to incorporate the blank comments.

Lydia uses a similar system for thesis feedback: pre-scripted comments about organization or grammar mechanics. As she describes her process, it is “basically a comment for every occasion.”

There is one *Tetris* piece called a T-block—because of its shape—that is highly malleable because a player can use it to even out lines. Players can rotate the piece, a move called the T-Spin, and position it in a tight spot to efficiently clear more lines and accumulate additional points. Similar to a T-Spin, Lydia has found a way to fit in everything she is expected to accomplish in an academic year. She makes time for activities she values, feels in control, and maintains a high level of job satisfaction. As she explains, “If you like what you do, it's not work, right?”

### **Avoiding Departmental Garbage**

Garbage is a term used to describe the gaps in the *Tetris* matrix caused by a misplaced block. Sometimes a player thinks a piece is going to easily fit in a space, but her perception is misaligned. Having a gap in the matrix means it is more difficult for a player to clear a line, decreasing the chance to score points. Garbage, like tricky departmental cultures, can throw off an entire game. When Lydia first arrived at Netherfield College, she was surprised by her colleagues' excitement of her work. “It was almost manic how excited they were to have me there. They were super friendly, everyone wanted to get lunch, everybody wanted me to go to dinner, everybody was curious about my work.” At that time, she was the first tenure-track hire in a while because of economic issues and was the only early-career faculty member in her department.

It took a few months into Lydia's first semester to develop a more nuanced understanding of the relationships between people in her department. She learned of an incident among her colleagues that took place fifteen years prior to her arrival that completely eroded the morale of the department. Mediators came in to work with her colleagues during Lydia's first three years and she has observed her peers grow and move forward. "The next couple years at Netherfield College—a third of the faculty is retiring—so that gives you an idea about just who has been just driving the culture." Lydia acknowledges that many of her colleagues are still stuck in a more traditional and outdated way of doing their work.

Two new early-career faculty have joined the department since Lydia, and she is excited for the wave of new ideas and fresh energy. At the same time, she continues to feel like she and her new colleagues are ignored by her senior peers:

Because they had no junior faculty for a while, I think there is a certain propensity, occasionally, to speak over junior faculty members. I don't think it's conscious. I think it's the fact that you have, in essence, a bunch of parents who've been childless for so long, that they don't know how to appropriately include junior faculty members productively in a discussion.

Lydia knows that there is not much she can do to alter the department culture—the gap in her matrix—except wait it out and embrace the progressive shift that comes with hiring new colleagues.

### **Getting a Tetris**

Lydia took a year-long research leave during her fourth year so she could travel to Africa to conduct research for her next book. She did not go alone; rather, she brought her two children and her husband with her. "The nice thing is that—and granted you can ask my kids when they're older and in therapy—I have not neglected them in the context



of my work.” Lydia’s ability to never run out of research ideas, the way she can pump out publications, and her ruthless scheduling and time management habits would suggest that what drives her is her career. But her family is the most significant facet of her life. Her husband plays a major role in refocusing Lydia’s attention. “One thing that he especially has been very adamant about is that I not neglect the family. And whenever I started, he’s come in, and he’s like, ‘You need to stop working and come and play with us right now.’” For Lydia, faculty life and family life have equal purpose.

The phrase, “getting a Tetris” refers to scoring a maximum number of points by clearing four lines at once. The only way a player is able to accomplish this move is by using the very valuable I-block. Lydia has had a unique game experience in that she has positioned herself for a successful tenure review by stacking publications and grants using a hard-drop method, while taking a more steady line-by-line approach to teaching that resulted in strong student evaluations. She has protected herself from common faculty stressors through a combination of T-Spin time management techniques and avoiding the garbage that comes with tough departmental cultures. But she was able to achieve a Tetris in her fourth year by consistently prioritizing her family (see Figure 11). “For good or bad, if you want something, then it’s kind of up to you to get it done because no one’s going to do it for you. You may have support along the way but at the end, it’s kind of on you.”

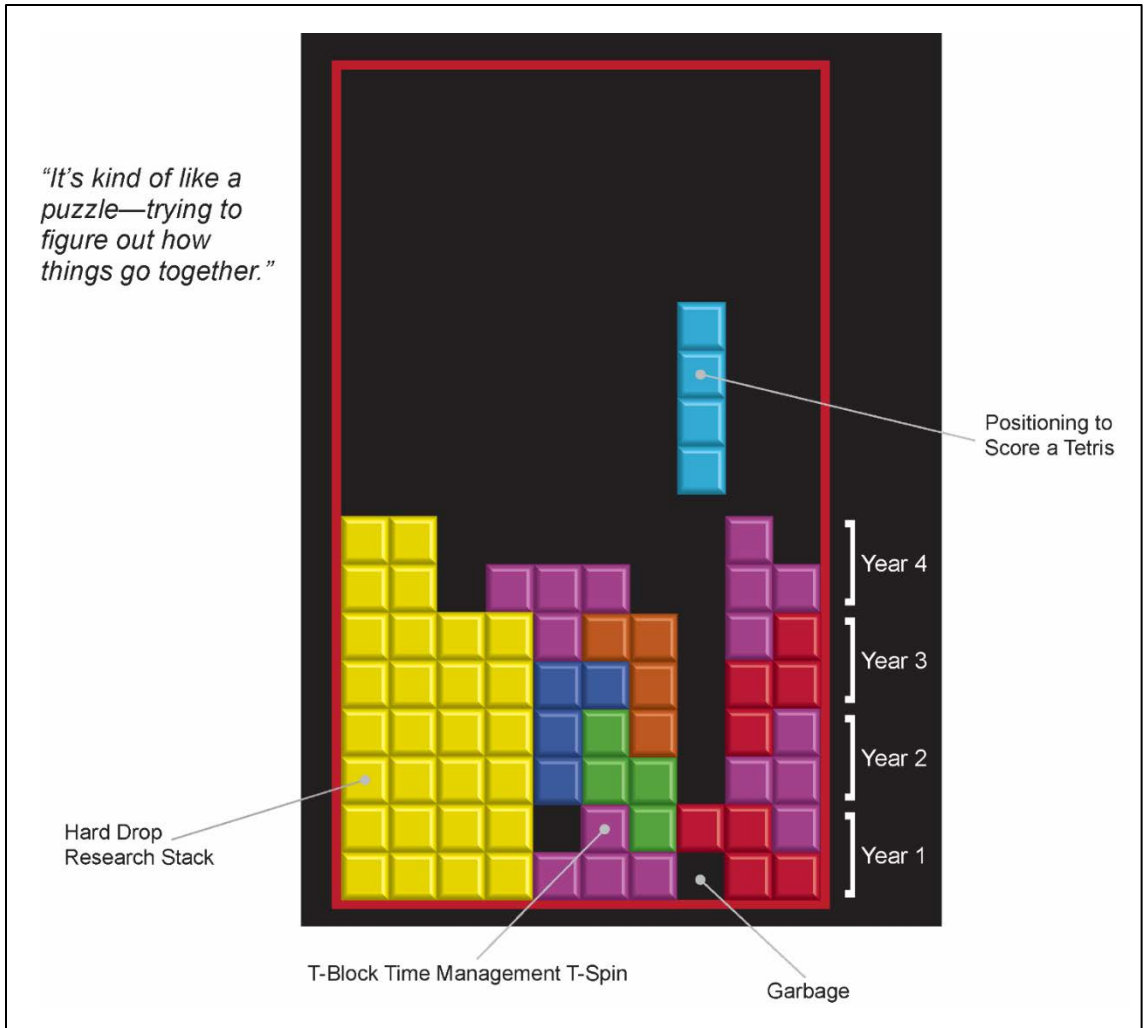


Figure 11. Lydia’s Tetris approach to tenure.

### **Eleanor’s Boggle Approach**

Eleanor’s favorite place to be is in the rainforest, sporting a headlamp, in search of frogs. “This is a very, very small part of my research job, but it’s the one that when I get to do it, I get very excited about it.” She likes to share the experience of looking for data out in the field with her students at Pemberley College. She models how to pay attention and look at the environment from different angles. In the game *Boggle*, a player takes a similar approach by examining the board—a four-by-four grid—from every perspective. Sixteen random dice sit on the grid, a letter from the alphabet displayed on

each dice. A player has three minutes to search for as many words created by the arrangement of the adjacent dice. To excel in the game *Boggle*, a player must be able to filter out what is superfluous in order to find meaning and maximize her score. Eleanor’s instinctive mental state is to be on the hunt; to scour her surroundings and discover items that interest, challenge, and reward her. In her game, the dice do not depict letters of the alphabet; rather, they show the objects she interacts with and the skills she brings to maximize her score (see Figure 12). And instead of creating words, Eleanor creates mantras, lessons that reflect what she has learned about herself in response to a particular challenge in which she has filtered out the information that does not help her in the game.

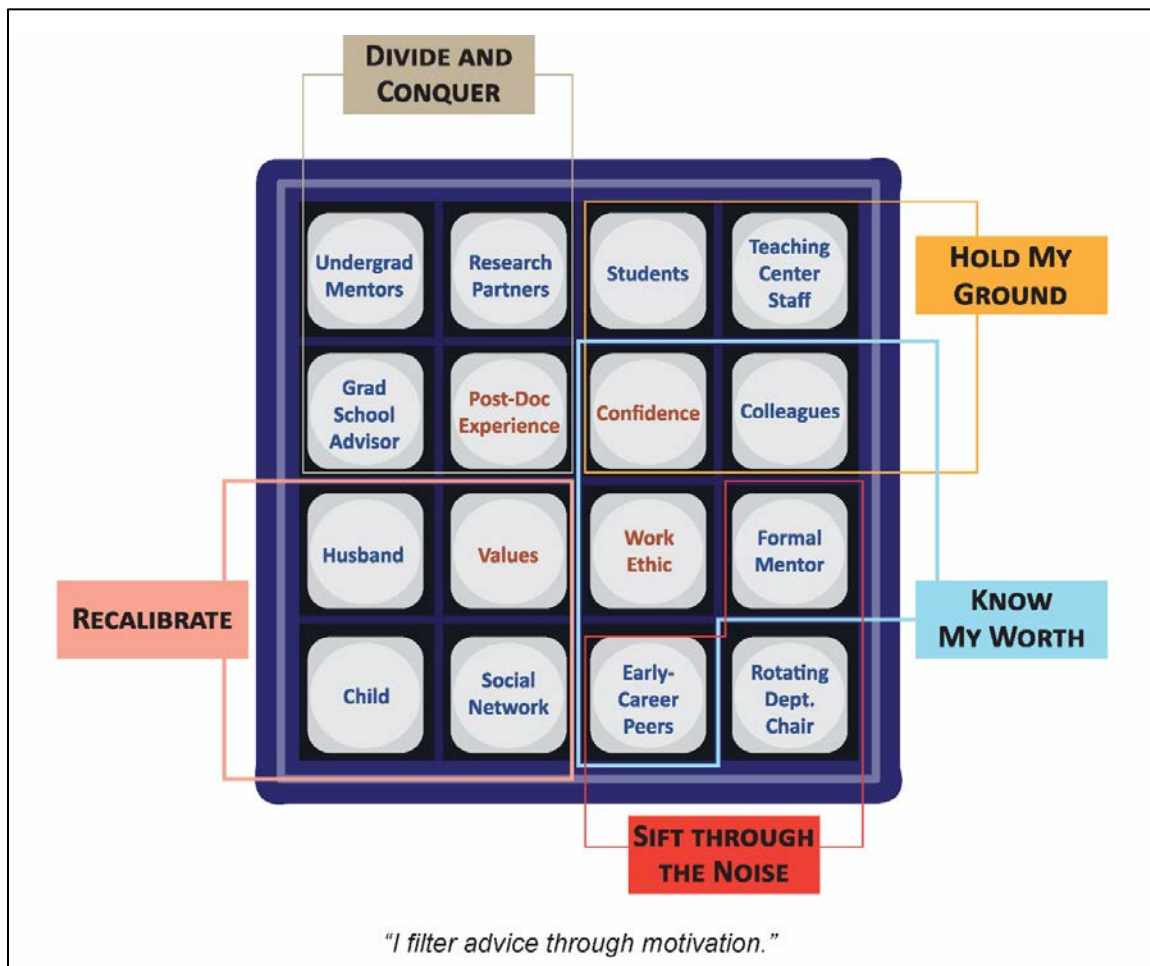


Figure 12. Eleanor’s *Boggle* approach to tenure.

## Stand My Ground

Eleanor had never taught a large lecture before her first year at Pemberley College. While she arrived at the college with previous teaching experience—both in her post-doc at another liberal arts college and as a one-year visiting professor—she was still uncomfortable. Eleanor found that a larger class demanded a lot from an instructor. As a quiet person, Eleanor did not enjoy the expectation placed on her to perform every day for her students.

The fact that her large class was usurped by ten vocal students made it all the more challenging. This small but influential group objected to the way Eleanor ran her class, questioning her authority and ability. “Mid-semester, I had given my first exam, and I will say that it was this unique combination of really pushy students and me not being confident in my course.” The students were upset with their exam grades. She explained, “They just hammered me on the exam. They were like, ‘I don't think this is right. You graded this unfairly.’ Basically they were saying what I perceived as, ‘You don't know what you're doing and we want our points back.’” To this day, she considers this experience one of her most trying moments at the college.

Eleanor knew she was going to have to address this issue. She began by talking with her colleagues and asking them for advice. With this feedback, Eleanor came up with a plan. “I basically said, ‘I will look at all of the things that you're asking and then I will score them based on this rubric of whether I think you need to have this reevaluated or not.’” Eleanor stood her ground. And with the structure and plan she put forward to the students, she was able to justify her initial grades. Her tactic made the dissatisfied students unhappier. After that first exam, Eleanor requested a mid-semester assessment

from a staff member at the college's teaching center because she wanted student feedback. The data were predictable: her students complained about her teaching and the grading on the first exam.

Eleanor has taught this course a few times since that first semester, and she believes it has improved as has she as an instructor. Her evaluations that first semester were fine overall, despite the vocal critics in the room. Upon reflection, Eleanor realizes that there were activities that just did not work in the class, but she pushed through them and tried them multiple times that first year. She has since changed the way she teaches the course. "I think just having the experience of having done it once before, made it get better." For some new faculty, having such a difficult experience in the first semester of a job would have been demoralizing, a crushing blow to their self-esteem. But Eleanor was able to see past her detractors and tune out their criticisms, rely on her colleagues and institutional supports for guidance during a rocky time, and trust her ability to get through this challenge.

### **Know My Worth**

Eleanor is part of a large department in a STEM field and a small interdisciplinary program. She views her colleagues in the *interdisciplinary program* to be the most supportive and productive and their decision-making process to be seamless and straightforward. "There are a lot of people who have very similar interests research-wise. We connect better, I think." Eleanor's female colleague who just received tenure has provided advice on grants, setting up a lab, and raising young children; she has served as an informal mentor to Eleanor by modeling success in both the professional and personal aspects of her life.

Eleanor's colleagues in the *department* create a different and more difficult culture. Many of her colleagues have been teaching at Pemberley College for decades and have challenging personalities. "Everyone has their own opinion. No one wants to compromise. That's like a dirty word—we can't do that because we're all so wonderful and our ideas are so wonderful." Eleanor admits that she does not understand the dynamics between her colleagues. She often remains quiet in meetings because she notices that the older faculty dismiss the views of their younger peers, particularly if the age difference is combined with a gender difference. "Some of the really senior male colleagues, although they mean well, they treat me like I'm their 16-year-old daughter, just the way they talk." Department meetings frustrate Eleanor, who considers herself a "go-getter," because she feels there is very little action that comes out of the discussions.

Eleanor's research program has been wildly successful since she started her position four years ago. She was awarded a large external grant in her first year, which set her up for a publication in a top-tier journal in her second year. Her research trajectory was looking strong for tenure. When she sat down with her formal mentor at the end of her third year to prepare for her mid-tenure review, she was expecting to receive some recognition or acknowledgement of her hard work. Instead, her mentor relayed a conversation he had with one of Eleanor's senior female colleagues, who commented that Eleanor should "cool her jets." Eleanor's success had started to make one particular male junior faculty member look bad because he had been struggling to establish his research program. Eleanor was shocked to hear this information. In her mind, she had been working so hard to get these accolades and she believed she deserved her success. "I think it made me angry more than anything else. Because I was like, 'No, I shouldn't be

cooling my jets. You should be telling me that I'm doing a great job.'" She found an ally in another female colleague who commented, "You know that if the shoe were on the other foot, if the guy was doing well and you were doing poorly, nobody would say that to him." Eleanor admits that these comments make her feel like her colleagues want her male peer to succeed more than her, but she continues to be confident of her work and is moving forward with her research regardless of these remarks. This situation could have depleted Eleanor's motivation and prompted her to pull back from her research. But like in a game of *Boggle*, Eleanor looked past these superfluous obstacles and hyper-focused on the research she needs to conduct and publish to win the game.

### **Sift through the Noise**

Eleanor had two department chairs during her first two years at Pemberley College. The inconsistency meant there was no one in an administrative role to help her make sense of her responsibilities. When Eleanor started her job, she was trying to understand the department structure, the culture, and the dynamics. One chair would give her one message and her second chair would offer conflicting advice. "And what you'll end up with is, 'Oh my god, I have to do everything perfectly.' And that's super stressful." The other early-career faculty Eleanor knew across campus expressed similar aggravations around work expectations. When the group got together and shared stories, they realized that new faculty were receiving sporadic mentorship:

When the junior faculty talked we were like, "Oh, well this happened to me. I had this person as a mentor but not this person." And then, "Oh, I had three people as mentors but not that person." They did something different for all of us.

The early-career faculty got together and approached administrators, sharing their frustrations with receiving so many mixed messages; the administrators created a formal mentoring program in response.

Eleanor appreciates some of the advice her formal mentor, a colleague in her department, has given regarding teaching. He is a very dynamic instructor, experimenting with innovative teaching methods, and Eleanor has observed his classes to determine what techniques she could adopt for her own courses. But overall, she does not feel supported. “I feel like the mentoring here is more evaluative. And I also feel like their way of supporting is just to tell you what should do based on what they want.” Her mentor stressed to Eleanor that she should be applying for a lot of grants during her first few years. Eleanor was completely overwhelmed with this advice. But she soon learned that the best way to work through these scrambled messages was to filter them, like playing a game of *Boggle*, and choose the activities that made the most sense for her, her work, and her goals:

I think that I am really good at reading people. And so I think what I did was that I filtered advice through motivation. I knew what the other person's motivation is, right? Oh, this person gets a lot of grants and they think that grants are important and they run this giant lab, and so they're telling me that I need to get four grants. When in reality, do I need that to run my lab? No. Do I need a grant at all? Probably not. Should I apply for one to make myself look like I'm doing something? Yes. If I got one would it help? Yes. But do I need to write four a year? No, my science doesn't require that.

Eleanor tempered her conversations with her mentor and looked at her world through his eyes. She then refined his recommendations and took only the vital information that would be most useful for her.



## Recalibrate

Eleanor was living with her husband in another state when she was offered the job at Pemberley College. While her husband loved his tech job, Eleanor was unhappy being a visiting assistant professor. They both agreed that the faculty position at Pemberley College was Eleanor's "dream job." Eleanor's first year was difficult because she felt like she was working during every waking minute. After she developed all of her courses and had taught them at least once, things got easier. She was able to carve out time for activities that were not related to work. She and her husband made friends in the area and she participated in more social outings. "Even if we putter around the house and rake leaves—that brings a little bit of balance to my life. I don't feel like I'm working 100% of the time." Like Lydia, Eleanor's husband helps her refocus on other aspects of her life that are important.

Eleanor points to two significant factors that help keep her stable: passions and boundaries. She and her husband love to be outdoors and she acknowledges that allocating time towards something she is passionate about contributes to her well-being:

Even if it's just like, a running hobby, or family members that you're dedicated to go see, or a friend who you hang out with every Saturday. Just, something else. I think a lot of my colleagues don't have that—or at least, don't have enough of it; and it seems like they're the ones that are not so happy.

It took a few years for Eleanor to realize that she needed to create boundaries between her work space and her home space. One variable that played a primary role in needing a stronger boundary was the birth of her son:

I try not to take the stresses of the job home with me as much as possible. That's not to say I don't take work home with me, but the kind of work that I do at home is more busy work. Not the kind of real stressful struggle work that I do in my day-to-day job.

Delineating what work is done in which location has increased Eleanor's happiness, as she feels like she has more time for her family when she is home.

Eleanor gave birth to her son at the end of her third year. When I last spoke with her, she was just returning to Pemberley College full-time after a semester-long parental leave followed by a semester-long research leave. She admitted to me that it was going to be interesting moving forward in terms of balancing her responsibilities:

My husband and I, when we had a kid we decided, "Okay, our lives are not going to change all that much." Like we're going to welcome this kid into our life but we're not going to stop doing the things that we like to do. We're going to try really hard to do them. And we may have to do them differently. We may have to go on a hike for an hour and then go home. We may have to go on a hike down the street and not in the White Mountains. So we're trying really hard to make sure that we keep that sanity for us. I think I had that mentality all along, even before I had a kid that my life was going to be not 100% work.

Eleanor knew she was going to have to recalibrate her expectations about her responsibilities to her job and her family. She needed to cull through the demands for her attention and identify the parts of her life that are the most important. "It's so cliché, but having this kid has changed my perspective on a lot of things. And a student's email is just really not that important anymore."

### **Divide and Conquer**

When she was in graduate school, Eleanor knew that she wanted to be a professor at a liberal arts college. This decision was informed by her interactions with her undergraduate role models and her graduate advisor. Eleanor always liked science, a passion further developed by two role models during her undergraduate studies at a liberal arts college. One of her professors encouraged Eleanor to write a junior year honors thesis, even though Eleanor did not have the strongest grades. "She really kind of opened my eyes to what it was like to be a scientist." The following summer, Eleanor did

a research internship with another mentor who persuaded her to consider a career as a researcher. Ultimately, Eleanor decided that a career in academia made the most sense for her interests.

When she was in graduate school, her advisor was a young female faculty member who was incredibly apprehensive about tenure and viewed her graduate students as utilities in helping her achieve success. “She was the type of person who viewed herself and her goals above everyone else. She wasn’t very nurturing of graduate students.” Eleanor and her peers were expected to pump out papers. In retrospect, Eleanor sees why her advisor approached their relationship in this way now that Eleanor is pre-tenure, but at the time she was hoping she would receive more mentorship on how to be a scientist; after all, she had joined her advisor’s lab because she found the research interesting. Instead, her graduate advisor taught her how to be a faculty member:

A lot of my mentality coming into a faculty position was, ‘Okay, I really need to look at what she taught me about how to play the game.’ I also picked up the fact that she was just so stressed out all the time by trying to get a grant and papers.

Eleanor knew she did not want a job where getting funding for her research was her sole focus. She liked research and wanted to share her research with students to spark their interest, but she did not want the pressures of high publication numbers.

She accepted a post-doc position at a liberal arts college after her dissertation defense. Her graduate advisor tried to dissuade Eleanor from accepting the position, as research at a liberal arts college “wasn’t real research.” Eleanor disregarded this advice and accepted the job. She credits the post-doc experience as playing an influential role in how she engages in research at Pemberley College:

When I got to a postdoc position I realized that at a small school, particularly one that has a lot of resources like this one does, that there are, as long as you are strategic about what kind of science you're doing, you can get it funded and you can have good relationships with students, and science that gets recognized in your larger field.

Eleanor took that knowledge and applied it to her research at Pemberley College. In her first year—a time in which she was spending most of her energy on course preparation and dealing with a challenging class of students—Eleanor was working on a backlog of potential publications. Perhaps the one important piece of information she learned from her post-doc experience was that she could not rely on working with students if she wanted to get her research published, particularly if the research expectations were high. “So my strategy was, I can incorporate students into other work, but I need to have a research line that is just mine and a colleague of mine—preferably someone who has graduate students who can help us write papers.” She reached out to another faculty member at a research university with whom she attended graduate school, and cold-called a new collaborator who was a full-time researcher in Europe. This particular innovative research collaboration produced her large grant award and a publication in a prestigious journal.

Eleanor has another research line that she involves students in as “there’s no speed that it needs to go in order for me to publish.” Eleanor examined her resources, divided them into appropriate groupings, and has complete control over both sets. “I feel like the people who get into trouble are the ones who take the liberal arts ethos and apply it universally to all of their research, because that slows it down.” Eleanor took her observations in graduate school about the usefulness of graduate students and her post-

doc experience of how to use liberal arts college resources strategically and applied those lessons to her current position.

There are early-career faculty who seek stability during the uncertain time of the probationary period; Eleanor is not one of those faculty. “I personally have felt like the times when I’ve been the happiest have been, not necessarily times when I think that everything is going right, not times that aren’t filled with some amount of struggle.” Eleanor enjoys a certain amount of conflict because it keeps her interested in what is going on in her life. The satisfying aspect of playing a game of *Boggle* is to look at the letters on the game board, make promising groupings, and mentally manipulate the surrounding letters until you find a word that could potentially yield a high score. The process is pleasing, but also challenging. Eleanor has been playing *Boggle* for four years, looking around her to see how she can pair objects with her knowledge and skills; how she can create something that will position her for tenure; how she can protect herself from falling into negative thinking; or how she can bring about a sense of gratification to her work and personal life.

### **Julia’s Jenga Approach**

Julia loves giving presentations, but she hates the lead up to the event. “Especially in the minutes before, I’m just like pacing like a jungle cat that’s been in the zoo for too long.” She wants to enjoy this aspect of her job someday, but the pressure she puts on herself to be perfect in the moment makes the task overwhelming. Julia admits that she has gotten better with conference presentations over the years. She doesn’t feel like she is a “farce” in front of an audience of experts, but she is still trying to find her groove. Her anxiety comes from the possibility that she might fail and look incompetent. “I have my

first keynote coming up. I'm excited about it. I am more excited for when it's in my past." Julia's feelings about presentations are like a pendulum swing, going from complete apprehension and dread for the talk, to her anticipation of how she will feel once the event is complete. What she craves is balance between her present feelings and her future state, a steady response to the task.

Julia approaches the game of tenure like she is playing *Jenga*, a game in which players attempt to remove blocks from a freestanding tower and place the blocks on the top tier of the structure. Ironically, the goal of *Jenga* is not to construct the tallest tower; rather, the objective is to not knock over the tower. In other words, the objective is not to win, but rather, not to lose. Julia's approach to her work reflects this idea of not losing balance between two important and conflicting values, and subsequently not losing herself in the process.

### **Balancing Spontaneity and Reliability**

Julia had a rather roundabout way of becoming a faculty member. After she earned a Bachelor's degree in the humanities, she worked for years in marketing and in the performing arts. It was a wild and fun life, but it was lacking. "That meaning piece was just feeling a little shallow for me and everything I was doing felt like something that was not a long-term plan, was not something that could be sustained." She took some time to consider what career would make sense for her: a profession that was equal parts stability and spontaneity. "If I was going to have a nine to five job, I wanted it to still feel like you didn't know what was going to walk in your door." Julia decided to pursue a graduate degree in a social science field that offered a reliable paycheck and meaningful work.

While in her Master's program, Julia discovered a love for quantitative research that laid dormant for most of her life. She took a liking to statistics, which was quite the deviation from her undergraduate degree. After giving presentations at conferences, Julia also discovered a passion for teaching and decided she would continue on and earn a doctorate. Her graduate advisor played a key role in Julia's development as a balanced faculty member:

He was a really strong researcher and really dedicated to that side. And I think to a point that most people who didn't know him very well would think that that's what he was all about, he was so productive in that area. But then you get to know a lot more and you have classes with him and you see this very much more relational side. And dedicated to teaching side. He was really sort of a "dedicated to it all" kind of model and seeing all the things, research, teaching, and service is very important to the field.

And yet, at the same time, Julia observed that her advisor did not have the best work-life balance. She commented, "I was making notes, I'm like, 'That's too hard, you're working too hard.' I sent to him one of my chapters on [a holiday weekend], not expecting feedback for a while and three hours later, I got it back with full feedback and I was like, 'I don't want to do that.'" Other faculty were "phoning it in" in one professional responsibility, such as prioritizing their research while struggling to be effective teachers. Julia made mental notes of the key aspects of faculty life she enjoyed, where she found fulfillment, and also where she could find balance among all of the activities competing for her attention.

### **Balancing Professional and Personal Support**

Julia knows that her colleagues at Highbury University have her back. "I have this feeling, like even with people that I'm not close with at all, if shit really hit the fan, they could be there in a big way." Julia had a family emergency at early on in her

appointment, requiring her to travel before the close of the semester. Her colleagues assured her they would figure out Julia's teaching load and that she should not worry about her job while she was away.

Beyond emotional support, Julia found a wealth of informal mentoring at Highbury University from her senior and junior colleagues. This network was helpful, given that she was not assigned a mentor and had multiple department chairs during her first four years at the university. The faculty in her program were very invested in mentorship, and Julia was also a part of an early-career cohort, comprised of pre-tenure faculty across the college of social sciences, which provided a venue to learn institutional information. Faculty a few years ahead of Julia shared their "mini-tenure" materials, which helped her prepare for her mid-tenure review. She received positive, concrete feedback that directed her on where she should concentrate her attention.

All of these supports made Julia feel confident about her research trajectory and the expectations for tenure. "There wasn't any BS there in terms of what it seemed like the expectations were. It seemed like there is that more of that holistic view of not just a number of what you're doing, but what's the actual sort of importance." Julia has access to ample resources to help her with her research. She was able to take a research leave in her fourth year and dedicate an entire semester to her scholarship. She was assigned a research assistant when she arrived at Highbury University, and has always had funding to attend conferences. Julia feels like her productivity would not have been as successful without these resources:

I can't think of anyone else who has quite like Cadillac of set ups here. And so I guess I just want to put out there that I know that my enthusiasm for everything is very much tied to that, that I think I would probably have a very different outlook if I didn't have this abundant level of support.



Her colleagues have offered their teaching resources and Julia has tapped into the university's teaching center for additional help. The center staff have come into Julia's classes to conduct a mid-semester assessment from her students:

I was really happy with how knowledgeable folks were to that topic specifically to be able to give very clear specific resources in a way to move forward rather than necessarily being kind of like a funnel for the feedback. It was like, "Here's also all of these tools," and it deeply changed my whole philosophy and how I approached that course the following year.

Julia also attended various workshops on teaching, diversity, and social justice issues.

She acknowledges her teaching as shifted as a result of this support.

Having access to resources and feeling the support of her colleagues prompted Julia to focus her energy on work. But Julia's wife, whom she has known since high school, is her reason for having a life outside of work. "I think she's the one who keeps me being a person and not a work robot." Julia admits that her work-life balance was not great in the beginning of her appointment—her career is very much a part of her identity. But she has actively been changing her approach to her job. "I've been more intentional as time has gone on about making sure of carving out that time and being attentive and not taking my partner for granted." Born on the west coast of the United States where "leisure is more valued", Julia has observed the "cult of work" that comes with having a job in New England—that a person's value comes from how many hours they are putting in to working. "And I felt the pull for that. And I think it was my third year that I was like...I'm just going to stick to my forty hours—sometimes more, sometimes less, and just be honest about it." Julia's wife offset her pull towards overworking, which was propelled by the lack of close friendships she has been able to make in the area. If she

had more connections and activities to do with people outside of work, it would be easier for her to work less because of other obligations.

### **Balancing Collaboration with Taking the Lead**

Julia collaborated early on with her colleagues. She quickly said yes to many different research projects in her first year. These collaborations have helped her create and strengthen her name in the field:

It's worked out well. I've been very connected, very connected in my field at a national level and being able to work with people that I only dreamed I would be able to. So much riding on their coattails, being at different events, being invited to dinners with them and being able to get people, get to know people in a very strong friendship level.

Julia worked hard at these collaborations; she wanted to do quality research, create a strong impression, and grow her reputation. But at the same time, she found that her own research was pushed aside for these collaborations. When she was updating her CV for her mid-tenure review, she got a visual cue that she was neglecting her research program when she saw her name listed as second, third, or fourth author. She needed to prioritize her own work and redistribute the weight of her publications like the weight of the *Jenga* tower:

But really the third year was sort of this wakeup call around research that I have so many of my own projects that have been on the backburner for a really long time, or what feels like a really long time that I need to start saying no. And so really second semester of third year and especially this year, I'm saying no a lot.

Julia admits that it did not feel wonderful to say no to colleagues who have been so supportive of her and her career. But she wants to put her research out into the world.

“Beyond tenure, I need to be much better about prioritizing the work that I’m spearheading and not constantly giving that sort of second banana status.”

Another reason why Julia wanted to publish her own research was to increase the methodological rigor in her discipline and to help out other people in her field. She feels her profession is “inundated with these really sort of sloppy studies.” Julia believes that she can consult with her peers in conducting more thorough research by developing better research instruments or sophisticated analysis. “I’ve sort of seen myself, like spreading the gospel of the low budget, rigorous experimental study.” Post-tenure, Julia sees this consultant role as one she would like to pursue in order to grow her status in the field. In addition, integrating her research and service work helps her peers and people in the community. Julia recently worked on a set of best practices for serving a particular vulnerable population, a document in which she was given first author status. Her co-authors acknowledged the leadership role Julia assumed on the project. For Julia, the project was “ideal service” because it tied into her broader research goals and directly helped a community she supports. Working with colleagues on collaborative research certainly helped Julia position herself positively for tenure. But she needed to balance those successes with prioritizing her own research and its potential impact in the field, as those activities amplify her work satisfaction.

### **Balancing Research and Teaching Responsibilities**

Focus, like patience, is essential for a successfully playing *Jenga*. When Julia decided to prioritize her own research, she had to set boundaries by declining requests to collaborate. She understood that she needed to divert her attention to her work, even if that work was isolating. As an extrovert, she also knew that she was going to need interaction with other people in order to feel connected.

Advising is where she finds her most fulfilling relationships because she feels useful in helping her graduate students unpack their future career goals. During her research-intensive leave, Julia decided to continue to advise her students so she could have immediate gratification in her work:

I worry because it feels like research takes and its teaching that puts things back in the coffers. I'm sort of navigating that right now on this research leave, because I mean, I'm really just writing my little head off and finding that I need to be more deliberate in sort of scheduling the things that bring me joy, that I'm still meeting with advisees...just the things that involve people.

For many faculty, research leave offers an opportunity to relinquish other responsibilities in order to have intense focus. Yet for Julia, such concentration was one-sided; she needed human interaction during the leave to stay centered.

### **Balancing Challenge and Comfort**

Despite having taught courses in graduate school, Julia noted that she felt awkward in the classroom during her first year. She over-planned her courses and included too much content and not enough processing. Her students were displeased:

I had gotten feedback that they found me to be like arrogant and pompous and I was like it so did not fit my identity. However, I wouldn't be surprised if they weren't picking up on me feeling aggravated because I am so thin-skinned about not doing a good job. But I think I was frustrated at myself but I wouldn't be surprised if they were picking it up as frustrated at them.

Despite displaying some perfectionist qualities, Julia is compassionate with herself when she must face challenges. She talked about having imposter syndrome and how she felt like she was faking it for most of her first year. The following year Julia taught the course again. This time, she made a list of all the lessons she learned: what worked for the students and what did not. Her teaching evaluations improved.

Today she feels differently: she knows she is really good at her job and she is a strong teacher. Every time Julia teaches a new course, she admits that she struggles. But teaching new courses in tandem with established courses that consistently go well helps to balance out the negative experiences:

I feel like it would be really challenging, and it would kind of wear me down if it was always the difficult courses. I like having that balance of something where it's like I'm really in my element. You know, I literally do have to work less hard. But if I was only doing that it would feel fluffy. I think it would be easy for me to think like, "Oh, I'm just the best," and I don't want that to happen. I wouldn't be challenged and growing, so it's nice to have both interactions.

Her process of equalizing the pull between challenge and comfort is not necessarily the easiest approach, but it is one that helps her develop as a teacher.

Julia does not want to lose balance, and she also does not want to lose herself while she plays the game. She maintains a sense of mindful gratitude for her work and her life circumstances, even referring to her view as wearing "rose-colored glasses." She does not want to be consumed by the game, even though she feels like her perspective is changing:

Years one through three had still been in that very surreal, "I can't believe this is my life." Filled to the brim with gratitude every single day. Really mindful all the time of what my life could be and what my life is now. And now I'm getting used to that and I'm feeling that slipping. I'm feeling myself sort of be whinier about things that I wouldn't have whined about.

To maintain a sense of gratitude, Julia has found that she must let the negative emotions coexist with the positive. She allows her affirming thoughts to commingle with the critical opinions.

Every action Julia took during her four years at Highbury University was to maintain the tension between two forces (see Figure 13). A job in academia offered her steadiness and unpredictability. She wants to excel in teaching and research so she makes

time for both responsibilities. With her scholarship, she wants to impact the field and influence the communities she researches. She feels strongly about her career and cares about her work, but knows she must spend time on activities that are not related to her job. Her negative views about faculty life exist with her gratitude for her work. For Julia, her *Jenga* approach involves constant motion to maintain stability.

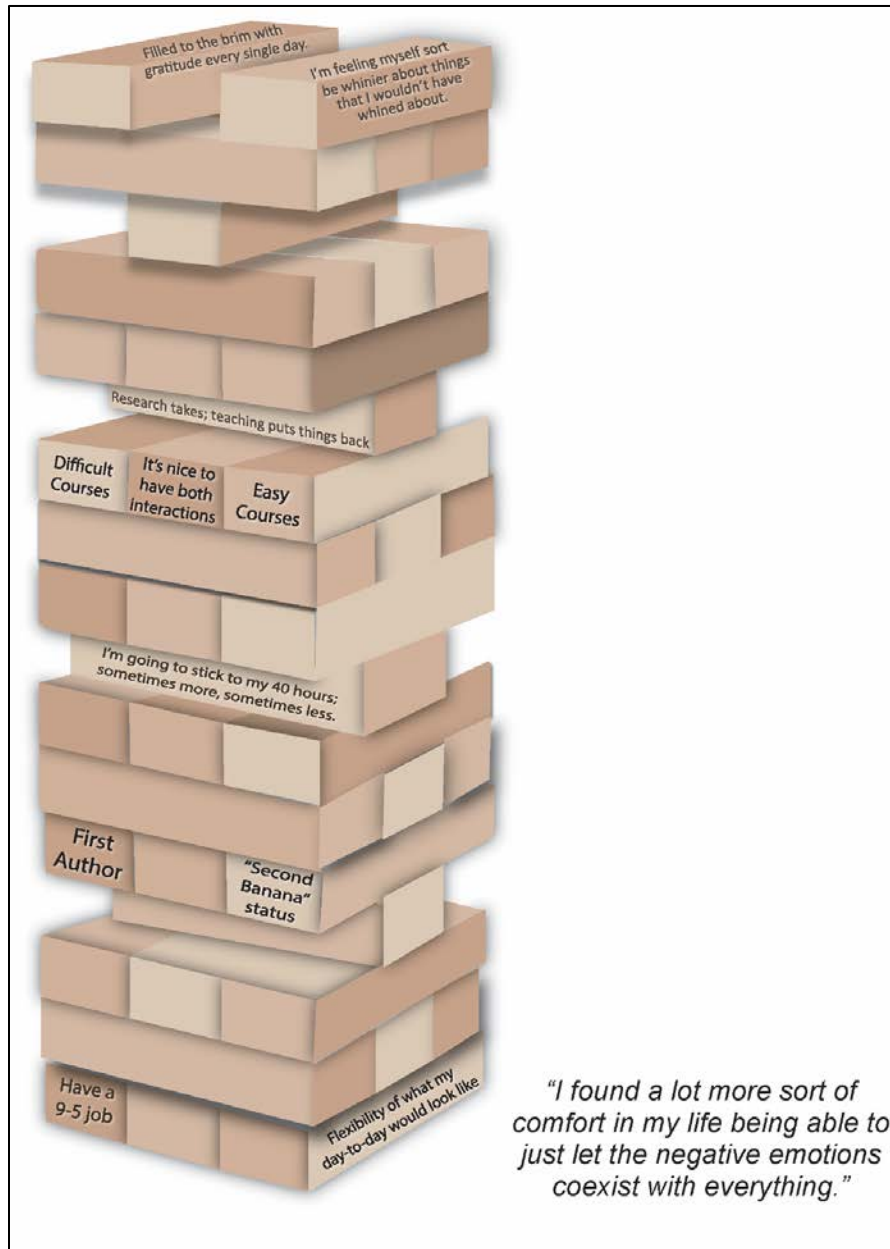


Figure 13. Julia's *Jenga* approach to tenure.

### **Georgiana's Scrabble Approach**

Georgiana spends Monday afternoons dancing at Zumba. On Wednesday evenings she competes in trivia contests. Her social calendar was not always so full. In fact, the first two years of her career at Highbury University were spent working every second of the day. “It was the way my life was at the time. It was kind of a continuation of grad school, and internships, and dissertation writing. So I just kept that momentum and worked all the time.” By her second year, she and her long-term partner decided to part ways. “Part of the initial conversations around the break-up were around my focus on work. So the fact that I was working so much was really hard on him.” Georgiana had tried to create a structure for a social life: she put her computer away when she was home to be present. She admits she did a terrible job at creating work boundaries. She was not shifting her job responsibilities into other times of her work day; rather, she would decide she was done working that moment and then would scramble the next day to complete her tasks. After three years of working at Highbury University, Georgiana realized that if she wanted to prioritize fun outside of work, she had to pencil the activity into her calendar. Today, she considers herself to be a happy, “somewhat sane” person who made space for fun while also working hard to build up her career.

Georgiana approaches her work by starting with a foundation from which to build, creating structure after structure. Another way to look at her process is that she is laying down tiles to create words in a game of *Scrabble*. Larger structures—complex words—yield a greater amount of points. People often think that players who have a comprehensive vocabulary are the best at *Scrabble*. Yet computer programmers and

mathematicians are often the most competitive opponents because of their ability to strategically use the game board to their best advantage.

### **Looking for Potential**

A *Scrabble* game begins with each player holding seven random letters from which they must construct a word. There is always an aspect of chance in play with any given *Scrabble* “hand” and an astute player knows how to make the best use of the available resources. For a skilled player like Georgiana, there are always opportunities to play the resources you have if you know how to use them:

I actually recently had a discussion with one of my colleagues and she said, "Seems like you were mentored on how to be a faculty and we weren't." And I said, "What do you mean by that?" And she said, "You have a project in every stage, you have new projects, you have old projects, you have data sets. You will always have something to work on." And I was like, "Yes, I will."

Georgiana knew how to create a foundational structure from which to build because her graduate advisor helped her develop skills for the game.

Georgiana realized her love for research and how data can inform practical settings while in graduate school. Her advisor, a young pre-tenure faculty member who started her appointment the same time Georgiana started graduate school, noticed Georgiana’s eagerness and took a proactive approach to make sure Georgiana saw all aspects of faculty life:

She would involve me from my first year and beyond in things like manuscript reviews for journals, and in grant writing, and in the politics in the department. I was privy to a whole lot of information that my fellow cohort members weren't, I think, because I had these faculty aspirations. I had a very real world picture of what it was like to be a faculty member. And she was also really good at helping me to notice and problem solve, some of the gendered dynamics of faculty roles. And she also made sure that I was getting experiences related to teaching, service, and research, not just getting maybe the typical grad school experience, but helping me be mindful of those things as I said yes or no to various things.



Having this core knowledge of the job is one of the reasons why Georgiana was able to proactively create structures she needed to thrive.

A *Scrabble* player must learn how to play her seven letters strategically; one way to do so is to examine the existing letters on the board to see if new words can be built from the present structures. Georgiana says this strategy—looking for ways to build off of existing structures—helps her to carve out “lots of different types of opportunities that meet all my various needs.” Her interests include applied research and working with the communities she interacts with and researches. Georgiana negotiated these interests upon her hiring by arguing that she wanted to do a clinical post-doc during her first two years at Highbury University, which would count as service to the institution. “Everyone said yes to that, but then I realized after accepting the job, there was no actual plan for how to make that happen.” Luckily, Georgiana was able to find a colleague who could broker a partnership between her and a community organization. The post-doc experience strongly contributed to her work satisfaction, as she feels like her research is making an impact in and outside of her university. She also appreciated the chance to bridge theory to practice in her field, which would provide a pathway to future publications.

When Georgiana interviewed at Highbury University, she was told that her college had a pre-tenure mentoring group, a positive attraction for her. By the time she arrived at the university, she learned that the program was defunded. So Georgiana created one for herself:

I decided to create a group of just the four people who came in when I came in. It was like, this is our cohort. I had such a nice cohort model in my grad program that I knew that I would need that and wanted to be proactive. Yes, that would be something that I very much thought existed. And then I was like, "Oh, never mind. That doesn't exist. So I'm just gonna make it." So that was a big part of my first year, too, was just trying to figure out how to make that happen.

The mentoring group became a standing committee, and Georgiana, who is now the committee chair, counts this work as part of her service. Within her research sphere, she also created a writing accountability group with colleagues outside of the university because she had a serious void in feedback on her research. The three faculty members provide comments and suggestions on their writing, talk through journal options, and strategize manuscript submissions.

The writing group was a successful accountability structure, but Georgiana knew she needed to create some internal structures to keep her on track. In her second year, she had a surge of publications coming out of her graduate program, but that productivity rate was not sustainable. She struggled to find time to write, so she decided to participate in a national faculty development program that would keep her accountable to daily writing. Through the program, Georgiana was able to think about manuscript writing as a series of steps with manageable goals. “So instead of saying things like, ‘I’m gonna get three manuscripts done by this semester, I’m gonna write an intro and a method section for two papers this week.’” Like simple words on a Scrabble board, the small structures of a peer mentoring program, a writing accountability group, and weekly goal setting has positioned Georgiana to build strong professional relationships and targeted plans for productivity.

### **Missed Opportunities**

Sensing when to make a move, like when to play a word in *Scrabble*, is fraught with uncertainty. Any single decision in a game can yield an unanticipated positive or negative outcome. While many early-career faculty choose to spend their first year or two in their appointment trying to publish their dissertation, Georgiana decided to hold off on

that activity. She knew she could use her dissertation data as a springboard for multiple publications and early in her appointment she decided she did not want to waste her dissertation dataset on a manuscript for a particular journal. Rather, she used the analytical technique from her dissertation with different data and published that paper. In her dissertation she proposed a novel measurement approach, which could only be accomplished in one direction during the time she was writing her dissertation. Since then, scholars have suggested that the analysis can be done in two directions: discrepancy ratings for use as either the predictor or the outcome. Georgiana is now stuck with revising her analysis to consider both directions:

It's a completely different project now than it was then, and it's totally because of the time that's past. There's no other reason, so it's turned into a huge thing, whereas if I had done it in 2014, it would've been a two day project.

She hopes to quickly finish the analysis and submit the paper for review because she just wants the paper on her CV by the time she goes up for tenure.

For the most part, Georgiana has avoided research set-backs, due in large part to her collaborations with her graduate school advisor and the accountability structures she established for herself regarding writing. In retrospect, she wishes she did not wait on this paper. If she had just played her hand during her turn four years ago, she would not have needed to quickly revise, rewrite, and submit this particular paper.

### **From Simple Forms to Complex Structures**

While Georgiana taught a class for a faculty member on parental leave in graduate school, she never felt like she had real ownership over that course, the curriculum, or her teaching of the content. Once she arrived at Highbury University, she quickly learned how much time and energy teaching takes. She wanted to be a perfect teacher in that first

year, and she pushed herself to achieve some level of greatness that, in retrospect, was unattainable. She quickly adjusted her expectations:

I developed a mantra of, ‘No matter what, I will know more than others in the room.’ Whatever I do is gonna be good enough. And they won’t even know what my grand plan was as long as I show up and do something that’s meaningful.

Georgiana had help during those first few years. Two of her colleagues in the department offered to share their teaching resources, which Georgiana was able to use and eventually make her own. “My first semester course, another female colleague had taught before. She gave me her syllabus, and basically said, ‘Just do it this way the first time, if you have to.’” After shaping the course to be what she envisioned, it is now one of her favorite classes to teach. Similar to building new words from existing words on the *Scrabble* board, Georgiana acknowledges that the resources her colleagues’ provided gave her a solid framework from which to build. She pieced together her colleague’s good ideas and amplified them as she grew confident in her teaching skills like she was creating complex words from a variety of simple structures.

Georgiana always knew she loved doing research, but today, she also enjoys the teaching aspect of her job despite the huge time commitment. She has received superb feedback from students, who have nominated her for teaching awards. Her students have told her, “This is my favorite class,” and “This class changed my career trajectory.” Unlike research, where she feels there is a feedback void, teaching is a domain where she constantly has a gauge of when things are going well.

Georgiana is primarily responsible for teaching graduate courses, and she had to learn how to advise masters and doctoral students on their theses and dissertations. She was assigned four doctoral students in her first year and had to figure out how to get them

enrolled in particular courses and navigate the graduate school requirements. Most of this information she figured out on her own. “The learning curve was so steep and the answers were so few and far between, or completely different answers depending on who you talked to.” Today, those four students are at the dissertation stage of their program and Georgiana is continuing to try and figure out the advising process:

It is so not enjoyable, and I’m trying so hard to support students, but I also don’t have a lot of experience supporting students that are on all sorts of different levels of the research-understanding continuum, and having to do four kind of simultaneously.

The one aspect of this process that eases the stress of advising is knowing that her advisees are truly appreciative of her role and guidance. “Hearing their gratitude, and seeing their growth, that’s the part that is reinforcing.”

### **Seeing All the Possibilities**

When a player gets stuck playing her tiles on a particular turn, one strategy is to rearrange the letters like she is shuffling cards and look for new possibilities. Georgiana considered various possibilities when she was debating whether or not she wanted to go up early for tenure. During her “mini-tenure” review, her personnel committee suggested the possibility. Georgiana decided it was not in her best interest, despite knowing that she could potentially shorten the probationary period:

I decided not to go up early, because I didn't feel the need. I have a cohort of people that I came in with, that it feels right to go up with those people. I really like the pre-tenure group too, so I didn't wanna have to not be a part of that. And not get the extra travel money that's associated with being an assistant professor. So, I really weighed the bigger picture. Not just was I ready to go up early, but did I want to? Did I care to? And I didn't really care to.

The idea of seeing “the bigger picture” comes up frequently for Georgiana. Reframing—a sort of special awareness—is one of her fallback approaches when work begins to feel overwhelming:

I think the primary source of my happiness is the work that I do, and the way that I feel that it's contributing to the broader world in any small way. I tend to look for times to gain that perspective, like, "This is good. This is awesome." Even when I'm in my crunch time, or lots of other stressors, or variables that are affecting the current happiness. I try to look at the bigger picture, and say like, "Things are still good."

Georgiana’s spatial awareness is just one of the ways her Scrabble approach has positioned her well for tenure. She views her game space as full of possibilities and actively builds structures in that space that will maintain her work satisfaction and her overall quality of life (see Figure 14).

### **Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I explained how each participant approached her work by likening their primary method to a particular game strategy. While each process was different, similarities begin to surface across the experiences. For some individuals, the game environment presents challenges and the participants’ actions are always in reaction to the challenges. Anne’s environment was oppressive and she ultimately was tired of responding to its challenges. Emma’s environment was muddled and she was bumping into conflicts until she understood what the environment expected from her. Maryanne’s environment was tumultuous and she rose and fell until she accepted the fact that she needed to relinquish control and ride the wave.

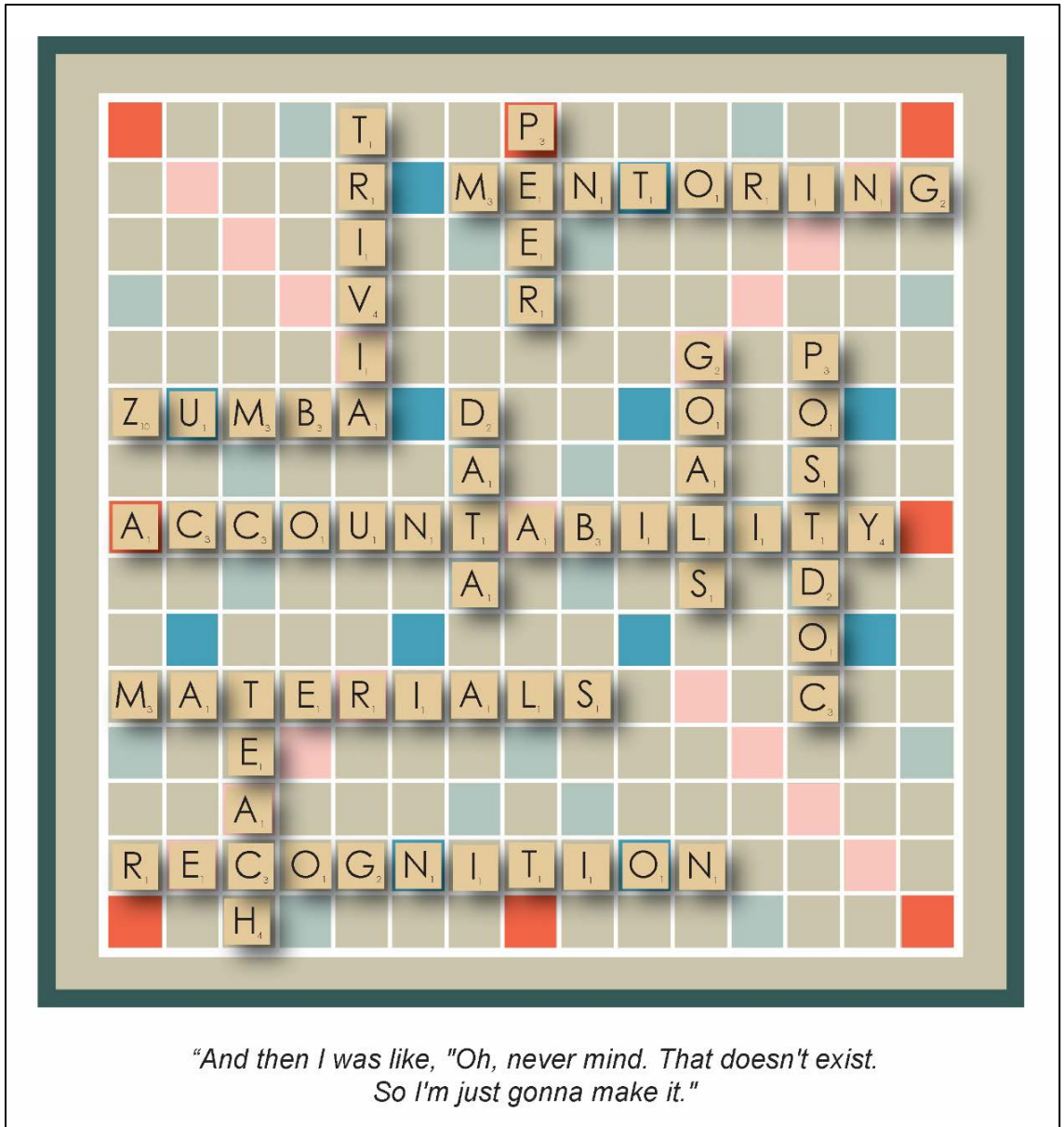


Figure 14. Georgiana's Scrabble approach to tenure

Some players' actions are dependent on their collaboration with other players—game objects—to identify and draw upon resources. Jane, Elizabeth and Caroline traverse their environments to make connections, find allies, and draw upon their skills. Other players manipulate the game space to gain leverage: Lydia shapes her environment in a way that allows her to act on every possibility with ease, while Eleanor sifts through her

environment to only find the pieces of information or objects to draw from that will help her position in the game. Julia builds her environment through subtraction; she seeks equal distribution across the game space, objects, and challenges. Finally, Georgiana's actions focus on creating a game space where she could thrive, basically ignoring the existing game environment and its challenges. The similarities across participants are beginning to appear; in the next chapter I widen the focus and look broadly at the common strategies from a general perspective through a cross-case synthesis.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CROSS-CASE SYNTHESIS**

#### **Overview**

To describe and interpret the commonalities across participant experiences in a multi-case study, I conducted a cross-case analysis and present a synthesis of the thematic findings in this chapter. A cross-case synthesis is an analytical method to highlight the “specific conditions under which a finding will occur” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 173). I used two different approaches to produce this synthesis. The first was a case-oriented process, in which I looked for connections among different contextual factors in a single participant experience before comparing those findings to other experiences. The second was a cross-case approach, in which I shifted the focus away from the particulars of each experience and considered the themes presented across all experiences as a way to suggest overarching generalizations. In doing so, I was able to build abstractions across the experiences and present a “general explanation that fits all the individual cases” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 234).

I demonstrated the case-oriented approach in the previous chapter, where I described each participant’s process of approaching her work or “playing the game of tenure.” Only towards the end of Chapter 4 did I begin to compare those approaches across experiences. For example, I spoke of how Anne and Emma’s actions were predominately in response to their existing game environment, while Lydia, Eleanor, Julia, and Georgiana took actions to manipulate their environments to serve their needs. In this chapter, I turned to a cross-case method to present the general themes across all ten participant experiences and describe how female early-career faculty approach their

professional work. In this cross-case synthesis, I continue to identify unique dynamics among the experiences, but minimize the differences in order to provide an overarching explanation.

When writing the narratives in the previous chapter, I considered the approaches that appeared to be particularly essential for each participant's experience of being a female early-career faculty member; specifically, I thought about *who* was taking the actions, *where* the actions took place, and *how* those actions translated into an approach to faculty work. As a result, I identified a primary game strategy for each participant, such as Georgiana's *Scrabble* approach to the game of tenure at Highbury University. In composing Chapter 5, I shifted my attention to consider *what* actions were taken across the participants' experiences, *when* they occurred during the probationary period, and *why* they were taken. In this chapter, I present broad themes that address these *what*, *when*, and *why* considerations, and make a point to emphasize any participants' experiences for whom the actions differed in response to a particular circumstance. For each theme, I begin with a general description and follow with illustrative comments from the participants to corroborate the finding; I see these excerpts as the fine details to complement the broad brushstrokes of the general description. To conclude this chapter, I provide a "general condensation" to offer a broad, comprehensive explanation of how female early-career faculty approach their work.

### **The Metaphor of Chess**

In Chapter 4, I presented particular game strategies each participant primarily used to play the game of tenure. I discovered the strategies by examining the relationships between the game mechanics that comprise each participant's experience:

how the game space (the case site) and the game objects (colleagues, department chairs, students, administrators, research collaborators) presented challenges; the actions the participant took during certain times in her probationary period to respond to these challenges; how the participant manipulated time by extending or shortening the probationary period; and how the participant's skills informed the actions she took to advance in the game. In this chapter, I looked across the approaches of the ten participants to find general commonalities. In doing so, I came to realize that the participants were broadly approaching their work like they were playing a game of chess.

The basic objective of chess is for players to capture their opponents' kings, while protecting their own kings from capture. Chess players know that in order to achieve the objective, they must have a plan that incorporates aggressive and defensive moves. Two-time U.S. champion Patrick Wolff (1997) explains that a plan is "a clear idea of what you want to accomplish based on your assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of your position" (p. 51). The most successful plans include an overarching chess strategy and a knowledge of tactics, two very different techniques that have a symbiotic relationship. A chess strategy is a long-term plan to achieve the objective, while a chess tactic is a short-term move or sequences of moves a player takes to advance in the game. Tactics are smaller plans that result in an immediate gain that support the long-term plan. Tactical calculations come from a player's ability, knowledge, and experience and certain chess scenarios encourage or demand the deployment of particular tactics.

To theoretically apply this chess analogy to tenure, the overall objective of the game is to achieve tenure. The basic strategy to achieve the objective is to demonstrate excellence in teaching, research, and service through strong student evaluations,

publications and grants, and committee work and advising. A tactical move that reinforces the strategy may be to participate in teaching development workshops to further develop instructional skills that would reflect improvement in the student evaluations. Another tactic may be to sit on departmental committees that demand the least amount of time so that attention could be reallocated towards research.

Since I looked holistically across participants' experiences and collapsed the particulars of each experience into broad categories, so, too, did I collapse the particular game mechanics into three general attributes of chess: space, time, and force. The literal space of the chessboard plays an important role in how a player approaches the game, as some areas of the board are more advantageous than others and the player has a goal to control as much of the board as possible. Moving chess pieces towards the center of the board is a profitable strategy because a player has more autonomy over which direction to move in the next turn, whereas peripheral areas on the board restrict a player's actions. Time is another important attribute because particular moves should be made at the right moment for a maximum gain. Chess master Znosko-Borovsky (1980) noted, "The same move, played at different times, has entirely different values" (p. 9). Expert chess players constantly monitor when a particular move should be made over the course of a game. Finally, force is the series of actions a player deploys to advance in the game in the most efficient way. Playing chess creates an equilibrium, as some moves will be proactive and aggressive, while other moves will be reactive and defensive, all of which are informed by space and time. Continuing the metaphor of the game of chess as a way to describe the game of tenure: space symbolizes the faculty areas in which the participants feel like they have most control and where they feel constricted with regards to teaching, research, and

service; time signifies the six-year probationary period; and force reflects the actions participants take to increase their control over the space within the time constraints.

The probationary period leading into the tenure review is perhaps the only time in a faculty member's career with a concrete start and end date, as the subsequent promotions in rank have more fluid deadlines. Similarly, chess is a game with distinct periods: the opening, the middle game, and the end game (Wolff, 1997). Chess player Rudolph Spielmann advises players to approach "the opening like a book, the middle game like a magician, and the end game like a machine." When I was using open and focused coding during data analysis, and in writing the participant narratives, I discovered that participants took particular actions during specific moments in their appointments. I present the findings using a similar framework: I describe the tactical moves taken across participants' experiences during three phases of the probationary period that reinforce the basic strategy of demonstrating excellence in teaching, research, and service in order to win the game.

### **The Opening**

When Spielmann suggests that players approach the opening like a book, what he is referring to is the extensive research on chess openings. Chess experts and theorists have identified patterns to openings that even a novice player can memorize, making the first moves straightforward, accessible, and planned in advance of starting the game. There are countless openings a player can make, ranging from common sequences to obscure moves. A beginner may learn three well-known ways to open the game, while a more advanced player may open with a new or riskier set of actions. I apply a similar analogy to the various approaches an early-career faculty member can make in the first

year of her appointment. Like studying chess openings prior to play a game, the skills and experiences each participant brings to the game of tenure influences her opening repertoire. While all of the participants were responsible for teaching, research, and service in the first year, they all entered their game spaces with a plan on how to gain control over their work; some of those plans were proactive and aggressive, while other plans were reactive to the environmental challenges. Moreover, some participants chose to focus on just one aspect of their work, or use their time getting to know their new work environment. Across the participants' experiences, there were three broad opening repertoires: the *scholarly maneuver*, the *classroom defense*, and the *acclimation variation*.

### **The Scholarly Maneuver**

Anne, Eleanor, and Lydia chose to open with an aggressive move of establishing their research programs in their first years as early-career faculty. While Anne struggled to figure out how to improve her teaching of a large STEM intro course, she consistently made time for her research. She had applied for a competitive grant before she began her position at Highbury University, which she received during the winter break. She was awarded another grant at the end of her first spring semester. Anne explained, "I was super productive. I published papers. I set aside time for my research, which I did almost every day, and I made that something of a priority." Research was always an area in which Anne felt she had the most control; conducting research was something she has been "trained to do." If Anne did not like the direction of her research, she had the power to choose a new approach or project. She remarked that her success with grants and publications made her competitive on the job market: "I'm prepared, I understand how

the system works. That's why I got the job at the other institution. I was hired because of my research—it's good."

Similarly, Eleanor made time for her scholarship in her opening. While she had to deal with some challenging students in her large STEM lecture course in that first year, which diverted her attention, she also knew she needed to be proactive about starting her research program. Eleanor executed her plan the summer before she began her appointment at Pemberley College:

I got hired in July of 2014. By August or September of 2014, I had formed a new collaboration with a really good friend of mine, so it's something we had been talking about for a while, but it became real in like August and September. And then by December of that year we were off to [Europe] to collect data. And then by January of the following year we had a paper in our top journal.

This particular collaboration also received grant funding and started an entirely new research trajectory for Eleanor that was separate from her dissertation and post-doc work. She remarked, "It was something that I really started from scratch the moment I got here and it just took right off. I knew that pretty much right away. Like, I'm going to need to get some collaboration going." Eleanor understood that her strategy to create a new collaboration would be advantageous because her post-doc experience showed her that she could conduct cutting-edge scientific research at a liberal arts college. Moreover, she knew she needed to quickly establish a research project that was not dependent solely on undergraduate research assistants. She commented, "I always have one project that is almost wholly under my control, so that I know that it'll be successful."

Likewise, Lydia arrived at Netherfield College with a plan for her scholarship. She published three reviews in the fall semester and was invited to give a lecture at the institution where she received her master's degree. In the spring semester, she was

awarded a couple of grants and had chaired a panel at a major conference. She was also finishing her first book and had submitted two articles for publication in that first year. Despite the fact that Lydia was teaching new courses and dealing with challenging graduate students, she was consistently focused on her research as a tactical move for tenure. Lydia explained, “To give teaching the credit it deserves, it will suck you in whole. It will take as much time as you want to give it.” She had watched her peers let teaching take over their schedules, from course preparation to grading. Lydia commented, “You need to research. You should be making time for you and writing.” As a result, Lydia’s approach to work at Netherfield College was to use the approach that worked in graduate school while she was raising two young children. She said that “every spare minute is a minute that can be done doing something” and that “you learn the tools you need to adapt and you need the tools that you learn to succeed. A lot of that has to do with scheduling.” Her comprehensive calendar system allowed her to be productive during every minute of the day and gave her a stronger sense of control over her time.

Anne, Eleanor, and Lydia opened their games with the *scholarly maneuver*, otherwise known as prioritizing research, the area where they felt they were the strongest, at times at the expense of allocating some time towards their teaching. The three participants had experiences in graduate school or in their post-docs that increased their capacity for scholarship. Those experiences helped to develop their skills to conduct research and their confidence to establish their scholarly agendas early in their appointments. The *scholarly maneuver* is an aggressive sequence of moves, displaying the participants’ agency in intentionally choosing to focus on their research, as well as their confidence in their abilities to seize control over this aspect of their work. Their



efforts had an impact on their positions in the game, as each of them received grants or published in their first year.

### **The Classroom Defense**

Conversely, another opening move is to determine how much time each faculty task will take, and then try and balance those activities appropriately, based on the time each task requires. Try is the operative word, as the participants who opened with the *classroom defense* quickly realized that balancing teaching and research in the first year was a moving target. While Caroline only had one class to teach her first fall semester at Highbury University, she allocated most of her time to course preparation. She often questioned if she was doing the right things with regards to her teaching because she had never taught in graduate school. She talked about her thought process that first year:

I probably had some feelings of, “I don’t have enough time to get everything done that I need to get done.” I don’t have my data because I don’t have space for it right now. How do I even get back to starting on my research? Every day I’m spending, I only had to teach one course, but every day I’m spending like trying to prep madly for that course.

Between the research setback of finding a secure location of her restricted dataset, and the time Caroline devoted towards her course preparation, she could not equally balance her teaching and research. She admitted, “Once classes are over, it was like, okay—now I have the summer. I can get a little more done. I can focus and think.” Concentrating intensely on teaching the first year did have its rewards: Caroline received excellent student evaluations in all of her courses.

Maryanne had limited experience teaching in graduate school, and like Caroline, found herself spending most of her time prepping for classes, while also looking after her two children. She remembered, “I would say by mid-October I was keeping up and I was

getting stuff done, but every weekend I would just be crying or not able to take care of the kids—feeling really overwhelmed.” She confessed that she did not have a clear sense of how to reduce her prep time that first year, because she felt like reading the textbook, writing up her notes, and preparing her lectures gave her a better sense of control over her teaching. Her extensive planning came at cost, as she admitted, “I didn’t do a lot around starting new projects in the first year. I don’t think I spent a lot of time on research.” Like Caroline, Maryanne’s teaching evaluations were strong in the first year, making the time she spent on teaching worthwhile.

Jane always felt like she had a natural gift for teaching, despite not having many opportunities to develop her skills in graduate school. When she arrived at Pemberley College, she put her talent to good use immediately. She commented, “I had no concept how intense teaching here is versus other places. As the semester got going, I was excited to meet all the students and seemed to have a good relationship with them.” Still, Jane had a learning curve in her first year. The STEM introductory course she co-taught in her first semester is a pre-requisite for pre-med majors. She remarked, “It’s an intense class to begin with, with intense students, at an intense institution. It’s just pile as many intensives as you can on top of each other and that’s this class.” Despite the challenges, Jane appreciated her first year in the classroom. She commented, “I had a really great group of students my first year who were very supportive and very understanding that it was my first year. They gave me a lot of constructive feedback.” Jane decided to put most of her energy into teaching during the academic year, which she refers to as “coasting in a sort of honeymoon period” and viewed the summer months as the time to start her research program.

Caroline, Maryanne, and Jane used the *classroom defense* as their opening sequence, which prioritized teaching over other areas of faculty work. By getting a sense of their job responsibilities as a means of starting their appointments, they quickly realized how much time course preparation takes, and that teaching held them to a higher accountability threshold because they had to be prepared each week. While these participants received the extrinsic rewards of positive teaching evaluations, they also saw the intrinsic value of being strong teachers. Caroline noted that she enjoyed talking with students about social science issues because “these are things you like to study.” Maryanne agreed by saying, “It was just really fun teaching those ideas.” Jane commented, “This is a great job. I get to do what I want.” In contrast to the *scholarly maneuver*, the *classroom defense* is a reactive or more passive sequence of moves; there was less forethought or planning at the onset and more redirection on the part of the participants after they assessed what control they could exercise over their space and within the time constraints of that first year.

### **The Acclimation Variation**

The third opening move is the *acclimation variation*, a sequence of steps taken to understand the environment. The move is a variation, as opposed to a maneuver or a defense, because the way the participants engaged in these opening moves was diverse, based on their knowledge of the rules of the game and the environments where the game was played. When Emma began her first tenure-track appointment at a liberal arts college in the Midwest immediately after graduate school, she chose to focus on her scholarship. She noted, “At the beginning, I didn’t spend a lot of time prepping. Then, as I went, I spent more and more time prepping because I realized that is what I was expected to do.”

Emma admitted that at her first institution she was “not really ready for the job at all.” Her teaching evaluations were poor that first year. However, she quickly changed directions and focused on developing her teaching skills when she arrived at Pemberley College. She acknowledged, “I really focused on my teaching at the beginning. I knew that was what needed to work right away.” As a result, her evaluations slowly improved. Emma commented, “When I started here, I knew exactly what I needed to do.”

Elizabeth’s first tenure-track appointment was at a research university. While she enjoyed her colleagues and the geographic area, she was spending most of her time teaching, advising, and engaging in service activities. She admitted, “There wasn’t a lot of time for me to actually learn how to teach a course.” While Elizabeth found joy and gratification mentoring graduate students at the university, she was receiving mediocre teaching evaluations. After relocating to New England, Elizabeth spent her first year at Pemberley College trying to understand the culture of the institution and how it affected her teaching. In her first semester, one of her courses was cancelled due to low enrollment. She later realized, “It was a really big transition from going to an R1 university, where I was teaching these huge classes and where I had large enrollments, to these small, boutique classes where I actually had to hustle students.” By hustling students, Elizabeth means that as a new faculty member, she needed to introduce herself to students in order to get them to register for her courses. In that first year, Elizabeth received some “trenchant” reviews from her students as she was adjusting to the college. Her colleagues coached her into just focusing on courses that she was familiar with teaching instead of volunteering to teach new courses. Elizabeth admitted that her instinct to step in and teach new courses was a byproduct of her first tenure-track experience at a

research university, due to faculty attrition and the need for teaching coverage. Thus, in that first year, Elizabeth's moves were a dance between using the information she learned at her first institution and translating the positive aspects of that knowledge to her new and different environment.

In her opening sequence at Highbury University, Georgiana negotiated a post-doc position that would count as service work, while spending the rest of her time on course preparation and advising four social science doctoral students. She recalled, "I didn't want to come that year unless I could do a post-doc simultaneous to my first two years here. I then had to figure out actually how to make that happen." Georgiana had high expectations for herself with regards to teaching, which she quickly eased up on after the second week of that first semester. She commented, "Just trying to do so many things and realizing that I couldn't always do it to the level that it was in my head, as this beautiful, well-thought out lesson." So she adopted a mantra of "no matter what, I will know more than others in the room," as a way to come into the classroom with a plan and be compassionate with herself if the plan was not executed to the degree she would have liked. Georgiana also created a peer mentoring cohort, comprised of colleagues who started their tenure-track appointments that same year, as a way to build community. She noted that she modeled the cohort after the mentoring group in graduate school. Georgiana acknowledged, "I knew that I would need that [peer mentoring cohort] and wanted to be proactive." Between these core responsibilities and activities, Georgiana could not find time for research in the first year. She admitted, "I didn't write out my dissertation. I didn't collect new data. I really just focused on teaching and figuring this place out in terms of advising." Nevertheless, she did arrive with a plan about how she

wanted to manage her work. She commented, “I was somewhat strategic that first year, to not have too much on my plate.”

When Julia arrived at Highbury University, her plan was to dial back the intensity of her work—a counterintuitive approach to what most early-career faculty do in the first year:

My doctoral experience was incredibly research intensive. I mean, to the point where I was like, “This is not sustainable.” I mean, I could not be this level of everything that the doc program required for the rest of my life, research included. And so actually I kind of came in feeling like I have all this time and I had a course release. And in my doc program, I was simultaneously working [in the field]. I had graduate-level advisees, I was teaching, just having many different hats. And it was like now I only had two hats; I have the one class that first semester and the rest I could devote to research, so it's kind of like, “Oh, okay, I have more time, I can breathe a little bit.

With a sense of newfound space and time, Julia reflected on what she wanted to do that first year. She accepted her colleagues’ teaching resources in order to control the amount of time she spent on preparation, and quickly integrated herself into various research collaborations. Julia’s teaching evaluations were mixed, as some students commented that she appeared “arrogant and pompous,” which shocked her. Alternately, her research program was productive because she had agreed to be a part of so many collaborations. In addition, her service load was through a research center affiliated with her department, which she counts as “double duty” research and service. She noted that in the first year she was more intentional about her work and commented, “I’m finding my way, I’m finding who I am as an academic.”

Emma, Elizabeth, Georgiana, and Julia opened with the *acclimation variation*, but their sequence of moves deviated in interesting directions. Emma used her knowledge of liberal arts colleges from her first tenure-track appointment and applied it at Pemberley

College, opening with an intentional focus on her teaching. Elizabeth found that her knowledge of faculty life, informed by her first faculty position at a research university, did not necessarily help her acclimate to faculty life at Pemberley College and she was left trying to get a better understanding of her new environment during her opening. She acknowledged, “I think, initially, I came in somewhat cocky because I thought, ‘Hey, what is this place gonna teach me that I haven't learned at a big institution?’ I had my ass kicked.” Georgiana and Julia’s graduate school experiences influenced their opening moves but in divergent ways. Georgiana tried to replicate structures in her graduate program, like the peer mentoring cohort, as a way to provide greater support in a new environment. Julia backed away from the intensity of her graduate program, taking her time to feel out her surroundings.

The level of control over their space varied among the four participants, as did their accomplishments in the allotted time. Emma, Georgiana, and Julia’s opening moves were proactive and intentional with regards to their environments, while Elizabeth took a more reactive approach in understanding her broader surroundings. The results of these moves were also varied: Emma and Georgiana received positive teaching evaluations in the first year, while Elizabeth and Julia received mixed reviews. On the other hand, Julia was the only case who made headway on her research in the first year. Thus, the outcomes of using the variation acclimation in the opening can be unpredictable. Because the participants’ moves were informed by their previous environments (i.e., previous academic appointments or graduate school), and then deployed in their current environments, the role of chance or luck was emphasized more than in the other two opening repertoires.

## Opening Themes

Across the participants' experiences, opening moves were made to advance in the game; however, there was some variability with regards to the types of opening moves taken by the participants (see Figure 15). Prior experiences may serve as a possible rationale for why certain participants opened with a particular sequence of actions. Anne's two different post-docs at prestigious universities provided her with ample research training. Eleanor's post-doc at a liberal arts college gave her additional insight as to how to conduct competitive STEM research at that type of institution, particularly if the liberal arts college was well-resourced. Lydia's graduate school experience, after her advisor was denied tenure, forced her to be proactive in all aspects of her work. She commented, "I didn't realize it as a blessing at the time. I thought it was more of a curse. But it taught me to be extremely self-sufficient." One conclusion to draw from these data is that a faculty member may prioritize research, the area where there is strong interest, during the opening.

Those participants who opened with a more subtle series of moves were prompted to focus on the areas of their work where the responsibility felt imperative and critical: teaching. Caroline had never taught before, so her time was concentrated towards course preparation. Maryanne had limited instructional experience and she decided to also attend to her teaching because it was the one faculty responsibility that held her accountable each week. While Jane felt confident in her abilities as an instructor, she, too, delayed the start of her research program until the following summer because her work life was consumed with course preparation. All three participants found teaching immensely gratifying, enjoying the intrinsic rewards that complemented their extrinsic returns of



strong teaching evaluations, despite a lack of progress on their research. A second conclusion to draw from these data is that opening the game with a reactive series of moves can have favorable and unfavorable consequences.

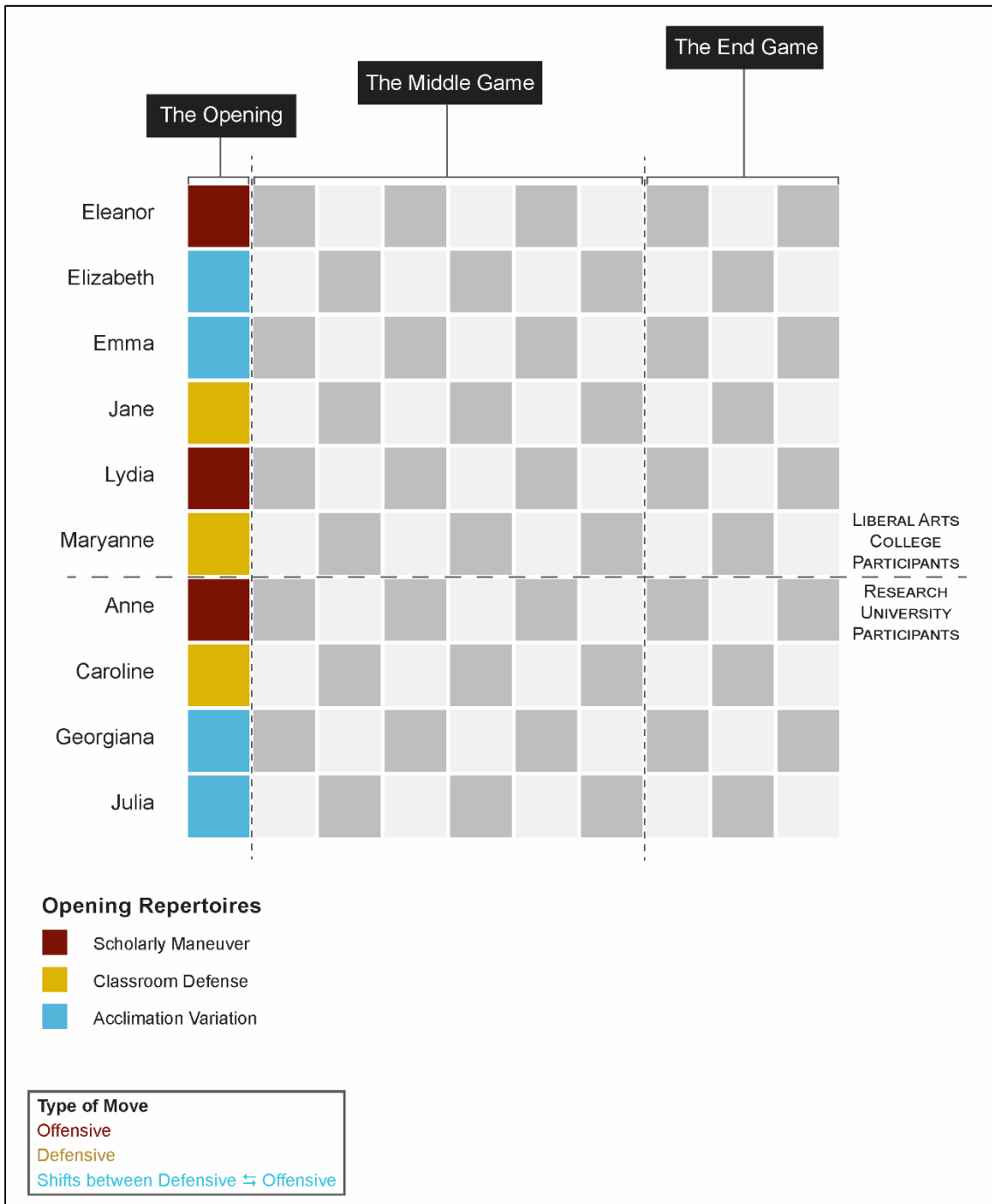


Figure 15. Participant approaches used in the opening.

Finally, some participants chose to open the game by getting a sense for their environments, the expectations put on faculty, and the resources they would need to be successful. Emma had problems with her opening sequence at her first liberal arts college because she did not prioritize the faculty area deemed to be the most important by her colleagues; she took that knowledge and applied it to her new surroundings at Pemberley College by focusing on improving her teaching. Elizabeth spent her first year reacting to the faculty and student cultures at Pemberley College and trying to understand why it was so vastly different from her previous experience at a research university. Georgiana quickly asserted her needs at Highbury University based on the supports available to her in graduate school; she negotiated a post-doc position and developed a peer mentoring cohort, and eased up on the expectations she placed on herself with regards to teaching and advising. Julia took a balanced approach to understanding her environment by signing on to collaborative research projects as soon as she arrived to Highbury University, while simultaneously taking a step back from working at the emphatic pace that she was accustomed to in graduate school. A third conclusion to draw from these data is that opening the game with a sequence that is, essentially, a delayed action based on gathering more information before advancing, can be beneficial most of the time, as was displayed by the proactive moves of Emma, Georgiana, and Julia. However, the same approach has the potential to go awry; Elizabeth's use of the *acclimation variation*—applying what she learned at her research university to her liberal arts college—resulted in a loss of time and the need to reorient herself. Thus, the *acclimation variation* is most efficient when the knowledge gained from previous environments mirrors the current environment.

Despite the differences in opening sequences, one common aspect of all opening moves is the advancement of the chess pieces, which in the game of tenure, signify the positioning actions of early-career faculty. This advancement was informed by choice—the autonomy to choose what task the participants’ focused on and their technique to accomplish the task. The participants’ use of autonomy (which comprises one component of intrinsic motivation) and agency to intentionally start their research programs, improve their teaching, or integrate themselves in their environments, were three moves that increased the participants’ control over their work and positively position them for tenure.

### **The Middle Game**

The true magic of chess happens in the middle game. Time and space are of equal importance, as players wage the largest battles and fight to gain control. The middle game demands creativity from the players, who must evaluate their standing in any given moment, identify the strong points, and acknowledge how the weaknesses came to be. As Znosko-Borovsky (1980) noted, “It would be of little use merely to acknowledge that our position is inferior and to take the necessary steps to defend it: we must strive to the utmost to transform the position, so that its weakness may become a strength” (p. 19).

With regards to the game of tenure, the middle game would be the period between the start of the second year and the end of the fourth year of a tenure-track appointment. In contrast to the advanced preparation for the opening, intuition directs the middle game. For early-career faculty, this phase is a time to assess their positions, where they are in executing their overall strategy and achieving the objective, how much they could logistically accomplish in the time frame on their own (i.e., their strong points in the

game), and where do they seek assistance to be successful (i.e., developing a weak position into a strength).

Intuition is most helpful after players have a general sense of their standing. All of the participants in this study noted the usefulness of their “mini-tenure” review after their completion of their third year at their institutions. During those reviews, participants remarked on areas where their committees suggested they make improvements. Anne said that in her letter from the Provost she was told to “work on her teaching,” while Maryanne’s letter suggested she had “done too much service.” These comments informed Anne and Maryanne’s understanding of their status in these areas of faculty work. Likewise, the “mini-tenure” review has the potential to reinforce a player’s strong points in the game. Georgiana’s feedback was that she could consider going up for tenure early based on her work during the first three years. Julia acknowledged the importance of the review: “I was pretty grateful for the process, actually, because at other institutions where like all of a sudden you're like poof, up for tenure and you don't know where you stand or what you're doing.” Thus the “mini-tenure” review provided a benchmark of each participant’s status in the game, apprising them of areas where they needed to develop and areas where they needed to continue to exert their power.

Tactics, the short-term calculated sequences of moves, are particularly valuable in the middle game when faced with an obstacle or a weak position on the board. As with any action, sometimes the tactics fail and players must recover and redirect. Similar to the opening repertoires, the middle game tactics can be proactive or reactive, depending the players’ positions on the board and the need to increase control. In this section, I describe the proactive and reactive tactics used by the ten participants during the middle game,

which include the *service sacrifice*, the *mastery combination*, *network development*, *zwischenzug*, the *balance blockade*, and the *satisfaction attack*.

### **The Service Sacrifice**

In chess, a sacrifice is when a player voluntarily gives up pieces in an effort to gain control or a greater advantage over the board (Eade, 2005) and is a defensive move. Analogous to a chess sacrifice, early-career faculty sacrifice time to engage in service, often the most overlooked and undervalued aspect of faculty life. Committee work, student advising, sitting on professional boards and associations, giving public lectures, and working with the local community are service activities that detract attention from teaching and research. Moreover, service is difficult to measure with regards to tenure and promotion; for example, how does the personnel committee qualify or define excellence in service?

Interestingly, the participants from liberal arts colleges were protected from service by their department chairs and colleagues. While they were expected to do some sort of service work, the amount was minimal and often involved sitting on departmental or programmatic committees. Maryanne was the only outlier, as she was asked to chair a consortial committee and participate in an institutional study on climate change activities at Pemberley College because of her disciplinary expertise. At the time, her service opportunities appeared strategic, as both activities would increase Maryanne's visibility across campus. But agreeing to both appointments had negative impacts on Maryanne's trajectory. She explained:

In my third year review letter, the Provost actually said that I had done too much service and be careful from overextending myself, which is kind of ridiculous because I was asked to be on the study group on climate change, so it was unclear.

Now that she switched to a half-time position, Maryanne reduced her service obligations and sits on one low-commitment committee and advises four students. She explained, “I don't think people expect me to do too much service. Now I kind of like just being me and just doing the teaching and research.”

While the other five participants at liberal arts colleges were minimally participating in service, they were tactical about choosing their activities. Eleanor rationalized:

I don't get evaluated on how good I do in my committee meetings—no one cares about that. I think one of the best pieces of advice that I got was—you have to do service, but make sure that you choose things that you really enjoy doing.

For Eleanor, sacrificing her time was worth it if she was supporting students who are underrepresented in STEM through her science center's diversity committee. Jane, another STEM faculty member at Pemberley College, also opted to sit on a similar committee. She commented, “It's work that I feel is meaningful.”

Lydia and Emma listened to their chairs' recommendations and kept low profiles in their service activities. Lydia's chair appointed her onto two committees every academic year and those committees have not taken much of her time. Despite not getting the choice to select her service responsibilities, Lydia commented, “Committee work is an interesting thing” because it gave her another view about the politics at Netherfield College. Emma, too, listened to her chair and participated in limited service during her first few years at Oak. However, in her fourth year she decided to take on more service outside of her program by agreeing to sit on an advisory committee of one of the college's global centers. As she explained, “I think it's strategically a good thing to reach out beyond my field. That's why I'm doing this—trying to be known by more people on

campus.” Emma realized that making contacts across campus would help her later in her career, particularly after she gets tenure, as a way to increase her stature at the institution.

Elizabeth’s approach to service was to decline every service request, following the advice of her colleagues. She admitted:

I pretty much say “no” to everything. On one level, it’s kind of problematic because I have less of a sense of the administration and how it works, the day-to-day stuff. But on another level, I’ve made a lot more progress on my research.

What Elizabeth may have sacrificed in institutional knowledge, she gained with increasing her research productivity. The one service activity she took on was advising numerous independent studies. She explained, “It’s a really great way to pilot my own research. I usually don’t take on students who aren’t doing something that I’m interested in.” So while that type of service work can carry a heavy load, she rationalized advising the independent studies as a way to help her with publications.

All six liberal arts participants agreed that first-year advising was the most difficult and exhausting service activity they were required to do. Unlike advising students who are majoring in the participants’ fields of study, first-year students typically have not declared a major and need assistance in course registration and adjusting to college life. Lydia refers to first-year advising as “life coach time.” Emma views the responsibility as “doing a lot of babysitting.” Eleanor was probably the most vocal about her frustration with the task:

Advising is the worst part of my job. I really hate it. You can look in the catalog and see what courses you want to take, why do I have to meet with you? And it’s not just like once; they have this whole structure of like, “You have to meet as a group. You have to buy pizza for the students. You have to be their friend.” And that is just a total waste of my time.

Jane, Elizabeth, and Maryanne felt that they were not the most effective in their advising role during their first few years because they were also trying to learn about the institution. Elizabeth summarized the challenge with being just as new as the first year students:

I just feel like I can't really give them good advice. I'm really junior. I do not know what's going on at the other departments. I feel like that's really, really pointless. Half the time they know more of what's going on than I do.

First-year advising was time intensive with very little fulfillment for the majority of the liberal arts faculty participants, as they did not feel like their talents and knowledge were best used in this role; as such, the responsibility had the potential to weaken their positions because of the time it demanded. Conversely, the six participants acknowledged that they enjoyed advising students in the major, as those conversations felt rewarding and that their expertise added value to the discussions.

The four faculty from Highbury University did not receive the same service protections from their departments. However, they used their *service sacrifice* to help their positions in getting tenure with regards to research or as a way to advocate for their needs. Anne opted to sit on five committees during her first few years at the university so she could learn more about the tenure process and have control over graduate student selection and the department curriculum. She remarked, "So it wasn't quite as bad, but there was a reason for everything that I was a part of." She learned how faculty scholarship and teaching evaluations were evaluated for tenure, how to propose a new course she wanted to teach, and how to select quality graduate students to work in her lab.



Because of the relationships Georgiana established through her post-doc experience, she counted her applied research in those clinical settings as part of her service work. The peer mentoring cohort she formed in her first year counts as service because it became an established committee of which she is the chair. She commented, “I’ve been able to balance a manageable amount of college and department level service and stick to the things that really matter to me so that it doesn’t even feel like service.” For Georgiana, her service is a continuation of her opening sequence.

Julia, too, combines her service responsibilities with her research projects. Her service activities included reviewing manuscripts for journals, sitting on an awards committee for a research article of the year, and working on a task force to develop research and assessment standards for her discipline. She explained:

And it was about a year-long process to develop this guide in how to do this work. That’s been amazing to be able to put my name to that...and to be offered first author for the research standards...For me, that’s ideal service. That it’s a service component, but it’s also tying into this greater research goals as well.

For Julia, the sacrifice of her time has meaning *and* contributes to her position for tenure.

While Caroline has also found that using service as a conduit for her research is helpful, she chose to refrain from combining the two areas. Caroline’s graduate school mentors advised her to be a panel organizer at a professional conference as a way to network with scholars who could be potential external reviewers of her tenure file. But Caroline finds that type of service emotionally and physically taxing. She rationalized:

It’s much more involved, and I’m just not that much of a people person. It sounds crazy, but it gives me like a little bit of anxiety that the day won’t go perfect or like, “How many people are going to actually show up even though I publicized this immensely?” It’s way too heavy for the benefit.

She is also in a precarious position of having to do service in two departments because of her dual appointment. And while she was encouraged to do less service in her mid-tenure review, she does not feel like she can heed that advice. She lamented:

I personally feel bad, and even if they [her chairs] say, "Yes, you can say no," I feel like if I do, they're like, "We didn't mean you should say no," right? I feel a pressure, and because of it, I think I do way more service than a lot of people.

Service is a major sacrifice for Caroline because of her obligations to both departments. And while it might be more advantageous for her to combine her service with her research goals, she chose to engage in activities that take less energy and commitment as a way for advocating for her needs. Because of her service commitments, Caroline found herself in a tough position in that she had to make a move, but none of her options were ideal.

Unlike the liberal arts college participants, the four female early-career faculty at Highbury University advised students who were majoring in their disciplines. Anne, Georgiana, Julia, and Caroline said they generally enjoyed advising and that they primarily mentored graduate students. Perhaps an obstacle unique to advising graduate students is being able to coach them in conducting research when they are either demotivated or lack the capacity to fully form research projects. Georgiana commented:

So it's as much helping them get inspired by something related to research, as it is helping with the writing and study design aspect. And that balance has, I think, made it even more challenging. I've only recently been able to label that aspect of the challenge. I was just like, this sucks. This is so hard. It's so much time.

The research university participants acknowledged that it is very difficult to drop advisees at Highbury University and that the responsibility of graduate advising is onerous, even if it can be, at times, rewarding.

While early-career faculty sacrifice time to engage in service, they may also find benefits—extrinsic or intrinsic value—in doing so. Maryanne, Emma, Lydia, Elizabeth, Anne, Georgiana, and Julia took on service activities that would complement their positions for tenure; they used the extra time afforded to them from engaging in minimal service and put it towards their research, they used their service assignments as a way to boost their reputations across campus, or they combined their service and research activities. Eleanor and Jane chose service roles that were intrinsically rewarding by increasing the pipeline of underrepresented students studying STEM at Pemberley College. Caroline decided that if she had to engage in service, she was going to advocate for her needs by opting for service commitments that will take limited energy and organization. However, none of the participants could escape the time-intensive aspects of student advising. While the type of benefit from the sacrifices are different across the participants' experiences, all ten faculty gained an advantage in their games through their service work by turning a weak position into a strong point.

### **The Mastery Combination**

In chess, a combination is a sequence of moves in which a player first gives up pieces in order to achieve some sort of gain through future moves. Similarly, the *mastery combination* is a tactic that ultimately allows participants to increase their control over their teaching by first allocating time towards developing their skills, shifting a potential weakness into a strength. Though the forfeit of time is present in both the *service sacrifice* and the *mastery combination*, there is a difference between the two tactics: the gain achieved through the *combination* takes more time to come to fruition. Mastery over

a task is a component of intrinsic motivation, in that an individual holds a belief that there is a possibility to grow and get better at a particular activity.

### **Surrendering Time in Order to Improve**

Participants chose to spend time improving their teaching skills by partaking in professional development activities. Through their teaching centers, seven participants requested mid-semester assessments, a process in which a teaching center staff member collects feedback from students in a particular class as a formative evaluation of teaching. The participants' reviews of this service varied: some felt like the mid-semester assessment did not provide enough guidance in how to improve, while others found the process incredibly useful.

Anne, Jane, and Emma thought the mid-semester assessment offered limited data and no clear plan on to move forward. Anne appreciated that the staff synthesized the data and attempted to give her advice, but she remarked, "It couldn't really solve my problems." Jane also had mixed reviews about the service and commented, "I didn't feel like there was a lot of really robust things I could to change and improve the course. I don't know if that means that actually I'm doing an okay job or if they [the students] just didn't say anything." While Emma requested mid-semester assessments at her liberal arts college in the Midwest and at Pemberley College, she did not find them particularly constructive. She explained, "I think the reason why it's not very useful is because the students will not say up front what's wrong to someone [teaching center staff] that they don't know."

Eleanor, Julia, Georgiana, and Maryanne had the opposite experience: their students gave some honest feedback on their courses, though these experiences occurred

primarily in the opening. Eleanor, who had a very challenging class of students in her initial year, commented that in her first mid-semester assessment, “They basically just complained about me the whole time.” That experience did not deter Eleanor for requesting the service again the following year for the same class. She explained, “It was to make sure that things had improved. And it looked like they had.” Julia noted that whenever she taught a class for the first time, she requested a mid-semester assessment. Her conversations with the teaching center staff about the data helped her consider how to make thoughtful changes to her courses. She remarked, “It [mid-semester assessment] deeply changed my whole philosophy.” Georgiana concurred and commented, “I made some tweaks or changes to the class, based on that feedback, both in the moment, but even more so, longer term incorporating into that syllabus later on.” Maryanne still has the data from her mid-semester assessments that were collected in her first year, which has been most helpful to her throughout the middle game. She remarked, “Now I do that [mid-semester assessment] myself just with a handout in the middle week of class. I’ll have the students fill out what’s going well, what could be improved, or what would you like to see change.”

Lydia, Caroline, and Elizabeth told me they had not requested a mid-semester assessment during their appointments for various reasons. Netherfield College does not offer the service, but Lydia acknowledged that she does not usually turn to anyone for teaching advice. She confessed, “This is probably not the best thing. I am very independent in that way.” Caroline abstained from the service because she did not think it was necessary at this point in her appointment. She commented, “It’s kind of been on my like possibility list, but I think I’d be more encouraged to do it if my evaluations weren’t

good.” Elizabeth, who was actively trying to improve her teaching at Pemberley College admitted she had not requested the assessment due to her own oversight.

Besides requesting a mid-semester assessment, a few participants chose to spend time attending events hosted by their institutions’ teaching center staff. Caroline participated in workshops and requested individual consultations, in which she learned about various instructional strategies and ways to incorporate more innovative methods into teaching. She explained, “Rather than spinning my wheels and saying, ‘How should I come up with creative ways to introduce this topic?’ Well, why not talk to the people who know something about it?” Similarly, Elizabeth looked for workshops that would help develop her skillset in addressing diversity and equity issues in the classroom, commenting, “I find it really difficult to navigate the students' anger.” Julia echoed Elizabeth’s interest in learning more about inclusive teaching and chose to attend workshops with an equity focus at Highbury University. She remarked, “The things that I have attended and been really be helpful have mostly been around that sort of diversity and social justice and addressing needs of different types of students.” While Elizabeth and Julia had teaching experience prior to their appointments, the skills needed to be able to facilitate critical or contentious discussions in the classroom was a relatively new demand placed on early-career faculty. Eleanor selected the teaching workshops she attended based on the topic and if the content is interesting to her.

Lydia, Emma, Jane, and Maryanne chose to refrain from attending the center workshops on a consistent basis. Emma commented, “I really would like to attend, someday, in my career. When I have time, but I don't have time right now.” Jane and Maryanne both acknowledged that like Eleanor, they will go to a workshop if the topic is

intriguing. Jane said, “I try to keep an eye on what talks are being given and if it's something that sounds really relevant and interesting, I'll go to those. I've used them [teaching center] much less in the last couple of years.” Maryanne has attended more workshops than Emma or Jane, but her assessment was: “It's variable, but sometimes they're pretty helpful.”

### **Using Their New Skills to Advance in the Game**

A few years into the middle game, many of the participants expressed their comfort and confidence with teaching, eventually turning their positions into strong points. When Elizabeth started teaching at Pemberley College, she felt like she was already exhibiting the best practices in teaching that she was learning in professional development workshops, but her student evaluations were not strong. She explained, “I think one of the things that happened is that I actually started thinking about how to present this material in a way that's adjustable and still formative and where I'm not dumbing it down. I think I'm just becoming a better teacher, you know?” By changing the way she was organizing her courses and revising her syllabi, Elizabeth was able to get the “stellar” reviews she always wanted and develop her aplomb as a teacher.

Julia, too, has adjusted her teaching based on initial experiences and conversations with teaching center staff. She remarked, “The first time I taught [a particular course], I've made a list of all like the “don't dos” for anybody else who's teaching the course, who might be teaching someday. Like, here's what I found that didn't work, here's what worked.” Julia's negative experiences informed her future actions in the classroom. Julia commented that with experience, the imposter syndrome began to fade away. She noted, “I'm at a place where I'm like, “I'm really good at this job,

I'm really good at what I'm doing and I feel especially good about teaching and the way I offer it." Similarly, once Emma felt like she had a better handle on her teaching, and started to receive positive evaluations from her students, she began to take more risks. She commented, "I feel like my approach to teaching changes all the time. I feel more confident now, and I feel like I'm less needing to perform. I can go deeper into topics, even in intro courses. I just feel more comfortable."

While Georgiana, Caroline, Jane, and Maryanne received strong evaluations, they always expressed a desire to improve their teaching and strengthen their positions, changing this tactic from a defensive to an offensive move. The four participants noted that their confidence in teaching was nurtured throughout the middle game. Georgiana was nominated by her students for a teaching award and that they often told her how meaningful her courses were to them. Over the years Caroline observed that the prep was "not as stressful as it was in the beginning," even if she must develop new courses each year, because she knows how to adapt to new challenges. She said, "The teaching is smoother and I feel more confident." Jane felt like she always had a "knack" for teaching, but even she admitted that her comfort level increased because of her years of practice. In her fifth year, she was tasked with developing two new classes; while she said the process was time intensive, she confessed, "I have a much clearer vision of what I want and how I want to teach it. I guess more confidence in myself to sort of map that out and make sure it happens." Finally, Maryanne echoed many of the sentiments expressed by Georgiana, Caroline, and Jane. She commented, "I think now I've been through [teaching] enough times that I had more confidence."



Anne and Eleanor explicitly mentioned wishing they felt confident teaching large classes more than they do. Anne noted that the smaller classes were nicer to instruct because it was easier to interact with the students and their “abilities and interests.” But the larger classes continue to be a challenge for Anne. She explained, “There's an expectation, and just exhaustion of standing up in front of a class and trying to make every day entertaining. There's definitely enjoyable moments about it, but, yeah, so maybe I'm slowly learning to enjoy it.” Despite the tribulations with teaching these larger courses, Anne acknowledged, “Every time you teach, hopefully you get a little bit better.” Eleanor concurred this sentiment about large courses, particularly around classroom management. She said, “What I'm doing in large classes that I don't enjoy is sort of standing there with no one interacting with me. And I don't know a way around that. I don't have the skills yet.” In smaller classes, Eleanor feels like she has better control because it is easier to form relationships with fewer students. She explained, “I also think a lot of it is comfort. You know, the more times I teach something, or just the more times I'm in the classroom with these particular students.”

If the participants' confidence in their ability to teach was low at the start of the middle game, they were likely playing from a weak position. By using the *mastery combination*, the participants had an opportunity to shift their situation; they were able to win a short-term gain by developing their knowledge of teaching through mid-semester assessments (immediate feedback on their teaching before students complete their evaluations) or participation in teaching workshops (learning best practices, techniques, or instructional strategies). For a majority of the participants, the use of this tactic resulted in the extrinsic reward of stronger teaching evaluations from their students,

contributing to the overall strategy of demonstrating excellence in teaching. The participants who used this tactic also became more confident in their abilities, thereby increasing intrinsic motivation to grow and develop as teachers with the greater purpose of inspiring and supporting students. Lydia was the only exception and the only case who did not use this tactic, most likely because she felt “confident in the material” and felt comfortable, “experimenting in the classroom.”

### **Network Development**

After the third full year in their appointments, all ten participants had their mid-tenure review (also known as a “mini tenure” review), which was a helpful gauge of their progress towards demonstrating excellence in teaching, research, and service. Leading into the mid-tenure review, and certainly after the review, many of the participants chose to pursue the tactic of *network development*. In chess, the process of “development” means to move the chess pieces into advantageous positions in the most efficient manner as a way of gaining control over the game (Wolff, 1997). Most of the participants used this tactic to increase their productivity for research.

Lydia was always a solitary scholar; in fact, most of her opening was spent working on solo-authored grant proposals and reviews. While she considers herself pretty independent and in control of her research, she did develop a network of informal mentors at Netherfield College who provide advice on her progress. Lydia does not necessarily need these mentors to increase her capacity and access to resources, but she does use them as internal evaluators to measure her trajectory. One informal mentor in her department, her “technical advisor,” has been helpful in providing feedback on her tenure case with regards to publications and grants; Lydia uses his advice as a means to

defend her space. She explained, “He's been my gauge, in terms of just whether or not, I'm doing what I need to do.” Her other mentor, a senior female faculty member, tries to encourage Lydia to ease up on her work. Lydia remarked, “She is constantly lecturing me that I am doing too much. She'll just sit me down and she'll look at me and she'll just be like, ‘Can you handle it? Are you working too hard? Should you take a step back?’” Lydia values her mentor’s advice; she reminds Lydia to engage in some self-care while she is focused on her position in the game.

When Anne could not get her research lab running effectively at Highbury University, she accessed her network at her post-doc institution in order to use their resources and continue with her data analysis. She commented, “In my postdoc, I at least had that affiliation for a year, maybe a little bit longer, so I was continuing to my research. I'm sure other faculty didn't have that luxury of having an Ivy League school where they could use their systems for free.” Anne tapped into her network as a way to continue her rate of productivity while she faced the obstacle of working with the facilities at Highbury University.

Those participants who used the opening as a way to develop their teaching abilities or allocate their time to teaching, turned their focus to research in the middle game. Caroline’s networks, both at Highbury University and off campus, have helped her strengthen her research agenda. She collaborated with two female faculty in her graduate program on a paper that was published in a highly-reputable journal. Her mentor outside of the institution encouraged a new partnership with other Highbury University colleagues. Caroline acknowledged:

I think the collaborative projects are the ones that do actually get out the door because we push each other and when you're telling someone you'll get them something, you get it. And then your own stuff, you kind of go, "Okay, well, let me get to this first." The collaborative projects are the ones that are sort of the furthest along.

Caroline strengthened her research network through her participation in an internal fellowship program, meeting colleagues across the Highbury University campus, who offered substantive feedback on her grant proposal and research project. Developing her networks fulfilled a research need for Caroline, strengthening her overall position.

It took until the fourth year for Jane to realize she needed to move on her research. The "honeymoon period" of teaching quickly faded away. She remarked, "The realization of tenure is not imminent, but looming. I need to get something done. That was when I started really feeling the pressure of being successful in terms of research." Because she enjoyed interacting with students so much in the classroom, she initially welcomed those collaborations in her research lab. But Jane's research is more advanced than the research undergraduate students are accustomed to, and doing the work on her own would have taken too much time, so she quickly moved to develop a network of research colleagues. She started by emailing faculty at a nearby research university who conduct similar research:

I'm not shy about just finding resources and asking for help when I need it. I was really nervous to meet them, but then most of them were so nice, so friendly, and so supportive. It's been really great and they've then included me in things from over there. It's just been huge for me.

Jane also increased her research volume by working with another STEM colleague at Pemberley College and hopes to have another manuscript published in the following year.

Like Jane, Maryanne found herself emphasizing her research program towards the latter half of her middle game with the help of network. After a few false starts and some struggles to focus on the work, she signed on to a collaboration with a colleague in her social sciences department at Pemberley College. Not only did this collaboration produce a publication, but Maryanne also developed new skills as a researcher. She commented, “I learned a lot because it was a different methodology than I usually learn.” While some of the partners in her network have been frustrating, including her recent work with another researcher who is not an academic and a poor communicator, she continues to see collaborations as her move towards demonstrating excellence in research. Her personnel committee already commented on her collaborations as having a positive effect on her research reputation. She remarked, “In my reappointment letter after my third year review, they mentioned something about co-authoring with people that I met at conferences and that it ‘reflects well on my status in the field.’”

Emma came to Pemberley College with a plan to develop her teaching skills; only later in the game did she return to advancing her status as a researcher. Her personnel committee does not view research collaborations favorably, as many faculty on the committee are from fields where solo-authored work is esteemed. They have encouraged Emma to be the only author on her scholarship. As such, Emma views *network development* differently than her peers; in fact, after participating in a national faculty development program, Emma realized that she needed to diversify her research network and think of resources outside of academic scholars. She explained:

What the [program] has helped me to do also was identify places where I need help and ways to get help. There are things that take me a lot of time that I've decided to outsource for the sake of time. For instance, I've hired a statistical consultant, because statistics is not my forte, and it would take me lots of time. Also, I have hired an editor, because I'm a second-language English speaker, and my English is not perfect. I can pay someone to help me with that, so I'm just doing it.

By adding a methodologist and an editor to her network, Emma increased her efficiency to submit manuscripts for publication and gain an upper hand in her research trajectory.

Elizabeth considers herself a natural collaborator. She credits her “scholarly friendships” as the primary catalyst for her research success, many of whom are outside of Pemberley College. She remarked:

I don't think I could have done this alone, and I'm not just saying that to get some kind of weird brownie points with people. I really do think I'm the product of a lot of good people who took interest in the work I did and also helped me with it, shared their contacts, were willing to do research for me free of charge.

Of course, Elizabeth had obstacles with her networks: she had a rather turbulent collaboration with a colleague and friend on a co-authored book. Despite that difficulty, Elizabeth views her network as the fuel that pushes forward her research agenda. She talks of mentors—senior and junior faculty—who consistently share scholarship opportunities. She explained, “I have been lucky in my friendships. My friend, she looks out for me like no one's business. Whenever there's an opportunity to present my research she's like, ‘Hey, do you want to go?’ I'm like, ‘Sure!’”

Georgiana is a builder of structures and one of those structures was the relationships she formed through her clinical post-doc she negotiated for in the opening. And while she feels supported in her research, she did realize during the middle game that she had a “serious void” of writing mentors. She pursued a network of disciplinary colleagues from other institutions, whom Georgiana met at “a nerd summer camp,” and

created a writing accountability group. She said, “We get to have a call every other week with each other,” in which they provide feedback on manuscript drafts and strategize submitting their work to various journals.

Eleanor and Julia did not use the *network development* tactic in the middle game because they were able to tap into research networks during the opening. Granted, Eleanor took a more aggressive approach to creating her research network, while Julia entered into collaborations established by her departmental colleagues. Julia had noted, “I think in terms of my output it wouldn't be what it is at all if I was going at everything solo... to be able to walk into a place like this, that has such a known program, and ride coattails a little bit.” By the middle game, Julia decided she needed to become less dependent on her network and pursue her own research projects. She acknowledged, “Having my CV actually just grow and grow and grow and to know that I have all of this stuff that's mine, that I believe in, that has gotten sort of been...lower on the priority.” Julia's lack of first-author status on her publications was a “wake-up call” and the catalyst for her to proactively prioritize her own research.

*Network development* was used by eight participants to advance their research in the middle game because of the immediate gain of additional publications or grants. The tactic also helped them defend control over their research spaces and strengthened their overall position. One potential rationale why this tactic was deployed in the middle game is due to timing. By the second, third, or fourth year of an appointment, the participants had started to develop their research reputations on their campuses and in their fields by meeting other scholars at conferences, all of which were potential future collaborators. Eleanor and Julia—exceptions to this rationale—had either formed their research network

prior to starting their appointments, or were immediately welcomed into a research network upon arrival at their institutions.

### **Zwischenzug**

The German term *zwischenzug*, which translates to “intermediate move,” is a tactic players use to change a particular situation to their advantage (Wolff, 1997). In this scenario, the player is expected by her opponent to play a particular move, but instead, the player makes a different move that poses an immediate threat to the opponent, who counters. The player *then* makes the expected move. *Zwischenzug*, in the game of tenure, is the participants’ manipulation of time. Typically, the appointment of a tenure-track faculty member—otherwise known as the probationary period—is six years. In that timeframe, faculty are expected to teach, research, and serve. Yet, many of the participants were able to influence their timeframes and subsequently, their responsibilities, through different methods.

The first method arose from changing institutions during the probationary period. Emma, Elizabeth, and Anne all took jobs at new institutions. Emma was able to carry some of her time from her previous institution where she worked for four years and decided to go up for tenure after her fourth year at Pemberley College. Elizabeth, who spent three years at her research university prior to Pemberley College, decided not to go up early. In fact, she acknowledges that the position at Pemberley helped her gain time with regards to research. She explained:



In some respects I would say that Pemberley College saved me. If I had done my third year review at [her research university], I probably would have gotten a big slap on the wrist, and they would have told me, "You need to publish." A lot of my stuff is in the pipeline, but these were big projects. A lot of them are coming to fruition now. I honestly think that I probably would have gotten tenure, mostly because my department really liked me and I have interesting projects. But I think it would have been an uphill slog.

Conversely, Elizabeth's "mini-tenure" review at Pemberley College was incredibly positive and she remarked that she has three more years to publish another book.

Anne spent three years at Highbury University and then moved to another research university in the southwest. After working at her new institution for one year, she inquired as to whether she could go up early for tenure, since she was able to carry her three years of work from Highbury University. She said, "I'm hoping still, I might still push them to try and go up [for tenure] early, but it's basically according to them. It's "accelerated" because I haven't been at [the institution] for the entire tenure process. For all intents and purposes, it will be a normal tenure time." One of the reasons why she was discouraged from going up early was her limited record of teaching at the new institution. She elaborated, "It's not about publications or my stature in the field or grants, so that's just a matter of time and effort."

The second method to manipulate the tenure timeline was to request a semester-long or a year-long research leave during the probationary period. A research leave, otherwise known as a research-intensive semester, releases the participants from their teaching responsibilities (and in some instances from advising, service, and other departmental responsibilities) so they can focus solely on their research. While Elizabeth felt that she was ultimately successful in using her time effectively (she was able to

gather data by collaborating with other colleagues), Maryanne admitted that the leave was frustrating because of how it changed her workflow. She explained:

I think one of the biggest problems was the lack of structure from going to having regular teaching and research, to doing all research. I think another problem is that I was having some trouble focusing on my research and moving ahead. But then really a big factor was a class that I needed to prepare for the following spring was kind of hanging over my head and I wasn't getting it done.

Maryanne's experience reflects that the concentrated time for research could potentially have negative effects of overall productivity. Lydia opted to take a full-year of research leave from Netherfield College. She was awarded a grant to help supplement the leave, and had been living remotely at her research sites with her family during our conversations. The research she conducted will eventually be made into a future book, of which two presses have already expressed interest.

Georgiana and Julia also opted to take their leaves in their fourth years of their appointments. While Georgiana acknowledged that she really enjoys teaching, the research leave opened her eyes to how she allocates her time. She said:

I had a research intensive semester last fall, and had mixed feelings about it. It was kinda like, maybe I'll miss teaching. But the amount that you can do in a semester, when you don't have to teach or go to meetings, is incredible.

Julia also expressed reservations about her research leave, as she feeds off of the interactions she has with other people. She was worried that she would not feel as energized without teaching and advising. But in actuality, she acknowledged that the research leave had forced her to become more structured about how she does her work and to decline requests for collaboration because of her research priorities. She commented, "Now that I've been submitting articles, identifying the grants, and getting closer to that, that I've been, 'Ah, okay here's the reward for saying no to some things and

if I hadn't done that then I definitely wouldn't have the time for this.'" For Georgiana and Julia, the research leaves almost created a timeless space for them to increase their productivity.

Finally, three liberal arts college participants combined their researches leaves with parental leaves. Emma took her parental leave when she was at her previous liberal arts college, which she then followed with a research leave. She said, "It was when I was on maternity leave that I applied for this job [at Pemberley College], and then I accepted while I was on [research leave]." Emma was incredibly unhappy at her previous institution, and after three years of stress and anxiety, she used her year-long leave to find a better work environment.

Eleanor, who recently returned from a semester of parental leave followed by a semester of research leave, told me about how she is thinking about handling her tenure timeline. She explained:

I could actually have two years of extension. One of them I have to decide on now, whether I want to take it or not, the [research leave] one you have to decline pretty quickly or they automatically give it to you. The one for having a baby you don't have to decline until right before you go up for tenure, which is good. It's basically like you have to decline it by March if you're going up for tenure in the fall.

When I asked Eleanor if she knew what she was going to do she told me, "I have a strategy." She was certain she would decline the first one afforded by her research leave, but take the other year-long extension because of her parental leave. She elaborated:

This year has been a bit of a dip in my productivity. So I'm going to hold the 'baby one' in my back pocket and then if I'm in good shape in March before I'm scheduled to go up for tenure, I'll decline that one too, and if not, I'll take it.

Even though Eleanor has a strategy, she does not feel like it is really going to help her.

She told me that her personnel committee will still look at how much time she *had* [my

emphasis] irrespective as to whether she took parental leave. In other words, she feels like her committee would still expect her to publish a paper each year, even on the year that she was on parental leave. She commented, “It's such a weird game... I don't know why they technically give you those [leaves] and then count them against you, it's very strange.”

Jane's first parental leave was in the third year of the appointment, which added a single year to her tenure clock. She followed her parental leave with a semester of research leave, which began her fourth year at Pemberley College. Now pregnant with her second child, Jane will add an additional year to her timeline. She explained:

Now I'm kind of trying to use this window of time before the baby comes to get data so that afterwards I have it there and I can try to get the next paper out so that I can feel better about my progress towards tenure.

Jane often feels guilty about saying no to student requests to work with her on research. While she knows the collaborations will not help her, she has a sense of obligation to the students to give them quality research experiences. But with her pregnancy, she feels more empowered to decline student inquiries and increase the time and attention she allocates towards her scholarship.

One note of clarification with regards to parental leave and research leave: While the participants requested a research leave to have dedicated time to work on their scholarship, the purpose of taking parental leave is, of course, not to find additional time to work on research. But taking parental leave does afford the participants the option to extend their tenure timeline, offering an additional year in which they *may* concentrate on their research. For the liberal arts college participants, taking research leave intentionally

manipulates the timeline because they have the possibility of adding a single year to their probationary period.

By using the tactic of *zwischenzug*, the participants were able to make an intermediate move in the middle game—manipulating time in ways that prove to be most beneficial to their needs and positions. Some participants tried to accelerate their time to get closer towards achieving the objective of tenure, while other participants attempted to prolong their timeline as a way to better position themselves for the end game. With the exception of Anne, the participants' approaches to control their timeline was informed by their research programs and the desire to increase the number of publications. For Maryanne, the leave was not what she expected and actually felt like the dedicated time to research was not helpful in strengthening her position in the game.

### **The Balance Blockade**

Every participant acknowledged that throughout the opening and the beginning of the middle game, they felt like they did nothing but work: preparing for classes, grading, meetings, advising, and trying to start their research programs. They all noted that they lacked balance between their professional and personal lives. As they moved further into the middle game, they realized that they needed to pull back from their work and protect themselves from burnout. But how did the participants manage to execute this desire? They were able to keep their defenses up and protect their well-being with the help of support systems: spouses, partners, family, and friends.

Jane and Emma, who are married to other academics, acknowledged that their spouses are supportive by splitting the childrearing responsibilities. Jane commented that the flexibility of faculty life was particularly helpful when trying to figure out daycare.

She remarked, “We try not to teach at the same time so if he [their son] gets sick and has to be home, we can switch off. In that sense we're lucky.” Emma noted that while she is still responsible for the “planning and thinking,” her husband takes care of the “operational and day-to-day stuff.” She acknowledged, “I got a lot of support from my husband.”

Other participants, who are in committed relationships with partners who are not academics and have flexible working schedules, recognized the help their partners provided at home. Eleanor, Maryanne, and Lydia’s husbands predominantly work from home. Eleanor commented, “Most of the time it's awesome because when I get ready in the morning he can take the baby, feed the baby, and then I can leave and he can just get down to work. So it's not this crazy rush, he's really helpful that way.” Maryanne explained that because of her husband telecommutes, it made the relocation to the New England area for the position at Pemberley College very easy. She also noted, “My husband was the major source of support. He was just kinda like, there, dealing with all of this [the pressures of work].” Lydia’s husband periodically travels for work, but spends most of his time working from home. She explained:

We decided that our future trajectory would be governed by my career and not his. Granted he graduated from an elite institution. He's brilliant so he's doing fine. He has provided a very important measure in terms of how I'm spending my time. He's just like, if you need to work, then I'll get the kids ready to go, I'll do this, that, and the other.

Lydia views her husband as her anchor back to her children when she is in the midst of a writing project.

Caroline commutes two hours to Highbury University because she would rather live closer to her husband's family, a situation that has been tremendously helpful when she needs to juggle different work tasks. She remarked:

I get a lot of family support from my in-laws, so that's one benefit. My husband's family is all from [nearby area]. Like, let's say I get stuck out here and my husband's stuck at work—my kids are covered. So that's a great relief of something you don't have to think about. And that they have cousins that are their age. It's perfect, so I think that that in itself is such a relief.

With this family network, Caroline feels free to focus on her work while she is physically present at Highbury University, allowing her to concentrate on one area of her life, while feeling in control of both areas.

Anne and Julia are in relationships with supportive spouses, but they do not presently have the added obligation of taking care of children. Anne cited her husband as someone who addresses the home details so she can focus on her research. She believes he is able to do so because he is not in academia, which has proved to be helpful. She remarked, "He has a slower amount of work, and a very different personality. So, it all balances out." Julia admitted that her wife has been her touchstone to the real world and that there is life outside of Highbury University. She explained:

She knows it feeds my ego to feel important at work and to feel valued and to have lots of projects and you know sort of buying into the culture of work here that that makes me a good person, the harder I'm working. She knows that deep down I'm also a person that needs to go out and travel and have adventures and do new things. And also just be a slug sometimes and watch *Real Housewives* and eat popcorn and refuel.

Julia commented that her wife knows her better than she knows herself and that she has a big picture view of who she is as a faculty member *and* as a person.

Georgiana and Elizabeth were not in romantic relationships when we last spoke, but they cited their network of friends outside of their institution or department as

catalysts for prompting them to take a break. Georgiana explained, “That trivia team for me, was—one time a week, designated time, at night, when I wasn't really doing other things anyway, that led to more social interaction, that led to meeting more people.” It took Elizabeth a few years before she felt like she had a solid friend base. She acknowledged that it was hard to find a partner in the surrounding areas of Pemberley College because it was so suburban and many people were already in relationships. She commented:

In my second year I made friends with two of my colleagues. They're not in my department either. I just don't have any close friends in my department, and not even among my two junior colleagues. I think it's because they're married, and they have kids, and so it's just weird to include me in any of their activities. Unsurprisingly, my two other friends is one person who just got divorced, and another person who is single like me.

By her third year, Elizabeth felt like she felt a greater sense of belonging at Pemberley College and had a stronger support system of friends. In a moment of candor she said, “It's harder for us to make friends the older you are, but I think my attitude changed.”

Many participants emphasized the need to take care of their health, particularly when work stress crept into their personal lives. A number of participants engage in some sort of physical exercise. Anne noted that she has figured out the best time to do certain activities: mornings are reserved for projects that require high levels of attention, after lunch—which she refers to her “bad time” in terms of focus—is a good time for her to get to the gym. Eleanor said she enjoys hiking with her husband, and Elizabeth, Lydia, and Jane mentioned “getting in a workout” during the week. Caroline cited tennis as one of her hobbies, while Maryanne told me she practices yoga and makes a point to exercise three days a week. Emma acknowledged that exercising increases her happiness, as well as “sleeping enough and having quality time with your family or people that you love.”



The other participants who have children echoed Emma's sentiments about spending time with their families as a counterweight to the heavy burden of work. Caroline observed, "I think that in times where my work is really stressful, I think that's when it's like, 'Well, let's do something fun with the family and let's relax.'" Lydia, Eleanor, and Jane also commented that they actively put away their work when they're home to be more present in their children's lives.

Maryanne and Julia cite acts of gratitude as a way to maintain happiness in and outside of work. Julia commented, "Gratitude is my most helpful tool to be constantly sort of ruminating on the things that have really gone well. I think that there's not a day that goes by in my life that I'm not sort of reflecting on that." Julia uses gratitude and appreciation as a way to neutralize the negative feelings she has about her job. Maryanne uses gratitude to offset the anxious feelings she has about her work. She told me about recently reading a book about retraining the brain to focus away from the negative and acknowledge the good aspects of the day. She commented, "I feel like I am dramatically happier than I was a while ago. Happier in like a pretty sustainable way, not just because everything's going well at the right moment."

The use of the *balance blockade* came at the heart of the middle game, when the participants felt like they had greater control over their work and their time. The strength of the tactic increased with the help of support systems: partners, family, and friends who hold the participants accountable to make time for fun and personal activities, and assume some of the burden of taking care of the house and family. The participants who are married to academics admitted that balancing work, family, and personal obligations can be tricky, while participants whose spouses work remotely have greater flexibility.

## **The Satisfaction Attack**

Each participant had her own reasons for choosing a career in academia: some were drawn to the freedom that faculty life offers, while other participants wanted to change the research or teaching paradigms in their disciplines. A few participants wanted to make an impact on their students, in the field, or in the community through their work as academics. The reasons why the participants pursued faculty life—what they like about their jobs—are what they prioritize over the course of the middle game. The participants chose to allocate their time to activities that are both associated with their reasons for playing the game and are moves that will help them get tenure. These activities are also the areas of work that the participants find the most gratifying. Thus, the satisfaction attack reflects the participants' intrinsic motivation to engage in a task for its sheer enjoyment and purpose.

Research is both a process and a product. The act of “doing research” involves analytical thinking, putting concepts together and determining how to communicate those findings to an audience. Faculty must have a sense of mastery in conducting research in order to confidently present it; in turn, the final act of sharing research feels rewarding. Anne and Lydia acknowledged that conducting research was their favorite aspect of their jobs. Anne explained, “I like the whole process of writing up the paper, when you have most of the results, maybe, but you're organizing things and writing this claim and just putting it all together.” Anne noted that she enjoyed the analytical and creative aspects of the process and seeing her daily progress. Lydia had a similar reason for loving her research, saying that “sitting at a computer, typing, and writing” was one of her “favorite things to do.” Research is like a puzzle for Lydia, figuring out by herself how all the

pieces go together to tell a coherent story. Eleanor enjoys the process and the product of research. She explained, “I like sharing my research with other people. I get to spark that in somebody else by taking them along with me, or showing them what I do and getting them interested in doing that too.” These three participants are highly competent and also extremely successful with their research because of the skills they brought with them to the game and their opening repertoires of focusing on research in the first year. They continue to aggressively move ahead in this area of their work throughout the middle game.

Alternatively, other participants found increased gratification through mentoring and interacting with students. Jane felt like she had an obligation to help students learn, and has found immense satisfaction working with students who struggle in her STEM courses. She explained, “This group of students were probably the weakest group I’ve worked with, but it was so gratifying to work with them because so many of them tried so hard and I got to know a lot of them really well.” Inspiring college students to consider careers in STEM was one of her reasons to pursue a faculty career. Elizabeth was not sure she wanted to be an academic, but she was always interested in the social sciences. While it took time for Elizabeth to adjust to teaching at Pemberley College, she realized that being in the classroom is her favorite aspect of the job. She commented, “I really like it when we have some kind of an epiphany in class and the students are like, ‘Oh, my God. This is so cool. This is so interesting.’” For Elizabeth, the chance to incorporate her passions and interests into her courses and inspire students to learn more about those concepts is particularly rewarding. Emma chose to enter academia because she appreciated “freedom of thought” and having a high level of autonomy over her work.

Having spent her first few years focused on her teaching at Pemberley College, Emma now enjoys discussing research ideas with her students. She commented, “You really get in the zone, and really get your thoughts flowing...There's some kind of uncertainty when you're teaching because of students, and they don't think like I think, and it's interesting.”

Maryanne wanted to be an academic so she could use her quantitative skills in the social sciences to have an impact in the community. Yet, she quickly realized that teaching was where she had the strongest feelings of fulfillment, as demonstrated through her teaching evaluations, so she prioritized her actions to focus on this aspect of her job. When she is in the classroom she says, “I just think I feel really charged up and connected to the students.” The review timeline for publications in Maryanne’s discipline is “glacial,” so she turns to teaching for immediate feedback and gratification. Finally, Julia wanted a career that had meaning, but could also be unpredictable. She said the work she finds most enjoyable is working with students and “being able to facilitate groups of people thinking about something in a different way or asking some of the questions that are just harder to chew on, and being able to see before my very eyes the ways that they're being impacted by that.” For Jane, Elizabeth, Emma, Maryanne, and Julia, working with students and seeing them grow as learners has been exceptionally rewarding, and all five participants experienced the extrinsically-motivated feedback of strong teaching evaluations during the middle game. Yet unlike the recognition they could receive from publications and grants, which has a slower turnaround, the participants enjoyed the immediate gratification they get from students after a single class.

Having influence in the field, as opposed to influence in the classroom, was another catalyst for pursuing an academic career. Caroline initially decided to get her doctorate because she wanted to get more women involved in her male-dominated discipline. She remarked that one of her favorite aspects of her job is talking about her work. She said, “I like hearing from people, hearing their feedback. I think that the reason I do the work that I do is because I want it to matter and have some sort of impact.” Georgiana enjoys applied research and training practitioners who work with youth populations. Her favorite aspect of her work is going into clinical settings and working with these practitioners. She explained, “It's my own way of feeling like I'm starting to close that research-practice gap. So, it is really one of my favorite things when I'm asked to work directly with staff.” Like the participants who found gratification interacting with students, Caroline and Georgiana find their satisfaction talking with others about their work so that it might change behaviors or practices in the field. Moreover, their interactions with others contributes to their sense of self-worth as well as the incentive to continue to engage in this work during the middle game.

The sequence of moves in the *satisfaction attack* are intrinsically motivated: the participants' actions reflected feelings of autonomy over their work, despite the looming pressures of tenure; a sense of mastery of teaching or research; or an impression that their actions are meaningful for someone other than themselves. How the participants used the *satisfaction attack* often reflected their opening repertoires: those faculty who opened by advancing their research found gratification in the same actions; those participants who prioritized their teaching or spent time getting a sense of their environments found interactions with others—students, colleagues, or community members—most fulfilling.

Yet, the opening repertoires were informed by the extrinsic reward of tenure: the *scholarly maneuver* was deployed to quickly engage in research and amass publications, while the *classroom defense* was used to develop the participants' teaching skills and avoid critical teaching evaluations. The *satisfaction attack*, by contrast, was used simply to find and relish in the sheer joy of certain areas of faculty work. The *satisfaction attack* is also a useful tactic to achieve the overall strategy of tenure, since intrinsic motivation increases and sustains momentum in a task over long periods of time. Each participant used the tactic as a proactive move, prioritizing the areas of their work where they find the most gratification throughout the middle game.

### **Middle Game Themes**

In contrast to the variability of the opening repertoires, the ten participants used similar tactics in the middle game (see Figure 16). Prior experiences and the skills the participants brought to the game played a minor role in the middle game tactics, as resiliency and intuition to seek out new sources of support took the lead.

The participants' use of space, time, and force directed their subsequent actions, but in very different ways. Space, as it is represented in the game of tenure, translates to a sense of control over the areas of teaching, research, and service. By implementing the tactic of the *service sacrifice*, the participants were able to use the time they were obligated to allocate towards service to either: fulfill an extrinsic need of positioning themselves for tenure by combining their service and research activities; fulfill an intrinsic need of choosing service opportunities that are meaningful; or opting for low-stakes service duties that demanded less time, thereby creating opportunities to focus on other projects. In using the *mastery combination*, the participants were able to amplify

their command over their teaching through professional development, practice, and building self-confidence. Finally, by deploying *network development*, the participants increased their control over their research productivity by drawing on the resources and support from colleagues and collaborators.

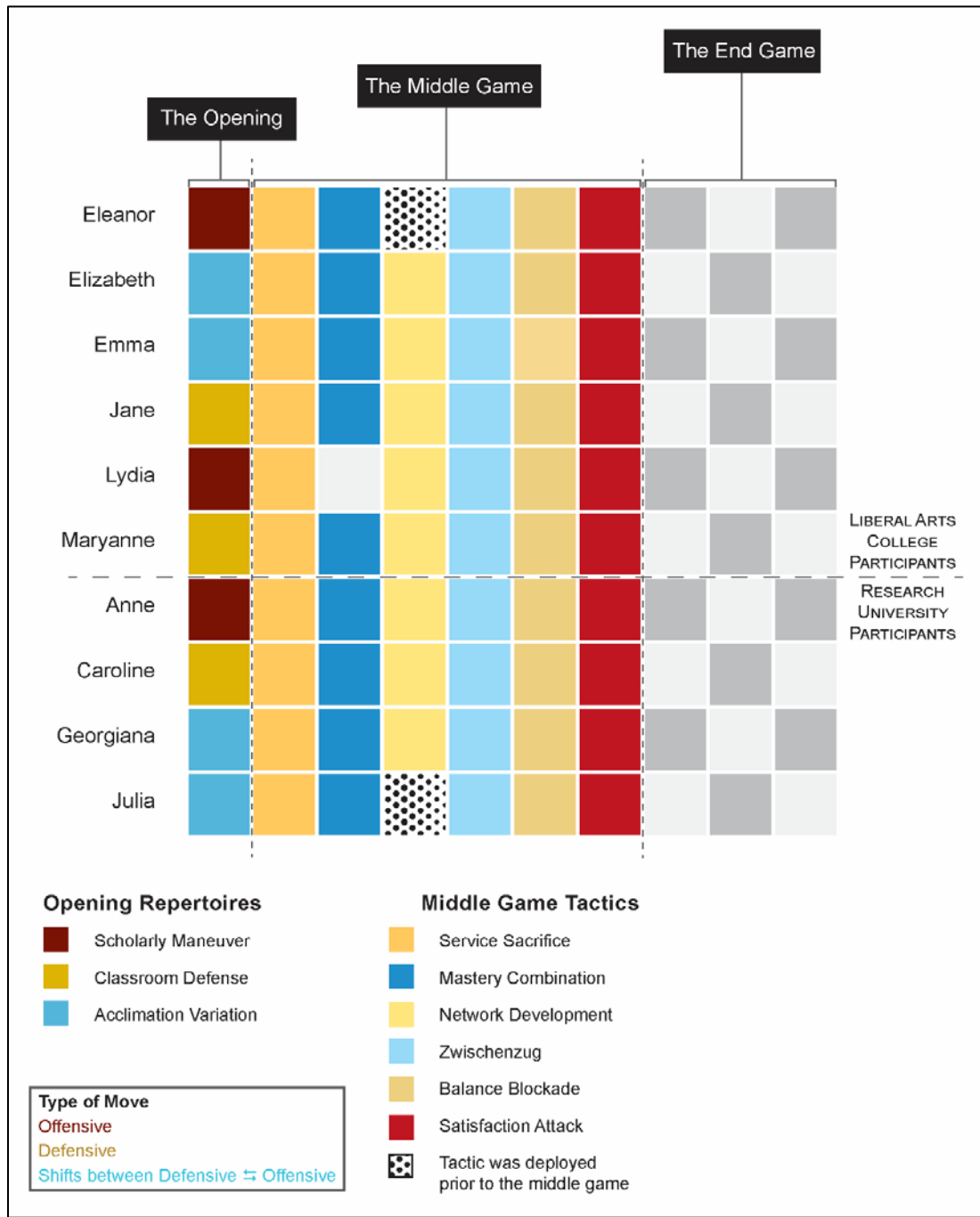


Figure 16. Participant approaches used in the middle game.

References of time, in the game of tenure, relates to the tenure clock. Many of the participants used a tactic to manipulate time—*zwischenzug*—as a method of improving their management of the game. The manipulation surfaced in two ways: speeding up the tenure clock by attempting to move up the review or slowing it down by taking extensions afforded by a leave. For most of the participants, the choice to manipulate the clock was informed by the progress made on their research while Anne’s attempt to go up for review early was discouraged because of her limited number of years as a teacher at her new institution.

Finally, force in the middle game is about all of the pieces working together; force, in reference to the game of tenure, reflects the combination and coordination of different actions that help gain control over the game spaces. The participants could have used the tactics of the *service sacrifice*, *mastery combination*, and *network development* to gain control over the areas of their faculty work, and *zwischenzug* to influence the game time, but incorporating the tactics of the *balance blockade* and the *satisfaction attack* creates a different—and greater—sense of power. The *balance blockade*, a defensive move, allowed the participants to possess control over their work-life responsibilities, while the aggressive actions of the *satisfaction attack* prioritized the activities that the participants found particularly gratifying. The latter two tactics play an important role in the overall middle game strategy approach of compounding control over the space and keeping the pace of productivity into the final years of the appointment. In particular, the *balance blockade* and *satisfaction attack* amplified the participants’ feelings of agency over their work and personal lives, while developing intrinsic motivation and reinforcing their self-efficacy in areas they feel like they excel. Perhaps



most importantly, the two tactics, when used in harmony, increase the participants' overall happiness and optimism about their jobs.

### **The End Game**

Towards the latter half of the probationary period, typically the fifth and sixth year, the participants enter the end game. In chess, every move a player makes during this phase affects the outcome of the game. Thus, playing the end game like “a machine” means a player must be calculating, persistent, relentless. Chess writer and master player Nimzovitch (1930) writes, “It should be pointed out to the beginner at the very start, that the end game does not merely serve up tasteless fragments left over from the rich feast of the middle game” (p.91); thus, end games have their own unique tactics that contribute to the overall strategy and objective. The majority of the participants are still technically in the middle game at the time of this study, given that more than half are in their fourth years or have stopped or delayed their tenure clocks for various leaves. Emma, Georgiana and Caroline are the three participants in the end game, as they were six months away from their tenure review by the time I conducted the final interviews. While a combination of extrinsically-motivated and intrinsically-motivated behaviors influenced the tactics used in the middle game, the extrinsic rewards of tenure inform the end game approaches used by Emma, Caroline, and Georgiana. Just like the opening and the middle game, there are a variety of tactics players can use in the end game in order to capture their opponents' king and win the game. However, two general sequences of most chess end games include *rallying isolated pieces* and *centralization of force*.

## Rallying Isolated Pieces

By the end game, the participants assessed their positions as they relate to the basic strategy of demonstrating excellence in teaching, research, and service. They determined they needed to spend more time on their research—rallying any isolated pieces on their chessboard and consolidating them into a single force—as a way to march strongly and confidently into the tenure review. If the participants felt like their record of scholarship was insufficient—either in number or in impact—they took on an almost robotic method of submitting manuscripts for publication. Georgiana admitted that she had lost her joy for writing because of the process for submitting manuscripts based on the review timelines. She explained:

I might know that the article will fit better in this other journal, but this one has a 21-day turnaround time, so let me aim there...Now that I'm really thinking strategically, this one should've been in a higher tier, and this one could've been published earlier so that I could've gotten this one out...hindsight's 20/20. Now that I am gaining a new understanding of the strategy part, I realize how much I didn't have that before, but my strategy also looks really different right now, because it's all about...is there a chance that it will be published by the time I need it to be published? Okay, so if it's not published by the time the external reviewers review my document, well it needs to be published by the time the internal people look at it?

Georgiana confessed that she dislikes this part of the process, feeling like she is forced to think about writing and publishing as racing against a clock.

Caroline was also producing at accelerated rate. She agreed with Georgiana about hindsight and that if she could do things over, her strategy would have been different. She commented:

I think I was much more lax about it in the beginning and I wish I hadn't been, right? The advice I would give to people is, if you're hung up on an article, move on, right? Don't try to force that article into submission somewhere. If it's not working, put your energy somewhere that is going to work, right? Give it a little bit, but don't—I think I spent too much time.

She keeps a list of potential “proper homes” for her papers. Every time an article comes back for revision, Caroline’s approach is to quickly revise and resubmit, or pitch it to another venue for publication.

While Emma is a liberal arts college faculty member, her focus in the end game is similar to her research university peers. She feels comfortable with her teaching evaluations and has directed her focus to her scholarship. When we spoke in February she commented, “I have two in review. I'm sending one now, and then I need to write one more, so I still have work to do.” For the past year, Emma has made a point to write every day. She admitted, “I've been in the write or die mode for a while.”

There is an art to crafting the tenure dossier: the package must contain evidence of excellence in teaching, research, and service; an external assessment of research impact by scholars in the field; and a personal statement. While a faculty member’s CV, teaching evaluations, course syllabi, publications, and external letters of review offer concrete demonstrations of merit and effectiveness, the personal statement provides an opportunity to persuasively attest to the quality of work. In the end game, Georgiana is thinking about how to use the statement as another avenue to strategically corroborate that she deserves tenure. She explained:

I do feel like I need to tell a story, but the way that I have been thinking through that story is more to connect the various threads of the work that I'm doing. What I have been focused on is, how do I make the case that all of the clinical work that I am doing is essential for all of the research that I'm doing? And connect that this research data collection opportunity only came about because I'm embedded within this system, and if I wasn't, that project would've never happened, or I wouldn't be anywhere as good. And, this connects to my class. And here's how I'm creating service learning opportunities. So, that's the story that I feel the need to tell, is the connections between research and teaching and service, and making that really explicit so that there's no questions asked about, "Well, why is she doing this one thing over here?"

Georgiana's reflects the tactic of bringing the chess pieces together as a unified force; her method in crafting the narrative is to show how her teaching, research, and service activities inform one another to justify why she prioritized certain interests during her probationary period.

Another way to prove excellence and value is to take initiative and start thinking about their next steps. Caroline's approach to proving her merit is to diversify her scholarly portfolio. While she has spent the last few years writing, submitting, and revising manuscripts for publication, she recently has set her sights on applying for external funding. She explained:

I would love to add some sort of prestigious fellowship or award. I think it's another thing to add for the tenure file. I mean, the number one thing to add obviously is publications, but even if my publications feel a little light, it would help to also have outside money, things like that. That helps, I think, my case."

A few months after Caroline and I spoke, she learned she was awarded a highly competitive grant, which will no doubt strengthen her case for tenure. Emma is considering a similar strategy for her own tenure file. When we met in the spring, she was getting ready to discuss a grant application with a colleague. She commented:

I want to apply for a grant before tenure. It's not, like, my top objective, but I think if I have that, even though I don't get the grant, it will just look good and it will show that I've put some serious thought into what I'm going to do next.

In terms of putting forward a concept of proof, Caroline and Emma chose to pursue external funding opportunities at the end of their probationary period, a final move to show that they are already thinking about the next stage of their research agendas.

## Centralization of Force

Castling is a move players make early in a chess game as a way to protect their kings from capture: they relocate their king pieces to the corner of the board and away from harm. In the end game, it is time for the king to move to the center and become a fighting piece. One way two of the participants demonstrated this proactive move was thinking through a contingency plan if they did not earn tenure. Their outlook on their futures is not bleak; rather, the plans appear to be more of a positive perspective on the possibility of different careers outside of academia. Emma admitted that she has begun to think about what her life would be like if she did not get tenure. When I asked her if she would continue to look for positions in higher education her response was, “My gut answer will be no. I wouldn't.” Caroline observed:

I think that's really important and that has taken some of the stress away from me, to say, "If I get tenure here, that would be great. If I don't, there are other things," right? Like, this is not the end of everything. It would make life seem a lot smoother if I did, but if I don't, I have a really good skillset and can do lots of different things.

Caroline notes that this outlook has kept her “sane and grounded about the process.” One rationale for why Emma and Caroline feel confident about their options if they did not get tenure is that their particular expertise is transferrable to non-profit, government, or even corporate work; in other words, both Emma and Caroline have a strong sense of agency because there are opportunities for them to use their skills outside of academia.

Georgiana did not express any thoughts of an alternative path if she did not get tenure. One potential rationale for why she did not even cater to that line of thinking is that a few members of her personnel committee actually encouraged her to consider going up early for her review because she had a surge of publications in her second year

at Highbury University. Ultimately, Georgiana chose to stay on a standard tenure timeline, but that positive encouragement may have sent an indirect message that she would be successful in her review. She commented, “It was a nice, encouraging, ‘You’re gonna be okay for tenure,’ kind of meeting, and that was hugely helpful, and nice to hear, and anxiety relieving.”

### **End Game Themes**

Like in the middle game, there was some alignment among the three participants in terms of which tactics they chose to use to advance their positions (see Figure 17). The intrinsic joys found in their work were compartmentalized in the end game; the actions of Georgiana, Caroline, and Emma reflected the extrinsic motivator of tenure and what they needed to do—mainly in terms of research—to achieve the reward and win the game. While space, time, and force continue to be the leading factors of approaching the game, time plays a prominent role in the end game. Specifically, players must make the most advantageous move in every single turn; Georgiana, Emma, and Caroline rallied their isolated (lingering) pieces and made choices about where to submit manuscripts based on review timelines.

Force continues to be important; players must make the most aggressive moves in the quickest sense. They must make a strong case for tenure, presenting a compelling narrative for what they engaged in the work they did and demonstrate their control over their spaces of teaching, research, and service. At times, Georgiana, Emma, and Caroline showed their strength—centralizing their forces—by considering alternative careers: both Emma and Caroline were already thinking about how to position themselves for other jobs—outside academia or at other institutions—if they did not win *this* game.

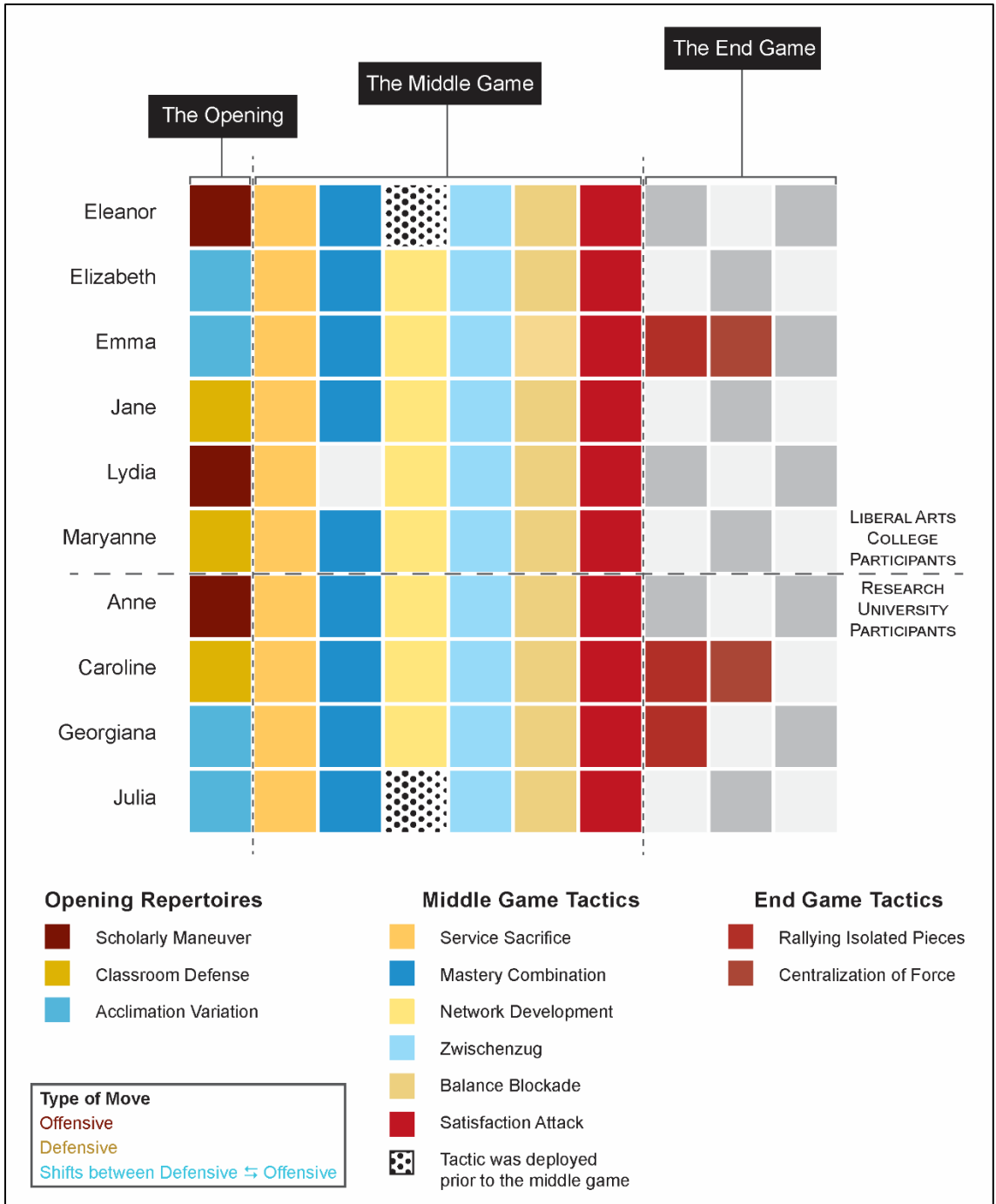


Figure 17. Participant approaches used in the end game.

## General Condensation

The general condensation I put forward here is a “compact description of the characteristics” that are common across the experiences (Fischer & Wertz, 1979, p. 148). The general condensation is an opportunity to express the bare essentials across female early-career faculty experiences and answer the question as to how the participants approach their professional work and if there is any difference between the liberal arts college and research university approaches. As I stated in the onset of this chapter, if achieving tenure is like playing a game, the common approaches across all participant experiences is similar to playing a game of chess.

Fundamentally, the participants play the game by gaining control over their *space* (the areas of teaching, research, and service) and *time* (how efficient the participants are in gaining influence over their space in the given six-year appointment period). The level of *force* the participants exert to gain control over their space depends on different factors at certain times in the game. In the opening, the participants’ previous experiences and the skills they bring with them to the game strongly affects how forceful their actions will be to gain control over the space.

Prior knowledge played a minor role in the middle game, while intuition took the lead to gain control over the space, predominately through the use of reactive tactics. Some participants attempted to gain control over their time by delaying or speeding up their tenure clocks. While extrinsic motivation was always present and informed the participants’ moves, intrinsic motivation and increased agency surfaced in the middle game through purposeful actions that protected the participants from long-term burnout



and prioritized the activities that brought them joy, thereby increasing overall job satisfaction.

By the end game, the participants returned to extrinsically-motivated actions, focusing on gaining control over the space (specifically research) in the most efficient manner under restricted time constraints. If the participants were not sure of their position in the game during this final phase, their thinking vacillated between present and future states; in other words, they continued to work efficiently to gain control over their research while considering possible careers at other institutions or outside of academia. Contemplating a contingency plan displayed a sense of autonomy over their futures, as well as personal efficacy in their abilities to be marketable at other organizations.

## CHAPTER 6

### DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

#### Overview

Before I embarked on this study, I had a general sense that the experiences of early-career faculty were those of survival: approaching their professional work, sometimes at a disadvantage, amidst low job satisfaction. Four factors, informed by the existing literature on early-career faculty experiences, contributed to the struggle to achieve tenure. First, early-career faculty did not develop the requisite skills in graduate school to perform and manage their responsibilities effectively (Austin, 2002; Austin et al., 2007; Golde & Dore, 2004; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). Second, early-career faculty found the tenure expectations to be unclear or vague (Austin & Rice, 1998; Batille & Brown, 2006; Olsen & Crawford, 1998; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996), making it difficult to know what work to prioritize (i.e., teaching, research, or service) and how that work was evaluated. Third, early-career faculty experienced competition and isolation at their institutions, which led to hostile or toxic interactions with colleagues and department chairs (Batille & Brown, 2006; Hernandez, Sancho, Creus, & Montane, 2010; Lindholm, 2003; Mullen & Forbes, 2000; Ponjuan, Conley, & Trower, 2011). Finally, many of the obstacles were manufactured by the faculty's own lack of time management among their work tasks and their personal obligations (Diggs, Garrison-Wade, Estrada, & Galindo, 2009; Finnegan & Hyle, 2009; Hershberger et al., 2005; Toews & Yazedjian, 2007).

In preparing for my conversations with ten female early-career faculty, I hoped I would find positive experiences that contrasted with the overarching narrative of struggle and survival—and I found them. I learned that these ten participants facilitated their

learning and growth and found fulfillment in their work, or at least particular aspects of their work, and approached their pathways to tenure like they were playing a strategic game of chess. All games have a goal, but a “goal with no obstacles is not worth pursuing” (Schell, 2015, p. 271). I was not naïve to think that I would find positive experiences with no instances of strife; after all, overcoming the struggle is what makes an experience particularly satisfying. But I hoped to find faculty who did not define their pre-tenure experience *only* by the struggle, and instead talked of their motivation and agency to persist through and triumph over any challenges.

For the strategic chess player, every pawn is a potential queen. By advancing a pawn towards the other side of the chess board, the player creates a situation where the opponent’s own pawns cannot prevent it from reaching the final rank (final row) of squares. One interesting rule of chess is that if a pawn reaches the final rank on the opponent’s side, it can be promoted; thus, a pawn can take on the attributes of any other piece. A strategic player will choose to promote the pawn to a queen, since the queen piece has the most influence and able to move in any direction on the board. I liken the move of the passed pawn to achieving increased autonomy and influence over the game space, and in the best position of finally getting tenure. While no participants had officially achieved a passed pawn in their games during the time of this study, the opportunity to do so was always present. In other words, all of the participants, including those still in the middle game, had a positive belief in their abilities to achieve tenure in the timelines they were working in, and had a generally optimistic view about their games.

Another ambition I had for this study was to share the professional approaches in real-time—as the participants were playing the game—and not after the game was won (or lost). Retrospective accounts can be problematic, with potential biased recounts amplifying instances of self-presentation, self-deception, or self-ignorance (Gregg, Seibt, & Banaji, 2006). Some faculty could refer back to their pre-tenure years with disdain or admiration. Of course, all personal accounts have some level of subjectivity, but I appreciated the participants' openness and vulnerability in sharing their stories with me in order to document the time of a pre-tenure faculty member. These real-time accounts add to the retrospective literature on the experiences of early-career faculty.

Finally, I intended to highlight the stories of liberal arts college faculty and determine how their experiences compared and contrasted with the frequently-reported accounts of research university faculty. What I found was that these experiences did not differ in stark ways. One reason may be that selective liberal arts college faculty and administrators share similar tenure expectations—particularly with regards to research—with their university peers. In turn, female early-career faculty at selective liberal arts colleges adapt their strategies to their environment. Nevertheless, the emphasis on selective liberal arts college faculty experiences contributes to the literature in that their stories—perhaps—are represented in the experiences of research university faculty.

In this study, I sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How do female early-career faculty approach their professional work?
  - How do female early-career faculty at selective liberal arts colleges approach their professional work in ways that are different than female early-career faculty at research-intensive universities?

2. How do female early-career faculty use positive-deviant approaches in their professional work?
  - How does environmental perception shape the use of positive-deviant approaches?

Using a multi-case study design, I analyzed the data from the ten participants, which included interview transcripts, diagrams, drawings, and documents. Using the inductive approach of constant comparative analysis and the deductive approach of pattern matching during data analysis, I started to see the theme of tenure as a game, as well as the participants' approaches to work as not only playing a game, but also a relatively enjoyable game.

Like chess, the participants play the game of tenure under time restraints: the six-year probationary period. There are only so many tactics or moves the participants can make in such a restrictive timeframe. The type of move and when in the timeframe the participant makes the move is critical. In this discussion, I elaborate on four major insights derived from the overarching finding that female-early career faculty approach their professional work like they are playing a game of chess within a fixed time period. The four major insights are:

1. Female early-career faculty begin their game by applying the knowledge and skills they developed from their previous experiences; if their skills are incomplete, they take subsequent actions to learn and develop, acquiring leverage in the game.
2. Female early-career faculty look for opportunities to advance quickly in the area of research by the middle of the game: those who find themselves in weak

positions use these opportunities to increase control, while those who are in strong positions use these opportunities to secure greater advantages.

3. Female early-career faculty incorporate moves that reinforce their passions throughout the game, making the overall playing experience enjoyable.
4. Positive-deviant approaches *combine* a female early-career faculty's existing skills, awareness of opportunities to advance, and passion into a single move *at the onset* that ultimately sets them up for success throughout the game.

In this discussion, I rephrase the insights as “advisory rules” or suggestions to help faculty play the game better (Schell, 2015), substantiate their relevance from my own research and the existing research on the topic of early-career faculty approaches to attaining tenure, and draw connections to my theoretical framework.

#### **Advisory Rule 1: Assess Your Skills Early On and Consider Ways to Improve**

A player's skills are different from strategies: skill is an “aptitude for the game that you bring in from the outside” (Ernest, 2011, p. 61). For most early-career faculty, skills are developed in graduate school when they first learn about the rules of the game (Austin, 2002; Gardner & Blackstone, 2013; Golde, 2008; O'Meara et al., 2008). Those skills are further improved through various additional experiences: post-doc positions, adjunct teaching, or even visiting professorships. By engaging in these additional experiences, early-career faculty are forced to take charge over their work, as they have a both a higher level of control over their day-to-day tasks and a higher level of accountability to various constituencies: the faculty members, students, and institutions for whom they work. The combination of formal training, informal preparation, and on-

the-job experience contribute and comprise the skills an early-career faculty member brings to her tenure-track game.

### **Know Your Strengths and Limitations**

In their first year of a tenure-track appointment early-career faculty quickly begin to get a sense of how their skills complement the game in terms of teaching, research, and service. Some participants in this study decided to prioritize the area where they felt the strongest, both in their abilities and their interests. Graduate students frequently note that their doctoral programs helped them develop the skills to design empirical research studies through working with faculty advisors or crafting their dissertations (Austin & McDaniels, 2006; Austin et al., 2007), and the opening actions taken by Anne, Eleanor, and Lydia reflected that preparation. These participants spent their first year making time for their scholarship by aggressively developing a research program, forming research collaborations with colleagues in and outside their institution, and blocking out time for writing. For Anne, Eleanor, and Lydia, prioritizing their research in the first year resulted in positive and negative gains: they received grants and were published, but also had issues with teaching and connecting with their students.

Other participants started their games cognizant of the area where they felt the weakest or the aspect of faculty work where they had not yet developed a strong skillset; this area was teaching. Researchers have found that while some graduate students gain teaching experience through assistantships, many feel like they do not learn how to design courses, manage and advise students, or assess student work while they are completing their doctoral programs (Austin, 2002; Austin et al., 2007; Helm et al., 2012); about half of the participants who focused on teaching at the onset shared these

experiences. Those participants who opened their games focusing on teaching experienced short-term positive effects and negative longer-range consequences. Many of these participants received strong teaching evaluations from their students, but it came at the expense of their research programs. Caroline, Jane, and Maryanne noted that they spent the majority of their time in the first year on course preparation, in-class instruction, and grading. There is some truth to new faculty's tendency to overlook their research and allocate too much time towards teaching preparation, as identified in the literature (Boice, 2000; Toews & Yazedjian, 2007). A reason for the emphasis on teaching responsibilities may stem from the accountability structure built into this aspect of the job (i.e., faculty must show up to class and teach each week).

Experiences beyond the doctoral degree also contributed to some of the participants' skill development. Post-doc appointments can offer "spectator insight" into the game because early-career faculty may learn the rules from observation or directly from colleagues and mentors knowledgeable of the game. Researchers found that taking one or two post-doc positions immediately after degree completion contributed positively to faculty work and scholarly productivity (Yang & Webber, 2015). Anne and Eleanor, two participants who held post-docs at institutions similar to those in their STEM tenure-track appointments, noted that the post-doc experiences better prepared them to conduct research in those specific environments. Holding an academic appointment as a professor on the tenure-track at another institution was another circumstance that helped develop aptitude for the game. Often, faculty who hold subsequent tenure-track positions are more likely to have a better understanding of the rules of the game and how to operate within the environment (Dowd & Kaplan, 2005). This finding was true for Emma, who held a



tenure-track position at a liberal arts college prior to her appointment at Pemberley College, but did not hold true for Elizabeth, who previously worked at a research university. Like with Anne and Eleanor, those participants whose post-graduate school experiences' environments closely mirrored those of their current appointment were in a better position to apply their knowledge and skills. Like "junior edition" games that offer a less complicated structure or opportunities to develop baseline knowledge for new players, so too, do post-doc and other faculty appointments help to prepare early-career faculty to play the game.

### **Take Subsequent Actions to Gain Leverage**

The participants also seized resources that would help develop their skills early on in the game, thereby turning their weak positions into strong points; these weak positions and further development often concerned teaching. Formal mentoring and professional development programs are the two recognized supports for teaching development (Cowin, Cohen, Ciechanowski, & Orozco, 2011; Ellis & Ortquist-Ahrens, 2010; Light, Calkins, Luna, & Drane, 2009; Reder, 2010) and the majority of the participants engaged in the latter. Specifically, they sought advice and training from the staff of their teaching centers through mid-semester assessments, workshops, and one-on-one consultations. While more than half of the cases were assigned formal mentors, few of them reported that the mentor relationship helped them improve their teaching, a finding consistent with the research on formal mentoring programs (Davis et al., 2011; Yun, Baldi, & Sorcinelli, 2016). Beyond transforming a weak situation to a stronger position, some participants chose to advance further by engaging in continuing professional development for their own growth with regards to teaching. Elizabeth, Julia, and Eleanor opted to attend

trainings based on their interest in social justice, diversity, assessment, and undergraduate research.

As the participants developed their mastery for teaching, their ability to control the game improved. Comfort with a task manifests as a proactive tactic in the game, especially with regards to teaching. Once teaching became more familiar, the participants' confidence in their abilities increased and they expressed a belief that they could handle their responsibilities in the classroom. For the majority of the participants, their perspectives on teaching were positive and optimistic. Individuals will only find the intrinsic motivation to act and persevere in difficult situations if they think they can ultimately achieve a desired result (Pink, 2009). The participants' beliefs in their abilities and behaviors to use their skills strategically reflected both mastery over their work—a key component of intrinsic motivation—and their agency to improve through intentional and self-regulated professional development.

### **Summary of Advisory Rule 1**

In order for early-career faculty to master their job responsibilities, they must possess the foundational skills to do the work. Historically, aspiring faculty develop these skills in graduate school or through post-graduate positions, such as post-doc appointments, adjunct teaching, or visiting professorships. The participants acknowledged that graduate school did prepare them for the realities of faculty work in different and interesting ways. All of the participants felt like they had the foundational knowledge to conduct research, which they developed by partnering with their graduate advisors on research or crafting their own research projects as a part of their dissertations. Some participants had taught in graduate school, but their teaching assistantships did not

prepare them for the full breadth and depth of the instructor experience. A number of participants arrived to their institutions knowing that they needed to get a better handle on their teaching and made this area of faculty work a priority. Other post-graduate experiences—mainly post-doc appointments or tenure-track positions at other institutions—helped to develop the participants’ skills for faculty work, particularly if the post-graduate experience closely resembled the environment of their tenure-track position.

After beginning their appointments, the participants had other occasions to develop their skills and advance their standing in the game. Many participants took part in professional development through their teaching centers. While some of the participants developed their skills so they could take a step forward in the game, other participants continued to cultivate their skills and make extraordinary moves, acting as “agents of their own learning” (O’Meara et al., 2008). To relate these actions to my theoretical framework, acquiring the skills to become a better teacher in order to get strong teaching evaluations was an extrinsically-motivated move because the outcome was directly related to the objective of getting tenure. Yet, seeking new knowledge to grow in the profession came from an intrinsic desire; specifically, the participants exercised their autonomy to engage in professional development, continually practiced and applied their new knowledge in efforts to demonstrate mastery, and did so because of a greater purpose beyond themselves—to educate students.

Finally, there were no significant differences between the skills liberal arts college faculty brought to the game of tenure and the skills held by research university faculty. This particular finding makes logistical sense, as all of the participants completed their

degrees at research universities, educational environments that emphasize research preparation as part of the doctoral degree. Moreover, the approaches to develop skills while playing the game were also similar across all ten participants, who primarily relied on the resources of their teaching centers.

### **Advisory Rule 2: Stay Aware of Opportunities to Advance in the Game**

Before players can gain ground in the game, they need to have an understanding of their current status: their scores, whether they are in the lead, and how much time they have to accumulate more points before the game is over. In a game of chess, players gauge their current status by where their chess pieces reside on the board, anticipate their opponents' future actions, and consider how they may relocate those pieces to a better position in the fewest moves possible. In the game of tenure, the participants required a benchmark measurement of their progress as a way to understand their status, which informed what future moves they needed to make.

### **Determine Your Standing in the Game**

When early-career faculty begin their tenure-track positions, they may face a tension between their expectations for how they think they should act and the realities of the job. For example, many of the liberal arts colleges participants expected that teaching would be their most critical responsibility, as often articulated in the literature (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996), only to discover the conflicting reality that research was also expected. While the pressure to secure external funding was not as high as it was for their research university colleagues, the liberal arts college participants shared similar concerns to their peers noted in the literature: publication counts mattered if they wanted to win the game of tenure (Lechuga & Lechuga, 2012).

All of the participants opened their games with some sense of their strengths and limitations, though these internal assessments varied in accuracy. By the end of their third year, they were able to determine their *actual* standing in the game through their “mini-tenure” review. While Austin, Sorcinelli and McDaniels (2007) reported that that early-career faculty lack professional feedback from their peers leading into the tenure review, all of the participants acknowledged that the “mini-tenure” review was extremely helpful in determining their standing in the game. After the review, and in subsequent conversations with colleagues, chairs, and personnel committees, the participants knew how they were doing with regards to teaching and had a sense of the number of publications needed to achieve tenure. They also had a clear idea of how their publications would be judged and if their committees valued solo-authored manuscripts over collaborative work. The literature reports that early-career faculty feel the tenure expectations are vague or unclear (Austin & Rice, 1998; Batille & Brown, 2006; Olsen & Crawford, 1998; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996), and the participants’ experiences somewhat reflect these findings; while no one could tell them an exact number of publications for tenure, all of the participants had a general target number. In fact, their anxiety around the tenure process was not a question of *what* they needed to do because of unclear expectations, but rather a question of *how* to accomplish what was expected of them in six years.

If there were instances of unclear expectations, it was often because the department chair would change during the participants’ probationary periods, a frequent challenge noted in the literature (Batille & Brown, 2006; Gappa et al., 2007). When department chairs changed, the participants reported that they received mixed messages

around number of publications needed for tenure and the types of research (collaborative, single author) were most valued by the presiding chair. Their solution to this challenge was to try to exceed their target number of publications needed for tenure and adhere to the current chair's perspective on collaborative and solo research.

Researchers have found that early-career faculty's agency can only get them so far in their careers and that colleagues and the overall institutional environment can have an effect on their pre-tenure experience (Berg & Seeber, 2016). When a department's environment is toxic, but the faculty member receives recognition for her work within that toxic environment, there is greater potential to view the climate in a favorable light. Lydia noted that her department comprised of mostly senior faculty contributed to low morale, but she continued to feel generally positive about the institution and her standing in the game because her colleagues, who did not get along with each other, were incredibly supportive of her work and recognized her successes.

Early-career faculty also need to feel supported by other colleagues, particularly if the face criticism by their students or other peers. Anne and Eleanor shared instances of bias from their colleagues based on gender, a common experience for female early-career faculty (Gappa et al., 2007; O'Meara & Strombquist, 2015), and more so for female faculty in a STEM discipline (Yang & Carroll, 2018). When Anne expressed concern to her chair that the students were complaining her intro course was too hard, he dismissed her unease by acknowledging that students had the same complaints when he taught the course. When she pressed her chair further on the issue of student bias in teaching evaluations, he assured her that the personnel committee took bias into account when reviewing tenure packages, but could not explicitly say how the committee was trained to

look for and interpret bias. Additionally, when Eleanor's formal mentor shared her colleague's comment that Eleanor should "cool her jets" because her successful research program was making her male early-career colleague look bad, Eleanor's mentor did not come across as particularly helpful or supportive. The "mini-tenure" review offers a chance to concretely determine faculty's standing but a lack of supportive environments has the potential to redirect or disrupt this interpretation of status. While Anne and Eleanor continued to push forward, their sense of belonging within their department was diminished.

### **Advance Efficiently within the Time Constraints**

It is around the time of the "mini-tenure" review that early-career faculty consider how to efficiently advance in the game within the constraints of time—the remaining years of the probationary period. The participants attempted to maximize their time by first taking an internal assessment where they felt the most in control over their areas of faculty work, most notably research. Eight participants opted to advance their research in the middle of the probationary period by developing and drawing on their networks of colleagues because of the potential immediate gain of additional publications or grants in the shortest turnaround time. Scholars found that early-career faculty have little to no time to conduct scholarship in the first three years of an appointment, making it difficult to develop a scholarly agenda (Walker & Hale, 1999). Establishing research collaborations is a solution to this particular problem in that it served as both an accountability structure and a conduit for increased productivity. This move circumvented the feeling that early-career academics cannot accomplish all their responsibilities within their deadlines (Berg & Seeber, 2016), because the participants

acknowledged that working with other faculty made them prioritize and advance that work.

The composition of the networks varied between collaborators, advisors, or mentors from graduate school; students, new colleagues, and mentors at their current institutions; or collaborators the participants met through mutual connections or at conferences. Researchers have found that some early-career faculty find continual mentorship with prior graduate school friends and advisors after they secure positions (Mullen & Forbes, 2000), a finding corroborated by this study. Moreover, the research on the positive experiences of early-career faculty noted that those assistant professors who have relationships outside of their institution played significant mentoring roles during the probationary period (Conway, 2012; Jones et al., 2015; Soto, 2014). While some liberal arts college participants followed the advice to find quality undergraduate students to serve as research assistants or grow research ideas out of class projects as ways to increase research productivity (Baldwin & Chang, 2007; Colbeck, 1998; O'Meara et al., 2008; Simmons, 2011; Toews & Yazedjian, 2007; Wilson, 2000), half of them noted that undergraduate students' skills for their particular research were lacking. While Niehaus and O'Meara (2015) found that assistant professors' networks were smaller in range—meaning that their connections were mostly on their home campuses—more than half of the participants' networks in this study showed more variation with quite a few collaborators coming from various locations across the country. The majority of the participants in this study had access to professional development funding to attend conferences to forge these partnerships. The research collaborations also provided resources that the participants may have lacked at their institutions, including the time



and assistance in collecting and analyzing data and writing manuscripts, and additional physical space to conduct the research. Lindholm's (2003) research on person-organization fit confirms that structural supports like professional development funding and access to physical space assist early-career faculty in achieving their goals for tenure.

Early-career faculty acknowledge that service is the least esteemed of the responsibilities of professors (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996); and yet, the rules of the game state that early-career faculty must make time to serve the campus and community while teaching and conducting research. Female early-career faculty often find the tenure process to be inequitable because of the teaching and service expectations placed on them by their (male) colleagues, resulting in less time to conduct research and weaken their positions (Batille & Brown, 2006; Gappa et al., 2007; Griffin et al., 2013; Lawrence et al., 2014; Porter, 2007). Recent research has found that women perform more internal service to their institutions than their male counterparts, regardless of institution type (Guarino & Borden, 2017). Interestingly, none of the participants in this study expressed that their colleagues had any expectations (neither overt, nor subtle) that they should do more service because of their gender. A reason for this paradox may be that the participants' colleagues, across institutions, were protecting early-career faculty (male and female) from too much service. This protection from service allowed the participants to perceive their service as manageable; a finding particularly relevant to the liberal arts college participants. If there was dissatisfaction around the distribution of service activities, it was because senior colleagues (men and women) in the departments were opting out or that the department lacked the human resources to cover all the service assignments.

Conway (2009) found that “flourishing faculty” found ways to shape their service commitments to their advantage, which included carrying out service that also advances their research. Many of the participants in this study used their service obligations as a way to gain traction with their research programs either by taking the time afforded from their service protections and allocating towards their scholarship, learning about how to gain an advantage in the game through participation in internal committees, or integrating their service and research activities like the faculty in Conway’s study. Overall, eight participants in this study used their service responsibility as an opportunity to advance their positions in the game. They exercised their agency over this obligation by choosing how they would engage in their service responsibilities that best suited their needs and goals.

Finally, some of the participants seized the opportunity to manipulate their tenure timelines by taking a semester-long or year-long research leave in their fourth year, corroborating the scholarly literature on the benefit of research leaves to provide uninterrupted time to increase scholarly productivity (Meyer & Evans, 2005). Unlike their research university peers, the liberal arts college participants at Pemberley College had the option to extend their tenure clock if they chose to take a research leave during the probationary period. Unfortunately, these participants could not determine whether they needed to publish more if they took the extension afforded by the research leave; this mixed message was one instance when the expectations for tenure were vague to the participants.

Some participants considered speeding up the tenure clock. Anne, Emma, and Elizabeth, who held previous tenure-track positions at other institutions, debated whether

to shorten their tenure timelines and go up early for their review. Emma was the only participant who went up one year early, as Anne was encouraged to wait and gain more teaching experience in her new environment, and Elizabeth chose to use her extra year to complete her second book. Faculty who move to another institution frequently go up early for their tenure review, prompted by either a recommendation from their new department chair or because they have a stellar research publication record (Schroeter & Anders, 2017). In Anne's case, it is interesting that while she had a strong record of publications, she was deterred from pursuing a shorter tenure timeline at a research university because of her limited experience teaching at the new institution. One potential inference could be that research universities take into account teaching performance and another example of how expectations of work may conflict with the realities of work.

### **Summary of Advisory Rule 2**

Around the middle of their probationary periods, the participants critically assessed their status in the game, prompted by their "mini-tenure" reviews, and in what areas (teaching, research, or service) they needed to assume greater control. The "mini-tenure" review served as a benchmark for the participants and the rules of the game (tenure standards) were generally clear to all ten participants. If there was a change in department chair, sometimes the interpretation of the rules would shift, particularly with regards to research expectations. The participants' moves in response to the shift were to over-produce by attempting to exceed a target number of publications. An overall supportive working environment, reinforced by colleagues, contributed to the participants' sense of control and ownership over their teaching, research, and service. If support was lacking from colleagues, the participants continued to push forward and

advance in the game. While toxic, competitive, or discouraging environments may contribute to an aura of negativity about the department or institution, it did not affect the participants' agency or a sense of self-efficacy and enjoyment of the actual work.

In addition to finding ways to take control over their external environments, participants also searched for methods to confront internal obstacles. Time management continues to be an issue for early-career faculty, particularly with regards to balancing the competing demands of teaching, research, and service. The participants seized control over these responsibilities through various strategies. First, they chose to forge research collaborations with colleagues in and outside of their institutions. A number of these collaborations were with individuals the participants met in graduate school or at professional conferences. Thus, graduate school, in addition to building the skillsets of aspiring faculty, also contributes to early-career faculty's ability to play the game efficiently by encouraging the development of networks. Second, the participants engaged in service activities that either doubled as research activity or were tasks that demanded less time so the participants could concentrate on research. The majority of the participants did not feel overburdened with service, and many commented that their department was protecting them from too many service assignments. Finally, the participants had opportunities to manipulate the tenure timeline as a way to gain control, either by extending or shortening the "tenure clock." Access to resources played a role in time management in indirect and direct ways: having professional development funding to travel to conferences assisted the participants in forging research collaborations, while resources to cover research leaves helped with increased research productivity and control over the tenure timeline. With each decision, the participants exercised agency in

choosing activities that would place them in advantageous positions, particularly with regards to their research.

There were no significant differences between the types of opportunities the liberal arts college participants chose to explore and the activities pursued by the research university participants. Both groups chose similar activities to increase control over their areas of work within the time constraints. In fact, while prior research noted that the research collaborations of liberal arts college faculty often include undergraduate research assistants, the majority of the liberal arts college participants in this study chose to exclude students and pursued partnerships with external collaborators that mirrored the collaborations of their research university peers. One rationale for this choice was that there was a greater return on investment to working with experienced colleagues than inexperienced students with regards to publication count.

### **Advisory Rule 3: Identify Your Passions and Make Them Part of Your Strategy**

All games have objectives and any player can figure out a strategy to win the game; but what makes a game enjoyable is when players have a reason to play. How motivated a player is determines her level of engagement in a game. The participants' reasons to play the game influenced their levels of motivation throughout the probationary period. These reasons were to achieve tenure *and* engage in tasks that were meaningful.

### **Understand the Limits of Rewards**

Extrinsic motivation will always be part of the players' drive to play a game because of the satisfaction that comes from winning. Similarly, extrinsic motivation influenced the participants' actions because tenure is their overarching goal, which was

continually reinforced through annual reviews of their work, conversations with their department chairs, teaching evaluations every semester, and in their “mini-tenure” reviews. Extrinsic motivation was used as a driving force particularly towards the end of the probationary period, as Georgiana, Emma, and Caroline positioned themselves for the tenure review by working to accumulate the “most points” in the last stages of the game. Accumulating points, in an academic sense, meant writing, submitting, revising, and resubmitting manuscripts for publication; thinking about how to put together a compelling tenure case; and applying for last minute grants in an effort to demonstrate future research ambitions. Lechuga and Lechuga (2012) found that extrinsic rewards have limits on determination and enthusiasm for the job. Moreover, Ryan and Deci (2002) found that environmental factors and expectations amplifies the pressure towards certain outcomes (i.e., the burst of manuscript submissions at the end of the game), and decreases the act of doing something simply for the joy it brings. Georgiana, Emma, and Caroline expressed similar issues and activities that they once found enjoyable were now lacking because of time pressure. However, the three participants did note that they looked forward to enjoying their work again once the tenure review had concluded.

Being motivated by extrinsic rewards is not necessarily a bad reason to act; rewards add purpose to a game and make players take immediate actions that reinforce and support their long-term plans of winning (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004). For example, choosing to submit manuscripts for publication or apply for grants make the game of tenure purposeful: publications and grants are immediate sources of recognition, which increase faculty well-being, and contribute to a compelling tenure case (Walker & Hale, 1999). Of the three main areas of faculty work, an impressive record of research

contributes significantly to the tenure case and appeared to have the most capital in this study. Anne acknowledged that she was able to get a job offer at another institution and leave Highbury University because of her research. In terms of the actions of the participants in their first years, those who prioritized their research programs may have chosen the most efficient sequence of moves when considering the number of occasions to “gain points” for research over the course of the probationary period. Early-career faculty likely have more opportunities to secure strong teaching evaluations over the course of the game than publications or grants, depending on publication timelines and grant review processes. For example, the participants in this study taught two courses a semester, which would result in twenty opportunities to demonstrate teaching excellence through strong evaluations before submitting their tenure packages. Thus, it may be more advantageous to begin a tenure-track appointment with a plan for publishing or at least beginning a research project in the first year.

However, like chess, academic work is a game of give-and-take: each move is met with a countermove and the sense of control generated by the strongest of openings has the potential to subside in the middle game. The intensity of extrinsic rewards, when they are the only motivator of behavior, tend to diminish over time. Finding the intrinsic motivation to engage in activities over the six years is necessary to maintain momentum. Extrinsic motivation can lead to a productive and purposeful game, but intrinsic motivation contributes to making the game enjoyable.

### **Determine the Areas that Inspire and Reinforce Passion**

To sustain intrinsic motivation over the years leading into their tenure review, the participants prioritized the areas of their work they found the most satisfying. They found

gratification in areas where they felt extremely confident in their abilities to complete a task. This confidence was often developed through feedback on performance: from students through teaching evaluations, getting nominated for awards or grants, or having colleagues acknowledge their talents or accomplishments. While the feedback on performance could be viewed as an extrinsic motivator, Walker and Hale (1999) found that faculty found greater meaning in the types of activities for which they received acknowledgment from others, which resulted in higher work satisfaction.

Individuals effortlessly engage in activities they find interesting; in doing so, they feel a greater sense of intrinsic motivation to continue doing the activities over an extended period of time. About half of the participants, regardless of institution type, noted that teaching was their favorite aspect of their jobs because it provided a venue to inspire students and talk through interesting ideas. This finding confirms the existing research regarding how high levels of student engagement in the classroom increases faculty's sense of purpose or meaning for the work they do (Austin & Sorcinelli, 2007; Martin, 2011).

The remaining participants, regardless of institution type, noted that they enjoyed some aspect of their research the most, which included writing manuscripts or thinking through how to make a compelling argument. These activities were largely solitary pursuits, where the participants experienced minimal interruption. Such a process reflects the concept of attaining a "flow" state of focused concentration. Nakamura (2003) found that individuals who attain a flow state engage in challenging but achievable tasks in which there is always clear feedback on progress, resulting in higher levels of satisfaction. The remaining participants who enjoyed research the most found that sharing



of their findings with students, colleagues, or practitioners made their scholarship have purpose beyond publication numbers for tenure. The research product, as opposed to the process, was more fulfilling for these participants. Georgiana, Lydia, Eleanor, and Julia found their research to be particularly rewarding, partly because they had a strong enthusiasm for their scholarly interests. Their experiences confirm what Conway (2009) found about “flourishing” faculty: they discovered ways to integrate their personal passions into their scholarship, which increased their job satisfaction.

Some of the participants considered how to creatively incorporate their passions and interests into other areas of their work. Jane and Eleanor’s strong desire to inspire women and students’ of color to pursue STEM informed their service work. Georgiana and Julia incorporated their excitement for the scholarship into their service responsibilities to permeate their passions into other areas of faculty work. Those participants who enjoyed research also integrated their scholarly interests into their courses.

By the middle of the probationary period, the participants also realized that they needed to focus on their interests beyond their academic lives; specifically, their hobbies, families, and friends. Every participant noted that she worked all the time during the first few years of her appointment, reflecting common sentiments found in the literature around early-career faculty difficulties in achieving work-life balance (Austin & Rice, 1998; Austin et al., 2007). However, once the participants felt like they had greater control over the game—often by the third year of the appointment—they turned their attention to their personal lives. Partners or spouses, family, and friends held the participants accountable to making time for fun and personal activities. Sometimes a

turning point or trigger—having a child, ending a relationship, discovering a health issue—would provoke the participants’ need for greater balance between home and work, corroborating the research on work satisfaction (Hagedorn, 2000). Maryanne was probably the participant who was the closest to defining her entire tenure-track experience as a struggle, if not for the turning point in her story of disclosing a chronic health issue to her colleagues. Her choice in sharing this private information significantly changed the flow of her work and her level of engagement and satisfaction.

Finally, some of the participants also used a creative approach to envision their futures; circumstances that incorporated their interests and passions, even if their future careers were not as tenured faculty. Conway (2009) found that her “flourishing” faculty managed their anxiety about tenure by coming up with career contingency plans, should their tenure review result in an upsetting outcome. Caroline and Emma, two participants closest to the tenure review, followed a similar line of thinking. By talking through their options, they displayed a high level of self-efficacy in their skills, and also a strong sense of agency to pursue other careers. They knew they had choices and appreciated the fact that they could find other work that incorporated some of the aspects they currently enjoyed as early-career faculty.

### **Summary of Advisory Rule 3**

By incorporating their passions into their work, the participants remembered their reasons for pursuing an academic career and created moments to find joy in their faculty responsibilities. Often, these passions are found in one area of faculty work—predominately teaching or research—and are areas where the participants felt the most confident in their abilities. Participants drew on their intrinsic motivation to continue

their momentum during the probationary period; they were able to amplify their gratification for their work, despite having to engage in tasks they find less enjoyable, and make time for personal activities. While intrinsic motivation hits its peak in the middle of the probationary period, the extrinsic reward of tenure is always there, an overarching objective that influences the participants' actions and decisions. However, the participants' intrinsic motivation to engage in areas where they feel successful and fulfilled redefined the game of tenure as one of satisfaction instead of struggle.

All of the participants prioritized the faculty responsibilities that brought them joy throughout the probationary period. Interestingly, the particular institutional environment did not dictate which areas were gratifying: for example, not all liberal arts college participants enjoyed teaching more than research and not all research university participants enjoyed research more than teaching. In their call for future research, O'Meara, Terosky, and Neumann (2008) asked for studies that examined whether there were areas of work in which faculty felt more engaged than others. This study's findings suggest that early-career faculty tend to find meaning and purpose in particular areas of their faculty work, based on their specific interest and level of mastery in that area.

**Advisory Rule 4: Combine Skills, Opportunity, and Passion in the Opening**

All of the participants were intentional about many of their actions and exercised their agency to: develop their skills as faculty, seek out opportunities that would advance their positions in the game, and find ways to incorporate work activities they find particularly gratifying. Positive-deviant behaviors are not only intentional, but also noteworthy or significant; these behaviors were different from the strategies recommended to early-career faculty in the literature or the approaches the majority of

the participants in this study took to find control over their work. In this study, the positive-deviant approaches taken by three participants integrated the first three advisory rules and were put to use in the *first* year of the game, as opposed to a single insight implemented over the course of the probationary period.

If the game of tenure is like a game of chess, the basic strategy is to demonstrate excellence in teaching, research, and service. Many common tactics to reinforce the strategy are extrinsically-motivated: for example, attending professional development workshops to improve teaching skills in order get strong teaching evaluations will positively position an early-career faculty member for tenure. Positive-deviant approaches to the game differ because they incorporate intrinsically-motivated actions; the behaviors are intentional, significant, and deviate positively from the typical strategies to achieve tenure. There are certain psychological factors that promote the use of positive-deviant approaches: freedom to choose how to act (self-determination); a high potential for success (personal efficacy); a desire to seek out challenge (meaning); empathizing with the needs of people (other-focused); and the ability to confront risk (courage) (Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2003). Moreover, the prevalence of these psychological factors increases if an individual perceives her environment to be positive, or if the individual intentionally creates an environment where she can thrive (Bandura, 2001). The different positive-deviant approaches taken by Eleanor, Lydia, and Georgiana were made in the first year of their appointments and integrated their skills for the game, their tendency to look for opportunities to quickly advance, and their desire to incorporate the aspects of their job that they are passionate about and enjoy. What follows is a discussion of each positive-deviant approach, the psychological factors that fostered the

approach, and a description of the participants' perception of their environment in which the approach was enacted.

### **Positive-Deviant Approach: Create a Resource-Driven Collaboration**

Researchers advise early-career faculty to seek out research collaborations through participation in a faculty learning community to identify research partners or, if working at a liberal arts college, identifying talented undergraduate students as research assistants (Baldwin & Chang, 2007; Toews & Yazedjian, 2007). Eleanor chose to form a collaboration that was not informed by this advice, but rather, by her own experiences in her post-doc appointment. Eleanor's positive-deviant approach was to create a research partnership primarily based on what resources the collaborators could bring to the project, instead of her partners' disciplinary or methodological expertise. This approach has a hint of being extrinsically-motivated: Eleanor knew that if she was expected to do research at her liberal arts college, she was going to have to get her program established immediately and not rely on the help of undergraduate students. Yet her behavior was also intrinsically-motivated in that Eleanor truly enjoys conducting research and considers it one of her passions. Even though she works at a liberal arts college, research is what keeps her interested in her work.

Conway (2009) found that "flourishing" faculty maintain a focus on their scholarship even in the face of institutional demands, because it is their scholarship that brings them joy. Eleanor's actions reflect Conway's finding: Her institutional demands were to allocate her attention to teaching and advising, since she works at a liberal arts college. Yet Eleanor knew she was going to need to find a way to keep her research in the forefront of her work. Soto (2014) found that female faculty used agency to make choices

that could regulate potential obstacles and drew on their personal efficacy to confidently achieve their goals. Indeed, Eleanor displayed self-determination and personal efficacy to set up this research program at the onset of her appointment. Her previous experience as a post-doc helped to develop her skills to conduct research at a liberal arts college, a stronger sense of ownership over her work, and the knowledge that she needed to search for opportunities that would support her desire to conduct cutting-edge research at her institution. In essence, she needed to create an environment for her (and her research) to thrive.

### **Positive-Deviant Approach: Use “Hacks” to Achieve Work-Life Balance**

In modern vernacular, a “hack” is a clever technique to doing something, often simplifying the task or increasing the efficiency of completing the task. Lydia managed to find hacks to most of her faculty responsibilities, and in doing so, used the time she saved to spend with her family or engage in some self-care. These hacks included: using targeted, pre-determined comments when grading to hopefully “bump” up her student evaluation scores; talking with students about their theses while walking on the treadmill so she could fit exercise into her work schedule; developing a research process of winnowing down of large chunks of information to quickly write books, chapters, and articles; judiciously planning her day by creating lists and using planners; and managing her email by limiting the number of messages to the length of her computer screen.

Lydia’s positive-deviant approach could be classified as extrinsically-motivated because her time management hacks allowed her to frequently prioritize her research, which she felt would solidify her chances of getting tenure. Yet like Eleanor, Lydia thoroughly enjoys her scholarship and it is an aspect of her work where she finds

immediate gratification. Similar to the successful female faculty in Soto's (2014) study of pre-tenured professors, Lydia possessed self-confidence in her abilities, which stemmed from developing an aptitude for faculty life in graduate school. When her graduate advisor left the institution before Lydia completed her doctorate, she had figure out how to teach, research, and write on her own without any feedback or guidance. Her graduate school experience forced her to develop resiliency and realize the aspects of her job she truly loves. Lydia's hacks allowed her to make time for her life outside of Netherfield College. Thus, she essentially created the environment she needed to succeed as a faculty member through these techniques.

### **Positive-Deviant Approach: Find Meaning in All Aspects of Work**

Most faculty discover that they are stronger in one area of their job more than their other responsibilities. Finding joy, purpose, and value in all aspects of a job is a real achievement. Georgiana accomplished this feat by integrating her teaching, research, and service activities; but what is remarkable about her approach is that her service work—not her teaching or research—drove her actions. She spent her first year getting a sense of her surroundings, which included allocating most of her time to her clinical post-doc that she counted as service work. That post-doc was the foundation for her research, serving as a data collection site where she forged future collaborations with other community partners, as well as a service-learning site for students in her courses.

Georgiana's service work is what motivates her and increases her job satisfaction. She displayed high levels of self-determination and self-efficacy, particularly when she negotiated the one-year post-doc when she accepted the offer at Highbury University. She talked about her position as her "dream job" because she was able to carve out

opportunities to fit her needs; but in actuality, she was manipulating her environment to fit the broader goals of working with practitioners in the community. Soto (2014) found that successful faculty exhibit a “drive to succeed” and that many professors use critical agency—deciding what they want to do and doing it—to accomplish their success.

Georgiana, who accepted a position at a research university, negotiated a post-doc position that would increase her time spent on service, because she knew working in the field would bring her joy, and contribute later on to her research and teaching.

Georgiana was able to construct the environment she wanted by using the autonomy and agency she has as a faculty member to carve out service opportunities that inform and complement her work as a researcher and teacher; but she was only about to do so by proactively negotiating for her clinical post-doc during the opening. The advice scholars give to faculty regarding work integration often focuses on combining teaching and research (Colbeck, 2002); Georgiana’s approach takes this recommendation a step farther. By connecting her teaching, research, and service, Georgiana is able to develop efficacy across all areas of her work, and also empathize and support the individuals she studies.

#### **Summary of Advisory Rule 4**

Eleanor, Lydia, and Georgiana drew on their aptitude for the academic profession, their ability to look for opportunities to create structures or environments they needed to thrive, and their understanding of the types of work that make them satisfied to develop their positive-deviant approaches. Because the use of positive-deviant approaches occurred in the first year of their tenure-track appointments, I suspect that their graduate school or post-doc experiences strongly informed how they created and executed their



actions. Eleanor's knowledge of liberal arts colleges, which she developed in her post-doc experience, allowed her to envision the environment she needed to conduct research. This environment was actually not one she would have access to at Pemberley College, so she set out to create it—virtually—through her research collaboration. Lydia's doctoral experience of having to educate herself on how to teach and conduct research, while raising two small children, taught her about academic work. She knew that if she was going to be able to manage all of her responsibilities and still have a happy life, she was going to need to figure out structures that worked for her goals. Similarly, Georgiana's graduate experience gave her an insider's perspective of faculty life, through the mentoring of her graduate advisor, while also providing her experiences as both a practitioner and researcher. She learned what she liked about faculty work and where she might want to incorporate opportunities to work in the field as part of her academic job. She created the environment she wanted to meet all of her professional needs.

Thus, combining a skills for the game, seizing opportunities to quickly advance and gain more control, and incorporating the most gratifying areas of work, leads to an advantageous position *at the start* of the game. In addition, deploying a positive-deviant approach in the opening reinforces a sense of control and satisfaction for the middle game: Eleanor's research collaboration continued to be fruitful with a prestigious grant award and additional publications; Lydia's life hacks produced extra time and focus for her scholarship, but also time with her family; and Georgiana's integration of work informed by her service produced a network of future research sites and participants.

And while all three cases generally perceived the institutional environments as favorable, they actively constructed their own environments through their positive-

deviant approaches. Eleanor knew her liberal arts college was well-resourced in terms of professional development funding, but it could not give her the staffing resources she need for her research, so she created her own virtual research environment through her collaboration. Lydia understood what was expected of her: teach two classes a semester, advise students, research, and serve on committees. But in order to have the environment she wanted—time to do all of her work responsibilities *and* feel fulfilled in her personal life—she was going to create it through her positive-deviant approach. Finally, it was very important to Georgiana that she begin her appointment with her post-doc in place because she wanted to spend her time in a clinical setting and forming those connections out in the community; this environment would not have existed at Highbury University and she needed to proactively create it.

### **Implications for Practice and Policy**

The results of this study have implications for positive change at the individual and organizational levels, informing both policy at institutions of higher education and the practices of early-career faculty, administrators, and units that support the development of early-career faculty, such as centers for teaching or office of faculty development. At the individual level, the results of this study could be useful to other female early-career faculty who are currently playing the game of tenure. Specifically, the results may provide insight into the potential tactics to use and when to deploy them—from skills acquisition and further development, to developing an awareness of opportunities to advance in the game, to identifying aspects of their work that they enjoy and finding ways to incorporate those areas throughout the six-year probationary period to increase their work satisfaction. Female graduate students may also find the discussion

of how to create a positive-deviant approach (or the approaches used by Eleanor, Lydia, and Georgiana) particularly useful and tactics to contemplate using when they begin their tenure-track appointments.

At the organizational level, the results of this study have implications for university and college practices for faculty development. Staff who oversee faculty development activities at selective liberal arts colleges may want to consider trainings, workshops, or fellowships that support faculty research, given that many of the liberal arts college participants in this study enrolled in a national faculty development program focused on making time for research in the absence of formal programming at their institutions. Such programming may complement the offerings of teaching centers, or be offered through the Provost's Office. Across institution type, staff charged with faculty development may also consider thoughtful programming explicitly aimed towards early-career faculty in their first two years with a focus on research. Because there is often a learning curve for new faculty with regards to teaching, this responsibility takes precedence; intentional programming during the first two years around developing a research agenda and a realistic project plan for research leave sends a message to new faculty that this responsibility must also be tended to and developed early on in their appointments.

Also at the organizational level, the results of this study have implications for improving the preparation of aspiring academics, which may include changes or revisions to graduate school curricula and policies. It would be a tremendous service to graduate students if there was a preparation course as part of the graduate curriculum that informs them about different types of higher education institutions—research universities, liberal

arts colleges, community colleges, and comprehensive universities—and the associated faculty expectations at each institution. For example, by clarifying the messages around teaching and research expectations at particular institutions, early-career faculty who find themselves at selective liberal arts college may not be surprised to learn that they are still expected to do research in addition to teaching and advising undergraduate students. Besides offering insight into the faculty expectations at each institution type, graduate students should be trained to inquire about the types of resources available to them—professional development funding, access to teaching development supports, or internal research fellowships—while they are on the job market and interviewing at potential institutions. Finally, it would also be helpful if graduate students had intentional opportunities—through a course or as part of their overall doctoral work—to reflect on the type of institutional environment they would prefer. There were a few participants in this study who remarked that a liberal arts college was the only institution they were interested in because of the emphasis on teaching, strong student mentorship, and the chance to still engage in research without the added pressures of securing external funding.

### **Directions for Future Research**

When O’Meara, Terosky, and Neumann (2008) conducted their comprehensive overview of faculty work, they put a call out to researchers to identify and describe positive experiences of early-career faculty who were active agents of their own learning and success. I heeded that call. In this study, I described how ten female early-career faculty approached their professional work and found that their methods of preparing for their tenure review were very similar to playing a game of chess. As a result of my

research, I have surfaced additional directions for future research informed by this chess metaphor.

### **Tactic Assimilation**

By comparing the process of attaining tenure to playing a game of chess, I described the actions the participants took during their six-year probationary period to demonstrate their excellence in teaching, research, and service. Some of those actions occurred early on in their appointments, while others surfaced later. In the opening, the participants' actions were more variable, likely based on their previous preparation in graduate school and post-graduate experiences. However, in the middle game, the participants—with all their unique experiences in their tenure-track appointments—managed to assimilate in using the same tactics. I recommend further research in determining why the actions of ten different early-career faculty merged into a common suite of moves. I mentioned in the findings that the participants may have deployed the tactic of *network development* in the middle game because they had years to build various partnerships through conversations at disciplinary conferences. Other possible rationales for assimilation include that the structure of faculty life is more rigid than academics perceive, or that the time constraints of a six-year probationary period restricts the number of choices early-career faculty can make. Thus, additional research on tactics, the timing of tactics, and the type of tactics would be useful to pursue.

### **How Resources Contribute to Increased Control over the Game**

The participants' access to resources—professional development funding, teaching development workshops, funding for research leaves and teaching assistants—had a positive impact on their progress towards tenure, and in turn, likely contributed to

overall optimism about the job. In a study of faculty agency across the career continuum, Campbell and O'Meara (2012) found that access to resources increases positive outlook and a greater sense of agency. Additional research has found that a lack of resources makes it challenging for early-career faculty to accomplish their work, particularly with regards to publishing (Baker, Pifer, & Lunsford, 2016; Gappa et al., 2007). There are two areas I would suggest for future research with regards to resources. First, it would be helpful if researchers examined how early-career faculty approach their work, using a methodological approach similar to this study's at other types of institutions. For example, would a similar sense of agency, motivation, and positivity occur among early-career faculty at community colleges with a likely limited access to resources?

Second, I recommend a thorough analysis of research development supports and training available for early-career faculty at selective liberal arts colleges. Unlike at research universities, where faculty have a greater likelihood to participate in internal research fellowships or research communities, faculty at liberal arts college often only have access to teaching development supports. Many of the liberal arts college participants chose to enroll in a national faculty development program to jumpstart their research agendas and writing (a program their institutions paid for), implying that there was both an interest and a need for formal assistance and training. If early-career faculty are expected to engage in research at selective liberal arts colleges, it would be helpful for administrators and the greater community of faculty development practitioners to understand the types of research development supports offered to liberal arts college faculty across the country.

## **Transferability of the Game Metaphor to Promotion to Full**

Perhaps unsurprisingly to other academics, the experiences of a tenured associate professor are also fraught with challenges. Some of those challenges may be similar to the obstacles encountered during the pre-tenure years: unclear or vague expectations around promotion to full professor and a lack of work-life balance (Britton, 2010). However, the post-tenure life presents new barriers: the protections around service afforded to pre-tenured faculty are gone, while the expectations for research productivity increase, including the assumption that the research receive recognition by national and international audiences. Moreover, the access to resources to conduct research is depleted and allocated to early-career faculty (Buch, Huet, Rorrer, & Roberson, 2011). The rigidity of a six-year timeframe is gone—which in itself was a challenge for early-career faculty—along with its formative feedback mechanisms of the “mini-tenure” review. In response, associate professors are often waiting for the “tap on the shoulder” to signal that they are ready to go up for full professor (Gardner & Blackstone, 2013). Finally, female associate professors also experience additional obstacles in promotion to full, based on how they allocate their time to various responsibilities at work and at home (Misra, Lundquist, Holmes, & Agiomavritis, 2010). While post-tenure faculty certainly developed their skills for the job during the pre-tenure years and identified strategies to overcome obstacles during the probationary period, I would recommend future research on the transferability of the game metaphor in promotion to full, examining all of the game mechanics for this particular population. Does the analogy to playing chess hold true for newly-tenured faculty, or is there an entirely different game that associate professors play in seeking promotion to full?

## Concluding Thoughts

My initial goals for this study were three-fold: tell the experiences of female early-career faculty from a positive perspective; identify experiences that were happening in real-time before the tenure review; and highlight the experiences of liberal arts college faculty. In discovering that the ten participants in this study approach their work as tenure-track faculty like they are playing a game, I quickly understood that struggle was always going to be a *part* of the experience, but it would not comprise the *entire* experience. Rather, female early-career faculty's intrinsic motivation and agency play leading and complementary roles in confronting that struggle. A good game has some combination of certainty, risk, and uncertainty (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004), and the game of tenure is no different. This study offers a new story about female early-career faculty: rich experiences of pursuing tenure by drawing on their skills, strategies, and creativity for the game.

Throughout this study, I have often wondered if the reoccurring narrative that early-career faculty's struggle to endure their tenure-track experiences is the most prominent theme in the literature because we—as a scholarly community—are only looking at some of the game mechanics: how the game space (the institution), the game time (probationary period), and the game objects (i.e., colleagues, collaborators, chairs, and students) manifest challenges. We ignore the actions taken by the players to prevail against the obstacles: using the skills they possess or developed during the game, their manipulation of the game space and time, and their ability to form connections with the game objects that will help them win tenure *and* enjoy the process of doing so. I have always hoped this research would play a significant part in refuting the idea that early-



career faculty experiences are predominately negative, while also assisting aspiring faculty in crafting gratifying careers and altering faculty development programming towards strength-based models. Ultimately, I want the results of this study to empower female-early career faculty to play whatever game of tenure they are handed with autonomy, mastery, and purpose.

## APPENDIX A

### RECRUITMENT EMAILS

#### Initial Email Requesting Participation—Liberal Arts College Faculty

Dear ,

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study focused on how early-career faculty in tenure-track positions who self-identify as female approach their work as they near their tenure review. Specifically, I am interested in hearing about how you develop your skills as a faculty member, make work-related decisions, find meaning in your work, and your perceptions of your work environment. I am writing to you because I believe you are in either the fourth or five year of your appointment and I would love for you to consider being a participant of this qualitative case study.

I am conducting this study as a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Policy, Research, and Administration at UMASS Amherst, under the direction of Dr. Ezekiel Kimball. I also previously worked at a private liberal arts college—Hampshire College—for a number of years supporting early-career faculty and have witnessed firsthand how strategic female faculty are in balancing their professional responsibilities and life responsibilities.

In order to understand your experience, you will be asked to take part in one or two semi-structured interviews that will be audio-recorded in your office or another mutually agreed upon location (or by Skype, if preferred). The first interview will last approximately 60-90 minutes. During that time, I will also ask you to complete a short demographic questionnaire and engage in a diagramming activity. To understand your professional work, I will also ask you to provide, if comfortable, a copy of your curriculum vitae.

You may be asked to take part in the second semi-structured follow-up interview, which will take 60-90 minutes of your time and involve another drawing activity and a request to see any organizational tools you use to assist in managing your work. If you are asked to participate in a second interview, I will contact you 1-2 months after your first interview.

**I plan to begin collecting this data in mid-October 2017 and am happy to accommodate your work schedule in terms of a day and time for the interviews. As a gesture of appreciation for your time, a \$25 electronic gift card to Amazon.com will be provided to you upon completion of the interview.**

Your privacy and confidentiality are important to me, and your identity and your institution will be concealed in any of my written findings and presentations of the study. If you would consider participating in my study, I will send you the informed consent document that details the research project, your involvement, and your control over

further concealing other features of your identity and work experience. I will also share the written transcript(s) of our conversation for you to confirm that I captured your words appropriately.

I understand the time constraints faculty feel and am aware that participating in this study is another demand on your time. For this reason, I am very appreciative of your consideration of this request. I am happy to answer any questions you may have and will follow up with you in about ten days, if I am still waiting your response to this invitation.

Sincerely,  
Bethany Lisi

## Initial Email Requesting Participation—Research University Faculty

Dear ,

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study focused on how early-career faculty in tenure-track positions who self-identify as female approach their work as they near their tenure review. Specifically, I am interested in hearing about how you develop your skills as a faculty member, make work-related decisions, find meaning in your work, and your perceptions of your work environment. I am writing to you because I believe you are in either the fourth or five year of your appointment and I would love for you to consider being a participant of this qualitative case study.

I am conducting this study as a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Policy, Research, and Administration at UMASS Amherst, under the direction of Dr. Ezekiel Kimball. I also work in the Institute of Teaching Excellence and Faculty Development where I am tasked to create programming for early-career faculty. For a number of years, I have witnessed firsthand how strategic female faculty are in balancing their professional responsibilities and life responsibilities.

In order to understand your experience, you will be asked to take part in one or two semi-structured interviews that will be audio-recorded in your office or another mutually agreed upon location (or by Skype, if preferred). The first interview will last approximately 60-90 minutes. During that time, I will also ask you to complete a short demographic questionnaire and engage in a diagramming activity. To understand your professional work, I will also ask you to provide, if comfortable, a copy of your curriculum vitae.

You may be asked to take part in the second semi-structured follow-up interview, which will take 60-90 minutes of your time and involve another drawing activity and a request to see any organizational tools you use to assist in managing your work. If you are asked to participate in a second interview, I will contact you 1-2 months after your first interview.

**I plan to begin collecting this data in mid-October 2017 and am happy to accommodate your work schedule in terms of a day and time for the interviews. As a gesture of appreciation for your time, a \$25 electronic gift card to Amazon.com will be provided to you upon completion of the interview.**

Your privacy and confidentiality are important to me, and your identity and your institution will be concealed in any of my written findings and presentations of the study. If you would consider participating in my study, I will send you the informed consent document that details the research project, your involvement, and your control over further concealing other features of your identity and work experience. I will also share the written transcript(s) of our conversation for you to confirm that I captured your words appropriately.

I understand the time constraints faculty feel and am aware that participating in this study is another demand on your time. For this reason, I am very appreciative of your consideration of this request. I am happy to answer any questions you may have and will follow up with you in about ten days, if I am still waiting your response to this invitation.

Sincerely,  
Bethany Lisi

## Second Email Requesting Participation

Dear ,

Thank you for participating in the initial interview for my dissertation study. Based on my analysis, I was hoping you would be available for me to ask some follow-up questions on some of your responses. Specifically, I want to learn more about your motivation and decision-making approaches to your work.

As with the first interview, this will be a semi-structured interview and will last approximately 60-90 minutes, in your office or another mutually agreed upon location. Like the first interview, the second interview will be audio recorded. I will also ask you to participate in a second drawing activity and if comfortable, allow me to take photographs, screenshots, or copies of any organizational tools you may use to assist in managing your work.

I am happy to accommodate your work schedule in terms of a day and times for the interviews. I will also share the written transcript of our conversation for you to confirm that I captured your words appropriately.

Again, as a gesture of appreciation for your time, another \$25 electronic gift card to Amazon.com will be provided to you upon completion of the interview.

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this study. I will follow up with you in about ten days, if I am still waiting your response to this invitation.

Sincerely,  
Bethany Lisi

## APPENDIX B

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

#### Demographic Questionnaire

Any information you provide in this questionnaire will be kept strictly confidential. You have the right to skip any question(s) you do not feel comfortable answering.

1. What year are you in your current tenure-track appointment? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How many annual reviews have you had with your department chair? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your birth year? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is your country of citizenship? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What is your racial or ethnic identification? (Select all that apply.)
  - American Indian or Alaska Native
  - Asian
  - Black or African American
  - Hispanic or Latina
  - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Island
  - White
  - Other
  - I prefer not to respond
6. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?
  - Straight (heterosexual)
  - Bisexual
  - Gay
  - Lesbian
  - Queer
  - Questioning or unsure
  - Another sexual orientation (please specify: \_\_\_\_\_)
  - I prefer not to respond
7. What is the highest level of education completed by either of your parents (or those individuals who raised you)?
  - Did not finish high school
  - High school diploma or G.E.D.
  - Attended college but did not complete degree
  - Associate's degree (A.A., A.S., etc.)
  - Bachelor's degree (B.A., B.S., etc.)
  - Master's degree (M.A., M.S., M.F.A., M.B.A., etc.)
  - Doctoral or professional degree (Ph.D., Ed.D., J.D., M.D., etc.)
  - I prefer not to respond

## Interview Guide—Interview 1

Participant Pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Date and Time: \_\_\_\_\_

### Pre-Interview Discussion:

- Hello and Introductions
- Overview of the study and focus of Interview 1
- Review of the Informed Consent Document (discuss any questions/concerns; request signature)
- Administration of a demographic questionnaire
- Request participant’s permission to record the interview.
- Any remaining questions?
- Permission to turn on the recorder.

### Establish Rapport:

Begin with asking faculty member to chart the peaks and valleys of her time in this tenure-track appointment. Give approximately five minutes to do this and offer to play some music while the participant completes the activity. Explain to her that the interview questions may prompt her to return to this diagram during the conversation.

### Interview Questions:

Question Type (Patton, 2002)	Questions
Behavior	1. Can you tell me briefly why you decided to become a faculty member?
Behavior	2. What about your disciplinary focus? How did you decide that this subject area would be the area you pursued a doctorate in?
Knowledge	3. What did you hear about the life of a faculty member when you were in graduate school? a. How did you react to that information? b. Do you agree or disagree with that you heard, now that you’re in the role?
Behavior	4. Why did you choose to accept a job offer at this institution? a. Were there any alternatives? b. How did you go about making the decision to accept here?



Question Type (Patton, 2002)	Questions
Opinion	5. What were your initial impressions of the institution before starting your appointment? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. How about your department?</li> <li>b. Have those impressions changed? (If so, in what ways?)</li> </ol>
Behavior Opinion Feeling	6. Gesture to the peaks and valleys diagram. Tell me about your experience in your first year.  If there is a valley, prompt for an explanation: How did you respond to that valley or challenge?  If there is a peak, prompt for an explanation: Why do you consider this moment a peak?
Behavior	7. How did you approach teaching during your first year? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Did you have any teaching goals for the first year?</li> <li>b. Has your teaching approach changed over the years? If so, in what way?</li> </ol>
Behavior	8. How did you approach scholarship during the first year? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Did you have any scholarship goals for the first year?</li> <li>b. Tell me about the kind of research you conduct.</li> <li>c. Has your approach to scholarship changed over the years? If so, in what way?</li> </ol>
Behavior	9. How did you approach service during the first year? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Did you have any goals for service the first year?</li> <li>b. Has your approach to service changed over the years? If so, in what way?</li> </ol>
Behavior	10. How did you approach advising during the first year? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Did you have any goals for advising the first year?</li> <li>b. Has your approach to advising changed over the years? If so, in what way?</li> </ol>
Behavior	11. How did you balance professional and personal responsibilities during the first year? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Has your approach to this type of balance changed over the years? If so, in what why?</li> <li>b. Do you think of yourself as having “supports” or “anchors” outside of this institution that help you in trying to achieve this balance? [Explain.]</li> </ol>

Question Type (Patton, 2002)	Questions
Behavior Opinion	12. Have you ever participated in faculty development at the college? a. If so, what types of development programs did you engage with? b. Why were these programs interesting to you?
Behavior Opinion	13. Have you ever sought out individuals (colleagues at the institution, or peers/scholars at other institutions) for support or information to help you in your career? a. If so, why did you choose these particular individuals? b. In what ways did you think they would be helpful?
Opinion	14. Is there anything about your experience you wish to share with me?

**Closing:**

- Thank faculty member for her time.
- Confirm faculty member has contact information.
- Review confidentiality procedures one more time.
- Ask if there are other specific measures the faculty member would like me to take to protect identity.
- Remind the faculty member that I may be in touch to conduct a follow-up interview.
- Remind faculty member she will receive a gift card via email (**confirm email**) within 48 hours.

## Interview Guide—Interview 2

Participant Pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Date and Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**Pre-Interview Discussion:**

- Hello and Introductions
  - Overview of the study and the focus of Interview 2
- Request participant’s permission to record the interview digitally.
- Any remaining questions?
- Permission to turn on the recorder.

**Establish Rapport:**

Think back to the fall semester and:

- Draw yourself doing something work-related that you enjoyed the most.
- Draw yourself doing something work-related that you enjoyed the least.
- Draw yourself doing something work-related that you don’t presently enjoy, but actually really WANT to enjoy.

Participant will spend about 5-10 minutes drawing.

Question Type <small>(Patton, 2002)</small>	Questions
	1. FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS TO BE INSERTED HERE (Based on participant’s responses to Interview 1).
Opinion	2. You are now in your ____ year of your appointment. If someone were to ask you how you were able to accomplish everything you’ve just spoken about, what would you say?
Knowledge Behavior	3. How would you describe your organizational system? a. What formats do you use (technology/analog)? b. How did you discover that format works for you?
Opinion	4. In looking through the courses you’ve taught, which course signifies that greatest accomplishment to you? Why?
Opinion	5. In looking through your scholarship, which project (research, publication, presentation) would you classify as something you found gratification in accomplishing? Why?
Opinion	6. What parts of your work do you enjoy the most? [Point to visual.] Tell me why you find them so gratifying.

Question Type (Patton, 2002)	Questions
Opinion Behavior	7. What parts of your work do you enjoy the least? [Point to visual.] a. How do you approach these unenjoyable or negative experiences? b. How did you determine those strategies worked for you?
Opinion Behavior	8. Tell me more about your third drawing.
Knowledge Opinion	9. As you get closer to your tenure review year, what do you think you need to do in order to have a successful experience? (Probe about what the participant might consider evidence for tenure.) a. How have you determined that these actions are reflective of what is expected of you?
Opinion	10. How do you think your colleagues would describe you and your approach to work?
Opinion Behavior	11. I want you to look over your CV right now. Is there something that you would want to add to it (in terms of courses to teach, research/scholarly projects, service work)? a. Why? b. How do you think you would go about achieving that addition? c. How would you prioritize those projects?
Opinion Behavior	12. Experts on happiness often say that in order for someone to be happy, they have to actively create or construct the life you want. What's your reaction to that statement? a. Do you think it's possible to construct the life you want as a faculty member prior to tenure? b. How would a faculty member go about constructing the life they want?
	13. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experience as a faculty member that we haven't discussed?

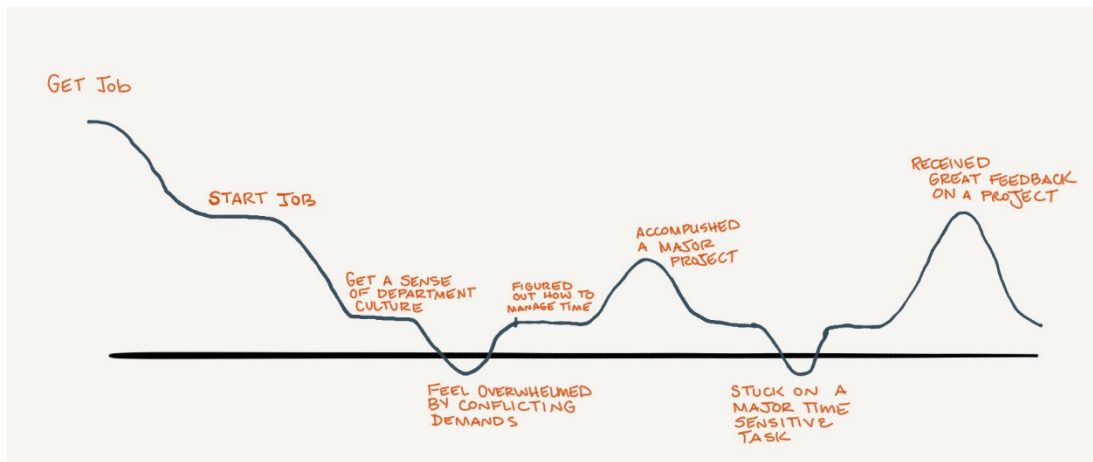
**Closing:**

- Thank faculty member for her time.
- Review confidentiality procedures one more time. Ask if there are other specific measures faculty member would like me to take to protect identity.
- Remind faculty member she will receive a gift card via email within 48 hours.

## Participant-Generated Drawing Exercises

### Peaks and Valleys

*Example:*



## APPENDIX C

### INFORMED CONSENT

Consent Form for Participation in a Research Study  
University of Massachusetts Amherst

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**Researcher(s):** *Bethany Lisi, doctoral student  
Dr. Ezekiel Kimball, faculty sponsor*

**Study Title:** *The Behaviors, Decisions, and Perspectives of Female  
Early-Career Faculty in Tenure-Track Positions*

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#### **1. WHAT IS THIS FORM?**

This form is called a Consent Form. It will give you information about the study so you can make an informed decision about participation in this research.

#### **2. WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE?**

Subjects must be at least 18 years old to participate, who self-identify as female, and are in their fourth or fifth year in tenure-track positions.

#### **3. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?**

The purpose of this research study is to discover and describe how early-career female faculty in tenure-track positions approach their work as they near their tenure review. Specifically, I am interested in hearing about how female early-career faculty develop their skills; make work-related decisions; find meaning in their work as a teacher, scholar, and community member; and their perceptions of their work environment.

#### **4. WHERE WILL THE STUDY TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?**

The research will be conducted at the subject's office or another mutually agreed upon location. A 60-90 minute semi-structured interview will take place, with the potential of an additional 60-90 minute follow-up interview, intended to be scheduled 1-2 months following the initial interview. The total amount of in-person time a subject might have to dedicate to this study is 3 hours maximum.

#### **5. WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?**

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to take part in one or two semi-structured interviews that will be audio-recorded, each lasting approximately 60-90 minutes. The questions in both interviews will cover your educational background, your initial experience at your institution (i.e., experiences in teaching, research, service, and advising), perspectives on your work environment, how you manage your time to complete your tasks, and how you find meaning in your work. You may skip any question you do not feel comfortable answering.

During the first interview, I will ask you to complete a short demographic questionnaire and you may skip any question you do not want to answer. I will ask you to engage in a short diagramming (drawing) activity. To understand your professional work, I will also ask you to provide, if comfortable, a copy of your curriculum vitae.

You may be asked to take part in the second semi-structured follow-up interview, which will take 60-90 minutes of your time, involve another drawing activity, and a request to see any organizational tools you use to assist in managing your work.

#### **6. WHAT ARE MY BENEFITS OF BEING IN THIS STUDY?**

While you may not directly benefit from the results of this study, by participating, you may indirectly benefit from reflecting on the work you have accomplished during your time at the institution. In addition, your experience will contribute to the existing literature on early-career female faculty.

#### **7. WHAT ARE MY RISKS OF BEING IN THIS STUDY?**

We believe there are no known risks associated with this research study; however, a possible inconvenience may be the time it takes to complete the study. There may be risks associated with breach of confidentiality. To safeguard against these risks, the following procedures will be used to protect the confidentiality of all study records. All sources of evidence (i.e., interview recordings, interview transcripts, questionnaire data, photos of drawings, documents, screenshots/photos/copies of organizational tools) will be stored and organized in two case study databases. The primary database will be in the software program NVivo 11 for Windows, which is loaded on a laptop computer that is encrypted and password protected. The secondary (backup) database will be in a BOX folder that is encrypted and requires a password in order to access the files. Only the PI will have access to both the primary and secondary password protected databases. All files in the databases will be labeled with a pseudonym. The key identifier sheet, which is the only document that documents the subject's name with the pseudonym ascribed to you, will be password-protected and saved in a separate BOX folder.

#### **8. HOW WILL MY PERSONAL INFORMATION BE PROTECTED?**

The following procedures will be used to protect the confidentiality of your study records. All sources of evidence (i.e., interview recordings, interview transcripts, questionnaire data, photos of drawings, documents, screenshots/photos/copies of organizational tools) will be stored and organized in two case study databases. The primary database will be in the software program NVivo 11 for Windows, which is loaded on a laptop computer that is encrypted and password protected. All data coding and memo writing will be conducted in NVivo.

The secondary (backup) database will be in a BOX folder that is encrypted and requires a password in order to access the files. Only I will have access to both the primary and secondary password protected databases. All files in the databases will be labeled with your pseudonym. The key identifier sheet, which is the only document that documents your name with the pseudonym ascribed to you, will be password-protected and saved in the BOX folder separate from the study data. Finally, the signed informed consent documents (paper copies) will be stored in a locked location away from any paper copies of the data.

The audio files of the interviews will be destroyed 3 years after the close of the study.

**9. WILL I RECEIVE ANY PAYMENT FOR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY?**

You will receive a \$25 electronic Amazon gift card upon completion of your interview. If you are asked for a second follow-up interview, you will receive an additional \$25 electronic Amazon gift card. You will be emailed with your electronic Amazon gift card within 48 hours of completing each interview.

**10. WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?**

Take as long as you like before you make a decision. We are happy to answer any questions you have about this study. If you have further questions about this project or if you have a research-related problem, you may contact the researcher(s), (Bethany Lisi, [blisi@umass.edu](mailto:blisi@umass.edu) or 413-545-1699 or Ezekiel Kimball, [ekimball@educ.umass.edu](mailto:ekimball@educ.umass.edu) or 413-545-2510). If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research subject, you may contact the University of Massachusetts Amherst Human Research Protection Office (HRPO) at (413) 545-3428 or [humansubjects@ora.umass.edu](mailto:humansubjects@ora.umass.edu).

**11. CAN I STOP BEING IN THE STUDY?**

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. If you agree to be in the study, but later change your mind, you may drop out at any time. There are no penalties or consequences of any kind if you decide that you do not want to participate.

**12. SUBJECT STATEMENT OF VOLUNTARY CONSENT**

When signing this form I am agreeing to voluntarily enter this study. I have had a chance to read this consent form, and it was explained to me in a language which I use and understand. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers. I understand that I can withdraw at any time. A copy of this signed Informed Consent Form has been given to me.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree that segments of the recordings made of my participation in this research may be used for conference presentations, as well as education and training of future researchers/practitioners.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to have my recordings archived for future research in the field of higher education and faculty development.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not agree to allow segments of recordings of my participation in this research to be used for conference presentations or education and training purposes.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date:



By signing below I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person  
Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date:

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