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Examining Equity in Tenure Processes at Higher Education Music Programs: An Institutional Ethnography

Deborah Bradley
University of Wisconsin-Madison, debbradley42@gmail.com

Deanna Yerichuk
Wilfrid Laurier University, dyerichuk@wlu.ca


Lori-Anne Dolloff
University of Toronto

Kiera Galway
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Kathy M. Robinson
University of Alberta

See next page for additional authors

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Authors

Deborah Bradley, Deanna Yerichuk, Lori-Anne Dolloff, Kiera Galway, Kathy M. Robinson, Jody Stark, and Elizabeth Gould

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Abstract

As part of a larger mixed-methods study, this article presents findings from research on processes of tenure in Canadian higher education music faculties. The Principle Investigator and three teams of two researchers analyzed the process of tenure at three Canadian institutions to gain insight into how tenure decisions are made in relation to gender and race/ethnicity. The researchers used institutional ethnography, developed by sociologist Dorothy Smith, to examine institutional documents that organize tenure, as well as how documents organize people's actions, studied through interviews with key stakeholders, such as directors, tenure applicants, and union representatives. The findings from the three sites were analyzed and integrated into one composite institution, and the researchers created a written analysis as well as a conceptual map of the process. The researchers found that the existence of a collective agreement created greater transparency in the tenure process for all stakeholders, contributing to a somewhat smoother path to tenure. However, ambiguities remained that created anxiety and stress, such as the "moving bar" related to publications and quantity vs. quality concerns, and the uncertainty about how artistic or musical achievements might "count" in the tenure dossier. The mantra of 'hire the best candidates' appears to disadvantage women and people of colour, who continue to be hired into tenure-track positions at much lower rates than men and White candidates. Policies to encourage diversity in hiring appear to be weak and poorly monitored.

The tenure process affects all aspects of academic life, including hiring, retention, and promotion. The process elicits strong feelings from virtually everyone involved, from faculty members to university presidents (Dooris & Guidos, 2006; Horn, 1999). There is

widespread belief across academia that the tenure system provides a way to ensure that universities hire and retain well-qualified candidates for the professoriate; however, research into the tenure process in Canada and the United States documents continued underrepresentation in tenure-track positions of women and minority candidates in relationship to the increasing numbers of qualified applicants. Current recruitment and hiring practices may undervalue women and people of colour and thus contribute to persistent inequity. This may be further exacerbated by a tenure process that, despite recent policies meant to ameliorate problematic workplace culture and structural issues, continues to award tenure at rates higher for men than for women, particularly in the US, and at higher rates for Whites than for people of colour (Gould, et al., 2012).

This article represents one component of a mixed-methods pilot study that investigated music programs in Canadian higher education with a professorial tenure/rank system. The overarching aim of the pilot study, which was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), was to obtain a better understanding of how the tenure process in Canadian institutions functions from the perspective of providing academic career opportunities to women and minorities. Given a contemporary context of equity and diversity policies in conjunction with ever-increasing budgetary and performance pressures facing post-secondary institutions, this research provides a necessary sketch of the profession's current demographics, and pilots a mixed-methods approach for researching tenure in tertiary music programs in North America. This study was piloted in Canada in part because the country's smaller population size provided a reasonably small field while still providing a national picture. However, and perhaps more importantly, there has been little research conducted on tenure in Canadian universities, and the few recent studies (Acker, Webber, & Smyth, 2012; Gravestock, 2012; Gravestock & Greenleaf, 2008) that have been conducted did not focus specifically on faculties of music.

Our study was conducted in three major parts: (1) a survey of administrators of the music schools/departments/faculties within 44 Canadian institutions with tenure systems; (2) an institutional ethnography conducted with three institutions selected from survey respondents; and (3) a narrative study of people who have experienced tenure. This article reports on the findings of the institutional ethnography portion of the research project, which analyses the processes of tenure at institutions.

Background/Literature Review

Perhaps because tenure is vigorously contested and emotionally charged (for instance, Ellsworth, 1993; Hawkins, 2011; Pierce, 2003; Richardson, 1997), concerns related to tenure are well represented in the scholarly literature. Research on demographics of tenure-track music faculty began in 1974, when the College Music Society (CMS) Committee on the Status of Women, led by Adrienne Fried Bloch, first documented information in music faculties by gender, rank, and teaching specialty, with follow-up studies conducted in 1976-1977 and 1986-1987.

The findings of the CMS research, as well as data collected by the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM), suggest that certain social groups are under-represented in the tenure makeup within schools of music, particularly women and ethnic minorities.

Although the proportion of female music faculty members in 1986 was 31%, up from 24.2% in 1976, by 1993, women still comprised only 33.6% of all US music faculty members, and 75% of these women were employed in "two-year institutions, community colleges, or in part-time, unranked positions" (Payne, 1996, p. 98). In a 2008-2009 survey completed by institutional members of the US-based NASM and volunteer non-member institutions (621 total, approximately one-third of the CMS directory), women comprised 30.4% of music faculty members ("Data summaries 2009-2010: Music," 2010). Gould's (2011) preliminary study found almost identical percentages in Canada. Women music students now slightly outnumber men in the US,¹ although White students far exceed non-White students ("Data summaries 2009-2010: Music," 2010). In the United States in 2009, 47% of music doctoral graduates were women, yet women were noticeably less represented in tenure-track positions in North America: only 36% of assistant professors and 29% of associate and full professors were women in the US and Canada ("Data summaries 2009-2010: Music," 2010; Gould, 2011).

While scholarship on gender in higher education has proliferated over the past three decades, race/ethnicity has been under-studied. The research that is available suggests that the demographics on race/ethnicity of tenure-track music faculty paint a similar and stubbornly unchanging picture. The only CMS-sponsored or related publication on race and ethnicity in music faculties is Anderson's 1982 report by the Committee on the Status of Minorities in the Profession, which provided summary statistical data that did not categorize in terms of gender. A brief report published in *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* noted that African Americans comprise only 4.7% of US music department faculties at 24 of "the nation's 27 highest-ranked universities" (Anonymous, 2003, p. 54). Factors cited as contributing to these low numbers include the less than 1% of music doctorates awarded to African Americans in 2003, and institutional curricula that are heavily weighted toward the Western European canon.

According to a US study, fully half of women who earned music doctoral degrees were non-White, while merely 4% of men

awarded doctoral degrees were non-White. Although they earned nearly two-thirds of all doctoral degrees awarded to people of colour, women constituted only 40% of non-White assistant professors, and 32% of non-White associate and full professors, demonstrating a preference for hiring and retaining non-White men over women ("Data summaries 2009-2010: Music," 2010). While non-White students earned 37% of doctoral degrees, people of colour constituted only 19% of assistant professors, and 12% of associate and full professors in the US.

Beyond examining demographics, tenure research has investigated the distinctly gendered and racialized experiences of tenure. A small body of scholarship has examined how female academics tend to have more domestic responsibilities, such as parenting and care-giving, which adversely affects their academic careers. Ongoing research in this area suggests that women who have children early in their careers are less likely to advance but men's careers often benefit from having children (Gappa, Austin, & Trice, 2007). Further, women tend to enter the profession later and leave it early. Thus studying tenure as a major means of retention of women is crucial.² Other topics discussed in "special tenure issues" in journals as diverse as *The American Behavioral Scientist* (1998), *Journal of Educational Thought* (2010), and *Women's Studies in Communication* (2008) include the effects of the "unintended barriers" of marginalization, racism, and sexism experienced by people of colour.³ The "glacial" pace at which equitable representation among faculty has occurred, even in Canada (Drakich & Stewart, 2007; Drakich, Stewart, & Ornstein, 1998), demonstrates that interventions must be innovative, creative, and immediate in order to increase hiring, retention, and promotion rates.

The lack of commensurate reliable data on Canadian tenure demographics and tenure research specific to music faculties led us to collect this information through the first phase of the *Living with Tenure* research project, which surveyed Canadian music faculty in higher education. Bergonzi, Galway, Yerichuk and Gould (2015) found that, in Canada, tenure has been granted at high rates over a five-year period ending in 2012, and that women were no more or less likely to achieve tenure than men. However, more men than women held both tenured and tenure-track positions, at a ratio of 2:1, suggesting that men continue to be twice as likely to be hired into tenure-track positions. The demographic data of the survey also found extremely low rates of non-White tenure-track faculty, which suggests that diversity remains an area of concern in Canadian higher education music programs.

The results of the first phase of our research corroborates other Canadian studies that have found that faculty members across disciplines in Canadian institutions who continue through the pre-tenure stream to apply for tenure experience high rates of success in achieving tenure: 87.8% of men and 82.8% of women (Stewart, Ornstein, & Drakich, 2009, p. 74). Anecdotal evidence suggests that this number may be artificially inflated due to the practice of "negotiating out" any candidates unlikely to achieve tenure. Acker, *et al.* (2012) published research on tenure suggesting that because of high tenure success rates in Canada, if an individual is denied tenure, it is emotionally damaging and often career limiting. The results of our national survey, combined with the research on tenure over the last several decades, suggest that the inequality these statistics represent is a real and pressing issue in academia across Canada and the US. Phase 2 of the *Living with Tenure* research study was designed to investigate how the tenure process unfolds in institutions.

Overview of *Living with Tenure* Study

Recognizing how tenure shapes post-secondary institutions in North America, this pilot study focused on Canada to determine effective methods for investigating tenure, as well as to provide preliminary information about the state of tenure in post-secondary music programs in Canada. Combined with similar work in the US, the study contributes to the creation of a baseline of knowledge about tenure in higher education music programs across North America.

The two-year pilot project was a mixed-methods study with three phases: *Phase 1*, as discussed above, provided a demographic snapshot of tenure in Canadian post-secondary music programs.⁴ This demographic work was particularly important in the Canadian context, since the country has no organizations like the National Association of Schools of Music or the College Music Society to collect such data regularly, or at all. *Phase 2*, the focus of this article, analyzed the tenure process at three Canadian institutions to gain insight into how tenure decisions are made institutionally. In particular, we sought to identify particular moments in the tenure process in which the interpretation of documents and the ensuing actions of any people involved may shift tenure experiences and outcomes. *Phase 3* was a narrative study of personal experiences of tenure, with the purpose of enlivening statistics and institutional processes with the voices of those who have experienced or are experiencing tenure processes. This article focuses on Phase 2 of the pilot project, which investigated tenure processes at three institutions in Canada using the sociological approach of institutional ethnography (Smith, 1986, 2005).

The Theory and Methodology of Institutional Ethnography

As stated above, the purpose of the second phase of the *Living with Tenure* pilot project was to examine processes of tenure in several higher education music programs in Canada. The objective was not only to identify how tenure works to coordinate particular actions through overt and covert processes, but also to understand how these processes may differently affect tenure-track professors according to gender and race/ethnicity. The theory and methodology of institutional ethnography (IE) was well suited to these aims.

Institutional ethnography (IE) is a sociological approach pioneered by Dorothy E. Smith (1986, 2005; 2006; Campbell and Gregor, 2002). Broadly speaking, IE uses empirical inquiry to explore the social relations that structure people's everyday lives. By combining textual analysis with ethnographic techniques, "institutional ethnographies are built from the examination of work processes and study of how they are coordinated, typically through texts and discourses of various sorts" (DeVault, 2006, p. 294). IE aims to locate discourse in the interactions between shared experiences of people, and how texts organize those experiences.

Smith insists that IE is not merely a method but a sociology, which our research team understood to mean a research approach that incorporates standpoint, theory, and method. Perhaps the most central tenet in Smith's approach is that social problems are investigated from the perspective of the people who occupy marginalized positions, rather than from an outside "objective" standpoint. In our research project, we were interested in investigating the tenure process from the perspective of female and/or non-White tenure-track professors. In some instances this meant that the research teams interviewed women or people of colour to understand their experiences, but it also meant that all interview questions were oriented toward this perspective, even when interviewing the director of a music program, a tenured professor, or a union representative.

Campbell and Gregor (2008) suggest that IE is like ethnography in studying everyday life in context, using similar research techniques such as participant-observation and interviews. What distinguishes institutional ethnography from other kinds of ethnography is its focus on how these local, specific, everyday experiences are coordinated translocally in ways that often cannot be seen from the local perspective. As Campbell and Gregor argue, IE tries to make visible "as social relations the complex practices that coordinate people's actions across separations of time and space, often without their conscious knowledge" (p. 31). Institutional ethnography investigates how people's actions are coordinated over and above their own experiences through reliance on texts, which Smith defines as something that "can be reproduced so that different people can read them across different times and/or different locations" (Smith & Turner, 2014b, p. 5). For example, in our project, a collective agreement represents a text that clearly organizes processes of tenure. Other texts included assessment forms, teacher evaluations, and, of course, tenure portfolios.

IE focuses on how texts coordinate the activities of people across multiple sites, or what Smith (1990) calls "textually-mediated social organization" (p.209). However, texts themselves do not rule over people. IE is unique in that the approach recognizes that while texts may not change, the ways that people act upon those texts are variable, forming and transforming social relations of any given institution. Smith therefore treats texts ethnographically by "explor[ing] the ways texts enter into the organizing of any corporation, university, etc." (Smith & Turner, 2014a, p. 308).

IE aims for concrete analysis that explicates rather than theorizes. As a result, IE has become a prevalent methodology for activists within and outside the academy who seek ways to map particular processes in order to locate and make concrete changes to these processes, and thus transform the social conditions for disadvantaged people across various contexts. Campbell and Gregor (2008) clarify IE's relation to theory by framing institutional ethnography as a theorized practice rather than a method that leads towards theorizing:

[O]ur theory commits us not to theoretical explanations, but to certain theorized practices of looking at the actualities of everyday life. Institutional ethnographers believe that people and events are *actually* tied together in ways that make sense of such abstractions as power, knowledge, capitalism, patriarchy, race, the economy, the state, policy, culture, and so on. (p.17, italics in original)

In sum, institutional ethnography is an empirical approach that tries to locate invisible and often mysterious relations in the concrete, the locatable, and the mappable. In fact, DeVault (2006) points out that many IE researchers have used mapping to point to the "analytical goal of explication rather than theory building" (p. 294). For this study, institutional ethnography provided our research team with a concrete approach for not only analyzing tenure as a process structured through many documents, but also how people act upon those documents, and how their actions are coordinated by those documents.

Project Procedures

Our institutional ethnography incorporated two main components: first, collecting and examining texts related to the tenure process for each of the three institutions, such as policy documents, forms, and assessments. The second component was ethnographic

research—in our case, interviewing key stakeholders who employ those texts toward tenure decisions. Stakeholders included faculty seeking tenure, faculty reviewing tenure applications, administrative executives, and university-wide staff who participate in the tenure process.

In terms of our specific study, institutional ethnography was employed to map pathways of the tenure process of music faculty in Canadian institutions, identifying junctures in the process that could be altered to produce more effective and equitable tenure procedures. The ethnographic data collection methods in this study were limited to interviews, not only because tenure processes are highly confidential, but also because tenure processes extend over years, and within the overall Canadian context, tenure applications in music departments do not happen frequently. Our data was gathered through semi-structured interviews conducted in 2014 with music executives and faculty members at three Canadian universities. Of the institutions that responded to the survey component of the study, three were chosen for the institutional ethnography based on the music executive's willingness to clarify and expand upon his/her survey responses and to permit the researchers to investigate processes of tenure at the institution. We selected these institutions from different regions of the country: Atlantic Canada, Central Canada, and Western Canada. Two of the institutions were classified as medical/doctoral (major research), and one was a comprehensive university. All three institutions were unionized or had associations that laid out rules for the tenure process.

A team of two researchers (one professor and one graduate student) was assigned to each institution, and ethics approval for the study was secured from each of the IE team's home university research ethics committees. Each team initially contacted the music executive, and then followed up with a phone call to discuss participation in this portion of the study. Once the music executives had confirmed their participation, each team examined the institution's documents related to tenure and promotion, gathered from institutional web sites and/or provided directly from the interview participants. Roughly 30 documents were gathered from all three sites, ranging from collective agreements to guides for preparing the various components of a tenure package at the institutional, departmental, and/or faculty levels.

The teams then met with each of the music executives to discuss their experiences with, and understanding of, tenure at their institution. Two teams conducted interviews at the participating institutions and the third team arranged to interview a music executive at a conference that all attended within the timeframe of the study. The interviews investigated participants' working knowledge and experiences of the institutional process of tenure, attending to the ways in which participants described their actions in relation to documents that organize the tenure process.

The music executives and each IE team identified individuals who could provide more insight into the interface between faculty members' lives and the tenure process at their institutions. These potential participants, which included professors ranging from newly hired to tenured, past or current tenure committee members, faculty association or union representatives, and others, were contacted for an interview to be conducted during the site visit, by telephone, or electronically. Where applicable, music faculty located in Faculties of Education were also contacted. A substantial number of individuals contacted declined to be interviewed and one withdrew their interview afterwards.

In total, seven semi-structured interviews were conducted over a six-month period, each lasting 45 to 90 minutes and each digitally recorded and transcribed. Pseudonyms were assigned to protect interviewees' identities. Transcripts were sent to each corresponding participant to get his or her approval, rejection, or feedback on where we needed to modify or eliminate additional identifiable information.

Each research team collectively analyzed the data from documents and interviews from their assigned institution, attending to connections between everyday life, institutional practices, and how texts organized both. We then mapped the tenure processes to visualize both the documents and steps of tenure, but also the moments of decision-making in relation to the documents. Our data analysis produced two main documents: an analysis of the experience of the tenure process at the three institutions, as well as a conceptual map of the tenure process. These documents were returned to participants for reliability, validity, and verification.

Because of the sensitive and confidential nature of tenure in postsecondary institutions, all the more fraught in Canada with many fewer post-secondary music programs than the United States, the research teams combined all research to create one composite picture in an effort to protect anonymity of participating institutions and their faculty. Consequently, the maps and the analysis refer to "Composite University." While this decision does obscure differences between the three institutions, the research teams found that the scope and size of the institutions, along with the fact that all three were unionized, led to fairly consistent findings of how tenure worked across campuses.

Limitations

Our project deviates from institutional ethnography in key ways, largely due to the extremely sensitive and confidential nature of tenure. Where IE most frequently involves intensive research in one location, our study selected three different institutions to study, and then created a composite analysis that integrated data from all three sites. While this potentially obscures differences between sites and also spreads data collection thinly, the research teams felt that the measure was necessary to protect anonymity of participants and participating institutions. More importantly, however, we felt that by providing a composite picture of the tenure process, the ensuing scholarly conversation can focus on processes of tenure rather than on any one process of tenure. In a North American context, tenure is a process that affects all higher education, and the research team did not want to lose sight of the opportunity for a larger conversation about tenure by focusing on the successes and failures of any one particular institution.

Another way that the research process differed from a more typical institutional ethnography is that there was no participant observation; instead, our data collection relied solely on texts and interviews. Again, this was largely a problem of confidentiality, in which outside observers are not privy to the conversations of a tenure committee. Further, tenure reviews are not frequent in Canadian post-secondary music programs, and no reviews occurred during the data gathering stage in 2014 that the researchers could observe, had this been an option. However, despite these limitations, IE enabled the researchers to focus interviews specifically around the documents that organize processes of tenure.

Mapping the Tenure Process

The research teams created two diagrams to map the key elements of the tenure process at Composite University. The first map (see Figure 1) offers an overview of the six-year tenure process, governed throughout by the Collective Agreement between the university and the union.

The first key moment in the map is the point of hire (box #1), the point at which the university hires an individual into a tenure-track position. The term “qualified candidate” was common in interviews with music executives, and this term was used to describe individuals who were not only qualified for the position, but were also likely to attain tenure within the six-year time frame.

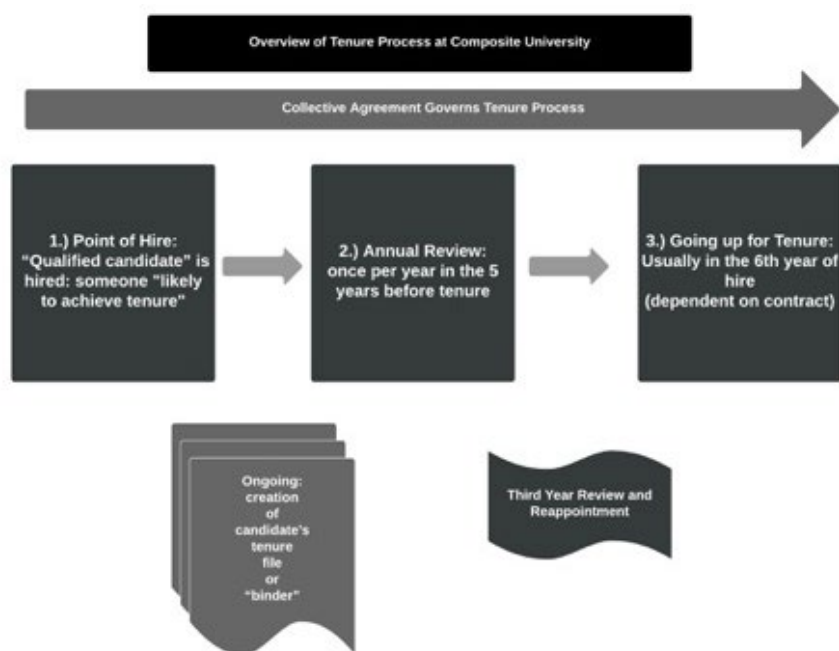


Figure 1

The next key moment is the candidate’s annual review (box #2), which takes place once per year in the five (5) years leading up to the tenure review year. The process of compiling the candidate’s “tenure binder” is ongoing during these five years. The third-year review and reappointment is a milestone in the tenure process, representing one of two major reviews during the tenure process. The third and final major step in the process is the tenure application itself (box #3), which typically occurs in the sixth year of the candidate’s employment.

The second map (see Figure 2) elaborates on these key moments in the tenure process. Once an offer of employment has been extended, contract negotiations begin. These negotiations are mediated by two key texts: the contract and the collective agreement. Once the candidate has accepted the position and becomes part of the faculty, senior faculty members typically engage in informal mentoring.

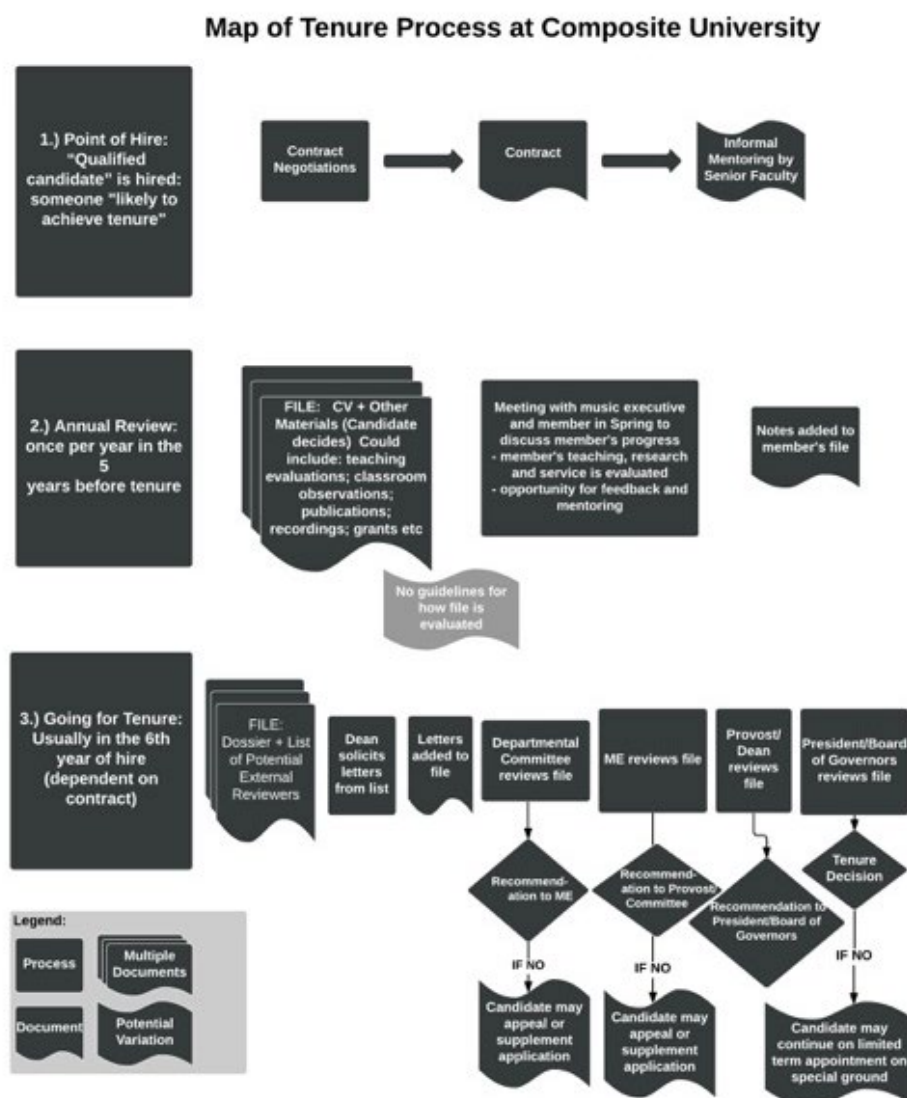


Figure 2

During the Annual Review, candidates prepare a file with their CV and materials documenting their productivity during the year. At Composite University, this step has no guidelines for how the file is to be evaluated, which suggests that candidates must seek out advice on how best to prepare files, and also that committee members evaluating the file do not use a standard rubric or set of guidelines to assess the contents. The executive reviews the file in advance of a meeting with the candidate in the spring of each year to discuss the candidate's performance and progress. This meeting is an opportunity for the executive to mentor the candidate toward attaining tenure, and frequently the chair of the candidate's department also participates in the meeting to advise the candidate. Finally, notes from the meeting are added to the candidate's file. This meeting occurs annually throughout the five years leading to the tenure application, and the annual reviews provide systematic check-ins to assess the cumulative progress of the candidate's work in building the tenure file.

Usually in the sixth year (depending on the candidate's contract), the candidate presents her/his tenure file containing the dossier of academic activity, accomplishments, the CV, and all other supporting materials. The candidate also provides a list of potential external referees. The executive then solicits letters from individuals chosen from this list. Once the letters have been obtained, they

are added to the file. When the file is complete, the departmental committee reviews it and makes a recommendation to the executive: if the decision is not to award tenure, the candidate may appeal or supplement the application. Next, the executive reviews the file and makes a recommendation to either the Provost or the faculty-wide committee (depending on the institution). The Provost/Dean reviews the file and makes a recommendation to the President/Board of Governors. If the Provost does not recommend tenure, the candidate will be informed and offered an opportunity to appeal or supplement the application. Finally, the President/Board of Governors reviews the file and makes a recommendation. If tenure is not recommended, the candidate may continue as a limited term appointment (only on special grounds). If tenure is recommended, the candidate is awarded tenure (sometimes with promotion, sometimes not) in time for the following academic year.

The flags on the map indicate the moments of ambiguity in the tenure process, in which people's actions could significantly shift the experience of the tenure process, or the final decisions. There are three key moments to identify: first, once someone has been hired into a tenure-track position, there is no formal mentoring process outside of the annual reviews, and so the candidate bears the responsibility of seeking out guidance, information, and assistance not only to carry out their various responsibilities, but also for how best to track those responsibilities. Who they ask for assistance may also shift how the candidate makes choices around scholarship, teaching, and service, as advice and priorities typically vary from faculty member to faculty member.

The second moment of ambiguity is in the annual review. While the meetings are structured as a mandatory part of the tenure process (mandated by the collective agreement), there are no guidelines to oversee how the annual file is assessed, which means that the candidate must guess at how to present his/her file to be assessed favourably; this also means that the faculty members evaluating the file have discretion to evaluate the relative success of the candidate's work, as represented in his/her file.

The third and final moment occurs when the candidate has actually put his or her tenure file forward to apply for tenure. On the map, there are three flags indicating points at which the candidate may appeal a decision or add supplementary material. In our interviews, the option to add supplementary material was not so much a choice of the candidate's as it was a directive to the candidate from the music director, although often it was to update the file if a publication or creative product came out after the initial file was submitted. The decision to appeal a denial of tenure also left the candidate with a few options, whether or not they knew it. Candidates may appeal the decision, and work with union representatives in this process. Our interviews with a union representative suggested that not many music faculty sought out union help in appealing decisions, and this may warrant further investigation. Similarly, if the file goes to the Provost and the Provost denies tenure, the candidate may also appeal the decision. Finally, if tenure is denied, candidates have the option of continuing on a limited term appointment of two years.

While the process of tenure is described through legal documents that are publicly available, various components and stages of the process are confidential. There are parts of the tenure file that the candidate does not see, at least not initially, such as letters from external reviewers and the assessment that the music director adds to the file. While confidentiality is deemed a necessary part of the tenure process, the candidate only has a limited view of her/his tenure file and how it is assessed at each step of the process. The aspect of confidentiality may also contribute to the possibility for variation in making decisions, since most assessors must use personal discretion to complete the assessment and/or make a decision.

Findings and Discussion

The Tenure Process in Composite University

The faculty at Composite University is unionized, and as such, the collective agreement regulates tenure processes and timelines, creating greater transparency than in many non-unionized institutions around the rules, expectations, outcomes, recourse, and timelines of the tenure process. Study participants, from the head of the music department to tenured professors, to tenure-track faculty to union representatives, largely perceived that the tenure process ran smoothly overall at the university. However, tenure has distinctive features in a music environment, largely related to the performance aspect of the discipline, and some themes emerged related to gender and race/ethnicity in particular moments of the tenure process.

Because the discipline of music includes performance and scholarship; the researchers were advised that uncertainty existed about how creative achievements might be evaluated for tenure at the university-wide administrative level. The music director had to act as a "translator" to the upper level of the university (in this case the Office of the Provost) to ensure that artistic work was valued and credited properly. The director worked to broaden the general understanding of research to include "research-creation," so that music faculty in performance disciplines could submit CDs, performances, compositions, and other creative works as part of their tenure portfolios. The director has been successful in shifting perceptions of what counts as research, in part by creating a document that defined equivalencies between "traditional" research products and creative research products, e.g. a performance equals a presentation; an invited performance as the headliner equals a keynote address. This document not only helped the Provost's office

make the final decisions on tenure applications, but also helped committees and external examiners evaluate tenure files by providing a clear standard by which to assess the relative success of a file.

At the same time, the director felt that flexibility was important in evaluating scholarship to accommodate the differing publishing expectations across music disciplines, understanding, for example, that the kind and quantity of publications deemed acceptable in musicology is different from music education. However, some interviewees feared that this also created a “moving bar,” since the quantity and kind of publications were never clearly laid out, risking inflated expectations from year to year, and leaving candidates unsure if their output would be deemed sufficient. This uncertainty about output adequacy created anxiety among tenure candidates.

The music unit at Composite University had a notable number of female tenure-track faculty members, and the director noted the recent hiring of a minority candidate. However, several of the interviewees felt that women and people of colour had to take on more service roles due to high demand for diverse representation on committees, which in turn compromised the ability of tenure-track candidates to publish and conduct research, widely regarded as the most important part of the tenure file.

The point of hire appeared to be a critical moment in the tenure process. Corroborating findings of the survey phase of this study, there were few examples of tenure being denied in the previous five years at Composite University, suggesting that women and racially/ethnically diverse candidates were not at a disadvantage in having their tenure applications approved. However, the mantra of “hire the best candidates and help them succeed” raised concerns among a few of the participants. The university has policies in place to hire diverse candidates into tenure-track positions, but all interviewees noted that these policies were limited in scope and effectiveness. The hiring committee must fill out a form regarding the demographic characteristics of the candidates, and if the committee chooses a candidate that is not from a minority group, they must offer an explanation to the Provost’s office. No repercussions, or even follow-up after submitting this form, were reported to the researchers, even when the person hired was not from a minority group. A few participants noted structural impediments to equity that easily can go unaddressed by simply “hiring the best candidate,” including how classical music training and educational systems may contribute to conditions that tend to produce White males, and to a lesser degree, White females, as the best candidates.

The music unit at Composite University did not have a formal mentoring program. However, there was a well-established system in place to provide annual check-ins to review the work of all pre-tenure candidates and to ensure they had the advice and guidance needed to work toward tenure successfully. Each pre-tenure faculty member met annually with the chair of her or his department along with a senior executive to review her file, and to get advice on how to focus her or his scholarship and balance her overall work in research, teaching, and service. In addition to this annual check-in, Composite University had a structured Annual Performance Review process for all faculty members, which provided another mechanism for pre-tenure candidates to get a sense of their relative accomplishments. These annual performance reviews, however, were not technically part of the process of tenure, and this caused confusion and anxiety among some candidates who had concerns about ratings assigned in these reviews. Also worth noting, the director expressed frustration with this process, finding the mandatory form cumbersome and placing steep demands on the time of each department chair as well as the faculty members.

Discussion Related to the Literature on Gender

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Sandra Acker conducted groundbreaking research into the gendered nature of life in the academy and its effects on women. It appears that little has changed in the 20 years since Acker first published her research (Acker, 1992a, 1992b, 1994). Gender bias remains evident in academic practices, and music is no exception. Although the picture at first glance may have improved somewhat—and the participants in our study by and large felt that the tenure process worked smoothly—like a geometric cube, how one looks at the cube determines how one sees it.

For example, the high tenuring rates for women in Canada may obscure equity issues that continue to exist in Canadian institutions related to the experience of tenure (Acker, et al., 2012). This, of course, was also part of the motivation for our particular study. We felt that the high tenure rates painted a picture that obscured the full story. More importantly, these high tenuring rates render the failure to achieve tenure in Canada potentially devastating to an individual’s academic career.

Another finding from the literature similarly indicates that little has changed: women remain overrepresented in service roles due to higher demand for visibility on committees, etc. (Acker, et al., 2012; Interviews). One participant in our study offered her experience related to service obligations and committee work:

I want to have a good service record for tenure, and I really enjoy working with students . . . right from the start I obviously wanted to have graduate students and do all of that. But there have been moments where I felt that I am doing significantly more than my fair share, even putting aside the fact that I was the only person in the area that didn't have tenure. So I feel,

personally . . . that if anything, the person without tenure should be doing less than their fair share, right?

Another concern raised by a participant in our study relates to the effects of maternity leave on one's ability to achieve tenure, an issue that Acker identified in the 1990s (Acker, 1992a, 1994). One participant commented:

I'd like to think that it [maternity leave] won't affect it at all, but I have a feeling that . . . becoming a mother can affect an academic career in interesting and complicated ways that perhaps aren't always visible . . . It's definitely something that I am aware of. I've seen things happen . . . sort of attitudes about no longer being taken seriously now that you have had a child. One colleague of mine at another institution was told by a senior male colleague when she was pregnant, "Oh you've chosen THAT path!"

Later in the same conversation, this participant shared another anecdote related to her experience as a new mother on the tenure track:

He (Chair) . . . implied that parental leave was a sort of sabbatical, but it's really not. I mean, obviously I don't have childcare; we can't afford it. I'm not being paid . . . right now. So I can't just sort of come into work at the drop of a hat. So there have been a little bit of those kinds of moments when I felt that people think I am just sitting around at home and why don't I just come in and do something useful.

Discussion Related to the Literature on Race

While Affirmative Action measures have improved hiring and tenure rates since their enactment, such initiatives benefit White women more than men and women of colour (Berry & Bonilla-Silva, 2007; Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Demographic data for the study suggest that changes in the hiring and tenure practices in Canadian schools of music continue at a slow pace, and thus provide Whites (including White women) with a continued advantage in the hiring process for tenure track jobs. It is important to bear in mind that in Canada, according to the 2014 census, the so-called "visible minority" population was 19.1%, and the Aboriginal population was 4.3%. Even though more than 1 in 5 people in Canada self-identify as other than White, music faculties remain predominantly White across Canada. Bergonzi, et al. (2016) found that non-White people account for just 9% of tenure-track faculty in Canadian tertiary music faculties.

In researching the overall tenure picture at Canadian institutions, Acker, et al. (2012) conducted interviews with junior faculty members and concluded, "the experience of being reviewed for tenure is related to gender, race and other factors" (p. 5). Their findings support our assertion that the "myth of meritocracy" as a tenet of liberalism and neoliberalism (Berry & Bonilla-Silva, 2007; Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Dei, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 1998; Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva, 2008) remains evident in the Canadian music faculties participating in our study. While statements such as "we hire only the best candidates" may on the surface appear benign, many race scholars have noted that the notion of "cream rising to the top" usually serves to protect White privilege, even among those responsible for hiring who may have good intentions about increasing the diversity of the faculty. "The language of universalism and minimization of racism allow most Whites to communicate their views about affirmative action using rhetorical strategies that seem reasonable and moral" (Berry & Bonilla-Silva, 2007, p.1). What constitutes "the best candidate"? Who typically has those opportunities? Universities continue to be constructed as "White spaces," as the following participant's comments suggest:

I believe that the whole system favours those with privilege, who are White. The kinds of music that are studied and propagated are elite musics. It takes a fair amount of money and circumstance to bring up the clarinet player or the soprano. Even if we wanted, the kinds of ways that we teach are so hemmed in by factors of the clock, the curriculum, the ways in which we teach . . . the steady impoverization of elementary and lower grades of music, and music teachers, and people who are musicians to work with them. All of these things are going to naturally make it very difficult for an immigrant child, or someone who is First Nations . . . they're going to have a really different orientation. If you have someone whose first tongue and first sonic landscape was African, or Japanese, or pop music, or country and western, you know?

Our findings concurred with those of Acker, et al. (2012); the experience of being reviewed for tenure is both raced and gendered, in part because of the belief in meritocracy, an ideology that is also raced and gendered.

Discussion: Texts vs. Participants' Lived Experience

An important element of the institutional ethnography methodology is to see how texts such as collective agreements serve to organize professors' work, and how these texts affect the actual work experience. According to the participants in our study, the existence of a collective agreement appeared to have created greater transparency in the tenure process, contributing to a somewhat smoother path to tenure. Even though the participants largely perceived that the tenure process ran smoothly, ambiguities remained

that created anxiety and stress for those on the tenure track. Participants spoke of the “moving bar” related to publication and quantity vs. quality concerns, whether or not to publish a book, and the uncertainty about how artistic or musical achievements might “count” in the tenure dossier, particularly after the tenure file leaves the home department or college for review at higher levels within the institution.

Wage equity studies are ongoing in several institutions across Canada in an attempt to correct the wage disparities that continue to exist between male and female faculty. Research into wage disparity at Composite University indicated that a gendered effect exists that favours females with less than 6.5 years of experience, but favours males with more than 6.5 years of experience. This disparity becomes more pronounced as the number of years of experience increases. The end result is that there is a gendered salary gap that favours males, one that widens with increasing years of experience. Thus when women faculty members take time off from work for maternity leave, for example, the gap grows wider, with few opportunities to make up the lost ground.

The participants in our study shared their experiences of the tenure process. Many spoke poignantly about the feeling that results from the evaluation of one’s achievements implied by the “number of trees” needed to represent them. These participants spoke of tenure binders and portfolios as effectively reducing the human experience of tenure to word counts and pounds of paper.

Another area that caused anxiety relates to Annual Performance Evaluations, which are used to calculate merit pay (when applicable). Some confusion existed among participants that these merit evaluations affected their tenure dossiers, although in the collective agreements we reviewed, these are not related processes.

The Annual Performance Evaluations differed from Annual Performance Reviews, which take place as a form of mentoring for tenure-track faculty. These reviews typically involve a meeting between the tenure-track professor, the Dean, and the Chair of the Department or area; the intent is to help guide the assistant professor to ensure that his/her tenure dossier is strong in the areas of teaching, research, and service. However, the personal nature of such interactions leaves open the possibility that personality conflicts may negatively affect the process and its outcome. Differences of opinion between the parties involved may leave the tenure candidate feeling pulled in opposite directions on issues such as what and where to publish, whether or not to devote time to a new research project, acceptable service load, and so forth.

Finally, it was apparent to the research team that one’s view of tenure may be strongly influenced by whether or not one has achieved it. Without exception, those participants who had already achieved tenure largely viewed it as “fair,” “equitable,” and a relatively smooth process. Other participants in the study, however, including assistant professors on the tenure track and union representatives who reviewed appeals of negative tenure decisions referred to the tenure process as “ambiguous,” “unnecessarily stressful,” and even “cruel.”

Final Remarks

Adrienne Fried Bloch started to research tenure in relation to gender 40 years ago in her role as Chair of the College Music Society’s Committee on the Status of Women. At that time, the primary concerns were the underrepresentation of women in academic faculty positions, and wage disparities between male and female faculty. While changes have since modestly improved representation of women in tenured positions, particularly in schools of music, the lack of minority group representation continues to be of concern. And although wage disparities have lessened, they have not been eliminated, as our findings indicated.

The issue of equity in tenure, however, must be placed within the context of the contemporary erosion of tenure overall. During the past 35 years, the number of full-time tenure stream faculty has increased by only 23%, while the number of full-time, non tenure-track faculty has increased by a whopping 259%, and part-time faculty by 286% (Curtis, 2014). Curtis concludes that the number of part-time workers in higher education has “swelled over the past 35 years; they now outnumber full-time faculty by 2.5 to 1” (p. A23). In many respects, emerging concerns about pay and working conditions for the exploding numbers of contingent faculty overshadow concerns related to gender and ethnic diversity in tenured and tenure-track positions across academe.

Under this new reality, the concept of equity on the tenure track seems almost quaint, for one of the most pressing issues facing academia is not equity but the precarity of contingent faculty. Judith Butler (2004) first theorized precarity in terms of gender and sexuality in her book, *Precarious Life*. Currently, she discusses it in terms of the neo-liberal economy (which is agnostic to equity concerns) in which prospects for secure work are lost—a condition that not only affects universities in Canada, but higher education internationally. She describes the conditions that affect all involved: everyone is vulnerable, and conditions appear to be beyond individual control. She further argues that the processes designed to mitigate conditions of precarity do not adequately protect vulnerable groups.

Our research focused only on tenure-stream professorial rank faculty, because the positions they occupy offer access to employment

security and prestige—in other words, protection from precarity. The institutional ethnography phase of our pilot project suggests that particular places remain in the tenure processes that could be examined to make these processes more equitable for women and racialized faculty members, starting first and foremost at the point of hire. However, these conversations on equity must be set in the context of the larger neo-liberal pressures facing higher education overall, where the role of tenure is under threat. This is not to suggest that discussions of equity should be sidestepped in the face of larger threats to an overall system. Indeed, questions of equity have never been more relevant.

NOTES

¹*Digest of Education Statistics*, 2010, Table 286; data not available in Canada.

²For instance, (Armenti, 2004a, 2004b; Colbeck & Drago, 2005; Finkel & Olswang, 1996; Mason & Goulden, 2002, 2004; Norell & Norrell, 1996; Rosen, 1999; Sutor, Mecom, & Feld, 2001; Wright & Young, 2001).

³For instance, (Alexander-Snow, Boyd, & Cintron, 2010; Diggs, Garrison-Wade, Estrada, & Gallindo, 2009; Fenelon, 2003; Perna, 2001; Thomas, 2006; Trower, 2009).

⁴A description of the survey and results are published in “A Snapshot of Tenure-Stream Music Faculty by Gender and Ethnicity in Canadian Post-Secondary Institutions: Findings From a National Socio-Demographic Survey,” in *Intersections* (Bergonzi, et al., 2016).

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Deborah Bradley, Deanna Yerichuk, Lori-Anne Dolloff, Kiera Galway, Kathy Robinson, Jody Stark and Elizabeth Gould

Deborah Bradley retired from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2010. She taught at University of Toronto from 1997-2005, and 2010-2014. Her research focuses on race and social justice in music education. She is Editor in Chief for MayDay Group publications including *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education*, and *Topics*.

debbradley42@gmail.com

Deanna Yerichuk completed a Ph.D. in Music Education (University of Toronto) on the emergence of community music as a discourse in Toronto's settlement house movement. She is now a Visiting Researcher at the University of Alberta, and leads singing classes with women in conflict with the law. dyerichu@ualberta.ca

Lori-Anne Dolloff is Coordinator of Music Education at the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto where she teaches courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels in choral conducting and narrative research. Her current research focuses on the "Calls to Action" of the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission in education institutions. ldolloff@chass.utoronto.ca

Kiera Galway is a PhD Candidate in Music Education at the University of Toronto, exploring the ways community musicians in St. John's, NL use music to mediate experience in space and place. Kiera currently teaches in the Education faculty at Memorial University in St. John's, NL and is Director of Music at the Basilica of St. John the Baptist kiera.galway@mun.ca.

Kathy M. Robinson is Associate Professor of Music Education at the University of Alberta and the director of *Umculo! Kimberley*. She has presented and published research focused on world musics in education and culturally relevant pedagogy and is an active clinician with more than 90 presentations given on five continents. kr10@ualberta.ca

Jody Stark is an Assistant Professor in Music Education at the Desautels Faculty of Music at the University of Manitoba. Ms. Stark is currently completing her Doctorate in Music Education at the University of Alberta. Her research explores music teachers' understanding of their work and their experiences of professional learning. Jody.Stark@umanitoba.ca

Elizabeth Gould serves as Associate Professor at the University of Toronto, Faculty of Music where she teaches philosophically-based courses in music, music education, and sexual diversity studies. Her research in gender and sexuality in the context of feminism and queer theory has been published internationally. e.gould@utoronto.ca