Academic Freedom and Academic Constraint: A Comparative Case Study of Faculty Perceptions

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Background and Statement of the Problem

Since the inception of the American Association of University Professors in 1915, academic freedom has been a standing principle for higher education faculty in the United States. As a policy measure, it has served to protect faculty in legal and administrative battles. It is inextricably linked to tenure, a basic and necessary component of faculty life. Indeed, it is not difficult to argue that it has served the profession well. Nevertheless, there is currently a very heated public debate that surrounds not only academic freedom, but also professional autonomy, and the related policy of tenure.

University professors are facing new and different constraints as funding bases change, as enrollment patterns shift, and as the very purpose of the university is called into question. As such, it is becoming increasingly clear that a formal policy of academic freedom may not be sufficient to protect the freedom and autonomy of academic researchers. The actual experiences of university professors as they confront obstacles and constraints in their work lives must be carefully examined if academic freedom is to be understood and, in turn, protected.

This paper describes the perceptions that academic researchers from a particular discipline – education – have of their own academic freedom and professional autonomy. Through in-depth interviews with 47 professors at two universities, the complexity of the notion of academic freedom is revealed. The findings demonstrate the very complex relationship between academic freedom and tenure and point toward important directions for future research. Before turning to these findings and implications, it is useful to place academic freedom in its historical context.

Academic Freedom in an Historical Perspective

In 1915, John Dewey delivered the Introductory Address of the AAUP, arguing for the importance of solidarity within the profession, and for the recognition of the interdependence of the academic world. The impetus for the Association's inception, however, is more clearly found in its first formal document, the “General Declaration of Principles.” Here, it is argued that

The university should be an intellectual experiment station, where new ideas may germinate and where their fruit, though still distasteful to the community as a whole, may be allowed to ripen until finally, perchance, it may become a part of the accepted intellectual food of the nation or of the world (reprinted in Van Alstyne, Ed., 1990, p. 400).
This idea about the importance of the university as a sanctuary of knowledge has persisted through the years; the AAUP’s focus has remained on protection from external forces, such as business and political interests.

To be sure, over the years there have been numerous external pressures which have endangered the autonomy of professors. The “Communist witch hunts,” for example, began in 1940 and continue to stir emotional recollections from older faculty. In that year, more than 40 professors in American universities were fired or did not have their contracts renewed “either because they were alleged to be communists, or because they refused to divulge their political beliefs” (Lucas, 1994, p. 224). Since “conventional wisdom held that any kind of non-conformism or liberalism was dangerously akin to communism” (p. 225) academics were the subject of particular scrutiny. Academic freedom was identified as “the major Communist party line for American higher education” (p. 226). Until these ideas lost credence in the mid-1950s, academics were silenced and scared; innumerable reputations were tarnished and careers were ruined.

Two decades later, as the nation was in the thick of the protests of the 1960s, faculty faced challenges of a different sort. Political activism was once again raising issues of academic freedom. The case of Angela Davis at UCLA is a particularly notable example. Shortly after joining the UCLA faculty in the late 1960s, Davis joined the communist party. The UC Regents ordered her dismissal, a decision that she fought in court. A year later she became a member of the Black Panther Party and was arrested when guns she had purchased for self-defense were used in a shooting in which she had no involvement. After being put on the FBI’s most wanted list, she was arrested but ultimately acquitted of all charges. Nevertheless, she was not hired back by UCLA, and both Governor Reagan and the UC Regents declared she would never teach in California again.

Clearly “academic freedom” has been used to protect faculty from a wide range of issues through the years. In fact, because of its breadth, many believe the term is essentially devoid of meaning. Others have made a case for a revised definition of the principle of academic freedom, arguing that it is not broad enough. For instance, Walter Metzger (1969) argues that the traditional definition has become outmoded. He notes that in 1915, when the AAUP was formed and the policy was created, universities were more isolated and, through that isolation, more autonomous. Metzger observed the decay of the boundaries between the university and society and argued that the university has become “delocalized,” with power for decision-making belonging as often to those off campus as to those on campus. Similarly (and more recently), sociologist Thomas Popkewitz (1984) points to the misperception that the university can truly provide space for “free” thinking,
arguing that academic freedom “represents a myth of the university” as a place where ideas can be exchanged, “untrammeled by outside interests and pressures” (p. 117). The arguments for a re-examination of academic freedom resonate strongly as American universities face new and different challenges from their environment.

The Political Economy of American Universities

Public opinion analyst Louis Harris has observed a marked decline in public support of higher education: In the mid-1960s, 61 percent of Americans had a great deal of confidence in higher education; in 1992, the level was down to 25 percent (Harvey, 1992). This decline in public support could not have come at a worse time, as higher education has faced funding difficulties in recent years and demands on the institutions have become increasingly complex. Several years ago, in the midst of an economic recession, Altbach (1994) cautioned:

A combination of economic recession, the restructuring of the American economy, and a popular revolt against paying for public services, including education, have contributed to the pervasive fiscal problems that colleges and universities face. While the economic recession should ease, most observers believe that higher education will not fully recover financially in the foreseeable future. It has been argued that higher education’s ‘golden age’ -- the period of strong enrollment growth, increasing research budgets, and general public support -- is over (p. 225).

Daniel Schugurensky (1997) also emphasizes the disturbing ways in which neoliberal ideology plays out in universities: While universities have previously been perceived as “a vital public investment, in the neoliberal era they are seen as a major part of the economic problem” (p. 2).

These pressures manifest themselves in a variety of ways in individual institutions. For example, fundraising has become a much more important issue on university campuses. State universities, in particular, are receiving less public funding and must therefore compete for resources elsewhere. Similarly, faculty who require outside resources for their research are required to work harder than ever to obtain funds. One study indicates that in order to receive the same dollar value of support, faculty must obtain 50% more grants than they did at the beginning of the 1980s (Kennedy, 1997). Even those who require little or no external funding to conduct their research remain aware of declining resources and feel the effects of these changes (McClafferty, 1998).

Faced with increasing demands for resources and space, decreased federal and state support (particularly with respect to public education), and a public that is less and less willing to accept on faith the procedures of the university, “The external environment, whether seen as hostile or
friendly, demands increased attention” (Tierney, 1993, p. 67). Hence, many universities and
colleges have turned to the corporate sector not only for funding, but for basic procedures as well.
Universities have begun to adopt corporate characteristics in a variety of realms. Whether through
corporate-university partnerships (Prewitt, in Cole, Barber and Graubard, 1994), through increases
in private funds, or through the implementation of business procedures which allocate funds based
on fiscal performance (Benjamin, et al., 1993), the nature of the academic enterprise is changing in
both overt and subtle ways. While none of these shifts toward business models are inherently bad,
the university has historically been very different from the organizations it now seems to emulate.
Hence, changes that move the university in a direction that is divergent from its traditions are cause
for closer examination. One particular aspect deserving of inquiry is how these changes impact
faculty.

Research on Faculty: The Need for Individual Perspective

Despite this prevalence of discourse on the changing nature of the academic world, the
literature on faculty perceptions of these changes remains somewhat limited in both scope and type.
To be more specific, published work typically describes either the results of large quantitative
studies (A. Astin, et al., 1991; H. Astin, et al., 1997; Bayer, 1970; Carnegie Foundation for the
Advancement of Teaching, 1989; Ladd and Lipset, 1977; National Education Association, 1979),
historical accounts (Damrosch, 1995), or the impassioned personal accounts of individual
academics (Frost and Taylor, Eds., 1996; Kennedy, 1997). These projects, while important to the
overall conversation, either silence the voices of individual faculty by speaking in broad
generalizations or present isolated and unique accounts of life in the academy. What is lacking,
then, are studies that incorporate the strengths of both approaches, allowing the individual faculty
voice to be heard in a methodologically sound way.

The importance of focusing on individual, lived experiences is an idea that is relatively new
to sociological theory. It has gained credence as work focusing on traditionally marginalized groups
--such as women and ethnic minorities -- has become more central to the discipline. The work is
based on the principle that if an individual’s experience is understood only through a lens developed
with the dominant paradigm, then the understanding cannot possibly be accurate (Greene, 1978;
Millman and Kanter, 1987; Olesen, 1994). Previously, sociologists had too frequently assumed that
individuals occupying the same physical space would and do interpret that space and the events that
occur within it in the same way. But the emergence of new, more critical work challenges this
assumption. It posits that individual lives must be understood beginning with the experiences of the
individuals themselves because differing amounts of power and influence will inevitably lead to different ways of understanding. The work of Pierre Bourdieu is particularly useful in this respect because his concept of cultural capital "leaves room for individual biographies by taking into consideration variations in how individuals use (it)" (Lamont and Lareau, 1988, p. 163).

Bourdieu uses the economic analogy of capital to explain social interactions. He argues that each individual possesses a particular amount of capital (in various forms) which he or she may exchange or rely upon at any given time (Bourdieu, 1983, 1993; Lamont and Lareau, 1988). This theory of capital can be likened to a card game, where each player is in possession of a hand of cards, some more useful than others (Bourdieu, 1976). The hand that one is dealt is analogous to the various forms and amounts of capital; the way in which an individual is able to play those cards -- i.e., the dispositions one possesses -- is referred to by Bourdieu as "habitus" (Bourdieu, 1977, 1993; Harker and May, 1993).

Although Bourdieu's discussions of cultural capital are at times highly complex and even confounding, the concept may most easily be understood as those social characteristics or attributes (both loosely defined) that are desirable and, therefore, exchangeable (Lamont and Lareau, 1988). For the professor, capital takes many forms including academic credentials, publications and presentations, social networks and key contacts, membership in various committees, and professional rank (especially tenure status). Capital is not limited to professional characteristics, however, and personal characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality all have a part in determining the amount of any one type of capital possessed by an individual. Taken in sum, this capital forms an individual's "hand" (to continue with the card game analogy). How the individual plays his or her hand, Bourdieu (1993) argues, will determine status. It will become clear in the discussion that follows that status is integral to the level of autonomy enjoyed by the individual researcher in setting his or her own research agenda.

There is, in fact, a small but growing qualitative scholarship that examines faculty perceptions, culture, and work, giving due attention to the issues described above. A recent example from Torres (1998) presents the in-depth personal biographies of eleven critical academic educators. Through informal, candid conversations, we are offered a rare glimpse into the "gut feelings" and "intellectual preoccupations" (p.10) of a select group of professors. We are able to hear, in their own voices, about the passions that led these individuals down their chosen career paths, and about the obstacles they have encountered along the way. Although not a research project in the formal
sense, it is nevertheless an important contribution to the understanding of the work and lives of university faculty.

On a larger scale, Tierney and Bensimon (1996) examine the academic socialization process with specific attention to tenure. Through interviews with over 200 assistant professors at 12 U.S. colleges and universities, the researchers present a strong argument for an overhaul of the tenure system. They argue that faculty with diverse or "controversial" viewpoints are too often forced either to adapt to more mainstream approaches in their departments (thereby potentially compromising their own values and beliefs), or to opt out of the current system (leaving the university without the benefit of faculty who offer viewpoints counter to the mainstream).

The work of Tierney and Bensimon stands out in the faculty development literature because most work in this area either examines faculty as a homogenous group or looks at only one variable, such as academic rank or discipline. Corcoran and Clark (1984), for example, examined the socialization patterns of research faculty across three faculty generations (i.e., according to when they began their academic careers). Kirk and Todd-Mancillas (1991) looked exclusively at the socialization of graduate students into the academic profession. Rosch and Reich (1996) focused their efforts on a comparison of new faculty in three different departments. Rare are the studies that focus in on a single department in order to understand the various ways in which faculty of different rank, gender, ethnicity, race, and class experience their work lives. In the absence of this type of research, larger-scale projects can offer preliminary insight into the changing university.

Historically, large quantitative studies have provided the most thorough insights into the perceptions that university professors have of academic freedom. Survey research -- like that cited above -- which addresses far-reaching issues such as political views, professional backgrounds, teaching loads, views on students, and personal goals, for example, has also included questions specifically related to issues of academic freedom. For instance, Helen S. Astin, et al. (1997), in a national survey of over 33,000 full-time college and university professors, find that 69.8% of faculty cite autonomy as a very important reason for pursuing an academic career. Similarly, 78.8% of the same sample say intellectual freedom was a very important factor. Although other research echoes this finding that faculty value academic freedom (Bowen and Schuster, 1986; Clark 1987; Ladd and Lipset, 1977; Lazarsfeld and Theilens, 1958), the issue is rarely investigated beyond this limited level. Although we know that perceptions of academic freedom vary by length of time in the academic field (Wences and Abramson, 1971), by type of institution (Goldblatt, 1967; Lazarsfeld
and Theilens, 1958), and by discipline (Lewis, 1966), we actually know very little about what these perceptions are.

A welcome exception to this scarcity of qualitative research is Burton Clark’s 1987 study of 170 professors from six different disciplines. From in-depth interviews with these faculty, it is concluded that the academic profession is actually “a profession consisting of many professions” (p. xv) because of the great degree of diversity across disciplines. Although the study adds qualitative data to our somewhat limited understanding of faculty perceptions of academic freedom and autonomy, the variance in faculty thinking renders the study too broad in scope to offer real insight into the issue. Indeed, faculty perceptions of these issues deserve much more careful and focused study, particularly given the very complexity of the concept itself.

**Research Questions and Methodology**

The issues outlined above are particularly important to investigate in graduate schools of education. Through both the training of our nation’s teachers and the development of new and critical thinking on American education, these university departments are of vital consequence to the nation’s future. The work lives of educational researchers must be carefully understood, particularly vis-à-vis their roles as intellectuals, contributing to the greater social good. This paper seeks to contribute to that understanding through an examination of the ways in which individual faculty members perceive their own freedom and autonomy in making decisions about their research. It also examines the methods that faculty members have devised to protect and maintain this freedom, even when met with resistance. Finally, it points to the dire need for additional research in this area, as we seek to maintain the university as a space for unfettered inquiry.

This research took place at the education programs at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and Stanford University. These departments are similar in that they are both housed within large research universities and are well-respected education programs. At the same time, the universities and departments have many important contrasts, each of which provides interesting points of discussion: UCLA, although somewhat buffered by its Westwood environs, is an urban university. Stanford University, on the other hand, is located in suburban Palo Alto, about 40 miles from San Francisco. UCLA’s education program is somewhat bigger than Stanford’s, with a larger faculty and nearly twice the enrolled students. UCLA’s department is also housed within a two-department school -- the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies -- arguably increasing its visibility on campus. Perhaps most importantly, however, UCLA is part of
California's public system of higher education, while Stanford is a private university. Table 1 below provides a comparison of the two programs on a number of key variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Comparison of Research Sites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UCLA Graduate School of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education &amp; Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Studies (Department of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stanford University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total University Enrollment</td>
<td>Projected 1998-99 average:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23,615 undergraduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11,018 graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1998-99 figure:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6,591 undergraduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7,553 graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Tuition or Fees for Doctoral Program (1998-99)</td>
<td>$4,555.50 California resident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$13,939.50 non-resident²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$22,110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled Students</td>
<td>1998-99 Figures:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total: 575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ph.D.: 285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ed.D.: 87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M.A.: 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M.Ed. (credential): 168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1997-98 Figures:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total: 379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ph.D., Ed.D.: 178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M.A.: 133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M.A. (credential): 68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure Track Faculty (1998-99)</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrees Offered</td>
<td>Doctor of Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doctor of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Master of Arts, Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Master of Education, Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Undergraduate Minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doctor of Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doctor of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Master of Arts, Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Master of Arts, Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Undergraduate Honors Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplines/ Areas of Study</td>
<td>Psychological Studies in Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Science and Comparative Ed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Higher Ed. &amp; Organizational Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban Schooling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Research Methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counseling in Student Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Educational Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher Credential Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychological Studies in Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Sciences, Policy and Educational Practice -- Includes: Administration and Policy Analysis International Comparative Ed. Social Sciences in Education Curriculum Studies and Teacher Ed. Language, Literacy and Culture Teacher Credential Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999 US News &amp; World Report Ranking</td>
<td>4 Overall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 Reputation (Academics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8 Reputation (Superintendents)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24 Student Selectivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 Overall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Reputation (Academics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 Reputation (Superintendents)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12 Student Selectivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999 Student Acceptance Rate⁴</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999 Research Expenditures</td>
<td>$19.1 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$10.1 Million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For recruitment purposes, all ladder and emeriti faculty included in lists supplied by each department were initially contacted with a letter describing the study. A follow-up telephone call or e-mail was used to determine each individual's interest in participating and to arrange a time for an interview. A total of 47 faculty members and three administrators participated in 40- to 90-minute
semi-structured interviews. The breakdown of respondents by ethnicity/race and professional rank was roughly similar to the overall breakdown of each department, largely due to the good response rates at both schools (58% at UCLA; 44% at Stanford). The most notable exception is found in the small number of female faculty at Stanford who participated. Table 2 describes the demographics of each department as well as of the final faculty sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
<th>Demographic Description of Ladder Faculty and Faculty Sample at Each Research Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ALL LADDER FACULTY (1998-99 Academic Year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UCLA (n=48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>27 (56%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21 (44%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity/Race:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>38 (79%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-White</td>
<td>10 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Rank:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Professor</td>
<td>31 (65%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>10 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>7 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor Emeritus</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another important variable that must be considered in this analysis is the length of time that each respondent has been in his or her academic career. The faculty at Stanford are somewhat older and seniority and professional rank have the potential to contribute to autonomy or minimize constraint. Table 3 illustrates the differences between the UCLA and Stanford education faculties on this important issue.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3</th>
<th>Length of Time Since Earning Doctorate and Receiving Tenure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UCLA (n=28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Number of Years Since Receiving Doctoral Degree</td>
<td>22.4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Number of Years Since Tenure Was Awarded</td>
<td>17.8 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following the faculty interviews at both institutions, I interviewed the current Dean of each department. Because UCLA is undergoing a significant change in leadership, I also interviewed the
school’s previous Dean. These interviews addressed the study issues outlined in this proposal, as well as additional issues that arose during faculty interviewing.

Consistent with the principles of case study research, the interviews with faculty were semi-structured and free flowing, in order to allow for themes not previously anticipated by the researcher to emerge from the conversations. An interview protocol was used as a guide, however, ensuring that all study participants addressed at least roughly the same issues. This allowed for the interview responses to be compared across sites or tenure status (for example). (Please see Appendix I for a copy of the interview guide.)

In keeping with the grounded theory approach, an iterative process was used for data analysis. In other words, data were continuously reviewed and analyzed throughout the data collection process (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Once all interviews with UCLA faculty and administrators were completed and transcribed, I created a preliminary framework for understanding the data. This was used in part to inform data collection at Stanford, the second of the two sites, although it was not finalized until all interviews (including those at Stanford) were complete.

Following the interviewing phase, the analysis process consisted of reading and re-reading interview transcripts and observational fieldnotes numerous times to develop a codebook containing analytic categories relevant to the research questions. I then used these categories to code all of the interviews and to sort responses. Additionally, where the sample size allowed for it, I compared responses according to key variables, including, but not necessarily limited to: Site (UCLA vs. Stanford); sub-discipline (e.g., educational psychology, policy studies, etc.); rank of informant (e.g., tenured/non-tenured); gender of informant; and ethnicity/race of informant.

**Results of the Research**

**The Very Idea of Academic Freedom**

Although this study focuses on academic freedom very broadly defined, I did not mention the term “academic freedom” to the respondents until the final questions of the interview. This allowed respondents to answer questions about constraints and autonomy without the limitations that the policy of academic freedom may conjure. Although this concluded the interview during data collection, it is a useful starting point here. The understandings that educational researchers have of just what is meant by “academic freedom” provide important context for their descriptions of the autonomy and constraints they face in their work.
Most professors interviewed at both UCLA and Stanford responded similarly when asked for their own, working definition of academic freedom. Typically, their answers were broad-sweeping, generally very simple, and usually focused on the freedom to pursue research topics, report on research findings, and teach course materials without threat or constraint from colleagues or, more commonly, university administration. It was not uncommon for respondents to comment that they never actually think about academic freedom, or that they take it for granted. For example, one Stanford professor told me that she doesn’t think about the principle “very much because… academic freedom is something I regard as quite fundamental, a basic right.” Similarly, a UCLA professor laughed and said “I never think about academic freedom and I guess that’s because I haven’t been stopped from doing anything that I wanted to do.”

Almost half of those interviewed -- and almost exclusively full or emeriti professors -- said they have never felt constrained in any way in their research. For example, one professor at UCLA told me, “Nobody for one instant…has ever said to me, you know, you should be doing ‘X’ rather than ‘Y.’” More than a third of those who fell into this category -- all white men -- went so far as to say, in effect, “I honestly do whatever I want.” For instance, one UCLA professor explained that “The academic enterprise does not have a paucity of autonomy. [You] can do pretty much whatever you damn please.”

A few of the respondents who were not aware of any constraints explained how they have been able to maintain this autonomous space. A Stanford professor, for instance, said:

I made a conscious decision that I would only study those things in which I had an interest, whether anybody else in the profession had any interest in those or whether there was any research funding available, and I’ve been very fortunate over the years that I’ve been able to do that. So I’ve never undertaken any research or done anything for money that I wasn’t passionately interested in. And so I don’t see how you can have any more autonomy than that.

Several respondents told me that the think the type of work they do is simply not controversial enough for them to be concerned about academic freedom issues. Often, these were professors whose work is less directly related to practice, such as historians or methodologists. To illustrate, one professor at UCLA explained that “I’m not a very controversial person: I’ve never had any comments made about anything I’ve written. … I’m not very controversial, so I’m not a good [person to ask about academic freedom].”

It was not uncommon for faculty to mention the benefits and pleasures they derive from academic freedom. For instance, one professor commented that “the exciting thing about academic
freedom is that one is encouraged to look at where the interesting questions are and pursue them.”

Another told me:

Academic freedom really means that I have the leeway to define my own intellectual agenda and to define, basically, how I spend my time and what I spend my time on. ... And that’s a wonderful world.

Another focused more on the practical and logistical benefits of tenure and academic freedom, telling me:

One of the remarkable things about being a professor at a place like this is that I have all the security of working for a major corporation with a multi-billion dollar endowment. For heaven sakes, you don’t even have to turn a profit every year and [you have] the guarantee of tenure which is absolutely unparalleled in terms of job security.

Several also commented that academic freedom is a trade-off for what are perceived as relatively lower salaries in the academic world.

Frequently, respondents qualified their definitions of academic freedom, noting, for example, that it does not allow a researcher to “Yell ‘fire’ in a crowded theater if there’s no fire.” In other words, there are boundaries to academic freedom, placed within the limits of common sense or professional judgment. One professor said that she takes the freedom and the responsibility “very seriously.” More specifically, “you better do it well. There better be a lot of integrity in this and a lot of seriousness.” Another spoke more specifically about her obligation to “other people in more vulnerable positions” who are not able to speak as freely on educational issues. For these respondents, then, academic freedom was not only a privilege but something for which they expected to be held accountable as well.

**Tenure and Academic Freedom**

About half of the respondents told me they believe tenure is necessary in order to ensure academic freedom. Most often, these faculty cited the importance of being able to conduct research and report findings without fear of repercussions or dismissal. For instance, one tenured UCLA professor said that because of his “strong commitment to free speech and academic freedom, I have to be for tenure because tenure protects people like me that are opinionated and outspoken.” A Stanford professor emeritus felt strongly that if tenure were to disappear, “it would be the death of what research universities have to offer” because the risk of politics influencing academics would be increased. A UCLA assistant professor made a similar point:
It provides some room for people to disagree, and it provides some room for people to push political, economic, social agendas in ways that probably they need to be pushed without fear of losing their job.

Rarely was tenure defended in absolute terms. In fact, of those who did not argue that tenure is absolutely necessary to ensuring academic freedom most cited some instances where it is necessary and others where it is not. Most often, untenured faculty fell into this category. Regardless of whether they felt tenure was necessary or if they were unsure, many respondents noted the occasional drawbacks to the policy or indicated ways in which it could be improved. For example, one Stanford professor cautioned me to remember that he “also said there is a corollary set of responsibilities.” Unfortunately, these “responsibilities” can also be the source of constraint for the beginning faculty member. Specifically, the problems with the tenure process center around two main issues: (1) confusion about what counts in tenure reviews and (2) the specificity of what counts in tenure reviews. Both have important implications for decisions researchers make about their work; these are addressed in the next section.

Confusion About What Is Valued

A beginning assistant professor at Stanford told me that while she hopes to earn tenure and she recognizes that her department has “high expectations” of her, she really is not sure of precisely what is expected. She explained that “Countless times I’ve said to people ‘I don’t know if I’m going to get tenure’ and they’ve said ‘No, no, you’ll be fine, you’ll get tenure, of course you’ll get tenure.’ And I don’t really know what you have to do.” Similarly, a full professor who counseled assistant professors at UCLA while serving in an administrative role told me that those with whom she spoke “had all these crazy ideas in their head” about what was expected of them on the tenure track. For example, she told me that most were misinformed about things such as whether collaborative research would be valued during a tenure review. And while she acknowledged the frustration that this confusion can cause, she argued that the process is worthwhile if you “know the rules of the game.”

Indeed, many researchers with whom I spoke -- some who had already gone through the tenure process, and others for whom it still lay ahead -- did seem to believe that they had at least a vague understanding of the rules of the game. I heard a variety of comments about what is advisable and what is not, with most comments referring specifically to publishing. The particular constraints of publishing for non-tenured faculty members, as well as other pressures with which they must contend, are discussed in greater detail in the next section.
Jumping Through Hoops

At a fundamental level, untenured faculty are aware that there are particular things expected of them and particular demands placed upon them. A UCLA assistant professor described it as needing to fit "into a perfect mold." Furthermore, non-tenured faculty indicate they believe these expectations will not change until they receive tenure. One tenured professor at Stanford explained:

In order to get tenure in a place like this, generally, you have to be a compulsive crazy. And that’s what the institution wants. The institution wants people who are basically incredibly compulsive and crazy and who are going to be able, under very difficult circumstances... for their own life and health probably, to overproduce.

Put more delicately by an assistant professor, she and her colleagues are expected to "jump through particular hoops and prove certain things." In her opinion, this process ultimately robs her of some of her autonomy, as she concerns herself with pleasing colleagues rather than with her own more immediate priorities.

Faculty in both departments are acutely aware of the importance of research in the tenure review process. At Stanford, an assistant professor told me that "teaching doesn’t count for a whole lot." Instead, it is the research that garners prestige and respect. Often this involves doing research in very particular areas. For example, an assistant professor at Stanford explained that:

We know there is a box and we know there are topics outside the box. Places like Stanford and other large universities, they’ve become famous for being right on the edge of the box. You don’t want to get too far outside the box unless you are comfortably tenured. I think that’s obvious.

Similarly, another explained that "it’s kind of a dilemma that typically younger faculty are more likely to want to do something more innovative ... But with the pressure to do certain research or so much research, it’s hard to make the time to do that." And an assistant professor at UCLA who had just finished putting together his dossier for tenure review explained how he realized after the fact the ways in which the tenure process affected his work:

I realize that inadvertently I began to shape some of my work in accordance to some of the expectations that I felt the university had for me. And that was not a conscious decision. It just happened. ... It was probably because I felt that before I can actually get tenure, I need to prove that I can really do stuff ... based on paradigms that are appreciated and valued. And I didn’t think about this consciously.

As important as the actual process of research, though, is the product -- the published article or book. But what is clear to faculty who are working toward tenure is that articles cannot be
published in just any journal: Only particular journals are acceptable to each subdiscipline. As one UCLA professor noted, when she began her career she “could study anything I wanted. [But] I had to study it in ways that would lead to publication in my discipline.”

And while that may seem a reasonable task, a number of respondents listed journals, which they, themselves, found respectable and worthwhile, but that their disciplines did not value. Moreover, what is also clear is that it is not sufficient to publish a few or even several articles -- the goal for most was to publish as many articles as possible. The consequence of this strategy, unfortunately, is that some lines of inquiry are deemed not researchable by the untenured professor, simply by virtue of the fact that they might be too time consuming or might not yield results quickly enough.

These issues can be compounded by other factors as well. For example, an associate professor with tenure at UCLA -- a woman of color -- told me that early in her career she was determined to earn tenure and that she knew there were certain things she would have to do in order to reach that goal:

As a person of color, I knew I had to do twice as much. Especially given the topics I was doing, I would have to do twice as much and better. And so they said publish ten. I said okay, it means I have to do 20. So for me it wasn’t ‘I’ll pack up my bags and go away.’ It was just I had to do both.

The issue of where to publish for faculty of color plays out in similar ways -- I was told by more than one professor that many journals which deal specifically with ethnic and racial minority issues are not considered appropriate or worthwhile within their subdisciplines. In fact, during one interview the respondent went to her bookshelf and pulled journal after journal off of her shelf to show me how many there were that were not considered “good enough.”

The extent to which the tenure process can constrain the untenured faculty member was by far the most salient issue to emerge from my conversations with these professors. Nevertheless, there were still a variety of other issues that they said come into play in the formation of their educational research agendas. In fact, while much of the sample clearly felt their academic freedom had not been encroached upon as they pursued their research agendas, most were nevertheless able to name numerous constraints. And while these constraints may not fall within what are usually seen as the limitations to academic freedom, they are a vital piece to understanding the actual freedom that educational researchers enjoy.
Funding as a Research Constraint

Almost half of the professors I interviewed said they either do not need funding for their research or they are able to conduct their work with or without funds. In other words, these professors do not see themselves as constrained by funding issues because their work can be done regardless of their funding situation. These professors typically said they already had data to work with (often for assistant professors this meant dissertation data) or that they were able to use their own departmental funds to sponsor their research. A few professors told me that they avoid significant external funds because of the bureaucracy and constraints that typically accompany it. As one Stanford professor said:

If you want to go build an empire, then its something else. I found that it just cuts off my flexibility. [Not having large grants] means that I don’t have to dedicate myself totally to some huge project, which entails all kinds of responsibility that I don’t particularly want.

A scarce few of the professors with whom I spoke -- philosophers and historians, mostly -- said they simply do not need any funding at all. As one put it, “all I need is a good library and a note pad and a pencil.”

More respondents said they do, in fact, require funding for their research but for the most part have not had difficulty securing those funds in the past. Many spoke of strategies they have devised for finding funding more easily. These tactics ranged from staying aware of what the funders’ interests are to “twisting” their own interests to fit those of the funders. A UCLA professor, for instance, told me that she tries to put her proposals “in the kind of language that they can tolerate.” Another explained that it is the researcher’s job to “persuade (the funder) that this stuff you think you know is really relevant to their problem.” Many told me that they maintain close relationships with foundation officials so that funding can be secured with less hassle or red tape.

A number of faculty, mostly at Stanford, mentioned the specific departmental pressures they feel to secure funding from external sources. Some faculty spoke of a changing institutional culture -- one that increasingly values an academic’s ability to bring money into the school. For example, one professor accounted the way every faculty meeting at Stanford now begins with an announcement of the names of faculty who have been awarded grants and how much money they have brought to the school. He also pointed out that “They never talk about what the results were or anything, never talk about the substance of it, but they certainly never fail to mention, no matter how small of a sum, what it is.” Another described the growing pressure to learn how to “market” and “sell” your research in order to attract external funding. Most of the comments of this sort
referred to the changes taking place with regard to these issues. In other words, despite the fact that
only a relative few remarked about internal pressures to obtain funds, the issue may be growing in
importance and should be carefully watched.

**Individual and Organizational Constraints**

Almost half of the respondents -- two thirds of the assistant and associate professors --
complained of the time pressures they felt and the ways in which those pressures affect their
research. Also common were remarks about feeling obliged to do or be responsible for particular
types of research, either because it was the work the researcher was hired to do, because he or she
was the only “resident expert,” or because a higher ranking professor or administrator made a
request. Not surprisingly, these comments most often came from assistant and associate professors,
and where they did not, they came from full professors who recalled earlier points in their careers.

Beyond issues of time and professional obligation, however, lie more politically charged
issues such as resistance to various bodies of research or personal identity factors that compel a
researcher toward a particular type or field of research. Faculty -- particularly female faculty,
faculty of color, and those who study students of color -- described the resistance they have
encountered in their work and the ways in which they have had to combat that often very subtle
resistance. Similarly, faculty of color often spoke of a sense of obligation to particular student or
academic communities, and the ways in which that sense has guided their research choices. These
various forms of constraint are the subject of the remainder of this section.

**Time Constraints**

There was a pervasive sense among the faculty with whom I spoke that academic life carries
numerous -- and often conflicting -- demands on time. A professor emeritus at UCLA explained that
managing your time well is “just a question of survival. I mean, you have things that fill your day
and fill your time and take your energy.” It seems research time is often sacrificed for
administrative tasks and student responsibilities, though, leaving educational researchers feeling
frustrated and constrained by their other obligations. One professor at UCLA lamented that “we’re
all going to die of overwork,” calling time a “major, major issue.”

An assistant professor partially attributed her lack of time to the “kind of person” she is, and
her desire to accomplish everything:

In my job now I feel like I’ve got at least six different jobs, and trying to balance those
different jobs and different responsibilities for me because it gets very complicated, so
whether it’s the teaching that I need to do and trying to do a really good job at my teaching
at the same time as I’m trying to carry out my research agenda, is difficult.
These researchers described various ways of responding to time constraints, often in relation to the power they feel they have to control their own time. For example, an assistant professor at Stanford expressed his frustration that when he was hired, he was given the impression that his teaching load would be light and he would have “oceans of empty time to formulate research proposals. And it hasn’t been like that at all.” He went on to tell me how he is struggling with just how to organize his time to be able to conduct more research. In contrast, a mid-career full professor at UCLA seemed almost resigned to the issue when he told me, “I don’t have the luxury of just devoting the kind of time I would like to research. It’s not in the cards anymore.” And a Stanford professor emeritus offered a perspective at the other end of the career ladder, explaining that at a certain point he simply decided he had “served my time. ... I was running between the department of anthropology and the school of education so much to attend [meetings] that I hardly had time to think about anything else. So I just quit.”

**The Good Neighbor Syndrome**

To be sure, many faculty feel obligated to do particular tasks or fill particular roles, either because they see themselves as part of a community or because they have been asked by someone above them in the professional hierarchy to contribute. Not surprisingly, these respondents were more likely to be beginning scholars -- assistant and occasionally associate professors -- who arguably have a greater stake in proving their commitment to the department or the field.

Although one Stanford professor described himself as “somebody who likes to help out,” and thus doesn’t mind being asked to contribute, an associate professor at UCLA made a comment more typical of the senior professors in the sample. She described the way that this particular issue has the potential to influence what she researches:

> There are other ways in which people try to define your work. I have had to learn how to get around it. People asking you to write certain things or people wanting you to get involved with certain projects that aren’t really the things that you think are important to do.

Often, the comments in this category related to respondents’ feelings that they were hired to fulfill a particular role and, as such, they had an obligation to do so. This was particularly strong at Stanford, where the professors with whom I spoke frequently explained that their faculty generally has one “expert” in each subspecialty of education. Hence, researchers felt obliged to help where their expertise was needed. A full professor at Stanford, for instance, told me that he believes most “don’t really feel that [as a] pressure because that’s why they’re here. So there’s kind of a perfect
marriage between their own personal interests and the institution's interest.” While this may be true to some extent, at least two assistant professors told me of the pressure they felt to join particular projects or pursue particular subject areas, despite the fact that it would take them away from the work they preferred to be doing.

Several full professors recalled instances earlier in their careers when they were asked by administrators to work on particular projects or take on administrative roles. It’s a difficult situation, as one UCLA professor put it, because “It’s not really pressure. It’s more like an opportunity, but if it’s the Dean asking, I guess you could say that there [was] a certain amount of opportunity plus push/pull factors.”

Above all, it seems that for many faculty, if they are to feel fulfilled in their work, the choices they make have to be guided by their passions, and not by their sense of obligation to others. An assistant professor at UCLA told me about her struggle to reach that conclusion:

You do have an affinity to want to be attached to an organization; you’re doing this because you want to be here, but at some point you have to divorce some of those things and say okay, if I’m going to stay here, I have to at least find something that will sustain me. And you can’t just do things because someone else tells you to do them. Or someone else thinks you should do them. That’s the other part of building your research agenda. ... Where’s your passion? Where do you feel you have something to say? And so I feel that now I’m in that position, a much greater position to have a lot to say. Come forth and say it and write it.

Faculty’s ability to actually do this is often met with resistance, however. It is this often-subtle pressure to take one’s research in a different direction that is the subject of the next section.

**Subtle Resistance in the Agenda-Setting Process**

Over one third of the respondents described some form of resistance they encountered (or continue to encounter) to their chosen area of research. Most often, this resistance takes on subtle forms, such as encouragement by mentors to pursue other avenues or difficulty in finding publication outlets. In most cases, resistance is thwarted with counter-resistance. In other words, most of the faculty who feel their work is not valued by colleagues choose to pursue the work anyway, often directly against the spoken advice of a colleague or administrator.

The form that this resistance takes is often difficult to discern. Faculty described their colleagues as “polite” and “civil,” noting that “you hardly notice they are being antagonistic.” One UCLA professor attributed this to the “professional respect” that others have for their colleagues. Nevertheless, these professors told me they realized the effect these quiet pressures could have on their research. As one assistant professor at UCLA put it:
I think the academic freedom is there, but ... it’s kind of contested in a way with some of your colleagues here in the department or division when you have arguments about what’s acceptable research, what topics, what are acceptable research methods.

In a stronger example, a Stanford professor told me he believes the work he does is not valued in his department. As evidence, he pointed to the fact that his salary has gone down relative to his colleagues since becoming involved in his current area of work. Furthermore, he said that

If you were to talk to the Dean I think, or leadership in the university, he’d say ‘oh, no, this is something we really value.’ But behavior is very different. In other words, rhetorically. You won’t see anyone putting it down to the contrary. They’ll talk about all the university does with poor populations and things like that. But internally, that’s really not a very accurate picture of what happens.

Similarly, an associate professor at UCLA is struggling with the same issues as he realizes that in order to maintain his autonomy, he will have to fight for it. He explained to me that, in his experience,

It’s not outright that people will tell you can’t do this work here. That rarely happens. ... It’s much more subtle. I think what people will tell you is that if you’re going to continue this line of research, don’t expect to get tenure. If you’re going to continue this line of research, don’t expect to be promoted to full professor. If you’re going to do this type of research, you probably shouldn’t be at a place like UCLA, or what are sort of traditional institutions. You might want to try something else, or some other place. .... And I’ve been told that in no uncertain terms while I’ve been here.

**Counter-Resistance in the Agenda-Setting Process**

As mentioned above, many of the professors who told me that their work is not highly regarded by their colleagues also told me that they, in response, have simply pursued it anyway. This response was understandably more likely to come from associate, full and emeriti professors. As one Stanford professor put it, “I’m old enough to kick them around now. They don’t bother me.” Another referred to himself as “a bad boy around here,” but told me simply, “It’s who I am...That’s the way it is.”

A UCLA professor described the various criticisms of his work, ranging from the area he chooses to study to his level of productivity. But he also told me that he is “strong enough and smart enough, and astute enough to fend off that type of criticism. ... Over the years I’ve been able to walk through that mine field with my head high.” Another UCLA professor echoed this certitude, acknowledging that throughout her career “there have been people who have tried to stop me from
doing what I wanted to do, but I haven’t felt that they’ve had a chance of being successful, so I haven’t had to spend a lot of time strategizing about that.”

Not all of the respondents see themselves as so impervious to this sort of subtle resistance. To the contrary, many have found it necessary to devise particular strategies for ensuring their autonomy while still retaining a commitment to their chosen topic of research. Those with explicit strategies for maintaining their autonomous space (in contrast to those who simply claim it) tend to be younger scholars, still in the process of proving themselves.

Several professors told me about the very careful ways in which they present work they consider to be politically charged. An associate professor at UCLA told me that she thinks very carefully about the tone of her writing:

I think about how to maybe be a little less confrontational in my writing for certain audiences. ... So that maybe some of these people won’t just dismiss my work, but would actually read it and engage it.

In fact, quite a few respondents told me they remain aware of their audience when writing or presenting research that might not be well received. A professor at UCLA told me that he does occasionally feel restricted in what he can say, but rather than abandon his agenda, he struggles to “figure out ways to say [things] to provoke ... without stirring up a hornets’ nest.” Similarly, a UCLA associate professor explained that he is

...quite cognizant of the particular audience that I am trying to write something for. I just don’t write for anybody. ... It’s intended to have a certain type of impact and whether that impact is theoretical or policy, or just to scare or shake up people.

As noted above, in addition to being generally younger faculty, professors who struggle constantly to frame their work in a “more acceptable” way also tend either to be faculty of color, female faculty, or faculty who do work on populations of color. And just as they are vigilantly aware of who they are speaking to when they present their research, they are also painfully aware of who is judging them. As such, many find that in order to carry out the work they have chosen, they must make it “air tight,” resistant to criticism or reproach. For some, this simply means making sure that the quality of their work is, in general, superior. One professor at UCLA related this issue to affirmative action:

I think that many people think that you only got where you are because of affirmative action and so ... they are looking for evidence to confirm that, and so you have to be constantly vigilant to that and make sure that you don’t confirm their stereotypic beliefs.
Some, such as this associate professor at UCLA, have found that using mainstream methodologies to address non-mainstream problems allows her work to be better perceived by her would-be critics:

I didn’t change my research agenda at all, but I knew that if I framed it from the sociocultural perspective, that it would make sense to people and I could argue all the things that I wanted to from this particular theoretical position and have this rigorous methodology. So that at the end, even if they didn’t like what I have said, they couldn’t say that I didn’t do it in a way that would be considered rigorous and authentic, and I think that’s the trick.

Others find that if their work is not valued, the only solution is to do twice as much research as their colleagues. Clearly, whatever the specific approach, these researchers are constrained by what they have determined is a higher standard, brought about by the negative perception of their research areas or their work in general.

**Identity Pressures**

In addition to the constraints described above, faculty of color often face additional pressures to serve their professional or social communities. More specifically, because of their relative under-representation on university faculties and because of the paucity of research on student populations of color, these professors are in high demand, creating time constraints not necessarily felt by their white counterparts. An assistant professor at Stanford told me that before he even assumed his current position he was receiving e-mail from students of color, eager for a mentor. Similarly, an associate professor at UCLA listed the variety of events, organizations and individuals all vying for her time -- none of which she felt comfortable saying “no” to.

In addition to time constraints, faculty of color often told me they feel obligated to do research aimed at improving the lives of minority people in general. As one assistant professor told me, “that’s always in the back of my mind.” An associate professor explained the tension she feels between

wanting to do things that fit your intellectual depth versus things that you think you ought to do because they’re socially righteous kinds of questions. And so you have a lot of peer groups that you think you need to answer to. ... You don’t want to be perceived by the other African American research community as a sell out or as somebody doing something trivial and stupid or self-promoting.

Although the precise nature of the pressures is somewhat different, female faculty also described particular constraints they have encountered. For some, there were recollections of past discrimination, hopefully representative of times now gone. For example, one UCLA professor told me that when she began her career she was told “not to wear pants to work or else I wouldn’t get
tenure.” Another described low self-confidence in her early career in relation to her male counterparts, and her consequent tendency to take on more work, promising completion in less time than was reasonable. At Stanford, where the female sample for this study was unfortunately low, a newly appointed assistant professor told me, “I don’t like the fact that I walk into a faculty meeting...and it’s nearly all men. That decreases my comfort and confidence.” She also told me she thinks it’s too early to tell how that will affect her work.

**Conclusions and Implications**

Each new scholar enters an organization or a discipline that has traditions and norms. Even in cases where the scholar may question these accepted attitudes, she still perceives a need to work -- to some extent -- within their limits. For instance, non-tenured researchers frequently described the pressures they feel to publish in certain journals and at a certain rate. As such, they must make choices about their work that propel them toward these very particular goals, which may or may not be consistent with their own agendas. Similarly, even those faculty who only feel pressure to obtain funding for their students and not for their own research will inevitably be pulled (however subtly) in the direction of what the funders believe is worthwhile.

This constraint may lessen over time, as a researcher moves up through the ranks, gaining status, prestige and, hopefully, tenure. The progression of an academic career includes the reaping of its benefits as well. The senior academic typically has more power and control over his autonomous space, and a greater ability to choose research projects based on interest or importance, rather than on the funding they will generate or the publications to which they may lead. In the absence of other forms of constraint, this increase in cultural capital can contribute to the creation of greater autonomy for the educational researcher.

But the amount of cultural capital acquired is not the same for all faculty. As is clear from the discussion above, faculty with particular backgrounds or who do particular types of work are especially vulnerable to the subtle constraints described here. Faculty of color and faculty who do work outside the mainstream -- two characteristics which, in this study at least, often go hand in hand -- recognize a need to over-perform and over-compensate, just to be accepted in the academy. Despite what are often very personal ideas about what needs to be researched, these professors may not be able to conduct their work freely, without the limits of traditional expectations and paradigms.

If academic freedom is to be understood as these researchers conceive of it -- as the right to research and teach topics of their own choosing -- then this should include areas and frameworks
that may challenge the status quo or push us to see things in ways we haven’t been able to before. While tenured faculty may be able to do this with little (or manageable) repercussions, non-tenured faculty do not enjoy the same privilege. Instead, they are told through the mentoring process, the publishing process, and the funding process that their work must speak a particular language and rely upon particular frameworks. This is even more pronounced among faculty of color and faculty whose work extends beyond the dominant paradigm.

And while faculty learn the limitations that they face, they are also being socialized into their profession. They are continually developing as researchers and, as such, their experiences shape who they will become. This inevitably leads to the question: if researchers who have more progressive or radical ideas than their more senior counterparts are not encouraged to pursue these topics early in their careers, will they return to them once they have “earned” a more autonomous professional space? Once they possess the autonomy of a tenured professor, will they return to their strong agendas and their idealized purposes?

There are problems in our schools that are so entrenched and so profound, they scream out for new ways of understanding. Researchers with different or novel approaches to understanding and addressing them need to be recognized as competent and as having an important perspective to contribute. To whatever extent the biases of history and tradition can be limited as newer faculty bring their fresh ways of thinking into the academy, their contributions will be increased enormously. One way in which this might be accomplished is through a careful re-examination of the tenure process.

Like some of the researchers in this sample, many academics criticize the tenure process by pointing out those full professors who no longer produce research or who neglect their responsibilities as teachers. As such, the critiques of tenure tend to be focused on departure, rather than entry. While the problems with the policy as its relates to faculty at the ends of their careers are important, they are not the only issue of relevance. Faculty at the beginnings of their careers are part of the tenure process as well. As such, the constraints they face because of the process they undergo from the very first days in the university setting must be taken into account in any reformulations of the idea or policy of tenure.

It should not be inferred, however, that these problems with the tenure process are sufficient to argue for a dissolution of the policy itself. Indeed, the researchers with whom I spoke were often adamant about the importance of tenure to academic freedom and autonomy. It is certainly reasonable to argue that if researchers are to feel free to pursue any potential topic, that they must
not be afraid of losing their jobs. But at the same time, this policy that protects them must not create other constraints. Therefore, the process of tenure -- as separate from but integral to the policy of tenure -- must be reconsidered in this light.

Internal pressures and constraints like the ones described here have enormous potential to draw boundaries that faculty -- particularly faculty with less power and less cultural capital -- may not feel able to cross. The difference between these limitations and larger-scale political or societal pressures (which are seen as the impetus for the policy of academic freedom in the first place) is that these more subtle constraints are accepted or even expected. Many faculty seem to believe that the boundaries created by tradition and history are inevitable. As a result, they do not include them in their ideas about academic freedom and do not challenge their very existence.

But as this research has shown, these limits have implications for the ways in which educational researchers do their work and for the ability they have to pursue various topics. Hence, this study should point toward the need for a more comprehensive and inclusive understanding of academic freedom. When the issue is discussed or defended, the conversation should include attention to both the external and internal constraints that faculty face, including the constraints created by the very process of tenure. It is only in this way that truly autonomous spaces for research and teaching can be created.

Beyond these policy implications lie numerous opportunities for future research. Specifically, we are in great need of additional research which clarifies why educational researchers (and scholars in general) believe strongly in the principle of academic freedom, yet seem willing to accept the internal limits on their work lives. Future study that draws a finer distinction between the ways in which researchers in all disciplines understand academic freedom and autonomy would allow scholars to be more active contributors in the formation and clarification of the very idea of freedom in their work lives.

Many of the pressures described in this research are new. Universities are facing increasing financial constraints and greater demands for accountability. As administrators and faculty struggle to incorporate these changes into more traditional tenets of university life, they may not realize the potential they have to impact the work lives of academic researchers. A greater understanding of the ways in which past situations of social and political change have impacted universities would assist faculty and administrators in preparing for future changes.

Additionally, placing these issues in an international comparative perspective would enhance our understanding at both the local and global level. The types of changes described in
earlier in this paper are occurring beyond our national borders, but we cannot assume that they play out in the same ways in all places. Through a comparison between the ways in which these issues are handled locally and internationally, a greater degree of clarity regarding necessary and inevitable constraints might be gained.

This study also focuses on one particular discipline in the academy: education. While some of the findings may be generalizable to the university at large, it is not possible to make those claims without first undertaking similar work in other departments. For example, increased attention to efficiency and the direct applicability of higher education has led to questions about the necessity and/or usefulness of fields such as English Literature. As such, scholars in the humanities may be feeling very distinct pressures, as they are constantly required to justify the importance of their work. Researchers in the hard sciences, on the other hand, are forming increasingly strong partnerships with private industry. As a result, the pressures that they face are of a very different nature. More extensive research that addresses this variety of experiences on university campuses should be conducted to understand these issues better.

This study was also very focused in its attention to research universities. In fact, the differences between Stanford and UCLA on this particular measure were quite subtle and often difficult to discern. There are numerous types of universities and colleges, all of which have different foci in their missions and goals. Some institutions focus more heavily on teaching than on research; others struggle for a balance between the two. These differing ideas about the purposes of the university may lead to different experiences for the faculty within them. Moreover, given that many of these respondents told me that they feel protected by the very institutions within which they work, this research must be expanded to include a more diverse set of universities and colleges.

The comments made by faculty of color and female faculty about the additional pressures they face raises many important questions about traditionally marginalized groups in the academy. Prior research has shown that these professors in particular face undue constraint as they conduct their work. This study indicates a similar trend, as women and faculty of color described more and different constraints than their white and male counterparts. But the sample size for both faculty of color and women -- small because of overall demographics of the faculty as well as response rate -- does not allow for strong conclusions to be drawn. It is not possible to determine, for example, whether the added constraints that many faculty of color describe are a result of their identities, of the work that they do, or of the organizations they are part of. Most likely, it is a complex weaving
of all three that cannot be understood without additional research that pays careful attention to the ways in which academic power is manifested in personal identity factors.

Finally, the tenure process itself must be more carefully scrutinized, so that its effects may be better accounted for in future policy revisions. Clearly, based on the discussion above, the process has an impact on many scholars, whether they say that tenure is important to them or not. The perceptions of both tenured faculty and those who still have that hurdle ahead of them are an important part of understanding the extent to which the tenure process constrains academic researchers. But the recollections of already tenured faculty and the projections of those not yet tenured must be interpreted with caution. When actually faced with decisions related to these issues, their choices may differ from what they recall or expect.

These issues are perhaps best addressed through longitudinal research that takes into account the ever-changing nature of the academic endeavor. Future inquiry into the trajectory of an academic career should focus on the changes that individuals undergo as they navigate through the tenure process. Even beginning as early as graduate school, choices are made based not only on motivation, but on perceived constraint as well. Longitudinal work would greatly contribute to an understanding of the ways in which these choices shape researchers’ scholarly identities.

**In Conclusion**

Critical educator Paulo Freire (1970) tells us that “Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other.” This project in which we are all engaged -- the pursuit and creation of knowledge -- is indeed an ongoing and complex project. It requires patience and strength as well as passion and desire. So many of the educational researchers who shared their experiences with me embodied all of these qualities. But at the same time, they were limited in the extent to which they could utilize them because of constraints that were either not recognized or seemingly beyond their control.

One assistant professor with whom I spoke told me she sees academic freedom as “the freedom to choose.” She also cautioned, however, that “academic freedom” is a loaded concept, because

There are these invisible forces that in some respects don’t allow you to really be free. ... And whether it’s my perception or not, your perceptions are your reality, and so I think that can impinge on your notion of freedom.
Indeed, perceptions are one’s reality. Because of this, the constraints that these educational researchers described play a significant part in determining the actual degree of autonomy that they enjoy. Despite a formal policy of academic freedom -- which according to these professors is alive, well, and effective enough -- there are other limitations and pressures that must be addressed if scholars are to be truly free.

Ninety years ago when the AAUP established the first formal policy on academic freedom, it was a critical step toward ensuring academic freedom for university professors. But if autonomy in the research process is truly to be protected, academic freedom must be understood in ways that extend beyond its original conception. We must begin to see not only the external and explicit threats to freedom, but the internal and implicit ones as well. It is only in that way that we can ensure the freedom of our researchers in their intellectual pursuits. And it is only in ensuring the freedom of our educational researchers that we can hope to improve the lives of students at all levels of our educational system.
Endnotes

1 For brevity's sake, the terms "department," "school," and "program" are used interchangeably.

2 These figures are for UCLA's Ph.D. program only. The Ed.D. program in Educational Leadership has higher fees because of the specialized nature of the program. Specifically, 1999-2000 tuition is $10,335 and includes orientation workshops, a residential component, some class materials, special workshops, and group activities.

3 This category should be interpreted with caution. Although UCLA has a higher acceptance rate, it also has a larger program and proportionately fewer applicants than Stanford. Hence, this cannot be interpreted unequivocally as a measure of program competitiveness.

4 Because of the relatively small sample size and to ensure anonymity, faculty of color are not identified by specific ethnicity or race. The category "non-white" includes faculty who identified themselves as Chicano, Latino/a, African American, Asian, and Filipino.

5 Although included in the sample, emeriti professors are not included in the official statistics of either department. Emeriti professors were contacted only if they were still active in their departments at the time of the study (i.e., they had offices or, at the very least, telephone numbers or e-mail addresses). A total of five emeriti professors were contacted at Stanford (all men), and nine were contacted at UCLA (seven men, two women).

6 Refers to amount of time passed since earning a doctorate and receiving tenure; no data were collected on the actual ages of respondents.

7 This figure represents the years since receiving tenure for the first time. Several respondents at Stanford had been awarded tenure more than once as a result of switching institutions.
APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Background
1. How would you describe your research?
   Probe specifically for: general topic; qualitative/quantitative; source(s) of funding;
   source(s) of data; intended beneficiaries; etc.
   How did you select your research agenda?
   Does your general topic have personal significance to you?

Personal Experiences with Constraint and Resistance
2. How much autonomy do you feel you have in selecting the topics you research?
   Have you felt any pressure to move your research in one direction or another?
   Where have those pressures come from?
   Do you feel that this autonomy has changed for you in the last several years?
   Is this the amount of autonomy you expected to have before you began your career?

3. What, if anything, constrains you from doing your work?
4. If not already addressed: Are there any more personal/individual issues or factors which
   you believe have influenced the direction of your research?
   What aspects of your personal identity or what affiliations or political
   commitments do you believe have an impact?
   Probe for gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, professional rank, etc.

5. If not already addressed: How closely does your current research agenda resemble the
   research you expected/planned to do when you began your career?
   If different: What caused that change? How do you feel about that change?
   If similar: Has it been difficult at all to maintain the same direction?

6. How do you make decisions about what your research will address?
   What factors do you keep in mind when making these decisions?
   If not raised already, ask specifically about attention to funders' needs/desires, administrative goals, etc.

Changes in the University/Environment
7. What changes -- if any -- have you seen in recent years, vis-à-vis your department?
   Probe for: Changes in Priorities, Funding, Staffing, Goals.
   What changes have you seen in the university as a whole?

The University in Society
8. What do you believe the priorities of the university (as a whole) should be at this
   moment?
9. How well do you think your department is living up to what you just described?
10. If not already addressed: What do you perceive as the social obligation of the
    university?
    Do you think this sense of obligation is changing?
    How?
    Why? (Or why not?)
    How do you see your work fitting into this obligation?

Academic Freedom
12. How do you define academic freedom?
13. Have you ever had an instance where you felt your academic freedom was threatened?
14. Do you think tenure is necessary in order to ensure academic freedom?
15. Is there anything else that we haven't already discussed that you think comes into play
    when you make decisions about your research agenda?
REFERENCES


