

# The Leaky Pipeline: Examining the Promotion & Tenure Process

Self-Determination Theory asserts that when individuals perceive an experience or task as self-determined (as opposed to externally controlled), they are more likely to experience intrinsic motivation to excel and their experience is more satisfying and fulfilling (Deci, 1975). According to the theory, conditions supporting the psychological needs of **autonomy**, **competence** and **relatedness** are central to individuals' creativity, motivation and performance and to their experience of self-determination.

**Research Question:** in the promotion and tenure process, defined by a marked lack of autonomy, are there differences in the ways men and women faculty members experience self-determination?

## The Study

### Participants:

- 13 TT faculty in STEM going through the P&T process in the same year.
- 2 groups (6 women and 7 men) matched by discipline and type of review.
- In cases where there was no exact match, females were matched to two males; in one instance, a male was matched to two females.

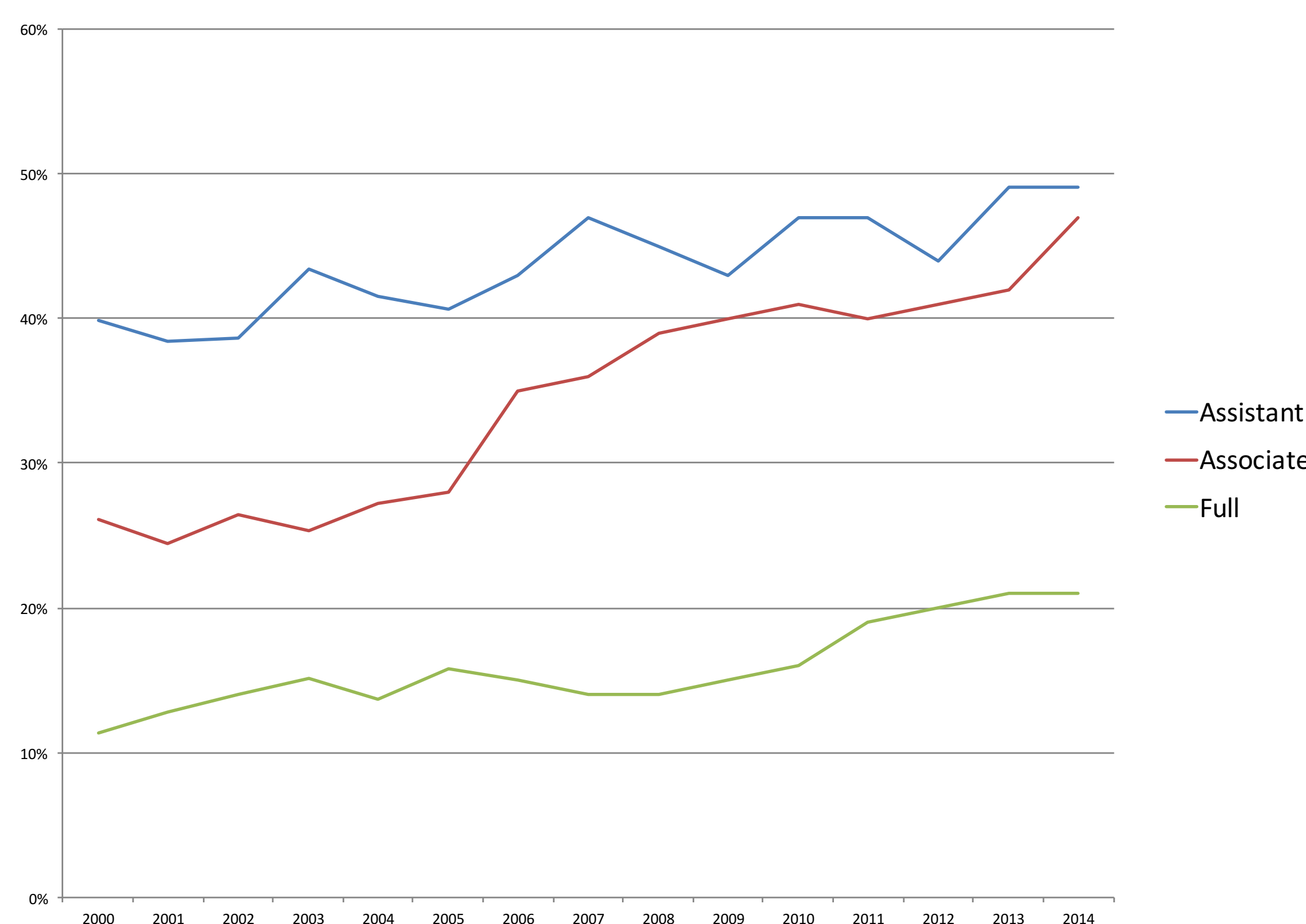
### Method:

- In-depth interviews focused on experiences of the P&T process and suggestions for improvement
- Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.
- Data were open-coded by multiple members of the research team, who identified themes relating to experiences of autonomy, competence, and relatedness.
- After initial blind-coding, participant sex and rank were revealed and data were analyzed for differences in the experience of P&T for men and women faculty.

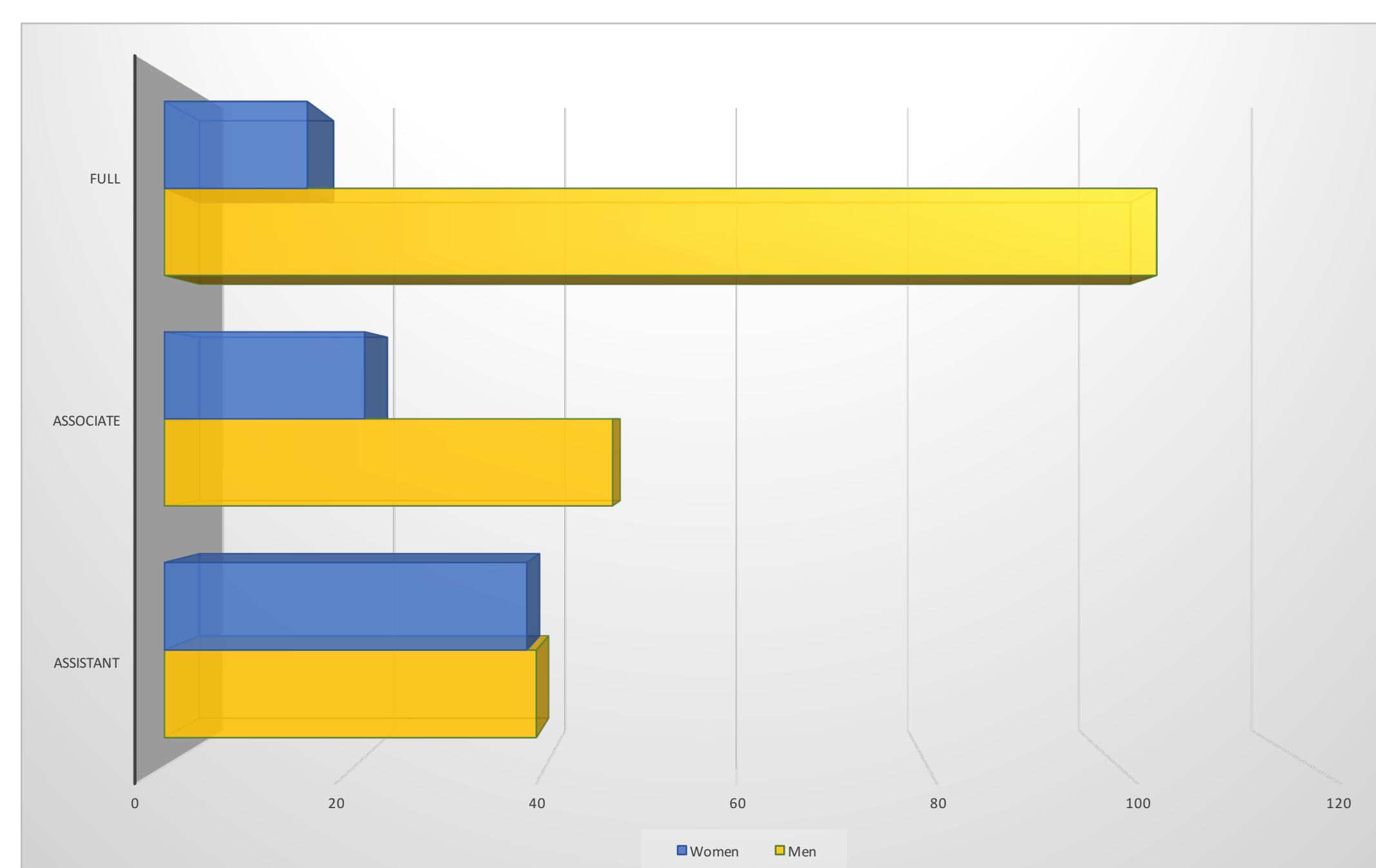
### Results:

- Men and women utilized different pathways to self-determination in the P&T process.
- Both men and women engaged in information-seeking to achieve competence, but their strategies and processes differed.
- Women were more likely to report **relational competence** (use of "feedback"). How information is obtained and feedback offered is more central to women faculty members' experience than the existence of objective rules about the process.
- Men primarily emphasized **informational competence** (use of the "Rule Book"). Feelings of competence begin with consulting rules and guidelines, while relatedness is less important.

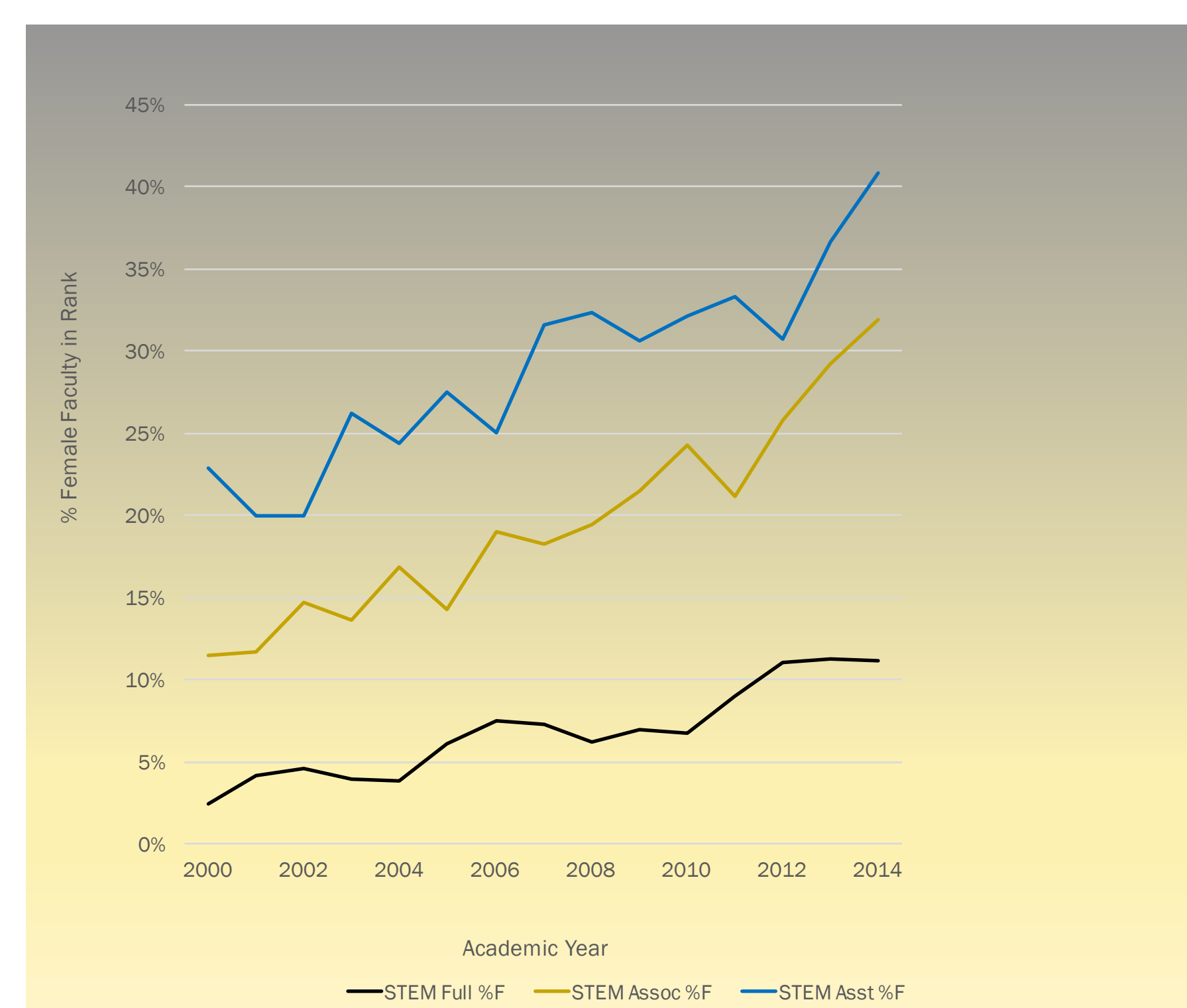
Percentage of Women Faculty Tenured and Tenure-Track at MSU



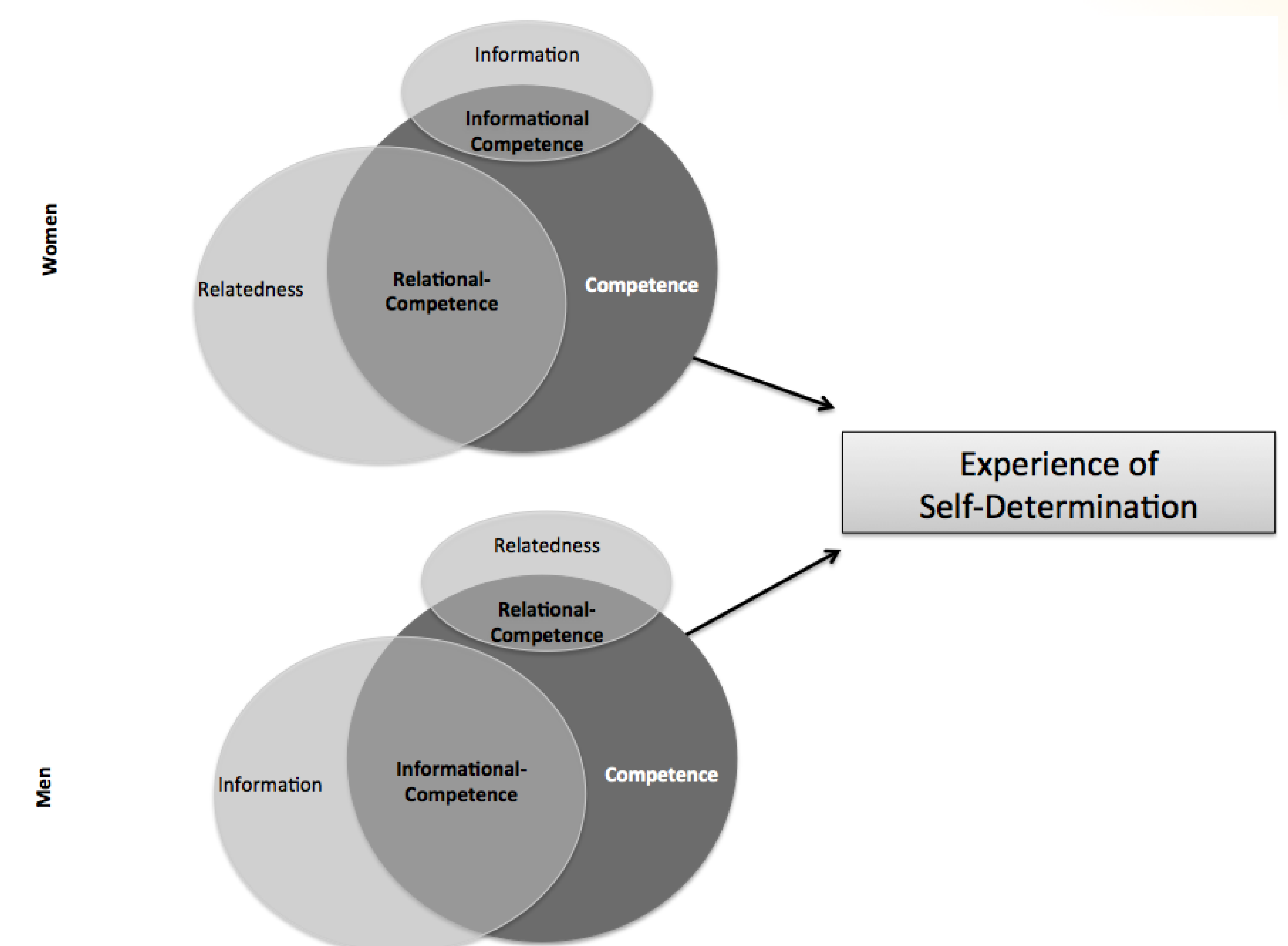
Number of STEM Faculty at MSU by Sex and Rank (Fall 2015)



Percentage of Women Faculty in STEM at MSU by Rank



Conceptual Map of Self-Determination in a Low Autonomy Situation



To Consider: Would a more adaptive promotion and tenure process improve retention of women faculty?