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Interrogating the Language of Diversity in Academe

Mothering and Parenting in View

In this article, we are interested in the ways in which one of the major obstacles to maternal empowerment and gender equity in academe – hetero-patriarchal sexism – is manifested through language. The official language of an institution holds within it the underlying logic of that same organization, and the official language and rhetoric of academe tend to be very revealing. In much of North America, the ideological blueprint underlying academic discourse on curriculum, hiring, and promotion, has been Eurocentric, male-centred, and heterosexist. Given the origins and genealogies of universities, none of these things should come as a surprise; it is their persistence, however, that we seek to trouble in this article. How do such structures of normativity continue to manifest themselves today? How have attempts to reroute, rewrite, and undermine normativity been contained or subsumed by academic institutions? By reading questions of racialization and gendering to inquire into hiring practices, spousal appointment policies, and teaching evaluation policies, we look to the broad politics of academic institutions in order to suggest that there remains much work to be done to dismantle hetero-patriarchal sexism in academe.

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The North American landscape of academic institutional diversification has grown exponentially in the last five decades. Antiracist, feminist, LGBTQ, and other social movements in and outside of academe have been significant catalysts to this growth, and analyses and principles born of these movements now permeate and even shape the language and policies of institutional diversification in many Canadian and U.S. universities. Nonetheless, a distinct and observable problem persists in this academic domain, one that we can examine from two vantage points. First, the tendency of diversity statements to reproduce, in their language, the exclusivity against which they are meant to work; and, second, the persistent gap between diversity statements or official policy (such as it may be) and a concrete manifestation of change. The gap between the discursive terrain of institutional diversification and its meaningful implementation and practice is something that still bears further thought and inquiry. The following, for instance, is the standard hiring language used in our institution, an institution which hires on the basis of merit and is strongly committed to fostering diversity as a source of excellence, intellectual and cultural enrichment, and social strength:

> We welcome applications from those who would contribute to the further diversification of our staff, faculty and their scholarship including but not limited to Aboriginal people, persons with disabilities and persons of any sexual orientation or gender identity, ethnic, national or socio-economic background, religion or age. ("Faculty Career Opportunity" 2014)

While the language is perhaps laudable (one might debate the specific details here), what is striking is how this statement highlights the importance of diversity and inclusion without, at the same time, demonstrating how such goals might be achieved. Rather than be waylaid by the debates that already surround affirmative action hiring, we instead wish to note that a lack of will and relevant knowledge, insufficient resources, conscious or unconscious racism, heterosexism, homophobia, and an idea that merit can be a neutral concept may all play a part in curbing the concrete implementation and practice of such espoused diversity goals in academic institutions.

That being said, we would also do well to take a step back and subject the language of diversity itself to some scrutiny, since the content of such language, along with the norms of an organization's communication practices, is often a telling predictor of the likelihood of the effective and substantive institutional diversification practices that we espouse. Communication, the set of symbolic and linguistic systems that allow us to "produce, interpret, share meaning … and create reality" (Allen 10), is key in shaping the social and material realities of inclusion and exclusion. In the academic workplace, the landscape of belonging, success, failure, and exclusion is influenced by discursive and communicative practices (institutional and interpersonal) that construct the boundaries of community and that shape existing differences in how people experience the social reality of community membership. These practices of communication are themselves channelled through power dynamics that reveal organizational patterns of competition and contestation as "different groups strive to service their own interests and to control various resources" (Allen 11). Official discourses interact with daily practices to produce and reproduce systems that may be unwittingly exclusive; even the language of inclusion often assumes a common norm into which differing bodies might be included, rather than a norm that itself may need to be radically changed or rejected.

The organizational culture of academic institutions is, indeed, characterized by explicit and unwritten "common norms" regarding the values and mission of the community, as well as by the nature of an institution's professional structure and the criteria set for succeeding and advancing within such organizations. This situation should hardly be surprising; mechanisms of control "are infused throughout meaning systems, including narratives and discourse, and contribute to the more 'hidden' forms of conflict in organizations" (Farley-Lucas). Yet how this control manifests itself in academe is important to note. Academic institutional cultures in Canada and the U.S.—that Allen argues continue to be steeped in ideologies of domination, patriarchy, white supremacy, and heteronormativity, as well as class-based meritocracy and neoliberal forms of capitalist consumption and austerity—often require community members (as a measure of their success within the organization) to internalize a logic that favours dominant group interests and favours the members of those same dominant groups (Allen 2011). This structure of domination increases the likelihood that a language of institutional diversification developed within this context will be symptomatic rather than critical of existing power relations and imbalances.

Forms of communication that shape people's experiences of institutional inclusion and exclusion come in a variety of forms. These experiences can include discussions of a "good fit" among hiring committees—where "recruitment [often] functions as a technology for the reproduction of whiteness" (Ahmed

39) and heterosexism—operationalized through interpersonal communication among privileged institutional gatekeepers. Methods of informal surveillance communicated through one-off or passing comments—for example, "I haven't seen you around much lately"—may be particularly distressing to academic mothers, many of whom already struggle with the anxiety of presumed professional unreliability and incompetence (Farley-Lucas). Mothers, visible minorities, and others whose bodies and subject positions do not conform to the invisible norms of the institution carry a heavy responsibility "for proving their sameness, [and] eradicating any questions about their competence, credibility, and worth in the face of heightened scrutiny" (Anderson 164). The weight of such pressure to successfully fit institutional norms and *stage* competence is particularly high for those situated at the cross-section of multiple low-ranked social identity markers (for instance, a woman of colour/mother/ queer-identified, see Gutiérrez y Muhs et al. 2012). The historically rooted presumption of incompetence associated with the aforementioned intersecting identity markers means that there is pressure, for some, to continuously stage competence (through dominant discursive formats), in addition to their actual practice of it. Such discursive formations operate below the radar of stated intent to create gendered—as well as heterosexist, racialized, and ableist—contexts of interpretation for terms such as professional, achievements, and exemplary (Anderson 164). There is also the communicative context of "nonverbal cues of power" (Allen 37). Meeting times, lack of childcare support and facilities, having to pay to work (for instance having to pay for childcare out of pocket in order to attend additional workplace events—orientations, retreats, conferences, semi-mandatory celebratory events and parties), and the "freezing out" of mothers from informal and formal opportunities that lead to workplace advancement and promotion based on a silently presumed unreliability or lack of collegiality are all examples of the non-verbal communicative context of exclusion. These conditions are also acutely felt by single mothers, who seldom have recourse to immediate or extended family support with childcare when additional workplace expectations beckon, given that academic workers often live at a distance from their extended personal communities of support.

The Racialized and Gendered Academy

In the Canadian context, and within the realm of institutional diversification, the issue that has drawn perhaps the most attention and has been best documented to date has been that of gendered disparities. We will discuss the stark differences between men and women faculty below, but it seems crucial to note from the outset that there remains a dearth of women faculty at the most senior ranks in Canadian universities, and the wage gap between men

and women faculty, which remained at 11 percent in 2006, is all too revealing (Can. Teachers "The Persistent Gap"). In this context, the University of British Columbia's decision in 2013 to provide 2 percent pay increases to all women faculty on the tenure-stream (Bradshaw), along with that of McMaster University in 2015 to raise the salaries of women faculty by $3,515 (Casey), strike us as an important step to bridging this divide. Yet, persistent problems continue to surface, such as the debate about gender equity when the Canada Research Chairs program was launched and an overwhelming percentage (eighty-six) of men was appointed—a program that was subsequently successfully challenged on the grounds of human rights discrimination (Side and Robbins; Robbins). That successful challenge was overwritten by the new, even more prestigious Canada Excellence in Research Chairs program, which currently supports nineteen academics, only one of whom is a woman ("Canada Excellence Research Chairholders"; Robbins). At the top of the academic echelon, men continue to dominate.

We wish, however, to go beyond a focus on gender alone in employing an intersectional analysis. As antiracist Canadian scholars Frances Henry and Carol Tator appropriately point out, "almost all universities declare a commitment to antiracism, diversity, and equity in their mission statements; however, mission statements and policies in themselves have little to do with implementing substantive change" (14). Even a cursory look at the current state of equity implementation in Canadian universities substantiates this statement. The feminizing of academic labour by shifting a large portion of a discipline's teaching to contract and part-time labour, the still paltry representation of women, and particularly women of colour, in full professorial and high-ranking administrative positions, and the continued under-representation of people of colour in full-time faculty positions are all, among other factors, symptomatic of the failure to effectively implement equity and diversity on the ground.

Simply having women in these positions is not, on its own, a wholesale solution to the problem, either. Census Canada studies indicate that women continue to shoulder the larger burden of responsibility for childcare, child rearing, and housework (Milan, Keown, and Robles Urquijo). This burden is reflected in the anxieties of women on the academic job market: should one divulge a prospective or current pregnancy during a job interview? Is not doing so, despite the clear human rights issues at hand, dishonest? Can a woman faculty member specify her teaching and service hours to match her children's school schedule without the penalty of negative peer judgment? Will missing meetings that are scheduled before 9:00 a.m. or that run beyond 5:00 p.m. be taken to reflect a lack of commitment to the job? While the number of fathers in the academy who grapple with the last two questions may be on the rise, these problems overwhelmingly remain the anxiety-producing concerns

and internal dialogues of academic women. Fathers in academia or on the job market are still largely assumed to have a wife/partner at home, who will ensure that their family lives do not interfere with the normative expectations and demands of the profession. If academic fathers do not have a wife/partner at home, they are lauded for being modern men who shoulder a symbolic burden in solidarity with their women peers. In many ways, North American academic institutions retain a traditional definition of success or of the real academic: a middle-class, heterosexual, white man, or anyone who can as closely as possible mimic the conventions of this identity. Such measure of normative success can become evident in the publish-or-perish cultures of many academic institutions, which value quantity over quality; many scholars, particularly junior ones on the tenure stream, feel pressured to write papers that they are not necessarily committed to just to meet the numerical expectations for tenure. The white, masculine norm of academia—characterized by individualism, competition, long hours, years of uninterrupted employment, and professional visibility both in the workplace and at conferences—indicates that the organization of academic work is constructed around family ideologies that favour traditionally masculine identities (Ramsay 34). In terms of university policy that aims to support diversity and work-life balance, the persisting assumption of a strict separation and fragmentation of private and public spheres of life, long criticized by feminists, has been a key barrier to a meaningful implementation of equity and work-life balance.

The biases influencing hiring committees, the wider masculine culture of most academic institutions, and the related personal choices of candidates contributes to the high number of women PhDs teaching at community colleges and working in the lower academic rungs of universities. This reality conveniently fits the contemporary landscape of popular public discourse around women's (empowered) personal choice to opt-out, scale back, or slow down. The masculine norms and values of most academic institutions will certainly contribute to the decision on the part of more than a few women to reduce their professional ambitions in an attempt to create greater work-life balances in the context of workplaces that will penalize them for doing so, even in the case of community colleges or teaching-focused undergraduate universities. And, indeed, a college or teaching-focused position can hardly be deemed to be less demanding than a full-time position at a research-intensive university. The heavy teaching load, class sizes, office hours and meetings with students, grading and service requirements, and expectations of continued research and publication may in the end not allow for any more time and balance than one might expect at a research institution.

The overrepresentation of white men as tenured faculty in many Canadian and U.S. universities, their numerical dominance on hiring, tenure, and pro-

motion committees, and in administration, is a key though not lone factor in, for the time being, perpetuating the heterosexist WASP values at the core of academic institutional cultures (in spite of those white men in those roles who are able to work as allies). Women have entered higher education in increased numbers over the past two decades, currently outnumbering men as both students and staff at some Canadian and U.S. institutions. The employment figures, when examined without attention to rank, show that women may be becoming dominant in the academic labour force. Nevertheless, even while the numbers support a cultural anxiety that women are "taking over" the academy, a trend that is feminizing the overall culture of academe in their favour (Leathwood and Read 176), the challenges that we identify persist. Viewing the raw numbers as a sign of equality, of course, misses the concentration of women in lower-paying, lower-ranked positions across employment sectors, academe included. We can additionally examine the increasing feminization of the academic labour force in the context of an unflinchingly masculine academic institutional structure and culture. Take, for instance, the shift towards part-time and contract labour in many universities. This cost-cutting measure shifts more and more of the bulk of academic instruction to part-time workers, who are not given the benefit of a regular salary, regular benefits, or a sense of employment stability. These working conditions represent a feminization of university instruction, regardless of the sex or gender of the person performing this labour. This feminized, neoliberal trend in higher education is anchored in a traditionally masculine economic framework witnessed in the explosive growth of university administrative structures run largely by men. That more male faculty are now vulnerable to the exploitative dynamics of precarious forms of employment does not indicate that women are on top or that we are entering a "women's market" or an actual shift away from sexist trends. Rather, we are seeing an overall feminization of labour under a long-established and thriving masculine economic ethic: the move towards increasingly precarious forms of academic labour demonstrates precisely the retrenchment of neoliberal patriarchal structures. Academic cultures situated in this economic context may, indeed, be more feminized today, but not in a feminist sense (Leathwood and Read). Women remain a minority in academic positions of power and continue to be underrepresented in traditionally male-dominated disciplines such as the sciences and engineering (Can. Teachers "Narrowing the Gender Gap"). The heterosexist and Eurocentric foundational norms, values, and structure of the university remain in place, while continuing trends in the exploitative feminization of labour (reflected in part in the simplistically presented female to male employment ratios) are used to suggest the progress, if not the unfair advantage, of women in the current workforce. This is not the diversification and employment equity that many of us were hoping for, and as UK-based

scholars Carole Leathwood and Barbara Read rightly argue, this kind of women's advancement discourse still "ignores the myriad structural and cultural barriers that women academics face, relating to the dominant cultural construction of the academic as 'masculine'" (175).

Spousal Appointment Policies and Politics as a Site of Intersection

If Eurocentrism, racism, sexism, heteronormativity, and ableism have been core to the development and foundations of academic institutions in Canada and the U.S., then it is important to recognize these elements as interlocking relations (Ng) that in various ways function to assimilate or punish a wide range of people whose experiences are situated in some tension relative to those academic norms. Spousal hires, for instance, have long been a contentious issue in academe, prompting concerns surrounding meritocracy, fairness, the maintenance of academic rigour, the autonomy of academic units, and nepotism (Eisenkraft). The issue is even more complicated, for instance, for same-sex couples who, more so than heterosexual couples, and in spite of federal non-discrimination laws and legalized same-sex marriage in Canada and some U.S. states, bear a greater burden of proving their spousal status and face the worry of homophobia upon disclosure. Spousal hiring is a core issue framing work and family lives for many academics and postsecondary instructors. Canadian universities, in their myriad of approaches to this issue, have been forced over the years to acknowledge this aspect of family life as a persisting reality of the academic labour force (Eisenkraft), requiring some measure of collective discussion and protocol at the administrative levels. This task is not an insignificant one because "faculty are voting with their feet [and] going to universities where they are hiring dual-career couples" (DuBois). Spousal hiring is a recruitment, retention, equity, and life balance issue that is uncomfortable to many in direct proportion to the degree to which it unsettles key assumptions in the traditionally masculinist and heterosexist blueprint of academe. For example, the assumptions can run as follows: merit, as a value-neutral concept, can only be determined through open competition. Family is a personal and therefore separate matter from the academic's professional life; all "serious" academics, according to this line of thought, know how to keep these worlds always separate, and therefore should not make personal appeals in a professional context. As a result, any personal ties taken into consideration in the context of hiring are nepotistic and threaten the overall quality of the institution. The underlying assumption is that there are only fairness and objectivity at play in the regular hiring process and that the candidates with the most merit always get the job. This assumption more or less dictates the (androcentric) assumption that academics maintain compartmentalized lives. The profession, family, and life

as a whole should, in this logic, remain an amalgam of separate compartments, with professional commitment and success defined by the separation of the professional sphere from the others. Finally, this logic ends in mistaking merit with fairness and equates the hiring of qualified spouses with the nepotistic "spill over" of the emotive personal sphere into the rational professional realm. The clear gendering of these categories should indeed give us pause. While academics remain entitled, as are employees in other sectors, to protections of their privacy, at the same time the assumption that the personal and the professional ought never to intersect (or ought to be performed in particular ways) leads to a ruling out of the notion of spousal hiring without any serious interrogation of its benefits.

University administrators and policies have had to catch up to the reality that academics will leave their positions in order to preserve the integrity of their personal lives. To a large extent, current university spousal hiring practices largely function as recruitment and retention tools that favour academic "stars" rather than as commitments to work-life balance and equity for faculty as a whole. This approach constructs a deserving class of academics according to questionable norms of success—namely, a large quantity of research publications and grants, among other factors. Thus while the increasing acknowledgement from many universities of the need to implement formal or informal procedures for spousal hires reflects a positive step in the right direction, these procedures, in practice, have not yet moved beyond androcentric and heterosexist norms of achievement, which remain dominant in many academic institutions (Eisenkraft).

If it is relatively straightforward to understand how and why spousal hiring policies may be important recruitment and retention issues, it may be less immediately apparent how these issues affect equity and work-life balance. How does spousal hiring speak directly to these two factors? The capacity to sustain the family of one's choice is a good place to begin thinking about spousal hiring as an equity issue. Should securing a tenure-track position mean, as it already has for so many, deciding between a job and having children? Most university administrators are likely to be, in principle, against employment conditions that prevent desiring faculty from planning for and having children. Yet the choice between job or children is one facing many dual-career academic couples forced to live in different cities or even countries from one another (Eisenkraft). One previously tenure-track scholar noted that if she or her husband could not find employment in the same place, then, at some point, "the window on having kids will close," and that, she states, "is a high price to pay for what is, at the end of the day, just a job" (Ledohowski). Couples in this situation also lose money on travel or unpaid leaves taken to sustain the relationship. If the academic "stars" are more likely to secure spousal hires, the

result is inequitable access to family life, work-life balance, and to possibilities for well-being among academics as a whole, particularly for those in junior and low visibility positions—where women, queer-identified people, disabled people, and people of colour are situated more often than not. Over the long term, these inequalities and conditions of work can affect not only the shape and experience of one's family, but also the capacity of faculty members to invest in their home lives and to build community and social networks in their cities of residence. In also pointing to some of the gendered implications of this issue, Lindy Ledohowski, a tenure-track faculty member at an Ontario university in 2010 at the time of the following statement, puts the problem clearly: "I'm a realist. So what I think will happen is that I will end up leaving academia, and I will try to find work doing something else, and I will be one more female statistic who compromises her own academic and professional goals.... But at the end of the day, I would rather have my marriage than my job. And I just wish that academia didn't ask me to make that choice" (Ledohowski). Those concerned about the "star" syndrome are cautious to adopt an unequivocally pro-spousal-hiring position and are quick to point out the potential inequities and abuses that can result in the context of a desperate job market and will query the possibly questionable practice of favouring some candidates over others. But these challenges set up the discussion of spousal hiring as a simple "yes" or "no" policy issue rather than as an acknowledgement of its overall value in spite of the complexities. The fair-unfair premise also sustains the problematic illusion of isolated spheres of life where one's career can supposedly thrive even though the conditions of one's personal life may be challenging or vice versa.

Evaluating Teaching

University teaching evaluations and tenure and promotion assessments provide us with another vantage point from which to observe persisting cultures of whiteness and heterosexism at work in academe. Student teaching evaluations, for instance, continue to carry significant weight in the assessment of faculty for tenure and promotion, especially at teaching-focused institutions. Yet, aside from overtly racist and sexist remarks, little consideration, if any, is given to the times when teaching evaluations function as a form of normalizing discrimination, times at which "racialized faculty members hold less power than their White students" (Monture 78). These moments include when factors such as "accent" are the basis of poor scores; when the gender presentation of the instructor and/or subject matter challenge students' normative assumptions about postsecondary education; or when faculty, due to class, culture, body, or principle fail to present as "functionally 'White'" (Monture 77). Additionally,

statements acknowledging the potential for bias in teaching evaluations or recommending due consideration to the differing backgrounds of different instructors can comfortably coexist with the continued overvaluation of scores or numerical data as a measure of teaching ability. The tenure process, Henry and Tator argue convincingly, "is … one of the most powerful examples of institutionalized racism, whereby individuals are punished or rewarded based on their adherence to obsolete rules and standards designed to ensure conformity to Whiteness and maleness" ("Theoretical Perspectives" 30). The *other-mothering* of students of colour, for instance, is invisible work that Associate Professor of Women's and Gender Studies, Maki Motapanyane, like many black women faculty, has found herself performing in every full-time position that she has held, beginning in the very first term of her career. This work has included the officially unrecognized and unrewarded labour of mentoring students in other departments, serving as a go-to figure of support for students experiencing racism in the university, and conducting reading courses with students whose intellectual interests are not served by the curricular offerings in their home departments. None of this labour has counted positively as part of the assessment process for tenure at either of the two institutions at which Motapanyane has held tenure-track positions (a Canadian undergraduate teaching university and a research university in the U.S.). In fact, she has been warned more than once by senior faculty and administrators (incidentally, all white) not to take on this work, as it receives no credit. This strange gesture of protection in no way challenges the established and problematic norms of assessment, but instead encourages faculty of colour to assimilate to these norms and turn away from what is obviously a gap in service to students of colour. The problem is compounded by university cultures that all too willingly allow for surface discussions of diversity and inclusion but frown upon any serious internal assessments of racism (Dua). It is important to note that the type of other-mothering work in question is, at its core, diversity work. In other words, this unrewarded labour, for which faculty of colour may pay with negative tenure assessments, is actually serving the diversity mandates that many universities have in place but do not substantively implement. It is often individual faculty of colour and not the offices of equity or diversity, as a whole, who effectively act to retain students of colour, see them progress through their degrees, help them apply for graduate school, or assist them in preparing for future employment; faculty of colour may, in turn, be punished for undertaking this work by universities that tout diversity and inclusion.

There is, additionally, a gendered dimension to this invisible and unrewarded work. This type of self-sacrificing service is feminized labour in academic contexts, not because it is only women who other-mother in this way, but because, regardless of who performs the labour, it is the strategically self-serving and

not the self-sacrificing who will be rewarded in the context of sexist university cultures. Other-mothering in this sense (putting the interests of under-served students first) is part of the larger problem of the gendered division of labour in academic settings. Speaking specifically to the subject of women and women's work in academe, Shelley M. Park puts the more widely applicable problem of advising faculty against unrewarded service as follows:

> the assumption underlying this advice—usually given by well-intentioned liberals, including liberal feminists—is that individual women can improve their situation if they choose to. This assumption portrays the successes and failures of women as the consequence of freely made personal choices, thus ignoring the fact that the university's current organizational culture depends upon a gendered division of labour. (302)

The meaningful inclusion and adequate mentoring of faculty of colour will, therefore, require a broad willingness to destabilize and shift the underlying Eurocentrism, androcentrism, heteronormativity, and neoliberal economic values that constitute the foundation of many university cultures and that negatively affect a spectrum of nonconforming individuals.

The Contextual is (also) the Political

The context within which we conduct this analysis is, of course, key. While we can advocate for specific policy changes within post-secondary institutions, the structures of everyday life under neoliberal political systems shape what these institutions look like, as well as the actions that they take. The recent analyses of Judith Butler (2004; 2010), for instance, that pick up on Foucauldian notions of biopower and biopolitics demonstrate that some bodies are allocated different amounts of human-ness under the war on terror and are considered more fully human than others (in particular those that are racialized, differently bodied, queer, etc.). As a consequence, Western society right now is at risk of (re)prioritizing normative bodies and, quite possibly, of reasserting their hegemonic socio-cultural status. Those normative bodies are the ones that prove to be the most economically productive, as a result of a positive feedback loop—because their bodies are those that are rewarded for being so—and are hence the most valorized. Neoliberalism may function as a means, over the longer term, of re-marginalizing marginalized bodies that had seemed to be coming into recognizability and even celebration.

We see this broad socio-cultural nexus operating in the university sector as well: our previous discussion, for instance, of how promotions accrue to

those whose research outputs are high in number shows again that the sector implicitly privileges normative bodies over others, those whose lives are uninterrupted, to the greatest degree possible, by quotidian cares and concerns, let alone the need to provide care for others. This problematic reality is carried in the discursive practices of our universities; it manifests itself even through the language of diversity and greater inclusion. If this is the case—and we believe that it is—then the sector is far from one that encourages mutually supportive and caring collaboration. It is, rather, one that implicitly promotes collaboration for the sake of individual gain, with the ongoing and attendant risks of reasserting the "old boys" networks that feminist struggles, in particular, have lobbied against. While none of this analysis is intended to excuse the acts that individuals may take to exclude or limit access to bodies marked by difference, it does suggest that the existing milieu in which colleges and universities are situated is one that already discriminates, and does so today through an economic rationalization that can initially appear to be value-neutral. To the extent that diversity statements remain symptomatic of, rather than challenging to the dominant power relations fundamental to many academic institutions in Canada and the U.S., these statements will reinforce deeply rooted power imbalances while appearing to work against them.

It is not our intention to sound bleak in this framework; rather, we stress that socio-cultural stigmas and oppressions continue to intersect and overlap, both inside the university and in broader society, suggesting the need for coalition building. We can bring this issue right back to the level of mothering in the academy with which we began. Mothering in the academy is fraught with divisions; we have attended meetings where faculty members openly declare that they do not wish to support childcare initiatives on campus because having a child is a choice, and that people who make that choice should not be helped in the workplace. Setting aside the vexed question of choice, we see that such moments reveal the fragile politics of coalition building: each moment of choosing to support a colleague marked by difference is a conscious one, since the existing structure already supports normative bodies—whose normativity is, if we accept the premises of some of the thinking coming from disability studies, only ever temporary. The move to support one another across differences not only is a matter of social justice—and, at times, human rights—but is also necessary for colleges and universities in Canada and the U.S. to become places where faculty can both survive and thrive.

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