

**Academic Autonomy:
Authority, Self-Confidence, and Resistance**

Sylvia Burrow
Associate Professor
Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies
Cape Breton University
sylvia_burrow@cbu.ca

I. Introduction

I did not expect to be a mother and an academic. I was happy that I did not become a mother when I was a graduate student, even though I was in a child-friendly Philosophy department. I would look at our well-organized professors and graduate students who were successful at parenting in academia and think, “if they can do it, maybe I can too!” But I made the right judgement in leaving a bad relationship and put my focus completely on my career. I defended my dissertation while beginning my first sessional position, graduating at the end of that academic year and then moving countries again for the next sessional position. I quickly landed a tenure-track job where I wanted to be in Canada. Now I have a solid relationship and a toddler. I am happy to be a mother but confused about my status as an academic. Am I taken as seriously by my students, my colleagues, or upper administration as I was before I became a mother? The president of our university welcomed me at the annual Christmas party by asking me if I would raise my daughter as a feminist. I wonder how this question might be taken politely. At the same time, my feminist consciousness raises concerns about the implications or innuendos of his comment. My experience as an academic philosopher raises deeper concerns about autonomy, or self-governance through choice formation and pursuit. In this essay I consider how status and authority affect autonomy and hence, career success for academic mothers. My account appeals to philosophy but its implications extend well beyond this academic discipline.

Women in philosophy encounter masculine values and ideals that are interwoven into both philosophical argumentation and discourse. Janice Moulton shows that philosophy values combative, aggressive forms of argumentation, which she calls *adversarial argumentation*. Her work has since been expanded upon to show that metaphors of masculine aggression help shape and define the ideal model of philosophical argumentation (Rooney 2010, 1994; Haslanger 2008; Burrow 2010). In this essay I consider argumentation to include any form of discussion aimed at cooperative or persuasive ends, following Christopher Tindale (1999).¹ Argumentation is distinct from *discourse*, which may have no aim or purpose beyond mere communication. I show that argumentation and discourse are *gendered* according to masculine and feminine norms and values. My point is that masculine ideals and values underwrite philosophical argumentation and discourse, which should come as no surprise since philosophy is, and has been for quite some time, dominated by men. Feminist philosophers have shown that philosophy is a chilly climate for women and have continued for several decades to point out that the numbers of women in philosophy remains startlingly low, even while the presence of women in other academic disciplines has risen (Garry 2009; Crasnow 2009; Haslanger 2008; Penaluna 2009). Much of the feminist response to the chilly climate aims to change the conditions in philosophy to be more inclusive to women and especially marginalized women. But little, if any, of this work on the chilly climate addresses harms to *autonomy* that women academics or academic mothers experience. I plan to show that philosophy's masculine-dominated climate undermines women's autonomy, illustrated by the case of academic mothers. I extend this account to those areas of academia dominated by masculine values and ideals, arguably most disciplines.

In the next section I explore how academic mothers encounter difficult choices between family and career commitments that work against mother academics counting as ideal academics. Section 3 shows how academia's oppressive social conditions threaten autonomy through undermining self-confidence and hence forms of self-appreciation such as self-trust, self-respect, and self-worth. Section 4 shows that

¹ Tindale (1999) recognizes persuasion as part of argumentation but still upholds agreement as the main aim of cooperative argumentation.

philosophy has a competitive and combative atmosphere which reveals masculine values and ideals of aggression creating a chilly climate for women. I argue in Section 5 that the chilly climate is similarly evident in other academic disciplines dominated by masculine discourse. The chilly climate endorses masculine interests and values at the cost of feminine interests and values, hence it works against women's choices to be both academics and mothers. Whether academic mothers subordinate family commitments or subordinate our academic commitments, we are exposed to masculinist assumptions about what it means to be a serious academic. Hence, we need to work at being taken seriously as academics; that is, to be regarded as academics with status and authority. And yet pressure, reproaches, and judgements from others in academia suggesting that academic mothers are not serious academics can undermine self-confidence, self-respect, self-worth, and self-trust – the very grounds for autonomy. My aim in this paper is to draw out how these chilly views of status and authority constrain academic mothers' autonomy. The cost to autonomy is significant since it damages the possibility of both career success and personal integrity.

2. Choosing Between Family And Career: The Double Bind

A recent report by Robert Drago *et al* shows that more women than men in academia practice behaviours aiming to minimize, hide, or neglect family commitments in order to improve their appearance as ideal academics, especially if those women are mothers. Academic mothers return to work too soon after childbirth, have less children (either one or two), or space their second child's birth well apart from the first (Drago *et al.* 2006). Such practices tend to further women's academic career goals. Alternatively, academic mothers might alter their work life to allow more time with their family and still be productive. Such approaches receive mixed results, exemplified in the following cases. Deborah Ross, a single mother, picked up her daughter after school and took her to events like Girl Guides. She was granted her request of no afternoon or evening classes by her department chair (Ross 2008). What Ross didn't expect was that she would be so bitter for having given up so much of her academic interests to meet her parenting demands. After years of successful teaching and research, Ross's application for full professor

was turned down while similarly successful, male junior colleagues received that promotion. While Ross thought that her department's accommodations would give her a good balance between personal and academic life, it cost her promotion. She later expressed regret that she chose time with her daughter over her career in the years before tenure (40). Rebecca Efroymson asked to have a part-time academic status that allowed her to be in the office from 10:00 am – 2:00 pm. Even so, she was embarrassed to tell her fellow academic scientists that she could not make an 8:00 am meeting because she knew she would be at the “Mommy and Me” exercise classes she did with her son (Efroymson 2008). Heidi Newberg took half-time status after receiving tenure, but needed to pay a nanny to do 40 hours of work per week. While her status was part-time, her hours were much longer. She tried to educate her colleagues that she is paid less to do less work but could not ignore the resentment directed at her for “not working as hard as everyone else” (Newberg 2008, 96). University administrators echoed the view that she was “unproductive,” a view emerging around the time she requested part-time status. She later reflected on this similarity of timing, wondering if perhaps the real problem was that she requested a workload decrease to have time to care for her four children (97).

Whether an academic mother alters her family commitments or her work commitments, such choices can be difficult because pressures to be a “Serious Academic” work against being an academic and a mother. I call “Serious Academics” those that have endless time to devote to their academic lives at the cost of their personal lives. Serious Academics are never torn between family commitments and work, not pressured by the demands of a breastfeeding infant, a busy toddler, or a special needs child. Academic mothers are continuously choosing between how much to give up of their personal life for the sake of their career (see for instance Evans and Grant 2008). Those that give up personal desires to have more children or spend more time mothering may experience regret over lost family opportunities for the sake of career progress. Those that aim to modify their workload to accommodate family commitments can experience regret over serious repercussions to their career status or progress. Choices can be agonizing, resulting in guilt and regret that one has managed to be neither a good academic nor a good mother.

Sometimes the choices *seem* obvious, but this need not alleviate later worry or regret. Marla McIntosh, a full professor, reflects on her academic success and her position as associate dean. She chose to leave her children under others' care while she focussed on her career. She did not find it hard to make this decision, rationalizing that "because of who I am and who they have become, my family gained more than they lost by having a working scientist mom" (McIntosh 2008, 53). But after stepping down as associate dean, she regretted the choice for full-time care for her children and wished that she had worked part-time through the early years of her children's' lives. While weighing our decisions, we are never certain exactly how things will turn out. As in Ross's or Newberg's case above, professors might think that they have an accommodating chair or dean but find out much later than those "accommodations" leave deep scars in their careers. Or, as in McIntosh's case, professors might feel they have given too much to their careers at the expense of mothering.

Experiencing merely *difficult* choices does not indicate more of a problem for academic mothers than it does any other academic challenged by administration, colleagues, or any sort of personal situation. What makes the limitations on choices for academic mothers problematic is that academic mothers experience *limitations* on choice due to their membership in two categories: as women and as mothers. Moreover, these limitations introduce harms to academic mothers that are difficult to escape. As feminist theorists have long recognized, when social or political structures systematically limit or harm persons because of their membership to a certain group or groups, those members experience oppression. Double binds are exemplary forms of oppression. In a double bind, either of two options pose limits or harms that seem inescapable. In this essay I show that academic mothers experience double binds and other forms of oppression that impede career success. But this is not my main goal. My main aim is to argue that oppression against academic mothers impedes success because it undermines *autonomy*. Threats to academic mothers' autonomy are not merely threats to the capacity to choose between caregiving interests and career success. As I show below, autonomy is central to the self's wellbeing in an overarching sense. Autonomy is damaged if positive self-regarding attitudes such as self-trust, self-

esteem, self-respect, or self-confidence are sabotaged. Suffering loss in any of these areas of self-appreciation can alter or fragment integrity through cutting away the ground upon which one stands up for one's commitments. So on my account, undermining academic mothers' autonomy comes with serious personal costs extending well beyond any damage to one's career or family possibilities.

3. Serious Academic Model: A Challenge to Academic Mothers' Self-Confidence

Philosophy has traditionally cast autonomy as the defining feature of persons who are wholly self-determining and completely independent beings. Feminist philosophy overturns this idea in light of a relational view of the self that recognizes that persons are *not* wholly independent beings. We are attached to other persons in varying forms of relations that contribute to who we are: mothers, sisters, friends, aunts, employers, nannies, and so forth. Relational autonomy aims to capture that relational view of the self. It understands autonomy as a capacity developed *through* our social relations or otherwise affected *by* our relations to others (for a discussion, see MacKenzie and Stoljar 2000). This essay is concerned with one element of the latter view. It is the idea that autonomy is affected by our relations to others through their effects on our ability to form and act on our choices. My view is that oppressive social conditions in academia erode core elements needed for autonomy through undermining women's status and authority.

Recent feminist work on autonomy reveals a newly emerging view that certain forms of self-appreciation ground autonomy, notably self-trust, self-esteem, self-worth, and self-respect. I will outline this view and then add a further component, self-confidence, as necessary to those grounds for autonomy. Trudy Govier explains *self-trust* as a core component of autonomy. Trust in another is typically founded on our view of others' motivations and competencies; it includes a willingness to rely or depend upon others, even though we are aware that they may not act as we expect. Self-trust includes similarly positive beliefs about one's own motivations and competencies, as well as a willingness to rely or depend upon oneself that accepts the risks of one's decisions and one's own vulnerabilities (Govier 1993, 104-06). Self-trust is necessary to autonomy because deliberating and choosing on the basis of one's own values,

beliefs, and judgement requires trusting one's beliefs and competencies to form judgements and values (111). Without self-trust, a person cannot think and decide for herself and thus, cannot function as an autonomous being. Govier ties self-trust to *self-esteem* to show that self-esteem is necessary to autonomy. On her view, self-trust requires basic self-esteem since self-trust requires a positive sense of one's own motivation, competencies, and so forth. Basic self esteem is basic self-acceptance, which supposes that one is a worthy and adequate person (113). This view of self-esteem is similar to Benson's (1994) view of *self-worth* as a regard for oneself as competent to answer for one's own conduct in light of others' demands. We can see a parallel between these ideas of self-esteem and self-worth and that of self-respect. *Self-respect* relies on an evaluation of one's own worth because we respect what we consider worthy in ourselves. But there is a more basic sense in which we are self-respecting. Robin Dillon explains *basal self-respect* as a basic valuing of oneself as a worthy person, captured in our "primordial interpretations of self and self-worth" (Dillon 1997, 241). Dillon shows that damaged basal self-respect focuses on our shortcomings and insecurities. This focus on ourselves results in a "moral indulgence" of only regarding other persons insofar as they affect our sense of security and worth. In contrast, secure basal self-respect permits persons to see the independent moral value in other persons and things (242). The social and political point Dillon makes is that oppressive circumstances such as those that tell women we are "worth less" erodes basal self-respect in destructive ways, harming possibilities for self-construction, self-valuation, and self-perception (248). It is implicit to Dillon's account here and elsewhere (1992, 2004) that oppressive circumstances eroding basal self-respect seriously undermine autonomy. Without basal self-respect it is unclear how we are supposed to form judgments, make choices, and act as a person worthy of thinking and deciding for herself. Basal self-respect, like self-esteem and self-trust, seems essential for autonomy.

Autonomy can be undermined by social and political forms of oppression. Oppressive practices eat away at our ability to trust our judgements and to view ourselves as worthy to choose and act according to our beliefs and values. In a similar vein, those who experience damaged self-trust, self-esteem, or self-

respect may not be able to withstand others' reproaches, criticisms, or views of oneself as incompetent or otherwise inadequate. Lacking self-appreciation diminishes resistance and resolve to act against oppressive circumstances, which diminishes autonomy (see Burrow 2009). But more than self-appreciation is necessary to autonomy. I consider *self-confidence* to ground self-appreciation. Self-confidence is opposed to self-doubt: to doubt oneself is to lack self-confidence. Without self-confidence, we cannot resist pressures working against self-esteem, self-respect, and self-trust. Self-confidence is necessary to self-trust because doubting our judgements or beliefs signals a lack of trust in our ability to decide or act. So too, without self-confidence, self-esteem and self-respect are undermined because each is opposed to doubting our self-worth. So on my account, self-confidence is central to resisting those pressures working against self-appreciation and hence, autonomy.

As we saw above, academic mothers can face criticisms from colleagues for taking time away from work, for adjusting their workload or schedule, or for allowing themselves time to care for their children. I suggested above that judgements, pressures, or reproaches from colleagues, chairs, deans, or administration suggest a similar theme, namely that academic mothers are not Serious Academics. Underlying this view is that academic mothers are somehow less competent or adequate than they were before they became mothers, and certainly not as competent or adequate as the ideal scholar. Views such as this undermine autonomy if they erode self-esteem, self-worth, or self-respect. It is likely they will do so because experiencing such negative pressures, whether overtly or covertly, tends to undermine self-confidence. Doubt begins to creep in: Am I compromising too much of my work now that I am a mother? Have I lost focus on my career while I singlehandedly manage a household? Can I function as I once did now that I am tired all the time or stretched too emotionally thin with multiple family commitments? Even the most self-possessed academic can encounter dents in her self-confidence as an academic. My point is that academic mothers have many more pressures working against their confidence than other academics; hence, academic mothers encounter more pressures undermining autonomy than other academics. Costs to academic mothers' autonomy are not merely personal costs. Academic mothers

whose autonomy is diminished by harmful attitudes and practices face very real dangers to their careers. At stake lie promotion, grant, tenure, and job placement decisions, each of which may be affected by prevailing attitudes that undermine status and authority. Below, I look at how women's success in academia seems to be seriously impeded by a chilly climate that threatens both status and authority. These losses are difficult to overcome, but even more so for women in academia who are mothers.

4. The Chilly Climate: Preserving the Masculine Ideal Academic

Academia has a chilly climate for women (Sandler and Hall 1986; Menges and Exum 1983; Holloway 1993; Feldthusen 1991; Aisenberg and Harrington 1988; Acker and Feuerverger 1996; Settles et al. 2006). In this section I argue that the chilly climate is especially oppressive for mother academics. The fallout of the chilly climate might best be captured in what is commonly called the "leaky pipeline." The leaky pipeline describes the increased absence of women in academia as we travel through our degrees toward tenured positions. My own discipline of philosophy has a terribly leaky pipeline. Women earned 31 percent of bachelor's degrees in philosophy in 2006-7, compared to 41 percent in history, 45 percent in mathematics, 60 percent in biology, and 69 percent in English (Penaluna 2009). Women in philosophy received 12 percent of PhD's in 1969-1970, increasing to 27 percent thirty years later; over the last ten years the numbers have remained the same, with 25-30 percent of women receiving PhD's in philosophy (Crasnow 2009). This proportion of women in philosophy receiving doctorates remains lower than other disciplines, which see on average 41 percent of women receiving doctorates (Crasnow 2009). Women in tenure-track positions in philosophy have rested at a low 21 percent for the past several decades (Dillon 2009). So while women in philosophy earn a low 31 percent of bachelor's degrees, an even lower 21 percent of academic philosophers will be women. Such leaky pipelines are not limited to philosophy. As women advance through their degrees to employment, the numbers decline in many other disciplines. The leaky pipeline winds through the sciences, technology, engineering, and mathematics (Gouldon, Frasch, and Mason 2009). And it is present in the social sciences, including political science and its subfields of international relations and multidisciplinary international studies programs (Hancock and Baum 2010b).

The leaky pipeline is part of academia. It is a symptom of much larger problem in which, I suggest, men's interests and values take priority over those of women.

We might say that academia is not just an ivory tower but rather plainly a phallic tower: it appears that academia is not simply dominated by a white presence, it is infused with *masculine* values, interests, and attitudes. Janice Moulton explains how many positive concepts are associated with masculine interests in her discussion of aggression within professional contexts. When aggression is attached to men in professions like politics, law, sales, and management it takes on positive associations with power, activity, ambition, authority, competence, and effectiveness (Moulton 1983, 149). These qualities are valued as masculine qualities. Philosophy exemplifies an academic discipline dominated by masculine standards and ideals and so it too values aggression. Sally Haslanger draws on a similar observation to argue that philosophy values masculine interests at the expense of women. Haslanger points out that philosophy defines itself through dichotomies that neatly map onto to gender dichotomies. Dichotomies in philosophy such as rational/emotional, objective/subjective, and mind/body frame philosophy as rational, objective, and concerned with issues of the mind (beliefs, knowledge, and so forth). These qualities are associated with masculine ideals of philosophy as seminal, rigorous, and penetrating; and what philosophers do: target, attack, and demolish an opponent (Haslanger 2008, 213). If masculine values of aggression, power, and so forth are exemplars of good philosophy and good philosophers, then women will find it difficult to produce good philosophical arguments and be respected and appreciated as good philosophers. Notice that this difficulty has nothing to do with any empirical features of women. The frustrations and limitations women philosophers face arrive from ideals and values demoting, dismissing, or denigrating that which is not masculine. This environment is very chilly for women.

The chilly climate for women in philosophy is typically sustained through a competitive, combative atmosphere that Haslanger describes as "hypermasculine." She asserts that women who succeed in philosophy are good at conforming to accepted masculine norms (which requires sublimating important parts of one's identity) or are simply adept at adjusting to a dysfunctional environment (Haslanger 2008,

217). Any or all of these adjustments may occur without *recognition* that one resides within a chilly climate. My own experience did not require altering my identity to feel at home in a masculine environment. I grew up in a house dominated by a masculine presence, pursued degrees solely in philosophy and concomitantly was (and still am) active in martial arts training, a clearly male-dominated activity. I did not sense a chilly climate because I was so immersed within those masculine contexts. When I became sensitive to feminist issues I gained a new feminist lens, seeing that I embraced many masculine values and ideals. I quickly set about turning the tables. I forged friendships primarily with women, detached myself from many masculine forms of debate, and welcomed advanced teachings in the gentle, fluid motions of karate as the art of no combat. My aim was (and is) to create a welcoming space for the feminine in academia and in my life more generally. Now, as a tenured professor, I mentor female students, teach feminist philosophy, and exemplify non-combative forms of reasoning in the classroom. But I did not always feel free to overtly engage in these activities. Until I recently received tenure I was not exactly *clandestine*, but in many ways *subtle* in my manoeuvrings toward less chilly spaces in academia. Accepting that cases like my earlier self exist, Haslanger seems correct to say that women in academia conform or otherwise adjust to a masculine environment, but she does not say much about *how* women might adjust to a chilly climate. Below, I sketch out how women might take on masculine modes of argumentation and discourse to conform to a masculine environment, showing that doing so aims to increase status and authority but, because of oppressive attitudes towards women, this approach *undermines* status and authority. I appeal to philosophy because it is a discipline primarily concerned with argumentation and persuasion, although my conclusion extends to other academic disciplines valuing masculine discourse and argumentation.

5. Model of the Ideal Academic Challenges Academic Mothers' Autonomy

Not so long ago in philosophy's dusty past, Ernest Sosa (1987) described "serious philosophy" as what is rational, objective, and knowable by any rational mind. We saw above that this depiction of "serious philosophy" in fact describes that which is gendered *masculine*. I submit that presumed masculine

qualities of the “serious philosopher” also describe the Serious Academic, who toils endlessly in the hallowed halls of academia to the exclusion of most else. Such academics can focus on their work because they have no family commitments – or ignore them if they do. One mother and academic scientist reports recently that she was at a farewell party for a colleague in which the department chair gave a speech in which he characterized the departing man as “the ideal faculty member” because he always worked late into the night every day, seven days a week (Baizer 2008). One might think that this model is outdated, a picture of the past better replaced with model scholars who rake in grants, publish solidly, and who also hang their children’s scribbings on their office walls and sometimes leave early to pick up their kids. I do not think so. Those academics who display their children’s artwork in their offices are usually men, precisely because they enjoy the “daddy privilege” of being Caring Serious Academics while women are simply seen as Not Serious.² And if anyone is leaving early to pick up their children it is typically mothers, but they won’t announce that fact for fear of not being regarded as Serious Academics.

If I try to capture my sense of discomfort upon returning to academia after a year’s maternity leave, it might be that I no longer felt that my colleagues regarded me as a Serious Academic, or even a lower-case “serious academic.” I introduce this last term to reclaim the idea of being a serious scholar without necessitating the extreme view of Seriousness that we have seen. I call a “serious academic” someone who is actively involved in teaching and research and is happy to spout off details of her latest academic thoughts and problems. This sort of academic colleague may not be so Serious but is at least a common presence who attends many (although never all) academic talks or functions and is usually involved in some sort of research project in addition to a standard teaching load. I fit this model. But for the first year or two since having my daughter I have not typically been asked questions about my research, teaching, or anything else academic for that matter. I am asked about my daughter. It is hard to shift topics from

² Drago *et al* (2006) describe “daddy privilege” as a practice both men and women regard as unfair, that “involves circumstances wherein men are viewed as leading a healthy, balanced life when admitting caregiving commitments in the workplace, while women *are seen as less than ideal* workers for similar admissions. Daddy privilege emerges from the closer application of the norm of motherhood to women, and the presumption that men tend to be ideal workers.

one's child to one's work but I have often inserted comments about my academic life to my academic colleagues after a small anecdote about my daughter. In doing so, I aim to reclaim my status as a serious academic before my colleagues. I am not too sure if it is working. That is largely due to the fact that I am not available for many of the casual conversations my colleagues enjoy in the course of a typical academic workday. I isolate myself in my office whenever I am not teaching in class so that I can catch up on my work *so that* I can leave at a reasonable time. I estimate that I do as much work now, or more, than I ever did in my long, sprawling days as an unpartnered, pre-mother academic.

My case seems to be part of a larger pattern. Stereotypes presume that academic mothers with young children produce less research and are thus less likely to receive tenure.³ I acknowledge that mothers typically have a higher parenting workload than their male partners.⁴ Yet I disagree with the stereotype of academic mothers' lower research productivity. Hancock and Baum's (2010a) research shows that young children (under age 5) are *not* a statistically significant factor in women's research productivity. I suggest that the reason why children under age 5 -- even though these are the years demanding the most parenting time -- do not detract from research productivity is because mothers are streamlining and condensing their workload to ensure they can publish at a reasonable rate (comparable to pre-mothering publishing rates). Anecdotal evidence supports this view. Gayle Zydlewski (2008) points out that a colleague in her department was a mother but "She and I could barely find time to talk, since when we were on campus we needed to pack our time full with research and then get home to our children! (138)" Academic mothers are very often successful researchers. Nevertheless, academic mothers will find it a largely futile task to be regarded as Serious Academics or even lower-case serious academics.

I expect that academic success hinges upon being taken seriously in academic contexts, in being seen as a legitimate authority who can offer convincing arguments for one's position. Persons with

³ Cited in Hancock and Baum (2010).

⁴ Hancock and Baum (2010a) reference Scheibinger and Gilmartin's (2010) research on mother scientists in academia. It shows that women assume a disproportionate share of child care (women scientists do 54 percent of parenting labour in their households, and men scientists do 36 percent, where "parenting labour" refers to physical, psychosocial, and intellectual responsibilities).

authority are not questioned or belittled; their arguments are taken as legitimate *because* they are persons with authority. If what counts as having legitimate authority presumes masculine ideals and values, then women rejecting those standards of masculinity lose authority. Hanrahan and Antony (2005) show that possessing authority is just a matter of *not having to prove* that one's authority is legitimate. "Because I said so" can be a legitimate form of authority, depending on who the speaker is (74). Hanrahan and Antony fail to mention how *status* is an important determinant of legitimate authority, but we can understand its role more clearly by considering that Serious Academics possess legitimate authority because of they have a certain status in the academic community. I expand on these points below, relating masculine ideals and values promoted in the chilly climate to challenges to women's possibility to maintain or claim status and authority. Women academics who are also mothers will experience these and further challenges that deeply undermine the possibility of attaining the status of a model academic.

Academic mothers fail to possess legitimate authority if their status is challenged by sexist assumptions. An academic is not so Serious once she has a baby in her arms or a child to retrieve from school. She fails to meet the ideal of the Serious Academic once she reveals that she has commitments outside of academia that matter to her. Once this happens, a curious consequence seems to be that her status is lowered in comparison to her colleagues. One can only presume that a devaluing of the feminine is at work here. Feminists have long recognized that what is feminine is typically devalued in the workplace, in the home, and in society in general. Mothers are quickly and easily associated with that which is feminine, which we might assume is because children bear witness to the female power of reproduction, a decidedly feminine trait. When status is challenged, legitimate authority hangs in the balance. "Because I said so" shows legitimate authority for speakers who have a status with good standing in their communities. It will not work to demonstrate authority if one's status is undermined because of sexist assumptions or stereotypes downgrading one's status.

It is not surprising that women's authority is routinely challenged in academia. Students ask questions of or make comments to women professors they would never dream of saying to professors

who are men. Antony gives an illustrative example:

Antony: What is the counterexample that convinced Frye that her first definition of *sexism* is inadequate?

Student: I don't see the point of this definition-and-counter-example thing (Hanrahan and Antony 2005, 59).

Students belittle, deride, and challenge their women professors in student evaluations (I have heard of snide comments about women professors' style of dress or hair cut, or their quality of voice as somehow counting against their ability to teach). Women in academia can find their presentations at conferences, department meetings, and so forth challenged in a similarly unrelated fashion. While Hanrahan and Antony outline many ways in which sexist assumptions about women undermine authority, the authors miss the point that those sexist assumptions implicitly assume a masculine model of the ideal academic – along with attendant masculine values and ideals about good argumentation.

We saw earlier that philosophical argumentation favours aggressive, adversarial forms of reasoning. Adversality is revealed in metaphors such as “verbal sparring,” “cutting to the point,” “thrusting the point home,” “going for the jugular” and so forth. Adversarial argumentation supposes a battle between two opponents, spurring philosophical argumentation to assume that one's points are constantly under threat and need to be defended against possible or real attacks. Good philosophical argumentation refutes real or imagined opponents and so is immune to counterexamples or other forms of opposition. As Janice Moulton points out, such argumentation dismisses as plausible those forms of reasoning that might be cooperative, friendly, problem-solving endeavours, or other forms of working out ideas with others (Moulton 1983, 157). My view is that having authority as teachers, colleagues, and researchers turns on women's ability to present reasoned arguments that are judged according to masculine standards of legitimacy. I argue elsewhere that women face significant difficulties developing and maintaining authority as academic philosophers because good philosophical argumentation presupposes masculine forms of discourse (Burrow 2010). Masculine discourse is usually direct, forceful, and favours aggression

and adversality; feminine discourse emphasizes connection, intimacy, inclusion, and problem solving. Correspondingly, masculine discourse strategies often employ insults, monologues, interruption, stonewalling silences, direct disagreement, and so on. Feminine discourse strategies often use strategies prompting communication, such as questions (*do you see? right? ok?*) questioning intonations at the end of sentences, hedging assertions (*I guess, sort of, kind of*), passive or indirect speech, empty adjectives (*cute, adorable*), or diminutives (*little, tiny, itsy bitsy*) (see for instance Christie 2000; Coates 1986; Mills 2003; Lakoff 1975).⁵

Women in academia face a double bind that holds as much for philosophy as it does other academic contexts dominated by masculine discourse and so, implicit masculine ideals and values. That is, expressing oneself through feminine discourse undermines authority; yet, transgressing femininity and adopting masculine discourse fails to deliver authority in the same way it does for men. The first half of the double bind can be explained as follows. Expressing oneself using hedging assertions, indirect speech, or questioning intonation reveals a lack of assurance in one's view. Women adopting such feminine discourse strategies will thus be frustrated in their efforts to be taken as authorities by their colleagues and students. The second half of the double bind follows from considering that women can *transgress* feminine norms of discourse and adopt masculine discourse strategies (which can be done with the hope of being taken seriously by colleagues or students). But women adopting masculine discourse may still be questioned, belittled, or derided. Valuing authority of a dominant group is typically accompanied by denying authority to subordinates who lack, or stereotypically lack, those markers of authority of the dominant group (Addelson 1983). Taking on masculine forms of discourse may not be enough to have authority because women transgressing feminine norms of discourse face demands to prove their reasoning, frequently and indiscriminately. But, as we saw above, having legitimate authority entails that

⁵ My discussion of typical gender patterns in discourse should not suggest that men always use masculine discourse or that women always use feminine discourse. I maintain that gender is performed through language and behaviour and is not tied to one's biological sex. Thus, those who are gendered as men may transgress typical gender roles through taking on feminine speech or behaviour; those who are gendered as women may transgress typical gender roles through taking on masculine speech or behaviour.

one need not defend one's reasoning indiscriminately or whenever another decides to challenge it: having authority entails that there is a place where defence of one's reasoning is not needed.

One might think that such challenges to authority need not undermine the possibility for women to be regarded as serious academics: women who strive to be serious academics simply need to be *better* armed with masculine qualities, such as masculine discourse strategies (interrupting, hogging the floor, swearing, so forth) or masculine argumentation techniques (targeting opponents with counter-examples, thrusting their points home, and so on). But it is difficult for women to be taken seriously by employing such techniques because we are likely to be seen as "harsh," "aggressive," "rude," "cold," or plain "bitchy." These qualities are not those esteemed in the ideal scholar and colleague; and they detract from, rather than promote, status and authority. Slurs and insults to one's character inherently demote women's status while they at once undermine legitimate authority. Authoritative legitimacy hinges on being the sort of person who *has* authority. Bitches do not have authority because their arguments are simply a result of bitchiness and not a credible position; so too for other negative character traits attributed to women. Thus, adopting masculine forms of discourse or argumentation is likely to undermine status and authority. So even those women who manage to successfully tread the masculine world of academia will not easily be regarded as serious academics. The alternative, adopting feminine discourse or argumentation, invites derision or condescension because what is feminine is devalued and derided in academia, as the chilly climate shows.

The chilly climate is more than an issue of gender balance in terms of numbers of women in academia. It is deeply and disturbingly a matter of masculine interests and values suffocating feminine modes of being. In such a climate, women struggle to be taken as seriously as their male counterparts and so must continually work to attain the status and authority much more easily granted to men. At stake lie many sorts of academic decisions, including whether or not one gets an academic job in the first place, receives tenure, promotion, grants, or similar markers of academic success. That is, women's success in academia largely relies on whether or not women possess status and authority as arguers. In a climate in

which status and authority are routinely challenged or questioned, more than just academic success is at stake. Persistent, or perhaps simply multiple, challenges to status or authority undermine self-confidence. Success in academia relies upon success in one's ability to argue, whether in teaching, service, or research settings. Challenging this ability questions one's standing as an academic. In this climate, self-doubt works against those self-appreciating attitudes necessary to autonomy. Self-trust, self-esteem, and self-respect can all falter as one doubts one's abilities to live up to the standard of the "Serious Academic" or even the lower-case "serious academic." As we saw earlier, doubt diminishes one's capacity to form and act on choices because it undermines one's capacity to value and uphold one's beliefs, commitments, and values. Women in academia encountering challenges to authority and status and who experience self-doubt see their capacity to have and express autonomy undermined by this chilly climate. Academic mothers can encounter diminished autonomy for the same reason women in academia do; but academic mothers have more challenges undermining autonomy *because* they are mothers.

Academic mothers face a serious double bind because of oppressive stereotypes about mothers. On the one hand, academic mothers may choose to minimize, hide, neglect, or otherwise conceal their childcare or family commitments so as to appear to be serious academics. But once a woman's standing as a mother is revealed to her colleagues, sexist stereotypes can undermine her authority if she is not taken as seriously as her non-mothering counterparts. Success as a researcher is a primary marker for success as an academic, no matter how much talk one hears about success in teaching and service as necessary to academic success. And so, an academic mother needs to resist stereotypes depicting her as a less serious researcher than her colleagues. At the same time, she is likely to experience self-doubt undermining autonomy if she wonders if she can pull off motherhood and the large demands of a full-time academic position (which is the only position a serious academic occupies). On the other hand, an academic mother might decide to alter her academic commitments to allow her more time to focus on her childcare or family commitments. While she may be just as, or more, productive than her colleagues on a similar schedule, she will fight against stereotypes assuming that she is not a serious academic. Her status

as an academic can be overshadowed by the stereotypical view that, if she is primarily a mother and secondarily an academic, she cannot be serious about her academic work. Hence, academic mothers face a deeply constraining double bind. Whether we subordinate our family commitments or we subordinate our academic commitments, we need to strive to be taken seriously as an academic – to be regarded as an academic with status and authority. In either case, we are exposed to masculinist assumptions about what it means to be a serious academic. Women find it difficult to live up to such expectations and be taken seriously, but academic mothers are bound by sexist assumptions about mothering that render it nearly impossible to be taken as a serious academic.

6. Conclusion

In this essay I have indicated how academia constrains autonomy for academic mothers. Autonomy is eroded in environments pressing us to question or otherwise be doubtful of our choices. If self-confidence is undermined because of self-doubt, then self-trust, self-esteem, and self-respect can each falter. In any of these cases it becomes difficult to trust our judgements, beliefs, and values. Hence, self-doubt erodes our capacity to make and act on choices. Autonomy is thus critically diminished in environments fuelling self-doubt. I have shown that academia proves one such environment for academic mothers. This conclusion does not deny that academic mothers may have a strong self-confidence and flourish despite pressures working against autonomy. But I suppose these cases the exception rather than the rule. Self-doubt, criticism, or worry easily creeps in when academic mothers try to balance careers and family life. If academia supported mothering practices without implicit or explicit repercussions, then these sorts of choices would not nearly be so difficult. But academia upholds a model of the ideal academic supposing masculine expectations, aims, and values. In this chilly climate, women academics try to achieve to be, and be regarded as, an academic with a status and authority worthy of others' respect. At stake lies the possibility for academic success, which is typically determined through colleagues' decisions about jobs, promotions, tenures, and so forth. These are the academic costs I have focussed on in this paper. Personal costs are also at stake, but I can only give a brief indication of them at this point.

Costs to self-confidence, self-esteem, self-trust, and self-respect are not simply costs to autonomy. Undermined self-confidence and self-appreciation deliver personal consequences to one's well being or happiness. We cannot derive happiness from our decisions or actions if we are plagued by worry, doubts, or fears as we question our choices, wonder why we made them in the first place, or receive criticisms, reproaches, or admonishment by others for having made those choices. Such responses erode basic feelings of self-worth and self-respect. When this happens, it is difficult to maintain personal integrity. I think Calhoun (1995) is correct to say that integrity is a matter of standing for one's commitments before others. If this is right, then the ability to assert one's values, beliefs, and the importance of one's goals and projects is critical to having and maintaining integrity. I have illustrated above some of the ways academic mothers may compromise commitments so as to succeed in academia. We might alter the number of children we have, our family commitments, or our appearance of being mothers so as to be taken seriously. These decisions are not usually made lightly. They compromise integrity if they entail that we give up or significantly alter our commitments because of outside pressures. There are a lot of outside pressures working against mothers due to sexist stereotypes. Academia provides no exception. *Resisting* those stereotypes is essential to standing for one's commitments as an academic mother.

In academia's chilly climate, academic mothers need to build a protective layer reinforcing our confidence that our choices are worth respecting and deserve to be taken seriously, just as *we* do. Until academia becomes less chilly, many women will limit or postpone motherhood in order to be regarded as ideal academics. Those who do secure accommodations to allow them to be productive *and* have children ask for what is legitimate (maternity leave, parental leave, adjusted teaching schedules, part-time status, and so forth) will still suffer because they do not meet the model of the Serious Academic. We can suppose that women desiring to become mothers might foresee many of the sorts of difficulties raised in this essay and opt out of academia instead. Opting out is one way of avoiding a masculine environment that undermines mother academics' autonomy. But I would rather see academia become more inclusive of women and mothering so that our autonomy is not undermined by an oppressive academic environment.

Perhaps academic mothers and their allies can forge new models of the ideal academic that allows academic mothers to be serious academics, even if we put our children's drawings on our doors or even if we reduce our academic load to attend to family commitments. Resisting pressures against autonomy is part of *cultivating* autonomy, so through resisting dominant stereotypes and ideals, academic mothers can advance or regain their own autonomy. But the burden should not rest on those oppressed to challenge oppressive social and political structures. Academic allies need to join mothers to urge changes making academia less chilly to both women and mothers, which requires challenging implicit masculine values and ideals built into the view of the ideal academic.

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