

Coming of age in a straight white man's geography: Reflections on positionality and relationality as feminist anti-oppressive praxis

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Abstract

In this intervention, we consider how relational thinking about our positions and experiences can contribute to a feminist, anti-oppressive praxis in geography. Hosting a critical dialogue amongst ourselves, we collectively reflect on our experiences on coming of age in a discipline marked by ongoing forms of coloniality, racism, sexism, and trans/homophobia in an attempt to find commonalities across our different identities and experiences. Drawing from feminist thought and situating these evolving and polyvocal concepts within our experiences as feminist geographers, we consider what relationality and its associated practices can accomplish within our institutions. We also critique how feminist approaches, such as these are taken up and deployed in 'critical' spaces, yet often fail to transform power dynamics long characterizing the discipline and its institutional spaces. In doing so, we aim to develop a feminist

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geographic praxis that recognizes our fluid subjectivities and the different positions we inhabit in the academy while also contributing to a sense of solidarity and commonality-in-difference. We revisit and build upon feminist concepts of positionality and relationality to both name the identity politics of the field and to fashion a way toward more inclusive spaces shaped by mutuality, recognition, and an anti-oppressive praxis.

Keywords

Relationality, feminist praxis, autoethnography, positionality, institutional practices, exclusion

Introduction

In recent years, the discipline of geography has witnessed a growing dialogue on power and exclusion in the field, demonstrating the urgency of geographers turning inwards to examine the influence of racism, colonialism, sexism, and cis- and heteronormativity within the discipline's institutional formations (Adams, Solís, and McKendry 2014; Mahtani 2014; Pulido 2002).

These critical and reflexive dialogues speak to the continued underrepresentation of minoritized subjects in the discipline (Adams, Solís, and McKendry 2014), limitations such as absences pose for minoritized subjects who *are* present in the academy (Joshi, McCutcheon, and Sweet 2015; Mullings and Mukherjee 2018; Pulido 2002; Tolia-Kelly 2017), and the reproduction of hierarchical systems in institutional spaces (Ahmed 2007; Kinkaid 2019, Mahtani 2014; Mansfield et al. 2019). These interventions also illuminate how underrepresentation shapes research methodology and the dynamics of knowledge production (Peake and Kobayashi 2002; Pulido 2002; see also Baumann; Cahuas; El-Hadi, this intervention section), as well as dissemination of geographic knowledge within the classroom and beyond (Domosh 2015; Mahtani 2014; Haji Molana, this issue).

Drawing on this growing body of work in geography, we collectively reflect on how we, as emerging scholars located in the U.S., have been forced to grapple with the whiteness, masculinity, and cisheteronormativity of our discipline. As co-authors, we share our personal and collective experiences navigating geography in an effort to bring our colleagues into a difficult but necessary dialogue about how forms of exclusion are reproduced in our discipline and how we might transform ourselves, our relations, and our institutions to address these dynamics. While we do not have a totalizing vision for what that transformation would entail or what an/other geography would look like (Oswin 2019), we begin from a need to reflect on our relations with each other to make broader transformative work possible in geography. For us, this act of critical reflection is anchored by three major terms – positionality, relationality, and praxis – conceptual and practical tools, which we develop here as an antidote to the forms of marginalization and exclusion that continue to shape geography as an intellectual and institutional space.

Issues of racism, colonialism, sexism, and cisheteronormativity are not new to geography. Geography remains a predominantly white field, even as adjacent fields become more diverse (Faria et al. 2019). The whiteness of geography is not only a demographic problem but also describes complex cultural dynamics and power arrangements that maintain exclusionary intellectual and institutional spaces (Ahmed 2007). The racially homogenous composition of geography in the U.S. produces discomfoting invisibility or hypervisibility for people of color who do make their way there (Pulido 2002; Joshi, McCutcheon, and Sweet 2015; Tolia-Kelly 2017). These forms of racialized exclusion impact all areas of our work and limit the intellectual and political potential of our discipline.

Feminist geographers have long reflected on how sexism and racism infuse disciplinary identities, histories, and spaces (Domosh 2015; Peake and Kobayashi 2002; Pulido 2002). This legacy can be read through the underrepresentation and undervaluation of women, queer people, and scholars of color in the field (Faria et al. 2019); the overrepresentation of white male perspectives in the ‘canon’ and gatekeeping sites (Maddrell 2015, Schurr et al. 2020); and the largely unacknowledged and unaddressed practices of sexual and racist harassment in the discipline (Bartos and Ives 2019; Mansfield et al. 2019). Cultures of masculine fraternity and white male privilege continue to pervade disciplinary spaces, though often in ways less visible than those operating a generation ago.

Cisgender and heterosexual norms have similarly shaped geography as an intellectual and institutional space. For decades, geographers have pushed back on the dominant identities and epistemologies that define ‘legitimate scholarship’ and produce institutional spaces and cultures that marginalize queer people (Bell 2017; Bell and Valentine 1995; Binnie 1997; Binnie and Valentine 1999; Browne et al. 2009; Eaves 2020). Critical accounts describe how homophobia and cisheteronormativity remain enmeshed in the discipline within theoretical discourse and everyday institutional life (Kinkaid 2019). These gendered politics have particularly pernicious effects on women of color, queer women, and queer women of color, as well as genderqueer and trans people, who often fall afoul of heteropatriarchal expectations of gender performance (Domosh 2015; Joshi, McCutcheon, and Sweet 2015; Oswin 2019; Tolia-Kelly 2017). Heteronormativity, homophobia, transphobia, and other forms of gendered and sexualized normativity thus continue to be sites of unequal power relations and struggle.

Positionality, Relationality, and Praxis

It is within this general climate of the discipline that we have come of age as intellectuals. While the three of us have experienced and negotiated this shared disciplinary and institutional atmosphere in different ways – shaped by our respective identities and positionalities – we recognize the shared struggles that mark our experiences in geography. Our training in feminist theory gives us shared language to recognize and name our experiences of marginalization and exclusions in our ‘home’ discipline of geography.

We begin with positionality, which we understand as the feminist epistemological stance that our intersectional and fluid identities shape how we experience, inhabit, know, and move through worlds (Mullings 1999; Rose 1997). This stance holds that our positions in relation to various social structures necessarily informs the knowledge we produce about our shared worlds. Positionalities are not static, nor are they total (Rose 1997) – the salience and meaning of the intersectional identities we inhabit emerge situationally and relationally. Intersectional and relational thinking enables us to see how multiple institutional and social logics produce varying outcomes for each of us, depending on how our identities are formed, read, and negotiated in institutional space (Collins and Bilge 2020; Crenshaw 1990). Positionality is a critical tool to call into question the production and institutionalization of dominant knowledge, while enabling us to articulate the epistemological and political value in our own accounts of the world and claim our experience as a source of critical knowledge (Parikh 2019; Kinkaid 2019; Kinkaid 2021).

For us, positionality is not only a matter of navigating our *individual* identities but rather describes how our identities are read and positioned within the discipline, thereby becoming an issue that extends beyond the boundaries of our selves. The problem is not our identities per se, but the manner in which our fluid subjectivities collide with dominant histories and institutionally-sanctioned forms of ignorance and privilege. Without a transformation of

dominant power relations, we share concerns that a focus on positionality could further marginalize the claims we make about the world, marking our scholarship as ‘minority’ knowledge issued from a ‘particular’ viewpoint. In this way, our knowledge continues to be read as particular while white male intellectual formations (i.e., the canon) are naturalized as universal or mainstream.

Thus, our positionalities and experiences of marginalization are part of a broader, pervasive problem in our discipline, which we develop here as a *problem of relationality*. We use this term to push back on the individualization and naturalization of our ‘minority’ identities, and to name this politics of identity in geography. In speaking of relationality, we highlight the co-constituted nature of our identities and approach these relational formations as the grounds for anti-oppressive political action and solidarity (Massey 2005), an approach which centers interconnectedness, mutuality, reciprocity, and respect. By insisting on heightened attention to relationality and positionality among ourselves and our colleagues, we seek to identify ways to hold ourselves and others accountable for how we disrupt or reproduce dominant identities, histories, and values in geography and beyond.

Our aim is to identify the shared context in which we have come together, where the overlapping practices and politics of whiteness, masculinity, and cisheteronormativity produce spaces that are toxic for a diversity of minoritized scholars. While our experiences as feminist geographers differ in substantive and meaningful ways, we share the following vignettes to illustrate our joint struggles against continuing dismissals and erasure in the academy, with a focus on furthering an anti-oppressive praxis. This praxis is guided by a commitment to address the distinct, but related logics that have constrained our critical education and scholarship as geographers, including racism, whiteness, and coloniality; sexism and gender-based harassment;

cisheteronormativity and homo/transphobia. While we recognize that addressing these logics simultaneously is ambitious and challenging, we nonetheless see these struggles as related and urgent.

How can we begin this work? For us, this praxis is in part intellectual -- it relies on a greater recognition of critical knowledge projects within the discipline and an overall reorientation away from geography's 'centers' toward its 'margins.' However, it is crucial that this project not remain merely intellectual; it must also reshape how we take accountability for our positionalities and recognize their epistemological and political limitations. Such a praxis must transform the way we recognize and relate to each other across differences of identities, positionalities, and relations of power. Indeed, it is the glaring contradictions between our espoused intellectual and political principles and the realities of how we relate to each other in the academy that is the site of our praxis.

Vignettes

The following stories have stuck with us and illustrate moments in which institutional logics have become crystallized in our everyday experience. Following Kinkaid (2019),

this intellectual-cum-personal account is methodologically animated by the concept of 'lived theory,' the premise that our experiences in the world, and in institutions, can teach us meaningful lessons about power, privilege, and oppression. Such an approach accepts the premise that '[t]he everyday is our data,' (Ahmed 2017, 215), as well as the idea that the positionalities we inhabit give us access to different forms of knowledge and experience' (2019: 1790).

We begin from this autoethnographic starting point to interrogate geography's institutional formations (Butz & Besio 2009; Smith 2005), with accounts that represent a constellation of moments in the experience of minoritization, experiences whose implications extend far beyond the boundaries of a single incident.

Parikh: (dis)Orientation and distance

My sense of peripherality in a geography program was structured around being a racial and national outsider to the discipline. I articulate this positioning and my discomfort therein by drawing upon Sara Ahmed's (2006) work on disorientation, whiteness, and proximity. Ahmed describes how particular arrangements of space and relations of power result in a cohering of the academy around whiteness. The resulting status quo is comfortingly invisible for those who are 'insiders' and discomforting and disorienting for 'outsiders' to these norms. For me, the process of becoming oriented to a geographic education ironically brought these feelings of disorientation into sharp relief.

In 2013, I began my Ph.D. program with a week-long orientation session. As part of this session, incoming students spent a day at an environmental center, where a coordinator conducted team activities to familiarize us with one another. In one such game, we were to make a collective 'map' with our bodies by standing at relative distances to one another based on our 'home' locations. As an international student from India, I asked where I should stand for the scale to work. The coordinator was perplexed and appeared not to have expected people from locations outside the U.S. Meanwhile, my cohort began to ask one another where they were from to situate themselves relative to one another. I watched another confused international student move to locate himself far away from the others. Thus, from a group of fifteen, there were twelve people located within the U.S., and three others straddling outside at awkward distances. At this moment, I was literally standing out, feeling out of place and disorientated (on this existential condition, see Ahmed 2006; Kinkaid 2019; Puwar 2014). Several years later, I recognize this moment as what Ahmed (2006) identifies as the shaping of institutional spaces through '...the

proximity of some bodies and not others: [where] white bodies gather and cohere to form the edges of such spaces' (132).

My next disorientating encounter occurred during an introductory seminar in geography when a graduate student brought up Tobler's Law. Many of us did not know what that was, and someone explained that the law stated that 'Everything is related to everything else. *But near things are more related than distant things*' [emphasis mine]. Another classmate, let's call her Jane, said that she did not think that that could be a *law*, even if it might have explanatory potential for some phenomena. She further wondered whether this, along with some other course material, might be somewhat outdated. The professor intervened to explain that the material provided disciplinary context, which continued to hold tremendous ground.

Within the unfolding conversation about the biological and social implications of the law, I was about to say something in support of Jane's response – when another student, let's call him Joe, remarked, 'Well, you know, obviously you [Jane] and I are more similar than, say, you and someone from Asia or Africa.' He was gesticulating as he got to the last part of the sentence, as if to refer to some faraway place. At this, I stopped short, and felt unable to respond. Jane looked at me uncomfortably. Joe followed her glance, and turned to me, saying that he did not mean *me* when he said Asia. Jane and I shared another mortified glance, and then turned to the professor. The professor appeared to disregard this exchange, made another reference to Tobler, and the class moved forward.

I found this exchange difficult to process, especially because I was talked about and talked to, not *talked with*. I was uncomfortable with being objectified, a discomfort bolstered by the evident comfort of my white, male, heterosexual classmate in gesticulating to faraway places and people, and a lack of intervention from the professor. As a counterpoint to Tobler's Law, the

interaction revealed what Ahmed (2006), drawing on Schilder (1950), recognizes as the *tendency toward* proximity wherein ‘bodies that are “distant” are less likely to be incorporated in the body image’ (*ibid.*: 126-7); or, in this case, the discipline. The classroom served as a space to ‘orient’ us to the discipline, inadvertently revealing its colonial legacies in centering whiteness, with a refusal to broaden its normative limits (cf Joshi et al. 2015). These norms are implicitly reinforced in classroom settings where students (and many instructors) lack a critical vocabulary – feminist or otherwise – that can open up a dialogue about the politics of identity in geography.

My discomfort with the issue was subsequently brushed off by a graduate student due to the perceived lack of ill-intention. While maintaining that the interaction is problematic, I agree that the issue at hand is not intentions per se, nor is my purpose here only to illustrate the dynamics of atomized intentions. Instead, I center my discomfort to explain how, in the everyday functioning of the institution and its knowledge formations, white heteronormative comfort is centered and unchallenged by those who hold positions of power in the academy. The lack of intervention serves to reproduce the disproportionate space whiteness occupies and reinforces it as the norm. Here, identity and marginality are produced *relationally*: those of us occupying non-normative identities then are forced to make sense of our positioning vis-à-vis the discipline and its institutions from a peripheral starting point. It is only through making visible such peripherality and our discomfort therein that we can point to the limitations and exclusions that prevail in the cohering and sedimenting of the discipline’s boundaries.

Kinkaid: Surveying diversity

In 2018, I incidentally became involved with the production of Pennsylvania State University’s (PSU) ‘campus climate survey.’ My inadvertent enrollment in this effort as a white, genderqueer graduate student demonstrates how our collective efforts to ‘do diversity’ -- to individually and

collectively notice and address the racialized, classed, gendered, and sexualized exclusions of our institutions -- often ends up rearticulating those very forms of exclusion that make our discipline a comfortable space for some bodies while making our institutions sites of trauma for geography's 'others.'

A few years ago, PSU was working with a consulting firm to administer a university-wide survey that would assess how students, faculty, and staff experienced the 'climate' on campus. Focus groups were convened to give feedback on issues that would shape the survey. A (straight, white male) professor in our department who was involved in the survey design asked me to participate in the women's focus group. As one of the few geographers available to participate, I obliged, although I identified at the time as genderqueer, not as a woman.

The professor said he wanted to talk to me about the survey before the focus groups convened. Upon entering the professor's office, he explained a number of his concerns about the survey design. He first expressed a concern that the categories for race/ethnicity on the survey lacked specificity and he worried that a student may have to select a 'best approximating' choice. Overgeneralized categories of 'Asian' for example, could obscure the differences between different 'Asian' identities. I agreed that this seemed like a problem.

The professor continued on: compared to categories of race/ethnicity, there was a lot of attention paid to issues of gender and sexuality. He wondered why the survey needed a 'sex assigned at birth' question. Having not seen the survey, I struggled to interpret or explain the use of gender, sex, and sexuality categories. Beyond this specific question, the professor seemed to imply that there were excessive options listed for questions about gender and sexuality.

As this conversation unfolded, the professor worried aloud that a 'Saudi petroleum engineering student' in our college 'would not see himself reflected in the survey.' He implied

that the inclusions regarding gender and sexuality, in conjunction with the survey's exclusions regarding race and ethnicity, might be a problem. This was not only because of the lack of specificity of racial/ethnic categories; the professor suggested that merely having to read through the plethora of gender and sexuality categories would be alienating to this imagined student. In this example, it seems that the imagined 'Saudi' is necessarily a male engineering student, who is not gay, and is assumed to be homophobic. This hypothetical student cannot see himself reflected on the survey because too much space is given to questions about gender and sexuality, which, it was implied, could upset his assumed 'cultural sensibilities.' Here, gender and race cannot occupy the same space; an Orientalist racial stereotype is pitted against stereotypes of gender and sexuality. Further, the professor's own homophobic discomfort is shifted onto imaginary others under the guise of showing concern for those others (see Kinkaid 2019: 1804).

This talk of sex, gender, and sexuality beget other questions: the professor asked me why we even need to 'talk about sexuality at work.' He did not feel the need for his boss to 'know who he was sleeping with.' Stunned by this question and the privilege it entailed, I awkwardly tried to explain how sexuality is broader than 'who one sleeps with' and can inflect one's experiences in an institution in myriad ways. He had yet another question, one which was at the root of all these categorical quandaries on the survey: 'But who do transgender people sleep with?'

Needless to say, I was deeply confused by this question. Had this whole conversation been leading to this question? Had I been called in this professor's office to answer it? Why was he asking me? Because he thought I would know? Because he assumed I was trans? Whether it was a question of 'who do *you* fuck?' or a question of 'who do *they* fuck?,' it was wildly inappropriate.

These kinds of situations happen more than one might think. As an openly queer and trans person in a cis-hetero discipline, I have accepted that my professional existence will always be contoured by these kinds of questions, whether they are spoken or unspoken, directed at me or to someone else. I do not necessarily object to discussing these issues with my friends and colleagues, nor do I object to being a resource on queer/trans issues. The problem here is that this ‘diversity moment’ entails a very different experience and emotional labor for those involved. This rather mundane interaction in the midst of a workday constitutes a moment in which privileged bodies attempt to respond to the institutional mandate of ‘diversity,’ often in ways that render marginalized people hypervisible, objectified, and ‘out of place.’ For the ‘confused’ professor, it seemed appropriate to ask someone who would know the answers to his questions (even someone he barely knew). For the genderqueer/trans person selected to be a spokesperson for basic, googleable questions about transgender people, the exercise in inclusion and recognition backfires significantly. The very process of ‘including’ and ‘listening to’ queer people shift the burden of explaining the need for ‘diversity’ and the workings of straight white male privilege onto the white queer student, rather than the straight white male professor.

It is in such ‘diversity moments’ that one is confronted with and asked to respond to (or politely ignore) the very forms of privilege and ignorance that produce one’s marginality in the first place. While cis and straight people have their ‘learning moments,’ queer people encounter everyday forms of exclusion and misrecognition that constitute institutional space as a site of trauma. *Regardless of the professor’s intentions*, his ignorance operated as a form of harassment: behavior that made me feel singled out, uncomfortable, hypervisible, and precariously situated in the institution because of my gender/sexuality. These everyday operations of straight, white male

privilege are all too common for ‘minority subjects,’ and render institutional environments confusing, conflictual, and exclusionary spaces to inhabit.

This interaction – one among many – illuminates the largest obstacle to leveraging positionality and relationality as a feminist praxis in institutional spaces: many of us in positions of racial, class, gendered, and sexual privilege – including feminists! – have difficulty conceptualizing our positionalities and why they matter in the context of our institutions. When we are in positions of privilege, we often do not see our racial, gendered, classed and sexual identities as identities at all. Privilege excuses some from situating or bounding knowledge claims, bodies, and experiences while others are forced to speak from the realm of the ‘particular,’ if they are to speak at all. Without a recognition of how our identities are produced in relation to one another, and what power relations shape this production, claims to positionality may remain a forced move on our part, one that merely rearticulates our marginal perspectives and excuses our interlocutors from understanding the role they play in producing our identities and our worlds. We must find ways to demand an honest accounting of these dominant positionalities and how they construct the institutional terrain we all inhabit.

Ranjbar: Institutionalizing Inclusion

In 2019, the AAG launched several initiatives to foster greater diversity in the discipline. A notable example was the creation of the Harassment-Free AAG Task Force that is charged with recommending programmatic changes to support a ‘safer and more inclusive national meeting,’ (Luzzader-Beach and Dowler 2019), which includes naming and addressing sexual harassment, racism, transphobia, ableism, etc. that remain pervasive in the discipline. During the registration check-in, I walked by tables with flyers highlighting anti-harassment policies and, after picking up my name badge, I was handed a button promoting the new initiative. The button had the word

'harassment' crossed out and I noticed that it was largely women who pinned the button to their bags and clothing. Efforts to cultivate a more inclusive conference space included 27 sessions sponsored by the anti-harassment initiative and the recognition of feminist and women of color scholars at the award luncheon. Yet, despite these overtures towards the importance of diversity, engrained patterns of exclusion were painfully obvious during the conference.

As scholars from underrepresented groups, we (the authors) are often dismayed by the jarring gap between the professed aims of critical scholars and the lived reality of marginalization within institutional spaces. It was particularly distressing to observe the prevalence of implicit bias and outright aggression in 'critical' spaces at the AAG. One of the most public instances of harassment played out in a *Socialist and Critical Geography* panel and subsequently on its specialty group listserv. During this session, a prominent male scholar shouted down two women of color scholars for centering race in their scholarship. Despite the scholar's reputation for regularly exhibiting this sort of behavior, he continues to be celebrated within the discipline, most recently as a recipient of the AAG Lifetime Achievement Award. This episode demonstrates the prevalence of celebrity culture within geography that allows for harassing behavior and, perhaps even more unnerving, the palpable silence of bystanders in a 'critical' conference space (Mansfield et al. 2019). Attempts to elucidate the harmful impacts of this exchange on the specialty group's AAG listserv were frustratingly read by some as an artefact of identity politics rather than pointing to the reality of harassment in professional spaces. This response sends a clear signal to minoritized subjects that our intersectional scholarship remains marginal within geography and the academy more broadly.

My AAG experience was similarly marked by contradictions between the stated goals of inclusivity and established exclusionary patterns recognizable to underrepresented groups in our

discipline. I participated in several sessions organized around the Global South and postcolonial theory. Yet, even in these sessions, participants reverted to established critical theory canons in Anglophone geography. For example, during a panel discussion on Global South theory, the question-and-answer session centered on Western theorists, such as Michel Foucault, with questions disproportionately directed toward white scholars despite the diversity of panelists. When I commented on the irony of falling back into dominant epistememes in a space created to celebrate innovative theorists located in and scholarship emanating from the Global South, I was largely met with silence until the end of the panel when several individuals privately expressed agreement. This episode illustrates how overtures toward inclusivity can feel more insidious than outright harassment. It is frustrating to participate in panels where we are read as ‘minority subjects’ and our intellectual contributions are not taken seriously, as evidenced by the rare straying beyond Western-centric modes of thinking. These ‘critical’ spaces often reify dominant epistememes, thus failing to enact a critical praxis. In this sense, some of the microaggressions that we experience paradoxically emerge from ‘diversity’ efforts that further compound experiences of marginalization in institutional spaces.

The exhausting repetition of these moments undermines laudable efforts to promote inclusive practices in the academy. It is particularly disheartening to witness these behaviors in ‘our’ spaces, spaces that we – as minoritized scholars – have painstakingly cultivated to dialogue about anticolonial and antiracist methodologies and praxis. As a result of the constant dismissal of diverse forms of inquiry and the everyday (micro)aggressions that underrepresented scholars continue to face, our discipline as a whole is impoverished. Instead of creating new avenues to enact a more inclusive discipline, underrepresented scholars are instead compelled to use our emotional and intellectual labor to make these experiences legible to the majority of our

colleagues, whose privilege prevents them from recognizing or confronting these ongoing issues. It is the repetition of these stories – so familiar to all those marginalized within our discipline – that consumes our energy and diverts our attention away from envisioning future possibilities for ourselves and our work.

These examples are illustrative of how diversity initiatives, critical to the growth of our discipline, are circumscribed by the very power relations they attempt to challenge. This disconnect between critical theory and liberatory praxis is not new, nor is the re-centering of whiteness and the exclusions that this produces in institutional spaces (Ahmed 2017). After decades of antiracist feminist scholars advocating for radical change from the bottom up, academic institutions are beginning to respond with top-down measures intended to foster greater diversity in academia. However, in our collective experiences, the selective acknowledgement of an anti-oppressive praxis often feels like appropriation rather than steady steps towards justice and inclusivity within our discipline. Yet, at the same time, these institutional initiatives are critical to supporting the decades-long work to transform geography. These moments of rupture raise important questions about what measures are critical to ensuring inclusivity within our discipline and what accountability – particularly in ‘critical’ spaces – should look like.

Conclusion

In this intervention, we have dialogued across our individual experiences to reflect on how whiteness, masculinity, class, heteronormativity, and other oppressive logics shape institutional dynamics in geography. While we inhabit different positionalities, we are brought together by our marginalization vis-a-vis a straight white male norm that continues to inflect geography’s spaces and its intellectual projects. Even in moments where our institutions and colleagues attempt to ‘undo’ these legacies, we become enrolled in ‘diversity moments’ that painfully

remind us of our marginality and become part of the fabric of our everyday existence and sense of (non)belonging in the discipline. Such incidents are repetitive, exhausting scholars who already labor disproportionately to establish the worth of ourselves and our scholarship in the academy. Due to these dynamics, we argue that attempting to promote diversity without committing to transforming the power relations foreclose the possibility of a relational praxis and frustrates our ability to be accountable to each other.

Positionality and relationality are not only an imperative for feminist geographers, but rather, gesture towards an epistemological intervention that illuminates how all perspectives are necessarily partial and limited. We urge those who hold privilege within the discipline to holistically incorporate relational thinking into their scholarship and institutional practices, and to reflect on power relations that mark some knowledge and bodies as universal, and others as marginal. It is this relational production of the universal and the particular, the norm and the exception, the center and the periphery, which has underwritten the stories we share here, thus circumscribing the possibilities of our discipline and overdetermining our place(s) within it. By rejecting the naturalness or discreteness of our minoritized identities -- and finding solidarity across our varied locations in institutional power relations and cultural formations -- we seek to expand the epistemological problem that positionality names toward a broader ethical and political reckoning of the relational production of our identities in disciplinary discourses and spaces.

Our praxis, then, must begin with accountability. We demand social and intellectual accountability from our colleagues in geography, particularly those in positions of privilege and power, whose silence and lack of consideration, self-reflection, and critical engagement predisposes us to intellectual and institutional marginality. We urge our colleagues, 'feminist' or

not, to become more reflexive about the politics of knowledge production and professional practice, how they are shaped by forms of power and privilege, and how they are necessarily situated within individual and collective identities and marked by their limitations.

While we are deeply energized by the potential of an/other geography (Oswin 2019); – one in which principles of positionality, relationality, and praxis are foundational – we do not know as of yet what this geography would be and who we might become within it. Nonetheless, we join many others like Al-Saleh and Noterman (2020), Athena Learning Collective (2018), Eaves (2020), Faria and Mollett (2020) Mahtani (2014), Oswin (2019) and many more in imagining a kind of ‘anti-oppressive geographic praxis’ in our discipline, a way of being with and relating to each other that could transform our institutions, our knowledge, and our worlds.

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