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A flow for the social sciences and humanities: Storying the struggle of high-stakes financialization in the academy

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Abstract

In the form of hip hop lyrics, this research-creation tells the story a grant application writing process as a feature of neoliberal, academic capitalism. The lyrics draw attention to institutional and organizational features of the modern academic workplace, including the effects of performance evaluation structures and the financialization (Billig, 2013; Giroux, 2015) of academic work. It also highlights the intensification of work caused by bureaucratization – not only by the workplace, but by external granting agencies who exert varying degrees of control over academic labour.

Hip Hop as Contemporary Culture, Art and Storytelling

Though often (and erroneously) branded exclusively as a form of music, hip hop is a cultural movement that originated in the 1970s among African American youths in New York City (Akom, 2009). As a culture, hip hop contains five elements: deejaying, breakdancing, graffiti, fashion, and emceeing (more conventionally known as rapping) (Akom, 2009). It plays an important role in socio-political analysis and representation of marginalized communities (Akom, 2009; Marsh, 2012). Hip hop emerged as a liberatory, arts-based culture that responds to struggle by emphasizing self-determination in oppressed African American communities. As such, participating in hip hop cultural production is a form of critical, public pedagogy as much as it is an art form (Marsh, 2012).

Emceeing or rapping is “a form of rhymed storytelling accompanied by highly rhythmic, electronically based music” (Rose, 1994, p. 2). Early DJs and emcees used what little equipment was available to them to make original music – often just two turntables for scratching, a beat box with heavy amplification, and their own voices (Martinez, 1997). The addition of affordable digital synthesizers led to sampling sounds (incorporating segments of other artists’ work) to create unique content (Martinez, 1997). By the late 1980s, hip hop had transcended its New York City roots and began making its way into the mainstream American and international cultures.

Though still controversial in some circles, hip hop songs are rapidly gaining widespread acceptance as forms of poetry and storytelling that feature specific elements including content, flow and delivery (Alim, 2011; Bradley, 2009), and often rely on sampling. Hip hop lyrics are stories just as much as reports of the author/performer’s life experience. As such, stories hold “many lessons for revolutionary scholarship” (Jeffries, 2014, p. 714). Rap’s aesthetic form samples from the

past while rupturing the present in a way that reconsiders narrative linearity in unconventional ways (Jeffries, 2014). In doing so, hip hop as storytelling speaks truth to power (Jeffries, 2014). For instance, 1980s and 1990s political and gangsta rap were forms of resistance and expressions of oppositional culture aimed at exposing American inner-city problems (Marinez, 1997) in narratives of self-actualization (Morrissey, 2014).

The rap genre has historically emphasized “realness” though class-based, racial and autobiographical authenticity (McLeod, 1999; Morrissey, 2014). Rap allows storytelling through dialogue about the writer/performer’s lifeworld, and where they see themselves fitting in or not fitting in (Marsh, 2012). Authenticity invocations are a response to the threat of assimilation by larger mainstream culture (McLeod, 1999). Rap emcees have also repeatedly dealt with economic and financial issues in their music – especially stories of disenfranchised and urban youth, and entrepreneurship as a means of self-determination in marginalized communities (Sköld & Rehn, 2007).

Though their origins lie in marginalized, urban American communities, all aspects of hip hop have been globalized. While the authenticity of international hip hop (especially rap) is disputed (Pennycok, 2007), individuals and groups worldwide have “localized” hip hop as a socio-political movement by responding to their own circumstances through visual art, rap, and other forms of expression (Alim, 2011; Marsh, 2012; Pennycok, 2007). Global hip hop dialogue, while diverse in content and topics, tends to encourage biographical self-expression and activism in spite of media representations that focus almost exclusively capitalist narratives of excess, hyper-masculinity, and hegemonic norms (Marsh, 2012). Marsh (2012) argues that despite “problematic, often racialized and gendered representations associated with hip hop culture,” its potential lies in the ability “to illustrate and facilitate the creative, thoughtful, and artistic subjectivities” globally and locally (p. 194).

Contested Terrains: Hip Hop, Rap and Cultural Appropriation

The “appropriation-revitalization” syndrome (Keil, 1966, p. 43) is a long-standing symbolic practice by which African Americans attempted to maintain control over cultural production that was a source of pride in their struggle for equal rights. Appropriation can be broadly viewed as the use “of one culture’s symbols, artifacts, genres, rituals, or technologies by members of another culture—regardless of intent, ethics, function, or outcome” (Rogers, 2006, p. 476). This occurred with jazz and rock and roll, both of which were appropriated by White artists who received mainstream success, while the Black artists who pioneered the genre’s development remained in the fringes. This appropriation-revitalization pattern was repeated when hip hop gained mainstream and commercial success in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Richards (2015) eloquently describes the sustained culture of appropriation as “a fresh chapter to the enduring pop saga of Black erasure, a never-ending story that predates the advent of Elvis [Presley] and lingers in the shadow of [White rapper] Eminem.”

While the examples just described embody exploitative cultural appropriation – in which members of the dominant culture (such as Presley and Eminem) appropriated without substantive reciprocity, permission, and/or compensation, Rogers (2006) argues that other forms of appropriation exist in addition to exploitation. Appropriation as cultural dominance in colonized contexts is the use of dominant culture’s element by members of a subordinated culture in a context in which the dominant culture has been imposed (Rogers, 2006). This form can include acts of subversion or resistance (Rogers, 2006). Appropriation as cultural exchange reflects reciprocal exchange of cultural elements between cultures with roughly equal levels of power (Rogers, 2006). Finally, appropriation as transculturation describes a situation in which cultural elements created by multiple cultures, such that identification of a single originating culture is problematic (Rogers, 2006). In addition to these, Cooper (2014) differentiates between code-switching and appropriation: code-switching is operating in the cultural and linguistic norms of another culture, with the goal of successfully navigating a world hostile to Blackness, but with minimal damage to communities, and rooted in love and respect for both cultures.

Various controversies have arisen about White artists’ and audiences’ cultural appropriation of hip hop. Cooper (2014) explains that appropriation is exploitative in that White rappers often take “something that doesn’t belong to you and wasn’t made for you, that is not endemic to your experience, that is not necessary for your survival and using it to sound cool and make money.”

Very recent controversies in the hip hop community stem from White, Australian rapper Iggy Azalea’s meteoric rise to fame in 2014. After immense record sales and multiple music award nominations (Chang, 2014; Cooper, 2014), Azalea came under scrutiny among some members of the hip hop community for cultural appropriation and inauthenticity. Cooper (2015) characterized Azalea as reckless in profiting “from the cultural performativity and forms of survival that Black women have perfected, without having to encounter and deal with the social problem that is the Black female body, with its perceived excesses, unruliness, loudness and lewdness.” Like others, Cooper (2014) took issue with Azalea’s

sonic Blackness (specifically an accent known as “dirty south” which Azalea uses to conceal her native Australian sonic register). Cooper (2015) contrasted Azalea’s “mimicry” against the work of other successful White rappers who did not appropriate Blackness (e.g., Beastie Boys, Eminem, Macklemore).

In a December, 2014 radio interview African American rapper Azealia Banks emotionally described the devastating effects of hip hop appropriation in relation to the Azalea controversy: “I feel just like in this country whenever it comes to our things – like Black issues or Black politics or Black music or whatever – there’s this undercurrent of kinda like a ‘f**k you’” (Chang, 2014).

Banks went on to express her perception that, by way of appropriation like Azalea’s, White youth receive the message that, “‘You’re great. You’re amazing. You can do whatever you put your mind to.’ And it says to Black kids, ‘You don’t have shit. You don’t own shit, not even the shit you created yourself’” (Chang, 2014). She described growing up feeling invisible, reading only “stories of you under some White person’s foot...So this little thing called hip hop that I’ve created for myself, that I’m holding onto for my dear f**king life...I feel like it’s being snatched away from me or something. The Blackness is gone” (Chang, 2014).

Shortly after the Banks interview aired, prominent African American rapper Q-Tip began tweeting an open “lesson” in cultural appropriation to Azalea (Chang, 2014). Q-Tip emphasized the absence of Black and Latino/a perspectives in mainstream American culture and the liberatory practice in which hip hop is grounded (Chang, 2014). He explained via Twitter:

we were left to put devices to survive but HIPHOP showed that we had DEPTH, fire, and
BRILLANCE

the music was undeniable! It moved from NY N became national and even GLOBAL

now u are fulfilling your dreams ... BUT!

you have to take into account the HISTORY as you move underneath the banner of hiphop. As
I said before

hiphop is fun it’s vile it’s dance it’s traditional it’s light hearted but 1 thing it can never detach
itself from is being a SOCIO-Political movement (Chang, 2014)

Q-Tip’s argument rests on the position that hip hop must necessarily be a socio-political movement, and anything else would be inauthentic to the culture. Yet, White hip hop fans and artists typically do not use rap music to cope with racism and other forms of oppression (Jeffries, 2014). Rather than positioning this difference as inauthenticity, Rodriguez (2006) and Jeffries (2014) argue that hip hop merely means different things to various groups, and authentic hip hop identity comes with different costs and benefits. Unlike Azalea, who has been consistently criticized for cultural appropriation, the Beastie Boys (White, American rappers who gained popularity in the 1980s) are typically held as an example of authentic White appropriation of hip hop. For example, “the Beasties made no attempt at Blackness...[they] adopted vocal styles to emphasize their Whiteness,” though they encountered some resistance when they treated their Whiteness as invisible to a Black audience (Hess, 2005, p. 377). In recent years, White rapper Macklemore’s vocal criticism of White privilege in his own life and career add a richness to his emceeing that avoids minstrel-like appropriation (Clifton, 2014; Cooper, 2014).

Other prominent voices in the hip hop community – including Questlove Gomez of The Roots and rapper T.I. (who doubles as Azalea’s mentor and producer) – view Azalea’s appropriation as more positive than exploitative. When asked about Azalea specifically, Gomez responded, “we as Black people have to come to grips that hip hop is a contagious culture. If you love something, you gotta set it free,” though admits being “torn between” the argument over Azalea’s appropriation versus exploitation (Thomas, 2014). To that end, Richards (2015) asks the important question: “Will tomorrow’s White rappers — and they will be legion — step into the spotlight as virtuous contributors or thoughtless colonizers?”

Context: Struggles in High-Stakes Financialization in Higher Education

This paper’s focus is the struggle of navigating the new, high-stakes financialization in higher education. Neoliberalism in higher education environments over the past decade has been well-documented (Billig, 2013; Giroux,

2015). One result of neoliberalism is highly competitive conditions for academic labour characterized as “academic capitalism” (Billig, 2013).

Competitive grant structures – and the related performance objectives that demand that faculty “prove” their worth by acquiring funds – reflect neoliberal financialization with the academic capitalism environment (Billig, 2013; Giroux, 2015). Giroux (2015) describes the shift in which “faculty members are defined less as intellectuals than as technicians and grant writers” (p. 318). In fact, my own institution invited faculty to optional a workshop titled “The Art of Grantsmanship” [sic]. The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC, 2014a) is the federal research funding agency and that is the primary source of funds for humanities and social science researchers in Canada. In 2013-2014 alone, SSHRC (2014b) supported grants, fellowships and scholarships totaling \$338.8 million. In recent years, grant application rejection rates have typically fallen in the 80% range (SSHRC, 2014c), creating a highly competitive environment for Canadian social sciences and humanities scholars seeking research funding.

My intention is not to critique research funding. Research grants have been a long-standing, positive aspect of academic labour and research communities. They have, and continue to, offer immense benefits to communities and universities, including funded research positions for students, development of local research capacity, and the means to engage in large-scale inquiry that would otherwise be unfeasible. While research grants continue to support students and researchers in very positive ways, the profound changes to the post-secondary environment (competition, high-stakes pressure, and ties to performance appraisal) have led to problematic processes in relation to the procurement of funds.

The implications of the competitive, external grantsmanship culture as a manifestation of financialization are three-fold. First, competitions privilege certain kinds of research and researchers and exclude others such as smaller-scale, qualitative, critical, or feminist research (Leathwood & Read, 2013). Second, the intense competitive nature impacts academic labour by deterring risk-taking in favour of externally-sanctioned research priorities and methods (Leathwood & Read, 2013). As grant stakes get higher (as they have in Canada – where the trend is towards fewer but larger grants), emerging researchers whose tenure and promotion possibilities are (at least in part) dependent upon the success of proposals may be disadvantaged (Leathwood & Read, 2013).

Third, the structure of competitions lead to an intensified work environment in which academic labour experience the grant culture as additional pressure (Musambira, Collins, Brown, & Voss, 2012), often at cost to their personal lives and physical well-being. Research participants in the United Kingdom reported “considerable personal cost in terms of overwork, stress and ‘sleeplessness’” in order to publish and bid for external funding (Leathwood & Read, 2013, p. 1167). The researchers described this as “‘playing the game’ rather than a wholehearted commitment to the demands and processes” (Leathwood & Read, 2013, p. 1168). For some, pleasure in their work was undermined by “the pressures and demands of audit and performativity” (Leathwood & Read, 2013, p. 1170). These implications speak to the individual and collective struggles of academic labour in the high-stakes world of academic capitalism. Yet, in spite of the many concerns voiced by research participants, Leathwood and Read (2013) reported little resistance to grantsmanship culture, which might be attributed to the high-stakes nature of the process.

While all academic labourers are subject to the new neoliberal realities just described, women fare differently from their male counter-parts with respect to career progression, part of which is dependent upon research and funding. This is part of women’s experiences as a bivalent collectivity (Fraser, 1997) both inside and outside of the academy, in which they suffer socioeconomic maldistribution and cultural misrecognition simultaneously, where neither of these can be reduced to an effect of the other. Though women represent half of new faculty members, Eddy and Ward (2015) report that “the academic pipeline begins to leak at the associate-professor level” (p. 8) where an average of only 42% achieve the rank of associate professor, and 29% become full professors. Among Canadian and international tenured and tenure-track women, pay equity issues based on systemic bias persist (CBC News, 2015) and rarely receive serious remedy. A full and nuanced exploration of contributing factors are beyond the scope of this paper, but several points related directly to intense competition for funding are worth mention. First, academic capitalism and the intensification as reported by Leathwood and Read (2013) fail to take women’s disproportionate burden of unpaid caregiving labour into account. For instance, Canadian wives put in 46% of the total time couples spent at jobs and 62% of time spent on housework, Canadian women responsible for nearly three times the caregiving for elderly family members (Pinto & Coulson, 2012). These gendered circumstances detract from a woman’s ability to enjoy the same sorts of professional opportunities. Thus, a woman may have equal opportunities, but not equitable opportunities given the social burdens that they face.

Second, the issue of highly competitive financialization in grant competitions poses a particular struggle for women as academic labourers. Male-dominated and individualistic workplace cultures that dominate neoliberal environments tend to

privilege White men (Benozzo & Colley, 2012). Competitive structures, like those in the high-stakes financialization of grantsmanship, are typically associated with patriarchal and masculinist approaches. Yet, those acculturated to more cooperative approaches to work (not only women, but people from cultures who value cooperation and collectivism over individualism) have experienced profound alienation in hyper-competitive workplaces (Benozzo & Colley, 2012), leading to less preparation and/or desire to participate in the competitive processes. Grant processes need not adhere to standardized, hyper-competitive structures. Perhaps envisioning a more flexible approach to grant preparation and funds allocation might lead to more gender- and culturally- inclusive labour environments.

Methods: Hip Hop as Arts-Based Research

In education and research contexts, hip hop as a research method is gaining traction, perhaps in part because researchers have come of age as part of “the hip hop generation or post hip hop generations” (Akom, 2009, p. 53). These researchers, and I count myself among them, recognize that hip hop is a dominant language among youth, despite its historical marginalization in classrooms and as a field of inquiry (Akom, 2009).

Arts-based research is the systematic use of artistic processes or artistic expression to examine experiences (McNiff, 2008). Arts as research allows both researchers and participants to “open doors” and “put up mirrors” because artistic expression alters conventional frameworks for re-imagination (Rolling, 2010, p. 111). More specifically, poetry as an artistic offers the opportunity to disrupt taken-for-granted and allows people to see things differently (Kinsella, 2006; Luce-Kapler, 2003), and is useful medium for those in organizational settings to explore and tell their stories (Slaney, 2012). Hip hop in the form of rap lyrics allow stories to be “(re)told through a contemporary oral practice and mediated by the discourses associated with hip hop culture” (Marsh, 2012, p. 193).

The creation presented is a specific form of poetry: hip hop rap lyrics to convey my personal experience as the principal writer for a high-stakes, large scale grant application. I chose to express my experience-as-research through hip hop as a creative-autobiographical project because a rap poem lends itself to critical praxis (Akom, 2009; Freire, 1970) and expression in the form of story, where struggle is a predominant lyrical theme in hip hop.

I want to emphasize that I do not by any means equate my own struggle as pre-tenure faculty member to the struggles of others, particularly in that my task-based struggle is not reflective of individuals’ struggles navigating oppression and marginalization in multiple aspects of life. I come to this project very aware of my own privilege – as a White woman with graduate-level education and foot in the door to a stable job. Yet, my position as a bivalent collectivity (Fraser, 1997) necessarily means that I experience my position in higher education with degrees of oppression based on my gender identity alongside that privilege, as described earlier.

This creative work responds not only to the pressures associated with “working twice as hard for half as much” as part of a bivalent collective, but also a response to the competitive financialization of academic professions described earlier. This mode of competition to define success (and its high-stakes implications in the tenure process) leads to multi-modal struggles of recognition, pressure, stress and fear in a high-stakes competition.

I also acknowledge that this work, if approached unreflectively, can contribute to the sort of exploitative cultural appropriation associated with hip hop described earlier. It is my intention to reflect authenticity through my own personal experience (and not appropriate the struggles of others) in my autobiographical expression. While the lyrics adopt an informal linguistic register and phonetic spelling (a hip hop convention), they are not intended as parody. Rather, they are reflective of conversational realities I experience primarily outside of my professional role.

In keeping with hip hop form, my lyrics “balance between the origins of the hip hop culture (appropriation), and local contexts (localization)” (Tervo, 2014, p. 169). The lyrics rely on modern flow. Hip hop work often relies on complex vocabulary that includes local dialects and slang unique to the socio-cultural group of the author/artist. The creation conforms to the hip hop register in language choice and spelling conventions. Several explanatory notes are included to clarify terminology used as end notes and in the Coda. This particular creation derives from the song “Work” (Azalea, Trocon, Sims & Invisible Men, 2014) by sampling aspects of its form and structure, and parts of the “hook” (a term used in hip hop to refer to what would be a chorus in a conventional song).

The majority of the creation was composed and performed intermittently and spontaneously during my 2-month grant-writing experience in 2014 for a competitive SSHRC Insight Grant (IG). The grant-writing process involved collaboration with two colleagues. We agreed that I would serve as principal investigator in the grant proposal, and take on the “heavy lifting” associated with grant preparation (research, writing, collecting and incorporating feedback). Collaboration and feedback also extended to other individuals – including a review within my own faculty (since supervisory sign-off is an

institutional requirement before the application can be submitted to the granting agency). As well, the institutional Research Office reviews all grant applications and provides feedback prior to their submission to granting agencies. As the principal author of the application, I reviewed and addressed feedback from all collaborators and readers to ensure the “best” possible application with the highest likelihood of acceptance.

Beyond my focus on substantive content, part of the grant application process involves adhering to external funders’ submission requirements – ranging from wordcount and page limitations, to required sections/headings, to detailed formatting requirements, to (in my case) the use of online submission interfaces. An error in any one of these bureaucratic or formatting guidelines could result in automatic disqualification of the submission – thus heightening the high-stakes nature of bureaucratic grant components.

A flow for the social sciences and humanities

[1]

Walked a mile in these Birkenstocks
They don’t wear these shits where I’m from
I’m not hatin’ I’m just telling you
What tyrna get half a ticket o’ funding put me through

[2]

I been up all night tryna get that grant
I been work (work), work (work), working on my SSHRC
Milked this research twice gotta get it’s how I live
I been work (work), work (work), working on my SSHRC
Now get this work
Now get this work
Now get this work
Now get this work
Working on my SSHRC

[3]

No grants mean no tenure
Tri-council writing adventure
Half a ticket’s what we need
Performance measure, ain’t no greed

[4]

Partnered up with Wins and KPok
We will show ‘em all we got
Tri-council funding scheme
For us that win would be a dream

[5]

To feet in Foucault here we go
Take a turn, post-structuralists spurn
Qualitative it’s slow, got to go
To Racière over there
Post-qualitative, be accomodative
With Gilles Deleuze could we lose
The funding pot, or find a methodological sweet spot

[6]

I been up all night tryin’ to get that grant
I been work (work), work (work), working on my SSHRC
Milked this research twice gotta get it how I live
I been work (work), work (work), working on my SSHRC
Now get this work
Now get this work

Now get this work
Now get this work
Working on my SSHRC
[7]
No grants mean no tenure
Tri-council writing adventure
Half a ticket's what we need
Performance measure, ain't no greed
[8]
Round 3, now's the struggle
Draft 18 I'm tryin' to juggle
All the feedback and the rules
From funding agencies and schools
Familiar geographies, new terrains
Seems we finally reached a frame
That might do it, listen to it
Next stage up I'll get us thru it
[9]
All aboard the bureaucratic spaceship of online forms
Turn at the first light in a raging storm
176 hours and 41 pages later
Click submit and cross my fingers
Fear of errors lingers
This grant is what we need
Cause it's all that Wins, KPok and me have

Coda

The lyrics in [1] set a context for the narrative – first, indicating “my shoes” (Birkenstocks, deliberately identified as a type of footwear popular among academic women), then indicating the attempt to obtain “half a ticket” (half a million dollars – the maximum funding amount available for a single IG). Repeated as hooks, [2] and [6] emphasize the many “all nighters” I endured during the course of the grant application writing process. Interim deadlines over the two-month process demanded that sometimes complex and time-consuming work would be completed such that colleagues would have an opportunity to review it. The repetition of the word “work,” in addition to being a form of sampling from Azalea et al.’s (2014) flow, is intended to underscore the immense amount of labour involved in the process. The research topic was revised multiple times using different theoretical frameworks, which contributed to the complex nature of this particular application’s completion.

A second hook, repeated in [3] and [7] conveys the high-stakes nature of the process, tying it to tenure and performance appraisal. This is consistent with features of academic capitalism (Billig, 2013) described earlier – particularly commodification of the individual through quantified performance indicators, and emphasis on high-stakes competition that privileges the financial over other measures.

I recounted the back-and-forth process of negotiating the grant application’s theoretical framework and details in [4], [5] and [8], and describe coming to an accepted approach to the proposed research. This section also represented the final phase of intellectual labour, which included 18 drafts, totaling 41 pages and 176 hours of my time, not including all colleagues involved in writing, review and feedback. To be fair, planning sound research is and ought to be a time-consuming process. However, the pressure to complete this task in a relatively short timeline underscores the sorts of intense pressures, stress and sleeplessness reported by researchers in the United Kingdom facing similar circumstances (Leathwood & Read, 2013).

Once the intellectual labour was completed, [9] explores the bureaucratic labour required to complete the submission process. In addition to institutional review time, the actual text inputting and document conversions took several days of my own time. In many ways, this was the part of the process during which I was most fearful – having been warned that failing to attend to details such as word or page counts could result in disqualification. While the application was checked

and verified by colleagues, including grants officers in my institution's Research Office, I remained vigilant, since conversion of documents within online form text fields (which then generated PDFs) often disturbed formatting and further restricted word counts. The high-stakes nature of fine details (and fear about the consequences of minor errors) reflects the simultaneously absurd, grotesque and bureaucopathic features of neoliberal workplaces described by Samier and Lumby (2010).

While somewhat playful, composing and performing this creation was both therapeutic and reflective during the grant application process. On one hand, autobiographic composition allowed me to organize my thinking, and make sense of the highly complex process in which I was engaged and experienced as a struggle – both intellectually, and bureaucratically. On the other, it also led to critical reflection on the intensified nature of the process, by verbally (then later, on paper) documenting the steps and placing them into a reflective framework by composing this paper.

The lyrics-as-storytelling draw attention to institutional and organizational features of the modern academic workplace, including the effects of performance evaluation structures and the financialization of academic work. They also highlight the intensification of work caused by bureaucratization (Samier & Lumby, 2010) – not only by the workplace, but by granting agencies who exert varying degrees of control over the academic workforce.

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End Notes

¹ In 2015, McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario raised annual base salaries of female faculty by \$3,515 across the board after a study conducted by the university and the faculty association determined inequity based on systematic bias² in favour of male faculty (CBC News, 2015)

² I elaborate on this – particularly in with respect to economic and financial implications, in Pinto and Coulson (2012).

³ Despite controversies surrounding Azalea’s public persona and work, I have chosen to sample from this particular piece because it speaks to occupational struggle.

⁴ A “ticket” (derived from “meal ticket”) is urban slang for \$1 million.

⁵ SSHRC is the acronym for the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the federal research funding agency for postsecondary research and training in the humanities and social sciences. Canadian academic workers typically refer to the organization and the grants it issues as “shurk” (rhymes with “work”). SSHRC’s annual Insight Grant program awards up to \$500,000 per project, though other grants are available.

⁶Tri-Council Agencies is the umbrella term for Canada’s major source of research funding for post-secondary institutions. They include SSHRC, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC).