

## **Intersectionalities of Opportunism: Trudeau's Distorted 'Diversity'**

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Tammy Findlay

Department of Political and Canadian Studies  
Mount Saint Vincent University  
Halifax, Canada  
[tammy.findlay@msvu.ca](mailto:tammy.findlay@msvu.ca)

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### **Introduction**

The government of Justin Trudeau was ushered into power amid a new optimism about an explicitly feminist federal politics. Since then, a mismatch between rhetoric and reality, not to mention an ethics scandal culminating with the resignation of two high profile female cabinet ministers and their subsequent ejection from caucus, has served to dampen this public enthusiasm. Countless conversations about whether Trudeau is a “fake” feminist is only one indication of the thirst for a more substantive, and indeed, intersectional feminism.

In this paper, my focus is not so much about the absence of intersectional feminism (though that is a serious concern), but rather the adoption and distortion of its language and conceptual tools. I outline how the values, principles, practices, and representations of Canada are undergoing a process of distortion and redefinition under the current Liberal government of Justin Trudeau. Feminist, anti-racist, post-colonial and intersectional scholarship and activism have developed the concepts of diversity and difference to analyze socially constructed inequalities based on gender, sex, race, ethnicity, class, age, sexuality, ability, citizenship, and geography (CRIA 2006; Dhamoon 2009). They are used for critical enquiry and transformative action-based research.

Diversity has also been taken up by Prime Minister Trudeau, but in a very different way. For Trudeau, diversity is used as a descriptor, rather than an analytical tool and is being appropriated and reconstituted as an opportunistic political device that undermines equitable public policy. While ‘diversity’ rhetoric is manipulated in numerous ways in this Trudeau era, my paper focuses specifically on its equation with regional difference, in which provincial/territorial ‘diversity’ is unquestioned, unscrutinised, and naturalized. Provincial/territorial ‘diversity’ is wholly celebrated. A lack of coherent national climate change policy becomes evidence of Canada’s ‘great diversity.’ Ideological opposition to universal public child care is couched in terms of meeting ‘diverse provincial needs.’ Resisting legal protections from genetic discrimination is about ‘respecting provincial jurisdiction.’ Using these three policy examples (climate change, child care and genetic discrimination), I argue that a substantive intersectional policy analysis reveals Trudeau’s celebration of regional policy ‘diversity,’ as actually a defence of *inequality* and *disparity*. In Canada, a ‘diversity’ of programs and services (or what many

policy researchers call a 'patchwork') results in unequal access and unrealized rights to social citizenship (Findlay and Johnston 2017; Findlay 2015). This is not going to usher in the 'sunny ways' that many Canadians were hoping for. Instead, it produces a glossy veneer for the further entrenchment of Canada's (neo)liberal welfare regime.

### **Diversity and Difference in Critical Scholarship**

To be sure, diversity is a contested concept among critical scholars, who spend as much time problematizing it as applying it. However, there are some common understandings of its meaning for social critique, which emphasize power, privilege, structural inequality, and institutionalization (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002; Hankivsky 2012). As Abu-Laban and Gabriel (2002) explain:

we use the term diversity to describe socially constructed differences related to gender, race/ethnicity, and class ... We see these points of difference as crucial because of the part they have played in the (uneven) distribution of power and resources in Canadian society, historically and in the contemporary context (13).

For Hartmann and Bell (2011),

All of our thinking about difference and diversity needs to be situated in a structural context, one that emphasizes the social inequalities and disparities associated with many forms of differentiation in the modern world ... We must pay attention to how these inequities are constructed and who they benefit. We must, in short, understand how diversity and equality are and must be interrelated (274).

Similarly, the intersectionality literature foregrounds the power relations that produce and uphold diversity and 'differences.' In her work on Intersectionality Based Analysis, Hankivsky (2012)

focuses on the interaction between core dimensions of diversity in ways that are complex and which compound one another and is grounded in the normative paradigm of intersectionality. Intersectionality moves beyond single or typically favoured categories of analysis (for example gender, race, and class) to consider simultaneous interactions between different aspects of social identity (for example, race, ethnicity, Indigeneity, gender, class, religion, geography, age, ability, immigration status) as well as the impact of systems and processes of oppression and domination (for example, racism, classism, sexism, ableism). It maintains that traditional approaches to inequality - such as those based on gender or race or ethnicity or religion or class or ability, among other markers of difference - are flawed because such approaches fail to recognize the complex inter-relations between such social locations and the processes by which marginalized groups experience oppression (177).

Hankivsky (2012) calls for a deeper conceptualization that captures "within group diversity," (177). Valentine (2007) emphasizes the need to understand "the full meaning of the word 'difference': clash, conflict, contention, controversy, debate, disagreement, discord, dispute" (Valentine 2007 14), and Cho et al. (2013) refer to the "structures of power that constitute subjects in particular sociopolitical formations" (807).

Perhaps even more useful for my purposes here is what critical scholars have to say about the *misuse* of diversity. They are careful to point out that not all diversity, and not all differences, are equally significant or significant at the same time. Dhamoon (2009) is

particularly interested in “how and with what effects power shapes difference” (ix). She grapples with liberalism’s diversity, in which “it is all about accommodation and diversity, not anti-racism, decolonization, white supremacy, or power” (Dhamoon 2009 x). Dhamoon (2009) goes on to maintain that “historical and continuing problems of discrimination, oppression, marginalization, violence, and domination that arise from forms of racism, patriarchy, capitalism, ableism, and homophobia are whitewashed by the more sanguine language of diversity” (7). She redirects our attention to “how meanings of difference are produced, organized, and regulated through power, and the effects of these meanings on socio-political arrangements” (Dhamoon 2009 2).

In their 2002 book, Abu-Laban and Gabriel question the growing trend of “managing diversity,” and the “selling of diversity,” drawn from a business model (2002 11, 12). This “discursive construction of ‘diversity,’” is individualistic, commodified and market-driven (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002 171). They argue that:

‘Diversity’ can reflect a number of points of difference among people. These might include gender, age, place of birth, ethnicity, culture, education, physical ability, social class, religion, sexual orientation, language, place of residence, citizenship status, political ideology, domestic relationships, and personal style and attributes ... However, while there are potentially endless points of diversity, not all of them are necessarily implicated in collective political mobilization or in the way power and resources are divided at any given moment. Nor are all possible points of difference necessarily implied when the term ‘diversity’ is employed (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002 13).

They conclude that “the way that the diversity model views all difference as equally important ... With differences levelled out in this way, real differences in power and access between groups – in short, inequality – gets ignored” (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002 156).

Both Dhamoon’s (2009) and Abu-Laban and Gabriel’s (2002) work centres the state’s role in defining which differences ‘count’ for the purposes of public action (Dhamoon 2009). Abu-Laban and Gabriel (2002) submit that “the state is a key player in determining which identities and identity claims are taken into account and how they are represented in actions or policy, and conversely which ones are downplayed or even ignored” (14). In this way, through Trudeau’s discursive strategy, the Canadian state is advancing a particular version of diversity that sidesteps power relations and restricts substantive citizenship claims.

### **Diversity à la Trudeau**

The authors cited above trace the manipulation of the language of diversity long before the advent of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Here, I explore the particularities of Trudeau’s invocations of diversity and their consequences.

Trudeau has gained international recognition as a self-identified feminist and promoter of ‘diversity.’ In an address at Canada House in London, England, Trudeau (2015) proclaims that

Canadians understand that diversity is our strength. We know that Canada has succeeded—culturally, politically, economically—because of our diversity, not in spite of it ... It’s that shared sense of purpose that’s so hard to define but so deeply felt. The feeling that we are all in this together. The knowledge that wherever we came from, we are united not only in our struggles, but also in our dreams ... Compassion, acceptance, and trust; diversity and inclusion—these are the things that have made Canada strong and free. Not just in principle, but in practice.

Interrogating the superficiality of such international statements is beyond the scope of this paper. What is interesting, is that Trudeau's diversity rhetoric is used quite differently in the domestic setting. Initially, Trudeau's domestic audience heard about diversity primarily in reference to his gender, ethnicity, and race-sensitive Cabinet selections. Since then, diversity is being re-deployed in increasingly politically calculated ways and reframed along geographic lines to connote, and defend, provincial and regional variety in public policy. In this section, I will explore three examples: climate change, child care, and genetic discrimination.

The Trudeau government ran for election promising to work with the provinces and territories to develop a national strategy to address climate change. They were able to secure a Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change with 11 out of 13 of the provinces and territories. After threatening to impose a carbon pricing plan should agreement not emerge (Campion-Smith, MacCharles and Boutlier 2016; Schertzer 2016), the government announced that the "Framework is rooted in the principles of a collaborative approach ... to reduce GHG [greenhouse gas] emissions and enable sustainable economic growth, recognizing the need for fair and flexible approaches to support the diversity of provincial and territorial economies" (Communiqué 2016). It is telling how much precedence is given to regional 'diversity' and how little to environmental policy effectiveness.

Media and commentary also honed in on the intergovernmental variation angle. Reporting on the federal-provincial-territorial (FPT) meeting before the Paris Climate Change Conference, Fitz-Morris and Tunney (2015) quote Trudeau as saying "the way forward for Canada will be in a solution that resembles Canada, that is shared values and shared desires for outcomes and different approaches to achieve those outcomes right across this great country." Likewise, MacDonald (2016) relates that "in their Vancouver Declaration [on Climate Change], the first ministers agreed to 'carbon pricing mechanisms adapted to each province's and territory's specific circumstances.'" For Schertzer (2016), "it is through this type of inclusive multilateral negotiation that we can build consensus around broad national policies and goals, while ensuring they are tailored to meet the diverse and unique needs of the different regions, provinces and groups in Canada." Of course, as of April 1 2019, this approach had been abandoned as a federal carbon tax was imposed on four provinces, a point to which I will return below.

The similarities between Trudeau's climate change and child care policy are stark. Although the women's movement has sought a *national*<sup>1</sup> child care system for over forty years in Canada, the Liberals campaigned against this model during the election, and have continued to hold that position since taking office. Regarding the FPT meetings on child care, Press (2016) writes that,

'Any national perspective on child care will have 10, possibly plus three, very different ways of approaching it and that's one of the strengths and challenges of our federal system,' Trudeau said Monday during a year-end press conference. 'I look forward to engaging with premiers and the provinces on these issues to ensure that all Canadians across the country have an opportunity to both work and raise their families in the way that they want to.'

The Trudeau government says they

will not impose pre-determined costs or models on other orders of government but work collaboratively with each of them on funding agreements... [Our] framework will build on

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<sup>1</sup> Which recognizes the right to self-determination for First Nations and Quebec.

the progress that provinces and territories are making and allow them to move further in providing more affordable, accessible, inclusive, high-quality child care and early learning, which considers the diverse needs of all children in Canada (Anderson et al. 14).

Child care exposes the limits of Trudeau's feminism.<sup>2</sup> He has been decidedly weak on the issue. In fact, Kingston's (2016) rundown of his "fake feminism," she points out that

Trudeau was mum on the subject of daycare access during a panel on gender equality at Davos [World Economic Forum annual summit] after it was raised by the only other male panellist, Jonas Prising, the CEO of Manpower, a global personnel company, who cited evidence that affordable, accessible care created work opportunities for women.

In this context, his pro "diversity" stance is a strange position for someone supposedly committed to feminism and evidence-based policy making, both of which firmly favour a coherent, *national* approach to child care.

A final example in which Trudeau defense of 'diversity' rings hollow is perhaps the most obscure of my three examples, but is also the most starkly articulated, genetic discrimination. In 2017, the Genetic Non-Discrimination Act (GNA) became law. Starting out as a private member's bill, *Bill S-201, An Act to prohibit and prevent genetic discrimination*, it

requires the government to do three things: create a Genetic Non-Discrimination Act, which would prohibit the requirement that genetic test results be disclosed as a condition of providing goods and services, namely health and life insurance; amend the Canada Labour Code to prevent employees from being required to take a genetic test or disclose results of a test to employers; and amend the Canadian Human Rights Act to prohibit discrimination based on genetic characteristics (Picard 2017).

The GNA was supported by the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, the Chief Commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission, and the Canadian Coalition for Genetic Fairness (CCGF), comprised of 18 organizations concerned about genetic discrimination (CCGF 2019). In reaction to the bill when it was proposed, Trudeau argued that it "is unconstitutional because it intrudes on provincial jurisdiction. He recommended that MPs vote against it" (Kirkup 2017). In addition, then-Justice Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould had gone to some lengths to rally opposition to the bill. Last week, she sent a letter to the head of the Council of the Federation, which comprises the country's premiers, which appeared designed to solicit provincial and territorial support for the federal government's position" (Kirkup 2017). Here, the government

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<sup>2</sup> This is not the only marker of Trudeau's fractional feminism. Kingston (2016) draws attention to Trudeau's "two-tiered feminism," which lacks an intersectional lens and fails to address the needs of Indigenous women. Kingston (2016) quotes Kathryn Trevenen, Acting Director of the University of Ottawa's Institute of Feminist and Gender Studies as saying: "If Justin Trudeau in 2016 wants to claim a feminist perspective, then he needs to get down with the feminism of 2016 and that's not a white liberal feminism." At best, his feminism is inconsistent and contradictory. As a case in point, his interest in women's representation extends only as far as gender parity in the Cabinet. He has rebuffed more consequential change, through electoral reform, out of political expediency.

reached past simply citing regional diversity to actively fomenting it in order to defeat a bill that was opposed by the insurance industry. Resisted by his own backbenchers, Trudeau's efforts were unsuccessful, and the bill eventually passed.

Without disregarding the difficulty of navigating intergovernmental relations in Canada, Trudeau is stretching far beyond navigating regional divisions to purposely reifying them. He is turning the vice of regional infighting into a virtue, and an immutable marker of Canadian identity. He is essentially embracing diversities of convenience that provide a cover for the social austerity he railed against during the election.

### **'Diversity' and Social Policy in Canada**

While place, scale, and region are important facets for identity, they are being mobilized for purposes that belie Trudeau's claims to progressive politics. Not all diversity should be celebrated. The 'diversity' he is rallying around really means *inequality*. It means inequality of access to programs and services depending on where one lives in Canada. Region *is* a significant axis of difference, but Trudeau's approach actually disadvantages regions, it doesn't recognize them. And it exacerbates inequalities across other identities and social locations.

This is why critical scholars centre power in their treatments of diversity and difference. They insist that we comprehend "which differences make a difference ... it is exactly our analyses of power that reveal which differences carry significance" (Cho et al. 798). Dhamoon (2009) also contends that

Not all representations of difference are equally salient in determining privilege and penalty, for some are voluntarily and others coercively adopted, some shape social relations without the effect of creating subjugation, and some are systemic and institutional, whereas others are not; in other words, not all differences carry the same essential characteristics or effects (12).

Trudeau has privileged regional 'diversity' over other socially significant forms, thereby setting up the competitive forms of identity politics that intersectional theorists warn against. Besides, his is not a genuine concern for territoriality as a marker of privilege or dispossession. This can be seen in his government's attempt to break with the tradition of maintaining an Atlantic Canadian seat on the Supreme Court in order to foster greater racial diversity on the Court. It appears that his commitment to regional 'diversity' is quite flexible.

Furthermore, Trudeau consistently puts symbolism above substantive equality. For instance, the gender parity and racial diversity of his Cabinet is not producing policies that will address the inequality of diverse groups. And the Trudeau Liberals have directed their energy at preserving only certain forms of regional 'diversity' – those which justify problematic social policies. These are policies that elevate patchworks over coherence, targeting over universality, exclusion over inclusion, and division over solidarity.

Even some who applauded the collaborative federalism of the Climate Change framework had to concede that it will lead to "a *patchwork of different approaches* and plans to regulate emissions and price carbon; for example, a direct pricing model (a carbon tax) in British Columbia and a cap-and-trade model in Ontario and Quebec" (Schertzer 2016, emphasis his). Flanagan (2016) views this as an advantage, as the "national approach continues to allow them to choose between carbon taxes and cap-and-trade systems with legislated emissions reductions targets, and it leaves decisions around how to use revenue in the hands of the provinces." Haley (2015) has a more nuanced take, that "[w]hile regional diversity is a basic fact of Canada, it does not mean the federal government should abdicate its responsibilities for

implementing a national carbon price. It does mean that it should not be the only policy in the toolkit” (Haley 2015).

Indeed, the bar was set very low for making progress on Climate Change, with Schertzer (2016) declaring that “real achievement ... between the Prime Minister and his provincial and territorial counterparts ... was that they were able to reach an agreement at all.” This allowable policy variation rests on the questionable premise that different methods of reducing carbon emissions are equally effective, or that different tools can achieve the same results. Geddes (2016) outlines the extreme malleability with which ‘carbon pricing’ is being treated. He explains:

Experts typically apply the term [carbon pricing] to broad measures, like B.C.’s carbon tax, or cap-and-trade schemes like Quebec’s, which strictly limit a companies’ emissions, but allow those able to operate more efficiently to sell carbon emission permits they don’t use. However, some premiers proposed a more elastic definition. Saskatchewan’s Brad Wall said a plant in his province that captures carbon dioxide from a coal-fired power station—and sells it to oil companies, who pump it into the ground to get more crude—is a kind of carbon pricing. Nova Scotia’s Stephen McNeil argued his province’s investment in hydro has pushed up electricity prices in what amounts to a price on carbon (Geddes 2016).

We should not overlook the reality that some Canadians will have the chance to live in a province or territory with much more effective environmental policies than others. Consider the analysis offered by Flanagan (2016):

Despite those two provincial holdouts, the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change deserves recognition as Canada’s first truly national climate plan. We welcome any plan that keeps the high-ambition actors in the tent, and doesn’t wait for those who aren’t yet ready to take advantage of the economic opportunity that climate action presents. Instead of letting the laggards hold the country back, the pan-Canadian plan establishes national policy benchmarks, compelling the slow starters to catch up — while working with the leaders to move us forward.

Presumably those Canadians who happen to live in a “laggard” or “slow starter” province or territory are just out of luck.

At first glance, it might appear that the shifting approach to the provinces and territories recently regarding climate change undermines my argument about the salience of provincial diversity for this government. But my point is not that provincial/territorial diversity is an honestly and steadfastly held belief of the Trudeau Liberals. It is rather quite the opposite – an argument of convenience, a fairweather frame, that unmasks the cynicism and instrumentalism (see Dobrowolsky forthcoming) of the ‘diversity’ discourse as it was promptly dropped when it no longer served its purpose.

Child care is another case in point. In January 2016, ten Canadians were given a “Face to Face” interview with the Prime Minister. In that process,

Jenna, an Ajax, Ontario social worker with a three-year old asked the PM: ‘Why wasn’t there a plan that made child care affordable for everybody?’ In a follow up interview with Mr. Trudeau, Peter Mansbridge cut right to the chase with the observation that we have been debating child care for 25 years with little progress. ‘It’s 2016. Isn’t it time for a national daycare program?’ he asked. That question and Jenna’s were lost throughout the ensuing conversation in which the Prime Minister discussed the provinces’

differences and the variety of infrastructure choices for them including transit, green infrastructure, seniors, housing -- and child care. Rather than considering women's, families' or children's needs and how to deliver on the Liberal platform commitment, much of the segment revolved around the idea of a 'national child-care program,' what that means in the Canadian context and whether it will take a national program to change families' limited access to quality child care (Friendly 2016).

Friendly challenges the notion that regional 'diversity' is an unqualified asset. She asks,

Are there basic assurances about early childhood education and child care upon which Canadian families should be able to rely, as they can rely on access to basic health care or on parental leave benefits? Should not all children be able to access an early childhood education and child-care program more-or-less in their neighbourhood? Should sky-high fees exclude parents from regulated child care in some provinces but not others? Shouldn't 'high quality' mean early childhood training and decent wages for child-care educators in every province? (Friendly 2016).

Elsewhere, I argue that:

Child care is fundamental for social justice, so its variability and fragmentation is not just an issue of federalism, it is one of human rights. A national presence in social programs has always been justified in terms of equity -- for mitigating regional disparities. Other equity concerns have received less attention. Women need access to quality, affordable child care regardless of where they live in Canada. Uniformity of services is of special concern for women, who have less control over their mobility due to their patterns of paid work and family responsibilities. If well-designed and governed, child care can advance women's equality, multiculturalism and inclusion. If not, it can undermine these goals (Findlay 2015 12).

The concrete impact of the child care patchwork is that "in all regions of Canada some groups are routinely left out, including infants, children with disabilities, newcomers, rural communities, parents working nonstandard or part-time hours and, perhaps most of all, Indigenous families" (Anderson et al. 11). This 'diversity' is more accurately identified as inequity (Findlay and Johnston 2017). In truth, homogeneity is a more just policy goal for this occasion.

In making his case against national child care, Trudeau must greatly exaggerate regional diversity. Friendly (2016) rightly affirms that

the issues they face from province to province are much more similar than they are different; while the specifics may differ, the same issues arise over and over again. Child care is in short supply; quality is all-too often weak; and with the possible exception of Quebec, fees are much too high for most low- and middle-income families ... unsatisfactory child-care situation is more similar across provinces and territories than it is different.

Moreover, Anderson et al. (2016) outline the profound parallels in child care throughout Canada:

From a structural or systemic perspective, ECEC [Early Childhood Education and Care] is strikingly similar across provinces/territories. All jurisdictions, under their own child care legislation, provide a combination of centre-based and home-based services, with



both full-time and part-time options, and all provide family resource programs. Almost all rely almost entirely on market-driven, for-profit and non-profit services. All provide some public base funding to child care and all provide publicly delivered kindergarten. All child care services except those in Quebec rely heavily on parent fees as the main source of revenue. All child care services across Canada rely on a poorly remunerated, almost entirely female workforce and have education and training requirements that are generally lower than international benchmarks. These and other structural similarities mean that, in practice, the gaps and issues experienced by families on a daily basis are remarkably similar whether they live in Harbour Breton, Newfoundland and Labrador, Toronto, Ontario, Montreal, Quebec, or Prince George, B.C. (10-11).

In the face of this reality, conjuring regional 'diversity' requires willful political misdirection.

Curiously (and also seen above with climate change), the Liberals are quite prepared to impose directives on the provinces and territories to encourage their preferred policy direction in child care. They were prepared to "push provinces and territories to funnel new federal child care dollars to what Ottawa describes as those most in need of help, despite concerns from advocates that a more universal approach would yield the greatest results" (Press and Smith 2017). Contra the evidence,<sup>3</sup> the federal government has not only chosen a targeted approach to child care, it is also inducing the provinces and territories to do the same.

With genetic discrimination, there are at least two problems in Trudeau's position. First, it required aggressively trying to incite provinces and territories to take up his cause. The Council of the Federation's<sup>4</sup> lack of response to the issue and testimony from constitutional experts in support of the bill (Aiello 2017), lays bare the manufactured nature of this as a jurisdictional problem requiring intervention (outside of Quebec).<sup>5</sup> The Trudeau government even contemplated pursue a reference case, putting them in "the bizarre position of preparing to go to the Supreme Court to argue against a federal law passed with the support of its own MPs" (Bryden 2017a). Citing MacFarlane, Bryden suggests that "a [federal] government that will be arguing against the constitutionality of a federal exercise of power ... 'is almost certainly unprecedented.'" The Liberal Chair of the House of Commons Justice Committee, wondered "how the federal government would go to court arguing a law that was adopted by the federal Parliament is not constitutional" (Bryden 2017a). These jurisdictional claims have not masked what many see as transparent aid to the insurance lobby (Kirkup 2017; Aiello 2017; Bryden 2017 a&b).

Second, Trudeau is sending the message that jurisdictional rigidity supersedes ethics and human rights. Michael Mackley, an expert in human genetics, outlines the importance of legislation on genetic discrimination:

There is currently no legal protection against genetic discrimination in Canada. Canadians could be refused life insurance, fired from a job, or denied a promotion on the basis of testing positive for Huntington's Disease or carrying a genetic variant that predisposes you to breast cancer. Unlike the other G7 nations, employers and insurance providers in Canada could feasibly make decisions based on genetic information (2017).

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<sup>3</sup> See, Findlay and Kiddell (2017); Anderson et al. (2016); Barnett, Brown and Shore (2004).

<sup>4</sup> This is the body representing Provincial and Territorial premiers.

<sup>5</sup> It is important to note that I conceptualize Quebec's 'diversity' as a *national* difference rather than a provincial or regional one. Thus, the subsequent decision by the Quebec Court of Appeal that the GNA reaches outside of federal jurisdiction (CCGF 2019) must be read through this particular lens.

The Foundation Fighting Blindness (2017) called this legislation “a landmark victory against genetic discrimination” that would ensure “a more fair and equitable future for all Canadians.” Recall that at the time the Justice Minister’s “argument against the bill was that it impedes on the provinces’ and territories’ ability to decide for themselves what regime works best for addressing genetic discrimination” (Aiello 2017). Following her line of reasoning would lead to an untenable situation in which genetic discrimination may be illegal in some provinces and territories and legal in others.

Vickers (2013) addresses political moves that defend jurisdictional inflexibility and “‘territorial pluralism’— the federal practice of using constitutional divisions of power to protect regional traditions” (16). She exposes the implicit gender bias in this tactic:

gender scholars have shown that most federations continue to tolerate territorial pluralism when it comes to the gender rights of women and sexual minorities ... gender scholars reject territorial pluralism when it constrains gender rights and social benefits to some constituent units in a federation, arguing that men, women, and sexual minorities should share a common citizenship that confers both universal, individual rights, and gender-specific rights (Vickers 2013 16).

Ironically, much commentary contrasts Trudeau’s ‘new’ adaptable, collaborative federalism with former Prime Minister Harper’s ‘open federalism.’ I have maintained that “open federalism, as it embraces provincial discretion and ‘diversity,’ will only intensify [the] patchwork and perpetuate residualism in social policy” (Findlay 2015 12). The material results of Trudeau’s collaborative federalism are not much different. Social policy advocates have always argued that ‘diversity’ (or inequality) in programs and services across the country is problematic for citizenship rights. They expect governments to work together to ensure equity through national standards and funding (Findlay 2015; Findlay and Johnston 2017).

## **Conclusion**

Trudeau is bending a meaningful concept until it becomes meaningless. Pundits, political marketers and public relations specialists might praise this as clever rhetorical maneuvering, but critical social scientists should be concerned about the effect of this spin on democratic discourse and public policy. Authentic interest in diversity must be attuned to multiple power relations and social locations. But this is absent from Trudeau’s appropriation and reinvention of diversity. His definition casts regional differences, disparities, and inequalities, as assets worth protecting at the cost of social solidarity and inclusive citizenship throughout the nation. Without a commitment to federal policy leadership, Canadians will be deprived of effective action on climate change, child care, and genetic discrimination. We should not let intersectionalities of convenience distract us from seeking a coherent, shared, and ambitious policy vision for the future.

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