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JOURNAL STAFF

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EDITORIAL WELCOME

"The far-reaching social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic . . . threaten to reverse many of the hard-won advances made in the last 25 years to empower women and girls."

-UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, 2020

For the 14th edition of the *Women's Policy Journal*, created in the midst of an unprecedented global pandemic, we began by reflecting upon the pandemic's differential impact on women. Due to their gender, women and girls are bearing the brunt of COVID-19. This pandemic and its associated social, political, and economic consequences are amplifying existing inequities and creating new ones caused by structural systems of oppression, such as sexism. We have seen women most likely to lose paid employment take on additional care and family responsibilities and have their physical safety put even more at risk. Black, Indigenous, and Women of Color, as well as women in the LGBTQ+ community, are disproportionately impacted in all these spaces.

This edition was also compiled during historic Black Lives Matter (BLM) and racial justice movements taking place in the United States and globally. BLM, founded by three Black women, should serve as a reminder to all of us that race and gender are not mutually exclusive and sit together among several other identities. Over 30 years ago, Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term *intersectionality*. She continues to teach us that we must pursue a feminism that is intersectional because there is no singular woman. We need to challenge and break down systems and structures of power that favor white, educated, income-earning, cis men over, well, everyone else. As always, bell hooks put it best when she said, "Since men are not equals in white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchal class structure, which men do women want to be equal to?"

Gender equity is not a guaranteed outcome, nor is its path necessarily linear. While we have made immense gains in opportunities for women, the last year serves as a reminder that stark inequities persist. Yet, we remain hopeful. In this moment, we need to intentionally create a new normal where power, resources, and opportunities are equitably distributed. We need to be vigilant, or else we truly do risk eroding the incremental steps forward we have taken to advance gender equity.

As we play our role in the movement to end sexist oppression, we hope this journal is a catalyst for change in your own lives and in policymaking.

Sincerely,
Rose Khattar & Amanda Said
Editors-in-Chief, *Women's Policy Journal*

CARE AND FAMILY

THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF COVID LOCKDOWNS

HOW 152,000 TEENAGE GIRLS IN KENYA WERE STRIPPED OF THEIR EDUCATION

Majd Steitieh

Majd Steitieh is a second-year student in the master's in public policy program at the Harvard Kennedy School and a Rawabi Fellow. Majd is focused on social and urban policy and comes from a multidisciplinary background that includes management consulting, financial services, and fashion design. Prior to HKS, she worked in the private sector as a management consultant focusing on issues centered around public safety. At HKS, Majd has been involved in co-chairing the Women in Power Conference, leading the Arab Caucus, and vice-chairing the Student Public Service Collaborative.

LUCY* AND JANE* sit quietly on the earthy ground, fenced between four faded blue tin walls with no ceiling above. The sun beams down relentlessly on them as 80 of their classmates squeeze into a 13-by-13-foot structure in Mathare, Kenya. Miss Elizabeth*, a slender woman in her 30s, calls the overcrowded classroom to order before proceeding to walk the students through the day's agenda. Lucy, 17, observes Miss Elizabeth in awe. Her dream is to become a teacher when she graduates from high school. Jane, 14, on the other hand, gazes at her classmate's swollen arm and daydreams about how she might treat it once she becomes a nurse. This was back in January 2020, when the Kenyan academic year had just begun and when both Lucy and Jane were cheerful and hopeful about the opportunities the year would bring. By May 2020, however, they found themselves among the 152,000 teenage girls who had become pregnant as a result of the economic hardship created by the nation-wide COVID-19 lockdown.[1] They

have different priorities now. Their dreams will inconveniently have to wait.

We are all too familiar with the unfortunate truths of COVID-19: how it has taken 2.14 million global lives to date; how it has pushed countless individuals towards unemployment; and how it has prevented us all from seeing our loved ones, ticking items off our bucket lists, and even breathing freely.[2] Numerous headlines have captured these aspects of the COVID-induced lockdowns, and we have spent the better half of 2020 praising world leaders for their decisions to shut down schools and businesses to keep us all safe. What often gets overlooked, though, are the dangers of these lockdowns, particularly for those who live in underprivileged, rural, and developing communities. One such community is Mathare, a collection of slums in Nairobi, Kenya, that houses over 500,000 individuals, including Lucy and Jane.

Mathare, like many other slum areas in Kenya, constantly faces four main constraints that prohibit it from providing

quality education to its students. With the ongoing pandemic, these constraints have been exacerbated and made reducing learning losses due to the COVID lockdown near impossible. Firstly, enforcing social distancing in these classrooms would be unachievable as "classrooms in public schools are usually congested with the number of pupils ranging from 70 to 110," as Nicholas Gathemia, Chairperson of the Kenya Primary School Heads Association pointed out.[3] Secondly, President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa declared lack of PPE as one of the most significant hindrances that Africa faces.[4] Thirdly, statistics by the Teachers Service Commission in Kenya indicate there is an overall teacher shortage of approximately 50,000, forcing teachers to take up more duties in and out of the classroom to fill these gaps.[5] And finally, Doctors Without Borders highlighted the drastic lack of water, as there are currently "only 200 water points for the approximately 200,000 people who live in [these] settlements," inhibiting routine hand washing.[6] It soon became apparent, however, that these issues were dwarfed when Kenya's second outburst in 2020 was taken into account: unintended teen pregnancies.

Global Citizen estimates that over 152,000 teenage girls have become pregnant between March and May 2020 as a result of the economic drawbacks caused by the COVID lockdown.[7] This represents a staggering 40 percent increase in Kenya's monthly average.[8] While this figure is alarming enough, many healthcare workers across Kenya agree that the true figure is likely higher as a substantial number of soon-to-be teen mothers "do not access healthcare services like adult females because of the judgment," Ademola Olajide, the United Nations Population Fund representative in Kenya conveyed.[9] Further,

even if a young woman tried to seek care, the strict movement restrictions imposed by the lockdown would make it even more challenging, with this obstacle being amplified for girls living in refugee camps who initially never had the means for transportation, the International Rescue Committee shares.[10] This is a crisis on its own as the World Health Organization warns that pregnancy and childbirth are the leading causes of death for girls aged 15 to 19.[11] This threat is intensified during a pandemic, where unsafe abortions, due to the absence of medical professionals and subpar hygiene standards, put these young women at higher risk for infection and could lead to more premature deaths.

Kenya is no stranger to the prevalence nor consequences of teen pregnancy, as more than 13,000 young girls drop out of school annually to have children, the National Council for Population and Development states.[12] And yet, unintended teen pregnancies have escalated to new extremes with some calling the phenomenon a "shadow pandemic." A number of factors can explain this massive surge in teen pregnancies, but most shockingly perhaps are access to showers, hygiene necessities, and sanitary pads.

With the lockdown, numerous families were left jobless or on the brink of unemployment in a country where a third of the population is already living below the poverty line, a 2020 comprehensive poverty report by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics finds.[13] It is not surprising then, that most families were unable to afford hygiene necessities, such as "clean water, soap, and sanitary pads," explains Mercy Chege, program director at Plan International Kenya.[14] Chege goes on to state that "the government used to give sanitary pads to girls while in school but failed to extend the services to their homes when

schools closed," meaning young girls were forced to source other means to acquire these supplies. This often meant that young women were left to be scavenged by elder men who offered to lend them the funds for an exchange of "services."

The heartbreaking truth is that a number of these men exploited these young girls' needs for hygiene essentials by asking for sex in exchange for necessities such as a shower. As Chege highlights, "Many would go for days without taking a bath and would do anything to appease someone who promised them such small luxuries." The market price for such small luxuries was 15 Kenyan shillings, or 14 cents, and sex was bartered as compensation. Unfortunately, the exploitation and abuse by these predators did not end there as "a few girls were lured into child pornography [. . .] but they didn't know they were being sexually abused," Chege continues.

The explosion of unintended teen pregnancies was also a result of many young girls being unable to seek reproductive health care including, but not limited to, sexual education and abortions. When the government directed efforts to flatten the COVID-19 curve, there remained inadequate "resources or personnel to continue to offer reproductive health care," says Dr. Manisha Kumar, head of the Médecins Sans Frontières task force on safe abortion care.[15] To make matters worse, these healthcare services were already unreliable and sparse in Nairobi's informal settlements, including Mathare, where 75 percent of the city's population lives.[16]

The unfortunate reality is that these young girls have only just began experiencing the abuse that awaits them. It is customary for young girls to be accused of carelessness, and it is the norm for their abusers to shame them, beat them, and even exile them once they become pregnant. Often alone, and with limited financial and mental stability, these young girls are forced to abandon their dreams, leave their career aspirations behind, and focus on surviving one day at a time. They are left to care for their children with little to no resources—most cannot even afford to vaccinate their children against common deadly diseases. While most pregnant women around the world are excited to enter motherhood, many of these girls dread the arrival of their newborns. As the World Health Organization reports, unmarried pregnant teenagers may face "stigma, rejection, or violence by partners, parents and peers" due to widespread misogynistic cultural norms.[17]

With all these horrifying events awaiting these girls further down the line, very few have the time nor the mental capacity to even consider going back to school. For the brave few that do, the mere thought of stepping foot on those school grounds frighten them more than the rest of their destinies as single unmarried teen mothers.

To resolve these concerns, the Ministry of Education has detailed new regulations to create a safe and discrimination-free environment for these teen mothers once they return to school. These efforts have been fruitless up to now as the culture at most Kenyan schools has remained unsympathetic to these young mothers' horrid experiences. Chege recounts an incident in which "a teacher told a class to consult a teenage mother on questions about sex as she was "an expert on this topic," yet was a rape victim."[18]

All hope is not lost however, as oftentimes it has been proven that informal initiatives can have the greatest influence in tipping the scales. A prime living example of this is Samwel Mbewa, business and fundraising manager at Pacemaker International.

In an initiative he has named "Mathare and Kibera Girls Advocacy Initiative," Samwel mentors these young girls to return to school after they deliver their babies. As Samwel recounts, "Growing up in Mathare myself, I have seen the sacrifices young girls must make."[19] Samwel and other volunteers pave the way back to school for these young girls by serving as their mentors. They are available to listen to the young girls' struggles and offer advice, based on lived experiences of people they know from their own community.

The world has changed massively since the last day Lucy and Jane sat quietly on the earthy ground. Their plans have changed, and their aspirations have altered as well in light of their current circumstances. They are afraid of what is yet to come—the judgment they will face and the ridicule they will have to endure. Jane has undergone countless informal therapy sessions to heal her trauma to date. Lucy is due to deliver in February 2021 and already worries about what future her child will have, if any. Both girls have grown up significantly since March. They have had different priorities to focus on since then, and their dreams were inconveniently put on hold. As they both prepare for the deliveries of their newborns, they pray that once their children are 14 and 17 respectively, they will at least be able to purse their dreams in the ways their mothers could not.

*Names have been changed to protect identities.

ENDNOTES

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CARING AFTER COVID

GETTING TO CHANGE ON CHILDCARE POLICY IN THE UNITED STATES

Stefani Jones

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INTRODUCTION

The childcare industry was devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic, with 35 percent of childcare centers and 21 percent of family programs remaining closed as of July 2020.[1] One survey found that 40 percent of childcare centers were certain they will close permanently if not granted additional funding.[2] Parents are also spending more time taking on these responsibilities, with 58 percent of parents saying they have spent more time on childcare since the pandemic began.[3] The major shifts and potential collapse of the childcare industry threatens to compound an already dire economic crisis and set back women's workforce participation and wages for years.

Childcare is one of the most significant costs in a family's budget, and parents missing work to make up for gaps in childcare costs $3 billion annually in lost productivity to businesses in the United States.[4] The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has designated "affordable" childcare as a program that consumes 7 percent or less of a family's income, but a survey found that 72 percent of families spent 10 percent or more of their household income on childcare in 2020, with more than half spending at least $10,000 per year.[5,6] The Economic Policy Institute found that, among families with two children, childcare costs exceeded rent costs in 500 of 618 communities surveyed. For workers making a minimum wage, childcare costs as a share of annual earnings range from 30.6 percent in Tennessee to 80.9 percent in Washington, DC[7]

Lack of investment in childcare disproportionately impacts women. American society and workplaces still operate off an antiquated model that assumes husbands work to provide for wives at home, who tend to do unpaid, domestic labor. The entrance of more women into the workplace has shaken this notion, but policies and institutions have not caught up. Norms still dictate that childcare responsibilities should fall to mothers, and the lack of options have long-term impacts on women's workforce participation and the gender pay gap. Parents are forced to make difficult choices about paying for care,

including leaving the workforce altogether. This choice disproportionately falls on mothers, who are still expected to be the ones making sacrifices to be stay-at-home parents.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, efforts to reform America's current system may succeed where they have failed in the past. In fact, the Biden administration has a unique chance to reform childcare, simultaneously stimulating economic recovery and getting women and families back to work.

IMPACT OF INACTION

Of American women aged 40 to 44, 86 percent are mothers.[8] Just over 60 percent of mothers with the youngest child under 3 years old participate in the workforce, with that number rising to 74.6 percent by the time the child is of school age.[9] Women are twice as likely to take a year off from their work as men, and that time out of the labor force has dramatic consequences on their earnings.[10] Over the course of 15 years, women who took just one year out of the workforce, often to care for a child, had annual earnings that were 39 percent lower than women who worked the entire time.[11] A study showed that among families needing childcare, mothers are 12 percent more likely to be unemployed if no care is found, whereas fathers' employment is not impacted. The impact on unemployment was more than double for single mothers who could not find care compared to mothers in two-parent households.[12]

Women make substantial contributions to the economy that are not fully realized. The United States lags behind other countries in women's workforce participation, in part due to its insufficient policies and systems to support working mothers. In 1990, the United States ranked sixth in workforce participation among 22 economically advanced countries. By 2010, it had fallen to 17th on the same list. In contrast, a number of other countries on the list, including Demark, Belgium, and France, have expanded programs for paid leave and childcare.[13] If working-age women participated in the workforce at the same rates as countries like Germany, Canada, and Japan, there would be 5.5 million more women working in the US labor force.[14] The Economic Policy Institute estimates that an ambitious investment in childcare, with costs capped at 10 percent of a family's income, would increase GDP by 1.2% percent or $210.2 billion, largely due to the increased number of mothers entering the workforce.[15] This could also go a long way toward closing the workforce gender gap, where only 56.8 percent of women participate, as compared to 69.1 percent of men.[16]

Childcare access has also had a particular impact on economic recovery for women during the COVID-19 pandemic. Men face a lower jobs deficit than women compared to pre-COVID employment levels, and women represent 58 percent of the 2.6 million workers who stopped looking for work.[17] One report estimates that mothers leaving the labor force at this high rate during the pandemic could cost up to $64.5 billion per year in lost wages and economic activity.[18] The abysmal recovery of the childcare sector, which employs mainly women, also poses an immediate risk to future economic growth. COVID-19 dealt a devastating blow to the industry, which already operated on tight margins. As of July 2020, 35 percent of childcare centers and 21 percent of family childcare programs remained closed in the United States.[19] While it is too soon to understand how many closures will be permanent, the dramatic decrease in childcare services will likely have a ripple effect for the entire

workforce, particularly women's wages and participation.

PAST EFFORTS ON REFORM

Unbeknownst to most Americas, the United States has briefly experimented with a universal childcare system. The Lanham Act of 1940 was passed during World War II to help women as they rushed to fill jobs left by men, inspired by the call of Rosie the Riveter to aide in the wartime effort. It was the first and only time to date when the United States provided universal access to federally subsidized childcare, operating in all but one state and serving nearly 600,000 children in communities contributing to defense production.[20] The Lanham centers were unique in that they served families of all income levels and operated 12 hours a day, 6 days a week, including holidays.[21] The cost of the program is estimated to be today's equivalent of between $762 million to $1 billion, with an adjusted cost to families of $7 per day, including meals.[22,23]

But as the war ended, so did the childcare centers. Public opinion was still opposed to women working outside the home and saw the wartime situation as an exception rather than a new trend. One Gallup poll from 1943 found that only 30 percent of husbands who were at war unconditionally supported their wives going to work.[24] Though the program itself was short lived, the Lanham Act had lasting effects on women's workforce participation. One study found a substantial increase in maternal employment, even five years after the end of the program, and "strong and persistent positive effects on well-being" for children. There is evidence that paid work for mothers increased substantially following the wartime period, and that the largest benefits of the program were for the poorest.[25]

By 1970, women's workforce participation had risen dramatically from 11.9 percent in 1950 to 30.3 percent among women with children under 6 years old.[26] In 1971, Congress considered the Comprehensive Child Development Act (CCDA), which would have created the first national non-wartime childcare program. The CCDA focused on low-income Americans, working mothers, and single parents and established a framework for and an objective of universally available childcare.[27] The bill provided $700 million in childcare subsidies for welfare recipients, with poor families fully covered, and $50 million for childcare centers. The free care would be available for any family making below a certain income.[28] But while the CCDA originally enjoyed bipartisan support, it became a lightning rod for religious and right-wing groups, with a watered-down version vetoed by President Nixon, who criticized it for "fiscal irresponsibility, administrative unworkability and family-weakening implications."[29] America's failure to take action at that critical juncture set reform back for decades, as the country instead took a piecemeal approach to childcare, furthering inequities as workforce participation grew.

The federal government currently has two programs that support childcare for low-income families: the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act and Head Start. These programs, though different in approach, are the primary way for low-income families to obtain affordable childcare, which advocates argue are hampered by insufficient investment.[30] Authorized by Congress in 1990, CCDBG is the country's largest federal childcare program and gives funding to states to both distribute and determine eligibility, functionally operating as unique state-by-state programs that subsidize childcare costs.[31] But the program reaches only 15 percent of eligible families with its subsidies based on

state requirements.[32] Head Start and Early Head Start are federally run programs to promote school readiness of children under 5 from low-income families through education and health, social, and other services. This includes free childcare and pre-K in "centers, family child care, and children's own home."[33] While Head Start operates programs for children ages 3–5 in every state and congressional district in the United States, the program only serves 11 percent of those eligible nationwide.[34]

In recent years, there has been a resurgence in bipartisan interest in the expansion of federal funding for childcare programs, though the issue has seen fits and starts. During her presidential campaign, Senator Elizabeth Warren made childcare a central aspect of her policy agenda. She also highlighted the issue in her speech at the Democratic National Convention, where she called childcare "infrastructure for families," comparing it to the roads and bridges that keep the rest of the economy going. Warren's childcare plan is a bold approach to Federal childcare policy. Her proposal would create a network of federally subsidized childcare programs with free access to anyone making less than 200 percent of the federal poverty line. The plan relied on her proposed wealth tax to offset the costs.[35]

THE SUCCESS OF MILITARY CHILDCARE PROGRAMS

While numerous reform efforts have failed, there are models for success in the United States. One of these models is the US military, which runs the largest employer-sponsored childcare system in the country, serving 200,000 children a day through Department of Defense (DoD)-operated, facility-based care called Child Development Centers (CDCs), certified home-based Family Child Care (FCC),

afterschool care for school-age children, and supplemental childcare programs and subsidies outside of military installations. The programs, started through the Military Child Care Act (MCCA) in 1979, employ 23,000 childcare workers and set standards for care and labor, paying caretakers good wages, and giving them career opportunities within the military.[36] These services are open to all military service members, surviving spouses, and DoD civilians. This year, the various childcare programs cost $1.2 billion, coming from both appropriated funds, which are budgeted by Congress, and non-appropriated funds, which are raised through parent fees and other military revenue-generating programs like exchange stores.[37]

Since the MCCA was introduced, the percentage of women in the military grew from 2.5 percent in 1973 to 16 percent in 2019. This is credited in part to programs like childcare, which were framed as critical recruitment and retention strategies.[38] Leaders sold the policy as critical to advancing the military's mission. In his prepared statement for the MCCA hearings, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Lt. Gen. Anthony Lukeman wrote, "Child care is not an entitlement, neither is it a social welfare program. Rather, it is the department's response to the need to recruit, retain, and motivate the highest quality of personnel, both military and civilian, for the defense of the nation."[39] In a 1988 congressional hearing on military child care, Eric Thorson, deputy assistant secretary for manpower, resources and military personnel of the Air Force, said, "With over 60 percent of the force married and 70 percent of our families having children of the ages that require child care, having this service available at reasonable cost is no longer nice to have; it's a necessity."[40]

WINNING ON CHILDCARE REFORM

As the Biden administration weighs options for stimulating the economy and rebuilding the American workforce, bold childcare reform should be at the top of the list. The pandemic has presented a rare trigger point from which change can be made on the issue after decades of debate and inaction. In the wake of the global pandemic, public focus on childcare and the plight of working parents is very high. The First Five Years Fund found in its 2020 annual survey that 84 percent of all voters think high-quality, affordable childcare is an essential service, with 79 percent saying the pandemic made it clear how important a strong childcare system is for families in the United States. Sixty-two percent believe that Congress should be doing more to help working parents of young children, and 67 percent of respondents said that access to high-quality, affordable childcare was essential or very important to boosting the economy and getting people back to work after the COVID-19 pandemic.[41]

President Biden's proposed $1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan includes a critical bailout of the childcare industry, with $25 billion to support childcare providers and $15 billion in assistance to families in the wake of COVID-19.[42] Packaging childcare as part of a broader economic stimulus is smart and necessary, but more is needed beyond stopgap funding that keeps the industry and families afloat. During his campaign, President Biden proposed national pre-K as well as expanded tax credits and subsidies so lower-income families would pay no more than 7 percent of their income on childcare.[43] Based on lessons learned from the US military case, the Biden administration should champion this kind of broad reform, leaning into the economic imperative for childcare as a workforce strategy. A successful plan would match the country's most ambitious projects and appeal to a sense of national pride. In the wake of crisis, a federal childcare plan can be a beacon of hope, inspired by our military's successes.

While there have been numerous efforts to reform the US childcare system, none have been able to achieve lasting change or meet demand. The policy debate—from the Lanham Act to the Comprehensive Child Development Act—has been consistent. The issue has largely been the willingness to pay for it, as well as concerns around autonomy and government overreach. Even as the role of women in the workplace has shifted dramatically, policy reforms have not kept pace with changing cultural norms. Childcare has deep impact on long-term earnings and workforce participation for mothers, and the lack of quality care contributes to the stubborn gender pay gap. To build a strong American economy after the pandemic, childcare is foundational to the country's immediate need of getting women and families back to work.

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BABIES, BUT AT WHAT COST?

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF PRO-NATALIST BABY BONUS POLICIES

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SHOULD A STATE be able to pay its citizens to have children? Given the economic and social consequences of large-scale population changes (i.e., labor shortages), over 50 countries have enacted pro-natalist policies to boost lagging fertility rates.[1] A nascent policy response is the "baby bonus," a substantial unrestricted cash benefit offered to new parents in approximately a dozen countries, including Russia, Australia, and South Korea. While the bonuses purportedly aim to subsidize childrearing, they also pose the risk of reinforcing social expectations that women are, first and foremost, mothers and overemphasizing the financial restraints on fertility without addressing underlying structural inequities influencing family planning decisions, like the gender division of labor or the gender wage gap. Increases to pro-natal subsidies during the COVID-19 pandemic heightens the need for critical analysis of the baby bonus. Some governments, such as Singapore, fear the pandemic will accelerate population decline and now offer additional subsidies. Traditionally, scholars have argued that

government financial support for children is too small to influence fertility decisions.[2] Yet, recent bonuses have reached unprecedented magnitudes and warrant reinvestigation in light of their considerable reproductive justice and gender equity concerns.

There is an urgent need for innovative policymaking and international coordination to ensure that demographic problems are met with sustainable solutions that comport with human rights frameworks and states' reproductive rights obligations. Without a concomitant commitment to achieving women's equal standing in society, governments implementing baby bonuses risk prioritizing state demographic concerns at the expense of women's reproductive rights and empowerment. Governments, international non-governmental organizations, and reproductive rights advocates must reexamine the use of outsized monetary incentives to boost fertility rates and consider viable alternatives that foreground women's voices and rights into the policymaking process. Evidence of higher

gender equity resulting in higher fertility intentions suggests there may be areas of common ground between the natalist and feminist agendas (e.g., job retraining programs for mothers), despite glaring differences.[3] In addition, improving the implementation of baby bonuses or opting for an alternative would likely enhance rather than undermine child welfare aims. The restraints placed on women's reproductive freedom—the right to have a family if they want, how they want, and when they want—by the baby bonus vary drastically according to country context and the structure of the bonus, but even applying a limited interpretation of reproductive rights to the baby bonus raises important questions about the appropriateness of its use. While I offer neither a comprehensive legal argument nor a conclusive policy solution, I engage two of those questions to provide pathways for future social research, legal analysis, and policy advocacy:

1. Are the bonuses coercive?

2. Are the bonuses equitable?

BACKGROUND

Pro-natalist policies, which broadly support childbearing and parenting, have traditionally been categorized as "coercive" and "non-coercive"—a dichotomy that no longer cleanly holds. For example, early academic works considered work and family policies like parental leave to be non-coercive and prohibiting abortion or birth control to be coercive. The literature on non-coercive pro-natal policies generally adopts a lens of social policy and welfare (e.g., How do child benefits raise test scores? How does maternity leave impact women's employment?) rather than government population policy. Scholarly and public attention has also concentrated on explicitly pro- or anti-natalist measures, such as forced sterilization. Yet, the line between coercive and non-coercive is increasingly blurred and needs to be defined with greater precision. Not only does pro-natalism encompass a state's direct efforts to regulate fertility, but it also entails indirect policies that culturally, ideologically, and psychologically encourage motherhood.[4] Categorizations on a policy-by-policy basis neglect to consider how these policies are implemented in tandem. In addition to a lack of conceptual clarity, ideologically motivated think tanks and increased government control over academia via funding, key appointments, and oversight in numerous countries weaken the reliability of publicly available studies and reports. A more expansive and independent research agenda is needed to address the current gaps and bias issues of scholarship on pro-natalism.

Likewise, research specifically investigating the baby bonus is limited. The existing accounts tend to adopt quantitative and econometrics approaches without rigorously incorporating social theory or policy evaluation principles.[5,6,7] The majority of research is single-nation studies focusing on Canada, Australia, or specific municipalities in cases where baby bonuses are not nationally implemented. As a result of the narrow empirical focus on whether the bonuses boost aggregate-level fertility or not, the attendant social and ethical consequences of baby bonuses remain overlooked. The baby bonus is also absent from international law scholarship. Reproductive rights remain an emerging facet of international human rights law and subject to considerable scholarly debate regarding their scope. The limited resources available at the state and international non-governmental levels are usually allocated to reproductive health. Despite

advocacy efforts by women's groups and the strides made in international recognition of reproductive rights, state abuses and accountability issues persist. The baby bonus is unlikely to become a focal point of international human rights in the near future given these shortcomings and all the more likely to go unchecked in the face of other pressing issues.

In spite of the baby bonus's absence from the literature, several trends animating the issue ought to capture our attention. First, rising global nationalism has played a role in propping up pro-natalist ideologies and programs while eroding political norms and civil society safeguards.[8] Particularly illustrative is the 2018 ban of gender studies departments by Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's government, which inspired a similar 2020 amendment in Romania.[9] Second, a growing number of actors have rallied behind the pro-natalist banner and sought to shape the global narrative around birth rates. In addition to states, these actors include conservative groups, religious leaders, and popular authors. For example, the World Congress of Families (WCF), an anti-LGBTQ coalition, promotes the "natural family" and portrays "women [as] saving their cultures by returning to their God-given vocation of homemaking."[10] While many dismiss the WCF and similar organizations as fringe groups, they command a strong following—WCF advocacy influenced a 2009 UN resolution promoting "a better understanding of traditional values of humankind."[11] These trends demonstrate that the legitimate challenges arising from decades-long fertility declines can be exploited to advance normative and political positions.

Populations shrink when their total fertility rates (TFRs) drop below the replacement level of 2.1 children per woman over the course of a lifetime, spurring both economic and social consequences.[12] The 1960s' global fertility rate of 5 live births per woman has halved, hovering around 2.5 in recent years and closing in on the 2.1 threshold.[13] Half a century ago, only six countries had sub-replacement fertility rates. Today, that figure stands at 83 countries and growing.[14] Fertility declines are often positive, reflecting reduced infant mortality, expanded contraception access, and greater gender parity in educational and professional opportunities. Yet, once the replacement threshold is no longer met, a country may face the economic challenges of financing an aging population, restructuring businesses according to shifting demographics, and adapting to a shrinking workforce. While the social implications of low fertility are less generalizable, they often include diminished family safety nets, a growing gap between desired and achieved fertility, and fraught intergenerational dynamics.

Baby bonuses date back to the early 1900s as a policy response to low fertility rates and aging populations. The bonuses were not widespread until recent decades; historically, states were preoccupied with curbing "excess" fertility and improving living conditions. In policy documents and media coverage, baby bonuses are interchangeably referred to as "newborn upfront payments," "child credits," "maternity payments," and "cash for care." Countries currently providing a bonus include Russia, the Czech Republic, and South Korea, among about a dozen others. The baby bonus size varies by country, birth order, and other factors, ranging from over USD$7,000 in Singapore to USD$420 in Australia. They usually are not conditional on employment status, intended to replace lost or lowered wages, or included as a part of regular child benefits and allowances. Governments differ

vastly in their public communication strategies, specifically in how they characterize the baby bonus's objectives. Some governments emphasize aims of defraying childrearing costs and reducing child poverty while others are more overt; Singapore, which offers a higher bonus for each additional child born, explains on its website, "The birth order of a child is tagged to the natural mother so as to incentivise married women to give birth to more children."[15] Economists similarly note that the baby bonus structure reveals its core intent of boosting natality:

> "If the goal were to simply compensate families for the extra costs of having children, the incremental benefit would shrink as the number of children grew. The more children a family has, the more people there are to spread household expenses over and, hence, the incremental cost per child. Thus, a scaled benefit that increases by child suggests that pro-natalist tax policy is on the minds of policymakers."[16]

CONCERN #1: ARE THE BONUSES COERCIVE?

The inattention towards baby bonuses may arise from the veneer of choice—that a couple chooses to have a baby on their own, and the bonus simply rewards that choice. From another vantage point, the bonus could be argued to *enhance* reproductive agency because the financial support enables couples to have children they want to have but would otherwise be unable to afford. Both perspectives are oversimplistic. Though not reaching the level of coercion, the baby bonus may serve as an undue inducement. Two areas where the bonus ought to be particularly scrutinized for undue inducement are its impacts on (1) low-income and other marginalized groups and (2) the spacing and timing of births.

The baby bonus substantively differs from the actions traditionally designated as reproductive coercion. Reproductive coercion is defined as "behavior that interferes with the autonomous decision-making of a woman, with regards to reproductive health."[17] Generally, it refers to a limited set of behaviors: birth control sabotage, pregnancy coercion, or controlling the outcome of a pregnancy.[18] The perpetrators are partners, a partner's family, or the woman's family. The bonus also does not conform with the standards for coercion laid out in research regulations, which adhere to a more expansive concept of coercion and a heightened ethical standard to safeguard the dignity, bodily integrity, and autonomy of research participants. The 1979 Belmont Report written by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research specifies that "coercion occurs when an overt threat of harm is intentionally presented by one person to another in order to obtain compliance."[19] Generally, "coercion is a threat of physical, psychological, or social harm in order to compel someone to do something, such as participate in research. Money is an offer or an opportunity, and not a threat of harm."[20]

Recent scholarship contends that the Belmont approach should be further expanded. Singer and Couper (2009) propose that "that the criterion should be whether or not they induce participants to undertake risks they would not be willing to accept without the incentive. [. . .] The test of whether an incentive is *unduly* influential is whether or not there is a statistically significant interaction between the size of the risk and the size of the incentive on the decision to participate."[21] Casarett et al. (2002) found that

74.6 percent of study participants believed 500 dollars—a figure less than some countries' baby bonus—would "impair subjects' ability to think carefully about the risks and benefits of research."[22] Having a baby is a commitment that is comparable to, if not greater than, research. To date, studies have found mixed effects of the baby bonus on aggregate fertility outcomes. Additional empirical work that disentangles the baby bonus's impact from the wide range of other fertility determinants at play is needed to make a more conclusive judgment.

A major concern is the lack of disaggregated national fertility data with which to assess the differential impacts of baby bonus policies on women and their partners according to age, race, income level, family size, occupational status, and other characteristics. These insights can help mitigate unintended consequences arising from the bonus, improve its implementation, and evaluate trends across countries and regions. The magnitude of the bonus and recipients matter: "Undue influence, by contrast, occurs through an offer of an excessive, unwarranted, inappropriate or improper reward or other overture in order to obtain compliance. Also, inducements that would ordinarily be acceptable may become undue influences if the subject is especially vulnerable."[23] While public data sets of such a scope may be infeasible for both privacy and practical reasons, there are several alternatives. Field surveys could provide qualitative and quantitative data to enable a more comprehensive intersectional, reproductive justice analysis and invite a deeper conversation that goes uncaptured by birth numbers alone (e.g., In what ways are baby bonuses being used? What unmet needs are there related to family life and parenthood for different segments of society?)

Governments might also endeavor to furnish researchers with pre-existing information, such as internal planning and evaluation documents, that currently is not publicly available and release restricted-use microdata, like census data, to qualified researchers.

Without this disaggregated data, the government forgoes the opportunity to make higher-impact, evidence-based investments. Furthermore, it is difficult, if not impossible, to compare the utility of the baby bonus against other measures, such as the direct provision of free or reduced-price children's services. In Singapore, distributing the bonus to parents of all income levels reduces politicization and social stigma. While the precise expenditure figures are not available, the Singapore Ministry of Social and Family Development allocated $2.08 billion—over 2 percent of its total annual expenditure—to its Family Development Group in 2019.[24] Of that, 95 percent is earmarked to support marriage and parenthood, consisting primarily of the baby bonus scheme and paid leave. That high price tag and increase to family resources may result in price hikes to childcare services and products, exacerbating affordability issues for the poor.[25] Critics further argue that the bonuses are subject to parental misspending, tucked away in investments, or wasted on one-time splurges.[26,27]

Moreover, the bonus restricts parents' freedom to determine the spacing and timing of their children. Empirical research shows a variety of timing impacts, including delayed effects, in which parents delay having children in anticipation of increases to the bonus in subsequent years, as well as compression and announcement effects in which births increase in response to announcements that a bonus will commence or soon conclude.[28] In Australia,

parents went as far as postponing induction and cesarian section procedures to ensure their children were born on July 1, 2004, the first day of eligibility for the baby bonus. Gans and Leigh (2009) report, "more Australian children were born than on any other single date in the past thirty years. We estimate that over 1000 births were 'moved' so as to ensure that their parents were eligible for the Baby Bonus, with about one quarter being moved by more than one week."[29] By changing benefits, states can considerably manipulate the timing of births. Such policies carry not only rights-based but pragmatic ramifications; the resulting year-by-year birth fluctuations strain infrastructure, such as schools and daycares. In addition, birth timing changes run counter to the 1994 ICPD Cairo Programme of Action's articulation of reproductive rights as a fundamental human rights guarantee:

> "Reproductive rights rest on the recognition of the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the *number, spacing, and timing* [emphasis added] of their children and to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health. They also include the right of all to make decisions concerning reproduction free of discrimination, coercion, and violence."[30]

CONCERN #2: ARE THE BONUSES EQUITABLE?

The bonus is inequitable in who it is available to and what it addresses. Specifically, it often excludes non-traditional families and fails to confront the gender inequities contributing to low fertility.

Selective anti-natalism is borne out in the design of many pro-natalist policies, including some baby bonuses. Counterintuitively, natalism often dictates anti-natalist stances towards specific subpopulations based on cultural prescriptions of motherhood.[31] In Singapore, the bonus is not means tested, employment based, or determined by the parents' area of residence, but there are substantial gaps in its coverage. Unmarried or non-heterosexual parents cannot redeem the bonus. Technicalities around citizenship additionally reduce the number of children eligible for the bonus because only babies holding Singaporean citizenship are eligible. Marriages between Singaporean citizens and non-citizens are on the rise, resulting in children who may reside in Singapore but hold citizenship of a different country due to Singapore's prohibition on dual citizenship.[32] Other bonuses that entail matching schemes inherently advantage the wealthy, who are better positioned to take advantage of the matching funds due to greater expendable income. Exclusionary policies deeming some parents fit and others not fit are ethically reprehensible and contradict the bonuses' stated aims.

Though governments possess financial resources and regulatory leverage, their policies are unlikely to be successful if they continue to misidentify the problem. McDonald's theory of gender equity and fertility argues that low fertility in economically advanced countries arises from a mismatch between high levels of gender equity in individual-oriented institutions, like education and employment, and low levels of gender equity in family-oriented institutions.[33] Put simply, women who have access to education and labor market opportunities on par with men are less likely to want children if they will be responsible for both paid work and the majority of housework—the "second shift"—or incur other costs that

their partner does not. If a primary issue is persistent gender inequity within family institutions, as many experts and women claim, a different theory of change—one that accommodates the ambitions and desires of modern women—is needed.

Monetary incentives alone miss the point and prove especially harmful when coupled with stifling public campaigns. In South Korea, a government-run website mapped the number of childbearing-age women by city, district, and region. The government removed the website within hours of its release after fervent public criticism that the website shamed childless women. Though short lived, the website drove young South Korean women to mobilize in campaigns such as #NoMarriage, SOLOdarity, and Elite without Marriage, I am Going Forward (EMIF). In China, unmarried or childless women over the age of 27 are referred to as *shèng nü*, meaning "leftover woman," a derogatory term popularized by the Chinese government. A leftover woman is well educated, professionally successful, and perceived as flippant towards traditional gender roles. By perpetuating sexist constructs and feeding on long-established social attitudes critiquing childlessness, these communications repel rather than compel young women.

Governments cannot afford to overlook work-family imbalances and should seek buy-in from an array of stakeholders, among them the general public, nonprofits, and the private sector. In particular, diverse women must be included across the stages of policy formulation. Governments also ought to collaborate with each other. Empirically proven policies from countries with high fertility and high gender equity, such as Denmark or France, offer a roadmap for policy improvements, and countries experiencing low fertility have

rightly begun sending delegations to learn from their baby booms.[34] These countries' experiences attest to the significance of women's advancement and reproductive freedom in achieving stable fertility rates. Setting aside these promising examples, women's rights too often remain peripheral to population policies in both the scholarly debate and in practice, as the baby bonus in its current form suggests. Failing to address the recurring issues with the present policies also stifles the consideration of other creative policy avenues. For example, strategic immigration and automation policies could potentially lift the burdens of demographic change off childless women's shoulders and correct course away from paying citizens for behavior change where other corporate sector and policy options are viable.

CONCLUSION

A paradigm shift is needed to acknowledge the complex roots of low fertility—among them the deep-rooted institutional inequities limiting women's potential and ambitions—and forge a sustainable path forward. Ethical issues aside, the high cost of the baby bonus, absent convincing evidence of its efficacy, should give policymakers sufficient reason to pause. Systematically measuring baby bonuses' outcomes is complicated given the vast number of fertility determinants, among other evaluation challenges, but collecting feedback, engaging stakeholders, and disseminating lessons learned are low-hanging fruit that could inform future policymaking in low-fertility contexts. While there is no evidence suggesting that it is coercive, the baby bonus nonetheless presents equity concerns and draws attention to critical gaps as well as unanswered questions in the available research.

Without pressure from the international

community, women's organizations, and citizens, pro-natalist policies run the risk of being normalized and further escalated. Historically, the reproductive justice movement has broadened its mandate in step with ongoing social issues and reproductive infringements—and it ought to do so again with monetary incentives for childbirth like the baby bonus. Moving forward, the international community needs to (1) acknowledge the threats to reproductive justice posed by the baby bonus and similar policies, among them the concerns about coercion and equity raised here; (2) establish principles and evaluation frameworks for pro-natalist monetary incentives; and (3) coalition build to implement safeguards and hold states or other actors accountable that do not adhere to the accepted principles.

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IS SHARED PARENTAL LEAVE IN THE UK DOING MORE HARM THAN GOOD?

Rachel Drapper

Rachel Drapper is a former Egyptologist by training, business strategy consultant by trade, and a Fulbright Scholar and MBA student at Harvard Business School by good fortune and privilege of access to opportunities. Career-wise, she specializes in transport and mobility and has interned at Transport for London in their Innovation Directorate and at TIER Mobility, where she led a project to understand why women don't use e-scooters. Despite these professional pursuits, Rachel's true passion is gender equity, and she spends most of her time outside of work—or, when the stars align, in work too—reading about, thinking about, and advocating for this cause. From founding a women's rugby club to conducting research into the gender grade gap at HBS with the Women's Student Association, she is most engaged when working on topics relating to equality and aspires to have a big impact in this sphere.

WHAT IS SHARED PARENTAL LEAVE?

Shared Parental Leave (SPL) in the United Kingdom allows eligible parents to split maternity leave. Under the policy, birth mothers must take two weeks of maternity leave but can donate the remaining 50 weeks as SPL. Both parents can then share these 50 weeks, taking them simultaneously or in alternating blocks. The intention behind the policy is to better equalize parenting responsibilities. Yet, six years after its introduction in 2015, uptake is as little as 2 percent.[1] Why? The policy is inadequately funded and therefore not a financially attractive option for most households; it is clumsy and complicated; and it has several unhelpful and stringent eligibility requirements. It also does not go far enough to undo deeply ingrained historical cultural norms surrounding gender roles. Not only do these norms hinder equity, but they also impact and limit the experiences of the broader population: fathers lose out on time with their children, same-sex couples are challenged

with navigating a narrow system, and people are increasingly expected to embody and promote equality yet are born into a system that is inherently unequal from the start. This article focuses primarily on heterosexual relationships—the impact of SPL on other family structures warrants additional study.

WHY IS (WELL DESIGNED) SPL GOOD FOR GENDER EQUITY?

I. ROLE-MODELLING EQUITY IN THE HOME

To understand SPL's full impact, it is necessary to situate the policy within the wider context of United Kingdom parental leave. Without SPL, new mothers receive 52 weeks of Statutory Maternity Leave and 39 weeks of Statutory Maternity Pay (*see Appendix 1*). New fathers, on the other hand, receive a maximum of two weeks of Statutory Paternity Leave and Pay. Occupational Maternity and Paternity Pay overlay the statutory offering and vary considerably by organization, though the disparity in

length for men and women is consistent with statutory leave. Not only is differing maternity and paternity leave incompatible with non-nuclear family structures, but it also firmly establishes women as carers and fathers as workers. This sets a visible precedent for traditional gender roles from the start of a child's life.

SPL helps equalize the division of childcare across parents.[2] Besides the act of breast-feeding, there are few parenting tasks that cannot be shared, yet only 31 percent of working parents purport to split childcare equally.[3] Women, often heralded for their "mother's instinct," are given a head start in the current system as they spend more time with their infants. The three fathers interviewed for this article corroborated that SPL, which they took advantage of, helped to equalize family and household responsibilities. Moreover, the benefits of SPL extend far beyond a child's first year. If men are more involved in the early years of childcare, they are more likely to stay involved as their children grow up.[4] A Swedish father who took advantage of SPL corroborated that it "set the agenda for the next 10 to 20 years" both in terms of domestic labor division between him and his wife and his relationship with their children.

2. EQUALIZING ABSENCE AND OPPORTUNITY IN THE WORKPLACE

In addition to equalizing the presence of parents in the home, SPL equalizes the absence of parents from the workplace. The status quo of UK fathers taking leave tantamount to a long vacation per child enables most men's careers to continue largely uninterrupted. The same is not true for women. Time out of work limits career prospects; it directly hampers professional skill development and indirectly influences hiring, women's employment status, and equal representation in certain occupations. While there is a gender gap in time taken *out* of the workforce, it is unreasonable to expect equity *within* work.

Women are more likely to have a child than not and, if they do, mothers are granted more leave and greater benefits than their male counterparts.[5] As absences are highly costly for employers, this has significant implications for hiring and attrition and perpetuates gender bias, since men are regarded comparatively efficient hires. This ranges from inappropriate interview questions scoping out women's likeliness to have children to directly letting women go (an estimated 54,000 women per year lose their jobs due to pregnancy or maternity).[6,7] The negative implications are clear for potential mothers—missed opportunities—but there are negative spillovers for everyone: women who have no intentions of having children are nonetheless penalized on the basis of their sex, and companies lose out on diverse talent. Bias is most keenly felt in small, resource-constrained organizations that struggle to cover absent employees; gender equity feels like an unaffordable luxury. Rather than unenforceable laws or positive discrimination to counter such bias, SPL addresses the root of the problem by spreading the absence and associated costs of parental leave across genders. This greatly diminishes the "motherhood penalty" in favor of a more balanced "parenthood penalty," thereby reducing employer discrimination.

Unproductive gender stereotypes in employment are pervasive. Male-dominated industries are often characterized as highly competitive, and there is a real (or perceived) urgency to be "at the forefront" in order to succeed. Roles where women tend to dominate are rarely characterized as such. In less ruthless

environments, exit and re-entry and long absences are less of a hindrance (though nevertheless still challenging). One dad observed that even in Sweden—which is heralded as progressive when it comes to parenting—it was simply "not accepted" for friends with "highly competitive" jobs to spend six months at home. SPL cannot eradicate demanding jobs, but it equalizes career opportunities by normalizing periods of leave for all new parents.[8]

By neutralizing the impact of having children across genders, SPL also establishes a foundation for economic equality. The United Kingdom suffers a persistent gender pay gap—British women earn, on average, 16 percent less than men per hour.[9] Having children is one cause. The mean gender pay gap widens from approximately 8 percent before children are born to around 30 percent when the eldest child reaches age 20.[10] On average, during this period, mothers will have been in paid work for three years less than fathers, spent 10 fewer years in full-time work, and seven more years in part-time work.[11] Women are currently over three times as likely to be employed part time than men (40 percent compared to 13 percent of men).[12] These differences in labor market experience contribute to the majority of the pay gap that emerges after children, most notably the lack of wage progression in part-time work.[13] SPL helps to create a virtuous cycle: by equalizing the absence of parents at work, it advances pay parity, which in turn facilitates greater uptake of SPL. Fairer employment opportunities also perpetuate equity in later life; levelling the playing field in the type and amount of work that women do relative to men would help close the gender pension gap.[14]

3. EQUITY HELPS EVERYONE

When it comes to childcare, society benefits if we think of *parents* and not mothers first. The cultural associations of mothers as caregivers are strong and examples of sexism against male carers are widespread. In the same way that women seek equality in spaces men previously dominated, mothers should make space for fathers in traditionally mother-centric spaces. The three dads interviewed have all observed maternal gatekeeping behavior: women who would insist on looking after their children alone; mothers reluctant to leave children alone with their fathers; women who deemed it their "right" to utilize their full maternity leave allowance; and women who "wouldn't let" their partner take SPL. One dad was shocked at the unexpected behavior of some mothers he knew: "No matter how feminist they were before, [when they have children] the mother insists on a very classical set up."

Fathers are increasingly expressing a desire to spend more time with their children.[15] Unlike the current disparity in paternity and maternity leave, which can leave one parent feeling excluded, SPL caters for "a new generation of fathers under 35 who want to do things differently."[16] None of the dads interviewed were directly motivated by gender equity at a societal level, but they agreed upon the immense personal gain—"I am a *huge* fan," championed one. They all spoke of the close bonds that they built with their newborn children and, overall, extremely highly of their leave. One father directly challenged the view that quality time can compensate for absence—"It really is quantity time that matters somehow." Breaking down gender roles brings about broader benefits too. In the same way that household responsibilities need not fall to one gender, the burden of breadwinning—a role traditionally assumed by the patriarch of the family—is also equalized. It could be

beneficial to spread the burden of financial provision and the accompanying pressure across both parents.

Attitudes towards gendered roles in parenting cannot be changed overnight or with policy alone. Nevertheless, policy is a tool that can facilitate cultural change and advancement towards parity. In Sweden, where SPL has existed since 1974, "latte dads" are not considered exceptional, and shared parenting is more accepted.[17]

HOW CAN WE MAKE SPL MORE EFFECTIVE?

> "I consider England as progressive in most parts compared to Sweden, but when it comes to this, it is quite shocking [. . .] a lot can be done"
> - A Swedish father who took SPL

With less than 2 percent uptake in the United Kingdom, SPL does not deliver the benefits outlined above. Three main areas require improvement.

I. INCREASE PAY AND INCENTIVES

Inadequate pay is the primary reason behind the low uptake of SPL in the United Kingdom.[18] For reference, statutory pay equates to an annual income of approximately £8,000 a year, less than half a UK living wage.[19] Where fathers earn more than mothers (as most do), and fathers are not eligible for enhanced occupational SPL benefits, it does not make financial sense, in the short term, to utilize statutory pay instead of company-enhanced maternity leave benefits. Even progressive parents who intend to share parenting responsibilities utilize alternatives to SPL.[20] It is unrealistic to expect households to significantly reduce their incomes. To make SPL an attractive option, it must therefore be resourced with appropriate wage levels. For example, Swedish parents receive 80 percent of their normal salary.[21] Going a

step further, SPL could be positively incentivized, as in Germany, where parents receive two extra months for opting in.

The challenge lies in how to fund SPL. The levers available sit with government and employers: maternity, paternity, and shared statutory leave and pay, and occupational leave and pay. Various stakeholders advocate different solutions. Working Families, for instance, champions lengthened paternity leave, no reduction to the existing provision for mothers, and a continuation of SPL with a portion of transferable maternity leave—"it shouldn't be a zero-sum game."[22] However, this option and another advocated solution, raising statutory Shared Parental Pay, are tough sells to resource-constrained employers.

A more realistic alternative is to redistribute the current occupational maternity budget to parents—regardless of gender—since most employers already provide occupational maternity benefits as part of company policy. The United Kingdom could mandate that any supplement beyond the state contribution must be granted equally to women *and* men. This solution is particularly compelling as it can be executed at no extra cost if company maternity provision is redistributed rather than added to. Some UK organizations are role-modelling SPL occupational pay in accordance with occupational maternity pay; however, this falls short until *all* organizations in the United Kingdom enhance SPL benefits.[23] Rather than companies budgeting for costly absences by *women* who have children, that same cost could be spread across all employees, regardless of gender.

2. EXPAND ELIGIBILITY AND IMPROVE EXECUTION

Eligibility for SPL could be widened: agency workers, contract workers, and

self-employed people are not currently eligible. There are also constraints around notice periods, minimum earnings, and tenure—a likely increasingly significant hurdle during the pandemic, especially for women.[24] Despite being an extremely simple concept, SPL is not simple in practice. There are several variable inputs (both parents' incomes, both parents' occupational benefits) that make it difficult to sketch out broadly applicable general scenarios. Working out the specifics is therefore left to each family. The fathers' accounts of the process of taking SPL in Sweden and the United Kingdom were vastly different. In Sweden, "The system, at least for me, made it very easy to split it [. . .] it is not complicated." The UK dad, on the other hand, told a different story. He spent a large amount of time studying the policy and engaging back and forth with HR: "It is quite a lot of hassle and a lot of forms to fill in [. . .] it could be quite daunting if HR was not supportive or not used to administering it." Coordination between parents' employers is required and cajoling may be necessary. If the government wishes to encourage the uptake of SPL, it needs to expand eligibility, lessen the burden on new parents to understand and enact the process, and raise national awareness of the policy, clearly communicating its benefits.

3. RETHINK THE SYSTEM

SPL marks progress for gender equity but it is not effectively changing the behavior of UK parents. This has a lot to do with the unequal legacy system. To start, it would help to redefine what society considers good. Currently, "good" maternity leave is based upon length and amount of pay. The downsides of skill stagnation and reduced earning potential are largely invisible, hard to measure, and much less frequently discussed, for instance, relative to occupational maternity benefits. They are therefore rarely factored into childcare decisions. "Best in class" maternity policies, whose benefits exceed those offered by SPL, can *hinder* its uptake.

Furthermore, bias is built into the policy as it requires mothers to give up their maternity leave to transfer any part of it as SPL. This counters the apparent intent of the policy to equalize childcare responsibilities across parents, as it presumes the mother to be the primary carer in the first instance, adding weight to existing cultural hurdles. Behavioral economics would also suggest this element hampers the policy's effectiveness as people are loss averse. Apportioning parental leave equally from the start (aside from the period surrounding birth) would establish a powerful default. In practice, the United Kingdom should adopt the "use it or lose it" component that features in other countries' better-performing parental leave policies. For reference, 90 percent of dads in Sweden take at least some portion of SPL.[25]

Furthermore, while SPL exists alongside the legacy system of distinct maternity and paternity leave, its chances of success are limited. In its current form, SPL feels like a sticking plaster solution to address a problem of inequity that permeates a much larger system. As society has evolved away from the traditional gendered family model, parental leave policy has been amended and SPL added. What is needed, however, is a complete and comprehensive overhaul of the current provision to meet today's needs. If SPL included everyone and was financed effectively and consistently for men and women, separate maternity and paternity policies would become redundant, and SPL could be the default and only policy required.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Overall, while childcare decisions for each family may make sense within the constraints of current parental leave policy, these constraints exacerbate pervasive gender roles: vastly different lengths of parental leave mean women are seen as mothers before workers and men as workers before fathers. The effect of these roles permeates far beyond childcare and creates inequity in broader domestic responsibilities, employment opportunities, and ultimately wealth in old age. The United Kingdom's current SPL policy, with its devastatingly low uptake, is doing little to counter these deeply entrenched norms. That said, while it is easy to criticize the nascent policy, it is undoubtedly a step in the right direction, and time is needed to achieve significant change. The embryonic policy is also subject to review; there is hope that an upcoming impact assessment will provide greater clarity on its adoption and result in implementation improvements.

To encourage uptake and ultimately realize the benefits of SPL, this article recommends the following changes. At a minimum, the financial barriers to taking SPL need to be removed. This can be done cost-effectively by reallocating employers' existing maternity provision equally across genders. In addition, eligibility for SPL needs to be expanded to include more families. Furthermore, policy can be implemented in a way that increases its effectiveness as a mechanism for change; to further encourage adoption, SPL should be made the default policy with "use it or lose it" built in to encourage fathers to utilize their portion of leave. With these changes, SPL becomes a compelling and inexpensive solution to eradicate gender roles and advance progress towards gender parity. SPL is a particularly efficacious tool as it addresses a watershed moment in parents' lives where, for most men and women, their experiences diverge significantly and inequality emerges. I remain deeply optimistic about the power of SPL as a solution for gender equity and am excited for it to evolve in the coming years.

APPENDIX I: KEY TERMS

Key terms	Men	Women
Statutory Leave	Up to two weeks.[26]	52 weeks (two to four are compulsory).[27]
Statutory Pay	Fathers "might be eligible" for one or two weeks' pay.[28]	First six weeks: 90% of average weekly earnings (no maximum). Subsequently: £151.20 per week / 90% of average weekly earnings (whichever is lower). Capped at 39 weeks.[29]
Statutory Shared Parental Pay	£151.20 per week / 90% of average weekly earnings (whichever is lower). Capped at 39 weeks.[30]	
Occupational Pay	Employer discretion, varies considerably by organization.	

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INTERSECTIONALITY

THE DILEMMA OF DOUBLE-MARGINALIZATION

BISEXUAL WOMEN & INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Jessie Miller

Jessie Miller is a current PhD student in sociology at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her focus is on queer victimization and how whiteness operates in public institutions. In her free time, she runs a nonprofit called Bisexual Queer Alliance Chicago, where she has been the President of the Board for the last two years. She has a great passion for issues pertaining to bisexuals and health and is hoping to form a National Bi+ Domestic Violence Coalition within the next year. On the rare chance Jessie is not working, you can find her beatboxing or watching/reading any of the Nickelodeon Avatar television or book series.

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE (IPV) against bisexual women is a public health crisis that has been hidden from view. Sixty-one percent of bisexual women have experienced IPV within their lifetime, and 46 percent of bisexual women have been raped. [1,2] Bisexual women face double marginalization by both straight and LGBTQ communities, as well as hypersexualization, bi erasure (the denial of the existence or legitimacy of bisexuality), and isolation. [3] Discussion of this double marginalization is critical as bisexual survivors of IPV have their needs unmet by *both* LGBTQ anti-violence programs and traditional, straight domestic violence organizations who do not know how to treat bisexual survivors. At a Bisexual Queer Alliance Chicago panel held in late 2019, attended by bisexual survivors, bisexual health researchers, and both LGBTQ and heterosexual domestic violence providers, panelists reported that domestic violence providers, counselors, and therapists still apply damaging stereotypes to the bisexual community. [4] Both panelists and audience members experienced providers

who believed their patients were confused about their sexual identity or generally indecisive as people, or providers who were too curious about bisexuals' lives and asked inappropriate and insensitive questions of patients.

The plight of bisexual women survivors of IPV boils down to one major issue: education. However, there is an easy fix to ensure education surrounding bi+ survivors of IPV and sexual assault. Federal and state governments should intervene by tying Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) funds to bi+ education, ensuring proper funding to create trainings on bi+ issues of IPV, and creating standards of care for bi+ survivors. At both the federal and state level, policies mandating education and funding should be leveraged to reduce the physical and mental violence bisexual women experience daily from both abusers and domestic violence agencies.

Because the Office of Violence Against Women (OVW) runs both national and state grant programs, VAWA funds received at either level should mandate education around bi+ survivors of IPV and sexual

assault. OVW, which is housed within the Department of Justice, runs 19 grant programs aimed at funding domestic violence agencies and organizations, providing housing for survivors, increasing training of agencies and police, and providing legal assistance.[5] Four of these programs are formula grants, meaning states apply for them and local agencies can in turn apply to the state. The remaining 15 all have differing funding objectives, and organizations from across the country can apply directly to OVW for the grant funds.[6] The OVW can mandate that anyone that receives these VAWA funds, whether a state or an agency, must be trained on issues related to bi+ survivors of IPV. States, who have agencies directly apply to their VAWA funds, can also mandate bi+ education, which would strengthen the efforts of the federal government.

OVW grants already include clauses ensuring education around issues of domestic violence, serving underserved populations, and providing funding for the necessary trainings.[7] However, none of these clauses are bi+ focused, meaning they miss the needs of bi+ women and allow this public health crisis to continue. Hence, there are a few policy changes that can be easily enacted to address the issue of bi+ IPV and support this long-ignored community. One policy option is for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and OVW to provide resources and mandate education around bi+ survivors of sexual assault.[8] This is supported by advocates Heron Greenesmith, Dr. Lauren Beach, and Dr. Herukhuti, who laid out the idea in a 2015 meeting with White House officials. In order to provide funding for education at the state level, OVW can allocate a portion of STOP grant cultural-specific funding to LGBTQ-specific programming, with at least 50 percent

of LGBTQ-targeted funds dedicated to bisexual- and transgender-specific programming.[9] Lastly, federal funding and grants by OVW for domestic violence shelters and sexual assault crisis centers also need to require education and funding around bi+ survivors to be taught by LGBTQ researchers.[10] Mandating education could also include a by-product of creating standards of care for bi+ survivors of IPV, something sorely lacking at both the state and federal level.

Bisexual women are hit with prejudice and discrimination from both of the communities they are supposedly a part of as LGBTQ *and* straight domestic violence agencies miss their specific needs. This should be addressed at both the state and the federal level by mandating education on bisexual survivors of IPV as a requirement for domestic violence agencies receiving funding. Every day that federal and state governments and domestic violence providers go without enacting lifesaving policies is another day that bi+ individuals face violence and are made invisible. Bisexual women deserve to live safe, healthy lives. It is time to finally begin addressing this public health crisis.

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EXCLUDED

GENDER AND JIM CROW IN THE US CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Sophie Campbell

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ON THE EVE of the 2020 US presidential election, I found myself talking to Kelsey, a young woman from rural Wisconsin. Kelsey was one of the many formerly incarcerated students from Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe College who responded to a call to aid me with my research. As a former prisoner myself, I was keen to learn more about the inequities experienced by other women of color in the criminal justice system.

Despite the late timing of our interview, Kelsey came across as bright, funny, and engaging. Had I not been to prison myself, I would have been taken aback from the moment she turned on her camera during our Zoom call. She was the very antithesis of what you expect a former female prisoner to look and sound like. Both of us were painfully aware of the stereotypes that society expects female offenders to conform to: mentally unstable, prone to anger, or just plain needy. The last two habits are easy to pick up when you're placed in an environment where you have to rely on guards for ordinary items that are treated as luxuries on the inside; this includes everything from sanitary towels to toilet roll.

Sentenced to under two years, Kelsey made the deliberate decision to treat going to prison as a "learning opportunity," enrolling in in-prison courses such as criminal justice. While acknowledging that "there is a stigma" against women who have been to prison, affecting their ability to find suitable employment, when Kelsey walked past those prison gates for the final time, she told herself with absolute conviction: 'I've been to prison. I'm done with it." If she was aware that she's the exception, she didn't give it away. According to a 2016 study, the average rate of recidivism among former Wisconsin female inmates stands between 25 and 30 percent.[1]

Later that night, when I was in the middle of transcribing Kelsey's interview, I couldn't help myself from saying aloud "Good for you" whenever I relistened to the obstacles she overcame to land a good job and resume her studies that, like myself, she accomplished relatively quickly. Stories about incarcerated women of color are rare and often do a poor job of humanising the women behind the headlines. Perhaps this explains society's indifference towards them.

Whenever I tell people that the United States has the highest female incarceration rate in the world, I'm treated to mostly blank expressions.[2] However, every year our criminal justice system willingly disappears hundreds of thousands of women from predominantly low-income or racially marginalised communities.[3] This deliberate act of disappearing takes two forms: disenfranchisement and discrimination. Presently, one in every 50 Black women is ineligible to vote because of their criminal record.[4] The data for Native and Hispanic women is unknown given the lack of research in this area, despite their high rate of incarceration. Former female prisoners are subjected to legalized discrimination across employment, education, and housing, which has consequences felt long after their sentences. This deliberate disappearing of women like me was one of the main reasons why I chose to reach out to former prisoners—to find out why and exactly whose purpose it serves. My search took me back to the beginnings of the American penal system.

The 13th Amendment to the US Constitution may have abolished slavery in general terms, but it made an exception for prisoners who could be legally transformed into "slaves of the state."[5] This led to the rapid expansion of convict leasing, a system of forced penal labor in which Southern states leased prisoners to commercial entities. The traditional narrative contends that convict leasing disproportionately targeted Black men who were arrested for criminal acts such as vagrancy.[6] However, throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, Black women continued to outnumber Black men in prison, 47.5 percent to 29 percent, respectively.[7] In states like Virginia, Black women were classified as "field laborers with a productive capacity equivalent to that of men." This meant women were just as likely to be arrested when seen out in public and, once sent to convict lease camps, made to perform manual labor such as growing cotton and digging ditches.[8] Those who refused to work were punished—in some cases beaten to death.

When the convict system was finally eliminated in 1908, it was replaced by the chain gang, where groups of prisoners dressed in white-and-black-striped uniforms were chained together to work, breaking rocks or building railways. When we think of the chain gang, we tend to visualise Black men. However, the painful sounds of women on the chain gang, who up until 1936 were made up entirely of women of color, could also be heard.[9] Convict leasing, the chain gang, and the system of parole that emerged in 1908 had the effect of permanently associating women of color, particularly dark-skinned women, with low pay, hard labor, and degradation. This even applied when prisoners achieved positions of responsibility, such as Georgia's Mattie Crawford, who was made the "sole blacksmith of the farm," after being sentenced to life imprisonment for killing her abusive stepfather.[10] Her status as a prisoner meant she would forever be stranded between "a free labor market that refused to admit her as a skilled worker" and the prison labor system "that would only allow her to work in chains."[11]

When I was speaking to Kelsey, one thing we agreed on was that prison was "definitely not rehabilitative." Whether it was seeing women who threw tantrums being rewarded for their behaviour or having to play the waiting game, whenever we identified opportunities that we thought could help us better ourselves, prison still did not seem rehabilitative. In the end, Kelsey was only able to identify two prison programs that led to viable routes of employment:

the cosmetology program and the construction program. Both ran for two years, but she needed to have been in prison for a minimum of two years before being placed on the waiting list; this meant prisoners with sentences of four years or less were ineligible to apply. In relation to the jobs women could do around the prison, there was a choice between "kitchen work and janitorial work." This practice of restricting women to trajectories leading to low-paid or unskilled labor extends far beyond Wisconsin. In Texas, there are 21 job-certification programs available for male offenders, including technology and advanced industrial design. For women, there are only two programs: office administration and culinary arts.[12]

Even when female prisoners like Mattie Crawford are trained to perform skilled work, they are still caught inside the trap of the prison-industrial complex. Nowadays, even training in making circuit boards or lingerie for luxury brand Victoria's Secret does not earn a female offender equal rights to fair treatment. She is prized when her labour means "No strikes. No union organizing. No health benefits" or unemployment insurance, and discarded once her chains are lifted and she demands to be treated like an ordinary employee.[13] It makes returning to prison look like the easy option. Currently, 66 percent of women released from American jails are rearrested within three years.[14] When women attempt to break the cycle of reoffending, they find the odds stacked against them. Formerly incarcerated Black, Hispanic and White women have an unemployment rate of 40 percent, 39.42 percent, and 23.2 percent respectively, compared to 6.4, 6.9, and 4.3 percent of Black, Hispanic and White women without criminal convictions.[15] I was unable to find unemployment data on formerly incarcerated Native women, but

the unemployment rate for other formerly incarcerated women of color, who are often of prime working age, exceeds that of men from the same ethnic backgrounds.[16] When formerly incarcerated women of color do find work, it is more likely to be part time and with an income that pays significantly below the poverty line, irrespective of their work history or qualifications.[17]

Despite the bleak outlook, most of the women I spoke to left prison feeling positive. Kelsey cited the education she's receiving as keeping her on track: "Without education, I would not be as stable nor as successful as I am today. Education has given me opportunities, especially when staying busy was essential." However, I'm painfully conscious that I, and the women I spoke to, are a minority within a minority. As women of color who have been to prison, the lives we're living now should not be so positive, at least not according to the statistics. When I left prison, many officers believed I would end up right back where I started—in a cell. At the time of leaving, I had no home and no identifiable employment prospects. While having a positive mindset helps, perhaps the fact that Kelsey and I were old enough to know who we were when we went to prison and what we were capable of meant we paid no attention to the low expectations other people had of us.

When the Black Lives Matter protest erupted during the summer, like most people, I thought we were entering a new era of race relations, where society would be held accountable for the discrimination experienced by people of color, especially within the criminal justice system. However, the lack of attention paid towards female prisoners has emphasized the disregard we've always shown to incarcerated women of color, who, in the years following the abolition of slavery, became the primary

victims of a system designed to keep us at the bottom of society. Some feel that by including women of color in debates concerning men and mass incarceration, we risk diluting the issue, but history has demonstrated that racial equality cannot be achieved if one group is prioritised at the expense of another. Especially because women of color, who are more likely to be single mothers and the primary breadwinner, often hold the fate of their children in their hands. Practices that limit their life chances also compromise their families' access to decent education, healthcare, and housing, increasing the likelihood of intergenerational poverty. If we're serious about reforming the criminal justice system, then we must listen to the stories of women affected by it. Otherwise, we'll continue to uphold a system that preys on those most disadvantaged by racial and social inequality.

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THE HELMS AMENDMENT

A REMNANT OF RACISM AND COLONIALISM IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

Lienna Feleke-Eshete

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In 1973, the US Supreme Court issued a decision in the landmark *Roe v. Wade* case that established the constitutional right for a pregnant woman to have an abortion without excessive government restriction. This decision fundamentally changed the landscape of abortion politics in the United States and has been unsuccessfully challenged in court countless times. While pro-choice America celebrated this decision, the anti-choice policymakers in Congress focused their attention to another area of US policy where they could plant their anti-abortion beliefs.

In December of that same year, anti-choice members of Congress led and passed the Helms Amendment, an amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. The Helms Amendment, sometimes referred to as the global counterpart to the Hyde Amendment, prohibits US foreign aid from being used for the "performance of abortion as a method of family planning" or to "motivate or coerce any person to practice abortions."[1,2] In theory, the policy has an exception to allow abortion in the cases of rape, incest, or life endangerment of the person seeking services; in reality, it has been implemented as a complete ban on abortion. The Helms Amendment was the first of 10 amendments in US policy passed over the course of 25 years that restrict or prohibit foreign assistance for abortion and/or family planning programs.[3] As the first abortion restriction in foreign assistance, which currently serves as the baseline for US engagement in abortion services globally, the Helms Amendment is extremely harmful and must be addressed immediately to revise the United States' global abortion politics. Policies restricting abortion in US foreign assistance were also enacted by presidents via Executive Order, such as the Mexico City policy (also known as the Global Gag Rule).[4] The Global Gag Rule (GGR), unlike the Helms amendment, is not in statute and can be removed or reinstated by presidents at their discretion.[5] The GGR also differs in that it applies to global health assistance funds, a subset of foreign assistance funds (approximately $11.2 billion in 2020), while the Helms Amendment applies to all foreign assistance funds (approximately $42.7 billion

in 2020).[6,7] In essence, the GGR restricts which organizations can receive US money, while the Helms amendment restricts what can be done with US money. In tandem, these policies restrict access to safe abortion globally and disproportionately impact Black and brown women, girls, and persons needing access to abortions in the Global South.

If you know anything about the policy's namesake, Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC), you will realize that the racialized and neo-colonial nature of the impact of the Helms amendment is intentional. Senator Jesse Helms served from 1973 to 2003 and during his tenure was chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee from 1995 to 2003. In his rhetoric and policy-making, Helms was an unabashed racist, homophobe, and misogynist with a clear disdain for abortion and foreign aid. During his campaign for Senate in 1990, Helms aired a racist advertisement on television accusing his challenger, Harvey Gantt, of supporting racial quotas.[8] As a US senator, Helms opposed nearly every civil rights bill proposed, including the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964, and publicly supported apartheid in South Africa.[9,10] In the *New York Times* in 1981, Senator Helms wrote that "crime rates and irresponsibility among Negroes are a fact of life which must be faced."[11] Throughout his Senate career, Helms introduced and supported homophobic legislation, including the Defense of Marriage Act, which would establish marriage only as a legal union of one man and one woman. In public, he unabashedly called homosexuals "weak, morally sick wretches" and blamed homosexuality for AIDS.[12] Despite his position as chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Senator Helms had an outspoken disdain for foreign aid, which he characterized as a "trillion dollars of the American taxpayers' money, much of it going down foreign ratholes to countries that constantly oppose us in the United Nations, and many which rejected concepts of freedom."[13] Notwithstanding his contempt for foreign aid, Senator Helms still fought to enact the Helms Amendment. In the context of Jesse Helms's legacy, it is clear that this amendment was created for a nefarious purpose—to control the bodies of Black and brown persons who need access to abortions, to influence abortion politics in countries receiving US assistance in a colonial manner, and to perpetuate the paternalistic idea that women do not know what is best for them, their families, or their communities.

Over the past 47 years, the impact of the Helms Amendment has been monitored in countries impacted by the policy around the globe. The documented impact has shown that the policy decreases access to safe abortion in countries receiving US funds and influences local abortion laws and politics in these same countries.[14] By prohibiting US funds from being spent on abortion, the Helms Amendment contributes to the lack of access to abortion services in country, particularly in low-income countries that are heavily reliant on US aid. As has been seen in the US context, restricting abortion access around the world does not decrease abortions; it makes abortions less safe.[15] According to the World Health Organization, restrictive laws, such as Helms, are a barrier to accessing safe abortion worldwide.[16] Every year, there are 121 million unintended pregnancies around the world, 61 percent of which end in abortion (approximately 73 million abortions per year), and 30 million of these abortions take place in unsafe conditions.[17] Globally, unsafe abortion results in approximately 23,000 preventable pregnancy-related deaths and 7 million

hospitalizations per year.[18,19] The United States should be addressing the unsafe abortion crisis not exacerbating it. To mitigate this unsafe abortion crisis, the United States should be implementing evidence-based and human rights-based foreign assistance policies and removing ideological policies like the Helms Amendment.

The Helms Amendment and other anti-abortion US policies also influence local abortion laws and politics in countries that are reliant on US funding. Countries that receive US funds, such as Sudan, Uganda, Mali, and Senegal, have laws that criminalize abortion and, often, these laws are vestiges of British, French, Belgian, or Portuguese colonization.[20] Local civil society organizations and activists, such as the Association of Senegalese Women Lawyers and the Center for Health, Human Rights and Development (CEHURD) in Uganda, have been advocating for the repeal and liberalization of these abortion policies; however, aid recipient countries fear losing US funding and, as a result, maintain these colonial-era laws.[21,22] Malawi, a former British colony that heavily relies on US funding, currently only allows abortion in cases of life endangerment of the pregnant person and obtaining an abortion under any other circumstances can result in incarceration for 7–14 years.[23] In 2015, the Malawian Parliament introduced a bill that would allow for safe abortion services in the cases of rape, incest, fetal anomaly, and danger to the mental or physical health or life of the pregnant person. However, the bill has stalled, despite support from a variety of local stakeholders, because the Malawian government feared upsetting the United States in light of the Global Gag Rule restrictions attached to US funds.[24] Malawi presents an example of the Helms Amendment, colonial Global North-Global South dynamics, and the United States' abortion politics hindering the progression of local laws and the advancement of the health of women, girls, and people who need abortions. The Helms Amendment is out of step with the trends of abortion politics globally and an undue influence on local politics and national sovereignty. Unsurprisingly, the Helms Amendment is also out of sync with US public opinion. Polling conducted by Ipas in 2020 found that the majority of Americans, across political parties, agree that women in developing countries deserve the safety and dignity of basic health care, including comprehensive reproductive health care.[25] By a 21-point margin, respondents favored overturning the Helms Amendment and supporting elected leaders who would do so.

Despite this, many politicians on both sides of the aisle have treated Helms as an immovable baseline governing abortion in foreign assistance for fear of upsetting the status quo. Thanks to advocacy by civil society organizations around the globe and the movement to decolonize global health, this is no longer the case. In the summer of 2020, Reps. Schakowsky (D-IL), Lowey (D-NY), Lee (D-CA), Speier (D-CA), Pressley (D-MA), DeGette (D-CO), and Torres (D-CA) introduced the Abortion is Health Care Everywhere Act (H.R. 7816), a historic bill that would repeal the Helms Amendment and erase part of Jesse Helms's ugly legacy.[26] Since then, the bill has secured over 120 cosponsors in Congress.

It is clear that the Helms Amendment is a failed policy. It has succeeded in some of its unspoken, shameful goals of bodily control of Black and brown women and girls and neo-colonial US influence on local abortion laws. However, by and large, the policy has been a failure; it has not

decreased abortion rates or protected life, as it has contributed to maternal mortality and morbidity from unsafe abortion. It is time for evidence-based, human rights-based, anti-colonial, anti-racist, and pro-abortion US policy. It is time to be rid of the legacy of Jesse Helms. It is time to repeal the Helms Amendment.[27]

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WHAT ABOUT THE LESBIANS?

LESBIAN ERASURE IN THE HISTORY OF THE AIDS CRISIS AND ITS IMPACT ON THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

Emily Nagel

Emily Nagel is a second-year student in the dual arts administration and policy and art history master's program at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. As a native Texan, she completed bachelor of arts degrees in French and European studies at the University of Texas. She has a passion for studying the cultural and political impact of art and is especially interested in art throughout and in response to the AIDS crisis. Her current work in Chicago focuses on art advocacy and how artistic practice can influence legislation and policy.

IN MORE WAYS than one, the AIDS crisis tore an empty space throughout the LGBTQ+ community. Along with taking hundreds of thousands of lives, the epidemic created a gap in history. A generation of Queer people, along with their stories and histories, were lost. Yet, the narrative of the AIDS crisis, already suffering from so much loss, tends to overlook an important piece of the story. Disease erases voices from marginalized communities, and these voices become harder to piece together when stories within the communities themselves are overlooked. The role of lesbians during the AIDS crisis represents an example of this overlooked history. While AIDS more dramatically affected the gay male population, there is little to no documentation of the organizing and community support provided by lesbians throughout the crisis. It is time that the stories of lesbians during the AIDS epidemic are told.

Lillian Faderman, author of *The Gay Revolution: The Story of Struggle,* writes that before the AIDS crisis, blatant sexism and "chauvinism" created division between gay men and lesbians. This was in part because many gay men did not feel that the stigma faced by lesbians was comparable to the exclusion that the gay men felt themselves. But when the destruction caused by the AIDS crisis was starting, there was "no time for animosity"—lesbians and gay men realized they needed to support each other to get through this devastating time.[1] In addition to the loss of gay men in the 1970s and 1980s, there was also a loss of lesbian representation in LGBTQ+ history.

This discussion will highlight the roles of lesbian organizers and caretakers, while also asking: Why have women been excluded from a narrative of a movement that already experiences an extreme loss of knowledge? What are the larger implications of the exclusion of Queer women in creating LGBTQ+-related policy? Additionally, this discussion will look at the women-run organizations' political leanings and how those political leanings compare to the legislative outcomes of the 20th and 21st centuries. Because they were often deemed too radical, the beliefs of lesbian-led organizations were pushed

aside by policymakers who favored providing temporary solutions that, in the long run, ignored systemic issues. Through this exploration, I will give a brief summary of organizing efforts during the AIDS crisis, focusing on lesbians' and women's involvement in community organization and political activism. I will then discuss political views central to the movement and the importance of more deeply understanding these organizing efforts when forging inclusive policy today. Many lesbian-run organizations had far-left beliefs that are often sidelined in LGBTQ+ history and were ignored in policy decisions of that time. The exclusion of those radical beliefs is evidenced by the lack of policy addressing systemic issues such as poverty, racism, and lack of healthcare access. Re-examining the ideals of women-run organizations in the 1980s presents an opportunity to move toward legislative actions that support the entire US population for the better.

THE AIDS CRISIS

Throughout the AIDS crisis, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that over 675,000 people died due to complications from AIDS. The majority of those deaths were of the LGBTQ+ community.[2] Queer people were disproportionally affected due to a lack of medical resources, stigma, and the Reagan administration's failure to act and insistence on ignoring the crisis. Some historians document AIDS becoming a major epidemic as early as 1980, but little was done by government officials throughout that decade. Jennifer Brier writes, "The [Domestic Policy Council] meeting held at the end of 1985 was only the fifth time the advisory body had discussed AIDS, and it was the only time, up to that point, that Reagan had attended a session with AIDS on the agenda."[3]

At the height of the AIDS crisis, after

so many deaths, the administration had only just begun to acknowledge that there was a public health crisis. Adding to the stigma of the AIDS crisis, Reagan signed an executive order that would add AIDS to the Dangerous Contagious Diseases list and allow the State Department to "deny visas to applicants with AIDS."[4] The Reagan administration's lack of action at the start of the crisis, combined with its stigma-producing policies, left these communities without resources and with a paralyzing fear of this disease. The stigma of living with HIV/AIDS was extremely strong even in the LGBTQ+ community. At the beginning of the epidemic, the press itself was not giving proper information or challenging the stigma, and even gay newspapers "did little to warn gay communities about AIDS."[5]

It was not until community organizing led by lesbian organizations, such as Alliance Against Women's Oppression in San Francisco, or *Gente*, that the LGBTQ+ community began to seek resources to supplement the government's failings. The lack of support completely ostracized the LGBT community on a national level. Perry N. Halkitis writes, "the AIDS crisis of the 1980s and 1990s created the circumstances by which we would come to demand that the government and society attend to our wellbeing. We would expect to be cared for and attended to like any other member of the population and, in that regard to no longer be victimized, harassed, or ridiculed -- stressors that continue to challenge our health to this day."[6] Members of the LGBTQ+ community were desperate to find financial support and medical care throughout this crisis. The actions of the Reagan administration drew a clear line in the sand that there would be no support for those living with AIDS. Because of the complete disregard for the community,

other LGBTQ+ people had to step in to offer whatever support they could, and thus lesbians began starting coalitions to fight AIDS.

THE ROLE OF LESBIAN- AND WOMEN-RUN ORGANIZATIONS

For the purpose of this discussion, I will examine only a few lesbian- and women-run organizations in order to focus on the reasons why these groups were excluded from LGBTQ+ history. fierce pussy was a specifically female-led coalition that used visual art and activism to raise awareness of the AIDS crisis and support those living with AIDS.[7] Other organizations such as the Alliance Against Women's Oppression in San Francisco, Dykes Against Racism Everywhere, and the Lesbians Against Police Violence all shifted their focus to provide support during the AIDS epidemic.[8] Straight and Queer women banded together during the Mothers Against AIDS March in 2001. Additionally, when considering women-led organizations, it is important to recognize lesbian organizations of color such as *Gente,* which was founded in the Bay Area in 1974. *Gente* was founded to support victims of rape but shifted focus to providing aid specifically for gay men of color.[9]

There are many reasons why lesbians are not recognized for their role in supporting the LGBTQ+ community during the AIDS crisis. For one thing, lesbians are left out of the conversation around AIDS because many health officials did not acknowledge that lesbians were at risk.[10] Many lesbian organizations were focused on community organizing, such as organizing blood drives when gay men were banned from donating blood and serving as buddies in the volunteer programs. However, lesbian organizations were involved not only in specifically providing services but also influencing policy, such as the work of ACT UP's Women's Caucus.

ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) started in New York City as a response to the lack of government assistance throughout the AIDS crisis. The Women's Caucus was created not only to empower lesbian activists to fight for LGBTQ+ aid but also to fight for women living with AIDS. Brier writes, "The Women's Caucus decision to target the CDC grew out of the fact that AIDS affected women differently than it did men [. . .] While both men and women could be infected with HIV in similar ways [. . .] the more advanced stages of AIDS did not manifest themselves the same way in women as in men."[11] AIDS developed more rapidly in women, and later symptoms presented themselves earlier in women's bodies, which was not expected by doctors and researchers at the time. The Reagan administration ignored the destruction within the male community, and there was little to no research on how this disease was affecting women. Lesbian organizers and activists did so much more than provide community aid; they organized on a political level and worked with gay men on issues outside, but directly related to, the AIDS crisis, such as housing, police violence, and economic equality. Brier writes, "The lesbians within ACT UP were very strong and vocal about not wanting to be made invisible once again."[12] In a community that was so deeply affected by AIDS, making any group invisible in their contributions disconnects the community as a whole. Lesbian and female organizations were involved in multiple planes of the AIDS crisis. Along with organizing politically, many women also wrote theory and attempted to work together to solve the problem plaguing the community. Brier continues, "Lesbians not only theorized and wrote about how sexuality

would change in the age of AIDS, but they also worked with gay men to chart an alternative response to the emerging AIDS epidemic, one based explicitly on gay liberation and implicitly on feminism."[13]

RADICAL POLITICS IN THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

The LGBTQ+ community has a reputation for radical politics due to the legacy of the Stonewall Uprising, but these left-wing beliefs originated before 1969. Daniel Rivers writes that radical political beliefs became popular in the LGBTQ+ community as early as the 1950s. Many of these beliefs were grounded in anti-Vietnam war movements. Activists "embraced draft resistance, helped war resisters go underground with the aid of extensive lesbian feminist networks, and took part in anti-racist work under the leadership of lesbians and gay men of color."[14] The response to the Vietnam war created anti-war rhetoric in the LGBTQ+ community that connected these radical ideas to "demands for sexual and gender freedom and LGBT civil rights [. . .] out of early gay liberation coalition politics, an enduring commitment to genderqueer, anti-racist, anti-capitalist, feminist, anti-homophobic and anti-militarist political perspective emerged alongside the liberal reformist politics."[15] For these organizers, there was a clear connection between radical left-wing beliefs, the AIDS crisis, and gay liberation.

Brier writes that LGBT organizations "imagined a response to AIDS that would reinvigorate gays and lesbians in a struggle for a more systemic liberation [. . .] mobilizing against homophobic oppression was the only way to address the roots of the AIDS epidemic."[16] Providing aid during the AIDS epidemic was obviously a priority for lesbian organizations, but the larger issue of how to address the crucial concerns around systemic violence and marginalization was also at hand. Rivers writes of lesbian organizers in 1987 in Chicago clashing with police violence, stating, "the civil disobedience served as a catalyst to the activism of the AIDS era, which in turn has contributed to the foundations of a modern public health paradigm emphasizing social justice and health equity, including an expectation for competent and appropriate health care for LGBTQ people."[17] The lack of action during the AIDS crisis from the Reagan administration created a void in the LGBTQ+ community that needed to be filled with community organizing. In working to secure needs such as medical care and housing, organizers recognized that these issues are intertwined on a larger systemic scale. Fischer writes, "Out of this moment came coalitions between organizations fighting against police harassment and a political perspective that linked racism and homophobia in police violence and housing discrimination."[18] In recognizing the connection between police violence, housing discrimination, and the AIDS crisis, these coalitions asserted that these issues went much further than simply finding the cure for HIV. By ignoring the missions and beliefs of radical lesbian- and female-run coalitions, policymakers and activists also ignore policy issues that affect women and members of the LGBTQ+ community at large.

Halkitis sees an intersection between multiple movements of the time, stating, "The Stonewall Riots and AIDS activism, which would follow a decade later, were intertwined with the Women's Rights Movement [. . .] along with the African American Civil Rights movement were, and still are, the basis for an urgent change needed in the dynamics of American Society."[19] Many of these important social movements happened around the same

time and dealt with closely linked issues of social justice and equal rights. While contemporary LGBTQ+ activist movements have often focused on marriage equality, there are still so many intersectional issues that affect Queer women and have been left out of the mainstream discussion, such as the fight for paid family leave and access to women's healthcare.

CONCLUSION

LGBTQ+ history has only just begun to include stories that are not only of white, gay men, and it is important to recognize this in order to put the power back into the hands of those who desperately need it. The AIDS crisis showed many members of the LGBTQ+ community the intersectionality of issues plaguing Queer people, people of color, and people living in poverty and without medical care. Gay men were the main victims of the AIDS epidemic, but the community at large showed up to provide aid, and it is important to recognize their place in the narrative. Recognition of intersectional community support will empower members of these communities to come together for others who need it. White women can come to support women of color. Gay men can recognize the struggle of their Queer sisters. Cisgender women can uplift transgender women. Halkitis writes, "To this day, we continue to challenge this monolith of power and privilege as White, straight, cisgender male Americans fight to hold onto the reins of power and privilege at any cost."[20]

Including these stories and histories creates a fuller picture of the intersection of issues concerning the LGBTQ+ community, women, and people of color. "The result is a richer, more complicated history of LGBT activism and organizing in the context of the post liberation era."[21] There are still problems with housing, police violence,

access to medical care, homophobia, racism, and misogyny that are much too large for any one specific community to tackle alone. By recognizing the radical policies of radical lesbian-run organizations, there is potential for implementing policies that tackle larger systemic issues faced by the LGBT community. Halkitis writes, "In these and the myriad other actions that are not recorded in history books, we were fighting for our rights, and in doing so, we were battling for our individual health and for the health of the entire population."[22] The actions of lesbian and female organizers throughout the AIDS crisis were more than hosting blood drives: they challenged the status quo and tackled issues such as poverty, racism, and violence. After the fight for marriage equality, LGBTQ+ activists can turn to the previous work done by their lesbian sisters to fight against police violence and work towards creating safe and economically stable communities. The inclusion of this history reintroduces these beliefs back into Queer and feminist spaces that can be then introduced in policy decisions that benefit the population as a whole.

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AFRICA NEEDS FUTURE-FOCUSED FEMALE LEADERS

Abosede Modupe Alimi and Jessica Austin

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Abosede is a tri-sector leader with over 17 years' experience working across the nonprofit, private, and public sectors as a development professional working to improve the health, education, and economic outcomes in over 30 states in Nigeria and five cities across West Africa. Until her enrolment at the Harvard Kennedy School as a mid-career, MC/MPA Mason Fellow, she was the Director, Strategy, Funding and Stakeholder Management at the Lagos State Employment Trust Fund (LSETF) and part of a team creating jobs in Africa's largest city. Abosede is now on a new mission to increase women's political representation in Nigeria as Co-founder of ElectHER, an end-to-end women's political advancement initiative that addresses the under-representation of women in elective office in Nigeria through behavioural change communication, skills development, and funding mobilization. The initiative's goal is to engage, encourage, equip, and enable women to decide, run, and win elections.

IF STUDIES SHOW that women's economic empowerment is linked to a country's economic growth, why have African leaders not prioritised an inclusive economic agenda?[1,2] Considering female leaders are more likely to pursue structural change and tackle discriminatory policies, the fact that women only make up 23.9 percent of legislatures in Africa means the lip service paid to female economic empowerment is not translated into policies that will enable women to be fully active economic citizens. We see then how empowering female political leaders in turn empowers females in the economy.

WHY IS A LACK OF GENDERED ECONOMIC GROWTH AN ISSUE?

Persistent gender inequality is a significant constraint to Africa's ability to reach its economic potential.[3] Female workers make up only 28.2 percent of full-time workers in Africa's economy, meaning overall economic gains for women are significantly less than those of men.[4] In addition, African women are more than twice as likely as men to provide unpaid domestic labor, limiting their ability to participate in the formal economy.[5] From a fairness perspective, the structural barriers that produce these results are clearly an issue. From an economic perspective, it makes little sense to exclude half of the potential labor force merely because of their gender.

African women have been described as a "powerful untapped economic resource."[6] A quarter of African women are early-stage entrepreneurs—not because they see it as a solution to poverty but because they are taking initiative to satisfy gaps in the market.[7] However, many businesses run by women remain micro-enterprises. They are constrained by limited access to—and the high cost of—credit, credential and documentation requirements, access to land, limited financial knowledge, mentorship,

and ongoing support.[8] For female-owned businesses to reach the stage where they can create jobs at scale and significantly contribute to overall GDP, these barriers need to be removed.

WHO WILL ENSURE THE NECESSARY CHANGE IF FEMALE LEADERS ARE ABSENT?

A study in India showed higher economic growth in constituencies that had elected females.[9] Female politicians were more effective at improving human capital outcomes, particularly access to education and health, which in turn led to sustainable growth that is better felt by all, regardless of gender. We need female leaders who create long-term targets that will work to close the gaps in education and formal employment and provide access to assets and the inputs of production. Female leaders need to be valued for these skills and perspectives that they bring to government—not merely because they fulfil a quota. There is evidence that the removal of gender-based barriers to growth will not only benefit women but will also make a significant contribution to Africa realizing its economic potential.[10]

Unfortunately, the challenges women face today are deeply rooted in colonial patriarchal systems. Prior to European arrival in Africa, many women held powerful decision-making positions and were regarded as key players in nation building.[11] With the elimination of basic rights to vote, an education, and employment opportunities, the marginalisation of women became entrenched within social and political systems, the results of which are still felt today. The continent now requires leaders who are willing to address these deep-seated systems to bring about the desired structural change needed for its development. Research shows that female leaders are more likely to push for this kind of change. They promote fairness, transparency, and impartiality, as well as improved service delivery.[12] Furthermore, when women hold leadership positions, they propose structural reforms that have a redistributive agenda, address structural inequalities, and provide social safety nets.[13]

"WE HAVE OTHER PRIORITIES"

A major trend that is important to highlight is that many leaders have argued that there are other key priorities, like education, that should come before attempts to increase female political representation. No doubt, greater educational attainment is the driver behind almost half of the growth countries experienced in the past 50 years, and a better-skilled population leads to improved economic growth.[14] Given this, increasing access to and the quality of education must be a priority for African countries if they are to attain their economic potential.

However, improving educational attainment and female political representation go hand in hand, as do other issues like healthcare, job creation, and economic opportunities. Female-led countries tend to have a more redistributive agenda where discriminatory policies are replaced with more inclusive ones. Increasing representation of women is likely to create better outcomes in these policy areas.

To ensure the promotion of economic growth, and for Africa to reach its economic potential, women need to be able to participate in the formal economy. However, treating the symptoms of their inability to do so is insufficient. We need to tackle what lies at the heart of these symptoms: discriminatory policies. To do this, Africa needs future-focused female leaders.
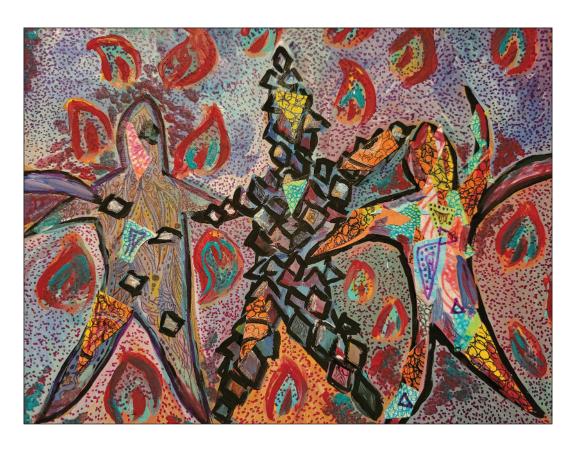
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SOON WE WILL REGATHER

Emily Wu

THE PERSONAL, THE PROFESSIONAL & THE POLICY

Anjali Patel

The implications of policy affect our (women's) professional and personal lives. Finding a sense of empowerment that stems from us and our support systems under the policies and systems that confine us is a part of individual growth. Understanding how these aspects of life deeply seep into each other is what this piece explores. The piece consists of three silhouettes. One silhouette represents the personal, one silhouette represents the professional, and one silhouette represents the policy. There are three different mediums (pen & ink, collage, and acrylic paint) that complete the silhouettes, but each medium is more apparent and used in each one of the silhouettes. This place-ment demonstrates distinction among these aspects of our lives while at the same time incorporating all mediums into all silhouettes, signifying how they are bound together in more ways than we may ever know or understand in one lifetime.

PHYSICAL SECURITY

NO MORE STOLEN SISTERS

AMERICA'S MURDERED AND MISSING INDIGENOUS WOMEN

Megan Linquiti

Megan Linquiti is a second-year master's in public policy student with a concentration in social and urban policy. Her previous experience is in the philanthropic sector, with a focus on poverty-reduction programs both in the United States and abroad. She is passionate about gender equity, especially policy that centers the needs of marginalized women.

IN THE EARLY 1600s, a 15-year-old Native American girl was kidnapped from her home in what is now called Virginia. She was raped and forced to marry an English adult, a process in which she had to convert to Christianity and adopt the name Rebecca. Ultimately, she died under mysterious circumstances in England, with some claiming she fell ill. Her family believed that she was murdered. This story of violence, kidnapping, and forced assimilation is the real story of the woman known as Pocahontas. It bears little resemblance to the Disney movie, in which Pocahontas falls in love with a white colonizer and saves him from her savage father. But the real story is consistent with America's treatment of Native women. Today, violence against Native American women continues at rates much higher than average and their stories continue to be forgotten, a trend that is born out of a long American history of settler-colonialism and erasing Native identities, stories, and cultures. Some Native women today consider Pocahontas one of the first "stolen sisters," some of whose stories and names have been lost to history, while the families and communities of others continue to fight for justice. This persistent violence against Native women is an issue of gender equity and racial justice that deserves more attention from social movements, the media, and policymakers at all levels of government. Despite some recent progress on addressing this crisis, it is imperative that policymakers build on this progress to protect Native women and ensure that both they and their communities have viable pathways to seek justice in response to violence.

Violence against Native American women continues at alarming rates across America. Major gaps in data collection persist, but even the limited data that is collected paints a grim picture. Four out of five Native women will experience violence in their lifetimes. Nationwide, violence is the third leading cause of death for Native women, and on some reservations, murder rates for women are 10 times higher than they are for other ethnicities.[1] In addition to facing higher murder rates, Native women are twice as likely to be assaulted or stalked and face higher rates of kidnapping

and trafficking.[2,3] Understanding who is perpetrating violence is vital to interrupting these patterns. While Native women face violence from both Native and non-Native perpetrators, they are more likely to be victimized by non-Native perpetrators. The majority of the murders of Native women are committed by non-Native people on Native lands, echoing the violence perpetrated against Pocahontas.[4] In fact, Native women today are five times more likely than non-Native women to experience interracial violence in some parts of the United States.[5] And almost all Native women who report having been abused identify at least one non-Native perpetrator.[6] Because of the ways in which jurisdiction for prosecution of these crimes is assigned, tribal governments are not given authority over cases in which a perpetrator is not Native, leaving them unable to pursue justice for crimes committed on their lands against their people.

Violence against Native populations is not new. Colonizing forces in North America perpetrated extreme violence against Native people, including forced assimilation and erasure, in addition to physical and military violence. This violence served to support the process of settler-colonialism, in which the colonizing forces want not only to take over and exploit land but also to settle permanently. While tools like genocide were utilized to force mass removal of Native people from land, colonizing forces also used tactics like cultural genocide to achieve the goal of erasing Native identities. For example, into the 20th century, many Native American religious practices were outlawed. Forced education in abusive boarding schools that prohibited Native cultural practices exposed Native children to violence and forced them to abandon their heritage and assimilate to European culture. Scholar

Evelyn Nakano Glenn said, "Redness has been made to disappear, such that contemporary Native Americans have become largely invisible in white consciousness."[7] When it comes to violence against Native women, the long-term consequences of this reality are plain.

This trend of erasure continues to play out in both the media and in systems of data collection on violence against Native women. Only about 5 percent of cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women (MMIW) were covered in the national media, and only a quarter were covered by any media at all, including local, regional, or national news.[8] When these stories are covered, they often include errors like the misgendering of transgender women or explicit references to the victim's criminal history so that, even when stories are told, they are told in a way that still contributes to erasure.[9] Poor data collection similarly presents a significant challenge in understanding the extent to which Native women experience violence and the ability of their communities to seek justice. Often, law enforcement systems don't track racial data on American Indian and Alaskan Native women because the category doesn't exist in police systems. As such, racial information is not collected at all. Furthermore, unknown racial status frequently defaults to white, or Native identities are erroneously conflated with Latinx or South Asian identities.

The statistics on federal recognition of tribes and tribal identities are important as well. A study carried out by the Urban Indian Health Initiative notes, "If a woman or girl was killed during the time their tribe was terminated, her citizenship may have never been restored when her nation was re-recognized, and she may have been falsely classified as white – or not racially classified at all – in documentation

regarding her case."[10] This study, which looked specifically at Native women living in urban areas, found that three out of four cases of MMIW don't list a tribal affiliation. What's more, they identified over 150 cases that don't exist in law enforcement records at all and discovered that, out of 5,712 MMIW cases nationwide, only 116 were logged in the Department of Justice's national database.[11] Both in the media and law enforcement records, violence against Native women is, at best, only partially understood and often ignored entirely.

Complicated relationships between federal, state, local, and tribal governments further contribute to the failure to properly address cases of violence against Native Women. For example, federal law gives tribal governments jurisdiction only in cases that involve both a Native victim and a Native perpetrator. Even when this condition is met, serious crimes are also sent automatically to the federal government, which often declines to prosecute these cases.[12] Recent expansions of the Violence Against Women Act allow recognized tribes to prosecute non-Native perpetrators of domestic violence on tribal land, but even this leaves gaps.[13] The failure to fully recognize Native sovereignty over these issues has significant consequences when most violence against Native women is carried out by a non-Native perpetrator. One attorney who focuses on Native issues said, "Predators may target Native women and girls precisely because they are perceived as marginalized and outside the protection of the American legal system."[14]

Legislation signed by former President Trump before his departure from office seeks to improve the data collection and reporting on cases of violence against Native women, but there is still room for further improvement. Comprehensive research and data collection overseen by Native researchers needs to be supported in order to get a full picture of the MMIW crisis. Data must be collected at state and city levels as well, and explicit protocols for data sharing between different levels of government need to be laid out, with Native communities themselves in control of the process. Tribal nations must be given room to advocate for their citizens like other sovereign nations, including notification, access to data, and involvement in prosecution. Native communities, many of whom continue to experience the long-term consequences of this violence, need to be fully engaged in creating these systems. Violence against Native women is rooted in a long history of colonialism and erasure, and efforts to address the issue need to confront this history.

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THE RISE OF THE MANOSPHERE AND EXTREMIST GENDER-BASED IDEOLOGICAL GROUPS ONLINE

Esli Chan

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INTRODUCTION

Access to internet and technological innovation has empowered the cohesion of new social identity groups; it also increasingly enables the connectivity of the men's rights movement online—the manosphere—and online extremist gender-based groups that perpetuate violence against women. In recent years, these groups, via self-identified involuntary celibate (incel) actors, including Elliot Rodgers and Alex Minassian, have enacted public acts of violence and targeted murder against women that were received with support by their communities.[1] However, the traditional understanding of gender-based violence (GBV) includes online occurrences only within the context of individualized harm. This definition is dangerously limited; online GBV extends beyond digital participation in direct, individualized harm, and its extensions into everyday life are increasingly influenced by these overarching gendered ideologies within widespread communities that encourage violence. Despite this, international cybersecurity standards and private corporations have not adopted

unified or gendered approaches to cybersecurity that broach the topic of online GBV. Online extremist gender-based groups continue to manifest online and adopt various tactics and methods to remain hidden online while expanding their userbase and amplifying violent ideology. International communities and standards must amend the commonly held understanding of online GBV to respond to the changing dynamics and evolving technological environment that permit and perpetuate violence against women.

THE MEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT AND THE MANOSPHERE

The Men's Rights Movement (MRM) and manosphere has significantly contributed to online GBV. The flexibility and breadth of subculture group identities and activities has garnered interest and participation across the digital environment, while unifying under a central ideology that promotes violence against women. The MRM emerged in the 1970s in response to second-wave feminism, arguing that traditional forms of hegemonic

masculinity were contested by the advancement of women's rights.[2] Hegemonic masculinity describes the dynamics of power within gender relations and hierarchies, and the domination of women by men within institutions and society.[3] The MRM poses as a gender-based ideological group, with its founding beliefs reliant on the standards of gendered hierarchy. They argue that the identity of white men in American culture is actively being jeopardized at the hands of the feminist movement and women's equality; thus, a return to traditional masculinity is required.[4] The MRM's online presence has grown and evolved with the proliferation of new technologies and social media. Known as the manosphere, men further the MRM's agenda on a wide range of online forums, blogs, and online communities.[5] Methods of upholding male hegemony, such as degradation, targeting, and violence against women, have been subsequently linked to this manosphere.

Technologization has been beneficial for the spread of the men's rights movement; online forums are cheap and easily accessible, making the spread of extremist thought conveniently distributable.[6] As noted by Ging, "The technological affordances of social media are especially well suited to the amplification of new articulations of aggrieved manhood" as the internet provides a social and organisational space to "draw in otherwise isolated movement participants" and formulate new shared identities.[7,8] Otherwise societally ostracized or deviant individuals are able to gather online in commonality of shared grievances without the limitations of borders or other barriers.

DEFINITIONS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence is defined by the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) as "any act that results in, or is likely to result in physical sexual, or physiological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life."[9] The eradication of GBV is also affirmed through the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), with SDG 5 establishing a need to "eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the private and public spheres."[10]

In 2016, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women noted the increasing prevalence of online violence against women, noting that "23 per cent of women have reported having experienced online abuse or harassment at least once in their life."[11] However, there remains no internationally recognized definition or consensus on the terms of online GBV.[12] Varying characterizations of online violence remain, such as terms "digital violence," "cyberviolence," or violence influenced by "information and communications technology."[13] These different definitions of online GBV can lead to ambiguity and discrepancies in the prescription, understanding, and eradication of violence against women.

Regardless, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights passed a resolution in 1997 to instate a Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women to report and investigate human rights concerns regarding women.[14] The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) 2018 *Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women* described online GBV as "any act of gender-based violence against women that is committed, assisted, or aggravated in part or fully by the use of information communications technology (ICT), such as mobile phones and smartphones, the Internet, social media

platforms or email, against a woman because she is a woman, or affects women disproportionately."[15] The United Nations Working Group on Broadband and Gender, comprised of industry and governmental experts, has also sought to provide a digital perspective to women's participation online, defining six broad categories of online violence against women: hacking; impersonation; surveillance and tracking; harassment and spamming; recruitment; and malicious distribution.[16]

INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS FOR CYBERSECURITY

The lack of convergence and consensus on international standards for cybersecurity impedes further progress towards gender-aware principles and norms in the prevention of online GBV. The Budapest Convention on Cybercrime of 2001 is the first and only legally binding intention framework for states to cooperative respond to cybercrime, outlining computer-related crimes such as hate speech and child pornography, as well as network parameters. The Convention focuses largely on civilian criminal justice issues related to cybersecurity, rather than political and military threats.[17] Since 2004, the United Nations Groups of Governmental Experts (GGE), comprised of 25 member states who focus on "advancing responsible State behaviour in cyberspace," and the Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) have explored cybersecurity standards, norms, and threats in relation to international security.[18] The establishment of international norms around cybersecurity acknowledge that ICTs and technologization is an increasingly social product and requires guidance on principles of human interactivity. In 2013, the GGE report outlined responsible use of the internet and technologies to ensure international peace and security. The GGE, OEWG, and member states continue to work towards reaching agreement on international cybersecurity frameworks, while implementing mutually recognized standards and existing norms within the cyber environment.[19]

EMERGING THREATS: ASSESSING THE MANOSPHERE AND EXTREMIST GENDER-BASED IDEOLOGICAL GROUPS

The internet has been crucial in the manifestation of the manosphere in its ability to attract and gather a wide variety of masculine identity groups, while preserving and converging at a central ideology that, at its core, promotes the degradation and violence against women. Four dangers emerge from the rise of manosphere as a growing influence and extremist group in the context of the spread of online gender-based violence: agility across diverse online platforms; integration of diverse group characteristics in preservation of ideology; ambulation within right-wing groups; and tactical neutrality of language.

DIVERSE PLATFORMS AND MESSAGING

The manosphere casts a wide network of platforms, blogs, and websites online, where members can openly support and express sentiments of violence towards women. Actors within the MRM also create their own websites, with well-known blogs, such as *A Voice for Men* by popular activist Paul Elam and *Return of Kings* by Roosh V.[20,21] Many key figures within the movement have essentially become online influencers, including "a range of prominent online trolls, gamers, ideologues, and conspiracy theorists [that] hold outsized influence among the other actors and play a distinct role in media manipulation efforts."[22] Groups also integrate into

mainstream platforms to expand their reach in effort to gain the attention of everyday individuals; men's rights groups have created their own "conspiracy 'documentaries' to YouTube," use popular forums such as 4chan and Reddit, and are active on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter.[23,24]

The MRM's diverse activity and networks across various platforms enables the agility of groups to become malleable to various contexts and social settings, enabling the further recruitment of like-minded individuals. Researchers, including Dr. Ging, have demonstrated that "these groups have established complex connections with a myriad of interconnected organizations, blogs, forums, communities, and subcultures, resulting in a much more extreme and ostensibly amorphous set of discourses."[25] The manosphere is thus able to draw in individuals spanning from videogame fanatics and everyday social media users to factions of other extremist movements who find commonality in shared interests on various platforms. Marwick argues that these groups employ strategic methods to magnify and propose their messaging through using the movement's networks and well-known figures to integrate into mainstream media and spread these beliefs.[26]

SUBCULTURE GROUPS: DISTINCT CHARACTERISTICS, UNITED IDEOLOGY

The MRM and manosphere capture a variety of masculine grievances and identities in its member base. The manosphere can be categorized into four subculture groups: pick-up artists (PUAs), men's rights activists (MRAs), men going their own way (MGTOW), and involuntary celibates (incels).[27] Each group identifies different reasons in the demonization of women and the rationalization of masculine hierarchy,

often adopting aggressive and misogynistic tropes towards women. MRAs are the largest subculture group within the manosphere, fighting for the re-establishment of what they perceive to be the legal rights of men in the reclamation of sexual rights and abolishment of affirmative action. The PUA community rallies around the gaming of relationships, attempting to assist men in "picking up women" in romantic or sexual settings; PUAs are often characterized by misogynistic tropes of women rationalized by the perception that women are disproportionately privileged.[28] MGOTW seek to depart from Westernized standards, grounded in a "deep distrust of and dissatisfaction with women who, they insist, have been 'programmed' to ruin men's lives."[29] Lastly, incels are often physically self-deprecating individuals who resultantly channel their anger from a lack of romantic relations towards women, who they believe inherently owe men sex.[30]

The manosphere is tactical in its ability to capture varying masculine identities, grievances, and personal motivations while rallying and directing individuals towards the same ideological motive to supress women. The manosphere is not homogenous, allowing for debate amongst a membership encompassing, as Ging describes, "alpha, beta, jock, geek, straight, gay Christian, and atheist–[who] can coalesce around any number of contentious issues or flash point events when the common goal is to defeat feminism or keep women out of the space."[31] Each subculture can capitalize on its individual characteristics to advance its membership and ideals; they "exaggerate of infight posturing, in spite of the fact that their philosophies are almost their differences in displays identical."[32] Diverse platforms, multiple factions of subculture groups, and unique in-group language and communication can also

create complexity in assessing the online threat of the manosphere.

However, while the means for furthering of men's rights is flexible through the characterization of different masculine identities and the widespread use of technologies and platforms, the ideological goal remains unified. The MRM is ultimately unified in the belief that women's advancement has intentionally sought to suppress traditional masculinity, with the ideological goal that hegemonic masculinity and the male hierarchy must be protected and re-established. The central and underlying belief across the manosphere is focused on male suppression by feminists and "political correctness," where men must fight against femininity in the reclamation of masculine dominance and hierarchy. As a result of this belief and underlying ideology, the use of violence against women is often justified and glorified to reinstate masculinity. Through increasing technologization, various MRM subculture groups and platforms are strategically employed to further online GBV.

Language online within these communities and forums converge in the promotion of hatred and violence against women, often rationalizing rape and describing graphic plans to murder or harm women. These forums have notably encouraged enactments of physical violence tied to the manosphere, as demonstrated by the promotion of the Isla Vista massacre by Elliot Rodgers and the Toronto van attack by Alex Minassian, both instances where members in allegiance to the involuntary celibate groups targeted and killed women.[33] Previous instances of online targeting of women incudes the Gamergate incident, where female video game developers and critics argued that portrayals of women in video games were inaccurate. These women were resultantly targeted and threatened by an online community that perceived the video game world as a preservation of masculine space and identity.[34] As such, sentiments derived from the manosphere, such as masculine grievance and animosity towards women's advancement, can be easily utilized and framed within everyday digital participation and online communities. This also demonstrates how online gender-based violence is often connected to offline of physical violence and stems from group motivations and ideologies that promote violence.

INTEGRATION INTO FAR-RIGHT COMMUNITIES

In parallel with this manosphere, other far-right groups increased their online presence in the early 2000s.[35] The dangers driven by the intersection of these two trends has become increasingly apparent to experts and lay observers alike over the last decade. As Hoffman noted in 2020, "a particularly worrisome trend is how seamlessly the militant incel community has been integrated into the alt-right tapestry, with common grievances and intermingling membership bringing the two extremisms closer together."[36] Increasing technologization and social communication through online forums has enabled the far right's ability to intentionally incorporate the manosphere into its membership and ideological efforts, as "far-right online communities have noticed the incel rhetoric's racial and men's rights undertones and thereby sought to deepen ties between these movements."[37] Both sides employ similar tactics: neutralization of rhetoric language; widespread usage of platforms such as Reddit, 8kun, and 4chan; and promotion via celebrated influencers and actors. The same language and motivations—hatred against out-group

members, a need to reinstate social hierarchies—are co-opted and shared between the manosphere and far-right communities. The Anti-Defamation League has noticed increasing mutual membership between MRAs and militant Proud Boys, who share similar sentiments of the reestablishment of hegemony and masculinity through racial or gendered dominance and are highly organized in their ability to act as a "cyber mob" in targeting marginalized groups.[38] The amalgamation of men's rights groups into the far-right community, enabled through the online sharing and identification of mutual values, amplifies an echo chamber that dangerously resounds to promote gender inequality and violence against women.

NEUTRALIZING LANGUAGE

The continued threat and existence of the manosphere is enabled by its ability to adapt to social contexts online. Its use of neutralizing and progressive language allows for it to gain the attention of everyday users and expand its user base without easy criticism of its ideological motive, proving difficult to identify the manosphere as a source of threat on the surface. For example, as "sexual violence is discussed throughout the manosphere as a gender-neutral problem," the MRM then describes violence as a justified act of retribution.[39] The MRM is also quick to criticize feminists for false rape accusations while arguing that sexual gratification through sexual violence is a right that is owed to men.[40] Sexual violence is often neutralized and rationalized as a relational process between the sexes.

Some scholars, including Ging, further argue that the MRM has adopted a "kinder, gentler" approach to describing their beliefs, adopting more moderate and neoliberal language in discussing the rights and experiences of women versus men, rather than explicit assertion of views on violence, familial rights and roles, and feminism.[41] For example, Saurette and Gordon discuss the change of rhetoric around the anti-abortion movement, which has largely embraced the online sphere in expanding its network. They argue that the "contemporary anti-abortion discourse also seeks to present the movement as progressive and humanitarian by situating its fight alongside other contemporary signifiers linked to progressive social movement."[42] As such, some online groups are strategic in posing a progressive image and ensuring "politically correctness" to advance their message while remaining unseen as a rising threat against women's rights and safety.[43] As technology and social dynamics change, the manosphere and faction of the movement modify its tactics and online communications to fit the mould of current social norms. The promotion of violence against women can be hidden under the guise of neutral intent and language and disguised under a discourse that is rationalized to be of fruitful discussion and goodwill. Online gender-based violence is thus hidden in plain sight, and the discernment and traceability of violence derived from the MRM is more easily concealable, increasingly complex, and malleable to appear in keeping with mainstream norms and language. Understandings of online GBV must be agile and dynamic to the changing nature and rhetoric of the social environment in order to eradicate continued violence against women.

The MRM has continually demonstrated its ability and willingness to conduct violence against women; however, the cyber threat of violence against women posed by the manosphere is continually minimized within current international definitions and standard. As such, the manosphere

continues to grow its membership, modify its strategy, and expand on online domains built strongly on their ideological foundations that promote the dominance of, and violence against, women.

CHANGING DYNAMICS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Current definitions of online GBV dismiss the increasing connectivity of online activity to offline harm and generally focus on individualized interactions and grievances between users online. They therefore miss the increasing threat of extremist groups, founded on ideological beliefs, that target women as an identity group.

Online violence is often not equated to "real-world harms" that are defined by their physical proximity of violence.[44] The equivalence, and subsequent protection against, of online versus offline threats to human and women's rights continues to be contested. However, Henry and Powell argue for "technology-facilitated" sexual violence, where technology is utilized in the modern age to create and perpetuate physical harm and inequalities against women.[45] In 2018, the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations noted that "we must think about violence online as part of the broader continuum of violence."[46] Women's participation cannot be dichotomized between the digital environment and everyday life, as online interactions are directly tied to physical incidences of harm. Technology and online forums are increasingly used to organize groups in promoting and supporting violence against women. Technology enables the development, connection, and radicalization of radical gendered ideologies and has become a breeding ground for extremist groups that enact violence. As such, technologization of everyday realities impacts women's participation in both offline and online spheres. Definitions of online gender-based violence must not be siloed and only understood within a digital perspective but must be integrated within the context of everyday society and harm.

The UNGA 2018 *Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women* and findings from the United Nations Working Group on Broadband and Gender in part focused on online violence against women in terms of the victimization and targeting of specific individuals.[47] The UNGA report notes that women may be targeted, often due to discrimination against specific personal characteristics such as race, age, or disabilities.[48] Online violence is described in terms of an individualistic approach, such as online stalking, impersonation, spamming and hacking, and extortion of personal information.

While these forms of violence are important to address, there is an increasing prevalence of online extremist groups such as the manosphere, who promote widespread violence and harm against women, founded in an ideology that rationalizes that women's equality degrades masculine hegemony. This form of violence becomes increasingly dangerous as it does not require a specific target or circumstance between individuals online but allows participants to easily rally around a shared belief and ideology. Rather than identifying individual women, the manosphere identifies women as a broad category that contests the male existence and masculine hegemony; as such, acts of online gender-based violence can become more pervasive and widespread. The spread of violence then does not necessitate specific targets nor techniques in tracking but is rather easily accessible on open forums that encourage the sharing of opinions and characteristics that perpetuate GBV in affirmation of their beliefs.

The anonymity of the online sphere, in addition to perceptions of protection and support hidden within collective communities, can allow individuals to feel safe and emboldened to enact harm. Further, the anonymity and immensity of the online sphere makes the identification of online GBV difficult as it can "diffuse moral or legal responsibility for group members."[49] As technology continues to evolve, social interactions and digital life online becomes increasingly dynamic. Tactics of online violence against women will continue to advance and change in response to mainstream usage of social forums and evade protections established by internationals institutions to prevent the perpetuation of harm. As such, definitions of online GBV must be malleable to change and inclusive of connections between online spheres to offline physical harm against women. International institutions must increasingly analyze and assess the threats posed by extremist gender-based ideological groups.

TECHNOLOGICAL CHALLENGES AND INTERNATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

These emerging threats posed by online gender-based ideological groups continue to remain unrecognized, as member states and large corporations have been reluctant to adopt implementation frameworks to establish cybersecurity standards and norms in response. While the GGE presented a framework for international cybersecurity norms in 2013, its 2015 report on the application of international standards of cybersecurity did not reach census.[50] Despite ongoing international focus on cybersecurity principles, member states continue to disagree on how international cybersecurity laws will be operationalized within their respective states and to ensure the preservation of national sovereignty.

As evident in the continual progress of the GGE, international member states continue to move slowly towards establishing unified cybersecurity standards due to a lack of capacity and resources, as well as a growing distrust and minimal collaboration amongst stakeholders.[51] These aspects not only cause barriers to general cybersecurity protocol and protection but contribute to the lack of progress towards gendered perspectives within international standards for ICT development and cybersecurity. Despite Moghaddam's argument that information technology is inherently social and cannot be gender neutral, mentions of cybercrimes and threats emerging from gendered dynamics or violence are largely dismissed in current 2013 GGE Report and the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime.[52] Gender remains siloed as purely a women's issue, addressed within institutions that support women's progress without substantive integration into technological standards and norms where women significantly operate and exist in the digital space. Current international standards and cyberthreat analysis is often built towards state-level interactions, largely analyzing the international conflict through the threat of state-based relationships and disinformation movements. While important, international standards do not sufficiently address emerging subculture groups that also span national borders and impact the domestic and national security of each member state.

In addition to international bodies and state-based frameworks for cyber standards, large corporations and companies have not responded to the emerging threats of volatile communities on its platforms. In contrast, online platforms are built for virality, information sharing, and cohesion of social identities and interests. At its core, companies do not often have

a business case to limit activity and information distribution on their platforms; "business models and software architecture are oriented towards the maximization of content sharing and user interaction."[53] As a result, this can enable and promote the use of online platforms towards targeting and abuse. Business models and algorithms are built as an "information cascade," made to iterate, disseminate, and promote the virality of content on its website.[54] In contrast to a gender-aware approach, attention gained from scandals, contentious opinions, or harmful content on these web platforms can create "economic disincentives to deal with abuse."[55]

As a result, the manosphere and its associated platforms and users utilize these algorithms to spread their messaging into mainstream media and garner the attention of others. The controversial nature and frequent messaging of the MRM naturally promotes the virality and visibility of the manosphere. Messages and encouragement of online GBV are thus able to continually manifest on social platforms, as companies lack incentive to strictly enforce and restrict their platform activity; "major platforms also have been unable to articulate clear definitions of acceptable speech; most platforms prohibit abuse, but controversial or insensitive humor, for example, is often protected under the Terms of Service."[56] Online forum platforms that are built around the constant interactivity and exchange between users became an opportunistic environment for the spread of misogynistic ideals and contributed greatly to the spread of ideology in the case of Incel-inspired attacks and the Gamergate incidents.

Large social media platforms and companies have grown to have international influence in the digital and physical sphere, characteristic of nation-states. With its userbase spanning millions across international borders, responsibility in the governance and protections of cybersecurity and the usage of the internet must also lie within the private sector. Many "international human rights institutions have started to explicitly call on Internet intermediaries to do more to combat GBV online."[57] Stringent regulatory standards for online forum boards and social media companies must curtail GBV and interrupt patterns of ideological radicalization and spread of harassment online.

Both the private sector and international institutions lack the ability, motivation, and framework to enforce cybersecurity standards that focus on the eradication of online GBV and gender-based ideological groups. Private companies are often only incentivized to crack down on forums after instances of abuse or violence have occurred in the public eye and respond due to "the fear of market and profit losses."[58] Additionally, governments and international actors have not been able to come to consensus on cybersecurity standards that protect both international human rights and gendered participation of the digital sphere. As such, online GBV enacted by the manosphere and gender-based ideological groups continues to be ignored.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Effectively addressing online GBV amidst changing threat environments in the digital sphere requires integrating technological approaches to gendered protections and frameworks and gendered commitments within international cybersecurity standards. As such, I pose four recommendations in addressing the rising influence of online gender-based ideological groups, and effective mechanisms to counter

online threats of GBV. These recommendations require the establishment of practical mechanisms and connections between the technology and ICT sector and the gender advocacy and expert community.

I. INTERNATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF ONLINE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE REQUIRE A DYNAMIC AND SYSTEMIC APPROACH TO CHANGING TACTICS OF HARM.

Research on online GBV that informs international standards and definitions must recognize and be inclusive of the technologization of harm. Specifically, understanding the influence of the manosphere and its incorporation into right-wing networks requires a focus on networked groups, rather than individual targets and victims. Online GBV does not solely occur and remain within the digital sphere but has active real-world consequences that impact the everyday realities women. For this reason, international definitions of online GBV must further delve into how technology and online communications increasingly enable and is connected to physical harm.

Overall, policymakers must remain tactile to effectively identify emerging threat groups online as they continually shift their strategies, and international definitions need to become dynamic as the evolving technology they address. Masculine identities and characteristics are tactically fashioned in different ways that are assumed to be politically acceptable or relevant to capture the socio-cultural environment of the current movement, capitalizing on common grievances and popular thought, as demonstrated by Saurette and Gordon's analysis of the modern anti-abortion movement.[59] However, ideologies and motivations towards harm predicated on

the contestation of masculine hegemony and hierarchy remain persistent across time. Policymakers must adopt a high-level and systemic approach to online GBV, identifying and tracking how ideologies manifest and evolve. This includes what Suzor describes as the "recognition of and discussion about the normative and competing values and beliefs underpinning the range of abusive behaviours that are not recognized as crimes."[60] As such, analysis of online GBV must adopt a dynamic yet ordered approach in addressing how increasing technologization influences everyday life and understanding how ideologies are manifested over time.

2. POLICY EXPERTS WITHIN THE SPHERE OF ONLINE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE MUST WORK IN COHERENCE WITH CYBERSECURITY AND ICT PROFESSIONALS TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE APPLICATION AND PROTECTIONS.

Practical understandings of technologization are often dismissed within international gendered frameworks and practitioners. Likewise, gender professionals and policymakers are often not included in the technical aspects and application of cybersecurity frameworks. This is often due to the siloed nature of the two sectors that lack an intersectional approach to violence against women. As such, the intersections of technology and gender are misunderstood and can minimize the application of protection against online GBV. GBV and cybersecurity experts must work in cooperation to ensure the application of mechanisms that protection against abuse and violence. Tanczer suggests that "support services [for violence] must closely collaborate with cybersecurity practitioners for an effective response to tech abuse. This can be done though the establishment of dedicated tech abuse units,

and/or through a hotline that could sit within [national cyber security centres]."[61] These national cyber centres, working in collaboration with gender experts, would provide a space for better evaluation of gender-based cyber incidents (such as the specific targeting of women through malware and scam campaigns), conduct threat evaluation of gender-based ideological groups, and provide gender-based educational awareness trainings and resources.

3. INTERNATIONAL CYBERSECURITY STANDARD AND NORMS REQUIRE A GENDERED APPROACH AND PERSPECTIVE.

In negotiation of international cyber standards, gendered perspectives are integral to the process of addressing online violence against women. In the continued process of implementing norms and standards under the GGE, countries such as Canada have made steps towards including these perspectives. In Canada's 2019–2020 report for the OEWG on developments in technology and ICT in response to the 2013 and 2015 reports by the GGE, it proposed that "gender equality and the meaningful participation of women" be at the centre of cybersecurity discussions.[62] It also explicitly identified the role of technology in the rising threat of gender-based attacks and extremist and radical violence: "Gender-based attacks that use digital ICTs are designed to silence women's voices and presence in online and offline spaces."[63] As such, Canada has declared its commitment "to reconcile the gap between Canada's National Cyber Security Strategy (NCSS) and commitment to the Women, Peace, and Security agenda."[64]

Canada has pushed the considerations of online GBV to the forefront of the agenda for cybersecurity norms and principles at the OEWG. As the OWEG continues to debate cybersecurity standards, members states should support Canada's proposals and consider how the intersection of gender and technology significantly intersects and impacts their national security environment. While strides towards addressing gendered perspectives of ICT have been made through the construction of international frameworks, countries must effectively implement gendered cybersecurity standards at a national level. Countries must seek to identify gaps and rectify differences between their cybersecurity strategies and women's advancement approaches, working with both private and civil sector organizations.

4. COMPANIES AND PRIVATE STAKEHOLDERS MUST BE CONSULTED AND INCORPORATED THROUGH RESPONSIBILITY FRAMEWORKS WITHIN GENDERED CYBERSECURITY STANDARDS.

Within the current digital age, private social media and ICT companies hold a wide influence over its users, able to shape digital participation and use of information across national borders. The ICT sector must be granted an opportunity to express its ongoing challenges in application of cybersecurity standards, such as the breadth of information flow and effectivity of mechanisms to identify abusive content, in order to ensure that cyber norms are practical, relevant, and applicable. "Despite repeated commitments to do more to address GBV online, many platforms and telecommunications providers have been slow to improve responses to abuse on their networks."[65] As a result, regulations are often "inconsistently applied and enforced, often along the lines of existing structural inequality"; opportunities for reparation by victims are often minimal, hard to trace within the digital sphere, and come with limited reporting

mechanisms.[66] Working with the ICT sector to understand the practical challenges they face in implementing regulation allows for the development of more realistic mechanisms and milestones to counter abusive behaviour.

Regulations and frameworks must effectively respond to the needs and challenges of the ICT sector, while holding private companies accountable for privacy rights, instances of abuse, and human rights standards. They must also be both proactive and reactive to instances of online GBV. To achieve this, protections against technological abuse and online GBV should be built within existing risk frameworks, business processes, and privacy functions; likewise, cybersecurity frameworks and standards must be consistently re-evaluated to address the changing nature of the digital environment. International state actors should implement stringent regulations to hold ICT providers accountable, including the use of review mechanisms and bodies to assess the application of protections against GBV and abuse. This collaboration between the ICT sector and international institutions, with the implementation of both proactive and reactive mechanisms, is key to the eventual eradication of online GBV.

CONCLUSION

The proliferation of new technologies has enabled the manosphere and proliferation of gender-based ideologies that perpetuate online GBV against women. International definitions of online GBV must adopt a dynamic approach to understand the technologization of everyday life and its impact to women's digital participation. Gender professionals must work in conjunction with cybersecurity experts to ensure practical mechanisms to eradicate online GBV. As well, international cybersecurity standards must adopt an integrative and gendered approach. As the influence of the manosphere and gender-based ideological groups continue to grow online, international protections against violence against women must be assured.

ENDNOTES

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GYMNASTICS CAN NO LONGER KEEP UP APPEARANCES

HOW THE OLYMPICS' MOST POPULAR SPORT SYSTEMATICALLY ENABLED ABUSE AND HOW GYMNASTS ARE LEADING CHANGE

Emily Fry and Anna Senko

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FOR DECADES, THERE have been rumblings that something wasn't quite right in the highly competitive world of gymnastics. Since the 2020 documentary *Athlete A* revealed the alarming depth of the problem at USA Gymnastics, some of the world's top gymnasts in the United States, United Kingdom, and Germany have publicly shared horrific stories of pervasive physical and emotional abuses.

Amy Tinkler won a bronze medal in the 2016 Rio Olympics at just 16 years old. She retired from the sport immediately after the Olympics, alleging that she had been traumatized by her coaches. Among other abuses, Tinkler cited remarks by Colin Still, a national coach, that she was "turning into a fat dwarf." Tinkler submitted a formal complaint to British Gymnastics more than a year ago.

Hundreds of gymnasts took to Twitter last summer to share more stories like Amy's under the #GymnastAlliance hashtag. Retired Team GB gymnast Catherine Lyons claims she was beaten with a stick on one occasion and started restricting calories at age 10; she is now only 20 years old.[1] Ellie Downie, a British National Team member heading to the 2021 Summer Olympics in Tokyo, was among the voices tweeting that she almost quit gymnastics after enduring repeated weight shaming.[2]

As bad as these allegations sound, they are just the beginning of a public reckoning of gymnastics. Systems of abusive training in the United States and the United Kingdom were allegedly informed by ex-USSR training regimens, suggesting that the very foundations of gymnastics need to be questioned.[3,4]

The numerous accounts of body shaming and psychological belittling have led to a review of the British Gymnastics complaints process. But addressing issues with the complaints process doesn't begin to untangle the systems of abuse within gymnastics and where it has stemmed from. It is clear that far more must be done in the United Kingdom and internationally to make the sport safe and enjoyable.

BECOMING AN ELITE GYMNAST

Hours of grueling training take place in large, echoing gyms which smell of chalk.

Danusia Francis, who will compete for Jamaica at the Tokyo Olympics, was upbeat when she explained her childhood training regime of up to 24 hours of gymnastics per week, equivalent to more than a part-time job.

The intensive training helps gymnasts perform ever more challenging tricks each year—whether Danusia's twirling beam dismount or Simone Biles's mind-bending triple-double. But these tricks risk serious injuries. To minimize these, the relationship between coach and gymnast is paramount. Samantha Peszek, 2008 US Olympian and silver medalist, knew her coach "had my best interest at heart." However, "a lot of other gymnasts didn't feel that way about their coach," she recalls.

Coaches' opinions are often accepted without question because elite women gymnasts are so young. Women Olympic gymnasts are typically between 16 and 20 years old, up to 10 years younger than elite men gymnasts.[5] The age difference might contribute to differential power relationships between athletes and their coaches, with men more likely to experience peer-to-peer relationships with their coaches.

A CULTURE OF FEAR IN A SUBJECTIVE SPORT

Samantha was single minded in her goals as a teenager: "I sacrificed a lot of my childhood for my dream to go to the Olympics," she says. However, being selected for the Olympic Gymnastics team relies on being chosen by judges, coaches, and the national governing body, like British Gymnastics in the United Kingdom.

Unlike in track, where running the fastest at designated national competitions earns you the right to represent your country at the Olympics, gymnastics is more complicated. The sport relies on scores from judges who award points based on the difficulty and execution of a routine. The execution score starts at 10 points and deducts points based on technique, artistry, and errors. This subjectivity in scoring gives coaches even more power to promote favorite gymnasts over others. As a result, staying in favor with coaches becomes even *more* important.

If rocking the boat means risking their place at these competitions, then gymnasts stay silent. Samantha explained that no one would stand up and say: "'I feel a little uncomfortable that my coach or somebody made this comment to me.' No way. No one wants a gymnast on the team that's gonna ruffle the feathers and create drama." This creates, as Louis Smith, a British silver Olympic medalist, points out, "a culture of fear" in the sport.

Smith outlined in a video what might happen after a gymnast lodges a complaint about a coach. He describes a process where British Gymnastics recounts the complaint back to the alleged abuser who would then "go back and coach the gymnast. And potentially that coach has the power to select who is going to be picked for an Olympic team." He explains, "It is easy to see how abuse could happen for decades with so much power left in the hands of coaches, and nobody confident enough to challenge based on welfare concerns."

THE TIPPING POINT: *ATHLETE A*

Jennifer Pinches represented Team GB at the London 2012 Olympics when she was just 18 years old. She went on to compete at UCLA, alongside Samantha and Danusia, and has now become a leading voice in the call for change, having founded the #GymnastAlliance movement last year. She recently partnered with campaigner and ex-gymnast Claire Heafford to launch Gymnasts for Change, an advocacy

organization dedicated to transforming the experience of people in the sport.

For many gymnasts around the world, *Athlete A*, which detailed physical, emotional, and sexual abuses in USA Gymnastics, was the tipping point that gave them the confidence to speak out. Australian gymnast Mary-Anne Monckton shared, "After watching the *Athlete A* documentary, I started to realize that behaviors we thought were normal, were, in fact abusive behavior and wrong,"[6] "Athlete A just opened a huge can of worms in the gymnastics world and I'm not sure people are ready for what's next!!" tweeted two-time British Olympian Becky Downie.[7]

Informal Whatsapp groups and whisper networks—essential in the Me Too movement—have played a major role in raising the profile of problems in the gymnastics community. Gymnasts around the world are connecting to support each other, helping the healing process of decades-old traumas. Jennifer explains, "People have got in touch with me who had stuff happen to them 50 years ago."

> "The sport itself is living in the past and it needs a serious update"
> -Jennifer Pinches

In 2011 Claire witnessed a horrific attack on a 10-year-old girl by a coach and reported it to British Gymnastics. Claire explains that she felt "very unsafe and had a very bad experience with blowing the whistle."

Nine years later, Claire was devastated to find out that the coach had been "reinstated despite it being one of the worst abuses that anyone has ever reported." It was at this point that Claire realized "there were major issues with British Gymnastics." She alleges that "it was in fact [British Gymnastics] policy to ignore allegations against coaches who had athletes on the national squad."

And yet, in 2019-20, British Gymnastics received a "green" rating from UK Sport and Sport England for its safeguarding processes, a requirement to receive government funding. Jennifer says, "You start to realize that [permitting abuse] is institutionalized in these structures through layers of policies that aren't being enforced. British Gymnastics might have 'safeguarding' written down, but it's not happening."

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR OVERSIGHT OF GYMNASTICS? NO ONE.

While the UK Sport website states that one of its key responsibilities is to promote "sporting conduct, ethics, and diversity," it shirks responsibility when it comes to athlete complaints. It says: "If you're not happy with a National Governing Body [e.g., British Gymnastics] you should make a complaint directly to that NGB in the first instance."

But British Gymnastics is not holding up its end of the bargain. Coaches and gymnasts have waited for years to receive the outcomes of complaints. "Some of the coaches got suspended but they didn't know why and they still don't know why [. . .] they just lost their job," Danusia says. Meanwhile, Tinkler took to social media 271 days after filing a complaint against top British coach Amanda Reddin.[8] She alleges she had heard nothing from British Gymnastics in that time.

An anonymous former employee at British Gymnastics told ITV that their welfare department would *not* handle certain complaints: "Obviously if it's a national coach, it would bypass that particular department. So why would a child come forward to make a disclosure knowing that nothing would be done?"

Sport England and UK Sport have co-commissioned an independent review,

known as the Whyte Review, of the complaints process within British Gymnastics. British Gymnastics, however, has yet to publicly take responsibility or apologize for its role in allowing abuse to occur.

While the Whyte Review has been seen as a step in the right direction, it has also made reporting abuse allegations even more fragmented. Instead of only reporting abuse to British Gymnastics, athletes can now report to the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) helpline, the British Athlete Commission, or the Whyte Review directly. "What was initially intended to be helpful is now complicated and scary and enraging, as there's a complex spider web of different ways you can report the abuse," Claire tells us.

None of the gymnasts we spoke to had a clear understanding of how the reporting process worked, despite many of them having made complaints themselves.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Leaving complaint management up to the NGBs to self-manage means that there is no safe place for athletes to report issues. The lack of accountability in the sport is unacceptable.

Gymnastics has more parallels with a school than a professional football team due to the age of athletes. In the United Kingdom, schools are overseen by Ofsted, an "independent and impartial" agency that inspects and regulates educational institutions to ensure that school administrators and teachers are acting in the best interests of the children.

Just as individual children are not expected to resort to sharing allegations about their schools on social media, gymnasts should not have to resort to Twitter to report abuses. NGBs, gymnastics clubs, and coaches need to be held accountable

for ensuring athlete welfare, and individuals must be free to report abuse without concerns of retaliation, perhaps through an equivalent "independent and impartial" agency for gymnastics.

Gymnasts for Change is calling for a sports ombudsman and World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)-style monitoring and follow up. WADA is an "international independent agency composed and funded equally by the sport movement and governments of the world" to protect the integrity of sport.[9] Jennifer hopes that one day we can "similarly work towards monitoring abuse at an international level."

There's also tremendous need and opportunity for education on the signs of abuse at every level. As a first step, numerous sport organizations have been partnering with local National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) organizations and nonprofits like the US Center for Safe Sport to educate coaches, parents, athletes, and NGBs on the signs of abuse. But these bodies need to go further than lip service to education.

Equally as important is educating the gymnastics community on healthy training methods. "I believe that you can reach the highest levels of sport in a healthy way. And I believe that mostly everyone wants to do the right thing, but they don't know how, so sometimes they do the wrong thing," Samantha explains.

British Gymnastics released a "Positive Coaching" resource in 2018, which was compulsory for all coaching members in 2019. To date, 7,000 coaches have completed this one-time certification. But a single course seems to be a tokenistic effort to make changes.

Instead, the gymnastics community must reexamine long-held beliefs about the training methods that produce elite

gymnasts and fundamentally change their practices.

WHO ELSE HAS A ROLE TO PLAY?

Though it may not listen to the stories of gymnasts, British Gymnastics might listen to money. In 2020, government grants accounted for 31 percent of British Gymnastics' total income. Government funding could start to come with caveats, or a portion of funding channeled to an independent oversight body.

British Gymnastics has also stated that it aims to reduce its reliance on government funding over the long term. To make up the difference, British Gymnastics may turn to other parties, like corporations, to generate revenue through avenues like sports sponsorships. Industry analysts estimate that sponsorship deals can "generate revenue in the single-digit millions of dollars and can account for about 20 to 33 percent of a federation's annual totals."[10]

Corporations have more power to hold NGBs responsible as shareholders increasingly demand that brands act as good corporate citizens. Following the USA Gymnastics sexual abuse scandal of 2020, global brands like Under Armour, AT&T, Procter & Gamble, Hershey, Chobani, and Kellogg Co. terminated their USA Gymnastics sponsorships. The deficit will likely take a substantial toll on the organization for years.

IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO MAKE THESE CHANGES

The conversations taking place in clubs, online and internationally, "give each of us energy and self-belief," says Claire. Jennifer adds that while there is a long way to go, she is hopeful about the "baby steps towards creating the big solutions."

Older athletes continuing to compete provides new hope for changing the culture of the sport. At age 26, Danusia is competing again at the 2021 Olympics, and is inspired by Russian gymnast Aliya Mustafina, who returned to gymnastics after having a baby. Danusia adds, "When you're older, you're more likely to stand up for yourself and identify wrong from right."

At the end of the day, sport is a people business. And the gymnasts we spoke to were optimistic about the future of the sport because of the people in it—courageous athletes willing to share their stories, open-minded coaches keen to reevaluate their training practices, and sport administrators open to creating new accountability structures.

Jennifer explains, "The more we talk about it, the more other people talk about it." She adds, "We're a long way from the light at the end of the tunnel, but the light is there."

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