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*I can clearly remember the confident words of one biologist ... “It may take us some time to discover the cause of this apparent universal infertility.” We have had twenty-five years and we no longer even expect to succeed... For all our knowledge, our intelligence, our power, we can no longer do what the animals do without thought. (James, 2018, p. 7)*

For all **our** scholarship, policy negotiations and organisational practices we, as parents, colleagues and academics, have also failed to achieve parenthood equity. The persistence of the problem includes the motherhood wage penalty (Gangl and Ziefle, 2009), job application bias against mothers (Rhode, 2017), and endemic workplace incivility based on women’s choices not to follow familial pathways (Gloor, Li, Lim, and Feierabend, 2018). With these examples, we face a systemic, cultural problem oriented around parenthood as a crucial gendered career juncture. This juncture demands creative thinking and emotional openness to problematize and imagine another future; dystopian fiction (DF) provides one avenue to achieve this.

P.D. James’ novel, ‘The Children of Men’ (2018) imagined a future where societal experiences for men and women are defined in relation to an existential threat of global infertility. Their lives are controlled and pacified in a hyper-masculinised patriarchy. In this stark reality, a group of individuals rise up to challenge the ruling ideology and demand change. Their message is succinct and targeted at five major problems that symbolise the erosion of humanity that typifies their society.

Contemporary experiences of *parenthood*, as a proxy of *fertility*, replicate a systemic ‘patriarchal dividend’ (Connell, 2005), which rewards men’s careers at the expense of women in a hierarchy which values hegemonic masculinity. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) describe ‘Hegemonic Masculinity’ (HM) as a symbolic, hierarchically dominant form of masculinity, changeable over context and time, and representative of a mythical and aspirational model of an ideal masculinity that prioritises men. HM, as a spectral presence in working parents’ experiences, provides the antagonistic counterpoint for my proposed ‘five demands’: a manifesto for parents and a starting point for organisational change.

These five demands form a subversive manifesto through my content choices, and methodology stylistics, or ‘scriptology’ (Rhodes, 2019), which includes form and content from DF and autoethnography. My scriptology acts as a vehicle to disrupt the expectations of

academic writing on this subject, and with the ambition to reach audiences outside of this academic space. I take direct inspiration from DF as a basis for the structure and content of the demands to position them as radical for academic and non-academic audiences. I hope my reader will reflect on and engage with my proposed solutions to the parental problem. I request that you join me, by enlisting others into social justice movements, such as trade unions, to change the parental narrative in our respective organisations.

### **The Five Parental Demands**

1. Openly negotiate and make transparent organisational parental policies
2. Strengthen civil rights for marginalised mothers
3. Abolish the silencing of fathers in parental discourse
4. Stop ‘deporting’ mothers out of their career paths
5. End the anticipatory discrimination of potential mothers

In this paper I attempt to follow in the illustrious footsteps of many fiction writers who have previously proposed alternative feminist visions such as *Herland* (Perkins Gilman, 1915) & *Woman on the Edge of Time* (Piercy, 2016/originally 1976). Additionally, second wave feminist writers (e.g. Beauvoir, 1949/2011; Firestone, 1979; Greer, 1970/2012) raised social consciousness of gender inequity preceding the neoliberal era. They proposed utopian alternatives to some of the persistent constraints of parenthood, which are as yet unrealised.

### **Inspired by Feminist Manifestos**

Before I proceed to my five demands, it is important to briefly define what I mean by the term ‘feminist manifesto’ or ‘femifesta’ (David, 2018). Manifestos, in a political context, are synonymous with collective statements of purpose and democratically mandated action for a narrow timeframe (David, 2017). Feminist manifestos allude to this framework, but diverge through their oft-radical intent and creative integration of utopian and fictional ideas. David (2017) places the emphasis on education as the vehicle for change and this is consistent with the consciousness-raising aspect of these five parental demands.

In contemporary contexts, we face a split within the feminist movements, between the Sheryl Sanberg-inspired ‘Lean in’, neo-liberal aligned movement, and the radical anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchy movement (Fraser, Bhattacharya, and Arruzza, 2018). I align my five demands to the latter interpretation, though acknowledge that these demands represent my individual interpretation as a starting point for potential, future collective development. I do not believe ‘great ideas come from individual geniuses’ (Brueske, 2018, p. 1) rather, I agree that

‘collectively written manifestos help create feminist space and actors’ (Brueske, 2018, p. 2). With that in mind, my *five parental demands* cannot be described as a ‘femifesta’, but can hopefully contribute to a later iteration of a collectively agreed feminist manifesto for future parents to resist patriarchal organisations.

There is a rich history of feminist manifestos that my five parental demands pay homage to, but vary from, through my dystopian fiction infused scriptology. Brueske (2018) lists 150 examples of feminist manifestos ‘the unflinchingly angry, the necessarily dogged, and the unapologetically passionate’ (p. 2) that date back to C17th. The selected manifestos, across a broad geographical spectrum, often represent intersectional, collectively agreed goals including (but not limited to) working class women labourers, indigenous and immigrant women, LGBTQ & climate change. Such a range of manifestos suggests that it is folly for me to attempt a unifying set of parental demands in the workplace context. Instead, my demands seek to start the conversation and encourage you, the reader, to use these demands as a starting point to debate these demands and create your own collective parental demands in your own contexts. Equally, I ask my academic audience to respond to these demands with their own perspectives on this vital organisational social justice issue.

The limited output of feminist aligned, future-oriented, writing in the HRD and Organisation Studies fields highlights the challenge of unifying an academic field behind feminist principles. There are some prominent exceptions. Bierema (2002) outlined the intentions of feminist research in HRD ‘challenging underlying assumptions, and proposing alternatives’ at a period when HRD was establishing itself. She also identified missing voices in HRD, and the devaluation of mothers returning to work in a proposed critical focus for an inclusive HRD. In *Organization*, Harding, Ford, and Fotaki’s (2012) literature review highlighted the journal’s relative success in its openness to the third wave feminist focusses on postcolonial and post structural analyses of gender issues. Recent HRD examples also demonstrate an active response to postcolonial feminist identities with articles examining women’s careers in Arabian, Indian, Korean and Nigerian contexts (Abalkhail, 2019; Bako and Syed, 2018; Chaudhuri, Park, and Kim, 2019), but not all set a new direction as inherently associated with the feminist manifesto. I suggest here that a visionary manifesto benefits from visionary source materials.

Harding et al. (2012) identified a hidden ‘treasure house’ of undiscovered feminist ideas including Greek mythology as a provocation to future writing. I draw on two foundational feminist manifestos as inspiration for their use of fiction narratives with ground-breaking impact. ‘The Laugh of the Medusa’ (Cixous et al., 1976) and Donna Haraway’s visionary

‘Cyborg Manifesto [abridged]’ (1991) both enter the liminal space and embrace ‘flexibility in form’ (Brueske, 2018, p. 2) with allusions to mythology and fiction, while setting a direction of women’s writing. Cixous’ fearless admonishment of phallogentric writing, and insistence on women’s agency and ownership of their bodies and sexuality, forged a new arena for feminist writing in academia. Her declaration, ‘And why don't you write? Write! Writing is for you, you are for you; your body is yours, take it.’ (p. 876) implores the reader through its affecting passion. Haraway’s manifesto responded with similar passion to the dominant neoliberal landscape and emerging technological landscapes, ‘Who cyborgs will be is a radical question; the answers are a matter of survival.’ For her, the prospect of a technology-enabled communication was existential. Cyborg writing heralded the potential deconstruction of identity binaries and boundaries in the ‘task of recoding communication and intelligence to subvert command and control’ (p. 175).

Both these examples radically differ from conventional (dominant paradigm) academic writing, and project our thinking forward into a ‘brave new world’ ripe with opportunities for marginalised voices to be heard. Rhodes (2019) describes ‘feminine creation’ as a means to arrive at a ‘scriptology’ that challenges ‘masculine stereotypes of rationality, rigorous method and explicit knowledge production’ (p. 33). Alternate scriptology approaches include the fifteen point manifesto Adichie (2017) produced, which invites the reader into a deeply personal conversation with her friend (who recently had a baby) about feminist principles to teach them. Adichie’s second parental suggestion to ‘do it together’ is especially pertinent to the five demands I outline here, and the form of her essay serves as a clear and radical evocation of the need to remove hierarchies in parental roles *and* academic writing.

I have incorporated my own parental experiences into my five parental demands in an attempt to make myself vulnerable and challenge patriarchal expectations of working fatherhood. I present my examples as a counter narrative to the ideal worker paradigm, which exclude parental experiences from operational reality. I have also incorporated dystopian fiction extracts to disrupt your reading of this manifesto and potentially take you into a speculative, liminal space where these fictions can teach us something about our realities. I hope you will read these vignettes and extracts as an invitation to be more open and speculative with your colleagues, and as vehicle to shift our collective workplace cultures through discourse and action.

### **Inspired by Dystopian Fiction**

This paper aligns to the recent call for a ‘more radical human resource development’ (Collins, 2019), which can affect organisational change. I propose a multi-faceted radical approach to the problem through this dystopian fiction inspired manifesto. Critical storytelling, initially identified as a major theme by Rhodes and Brown (2005), has further developed into an important and emerging theme amongst female authors in organisational research (Beigi, Callahan, and Michaelson, 2019). Importantly, between 1975 and 2015, the use of story and fiction has become a method for more critical perspectives from female authors, ‘disrupting conventional narratives’ (p. 1) and enabling more egalitarian gender representation for critical organizational storytelling outputs. DF uniquely offers an opportunity to develop critical ‘counter-narratives’ (Frandsen, Kuhn, and Wolff Lundholt, 2016) to our patriarchal reality and provides a framework for subversion through progressive, action-focused *demands* in organisations.

As an allegory of our ‘problematic reality’ (Griffin, Learmonth, and Piper, 2018), DFs are variously defined as speculative, flawed societies; recognisable by prominent tropes of oppression, fear and estrangement (see examples in Claeys, 2018). Other relevant DF tropes to the five parental demands are *fertility, patriarchy and subversion* (see *The Children of Men* by James, 2018 and *The Handmaid’s Tale* by Atwood, 1996). These tropes guide and inform my approach to my parental demands. Atwood’s (2017) insistence on only using penalties in her fiction that replicate the horrors of the past illustrates DF’s unique power to shock and disrupt our current thinking. Incorporating DF also allows me to engage in ‘counterfactual imagining’ (Stock, 2017) to speculate and warn about the possible future for parents and critically reflect on recognisable mirrors to our past and present (Stock, 2016).

### **A dystopian fiction approach to manifestos**

In DF, subversive characters offer a sense of hope and formulate blueprints for resistance that organisational actors can learn from. *The Children of Men* (James, 1991/2018) depicts a future UK society, resigned to extinction after 25 years of global infertility. The authoritarian leader exploits societal vulnerability and promises ‘security and comfort’, but at the expense of freedom and dignity for many of his subjects. The novel provides examples of the oppression of the elderly, destitute and immigrants, all to maintain order, security and comfort.

*The Children of Men* offers a narrative of hope and resistance which inspires these parental demands. A small group of co-conspirators, known as ‘The Five Fishes’, rise up against the status quo by communicating an alternative, values-based message of dignity and respect. They

transform their message into five demands that they distribute to the people as a manifesto, which this paper re-appropriates in the context of organisational reality:

- 1. Call a general election and put your policies before the people.*
- 2. Give the Sojourners full civil rights including the right to live in their own homes, to send for their families and to remain in Britain at the end of their contract of service.*
- 3. Abolish the Quietus.*
- 4. Stop deporting convicted offenders to the Isle of Man Penal Colony and ensure that people already there can live in peace and decency.*
- 5. Stop the compulsory testing of semen and the examination of healthy young women and shut down the public porn shops.*

*(James, 2018, p. 158)*

Adapting this manifesto from the fictional imagination, the following sections transform its fictional potential to address the present reality of parental, patriarchal inequity in contemporary organisations. I present these demands as a subversive manifesto in content and form for working parents everywhere who deserve to have the closeness with their families that I have enjoyed for the first year of my child's life, long may it continue.

## THE FIVE PARENTAL DEMANDS

### ***1. Openly negotiate and make transparent organisational parental policies***

I begin with this demand as a believer in the imperative of collective approaches to collective problems, and the importance of never leaving people behind to achieve this. Recent DF 'Red Clocks' (Zumas, 2018) provides a chilling portrayal of the impact of autocratic 'pro-life' parental policies that promote 'wholesome' family values derived from doctrinal, conservative biblical interpretation. Such singular policies marginalise minority groups such as single parents and LGBTQ couples and force women to seek out unregulated herbal practitioners like 'The Mender' character, for remedies that subvert systemic restrictions.

The restrictive family policies also trap a pregnant teen character, 'The Daughter' into desperately, and dangerously, seeking an unregulated abortion to avoid her life-changing fate. It is only at the end of the novel that we see the bravery of a wider group willing to organise and resist, in spite of the risk to their personal liberty, to protect the rights of the vulnerable and

marginalised in society. This bravery has a huge impact on main character 'The Biographer', whose concluding reflections allude to a shift towards collective responsibility:

*'She wants to be more than one thing...*

*...To quit shaking her head.*

*To go to the protest in May.*

*To do more than go to the protest.*

*To be okay with not knowing...*

*To see what is. And to see what is possible.'* (Zumas, 2018, pp. 348-349)

I gained insights into what is possible in parenthood in the early days of my life as a parent, benefiting from parental policies, hard-won though incremental collective bargaining.

*I caught my breath, held my chest, and with each whimper, nuzzle and twist of the new-born baby sleeping on me, I pleaded with them to stay asleep. A one-handed lit-review at 10pm was not what I expected, but it was working. The fears I had carried up to that time; of compromising or being inadequate as a parent, started to ease as each day passed. My supervisor's empathy, workplace flexibility, and peer support meant I could navigate my way through this hazy, sleep deprived soup of emotion. Knowing I was supported made it feel possible.*

Sadly, my own experience of organisational policies and practices represent an exception to typically negative fatherhood experiences in western organisations (Collier, 2019; Murgia and Poggio, 2013). As a cis-gender, white man, I know I speak from a privileged positionality, but as a son, husband, colleague and friend, I yearn to see greater social justice in all parental experiences. One way organisations can move towards parental equity is by adopting progressive policy, beyond statutory baselines, to protect family life. As DF examples show, when policies are unjust, employees are forced to pursue dangerous pathways to subvert and resist.

Unjust policies occur when applied via individualised workplace negotiations which are subject to biases. When individuals apply different interpretations to policy, they negotiate exceptions that should be available to all and undermine collective rights (Weststar, 2012). Senior figures can exercise disproportionate influence on organisational policy, which can further exasperate the risk. A small illustration of this comes from Sheryl Sandberg's 'lean in' revelation about demanding pregnancy car parking spaces (closer to the building) at Google after her own pregnancy experience (Cohen, 2013). Though she should be lauded for this positive



intervention, the story highlights the problem of relying on individual interventions for collective rights. What if Sandberg decided this right should only apply to executives with important meetings to attend? Who would have challenged her?

We must tap into the collective unease at unjust policies. It is not enough to gripe in isolation. Sensing a lack of transparency, evidence suggests employees engage in ‘backstage resistance’ (Ybema and Horvers, 2017, p. 1244) to subvert organisational policies through covert acts, while maintaining a surface level of conformity. This form of subversion may help individuals’ sense of personal justice, but cannot help the whole. Collective responses require collective models to base our demands on. I have recently established a workplace parenting network to bring people together for peer support and a shared purpose alongside our trade union colleagues. The network also aspires to grow into a community at work for mutual support (practical and emotional) to subvert the pressures of patriarchal work cultures. We will support the lobby for better parental policies, and aspire to follow the example from our Nordic counterparts.

Nordic shared parental leave policies (introduced in early 1990s) have started to change the meaning of parenthood. Their original aim was to encourage women’s participation in the labour force (Eydal and Rostgaard, 2011) by using a ‘special quota for fathers’ (p. 165), which have increased participation for fathers. Nordic policies also include flexible parental allowances where fathers ‘serve both work and childcare’ (Brandth and Kvande, 2016, p. 287). However, Brandth and Kvande (2016) contend that fathers’ right to flexible protected parental leave has not resulted in equal participation as many fathers remain secondary caregivers with some suffering heightened stress with increased work-life tension. It is a tension that will not easily disappear, but Nordic policy change has shifted the dial towards greater gender equity for all.

In sum, as Haraway suggests, unified approaches risk marginalising some people, but I maintain that they are the foundation of ongoing discourse for collective rights. It is very difficult to account for the often hidden dark side to any policy, and policy change alone is insufficient to overcome cultural barriers, but without change we cannot learn from mistakes and make further improvements. The following demands seek to realign our thinking beyond legislation and policy, toward social justice through collective responsibility.

## ***2. Strengthen civil rights for marginalised mothers***

*‘We stand between Janine and the bed, so she won’t have to see this...she’s still*

*having the pains for the afterbirth, she's crying helplessly, burnt-out miserable tears' (Atwood, 1996, pp. 136-137)*

Janine's plight in *The Handmaid's Tale* represents the patriarchal hierarchy applied to fertile handmaids in Gilead. After carrying her baby to term, the infant is immediately transferred to the commander and his wife. As compensation, her hollow prize for a successful pregnancy is remaining a 'Handmaid' in servitude to another commander for further exploitation in pregnancy. I draw on this dark, dystopian vision, stark though it seems, to approximate the underappreciated and exploited 'emotional work, day-to day deliberations, and frequent sacrifices to manage responsibilities' (Horne and Breitzkreuz, 2018, p.128) that many women endure in the workplace and home.

I speak of strengthening civil rights concerning parental experiences in a bid to extend concepts of respect and fairness concerning women's labour (physical and emotional). Acker and Dillabough (2007) describe women's work replicating domestic responsibilities, which is 'insufficiently credit[ed]' (Acker, 2012, p. 423) and primarily benefits the organisation, not the mother. Hochschild's (1979) theory of 'emotional labour' can frame an argument that employers expect a degree of free, 'autonomous emotional labour' (Callahan and McCollum, 2002) from mothers in exchange for their perceived accrued debts to the employer. These debts could include accrued parental leave and flexible working to meet childcare demands. Mothers, on their return to work, may conform to perceived 'feeling rules' (Hochschild, 1979, p. 564) on how they should repay their social debt and 'go the extra mile' (Gloor, Li, Lim, and Feierabend, 2018, p. 47) to perform their 'ideal worker' role through emotional sacrifices and additional effort. The emphasis seems wholly placed on women, while men escape scrutiny in their civil responsibilities.

I believe an emphasis on 're-embodied masculinity' (Connell, 2005) can shift parental experiences. Current models marginalise mothers and 'reproduce masculine values' (Vohlídalová, 2017, p. 167) such as 'aggressiveness, decisiveness and independence' (Powell and Greenhaus, 2010). The emotional labour that many men expect of their partners is a consequence of their limited involvement in the physical acts of fatherhood (e.g. changing nappies) and the associated emotional connection that brings. Supporting this assertion, research in Sweden suggests that mothers perceive the significant impact the role of their partner plays in enabling or constraining parental equality (Stertz, Grether, and Wiese, 2017). Men who contribute to an equitable share of parental working responsibilities demonstrate a commitment to equal civil rights for women. I call on fathers everywhere to take this

responsibility seriously.

My own process of parental ‘re-embodiment’ started mere seconds after my child was born:

*I cradled our new-born baby for the first time, their squashed, pink face peered out into the world, vulnerable and dependent. I looked at my wife through a melee of bodies, beeps, white light and machinery... my inner voice implored, ‘Please don’t die...’ She stared ahead, sombre and distant. Doctors and nurses followed protocol; a nurse spoke to me but I don’t know what she said. ‘I just want her to be OK...’ I replied before she was wheeled to surgery... Afterwards, as my wife held our baby for the first time, I wept.*

This experience taught me how precious family time is and to never take it for granted. Each nappy change is an opportunity to connect, it’s time you can’t substitute, and organisations should value it by promoting family time in their cultures.

The task is not simple for organisational contexts. Recent research shows the increasing pressure for women to remain in contact with the workplace during maternity leave (Ollilainen, 2019). The ‘ideal worker’ paradigm demands continuing interaction with the workplace during parental leave, unfairly diminishing a parent’s civil right to family life. Acker and Dillabough also describe career ‘pace’ where the ‘expected productivity is too great to allow for lapses and spaces’ (2007, p. 313). Demanding career paths might necessitate a tough decision as the ‘pace’ and pressure creates the conditions for women to remain childless. However, childless workers (mainly women) may also face moral backlash from their colleagues (Ashburn-Nardo, 2017) due to social expectations. To that end, the third demand identifies the challenge to patriarchal organisational cultures and parental discourse.

### **3. Abolish the silencing of fathers in parental discourse**

Fatherhood is often an inconspicuous storyline in DF; *The Road* (McCarthy, 2009) is a notable exception. ‘The Man’ demonstrates guardianship and love for his son throughout their struggle to survive, while navigating parent/child discussions. Nowhere is his love more deeply expressed than when [spoiler alert] ‘The Man’ is dying and saying goodbye to his son:

*[The Boy:] You said you wouldn’t ever leave me.*

*[The Man:] I know. I’m sorry. You have my whole heart. You always did. You’re the best guy. You always were. If I’m not here you can still talk to me. You can talk to me and I’ll talk to you. You’ll see. (McCarthy, 2009, p. 298)*

McCarthy's prose provide an insight into the depth of emotion inherent in the father's relationship with their child. Written in homage to his own relationship with his son (Adams, 2009), the love and connection on display in this novel evokes an honesty sometimes lacking, or silenced in patriarchal workplace discourse. This demand is highly personal to me and centres on the barriers men face in the workplace and in themselves. McCarthy's language choices in *The Road* (specifically the parental dialogue) create an immersive sense of openness and love between a father and son. Emotional language is sorely lacking in the workplace and this must change! We need to get away from 'breadwinner' men 'babysitting' their children. Importantly, we must start referring to mothers and fathers as 'parents' who have an equal stake in their family and the workplace.

The essentialized labels, 'mother' and 'father' are imbued with historic gender injustices. Haraway's (1991) cyborg manifesto critique of feminist essentialism provides a useful parallel to parental essentialism. Just as hierarchies exist in feminism, the same is true of masculinities where concepts of 'breadwinners' and 'ideal workers' still prevail (Locke and Yarwood, 2017). The language we choose for parents must challenge the socially constructed sex-role division of labour and power (Connell, 2003). Our language choices become symbolic of the barriers in place that inhibit parental equality.

As an expectant new parent, I became aware of the ease at which fathers can covertly exist as a worker (Horvath, Grether, and Wiese, 2018) in a culture of silence in the workplace (Murgia and Poggio, 2013). I delayed disclosing my expectant parent status because (physically) I could. This maintained the separation of work from my family and it is something I regret. Since becoming a parent, I have talked openly about parenthood at work to normalise this discourse. I am conscious that a father's parental identity is often suppressed by constructions of the 'breadwinner' and 'ideal worker' (Vandello, Hettinger, Bosson, and Siddiqi, 2013). It is incumbent on each and every new father, as an ally to working mothers, to become a working *parent* and inhabit that new role with pride, not secrecy.

Unfortunately, barriers persist in the form of 'financial costs, gendered expectations, perceived workplace resistance, and policy restrictions' (Kaufman, 2018, p. 316), which limit father's involvement. Financial barriers are emblematic of societal gender pay inequity, where women's structurally lower pay means they often default as primary carer. Systemic changes following pay reporting may begin to alleviate this barrier, but it will take time to see positive results. Gender perceptions and workplace resistance include both cultural and language barriers that we can each individually affect with our language choices. I discussed policy in

the first demand and models of policy change in Nordic countries; ‘daddy quotas’ represent a minimum baseline for progressive policy making that can change patriarchal attitudes and overcome financial barriers to parenting through re-embodied masculinity.

Nordic parental policy has led to some organisations including parents as representatives on boards (Brandth and Kvande, 2019); this empowers workers to perform check and balance guardianship for employees’ parental rights and culture. The cultural conversation including senior management parental advocacy can also extend to encouraging employee preparedness for fatherhood (Kaufman, 2018, p. 321). This is not an easy road; a Norwegian study showed that flexible parental leave served to reinforce father’s position as secondary, rather than empowered carers (Brandth and Kvande, 2016). As with most policies, there can be unforeseen negative consequences to changes that seem utopian, but there are undoubtedly potential benefits to fathers becoming more involved.

*One of my favourite times of day is my baby’s bedtime. I remove their dirty nappy, bathe them, dress them for bed, and read them a bedtime story. I love to create a sense of calm for them throughout and cuddle them as I read softly. After their final feed with mummy, I usually tuck them in. Over the months, this routine has become very precious to me.*

I frequently work flexibly from home, it allows me to interact more with my child during the daytime and stay connected to my familial responsibilities. As a result, I feel I can embody ‘caring masculinities’ (Connell, 2005; Elliott, 2016; Lee and Lee, 2018) that are otherwise harder to maintain and integrate into workplace discourse. A study of ‘stay at home fathers’ in Norway highlights the development of ‘caring masculinities’, which includes ‘caring competencies’ such as nappy changing, reading, bathing etc. (Brandth and Kvande, 2018). Supporting fathers to develop ‘caring competencies’ can be beneficial to organisational cultures as it can break down the myths of ‘separate spheres’ and foster greater collegiality.

As with other policy shifts around flexible working, the outcomes of longitudinal studies indicate negligible uptake for low income, or unemployed fathers (Duvander, 2014; Eydal and Rostgaard, 2011), whose masculine identity is under greater threat (Thebaud and Pedulla, 2016). In pursuing progressive policies for parents, we must be mindful of avoiding a social stratification consequences whereby those with financial means can benefit from an evolution in their masculinity, while those without financial freedom are silenced (Hunter, Riggs, and Augoustinos, 2017). In the UK, as per Nordic examples, this barrier will continue to stratify

fathers by income, but removing other barriers can still have an effect for silenced fathers.

Outside of state intervention, or organisational precedent, as individuals we must join collective lobbying voices. I implore you to join trade unions or create employee networks to share and amplify your views in solidarity. Acknowledging my privileged status, I greatly benefit from engaging in open conversations with other parents and encourage parental discourse with fathers. Silenced fathers need the space (and excuse) to talk about their parental experiences. Creating an inclusive parental community with a collective voice can benefit all parents. The next demand concerns the current impact of this silencing on mothers and proposes approaches to shift this narrative.

#### ***4. Stop 'deporting' mothers out of their career paths***

The inevitability of the current career deportation for mothers, dispassionately marginalising women regardless of emotional cost, is reminiscent of the exploited cloned children of Hailsham School in *Never Let Me Go*:

*'Your lives are set out for you. You'll become adults, then before you're old, before you're even middle aged, you'll start to donate your vital organs... You were brought into this world for a purpose, and your futures, all of them, have been decided' (Ishiguro, 2005, p. 73)*

Hailsham children have a singular purpose, to reach adulthood and provide organs that elongate the lives of the 'real' people they were modelled on. Societal impositions of women's purpose as primary caregivers is currently modelled on a similar exploitative system.

By imposing primary childcare responsibilities on most women (regardless of preference), we too are exploiting women's bodies to serve and propel the male 'ideal worker' (Locke and Yarwood, 2017) into the next phase of their career. This emotionless prioritisation of workplace efficiency and productivity, modelled on a patriarchal ideal workers, renders privileged men the beneficiaries of the 'patriarchal dividend' (Connell, 2005), while women remain the exploited 'other'. What is forgotten in this systemic gender imbalance is the injustice for those women who wish to pursue their careers as well as being a parent. It is wrong and it must be stopped.

I make no apologies for this depressing evocation of DF exploitation. I want my reader to consider how these physically exploitative acts might benefit them too. I am conscious of my own culpability as a full time student/researcher. My career is enabled by our shared decision for my wife to take parental leave as the primary carer for our first child. Every circumstance

is different and our choice reflected our specific circumstances. Outside of those of us who are fortunate to choose parental leave options, and retain their career pathway, the risks are far greater.

There is currently an inevitability to the cliff-edge moment where women's careers stall, regardless of increasing work flexibility (Fuller and Hirsh, 2019). Research shows that mothers, especially, suffer increasingly negative prospects relative to the length of parental leave (Aisenbrey, Evertsson, and Grunow, 2009), when they disclose parental status in job applications (Correll, Benard, and Paik, 2007), and are more likely to prioritise family needs when negotiating contract terms (Bowles, Thomason, and Bear, 2018). All these factors contribute to career stagnation and wage penalties (Gangl and Ziefle, 2009).

Many mothers 'face a choice of assimilation or denial in the workplace' (Amsler and Motta, 2019, p. 85) especially considering the incivility and bias already discussed. One consequence of this assimilation pressure is that women's success is contingent on whether 'babies were timed with career considerations in mind' (Santos and Dang Van Phu, 2019, p. 2). Such conditional success suggests that women must conform to patriarchal workplace ideologies and work-based schedules in order to progress, if not, they risk deportation from career tracks.

I raise this demand in light of known detrimental effects on working mothers who rail against patriarchal organisational cultures (Cahusac and Kanji, 2014). This problem requires a fundamental reconfiguration of the meaning and implications of parental leave and a focus on the gatekeepers of parental rights and opportunities, line managers (Fodor and Glass, 2018) and partners (Stern et al., 2017). Line managers and partners have a crucial role to play in protecting career pathways and prioritising fairness for parents returning to work.

One approach some parents take is to foster positive relationships with their line manager, raising emotional capital in order to benefit personally. This relationship is further enhanced when the line manager is a parent (Fodor and Glass, 2018). However, this approach reinforces inconsistencies and injustices at work. The onus should lie *with* the employer to lead the culture and set a higher standard for employee human rights. Leaders must empower line managers to apply empathic, favourable interpretations of parental policy. Otherwise, individual interpretations based on inconsistent individual values can benefit some, but not others.

In academic writing, consistency with norms can sometimes be the problem. Autoethnography is subversive writing which can humanise our field to influence counter narratives. In my scriptology approach, I have incorporated my own experiences and informal language as a nod

to far greater autoethnographic and unconventional writing (for an overview, see Rhodes, 2001, 2019). Such writing, when taken from a critical perspective, presents authentic individual accounts and exposes hegemonic workplace conditions via representations of marginalised experiences. O'Shea shares their transgender and queer experiences using a queer theory lens in their auto-ethnographic writing (2018), their beautiful prose provide a privileged insight into their lived experiences:

*It went unnamed, buried away in a grave so shallow its spectre haunted me for years until 3000 days ago I ceased denying and accepted it as me. This 'difference' that makes me what I am names me 'non binary transsexual': a small label that sutures this girl's life. (O'Shea, 2018, p. 5)*

Without these pioneering voices, many (including me) would be 'haunted by the spectre' of their own ignorance. It should not be the responsibility of the oppressed to 'invite witnessing' (Amsler and Motta, 2019) of the neo-liberal dehumanisation, or to educate the privileged. I thank those who share their unique and often devastating experiences to shift our collective perceptions of what it means to be human in organisations. My hope is that further humanisation of discourse can change the narrative of deported mothers too.

Autoethnographies can create a space where parental experiences, especially of marginalised and deported mothers can reach those ignorant of the individual impact. This is even more important for those whose experience has been tragic, such as miscarriage:

*My baby is gone. I have never experienced this before but I know with absolute and unmistakable certainty that I have lost my baby today. I feel... despair. And shock. Shock at my despair. (Boncori and Smith, 2019, p. 77)*

Reading this heart-breaking reflection, it is important to pause and consider how a colleague you might know may also have experienced similar trauma.

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Please also consider how, due to neo-liberal attitudes prioritising productivity and efficiency, they may have buried their emotions. Autoethnographies can disrupt our quantifiable thinking in academic research, and provoke debate with their alternative depictions of suppressed reality in the hegemonic culture of the workplace. This demand evokes the emotional aspect of parenthood and implores the reader to open themselves up to each other's vulnerability to create a greater shared empathy and responsibility to each other to stop the deportation!



## ***5. End the anticipatory discrimination of potential mothers***

My final demand opposes egregious, judgemental ‘workplace incivility’ that mothers experience due to their potential to bear children later in their career (Gloor et al., 2018). This demand considers ‘abject appearance theory’ (Mavin and Grandy, 2016) and perceptions that ‘feminine bodies are “out of place” in organizations’ (p. 1096). Specifically, I propose that the imagined projection of pregnant bodies is used as a stigma to impede women’s careers in patriarchal organisations. This is pertinent for early career women whom peers may view through the lens of ‘disgust-attraction and be perceived as unprofessional’ (p. 1112). They may also be measured against a projected future, ‘mother-like’ pregnant bodies.

I call on readers to be brave in your allegiance with early career women, and refer to the action of the Five Fishes in the *Children of Men* whose determination to ***do something*** rallied against overwhelmingly oppressive circumstances:

*Theo said: I don’t think you’ll start a revolution on the issue... people don’t care enough.*

*Julian said: We want to help them to care (James, 2018, p. 84)*

This simple subversive goal demarks our everyday acts of kindness compared with instrumental concerns for productivity, efficiency and the ‘ideal worker’. It is unfair that any women experience mistreatment based on assumptions that they may, one day, have children. I present the inverse argument of fathers and their potential to have children, which garners no such incivility, in fact my experiences have highlighted only positive responses from colleagues.

This incivility phenomenon affirms gender stereotypes whereby women are perceived as primary carers and mothers-in-waiting; an assumption which extends to ‘managers’ perceptions of their family-work conflict’ (Hoobler, Wayne, and Lemmon, 2009, p. 951). Some evidence also suggests postponing childbirth actually causes further workplace mistreatment due to an incongruence with expected familial duties (Berdahl and Moon, 2013). Women face a double-bind scenario where the only perceived solution is to conform to hegemonic masculine expectations and sacrifice their own career.

I return to men’s responsibilities as the recipients of the ‘patriarchal dividend’, to shift this narrative through allegiant action. Additionally, we must recognise a woman’s right to choose whether they want to have a family, not impose social expectation on each other based on hegemonic attitudes to family and gender. As a parent, it is my privilege to speak about parental

issues and call for civil justice for all parents, I do so for my wife's career, my family, colleagues and friends. We all have a responsibility to *do something* to help people to care more about each other, whether that's challenging examples of anticipatory discrimination, or reflecting on our own internal assumptions of gendered parenting. Changing such attitudes requires us all to take responsibility in subverting the effects of our cultural model of Hegemonic Masculinity.

## Conclusion

In this paper, I use the DF tropes of 'fertility' and 'masculinity' as a pivotal influence on my 'scriptology' of five parental demands; a manifesto inspired by *The Children of Men*. Using storytelling in the flourishing critical landscape of feminist academic writing (Beigi et al., 2019), one of the primary contributions is my 'scriptology' (Rhodes, 2019) approach to a feminist-inspired manifestos for organisational change. My use of DF vignettes and autoethnographic accounts of parenthood are intended to disrupt conventional academic reading, expose my personal vulnerability and promote caring, 're-embodied masculinity' (Connell, 2005). The examples I have presented are sometimes traumatic, but also joyful; as parenting often can be. I propose manifestos should draw on storytelling more to reach a wider audience and inspire social justice action in organisations.

This manifesto intends to jolt the reader into action (collective and subversive) within their organisational contexts. I promote collective resistance to patriarchy through critical discourse, policy lobbying, and individual responsibility as parents. These five demands present a new scriptology for manifestos, intentionally disruptive and emotionally open with DF as 'inspiration and source' (Phillips and Knowles, 2012). I hope this combination can inspire a creative platform for working parents and embolden them to articulate their own parental demands towards a more equitable future in organisations.

Finally, I present a quote from *The Children of Men* which encapsulates the creative and radical leap required of individuals, the academy and organisations to overcome our patriarchal reality and contribute to genuine change:

*"The world is changed not by the self-regarding, but by men and women prepared to make fools of themselves." (James, 2018, p. 157)*

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