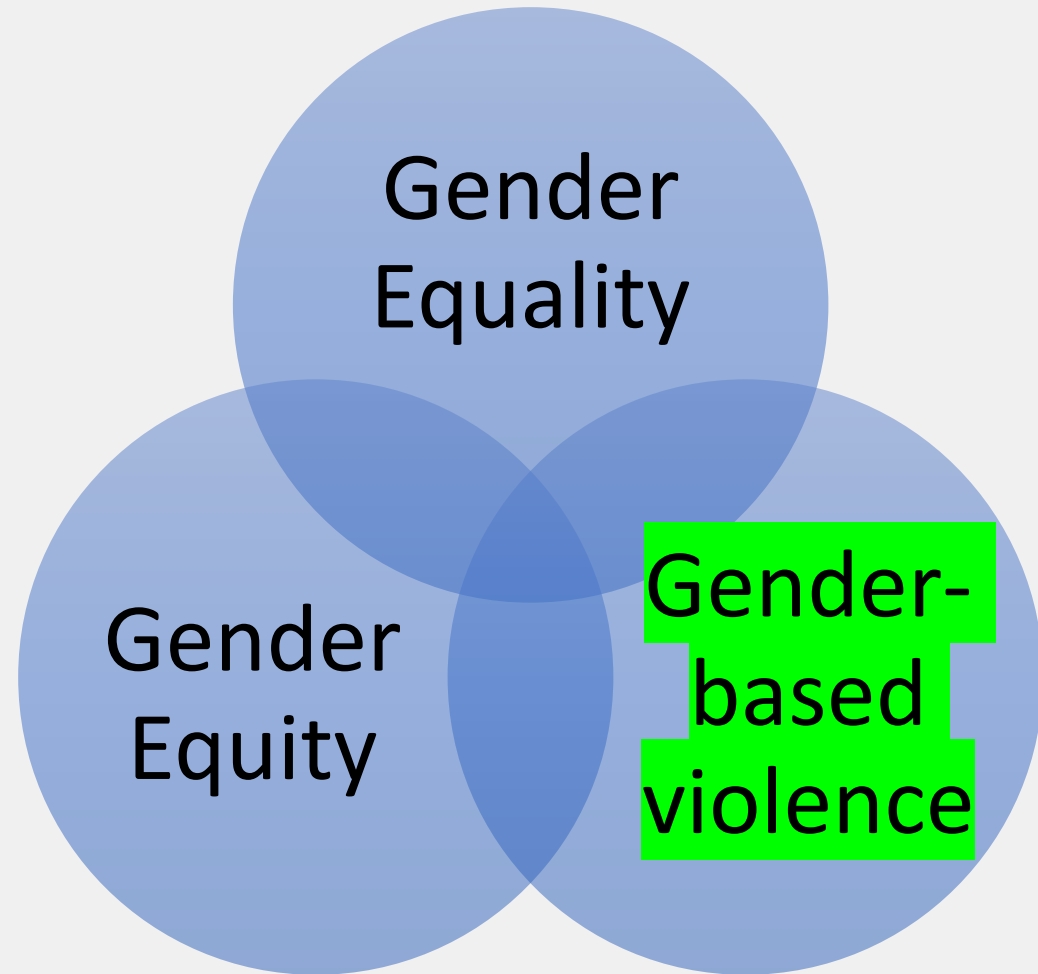


Gender equality,  
gender equity and  
gender-based  
violence:  
Mobilizing an anti-  
violence movement in  
a pandemic

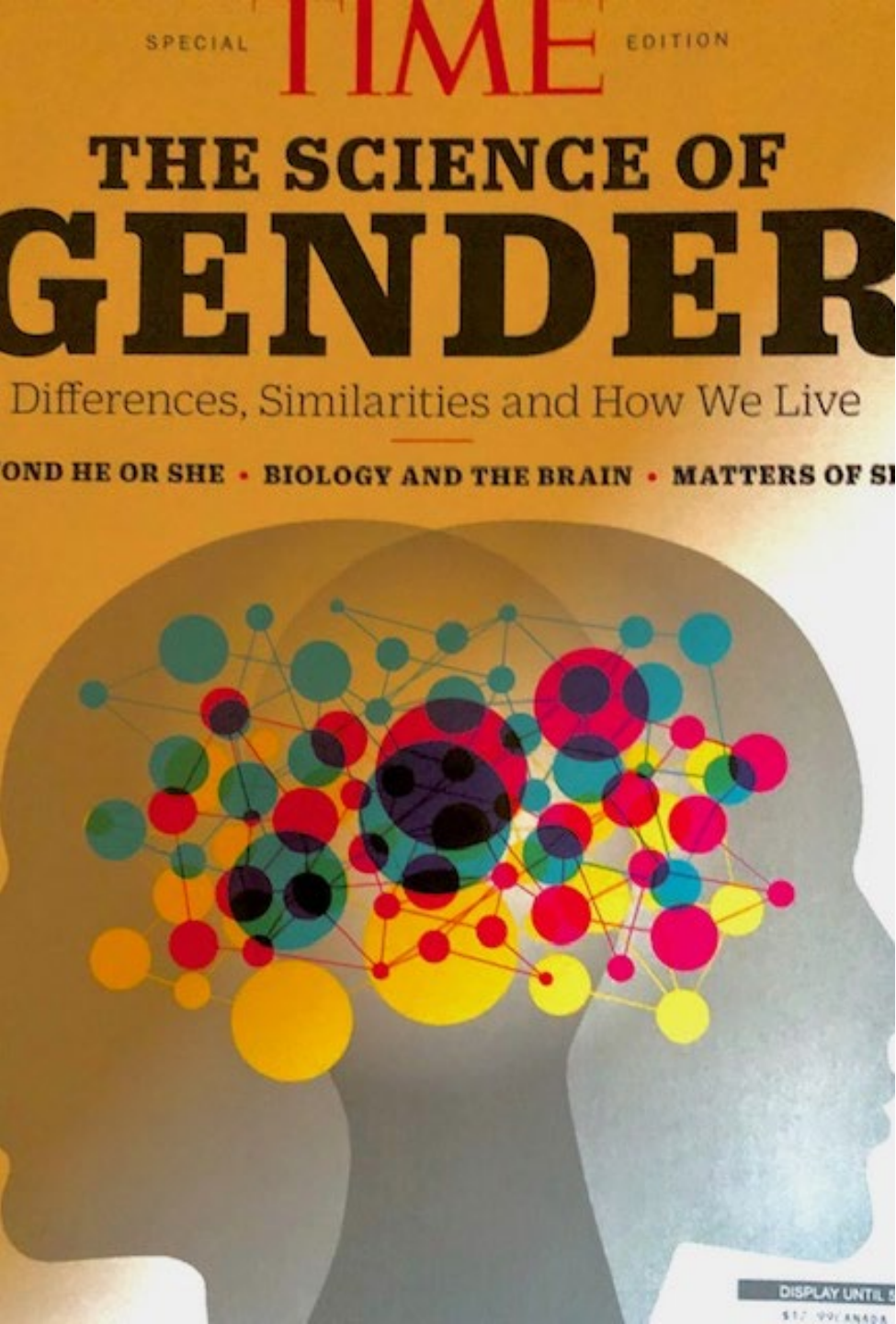
OCSWSSW Annual Meeting  
2020 Keynote Address

Dr. Ramona Alaggia (she/her)  
Professor & Researcher  
Margaret & Wallace McCain Family Chair in  
Child & Family  
Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work  
University of Toronto  
September 3, 2020

Gender based  
violence is  
clear evidence  
of gender  
inequality and  
inequity



The pandemic is exposing, and exacerbating, existing social and economic inequalities.



## Setting the context/re-defining gender


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- Binary notions of gender are outdated and constraining
- Binary non-conforming
- Gender expression is diverse
- More encompassing use of pronouns
- Toxic masculinity

# Violence Against Women

## 1 in 3 (World Health Organization)

- 1 in 3 women/girls around the world experience physical and sexual violence
- Vast majority of police reported calls in Canada are for female victims of domestic violence (DV), with significantly more serious injuries and risk for death
- 8 out of 10 victims of domestic homicide in Canada are women (Dawson et al., 2018)
- In 90% of reported and investigated child welfare cases in Ontario for exposure to intimate partner violence (IPV) the adult victim/survivor of IPV are mothers
- 17,000 women and children go through the shelter system in the province as reported by Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH), adding that one in three will experience violence in their lifetime



Domestic abuse and  
sexual violence is a  
gendered issue

# Using an intersectional lens the most vulnerable to gender-based violence (GBV)

- Racialized women/girls
- Indigenous women/girls and Two Spirit people
- Women with precarious immigration status
- Trans women and non-binary community members
- LGBTTQ+ community
- Women with mental health issues; substance abuse and addiction issues
- Women living with disabilities
- Senior women
- Women and children



# Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender- Based Violence

- In 2017 Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence (CSPAGBV) was developed under the Status of Women's Office
- Distinct pillars for prevention and intervention (Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2019)
- CSPAGBV outlines that gender-based violence can take many forms:
  - cyber, physical, sexual, societal, psychological, emotional, and economic
  - neglect, discrimination, and harassment are now recognized as forms of gender-based violence that were previously not designated
  - however, it is important to note that coercive control is not explicitly named (Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2019)

## Ontario's response to CSPAGBV

Doug Ford's Progressive Conservative government dismantled the Provincial Domestic Violence Roundtable in 2018. Established in 2015 this panel of experts was struck to end violence against women (VAW) in providing strategic advice to law and policy makers, service providers, and advocates. Membership on the panel included representation from specific populations, especially marginalized and vulnerable groups including Indigenous women, immigrants, older women, LGBTTTQ+ people, and sex workers.



# The shadow pandemic -DV rates

- 20-30% increase in the rates of gender-based violence and domestic violence in across Canada (Ministry for Women and Gender Equality, 2020; Apr 27 Minister Maryam Monsef)
- Tip of iceberg theory
  - Rates of DV have always been underestimated/pandemic has unmasked what was already there
- Social isolation theory
  - Rates have increased with confinement and stressors of the pandemic
  - Increased mental health issues and substance abuse explanations

# Child abuse rates have increased since the pandemic lockdown

- Kids Help Phone report
  - 112% increase in calls/contacts since April 2020
  - 33% increase in emotional abuse calls
  - 28% increase in physical abuse calls
  - 35% increase in sexual abuse calls

(Aaron Sanderson, 2020)
- Children in care are at a heightened risk of harm from the current COVID-19 pandemic
- Isolation leading to online luring, exploitation
- Human trafficking risks have increased

# Bill C-78 Amended Divorce Act Rising rates of divorce/Backlog of several months in family courts

- In the wake of the pandemic divorce rates will increase significantly –30% increase in Ontario (Acumen Law, 2020)
- Bill C-78 will now be delayed until next year with significant changes to promote the best interests of the child, address family violence, reduce child poverty; make the family justice system accessible and efficient
- Bill C-78 includes “family violence” defined as behaviour that is violent, threatening, forms a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour, or causes a family member to fear for their safety or the safety of another individual
- Does not have to be a criminal offence or meet the criminal threshold of “proof beyond a reasonable doubt”

# The gender gap –the pandemic will widen the gender gap

- Women's wages are still well below men for the same work at about 76 cents to a man's 1 dollar for the same work
- Time studies continue to show that women do the majority of domestic responsibilities -childcare, household and emotional labour – unpaid work
- For women who also work in the paid labour force, this is referred to as the “double shift”
- Inadequate access to high quality affordable child-care

# The double shift – advancement implications for the workplace



*"Yes, this is a two career household.  
Unfortunately I have both careers."*



Access to high quality affordable child-care is woefully inadequate

Women have more precarious work situations - part-time, contractual, lower pay, without benefits

Women are more likely to stay at home when children are sick, need to be home schooled & provide other care-giving responsibilities i.e., elder parents

# The hidden pandemic

- Essential services/frontline workers are predominantly female in health care services
- Personal support workers, long-term care staff, cleaners, kitchen staff, nurses are working the front-lines in the highest risk environments
- Often they are marginally paid and are living in over-crowded housing situations
- Migrant workers and their families are another vulnerable group

A dark blue, irregularly shaped graphic with a splatter effect, containing white text. The graphic is centered on a white background and has a rough, ink-like edge with some smaller splatters around it.

Sexual violence and  
exploitation increase



# Disclosing/reporting sexual violence


- MeToo Movement raised awareness of the extent of sexual violence
- Bill C-65, to amend the Canada Labour Code for Workplace Harassment and Violence delayed due to COVID-19 –Jan 1/2021
- Tightening workplace violence, harassment, and sexual violence policies in Ontario, employers and workers are bound to report any suspected domestic violence that their co-workers might be experiencing at home
- Employers across Canada will be required to outline how they will respond to situations in the workplace where there are concerns that domestic violence and its subsequent effects may make its way into the workplace

# COVID-19 creates more opportunities for sexual offenders to perpetrate

- Sexual exploitation and luring online with youth spending more time online
- Sex for survival-women who are in vulnerable positions where-by demands for sex are put on them in lieu of rent, lodgings, food
- Sexual assault survivors are less likely to go to hospital after an assault for fear of contracting COVID-19
- Sexual assault offenders are using masks to hide identities
- Majority of sexual assault survivors are women
- Child sexual abuse 1 in 4 girls; 1 in 6 boys

# Double pandemic of racism

- Double pandemic with anti-Black, anti-Indigenous racism on the rise and the uncovering of on-going racism
- Missing and murdered women and girls (MMIWG)
- Since the pandemic Black and Indigenous people are losing their lives to police use of force -Regis Korchinski-Paquet & Chantel Moore
- *Social Movements are being galvanized and mobilized*
  - *Black Lives Matter*
  - *Idle No More*



# Structural violence


- Immigration laws
- Child and family policies and practices
- Gender-based violence policies and practices
- Police practices
- Legal processes

Radical  
resilience and  
an anti-  
violence  
movement

“The dark does not destroy the light; it defines it.”

Brené Brown

We have to take this moment and embed it in an anti-violence movement for long-lasting change. We cannot go back to the way things were when they were not working



# Radical resilience – from the individual to the collective

- Resilience is the growth that happens in the face of and after adversity –it is what we experience personally within and outside of ourselves –an interactive process of internal and external resources
- Resilient systems focus on changing environments rather than just changing individuals –people will change as their environments change
- We are as resilient as our environments are resilient

# Radical resilience –transformational change

- ✓ seeing crisis as opportunity for change
- ✓ standing united, not divided - connectedness
- ✓ proactive planning vs. reactive responses
- ✓ solution focused vs. problem saturated
- ✓ evaluation -identifying positive change processes and embedding what works
- ✓ ability to reflect & valuing reflection
- ✓ intolerance to current condition(s)
- ✓ faith/hope –belief that change is possible
- ✓ creating a new vision for going forward
- ✓ Re-visioning
- ✓ mobilizing resources to realize the vision
- ✓ advocacy and activism



# Taking a vigilant stance

- Use the power of social movements
  - Black Lives Matter
  - Idle No More
  - MeToo
  - Women's March
  - Take Back the Night
  - Slut Walk
- Monitor policies and practices –Amended Divorce Act; Labour Law amendments for violence in the workplace
- Be involved in training to allied professionals; police, judges, lawyers
- Advocate for legal reform
- Advocate for universal child-care



# Staying grounded

- increase rational thinking
- decrease fear-based decision making
- choose fact over fiction
- connecting vs isolating
- self care
- mindfulness –deep breathing
- manage expectations
- practice self compassion and compassion towards others



Question period  
The end

