# The Motherhood Salary: The Financial Recognition of Motherhood

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# Abstract

This paper concerns a moral argument for why there ought to be an economic response to women's inequality they face as a result of motherhood. The burden of unpaid labor and less opportunities to engage in income-generating labor and influential positions falls upon many women as a result of their desires to become mothers. In contrast, the opposite is true for fathers that more easily obtain success in career after entering parenthood. Despite the work of mothers accounting for a huge economic sector, it is not paid. Despite being economically beneficial, this benefit falls mostly upon men denying the potential economic gain that women could have. Labor ought to result in a reward in terms of pay based on the value, productivity, and importance it has. The work carried out by mothers is valuable and important labor that takes up more time and energy than other labor. Due to the importance of motherhood and the hard work it is, it ought to be rewarded. I will argue that motherhood ought to be valued as a career entitled to a salary. The motherhood salary will be compared to the salary of similar sectors including teaching and it should be paid by the states as motherhood is important for the well-being of the society.

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# Introduction

## The concern

A tenth of the world's women live in poverty the United Nations report, in the same article they state that out of the prime ages of being in the labor force sixty-one percent of women are engaging in income generating labor compared to the ninety percent of all the world's men that engage in income generating labor.[1] The thirty-nine percent of women in their peak ages that are not engaging in income-generating positions are for the most part engaging in the wrong kind of labor, the kind of labor that has been taken on by women for ages, yet this labor is not rewarded. Money, wealth, and poverty is gendered and geared towards favoring the work of men meanwhile the work of women is enabling the men to engage in the financially favorable positions. Before, during, and after women become mothers they are financially negatively impacted by their fertility. Motherhood limits women from engaging in male dominated sectors and pushes them into unpaid labor by becoming the caregiver, chef, sanitary worker, therapist, the capsule holding and nurturing new life, of the family, the most essential parts of the upbringing of the new generation of human being is performed by mothers. Without the economic sacrifice of women, humanity could not flourish. In my master's thesis, I will present a scenario in which the choice of women to engage in motherhood turns into an economic benefit for women. I am going to present the motherhood salary.

## The aim of the paper

In this paper I aim to analyze the question whether motherhood should be considered a career entitled to a salary? By answering this question I will push towards practical action benefitting women from a moral standpoint that women's work ought to be valued. I will assume that the current situation of gender inequality in relation to labor and parenthood is morally wrong due to the fact that it is unfairly and unequally affecting individuals based on their gender, and therefore, this situation ought to be changed. I propose a measure which would be economically

[1] UN Women. 2024. "1 in Every 10 Women in the World Lives in Extreme Poverty." UN Women – Headquarters. link

radical as I propose implementing a salary to an extent that cannot be compared to any of the economic benefits parents receive today. I am choosing to pursue this drastic position due to the fact that the situation is critically unfair and is impacting women and children unfairly. I argue that the status quo is as odd as arguing for a position that would hold that construction workers ought not to be paid. After all, construction workers and mothers build societies through engaging in sometimes physically demanding work; the differences are that construction workers are male, the physical risk is smaller. Mothers undergo life threatening conditions during pregnancy, and they represent a large part of women, which is half of the world's population. The work of mothers is not valued, because it has chosen not to be valued.

## The research method

The research of this paper is literature based, due to the scale of the subject, I have chosen to show large numbers and generalized cases to paint the actuality of the situation of women and mothers. For the first section of this paper, I am relying on reports and statistics making up a mixed study of qualitative and quantitative sources. In the second section, I am relying mainly on qualitative sources in the form of argumentative papers. In the third section, I am using some qualitative sources but this part consists mainly of the argument produced by my reasoning stemming from the first and the second part. The fourth section is also mainly focused on qualitative sources and my own responses.

## Introducing women's unequal position

The first section will dive into the actuality of women's and mothers' situations, I will introduce concepts such as the 'unpaid labor'; childrearing and household work that is unevenly placed on women to engage in. Then I will explain the 'motherhood penality' and the 'motherhood wall'; a barrier that women face in their careers solely on the basis of their fertility that limits their possibility to achieve higher paying jobs. Alongside this concept I will touch upon the bias that women's work is seen as a hobby rather than a need. Thereafter, I will contrast the situation of women and mothers at work to the situation of fathers, fathers receive a 'fatherhood bonus'; meaning a raise in salary and influence at work due to their status of having entered fatherhood which is very different from the reality of women. After having explained these trends I will

exemplify the impacts on single parents, children, and human reproduction. With the bias that works against mothers at work and the bias that favors fathers' positions, raising children for a single parent is a highly difficult task, where single mothers are paying the worst consequences. Due to the economic difficulties women face, and the fact that men do not take out parental leave to the same extent as women, children fare worse off because time is a luxury most parents do not have which has negative implications for future generations of children. Parenting and unpaid labor are seen as a choice rather than the work it is, when it becomes harder to become a parent, especially for women, it is not strange that birthrates are going down drastically. I will continue the paper arguing for a solution that I strongly see would impact all of these trends.

## Introducing the philosophical debate regarding rewarding labor

In the second section I will illustrate what actions ought to be rewarded. I will start by illustrating why there is a need for rewarding actions in the first place which I will base on the necessity for humans to trade skills. I will turn to the distinctions and similarities of income generating positions and the classifications of labor, hobbies, and charity. Where I will show that labor is not solely the action of holding a position simply for the economic incentive but could also be engaged with based on interests and inclination for the well-being of others. Thereafter, I will discuss the various positions that may influence adequate pay that one could consider, the models include the desert view; the agreement view; consumer surplus; minimum wage; and a universal basic income. I will highlight their strengths and shortcomings in determining what an adequate pay is. I will end the section by showing that determining adequate pay means including various factors, even unknown benefits of the work of the employee.

## Introducing the motherhood salary

In the third section I am arguing for the motherhood salary, the answer to women's unequal positions when entering parenthood. I will start the section by introducing my argument which considers that performing work that benefits the growth of the society ought to be rewarded, thus mothers ought to be rewarded. I proceed by explaining why someone should be paid for a task that they would already do without the monetary incentive, in which I point to fairness and justice underlying the reasons behind a motherhood salary. I go on by defending why mothers

ought to be the recipient of the salary and not fathers, where I point out that certain aspects of parenting can only be undertaken by women and the workload is currently and historically only placed on women which has affected women's wealth and power in a negative way, thus the salary ought to be allocated to mothers primarily. After defending the motherhood salary I go on to show how it could practically be implemented. I start out with mentioning models of payments that are already given to parents and then explain how these do not succeed in properly bringing justice to the hard work that is being committed to in parenting. The motherhood salary could be found in various ways. I will mention the government in the form of taxpayers, the child-free, the father, or the children as the contenders for obligated contributors. I will go on to explain why I find the government to be the best option to pay out the motherhood salary. Thereafter, I will address the question of families without the biological mother being present and justifying a transferability of the motherhood salary as it is also a measure to make sure that children receive the care that they need and have economic safety. The motherhood salary acknowledges the work of mothers and the need for flourishing future generations.

## Addressing the main challenges to the motherhood salary

The fourth section will address some challenges to my argument. This includes the critique that introducing economic compensation to parenting could result in a commodification of parenthood which could have highly problematic consequences such as inhibition of the sacredness of the parent-child relationship or even become a tool to exploit women for the sake of economic benefits. I will answer this critique by showing how the motherhood salary actually could have opposite effects and that these situations are already occurring currently. Another challenge to the motherhood salary is the perspective that young women would engage less in influential positions during the period in which a motherhood salary is paid out. I accept this limit but move on by showing that it does not suffice as an argument against compensating women for their labor. The last challenge addresses other potential measures promoting gender fairness in parenting, such as making it mandatory for fathers to take out parental leave. I will reply that this position fails to address the main injustices addressed in section one.

## Defending the variables included and excluded

This paper builds on the most common scenarios of families which are families which are made up by biological mothers and biological fathers, because it represents the majority of cases and it shows the gendered unfairness towards women and mothers in particular. However, there are other constellations of families which do not consist of biological mothers and biological fathers that take on the task of raising children. Examples of injustices they face in parenting is a topic for future research, nevertheless, for the sake of clarity in my position I have chosen to focus this paper on the majority of situations.

# Section One

### *The current unequal situation of parents*

## Introduction

Motherhood is a risky pursuit not only due to the potential health consequences but also due to the worse financial and labor situations women are placed in due to their status as mothers or potential mothers. In this section I will discuss the current influences impacting mothers. Firstly, I will discuss unpaid labor that falls upon the mother after having children, limiting the possibilities for mothers to engage in income generating positions, while the labor at home makes up a large portion of the wealth of the society, it remains unpaid and undervalued. Secondly, I will turn to the motherhood penalty, which is imposed on both mothers and fertile women. The motherhood penalty entails that women earn less and receive less opportunities at work due to the possibility of pregnancy, because of the underlying view that motherhood is an economic liability in the eyes of employers. Thirdly, I will contrast mothers at work with fathers at work, men receive the opposite reaction for their parental status. They are more likely to receive a raise in salary after becoming fathers presenting a completely different reality from the situation of mothers at work. Fourthly, I turn to the question of single parents and how mothers and men are impacted differently when they need to bring up their children as one entity rather

than as a couple. Single mothers are also seen to be impacted worse than single fathers. Fiftly, I will discuss the well-being of the children in terms of how the motherhood penalty is affecting them. The unequal conditions mothers face due to parenthood impacts the children's need for attention and care. Lastly, I will discuss how reproductive incentives have been affected, birth rates are going down, while some point to economic challenges and women entering the workforce other important factors such as unpaid labor and unequal treatment at work are being overlooked.

## Unpaid labor

Unpaid labor concerns time-consuming work that must be done but is not materially rewarded, including cooking, cleaning, and care work for family members. The United Nations note that women worldwide do about two to three times more household work than men do.[2] Seriously affecting the economic growth of women as they spend less time in income generating positions. This reality is a world-wide concern, meaning that despite implementing policies of gender equality the divide of unequal labor persists. The work going into labor at home is not valued in terms of how other kinds of work are valued. While labor is for the most part valued in terms of economic compensation, there are other reasons to engage in labor at home, such as a person's deep desire to have children and sustain close relationships with one's family. Meaning that one could argue that committing to unpaid labor is a choice. Nevertheless, even when women commit to unpaid labor because of their own desires to care for their families, it is important to note that it also benefits societies in terms of economic development and generating a new young generation that will contribute to economic and development of the future. Despite the importance of unpaid labor, it is not valued as other labor is, because it is not valued in terms of money; it does not fit the supply and demand market system.[3] However, if unpaid labor would be paid a minimum wage, the worth of unpaid labor in 2020 was estimated by OXFAM at around eleven trillion US dollars.[4] Compared to the tech-industry which the same year only amounted to

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[2] United Nations. 2019. "Redistribute Unpaid Work." UN Women. 2019. link .

[3] Gus Wezerek and Kristen R. Ghodsee. 2020. "Opinion | Women's Unpaid Labor Is Worth $10,900,000,000,000." *The New York Times*, March 5, 2020, sec. Opinion. link

[4] OXFAM. 2020. "Time to Care Unpaid and Underpaid Care Work and the Global Inequality Crisis." *Oxfam.org*. Page 24. link

around half of the value of unpaid labor.[5] Notwithstanding the high value of labor going into raising and caring for families, the status quo as unpaid remains largely unquestioned and women around the world are left out of a large income-generating sector.

## Mothers in workplace

The gender gap is decreasing, meaning that women have more choices in terms of careers and labor. Furthermore, the expectations that women should have children at a young age, and therefore stay home to commit to the caregiving work that raising children entails is becoming an increasingly unpopular view over the last decades. Despite lowered expectations and the shorter gender gap entering income generating positions, it is more important than ever to consider mothers' positions at work and at home. Women entering motherhood through pregnancy must go through a period of not engaging in other labor for the sake of their own and their child's health and wellbeing. While it is natural to have a period to focus on pregnancy and after-birth care, it is financially negative for women to be pregnant. Furthermore, employers see pregnant women as a cost rather than a contribution, this has affected women to the point that they feel less inclined to inform their employers of their plans to become mothers. It is not uncommon that women are questioned whether or not they are planning to have children in the future, in turn their responses affect their careers, such as a woman that told her employer that she wanted to have children in the future and thereafter never received a promotion that helped her advance in her career as a journalist.[6] US women report circumstances in which they have been advised to remove their engagement or wedding ring because marriage signifies a risk of pregnancy.[7] While these examples of discrimination are illegitimate causes for the treatment of women, this kind of discrimination is difficult to prove. Nevertheless, as these stories paint a picture of the experienced life at work for many women it is clear that women are subjected to the maternal wall. The metaphorical maternal wall hinders women that may be interested in motherhood from

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[5] Eva Epker. 2023. "Women Handle 75%+ of All Unpaid Labor. Their Health Pays the Price." Forbes. October 31, 2023. link

[6] Amy Diehl and Leanne Dzubinski. 2024. "How Biases about Motherhood Impact All Women at Work." Harvard Business Review. July 30, 2024. How Biases About Motherhood Impact All Women at Work .

[7] Amy Diehl and Leanne Dzubinski. 2024.

advancing at work, meaning that higher income generating positions are seen as more financially stable if given to men than women which I will further discuss in the next paragraph. The bias that women face is not only that their fertility is a financial negative but there is also a bias that women work as a hobby rather than their job being a need.[8] This is also a contrasting experience from the one fathers face at work.

## Fathers in the workplace

Fathers and men, on the other hand, face a contrasting reality at their workplace where their marital status and parenthood would be viewed as a cause for higher earnings and a promotion. It is shown that on average the fatherhood bonus is around a twelve percent increase in salary after becoming a parent.[9] A reason for this drastically different view on men's parental status includes the bias that when men enter parenthood, it is perceived by employers that they have greater needs to earn a larger salary as they have to provide for their families. Compared to women that are not viewed as providers of their families, employers justify paying men more than women.[10] However, this is also based on the assumption that men do not take out parental leave or alternatively take out less parental leave meaning that it would not affect the profits of a company to the same extent as having to pay full parental leave to the mother. Men do not have a fatherhood penalty because they are not expected to be the ones to stay home with their families after entering parenthood. OECD statistics note that the difference in time taken out for maternal and paternal leave is significant and claim that this could be due to the bias of the traditional roles and the income gap between the parents.[11] Due to the view that men are the providers, becoming a father amplifies their opportunities to achieve better positions at work giving fathers a more stable income and more power.

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[8] Amy Diehl and Leanne Dzubinski. 2024.
[9] Michelle Budig. 2014. "The Fatherhood Bonus and the Motherhood Penalty: Parenthood and the Gender Gap in Pay – Third Way." Thirdway.org. September 2, 2014. link.
[10] Amy Diehl and Leanne Dzubinski. 2024.
[11] OECD. 2023. "Paid Parental Leave: Big Differences for Mothers and Fathers." Oecdstatistics.blog. January 12, 2023. link

## Single parents

The bias women and mothers face at work become even more concerning when addressing mothers in unhealthy relationships with their partners and single mothers. My previous paragraphs point to the view that women at work are not seen as in need of a salary to the same extent as the men due to that they are not working to provide for the family but rather have a free choice whether or not they work. On the opposite hand, men are not expected to stay home with their children. The impact of the existing bias of parents at work not only infringe on women's and mothers' fair opportunities but could lead women to refrain from making the best choices for themselves and their children. After exiting an abusive relationship, women including mothers are more likely to return to the relationship due to stress caused by an unstable financial situation.[12] It is pointed out that historical prejudices that women face at work lie as a foundation for the vulnerable position that women and mothers end up in due to dependencies on their partners for financial stability.[13] Historically, marriage gave men the power over women, while this is not the current reality of the significance of marriage, men still hold the upper hand of power by still remaining the gatherer of income.[14] As a result wives may experience entrapment in unhealthy relationships that are both dangerous for themselves and for the children. Having the opportunity to leave an unhealthy relationship and be able to take care of and provide for your child is currently a task that requires a financial status that many mothers lack.

Moving on to those mothers that are separated from the father of their child or those that have been widowed, finding time to both generate an income and to give their children attention is very hard. The existing bias regarding parenthood is damaging for single parents that are both the caretaker and the provider. Single mothers that need to provide for their families have less opportunities to do so due to the prejudice against working mothers. Furthermore, it is important to note that the bias towards fathers is harmful as well as single fathers are discouraged from spending important time with their children. Consequently, single-parent households have a negative effect on either finances and the well-being of the parents and of the children, whether it

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[12] Dana Harrington Conner. 2014. " Financial Freedom: Women, Money, and Domestic Abuse." *William & Mary Journal of Race, Gender, and Social Justice* 20 (2). Page 340. link
[13] Dana Harrington Conner. 2014. Page 341.
[14] Dana Harrington Conner. 2014.Page 343.

is a single mother or a single father. Nevertheless, as it is more common for a mother to be single and raising the children than the father being the single parent raising the children, the struggles of single mothers should be emphasized, especially since they have less opportunities for better income generating positions than fathers. In 2023 it was noted that single mother households were about five times the number of single father households, meaning that it is more common for women to be the group taking on the responsibility of being the economic provider and the caretaker of the children.

## Impact on children

Now I turn to the wellbeing of children in relation to the current situation of parents. The current situations of unpaid labor, mothers and fathers unequal positions at work, and single parents are not only important in terms of gender inequalities but it is important to highlight how it impacts children and their well-being. It is noted that two out of five children in the United States have a hard time forming deep emotional bonds with their parents.[15] The reason for this situation is due to a lack of quality time spent between the parents and the children at an early age, children form healthy attachment styles when they are being held lovingly, when parents show off a calm presence, and when they are given attention after having a reaction. Therefore, it could be damaging for children's wellbeing to have working parents at an early age. Nevertheless, in order to serve the basic needs of children and contribute to their future success it is at the same time highly important that the parents contribute financially to the family. This pressures both parents into pursuing traditional income generating positions and especially mothers to pursue both a traditional career and to contribute to the unpaid labor that falls upon them. As a result, there is no more time to be spent on proper quality time with children. Nevertheless, children require a caregiver, a job that is unpaid when performed by the parents which therefore is not a possibility for all parents to fully engage themselves in. This current lack of emphasis on the importance of the job of parents result in even more damaging conditions of children growing up with single parents. Children growing up in a single parent household risk losing a larger portion of attention they need from their parent due to the stresses of economic stability covering the needs of the families. If the parent instead engaged less in focusing on higher income positions to take care of

[15] The Sutton Trust. 2014. "40% of Children Miss out on the Parenting Needed to Succeed in Life - Sutton Trust." Sutton Trust. March 21, 2014. link

the children, the children would instead miss out on opportunities due to the worse economic situation they are put in. Improving the conditions of parents would mean bettering the conditions of the future members of society.

## Reproductive incentives and rights

Birth rates have been declining steeply during the last half century, according to OECD statistics, creating uncertainty for future generations.[16] Certain reasons highlighted for this relatively new trend in human history are listed as economic pressures that make it harder for people in their twenties and thirties to live by themselves and therefore they tend to co-live for longer with their parents. Furthermore, women's rise in work activity and education is listed as a cause for this trend, as they spend longer time engaging in activities other than those pertaining to child rearing, it means that the interest is lowered and there will be overall less time that they spend in a fertile age. This kind of reasoning is both problematic and may overlook other reasons for women to be less inclined to have children. I have so far in this section outlined the unequal positions mothers end up in due to their parenthood, having to face such conditions if choosing to have children it is not strange that women feel less inclined to have children. Having children today will mean financial instability, in turn women's freedom is impacted as they become dependent on their partner or if pursuing their career alongside motherhood, they end up working more than men do factoring in the unpaid labor and as a result the children are left with less attention than they need. In the light of these consequences it is a daunting decision to choose to have children.

## Conclusion: section one

With the conditions women meet when entering motherhood it is not strange that birth rates go down and children miss out on the valuable attention they need. Current standards and policies are currently not meant to help women entering motherhood, the opposite, instead stands the status quo. Work that goes into motherhood is not sufficiently valued, thus, their efforts are not valued either leaving women less encouraged to have children. To pursue my call for changes in

[16] OECD 2024. "Declining Fertility Rates Put Prosperity of Future Generations at Risk." OECD. June 20, 2024. link

the views on the value of motherhood, in the next section I will turn to what kinds of work is deserving of an economic compensation to later engage in my argument on the economic compensation for motherhood.

# Section two

## *Philosophical background on rewarding labor and adequate pay*

### Introduction

In this section I aim to deepen the understanding of conceptual perspectives on what salary and labor entail; salary is the compensation for performing work for someone else, and labor is pursuit leading to a salary appear to be two basic understandings. However, the first statement does not say enough about why one deserves compensation nor when one deserves the compensation nor how much the compensation ought to be. Meanwhile, the second statement does not specify what ought to count as labor only that it is connected to receiving a salary. I aim to clarify these statements through answering these questions. Firstly, I will discuss the basics of the importance of human cooperation and why a reward system is necessary. Secondly, I will consider the kinds of actions that ought to be rewarded where I illustrate how labor is different from hobbies and how labor shares similarities with charity. Thirdly, I will present the arguments supporting different models of adequate pay, namely, the desert view, the agreement view, the minimum wage perspective, and the universal basic income. Fourthly, I will consider who ought to pay a salary.

### Trading skills

Before discussing the topic of rewarding labor, it is important to outline the core of what is being rewarded in the first place and why humans depend on this system. I argue that humans enjoy living comfortably to be able to enjoy their capabilities and interests. What the comfortable life entails will differ depending on the individual in question as humans have different interests. Nevertheless, a basic assumption that I will make is that most people want to live under a roof,

be in control of their food consumption, and have mobility in terms of transportation. However, one person does not have all the skills necessary to self-sustain, and it would seem unrealistic to train each person to be skilled in carpentry, sewerage, electricity, hunting, gardening, technology with the list going on of skills that are needed in the everyday life of most people. Furthermore, due to the different skill sets of humans it would not be possible to achieve the expertise required to perform such a comprehensive number of tasks. In Aristotle's *Politics* it is acknowledged that humans innately have different sets of skills and capacities such as one being physically strong and another politically or socially strong.[17] These different sets of skills ought to be utilized for the best functioning of the society promoting a flourishing lifestyle. A point not only valuable in Aristotle's ancient Greece but also in our current globalized world that includes a large range of occupations, interests, and efforts that humans can specialize in. It is of high importance that humans work together with their varying set of skills, to maintain a comfortable life and thrive in an ever changing concept of what a society is.

In order to access the necessary services, humans need to trade. One way of trade could be performing one's skill for someone such as providing their house with electricity while the other person connects their friend's house with water. As humans are much more interconnected, the reward often comes in terms of money and the services become gathered in companies rather than freelancing. One is paid for their skill being used to help another and uses the money to pay for a service provided by someone else. However, as the skills do not need the same amount of training and intensity it would not be fair to treat them equally. Certain skills require decades to master whereas other skills require a couple of hours. Doctors must spend a long time in training due to the difficulty of their skill, whereas a cashier does not need a long training to become skilled. Despite both skills being necessary for the functions of the society they ought to be treated differently to what has been contributed towards the other.

The trade of skills does not occur perfectly and exploitation removes the employed person's possibility to trade her skill for a fair return. Exploitation occurs when one's vulnerable position

[17] Aristotle. 2013. *Aristotle's "Politics."* Translated by Carnes Lord. University of Chicago Press.
Page.8-9 (15-35).

is taken advantage of.[18] In terms of work related exploitation, a worker is being exploited in the scenario in which the worker does not have an option but to be giving up valuable work for a compensation that is not adequate. What is central to the concern of exploitation is the level of choice the person has to be in the position where her trade is being used by another with a significantly small return for what the work is actually worth. When the exploited is not paid enough to reach 'livable' standards, the exploitation has detrimental consequences on people's lives which should be considered as morally problematic. Determining what qualifies as exploitation is, however, not a straightforward task. If one were to argue that it must include options and choices one could say that a person working a nine to five job, not because the person desires the nine to five job but because the person needs the income from the job and has no other options for jobs currently would be exploited. However, exploitation requires a deeper level of removal of personal autonomy, as it is still possible for the person to leave the nine to five job without facing harm from the employer. The person is free to walk and technically has time to pursue other activities under leisure time between shifts. Many agree that sweatshops, for instance, are not in adherence with standards that are set for workers rights and would hold the position that those working in sweatshops are being exploited. Granting that a worker at a sweatshop earns the minimum to survive and works hours that are so long that the person could not pursue any other activities beyond eating and sleeping, it could appear less of a choice. Nevertheless, this view has been challenged by Matt Zwolinski that claims that working at the sweatshop must be a choice due to the fact that the job is the most preferred choice of the employee out of a limited number of options.[19] Applying this line of reasoning to parenthood and the unpaid labor that follows, it remains unpaid because the conditions of the labor have been accepted. However, this argument does not pose a good reason for why it is morally justified to underpay or not pay someone for their work. In the next paragraphs, I will turn to the meaning of labor and move beyond the idea that it is more than merely an action that is done for the sake of compensation.

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[18] Matt Zwolinski and Alan Wertheimer. 2001. "Exploitation (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)." Stanford.edu. December 20, 2001. link.

[19] Matt Zwolinski. 2007. "Sweatshops, Choice, and Exploitation." *Business Ethics Quarterly* 17 (4): 689–727. Page 695. link.

## Labor, hobbies, and acts of charity

Before determining the reward it is important to consider what efforts should be rewarded, in these paragraphs I will distinguish between labor, hobbies, and acts of charity and why the traditional sense of labor does not capture the question of why someone is being rewarded. In turn, I will show how acts that could be labeled hobbies and charity could in certain instances entail a right to reward. Labor entails a relationship with the economic sphere and is a pursuit expected to be performed by a person throughout their lives.[20] Thus, labor could be viewed as an activity done not for the sake of pure enjoyment but for the sake of economic gain. This can be contrasted with hobbies that humans engage with for the sake of enjoyment and leisure. However, applying this logic to current standards of working, only the workers that would enjoy their occupation the least ought to be rewarded. Meanwhile those passionately running their own companies and enjoying their occupations should not be rewarded, or rewarded much less than the former example. Nevertheless, in practice, the opposite is true. The workers at sweatshops are paid minimally whereas large business owners are paid huge sums. For this reason I grant that hobbies could be labor.

Acts of charity are also examples of pursuits that are not engaged with for the purpose of economic gain despite sometimes engaging in actions that one would normally be paid for. Instead it relies on the idea that humans act out of empathy and good will towards one another. It moves from acting on behalf of oneself to acting on behalf of others.[21] Nevertheless, this kind of motivation could also be underlying for certain kinds of paid labor. Examples include the work of medical personnel, it should be concerning if a worker in the medical sector would claim that the main interest of working in the health sector is for the economic benefit of the job as their job concerns assessing and assisting the well-being of others. While the outcome of the payment is important for the healthcare workers, it appears as if the interest in the well-being of others is at a central part of their jobs. If motivation was to guide the reasons for rewarding work, it would not be clear that all healthcare workers should be paid as their jobs entails a pursuit that could be

[20] Cholbi, Michael. 2022. “Philosophical Approaches to Work and Labor.” Edited by Edward N. Zalta. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University. January 11, 2022. Link .
[21] Michael Slote. 2007. “The Ethics of Care and Empathy.” *Routledge eBooks*. Page 106. link .

done without a clear reward. Such as when a medic volunteers in a war-torn zone and does not receive a salary. It would be justified to say that even when a person's motivation for pursuing a task does not concern the reward, it does not make the person less deserving of the reward, does not necessarily mean that acts of charity ought not to be rewarded. While the medic in the warzone is not there primarily to gain a payment, the medic is deserving of a reward.

While labor is often distinguished as the sole activity that leads to payment, practice and deservingness shows that this is not the case. In the section on the motherhood salary, I will show that motherhood falls into labor while being an activity that would be placed in the categories of hobby and charity.

In these paragraphs, I have discussed labor from the point of view of the worker in terms of how personal enjoyment and the willingness to abstain from payment does not necessarily exclude the worker from a right to payment. In the next paragraphs I will discuss the different arguments for what determines a compensation for labor and deepening the understanding of who ought to be entitled to compensation.

## Models of adequate pay

Models of adequate pay concern the different arguments pertaining to what one is deserving of after having performed a task. Proposals for what could determine adequate pay vary in terms of values that are being prioritized. I will start by discussing the issue of varying levels of expertise and difficulty that different tasks require and present the argument for why that entails different levels of pay. I will move on to discussing valuing based on informed agents agreeing upon what a task is worth and the model of payment that is produced by this logic. Thereafter, I will discuss the arguments favoring a model of minimum wages and the possibility of universal basic income.

*The desert view* - Entailing that a person is paid based on the performance and benefits of the person's work aligns with the desert view that takes the exact outcomes of performance as the main reason for the pay given out to the employed. This means that if the employed is not adding any value, the employer would not hire the person, but only insofar the employer is gaining value from the employed, the job is given out and kept. Meaning that this view gives no proper criteria

for what fair pay entails rather than the criteria that the employed must add value. In turn, basing the criteria for which one person deserves a payment based on the practical outcomes of the work, other important considerations may be overlooked. The concept of deserving in question is analyzed by Jeffery Moriarty while he identifies the criteria that state that deservingness derives from the outcomes of the presence of the person, he also points out that certain positions require a person to make decisions that have big consequences on the well-being of the business.[22] Comparing the job of a CEO to the job of one performing physical labor such as a painter would need to consider the mental stress that the CEO is experiencing along with unfixed work hours resulting in longer days on average. While the painter, on the other hand, may take greater physical risks involving heights, the painter is not required to be present over the hours stipulated in the painter's contract in a legitimate business. Thus, the pay gap between the CEO and the painter is justified.

*Agreement view* - This view considers the direct relationship between the service provider and the recipient of the service, where they agree upon what the service is worth through arms-length discussions, meaning that both parties are well informed and aware of the agreement they are entering.[23] This model works for the small scale businesses where the involved are in direct contact. This could be exemplified by private sales or services such as selling art or babysitting. The weaknesses of this model is that it is too simplified to work for larger businesses, and it could risk overlooking the influence of income gaps. Meaning that person living in the wealthy area A could be paid fifteen dollars an hour for babysitting while person living in area B which is not as wealthy is paid six dollars an hour for the same time spent and the same tasks performed. It would seem unfair that these two people have such a large gap in payment despite performing the same skills and tasks.

*Consumer surplus* - Consumer surplus does not account for a model of pay but shows how different purchases or investments financially affect people differently. Take a two euro bottle of baby food, for some it may seem expensive to have to spend this money continuously every day, whereas for someone else two euros for a baby's meal is not much at all and they could have paid 10 euros per bottle without having a financial impact on their lives. In turn they "earn" the extra money that they could have paid compared to the family that is struggling to pay the two

[22] Jeffrey Moriarty. 2005. "Do CEOS Get Paid Too Much?" *Business Ethics Quarterly* 15 (2). Page 262-263. link .

[23] Jeffrey Moriarty. 2005. Page 259.

euros. This applies to buying houses and paying for rent as well, meaning that despite facing the same costs, some people are less affected by financial ups and downs. In turn, one may argue that those that have less ought to be given more.

*Minimum wage* - A central topic of politics is the earnings of the people, whether or not taxes should be raised or lowered and if there should be a minimum line of income. As some may hold that certain conditions of employment lead to exploitative situations, it would be morally preferable to implement a system that seeks to guarantee that people can live off their work and have more options. If we agree with the idea that no one would want nor deserve to live in exploitative conditions, it follows that there ought to be a minimum standard of conditions for human lives. As a response to the exploitative conditions some people may face in the workplace, one could call for minimum wages which guarantee that 'livable' standards are met. With a minimum wage, employees would not be paid under a certain amount regardless if their work is not valued at the minimum standard. Nevertheless, determining what a minimum wage ought to be is not an easy task. Jason Brennan points out the difficulties in determining such a standard. First of all, the standard for what a 'livable' life is needs clarification. Bernie Sanders's and MIT's calculations of what a fair income for the Americans are fifteen dollars per hour, however, it is also true that the Americans living on the poverty line make up the fourteenth percent of the richest people alive.[24] Therefore, suggesting that a livable life is one where one receives a wage comparable to what one can spend as an American making a wage of fifteen dollars per hour would result in concluding that the great majority of the world lives in 'unlivable' conditions. This would set an impossible standard for meeting fair pay and does not necessarily guarantee that it is adequate. Thus, the proposed models of minimum wage become unwell for the wellbeing of the society. Aristotle's writings point out that exchange plays a vital part in the workings of society and therefore reciprocity ought not to be based on equality, rather on proportionality recognizing the varying values that different skill sets have.

*Universal basic income (UBI)* - I want to highlight that there is a payment suggested that would go a step further than minimum wage and direct money to those that are the worst off, this idea is the implementation of a UBI. The UBI entails that everyone receives a payment without conditions meaning that different from the minimum wage the UBI does not entail a

[24] Jason Brennan 2017. "Should Employers Pay a Living Wage?" *Journal of Business Ethics* 157 (1).
Page 16. link .

compensation for labor. This is to ensure that the minimum standard of life is raised, meaning that the worst off are still living under livable conditions. Martin Sticker discusses the concept of what a Kantian version of UBI is in response to the difficulties of "working oneself up", he insists that such action is not viable for everyone and would dissuade certain kinds of labor such as the work traditionally performed by women when raising children and taking care of the household.[25] An UBI without strings attached would raise the independence of those that are not in income generating positions which would lead to the overall strengthening of independence of the citizens.[26] While this model would be directing money towards those that are in positions of less income generating opportunities, it is not exactly a model of payment but rather an economic safety net. Nevertheless, those speaking up for the model see it as a possibility to tackle problems in relation to unpaid labor which is important to mention in relation to my further discussions of the motherhood salary in the next section.

## Determining adequate pay

Reaching adequate pay requires meeting more than a livable standard for the worker. Brennan suggests that adequate pay ought to consider productivity, meaning that adequate pay would be being paid for what one produces.[27] Meaning if a worker produces one dollar worth of labor per hour it is justified to pay the worker one dollar per hour, whereas, if the worker produces a thousand dollars worth of labor per hour, the worker would earn that amount. This would take into account the varying scales of efficiency of labor that is being produced worldwide resulting in the gap between living wages, as it supports a low pay for long hours on the condition that the labor is inefficient. While this scenario presents a perfect market system it does not live up to the reality which presents itself as non-ideal.

Determining the value of labor is not straight-forward. Labor must not entail a corporation benefitting from your work but it could also pertain to performing a task whose value is not possible to determine until a significant time period has passed by, and even then other

[25] Martin Sticker. 2024. "Working Oneself up and Universal Basic Income." *Kantian Review* 29 (2). Page 240. link
[26] Martin Sticker. 2024. Page 243.
[27] Jason Brennan. 2017. Page 18.

influences have impacted the success. A clear example of such labor pertains to those that work with influencing children and young adults, such as teachers. Teachers perform labor that is absolutely invaluable to the future competence and success of the society, yet their work is not guaranteed to generate success as there are other influences that will affect the course of a child's life going into adulthood. I will take it for granted that teachers ought to be paid well due to the importance of their labor, furthermore, exceptional teachers ought to be paid better than lower-performing teachers if agreeing that one ought to be paid for what one produces. If one teacher shows up in time and prepared for each class and produces a class with individuals that have learned a large portion of information along with skills to generate academic excellence, the school and the community would wish to keep the teacher, therefore they would also see the value in rewarding such excellence despite the time-span until the long-term effects of the teacher are seen. Contrasting this scenario with a teacher who comes unprepared to the classes, and leaves the class without the students having learned the subject it would seem unfair to the excellent teacher to reward their work equally. I will return to the example of determining the value of teachers when I determine adequate pay for motherhood as these professions share similar difficulties in assessing the value that they generate.

## Who pays?

The question regarding *who* pays the employee also implies a question of *how* the employee is paid which differs depending on the position the person deserving of a payment is in. One could make the argument that the employee ought to be paid by the employer as the employer has a head position at the business and is usually the largest beneficiary of the work performed. However, as mentioned, this could risk the employee being at a disadvantage as it only depends on the value of hiring and keeping the employer that the person stays in position. Alternatively, one could say that the customer or the beneficiary pays the employee which stems from the customer being the person that buys the product or service of the employee. This would relate to the value of the productivity the employee has worked for, however, it would result in different payments for the same positions at a company, risking resulting in claims of unfairness towards the expertise that is required for the position being rewarded differently. Yet another position could place the state as the actor that ought to pay the employee, the state would represent the

overarching employer of the businesses. This position would contribute to fairness in payment regarding the status of the position, nevertheless, other factors may be overlooked, such as the different levels of productivity would not be taken into account.

## Conclusion: section two

In this section I have illustrated the various inconsistencies pertaining to labor and payment, showing that the one performing the hardest work may not be paid the most. Furthermore, the notion of deservingness is not a factor that only is contributed to the person engaging in traditional kinds of work but could also be applied to the person that would see their work as a hobby or the one that is committed to charity without regards for financial benefits.

# Section three

### *The motherhood salary*

## Introduction

In this section I will argue for an economic compensation that is intended to be allocated to mothers. I will start out on why motherhood fills the roles of a career, highlighting the recognition that mothers should be given. Historically, jobs performed by women have not been recognized and rewarded to the extent that men's work and career paths have been. For the case of motherhood, it is not paid because it has been decided that way, it is looked upon as an activity entered into for the sake of own pleasure such as hobbies which is a position I aim to challenge as the significance is far greater of the work of mothers. I will move on by addressing existing models of economic compensation for parenthood, while current payments are not sufficient for parents to sustain themselves and their children, it portrays the criteria that are viewed as important when deciding to give an economic compensation. Which is valuable in the evaluation on the grounds for  why the motherhood salary ought to be paid. Following the paragraphs is the section on the practicalities of the payment. I will argue that the payment should consider factors such as the number of children and whether the mother is single or if

there is another parent present to provide economically for the family. Furthermore, I will address the question regarding who pays, I will argue that considering current models the state ought to allocate tax money for the motherhood salary, similarly to any job provided by the state. Lastly, I will discuss families without a mother, where I will explain and defend a transferability of the motherhood salary. As my thesis statement reads: motherhood ought to be viewed as a career deserving of a salary.

## The argument

In this paragraph I will address my argument that states that motherhood ought to be recognized as a career with benefits such as income. I arrive at this conclusion due to following logic. I find it morally right that a task benefitting the future of society ought to be rewarded. Actions benefiting the future of the society includes creating a new generation that benefits the growth of the society by supplying future taxpayers. As concluded by the first section, mothers present the group that contributes the most to the upbringing of children. Because of the future benefit of raising children, mothers perform a task that benefits the future of the society, thus they ought to be rewarded. I will address that despite parenthood being a pursuit that many engage with for the sake of a greater will to have children without regards to what economic benefits it could generate, it still ought to be rewarded. I will also show why mothers should be the primary recipient of a salary directed to parents. Motherhood is not sufficiently rewarded because it has been decided so. Possibly stemming from the idea that women's activities and pursuits are of a leisurely nature in contrast to the idea that men are the hard workers of society.

The first obstacle to my argument relates to the fact that parents become parents because they deeply desire to have children, making parenthood primarily fit into the category of hobbies. Supporting this claim is the fact that individuals continue to perform this important task without the monetary incentive. Nevertheless, the economic burdens and extremes of today are growing, despite pursuing a long education and engaging in internship it takes longer for young adults to enter into an income generating position. This is an important factor to consider because it shortens a woman's fertility and possibility time-span. Especially as in many societies both parents must take on income generating positions to afford raising kids, it is simply not a feasible pursuit to have children if both parents are not in income generating positions. Even though

money is not the incentive to have children, it may alter the number of children raised per couple and the quality of the raising of the children due to obligations towards standard careers. As has been mentioned previously, it is important to generate a future generation that can build the future of society by performing tasks such as taking care of the generation that cannot work anymore. Meaning that parenthood is not only a hobby but a charity as society relies on couples to reproduce. As I mentioned in section two, while charity is engaged on a voluntary level, it does not mean that it should not be rewarded. However, it needs outside interest to be rewarded. It is in the greatest interest of societies to reward parenthood as the future and wellbeing of the societies relies on it.

The recipient of the economic benefits stemming from a career ought to be the mothers because they perform tasks in relation to parenthood that fathers cannot perform meaning that according to the desert view, they should receive the benefit for the job performed. Without the work of mothers throughout history fathers could not have been able to pursue their careers to the same extent. Consequently, mothers created the foundation at home enabling the other partner to pursue other careers. While one may argue that fathers perhaps should be staying home with their children and equally performing the unpaid labor, it misses out on recognizing that the work that mothers have engaged with to a large extent solely. The mother is the parent to take on the life endangering pursuit of pregnancy and after-birth care, meaning that they perform the most important tasks in generating new life. Due to the intensity that childbirth and after-care entail, women do not have the same choices in engaging in income generating positions during a significant period of time and face greater financial losses due to parenthood than men. Fathers have greater opportunities to choose their engagement with their families than mothers due to the biological conditions of parenthood, meaning that men and women do not enter parenthood on equal grounds. While men could leave their role as fathers at any time, women are stuck with the baby growing inside of them and the risks of future health implications. Therefore, the motherhood salary ought to be directed to mothers and not to parents in general.

## Current examples of benefits to parents

To imagine the implementation of the motherhood salary it is useful to look at models of benefits for parents. Some states have policies directed towards ensuring the financial feasibility of

parenthood which could be viewed as a benefit given as extra support rather than recognizing the work done, resembling a UBI but for parents. I will distinguish between different kinds of economic policies directed to parents. The first example is directed toward only one kind of parents, not based on their role as parents but on the level of financial struggle. In the second example, parents are rewarded regardless of their financial situation, meaning that all parents are included. In the third example, the economic relief is given only to one parent, the mother and regards how many children she has but not her prior financial status.

The United States of America has tax break policies available for low income parents, the tax break is given when a parent or parents meet certain criteria. The criteria include how low their income is and how many children they have.[28] The tax reduction may help the added financial pressure from the money the state claims, however, it is not a benefit for parents having chosen to have children, but rather a means to aid those that are financially worse off in the United States and also have the financial burden of having children. Moving on to the second example, states, such as Germany and Sweden have monthly payments per child to the household. This policy is directed indiscriminately towards parents, meaning that their marital status or prior income does not affect the payment. In Sweden the sum of the payment is one thousand two hundred and fifty Swedish Krona (SEK) per child with an addition of one hundred and fifty SEK per kid arriving after the first.[29] The payment is a bonus but does not come near to covering the costs of raising children and sustain oneself as a parent. My third example, Hungary instead recently implemented tax reliefs directed towards mothers with two to three children.[30] In this example, gender of the parent and the number of children are the main deciding factors of the economic benefit and the prior earnings of the mother is not regarded.

The United States of America and Hungary both have a form of economic benefit that subtracts a subtraction, namely the tax meaning that the models are not rewards to parents but rather reliefs. The German and Swedish monthly contribution per child, on the other hand, are rewards as they

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[28] Internal Revenue Service 2024. “Publication 596, Earned Income Credit (EIC). link
[29] Försäkringskassan. 2025. “Barnbidrag Och Flerbarnstillägg.” link
[30] Reuters. 2025. “Hungary’s Orban Launches Tax Exemption for Mothers, Cap on Housing Loan Rates.” link

add a benefit only based on the parents raising children. However, these payments are not sufficient for the parents to be able to sustain themselves and their children. The existing examples show that factors such as income, number of children, number of parents present, and the gender of the parent are highlighted in attempting to reach those that deserve it the most. None of the examples include a reward for the professionalism that should be considered in parenting. When moving on to my proposed motherhood salary, I will do so in the light of parenthood being a source of financial and societal possibilities and wealth rather than a burden.

## The payment

Turning to the practicalities of my proposed motherhood salary, while I have made the case that women should be paid for motherhood, I need to clarify how large the salary should be and to defend why that would obligate someone else to pay mothers and specifically who is obligated to pay. I will address this question through answering how we could formulate the payment which benefits are not seen until the future. I will move on by mentioning the potential entities that are responsible to distribute the payment to the mothers, such as the welfare state, or the child-free adults, and address whether a number of children determines if the benefits ought to be greater. Then I will turn to other interesting perspectives such as if the father should pay the mother or if the children should be in debt to their mother once they are adults.

Valuing work that individuals would already commit to without a salary poses a challenge because it places women that wish to enter motherhood at a bargaining disadvantage where the entity and/or person benefiting from their choice to become mothers become the deciding party for the sum of the salary. Turning to fairness, I argue that if attempting to create a fair salary for mothers, it should be compared to other sectors that involve housework and caregiving. Motherhood falls into the same category as teaching where the benefits of the work is not seen immediately and therefore cannot be valued on the basis of day-to-day productivity. On the one hand, it is not possible to completely compare teaching to motherhood, because teachers go through years of education to be suitable for their positions, whereas motherhood does not require education or training. On the other hand, while there is no clear education required for parenting, parents with varying skills and knowledge are important for the growth of the child, furthermore, entering parenthood itself comes with experience similar to harsh training for their

position as parents. Far above the federal minimum wage of seven USD and twenty-five cents minimum wage are the hourly earnings of teachers in the United States placed at around twenty-four USD.[31] While the teachers are likely to have spent more money on their education to achieve their positions, one could point out the need to account for their need to repay potential loans that they would have taken out, which would mean that the hourly rate for teaching should be greater than for parents. However, it is important to consider that teachers do not need to spend money on the students which parents need to do. Meaning that having a child should be viewed similarly as to be indebted by a loan. This burden would be twice the size if the parent is raising a child without a partner, this burden would also multiply when having more children which would call for an increase of salary depending on if it is a single household or if both the parents are present and depending on how many children there are.

One may also ask whether some mothers should be paid more or less on the basis of their economic situation or by the varying degree of struggle they face. Similar to the situation presented with consumer surplus, for some couples the motherhood salary as proposed might be a nice extra bonus that could be spent on anything if the couple has enough wealth gathered to raise their children. However, for another couple or single mother the motherhood salary will determine the time that is possible to spend raising the child or children. I argue that a fair salary would be placed at around a teacher's salary if the mother is single and has to sustain herself and her child. If the mother is living together with a partner the salary would be split in half as the economic burden also is lowered by half. The salary for the first child should be seen as a starting point on which the mother and the child could survive on, when more children are born the salary should increase with only what the estimated cost of having that other child is. Despite a few couples that may not need a motherhood salary but will receive it as a bonus, it is still important that the labor carried out is paid for. Turning to the question of struggle, the struggle faced during pregnancy and while raising children is different for women, meaning that some may find it easier than others, nevertheless, the same work is expected from each mother as they receive the same salary. One could ask if a woman that did not desire to have children is now raising her child in a good way despite not desiring the work required from her should earn more because of struggle. As seen from the second section, struggle is not credited to be the basis of

[31] Indeed. 2025. "Teacher Salary in the United States." Indeed.com. link

why someone is paid more money. Furthermore, if starting to pay mothers unequally, it would also mean paying them unequally despite performing the same work of raising children this would lead to the same problems faced in relation to the agreement condition for adequate pay, where the quality of the work performed could risk being overlooked if other conditions influence the process of determining an adequate pay. I will move on by discussing further why the best option is to have a system that promotes an equal pay for motherhood by investigating who ought to pay.

If the employer is the one paying the motherhood salary, one must allocate the employer responsible for paying the mother a salary. If moving away from the word employer, one could think about the person or entity that benefits from women having children, the state, the child-free, the father, or potentially the children are those that primarily benefit from women's choice to enter motherhood with the personal risks that come along with that choice. Starting with the state, the state needs a new generation of tax-payers as mentioned, furthermore, it needs a flourishing society that does not shrink in order to keep up with the societal functions. The state therefore should be allocating tax money for the motherhood salary.

However, one could say that adults benefiting from others having children while themselves being child-free are free riding on the work of parents, as a resulting obligation, they should pay the tax to other parents. Because the child-free will benefit from the children others choose to have, they should pay a contribution to what otherwise would be a cost for the parents. This would even out the economic inequalities between parents and the child-free adults. Nevertheless, it might not be the desires or interests of the child-free for others to have children, they might not care for the future benefit of having a sufficient number of tax-payers and may wish to be self-reliant. Furthermore, it would be unfair to those that are unwillingly child-free to pay for not choosing to become parents when that option was not a choice in the first place.

Supplying yet another perspective on the question, one could also say that the father should pay because the cost of opportunity and financial loss due to having children is unfairly placed on the mothers and not the fathers. Thus, it would redirect the money from the least affected parent in the relationship to the most affected. However, due to the different ranges of salaries of potential

parents, it would result in different motherhood salaries based on the wealth of the men rather than the competence of the women which would also result in some couples not being able to have the desired number of children.

Another potential candidate for supplying the payments could be the children once they become adults, one can say that as they are the ones that are directly benefiting from their mother's bodily sacrifice during pregnancy and the labor performed when raising them, they should also be the ones in debt to their mother. This option comes with important obstacles, namely, the child's inability to choose their situation, no one ever chose to be born which would make it problematic to unwillingly end up in debt for a situation someone else created for them. Another obstacle is that parents face the hardest economic struggles when they raise their children, meaning that the compensation that they might be in need of urgently is waiting for about twenty years.

From all the potential candidates to pay the motherhood salary I argue that the state presentes the most plausible and functional payer because it has the power to ensure fair payments for the work that is being provided and everyone contributes to the good of the future of society meaning that no one is in an unfair position to contribute to the motherhood salary as the only way to opt out of contributing to the state is to exit the state itself. Furthermore, for the sake of ensuring quality of the work done by mothers, the state can regulate, modify, or stop payments in case of abuse or mistreatment of it, for instance if in a household children live in danger due to neglect from their parents.

## Families without a mother

So far I have argued for a salary that ought to be given to mothers, however, other circumstances may result in a family not having the biological mother taking care of the children. Which results in the question whether the motherhood salary should be transferable. I will argue that the motherhood salary should be transferable under certain conditions but only under those which involve the biological mother not being present including, adoptive parents and families in which the mother dies when the child is still young. While I mainly suggest to direct the motherhood salary to mothers due to the unequal conditions that mothers face compared to fathers, another

important reason for why the salary is needed is because children need quality time spent with their parents, developing healthy bonds with their families, generating more well-being and success in the future. Therefore, certain circumstances ought to entail a transfer of the motherhood salary to someone else. This transfer of payment is clear in the case of when a mother dies in childbirth, the intense labor cost her her own life and also cost the child a mother, without the mother, the remaining parent becomes a single parent that cannot pursue both a stable income position and parenting at the same time. As the remaining parent must take on the duties of the mother, the motherhood salary should be transferred to the remaining parent. In case of adoption, the burden of labor is removed, however, the financial struggles and the need for the child to have a parent present remains, meaning that such a condition is also cause for a transfer of the motherhood salary to a parent that is not the biological mother.

## Conclusion section three

In this section I have argued that a benefit to parents ought to be a benefit allocated to the mother due to the unequal conditions that mothers meet. In the light of the motherhood salary, it is not only a woman's choice to become a mother that matters but how many children she has and if she is single or not as these factors will also currently place mothers at a disadvantage. While the motherhood salary may be transferable, my choice of calling it "the motherhood salary" is because mothers will be the largest group affected and helped by this salary, thus it brings recognition for the currently unpaid labor that falls mainly upon women.

# Section four

### *The main challenges to the motherhood salary*

## Introduction

In this section I will address the main challenges to the motherhood salary and why, despite these arguments, the motherhood salary should still be implemented. Firstly, I will address the commodification risk when implementing the motherhood salary. Becoming a parent is a sacred

and special part of life that people ought to enter because of their deep desires and not because of a monetary incentive. Furthermore, there would be detrimental effects if someone was to abuse the motherhood salary by exploiting women through abusive measures to become mothers. Because of these concerns, one may argue against the motherhood salary. However, I will illustrate that the first scenario does not appear likely, and that the motherhood salary actually would make the second scenario less likely. Secondly, I will address the potential lack of representation of young adult women in decision-making bodies which may negatively impact women's rights due to young women's incentivised engagement in parenthood instead of other careers. I will acknowledge that this position may be problematic for the motherhood salary, but it does not offer a strong enough argument against implementing the motherhood salary. Thirdly, I will address other paths to gender fairness in parenting that could be implemented instead of a motherhood salary. Including making it mandatory for fathers to take out a certain amount of parental leave. I will show how such measures will not result in the desired gender equality which the motherhood salary could promote.

## Commodification of motherhood

Implementing a motherhood salary would commodify parenting, a role that is seen as a choice that is made based on deep desires of raising children. In relation to the motherhood salary is J. Robert S. Prichard's illustrating what a market for adoption would look like, where the birth mother is paid for having conceived and giving the rights of parenting to another person. The commodification of the adoption process is argued to lead to some morally problematic situations, such as the ranking of the attractiveness of the adoptive mother and thus the baby.[32] As I lightly touched upon previously in the paper, a motherhood salary paid for by the potential fathers could result in a situation like this where women and potential future babies would be ranked by their attributes and men would be ranked based on their financial status. Moverover, other risks with a market that involves parenting and children concerns the potential exploitation of women in a vulnerable position and may take away the sacredness of what parenting entails.[33] This would involve a scenario in which another person other than the mother, for instance, the

[32] Robert S. Prichard. 1984. "A Market for Babies?" The University of Toronto Law Journal, 34 (3). Page 348. link
[33] Robert S. Prichard. 1984. 352-353.

father, forces her to bear children for the sake of the economic benefits. Because of the sensitivity regarding parenting and children decisions therefore ought to be made against possible scenarios which may result in exploitation, and as the motherhood salary could be taken advantage of one could argue that an economic incentive for procreating should not be implemented.

While it is important to be careful in making sure that women or children would potentially be exploited in the process of implementing a motherhood salary, the risk does not suffice as an argument against paying someone for their labor. Furthermore, historically and currently men and fathers have financially greatly benefitted from the work of mothers, in turn, parenting is already commodified but for the benefit of men's positions. Moreover, the risk of mothers falling into slavery-like conditions due to abusive relationships that seek to take advantage of her salary would not be greater because of the motherhood salary. Currently without the incentive of a motherhood salary women are taken advantage of and pressured into motherhood, what the motherhood salary could change would be their financial possibility to leave the relationship if it is abusive. Furthermore, in regards to the sacredness of parenting, implementing a motherhood salary would not change women's desires, on the contrary, it would enable women's desires. I assume that parents regardless of the potential benefit would choose to become parents because it is an activity they deeply desire to pursue, it is unlikely that they would pursue it only for the sake of the benefits of the motherhood salary as it involves a lifetime commitment which will involve using the salary for the benefit of the child.

## Enabling women at the cost of representation of women

If implementing a motherhood salary, one could claim that it would enforce bias that women should become mothers and mainly occupy themselves with parenting related activities. Women are bound by a time-span during which they can bear children, which means that the group that would take out the motherhood salary would be women between twenty to forty years old in most cases. This could risk impacting the representation of this group in various other career sectors such as in the governmental sector including the ruling bodies. Up until recently it would not be common to see young women taking on roles in governmental positions, similarly, jobs and careers that are dominated by women are much less valued in terms of income than

male-dominated jobs. When young women are not included in decision making processes it could risk affecting them badly. I recognize that this could pose a limit to my argument, however, if a motherhood salary would result in this group of women choosing motherhood over positions of influence it does not have to implicate their rights if making sure that their rights are written into law and that studies on women's rights and health remains topics of investigation in politics. Furthermore, after having taken out the motherhood position, mothers have a lot of knowledge of what is needed and would become good representatives of younger women as they themselves have been in that position.

## What about other routes to gender fairness in parenthood?

The motherhood salary proposes a radical change in which mothers would have greater benefits to parenthood than fathers, as I have argued is a model based on equity. Other writers on this topic have taken another route and focused on equality in parenthood as the best measure for gender fairness in parenting. Anca Gheaus and Ingrid Robeyns argue for a requirement to have fathers take out parental leave, which would mean that the economic implications for becoming a parent would impact men and women similarly.[34] On the one hand, this could help fight the contrasting bias against women and men at work due to their marital and parental status, because practically, a solution that would force mothers and fathers to stay home equally with their children would mean that the employers would lose the same amount of money of the employee regardless of the gender of the employee. On the other hand, it fails to recognize the labor women perform during pregnancy and after having given birth. Furthermore, the bias that men work because they have to financially support their families, while women are seen as working by choice as a hobby has not changed despite women's independence from men. Meaning that it may not have the desired positive effects for women that Gheaus and Robeyns assume.

## Conclusion: section four

The motherhood salary is a measure that ought to protect women's rights and strengthen women's financial and influential position, so far motherhood usually causes the opposite reality

[34]Anca Gheaus and Ingrid Robeyns. 2011. "Equality-Promoting Parental Leave." *Journal of Social Philosophy* 42 (2): 173–91. link

for women. Instead of fathers benefitting from the work mothers do, mothers ought to be the ones that are rewarded. Women's labor has strategically been undervalued, other options do not value the financial position of women as the motherhood salary does.

# Conclusion

I have argued for a motherhood salary as a response to the unequal conditions that women face due to their fertility and choices of becoming mothers. I have shown that women compared to men are placed in worse positions when they become mothers, harming women's freedom and independence. The current economic systems do not regard work traditionally carried out by women as work deserving of a salary. I have illustrated that this reasoning does not uphold rights that mothers ought to have in relation to the philosophical discussion on labor. It is clear that motherhood entails labor despite being an activity that is engaged in willingly, which is as true for motherhood as for a teacher passionate about teaching, or a CEO passionate about directing a company. Personal rewards should not be a barrier limiting anyone engaging in labor from receiving a fair salary for the work they provide. I propose a motherhood salary that elaborates on what economic benefits for parents should be. The compensation ought to be allocated to mothers and ought to be comparable to a salary due to the intensity of the work required. Motherhood ought to be a career entitled to a salary.

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