

Research / Action

Transforming Research into Action to Protect Teens on Social Media



Featuring:

Peggy McIntosh to be inducted into National Women's Hall of Fame • WCW enters environmental arena • New book delves into battle for public schools

Shaping a Better World through Research & Action

Wellesley Centers for Women

Research \ Action Report

annual report 2023

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The Wellesley Centers for Women is a program of Wellesley College

From the Executive Director

A world that is good for women is good for everyone.™

The Wellesley Centers for Women is an academic research and action institute at Wellesley College that is focused on women and gender and driven by social change. Our mission is to advance gender equality, social justice, and human wellbeing through high-quality research, theory, and action programs.

While women's and girls' perspectives and experiences are at the center of our institutional identity, we aim to shape a better world for people of all gender identities and expressions.

Production of this report was supported in part by the Mary Joe Gaw Frug Fund, an endowed gift to the Wellesley Centers for Women.

Here at the Wellesley Centers for Women, we are not content to let our research sit on a shelf. We insist on transforming it into action—by making it accessible to policymakers, thought leaders, decision makers, academics, advocates, activists, direct service providers, funders, the media, and the general public, who have the power and desire to make positive change.

In this *Research & Action Report*, we are proud to highlight some of the ways our researchers and project directors are driving social change. **Linda Charmaraman** helped write a public advisory from the American Psychological Association on social media use in adolescence that informed further recommendations from the U.S. Surgeon General and the American Academy of Pediatrics, as well as a bill before Congress. **Jennifer Grossman** is evaluating Planned Parenthood's new sex ed curriculum for high schoolers, ensuring that teens have access to evidence-based programs that protect their health and wellbeing. And **Wendy Wagner Robeson** is working on a new study of what home-based child care providers need to survive, so that policies can be put in place to support them.

We are excited to share news of **Peggy McIntosh's** upcoming induction into the National Women's Hall of Fame in

honor of her incredible body of work on power, knowledge, and self-doubt. In founding the **National SEED Project**, which continues to thrive, she found a way to guide countless individuals to make change in their own lives and communities.

WCW's first foray into the environmental arena is a project that aims to strengthen the management and conservation of Liberia's rainforests through education, training, and technical assistance. I'm leading the program's gender equality and social inclusion strategy, which will ensure that when we take action, the right people are at the table.

Finally, **Pashtana Durrani** writes about her experience returning to her native Afghanistan this past summer to check in on the underground schools for girls she runs through her organization LEARN. Her bravery and dedication in taking action for justice is an inspiration.

Thank you for reading and for standing shoulder-to-shoulder with us as we work to shape a better world, in 2024 and beyond. ▀



Layli Maparyan, Ph.D.

Katherine Stone Kaufmann '67 Executive Director

Thank You

To our friends, supporters, funding partners, and colleagues—thank you for believing in our work. Your generosity supports **research that drives social change.**

With your help, we are able to study the most significant and challenging social issues and use data to point toward solutions. We share our findings with policymakers, activists, and the general public so they can make evidence-based decisions that **shape a better world.**

Thank you for making this work possible and for believing that **A world that is good for women is good for everyone.**[™]



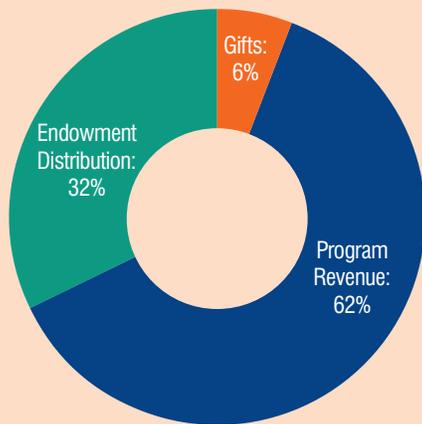
HIGHLIGHTS

from Fiscal Year 2023

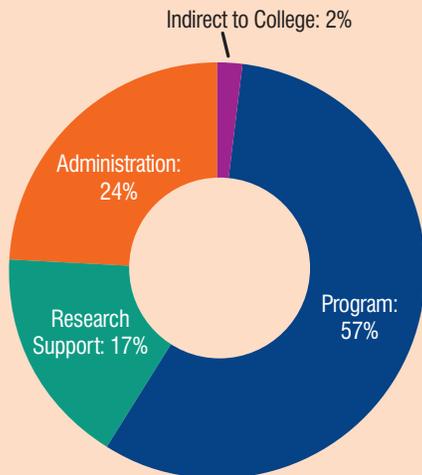
(July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023)

Fiscal Year 2023
Budget: \$7.0M*

*based on unaudited data



Revenue



Expenses

25

PUBLICATIONS
in book chapters,
journal articles,
and more

40

PRESENTATIONS
at virtual and
in-person events

100

MEDIA MENTIONS
and op-eds

41

ACTIVE
research
projects

6

NEW
research
projects

\$5.8M

IN GRANTS
and contracts

780

PRACTITIONERS
& administrators
trained by the National
Institute on Out-of-
School Time

147

PARTICIPANTS
from 86
institutions trained
by SEED

575

GIFTS
received

\$396K

IN DONATIONS

Peggy McIntosh to be Inducted into National Women’s Hall of Fame



Image credit: Lisa Abitbol

We are proud to announce that Senior Research Scientist **Peggy McIntosh, Ph.D.**, will be inducted into the National Women’s Hall of Fame in March 2024.

Over her 43 years at WCW, McIntosh has brought new angles of vision to matters of power, knowledge, and self-doubt. Her work has had a transformative effect on people in many walks of life in the U.S. and around the world.

In 1986, McIntosh founded the **National SEED (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity) Project** on Inclusive Curriculum, which she co-led with Emily Style for its first 25 years. SEED trains leaders to create their own local, year-long, peer-led seminars that help their communities and workplaces to become more whole and inclusive. Over the last 36 years, 3,275 SEED leaders have enrolled 62,000 participants.

McIntosh’s 2019 book *On Privilege, Fraudulence, and Teaching As Learning* includes her most famous papers, “White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences through Work in Women’s Studies” and “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack.” Her four-part paper series, “Feeling Like a Fraud,” also empowers readers to trust their own observation of their life experiences.

The National Women’s Hall of Fame 2023 inductees include, alongside McIntosh: Patricia Bath, Ruby Bridges, Elouise Cobell, Kimberlé W. Crenshaw, Judith Plaskow, Loretta J. Ross, Allucquère Rosanne “Sandy” Stone, Anna Wessels Williams, and Serena Williams. Previous Wellesley inductees include Madeleine Korbel Albright ’59, Hillary Rodham Clinton ’69, and Jean Kilbourne ’64.

To commemorate this historic event, McIntosh sat down with WCW Executive

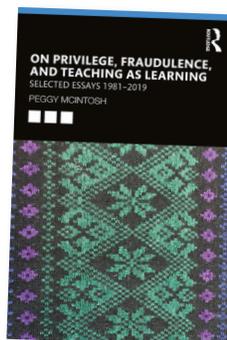
Director **Layli Maparyan, Ph.D.**, to discuss her life’s work.

LM: Very few women in U.S. history get inducted into the National Women’s Hall of Fame, and those who are inducted are trailblazers, changemakers, leaders, and innovators, which you clearly are. Your work on white privilege has made “privilege” a household word in American society—just as Kimberlé Crenshaw did with “intersectionality”—and it has enabled us to advance social justice in ways that we wouldn’t be able to do without having the terminology. How did the concept of white privilege come into being for you?

PM: I observed men having doors open for them whether or not they seemed to merit this special entree. I also saw it had nothing to do with whether they were “nice men.” Even terrible men had societal doors open for them! So I began to write about ways to bring the work of more women into the liberal arts curriculum. But then I recalled

women of color in the Boston area—members of the Combahee River Collective—saying how disappointed they were that so few white women had learned about or been interested in their lives as Black women, and I looked at my work getting women into the curriculum and realized

it was mostly about the work of white women, including myself. It had nothing to do with whether I was a “nice person”! So I began to try to cobble together some examples of how the doors have opened for me. What did I have that I hadn’t earned? What was given to me because I was white? I made a list of 46 examples of the unearned advantages I had, being born white in a culture that favored whites. I published it in 1988.



“I couldn’t possibly have done the work for which I’m getting this honor if it hadn’t been for WCW—its fabulous administrative support for getting grants, its collegueship, and the freedom of thought here. Just the fact that you don’t have to apologize in this building for doing research on women.”



McIntosh at her desk in the early 1980s; Maparyan and McIntosh at a celebration of McIntosh's career in 2015; SEED Co-Director Emerita Brenda Flyswithawks, McIntosh, and former SEED National Staff member Hugo Mahabir

LM: It's funny, my first encounter with both you and WCW came when I was trying to find your "Invisible Knapsack" article for my students at the University of Georgia—this was pre-internet—and I had to get special permission to use it. I was teaching a multicultural psychology class, and I made each student read one of the examples out loud. I remember what a transformative experience it was for each of those students to really go, "Wow, I never thought about that." Even the Black and Asian and Latino students in the class had an aha! moment, and I remember for myself, the one that sat with me the most was: "I can get Band-Aids in my skin color." It really brought to my attention how even the most mundane things have to change to really bring about equal representation, participation, access, and social justice. What other reactions were there to your papers on privilege?

PM: Many white women have said, "Thank you, I never thought of any of this before." Many women of color have also thanked me for something else, saying: "Thank you, you showed me I'm not crazy." It is deeply satisfying to have both changed the awareness of white women and white men who have read the papers, and also to have put some floor of support under those who know they've been oppressed.

LM: In addition to your work on privilege, what other bodies of work are you most proud of? And how has WCW influenced your work?

PM: Let me start by saying I couldn't possibly have done the work for which I'm getting this honor if it hadn't been for WCW—its fabulous administrative support for getting grants, its collegueship, and the freedom of thought here. Just the fact that you don't have to apologize in this building for doing research on women. In 1979, I was hired by founding director Carolyn Elliott, who supported all kinds of work on women and would not have thought of asking us to stay within disciplinary boundaries. And when I began to talk about things like white privilege and expanding the liberal arts curriculum, Wellesley's reputation gave an incentive to audiences to give me the benefit of the doubt.

As for my other work, I like my "Feeling Like a Fraud" essays because they have enabled so many people to stop feeling like frauds. I told my stories, and that mode became easy for people to relate to. I also spoke in the first person, so I was able to convey that I'm talking about myself, not about you.

LM: Which is the same technique used in SEED discussions.

PM: Yes—serial testimony. In serial testimony, a meeting does not have a chairperson who will control it. It has a facilitator, and it consists of people's accounts of how they're feeling about a certain topic. The talent of the facilitator lies in choosing a kind of topic that everybody can relate to—and it delights me that you don't need an advanced degree to be a SEED facilitator! One school nominated the cafeteria cook to be the facilitator, because everyone agreed she was the best community-maker.

After a question or a prompt has been put out there by the facilitator, the people in the group all speak in turn around a circle, timed, and there is no interrupting and no reference to what anyone else has said. The testimonies are about your experience, not your opinions. There's a big difference. Opinions are gathered from all over the place, and experiences come from right in here [pointing to her heart].

I think these ideas and methods are my most useful work. When I was small, I wanted above all things to be popular. Then by the time I was 35, I decided I would rather be useful than popular. The Hall of Fame award is for the ways I have been judged to have been useful. ■

This interview originally appeared as a Spotlight on Wellesley article by E.B. Bartels.



Peggy McIntosh, Ph.D., is a senior research scientist and former associate director at WCW. She is the founder of the **National SEED Project**.

Layli Maparyan, Ph.D., is WCW's executive director and a professor of Africana Studies at Wellesley College.

WCW Enters the Environmental Arena with Project in Liberia

The connection between climate change and gender equality may not be immediately obvious, but the two are intricately linked. Climate change often leads to social, economic, and political disasters—like migration, violent extremism, resource wars, mental health crises, and gender-based violence—that negatively affect the lives of women and girls.

That's why WCW is entering the environmental arena with a project that aims to protect one of Africa's most important rainforests.

In February, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) awarded \$5 million to a team of eight institutions, led by the University of Georgia and including WCW, for the implementation of a program called Higher Education Conservation Activity (HECA) in the Republic of Liberia.

The country's rainforests account for roughly half of the remaining rainforests in West Africa, and over many years they have been degraded by unsustainable forestry practices, land conversion, and other pressures. HECA aims to strengthen forest management

and conservation in Liberia through education, training, and technical assistance.

WCW received a \$1.13 million subaward to lead HECA's gender equality and social inclusion strategy. Goals include

the involvement of more women in forestry education and the forestry profession in Liberia; greater inclusiveness of people from forest-dwelling communities; sensitizing youth to forestry as a career path; and more inclusion of people with disabilities in forestry.

"HECA is built on the premise that climate action must address broader social justice concerns to be successful," said WCW Executive Director Layli Maparyan, Ph.D., who has worked in Liberia since 2009 and is leading WCW's part of the project. "When rainforests disappear, these groups of people are directly affected, so they must be part of the solution."

HECA will include four landscape studies, each focused on one of the groups outlined in the social inclusion strategy. In the program's first year, Maparyan and her team studied women and forest dwellers to better



Maparyan (center) with student interns from Liberia's Forestry Training Institute

understand how to more effectively involve them in Liberia's forest management and conservation. In the second year, the researchers will turn their attention to youth and people with disabilities.

In order to complete these studies, Maparyan and her team trained students from the Forestry Training Institute, the only technical and vocational education and training institution dedicated to forestry in Liberia. After learning data collection methods, the students were dispatched to their home communities, where they conducted focus groups—ultimately gathering information from 1,354 people in 25 villages and towns in 9 Liberian counties.

This data, as well as data collected in the next wave of research, will inform the development of HECA programming that increases gender equality and social inclusion in forestry, biodiversity,

and conservation education and in its workforce. A summer intern from Liberia and several Wellesley College students are assisting with the project as well.

"Climate change is one of the most urgent global concerns of our time, and we know that its effects are gendered," said Maparyan. "HECA gives WCW a defined role in work that is solidly environmentally focused, with a strong action component. We are living out our motto of shaping a better world through research and action in a new way." ■



Students from the Forestry Training Institute

“Climate change is one of the most urgent global concerns of our time, and we know that its effects are gendered.”

Researcher Will Evaluate Planned Parenthood’s Sex Ed Program for High Schoolers

For Senior Research Scientist **Jennifer M. Grossman**, Ph.D., taking the long view when it comes to research partnerships has paid off.

Back in 2006-2007, Grossman and then-Senior Research Scientist **Sumru Erkut**, Ph.D., conducted an initial pilot review of *Get Real: Comprehensive Sex Education That Works*, Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts’ (PPLM) comprehensive sex education program for middle schoolers. Building on that connection, they applied to PPLM’s call for proposals to evaluate *Get Real* and were awarded the contract. From 2008-2013, they conducted a large-scale randomized controlled trial evaluation of the program.

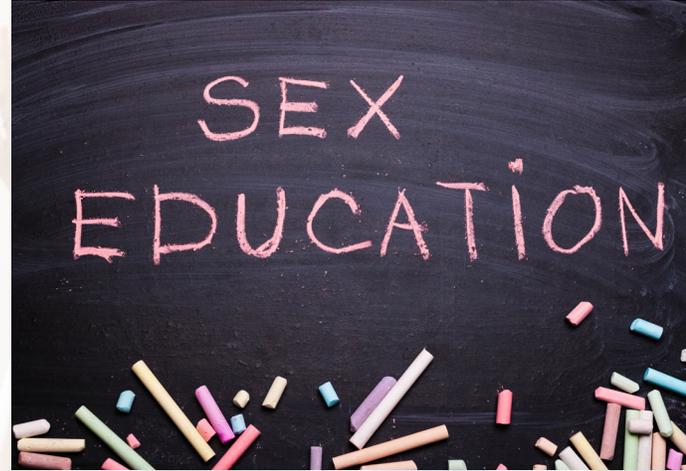
They found that *Get Real* Middle School was effective in delaying sex among participants—which allowed it to be included on a list of evidence-based programs for teen pregnancy prevention endorsed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Then in 2016, Grossman completed a small evaluation of *Get Real* for Parents, a mobile website that accompanies the middle school curriculum.

With the success of its middle school program, PPLM began developing a *Get Real* High School curriculum and sought funding for an evaluation of it. In 2015 and again in 2020, the organization and Grossman jointly

submitted funding proposals to HHS but were unsuccessful. Finally, this year, the third time was a charm. Grossman received a \$1.4 million sub-award to serve as the evaluation partner on this teen pregnancy prevention project, in partnership with PPLM as the program developer and Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio, which will implement *Get Real* in Cleveland, Ohio public high schools.

“It was a long road to get here, but it was so worth it to stay on that road,” said Grossman. “I’m thrilled to be able to move forward with this work and excited to see how the next steps go as we begin this collaboration.”

Get Real is grounded in social emotional learning and family engagement, and is a comprehensive, inclusive, trauma-informed, and culturally responsive sex ed curriculum. Grossman and her team will assess the



curriculum’s impact on delaying sex and increasing safer sex behaviors, such as using condoms, among Cleveland high school students. If it is found to be effective, the *Get Real* high school curriculum will join the *Get Real* middle school curriculum on HHS’ list of evidence-based programs for teen pregnancy prevention.

Grossman leads WCW’s Family, Sexuality and Communication Research Initiative, and has spent her career studying adolescent development, sexual health, and risk-taking, with an emphasis on the role of families. She is also developing an intervention program to help fathers talk to their kids about sex, funded by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health & Human Development of the National Institutes of Health.

“Research has shown that comprehensive sex education is critical to protecting teens’ health, and both schools and families play important roles,” said Grossman. “It’s essential to use scientific research to make evidence-based decisions about what works and what doesn’t, so I’m glad to help further that process through this project with Planned Parenthood.”

This project is supported by the Office of Population Affairs in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Health of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$1,000,000 with 100 percent funded by OPA/OASH/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, OPA/OASH/HHS, or the U.S. Government. For more information, please visit <https://opa.hhs.gov/>.

“It’s essential to use scientific research to make evidence-based decisions about what works and what doesn’t.”

Transforming Research into Action to Protect Teens on Social Media

It all started with a podcast. In November 2021, Senior Research Scientist **Linda Charmaraman**, Ph.D., was invited on *Speaking of Psychology*, the podcast of the American Psychological Association (APA). It was several months after doc-

uments leaked to the media revealed that Facebook's internal research had found that its apps could be harmful for teen girls' mental health. Charmaraman talked about what her research showed about the effects of social media on teens' health and wellbeing.

At the end of the interview, host Kim I. Mills asked Charmaraman about the practical application of her work: "How does it get used and translated into something that will make a difference?"

Charmaraman responded, "That's the perennial dilemma of all of researchers who get funded—dissemination and translation to the different audiences it needs to go to, whether it's policymakers, marketing executives, to computer programmers, to the general public and families, educators... there's so many different pieces to the messages that we want to convey."

Little did Charmaraman know at the time that this connection with the APA—and a podcast that eventually garnered more than 15,000 views—would lead to a number of opportunities to translate her research into action by sharing it with audiences who could use it.

More than a year later, Mitchell J. Prinstein, Ph.D., the APA's chief science officer, invited Charmaraman to join a task force that was writing a public advisory on social media use in adolescence.

"The task force included people I had always wanted to collaborate with who worked in widely different areas of psychology: social, clinical, community, quantitative, qualitative, diversity, etc.," said Charmaraman. "We looked at the scientific evidence to date and came up

"We looked at the scientific evidence to date and came up with a list of recommendations that would be useful to parents, families, and educators."

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Released in May 2023, the advisory began with a simple statement about the nuance of the subject matter—nuance that has always been a hallmark of Charmaraman's work:

"Using social media is not inherently beneficial or harmful to young people... the effects of social media likely depend on what teens can do and see online, teens' preexisting strengths or vulnerabilities, and the contexts in which they grow up."

It went on to make 10 recommendations that covered when and how youth should use social media, the role of parental monitoring, the importance of training in social media literacy, and the need for continued research that goes beyond the focus on screen time. The advisory was written in language that anyone could understand, with the goal of providing practical guidance in an area that often felt like the Wild West.

The advisory had an immediate impact. It was downloaded 50,000 times and received more than 3,200 media hits. Both the U.S. Surgeon General and the American Academy of Pediatrics used it to inform their recommendations on teens and social media, which then received more attention from the media and the general public. (The Surgeon General's advisory cited a book chapter Charmaraman co-authored on how marginalized and understudied groups use social media.) The topic became top of mind for many, and the murkiness of the guidance available began to become slightly clearer.

Charmaraman's work wasn't done yet. In June 2023, the APA invited her to Capitol Hill along with nearly 60 APA member psychologists to advocate for the Kids Online Safety Act—which contains policies directly

"We are on our way to a better understanding of how we can help kids use social media in a healthy way."



From top: Charmaraman with Beth A. Jerskey, Ph.D., a clinician and Federal Advocacy Coordinator for Massachusetts; an overview of the APA's legislative requests on Capitol Hill; U.S. Surgeon General Vivek H. Murthy with Charmaraman

related to the APA advisory—and legislation to fund the Youth Mental Health Research Initiative. The initiative would authorize \$100 million per year for five years to the National Institutes of Health to conduct research, including research on youth and social media.



“I was paired up with a clinician and a policy advocate, and I have to say, we made a very persuasive team,” said Charmaraman, who had previously submitted written testimony in connection with a February 2023 U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on protecting children online. “We shared our elevator pitch with lawmakers and generally found a receptive audience. There was a lot of concern about the growing youth mental health crisis, and an interest in the potential to regulate social media to enhance its opportunities and reduce harms.”

A month later, Charmaraman participated in a meeting with the Future Forum Caucus, composed of 51 younger members of Congress who focus on issues important to younger Americans. In addition, she was invited to speak to the National Association of Attorneys General, at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, and at the Duquesne University School of Law’s Thomas R. Kline Center for Judicial Education.

In just a few months’ time, through several different avenues, Charmaraman had been able to reach a wide audience: parents, families, educators, policymakers, the legal community, and the general public. Her research, as part of a wider body of research on youth and social media, had been translated into actionable steps that ordinary people could take to help protect the teens in their lives. And it had lent credibility to proposed policies making their way through Congress.

“In an area that for a long time has been filled with uncertainty and fear, people are eager to find out what the scientific research says,” she said. “There is much more research needed, and hopefully the APA’s work on Capitol Hill will lead to more funding for that research. But we are on our way to a better understanding of how we can help kids use social media in a healthy way.”

The APA’s recommendations from its health advisory on social media use in adolescence include:

- Youth using social media should be encouraged to use functions that create opportunities for social support, online companionship, and emotional intimacy that can promote healthy socialization.
- Social media use, functionality, and permissions/consenting should be tailored to youths’ developmental capabilities; designs created for adults may not be appropriate for children.
- In early adolescence (i.e., typically 10–14 years), adult monitoring (i.e., ongoing review, discussion, and coaching around social media content) is advised for most youths’ social media use; autonomy may increase gradually as kids age and if they gain digital literacy skills. However, monitoring should be balanced with youths’ appropriate needs for privacy.
- To reduce the risks of psychological harm, adolescents’ exposure to content on social media that depicts illegal or psychologically maladaptive behavior, including content that instructs or encourages youth to engage in health-risk behaviors, such as self-harm (e.g., cutting, suicide), harm to others, or those that encourage eating-disordered behavior (e.g., restrictive eating, purging, excessive exercise) should be minimized, reported, and removed; moreover, technology should not drive users to this content.
- To minimize psychological harm, adolescents’ exposure to “cyberhate” including online discrimination, prejudice, hate, or cyberbullying especially directed toward a marginalized group (e.g., racial, ethnic, gender, sexual, religious, ability status), or toward an individual because of their identity or allyship with a marginalized group should be minimized.
- Adolescents should be routinely screened for signs of “problematic social media use” that can impair their ability to engage in daily roles and routines, and may present risk for more serious psychological harms over time.
- The use of social media should be limited so as to not interfere with adolescents’ sleep and physical activity.
- Adolescents should limit use of social media for social comparison, particularly around beauty- or appearance-related content.
- Adolescents’ social media use should be preceded by training in social media literacy to ensure that users have developed psychologically-informed competencies and skills that will maximize the chances for balanced, safe, and meaningful social media use.
- Substantial resources should be provided for continued scientific examination of the positive and negative effects of social media on adolescent development.

Read the full text of the recommendations at [wcwonline.org/apaadvisory](https://www.wcwonline.org/apaadvisory)

New Study Focuses on What Home-Based Child Care Providers Need to Survive

The pandemic made visible the lack of available and affordable child care in the U.S., and families continue to struggle to find care for their children, whether in licensed centers or homes. Massachusetts alone has lost 1,000 home-based child care providers since 2020—directly impacting parents’ ability to work, especially mothers.

And yet, despite the dire state of the field, individuals continue to start their own child care businesses.

Senior Research Scientist **Wendy Wagner Robeson**, Ed.D., is collaborating with **Kimberly Lucas**, Ph.D., Professor of the Practice in Public Policy and Economic Justice at Northeastern University, on a study of the experiences of home-based child care providers in Massachusetts in order to better understand which government policies can help them survive and thrive.

With funding from the Massachusetts Early Childhood Funders Collaborative, Robeson and Lucas are conducting a survey and focus groups with those who have become licensed home-based child care providers since 2020 and those who have recently left the field.

“We’re asking questions like, why do people decide to become child care providers? Why do they close

their businesses? What can the state do to support existing providers and to prevent them from dropping out?” said Robeson, who leads WCW’s Work, Families and Children Research Group. “We can gain important insights both from those who have entered the field and those who have left.”

The study is unique in seeking to understand the experience of home-based child care providers at this moment in time. The results can serve as the



foundation for future insights to inform the early childhood policy landscape in Massachusetts and nationwide.

Robeson and Lucas previously worked together on a study for the City of Boston, Office of Women’s Advancement, which resulted in the report “Too Much and Not Enough: Family Stresses and Child Care Preferences in Boston During COVID-19” and a chapter in the book *COVID-19 and Childhood Inequality* about parental burnout during COVID-19.

“We’re interested in understanding the struggles on both sides: families and child care providers,” said Robeson. “We know that families are daunted by the high cost of child care and have problems finding care that is accessible and of high quality. We also know that child care providers are severely underpaid and that it is extremely hard to operate and keep open a center or home-based child care facility. Once we understand the obstacles that each side faces, we can seek solutions that allow families to access the care they need, while keeping providers afloat.”

“We’re asking questions like, why do people decide to become child care providers? Why do they close their businesses? What can the state do to support existing providers and to prevent them from dropping out?”



How a WCW Research Scientist and a Wellesley Student Co-Authored a Book Chapter

Senior Research Scientist **Linda M. Williams**, Ph.D., and Wellesley College graduate **Simone Toney** '23 began working together in September 2021 through the Class of 1967 Internship Program at WCW. In 2023, they updated a chapter on rape and sexual assault in the *Encyclopedia of Mental Health*. Here, they talk about what they each gained from the experience.

Simone, what role did you play in writing the book chapter?

ST: My role was mainly to help update the chapter to reflect the way that rape is handled differently for victims of different racial groups and how intersectional identities are treated differently in their pursuit of justice, as well as how recent social movements like #MeToo impacted the way that victims are empowered to come forward.

What was most rewarding to you about the experience?

ST: It was rewarding getting to add social movements and updated statistics on race and intersectionality that are more visible to our culture now and to be able to see how some progress has been made since the chapter was last published.

How did your work with Dr. Williams shape your future career goals?

ST: I really enjoyed working with Dr. Williams because she allowed me to pursue projects that aligned with my interests in popular culture while also discussing justice related to gender and sexual assault. She was a great guide and helped me refine my thoughts and ideas. I learned that I really love talking about the way that pop culture reflects back to us certain stereotypes and expectations of women and that

working in a fluid and collaborative manner with a mentor is a really beneficial working style for me.

Dr. Williams, how did Simone's input contribute to the book chapter?

LW: Simone hit the ground running in her work on justice and gender-based violence. We had worked together for less than a month when she wrote a blog post about gymnast Simone Biles and how the reaction to her choice to not continue competing in the Tokyo Olympics due to her mental health illustrated how women's bodies are seen as commodities owned by others. Our Simone was then tasked to conduct a literature review, write annotated bibliographies, and assist with revisions on a chapter for the *Encyclopedia of Mental Health*. If you read anything from Simone (she now has a blog at SimoneToney.com), you know her writing is terrific! She updated this chapter with current research on #MeToo and on intersectionality—topics not covered in the

“Simone updated this chapter with current research on #MeToo and on intersectionality—topics not covered in the earlier version.”

earlier version. Thus, she made impressive contributions to the book chapter and to our understanding of rape, and she became a co-author.

What has been most interesting and rewarding to you about working with interns like Simone?

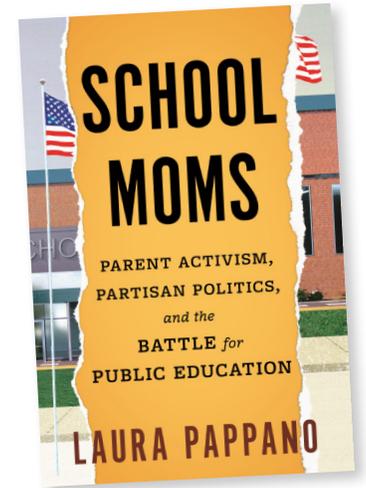
LW: Learning about their goals and aspirations and discovering (along with them sometimes) where they are headed, what they know and what they need to learn, how they view the world, and how much they can contribute to it. Most rewarding is knowing we are in good hands as these young women shape the world. ▀



Senior Research Scientist
Linda M. Williams, Ph.D., and
Wellesley College graduate
Simone Toney '23

New Book “School Moms” Delves Into Battle for Public Schools

WCW Writer-in-Residence **Laura Pappano** is an award-winning journalist and author who has written about K-12 and higher education for over 30 years. Her latest book is called *School Moms: Parent Activism, Partisan Politics, and the Battle for Public Education*. Here, she talks about the process of reporting and writing from the front lines of this battle.



Why did you want to write about this topic at this moment in time?

I have covered education for decades. I have followed what happens in schools and how it affects those trying to teach and to learn. I have sat in hundreds, if not thousands, of classrooms (I still volunteer, teaching journalism to students in grades 3-8 in New Haven, CT). But the conflicts and the actions I saw unfolding, first in specific spots around the country and then more widely, were NOT about education. Rather, I saw well-funded and well-organized far-right actors using our public schools as a platform to gain political power. With 90 percent of American children attending public schools, these institutions are critical to our social, cultural, and economic future. They need to work. I felt compelled to connect the dots, offer historical context, and challenge the wild misinformation being put out there.

Why did you choose the title *School Moms*? What role does gender play in the book?

There is a rich history of women asserting their identity as mothers to organize and lead. Before the 19th Amendment enshrined the vote, in some locales women could vote and be elected to school boards. Enterprising female leaders in the early 20th century used female domestic “expertise” to extend their authority, including over schools. More recently, parent-teacher associations have relied on mothers’ labor to organize fundraisers to pay for

playground upgrades, school trips, and classroom supplies. These “school moms” bring serious talent to such tasks, even as that work is underestimated.

As WCW Senior Research Scientist Sari Kerr has noted, women who take time off from professional roles face a “motherhood penalty” in lower wages and slowed careers. Yet what looks like a blank space on a resume, I argue, is actually a time of skill-building; it just doesn’t get public credit. Now, we see those skills being put to work. The book title recognizes that these moms are the ones tapping their networks and building powerful organizations to counter the attacks on public schools. They are the heroes on the front lines.

How did the work of WCW’s Peggy McIntosh and SEED shape your thinking about this topic?

Peggy McIntosh’s work, and that of SEED, was so important. I’m not sure you can discuss the gag laws on teachers around discussion of race and gender without paying homage to her work, particularly her essay “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack.” It remains a critical piece of writing and thinking. In fact, Matthew Hawn, one of the teachers in East Tennessee who I spent time with and is in the book, was fired for discussing race, including asserting the existence of white privilege. He had assigned the McIntosh essay to his 11th grade “Contemporary Issues” class.

“With 90 percent of American children attending public schools, these institutions are critical to our social, cultural, and economic future. They need to work.”

During summer 2022, four Wellesley College students—**Laila Brustin** '25, **Aidan Reid** '24, **Catherine Sneed** '25, and **Sunny Lu** '24—helped Pappano with research, from digging up historic documents and tracking members of moms’ groups to poring over campaign finance filings for school board races.

From School Moms: Parent Activism, Partisan Politics, and the Battle for Public Education:

Public schools carry the weight of our cultural differences. Even though, for more than a century, they have been nonpartisan gathering places and a center of civic life in America, they have spurred debate. Often, friction has been over disappointing test scores, funding formulas (do school systems rely too much on property taxes?), or disagreements over how math or history should be taught. In combing through old



magazines, I was struck by how often we have raised alarms about our “troubled” public schools. A headline in the March 1947 issue of *Ladies’ Home Journal* warns, “Our Schools Are in Danger.” A story in the February 1971 issue of *Parents’ Magazine* could have been written at almost any time in the previous century. Titled “Schools in Trouble,” it promised a “hard-hitting analysis of the failures of public education.”

But what is happening now is not a debate over the institution’s shortcomings. Rather, this is a move by the far right to use public schools to gain political power. The campaign by extremists ignores the messy job of educating every single child, regardless of background, circumstance, or academic ability. Instead it seizes on the convenient fact that schools touch everyone. When you control schools, you control society.

What I appreciated about all the people I spent time with—whether or not they are

quoted in this book—was their willingness, even eagerness, to share what they were experiencing. We have crossed a line, and people who have worked in and around education can feel it. Just as I was compelled to write this book, I heard from many that they were compelled to speak up. I am grateful that they have done so.

As a mother who has raised children in both suburban and urban settings and has volunteered in public schools in both, I am struck by the relentless energy and determination of today’s parents. I salute these “school moms”—a term that I intend as wholly complimentary and includes all highly active school parents—who bring serious professional skills, hours of labor, and care to the tasks they take on. They have always been around, breezing down school hallways or sitting at a checkout desk in the library to help out. But in this new environment, their tasks have shifted. Parent involvement is no longer only about organizing the back-to-school picnic and the teacher appreciation breakfast or keeping track of orders for the wrapping paper fundraiser. Now it also includes tracking school board agendas, organizing meeting turnouts, reviewing proposed state legislation, creating Facebook pages where parents first spread the word about conflict in the schools and building—and then turn those Facebook groups into bona-fide organizations with their own websites and missions. Parents have become expert in digging through



Laura Pappano is a writer-in-residence at WCW. A former education columnist for *The Boston Globe*, she has written about education for *The New York Times*, *The Hechinger Report*, *The Washington Post*, and others. She is the author or co-author of three other books, *The Connection Gap: Why Americans Feel So Alone*, *Playing with the Boys: Why Separate is Not Equal in Sports*, and *Inside School Turnarounds*.

“School moms are fighting for public education in their communities. This book is about that battle—and why it matters.”

campaign finance filings and other public records. They sift through news reports, connect the dots to local issues, and share. Parent involvement at this level is no longer casual. Recently a North Texas mom texted me to share an article about fallout from the book policy recently adopted by a local far-right-dominated school board requiring the district to review all book donations: the Rotary Club was rebuffed as it prepared to donate a copy of the Webster Student Dictionary to each third-grader, as it had done for over a decade. (The new edition contained twenty-two new words.) School moms, in other words, are fighting for public education in their communities. This book is about that battle—and why it matters. ■



Excerpted from *School Moms: Parent Activism, Partisan Politics, and the Battle for Public Education* by Laura Pappano. Copyright 2024. Excerpted with permission by Beacon Press.

NIOST Studies Youth Fields Workforce

The following is an excerpt from “Youth Fields Workforce Perspectives” in the latest issue of *Afterschool Matters*, published by the **National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST)**.

The place of out-of-school time programming in supporting young people’s learning and growth is well established. Yet little is known about the staff and volunteers who support young people in school- and community-based afterschool programs, summer camps, national and local youth-serving organizations, and more.

The Youth Fields Workforce Study is a national effort to explore, define, and elevate the work of professionals and volunteers in an expansive range of youth-serving organizations. With support from The Wallace Foundation,



the American Institutes for Research led a constellation of partners, including the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST), in this study of the youth fields workforce.

“In addition to highlighting the experiences and opinions of youth-serving professionals, each Perspective points to promising directions for future research, policy, and practice.”

A major part of the study is the Power of Us Workforce Survey, designed to learn about youth workers and their experiences in the field. The survey, which ran from February 2022 through March 2023, gathered data from thousands of youth fields professionals across the country. In addition to soliciting detailed demographic information about respondents, the survey asked about respondents’ current role and type of organization, career trajectory, professional learning opportunities, experiences on the job, professional values and needs, and professional certifications and associations.

A series of Perspectives, developed by NIOST researchers, supplements the data from the survey.

Based on interviews with youth-serving professionals, the Perspectives highlight the broad range of voices in the youth fields workforce. Its goals are to:

- Deepen insight into the data from the Power of Us survey
- Explore the nuances of youth professionals’ work experiences
- Elevate practitioners’ voices, highlighting their experiences and challenges
- Investigate similarities and differences in youth work in diverse employment sectors
- Raise awareness of this workforce and its value

We call this series Perspectives because it captures the perspectives of youth fields professionals on critical workforce issues. Each Perspective explores a single workforce issue or sector:

Authors include Elizabeth Starr, Research Associate, NIOST; Edward Franklin, President and CEO, Voice of Hope Ministries, Texas; Amy Franks, Associate Director of School and Family Engagement, Book Harvest, North Carolina; Georgia Hall, Ph.D., Director and Senior Research Scientist, NIOST; Patricia McGuiness-Carmichael, Research Associate, NIOST; Priscilla Parchia, Program Manager, Office of Expanded Learning, Oakland Unified School District, California; Vesna A. Karmelic-Pavlov, Consultant, NIOST; and Kate Walker, Ph.D., Professor, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.

Perspective 1: Community institutions

Perspective 2: Summer

Perspective 3: Entry points and recruitment

Perspective 4: Compensation

Perspective 5: Career pathways

Perspective 6: Recommendations

In addition to highlighting the experiences and opinions of youth-serving professionals, each Perspective points to promising directions for future research, policy, and practice. Our hope is that the findings from our interviews, together with results from the Power of Us Workforce Survey, will inspire leaders and policymakers to better support this vital workforce in transforming the lives of young people. ■

Read these Perspectives in the latest issue of *Afterschool Matters*, which can be found at www.niost.org/Afterschool-Matters-Journal.

WCW Research Scientist Contributes to Work Recognized by Nobel Prize

In October, Harvard professor **Claudia Goldin**, Ph.D., won the Nobel Prize in economics—only the third woman to do so and the first to win it alone. WCW Senior Research Scientist **Sari Kerr**, Ph.D., worked with Goldin on some of her recent groundbreaking research on the gender pay gap.

“Over the life cycle of parenting, there is a moment when child care demands greatly lessen and mothers can increase their hours of paid work and take on more career challenges,” Kerr wrote about their study in last year’s *Research & Action Report*. “They reach the summit and can then descend the other side of the mountain. But even though they increase their hours of work, they never enter the rich valley of

“This recognition of Goldin’s research is also a recognition of the gender pay gap as an important area of study in economics.”

gender equality. In large measure, mothers’ inability to earn the same as fathers is due to the fact that having children gives men an advantage—a fatherhood premium—that women can never catch up with, no matter how many years of work experience they have.”

As Kerr told *Insider* in an interview, this recognition of Goldin’s research is also a recognition of the gender pay gap as an important area of study in economics, and it validates the work of the hundreds of researchers chipping away at the topic. ▀



Leadership Transition at SEED

After 12 years of driving social change, one conversation at a time, **SEED** Co-Director **Emmy Howe**, M.Ed., retired on September 1, 2023. Under her leadership, SEED brought its transformational professional development to hundreds of communities, organizations, and institutions—bringing people together to learn through self-reflection, building relationships through structured dialogue, and creating change through systemic analysis.



Emmy Howe and Ruth Condori-Aragón

“It has been amazing to collaborate and co-create in so many SEED circles for the last 30-plus years,” said Howe. “The opportunity to listen and share in the ways we do at SEED is rare and impactful. I know that SEED is in good hands and will continue to move lives and systems toward justice for a long time.”

Howe has a long and accomplished history of advancing educational initiatives at the intersections of social justice and diverse learners, teachers, and families, including but not limited to her work on SEED. She also served as the Cambridge, Massachusetts, public schools’ first family liaison to the LGBTQ+ community and was part of a group that co-created the Welcoming Schools Program in support

of LGBTQ+ and gender-inclusive educators, students, and families.

In addition, Howe has played an important role in establishing SEED as a professional development opportunity for the Wellesley Centers for Women and the Wellesley College community.

Howe will be succeeded by **Ruth Condori-Aragón**, M.Ed., who will join **Gail Cruise-Roberson** and **Jondou**

Chase Chen as co-director. Condori-Aragón attended SEED New Leaders Training in 2010 and joined the SEED staff in 2012. Several years later, she joined the leadership team as an associate co-director. She is also a full-time teacher at The Meadowbrook School of Weston in Massachusetts.

“At Meadowbrook, SEED has opened doors for meaningful and respectful conversations around tough issues such as race, ethnicity, and gender, and has given our community, parents, and teachers a new perspective,” said Condori-Aragón. “I have experienced firsthand the tremendous impact SEED has on the lives of those who attend the training as well as those who are later touched through its work.” ▀

“Afghanistan Is a Country of Rebels. We Will Never Stop Fighting.”

WCW International Scholar-in-Residence **Pashtana Durrani** is the founder of LEARN Afghanistan, the country’s first-ever digital school network. Below is an excerpt of an essay she wrote for Global Citizen about her experience running LEARN from abroad since the Taliban took power in August 2021.



Over the past two years, a lot has happened.

When the Taliban banned women from working in NGOs, it made it practically impossible for women to exist in any sphere. For two weeks, we had to shut down everything. All learning was stopped. I thought it was the end.

Then, my deputy director called me and said they were restarting the classes and even more girls had enrolled. Two weeks earlier, we had to close our doors on 220 students. Two weeks later, we had more than 280 in three schools.

In July this year, I returned to Afghanistan after 18 months of Taliban rule. I went to Helmand, the sister province to Kandahar, and I entered one of our schools. All of the students and all of the teachers knew me even though we had never met. No introductions were needed, and there were no pleasantries. We all knew the importance of the work we were doing.

One moment I’ll always cherish is when a girl raised her hand and said: “I’m in

Grade 7 now but I’m going to need support until Grade 12. Are you going to stay here until Grade 12?”

There are times I worry: “What will happen after this date? How are we going to get the funding?”

But this girl was saying to me: “I’m going to show up. Are you going to show up for me?”

There have been heartbreaking moments over the past two years, too.

The worst thing I have seen was when, in March, the girls went to school and were turned away.

How horrible is the world that there can be young girls taking to the streets to beg to go to school?

I’m not going to claim that we have been at the forefront of fighting with the Taliban by openly opening schools. I have to be smart about it. The best resistance is for them to see a woman or a girl reading right under their noses. That’s only possible if we do our work silently.

What keeps me going is that we have already been through this. This is not the first time we’ve been here. The one thing people should know about Afghans is that we are a country of rebels. And we will keep rebelling against the Taliban and anyone who enforces their outdated mentality again, and again, and again, until they lose power—which they will. ■

“What keeps me going is that we have already been through this. This is not the first time we’ve been here.”



Pashtana Durrani is an Afghan feminist, activist, and educator who founded LEARN Afghanistan, the country’s first-ever digital school network. In 2023, she received the Global Citizen Prize, which celebrates remarkable changemakers who are taking exceptional actions to end extreme poverty.

Read the full text of Durrani’s essay and watch a film based on it at [globalcitizen.org](https://www.globalcitizen.org).



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