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14. ABSTRACT A global effort to promote and increase women's participation in decision-making to voice issues, negotiate peace and protect them during a crisis, conflict, or war is called Women, Peace, and Security (WPS). WPS offers women a platform to use their voice as a powerful tool to speak up and speak out. WPS has removed a few barriers and expanded opportunities, but it is a pacing challenge to implement worldwide. Recognizing the importance of WPS to U.S. national interests, the Biden-Harris administration is attempting to advance WPS Strategy Lines of Effort (LOE). More recently, President Joe Biden established the Gender Policy Council (GPC) in 2021 to emphasize the importance of gender equality and to incorporate WPS principles in current policies, action plans, daily operations, and national partnerships. This paper will argue that the current administration needs to move faster to advance the following LOEs: 1) participation in decision-making and peacebuilding, 2) protection of human rights, 3) improving internal capabilities, and 4) creating partnership engagement. Out of these four LOEs, it is especially important to consider efforts taken, significant challenges, and viable recommendations on the way forward in LOEs one, two, and four. The U.S. is a global, national power that must shape a world that will be more accountable to everyone because all gender deserves to belong in a peaceful and stable world.						
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WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY STRATEGY LINE OF EFFORTS



The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Date: 12 May 2023

Question: How does failing to implement the Women, Peace, and Security Strategy Lines of Effort impact the United States National Interest?

INTRODUCTION

Growing up, my grandma would say, "Women should be seen and not heard," or "Mind your tongue and never speak over a man." As a child, I would remain silent among men and not speak. Growing up in the church, I heard ministers refer to First Corinthians 14:34-35, where Apostle Paul wrote, "Women should remain silent in the churches. As the law says, they are not allowed to speak but must be in submission. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church."¹ Today, women are seen but need to be heard more. Women no longer keep silent but are sometimes forced to remain silent. A global effort to promote and increase women's participation in decision-making to voice issues, negotiate peace and protect them during a crisis, conflict, or war is called Women, Peace, and Security (WPS). WPS offers women a platform to use their voice as a powerful tool to speak up and speak out. WPS has removed a few barriers and expanded opportunities, but it is a pacing challenge to implement worldwide.

Whether women whisper or roar, they have a voice and the power to be agents of change in achieving peace and security. Significantly in 2017, WPS emerged when Congress passed legislation that identifies "the active participation of women as critical to maintaining peace and security around the globe, thus establishing the WPS Act."² "The Women, Peace, and Security Act has a global constituency that provides policymakers with the tools to end cycles of violent conflict, create more equitable peace processes, halt inequalities, and promote gender equality on

¹ 1 Cor. 14:34-35 NIV

² C. Lopez, Todd, DOD Makes Progress Implementing Women, Peace, Security Act, October 6, 2020. DOD News.

a global, national, and local scale.”³ Recognizing the importance of WPS to U.S. national interests, the Biden-Harris administration is attempting to advance WPS Strategy Lines of Effort (LOE). More recently, President Joe Biden established the Gender Policy Council (GPC) in 2021 to emphasize the importance of gender equality and to incorporate WPS principles in current policies, action plans, daily operations, and national partnerships. This paper will argue that the current administration needs to move faster to advance the following LOEs: 1) participation in decision-making and peacebuilding, 2) protection of human rights, 3) improving internal capabilities, and 4) creating partnership engagement. Out of these four LOEs, it is especially important to consider efforts taken, significant challenges, and viable recommendations on the way forward in LOEs one, two, and four.

U.S. departments and agencies must fully commit to applying the WPS Strategy LOEs. The Department of State (DHS), U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and Department of Defense (DOD) focus on LOEs to ensure women participate in discussing matters of peace and security. Only one department had a specific implementation plan with clear training goals. The others needed more specific implementation plans that speak to the principles of the WPS agenda that align with the LOEs. Departments and agencies are progressing towards increasing women’s participation, providing training, and developing partnerships across all facets of security. Significantly in 2021, “USAID supported the participation of over 77,000 women in leadership, conflict mediation, legal, political, and peacebuilding processes, as well as providing critical healthcare, psychosocial support, legal aid, and economic services to more than 5.3 million gender-based

³ Sahana Dharmapuri, Jolynn Shoemaker, and Erin Cooper of Our Secure Future, It’s Time for a U.S. Special Representative on Women, Peace and Security. foreignpolicy.com

violence survivors.”⁴ The 2022 U.S. Government WPS Congressional Report highlights the progress and challenges of each department and agency. “DHS trained 8,458 women in law enforcement training programs.”⁵ Additionally, DHS led a Unified Coordination Group’s “effort to resettle more than 76,000 vulnerable Afghans, including women leaders, human rights activists, humanitarian workers, and other at-risk individuals across the United States.”⁶ These departments and agencies are making great strides in meeting the needs of the most vulnerable population by working to implement WPS.

While the U.S. and the United Nations have come a long way on all levels, including individual, societal, national, or international, challenges with implementation still exist. According to the 2022 WPS Congressional Report, “some challenges must be addressed to advance further and prevent the failure of WPS goals. Challenges include 1) the need to acknowledge women’s leadership roles, 2) increase funding, and 3) enhance internal staff capacity.”⁷ These challenges limit women’s abilities to fully contribute to negotiations within their affected communities. Inflexible funding creates barriers to supporting women and girls. The lack of staff causes delays in fully implementing WPS initiatives across departments and agencies. To prevent conflicts, thwart counterterrorism and promote peace and stability, the Biden-Harris administration must address the challenges creating barriers to WPS Strategy LOEs.

⁴U.S. *Women, Peace, and Security Congressional Report 2022 · Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017* (P.L. 115-68) 19,

⁵ U.S. *Women, Peace, and Security Congressional Report 2022 · Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017* (P.L. 115-68) 37.

⁶ U.S. *Women, Peace, and Security Congressional Report 2022 · Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017* (P.L. 115-68) 37.

⁷ U.S. *Women, Peace, and Security Congressional Report 2022 · Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017* (P.L. 115-68) 5.

LINE OF EFFORT: PARTICIPATION

Even in the U.S., with all its freedom, glory, and equal rights, women are often still not considered legitimate participants. “The WPS Strategy Participation LOE seeks and supports women's preparation and meaningful participation worldwide in decision-making processes related to conflict and crisis.”⁸ Departments and agencies have made efforts to support preparation through unique training opportunities. According to the 2022 United States Government WPS Congressional Report, “DHS trained 62 female soldiers from various countries in Guinea-Bissau to serve as an armory and explosive storehouse keepers and managers.”⁹ The training provided women with skills in weapons and explosives. This advanced U.S. national interests by improving human security and enhancing regional stability. Historically, Guinea-Bissau’s culture of masculinity devalues women in the Defense and Security Forces therefore teaching skills for roles exclusively reserved for men makes it difficult for women to serve. Traditional gender roles and traits of masculinity often do not apply in all cultures but is standard in most patriarchal societies. DHS checked the box for preparation but did not think outside the box to be more inclusive in promoting participation. Integrating female and male forces into training would have promoted inclusion and reinforced female soldiers’ ability to fulfill the role.

Women's participation is essential for gender equality and sincere democracy. WPS facilitates women's engagement decision-making as a means of guaranteeing better accountability to women. USAID focused on increasing women’s participation in decision-

⁸ U.S. *Women, Peace, and Security Congressional Report 2022 - Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017* (P.L. 115-68) 7

⁹ U.S. *Women, Peace, and Security Congressional Report 2022 - Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017* (P.L. 115-68) 7

making so women in leadership could freely discuss violent extremism, climate change, and food insecurity issues. USAID implemented programs to enhance women's understanding of political processes to increase political and civic participation in election legislation and within community groups. In municipalities where women historically could not hold influential positions, "USAID held 43 meetings in rural areas and trained 73 women candidates on developing political messages and identifying topics of interest to voters."¹⁰ These activities contributed to women's empowerment and helped them create a network of politicians, entrepreneurs, and humanitarians. USAID checked the box on preparation and increasing women's participation, and it elevated representation in public offices. However, USAID's lack of promoting participation within traditionally underrepresented communities often prevents women from participating due to threats and violent attacks.

In countries where the U.S. initiates partnerships, failure to promote women's participation is leading to bullying, online attacks, and even death for women who demonstrate leadership in politics and public life. "In Bosnia and Herzegovina, 60% of women in politics experienced violence, and 96% of that violence was verbal or emotional."¹¹ In other countries, women like human rights advocates, journalists, trade union members, and peacekeepers are targeted for violence and subjected to intimidation and reprisal. "The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) received 1,116 complaints of threats and attacks against human rights defenders and organizations and reported the killing of 12 women human rights defenders."¹² Meaningfully educating men on gender equality will

¹⁰ U.S. *Women, Peace, and Security Congressional Report 2022 · Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017* (P.L. 115-68) 26

¹¹ Miftari E. (2019), "Violence Against Women in Politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina" www.wfd.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Violence-Against-Women-in-Politics-BiH-WFD2019.pdf

¹² United Nations 2022. *Women and peace and security: Report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/740)*, para. 23.

empower men to promote women's participation which will strengthen the roles of women and eliminate discrimination. The Biden-Harris administration must move expeditiously to work with allies to educate on gender equality and enforce stricter punishment for those who violent human rights.

LINE OF EFFORT: PROTECTION AND ACCESS

Even the United Nations, with all their approaches to human rights prevention and violations, gender inequalities still often leads at the expense of women's and girls' human rights. "The WPS Strategy Protection and Access LOE seek to promote the protection of women and girls' human rights; access to humanitarian assistance; and safety from violence, abuse, and exploitation worldwide."¹³ U.S. Departments and Agencies have tried to advance human rights through prevention, responding to gender-based violence(GBV), and improving support services for survivors. The 2022 United States Government WPS Congressional Report states, "USAID support helped 34,785 survivors access services for HIV and GBV screenings."¹⁴ The Department of State implemented workshops in "Trinidad and Tobago, Ghana, India, Sri Lanka, Kenya, and the Bahamas to raise awareness against gender-based violence to counter violence against women and girls."¹⁵ USAID and the DHS implemented support services for GBV survivors but noted a lack of diplomatic engagement.

The WPS agenda seeks to protect and support survivors of GBV, but often implementation plans target the wrong audience. It is notable that women and girls receive

¹³ U.S. *Women, Peace, and Security Congressional Report 2022 · Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017* (P.L. 115-68) 26

¹⁴ U.S. *Women, Peace, and Security Congressional Report 2022 · Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017* (P.L. 115-68) 27

¹⁵ U.S. *Women, Peace, and Security Congressional Report 2022 · Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017* (P.L. 115-68) 12

survivor services. Its excellent workshops raise awareness of GBV. What is troubling is that services help women after the violence occurs and awareness is projected among women trying to survive. The audience should not be the survivors but boys and young men who often follow generational norms. Engaging young men and boys in gender equality by training them to promote awareness could shift traditional norms, breaking the cycle of violence against women. This provides a way for organizations to stop projecting onto women what happens to them; instead, project onto the people initiating the violence. The lack of diplomatic engagement to promote GBV awareness can affect Humanitarian response to assist women and children in conflict-affected areas. “GVB in the Tigray Conflict reported that 2,204 survivors sought services for sexual violence at health facilities and that only 29 of the nearly 230 health centers in Tigray were fully functional.”¹⁶ Humanitarian assistance programs help “Combatant Commands to gain access, visibility, and influence within their regions and achieve theater and U.S. national security objectives.”¹⁷ Survivors had limited access to medical facilities and other support resources. Additionally, food and fuel shortages are due to the government blocking humanitarian aid. The Biden-Harris administration must address the lag in diplomatic engagement to continue pursue a prosperous, peaceful world.

Even with all the U.S. does to address human rights, women still often seek protection from armed groups and access to basic services. Opportunities to advance U.S. national interest in the pursuit of a prosperous and secure world is often met with opposition from women and girls continuing to suffer severe poverty, kidnapping, rape, and torture. Women are often targeted during conflict, insurgency, or war and subjected to human rights violations. These

¹⁶ “I Always Remember That Day” Access to Services for Survivors of Gender-Based Violence in Ethiopia’s Tigray Region

¹⁷ <https://www.dsca.mil/humanitarian-assistance>

women are either recruited or they join armed groups to deter violence against them. While serving in these armed groups, females generally gain reputations as fearless leaders and fighters. Women epitomize their role as a symbol of women's liberation. They have the power to disrupt terrorists' abilities to expand through recruitment which can deter terrorist attacks. Violent extremism and terrorism are not new threats, but threats the government, military, and people worldwide should not take for granted. Terrorism has been one of the biggest threats to peace and security worldwide. The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, made people aware of the massive pain and destruction terrorism can cause. It has been almost twenty-two years since the devastating attack on the Pentagon, Twin Towers, and aboard United Airlines Flight 93. People still feel the effects of the devastation that resulted in stricter air travel security, increased surveillance, and how the world viewed threats. Although the U.S. has not experienced another attack like 9/11, countering violence against women and girls prevents and protects them from GBV and gives the U.S. an advantage in preventing terrorism globally.

LINE OF EFFORT: PARTNER SUPPORT

The right to Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness, as declared in the U.S. Constitution, is becoming more complicated to sustain in a world with growing conflicts. The WPS Strategy Partner Support LOE initiates partnerships with governments to assist with developing policies and plans to advance WPS. Departments and agencies have made strides in partnering with diverse stakeholders to assist countries with implementing WPS into their National Action Plans. USAID implemented awareness raising activity with the Government of "Egypt that focused on young girls forced to marry early, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), and

violence in 12 villages in Upper Egypt.”¹⁸ DHS and several other departments that prevent human rights violations “collaborated with United Kingdom’s Police and Border Forces to train 180 people from various law enforcement agencies to target FGM issues.”¹⁹ USAID and DHS accomplished partnership engagement and showed much success speaking at multilateral fora. However, reports show a decrease in countries that included WPS in their National Action Plans and Common Vulnerabilities and Exposures (CVE) frameworks. According to the 2022 WPS Congressional Report, “Between FY 2020 and FY 2021, a slight increase of 21 to 20 countries reported they developed, revised, or implemented WPS NAPs.”²⁰ The number of reported countries that integrated WPS concepts in their policy CVE frameworks decreased from eight in FY 2020 to zero in FY 2021.”²¹ Departments and agencies noted that underreporting data is causing challenges to accurately assess WPS implementation. Nevertheless, out of 193 countries, “104 UN member states and only 54% developed NAPs.”²² This is unacceptable and to think it has been 23 years since the UN Security Council adopted UN Resolution 1325 to address WPS. Women are fighting for peace, protection, security, and a voice.

The Bible, according to Rev. Billy Graham, references peace in three ways. “First, there is spiritual peace—peace between God and man. Second, there is psychological peace—peace within. Third, there is relational peace—peace among mankind.”²³ Peace and security among humanity are what every Nation strives to accomplish. The hardest of these is relational peace.

¹⁸ U.S. *Women, Peace, and Security Congressional Report 2022 · Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017* (P.L. 115-68) 27

¹⁹ U.S. *Women, Peace, and Security Congressional Report 2022 · Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017* (P.L. 115-68) 41

²⁰ U.S. *Women, Peace, and Security Congressional Report 2022 · Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017* (P.L. 115-68) 14

²¹ U.S. *Women, Peace, and Security Congressional Report 2022 · Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017* (P.L. 115-68) 14

²² <http://1325naps.peacewomen.org/>

²³ www.billygraham.org

The overall goal is to foster sustainable peace globally. If the U.S. fails to encourage more partnerships raising awareness on early marriages, FGM, and GVB, young girls and women will continue to be victims. Without peace, there is no stability, and without stability, there can be no peace.

COUNTERARGUMENT

Some may argue that the Biden-Harris Administration is becoming a “gender superpower” and leading the way in implementing WPS principles. For example, “President Biden signed *Executive Order 14020*, establishing the first-ever Gender Policy Council (GPC) to pursue a comprehensive approach to advancing gender equity and equality.”²⁴ The GPC secured program funding, implemented new policies, and honored women leaders, activists, and human rights defenders. “One program trained and supported 25 human rights organizations and 50 civil society organizations actively engaged in advocacy on gender equity and equality.”²⁵ The ultimate gender superpower is electing the First African American female Vice President (VPOTUS) in U.S. history. Vice President Kamala Harris is in the second highest leadership role in the U.S. She can meaningfully participate, voice concerns, make decisions and be seen and heard. This example demonstrate that women can be great leaders and decision-makers, advancing WPS by addressing leaders globally on the issues women face from a woman’s perspective.

In comparison, women in other countries are generally provided a seat at the table but are seen and not heard.

²⁴ Executive Order on Establishment of the White House Gender Policy Council, March 2021

²⁵ <https://www.state.gov/dipnote-u-s-department-of-state-official-blog/advancing-gender-equality-a-year-in-review/>

REBUTTAL

This is progress; however, the U.S. must work faster with growing tensions between countries. Because of the lack of promoting women's participation, women's subjection to violence and abuse grows. The 2022 WPS Congressional Report states, "Funding constraints and challenges with diplomatic engagements slowed down training opportunities, awareness raising, and integrating WPS into policies."²⁶ "A new study by the Cairo-based Tadwein Center for Gender Studies has found that 86% of underprivileged women aged 18 to 35 in Egypt in a country of more than 102 million people, have been subject to FGM, and the vow to end FGM by 2030 will not happen."²⁷ VP Harris stated in her UN speech that "the status of democracy also depends fundamentally on the empowerment of women."²⁸ Women's empowerment will only work by promoting their participation in decisions that affect them and their families. Making progress is excellent, but it is not enough to be considered a gender superpower when other countries do not feel impelled to integrate WPS concepts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Too many people do not think outside the box because they are stuck in it. We are in an era of diversity and inclusion. It is time to get out of the box, evolve together, and challenge the status quo. One way forward is to engage with the UN to assign a date for all countries to implement WPS concepts into their NAPs. The U.S. is not the global police, the UN must be more forceful in implementing UN Resolutions.

²⁶ U.S. *Women, Peace, and Security Congressional Report 2022* · *Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017* (P.L. 115-68)

²⁷ <https://www.dw.com/en/despite-progress-elsewhere-egypts-fgm-numbers-still-high/a-61042948>

²⁸ Remarks by Vice President Kamala Harris to the 65th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women

Providing more funding to departments and agencies increases capabilities. WPS encompasses a spectrum of concepts that suits an individual with time specifically allocated to the agenda. Adding implementation to someone as an additional duty decreases the time they would have to implement WPS fully. To fully implement, employ more WPS coordinators to coordinate training, organize symposiums, and create forums such as the recent Naval War College WPS symposium. More people need to know why women have a Warfighting advantage and diversity and inclusion are not the end state. More funds are needed to implement programs targeting boys and young men to promote women's participation, GBV, and other issues prevalent in their areas. In patriarchal traditions, women are stereotyped as weak and needing a man's support. Males exert supremacy and domination over women through rape and torture that weakens their security and welfare. Focusing on the next generation is vital to reducing the objectification of women. More funding is needed to train more young girls and women on peace processes to prevent conflict. Before the implementation of WPS, women in Syria organized non-violent protests to build peace and stability. In March 2011, "women were the first to take to the streets voicing their concerns against violence by gluing government building doors shut and placing red dye, symboling blood, in fountains."²⁹ "In April 2011, 2,000 women and children blocked a highway in Baniyas and successfully demanded that the government release hundreds of men wrongfully detained."³⁰ These women successfully organized, taking a cooperative approach to peacemaking, demonstrating WPS objectives of women acting as agents of peace in conflict resolution.

²⁹ <https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/2014/02/21/10-ways-syrian-women-building-peace-democracy/>

³⁰ <https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/2014/02/21/10-ways-syrian-women-building-peace-democracy/>

The execution of yearly mandatory training like Sexual Prevention Assault and Harassment and Equal Opportunity, specifically within the armed forces, enhance gender equality. “A report in the Military Times estimated that more than 8% of female service members and 1.5% of males experienced unwanted sexual contact in 2021, the highest rate since the department began counting in 2004.”³¹ First of all, it is disappointing that Soldiers held to a higher standard are committing such acts. Men should be considered allies in the meaningful inclusion of women in the armed forces. Mandatory training is a great way to introduce neutrality to gender allyship to men. You must genuinely understand what WPS is to try to advance or implement the plan wholeheartedly.

Gender biases have created barriers to decision-making vital to this Nation's national security. Appointing more women to leadership positions is the most effective way. Women currently serving in leadership roles craft a yellow brick road for future generations creating a more inclusive and diverse government. As in the film, *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy navigated the yellow brick road promoting feminist ideas while highlighting gender reversal roles . Although there were challenges along the way, Dorothy’s leadership, determination, strength, and forward-thinking successfully returned her home.

Implementing the WPS Act, WPS Strategy LOEs, and various Gender policies resulted in women challenging the status quo because of the unique ways they have maintained peace and security worldwide. Studies show that peace lasts longer when women participate in peace negotiations. Women understand the issues on the ground and the needs of the people. Significantly in 2019, the UN Population Award was awarded to women in Liberia for creating

³¹ <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2022/09/01/the-militarys-sexual-assault-problem-is-only-getting-worse/>

38 Peace Huts where they could engage in mediating local disputes, serve as vigilant watchdogs, prevent and support GBV, and promote the importance of women's political participation, and governance."³² Throughout Liberia, these women changed the status quo by challenging patriarchal traditions in an often male-dominated society engaging with males on issues within their communities.

Even with the U.S., with all the leadership opportunities, women are often not able to serve in political or economic leadership positions to challenge the status quo. Gender equity and equality can make a significant difference within International Relations because it creates balance and positively genderizes policies. Because of tensions between Great Powers, this is not the time to have policies circling the drain or appointments of women into leadership positions held because of bias. It is time for the U.S. to wake up or, in the phrase used more often today, "Stay Woke" and push harder to promote WPS. "Stay Woke" concerns racial injustice and people becoming more socially and politically conscious. This phrase is not new because in my great-great-grandfather, blues and folk musician Huddie Ledbetter's "Leadbelly" in his 1938 recording of "Scottsboro Boys," he advises everyone to "Stay Woke" because of racial injustice. His message was for African Americans to stay alert to physical danger and political consciousness. The U.S. is going through a racial and gender reckoning. They must work faster in leading change to in giving women equal opportunity.

CONCLUSION

Implementing gender equity and equality advances U.S. diplomatic, development, and security efforts to achieve peace and stability. Because women comprise 56% of the population,

³² <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2019/6/statement-ed-phumzile-peace-hut-women-of-liberia-wins-2019-un-population-award>

it is only fair that they participate in decision-making to address threats contributing to their instability and insecurity. A Feminist voice brings a diverse viewpoint to decision-making. "A diverse viewpoint implements a strategic imperative that advances political stability, fosters democracy, and is essential to our Nation's security and the world."³³ Today, women are generally being seen and heard, creating a paradigm shift from the orthodox saying that women remain silent to becoming empowered to speak their truths. Leaders realized women were vital to achieving peace and security by taking steps to implement the WPS Act. Women are suffering and want their voices heard. In Oprah Winfrey's Golden Globe speech, she stated, "Speaking your truth is the most powerful tool we all have." The Biden-Harris Administration has made significant progress but needs to work faster. As Toby Keith sings, "A little less talk and A lot more action." It is time for less talk and more action in implementing WPS goals. The U.S. is a global, national power that must shape a world that will be more accountable to everyone because all gender deserves to belong in a peaceful and stable world.

³³ *Politics & National Security. Why a Focus on Gender Increases National Security. By Susan Markham. Thursday, May 5, 2022*