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Opponent Report for Savannah Catalina's Master's Thesis in Gender Studies at Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic.

Savannah Catalina has submitted to the Gender Studies Program at Charles University, Prague CZ, as part of her requirements for completing the Master's degree a thesis entitled, "When Reproductive Rights are Criminalized: Cross-Border Abortions and a Case Study of the Ciocia Collectives." In it, she examines the actions of the Ciocia Collectives and their fight to provide abortion access to pregnant individuals, primarily from Poland, in light of Poland's recent Constitutional Tribunal ruling in October 2020 making abortions unconstitutional and severely limiting permitted reasons for abortions within the country. A prominent feature of this thesis is its qualitative interviews with three Ciocia Collectives: Ciocia Basia; Ciocia Wienia; and Ciocia Czesia, based out of Berlin, Vienna, and Prague respectively. Throughout the thesis, Savannah explores two questions related to their work. First, what can we learn about reproductive justice in Central Europe based on the work these organizations do, and second, do these organizations, founded and functioning independently, provide us insight into the potential for feminist solidarity? Both of these questions are well addressed within the thesis. Savannah finds that when it comes to reproductive justice, the three collectives have to navigate various factors to ensure access to abortion for individuals who want them. Those factors include safety, navigating country borders as well as personal boundaries, education, and walking the line between visibility and invisibility. In terms of feminist solidarity, there is plenty of evidence given here as to how unique feminist solidarity is between the groups as it goes beyond just important practical reasons to become, in a way, an intentional sympathetic support network.

Moving onto the content itself, the thesis begins by introducing the reader to various terms that will be necessary within the thesis. It then moves into the theoretical and historical background of the topic, paying particular attention to various abortion access organizations that exist both in Europe, the United States and Canada (although it does, appropriately so, focus on Europe). In the theoretical part of the thesis, Savannah concentrates on reproductive justice, how it developed, and its inherent intersectionality. This section contains most of my concerns with the thesis itself. Here, I would have liked to have seen some look at feminist activism or at least feminist activist organizing. For example, it seems crucial to me that in order to address the first research question posed in this thesis, and given that it is its whole section in the questionnaire, that it would be helpful to have some theoretical background/history on how feminist activist organizations have traditionally functioned, such as are they primarily volunteers, what are the issues they face in terms of money, how visible/invisible are they, do they worry about issues of safety, do they generally keep good records (archives), etc.? I find that many of the

conclusions that Savannah makes could be additionally backed up if the literature review would have addressed this. In addition, is there a theoretical difference between activism to change laws and activism to undermine or subvert established laws (but not to change them)? I would say there is, but again as this is not addressed in the theory section, the reader does not know Savannah's thoughts on the matter, specifically when she discusses invisible activism on page 54.

My second point in this section relates to the theoretical grounding of reproductive justice in intersectionality. I find this is key to understanding the term reproductive justice, but in the analysis section of her thesis, I do not see specific mention of the ways in which intersectionality affects the work these collectives do. In fact, there is no use of the term past her discussion of its significance to reproductive justice on page 13. This seems like a missed opportunity, especially given the fact that there are intersectional concerns that could be more prominently pointed out. Savannah could have mentioned, for example, the intersectional nature of abortion access for the foreigner in the Czech Republic who does not reside here or specifically stated that economic concerns are part of the intersectionality you see here in Europe. Rather, it is left for the reader to infer what the author considers to be important intersectionally and the reader is left without really knowing if the author sees the intersectionality that is present.

This leads me to the other main concern I have with this literature review and the thesis as it stands. Given that you are focusing on predominately white individuals in Europe who are seeking access to abortion, how does this fit within the Combahee River Collective's concern for reproductive justice, specifically given the fact that the Combahee River Collective called out white feminists for white women's focus on abortion in their work? Does this thesis replicate their concerns with its focus? If not, how so? This is briefly addressed but I would like more of a detailed response.

Finally, I do have some additional questions that are not answered within the thesis. First, Savannah does not mention language within methodology. What language were the interviews conducted in and does Savannah think that affected the responses of the interviewees? How does the choice of language also assume a "power imbalance," which is mentioned as one of the concerns in the methodology section? Second, why did Savannah choose solidarity as one of her research questions? What was the motivation for that as opposed to other options? Now to a more picky question, on page 46, it is mentioned that Ukrainians cannot be helped in the Czech Republic, why is that given their protection status in the country? That is not clear. Finally, if Savannah were to redo the interviews now, is there anything she would change?

While I am voicing these concerns, there are two that I would like Savannah to concentrate on during her response at the defense. Firstly, I would like to know why a specific discussion about intersectionality does not occur within the body of the thesis? The thesis relies so heavily on reproductive justice, and intersectionality is an essential part of that. Secondly, I would like Savannah to address the questions surrounding activism: why did she not look at feminist activist organizing and its history (in order to help herself with some of the conclusions she draws about the organizations and how they are or are not different

from feminist organizing in general) and how does she consider these collectives' subversive activities to be activism? Specifically, while they may be providing access to abortions, how are they changing the system that makes abortion illegal in the first place? If time allows, I would appreciate it if she could expand on her ideas concerning the focus on abortion in light of the concerns of the Combahee River Collective's understanding of reproductive freedom.

All this being said, I found Savannah has put a tremendous amount of effort into this thesis, done copious amounts of research, and recorded a history of feminist activism that would, given their lack of records, have otherwise gone unrecorded. She is to be commended for all of this.

I find this thesis to be defensible and, assuming my questions and concerns (specifically intersectionality) are addressed at the defense, recommend a preliminary grade of excellent (1).

In Prague, 6 September 2023.

Ivy Helman, Ph.D.