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APPLIED SOCIOLOGY AND ANIMAL ADVOCACY: CREATING A COMMUNITY CATS COALITION

Irene Fiala

ABSTRACT

This paper represents an autoethnography of the creation of a county-wide, all volunteer Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) program in Northeast Ohio. Both descriptive and reflective, this examination is intended to accomplish two goals. The first goal, as a description, is that I will provide the history and evolution of a specific TNR program (i.e. the Community Cats Coalition of Ashtabula County) and the results of trapping and fixing community cats in the first year of running the program. Secondly, through reflection, I will present a personal narrative of “lessons learned”. This narrative will briefly present my personal discovery, examination, and considerations of the subcultures of colony cat care providers and feeders as well as the subcultures of TNR advocates and practitioners. Both macro-level and micro-level considerations are included through a brief introduction to working with organizations, volunteers, and with members of the community. Further participation in volunteer work with a TNR program will undoubtedly lead me to engage in additional examination and reflection across these subcultures and organizations.

KEYWORDS: Trap-Neuter-Return, TNR, community cats, feral cats, stray cats, spay/neuter

THIS IS MY STORY: A DESCRIPTIVE AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

As a descriptive autoethnography, it is my intent to describe the formation of the Community Cats Coalition of Ashtabula County (CCCAC, aka “The Coalition”), its evolution, and the results of the first year of trapping and neutering stray cats in this county in Northeast Ohio. Additionally, through reflection, I will engage in sociological introspection in an attempt to connect my understanding of these experiences for the reader; that is, a “meaning-making” by transforming my experiences into the language of a sociologist (Muncey 2010).

Chang (2016) writes that an autoethnography may stem from personal experience had by the author or springs forward from the researcher’s professional interest. For me, the two are so tightly interwoven that it is difficult to state which motive preceded the other. On the one hand, my involvement in the October 2019 city council meeting that led to the development of the CCCAC sprang from my work in animal advocacy. There was no intent to speak to the council as an academician, but rather, as a resident of the community who had insight to the issues at hand. My offer to help residents of the community organize into a

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problem-solving group would utilize my training in applied sociology, experience in the non-profit sector, and draw from relationships I already had with a variety of animal welfare agencies in the county. On the other hand, when COVID-19 thwarted my Sabbatical plans, I saw an opportunity to substitute my original international community development and animal advocacy plans with the local community-based animal advocacy that I was now developing.

There is no “one-size fits all” type of autoethnography. While four types of autoethnographies have been described by Chang (2008:141-148), which are “imaginative-creative writing”, “confessional-emotive writing”, “descriptive-realist writing”, and “analytical-interpretative writing”, it is often found that styles are combined making for great variations in this writing method. Indeed, I will write primarily in a descriptive style but will include elements of the interpretative style. The descriptive portion of this paper is a case study of “how” a coalition was created, including the need for the coalition, the changes that occurred in the first year of its being, the impact that the coalition had on the community, and, as an individual autoethnography, the role I played. The interpretative portion will examine the relationships between The Coalition and the various players, such as cat colony caretakers, feeders, and animal welfare agencies in the form of “Lessons Learned”.

However, the voice that is not heard in this examination are those of the direct recipients of the services offered through the TNR program – the cats themselves. Unlike other autoethnographies involving vulnerable populations, the cats who are trapped and neutered, and occasionally rehomed when circumstances make their return to a dangerous situation unethical, do not have the ability to refuse the Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) service.

COMMUNITY CATS AND COALITION BUILDING – DOING PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY

Research in community coalition building may be found in works including Kegler and Swan (2012), Wolff (2001), Berkowitz (2001), Zakocs and Guckenbug (2007), Granner and Sharpe (2004), and Zakocs and Edwards (2006). These works, however, represent coalition and capacity building in health promotion and healthy communities (e.g. drug abuse prevention, teenage pregnancy prevention, tobacco use prevention). However, when a literature review for “community cats and coalitions” was conducted, I found no results. Instead, I found articles on perceptions of community cats (e.g. Van Patter et al. 2019, Loyd 2012), implementing non-lethal solutions to managing community cats (e.g. Hamilton 2019, Spehar 2015), the evaluation of feral cat management programs (e.g. Loyd and DeVore 2010, Hughes and Slater 2002), cohabitation with community cats (e.g. Jaroš 2021), characteristics of community cat care providers (Centonze and Levy 2002, Gunther et al. 2016), early de-sexing of cats as a method to reduce the unowned cat populations (Mazeau et al. 2021), and articles on domestic cats’ predatory behavior on wildlife (e.g. Crowley et al. 2020).

In fact, the literature surrounding community cats and feral cat management appears to focus on the success of TNR programs which are mostly instituted by government agencies (Gibson 2002). Non-profit organizations, such as Alley Cat Allies, a national group advocating for TNR to address feral cat management, or local and national Humane Society groups, can be found in the non-academic literature (e.g. websites). The CCCAC is unique not only with regard to its formation as a grass-roots group but also with its success. For example, a newly begun TNR program examined for its effectiveness on Prince Edward Island had a sample size of 185

cats (Gibson 2002) as compared to the first year TNR of 510 cats by the CCCAC (Terry 2020a, Terry 2020d).

Mithani and O'Brien (2021) discuss coalition building within an organization as an attempt to synthesize academic literature that has been said to be "fragmented" (:171). Although the emphasis in this discussion was "coalitions within an organization", the emphasis in this work was on the individuals in that coalition. Stating that a coalition "consists of individuals who, despite their persistent differences, work together to pursue a mutually beneficial goal" (:171) this definition captures the essence of the CCCAC. That is, the CCCAC represents individuals, many of whom hold membership or are affiliated with an organization, and who have come together to address the community's concerns of "too many stray cats." Members of the CCCAC include a county official, a city Animal Control Officer, paid staff and volunteers with several local animal welfare agencies, business owners, and self-described "animal advocates".

Nonetheless, other than pursuing the same goal (i.e. reducing the stray/feral cat population in the community) there appears to be little else that connects these diverse individuals. In fact, several of the key players in The Coalition do not even reside in Ashtabula County. It has been said that there is strength in diversity and this truism is evidenced in the successes of The Coalition. Rather than individual members volunteering within an echo chamber, where ideas and beliefs are reinforced in such a way that rebuttal or contrary values do not emerge, the membership's diverse constituencies ensure that frank exchanges of ideas are presented.

Coalition characteristics identified by Mithani and O'Brien (2021) include: interacting group, deliberately constructed, issue oriented, independent of formal organization's structure, lack of formal internal structure, mutual perception of membership, external focus, and concerted member action. For these characteristics, it is suggested that the CCCAC meets most, if not arguably all, of these characteristics. Members of the CCCAC are in weekly contact (e.g. interacting group), are addressing an unmet community need via creating a TNR program (e.g. deliberately constructed and issue oriented), have created a sense of membership and identity through choosing a name, having a logo, and having designed a volunteer T-Shirt (mutual perception of membership), work as a group to benefit the community (e.g. external focus), and are a hands on, working group trapping, transporting, caring for, and ultimately releasing or rehoming community cats (e.g. concerted member action). Because members of The Coalition are not a part of a single formal organization but may belong to other organizations, by definition, the CCCAC is independent of the formal organization's structure.

On the other hand, while the CCCAC meets coalition characteristics enumerated above, the theoretical research streams identified by Mithani and O'Brien (2021) are not adequate. However, with the CCCAC's short term goal to bring a county-funded TNR program (in lieu of volunteer efforts and donations) to fruition and a long-term goal to bring a spay/neuter clinic to the county, a future examination within a formal organization is anticipated.

In his 2004 address to the American Sociological Association, former ASA President Michael Burawoy called upon sociologists to recommit to public sociology. He has been a leading proponent to a return to engaging the public. While there is no agreed upon definition of "public sociology", the term is often associated with Burawoy's perspective (2005a). Similarly,

Piven (2007:158) defined public sociology as “the uses of sociological knowledge to address public, and therefore, political problems” and further maintained that “public sociologists treat public problems as the important part of our research agenda.” Additionally, Piven states that it is important to communicate to the public not only what was discovered during an academic examination but to act upon those discoveries. As did Heller earlier, Piven also makes the claim that informing political debate was a “return to roots” for sociology (Heller 2003, Piven 2007).

David Brady, in a presentation at the 2004 North Carolina Sociological Association meeting, and prepared in an article through the University of North Carolina Press, opined “that public sociology essentially involves two ideas: reaching a public audience and serving to improve the public’s well-being” (Brady 2004:1629). Although Brady would enumerate shortcomings to the agenda of Burawoy’s public sociology, the idea that sociology as a social science demanding greater public attention is one many sociologists could support. Indeed, my own reason for becoming involved in the debate surrounding Ashtabula residents’ concerns about “what to do with community cats” was driven, in part, by my sociological training.

Nonetheless, Burawoy (2005a:4) stated that the “challenge of public sociology is to engage multiple publics in multiple ways.” Here, I say “challenge accepted.” As a sociologist, organizing a TNR initiative, with the long-term goal of bringing a spay/neuter clinic to the county, is “doing sociology.” That is to say, a sociological understanding of group behavior and group dynamics, social structure, decision making styles and leadership, conflict resolution, and groupthink, are central to organizational success. This academic knowledge is then put to use in the community through action; the “roll up your sleeves and let’s get to work” activism that results in change.

In the following pages, I will demonstrate how “multiple publics” are engaged “in multiple ways”. This paper will contribute to the academic literature in that coalition building by individual volunteers to solve a local problem regarding community cats utilizing TNR has not been found heretofore in the literature. Furthermore, this paper is expected to contribute to the growing autoethnographic literature by providing a first-hand account of engaging with a community of volunteers, advocates, and residents reached through a TNR program. Finally, Burawoy’s challenge will be shown to have been met.

BACKGROUND

On October 21, 2019, a group of citizens attended their City Council meeting to voice concerns about a local matter of alleged animal cruelty. I was among them. This paper examines my involvement in founding a grass roots organization to address the issues that were raised in this meeting and the subsequent creation of a TNR group in the city, and ultimately, extending throughout the county.

Most of the citizens present at a standing room only City of Ashtabula (Ohio) council meeting on October 21, 2019 were there to voice concern about a news story that was in the local newspaper, the *Star Beacon Journal*. The story involved a cat that was reported found hanging from a tree (Terry 2019a). Although the cat survived, rumors and conjecture quickly made their way through the city; “will there be a ban on feeding stray cats?” was one such question that was frequently asked (Terry 2019b-d, Terry 2019 f-g). As the story was retold, the

number of cats that were reportedly found hanging increased. Ultimately, it was determined that one cat had been found hanging from a tree; this cat was freed unharmed (Terry 2019e).

During the open public comment session, citizens voiced their concerns, and fears, about stray and feral cats in the community. Advocates, including myself, offered the City Council a solution to these concerns: TNR. TNR, an acronym for Trap, Neuter, Return, is a humane and effective solution to a community's "cat problems". Heralded by agencies and non-profit animal advocacy groups such as the Humane Society of the United States, the Association for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Alley Cats Allies, and Best Friends, successful TNR programs have been instituted in cities across the United States and elsewhere beginning in the 1990s (Best Friends Animal Society 2018). TNR involves the trapping of community cats (aka free roaming cats), neutering the cats at a clinic or veterinary hospital, and then returning the cats to the location where they were initially trapped.

A TNR program can speak to the desires of a variety of groups; animal advocates, conservationists and bird enthusiasts, home owners, and business owners. Whether an animal advocate wants to reduce animal suffering, a conservationist or bird enthusiast wanting to reduce attacks on birds or other wildlife, a home owner or business owner wanting community cats to stop destructive or nuisance behaviors, the end result of colony attrition through TNR addresses all of those needs. What is compelling about a TNR program is that both sides of the proverbial fence, that is, those who "love cats" and those who "hate cats", have their needs met.

After speaking to City Council in the open meeting, my fear was that "nothing would happen" once everyone went home. Yes, animal advocates, representing different animal welfare non-profits in both the city and the county, came out in force, sharing the challenges they currently face. Yes, individuals who have quietly worked in the shadows doing TNR, oftentimes using their own money, came out to express the need for TNR. Yes, residents who feed these community cats came out to challenge any thought that council may have to ban feeding. Even those residents present who did not feed, nor encouraged the feeding of community cats, wanted to see something "done" as they were frustrated with cats destroying their property. Nonetheless, the question remained, "What would come out of this meeting?"

At the beginning of the meeting, the Clerk of Council had provided a "sign in" sheet asking for contact information of those residents who were present, indicating that they may be contacted in the future. Having worked on other animal-related issues with the City Council in the past, I e-mailed the Clerk of Council shortly after the meeting and offered to take the sign-in sheet to organize a group. Because representatives from several animal welfare non-profit groups were in attendance, I wanted to make sure that I did not "step on anyone's toes". Therefore, I waited to see if someone in one of those non-profit groups would step forward. I also waited to see if one of the independent Trappers would step forward. No one did. On October 30, I sent out a mass e-mail to those individuals who had provided their contact information on the sign-in sheet. I asked if those residents wanted to organize and offered to help facilitate the process.

As an Applied Sociologist who teaches courses in *Animals in Society* and in *Community Organizations*, I felt that I was uniquely qualified to spearhead this initiative. What I had conceived and what ultimately was the result, however, would be quite different. Nonetheless,

the results of this initiative were impressive. In the first year, the group that would ultimately become the Community Cats Coalition of Ashtabula County (CCCAC or “The Coalition”) would neuter 510 community cats.

Organizing a Coalition

Following my initial “do you want to work on this” e-mail, the response I received was swift and positive. As a group, prior to my first report to City Council in December 2019, we met three times: November 11 (sixteen residents present), November 25 (fifteen residents present) and December 9 (fifteen residents present). It was clear that there was a core group of highly committed residents and that a grass-roots organization would be created.

The first item on my agenda was to create an identity for the group. Although several names were suggested over the course of the first three meetings, we settled on the name “Community Cats Coalition of Ashtabula County” (CCCAC) as it represents the purpose of the group; that is, addressing the “community cats” issue. The initial idea was to create a coalition representing members of existing community groups so that the organizations’ members could collaborate, creating synergy while reducing duplication of efforts. What would eventually result, however, is that I would work very closely with two other volunteers to manage the CCCAC (aka “The Coalition”) and the three of us became the leadership. The evolution of The Coalition will be discussed shortly.

Once an identity was created, our emerging group wrote a vision statement, a mission statement, and identified goals and objectives. The next item that was addressed was the need for fundraising to assist with long term goals. A local non-profit animal welfare organization would become CCCAC’s fiscal manager for fundraising purposes, transparency, and financial accountability in the inaugural year.

Important for this endeavor was cooperation with the City of Ashtabula. The CCCAC wanted to address a social problem identified by the residents of the city in such a way that would be in collaboration with city officials. Enthusiastic and eager to assist, the City’s Animal Control Officer was grateful for the effort and began to enumerate the scope of the “cat problem” by identifying “hot spots” where a high number of community cats could be found based largely on residents’ complaints. Likewise, the City Council was highly supportive of this initiative and welcomed the effort (Terry 2020e).

The CCCAC would meet bi-weekly over the winter months (December 2019 - March 2020). Initially, the use of PetFix Northeast Ohio[®] was discussed and options examined, including bringing a mobile spay/neuter van to Ashtabula County or, alternatively, transporting cats to a PetFix clinic in Cuyahoga County. The need to tap into other needed resources was also discussed, including identifying civic-minded groups as a resource to recruit volunteers and obtain financial assistance, a new, local veterinary technician program and an existing veterinarian assistance program to recruit volunteers and create internship opportunities, and local businesses who could be tapped for fundraising opportunities. To assist with information sharing and transparency, I created two Facebook pages for the CCCAC; one as a “closed” Facebook group CCCAC Volunteer page and the second as an “open” public Facebook page. By mid-February, a goal to trap and neuter 40 cats for a March 4th surgery date was scheduled. This goal reflected the original intent to have one large-scale TNR every month.

The Evolution of the Coalition

My initial plan was to create a “turn key operation”; that is, to get the proverbial “ball rolling” to establish firstly, a robust TNR program, and secondly, to bring a spay/neuter clinic to the county of Ashtabula. My idea behind this initiative was to create a coalition or alliance and help organize animal advocates, concerned citizens, public officials, community leaders including small business owners, club organizers, and clergy, and anyone else who wanted to get involved.

I had been awarded a Sabbatical leave for the 2021 Spring semester. My proposed Sabbatical had me volunteering for an international non-profit organization engaged in community development activities, and specifically, working with animals. Those plans were sidelined due to COVID-19. What did this all mean for the Cats Coalition that I had founded? It would ultimately mean that I would transition from being a “moderator” at meetings to becoming “hands on”. Our first TNR event was held the day after I left for a deployment with the Humane Society of the United States’ Animal Rescue Team. The Coalition volunteers that I had helped organize were able to trap, neuter, and return our goal of 40 cats. When I had returned to Ohio two weeks later, I returned to a state that was on “shut down” and would not allow any veterinarian care (outside of emergencies) due to the COVID-19 restrictions in place. All of our planned TNR events were cancelled due to spay/neuter clinics not being able to do surgeries, as neuter surgery is seen as an “elective surgery”. The Coalition’s TNR plans were effectively shut down for nearly two months.

My biggest fear at this time was losing the momentum that the Coalition had following a very successful, initial TNR event. Other concerns that I had were related to the economic uncertainty due to lost wages, the inability to gather as a TNR group, the inability to go into the community and meet with colony caretakers, the mental health toll on volunteers, and other COVID-related concerns and that these issues would render the TNR initiative ineffective. These fears would largely not materialize. While the ability and desire of some volunteers did wane after the initial excitement, a core group of dedicated volunteers emerged. The TNR group was able to meet virtually on Zoom® for planning purposes, were able to trap cats with social distancing in place, were able to communicate with colony caretakers largely through phone conversations, and the ability to engage in meaningful volunteerism was reportedly beneficial for many volunteers (personal communications, 2020).

CCCAC’s TNR RESULTS

As has been said, “numbers don’t lie.” The average cost of a neuter surgery for a cat varies and according to a Google search, the estimates range anywhere from \$100 to \$400 in a private veterinarian practice. Nonetheless, one source states that a neuter of a male cat (castration) is \$95 and the de-sexing of a female cat (spay) is \$140 at a private office (Thecatsite.com). A cat that is taken to a low cost spay/neuter clinic (which is based on a person’s income) averages \$40 for a male cat and \$60 for a female cat (Thecatsite.com). My experience in Ohio is that this is an accurate estimate. A community cat that is TNR’d (which includes an “ear tip” and rabies vaccination) may cost between \$30 and \$60; if there is a subsidized program in place, the cost to an individual trapper may range between \$0 and \$25. In comparison, the cost of euthanizing a cat averages \$100. (Thecatsite.com).

In the first year of the CCCAC, a total of 510 cats were neutered (Fiala 2021, Terry 2020a, Terry 2020d). The CCCAC raised \$17,596.75 in donations and spent \$17,443.25 in neuter surgery and additional veterinary care (e.g. Convenia injection) (Fiala 2021). The Coalition spent an average cost of \$33.80 for a community cat. Because 57% of the cats that were neutered were female (289 female cats) and one female cat averages 12 kittens in one year (International Cat Care 2021), a minimum of 3468 kitten births were prevented. A paper on the characteristics of the cats that were TNR'd by The Coalition, and the hypothesized impact of the TNR program, is forthcoming.

LESSONS LEARNED

“Doing” Sociology

As will be described, my involvement in the Coalition represented a “roll up the sleeves and let’s get to work” approach to a community’s concern. I had anticipated drawing upon my organizational skills and understanding of group dynamics. The insights that I gained as a result of participating in TNR represent outcomes independent of the number of cats that were neutered and the number of kitten births prevented. Indeed, I will explore these insights as part of the “Lessons Learned”.

Understanding the TNR Subculture

On reflection, I have been excited to learn about, and interact with, an entire subculture of which I was previously unaware. Although I had been engaged in animal advocacy work for decades, the last 20 years involved the rescue and transport of (mostly) dogs. Having engaged in “Freedom Runs” or “Freedom Rides” for dogs (and occasionally cats), my main contact with the rescue community was limited to “dog people” (Fiala 2012). I had no prior experience with “cat people” let alone community cats.

While I was aware of TNR, I had never trapped a cat nor previously interacted with cat colony caretakers. Just as I had learned about a subculture of rescue transport (i.e. Freedom Runs), I would soon learn about another subculture. This TNR subculture to which I became exposed includes such statuses and accompanying roles as “trappers”, “feeders”, and cat colony caretakers. Additionally, I have been exposed to a new language which includes terms such as traps, “forks” (i.e. trap dividers), and trap covers. I would learn about the different types of traps that a trapper may use, how to set a trap, how to fold newspapers in such a way as to line a trap, how to feed a cat in a trap, how to change soiled newspapers in a trap, how to transport a trapped cat, and how to release a cat following surgery.

In my exposure to this TNR subculture, I learned many of the community’s beliefs, values, and norms, in addition to the material objects, artifacts, and language that make up the community. I would eventually be able to recite the position statements of advocacy groups as to the benefits of TNR and justify the practice of returning a neutered cat back to the outdoors. I learned ways in which to keep the group’s focus on TNR and largely resist the urge to re-home friendly stray cats who were in relatively safe environments. I learned about barn cat placement programs, how to set up a barn for acclimatizing a cat to a new environment, and what a barn owner could provide for a feral or semi-feral cat. Additionally, I learned about the

resources of other community agencies that we could call upon to assist with kittens, sick cats, and colony caretakers who needed assistance to provide for their colonies.

While my academic brain was telling me that The Coalition was solving a community's problem using the most humane and effective method available, my emotional heart felt a combination of positive and negative states: guilt, betrayal, frustration, compassion, gratitude, and humbleness among other feelings. I had not expected the range nor intensity of emotions that I would experience. On one occasion, I had trapped a feral cat on my property that was coming from a neighbor's yard. My neighbor is a feeder and it is not uncommon to see 15 or 20 cats roaming about. Upon trapping the cat, I quickly felt that I had betrayed him. I knew he was coming to my home to get another meal and to sleep in a shelter I had left out in the bushes. After releasing the cat back on my property, I never saw the cat again. I understood then why some feeders and caretakers did not want to trap and neuter the cats that rely on them.

I have also been frustrated when I get scratched taking care of feral cats in traps as from my perspective, I am providing them with a better life. One time, I even yelled at one very angry cat who took a gouge out of my gloved hand, stating "I should throw you into traffic." Immediately, I felt guilty and ashamed. Guilt is another emotion that I have struggled with. I have felt incredible guilt returning friendly stray cats "back to the streets", even if there is someone to feed them. It is not uncommon to trap a stray cat who was obviously a pet at one time. The guilt stems from the fact that the cat had lived indoors with a family as evidenced by the fact that it likes to be petted, and indeed, sometimes even to be held. Placing a purring, friendly cat back into the community may seem cruel, however, the cat could be an "indoor-outdoor" intact, or not neutered, cat with an owner. It is the "R" part of TNR that seems to be the hardest. Heart-strings are also pulled when sick or injured cats are trapped (they will receive veterinarian care through TNR) and knowing that the care that we had provided may be quickly undone when the cat returns to the streets. Of course, addressing the unique needs of kittens and of elderly cats, likewise, has placed a heavy emotional toll on me. Still, nothing is better than knowing that "because of this short-term relationship, no matter what ultimately happens, the cat is better off" for having been the recipient of a TNR.

However, one of the most important lessons I learned is that there needs to be a coordinated response to address the unique requirements of kittens, elderly cats, and sick or injured cats, in addition to the stray and feral cats that are part of a TNR program. Ideally, this coordinated response would incorporate networking strategies, communication skills, training in the handling of cats, and information on compassion fatigue.

The Need for Cat Colony Caretakers, Feeders, and Community Involvement

When I first became involved in a TNR program, I had very little knowledge about a "cat colony caretaker". While I knew that there were people who fed stray cats, I did not previously consider the extent of care that may be provided these cats. In my interaction with colony caretakers, I would meet men and women who built not only shelters for cats but had regular feeding schedules for these cats, who would spay or neuter a cat as they were able, and who would take cats with kittens to the local animal shelter.

It was not long before I realized that there were two distinct types of "stray cat feeders": the "feeder" and the "colony caretaker". The feeders are those people in the

community who feel a responsibility to provide for the stray cats that they are seeing in their neighborhood. The feeders generally do not know how many cats they are feeding, largely do not know the characteristics of the cats that they are feeding (e.g. color, approximate age), do not interact with the cats, nor feel any particular attachment to the cats. While talking with feeders, I learned that most feel a moral obligation to provide food, and some provided shelter, but that is the extent of their connection to the cats. Many feeders indicated that if the cats could be re-homed, they would be happy to see them “leave” even though they would “probably miss them” (personal communications, 2020).

In contrast, the colony caretakers are both a part of a subculture and independent of this subculture. On the one hand, colony caretakers share similar values about community cats and engage in similar behaviors. The majority of colony caretakers that the CCCAC worked with knew each cat that they fed (e.g. approximate age of cat) including individual cat’s personalities. Many caretakers had even given names to “their” cats. That is, they considered themselves informal owners of the cats for which they cared. They enjoy having the cats around and even insisted upon the cats return following their neuter surgery. Many were fearful that the cats would either not be returned or that something “bad” would happen to them and stated that they would “absolutely miss the cats” even if it were for a night or two pre and post-surgery (personal communications, 2020). I admired the care and concern that colony caretakers expressed for “their” cats.

On the other hand, my experience was also that colony caretakers do not interact with one another. That is, they are not in communication with each other, they do not meet one another, nor do they know where to find other colony caretakers. In many respects, they are like islands in an archipelago. Most of the caretakers that the CCCAC worked with were also unaware of neighboring county TNR programs, most did not know where they could find low cost spay/neuter clinics for the cats they were feeding, many did not know how to create *suitable* shelters for community cats, and many were not feeding the cats nutritious meals (e.g. feeding snack foods, giving cats milk instead of water, overfeeding, etc.).

What struck me the most about working with colony caretakers and feeders was their level of dedication. Whether stemming from a sense of moral obligation or from true affection of the stray cats, the people I came into contact with would spend their own money to care for these vulnerable cats. In fact, many colony caretakers and a number of feeders gave donations ranging from \$20 to \$200 to the CCCAC. For many, this was a true sacrifice of resources. I was humbled.

The characteristics of the colony caretakers that the CCCAC made trapping arrangements with appear to reflect what has been observed in other studies. (e.g. Centonze and Levy 2002). Centonze and Levy (2002) found that females were more likely than males to be colony caretakers (84% female). Individuals who requested assistance from the CCCAC were overwhelmingly female. Likewise, in scheduling the trapping of stray and feral cats, the CCCAC worked primarily with female feeders as well as female colony caretakers. I will note that this represents my general impressions and additional research would need to be done.

Furthermore, it is important to note that not all those who requested assistance were feeders or colony caretakers; in fact, some of the requests for assistance were received as a result of neighbor disputes forwarded to the CCCAC by the city and/or county Animal Control

Officers. Having been both a feeder of cats that would come to my yard from a neighbor, and having been a trapper of cats, I am finding myself in a position where I can use my sociological training to better understand the statuses I am occupying and the roles I am playing. I would come to learn that the emotional attachment (or detachment) combined with the technical aspects of care taking has been described by Finkler and Terkel (2015). I hope to add to this literature in future work to further understanding the dichotomy in the emotional approaches described by Finkler and Terkel (2015).

An important lesson that was learned with working with residents in the community was the significant role that these residents play in the success of a TNR program. Moreover, understanding the motivation(s) for feeding and caring for cats, as well as the reasons for resisting TNR assistance, would be instructive to overcoming barriers of TNR programs and encouraging participation in future endeavors. A follow-up examination on the beliefs, values, and behaviors of cat colony care providers and feeders is warranted.

Work of Volunteers as Essential to the Coalition

It is not an overstatement to say that without volunteers, and two volunteers in particular, that this initiative would not have been possible. One volunteer took on the role of Trapping Coordinator. The lion's share of the organizing work was completed by her and the success of The Coalition would not have been possible without this important work. This volunteer secured the location for pre and post-surgical cat care, communicated with residents who requested services, arranged the trapping schedule, provided daily cat care, coordinated volunteers, and assisted with strategic planning. A second volunteer not only often worked independently trapping in rural areas of the county, but also assisted with coordinating trapping, transporting cats to neuter surgery, record keeping, communicating with individuals and administrators of barn placement programs, and strategic planning. My own role in the Coalition, outside of founding the group, was largely that of trapping cats, providing daily cat care, transporting cats, public relations and working with the local media, communicating with City Council, and analyzing the information collected regarding the TNR program. In addition to our individual contributions, we worked together to organize fundraising and maintained the financial records. The three of us represent the leadership of the CCCAC.

Although the group started off with 15 or so volunteers who attended the early meetings, as with any group, there would be a shake out. At the end of the first trapping season, in addition to the leadership, there were 4 or 5 volunteers who assisted somewhat regularly with trapping, cat care, and/or transport. Other volunteers helped on the day of a fundraiser held in July 2020. Volunteers also folded newspapers, washed trap covers, blankets and towels, and helped place Styrofoam cat shelters in the community.

Ironically, volunteers were not only those individuals who are affiliated with the CCCAC. While trapping, people in the community would also assist us. CCCAC trappers are instructed to not leave a trap unattended. When trapping, several locations are identified for trapping cats for a single surgical date. This is done as a way to ensure that enough cats are trapped to fill the surgical slots that are allocated to The Coalition. However, with 3 or 4 trappers trapping cats (often working in pairs) and with the demand for assistance far outweighing the capacity to provide it, trap "watchers" become vital to the success of a trapping day. Due to having

multiple trapping locations, trappers would often ask a colony caretaker, feeder, or someone else present at the location to “watch the traps” and notify the trapper if a cat had been trapped. These “trap watchers” allow the CCCAC to maximize efficiency and ensure that an animal is not left in an unattended trap.

Here, too, I was impressed with the care, concern, and dedication of volunteers and residents who were freely giving of their time and money to help with a program that they believed was important. A valuable lesson learned here was the importance of volunteers to a successful outcome, the need to provide volunteers with rewarding activities, understanding why volunteers may discontinue their involvement, and the desire on the part of volunteers to be seen by others as integral to the program.

Relationships with Animal Welfare Community Organizations

The 501(c)3 group that had initially offered to affiliate with the CCCAC for fundraising and financial record keeping purposes did not come to fruition. However, another nonprofit quickly stepped forward and took on the role of “fiscal sponsor” for the first year. Had it not been for collaborating with this agency, The Coalition may not have been able to provide TNR for as many cats as we did. In fact, it was through a grant written by this nonprofit that the CCCAC was able to procure 22 traps to use for trapping cats. The CCCAC will have these traps as long as the TNR group is active; at such time the group no longer is functioning, the traps will become property of the nonprofit. I will note that through borrowing traps from other agencies and individual trappers having their own traps, The Coalition generally has 48 – 50 traps available. The questions for the 2021 TNR season will include whether or not the CCCAC will continue this relationship, seek to work with another nonprofit that currently engages in TNR, or pursue non-profit status as an independent organization.

Representatives from local animal-welfare agencies in the county had attended the initial, organizing meetings. Although the coalition, as originally conceived, did not materialize, several members who represent the resulting Coalition do work or volunteer with these other agencies. Primarily through information-sharing with these local non-profits, the CCCAC was able to address issues that arose.

For example, the intent of a TNR program is to Trap-Neuter-Return community cats; however, the CCCAC has often been asked to assist with cats who have recently given birth. TNR programs, in general, and the CCCAC’s program, specifically, are not set up to address found kittens. A common heuristic that is applied to answering the question of “when can a kitten be neutered” is that the kitten should have attained the age of 8 weeks and weigh 2 pounds, although there is no current research to suggest that healthy kittens neutered at 1.5 pounds or at 6 weeks of age are at higher risk for anesthetic or surgical complications (University of Wisconsin, School of Veterinary Medicine 2018). Nonetheless, TNR programs are not equipped to provide for kittens until they reach the weight and age for neuter surgery. One ethical question then becomes “what to do with weaned kittens” that would not likely survive on their own while the “mom” cat is trapped and neutered and returned days later. A second ethical question regards what to do with kittens who have not weaned. A third ethical dilemma is “what to do with a kitten that is a good candidate for adoption”. Without access to fosters

who can provide for kittens, or kitten rescue groups to assume responsibility for them, a group such as the CCCAC finds itself addressing these ethical dilemmas.

In addition to information sharing, there has also been resource sharing among the different agencies. As noted, the CCCAC has borrowed traps to trap stray and feral cats. The CCCAC has also relied on several animal welfare agencies for assistance with testing and vaccinations for kittens who will ultimately be placed for adoption. Kittens who can be adopted and thus removed from the dangerous environment of living in the community, should be tested for contagious diseases and, ideally, vaccinated against feline herpesvirus type 1, feline calicivirus, feline panleukopenia virus, rabies (if old enough), and feline leukemia virus (American Animal Hospital Association 2020). This is often provided as a feline combination vaccine known as FVRCP (feline viral rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, and panleukopenia). Without access to trained individuals as well as a supply of these vaccinations, any kittens that are found as part of a TNR event should not be adopted. Having a rescue group who can assume responsibility for the kittens at the time of trapping is ideal.

One important lesson learned in working with animal welfare community organizations is that “many hands make for light work.” When cooperation and coordination was possible, resources were better controlled and the CCCAC was more effective (e.g. borrowing traps, obtaining vaccinations). When organizations were unable to provide for the CCCAC’s needs (e.g. lack of fosters for kittens), the leadership and volunteers of the CCCAC experienced high levels of stress, frustration, and the sense of failure (personal communication).

Relationships with Non-Animal Welfare Community Organizations

Perhaps my last “lesson learned” is that I learned about different community groups and organizations that are not a part of the animal rescue community. The CCCAC would collaborate with a Pet Food Pantry in neighboring Lake County and later meet with the local Rotary Club, with the Farm Bureau, with the local Lions Club, and other civic groups, clubs, and organizations that could provide financial assistance or be a source of volunteers. One volunteer with The Coalition is currently an elected official and business owner whose network is expansive and he has provided necessary introductions to many of these groups and organizations. Although I moved to this community 20 years ago, the fact of the matter is that my university position is in a neighboring state. I came to recognize that my knowledge of the different organizations in this community was ashamedly low. Delightfully so, I also learned that there are many people in this community who are willing and quite eager to help the CCCAC.

Indeed, while the need for TNR and low cost spay/neuter is high in the city, and county, of Ashtabula, I would quickly learn that there are a lot of people who are doing the best they can to provide for the community cats. I also learned that there are a lot of groups and organizations willing to help with this initiative. Whether through providing financial assistance, giving donations of cat food or towels and sheets for traps, providing a place to keep and recover TNR’d cats, or serving as volunteers, the willingness of people in the community to assist the CCCAC was truly humbling.

What I learned by working with agencies that are not a part of the animal welfare community was the existence of a network of people who also shared many of the concerns of

the animal welfare community. Although animal welfare issues may not be their organization's focus, the desire to assist with the TNR program was quite evident. Simply because an organization may have other charitable interests does not mean that they do not share the interest to provide for community cats.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

A descriptive autoethnography has the potential to be tiresome or boring to read (Chang 2016, Van Maanen 1998). Generically, the autoethnography approach has also been criticized for being "self-indulgent, narcissistic, introspective, and individualized." (Wall 2016:1). Nonetheless, without a description of the processes involved, another risk is that the work could become a litany of subjective observations that are not grounded in objective understanding. A coalition does not simply form because a group wills it but rather because a plan is set into action.

Limitations of the work described in this paper are those that normally are associated with an autoethnography and have been described elsewhere (e.g. Marzia 2003, Plummer 2001). An autoethnography has been defined as "...an autobiographical genre of writing that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (Ellis and Bochner, 2000:739). As such, this method allows me to consider my experiences interpreted through a sociological lens.

However, in my attempt to provide an accounting of my experiences in a narrative form, I cannot discuss my role in a vacuum, although to a degree, I must. Other individuals have contributed to the success of The Coalition yet ethical considerations prevent me from disclosing not only their identifying information but also leaves out the experiences they have had. Moreover, although I am able to share personal communications that I have had with other volunteers, this telling of those experiences would be one-sided as it represents my interpretation of events. That is, it is subjective by its very nature.

As a result of the "lessons learned", it is my intent to examine the topic of colony caretakers specifically, and TNR, more generically, in the future. One of the early goals of the Community Cats Coalition of Ashtabula County is to bring a spay/neuter clinic to the county. It is my desire to demonstrate how the presence of colony caretakers can inform this debate. That is, the presence of a subculture of individuals who are dedicated to providing care for stray and feral cats may "tip the balance" by ensuring that the colonies would be maintained once stabilized. Indeed, current work in TNR is now incorporating another aspect to TNR; namely, TNRM with the "M" standing for "monitor" (ASPCA 2021) or "management" (The Community Cats Podcast 2017). In TNRM, a colony caretaker not only provides the community cats with food, water, and shelter, but monitors or manages the colony for the cats' health post release and notifies a TNR program when veterinarian care is needed.

Moreover, it is also my desire to share with decision makers the challenges that those engaged in TNR work currently experience. While decision makers may be aware of individual trappers who engage in TNR activities as they are able, I would suggest that adding their voice to that of colony caretakers and feeders who need assistance would demonstrate the need for a brick-and-mortar county spay/neuter clinic.

Additionally, it is my intent to more fully and robustly examine each of the “lessons learned” in future work. That is, my intent is to engage in both descriptive and reflective work regarding volunteering with colony caretakers and feeders, individuals engaged in TNR, volunteers, community organizations, the public’s perception about TNR programs, and lastly, my own changes in attitude and behavior.

Lastly, the CCCAC has the potential to evolve into a formal, normative organization (Etzioni 1975) should the TNR work continue. Nonetheless, at present, there are too many unknown variables, including, but not limited to, access to volunteers, money, and trapped cat recovery location, to hypothesize its future.

CONCLUSION

As an Applied Sociologist and Animal Advocate, my original plan was to kickstart a vibrant TNR program in a city where residents had identified “too many cats” as a problem that needed to be humanely addressed. Residents demanded that the City Council address the need for reducing the stray cat population. Ashtabula County does not have a spay/neuter clinic and residents must rely on private veterinarians to have their animals neutered or reach out to a mobile spay/neuter clinic or service. A third alternative is to take a stray cat(s) to one of the neighboring counties that does have a TNR clinic. From the city’s center, the nearest county’s clinic is an hour’s drive. To assist in this need, a local non-profit has coordinated transportation for residents’ cats (and dogs) to a spay/neuter clinic in Cuyahoga County (two counties to the south of Ashtabula County).

Creating a Community Cats Coalition may be the first step to a formal, subsidized, county-wide TNR program. It is the intent of the CCCAC to institutionalize TNR as a program and have it funded, even if only in part, by the county. The ultimate goal of the CCCAC is to build a low cost spay/neuter clinic in the County or to collaborate on low cost spay/neuter and TNR services through the local animal shelter. A low cost spay/neuter clinic would provide an unserved, or under-served, community the ability to reduce the stray and feral cat population, reduce suffering of community cats, and reduce neighbor to neighbor conflict.

This work may serve as a teaching tool or case study for those who want to engage in public or professional sociology. In this paper, I described how a community problem was identified by its residents, how concerned citizens and animal advocates were organized to form a coalition, the steps taken in coalition building, strategic planning, and information dissemination, the coordination with the city government, the organization of volunteers including identifying important statuses and roles, and how the coalition identified and worked with distinct subcultures within the community.

Additionally, this paper may serve as a catalyst for further exploration in grass root organization and community problem solving regarding community cats. Prior programs to address feral and stray cats utilized a “trap and kill” approach where cats were trapped and then euthanized. These programs were generally instituted by a local government agency. Increasingly, this approach is rejected by members in the community as perceptions about community cats have changed (Van Patter et al. 2016, Lord 2008). As animal welfare agencies or humane societies replaced the earlier trap-and-euthanize with TNR, it is noted that the programs to address community cats are now almost always run by non-profit organizations.

Other approaches have resulted in a coalition approach such as was originally intended, but unrealized, for the CCCAC (University of Guelph 2015, Toronto Feral Cat TNR Coalition N.d.). In contrast, the Community Cats Coalition of Ashtabula County represents an all-volunteer, donation-funded, grass roots initiative that came about because citizens joined forces to address a shared concern. While a non-profit did act as a fiscal manager for fundraising activities (to allow for transparency and give legitimacy to the CCCAC) the CCCAC itself does not have a formal structure. Should the CCCAC continue to engage in TNR activities following its first year, it can be anticipated that this informal structure will eventually result in a formal, normative organization (e.g. Weber 1921/1978, Etzioni 1975).

Ironically, my original intent for my Sabbatical was to engage in community development and veterinarian assistance on an international stage. The irony is that I would engage in community development and animal advocacy in my own community.

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California Press. Originally published as Max Weber. 1922. *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Grundriß der verstehenden Soziologie*. Mohr: Tübingen.`

COMMONLY ACCEPTED TERMS

Colony Caretaker - an individual (or group of individuals) who manages one or more cat colonies in a community; providing food, water and shelter. (ASPCA)

Community Cats - a term used to describe outdoor, unowned, free-roaming cats. These cats could be friendly, feral, adults, kittens, healthy, sick, altered and/or unaltered. By this definition, the only outdoor free-roaming cats who are not community cats are those who have an owner. (ASPCA)

Feral Cat - a cat who has either never had any contact with humans or contact with humans has diminished over time. The cat is fearful of people and survives on their own outdoors. A feral cat is not likely to ever become a lap cat or enjoy living indoors. (Alley Cat Allies)

Indoor/Outdoor Cat – a cat that lives and spends time both indoors (inside a home) and outdoors. (AAFP)

Neuter - castration in the male (removal of the testes), and spay of the female (removal of the ovaries and uterus). (International Cat Care). *Note, the phrase “spay/neuter” is a redundancy in that *neuter* (de-sexing) applies to both castration and spay.

PetFix Northeast Ohio® - a non-profit organization that offers high quality, affordable spay and neuter surgeries. (PetFix Northeast Ohio)

RTF – acronym for Return To Field. RTF programs are similar to a community TNR program except for the fact that the cat has entered an animal shelter at one point in the process. (ASPCA)

SNR – acronym for Shelter, Neuter, Return. (Windsor Essex County Humane Society)

Stray Cat – a *cat* who has been socialized to people at some point in its life, but has left or lost its domestic home, as well as most human contact and dependence. (Alley Cat Allies)

TNR – acronym for Trap, Neuter, Return. (ASPCA)

TNVR – acronym for Trap, Neuter, Vaccinate, Return. *Note: Most TNR programs do provide rabies vaccination. (ASPCA)

TNRM – acronym for Trap, Neuter, Return, Monitor. Increasingly, colony caretakers are encouraged to monitor the health of a colony. (ASPCA)

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GENDERED NATURE OF MARRIAGE ASPIRATIONS IN CHINA

Sampson Lee Blair and Christina L. Scott

ABSTRACT

Marriage in China has undergone considerable change over recent decades, as increasing rates of cohabitation, rising divorce rates, and increased materialism and individualism have coincided with lower rates of marriage. Using a sample of young women and men, this study examines the aspirations for marriage, framing the analyses within the ecological systems paradigm. The results show that while young females and males have similar marriage aspirations, in regards to the desire for marriage and the timing thereof, the determinants of these aspirations are quite distinct for each sex. Both parental and peer influence are shown, although these are more substantially associated with females' marriage aspirations, rather than males'. The implications of the findings for future marriage patterns are discussed.

KEYWORDS: Aspirations, China, Gender, Family, Marriage, Peer Influence

INTRODUCTION

During the late adolescence and early adult years, individuals begin to formulate aspirations concerning future adult roles, as decisions concerning prospective educational, occupational, and familial statuses come to bear. Many of such aspirations involve the desired financial standing of individuals (Weisgram et al., 2010), as may be affected by educational or occupational status. Frequently, though, more intimate decisions concerning personal relationships and, for many, marriage are foremost in the minds of young women and men (Carroll et al., 2009). Such aspirations do not develop within a vacuum; rather, a multitude of influences, including parents, peers, and their own experiences affect their desires to achieving particular adult roles (Schneider and Stevenson, 1999). The broader social context, as well, may influence aspirations concerning marriage, as both cultural and structural factors within societies have been shown to affect marriage aspirations and preferences (Chen et al., 2009; Paat and Hope, 2015).

Within the context of contemporary China, cultural and structural factors which may influence marital aspirations have undergone considerable change over recent decades. Over the past five decades, China has undergone considerable economic, political, and cultural change, resulting in tendencies toward materialism and individualism (Schwartz, 2004). Within its long history, marriage was viewed as a means of continuing family lineage in China (Qi, 2014), and was thus a very stable component of Chinese society. These long-standing patterns

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and perceptions of marriage have been dramatically altered, as the age at first marriage has increased significantly (Feng and Quanhe, 1996), along with increasing rates of divorce (Chen et al., 2012). Alternatives to marriage, such as cohabitation, have been increasing (Zhang, 2017). Among adolescents and young adults, sexual activity is common (Blair and Scott, 2019), and the display of intimacy has become increasingly more prominent (Gui, 2017), underscoring dramatic changes in dating and mate selection (Chang and Chan, 2007). All of these changes are likely to have bearing upon marital aspirations, yet the role of gender also needs to be considered.

Throughout its history, traditional Chinese culture has been patriarchal, as men have been seen as authority figures within all social institutions, and particularly so within the family. Beliefs such as women bearing responsibility for household labor and childrearing (Cook & Dong, 2011), along with being virgins at the time of marriage (Pan, 2004) were typical. With increasing modernization over recent decades, there have been dramatic increases in women's educational attainment, occupational attainment, and financial independence (Nakano, 2016; Yu and Xie, 2015), thus providing them with greater decision-making capabilities within personal relationships (Gittings, 2006; Guthrie, 2008). Although the One-Child Policy has been changed, the lasting impact of it is the skewed sex ratio among young people, where there are substantially more young men than young women (Liu et al., 2014), thus making the navigation of the marriage market easier for women, rather than men (in terms of the number of prospective partners). The increases in educational and occupational attainment, coupled with many other forms of cultural and structural change, may have affected the respective marriage aspirations of females and males (Gaetano, 2010; Nakano, 2016). In order to better understand the current state of marriage aspirations in China, this study will focus specifically upon how such aspirations may vary among females and males, and also examine the factors related to such aspirations.

Marriage and Marital Aspirations within the Chinese Context

The expectation of marriage is regarded as a cultural universal, yet in the context of China, this expectation has a decidedly unique history. Throughout its history, families have adhered to a patriarchal structure, and have maintained the additional expectations that adult children reside either with or near their fathers, thus making the patrilocal extended form prominent (Chu et al., 2011). Among the tenets of Confucianism, which arose between 770 BC and 476 BC, was the expectation that men were the authority figures, while women were expected to defer to them (Yu and Chau, 1997). This was evident within traditional Chinese families, wherein wives would provide care for their husbands and children, and also their husbands' aging parents. A core necessity within families was the continuation of the male lineage (Han, 2008), thus making the marriage of sons a central priority for parents, who would typically control the selection of a spouse for their sons through arranged marriage (Wolf and Huang, 1980).

Supporting this practice of arranged marriage was the cultural trait of "*xiao*," or filial piety. Inherent within filial piety in traditional Chinese culture was the expectation that children devote themselves to their parents and families (Han, 2008). For young children, filial piety largely involved obedience, without question, to the directives of their parents (Luk-Fong,

2005), whereas for adult children, filial piety involved assuming primary responsibility for the care of elderly parents (Cong and Silverstein, 2008), as expressed in the notion “*fumu zai, bu yuanyou*” (“as long as the parents are alive, do not go far away”). For many centuries, children were taught to respect and obey their parents, and to recognize that their obligations in life were to their parents, grandparents, and each and every preceding generation of ancestors (Yeh and Bedford, 2003). From the perspective of an unmarried son, the obligations of filial piety meant that he would have to accept their choice of bride, as their priority would be to choose him a wife who could provide suitable assistance to them in their remaining years (Liu et al., 2014).

With the founding of the People’s Republic of China, in 1949, filial piety and its inherent obligations, along with the patriarchal and hierarchical authority of families were viewed as inconsistent with the aims of the new state (Chow, 1991). The PRC moved quickly to establishment mandates which provided for new family roles, most of which were intended to shift away from the long-standing family structures and norms. One year later, in 1950, the New Marriage Law was introduced, with the goal of effectively removing family authority, and particularly so in regard to mate selection and marriage. Centered around the development of egalitarianism, the New Marriage Law stipulated that young adults were free to choose their own spouses, thus eliminating arranged marriage within China. Although the law was well-intended, it nonetheless created a dilemma – there were virtually no existing norms regarding how young adults should go about selecting a partner. Centuries of arranged marriage had left young adults with no guidelines concerning how to go about starting and maintaining intimate relationships.

Although the New Marriage Law, along with its later amendments, was intended to promote freedom of choice in the selection of a spouse, it did introduce some restrictions in regard to the timing of marriage. In its 1950 version, the New Marriage Law established the ages of 18 for women and 20 for men as the minimum age at marriage. These age limitations were effectively controlled through the introduction of a mandatory marriage registration system, put into place to prevent further arranged marriages (Xu and Whyte, 1990). During the 1970s, the minimum age at marriage restrictions were increased, partially in order to suppress fertility levels at that time. In rural areas, women could not marry until 23 years of age, while men were likewise prevented from marrying until they reached 25 years of age. Their urban counterparts were not permitted to marry until the ages of 25 and 28, for women and men, respectively. These age restrictions were reduced during the 1980s, but remain an effective means of state control over marriage onset, with a current minimum age of 20 for women and 22 for men (Yu and Xie, 2015).

Marriage remains a key expectation for young adults, particularly as it is consistent with the notion of filial piety, and likewise conforms to Confucian expectations. Through marriage, daughters and sons can demonstrate their respect for their parents and, in the case of sons, maintain the continuity of the family lineage. Indeed, less than two percent of adults above the age of 30 remain unmarried (Jones, 2007), suggesting that marriage itself remains a highly desired status. However, the timing of marriage continues to fluctuate, and has been increasing over recent decades, largely as a consequence of the higher levels of educational

attainment, which effectively removes students from the pool of eligible marriage partners (Han, 2010).

With the considerable economic change which China has undergone over recent decades, educational attainment rates have increased, as have the more materialistic goals of young adults. The pursuit of wealth, greater social status, and especially homeownership are not only desirable goals for individuals, but are also seen as absolutely essential to entering marriage (Piotrowski et al., 2016). Relative to the expectations of filial piety, such materialistic goals do seem more focused upon individual needs, rather than the more traditional needs of the family (Chuang and Yang, 1990).

The rapid modernization of China, coupled with increasing exposure to representations of love, dating, and marriage in other societies, has prompted young women and men to approach dating in a manner which is considerably progressive, modern, and quite novel (Chan, 2011). The increasing rates of college attendance play a role in this transition, as colleges are considered “love havens,” wherein students engage in dating, public displays of affection, and sexual intimacy (Yang, 2011; Xia and Zhou, 2003). Again, given the lessening of parental control over mate selection, young Chinese adults are essentially creating their own norms concerning how to find that “special someone.” Although behaviors such as sexual intercourse may be regarded as unacceptable by previous generations, contemporary youth in China are forging their own standards. There are, though, limits and boundaries, as even the young women and men, themselves, tend to espouse somewhat conservative attitudes toward dating and sexual intimacy (Higgins et al., 2002). The element of parental and family influence still appears to be quite salient in the mate selection behaviors of young adults, as many still evaluate relationships in terms of how well they may satisfy the needs of the family (Zhang, 2017).

In many ways, contemporary forms of mate selection in China are shaped by forces related to modernization, yet are nonetheless still impacted by traditional concerns and expectations. The pragmatic qualities of prospective partners (e.g., income, education) are given greater emphasis, rather than the passionate and romantic qualities which are highly valued in Western cultures (Gui, 2017; Markus and Kitayama, 1991). Researchers have suggested, however, that modernization and increasing individualism in China may be shifting young adults’ perceptions of love and marriage in a direction which is substantially more progressive, and dissimilar to those of their parents (Lange et al., 2015). Ultimately, Chinese parents still actively seek to assist their daughters and sons in finding a suitable partner (Zhang and Sun, 2014), despite the increasingly individualistic approaches of their children (Gui, 2017). Whether young adults follow their own hearts, follow the recommendations of their parents, or some combination thereof, one traditional component of Chinese culture remains a challenge - gender. Even in the context of modernization, the patriarchal nature of Chinese culture typically leads to quite distinct experiences for females and males, and particularly so in regard to their respective roles in marriage.

Gender and Marital Aspirations

Gender and gender roles have an interesting history within the Chinese context, as there are long-standing beliefs that females are expected to be submissive, subservient, and bound to domestic responsibilities, such as household labor and childcare (Lin, 2006). These

beliefs arise from traditional Confucian philosophy, which stipulates that women should obey: 1) their fathers and brothers prior to marriage, 2) their husbands within marriage, and 3) as a widow, their adult sons (Chia et al., 1997). From its beginnings in 1949, the People's Republic of China has attempted to push aside the patriarchal elements of China's past, and has attempted to propagate and instill gender equality. The introduction of legislation, such as the New Marriage Law of 1950, represented a determined effort to improve the status of women, particularly by legalizing freedom of individual choice in the choice of a spouse. When coupled with increases in women's educational and occupational attainment, the opportunity for greater gender equality was certainly present. In some instances, such as within decision-making and bargaining within personal relationships, women's status has, indeed, improved (Guthrie, 2008). However, there is a distinction to be made between the more macro-level forms of change, such as those within the educational and occupational realms, and the more micro-level forms of change, such as those within marriage (Parrish and Farrer, 2000).

Although women in China do have greater opportunities in social institutions, the same cannot necessarily be said of their status within the institution of the family. For many employed women, they are providers for their families, but also must perform a substantially greater share of domestic labor, such as housework and childcare (Yang, 2013). Despite the various forms of modernization in China, along with the increased educational and occupational attainment of women, there is a lingering presence of traditional beliefs, as researchers have noted that many adults maintain traditional beliefs concerning the division of household labor (Cook and Dong, 2011), the responsibilities of child care (Rosen, 1992), and even the provider role within the family (Chia et al., 1997). Working women are thus recognized as wives and mothers, while their careers and financial support of their families are regarded as secondary (Yang, 2013). In many instances, parents of young adults can often make matters even more confusing, as contemporary parents prefer that their daughters and sons marry because of love (Xu et al., 2007), but also expect their daughters or daughters-in-law to be responsible for housework and childcare (Cook & Dong, 2011).

The seeming resurgence of traditional Confucian expectations and norms are evident in the treatment of unmarried, educated, successful women in China, where they are labeled as *sheng nu* (剩女), or "leftover women," and are regarded as being less feminine and less appealing as a prospective spouse, simply due to their pursuit of a career (Gui, 2020). Hence, although the relative standing of female and male roles in China have become somewhat more equal since the founding of the PRC, there remains a distinction, and one which may be shifting back toward more traditional expectations for women (Parrish and Farrer, 2000). The manner in which these shifts affect the marriage aspirations of young individuals remains to be seen.

Gender plays a central role in the developmental processes associated with the aspirations which young individuals have about marriage, affecting the development of such aspirations across adolescence and early adulthood. From the early adolescent years and onward, girls and boys begin to seek intimate relationships, with dating representing their first experiences with beginning and maintaining such relationships. These dating experiences, though, are typically distinct for each sex, and reflect existing gendered expectations. In the selection of a dating partner, young men frequently place a greater priority upon the physical

appearance of women, whereas young women tend to focus upon the economic status of men (Blair and Madigan, 2016; Piotrowski et al., 2016).

Understandably, the impact of gender upon marital aspirations must also be considered within the realities of the existing sex ratio of the population. As a consequence of the One-Child Policy, the sex ratio of never-married adults is 134.5 (Liu et al., 2014), which has created a male marriage “squeeze,” wherein young men’s prospects of securing a partner are considerably less than those of young women doing likewise (Guilmoto, 2012). The skewed sex ratio will obviously affect eventual marriage patterns, but it is also likely to impact the preceding marriage aspirations of young individuals. Researchers have posited that the relative scarcity of females is likely to result in greater decision-making power within intimate relationships (Ellinson et al., 2004). Even in regards to physical intimacy, studies have shown that the skewed sex ratio is associated with higher rates of premarital sex among females in China, but lower rates among males (South and Trent, 2010). Oddly, though, the traditional expectation for brides to be virgins remains, despite the higher rates of premarital sex (Pan, 2004). The leverage which females may have is evident in studies which have concluded that women in China are increasingly selective in their selection of partners, and express preferences for men with higher salaries, occupational prestige, and perhaps most importantly of all, their own home (Blair and Madigan, 2016; Liu, 2005; Yu and Xie, 2015). Hence, while men with fewer material advantages (e.g., income, home ownership) to offer a woman may have difficulty in obtaining a spouse, those men whose gender expectations are more traditional may find themselves in even more dire straits (Blair and Madigan, 2016; Peng, 2004).

As young individuals are contemplating marriage, and formulating their own aspirations, they will undoubtedly be aware of the roles of women and men in the larger society. For young women, in particular, the greater opportunities for educational attainment, followed by occupational opportunities, may have substantial bearing upon their views and aspirations of marriage (Gaetano, 2010; Nakano, 2016). Becker (1981) proposed that marital roles tend to be highly specialized, and that the nature of these roles shapes the respective views of marriage. Men view their role within marriage as involving their provision of financial support, while their wives will provide unpaid domestic labor in the form of housework and childcare. Women, on the other hand, regard marriage with the expectation that their husband will provide financial support for themselves and their children. However, economic independence theory (Willis, 1987) posits that when women have greater resources of their own, such as higher levels of educational and occupational attainment, marriage itself may lessen in its appeal. Recent studies have supported this contention, noting that greater resources are associated with higher ages at marriage, among those who do opt to marry (Ono, 2013; Qian and Qian, 2014).

Understanding how young women and men develop aspirations about marriage is challenging, given the wide array of potential agents of influence, including parents, friends, schools, media, and beyond. Given that the focus is upon aspirations for future roles, ecological systems theory is an appropriate framework in which to consider such aspirations (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). This model proposes that individuals’ experiences, relationships, and norms produce a combined influence upon the development of aspirations for future roles. Gender and gender norms are regarded as having a fundamental impact upon the development of aspirations (Dornan and Woodhead, 2015). As such, the assessment of marriage aspirations

and accompanying determinants will be conducted in a comparative manner for females and males.

DATA AND METHODS

Data for this study were collected at public universities in the cities of Nanjing, Shanghai, and Wuhan, with the collection ending in the summer of 2019. Participants were college students who were actively enrolled at their respective schools. Students were randomly solicited by the researchers, and asked to participate in a survey concerning dating and marriage. Of those students who were solicited, 86% agreed to participate, and completed the survey. Following the tabulation of responses, 47 cases were eliminated due to incomplete responses, resulting in a sample of 918 females and 609 males. The survey was provided to students in both Mandarin and English, and had undergone multiple back-translations for purposes of verification. The sample of students ranged in age from 18 to 22, and were all currently enrolled at their respective universities. In regard to relationship status, all of the students in the sample were single and never married. The sample includes both female and male college students, who were attending urban Chinese universities. Any generalizations drawn from the analyses should be limited to that population.

Marital aspirations were assessed through a combination of two survey questions. First, participants were asked how much they agreed with the following statement: "I would like to get married someday." Responses to this item ranged from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). In addition, respondents were asked at what age, ideally, they would like to get married. This item was open-ended, and allowed students to designate their specific preferred age at first marriage. The combination of these two measures should provide a clear picture of both the overall desire to marry, as well as the preferred timing thereof.

Given that previous studies have demonstrated the influence of both familial and individual factors in regard to marital aspirations, a variety of these characteristics were included. In regard to parents, respondents were asked: "When you think about the relationship between you and your parent(s), how close to you feel to them?" Responses to this question included: "not close at all" (1), "somewhat close" (2), "fairly close" (3), and "very close" (4).

Understandably, parents can function as role models in terms of marriage and marital stability. Respondents were queried as to whether either of their parents had ever experienced a divorce (coded as 1=yes, 0=no). Within the Chinese context, filial piety has the potential to influence marital aspirations, as well. Respondents were asked whether they would "be willing to marry someone" of whom their parents did not approve (coded as 1=strongly disagree, 2=somewhat disagree, 3=unsure, 4=somewhat agree, and 5=strongly agree). The rural/urban residence (of the parents) was included in the analyses as a control variable, but is not included in the tables, as no significant differences nor associations were revealed.

Additionally, a number of individual characteristics were also included. First, respondents were asked about the traits which they are looking for in a spouse. Respondents were asked to indicate their preference for particular traits by stating whether each quality was "not at all important" (1) to "extremely important" (7). The various traits were then grouped into three indexed measures of desired qualities. The first of these, pragmatic traits, is created

through the combination of four characteristics: well educated, wealthy, successful, and ambitious (Cronbach's alpha = 0.91). The second, caring traits, is created through the combination of the following four characteristics: affectionate, loving, considerate, and kind (Cronbach's alpha = 0.88). The third, appearance traits, is created from the combination of four characteristics: sexy, neat, attractive, and well dressed (Cronbach's alpha = 0.86). Since dating experience may influence marriage aspirations, respondents were asked if they were currently in a dating relationship (coded as 1=yes, 0=no).

As previously noted, China has experienced a substantial increase in cohabitation, over recent years. Respondents were asked if they "would like to live with someone before getting married" (responses ranged from 1=strongly agree to 5=strongly disagree). Such progressive behaviors were also assessed with the query of whether respondents would "be willing to have sex on a first date" (coded as 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). Attitudes about gender and family role would potentially influence marital aspirations. In this regard, respondents were asked about their beliefs concerning gender roles within the family context. An indexed measure of gender attitudes was created, including responses to the following statements: 1) it is much better for everyone if the man earns the main living and the woman takes care of the home and family, 2) both husbands and wives should contribute to family income, 3) a husband should spend just as many hours doing housework as his wife, and 4) the spouse who earns the most money should have the most say in family decisions. The resultant indexed measure of gender attitudes ranged across a five-point scale, with a higher score indicating more conservative or traditional gender role attitudes (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.88). Participants were asked how many of their close friends were currently dating or in a romantic relationship. Responses to this question ranged from "only a few or none of them" (1) to "all or almost all of them" (5).

Marital aspirations may also be influenced by perceptions concerning the benefits of marriage. Respondents were asked how several components of their lives would differ if they were married. The components included their: 1) standard of living, 2) sex life, and 3) overall happiness. Responses to these items ranged from "much worse" (1) to "much better" (5). For many individuals, marriage may be synonymous with parenthood. As such, respondents were asked how many children (open ended) they hoped to have, one day. A measure of self-esteem was included, using responses to the statement: "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself." Responses ranged from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). Finally, respondents were queried about their grade performance in college, with responses ranging from "less than D's" (1) to "mostly A's" (8). In order to assess the relative influence of the aforementioned variables upon marriage aspirations, ordinary least squares regression models will be utilized.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents the mean levels of marriage aspirations among young adults in China, as shown by sex. In regard to their respective desire to marry, females and males appear to be quite similar (3.86 versus 3.88, respectively). Over the five-point scale of this measure, these means suggest that both females and males are seeking to marry, one day, but their enthusiasm is, nonetheless, somewhat muted. Given the age of the respondents (18 to 22 years of age), the degree of this aspiration is understandable. In terms of their preferred age at

marriage, there are distinctions shown between females and males, with females desiring a slightly younger age (26.95) at marriage, as compared to their male counterparts (27.76). If this age difference is compared to the larger population of married individuals in China, it would appear that young adults are adhering to the long-standing expectations of females marrying at a younger age. Within China, the age-gradient among married couples, wherein wives are slightly younger than their husbands, is very much the norm. The aspirations of the young adults in this sample seem to be following that same age-gradient pattern.

Table 1. Mean Levels of Marriage Aspirations among Young Chinese Adults, by Sex

	<u>Females</u>	<u>Males</u>
Wants to Marry	3.86 (0.94)	3.88 (0.96)
Preferred Age at Marriage	26.95 (2.51)	27.76*** (3.01)
24 and younger	11.0%	9.5%
25 or 26	38.9	25.3
27 to 29	29.4	31.5
30 to 34	18.9	29.1
35 and older	1.7	4.6

Note: N = 918 females, 609 males; Standard deviations shown in parentheses; Significance levels indicate difference between the means of females and males; *** p < .01, ** p < .05, * p < .10

Table 2 presents the mean levels of parent, dating, and individual characteristics among young adults in China, as shown by sex. Both females and males report a rather substantial attachment to their parents. However, the willingness to marry without parental approval is significantly higher among males, rather than females. It is possible that the skewed sex ratio within the mating pool places greater pressure upon males to find a partner, and thus leads them to eschew parental approval. It is also worth noting, though, that a considerable number of young females and males have experienced a parental divorce (16% and 12%, respectively), reflecting the increasing divorce rate within China.

Table 2. Mean Levels of Parent, Dating, and Individual Characteristics among Young Chinese Adults, by Sex

	<u>Females</u>	<u>Males</u>
Close to parents	4.28 (0.81)	4.21 (0.83)
Parental divorce	0.16* (0.36)	0.12 (0.33)
Marry without parent approval	2.64*** (1.06)	3.12 (1.05)
Desired qualities in partner:		
Pragmatic	4.86*** (1.03)	4.26 (1.09)
Caring	5.41*** (0.99)	5.25 (1.03)
Appearance	4.72 (1.05)	4.73 (1.05)
Currently dating	0.45 (0.49)	0.48 (0.49)
Willing to cohabit	3.51*** (1.03)	3.73 (0.98)
Willing to have sex on 1st date	1.89*** (1.11)	2.71 (1.28)
Traditional gender attitudes	2.28*** (0.64)	2.74 (0.65)
Number of friends dating	3.09*** (1.07)	3.23 (1.06)
Perceived benefits of marriage:		
Standard of living	3.42*** (0.93)	3.23 (1.00)
Sex life	3.66 (0.88)	3.61 (0.99)
Overall happiness	3.63 (0.95)	3.59 (0.97)
Desired # of children	1.63** (0.90)	1.74 (0.85)
Self-esteem	3.24*** (1.17)	3.40 (1.06)
Grades	5.80*** (1.00)	5.61 (1.17)
N	918	609

Note: Standard deviations shown in parentheses; Significance levels indicate difference between the means of females and males; *** p < .01, ** p < .05, * p < .10

Among the measures related to desired qualities in a prospective partner, females appear to place a greater premium upon pragmatic qualities, such as earnings, as compared to males (4.86 versus 4.26, respectively). Similarly, females also report a greater desire to caring qualities, such as affection, as compared to males (5.41 versus 5.25, respectively). While the differences shown between females and males with these two measures do seem to support long-standing gender stereotypes concerning the partner qualities desired by women and men, it should be noted that no significant differences were shown in regard to the desire for appearance qualities (such as being sexy or attractive). Slightly less than half of the sample reported that they were currently in a dating relationship (45% of females, 48% of males). As anticipated, males were more likely to express the willingness to cohabit before marriage, and were substantially more willing to have sexual intercourse on a first date, as compared to females (2.71 versus 1.89, respectively). In conjunction with those differences, males also reported significantly more traditional gender attitudes, as compared to females, and also reported having a greater number of their friends in dating relationships.

In regard to the perceived benefits of marriage, females viewed future marriage as providing them with a greater standard of living. This perception is likely linked to the assumption of having two sources of household income. However, females and males were quite similar in their perceptions of how marriage would affect their sex lives and their overall happiness. Males do seem to associate marriage with parenthood, as they reported a higher desired number of children, as compared to females (1.74 versus 1.63, respectively). Given changes to fertility policies in China, it should be noted that these desired fertility aspirations are much higher than one. Finally, males reported higher levels of self-esteem, while females reported a higher level of performance in school, with a significantly higher grade average. A series of multivariate regression models will now be presented, in order to ascertain how the characteristics of females and males influence their marriage aspirations.

Table 3 presents the ordinary least squares regression models of the desire to marry among young adults in China, as shown by sex. The models for both females and males are robust, and yield a substantial amount of explained variance. Among females, closeness to parents was shown to be associated with the desire to marry ($B = .103$), yet this same effect is not shown to be significant in the model for males. This is rather surprising, as traditional filial piety within Chinese culture would seem to place a greater emphasis upon the bond between parents and sons, and particularly so in regard to marriage. Females' willingness to marry without parental approval is shown to be negatively associated with the desire to marry ($B = -.052$). Although the strength of the association is rather meager, it may suggest a growing independence among young adult females in China, such that they may feel a greater freedom of individual choice, at least as it pertains to parental relationships and marriage.

Table 3. Regression Models of Desire to Marry among Young Chinese Adults, by Sex

	Females		Males	
	B	beta	B	beta
Close to parents	.103***	.089	.003	.003
Parental divorce	.046	.018	-.012	-.004
Marry without parent approval	-.052*	-.058	-.033	-.036
Desired qualities in partner:				
Pragmatic	-.019	-.020	.056	.063
Caring	.127***	.133	.110**	.117
Appearance	-.009	-.010	-.042	-.046
Currently dating	.148**	.078	-.007	-.004
Willing to cohabit	.023	-.026	.168***	-.171
Willing to have sex on 1st date	-.107***	-.126	-.128***	-.170
Traditional gender attitudes	.042	.029	-.146**	-.098
Number of friends dating	.060**	.068	.019	.021
Perceived benefits of marriage:				
Standard of living	.083**	.082	.065	.067
Sex life	.103***	.096	.007	.007
Overall happiness	-.019	-.020	.036	.036
Desired # of children	.236***	.226	.164***	.144
Self-esteem	.119***	.148	.083**	.094
Grades	.032	.034	.071**	.087
R-square		.198		.171
F		13.048		7.173

Note: N = 918 Females, 609 Males; *** p < .01, ** p < .05, * p < .10

Females and males are similar in regards to how their desired qualities in a partner are associated with the desire to marry. Among both females and males, the desire for a partner with more caring qualities (e.g., affectionate) are positively associated with the desire to marry (B = .127 and .110, respectively). This association, coupled with the lack of significant influence by the desire for more pragmatic qualities in a partner, may reflect again the growing emphasis upon the more interpersonal and intimate nature of relationships among young adults in China. The shift to individual choice of partner, in conjunction with greater emphases upon materialism and individuality, certainly make the influence of affectional qualities quite understandable.

Among females, being in a dating relationship is associated with a greater desire to marry (B = .148), yet this same effect is not shown to be significant in the model for young males. Among males, however, the willingness to cohabit yields a positive association with the desire to marry (B = .168). It is quite likely that females and males have quite distinct

perceptions of the meanings of relationships within both cohabitation and marriage. The two sexes are similar, though, in regard to having sex on a first date, wherein such willingness is shown to be negatively associated with the desire to marry ($B = -.107$ and $-.128$ among females and males, respectively). Sexual intercourse on a first date is decidedly progressive within the context of Chinese culture, so it is to be expected that individuals who are willing to engage in sexual activity so early in a relationship would also likely be less eager to engage in the more traditional transition of getting married. Interestingly, traditional gender attitudes are shown to be negatively associated with males' desire to marry ($B = -.128$). This is rather perplexing, as traditional Chinese culture very much encourages sons to marry, and to do so quickly.

Females are also shown to be influenced by their peers, as the number of friends who are dating is positively associated with the desire to marry ($B = .060$). Similarly, the perceptions that marriage will be beneficial to both their standard of living and their sex lives yield significant associations with females' desire to marry ($B = .083$ and $.103$, respectively). These same associations are not significant in the model for young males, again suggesting a clear distinction in how each sex develops their aspirations for marriage. The two sexes are comparable, however, in regard to the desire for children, which is shown to be positively associated with their desires to marry ($B = .236$ and $.164$ among females and males, respectively). Marriage and childbearing are strongly intertwined within traditional Chinese culture, so these associations are to be expected. Self-esteem also yields significant associations with the desire to marry among both females and males. Finally, grade performance is shown to be positively associated with males' desire to marry ($B = .071$), but not those of their female counterparts.

Table 4 presents the ordinary least squares regression models of the preferred age at marriage among young adults in China, as shown by sex. Among females, the experience of a parental divorce is shown to be negatively associated with the preferred age at marriage ($B = -.535$), suggesting that young females who have gone through a parental divorce prefer to marry at younger ages. Among males, this same association is not shown to be significant. Males who prefer a partner with more pragmatic qualities, though, appear to desire a younger age at marriage ($B = -.445$). It is conceivable that, in the context of increasing materialism among young Chinese adults, some young men might seek early entry into marriage as a means of achieving greater financial status. At the same time, however, the willingness to cohabit is shown to be positively associated with males' preferred age at marriage ($B = .414$). With the increasingly progressive nature of young adults' perceptions of relationships, it is possible that many young men may see cohabitation as having similarly favorable attributes, as compared to traditional marriage.

Table 4. Regression Models of Preferred Age at Marriage among Young Chinese Adults, by Sex

	Females		Males	
	B	beta	B	beta
Close to parents	.051	.017	.057	.016
Parental divorce	-.535**	-.077	.401	.043
Marry without parent approval	-.092	-.039	-.119	-.041
Desired qualities in partner:				
Pragmatic	-.109	-.045	-.445***	.162
Caring	.065	.025	.111	.038
Appearance	.022	.009	.125	.044
Currently dating	-.262	-.052	-.007	-.004
Willing to cohabit	.076	-.031	.414*	-.069
Willing to have sex on 1st date	-.004	-.002	.129	.055
Traditional gender attitudes	-.514***	-.133	.079	.017
Number of friends dating	-.197***	-.084	.063	.022
Perceived benefits of marriage:				
Standard of living	-.002	-.001	.087	.029
Sex life	.092	.032	-.159	-.053
Overall happiness	-.322***	-.122	-.184	-.059
Desired # of children	-.479***	-.172	-.058	-.016
Self-esteem	-.249***	-.116	-.098	-.036
Grades	-.016	-.006	.151	.059
R-square	.119		.041	
F	7.158		1.483	

Note: N = 918 Females, 609 Males; *** p < .01, ** p < .05, * p < .10

Although young men espoused more traditional gender attitudes, such beliefs yielded no significant association with their preferred age at marriage. Among females, though, traditional gender attitudes were negatively associated with their preferred age at marriage (B = -.514). Hence, traditional gender attitudes are equated with a younger age at marriage, among young adult females. Females were also influenced by their peers, as the number of friends in dating relationships was also negatively associated with the preferred age at marriage (B = -.197). In regard to the perceived benefits of marriage, females' perception of marriage as increasing their overall happiness yielded a negative association with their preferred age at marriage (B = -.322). Additionally, a higher desired number of children was also negatively associated with young females' preferred age at marriage (B = -.479). This finding is consistent with the associations yielded by the desired number of children with young adults' desire to

marry (Table 3). However, the desired number of children does not significantly influence young males' preferred age at marriage. It is possible that the linkage between marriage and fertility is more salient among young women, rather than young men. These findings, along with their implications for future patterns of marriage in China, will now be discussed.

DISCUSSION

This study was initiated with the goal of examining the marriage aspirations of young females and males in contemporary China. Throughout its long history, Chinese culture has been decidedly patriarchal, with males occupying virtually all positions of authority, across all social institutions. In addition, arranged marriage was the norm throughout most of China's history, and was not formally abolished until the introduction of legislation in 1950. Since that time, China has undergone considerable social, economic, and political change, all of which have affected the existing cultural environment in which young adults develop aspirations concerning marriage. Gender and gender ideologies are quite relevant in the development of marriage aspirations, as women have experienced considerable increases in their educational and occupational statuses. In many ways, young adults find themselves in a challenging situation, wherein the forces of modernization encourage them to be more progressive and individualistic, while the cultural traditions which have long defined the very nature of family encourage them to conform to the standards of past generations. Framed within ecological systems theory, this study sought to examine not only the differences between females' and males' marriage aspirations, but also how the influences upon such aspirations may differ by sex.

The results indicate that both females and males have moderately high aspirations for marriage. Given the nature of the sample (students attending college), it is quite likely that most respondents were primarily focused upon their more immediate goal of completing their educational degrees. In regard to the timing of marriage, the results appear to confirm that the marriage gradient, wherein females tend to marry slightly older males, and vice-versa, is a continuing feature among young adults who aspire to marry. Females reported a preferred age at marriage of approximately 27, while males reported a preferred age at marriage of approximately 28. Although legal restrictions do prohibit early marriage in China, these findings suggest that both females and males want to become married while still in their 20s.

Females and males also differed in regard to the factors which might influence marriage aspirations. Males, for example, were significantly more likely to consider getting married without parental approval. This is somewhat surprising, given the valuation of sons by parents, but this may also be reflective of the greater odds of marriage for males, given the skewed sex ratio and smaller pool of eligible partners (as compared to that of females). Indeed, it is possible that the challenges of locating a partner may have contributed to some of the other distinctions between females and males. Males reported a greater willingness to cohabit before marriage, which is a rather progressive step, even in contemporary China. Likewise, men reported a significantly greater willingness to have sex on a first date, which is, again, very progressive and counter to traditional norms. Interestingly, though, males reported significantly more traditional gender attitudes. Such attitudes could, conceivably, put males into a difficult situation, wherein they prefer women who conform to the traditional

expectations of being docile and obedient, yet are searching within a pool of eligibles comprised of women who are well-educated, career-oriented, and egalitarian-minded. To some extent, the more traditional perceptions of marriage were seen within the responses of women, as they expressed preferences for partners who were more pragmatic (e.g., with higher incomes), more caring (e.g., more sensitive), and they perceived marriage as being beneficial to their future standard of living. Such responses do, indeed, support the contention that females and males in contemporary China have distinct aspirations for marriage, and also that their larger perceptions of married life are likewise distinct from one another.

The multivariate analyses revealed several intriguing findings. Among these, females' closeness to their parents, along with their willingness to marry without parental approval, were significantly associated with their desire to marry, while these same factors did not significantly influence males' desire to marry. Given the greater valuation of sons within Chinese culture, it might be assumed that parental influence would be more substantial among males, rather than females. However, given recent increases in female educational and occupational attainment, it is conceivable that parents place just as much, if not more, emphasis upon the adult status outcomes for their daughters. A similar effect was shown in the models of preferred age at marriage, where daughters' preferred age was negatively associated with parental divorce, yet no significant association was shown in the model for males. Again, these suggest that a strong linkage exists between parents and daughters, at least in terms of how parental characteristics impact marriage aspirations.

It was interesting to note that among both females and males, the desire for more caring qualities in a prospective partner were associated with a stronger desire to marry. While this does not necessarily indicate a shift toward the progressive notions of love and romance, such as are found in other cultures, it does indicate that young adults of both sexes are keenly focused upon their desire for greater sensitivity and empathy in a future partner. Among males, however, the desire for more pragmatic qualities in a partner (e.g., income) was associated with the preferred for an earlier age at marriage. While it is difficult to discern the precise meaning of this association, it does suggest that males are aware of the need for having a spouse who can also be a provider. In keeping with masculine stereotypes, though, males who were willing to cohabit were shown to have a lower desire to marry, and to prefer an older age at marriage. Their willingness to have sex on a first date was also shown to be associated with a lower desire to marry. Together, these results do offer some support to the stereotype that males are squarely focused upon the immediate gratification of an intimate relationship, and are not necessarily keen to marry, once those gratifications are made available. Or, to put it more succinctly – if he finds a woman who is willing to cohabit, what is the need for marriage?

Among females, it was also interesting to note the impact of peers. The number of friends in dating relationships was positively associated with females' desire to marry, and negatively associated with their preferred age at marriage. Given that these same associations were not significant among males, it is reasonable to assert that peers and, more precisely, peer pressure impact young women's aspirations of marriage, but not those of young men. There is an abundance of research which has detailed the nature of peer relationships among young women, particularly in terms of how it affects such attributes as appearance and body

image. In this instance, however, peer relationships clearly impact young women in ways which are unique, as the decisions concerning marriage are certainly more meaningful and lasting than issues such as choosing how to style one's hair. Females were also affected by their perceptions concerning the benefits of marriage, while males were not. Among females, the perceptions that marriage would improve their standard of living and their sex life were associated with a greater desire for marriage, and the perception that marriage would improve their overall happiness was associated with a lower preferred age at marriage. Seemingly, the respective perceptions concerning the benefits of marriage are affecting young females' marriage aspirations, but not those of young men. The two sexes were similar, though, in regards to how their desired number of children affected their desires to marry, wherein the linkage between marriage and childbearing was clearly evident among both females and males. However, while the desired number of children was negatively associated with females' preferred age at marriage, no significant association was shown among males.

From the perspective of the ecological systems paradigm, it is evident that the marriage aspirations of both female and male college students are being influenced by a combination of parental, peer, and individual characteristics. The distinctions shown between how these factors influence young females and males also support that contention that gender remains a salient determinant of how individuals develop their own aspirations for marriage. As previously noted, China is undergoing considerable forms of change – social, economic, and political, all of which are likely to affect how young people perceive intimate relationships. While the traditional expectations of getting married and bearing children are obviously still at the center of many young individuals' aspirations for their futures, the changing nature of marriage is perhaps also evident. The combination of high divorce rates, increases in materialism and individualism, along with the increasingly available alternatives to traditional marriage, including cohabitation and premarital sex, may detract from the aspirations of young females and males for marriage. Given the long history of cultural traditions in China, and specifically those related to marriage and family, it is unlikely that those traditions are going to fade away entirely. However, it is undeniable that marriage aspirations, as part of the institution of the family, are dynamic, and change over time. Future studies should attempt to more precisely determine the broader effects of both peer and youth culture upon the development of marriage aspirations.

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THE UNIQUE EXPERIENCES OF THE SANDWICH GENERATION

Emily Frack and Jamie Chapman

ABSTRACT

Due to the changing age structure of society, along with increased costs of living, a trend is emerging where some adults in the United States are providing care for their elderly parents at the same time they are providing care for their dependent children. This simultaneous caregiving for children and elderly parents is referred to as the *sandwich generation*. Adults in the sandwich generation must balance the responsibilities between work, home, the double-duty caregiving of children and elderly family members, and various family relationships. Utilizing a qualitative research design, this research focuses on identifying and contextualizing specific experiences of caregiver stress that are directly related to a structural position in the sandwich generation. In total, 12 in-depth interviews were completed and the qualitative findings suggest that sandwiched caregivers experience specific stress-inducing situations, unique to their caregiving roles, that influence their relationships with their children and their spouse. Interestingly, the experiences of the sandwich caregivers in this study support both role strain and role enhancement theories and further contextualize how symbolic interactionists might interpret the influences of social role expectations within the American family.

KEYWORDS: sandwich generation, gender roles, caregiving, double-duty caregiving, multigenerational caregiving, work-family spillover, work-family conflict, role conflict, role strain theory, role enhancement theory

INTRODUCTION

The current age structure of society is changing as a result of both increased life expectancy and the size of the Baby Boomer generation (those born between 1946 and 1964) (Smith and Tasman 2005) reaching retirement age. Due to the increasing average age for the first child, contemporary age gaps between parents and their children are different than they were 20 years ago, leading to middle-aged persons having young children and older parents, simultaneously (Pierret 2006). These changing demographic trends have created social situations in which middle-aged adults, disproportionately women (Tebes and Irish 2000; Hammer and Neal 2008), find themselves caring for both children and their elderly parents.

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Miller (1981) originally designated this group of double-caregivers as the *sandwich generation*. Friedman, Park and Wiemers (2017) estimate that this label currently applies to 30% of individuals who have living parents and children in the United States.

Providing outside care for elderly parents is expensive, and for many families, financially unrealistic. In 2016 The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reported the national average cost of an in-home health aide was \$20.50 per hour. This equates to \$164 for eight hours of elder care per day, and approximately \$60,000 per year. In a society where dual-income households are the norm (Pierret 2006), it is often financially unrealistic for an adult child living within a dual-income household to quit work in order to provide care full-time for an aging parent. All of these factors contribute to conflicts among work and caregiving responsibilities.

Recent demographic trends related to increases in dual-earning households and the growing need for elder-care have created unique work-family stressors for members of the sandwich generation. The existing literature on sandwich generation stressors would benefit from a contemporary analysis. The current qualitative research intends to address this gap in the current literature by contributing a sociological analysis of specific caregiver stress-inducing situations, as well as an analysis of the effects that this environment has on developing children. This research extends the current literature in the following ways: 1. It examines a new generation of sandwiched caregivers (SCG) in the United States; 2. It contributes to the current body of sandwich caregiver research by identifying that many SCGs felt isolated from their own families, in addition to their friends; 3. It extends the concept of double-duty caregiving to include two types of uncompensated caregiving, elder care and childcare; 4. The findings suggest that growing up with a SCG parent(s) may be associated with the likelihood of choosing a caregiving field career path. These findings have the potential to help families who find themselves living in this unique “sandwiched” experience, as well as benefit family counselors and policymakers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mental and Physical Costs of Double-Duty Caregiving

Symbolic interactionism, as a sociological paradigm, focuses on the process of interpreting meaning in social situations. Social scientists explain that a person’s perceptions of their social roles and associated role performances, influences their perceived quality of life (Chapman 2018; Pearson 2008; Turner 1978). Members of the sandwich generation face a variety of psychological and work-family challenges. The psychological burden of caring for both an elderly parent and children simultaneously can negatively affect the caregiver’s mental health, possibly leading to depression and anxiety (Cattanach and Tebes 1991). Byrd, Grant-Vallone, and Hamill (2002) note in their research that approximately 50% of sandwich generation caregivers suffer from anxiety and depression; however, there is disagreement on the role of gender.

Some researchers find that both men and women experience increased depression similarly (Cattanach and Tebes 1991), while others find that women experience more

depression than men due to the fact that women disproportionately take on the caregiver role (Tebes and Irish 2000; Hammer and Neal 2008). *Gender role theory* explains that women are socialized, from a young age, to be more “nurturant and relationship-oriented” than young boys (Umberson, Chen, House, Hopkins and Slaten 1996: 838). Building on gender role theory, Ergeneli and colleagues (2009) find that women place more significance on their family roles than men. Additionally, Offer (2014) highlights that women continue to bear a disproportionate amount of mental labor in family settings. Working from a symbolic interactionist perspective, these aspects of gender role theory suggest that gender may influence how individuals experience their sandwich generation caregiving roles.

Structural aspects of the multi-generational caregiving relationships have also been shown to influence caregiver stress. For example, researchers, such as Coe and Van Houtven (2009) explain that the length and duration of the double caregiving situation is associated with an increased risk of depression for both men and women. In a study of female sandwiched caregivers in Italy, Brenna (2021) found that the presence of children under age fifteen was associated with higher depression outcomes for caregivers. These structural aspects further exemplify the complexities of the double-duty caregiving experience.

Several studies have also found a correlation between sandwiched caregiving and unhealthy behaviors. Multigenerational caregivers are more likely to exercise less, smoke cigarettes, and eat unhealthy foods than non-caregiver adults or adults who only care for their children (Chassin, Macy, Seo, Presson, and Sherman 2010). This is likely due to less available time to exercise or cook healthy foods; these individuals have double the caregiving duties, which takes up more time. It is possible that they prioritize the health of their children and parents over their own. Son, Erno, Shea, Femia, Zarit, and Stephens (2007) found this health disparity to be exaggerated in situations where caregivers were providing care for elderly parents or children suffering from exacerbated health or behavioral issues, such as those often present with dementia in the elderly, or those present among children with chronic illnesses. These increased stressors in the caregiving environments were associated with a lack of self-reported health care, increased negative health behaviors, and increased use of healthcare services. The caregivers in this study attributed the decline in personal health to feeling overwhelmed with the high demands of time and energy associated with double caregiving (Son et al. 2007).

Sandwich generation caregivers also often experience conflict within their personal lives. The effects of caregiver stress leak into their lifestyle, limiting their personal time (Riley and Bowen 2005) and their ability to nurture various relationships. Spouses in this generation have been found to experience increased marital conflict (Tebes and Irish 2000). Roots (1998) explains that increased marital conflict is linked to the lack of ability to put time and effort into marriages. Loomis and Booth (1995) argue that caregiving negatively impacts the marital relationship because it disturbs daily family life, limiting the time spent with other family members, and it interrupts privacy. When only one partner in a married couple takes on the role of sandwich caregiver for elderly family member, the other partner may feel neglected, leading to increased marital conflict (Bengston 2001; Pnina 2006). Overall, researchers agree that the stressors associated with double-duty caregiving increase marital strain in the sandwich generation.

The location of middle-aged adults in their career trajectory further complicates the struggle to care for both their children and parents. Career opportunities that are often associated with middle-aged adults are complicated by caregiving responsibilities (Riley and Bowen 2005). Goode (1960) originally developed *role strain theory* to explain the increased negative stressors that people may feel when they take on additional social roles. Additionally, Steiner and Fletcher (2017) embrace a symbolic interactionist approach when they explain that the stress associated with a new role is potentially higher in unanticipated situations. Essentially, middle-aged working adults are likely to experience negative stressors in situations where they unexpectedly take on the role of multigenerational caregiver.

Multigenerational caregiving also makes career goals harder to achieve and employer expectations harder to meet – especially in the United States, which lacks family-oriented employment policies; including, but not limited to, no standardized paid family leave and a lack of flexibility in work schedules (Ciabattari 2017:174-176). Adults in the sandwich generation often have to take time off of work to complete caregiving tasks, which further exacerbates their caregiving stress (Starrels, Ingersoll-Dayton, Dowler, and Neal 1997). Chapman, Ingersoll-Dayton and Neal (1994) find that employees who maintain multiple caregiving roles are more likely to leave work than those with only one caregiving role. It is clear that work life and family life are often in contention with one another for caregivers, and this phenomenon is amplified for members of the sandwich generation.

The literature illustrates that double-duty caregiving is not only emotionally and physically taxing, but also financially challenging. The National Family Caregivers Association (2006) reports that family members who are caring for their children and parents simultaneously have 2.5 times higher out of pocket medical costs than non-caregivers. The financial burden is not just due to medical costs, but also personal and household costs, as well as paying part time caregivers to come during the work day. This reason may explain findings by Chisholm (1999), that families with higher incomes are more likely to support their aging parents in addition to their own children. A higher income provides the means to support additional family members, especially in the cases where the elderly parents cannot offer financial support. Ingersoll-Dayton, Neal and Hammer (2001) found that some adult caregiver-elderly parent relationships experienced increased conflict in situations where aging parents were able to offer financial assistance as compensation for care. It is possible that accepting money might make the adult feel as though caring for his/her parent is a job, minimizing the action as one driven by love and respect. As Roots (1998) described the motivation for his sandwich generation experience: “You take care of your own.”

Effects on the Sandwich Generation’s Children

While most research concerning the sandwich generation primarily focuses on caregiver stress effects on the adult caregiver-elderly parent relationship or marriage relationships, it is important to explore the effects of double caregiving by parents on the sandwich generation’s own children. Studies have shown that difficulties experienced by sandwich-generation caregivers result in their children experiencing increased depression, problematic behaviors, and diminished functioning (Tebes and Irish 2000). In a study

completed by Szinovacz (2003), children of the sandwich generation reported that they noticed a spillover of caregiver stress into their family's relationships and felt that their parents showed more attention towards their grandparent than themselves. Children also complained about their family's limited abilities to do activities and travel (Szinovacz 2003), echoing Loomis and Booth's (1995) argument that caregiving negatively impacts the marital relationship because it limits the time spent with other family members. Szinovacz's (2003) study compared how sandwich generation parents and their children viewed their unique family situation. The adult caregivers viewed the situation as a positive opportunity and environment for their children to grow more so than the children did. The parents seemed to be aware that their double caregiving role changed their relationship with their children but did not experience it as negatively as their children (Szinovacz 2003). It is also possible, as Brody (1989) explained, that children in sandwich caregiving households often take on some form of a caregiving role to help out, leading to further disruption of social life and increased family conflicts. Interestingly, while children of the sandwich generation can be negatively impacted, many researchers have found positive outcomes associated with growing up with multigenerational caregiver parents.

Positive Outcomes of the Sandwich Generation

In some cases, the positive outcomes of growing up with multigenerational caregiver parents seem to outweigh the negatives. The experience of caregiving as a child positively impacts their views of elderly people and caregiving roles long-term (Szinovacz 2003). Children were found to show greater empathy towards their grandparents and more respect towards their sandwich generation parents (Szinovacz 2003; Beach 1997). Beach (1997) conducted a study on the positive impacts that children experience with double-caregiving parents and noted that these children had more productive sibling interactions, increased empathy towards older adults throughout their lives, more positive relationships with ill relatives, and greater maturity than their peers. Another interesting finding in Beach's research (1997) was that children growing up with sandwich generation parents and close relationships with ill grandparents were more careful about choosing friends. These children looked for friends who would similarly demonstrate compassion towards their ill relatives and have an understanding for the unique situation their family was in; these children avoided friends who were insensitive to the situation (Beach 1997).

Children who helped their parents with caregiving responsibilities were found to have stronger relationships with their parents (Szinovacz 2003), specifically with their mothers – who are typically the primary care provider in a sandwich generation household – because the children grew up watching their mothers juggle multiple roles and provide care their whole lives; this caused most children to gain genuine respect for their mothers (Beach 1997). Beach (1997) also noted that families in this caregiving context tended to have tighter family bonds and cohesion, which she conceptualized as “family fusion.” Greater family fusion can, superficially, seem like a positive thing. However, when it comes to adolescents finding their own identities, increased family fusion can inhibit the teen's ability to explore their sense of self apart from the family, due to their identities being rooted so deeply in their family relationships (Beach 1997).

The potential positive impacts of providing sandwiched caregiving is not limited to children. In some cases, it also positively effects the marital relationship. This positive influence might be related to the *role enhancement hypothesis*, or the claim that multiple roles can be beneficial for a person (Pearson 2008). A study by Ward and Spitze (1998) found that spouses in the sandwich generation experienced increased marital happiness when their relationships with their aging parent and their children were strengthened. Another study found that these adults experienced *role satisfaction* from providing care to their elderly parent; supporting the idea that the double caregiving role can be experienced positively (Stephens, Franks, and Townsend 1994). For some caregivers, sandwich caregiving might be experienced as a unique opportunity for adults to “give back” to their parents.

Additionally, as mentioned above, there are cases where the elderly parent provides financial support, but there are also times when the aging parent can offer childcare, emotional support, and help with household tasks, all of which potentially help alleviate caregiver stress and burden and benefit the sandwich generation members (Ingersoll-Dayton, Neal, and Hammer 2001; Greenberg and Becker 1988). One study noted that in situations where the elderly parents are in a position to help their children and grandchildren, the elderly are no longer seen as passive recipients (Ingersoll-Dayton, Neal, and Hammer 2001). The majority of multigenerational caregivers in Ingersoll-Dayton et al.’s (2001) study reported great appreciation for their parents’ help with childcare as well as improved relationships between their elderly parents and their children. They also perceived that their elderly parents experienced personal satisfaction from their helpful role in the family (Ingersoll-Dayton, Neal, and Hammer 2001).

Reciprocity in the adult caregiver-elderly parent relationship has been widely studied to determine if the presence of reciprocity lessens caregiver stress for the caregiver and/or increases the satisfaction of the elderly parent. Reciprocal action by the elderly family members can be defined as appreciation for the care their child is providing. Studies show that when reciprocal action and gratitude are present in adult-elderly parent relationships, the adult caregiver reported less caregiver stress (Starrels et al. 1997). Exchange within the caregiving relationship was found to decrease stress levels and burnout in caregiving daughters (Dwyer, Lee, and Jankowski 1994). However, reciprocity was not found to significantly affect the satisfaction of the elderly parent being cared for (Dwyer et al. 1994).

Adults in the sandwich generation experience unique stressors for a period of time in which they occupy a double caregiving role—caring for their children and their aging parents simultaneously. This caregiver role can negatively impact one’s psychological health, physical health, career success, finances, and social relationships. However, it can also have positive benefits, including strengthening family bonds, creating an environment that fosters positive qualities and maturity for their children, as well as providing an opportunity to teach them to live selflessly. Much research among American sandwiched caregivers is quite dated, stemming mostly from the 1990s and early 2000s. Contemporary analysis will extend the original work in this area by examining a new generation of sandwiched caregivers.

METHODS

Sample

The goals of the current study were two-fold: to analyze how double-duty caregivers perceive and experience caregiver stress related to their structural positions in society, as well as to examine how sandwich generation caregivers perceive their double-duty caregiver role to influence their children. Study participants were recruited through convenience sampling. To be eligible for the study, participants had to actively be part of or previously been part of the sandwich generation. The participants in this study included 12 females residing in the United States. Six of the participants were actively performing double caregiving roles at the time of the interviews and the remaining six had prior experiences as multigenerational caregivers.

Characteristics of sandwich caregivers (SCGs) and the elderly care recipients (ECRs) are shown in *Table 1*. The average age of SCGs and ECRs were 42 and 79, respectively, at the time of caregiving. All SCGs interviewed were female and Caucasian. The average length of time for the sandwiched caregiving relationship was 5.6 years (this includes participants who are still currently providing care). The average number of children of the SCG was 2.7. Fifty-eight percent of SCGs interviewed provided care for more than one elderly family member. While the presence of dementia in the ECRs was not a requirement to participate in this study, 75% of SCGs interviewed were providing care for an ECR who was diagnosed with dementia.

Table 1. Characteristics of the Sample (n=12)

Characteristics	Sandwich Caregiver (SCG)	Elderly Care Recipient (ECR)
Average Age at the start of caregiving (years; M [SD])	42 [9.57]	79 [11.17]
Time Spent in Double-Duty Caregiving Role (years; M [SD])*	5.6 [3.70]	
Gender (female; %)	100	55
Race (White; %)	100	100
Providing Care for Multiple ECR (%)	58	
Kin Relationship of CG to ECR		
Daughter (%)	75	
Daughter-in-law (%)	25	
Granddaughter (%)	17	
Presence of Dementia (%)	75	
Number of children (M [SD])	2.7 [1.15]	

*indicate that the sandwich caregiving was currently taking place at the time of the interview

Research Design

This qualitative study of sandwiched caregivers utilized an inductive approach to identify specific caregiver stress-inducing situations, as well as the effects that this environment had on their dependent children. Interviews were utilized for data collection to contextualize this unique experience (Carcary 2009:12). Additionally, interviews are a common method used to investigate caregiver stress in the sandwich generation; the majority of the studies cited in the literature utilized interviews in their methodologies (Beach 1997; Son et al. 2007). In total, 12 semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted remotely over the phone or through a video call using FaceTime or Skype, and were approximately 30 minutes in length. Following data collection, pseudonyms were assigned to each participant in order to maintain confidentiality for the participants.

Analysis

Each interview, approximately 30 minutes in length, was tape recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. Following transcription, a loose color-coded coding system was developed in Microsoft Word to guide analysis, and was expanded as additional themes emerged during subsequent reviews of the transcripts. After the coding process was complete, individual codes that emerged were grouped into four overarching themes for analysis: specific stress-inducing situations for sandwich generation caregivers, the impacts of double-duty caregiving on relationships with children, work-family conflict and positive outcomes of sandwiched caregiving.

In an effort to preserve the validity of the study, field notes and an audit trail were utilized during the course of data collection and analysis (Carcary 2009:15). Field notes were recorded directly following each interview and consisted of the researcher's personal reflections on the interviews. Audit trails help to document the analytical process (Koch 2006) and were updated continuously throughout the coding and analysis stages.

FINDINGS

Four distinct themes emerged from this qualitative project focused on investigating the lived experiences of sandwiched caregivers. The first theme includes specific areas of the sandwich caregiving lifestyle that increased caregiver stress. These specific stress-inducing situations included the presence of parental dementia, role conflict, feelings of isolation, marital strain, and strained sibling relationships. The second theme focuses on the perceived negative impacts of double-duty caregiving on the caregiver-child relationships, while the third theme unpacks experiences of work-family conflict, including both career conflicts and caregivers becoming neglectful of personal health. The fourth and final theme highlights the positive experiences that participants reported to be directly associated with their double-duty caregiving roles. This final theme helps to fill a gap in the broader work-family spillover literature related to the absence of positive experiences. Together, these themes contextualize our understanding of the lived experiences of double-duty caregivers that are simultaneously providing care to both aging parents and their own children.

Theme 1: Specific Stress-Inducing Situations

Presence of dementia

The participants in this study identified several specific stress-inducing situations that are unique to their sandwich caregiving role. The first major theme to emerge included the stress that SCG's felt when the behaviors of their aging parent adversely impacted the SCG's children. Because the majority of participants provided care for an elderly family member suffering from dementia (75%), many stress-inducing situations described by the sandwiched caregivers (SCGs) directly relate to behavioral changes that are generally associated with a dementia diagnosis. Specifically, SCGs reported several situations in which behaviors associated with dementia negatively impacted the SCGs' children. For example, one SCG described how her mother's dementia led to risking her son's safety as well as stress and conflict when the SCG had to subsequently limit her mother's independence.

She took one of my little boys out [on a golf cart ride] without permission – the little four-year-old and she got lost. She couldn't find a way back home and *I was so scared* and then we had to take that key from her, and she already couldn't drive a car anymore... *That was really upsetting for me.* (Chelsea, Female, Age 58, 2 kids)

In another situation, SCG Eloise (Female, Age 56, 4 kids) described a situation where her elderly mother's dementia prohibited her from recognizing her grandchildren. This confusion led to her elderly mother experiencing romantic feelings for Eloise's adult son.

My mother is in love with my son and does not know that he is my son. She says [and tries] very inappropriate things. I am with my mother 24/7 and my son can't be in that room [with us]...*it's extremely hard.* And then you don't have a relationship with your son. (Eloise, Female, Age 56, 4 kids)

Eloise recounted the emotional awkwardness and complications that this created in her household. She described the barrier that now exists between herself and her son—Eloise spends the majority of her day caring for her mother, preventing her from spending time with her son. She also talked about how her son used to have a close relationship with his grandma, but no longer has that connection. In general, Eloise shared her difficulties attempting to balance both of those relationships, and she expressed sorrow over the disrupted relationships between herself and her son, as well as between her son and his grandmother.

Participants also related increased stress to instances when the elderly family member suffering from dementia lashed out physically on other family members:

She pushed my daughter today. (Eloise, Female, Age 56, 4 kids)

She's hit me, she's grabbed me, she's shaken me, and she's done that to my dad. (Katy, Female, Age 52, 2 kids)

SCGs, like Katy (Female, Age 52, 2 kids), also noted stressful situations related to conflicts between elderly parents related to physical violence perpetuated by the elderly parent with dementia. Katy was in a tough situation when her elderly mother's dementia led to outbursts of physical violence that put her mentally-sound elderly father in danger.

When my mother was physical...I saw bruises on my dad. One time, *my mother took a knife and ran after him* and he ran out of the house... that's when we moved him into our house. (Katy, Female, Age 52, 2 kids)

Katy recounted how stressful it was to convince her dad to move in with her. She described how guilty her dad felt, leaving her mom alone. She also said it was very difficult for her mother to come to terms with her husband choosing to live with their daughter over herself. This was something her mother could not understand because her dementia

prevented her from remembering her violent outbursts. This experience was stressful for the whole family—Katy’s father was emotionally affected by his wife’s violent outbursts and his guilt over moving out. In addition, Katy’s children were unable to see their grandmother for a period of time. There was also additional stress as Katy and her family adjusted to sharing their household with her elderly father (Katy, Female, Age 52, 2 kids).

This research builds on previous findings related to the presence of dementia increasing caregiver stress and contributes the additional perspective of how this stress might also impact the SCG’s children. These findings regarding the increased caregiver stress associated with dementia are supported by previous literature (Boutoleau-Bretonniere, Vercelletto, Volteau, Renou, Lamy, and Zarit 2008; Solberg, Solberg, and Peterson 2014). In addition to the increased caregiver stress, Son et al. (2007) also found that in caregiving situations where the elderly parent suffers from exacerbated health or behavioral issues associated with dementia, the caregivers experienced more overall poorer physical and mental health. As experienced and shared by the participants in this study, the presence of parental dementia further complicates the unique stressors experienced by sandwiched caregivers.

Role conflict and social isolation

In addition to the challenges that come with caring for an elderly parent’s cognitive decline, caregiver stress was found to be exacerbated by role conflict. *Role conflict* occurs when multiple roles that one plays in life (such as wife, mother, daughter) compete with each other (Miller 1981). SCGs experience role conflict in relation to their double-duty caregiving roles (Pierret 2006). The concept of *double-duty caregiving* is traditionally referred to in the context of work and home—performing care work in a professional setting as well as at home (Cottingham, Chapman, and Erickson 2019); however, in this research, we have extended the concept of double-duty caregiving to include two types of uncompensated caregiving, parental care and childcare. This approach is a contribution to literature. When participants were asked to describe their most stressful situations, they referred often to the juggling of the many roles a sandwich generation caregiver must play—mother, daughter, wife, and employee:

I can’t be a great mom and a great teacher and a great wife and a great daughter and take care of myself. *I can’t do it all.* (Chelsea, Female, Age 58, 2 kids)

Chelsea was experiencing role conflict in this situation—she wanted to excel in her roles of mother and daughter, but felt as though she needed to choose whether to put her energy towards being a great mother or a great daughter—that she could not be great at both roles at once. Another SCG described her experience with conflicting roles as something that caused her to lose her sense of self. She explained feeling detached from her life and as though her life existed simply to serve others:

I feel like my life is very much so not my own. (Veronica, Female, Age 34, 1 kid)

Other SCGs recounted feelings of guilt when the roles of wife, mother and daughter would conflict, and they felt forced to prioritize one over the others. In many cases, feelings of

guilt seemed unavoidable. They felt guilty for not spending enough time with their children and husband, and also felt guilty for not spending enough time with their elderly parents (Katy, Female, Age 52, 2 kids).

I just feel like I should be at home with my parents, but *being home with my parents means I'm away from [my family]*. (Amanda, Female, Age 57, 2 kids)

The role conflict that SCGs experience can be extreme and lead to isolation from friend groups as well as their families in some situations. As explained by Amanda (Female, Age 57, 2 kids), her isolation from her family was one of the most stressful periods of her life. Her elderly parents who needed her care lived over 8-hours and a state line away. She was making trips back and forth so that she could take care of both her small children and her sick parents. The time-intensive commute further complicated Amanda's (Female, age 57, 2 kids) double-duty caregiver stress.

I was coming back and forth...*I'd be home and then I'd leave*. I figured out I was home, over those three months, actually 12 days. (Amanda, Female, Age 57, 2 kids)

Alongside isolation from their families, many SCGs (50%) mentioned feelings of isolation from their friends. This isolation from personal relationships outside their family was due to the busyness of their double caregiving role:

I don't see my friends...*my personal life is shot*. (Eloise, Female, Age 56, 4 kids)

I didn't have time to tend to a lot of my relationships outside of my immediate family...*my circle got a lot smaller*. (Carly, Female, Age 52, 2 kids)

In some cases, respondents identified that sheer busyness was not always to blame for their social isolation. Veronica suggested that her sandwiched caregiving role seemed to define her lifestyle in a way that was different to that of her friends, creating an invisible social barrier of sorts. She explains:

I'm not dealing with this alongside any friends. Like they're taking care of their, you know, babies and toddlers and dogs (Veronica, Female, Age 34, 1 kid)

Several participants reported that these experiences of social isolation and role conflict associated with their sandwiched caregiving role directly led to strained relationships. Two specific types of strained relationships that they mentioned included those with their spouses and those with their siblings. Both of these types of relationships seemed to be stressed by the time demands of the sandwich caregiving role. Interestingly though, although the demands of the sandwich caregiving role were the culprit for both types of strained relationships, the point of stress was different for each. The SCGs shared that while their marriages were strained by issues related to role conflict, their sibling relationships were strained by the perception of

uneven distribution of caregiving labor among siblings. Regardless of the point of stress, the fact remains that the SCGs experienced strained relationships due to their sandwich caregiver role.

Marital strain

Many of the participants shared that in addition to feeling socially isolated from their friends, they also felt isolated from their husbands. Due to the time and energy required for the sandwich caregiving responsibilities, the majority of the SCGs interviewed reported an increased level of strain on their marriage that led to them feeling isolated from their spouses.

For my husband and I to even go to the grocery store [together], it's huge. Everything is: "oh you stay here [with my mom] while I go do this." And *it's extremely stressful* that I don't have time with my husband. (Eloise, Female, Age 56, 4 kids)

In one case, the marital strain was so great that it led to a divorce for Chelsea (Female, Age 58, 2 kids) and her husband. Her husband had initially agreed to help her provide care for her elderly parents—one of whom was suffering from dementia. Chelsea and her husband even purchased a bigger house so that her elderly parents could move in with them. However, after a few months, Chelsea explained that her husband felt that she was neglecting her role as a wife:

My husband decided he didn't want to be a husband anymore and left. *I drove [him] away.* (Chelsea, Female, Age 58, 2 kids)

As Chelsea explained this heartbreaking situation, she recounted feelings of guilt and explained how her struggles with role conflict led to her husband realizing he was not actually okay with caring for her elderly parents.

I was really struggling with being a good wife, a good daughter, a good mom...and I definitely prioritized being a good daughter and mom before being a good wife...I was trying to be a good wife, but *I could not pull it all off and he left over that.* (Chelsea, Female, Age 58, 2 kids)

Unfortunately, Chelsea's situation is not uncommon. The majority of literature agrees that sandwich caregiving is linked to increased marital conflict (Loomis and Booth 1995; Tebes and Irish 2000; Bengston 2001). Similar to the results of this study, which showed that it is common for husbands to feel neglected by their wives because of the lack of time available to be a good wife (specifically in the case of Chelsea), literature shows that increased marital strain is connected to the lack of ability to put time and effort into marriages, leaving one spouse feeling insignificant (Roots 1998; Pnina 2006). Other researchers credit marital strain in the case of sandwich generation caregivers to the disturbance of the caregiving in daily life and its interruption of privacy (Loomis and Booth 1995).

Many SCGs recounted stressful situations that were related to the isolation that came from juggling so many roles—caregiving and otherwise. There is a gap in the literature related to a sandwich caregiver’s experience with role conflict. In fact, role conflict has even been classified as an “atypical” occurrence for sandwich generation caregivers (Evandrou and Glaser 2004). Additionally, caregiver stress researchers have reached different conclusions related to the experiences of role conflict among sandwich caregivers. Researchers agree that female sandwich generation caregivers experience role conflict when they have conflicting priorities regarding how to spend their time and energy (Evandrou and Glaser 2004; Mui 1992). However, the present study uncovered that role conflict led to isolation from both their husbands and children, and in some cases, from their friends, too. Isolation from their families is not covered in the literature, but sandwich caregivers experiencing isolation from friends is well studied.

The effects of caregiver stress and the juggling of many roles limits personal time because caregivers choose to sacrifice their personal lives and activities in order to provide care for their elderly parents (Riley and Bowen 2005). In their study of caregiver stress, Glaser and colleagues (2006) found that occupying an intensive caregiver role significantly reduced the caregiver’s involvement in social activities. Opposing literature does exist, noting that maintaining multiple roles is associated with higher social activity levels for women, as well as with more opportunities to meet new people (Glaser, Evandrou, Tomassini 2006). This study contributes to the current body of sandwich caregiver research by identifying that many SCGs felt isolated from their own families, in addition to their friends.

Strained sibling relationships

The majority of the stressful situations described above occurred within the home or directly with the elderly family member requiring care, yet all 12 SCGs interviewed also mentioned increased stress and conflict in relation to the uneven distribution of caregiving labor among siblings of SCGs. Most conversations with the SCGs related to sharing responsibilities for their elderly parent with a sibling or sibling-in-law consisted of them expressing frustration about people being unhelpful. Interestingly, in their descriptions of these frustrating situations, the SCGs often discussed a reason for why they, of all the siblings, were the best cut out for sandwich generation living. More often than not, this excuse was often related to gender. For example, Katy (Female, Age 52, 2 kids) lived over two hours away from her parents when they started needing everyday help. Her brother lived less than 30 minutes from them, but Katy still took on the role of primary caregiver. Eventually, she had no choice but to disrupt her parents’ lives even more and move them closer to her so she could provide more frequent and in-depth care. Katy described it this way:

My brother is a male and not in healthcare. I’m in healthcare, I’m female...*it just makes sense* and I’m willing to do it; I can do it. (Katy, Female, Age 52, 2 kids)

Other SCGs provided similar gender-related reasons as to why brothers were unable to step up and take on partial responsibility for the elderly parent caregiving. All of the SCGs

interviewed were women and they collectively seemed to think that this fact alone made them responsible for being the sole provider of care for their elderly parents.

My brother...was working and *couldn't take time off*. (Amanda, Female, Age 57, 2 kids)

They [my brothers] have jobs and lives and they can't stop. My oldest brother...just doesn't care. *It's not that he can't [help], but he won't*. (Eloise, Female, Age 56, 4 kids)

My dad couldn't stay in California because *it was just more than my brother could ever have taken on*. (Carly, Female, Age 52, 2 kids)

This mindset, that women are better equipped to be caregivers, exemplifies gender role theory—which describes the influence of gender socialization. Umberson and colleagues (1996:838) explain that young girls are commonly socialized to be more “nurturant and relationship-oriented” than young boys. This theory explains that gender socialization influences the roles that men and women play in social institutions, specifically the sexual division of labor in the heteronormative family. This division of labor connects women to the roles of wife, mother, and overall caregiver (Ritzer and Stepnisky 2017: pg. 224). The literature also supports increased conflicts and stressors related to sibling relationships in the sandwich generation caregiving situation, especially when females are forced to assume the caregiver role (Scommegna 2016).

Another interesting finding related to the distribution of caregiving amongst siblings included the dynamic of in-laws. Three of the SCGs interviewed were wives caring for their husband's elderly parents – their in-laws. There appeared to be more stress associated with these situations because the SCGs felt that the actual children of the parents should be taking on more responsibility and more of an active caregiving role. Because these three SCGs were the main caregivers of their husband's parents, they felt restricted in how they lived their lives due to the fact that their schedules were dependent on other biological children of the elderly parents stepping up to cover caregiving shifts:

If she [sister-in-law] decides that she wants to do something other than have her mom, *then I can't do what I want to do*. (Julie, Female, Age 48, 4 kids)

Multiple cases were described where a biological son wanted to help provide care for his elderly parents, but his wife was not supportive, leaving the responsibilities up to the elderly parents' biological daughter.

Her son wanted her, but *my sister-in-law felt that this was going to be too much...* It was like: I already have my own problems. (Molly, Female, Age 73, 1 grandkid)

They had their own family. My brother's wife wanted to raise her kids and my mother would take over a little cooking and...*there was conflict*. (Hannah, Female, Age 76, 3 kids)

Another cause of stress in this situation related to times when the uninvolved siblings and in-laws freely offered their opinions on the caregiving situations. In Michaela's (Female, Age 44, 4 kids) case, her husband's parents needed everyday care, but his sister was unwilling to step up and help with caregiving responsibilities, yet she offered criticism as to how Michaela and her husband chose to provide care:

[My husband's] sister has a lot of opinions about their health and their money or with their situation. And she offers them freely but *isn't around to actually help with anything*. She just has an opinion on what should happen. (Michaela, Female, Age 44, 4 kids)

In another situation, Chelsea's (Female, Age 58, 2 kids) elderly mother was on hospice and had a failure to thrive. Her brother who lived states away and who had not played any type of active role in providing for her care for the entire decade beforehand decided to offer his opinion regarding end-of-life care:

When it came to make a decision about my mom and letting her go, he [my brother] basically said *we couldn't play God* and take the feeding tube out, but *the rest of the family and my dad all wanted that*. My brother wasn't living out here with her. (Chelsea, Female, Age 58, 2 kids)

The literature supports the finding that it is common for one sibling to assume the position of "primary caregiver" over other siblings because they view caregiving as a type of familial duty (Keith, Wacker and Collins 2009). Literature related to caregiver stress associated with sibling relationships for sandwich generation caregivers is limited. One study, by Young (2017), surveyed SCGs and asked a few questions about sibling relationships and found that the majority of participants reported feeling low levels of support from their siblings and in-laws, leading to moderate levels of additional caregiver stress (Young 2017). Another study by Smith and Hamon (2012), noted a few positive sandwiched caregiving interactions and concluded that if siblings are able to work together on the caregiving responsibilities and communicate well, then there is more sibling satisfaction and less additional stress due to sibling interactions.

Theme 2: The Impacts of Double-Duty Caregiving on Relationships with Children

In addition to looking at what situations caused increased caregiver stress for the SCGs, this research also aimed to analyze how being part of the sandwich generation impacts familial interactions, specifically how parents perceived their sandwiched caregiver role to influence their children. Multiple respondents mentioned that their children had vocalized feeling abandoned and isolated by their mothers when more time was spent caring for their grandparents than themselves. Isabelle directly asked her now adult son:

If you could put down a couple words that you look back and think of during that time? And he had three words. He said, "*You were absent and sad and stressed.*" (Isabelle, Female, Age 54, 4 kids)

My youngest son...will even talk about it today and he's 28 [now], about *how I abandoned him as a child*. Because in his eyes, he was. (Amanda, Female, Age 57, 2 kids)

Molly (Female, Age 73, 1 grandkid) was in a unique situation where she was providing care for both her grandchild and her own elderly mother. Molly was able to recall a situation when her granddaughter expressed her frustration with the sandwiched caregiving situation during a play session involving her dollhouse:

There were mother, father, child, and grandma [dolls]. And she couldn't express it, but she put the grandma doll on the roof, and she said, "Grandma, this is you!" And she would hit it and knock it off the roof. *She didn't want her [great-grandmother] here.* (Molly, Female, Age 73, 1 grandkid)

The feelings of abandonment that these children felt are evident in these examples. The now adult children are able to clearly remember the absence of their parents that came from their parents having to provide care for their grandparents, and even the younger children were able to express their feelings toward the sandwich generation situation using toys. Feelings of stress and abandonment in children of sandwich generation caregivers is supported with previous literature. A study by Szinovacz (2003) found that children of the sandwich generation felt that the double-caregiving role took their parents away from them and that their parents showed more attention towards their grandparent than themselves.

These real-life examples also show that SCG parents are aware of how their double-duty caregiving role affects their children, whose childhoods look different than the average child's. Sandwich generation caregiving leads to a unique set of circumstances that, in some cases, lead to older children playing a more active role in providing care for the elderly family member. This is especially likely to occur when the SCG also works outside the home:

My older daughters were helping care for her while I was at work...helping her to the toilet and washing her up. And they helped me care for my dad as well; *at a very early age, she was helping me empty his colostomy bag.* (Abigail, Female, Age 36, 4 kids)

This mother needed additional help so she could go to work and provide for her family, but she knew that caring for their elderly and ill grandparents was hard on her daughters – this made the situation all the more difficult for Abigail. She felt guilty because their teenage years were being spent caregiving and this goes against the cultural norm (Abigail, Female, Age 36, 4 kids). This same sort of situation can be seen in previous literature. A study by Brody (1989) noted that children growing up with sandwich generation parents usually take on some form

of a caregiving role in order to help out and that this phenomenon typically leads to disruption of social life and increased family conflicts.

Additionally, many participants shared feelings of guilt when asked about their children. On top of feeling guilty for being absent, many respondents associated their guilty feelings with missing out on various events and activities that their children were involved in, such as school awards ceremonies or sporting events.

I missed my daughter's senior year. Everything...her awards, she played field hockey. *I just wasn't present in her life.* (Eloise, Female, Age 56, 4 kids)

I missed one parent-teacher conference, and my older son made a statement about like, "Well I only had my dad, everybody else had their mom and their dad." (Amanda, Female, Age 57, 2 kids)

Isabelle (Female, Age 54, 4 kids) recounted her regret in having to miss her son and daughter's high school football games, but she put more emphasis on her guilt related to how their family had to change how they spent the holidays during this time:

Even Easter, like holidays where I would [normally] be the main hostess, *those kind of fell by the wayside* (Isabelle, Female, Age 54, 4 kids)

Multiple SCGs recounted that they were aware that their family home life made their kids' childhoods look different than other children their age – regarding both the everyday life and holidays. This sandwich caregiving lifestyle was noted to emotionally strain their children in many cases (Eloise, Female, Age 56, 4 kids; Isabelle, Female, Age 54, 4 kids; Amanda, Female, Age 57, 2 kids), but in one case, the emotional stress manifested physically for a child. Amanda was driving across multiple state lines to provide care for her ill parents when her kids were young. She was driving back and forth multiple times per week to show up as both a mom and a caregiving daughter, and while this imposed an incredible amount of stress on Amanda, it also caused stress for her son.

He [has] no mom at home because I was coming back and forth. My youngest son was starting to have issues. He didn't want to go to school; he had a bellyache. And *it was all related to the fact that I was not home...*he developed a stomach ulcer (Amanda, Female, Age 57, 2 kids)

The negative effects that a sandwich caregiving position has on the caregiver's children is covered in literature, though with much less specificity and personal detail as listed above. Similar to the case discussed above with Abigail, other studies have shown that when SCGs are under intense amounts of caregiving stress, their children are more likely to experience increased depression, problematic behaviors, and diminished functioning (Tebes and Irish 2000). The study by Tebes and Irish (2000) saw an overwhelming amount of noticed

absenteeism in SCG children's lives, but the majority of other literature does not acknowledge the commonality of SCG parents being aware of their absence in their children's lives. While Szinovacz (2003) found that children felt that their parents showed more attention to their grandparents than themselves (Szinovacz 2003), the parents themselves are not found to notice this in outside literature.

Positive experiences for SCG children

While a number of respondents in this study reported negative emotional experiences related to being raised by sandwich generation parents, many were also able to recall positive experiences that, in some cases, outweighed the negative. For example:

My boys are very, very close. They slept together almost every night [when I was away]. *They had to rely on each other...*they probably talk every day on the phone [now, as adults] (Amanda, Female, Age 57, 2 kids)

My boys are both really- very family oriented (Carly, Female, Age 52, 2 kids)

They recognize...when something needs done or someone needs help and they'll just do it without being asked...that's a little bit of *maturity*. (Julie, Female, Age 48, 4 kids)

While the majority of respondents experienced guilt or negative emotions related to their double-duty caregiving stress, these participants also framed the experience in a beneficial way to their children. Participants noted positive attributes that their children gained from growing up in such a unique environment – stronger sibling bonds, higher value on family, selflessness, and independence. These reflections align with other literature that found SCG children to have more productive sibling relationships, increased empathy, and greater maturity (Beach 1997; Szinovacz 2003). Additionally, a pattern that arose within this research – but is not mentioned in literature – was the prevalence of a child growing up with an SCG parent(s) choosing a caregiving field career path. Of the now-adult aged children of the SCGs interviewed, 38% were reported to be in a caregiving profession. When you look at just female children, because females are more likely to occupy a caregiving role than men (Croft, Schmader, and Block 2015), the percentage increases to 62%. This gravitation towards a caregiving career suggests that their sandwiched childhood experience may have shaped their character towards being more empathetic and drawn towards caring for those in need (Szinovacz 2003).

Theme 3: Work-family Spillover

Work-family spillover is defined as the transmission of behaviors, stress, and emotions between work and home (Curbow, McDonnell, Spratt, Griffin and Agnew 2003:311). For the purpose of this study, "work" is defined as work related to a career outside the home or uncompensated work related to the caregiving specifically performed for an elderly family member by the sandwich generation caregiver. This operationalization expands the traditional notion that double-duty caregiving is associated with a combination of occupational and

personal caregiving responsibilities. This research specifically extends the concept of double-duty caregiver and work-family spillover to include the non-paid caregiving that SCGs provide to their elderly parents. In general, SCGs reported two distinct experiences of work-family spillover related to their SCG role: career conflicts and the neglect of their personal health. In both situations, the SCGs described negative spillover experiences.

Career conflicts

Because women are now increasingly more likely to be part of the workforce (Pierret 2006), balancing a career on top of being a wife, mother, and daughter is another unique aspect of the sandwich generation that is associated with stress. Many SCGs described having to make drastic (and oftentimes unwanted and unplanned) career changes in order to care for their elderly parents and children. For Katy (Female, Age 52, 2 kids), she worked with patients in a homecare setting, but when her parents needed more and more of her attention, she cut back to part time and then, eventually, took a remote position so she could work from home and stopped seeing patients altogether:

I probably would've never ever done this job if I didn't have my parents with dementia.
(Katy, Female, Age 52, 2 kids)

She expressed disappointment that her career took such an unforeseen turn. She reiterated how much she had loved her previous job and missed seeing patients, but working from home gave her the flexibility that she needed to be a good mom and a good daughter to her elderly parents with dementia.

For another family, beginning to take care of their elderly parents involved moving across the ocean. Michaela (Female, Age 44, 4 kids) and her husband worked overseas, but had to both completely switch careers so that they could move back to the United States in order to be able to provide care for her husband's parents. While Michaela looked on the bright side regarding her sandwiched caregiving circumstances, she did share some disappointment in regards to having to postpone their overseas ventures.

It was also a common occurrence for women to feel lost without their preferred careers that they had been working towards. Eloise (Female, Age 56, 4 kids) initially had a caretaker come in during her workday, but because of the aggressive behaviors her elderly mother was exhibiting, due to the dementia, that was not a sustainable solution. Eloise ended up quitting her job to take care of her mother, but having to leave a job that gave her such purpose left her feeling displaced and useless:

I ended up quitting my job... I loved my job. I was good at my job... I don't use my brain anymore. (Eloise, Female, Age 56, 4 kids)

Eloise quitting her job ended up exacerbating the stress her family was under because she had been providing her family with health benefits. Having to quit her job to care for her mother led to financial stressors for her family as well. Another SCG experienced a similar

career situation where she struggled to find a job that would allow her to financially support her family as well as be flexible enough for her to provide care for her family:

I needed to work financially, but I had to make sure I was in a job that gave me flexibility. (Carly, Female, Age 52, 2 kids)

The situations described above are not uncommon. Literature supports the unfortunate scenario of females in the sandwich generation quitting their jobs in order to simultaneously provide the best care for their children and their elderly parents. Balancing multigenerational caregiving with a career makes it significantly harder to achieve career goals and meet employer expectations, especially in the United States where family-oriented employment processes such as paid leave and flexible work schedules are lacking (Ciabattari 2017:174-176). Previous studies have shown that adults in the sandwich generation are more likely to have to take time off of work for caregiving tasks than regular caregivers. The conflict between career and home can lead to increased caregiver stress and results in many sandwiched women changing careers or quitting their jobs altogether (Starrels, Ingersoll-Dayton, Dowler, and Neal 1997; Chapman, Ingersoll-Dayton, and Neal 1994).

Neglecting personal health

With the extreme volume of work that sandwich generation caregivers must provide for their children, elderly parents, and careers outside the home, the SCG's own health tends to fall low on the priority list. Veronica (Female, Age 34, 1 kid) explicitly said that she is no longer able to take the time to schedule her own doctor's appointments between the time needed for her parents' and her young daughter's appointments. Over half of the SCGs interviewed reported trouble sleeping during their time of double-duty caregiving. One SCG shared that her insomnia was a physical manifestation of caregiver stress and her constant worry for her elderly parents in the back of her head:

It's always in the back of my head, always there. What do they need? It weighs me down. (Veronica, Female, Age 34, 1 kid)

Another common physical health outcome of sandwich generation caregiving was back pain. Many of these women had to physically help lift the elderly family member they were taking care of – sometimes daily, for years – and this repeated strain has led to chronic back pains for some SCGs (Abigail, Female, Age 36, 4 kids; Eloise, Female, Age 56, 4 kids). Outside literature regarding the health of SCGs mainly focuses on negative mental health effects such as depression and anxiety (Catanach and Tebes 1991; Byrd, Grant-Vallone, and Hamill 2002). The results of this study contextualize these findings with qualitative evidence of the connection between caregiver stress and mental health (Son et al. 2007). In general, the participants in this study shared that the stress of providing double-duty caregiving led many of them to neglect their personal health.

Theme 4: Positive Experiences of Sandwiched Caregivers

While there are many drawbacks to living in the sandwich generation that have been discussed at length, positive examples did arise when the women were asked to reflect on how living in such a unique circumstance might have impacted their lives for the better. The following positive outcomes discussed are examples of *positive work-family spillover*. It is well founded in the literature that positive work-family spillover experiences are in the minority (Grzywacz 2000). A few participants noted how the sandwich generation – in hindsight – positively impacted their marriage. The sandwiched situation taught some couples important life lessons and made them more grateful for the time they had with their families:

[I] really do think that it made us stronger because the reality of losing a parent is very sobering and *it makes you appreciate the time you have with your own spouse*.
(Isabelle, Female, Age 54, 4 kids)

The sandwich generation situation also provided opportunities for husbands to grow in their roles of husband and father. Multiple women described how their husbands showed their support by doing house renovations. For Abigail (Female, Age 36, 4 kids), her husband was tired of not having his wife around all the time because she was driving back and forth to her parents' house every day to care for them, so he decided to do something about it:

He came home one day and said, "I'm going to convert our apartment building into one big house *so we can all be together*." (Abigail, Female, Age 36, 4 kids)

Though scarce, positive outcomes related to marriage were seen in the literature related to sandwiched caregiving. Ward and Spitze (1998) found that spouses in the sandwich generation experienced increased marital happiness when their relationships with the elderly parent and their children were strengthened by the sandwiched living. The present study provides further support for these strengthened relationships.

Another prevalent positive outcome of sandwich generation caregiving involved role satisfaction for the SCG and their family. Several SCGs reported having no regrets after their elderly family member(s) passed away. SCGs felt validated that they were intimately involved in their elderly family member's life – playing their part in making sure that they were properly taken care of till the end.

We all feel like we *did our part*. We *feel like we honored him* and we're *thankful* we had that opportunity to make sure he was safe and cared for *and not alone*. (Carly, Female, Age 52, 2 kids)

I got to know my mom and dad. [I had] all that adult time of learning about who they were and when my dad passed away, *I had zero regrets*. I was so thankful that I had *all that time with him*. (Chelsea, Female, Age 58, 2 kids)

The role satisfaction experienced by SCGs is supported by outside literature. Especially after the elderly family member passes away, SCGs are able to fully appreciate the role they were able to play at the end of their parents' lives. One study found that SCGs reported role satisfaction because they were able to give back to their parents who put so much work into raising them when they were children themselves (Stephens, Franks, and Townsend 1994).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Adults in the sandwich generation live a unique life in that they occupy double-duty caregiving roles—caring for their children and an elderly family member simultaneously. This research investigated the lives of 12 female sandwich generation caregivers who experienced varying levels of caregiver stress and role conflict associated with the fulfillment of their various social roles. Personal situations differed in many aspects, including the quality of the caregiving relationship, level of perceived support, the presence of serious medical conditions, and resources. This research aimed to study specific situations associated with caregiver stress, how double-duty caregiving affected family relationships, and the experiences of work-family spillover.

Through qualitative analysis, this study highlighted the interconnectedness between the double-duty caregiving status, stress levels and relationships for the caregiver. The results of this study suggest that sandwiched caregivers perceive their double-duty caregiving roles to be associated with both positive and negative outcomes. Many participants reported that the combined stressors associated with their SCG role resulted in negative physical outcomes, such as insomnia and back pain. One participant (Veronica, Female, Age 34, 1 kid) even directly connected that her caregiver stress is associated with her insomnia. As such, this research exemplifies the hypothesis of role strain theory, because many of the SCGs described increased stress when the role of primary caregiver for an elderly parent was added to the multiple roles they already fulfilled (Goode 1960).

Interestingly, the results of this research also support notions of role enhancement theory (Marks 1977) by expanding our understanding of the potential positive outcomes associated with performing sandwich caregiving, such as improved marital relationships, due to spouses having the opportunity to demonstrate support for their double-duty caregiving spouse. Additionally, as supported by some previous work, some SCG's in this study reported feeling role satisfaction following the death of their elderly family member. In essence, following the death of their elderly family member that they were providing primary care for, they were left with a feeling that they had "done their part" and some even expressed gratitude for the time and increased interactions they got to share with their family member while performing their sandwich caregiving role.

The simultaneous support of two conflicting theories, role enhancement and role strain, highlights the complexity of the individual experiences within the sandwich caregiver role. As supported by the literature, these variable perceptions of the experience might be related to both personal, as well as structural factors, such as an individual's interpretation of the situation, and the presence of young children. Steiner and Fletcher (2017: 142) note that "unexpected" roles are also often perceived as "more challenging" and are associated with higher stress levels. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, these varying perceptions of

the experience of performing double-duty caregiving enhance our understanding of expectations and norms associated with the institution of the family (Stryker and Statham 1985).

The majority of research regarding the sandwich generation in the United States is dated, mostly from the 1990s and early 2000s. Contemporary research is needed to contextualize how the large Baby Boomer generation – those born between 1946 and 1964 (Smith and Tasman 2005) – is experiencing double-duty caregiving within modern society. This research study showed that all of the female sandwich generation caregivers interviewed experienced varying forms of loneliness, isolation, and perceived a lack of support. This evidence indicates that future research needs to focus on caregiving resources and healthy coping mechanisms, in addition to the changing demographics of the American family. Additional research on the sandwich generation experience could be beneficial to family counselors as well as policymakers. Counselors may not know how to help a family in this unique position and more research could provide counselors with resources that may help them aid sandwich caregivers in self-care, as well as managing role conflict and caregiver stress. Policymakers might be able to use this type of research to inform family-friendly policies that improve the welfare of sandwich generation caregivers and the care recipients.

It is important to note that one potential limitation of this research is related to the use of convenience sampling. This sampling methodology might be at least partially responsible for the racial and gender homogeneity of the sample. Since generalization to the population is generally not a goal of qualitative research, the results of this study remain valuable to contextualize our understanding of how sandwich caregivers perceive their lived realities. It is equally as important to also note that the majority of family caregivers in the United States are women (Hammer and Neal 2008; Tebes and Irish 2000). Regarding racial composition, increased diverse samples will further improve our understanding. Future research should work to address differences in race/ethnicity/cultural values of family members, and how those characteristics may shape the sandwich generation caregiving experience. Future research endeavors regarding the sandwich generation could also work to contextualize nuances of double-duty caregiving such as the unique stress that in-law children feel when they provide care for their spouse's parent(s). Additionally, it is likely that men in the sandwich generation caregiver role experience/perceive caregiver stress and role conflict differently than women and future research would expand our understanding of the role by investigating how men experience and adapt to the situation.

This qualitative study focused on investigating the lived experiences of sandwich generation caregivers and discovered that SCG's experience both positive and negative aspects of double-duty caregiving in the 21st century in the United States. The results of this research enhance our understanding of the complex situations involved in the sandwiched caregiving role that lead to caregivers experiencing both positive and negative stress. For some, the double-duty caregiving role of the sandwich generation is associated with role conflict, while for others, it is associated with role enhancement. Future researchers might attempt to investigate the personal and structural characteristics that are associated with these differential caregiving experiences.

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BIOGRAPHIES

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INTERSECTION OF RACE AND SEX AND ITS EFFECTS ON SENTENCING LENGTH: A PILOT STUDY

Alyssa McLaughlin and J. Scott Lewis

ABSTRACT

Sociological literature has repeatedly documented racial disparities in incarceration, with Black males incarcerated disproportionately compared to their white counterparts. The “Chivalry hypothesis” asserts that women are sentenced less severely and less frequently than men for the same crimes. However, while most sociologists recognize intersectionality, little research exists in examining the intersection of racial identity and sex in the context of the criminal justice system, which work together to grant or deny privilege in various ways in the courtroom. Using a mixed method approach this study seeks to move towards an intersectional understanding of sentence length disparities. Quantitative investigation included a Factorial ANOVA on data from the United States Sentencing Commission’s 2019 fiscal year on white men, Black men, white women, and Black women sentenced for drug possession. Qualitative follow up involved interviews with two lawyers and a judge practicing in the state of Pennsylvania. Results indicate there was no significant effect of the intersection of race and sex on sentencing disparities for drug possession. However, there was a significant effect for robbery offenders when using an intersectional lens. Qualitative interviews support the existence of sentencing disparities on the basis of intersectionality for specific crimes, and lends further guidance to understanding quantitative findings.

INTRODUCTION

Although the core value and belief of the criminal justice system is that “justice is blind,” research and data suggest otherwise. Disparities in criminal justice sentencing across the United States is a widely studied sociological phenomenon. Most often these disparities are understood through analyzing the differences in sentencing between the individual characteristics of racial identity. Empirical research has shown that people who are Black are incarcerated disproportionately than people who are white (Bobo & Thompson 2006). The racial typification of crime (Chiricos et al. 2004) is one way that allows us to understand how one’s racial identity is implicitly associated with certain types of crimes based on negative and harmful racial stereotypes. The assumption that certain types of crimes are “Black crimes” is a part of implicit *de facto* racial biases, and further inflates this assumption of racialized crimes, ultimately contributing to the disparity between white and Black individuals who are sentenced

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to prison. This process of implicit thinking is present at all layers of the criminal justice system. Multiple studies have reached a similar conclusion about the impact of race on criminal sentencing (Shannon et al. 2017; Mauer 2010; Mustard 2001; King et al. 2010; Lu 2007; Daly & Tonry 1997; Sorenson et al. 2012), concluding that on average Black individuals are sentenced more than white individuals, and are often given longer sentences on average as well. However, almost none of these studies take into account the influence of sex in conjunction with racial identity on the extent of the punishment for committing said crimes. These studies fail to take into consideration that there are characteristics beyond race that could be influencing the outcome of individuals in the criminal justice system.

Less commonly compared, but still studied, is the Chivalry hypothesis. The Chivalry hypothesis suggests that on the basis of sex, women will most often receive less severe criminal sentences than their male counterparts for the same crimes (Zhao & Rogalin 2017; Rodriguez et al. 2006; Daly & Tonry 1997; Sorenson et al. 2012). While not itself a theory, the Chivalry hypothesis lends focused insight into an occurring phenomenon of gendered incarceration. Although women have been historically discriminated against through various social institutions, it would not be expected that their identity as a woman in society would grant them the upper hand in the criminal justice system. How criminal behavior came to be gendered may help explain this phenomenon. The Chivalry hypothesis falls squarely within the paradigm of feminist theory and asserts that women are essentially stereotyped. Gendered assumptions about their maturity, capabilities, and so on, are used to explain away their criminal behaviors. As a result of these stereotypes implicitly being used in the criminal justice system, female offenders will be given preferential treatment by all parties involved in the criminal sentencing process (Rodriguez et al. 2006:320). Similar to the racial typification of crime, criminal behavior is also gendered; the assumption exists that women are not as capable as men are of committing certain types of crimes and are somehow less responsible, or should be punished less harshly as a result of their sex. The essential question is whether it was a "heinous crime or an unfortunate incident," as posed through Zhao and Rogalin's work (2017). Nonetheless, current research focusing on the Chivalry hypothesis does not take into consideration the impact race may have on these sentences; the outcome of a white woman versus a Black woman being sentenced for the same crime may differ because of the race of the individual being tried. Gendered assumptions work in conjunction with racial stereotypes and the implicit perceptions of white women versus Black women are wildly different within American society (Donovan 2011; Lewis & Neville 2015). Racial identity plays a role in the courtroom - and the criminal justice system as a whole - and can work in relation to sex to create disparities among those sentenced in more profound ways than originally imagined.

Individual characteristics do not exist in a vacuum. Rather, each characteristic is part of an intersecting identity that works together to either grant or deny privilege within the social institutions created by those in power. This concept is recognized as intersectionality theory (Crenshaw 1989), which assists in understanding the effects of being marginalized on the basis of sex and race in the criminal justice system and, ultimately, helps us to determine how the combination of those identities impact disparities in incarceration. This is a multi-layered issue that requires a multi-layered approach, and Crenshaw's framework allows for proper exploration. Individuals have overlapping identities that impact their treatment and

experiences through various social institutions. Previous feminist discourse failed to address gendered issues from a non-white perspective, which is why an intersectional lens to examine these disparities in the criminal justice system is necessary. Historically, it is impossible to deny both the social and structural privileges denied to women and people of color, which leads to a hierarchy of privilege based on those identities. As Crenshaw applies her theory of intersectionality to understanding incarceration of Black women, she discusses how individual identities are not “irrelevant or wholly transparent” throughout social processes. Instead, they are all connected, and individually create advantages and disadvantages that influence social power (Crenshaw 2012:1441). Again, since it is possible to be marginalized both on the basis of race and sex, it is important to recognize how racial discrimination and sex discrimination work in conjunction with each other through systematic structures. Not every man or woman’s experience is the same because they share the same biological sex; intersectionality theory acknowledges the differences and variety in identities that create experiences that are specific to individual people. Systemic structures are not the only parts contributing to the disparities in incarcerated individuals, as they are covertly penetrated by beliefs of socially constructed, universally recognized, and toxic stereotypes of Black women. Often understood as “immoral and irresponsible”, the facets of a woman of color's identity as both being a woman and being Black is used to continue the vilification of people with these intersecting, oppressed identities (Lewis & Neville 2015). Thus, the Chivalry hypothesis is anticipated to not work in the favor of women of color, who have been stereotyped and disadvantaged both systemically and culturally. Crenshaw’s lens allows for deeper inspection of the Chivalry hypothesis by using previously established literature on racial disparities in the criminal justice system to no longer see sex disparities in sentencing as dichotomous. Intersectionality theory takes into consideration the impact that all aspects of one's identity has on their placement and treatment within society, and, especially in this case, within the criminal justice system.

More specifically, preexisting studies and their findings will be the baseline for understanding these concepts when it comes to looking at the impact of race and sex on drug offenders’ sentences across the United States. As positioned through Rodriguez, Curry, and Lee’s (2006) work, women are less likely to be sentenced, or receive significantly shorter sentences, for drug crimes, but they failed to examine this phenomenon among racial lines. As is widely known, drug policies are already inherently rooted in racism and the war on drugs has continually targeted oppressed racial groups (Bobo & Thompson 2006; Mauer 2010), often resulting in long term systemic effects on low income, minority communities. The war on drugs primarily targeted Black men creating a link between drug use and “violent” mental illness stigma, making mass imprisonment for drug use a quick, discriminatory process to affect Black communities. According to the Federal Bureau of Prisons, 38.2% of the inmate population is made up of people who are Black, and males constitute 93.2% (Federal Bureau of Prisons 2021). In comparison to both their total populations, both Black individuals and men are disproportionately represented within the prison system (Bobo & Thompson 2006:451). Women and people of color are both marginalized in American society, and yet the drastic differences in their representation of prison populations poses questions about how bias works within this social system. As a result of these fast-changing drug policies, it has ultimately increased the female to male imprisonment ratio as well (Harmon & O’Brien 2011). However, it

is likely this increase in female imprisonment has not been consistent across racial groups, and research is beginning to show the fastest growing imprisoned group is Black female offenders (Harmon & O'Brien 2011:658). It is important to acknowledge that changes in policies are the reason for these rapid increases in incarceration rates and the disproportionate populations represented within them. Anti-drug policies have not done this same thing to white populations, but there has been no case made on whether or not sex and race has a joint, influencing effect on incarceration for drug related crimes. Both race and sex matter; how they intersect to create an independent identity and a complex perception of said identity reveals new ways of advantage and disadvantage for each individual.

An attempt was made to understand both race and sex in the criminal justice system in a study by Sorenson, Sarnikar, and Oaxaca (2012), where they established the gendered circumstance that gives white women less severity in sentencing. They found that compared to sentences for white women, white men and Black men were sentenced around double the amount of time for the crimes they committed. They also establish the racial differences in severity of sentencing between men, with Black men receiving more severe sentences than their white counterparts. However, Sorenson, Sarnikar, and Oaxaca ultimately make no conclusions regarding women of color and the overlap of these identities for Black women and sentencing. Crenshaw describes Black women as being “theoretically erased” (1989:139). The exclusion of Black women, and other women of color, from examining a double bind system that may both privilege and oppress them does not allow us to fully understand the extent of bias influence on the criminal justice system and the experiences of those within it. Thus, the previously posed question remains. This study will examine the impact of racial identity on disparities in incarceration length and the Chivalry hypothesis through an intersectional lens. Sentencing for drug possession is hypothesized to be impacted by the intersection of racial and sex identities, and thus white women, white men, Black women, and Black men will be sentenced least to most often, respectively.

METHODS

To understand the complex relationship between sex and racial identities on the disparities in incarceration for drug related charges for white women, white men, Black women and Black men, a mixed method approach was used. Using both quantitative and qualitative components in this research strengthens the results garnered in each component. Quantitative results can only display the existence of problems in the criminal justice system, while qualitative results can fill in the gaps and provide further explanation. Qualitative methods can also capture the experiences of individuals who have worked in the field of criminal justice, thus providing context to available data. Quantitative data was taken from the United States Sentencing Commission's (USSC) 2019 fiscal year. These data provide a wide range of variables on individuals sentenced in federal courts. This data set was chosen specifically for its ability to distinguish the race and sex of the offender, allowing us to analyze both race and sex within the sample. Youth and adolescent offenders were excluded from analysis. Although there are parallel trends in sentencing disparities among juvenile offenders compared to adult offenders, this data set collects information on offenders categorized as legal adults, therefore this research can only contribute a better understanding of incarceration for adult offenders. The

hypothesis was tested quantitatively using Factorial ANOVA, which allows us to understand the relationship between these variables and each individual offender's length of incarceration, as well as the interconnecting trends when accounting for both racial identity and sex. Factorial ANOVA accomplishes this by comparing means dependent on the independent variables, in this case those independent variables being the intersection of race and sex. Although there are several statistical methods appropriate for this investigation, Factorial ANOVA was chosen because it best fits the parameters of the data. Factorial ANOVA is appropriate when independent variables under investigation are categorical in nature. To understand the differences of intersecting race and sex identities on length of time incarcerated, a Factorial ANOVA analysis must be used to more thoroughly answer the question posed. The limitations of the available data include the inability to look beyond sentence length for crimes outside of federal courts. Additionally, while the data is categorized by primary crime type, it is unable to distinguish of any other possible crimes that may be influencing sentence length. However, by examining nationally acquired data, trends that are not region specific and presume to be generalizable are hoped to be discovered.

Quantitative analysis will specifically focus on white women, white men, Black women, and Black men sentenced for drug possession. While the quantitative data examines the sex of each offender in relation to their racial identification, this research is establishing that the Chivalry hypothesis exists due to historically perpetuated, societally recognized gender norms and stereotypes attributed to the sexes; this is not an attempt to conflate sex and gender. Similar to other research, sentencing is defined as having two separate parts - incarceration, and the length of those being incarcerated. Severity, in this case, refers to the length of time sentenced in months. From here, the USSC's 2019 fiscal year data will be used to determine the effects of the intersection of the race and sex on the length of incarceration for drug possession.

Quantitative - Dependent Variable

As the hypothesis is looking to determine the impact of race and sex on sentencing severity, the dependent variable was selected from the USSC's 2019 fiscal year sentencing data, and indicates the total prison sentence in months, plus alternatives (home detention, community confinement, intermittent confinement) with zeros for probation. Sentences larger than 470 months are capped at 469.99, and life sentences are given the value 470. After eliminating cases that were not primarily drug possession crimes, a Factorial ANOVA was run through SPSS testing the effect of the INTERSECTION variable (IV) on the sentencing variable (DV).

Quantitative - Independent Variables

Independent variables were taken from the USSC's 2019 fiscal year data; the sex of the offender, the race of the offender, and the primary type of crime per individual case. First, all cases originally coded as primarily drug possession (9 = drug possession) were recoded (1 = drug possession), and then all other cases (1-8, 10-30) were coded as missing. Missing cases were deleted to focus the analysis specifically on drug possession offenders and their sentences. The sex of the offender was then recoded from (0 = male, 1 = female) into (1 =

female, 2 = male), creating a new SEX variable. Similarly, the race of the offender was also recoded from (1 = White, 2 = Black, 3 = Hispanic, and 6 = other) into (3 = White, 4 = Black, and 3, 6 = system missing), creating a new RACE variable. The reason for doing this is to align the coding of the variables with the hypothesis, associating higher values to the sex and racial categories presumed to be sentenced more often and more severely, and giving lower values to those identities presumed to be sentenced less often and less severely. By categorizing Hispanic and other racial identities as system missing, they will not be included in the Factorial ANOVA as they are not relevant to the hypothesis. Reducing race to simply Black and white identities is not the intention of this research and the inclusion of other racial or ethnic identities will be important for future research in this area. Lastly, the creation of the intersection variable was done by combining both the new sex and race variables, and coding them to assign numerical values to the intersecting identities that correspond with the presumed hierarchy of sentence severity (3 = white female, 4 = white male, 6 = Black female, and 8 = Black male). Any case in which the intersection variable was categorized as missing, assuming because the racial category was not a part of the sample, was then deleted, with a final sample size of (n = 268). The breakdown of drug possession offenders’ race and sex intersection along with additional descriptive statistics is shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1 – Descriptive Statistics for the Intersection of Drug Possession Offenders

<i>INTERSECTION Label</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>N</i>
White female	.8839	3.32916	61
White male	1.3009	4.717938	107
Black female	.0344	.12193	16
Black male	2.1617	5.46503	83
Total	1.3973	4.36196	267

Qualitative

A qualitative component consisting of three separate interviews with two federal public defenders and a magisterial judge from Pennsylvania who have experience working within the criminal justice system was conducted. The reason for this mixed method approach is to not solely rely on data; rather, to gauge the perception of those “in the trenches” to see if perception and experience match the reality of the statistical results attained. While quantitative results can provide mean averages of sentencing disparities on account of race and sex, qualitative follow up further dives into why these disparities are happening, and how they are continuing to play out in the criminal justice system. Touching on the experiences of individuals with constant exposure to the facets of the criminal justice process allows for a deeper understanding of sentence length disparities. This includes participants understanding of implicit biases and social stigmas present within this system, as well as knowledge of sentencing patterns noticed throughout their careers. The quantitative results provide the basic answers, while qualitative results provide reasons and explanation.

Convenience sampling is recognized as a possible limitation, as those who practice law in Pennsylvania may have different experiences about how these racial and sex-based

disparities exist than those in other areas of the country. Although the participants are a sample of convenience, each interviewee is an expert on issues of criminal justice and sentencing disparities. Each interview was conducted through a video conference, which was recorded and then transcribed. For all three participants, the same set of nine questions guided each interview. Interview questions can be found in Appendix A. Interview questions were created to understand the participants' knowledge and perception of both racial and gendered disparities in the criminal justice system, as well as how they might work together. Some questions focused on these disparities in instances of drug possession crimes.

RESULTS

Results of the Factorial ANOVA for the effects of the INTERSECTION variable on the length of time served for drug possession offenders were tested at ($p < .05$), and the results were not statistically significant (see Table 2). The intersection of race and sex variable showed no significant difference on the length of time served for drug possession for white women, Black women, white men, and Black men tried in federal courts.

TABLE 2 - Test of Between Subject Effects

Dependent Variable: SENSPCAP							
<i>Source</i>	<i>Type III Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Partial Eta Squared</i>	
Corrected Model	95.287	3	31.762	1.682	.171	.019	
Intercept	191.375	1	191.375	10.136	.002	.037	
INTERSECTION_FINAL	95.287	3	31.762	1.682	.171	.019	
Error	4965.811	263	18.881				
Total	5582.432	267					
Corrected Total	5061.098	266					

a. R Squared = .019 (Adjusted R Squared = .008)

This is a direct contrast to previous research on both racial disparities in the criminal justice system and the Chivalry hypothesis established. As previously discussed, this deviates from juvenile patterns of sentencing disparities, making the insignificant results outside the norm. This is assumed to be due to the lack of seriousness of the crime; the USSC collects data on federal offenders, and drug possession, while still federally illegal, is less taboo and widely viewed as less serious than other crime types. As a result of this, an additional Factorial ANOVA was conducted for the effects of the INTERSECTION variable on the length of time served; in this case the data set examined people who committed robbery, eliminating all other cases and those with missing INTERSECTION variables with a sample of ($n = 1491$). Robbery was chosen due to the more serious nature of the offense in comparison to drug possession, with the anticipation that the more serious the crime, the more prominent sentence length disparities would appear. Descriptive statistics regarding the intersection of race and sex for robbery offenders is shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3 – Descriptive Statistics for the Intersection of Robbery Offenders

<i>INTERSECTION Label</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>N</i>
White female	43.2506	40.23516	33
White male	97.3548	71.72481	362
Black female	64.4245	555.75970	66
Black male	122.1646	88.76772	1030
Total	111.8386	84.77642	1491

When running the analysis for another crime, any cases that were not primarily robbery offenses were eliminated from the dependent variable, and another Factorial ANOVA was run to test the same independent variables on the dependent sentencing variable for robbery. In the case of robbery offenders, results show a significant effect ($p < .001$) of the intersection of race and sex on length of time served (see Table 4). There were significant differences in length of time served between both white women and Black women, white men and Black men, and women and men regardless of racial background.

TABLE 4 - Tests of Between-Subject Effects

Dependent Variable: SENSPCAP						
<i>Source</i>	<i>Type III Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Partial Eta Squared</i>
Corrected Model	489383.11	3	163127.705	23.737	<.001	.046
Intercept	2176478.28	1	2176478.28	316.698	<.001	.176
INTERSECTION_FINAL	489383.115	3	163127.705	23.737	<.001	.046
Error	10219262.8	1487	6872.403			
Total	29357872.0	1491				
Corrected Total	10708645.9	1490				

a. R Squared = .046 (Adjusted R Squared = .044)

Responses from participants were viewed as an extension of the frameworks used. Their experiences and expertise in law and criminal justice were used to lend further support to the hypothesis and quantitative results, while providing an additional yet necessary lens into sentencing disparities in the criminal justice system. Participant responses generated a consensus surrounding the existence of both racial and sex based disparities in sentencing, as well as support for the intersection of the two. Participant #1, a federal public defender, demonstrated the intersectionality of both race and sex when regarding women and their sentence:

If they're absolutely, equally, factually situated, Black women will get sentenced more harshly [than white women] because of the cultural baggage.

The cultural baggage mentioned here is referring to the stereotypes and systemic oppression of Black individuals throughout America; the Chivalry hypothesis asserts that women will be sentenced less severely than men, but not all women are white. Stigma surrounding Black women's identities was discussed by this participant, as people assume these women are familiar or "used to" the criminal behavior due to their racial identity. Participant #1 echoes Crenshaw's theoretical framework here, as race and sex do not exist in a vacuum but rather work together to create individual experiences for specific identities and influence perceptions about those identities. A similar narrative emerged through responses from participant #2, who is also a federal public defender:

I think it's again, an overt bias, that a lot of people believe that females, and particularly white females, are more innocent... [judges] may look at a female and find her to be attractive, innocent, things of that nature.

Responses show support for all frameworks being used in this research; the ability to distinguish differences in criminal justice outcomes between women of different racial backgrounds indicates the necessity of using an intersectional lens to understand sentencing disparities. The Chivalry hypothesis, while not a theory, is well supported in participant responses and should be explored further through future research.

When prompted with questions regarding sentencing disparities along the lines of race and sex among those being sentenced for drug possession, participant responses are consistent with quantitative findings. Participant #3, a magisterial judge, stated:

I would say that... there are more people of color being arrested for those [drug] crimes, and so it's only a matter of time. You build up a record pretty quickly, and then you end up going to jail for stuff like that - you know, the first time you get caught with possession you're not going to go to jail, but the sixth or the seventh time and statistically speaking, you know, I think more people of color are getting arrested for that stuff.

Participant #1 provided a similar response:

I think where the disparities are at now [for drug possession] is who actually gets arrested, what they get charged with, and how far they have to go in the court system... more of the minority folks are going to get to the day of sentencing.

Qualitative results are consistent with the frameworks used to reach these answers. While no significant findings were apparent for drug possession offenders, there were significant findings for robbery offenders. Qualitative responses help to fill in gaps pertaining to the hypothesis and lend further explanation regarding the differences in quantitative findings. Participants asserted with certainty the drastic difference in sentence length outcomes between men and women, as well as between white and Black individuals. When asked to conceptualize both of these disparities as occurring simultaneously, participants agreed there

were obvious differences in sentencing outcomes along the lines of both race and sex. Additionally, when trying to examine how these disparities exist, participants each articulated that the current trends in drug criminalization is moving away from incarceration and more towards rehabilitation. They also indicated increased encounters with police as a reason for disparities in who is getting sentenced for these crimes, rather than how long these individuals are serving, when specifically discussing drug possession offenders.

When discussing sentencing in a broader sense, especially in regards to more serious crimes, the effects of the Chivalry hypothesis and racial disparities working together emerge in participant responses. Gender norms about women penetrating the courtroom were discussed by all three interviewees, and how those gender norms vary between racial groups were distinct, ultimately affecting the sentence of individuals charged with more serious crime types.

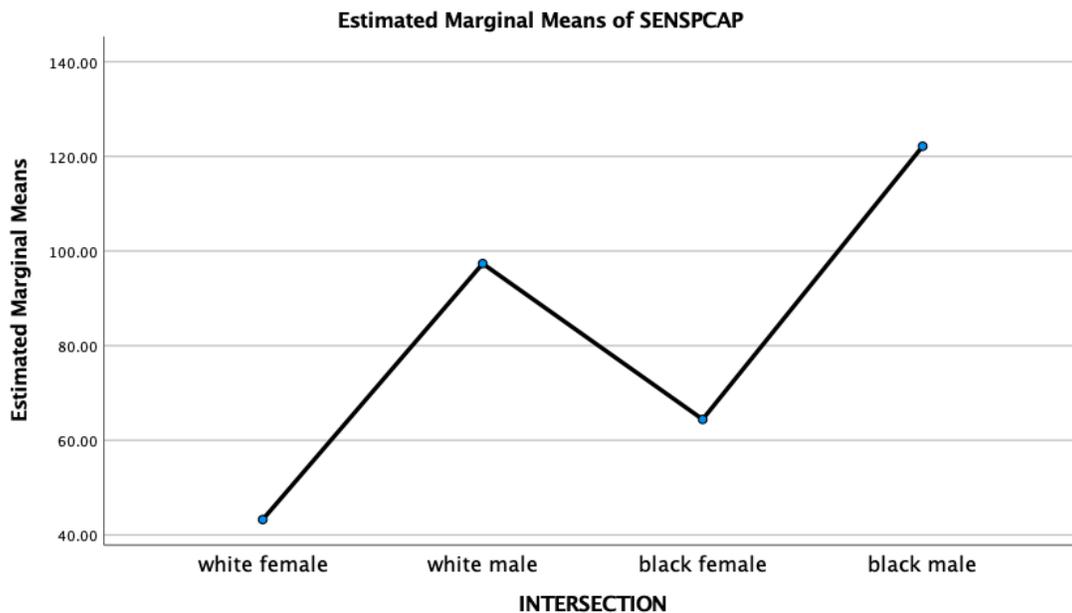
ANALYSIS

Initial quantitative findings on drug possession offenders does not show a disparity in sentencing length between white women, Black women, white men and Black men. Responses from the qualitative interviews agree that the racial and sex demographics that make up the overall demographics of drug offenders is dependent upon police contact and the increased likelihood of people of color, particularly Black men, in heavily policed, low-income neighborhoods. Sentence length for drug possession is not particularly dependent upon race and sex, but rather sentencing rates are due to the differences in police contact between these groups, with more arrests or police contact simply leading to more incarcerated individuals, primarily for Black individuals as discussed by previous research. The rate at which these groups are being sentenced refers to the how often Black or white individuals are being arrested and sentenced for a specific crime, whereas the severity of sentencing is contingent upon the amount of time they are sentenced to incarceration. Sentencing rates, as opposed to sentencing length, is where the disparity seems to lie for this specific crime type; although two different issues, these findings lend a key insight into where disparities are continuing to exist.

FIGURE 1 – The Intersection of Sex and Race Disparity for Robbery Offenders

Other responses from participants are consistent with the additional quantitative findings regarding the sentence length disparities present for those who committed robbery on the basis of race and sex. To see this disparity emerge with a more serious crime type in comparison to drug possession, it is assumed that these sentencing disparities between white women, Black women, white men and Black men may be crime dependent. As drug possession is becoming regarded as a less serious crime culturally, it could also be beginning to be viewed that way in the courtroom. The influence of race and sex on sentencing disparities for robbery offenders but not for drug possession offenders allows future research to more closely examine where the disparities continue to lie in the criminal justice system. Participants mentioned culturally categorizing Black individuals, specifically Black men, as “dangerous criminals”, which helps to explain the significant disparities existing for robbery offenders as opposed to drug possession offenders. Thus, further assumption is made that the more serious or violent the crime, the more pronounced these sentencing disparities will become when looking at the intersection of racial identity and sex on sentencing length.

FIGURE 1 – The Intersection of Sex and Race Disparity for Robbery Offenders



Both quantitative and qualitative results lend further support to theoretical frameworks used to form the hypothesis, especially for the understudied Chivalry hypothesis. On average, women regardless of any race are being sentenced to significantly less jail time than their male counterparts for robbery (see Figure 1). This exists within racial categories as well, with a similar average difference in time served between white women and White men, and Black women and Black men. Racial disparities are present both between and within sex categories as well, with an average difference of 20 months served for robbery between white women and Black women, and a slightly longer difference between white men and Black men. These findings present more evidence of how race-based disparities in incarceration exist within the criminal justice system, and even with this research lending support to the Chivalry hypothesis, Black women are still receiving longer sentences than white women for the same crime. Participant responses support these phenomena. This research is only looking at the binary sex categories each offender was assigned to, while qualitative findings lean into a necessary dependence on the function of cultural narratives surrounding typical gender roles and norms for women as an explanation. Interview findings often mentioned women as being the more “docile” sex, less culpable for their crimes unless they violate gendered expectations (i.e. crimes involving the harm or killing of children).

Participant responses give insight to the grey areas of quantitative findings. They put emphasis on sex as a major influencer in determining how much time someone will serve for any given crime, with women often serving significantly less than men. They acknowledged that race and sex are intersecting, and work together to determine an individual’s sentencing outcome in the criminal justice system. Multiple responses demonstrated that Black communities have more police contact, and that Black men receive the longest sentences in comparison to any other identity makeup. As one participant mentioned, the equally situated

scenarios between white and Black women will produce different results regarding sentencing, especially for crimes regarded as more serious in nature. Other responses indicate the impact police contact has on drug possession offenders, specifically, as the disparities of the intersection of race and sex lie within the demographics of who is getting arrested and making it to the day of sentencing. Ultimately, all three participants acknowledge that race and sex are factors that determine the severity of one's sentence, significantly more so for more serious crimes. Quantitative data suggests sentencing disparities may be dependent on what crime has been committed, with disparities emerging for more serious or violent crime types.

DISCUSSION

Results suggest the intersection of race and sex on sentencing disparities in the criminal justice system may be crime dependent. While no significant results were found for sentence length differences for drug possession offenders, this does not assert there are no race and sex based disparities in other layers of the criminal justice system for those charged with drug possession. Previous research has also addressed the higher likelihood of Black individuals being incarcerated than their white counterparts for the same crime (Mauer 2010; Mustard 2001). This may exist due to increased contact with the police, and results in disproportionate incarceration of people of color relative to their entire population (Shannon et al. 2017). While there may not be disparate sentence lengths for drug possession, future research should address the sample sizes within the race and sex categories relative to this crime type. Secondly, the disparities in sentencing length attributed to the intersection of race and sex emerged when an additional analysis was run for a more serious crime type - robbery. The effects of the intersection variable may become statistically significant for specific crimes; thus, it is assumed that the more serious or violent the crime, the disparities will continue to emerge and possibly become more disproportionate. Again, additional quantitative findings for robbery offenders allows for future research to more thoroughly examine where the impact of the intersection of race and sex on sentencing length may prominently exist within the criminal justice system. For robbery offenders, white women, Black women, white men, and Black men were sentenced least to most severely. This severity "hierarchy" is believed to persist in the same pattern regardless of crime type, however the actual length of time between each identity category could vary. This is evidenced by the fact that a similar pattern could be seen for drug possession, although results were not statistically significant. Since disparities did emerge in a way consistent with previous research studying race and sex separately, this research lends continued support to those findings.

To find no significant sentence length disparities for drug possession offenders was somewhat supported through all qualitative findings. Participants' knowledge and experience with the criminal justice system was used as an extension of the hypothesis and to help guide predictions for results. Responses provided an explanation for the insignificant quantitative results for drug possession offenders. Again, it is a further indicator that the presence of race and sex disparities exist in various parts of the criminal justice system. For individuals who were sentenced for drug possession, the disparities lie along the intersection of race and sex with initial police contact and the individuals actually reaching the day of sentencing. These findings

lend an understanding to the intersection of race and sex, and the assumptions that follow those intersecting identities, within the criminal justice system.

The Chivalry hypothesis was relevant when looking at the disparities between men and women for average time served, regardless of race (Figure 1). This is especially significant because sex disparities in sentencing remains understudied, even more so when also accounting for racial identity. Remembering to not conflate sex with gender is essential to deconstructing what these results are indicating. With the help of supporting research and interview responses, the Chivalry hypothesis emerging in significant findings can be understood through the gender norms culturally attributed to each sex. It is less about the legitimate, biological sex of each offender, but rather the constructed societal meaning and expectations surrounding what it means to be male or female (Zhao & Rogalin 2017). These cultural expectations surrounding identities are especially relevant when looking at the intersection of race and sex for each offender. Living in a patriarchal society has limited the criminal justice system's ability to view women as culpable for their crimes. Female offenders were described as "docile", "protectors of children", and "innocent" by interview participants, consistent with patriarchal understandings of women and their assumed placement within society. When society is already viewing women as not fully capable of anything beyond passivity, that assumption hinders the criminal justice system's ability to adequately sentence them for their crimes. This research is not demanding longer sentences for women; it is simply scratching the surface of deeply ingrained, institutional gender bias that happens to benefit the outcome of female offenders in comparison to their male counterparts.

Figure 1 also demonstrates racial disparities for average time served for robbery offenders, present within both sexes. There is, on average, a twenty-month difference in sentence length between white women and Black women, as well as white men and Black men, with offenders of color receiving more months for the same crime. Previous research supports the existence of these disparities within the criminal justice system and attributes them to the implicit racial biases that have penetrated social institutions born from the War on Drugs (Bobo & Thompson 2006). Culturally understood stereotypes about racial groups lends an explanation to this finding (Chiricos et al 2004). Participants discussed how Black offenders, particularly Black male offenders, are typically associated with dangerous crime and criminal activity, and that is an implicit factor that determines sentencing outcome. The previously discussed issue of increased police contact in low income, predominantly Black communities can fuel these stereotypes by "catching" more offenders in that racial demographic and entangling them in the criminal justice system. Black individuals have a significantly higher chance of being arrested and incarcerated than white individuals, bringing them back into the system more than once, and increasing their likelihood of being sentenced more punitively due to the assumption that Black people, especially men, are inherently criminal. Additionally, when looking at race and sex as separate variables and accounting for previous police encounters, previous research still found disparities in sentencing to exist (Daly & Tonry 1997). While quantitative methods in this research did not account for previous encounters with the criminal justice system as an influencing factor on sentence length, findings display multifaceted forces previously established as driving the racial disparities in the criminal justice system. Future research should investigate this further.

The most interesting intersection of race and sex identities is Black women's place in this scale of sentencing severity. Aforementioned research provides an understanding of racial disparities in the criminal justice system and asserts Black offenders are sentenced more often and more harshly than white offenders. The Chivalry hypothesis demonstrates that women are sentenced less often and less severely than male offenders. Positive results for robbery offenders show both of these phenomena to be occurring, but Black women's identities position these frameworks at odds with one another. Crenshaw's (1989) lens allows us to view them simultaneously rather than oppositional, and thus demonstrate the necessity of using an intersectional lens to study criminal justice disparities. As interview participants discussed the gender-based assumptions about women's culpability in the courtroom, they indicated that particularly white women were viewed as more innocent, and were the least likely to receive a longer sentence than any other race and sex identity make up in the sample. Participants provided reasonings as to why this is, demonstrating that although Black women are still viewed as less culpable than their male counterparts, they were also perceived as less innocent than white women. Black individuals and associations with their engagement with criminal behavior still falls on the backs on Black female offenders. Additionally, the perception of Black women in society differs from the perceptions of white women, often viewing them as more domineering in general (Donovan 2011). The patriarchy and racial stereotypes have merged; the criminal justice system still views Black women as less responsible, but yet they hold on to the cultural baggage that assumes they are still more inclined to commit crime. The intersection of these race-based and gender-based cultural narratives allows us to understand why the twenty-month average difference between white women and Black women who committed robbery may be occurring.

Essentially, the hypothesis is partially supported; both quantitative and qualitative results continue to support racial disparities in the criminal justice system, the Chivalry hypothesis, and the necessity of looking at the criminal justice system through an intersectional lens. Interview responses provided understanding around societal assumptions around sex and gender, as well as racial biases within the criminal justice system. While significant results were obtained for the intersection of race and sex on sentencing length for robbery, this did not occur for drug possession, indicating that sentencing disparities may be crime dependent. The sentencing severity scale assumed to exist for intersecting race and sex identities, through the use of the aforementioned theoretical frameworks, was partially upheld; the position of white men and Black women was switched from the original ordering. It was assumed that in spite of the Chivalry hypothesis, the cultural baggage associating Black individuals with criminal behavior would trump the patriarchal notions that women are incapable of engaging in criminal behavior, thus Black women would serve slightly more time on average than white men for the same crime. This did not prove to be true. Nonetheless, Black women's average sentence length in comparison to white men's for robbery was found to only strengthen the theoretical frameworks that led to these findings.

Overall, the intersection of race and sex does appear to affect sentencing length and appears to be crime specific. The use of an intersectional lens has allowed us to better understand implicit race and gender stereotypes based on sex present within the criminal justice system and how those biases impact the outcome of an individual's sentence for a given

crime. The possibility of crime dependency allows for further investigation into where the intersectional disparities occur and how implicit biases are continuing to fuel said disparities for specific crime types. Limitations in this research include the federal data acquired from the USSC on insignificant results for drug possession offenders, as it is crime data reported only from federal courts. Drug possession is considered a minor crime, and perhaps local or state data would better exhibit the disparities not present in these findings for drug possession offenders going through federal court systems. Additionally, problems with generalizability may arise when trying to compare these disparities in more rural areas, as the majority of these crime types are most likely occurring in urban areas. Prior offenses or prior contact with law enforcement were not accounted for, which may increase the length of time served for any offense committed by any individual. Future research should address other racial or ethnic identities intersection with sex on sentence length disparities as a way to further understanding of these theoretical frameworks and the impact of Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality theory. Additionally, socioeconomic status should also be addressed in conjunction with race and sex. It has been argued by Black feminists that to examine any issue without a lens consisting of race, class, and gender is an incomplete understanding of inequality (Daly & Tonry 1997:238-239). It is important to recognize that class is considered to be one of the most influential components in determining the privileges awarded throughout society, and as previously mentioned, not considering class in this research does not provide a complete account of the issue. There is substantial literature on how social class influences sentencing outcomes in the criminal justice system. However, this research addresses how previous literature has failed to examine identities as intersecting rather than singular, and therefore are building the foundation for future analysis of understanding inequality in the criminal justice system from an intersectional viewpoint. The inclusion of control variables, such as class or education, in future analysis would lend further insight into the question posed, as this research is beginning to scratch the surface of looking at the criminal justice system through an intersectional lens. Class was mentioned by interview participants as another factor in an offender's sentencing outcome, with participants indicating that more wealth leads to a better and shorter sentence. Social class is closely correlated with race and sex, and can be another way to understand the intersection of various social identities and their effects on individuals going through the criminal justice system. Ultimately, the intersection of race and sex does impact sentencing severity for specific crime types, lending further guidance for future research on where sentencing disparities in the criminal justice system lie, with white women, Black women, white men, and Black men receiving the shortest to longest average sentences, respectively.

APPENDIX A

Qualitative Interview Questions

2. Can you briefly describe your experience with criminal justice sentencing?
3. Do you feel that gender and race are factors that determine the outcome of individuals going through the criminal justice system? In what ways?
4. Do you feel that a jury would see and perceive white women and Black women differently, even for the same type of crime committed? Why or why not?
5. Tell me how would you define "racial privilege" in the criminal justice system?

6. Tell me how would you define “gender privilege” in the criminal justice system?
7. In your experience, have you noticed a racial disparity among those sentenced for the possession of illegal drugs? If so, how would you describe this disparity?
8. In your experience, have you noticed a gendered disparity among those sentenced for the possession of illegal drugs? If so, how would you describe this disparity?
9. Have you noticed any trends in sentencing throughout your career along the lines of gender and race?
10. Rank a white man, a Black man, a white woman, and a Black woman from least likely to most likely to be sentenced for drug possession; why did you rank them that way?

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BIOGRAPHIES

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BOOK REVIEW: WHY MEADOW DIED: THE PEOPLE AND POLICIES THAT CREATED THE PARKLAND SHOOTER AND ENDANGER AMERICA'S STUDENTS

By Andrew Pollack and Max Eden

Reviewed by Rachel Kosaka, Nathan Kruis and Nicholas J. Rowland

The authors of *Why Meadow Died*, Andrew Pollack -- father of murdered student Meadow Pollack -- and Max Eden -- former senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute -- without question, have no intention of entering into a discourse over topics pertaining to school shooters and their shootings. They are not going to blame victims or parents, or discuss gun control legislation, advocacy, and activism. Instead, they wage a controversial argument that school policy, and, thus, school boards, are ultimately responsible for contemporary school shootings. In Pollack and Eden's telling of it, the decisions of policymakers at Broward County collectively failed both Nikolas Cruz and the seventeen Marjory Stoneman Douglas (MSD) students and teachers that were killed on February 14, 2018. The book is not published in a university press, and, as such, is not firmly academic in tone or posture. In the remainder of this book review we cover the book's main argument, comment on some stylistic concerns, and hint at broader, empirical implications of the authors' argument linking educational policies and school shootings at a national level.

While this book adopts a relatively unique approach to the identification of the antecedents of school shootings, the book has yet to receive, to the best of our knowledge, much if any scholarly review apart from Catlin's (2020) "A Mother and a Father and the Tragedy of School Shooting," a review that compares *Why Meadow Died* to Sue Klebold's book *A Mother's Reckoning* -- Klebold being the mother of Dylan Klebold, responsible for a school shooting at Columbine High School in 1999. "These books could not be more alike," Catlin (2020: p. 57) writes; they are both "very hard, induce tears, and are riveting upon examination." While these authors adopt markedly different viewpoints on preventative strategies, they both approach the subject matter from the parental viewpoint. Also, if the parental perspective in the wake of a school shooting was of interest to readers of Sue Klebold's *A Mother's Reckoning*, then we suspect that these readers will also find utility in *Why Meadow Died* -- just be forewarned that the latter provides more of the stance that tragedies "can be averted," but is squarely focused on the role the school may have played in making that tragedy possible (Klebold, 2016, p. xii). There are additional titles that may be of interest to this readership. For example, *Parkland* by Dave Cullen and *Glimmer of Hope* by The March for Our

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Lives Founders each provide a unique perspective on the Parkland/MSD school shooting. If readers found the journey of The March for Our Lives activists interesting, then Pollack and Eden's book likely will be too -- it also contains a detailed roadmap on "overcoming trauma and helplessness" and shining "a light on just how rigged our system is" (Kasky, 2018, p. 1). These are just a few of the books in the same broad conversation, close-by on the proverbial bookshelf, with *Why Meadow Died*.

Regarding analysis, Pollack and Eden are unabashed in their abundant repetitiveness of denouncing the lack of accountability culture and leniency policies developed by the Broward County School District. These policies, they intuit, also impact other schools across the US. While the school's policies were partially to blame for the shooting at MSD, blame to the shooter, Cruz, is minimized in the book. The authors explain that the predictable red flags at MSD were "missed by design" and that administrative convenience allowed the shooter to slip through the cracks (Pollack & Eden, 2019, pp. 45, 71, 152). The writers, somewhat counterintuitively, point to political correctness as the mitigating factor in decisions made by policymakers and school administrators in the school environment. Not surprisingly, the authors specifically set out to explain why Meadow died in this context. However, the argument may be applied to and tested within a broader analysis of historical policy change to determine whether the data exposes any correlative relationship between the adoption of leniency policies and school gun violence. Specifically relevant to a sociology readership, another aspect of the book, which the authors demonstrate but do not theoretically conceptualize, is the problem of "goal displacement" (Selznick, 1949): politicians' and school administrators' goal to bolster school safety for all students was subtly displaced by the need to make schools look "good" on paper and show adequate safety precautions in the form of numerical data -- most notably the school's enactment of a progressive disciplinary regime, known as the PROMISE program, intended to reduce the "school to prison pipeline" through behavioral leniency, by reducing suspensions, expulsions, and arrests. Unintended consequences, thus, emerged as dangerous students, such as Cruz, were intentionally kept within the same school system, which, the logic goes, ironically reduced the overall safety of the school.

Why Meadow Died contains little ambiguity in the authors' intention. Even though there are a number of other stories told in the book, namely, from an MSD teacher and a student journalist, the authors stick to their intended purpose and focus the lion's share of the book on school policy and administrative incompetence. While the book's constant repetitiveness may be maddening to the close reader, it is useful for the casual reader who may pick up the book for only a chapter or two.

The writers do not, at any point, shy away from emotionally-charged language choices. Anger and sarcasm are easily recognizable in the book; on balance, however, it is also worth noting that there is also a tone of empowerment and resilience in their text. The authors keep the reading level simple for the general public, and are neither condescending nor pedantic at any point. Eden, the education policy expert, did have a small, dense portion near the beginning of the book based on their policy expertise; however, the authors manage to align their book in its logical course without distraction. There are a few grammatical and formatting mistakes, such as backward quotations or missing the preposition "to;" still, overall, the errors do not detract from the book's message or meaning.

The authors of *Why Meadow Died* intend for their book to be a call to action for parents with children; a call to investigate whether their child's school may have adopted the same types of policies generated in the Broward County school district (Pollack & Eden, 2019, pp. xiv, xxiv, 149, 211, 274-275). School administrators, teachers, boards, and PTAs have been, implicitly, called to heed the potentially dangerous policies for the sake of preserving the future lives of their student body. While this book is clearly written for parents whose children may be directly impacted by Broward County school district-type policies, there can be some utility for this book within the college environment. *Why Meadow Died* is not conceptually oriented or founded on a specific theoretical perspective relevant to scholars in the social sciences; as such, this book would be challenging to incorporate into introductory or general education courses for the undergraduate level. In terms of undergraduates, this book may fit within special topics or advanced courses, such as a sociology of education or educational policy course.

The book, while modestly emotional, is informative. While *Why Meadow Died* may have been written for the sole purpose of explaining the Parkland shooting through a parental lens, the argument that school policy could be endangering students calls for a deeper look, critically and analytically, into education policy and its connection to violence within schools. In the end, while guns -- and gun accessibility -- are issues routinely raised in discussions of school shootings in the US, Pollack and Eden identify another non-human actor, in this case, education policy, as a co-contributor in school shootings.

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