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Seven Years with the JUE

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Among my proudest moments as an academic are the times when I have met fellow presenters at conferences who tell me, "You published my article in the JUE." It is a pleasure to meet these young scholars in person, and it is a thrill to realize that their JUE article is part of the foundation they are building on as graduate students or even postdoctoral fellows. It's exciting to know they are still reading, doing, and writing ethnography. That said, I hope all JUE authors have a positive, constructive, and encouraging experience of publication with us, whether they pursue further academic study or not. The aim of this journal has always been to show that undergraduate research can make compelling, valid contributions in and of itself.

The first issue of the JUE that I helped produce, after accepting founding editor Jason Patch's invitation to take over as editor, was volume 5, number 1, in 2015. This is volume 12, number 2. Seven years, 17 issues, 99 articles, and 107 authors later, I am very happy with where the JUE now stands. It is a well known, well respected, open access undergraduate journal that consistently receives excellent submissions from students writing in English from around the world. Twelve years is a long run for

an undergraduate journal, and I think it is in great shape to run for at least twelve more! Two big innovations helped it achieve this position.

In 2016, I created our international, multidisciplinary Senior Editorial Board, made up of professors and independent scholars who conduct ethnographic research themselves and who commit to reviewing up to one submitted manuscript a year (plus its revisions, usually). Without the generous, serious work of the folks on the Senior Editorial Board, the JUE team would simply not be able to keep up with submissions to the journal, nor deal with them as thoroughly and efficiently as we aim to. It has been wonderful to collaborate with these scholars. The second change came in 2018, when I switched to using Open Journal Systems (OJS) to publish the JUE, thanks to the hosting and expertise provided by Dalhousie University Libraries and the funding for research assistance to make the switch provided by Dalhousie's Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Publishing on OJS helps make the JUE perrenial, facilitates indexing and attribution of DOIs, and makes it easier to get the recognition this journal deserves.

Many other good things have happened in my seven years with the JUE – a fabulous redesign, invaluable research assistance from several Dalhousie undergraduate and graduate students, and a gradual systematization of our processes. I am now handing the reins of the JUE over entirely to the current editor-in-chief, Dr Karen McGarry, an anthropology professor at McMaster University (Hamilton, Ontario). Karen and I have worked together for the last two years to ensure a sustainable transition, and I am confident that the journal is in excellent hands! I will stay on as a member of the Senior Editorial Board and I'm looking forward to seeing what exciting new ethnographic research is sent my way for review.

In the meantime, we present the eight rich articles of volume 12 number 2. Clayton Jarrard (Kansas State University) explores how queer Christians navigate their relationship to their religion in caring online communities. Roos Metselaar (University of Amsterdam) analyzes how pregnant women in The Netherlands appropriate fetal ultrasounds for use as a kind of entertainment, having fun with technology in what can be an anxious time. Elizabeth Payne's (Macquarie University) autoethnographic photo essay unpacks the meanings of material possessions and their stewardship as the items are boxed up for a house move. Alicia Maners Taylor (Harding University) takes hesitation as a point of entry into understanding the shifting identities of Syrian refugee women and mothers who settle in St. Louis. Damilola Fakunle (Wake Forest University) documents how institutions in Jamaica that look after children in government care uphold children's rights and vernacularize those rights in accordance with local norms. Princess Udeh (UCLA) investigates how and why Black university students create their own safe spaces and resources for maintaining mental health on campus. Danning Lu (Wheaton College) compares four community gardens in Beijing and Shanghai to identify the factors that make them a success or not in this sociopolitical context. Chuhan Zhang (Dalhousie University) takes an ethnographic approach to demographics, exploring what is important to parents as they make fertility decisions in light of China's recent shift from a one-child to a universal two-child natal policy.

It has been a privilege to bring such original ethnographic research by undergraduates to a wider audience, to mentor such impressive budding scholars, and to communicate with such generous, insightful colleagues. I hope you enjoy this issue, and many more. Thank you for reading and for staying curious about human beings in all their complexities. Here's to the *Journal for Undergraduate Ethnography*—long may it thrive!

The Journal for Undergraduate Ethnography

Envisioning Care: Responses to the Traumas of "Truth" in an Online Queer Christian Community

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ABSTRACT

In light of the antagonistic histories of Christianity and the LGBTQ+ community in the U.S., a common hardship experienced by queer Christians is the shame of isolation. Many queer Christians are steeped in queerphobic faith communities, lacking resources to help themselves. Digital spaces have become an innovative way to forge connections around this distinct point of tension between faith and lived experience. In this digital ethnography of an online queer Christian community, care is witnessed to be formative for many, and vital for some. Community members adapt approaches to care in the online domain of Reddit to produce support, belonging, and solidarity for those like themselves who are suffering. Yet this care is also bound by social and political norms, which limit its scope to address the entrenched problems queer Christians face. Central to this experience is the role of "Truth" and how it has been wielded against queer Christians, used to marginalize populations, and exploited to shape American culture.

Keywords: Christianity; queer communities; LGBTQ+; digital ethnography; care

Many queer Christians spend years in shame and isolation, afraid of their bodies, their lived experiences, and the threats these might pose to relationships with their communities and with the divine. A key motivation for my ethnographic research has been exploring how queer Christians find community and support in online settings. Online communities can be an escape for solace, a nucleus for distanced connections, a pathway for hopeful imaginings. This piece is an account of individual and communal interactions with "Truth"—subjective beliefs accepted as moral absolutes. More specifically, it is an exploration of circulations of care emanating from these embodied, relational, and cultural encounters with "Truth" inside an online queer Christian community.

My work builds upon existing studies of American Christianity and the LGBTQ+ community (Griffith 2017; White 2015). Much research has been devoted to homophobic Christian ministries (Erzin 2006; Wolkomir 2006; Harris 2014) and the underpinning of Christian theologies surrounding homosexuality (Brownson 2013; Gagnon 2001; Siker 1994; Web 2001). There is also a burgeoning trove of writing from Christians with queer lived experiences wrestling with biblical interpretations and the Christian church (Hill 2010; Lee 2012; Perry 2018; Vines 2014). Yet queer activist and seminarian student Rachel Ward condemns instincts to consult the "biblical case" for inclusion, calling it "un-loving and violent" to queer people's embodied traumas (Ward 2020). Little has been dedicated to the experience of queer Christians and the intentional communities of solidarity formed around tending to these traumas.

In this piece, I trace the self, constituted with and projected as the 'other,' in my participant observation. I then engage points of convergence between hegemonic American Christianity and queerness, homing in on the resulting experiences of queer Christians. I articulate the contours of care witnessed throughout my fieldwork, and, finally, evaluate this care in relation to outside realities. As such, this ethnography is an occasion to consider the "suffering subject," involving my speaking for and from that role, and with an "anthropology of the good" (Robbins 2013, 457).

Becoming a Member

Outside the window, the evening sky was dark—typical for a mid-February evening. I sat at a small table inside a small coffee shop in my small, rural college town of Manhattan, Kansas. It was a frequent haunt of mine, usually on Sunday nights. With the checkered tile flooring, the dark wood furnishings, the indie art, and the music from their eccentric playlists mingling with sparse conversations, the space was casual, unconcerned. But tonight was Monday night, and the atmosphere radiated the stress and frenzy of a new week—chairs scraping, the assorted grunting and whirring of an espresso machine, loud conversations and exasperated laughs, the comings and goings of people studying, writing, preparing a presentation, downing caffeine.

As I placed my things on the table before me, the concentration of Christian groups struck me. I noticed that at the table beside mine there were two guys talking with one another while poring over their bibles. Not far away from us, there was a table overcrowded with college girls gathered for a bible study. Other tables scattered throughout the place housed bible study groups as well. And occupying the back corner, I sat alone. I became self-conscious, somewhat uneasy. Familiar accusations filled my mind. What would they think if they saw? I opened my laptop to plug into my own group of Christians, connecting with thousands of its members spanning beliefs, cultures, time, and continents, though none of whom I actually knew.

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From attending conferences, making my way into different online groups, and scouting various organizations and online resources, I

have discovered that there are many private online forums and groups where one can find LGBTQ+ Christians congregating. The point of conflict I find with these groups, however, is that they remain out of reach for vulnerable Christians still grappling with their queerness, those who have not yet claimed membership in the LGBTQ+ community. They remain out of reach for the person I used to be, even considering the access of my social positioning as a middle-class, White, cisgender man.

During my teenage years I tried to keep a firm grasp on my Southern Baptist faith while secretly "struggling" with same-sex attraction. I firmly believed that it was impossible for a person to be queer *and* Christian; I thought I was the only one in the world "suffering" in this particular way. It was a period of my life steeped in fear, isolation, and self-hatred. Only at twenty years old, when I found Matthias Roberts' podcast, "Queerology"—a podcast centered around conversations of faith and queerness by a real, proud gay Christian—did things begin to change. At first, it was terrifying to listen to "Queerology." I thought I was subjecting myself to false teaching. But I had also never heard anyone discuss an experience like mine, especially out of a place of acceptance and confidence. Such fear, paranoia, and uncertainty I later came to realize were not unique to me.

In discussing "halfie anthropologists," Lila Abu-Lughod asks, "What happens when the 'other' that the anthropologist is studying is simultaneously constructed as, at least partially, a self?" (1991, 140). Due to the fact that I myself identify as a queer Christian, I write my research from the "uneasi[ness]" of "speaking 'for' and speaking 'from'" (1991, 143). Before my ethnographic research, I had never engaged with an actual online community of LGBTQ+ Christians as a member. This fieldwork thrust me into a liminal state, holding the tension of my faith and sexual orientation, germinating into research of a familiar topic in an unfamiliar setting.

My past experiences in queerphobic Christian environments have given me a certain frame through which I engage this topic. In fact, as I began conducting this research, I experienced an affective kinship with others' stress and trauma. After my first night of fieldwork, I wrote in my notes: "I have a flurry of emotions as I have been processing what I read. Visceral feelings of pain and empathy." As I reflect, I can recognize the gradual ways I had become emotionally immersed in my field site, how it affected me and the feelings I came to associate with it: uncertainty forming a pit in my stomach, anxiety subtly pressing behind my sternum, anger radiating in my chest, disappointment and hopelessness sinking through my body. Some nights I would log on to Reddit and look at the latest post, only to become overwhelmed. I quickly learned to gauge what and how much I could handle.

There was a tension in my vulnerability, and that tension persists as I write with the uneasiness Abu-Lughod named. I do not claim that such feelings are absent in this product of my research. Ruth Behar in *The Vulnerable Observer* discusses tensions surrounding participant observation. She professes, "The exposure of the self who is also a specter has to take us somewhere we couldn't otherwise get to" (Behar 1996, 14). In this venturing to be a vulnerable observer, as a queer Christian with a perspective oriented by experience, I expose myself out of a striving to carry this research somewhere it might not otherwise go.

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The light of my computer screen arranged into colors and shapes. Opening Reddit was the entrance into my ethnographic fieldsite, the home page of the LGBChristians subreddit (r/LGBChristians, a pseudonym). I found myself virtually among a multitude of queer Christians. A subreddit is a user-created group on the Reddit website that is devoted to a specific topic. The name of this subreddit unambiguously designates the space for Christians discussing lesbian, gay, and bisexual experiences, though it exceeds this boundary, as many members identified with other queer sexualities and genders. Scrolling through the subreddit shows a variety of posts and conversations that all revolve around being queer and Christian: emotional accounts where people provide support to one another, intellectual exchanges for discussing theology and biblical interpretations, and sharing helpful resources or amusing memes. Under the

header painted in a band of rainbow colors, big black letters announce, "LGB Christians," and centered underneath: "There is a place for us."

Every person's participation on Reddit is veiled with a username, which allows individuals to remain pseudonymous and their participation to be apart from their "actual" lives and identities (Boellstorff 2015). This is crucial for r/LGBChristians, as discussing queer matters can be taboo in Christian communities, especially when one personally claims this experience. Throughout this piece, I employ "queer" as a term to encompass lived experiences outside of merely identifying as LGBTQ+, which, I contend, more accurately depicts my fieldsite. I use LGBTQ+ to refer to a category/community/population specific to those identities. The nuance in naming and separation between online and in-person identities are significant. Consequently, being attuned to the ethical complexities of this research was of utmost concern.

To obtain permission for conducting ethnographic research within r/LGBChristians, I contacted the moderator, and explained my intention for the research. Upon receiving their approval, I made a post in the subreddit to introduce myself, shared my proposal to do research with the group, and provided a document with more in-depth information about the research for people that were interested: details about me as a student, ethical considerations, practices regarding data collection, and information about my approval from Kansas State University's Institutional Review Board. The post ended with an invitation for people to contact me with concerns or questions. I offered this information again to members I contacted for interviews. Two interviews were conducted over the phone, one was through direct messages, and the six others were conducted by video calls. Additionally, my username was "cjj_ethnographer" to mark myself as a researcher.

Names and usernames are all pseudonyms for privacy purposes. Quotations from posts and comments in the subreddit have not been edited for punctuation, grammar, or typos. I use they/them/their pronouns for members in an effort to avoid making assumptions of gender and defaulting into binary gender categories. Accounting for the fact that Reddit is an online space open to the public—all of the posts and comments are visible for anyone's engagement—and that I had received permission from the moderator as well as introduced myself and my research to the group, I endeavored to conduct my digital ethnography without breaching individuals' privacy or acting under false pretenses.

For an idea of the activity in the LGBChristians subreddit, I quantified every engagement for a one-month period. Within the month of March 2020, there were 64 new posts created, 772 comments made, and the scores (positive and negative points to indicate support or dissent) of these 64 posts numbered to 2,310. I recorded these measurements a month after they were originally posted, hoping the lapse in time would prevent numbers from changing dramatically after documentation. In addition, self-proclaimed "lurkers" frequently observe the subreddit, gleaning from the discussions yet never interacting (albeit some eventually choose to participate, often writing their posts with disclaimers noting how long they have followed the subreddit without contributing). The bulk of my fieldwork—over 130 hours of research—took place between February and April of 2020, during which I took notes and analyzed data from all of the posts and comments made. (Numbers of interactions and membership gradually increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically between April and May.) Throughout these three months, the number of members in the subreddit climbed from 5,800 to over 6,300, and there was an average of 13 members online while I was performing fieldwork. Such data allow for the general idea of people's engagement within the subreddit.

Living Deaths: Convergences of Christianity and Queerness

Severe statistics on suicide, houselessness, queerphobic violence, and self-harm are the classic metrics for judging the quality of queer folks' experiences. Among LGBTQ+ youth, rates of suicide, houselessness, even "change attempts," remain high, more so for transgender and nonbinary youth (The Trevor

Project 2020). Systemic forces are a persistent specter, an example being how queer Black and Native American youth are disproportionately affected by issues such as houselessness (Youth.gov). These situations only compound disparate traumas and injustices faced by people of color, as reflected by incarceration rates, institutionalizations, and other forms of state violence. Meanwhile, a 2018 study revealed that among LGB individuals, "religious importance" —that is, religion being important to the respondent—was associated with a 38% increase in the odds of recent suicidal ideation (Lytle 2018, 646), and according to a Pew Research Center report, about 70% of Americans "describe themselves as Christian" (2015). These realities are historically connected. It is likely that a majority of LGBTQ+ folks in the U.S. grew up with a background determined or influenced by Christianity. As the tacit state religion of the settler-colonial U.S., Christianity merits being at the forefront of any discussion on the state of the LGBTQ+ community in this country.

Traditional Christianity—a term I use to demarcate the often conservative, queerphobic Christianity that has been central in the formation of settler-colonial American society—is pivotal in this country's history of oppressions: cis-heteronormativity; White supremacist knowledge productions, social abuses, and structural exploitation; ableism tied to capitalist production (witnessed broadly in the Protestant work ethic and the prosperity gospel, for example); and settler-colonialism's "civilizing mission" and its continual colonial violence against Indigenous people and cultures. Historian and religious scholar R. Marie Griffith traces the merging of traditional Christianity and cis-heteronormativity, with Christianity portraying women, queer folks, immigrants, racial Others, and other Others as representing the "enemy within [...] a God-blessed nation" (2017, xi). Looking at cis-heteronormativity specifically, what/who is Other blends into what/who is queer. Cis-heteronormativity began taking shape more concretely in the late 1800s when White, "monogamous hetero couple-hood and the privatized single-family household" became state-sanctioned "national ideals" (Rifkin 2006, 28). It has become entrenched in American life since then as the American dream, and in many ways, "the family" can be seen as metaphoric to morality (Burack 2015, 3). Thus, national and Christian ideals have noticeably been braided together.

As the Other blends into the queer, nonheteronormativity is racialized. Productions of African Americans as "nonheteronormative" have been enacted since times of slavery through "material practices of state and civil society" (Ferguson 2009, 420). Often White-enforced, "African-American racial and sexual formations" —including "lack of common law marriages, out-of-wedlock births, lodgers, single-headed families, non monogamous sexual relationships, unmarried persons, and homosexual persons and relationships"—were condemned as immoral (Ferguson 2009, 423). Cathy Cohen fleshed out how only privileged (rich, White) expressions of heterosexuality are accepted and empowered, rendering Black women, and women of color more generally, deviant (1997, 454). Mark Rifkin followed Cohen, maintaining that missions to "civilize" Native folks heavily involved institutionalizing heterosexuality, enacting a colonial "network of interlocking state-sanctioned policies and ideologies" (2006, 28). Just in these glimpses, the forces of anti-Black racism and White supremacy, citizenship, and colonialism stand out in the development of cis-heteronormativity.

A generative force for traditional Christianity's investment in cis-heteronormativity as a colonial, White supremacist, national enterprise was pathologization. Starting in the early 1900s, Christian pathologization of LGBTQ+ folks involved developing therapeutic discourse and informing pastoral counseling to "treat" homosexuality, which then shaped biblical interpretations surrounding homosexuality (White 2015, 27). In the 1940s, emotionalism in Black churches—namely Holiness, Pentecostal, and Apostolic denominations with worship styles connected to traditional African religions—was labelled as a pathological condition, indicative of "unregulated nonheteronormativity" (Ferguson 2009, 426-427). In a more recent case of pathologizing, Southern Baptist pastor Jerry Falwell and the Moral Majority damned queer folks during the AIDS epidemic in the US, projecting AIDS and the multitudes of deaths as

"God's wrath" (Shilts 1987, 348). Considering the disproportionate effects on communities of color, queerphobia was not the only force at play. This overview is context for traditional Christianity's involvement in interlocking and overlapping American regimes of oppression, While these oppressions are imposed upon communities, they are also inscribed on individual bodies.

Christianity in the Queer Body: Disgust, Divine Disapproval, and Disablement

From within, Christian communities can intensify the cis-heteronormativity circulating in broader culture. Stephen, a member of the subreddit I interviewed, confessed over the phone his anger for and distress from buying into the life trajectory of a Christian family and the American dream set before him. In two different subreddit posts, he shared: "I want to live and believe I'm not going to hell, guys. I want God to love me. I want to love myself" and "I'm not happy that I have to now settle in a life that I never wanted." A commenter aptly replied that when one has only been presented the heteronormative, "It's hard to even envision a different script." Traditional Christianity's cis-heteronormative script constrains people's lives but can constrict to the point of strangling for queer folks.

Prejudice is projected onto collective and individual mind-bodies. While talking about the mistreatment they endured because people suspected they were gay, u/komo-journey1376 elucidated, "The truth is that a lot of Christians aren't just against gay sex, they really don't like lgbt people and wish we didn't exist." Burack situates "disgust"—signifying "moral wickedness"—as the root of Christian homophobia (2014, 23). Yet in sociologist Kelsey Burke's digital ethnography of evangelical men's online groups for non-normative sex practices, sexual acts (such as "pegging [the anal penetration of a man by a woman]" [2014, 4]) are justified because both God and their wives are assured of (and ensure) their "masculine status" (2014, 17). Disgust then resides in queer bodies specifically, in the desires, expressions, experiences, relationships, and lifeways implied in these mind-bodies do not align with cis-heteronormative scripts. SueAnn Shiah's presentation, "Theology of the Body," at the 2020 Q Christian Fellowship conference affirmed this: even if LGBTQ+ Christians try to convince people they are one of the "good ones"—meaning they believe the "right" thing—"History has shown they will judge you by your body" (2020, 40:33-40:45). Violating cis-heteronormative scripts in a queer mind-body supposedly invites divine disapproval, justifying human prejudice.

Following this shift towards individual bodies, there are theologies in Christianity that consider queer sexualities and gender identities to be disabilities, reifying their locus in a judged mind-body through the lenses of queerphobia and ableism. This began with early 1900s' therapeutic discourses positing that homosexuality, rather than being a problem of morality, manifests from a "psychic conflict" (White 2015, 29). Wesley Hill's *Washed and Waiting* tells of his experience as a gay Christian, presenting his sexual orientation as akin to Paul of the New Testament's "thorn in the flesh," a bodily affliction given by the divine through which suffering becomes a transformative aspect of grace (2010). Disability studies scholars commonly explain disability as a social construction, but through the "ignorance, stereotyping, and stigmatization" of disability in our broader culture, disablement is often attributed solely to biology, which eludes the recognition of the disabling structures of our world and our subsequent "social responsibilities" (Wendell 1996, 57, 67). Theologies positing queer sexualities and genders as disabilities do not recognize that one's (cis-heteronormative) environment can create the "disability," and so people are judged by their mind-bodies.

Due to this perspective, conversion therapy efforts geared towards "healing" still exist. Devastatingly, many queer Christians consent to and even seek out these practices for themselves, betraying the pervasive ways Christians can internalize queerphobia, being subject to the affects and embodiments of convictions manipulated (Jarrard 2020). Such "reparative" methods, even queerphobic religious rhetoric, can be disabling of the mind-body. Brett Trap speaks of having a stroke in his intense moments in the closet (2017), and Christian singer Vicky Beeching was diagnosed with fibromyalgia and myalgic

encephalomyelitis after the onslaught of homophobic Christian condemnation during her coming out (2018). In r/LGBChristians, one member posted, "I pray every night, and have for the past 6 years, to be straight. I beg and cry out to God to change me, but I'm still here." When cis-heteronormative scripts are all one knows, the vitriol becomes embodied.

"Truth" Traumas

Queer Christians too often embody spiritual and religious traumas. These traumas result from lived experiences where "Truth"—a religious belief held to be the absolute, universal standard of morality—threatened a severing of connections with communities, themselves, and even with the divine. Underlying the focus of care in my ethnography is a phenomenon I call "Truth" trauma. I use this concept to explain how "Truth" has been weaponized, used directly and indirectly to condemn, oppress, or Other another human being. Obviously, there are multitudes of Christian sects, denominations, traditions, and interpretations that distinguish what each branch, congregation, and individual respectively considers "Truth." I am unconcerned with what exactly may be considered "Truth." Rather, I am emphasizing how people, acting under the auspices that their belief is the real "Truth," can cause harm.

Many members of the LGBChristians subreddit reiterate messages like that articulated by u/ComanderPaaanther: "I can't live a life knowing that i'm sinning just by being alive, [...] The worst part is that I can't change it, I've tried and I've prayed and God hasn't changed me." How does one cope with the belief, and the embodiment of the belief, that living is essentially sin? In what ways can life be tenable against this shadow of spiritual and physical death? Traumatic experiences—"experiences that radically sever [...] basic human connection and relationship," a feeling of "ontological aloneness" (Lester 2013, 754)—arise with the brandishing of Othering beliefs as an absolute moral "Truth." Rachel Ward brings forth the concept "living death" in which queer people embody an experience of loss (at the fault of their own body) for which they cannot return to cis-heteronormative faiths, families, communities: "it's a death, and we're still here [living]" (Roberts 2021). Throughout this piece, "Truth" trauma iterates the significance of community for queer Christians. Circulations of care in these relations are vital.

The Culture of Care

I had my notebook at the ready when our Skype call connected and u/thatqueergirl's face materialized on my screen. Hannah is a queer White woman with blonde hair and bushy bangs. She is in her mid-twenties and studying to be a nurse. We started talking about her coming out and faith journey. Since coming out, she plugged into networks of queer Christians on Facebook and Twitter and attended queer Christian conferences. When joining Reddit, Hannah purposefully sought out the queer Christians. Under her username, u/thatqueergirl, she swiftly, consistently, and thoughtfully responds to despairing posts. Despite how sad it is to read these posts and open up to other people's hardships, she views this emotional labor as suicide prevention. It is through the care of members like Hannah that r/LGBChristians becomes a space of belonging, support, and solidarity.

Care contains constellations of meaning. I aspire to avoid associations of care with wholeness—an ableist endeavor (Sins 2019, 24)—and also uses of care as a means for "saviorist storying" (Weaver 2021). Weaver uses "saviorist storying" in the context of adopting rescues from shelters, but also extends its missions of (White) saviorism, colonialism, neoliberalism, and other(ing) forces. Critiques of these forces can and have been leveraged toward anthropology and its dynamic with the Other. While I do not want to conflate these situations, I want to point out the underlying forces enabling these.

I am compelled by scholar of feminist science and technology studies Maria Puig de la Bellacasa's consideration of care to encompass "an affective state, a material vital doing, and an ethico-political obligation" (2011, 90). Care presents as inherently social and political, permeating affective relations and material realizations. But care can also involve alienations. "Care eschews easy categorization: a way of caring over here could kill over there" (Puig de la Bellacasa 2011, 100).

Consulting with this lineage, I employ care here as a framework operating as knowledge production and consequential practices—it provokes a process of bringing awareness, cultivating empathy, and an ethic of responding.

In *Life Beside Itself*, an ethnography of care in an Inuit community, Lisa Stevenson conceives of care—involving knowledge productions and the response to it—as "the way someone comes to matter and the corresponding ethics of attending to the other who matters" (2014, 3). Looking at efforts of the state and other institutions, Stevenson unravels "anonymous care" in suicide hotlines: "One comes to experience oneself as a caring person, caring such that it matters not for whom" (2014, 84). But mediated through this generalization, the *who*, the self of the person caring, "became irrelevant"—what matters is not *who* the person is but *what* they are (Stevenson 2014, 89, 107). Inspired by Stevenson, I characterize the efforts within r/LGBChristians as pseudonymous care, where the object of one's care is not always as important as experiencing oneself as a caring person. Meanwhile, the caring self only comes to matter through their shared social and spiritual body as a queer Christian. As well, I seek to add to ways Stevenson evinced for how "anonymity actually comes to structure our very definition of what it is to care" (Stevenson 2014, 85).

Pseudonymity is simply the nature of many online settings, yet it can still allow—even aid—LGBTQ+ individuals to support one another, especially if privacy and geography are barriers for community (Dym et al 2019, 12). With this remote aspect, the sentiment is usually, "I want to give people what I needed." Care shapes itself according to the landscape of its home. Pseudonymous care takes root within structural boundaries of engagement, and in r/LGBChristians, it is bound to the design of Reddit: its pseudonymous requisite, the subreddit interface, the established structure of posting, commenting, adding positive or negative points, and messaging.

Hannah said she hardly ever looks at usernames; Reddit has a "fire and forget nature," according to Nathan, another interviewee. Like hotlines, Hannah's suicide prevention creates no "lasting bonds" (Stevenson 2014, 84). Rather than care and concern in r/LGBChristians being directed at particular individuals' on-going lives, members focus on providing care to the *community* of LGBTQ+ Christians. Aligning with Stevenson's anonymous care—concentrating on the idea of caring for the community rather than a certain person (2014, 84)—acts of care in r/LGBChristians are motivated by an intent to help any one, in contrast to continually investing in particular individuals' on-going lives.

This surfaces throughout the subreddit in how commenters frequently respond to posts focused on what they believe is the true problem, not what the OP (Original Poster) is asking for help with. When a post conveyed the OP's ambivalence about having a romantic partner who did not share their Christian faith, asking, "How do I go about introducing her to Christianity in this situation?" most did not address the question. Member u/GimMeTac0s advised, "Well,OP i think what you actually need to decide is if you are okay with being with someone long term who doesn't share your faith." Others also added what they believed the OP should be more concerned with. The piece of advice most relevant to the original question was from u/NeverNotInfinity: "Really I think that if she goes to church with you and sees your faith in your life, it might move something inside of them." Since there is no concern for follow-up, members diagnose what they believe is the OP's true problem and then impart their solution. This practice is presented as helping others, but it is meaningful to the commenters, allowing them to interact with other queer Christians in ways they can experience themselves as caring.

Careful not to invalidate these attempts to care, I want to return once again to broader contexts of traditional sects of Christianity. Malachi, the first member I interviewed, was from Hong Kong and identified as a gay man. When speaking with me, he contrasted the care of this subreddit with what he had experienced from his physical Christian community. He told me that when he shared with his church about being a victim of sexual assault, "The care was like, 'Did you have sex with that boy?' [...] And when they heard 'Yes,' they were like abhorrent, astonished." Malachi recounted this with what

appeared to be a smile, but his words quivered with pain. Although Malachi's account was unique in my research, others expressed similar religious reasonings for harm, similar "Truth" traumas. The subreddit's movements toward care undeniably stand out against this backdrop.

After the reductive attempts of care many members of the subreddit experienced in their religious communities, r/LGBChristians' expressions to care are meaningful. This is largely because of the sense of solidarity. Olivia, a White, Catholic college-age girl, spoke of the fundamental bond within the subreddit. "There's this really hard internal struggle that comes with being gay and Christian, and because of that, we have this community," she said. "People are trying to reach out" and share "how they're feeling and their experiences." The foundation for this care reminds me of SueAnn Shiah's term "embodied solidarity," meaning a kinship in suffering: "My body was experiencing the same pain, the same trauma they were" (2020, 38:26-38:45). In these terms, perceived shared experiences of being a queer Christian solidify the bond through which care responses flow. But the affective relations streaming from embodied solidarity complicate the distance of anonymous care, and so I propose pseudonymous care—a slightly closer association—to account for this unique intimacy, where feelings become more important than selves. Structures of what it means to care and perceptions of an embodied solidarity forge a dynamic relationship. Out of these complicated flows, more a/effective productions of care take form.

Methods of Care

I contend there are three broad approaches in r/LGBChristians to producing care, knowledge, support, and belonging: advice, story sharing, and offering perspective. Complimentary affirmations are sprinkled generously throughout. Often, people braid the three approaches together. Looking back at when I was compelled to share as a participant observer, I can see how I regularly intermingled story sharing and perspective offering. These three intuited approaches are invested in the production of care, enlivening its externally structured framework through affective relatings. Affinities sharpen across these efforts to address traumas.

Advice

Many people come to the LGBChristians subreddit just for the purpose of seeking advice from other queer Christians, eliciting thoughtful guidance or instruction. The range of topics is extensive. People sought advice for bible passages to read, how to sit through homophobic sermons, whether it is okay to wear a cross symbol in an LGBTQ+ safe space, even design ideas for how a closeted teenager can decorate their room with bisexual colors. The varying degrees of seriousness allow people to receive support and a sense of belonging for whatever situations they feel comfortable disclosing. There is a welcoming community on the other end of the screen.

One user asked the subreddit for advice on how to stay closeted, as they suspected their homophobic family members might be questioning their sexual orientation. Commenters cast a wide net of advice, addressing what they diagnosed as the true problem. Something within this net had the possibility to resonate. The first commenter began with an affirmation: "First, know that you are loved. I know you'll get comments to not hide but I know from my own experience that isn't always possible." Following, u/Mrhappenada divulged their own past efforts to eliminate suspicion, even claiming to have once "left a google search on my dads computer for 'girl master-bates while saying Jacob.'" Yet in their conclusion, u/Mrhappenada shared:

> For me staying closeted was a poison that was ruining my life I got deeper and deeper into my lies and created even further strained real auto ships [relationships] with my family. I hope you get to a place where you can be free to be the perfect child of god that you were born to be.

Story Sharing

The practice of story sharing, recounting personal experiences to foster a sense of solidarity, is another integral approach to care among queer Christians, especially as many seek this subreddit specifically because of isolation. Stories provide a pervasive comfort

through "embodied solidarity," and sharing them also pushes boundaries, challenging "Truths" against a narrative of first-hand experience.

"Have you ever been so far back in the closet that you wondered if you were fooling yourself?" began the post. The author proceeded to describe their situation as a recent college graduate who moved back in with their parents to save money. "I've just been questioning things recently," they continued, "because I've had to step back farther into the closet. […] There's been a part of my mind ever since I came out that always tries to interject when I think about love, dates, sexuality, romance, etc." A list of accusatory and shaming questions followed, indictments that constantly resided in their mind. Two people answered the post to share their own stories of similar struggles.

"Here's my two cents for what it's worth," the first commenter said. "I'm 27, and I've never experienced sexual attraction at all (aka I'm asexual). I've had many of the same doubts your having due to my lack of sexual experiences and that fact that it hard to know what you don't feel if that makes sense." Adding to their own personal account, they encourage the OP to find an LGBTQ+ affirming church that could help in processing their pain and finding out who they "really are." Others echoed similar stories of their own experiences, sometimes even capping it off with the common trope, "it gets better."

Offering Perspective

This last approach is not instructive, nor does it rely on anecdotes or experiences. Offering perspective simply entails sharing different viewpoints believed to be edifying for the receiver. Importantly, there can be a liberatory (and dangerous) undertow here. Differing ideas, beliefs, and imaginings may threaten traditional Christian establishments. Relatedly, this can be the most prevalent means for members to diagnose what they believe to be the actual problem and share their view, with or without regard for the OP's needs.

In the beginning of my research, I considered offering perspectives to have an almost competitive nature through which people were challenging others about what is right. Over time, I have come to recognize it as an attempt to offer as many viewpoints as possible in hopes to allow the receiver to choose the one that best applies to them. Todd, whose voice on the phone was sure with age and experience, said of the significance of ideological diversity:

> None of us truly, truly know what God wants from us. […] I think this particular subreddit does a very good job of saying, 'This is how I live my life. This is how I see it,' and then someone else will come along and say, 'Well, that's not how I see it." […] It gives someone a chance to see many different perspectives.

While potentially less personal than other approaches, inclinations to offer varying perspectives can provide a gentle space for appraising damaging "Truths." When one user consulted the subreddit for their anxiety about going to hell, the ten comments each proffered different perspectives, like how Paul's "thorn in his side" allowed him to better serve God, an assurance that repentance will always lead to salvation, even how new scientific advances may conquer death. The final comment expressed, "Pick the path that makes the most sense to you. If you have faith in the Lord I'm sure he will have faith in you to navigate your life according to his will."

Productions of care within the LGBChristians subreddit reveal, at least in part, the bonds tying this community together and meanings associated. Pulsing within r/LGBChristians, anonymous and pseudonymous care dissolve the self on both sides of the interaction. But members come to matter through their social and spiritual bodies, their experiences as queer Christians. And care is the means through which this meaning is assigned—against the backdrop of a coalescence of history, culture, and spirituality. Caring for another queer Christian can be caring for one's self, blurring boundaries of space and time. This provides a space of support for queer Christians while providing the community in which it takes place. Care here is a framework: it opens the possibility for knowledge, support, and belonging; it affectively connects the members it draws; and it produces approaches through which these possibilities and connections can be realized. However, Puig de la Bellacasa forewarned care as an Othering and

alienating power. Peering outside the subreddit once more, I feel it necessary to destabilize r/LGBChristians' care.

Destabilizing Care

While the support queer Christians show one another in this subreddit is valuable and much needed to all involved, it does little to intervene against the foundational problem: the oppressive hegemony of Christianity, particularly within the United States. Vincent Duclos and Tomás Sánchez Criado's troubling of care cautions, "Care, to put it bluntly, is at risk of calcification—of becoming a placeholder for a shared desire for comfort and protection" (2019, 1-2). Might exhibitions of care in r/LGBChristians merely be a "placeholder" for comforting people in their pain and trauma? Confronting the mechanisms of Christianity that perpetuate "Truth" trauma may be outside the scope of this subreddit, for it was founded to be a community for queer Christians. But problematizing these care responses may also be essential. Care, even inside the subreddit, is inherently social and political in the knowledge it produces, the ignorances it perpetuates, and the support and belonging it extends.

In what ways might the subreddit be overlooking more penetrating forms of care due to limitations within a (hegemonic) Christianity imaginary? W. C. Harris critiques the hegemony of Christianity, remarking that improvements in regards to LGBTQ+ inclusion cannot truly address the "rhetorical, political, and cultural entrenchment of religiously endorsed homophobia" (2014, 87-88). Sociologist Michelle Wolkomir writes of how gay Christian men in support groups carved out niches in which to exist but remained connected to dominant, oppressive ideologies. Wolkomir explains, "their revisions were necessarily selective, allowing the larger, legitimating structure of Christian ideology to remain intact" (2006, 199). Similar to Harris' and Wolkomir's interventions, and despite how generously members of r/LGBChristians care for one another, the sentiments and stories shared in posts, comments, and interviews betray a lack of action taken towards the systemic issues that have determined queer Christians' traumatic experiences.

Such selective revisions dim against hegemonic Christianity's role in oppressive regimes. Venturing further into the social and political ramifications of the group, I want to be skeptical of normativities produced and sustained in r/LGBChristians. In spite of the variety of nationalities represented in the subreddit—I witnessed people in r/LGBChristians claim to be from the Philippines, Jordan, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Hong Kong, and the United Kingdom—the centrality of the U.S. seems to be understood. One member even criticized the rhetoric of Christian queerphobia to be stemming from "fff'ing weird (american) religious weirdos." In *The New York Times* bestseller, *I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness*, Austin Channing Brown describes a White supremacist expectation of assimilation in Christian organizations: "The prayers are that I would become who *they* want me to be. 'Lord, make this Black person just like us'" (2018, 79). Might this be a haunting interpolation hidden in affirmations of being a queer Christian? Perhaps because such normativities exist so pervasively, social and political impacts appear to go unnoticed.

The only time I saw race mentioned in the subreddit during the months of my fieldwork was when u/contemplate_er posted about praying away their "same-sex attraction" because of their race, saying, "I'm black *and* bi, that's two strikes against me already." Out of the 19 comments, only one commenter—self-identified as a gay Catholic Latino man in their 30s—approached the topic of race, saying God would not change their attraction "any more than He would make you white to escape racist prejudices [...] Prejudice is the sin and the problem, not the way you were fearfully and wonderfully made: a black and bi child of God." These statements convey a complexity of identity and lived experience in the terms of sexual orientation, race, and faith, but the social and political intricacies of this intersection were never explored.

One of the only (markedly) political posts I observed in the subreddit was when a member shared a newly published article about how then presidential candidate Pete Buttigieg was normalizing being gay and Christian. A great number of the post's 17 comments shared an

appreciation for LGBTQ+ Christians being recognized "on a national stage." Three comments dissented; one merely complained, "Why did the first gay Christian candidate have to be so bland and so imperialistic?" A separate post inquired about whether a person of color would be willing to discuss their perspective of Buttigieg: "It's curious to me that a minority group can have a strong bias against another minority group, even when aligning with the same faith and the same political party." The only comment on this post was from a self-identified Latino/a/x member, who explained that communities of color "are driven by faith and tradition," but proclaimed Buttigieg is "our hope for unity." Placing Buttigieg's identity as a (White) gay Christian center stage superseded his politics—stances that were heavily criticized by broader LGBTQ+ communities in regards to systemic racism, health care, imperialism, and neoliberalism among others.

These scant instances were the extent to which I witnessed social issues and politics being touched upon. Evoking Duggan's concept "homonormativity"—the depoliticizing of LGBTQ+ communities where ideals like "equality" and "freedom" provide lesbian and gay folks the promise to access and sustain institutions and regimes of oppression—sheds a sobering light (2002). Homonormativity (Pete Buttigieg being a beacon of its arrangements) is certainly relevant, constituted with regimes of oppression, and can be advantageous to the nation and national ideals through deployments of "homonationalism" (Puar 2007). Scrutinizing Christianity's investment in dominant, oppressive culture spotlights how even seemingly radical acts—liberation from traumatic beliefs about one's queer sexuality and/or gender—can still keep folks upholding ongoing structures of oppression. For many queer Christians in the subreddit, the telos for their life is still the state-sanctioned cis-heteronormative Christian script: faith, marriage, children, "equality" and "freedom." Selective revisions do not confront or even name the overarching hegemonies pertinent to queer Christians' pain, which are also tied up with the injustice perpetrated against so many others. Taking on the landscape of its home, care meets its end here.

What would it look like to strive for a community of "thick solidarity," which Liu and Shange describe as "Layer[ing] interpersonal empathy with historical analysis, political acumen, and a willingness to be led by those most directly impacted" (2018, 196)? Engaging such would require disentanglement with hegemonic Christianity. This could look like the discussions and actions inspired by people like Kevin Garcia, a prominent voice for LGBTQ+ Christians using an intersectional lens in their exegesis of practical theology; Dr. Robyn Henderson-Espinoza, queer activist theologian; Grace Semler Baldridge, the first openly queer artist to top the Christian music charts, speaking against capitalism; or Jo Luehmann, working to decolonize Christian theology. Thick solidarity can be a challenge birthed from care as a social and political act. It can address White supremacy, which impedes u/contemplate_er from accepting their sexual orientation. It can provoke people to divest from cis-heteronormative constructs, opening an acceptance for queer kinships and even confront incorporations of legal status, race, indigeneity, and disability into who can be a family—the separations of families at the U.S. and Mexico border, families with an incarcerated member, families split due to the racist, classist, ableist child welfare system and medical industrial complex. It can inspire a divestment from punitive, capitalist practices. It can back the "abolition of land as property," the eradication of "settler sovereignty," the pursuit for Native sovereignty (Tuck and Yang 2012, 26). These can combat the "Truth" trauma inflicted outside of queer Christians' experiences as well as forge an entry point to reimagine our culture.

Conclusion: Visionary Care?

Articulating care requires nuance, but materializing forms of care in one's life and especially in community is a significantly greater undertaking. Along those lines, I need to acknowledge the privilege in my ability to step back, analyze, and depict the care within r/LGBChristians. I was not one to regularly comment on posts as a form of suicide prevention like Hannah, to repeatedly offer perspectives in hope that they might help like Todd, to show my internal struggles in order to

build solidarity like Olivia spoke about. I strove for empirical data collection, and that set me apart.

But in my months of fieldwork, I sensed currents of care pulling people toward one another, pulling me towards what could have been my community. I was vulnerable to this subject, this community, these people. I was vulnerable in a way that affected me deeply. Seeing posts and comments where people shared experiences or circumstances like mine forced me to hold space for my own hurt. Memories surfaced. Old wounds became sensitive once more. Yet the support shown for others also resonated with me. That the subreddit could help me like others professed it had helped them reveals my kinship with this community, and more importantly, in my position speaking for and from, it shows the impact of its productions of care.

Within r/LGBChristians, I maintain expressions of care are most integral in association with "Truth" trauma, the weaponization of beliefs which Other, condemn, and traumatize. The heart of this concerns "Truth" and how people interact with it. Recognizing how "Truth" trauma exists and is perpetuated throughout our culture can allow for more precise interventions in suffering. The issues spoken of throughout—pathologizations, dehumanization, punishments related to rights and citizenship, inflictions of "Truth" traumas—do not exist in silos. All inherently connect in interwoven regimes of oppression, and "Truth" is implicated in this. Reconciling queer identities and lived experiences with faith is innately a social and political act. Care within the LGBChristians subreddit can ripple outside of the community; however, if expressions within this framework of care do not confront Christianity's hegemony, it can seamlessly perpetuate it.

As an online queer community of solidarity, my hope would be that r/LGBChristians and its practices of care become more expansive. Looking at queer Christians' interactions to help each other in the subreddit, perhaps something can be made of these interventions of "Truth" trauma. Perhaps care can blossom into a true "transformative ethos" (Puig de la Bellacasa 2011, 100). Might communities like r/LGBChristians be able to offer a perspective of visionary care outside of religion, if it were open to the social and political as it is to the spiritual? In closing, I offer Kevin Garcia's blessing (and challenge): "Jesus said that he chose the weak things of this world to shame the strong, foolish things to shame the wise, and I think he chose queer folks, in this world, to shame the system" (Semlar, 2021).

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"A Wonderful Movie!": The Appropriation of Entertainment Ultrasound Technology in The Netherlands

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ABSTRACT

It is now almost impossible to imagine a pregnancy in The Netherlands without one or two fetal ultrasounds. In contrast to the biomedical view of seeing ultrasound technology as a transparent window into the womb, much scholarly research in the social sciences highlights that the technology is not neutral, but has different meanings and applications depending on the context. Feminist anthropologists have mostly criticized ultrasound technology for invading the intimate experience of pregnancy and making women "invisible." This article focuses on so-called "entertainment" ultrasounds to explore how pregnant women in The Netherlands use ultrasound technology for new, unintended purposes. Using semi-structured interviews and discourse analysis of websites of commercial ultrasound clinics, I demonstrate that many pregnant women in The Netherlands consider the ultrasound scan a positive and valuable experience that they can consciously use to feel less insecure and to relax during their pregnancy. It is argued that, in looking so closely at the structural power relations that limit women's agency, feminist anthropologists often downplay the possible leeway that expectant mothers have. These women are not forced into doing "entertainment" ultrasound scans but are active agents appropriating the technology.

Keywords: entertainment ultrasound; fetal ultrasound; feminist anthropology; the Netherlands

The one where seeing sound waves makes parents cry

When Rachel first saw her baby, she cried. To tell the truth, Rachel did not *actually* see her baby. She saw sound waves produced by her fetus, made visible by sonographic technology. And to be even more precise, Rachel did not even understand that that was what she saw on the screen. While crying, she exclaimed: "I don't see it! I lied, I didn't want her to think I was a terrible mother! I can't even see my own baby." Stammering, Ross, the father of the baby, started explaining: "You see this, this tiny thing, that looks like a peanut? Sweetie, that is it." Rachel's expression changed immediately. It seemed like she was suddenly looking at a cute baby animal movie. Lovingly, she took Ross's hand and spoke the words: "Wow, I cannot believe that is our baby" (*Friends* 2001).

This famous episode of the American television show *Friends* is certainly not the only time that fetal ultrasound plays an important role in popular culture. In the Dutch soap opera *Goede Tijden, Slechte Tijden* (2013) one of the characters, Nina, is going to bed early, because as her boyfriend tells her, she has "an important photoshoot tomorrow." Her mother-in-law weighs in: "It is the first time that you see your child. You have to share that with each other." The first moments in the hospital are awkward, because the father of the baby and Nina's boyfriend, who hate each other, are both there. But that changes immediately when they see the fetus on the screen; Nina exclaims: "It is really a small human!"

Although these examples are "just" scenes of television shows, they demonstrate the role that fetal ultrasounds play in experiences of pregnancy. While the sonogram was introduced to improve the physical health of pregnant women and their babies, the practice is now also used by pregnant women for other purposes. This is evidenced by the rise of what is popularly referred to as "the entertainment ultrasound," or "*pretecho*" in Dutch, where women are shown images of the fetus in a non-medical setting, often in 3D imagery. The goal of doing an ultrasound is no longer (just) to see the medical condition of the baby or fetus (these terms were used interchangeably by my interviewees). As such, my research explores how pregnant women in The Netherlands appropriate the technology of the fetal ultrasound for new, unintended purposes. The concept of "unintended purposes" includes non-traditional uses of ultrasounds that are beyond the scope of their original design and use by scientists and designers who introduced them to the medical community (Van Dijck 2005), on which I will elaborate later in this article. I chose to specifically focus on women because the mother (and not her partner) is made a "patient" in the ultrasound process. I was also intrigued by popular ideas about motherhood and the "natural" and special connection that exists between a mother and her child.

I am certainly not the first anthropologist to look into fetal ultrasounds. Many researchers have been critical of this relatively new technology "invading" the experience of pregnancy. Multiple feminist anthropologists have, for example, critiqued the way that the ultrasound erases the female body to make the fetus visible (Kroløkke 2009, 130). In my analysis I focus more on the leeway that certain pregnant women in The Netherlands have; they are not "lured" into "entertainment" ultrasounds; they see them as valuable experiences. I will explore the ways in which expectant women act as active co-creators of the fetal ultrasound, shaping the technology and ascribing meaning to it while using it.

In this article, I first examine theories that are important for understanding the changing uses of the sonogram. I pay particular attention to the Science and Technology Studies (STS) concept of "appropriation of technology," by giving not only examples of ultrasound in other countries, but also of another technology: the car. I then briefly discuss the concepts of "co-production" and "embodied knowledge." Finally,

I critically look at the specific case of ultrasound in the Netherlands. Particular emphasis is upon how non-medical uses were attributed to the practice of ultrasound, such as the theory of ultrasound bonding. I then come to my argument, by demonstrating how ultrasound technology influenced the pregnancy experience of Dutch women. Part of my argument will be that the introduction of selective reproductive technologies (SRTs) has made pregnancy more insecure, especially because women have less confidence in their embodied knowledge (Browner and Press 1996). However, I also argue that some women have the possibility to appropriate the technology to "solve" this problem and take this opportunity to incorporate ultrasound in their embodied pregnancy experiences. In the end, I position myself within the debates of many feminist anthropologists: are women indeed victims of ultrasound technology?

Gathering data

To examine the above-mentioned research question I used two forms of qualitative methods. First, I did seven semi-structured interviews that lasted between thirty minutes and an hour and a quarter, six of which were with Dutch women who chose to do one or multiple entertainment ultrasounds during their pregnancies. Their ages varied between twenty-five and thirty-four and they had all been pregnant within the last three years at the time I interviewed them. For the purposes of my research and to protect their identity, all of my informants were given pseudonyms. I used my first interview as a pilot to obtain insights into how to structure the questions. However, most of the time, I let my interviewees take the lead and talk about the topics that they thought were interesting. To complement the data from these six interviews, I also did one interview with a 55-year-old sonographer who has her own commercial ultrasound clinic, which means that the clinic is geared toward non-medical uses, not covered by health insurance, and often referred to as "entertainment" ultrasound clinic. With permission from the interviewees, I recorded all the interviews and transcribed them afterward.

The interviews were carried out between October 2020 and June 2021, which means that for a big part of the research period The Netherlands was in lockdown due to COVID-19. Therefore, all the interviews were done through video calls, either on Zoom or WhatsApp, depending on the preference of the interviewee. The benefit of this was that it was often easy for my interviewees to find the time for an interview. One of them was even driving home from work during part of the interview. However, because I had never done an online interview before, I did encounter some difficulties. Next to background noises and a sometimes inconsistent internet connection, the interviewees were sometimes distracted by children or other family members that I could not see. These distractions during the interviews sometimes influenced the interview flow. Another problem, that I only noticed while doing the first interview, was that it can be quite difficult to read body language when you can only see someone's face. Sally Seitz (2016, 232) argues: "This makes it even more vital to listen to the tone of the participant's voice and be very conscious of their facial expressions." During the interviews, I recognized how difficult this can be, especially when the internet connection is poor. I was also more conscious of my own facial expression than when doing a face-to-face interview. I could constantly see my face on the screen and noticed that it sometimes distracted me: am I looking okay? Do I show enough emotion in my face? Seitz (2016) also argues that a video interview can cause a loss of intimacy when talking about sensitive topics. I think that I was lucky that my interviewees liked to discuss this topic. For all of them, the ultrasound was a happy memory to look back at.

This seemingly insignificant observation about the feelings my interviewees had concerning their ultrasound scans is not as innocent as it looks; it hints at the women's positionality within Dutch society. Part of the reason that they did not face many structural barriers in accessing health care and did not experience much fear in medical settings, is that my interviewees were almost exclusively white, middle-class, able-bodied, cisgender, straight women. In this research, I use the experiences of this relatively powerful group of

women to dive deeper into the often-heard statement of feminist researchers that women and their embodied experiences are made invisible in maternity care, for example by ultrasound technology. Having said that, there is of course an important body of work within feminist anthropology that focuses on how structural inequalities, particularly racism, seep into – and are maintained by – the medical system and medical technologies (e.g. Colen 1995; Bridges 2011). My research shows that, although my interviewees did not experience the structural barriers often encountered by less privileged groups of women, there were still boundaries left to encounter and strategies needed to overcome them; this article sheds light on the ways even these relatively powerful women were struggling to navigate through their pregnancies and the medical processes related to it.

Next to the semi-structured interviews, I also did a discourse analysis of four websites of Dutch commercial ultrasound clinics (*Joehoedaarbinnen, BabyView, Dokter Papa*, and *FunBaby*) and one of a Dutch company for rental ultrasound devices (*Babywatcher*). I mostly focused on the reviews written on the websites but also paid attention to the ways entertainment ultrasounds are sold to expectant couples. Now that I have discussed the methodology used in this article, I will turn to some important theoretical concepts.

Society shaping technology

Doing an ultrasound scan can feel miraculous. On the website of *Babywatcher*, a site for an ultrasound device for home use, I watched a vlog of a woman moving the scanner across her belly. While pointing at the screen, she explained to the child sitting next to her: "Look! That is the baby." It seemed like the woman's belly was suddenly invisible, and the inside was shown on the screen of her laptop. Looking at it that way, one may think that the scan provides pregnant women with an objective view of their fetuses. And, according to anthropologists Lisa Mitchell and Eugenia Georges, this is the exact discourse that is presented by medical professionals about ultrasound technology:

> For physicians and sonographers, ultrasound represents a necessary, passive, and neutral technology, capable of providing, as one obstetrical text describes it, "a window of unsurpassed clarity into the gravid uterus" (Mitchell and Georges 1997, 373).

Mitchell and Georges based their conclusion on research in Canada and Greece at the end of the twentieth century. However, the same discourse can be recognized in The Netherlands in 2021; for example, during an interview, Viviënne (55), the owner of a Dutch entertainment ultrasound-clinic, compared doing an ultrasound to "taking a look inside."

The ultrasound is, however, not as passive and neutral as it seems. As sociologist Julie Roberts (2012) argues, the technology does not provide a transparent window to the inside of the uterus. Rather, the meaning of the images is shaped by the cultural context and interactions within which the technology is used. In her anthropological article about ultrasound in Tanzania, Babette Müller-Rockstroh (2012) not only states that the sonogram has very different meanings within the country, but also that there are extensive differences between countries. In the United States, an ultrasound is a way to get to "know" the baby, while in Brazil the technology is used to improve family bonds (Müller-Rockstroh 2012). In contrast, in Japan the diagnostic meaning of the ultrasound is almost completely left out of the discourse (Ivry 2006, 452); instead, the focus is completely on the "cuteness" of the baby. In this article, I will complement this earlier literature, by looking at the case of the Netherlands to show that, in this context, pregnant women use ultrasounds in an attempt to pragmatically counterbalance the medicalized discourse on pregnancy and to feel less insecure about the pregnancy.

To understand the different meanings of ultrasound technology I follow earlier work in the field of STS in stating that technology is predominantly shaped by the people that use it (e.g. Bijker, Hughes and Pinch 2012). Technology is not a fixed and stable entity, but acquires meaning through interactions within a cultural context. This re-making or shaping of technology by its users can be described as the appropriation of technology. Müller-Rockstroh (2012) explains that users shape technology in two ways: first, they are imagined as potential

future users by the designers, and, second, they shape the technology by using it, for example by giving meaning to the equipment. In analyzing the appropriation of the sonogram by pregnant women in the Netherlands I will focus on the latter: the way expectant mothers change the meaning of ultrasound technology by interacting with it in various ways.

While a non-conventional comparison, the history of the car and how its meaning has changed over time, is a good example of how technologies and their meanings get reinscribed with time and usage. When the first cars were seen driving around the American countryside at the beginning of the twentieth century, the farmers called the vehicle the "devil wagon" (Kline and Pinch 1996). However, they soon found "less dangerous" ways to use the technology: instead of using the technology as a means of transportation, they used it as a general source of power, especially for agricultural machinery. Ronald Kline and Trevor Pinch (1996, 775), both STS scholars, state: "Although manufacturers may have ascribed a particular meaning to the artifact they were not able to control how the artifact was used once it got into the hands of the users." The farmers were active participants in the social construction of the car. They were not passive users but changed the meaning of the automobile by using it in different ways than intended by the designers.

Thus, although the focus is often on the ways technology influences society, I will in this article also look at the other side of the coin: society shaping technology. To describe these two sides of the same coin anthropologist Kim Tallbear (2013) uses the concept of "co-production," a concept that was developed by STS-scholar Sheila Jasanoff about two decades earlier. Tallbear describes co-production as distinct from "…discrete categories where one determines the other in a linear model of cause and effect…" (Tallbear 2013, 11). Instead, ""science" and "society" are mutually constitutive – meaning one loops back in to reinforce, shape, or disrupt the actions of the other…." (Tallbear 2013, 11). Society and technology are thus constantly interacting with each other, impossible to be seen as separate, and resembling an eternal loop. Using this concept of co-production, I argue that ultrasound technology not only influences experiences of pregnancy, but that pregnant women in turn also shape what ultrasound technology *is*; the two processes are interconnected. The application of this concept will make clear that, while pregnancy experiences are indeed influenced by this new technology, expectant mothers also have a chance to transform the technology.

When discussing the reassuring function of the ultrasound, I also adopt the concept of "embodied knowledge." Anthropologists Carole Browner and Nancy Press (1996, 142) describe this kind of knowledge as: "subjective knowledge derived from a woman's perceptions of her body and its natural processes as these change throughout a pregnancy's course." It can be contrasted with authoritative knowledge, which can be defined as "rules that carry more weight than others" (Browner & Press 1996, 142). Browner and Press argue that American women consider information that is based on technology authoritative knowledge. I argue that this is also the case for Dutch women. However, women, irrespective of whether American or Dutch, appropriate the technology and "make it their own." I now first turn to a broad overview of the medical history of the ultrasound.

Looking back

When the ultrasound technique was invented, the designers were not thinking about visualizing fetuses. At the start of the twentieth century, the technology was used to track submerged icebergs by using sound (Van Dijck 2005, 102). Later, it was also used in the First World War to search for hostile submarines. After some experiments with ultrasound in the medical world, the technology was only first used in obstetrics in the 1950s, when medical scientist Ian Donald coincidentally discovered that the technology could be used to visualize fetuses at an early stage of pregnancy (Van Dijck 2005, 102). In 1958, for example, echography was first used to determine the gestational age of a fetus (Harris et al. 2004). By 1962, the first ultrasound machines came to the wider market, but at that moment the technology was still only used when doctors

suspected problems (Draper 2002). Slowly, the sonogram gained ground and in the 1980s, the ultrasound scan turned into a routinized procedure in most countries in the global North, including the Netherlands.

Currently, most pregnant women in the Netherlands receive two ultrasound scans in the hospital: one at around ten weeks of pregnancy to measure the gestational age, and one at twenty weeks to examine the development and anatomy of the fetus. These two scans are covered by state-mandated health insurance and are strongly recommended by medical professionals. As part of a scientific study, a new scan was added to these insurance-covered ultrasound scans in September 2021: pregnant women can now also choose to do a supplemental scan at thirteen weeks of pregnancy. More scans are only done at the hospital when there are complications or health risks. Still, for the Netherlands, a country in which homebirths are relatively usual (Van den Berg 2020), this medicalization of pregnancy is quite unique (Van Dijck 2005). Professor of media and culture José van Dijck (2005, 110) argues: "In a generally low-tech and de-medicalized trajectory of pregnancy and childbirth, the clinical ultrasound seems an anomaly."

When the sonogram was initially introduced in hospitals (especially in British and American contexts) to check the health of fetuses, scientists not only started to investigate changes in fetal and maternal health, but also theorized about the emotional consequences of the ultrasound. One of the first people to explore this was obstetrician Stuart Campbell. In 1982 he stated that pregnant women had more positive feelings about the fetus after doing an ultrasound scan (Campbell et al. 1982). However, anthropologist Janelle Taylor (2008, 89) argues that this is not what Campbell actually "measured" with his survey: "What this study really documents, then, is simply that when the person conducting an ultrasound examination provides more information and feedback, pregnant women experience it as a more positive event." In reality, Campbell did not ask the women about their feelings towards the fetus, but about their feelings towards the scan. Still, the assumption that "ultrasound technology accelerates and improves upon the natural process by which pregnant women enter into specifically maternal relationships to the fetus" (Taylor 2008, 77) is now widely accepted in medical and psychological research, and seldom questioned in scientific research, although it was never "proven."

According to Taylor (2008), this assumption, called "the theory of ultrasound bonding," has had a big influence on popular ideas about "bonding." First, earlier theories about bonding focused on the period *after* birth. The theory of ultrasound bonding indicates that women can also enhance bonding with their babies *before* birth. Next to that, the practice of bonding also changed due to ultrasound technology. Where bonding was first seen as something that had to involve touch, eye contact, and smell, it was now also expected to happen when a woman could only *see* her baby (Roberts 2012, 81), something that can be recognized in the fragments from television shows that I described in the introduction. Thus, the introduction of the ultrasound in the medical world not only changed practices, but also ideas about the basis of the relationship between mother and child. The importance of this theory will come back in the part of the article to which I now turn: how ultrasound has changed the experience of pregnancy.

Uncritical faith in human optics

When Mitchell and Georges (1997, 386) investigated the meaning of ultrasound technology in Greece, they interviewed an older obstetrician. He observed:

> There are few things my hands can't find that the ultrasound can. My hands are my eyes… but patients think it's more modern to use a machine. They themselves wouldn't trust just a manual exam. The doctor needs to show that he's modern too. That is, some will do an exam with a machine just because a woman will trust him more if he does.

The same discrepancy between the trust in manual and machine examinations appeared in my interview with Christa, a Dutch 29-year-old woman who became a mom in August 2018. Christa had some complications during her

pregnancy, which made her feel insecure. However, when she wanted to do an ultrasound scan, she could not do that at the hospital. Following the advice of the doctor, she decided to go to a commercial ultrasound clinic. I wondered out loud why she felt like she *needed* that scan. Would it also have been enough if she had just heard the baby's heartbeat and if the doctor had told her that he was confident that the fetus was alright? It took Christa some time to come up with an answer. She never thought about this; it just felt like the right thing to do. In the end, she said: "When it is visual, it satisfies more." She clarified: it would not have been enough if the doctor had just *told* her that her baby was alright, she needed to *see* it – even though she also explained that she did not understand what she saw.

This example from my interview with Christa is an example of the growing authority of the visual over other sensory experiences, which could also be distinguished in most of the other interviews. When I discussed the need for reassurance with Elise (28), who was still on maternity leave when I interviewed her in April 2021, she stated: "I think that it was really necessary to see it. I had the feeling: a check-up in which we only hear the heartbeat isn't enough. I really have to see it. Is everything alright?" In this part of the article, I will explain why my respondents' need for reassurance can no longer be satisfied without the help of an ultrasound machine.

Pregnancy has always been a liminal state filled with insecurity (Rapp 1999, 105). The pregnant woman is temporarily in a middle stage: not a nonparent anymore, but also not a parent yet. There is a certain level of universality in pregnancy-related anxiety, which is also at times thought to be unavoidable by expectant mothers (Rapp 1999). But the obstetrical ultrasound, together with other SRTs, has amplified this insecurity. Anthropologists Tine M. Gammeltoft and Ayo Wahlberg (2014, 207) explain: "At the same time that they render the child-to-be "real," sonographic images also remind women that this pregnancy may come to an abrupt and unfortunate end." This contradictory observation is confirmed by Rayna Rapp's anthropological study on amniocentesis. She argues that the women she interviewed all worried more about the health status of their fetuses because of the test (Rapp 1999, 118). The possibility of having a child with a disability is increasingly present in the minds of the women because the technology confronts them with it. Joëlle (31) could even tell me the exact moment that she started to get nervous about possible complications during her pregnancy; when she was pregnant with her first child in 2019 she told a nurse in the hospital that she would be on holiday in Australia when she was supposed to have her 20-week ultrasound scan. Personally, she did not worry about it; she could do the scan one or two weeks later. But after being confronted with all of the possible complications by the nurse, she started to worry more and get nervous.

With this knowledge about possible disabilities and complications also comes responsibility: now more than ever, pregnancy is about choice. In this context of what Charlotte Faircloth and Zeynep B. Gürtin (2018) describe as "anxious reproduction", women can choose to do tests, to have abortions, or to not smoke during pregnancy, for example. But having a choice also means that one can make the "wrong" one. Harris et al. (2004, 30-31) describe the increasing responsibility for fetal health that is attributed to women. Bluntly said: if a woman does not accept the advice of medical professionals, it is projected as her fault if there are any complications during the pregnancy. One of these responsible choices is the ultrasound scan. The theory of ultrasound bonding also plays an important role in this practice. Every woman is now susceptible to the "universal risk of failure to bond" (Roberts 2012, 88). If the mother does not bond with the child and did not do an ultrasound, who is then to blame but the mother herself?

Pregnant women must find a way to handle this intensified anxiety. In the next part of the article, I argue that Dutch women are less likely to use their embodied knowledge to reach this goal, instead relying on visual, technological knowledge. Roberts (2012, 8) states that "subjective knowledge of the body is no longer to be trusted and visual knowledge from imaging technology takes precedence." This is reflected in the earlier described examples

from my interviews. Knowledge is no longer trusted when it cannot be seen. This development already began during the nineteenth century with the rise of the positivist tradition. As Roberts (2012, 6) aptly says: "Faith in God was replaced by uncritical faith in human optics." Much of modern scientific belief and approach now depends on the power of observation. The sonogram thus originated in a strong tradition of privileging visual knowledge (Draper 2002, 777). As Van Dijck (2005, 106) summarizes: "Feeling and listening are still important sensorial perceptions, but ever since ultrasound has entered the prenatal trajectory, sight has arguably become the privileged sense perception."

This is not only the case for physicians and obstetricians but especially for the patients themselves. For example, Christa stated: "I feel like I would miss the ultrasound at 20 weeks if I would not have that one because then I would be thinking: is he *really* healthy?" She needed the visualization to get the confirmation that her baby was healthy and she privileged this medicalized knowledge over her embodied experience. The same can be seen in a review by Amber on the previously discussed website, *Babywatcher*: "It was mostly nice to see the heart beating, that gives reassurance that everything is well in there, especially if you haven't been to the obstetrician for a while." Just like Christa, Amber does not feel like her embodied knowledge is enough to be confident about the health of the baby. The embodied knowledge of the woman, which used to be the most important source of knowledge for making choices during pregnancy (Browner and Press 1996, 141), has since the rise of the ultrasound been overshadowed by the authoritative knowledge of the visual image on the screen. This is summarized by Isabel (34), mother of three children: "Even though you feel good, you don't know if everything is alright in there."

On top of the strong tradition of visual knowledge, this privileging of authoritative knowledge is strengthened by the influence of ultrasound technology on the realization of pregnancy. Before the introduction of the sonogram, the pregnancy often started to feel "real" when women experienced bodily quickening: the first time pregnant women feel the movements of their babies. Now, fetal movement is often seen on a screen before the mother can feel anything (Mitchell and Georges 1997, 378). The moment when the pregnancy first feels "real" has become what Charlotte Kroløkke (2009, 129) calls a "technogenic experience." Next to that, the process of bonding is also accelerated. Roberts (2012, 82) states: "Bonding is no longer a long process of weeks or months but something to be achieved (or at least accelerated) in the course of a short appointment." Bonding thus happens even before the "natural" bonding process begins for the expectant mother. The experience of pregnancy is being hijacked by technology before the "natural" process has even had a chance to start.

At this point, pregnant women may seem helpless victims of this new technology. Their embodied experience is devalued, and their experiences of pregnancy are anxious, because they question their bodies. However, that conclusion would be too shortsighted. The women in my research changed the meaning of the ultrasound. They appropriated the technology to make their pregnancy experiences more pleasant. I will turn to this part of the article now.

"It was a wonderful movie"

While interviewing Christa (29), I soon found out that her pregnancy was not the easiest one. In the first weeks of her pregnancy, she suffered from blood loss, and later in her pregnancy, she experienced extreme gallbladder pain, sometimes lasting for more than three consecutive days. For Christa, this made the already insecure period of pregnancy even more anxious. She felt the need to be reassured every so often and found the solution for this in the sonogram. She did her first *pretecho* shortly after the blood loss. When I asked Christa why she did this "entertainment" ultrasound, she answered:

> Well, the first one was of course because of the blood loss, so that was really for me to know that everything was alright. Because at that moment you do not feel anything yet and you just experience the blood loss and you think… you don't know what is going on on the inside, you

> know what I mean? So that was really nice to know for sure: okay, he is still moving and the heart is still beating, that kind of stuff.

For Christa, the ultrasound was a coping mechanism to handle the insecurity that she experienced during the pregnancy. Whether the technicians performing this *pretecho* had any medical education, did not matter to Christa. Seeing the baby was enough to reassure her. She even told me that she already felt okay after seeing the screen for half a minute. Most important, despite the serious medical reasons for which Christa went to the ultrasound clinic, she only described the ultrasound in cheerful expressions, for example: *leuk* [fun] 24x, *fijn* [nice] 6x, *bizar* [bizarre] 6x, *blij* [happy] 2x and *speciaal* [special] 2x. It seems like Christa transformed an oftentimes stressful procedure into an exciting experience.

Christa is not the only woman who had such fond memories of the ultrasound. After reading some reviews on the website of the Amsterdam -based commercial ultrasound clinic *Dokter Papa,* one may almost forget that the sonogram is originally meant to detect abnormalities. The Dutch actress Nicolette van Dam for example wrote: "Incredible… what an experience to see our little wonder in 3D. To share this with each other before your baby is born is so special." Famous television presenter Lieke van Lexmond had the same kind of experience: "It was a wonderful movie with our little baby in the lead! Getting to know your baby together with your loved ones, certainly recommended!!!".

These examples demonstrate the changed meaning of the ultrasound. In the previous part of this article, I explained that ultrasound scans can be a cause of insecurity and worry. However, the women in my research transformed this technology into a positive experience. Instead of making their anxiety worse, the sonogram is now used to relieve stress. Some women even consciously chose to do a commercial ultrasound to feel less insecure. Cynthia for example wrote on the website of *Babywatcher*: "We could watch if everything was alright with our girl when we felt insecure. That got me through an insecure period. Because of this, I could still enjoy [my pregnancy] without having to go to the hospital every time." Elise (28) and Joëlle (31) expressed a similar motivation when I interviewed them. Both women decided to do a commercial ultrasound scan because they felt that the period without an ultrasound at the end of the pregnancy was too long and they started to feel insecure.

Not all the women I interviewed felt this need to use an entertainment ultrasound for reassurance, mostly because not all of them had the same level of insecurity about their pregnancies. However, all emphasized the importance of the absence of stress during these non-medical ultrasounds, particularly in contrast to the check-ups in the hospital. Emma, a 25-year-old woman who was 34 weeks pregnant when I interviewed her, pointed out that for her the *pretecho* was mostly about a moment of fun:

> [The pregnancy] is just going so fast and you are dragged into this medical wringer of ultrasounds and making sure not to eat this and not to drink that. … [And when going to the entertainment ultrasound] you don't have any stress of course. It's really just for fun and not to rule out any complications.

Striking in this excerpt is Emma's use of the Dutch expression "*medische molen,*" which can literally be translated to "medical mill" (although "medical wringer" seems more appropriate) and is used to negatively describe a seemingly never -ending cycle of a large number of hospital visits and medical treatments. The expression seems to reflect the earlier mentioned "generally low-tech and de-medicalized trajectory of pregnancy and childbirth" (Van Dijck 2005, 110) that is distinctive of the Dutch context.

The same negative sentiment about the medicalization of pregnancy was expressed by Isabel (34), who stated that, "there are already a lot of things that you need to do at the obstetricians. And of course, you are glad to have these check-ups, but they are also quite stressful… And it was just nice to have something fun in between." Even Viviënne (55), the owner of a Dutch entertainment ultrasound -clinic, made a distinction between medical

ultrasounds and "fun ultrasounds." She argues that a lot of women come to her clinic to consciously create a moment to enjoy their pregnancy "in a relaxed way with a lot of time and attention."

By using ultrasound technology as a strategy to reduce anxiety or create a moment of relaxation and fun, pregnant women appropriate the technology into something uplifting. In this new context, the technology changes from an SRT that could result in a positive diagnosis to a reassuring emotional event and way to obtain information about the baby. This is the other side of the coin of co-production. Earlier I explored how the introduction of ultrasound technology changed the experience of pregnancy by creating more anxiety and giving pregnant women more responsibilities. However, the interaction between technology and society is not linear: women also influence ultrasound technology. They turn it into their own important ritual until the diagnostic purpose of the SRT has become secondary; they appropriate the technology.

And again, the eternal loop of co-production continues. The introduction of the entertainment ultrasound influences society and society in turn influences technology, changing the meaning of the technology itself as it influences society again. The new meaning of the technology is now also altering practices in the medical setting. At the beginning of this article, I stated that ultrasound is not a neutral technology; it is influenced by cultural ideas. The meaning of the sonogram as a reassuring and bonding instrument, is now also reflected in practices in hospitals and clinics. My interviews seemed to indicate that medical professionals in hospitals are influenced by the new purposes of the sonogram and try to reach new goals: reassuring the pregnant women and making the scans into "wonderful" experiences. Christa (29), for example, recalled that sonographers in the hospital sometimes tried to show the fetus in 3D and print some "nice pictures," similar to what happens during an entertainment ultrasound. Women are also encouraged to "interact" with their fetuses (Kroløkke 2009, 134). Women are, for example, asked to massage their bellies, to try to get the fetuses to move or kick, a process that several of my interviewees described as "fun."

In this part of the article, I have shown how women take the anxious experiences of SRTs and change them into meaningful and important rituals that help them to feel more confident about their pregnancies. A criticism of my argument so far could be that I look at ultrasound mostly as a valuable experience for women, without looking at the downsides. I now turn to this feminist critique of ultrasound and explain why I have a more uplifting view.

The invisible woman

When Theresa, a 27-year-old business owner, went to do an ultrasound scan, she told the sonographer that she had felt the fetus moving already (Georges and Mitchell 1997, 379). It was a happy memory that she wanted to share with her doctor. However, the sonographer soon burst her bubble. Theresa explains:

> We could see it moving and I told [the sonographer] I had felt it when I was taking the Metro. She said that wasn't it, that I couldn't feel it until a few more weeks. I thought for sure it was the baby moving, but I guess not (Georges and Mitchell 1997, 379).

The way in which Theresa's embodied knowledge is rejected and substituted for authoritative medical knowledge during her hospital visit, is an important reason why a lot of feminist anthropologists, including Georges and Mitchell (1997), are so critical of the ultrasound. Some researchers have even talked about a "technomedical takeover" (Harris et al. 2004) in which the process of pregnancy is removed from the hands of women and placed into the hands of the medical-scientific world. The example of Theresa fits in this body of feminist research critiquing the devaluation of embodied knowledge in maternity care: it shows how pregnant women have unsettling experiences because they lose their privilege on knowledge about the fetuses. Where previously women always had somewhat of a monopoly in the pregnancy experience, because of their first -hand bodily experience, the ultrasound made this experience more equal for men and women (Draper 2002). Some researchers even

argue that women have become invisible in the pregnancy experience (e.g. Martin 2001). Sociologist Barbara Rothman (2004, 285), for example, states that, "to make the fetus visible, the mother becomes invisible, even to herself. She turns away from her own body, away from her lived experience of the fetus, and watches it on the screen." It even seems as if the female patient *needs* the technology, for example to bond with her baby.

While I agree that it is important to take the embodied knowledge of women seriously and look critically at the power relationships that are reflected in biomedical technologies, I think that the above-mentioned feminist critiques miss an important point. In looking so closely at the structural power relations that limit women's agency, they downplay the possible leeway that women still have. Women are presented as being completely subjected to a technology – with a pre-determined goal, use, and effect – over which they have no influence. However, as can be seen when looking at theories from STS, technology is never a finished project and is created in interaction. To say that women are entirely subjected to ultrasound technology would be a form of technological determinism. Ultrasound technology in and of itself does not *do* anything; it is produced in constant interaction with other actors: the pregnant women using the technology, the technicians operating it, the families and friends being present, the buildings in which this all takes place, and many more. The pregnant women are not just subjects of the technology, but are actors, which means that, within the existing structures, they still have the power to make choices. This does of course not mean that every woman has the same amount of power. As mentioned before, the women in this research were highly privileged.

Following, among others, Kroløkke (2009), I argue that women are not passive spectators and victims of ultrasound technology but are active agents in shaping the instrument. They consciously develop ways to make the sonogram a positive part of pregnancy. Cynthia's previous anecdote is an example of this: Cynthia rented an ultrasound device to decrease her anxiety. She was aware that this purchase would help her feel more relaxed and enjoy her pregnancy more. One could almost say she was acting like a pragmatic consumer. Like Cynthia, most of my interviewees also had a clear goal in mind when choosing to do an entertainment ultrasound. Whereas Elise's (28) motivation was, just like Cynthia's, mostly about reassurance, Emma (25) had a different goal: "I think that my biggest motivation was to involve my partner [in the pregnancy experience] and to get him to connect more to his child." Mother of two Celine (33) also mentioned her family; apart from being curious about the looks of the baby, for her the ultrasound was mostly about having a nice experience together with her mother and sisters. Another example was mentioned by Viviënne (55), when discussing the motivations of the women doing an ultrasound scan at her clinic. After hearing that the baby would be born with a cleft lip, an expectant mother wanted to be prepared before giving birth. Therefore, together with her partner, she came to the clinic so they could look at the baby's face. These examples demonstrate that the pregnant women in my research consciously *chose* to do an ultrasound to reach their own goals. The 'entertainment' ultrasound is, for example, used to feel more comfortable, to connect with the baby and to build a family.

In a critical essay about motherhood and technology, feminist sociologist Ann Oakley asked herself whether "women and fetuses really needed scientists and high-tech medical devices to "glue" them together" (Taylor 2008, 79 paraphrasing Oakley 1993). My answer is: no, women do not *need* this technology to bond with their children. However, that does not mean that it has not become valuable to some of them. When I asked my interviewees, they all told me that they would really miss the ultrasounds if they would not be able to do one in their next pregnancies. The reviews on websites of commercial ultrasound clinics, such as *Dokter Papa*, tell the same story. The ultrasound turned from an SRT into an important emotional ritual; women are not helpless victims of the technology, but active actors using it for their own goals.

Going back to Ross and Rachel

In the previous section of this article, I stated that the pregnant women in my research consciously transform ultrasound technology to change their experiences of pregnancy for the better. The question that I tried to answer in this article was: how do pregnant women in The Netherlands appropriate the technology of the fetal ultrasound for new, unintended purposes? My use of the word "appropriate" in this question already highlights my assumption that pregnant women are active agents in the process of changing technology. Therefore, I started to answer this question by looking at the concept of "appropriation of technology." I noted that technology is not neutral, and that ultrasound has different effects in different contexts. I articulated, for instance, the first side of the coin of co-production: the way in which ultrasound technology has influenced pregnancy experiences. I used examples from my interviews to elaborate on the growing importance of visual knowledge. The introduction of new forms of SRTs has made pregnancy more insecure than it was before. I ended this part of the article on a sour note: because of a combination of more insecurity and less trust in embodied knowledge, pregnant women now must deal with new anxieties.

Subsequently, I explained a second component of co-production in which pregnant women influence ultrasound technology. They change the meaning of the technology to reduce their anxiety and to consciously take a moment to "relax." Ultrasound is not only used as a method of reassurance but also as a "wonderful experience" and a family maker. In contrast to feminist critiques, I state that some women *choose* to do these ultrasounds. This choice should not be considered a "surrender" to biomedical power, but a pragmatic strategy to handle the changing experiences of pregnancy. Women are not passive victims, but active agents of technological change.

Of course, this study also has limitations. First, as I discussed earlier in this article, my research population consists of, in many ways, a homogenous group of privileged, white, middle-class women. The experiences of these women provide interesting insights into the appropriation of ultrasound technology, but they are not representative of the entirety of society. The research also shows that, despite their privileges, these women *do* encounter anxieties and difficulties during their pregnancies that they must navigate. However, it would be interesting to research how other groups of women in The Netherlands relate to ultrasound technology. Viviënne, for example, observed that women with a Hindustani background often brought their whole family with them to her clinic, while white women often only took their partners. In my research, I did not get the chance to look at these differences. Next to that, I chose not to focus on the use of the image of the fetus in abortion debates, as well as on the result of positive medical diagnosis after ultrasounds. Although interesting topics, these issues could not be discussed due to time limitations.

Theoretically, I think that this article provides an interesting view of the interactive relationship between technology and society. Medical technology is not neutral and has to be explored critically, because it *is* changing the world in which we live. When I first watched the episode "The one where Rachel tells..." of the television show *Friends* (2001), I thought it was one of the funniest of the whole show. I am not the only one. The clip in which Rachel tells Ross that she is pregnant is often mentioned as a particularly hilarious scene of the show. But it is also emotional; it is the moment that brings the most popular couple of this show back together. After writing this article, I recognize that this episode is not just funny and emotional; it reflects the new meaning of ultrasound technology that is created by women. Ultrasound is something that can connect a mother to her baby, that can tell the mother that she is a good mother, and that can bring a family together. In stating this, I do not conform to the theory of ultrasound bonding as "real," or to the idea that ultrasound technology on its own *does* something at all. But the experiences that are created in the interaction between women and ultrasound technology are real, and it makes ultrasound indeed a wonderful, miraculous experience.

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The Journal for Undergraduate Ethnography

Moving the Material Me: A Visual Autoethnography

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ABSTRACT

This visual autoethnography aims to understand how the significant event of moving house forces us to consider the materiality of our lives and the intimate relationships we have with our belongings. Situated at the intersection of anthropological studies on the home and materiality, this study looks at the ways these fields interact to reveal new conceptions of responsibility over the social life of things. Using autoethnographic methods, this research is embedded in my personal embodied experience of moving house, with particular emphasis on the sensory and subjective elements of this process, as highlighted through photographs and descriptive vignettes. This study delves into the decisions behind whether we keep, throw away, or pass on our things, interwoven with discussions around our moral obligations to the material lifeworlds of our stuff. It explores how our possessions reflect our relationships, our heritage, and ourselves.

Keywords: material culture; moving house; home; decluttering; visual ethnography; sensory ethnography

All You Need is Less

I found this at my local op shop (thrift store) when dropping off some things I had decluttered, and appreciated the perfect irony of it. In the context of the op shop, in and amongst all the things that people have gotten rid of in an attempt to have less, this made me stop in my tracks and laugh.

This visual autoethnography aims to understand how the significant event of moving house forces us to consider the materiality of our lives and "unpack" the intimate relationships we have with our belongings. Emerging from the 90 day notice I received to move out of the house I had been living in with my family for the last 5 years, the field site for this ethnography took shape. Within this exploration, I consider interrelated questions surrounding decision making and the factors that shape our choices of whether to keep, sell, throw out, donate, or give away items, and our responsibility once they are no longer ours. This invites us to discuss the social life of things, their value to us and the market, where they have come from, and where they will go; the "passing on" of things. Threaded through these discussions is an investigation into the materiality of memory as stored in our belongings, and what it means to give up memory, or cut ties when discarding our things. Situated at the intersection of established anthropological subjects of the home, materiality, and waste, this research examines how these fields interact with the process of moving to reveal new conceptions of responsibility over the social life of things. By looking at the materiality of our intimate lives I demonstrate how we can better understand each other and ourselves through the objects with which we furnish our lives.

I structured this visual autoethnography with the intention of taking you along the moving process with me, while also highlighting elements of material culture. The juxtaposition of diverse objects, rendered into words and pictures, evokes the haphazard material encounters that emerge through the systematic process of packing up a home. At the start of the moving process there is the time and energy for glorious indulgence in the profusion of material memories, childhood toys, boxed away photos, and half-finished art projects. To revel in the remembering, moseying your way through, unpacking and repacking the same old things that are relocated from house to house. Then, getting into the groove of it, you start the decluttering, determined to shrink the size of your possessions that all of a sudden seem quite overwhelming. You start to consider the contents of your pantry like you never have

before, and the enormity of the waste you have produced becomes increasingly apparent. But with all your possessions stripped back and boxed up, you come to consider the traces of yourself and your belongings, proof of your material impact on this space, and how it feels to remove the evidence of your existence or leave reminders for those to come. I shift then to the final days of moving. To the ways humour and exhaustion are communicated in how we care for our things. From wrapping prized possessions with the utmost care, to jamming things together in boxes and calling it a day. To focus on the joy material objects can bring, and the enormous pain of having to move them all. In closing I reflect on the emotional toll that moving takes and how in reconnecting with our things, in the process of physically moving them, we come to situate our sense of home in our things, and the memories they hold, transporting them from one house to the next.

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Still Life

Taking this photo, I realised that the deep connections I have to this pile of items cannot be translated simply through the visual. This "Still Life," in my eyes, has so much movement, it is buzzing with memories. As if I am playing "I Spy," I can hunt through the image, and I find a Madeline picnic set, two iron fairies, a wind-up music box, a Pinkies Triathlon medal, a butterfly, a tin of crayons, Silver Linings Playbook, and a little jar of glitter. But when these things end up on op shop shelves does my connection with them, or their connection with me, cease? Their new owners will not know where they have come from or their story. I think, could I attach a note to each of the objects, explaining their life before? But will the new owner even care?

With Love, Grandmother

I was always envious of my grandmother's ability to paint. Every birthday, every Christmas, a watercolour artwork, inscribed (usually on the back) with a letter of love. This example is far from her best work, but I always marvelled at how she could use the light and shadow. She passed away when I was in primary school, so I was never able to learn properly from her. There are some photos somewhere of me in her studio at the easel, paintbrush in my chubby toddler hand, beaming up at the camera, her by my side. So, I keep all these cards, little pocket size artworks, read the messages about nothing in particular, and cherish the memories.

A Container of Friends

Bella, Rosie, Wiggly Woo, Tigger, and Flat Nose Bear. Some worn around the edges, showing signs of the lifetimes they've lived. Others pristine, never to be played with.

Friends… containing memories, of a younger version of me.

I can't bear the thought of them in the hands of grubby kids, or sitting atop op shop shelves, longing for a hug.

Their eyes full of life… as if they have stories of their own to tell.

And so they stay, squished together tightly, crammed into a plastic home, stored away and forgotten, until next time.

Haunted

This shirt has haunted me. Not in a ghostly sort of way, in more of a decision-making dilemma way. I just could not decide what to do with it. The colour I would never wear, and it is made of this silky sports-like material in a polo style. I was given it at a leadership camp I went to in January 2019. This camp was an amazing experience, and had a huge impact on me in relation to what I am passionate about, but we wore the shirt only twice that week, and now what am I meant to do with it? Arriving at a stalemate, I've kept it. I can already foresee its future, where it sits in the back of my wardrobe and taunts me every time I sort through my clothes.

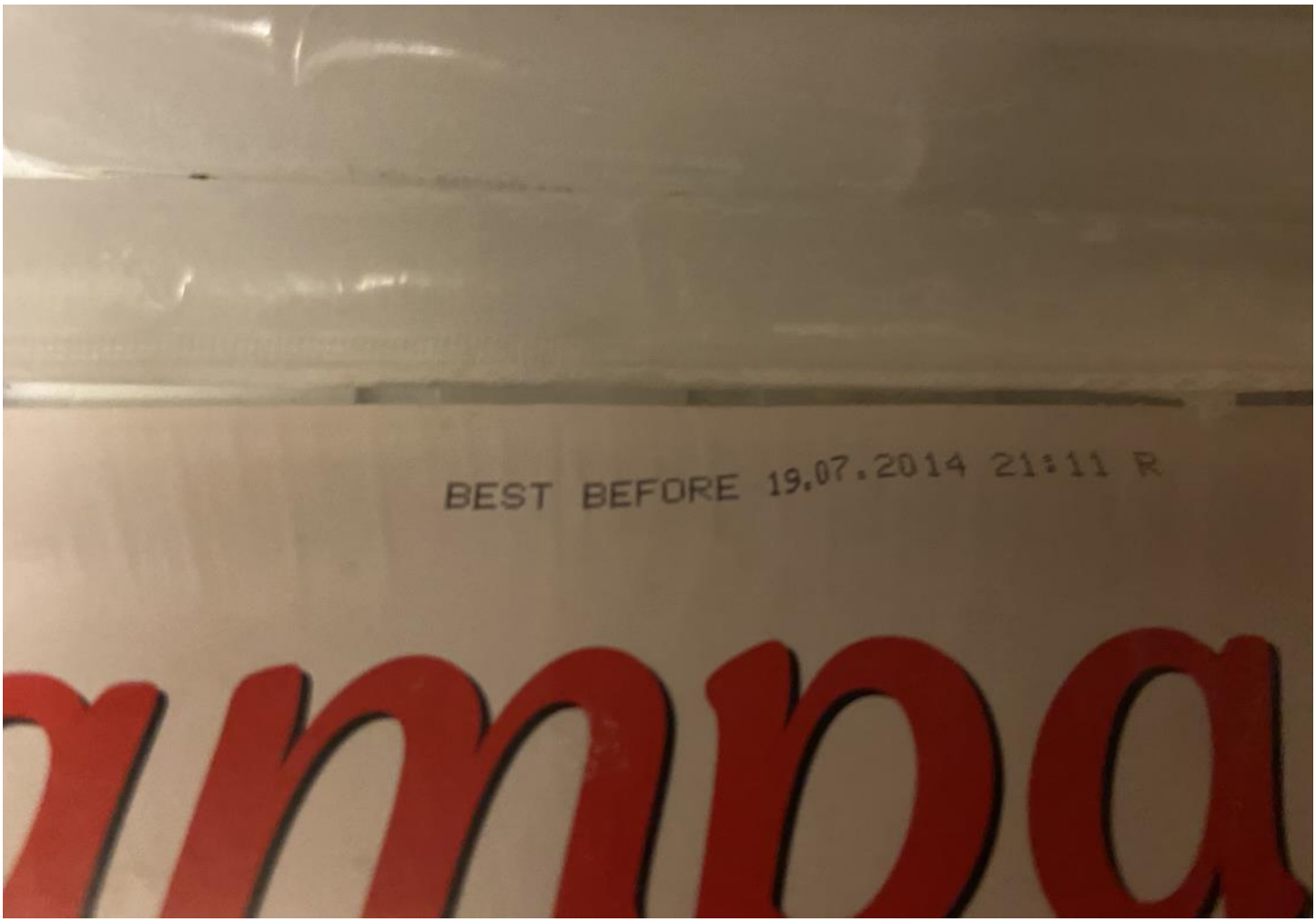
A large part of the moving process is recovering long-lost treasures amongst stored belongings and indulging in the nostalgia of sparked memories. Macdonald and Morgan's concept of "curating profusion" (2016, 1) can be best applied to this stage of moving, that in sorting through our belongings we are making choices about what we seek to represent ourselves through, and how this showcases our heritage. When I look at my treasured items, their significance to me is influenced by their relationality to other people, through familial connections and the obligation I feel to hold onto things to maintain those relationships. Over the years I have taken on the responsibility as the keeper of various family members' childhood toys. 'A container of friends' captures some of my precious stuffed animals, as well as my mum's bear, and my cousin's doll. As a child I had a hierarchy of toys: my favourites got played with most, while those that had come from other homes were always neglected or cast as the villains in my play. Now as a young adult I feel the weight of this commitment to hold onto the once treasured friends of my family, even if I do not have a particular connection to the objects themselves. But my toys on the other hand, I could not bear to part with. Winnicott's (1971) writing on transitional objects as the first "not me" object that a child is encouraged to form an attachment to, in place of constant attention from a parent, explains the deep bonds we often form to our childhood toys (Chin 2016, 42). In her autoethnographic book, Chin (2016) writes that from very early on we ritually encourage children to put their trust in objects rather than people. The transitional object is not simply for self-soothing purposes but becomes encoded in a relationship of trust, reliance, and dependency. While the initial need for the soothing property of the object may diminish over one's childhood, this relationship built on memories and emotional reliance lingers. Chin (2016, 40) recounts losing her own beloved "Banky" at a friend's house, and while she was devastated, there was an underlying feeling of relief that she didn't have to be responsible for saying goodbye or throwing away her toy. It is this sense of responsibility forged through a connection formed in the early stages of our development that makes

parting from these transition objects so tough. Rather than unpacking my emotional connection to my childhood toys, and the underlying sense of cultural embarrassment (that I like to pretend I don't feel) that surrounds having stuffed animals as an adult, I decided it was simply too hard, boxed them back up, and made them a problem for future me.

This responsibility for heritage was also evident when sorting through the family photos, in particular my parent's wedding album. Despite being divorced from my dad for a couple of years now, my mum stated that she would be keeping the wedding photos for my brother and me. Her reasoning was that it was important for us as their children to have some memories of them happy together. By displacing the responsibility onto us, she was able to disconnect from the emotional potency of her memories, both loving and painful, invoked through the ownership of the images, but retain a sense of comfort in the fact that the material evidence of the family history is safe and will be remembered. Miller and Parrott (2009) highlight the tendency to preserve only the ideal versions of people or relationships in the keeping of objects. In contrast to, say, piles of divorce paperwork, wedding photos allow for a representation of the relationship at its prime, refracted through gendered roles and societal milestones.

I felt this obligation to others, implanted in their material possessions, especially in relation to those that had died. My responsibility was not only to my heritage, but to theirs as well. Thus, letting go of things would mean letting go of those connections, and forgetting those memories. Giacomelli (2020) explores the diversity of approaches to keeping our memories of people alive through their things. Discussing her treasured items, one of Giacomelli's research participants, Franca, explained that she chose to store away a blanket her mother gave her on her wedding day rather than to use it, because if she ruined it, it would tarnish those memories (2020, 201). By protecting the blanket, the memories contained within it are also protected. In contrast, Claudia, whose father died when she was young, uses his possessions every day, or has them on display around her home, bringing the dead into the present (Giacomelli 2020, 201). Similarly, Miller and Parrott (2009) explore the capacity for objects once owned by those who have died to be both a painful reminder of their loss, and a means to manage that loss. They emphasise that divestment can be a powerful tool to regain control over one's emotions towards the death of a loved one. Although we cannot control death itself, we can choose how that person is represented through their belongings and offer a new life to their things.

Belongings therefore symbolise interpersonal relationships, and as Woodward (2021) suggests, in her ethnographic study on clutter in the home, are a way people negotiate and manage their social relationships. Woodward (2021) also proposes the values we attach to our things are not only situated in their inherent thingness, or their material qualities, but the relationships they represent. She provides the example of a mother keeping the drawings of her young child, not because of the quality of the drawings themselves but because of the moral expectations surrounding the exchange (Woodward 2021, 11). In this instance the mother is operating through normative ideas of the appropriate material trajectory of artworks, doing what she feels a good parent is supposed to do, and in keeping the drawings she is showing her child that their work, and familial connection, is valued (Woodward 2021, 11). This experience is one I could relate to in the conversations I had with my own mother when sorting through the paintings I had done as a child. Since she took on the gendered role of the stay-at-home mum, in charge of homemaking and thus the possessions in the house, she was under additional pressure not only to be a good parent, but a good mother specifically. Putting aside the very best, she had curated a gallery of my images, and kept them, so that in my adulthood I could decide what to do with them. This choice was influenced by her lack of possessions from own her childhood, and the desire to give me the option to keep the paintings, whether I would want to or not. Her reasoning being that if she threw them away, I would feel the same resentment she had felt towards her own mother, and she would be seen as a negligent parent. This



decision to keep a multitude of artworks, bound in moral expectations of mothering, is therefore materially representative of a valued parent-child connection.

Scholarship on both homemaking and attachments to the material world situates them as traditionally feminised practices, so it is understandable that the responsibility typically falls on women to see the affective links and memorable relationships in the material, and to perpetuate that exchange from generation to generation (Giacomelli 2020; Pink 2003). In my experience of moving, my younger brother, while no longer living with us, contributed minimally to discussions around what to keep or donate from his own belongings. Despite saying he didn't care, his blind trust in myself and my mum indicates his reliance on our judgement as to what should and should not be important to him. This responsibility of both the labour itself and the curation of memory was a heavy one to bear.

Best before 19.07.2014

These pastry sheets had become part of the landscape of the freezer; you always expected to see them and looked past them to find what you were actually after. The funny part is that we moved into that house around 2015, so these were already out of date when we took the effort to move them. This cleaning out process forced the familiar to become strange, and for me to notice these things as I hadn't before.

It Still Works

These are some of the medical creams, sprays, pills, and potions that we binned while cleaning out the medicine boxes. It isn't captured in the photo, but this process was really genuinely funny. Delirious after a day of sorting through things, Mum and I laughed the entire time at the odd products we had, most of which were out of date by a good couple of years. The nappy rash cream, (which, as she reminded me, "can be used for more than just nappy rash you know") was still in the medicine box, despite me being 21 and my brother 18. Some cold and flu medicine had only a couple of months until it expired, and it was kept with the verbal warning, "now if you're going to get sick, you have to do it before July or this will go to waste." The "it still works" mentality is what had kept most of these in the medicine boxes, that they still probably did the job, alongside the fact that we were too lazy to clean them out — mostly because everything in the containers was usually coated in a sticky golden yellowish substance from something that had leaked long ago.

Where do we go from here?

This is a closer look at some of the things in our council pick-up pile. The yoga mats almost peek in the side of the image to ask, "Where are we going? What is happening to us?" And I know that's just my perception of the image, with a sort of artistic reflection, when really it is just some mats, a drum, pillows, a fake plant, and a stack of tires. But whether or not the material objects are asking themselves "where do we go from here," I am asking the question. What is the afterlife of these things? They will likely end up at the tip, consuming a space on this earth, buried, unable to break down, just sitting in junkyards. The thought of that makes me feel sick. That there are just huge spaces dedicated to waste. And the reality of what happens to our stuff when we are done with it is revived in my social conscious. To make more thoughtful purchases, to reuse, to regift, to recycle.

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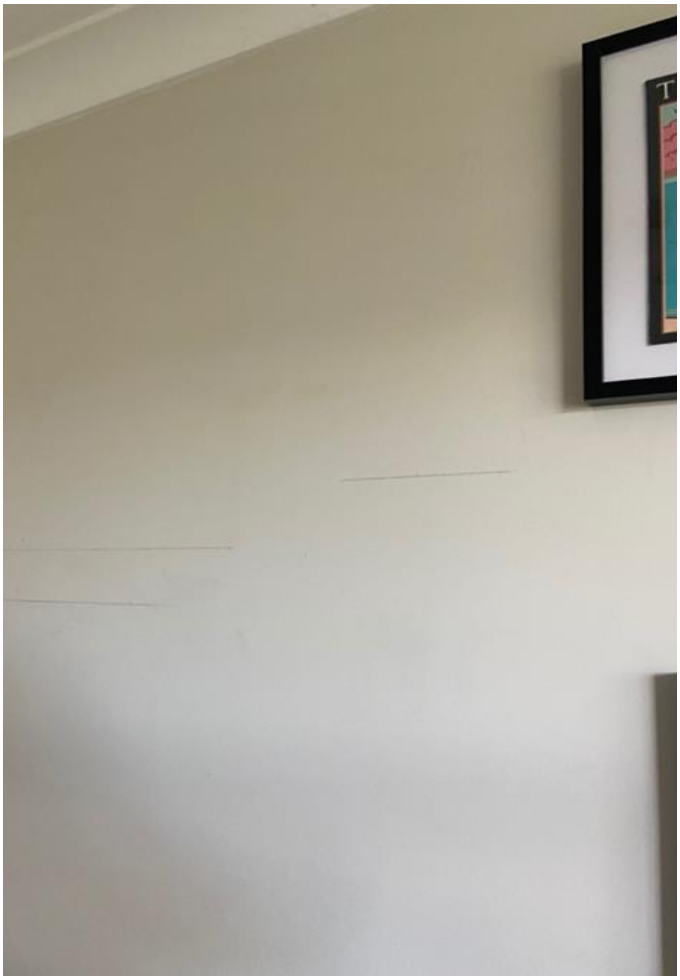
While I have focused on objects of significance and the things I held onto, much of this study was also consumed by an extensive decluttering. The moving process and moving mindset disrupted the everyday landscape of my life, and made the familiar strange once again (Ehn, Löfgren, and Wilk 2015). I was constantly filled with the sense that we had so much stuff, and the worry about how were we possibly going to sort through and move it all. I had to consciously remind myself to "zoom in" or "zoom out:" when the task felt too huge, to just focus on one thing at a time, and when I got caught up on individual things, to look at the bigger scope of moving and simply get on with things. I was tormented by the freedom of decluttering, and employed the popularised Marie Kondo (2014, 44) method of considering whether things "spark joy" in deciding whether to keep them. This getting rid of things did make me feel lighter, as Woodward (2021) indicates many studies say you should feel, with less material baggage holding me back. However, I also felt overwhelmed by the social lives of things while they were in my possession and their future material afterlives when they were beyond my sphere of influence. We have a set of social expectations around the trajectory

of things, clutter being a phase in this lifecycle, such that we simply cannot consume and discard objects, even if we don't want them (Woodward 2021). It is the thingness, the innate material quality of objects that prevails even after their value has gone, and that allows them to remain a site of creative and transformational potential (Woodward 2021, 11).

This led me to consider my sense of responsibility over the social life of my things and their material afterlives when I gave them away or threw them out. The difficulty when curating profusion, or a large quantity of something, is that is becomes exhausting, and when the lifeworlds of the things we own are more about use-value than memory or connection to self or others, we find them easier to discard (de Wolff 2018; Macdonald and Morgan 2016). The choices we make when disposing of our objects heavily impact their

material afterlives. It was in reading de Wolff's (2018) writing on materiality and the ecologies of discarded objects that the weight of these decisions became clear. Focusing on Kamilo Beach in Hawaii where fragments of discarded plastics wash ashore, de Wolff (2018, 1) frames objects not as bounded entities but as material processes with no endpoint. As I have already outlined, we think of our objects as carriers of meaning, as representations of us, but when they are discarded and break into fragments of material washing up into faraway places, how does this change? When the synthetic materials leach pollutants into the oceans and become homes for sea life, shaping and being shaped by their new environments, they retain cultural traces of us (de Wolff 2018, 1). In my conscious choice to discard I relinquished the control I had over the lives of my things, handing them over to the unknowns of our recycling systems, op shops, and dumps, unable to definitively secure a future free of their potential environmental harm.

Reflecting on de Wolff's (2018) first-hand experiences with the ecological problems of consumer waste, I tried as best I could to ensure the best outcomes for my things by recycling, donating, or rehoming, but the exhaustion of going through a home full of objects led to quick decision-making, which usually ended up with things in the trash. This provoked feelings of guilt about the impact of my life on the planet. Thomas et al. (2017) emphasise that our relationship to waste changes over our life course as new definitions of waste emerge from our social relationships, innovation, and the value of things, but I also posit that our relationship to waste changes generationally. I am privileged in my worry for the planet, in my curation of excess within a capitalist system that demands the infinite collection of more, and my subsequent responsibility to sort and discard from my collection. I have the luxury of plenty, and the luxury to put it out of my mind. With the urgent need to tackle overproduction, excessive consumption of energy, and thus climate change weighing on the shoulders of the young, individuals are feeling increasing pressure to make big changes to their lives while the companies that produce this excess sit back and do nothing. Should I be worried at all then, if my personal actions are not going to make a difference? While I did contemplate these questions, I also found myself having to put them out of my mind in order to get on with packing. I had to bring myself back to the reality of my present life rather than its future impact.



Remnants

If you look closely to this photo you can see the pencil lines I drew on the wall when hanging my framed art work in order to ensure they were straight. When taking the pictures down off the walls I had to painstakingly rub away these lines. They were the only traces left that I had had an impact on this house, that my things were there making marks, that I was there. After I finished, my arm was cramped and my fingers tight, the floor covered in little rubber shavings.

Long Forgotten

I took this photo while cleaning out the fan in the bathroom, which was normally covered by a vent. It was really dusty and gross, and while I cleared away most of it with the vacuum, I didn't make sure that it was spotless, as it's mostly tucked away. Now, reflecting on this, I am kind of happy thinking about the fact that some of our dead skin cells mixed with dust are still in the house, hidden, proof that we were once there when all other evidence has been wiped away.

The moving process also becomes in a sense an undoing process. By packing up the material things that fill out the space of a home you are removing yourself from this landscape. Although home culture scholars such as Cieraad (2010) highlight the importance of material objects in the making of a home, in transforming spaces, and in representing transitions, I emphasise that the process of putting them there and subsequently taking them away is a part of unmaking home. The repetitive action of scrubbing the walls or wiping down vents became an extension of this. Beyond the removal of my material belongings, I also had to remove any traces of my material form, such as stray hairs on the floor, dust atop the fan, or dirty fingerprints on door handles, that would identify a relationship between us and the house. In packing up the objects that decorated our home, and scrubbing its surfaces, we were transforming it back into a house, a blank slate that no longer had a material connection to us. This was a deeply emotional process, but in the same instance it allowed a severing of the tie between myself and what I had known as home.

The concept of home is fluid, both actively being instated and connected to past conceptions of its enactment. This became particularly evident on moving day, as we experienced an almost tangible discomfort in labelling the two houses. We were going from "home" to the "new house", then when that didn't feel right it was from the "old house" to the "new house", or from the name of one suburb to the name of another. In the undoing of home, the word felt uncomfortable in my mouth. Saying it aloud in relation to the conversation felt wrong, like a grammatical error, but there was nothing adequate to replace it. It was in those moments I felt a loss, in the leaving of one home without the conception of another.

The process of autoethnography, in examining the seemingly unimportant elements of everyday life, is uniquely suited to my topic of exploration, as the moving process itself invites an exploration into the background material elements of our lives that we rarely stop to consider. Pink's (2003, 46) approach to the "sensory home" is one I adopted during my research and in my choice of visual ethnographic method. Considering the home as a sensory landscape influences how we look at our material lives, and encourages particular emphasis on each item's texture, material, weight, odour, visual qualities, and taste (if you are brave enough to lick it) as well as how it makes you feel (Pink 2003). Not only did I consider the sensory nature of my belongings, but also the sensory nature of the moving process. Repetitively wrapping wine glasses in newspapers, the inky scent tickling at my nostrils, I found my fingers coated in a dusty black film, which I wiped lazily on the side of the

Texture

This is a close-up of some boots Mum decided to give away. This photo was originally taken to post on Facebook marketplace to show people the fabric. I like the vibrancy of the image, and that you want to reach out and stroke the photo to feel the scales. This serves as my appreciation of the rich vibrancy and texture of our belongings, that they aren't all wrapped up in memories, feelings of guilt, or utility, that they, in their material form, have qualities of beauty.

rough cardboard box I placed the glasses in. Holding the tape dispenser to the side of the box, it screeched as I pulled it taut in the air then flat down against the box, and tore it off on the other side before running my hand across the smooth plastic tape to seal it down. This sensory exploration I believe is best captured through a multimodal ethnography, one that incorporates photos as well as poetic captions alongside thick description and academic analysis. Thus, in order to capture the process of moving house holistically, several manners of perceiving need to be employed. This desire to both experience and capture the sensory qualities of the move is reflected in my note-taking practices. I would let myself get caught up in the nostalgia of memory boxes diving deep into another world, careful to hold onto the feelings evoked but not to wrench myself out of the dream-like state. I would write notes on my phone, or on whatever piece of paper was closest, consisting of one to two-word phrases like "book fair," "Lego," "awards folder," and "glow-in-the-dark stars," which I would come back to later. I used photos in the same way, taking a quick photo so I would remember to write about it later that day.

Although I had not intended for this to become a visual ethnography, it emerged out of this sporadic photo-taking throughout my fieldwork. As Pink (2007, 66) states, it is important to understand the context within which our knowledge of photography has developed, as well as how our photos fit within the visual culture of our study. I do not consider myself a photographer in the traditional sense, but I document my life as many of us do, using the camera on my phone. These photos were taken on my iPhone 11 with no editing, and while I may have framed shots to make the object more or less dominant in the photo, or moved positions to gain better light, most of the time I snapped the photo and moved on to packing. I was also taking photos of my belongings anyway, in order to assist the passing on of things in secondhanded economies, whether through Facebook Marketplace listings or messages sent directly to friends to see if they wanted what I was getting rid of. The use of Facebook Marketplace both bolstered my visual ethnographic approach by encouraging me to take photos of things to sell, but also opened a new avenue for material investigation, as it bridged a gap between myself and the people to whom I sold my possessions, a connection which is not possible when donating to op shops. Taking photos of my things, whether I was passing them on or keeping them, allowed for a preservation of connection through a transformation from the material to the digital, extending their life, in photographic form, regardless of what happened to their material body.

Capturing the intensely sensory elements of this material study, these photos and their accompanying captions became visual vignettes centred on their subject's significance and took on a far larger role than I had initially anticipated. I had started off taking photos as a reference and by the end of the move I had 202 photos to sift through. As I got into the practice, I become more concerned with the composition of the image, choosing to zoom out to capture the whole object and its context, or to zoom in and focus on its textural qualities. Half of the photos were taken from adult height, hovering over the object in a boxing up state. Most often objects were housed in some sort of container which itself came into focus, such as a cardboard moving box, a plastic tub, washing basket or garbage bag, which showcased the transitory nature of the photographic subjects. Photos of the house or its features are quite different; they look out or up, capturing a feature of a room, but never the whole thing in its context. I found that capturing the house as a whole, when it was empty, seemed almost a waste. Without my things in the home, in their context, there was less to be said, the stories were boxed up and on their way, and there was no use in capturing the ghosts of where they had been.

It was important to me to embed the photos in the descriptions and analysis of the ethnography, rather than have a separate visual album, as that is how my thinking worked throughout the research process. I was simultaneously packing, taking photos, and contemplating the impact of my actions in relation to what I had been reading: it all melded together. I purposely did not include myself in the photos, positioning my

possessions as the subject, as I wanted them to be able to stand alone and tell their own story, so the viewer/reader could consider their visual qualities first, before being introduced to my connection with them. I used captions to bridge the gap between the photos and my analysis of them, by introducing my emotional connection to the objects. This format allowed for poetic, diary like confessions, where I could communicate my internal dialogue and speak directly to the reader, as if I were beside them, showing them a window into my life. I wrote these captions and vignettes after moving, in a reflective process, rather than during. I sat down to review my collection of photos and picked out the ones that had something to say, and then wrote down what that was. Some of these vignettes describe what I felt after moving, reflecting on the things that are now long gone out of my life, and others captured the thoughts I had in that moment that were still simmering away in the back of my head.

While the democratisation of photography to the ordinary person through their smartphone may have demystified the wonder of more traditional visual ethnography, I find beauty in the "not-trying" of these photos. The experience of moving is a near universal one, so I wanted this ethnography to be accessible beyond a scholarly audience. The inclusion of visuals through the photos assists in embedding this research in the reality of the experience, in the mundaneness of the home and the everyday. Therefore, because I was not setting out with the intention to capture an ethnographic feel through visual images, I believe that I ended up with a far better impression of the materiality of my life, than if I had purposely tried to capture this.

Snug as a bug

I was really struggling to work out how I was going to move all of my houseplants, as many of them grow in water in glass jars. I love my plants, and wanted to ensure they all survived the trip, but, how on earth are you meant to move plants?! You can't just put them in a box, or carry them on your lap in the car, not when you have this many at least. This photo shows the solution I ended up at, with them all tucked into boxes with tea towels wrapped tightly around them, ready for the journey to their new home, snug as a bug in a rug.

Space optimisation

This photo makes me laugh every time I see it. We put the toaster in the microwave to save space when moving, that's it, that's all this is, there isn't a deep message behind it. I don't know how Mum got the idea that this would be a smart thing to do, but we both enjoyed it. On moving day, when unpacking the new kitchen to heat up my lunch, I giggled when I opened the microwave and saw the toaster. It brought some light and laughter to the day.

While moving is often planned, the reality for people that rent, like me, is that we are often forced to move at the end of our lease, or when circumstances change unexpectedly. Thus, planning a research project around moving house is contingent on a transient field site. The temporality of the field lends itself to an autoethnographic approach, where one operates both as researcher and participant in the events of their own life. The findings of this study are specific, however, to the circumstances under which I moved, which was not by choice, but necessity, in a poor rental market where the demand for homes was outnumbering available properties, when we had to downsize again, yet for a higher price. We also moved ourselves with the help of partners and close friends, instead of hiring movers, due to the cost of labour. These contextual factors undoubtedly impacted how I experienced this process, and this study would have been vastly different if the move had been under different circumstances. The realities of the broader social world impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic meant that this research was also bound by the changing restrictions to human research, as a deep ethnographic study in another person's house simply would not have been feasible.

My moving narrative is just one among many. Although we had to downsize this was not to the extent that Stevens, Camic, and Solway (2019) discuss in their research on the elderly moving into residential care homes. Participants in their study describe this particular moving experience as a process of unpicking, whereby in sorting and departing with the items that once formed the landscape of their home they are forced to discard layers of themselves (Stevens, Camic, and Solway 2019, 219). Uncertainty around the future of their possessions poses a key threat to identity during this transition, however, by being involved in this process, rather than it being done for them, they are able to curate their new space, providing a continuity of identity, and safeguard items of importance (Stevens, Camic, and Solway 2019, 217). Moving can also be a milestone event, as captured by Cieraad (2010) in her research on Dutch university students as they move into their college dorms. As this is the first step out of the family home, students utilise their homemaking as a means to shape and embody a new social identity of independence and self-reliance (Cieraas 2010, 88). These moving experiences are different

again from that of a refugee, to first homebuyers moving into their own place, or a child moving between foster carers. My experience of moving is thus very insular to my circumstances; however, the process of questioning my material relationships is one that resonates with many.

One of the most revealing parts of this research and using an autoethnographic approach was in its inescapable all-consuming-ness. As the field site was made up of my literal home, objects, and emotional journey, there was no separation between what was my research and what was my life. Even when I wanted to stop packing and moving, or even thinking about packing and moving, I could not, because it was happening anyway. I did attempt to employ Chang's (2008, 43) recommendations for best practice autoethnography and straddle the emic and the etic, considering each moment both as the subjective insider and balancing it with objective reason. I also tried to home in on the experiences I shared with my family, rather than solely on my own experiences, but at the end of the day I could not help but mull over my own thoughts. While this was often draining and left me feeling like I was overanalysing everything I got rid of or chose to keep, this intense immersion in the field was necessary, as Pink (2003) emphasises, to capture embodied experience, and was ultimately of enormous benefit to the depth of understanding I was able to achieve. The process of ethnographic research in parallel with moving house allowed me to systematically separate from that home both physically and emotionally. In addition, I strengthened my familial connections by achieving a deeper awareness of their material worlds and the objects that tied us to one another. I am still unsure whether this is due to the moving experience or the ethnographic process, or both hand in hand, as together we peeled back the layers of clutter and opened ourselves up to a new way of viewing the material landscape of the everyday. If nothing else, this autoethnographic approach was a hugely cathartic experience, in that by having to process and understand the emotions that were evoked around this significant life event, I was able to better understand myself and my relationship to my belongings.

Just a house

While I took photos of the rest of the house empty before we left, I kept forgetting to take a photo of the front of it, maybe because in doing that it would seem final, like the closing scene of a movie. A couple of weeks after we had moved, Mum was there to pick up some mail and took a photo of the front of it, as per my request. The gloomy weather aids this feeling, but it seems cold and empty, with everything packed up and moved on, all traces of us wiped from the walls, with the blinds still pulled shut. This home is just a house once more.

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When Facts Falter: Practicing Reflexive Ethnography When Co-Constructing the Identity of Syrian Refugee Women

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ABSTRACT

Recent studies suggest that refugee women are more vulnerable to culture shock than men due to the ongoing process of negotiating one's social and cultural identity; however, few studies have been conducted to further explore this phenomenon. In this study, I provide new insight into the experiences of Syrian refugee women resettling in the United States by highlighting the moments of hesitation involved in their identity negotiation. Using a reflexive ethnographic approach, I draw on my participant observations and informal interviews to ask, "What does it mean to be both a mother and a provider?" Ultimately, I argue that the new roles my interlocutors take up do not reflect what American women have, what their families value, or even what their friends hope for them. Instead, the Syrian women construct their new identities on their own terms given their unique concerns, hopes, and perspectives, and by relying on a reflexive methodological approach, I can begin to describe the changing women's roles within the St. Louis Syrian refugee community.

Keywords: refugee women, reflexivity, ethnography, identity, culture shock, refugee resettlement

At the Farmers' Market

I am driving to the St. Louis farmers' market, and my friend Amira, a Syrian refugee, leans over the center console to tell me more about her life in Damascus. At fifteen-years-old, Amira married the love of her life, Hassan, who was twenty at the time. They met in his family's butcher shop, and it was love at first sight. She explains that some couples still have an arranged marriage, but their meeting was *kismet*. Within the first year of their marriage, Amira gave birth to a baby girl, Jamal, followed by another daughter, Rima. Amira's mother taught her how to both cook and run a household with love and efficiency. Now, she loved caring for her family, and Hassan praised her constantly. Amira never knew any woman who worked outside the home.

It is 7:35 A.M. when we get to the market—still plenty of time to set up the craft booth. Fatima, Yara, and Badia are already here and have claimed our spot between two large oak trees. We will need plenty of shade to block the 90-degree, July heat that at times seems inescapable. We then begin unloading the crafts from the various duffle bags. Macramé hangers, succulents, clunky jewelry, and crochet yoga bags emerge (see Figure 1). These women know their target customer: twenty-something hipsters who do not think twice about dropping $50 on an impulse buy. Throughout the day, I sit with the women while they sell. At 10:30 A.M., Badia passes around styrofoam cups filled with bitter Arabic coffee. At 12:30 P.M., Yara's husband delivers *shawarma* and *falafel* to everyone while their six kids wait in the van. By 2:15 P.M., the women begin sweating profusely under their hijabs and layered clothing. I sit quietly in jeans and a button-down shirt; I am thankful that I can pull my hair into a tight bun. There is no mention of the heat; instead, the women sit with straight backs and glistening faces. Around 3:30 P.M., it's time to packp. It is a good day, so the women make around $150 each. Amira wants to take her kids shopping for school supplies. Badia has hospital bills to pay. Yara wants to help her husband put food on the table, and Fatima sends all her money back to Jordan where her parents and siblings live in a refugee camp. For the first time, these women are making their own money and spending it as they see fit.

Figure 1. The refugee women wait for customers at the St. Louis farmers' market. Photo by author.

Introduction

In this study, I reflect on my recent fieldwork with Syrian refugee women and their experience negotiating new cultural identities here in the United States. In particular, I ask, "What does it mean to be both a mother and a provider?" and listen for the internal conflict, for the hesitation and disruptions that occur when some Arab women begin to seek employment opportunities while others wrestle with the costs of role-switching. Doing so entails analyzing identity crisis as my ethnographic subject, and in analyzing this subject, the fieldwork becomes less about collecting facts and more about recognizing the moments when facts falter, and hesitation occurs. In these moments, I am arrested by the uncertainty that the Syrian woman feels, and in sharing this uncertainty, I can begin to understand rather than simply know her experiences. However, such understanding can dissolve the professional distance between the

ethnographer and her interlocutors and initiate the practice of reflexive ethnography. Therefore, using a reflexive ethnographic approach, I invite my participants to share in their moments of hesitation as they construct new cultural identities, and this allows me to describe the changing roles of women within the St. Louis Syrian refugee community.

In what follows, I explore the internal conflict that many Syrian refugee women experience surrounding the negotiation of their new identities. I do so by first constructing a methodology rooted in reflexivity to promote more nuanced and ethical research. I then present an overview of the current literature on culture shock as it relates to the negotiation of social and cultural identities with an emphasis on the experiences of refugee women. Using a reflexive approach, I analyze my ethnographic observations and informal interviews with the Syrian women—highlighting the hesitations and deliberations involved in deciding which roles and identities they ultimately adopt. I conclude by arguing that these new roles my interlocutors adopt do not reflect what American women have, what their families value, or even what their friends hope for them. Instead, the Syrian women construct their new identities on their own terms given their unique concerns, hopes, and perspectives.

Practicing Reflexive Ethnography

As I approach this study, I recognize how different my background is compared to my participants—linguistically, culturally, and religiously to name a few. How then am I able to conduct research and derive meaning from a culture I am not a part of? It is in response to this important question that I rely on a methodology and analysis rooted in reflexivity. By practicing reflexive ethnography, I highlight the ways in which I, as an individual with a particular social identity and background, affect the research process, and I address the biases, assumptions, beliefs, and values that I carry into the study. Reflexivity therefore is "essential in augmenting the integrity, credibility, and trustworthiness of qualitative inquiry" (Valandra 2012, 204), and it is "central to debates on subjectivity, objectivity, and ultimately, the scientific foundation of social science knowledge and research" (Hsuing, 2008, 211). Additionally, reflexivity is not a practice which occurs in isolation; it is a social, relational process between the researchers and his or her interlocutors. Collaborative reflexivity encourages researchers to practice self-examination while offering an opportunity for participants to share their unique perspectives and conflicting positions within particular social contexts. In what follows, I argue that it is through these collaborative moments that I can begin to describe the hesitation my interlocutors felt surrounding the roles of women.

But what does reflexivity look like in practice? In an interview with Pavlos Kavouras, Clifford Geertz insists that collective representations of selfhood are key to developing interpretations (Panourgiá 2008). By identifying oneself in a text and recognizing one's situated position in relation to other texts, ethnographers and participants can begin to negotiate what is proper and right behavior (Panourgiá 2008, 23). For example, when I enter a Ramadan meal, it is important for me to be aware of any underlying influence that I may bring the situation, my own expectations for the evening, and my perceptions of Islamic traditions in relation to the overarching text that is the meal. If I do not, then I may mistakenly misunderstand what is proper and right behavior. Geertz further argues that we can never analyze a situation outside our own frame of reference. As David Hockney once said, "our big mistake was to describe the world as though we were not in it" (qtd. in Yang 2015, 449). When researchers write about talking and living with people, going to the market, and walking around, it is pointless to try to make readers believe that all the insights came from an objective information -producing machine.

Second, reflexivity emphasizes ethical research. In *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher: Using Ourselves in Research*, Kim Etherington (2004) defines reflexivity as an "ability to notice our responses to the world around us, other people and events, and to use that knowledge to inform our actions, communications and understandings" (Etherington 2004, 19). Reflexivity calls for critical reflection on the self as a research instrument and "actively locating

oneself within the research process" (Yang 2015, 449). Ultimately, this reflection requires researchers to continually examine their methods to ensure high quality research that also respects the participants. Reflexivity as a concept has been further defined by Lai Fong Chiu (2006) in the article "Critical Reflection: More than Nuts and Bolts." Chiu categorizes three types of reflexivity: self-reflexivity, relational reflexivity, and collective reflexivity. Self-reflexivity calls for researchers to "become aware of their hidden assumption in the process of knowledge making." Relational-reflexivity prompts researchers to "attend to power differentials and to collaborate with participants," and collective reflexivity promotes "critical awareness amongst participants" (Chiu 2006). Each of these aspects promote ethical research.

Methodology

This project was conducted through my summer 2018 internship with International Literacy and Development (ILAD), an organization dedicated to helping marginalized people through language instruction and economic development. My objective for the internship was two-fold. First, I was to research possible job-creation opportunities specifically tailored to Syrian refugee women. Most immigrants who resettle in St. Louis come from cultures similar to Western culture where women are expected to pursue employment. Therefore, these refugee families are at a disadvantage living in the United States where a family of eight must oftentimes survive on a single income. Second, I was to teach informal English lessons to Syrian women in their homes. These lessons were mostly one-on-one, but there were a few combined with children and husbands. I taught English regularly to nine women over the course of ten weeks, and I worked with twelve Syrian women in a sewing class. By meeting with a wide range of women in both a home and work setting, I was able to better understand what types of jobs would best fit the Syrian woman's lifestyle. However, I quickly learned through my fieldwork that the various obstacles for Syrian women getting jobs were more cultural than logistical, and these barriers were not necessarily outside forces keeping them at home. It was their own convictions about the role women should play as their families integrate into American life. I did meet some women who were extremely eager to explore possible career options. Others were apprehensive to say the least; however, most were caught somewhere in between the two—tangled in an identity crisis. For example, the women who sold macramé and jewelry at the farmers' market all seemed interested in selling online or in local fair-trade stores until it came time to follow through. They enjoyed the social aspect of making and selling crafts with their friends; however, many did not want to make more money than their husbands. These moments of hesitation and internal conflict are what prompted me to conduct more interviews on the subject and utilize reflexive ethnography that validates the co-construction of identity.

Because most of my interactions with the women took place in the home, the nature of my project quickly became informal and intimate. After just a few lessons, most of the women asked me to help sort their mail. I became an expert at answering questions on medical forms, filling out food stamp applications, and throwing away advertisements. Consequently, we established a level of trust and even became close friends. In order to maintain this friendship and minimize any potential power dynamics, I chose not to record our conversations; instead, I took detailed notes. Looking back at these notes, I have pulled the stories that most readily highlight the negotiation of social and cultural identities.

Situating the Ethnographer

In an interview with fellow anthropologist, Neni Panourgiá (2008), Clifford Geertz argued that when writing about another culture, "You don't get to sign just your name anymore, you have to sign your identity." We, the ethnographers, are all "situated observers," as Geertz explains, "We don't stand on the moon, we stand somewhere." Sometimes this "somewhere" is our own culture, sometimes not, but "wherever we are, we are situated" (Panourgiá 2008, 26). Any attempt to cast away our personal identity becomes problematic and affects how we perceive and write about other cultures. For

instance, when working with Syrian women, I am mindful of where we are each situated. I sit educated, single, with my hair exposed, and wear a cross on my finger. Meanwhile, Amira, Badia, Yara, Fatima, Radeyah, Hafsa, and Nadira sit covered with hijabs, and they have spent their whole adult lives fulfilling the roles of mother and wife. So, as we talk about different women's roles, the Syrian women and I know that, in a sense, we are talking about the pros and cons of the other's perception of womanhood.

Therefore, before I begin to analyze the shifting identities of Syrian women, it is important to construct my own identity as an American woman by exploring all that is being negotiated within our dialogues and listening for the inevitable hesitation that happens when we, Syrian women and I, run into conflict. In the following passages, I present four anecdotes where we examine my relationship status around Hafsa's dinner table, my family background at Fatima's kitchen table, my education at Amira's stove top, and my religion on Radeyah's couch. I will follow each of these scenes with a brief analysis as they pertain to the co-construction of my identity compared to the Syrian woman's as she begins to test the boundaries of possible roles for herself.

We are seated around Hafsa's living room—the only room where her family of nine and I can sit together comfortably for a four-course meal. She speaks almost no English, but her son, Majed, translates for us. After the coffee and *ma'moul abiad*, the polite small talk turns into an unexpected interview. It begins with "Where are you living?" and "What are you studying?" However, the questions inevitably become more personal: "Do you have a husband? A boyfriend? No? You are how old? Umm… what about a wife?" Knowing that I am the only single American woman she knows, I laugh, shake my head, and try to assure her that I can take care of myself without a significant other. Even so, Hafsa sends me home that night with a plate of food and a blessing to be safe on the road as if I am going on a road trip, not a fifteen-minute drive. I had never thought of myself as an extremely independent person before, but as I climb in my car that night and drive across St. Louis to an empty house, I reflect on Hafsa's concern. She was not the only Syrian refugee woman I met to comment on my living situation and being so far from family. Through these interactions, I came to understand how she, and others, might perceive me: independent, yet isolated, and somewhat reckless for choosing this lifestyle.

Around midnight, Fatima passes me the hookah pipe and asks about my family. I tell her about my dad, my sister, and my two brothers. I explain that my mom died last year. "Do you know what cancer is?" From around the corner, I heard her daughter, Waheeda, exclaim, "I have cancer! Your mom died? Where was it?" I can feel my face turning red as I press my hands to my chest and stomach to indicate its location. Waheeda gave a huge sigh, "Oh good, mine's just in my eye!" I pass the pipe back to Fatima as we compare treatment plans. Fatima tells me that when her family lived in a refugee camp in Jordan, she would take her daughter to the doctor, and rats would be crawling on the floors. She never thought that she would be able to bring her daughter to the United States for treatment. When we met again the following week, Fatima and Waheeda began speaking openly about their experience navigating the U.S. healthcare system and going to the hospital while not knowing English. Fatima knows that I will never fully understand these experiences, but she still confides in me and comes to see me as a friend.

"Two scoops then stir for maybe five minutes," Amira instructs as I try to make Arabic coffee. The little copper pot bubbles with dark espresso over the stovetop, and the smell alone is strong enough to give me a caffeine buzz (see fig. 2). "What do you study at school?" As I stir, I explain that I want to teach English as a second language. I might try to work with kids, but I really like working with adults. She nods along while helping her daughters plate our dessert, a type of sweet bread. I ask her if she knows what her daughters will do when they grow up. Amira admits that she has no idea. However, she insists that her daughters are going to college explaining, "This is my dream." Before selling macramé at the farmers' market and occasionally catering for her American friends, Amira never worked outside the home before, and while wrestling with her own decision of

whether or not to start her own catering business, she also thinks about her daughters working. Whenever we met, Amira always asks about my school, my work, and where I would move once I graduate. By answering her questions, I give her a glimpse into what that life might look like as a young, working woman.

Figure 2. Visits with Amira always included coffee. Photo by author.

I pass my iPhone to Radeyah so that she can scroll through pictures of my family. "You and your mom look like sisters!" She then stumbles across my study abroad pictures from spring 2017. "What countries have you traveled to?" I start listing: England, France, Haiti, Chile, Argentina, Peru, and Canada. She recognizes all of them but Haiti. "Why did you go there?" I explain that I went there with my church to help the community there and deliver supplies to the schools. Radeyah listened intently, but I could tell she was a little confused. "Did you only help the Christians?" I answered, "No, we helped everyone—Christian and non-Christian." I explain that I would love for all the people there to become Christians, but even if they do not, we are still going to help them. She nods taking this in and then explains that there are many organizations in St. Louis who help refugees until they realize that they will not convert to Christianity. She tears up as she tells me about one woman who stopped visiting her because she did not want to talk about religion. I respond my insisting, "Radeyah, you're not a Christian, but I'm still going to be here for you if you need help. Would I love for you to be a Christian? Yes, probably as much as you want me to be a Muslim. But, even if that doesn't happen, you're still my friend." Over the summer, Radeyah would come to me with her questions about Christianity: "Why do we say there is one God but also say that Jesus is God? What does the bible say about Mohamad? How do Christians pray compared to Muslims?" To her, I am a Christian who will not try to convert her, and I will continue to be her friend.

From Culture Shock to the Negotiation of Identities Among Refugee Women

Over the past decade, several studies have been conducted to identify the determinants of culture shock among Middle Eastern and African refugees and asylum seekers resettling in Western countries (Milner and Khawaja 2010; Slonim-Nevo and Regev 2015; Yako and Biswas 2014). Researchers hoped that identifying these factors would enable tailored programs to promote the well-being of refugees and inform mental health professionals working with these specific populations (Slonim-Nevo and Regev 2015; Milner and Khawaja 2010). The results from these studies showed that culture shock was not significantly associated with socio-demographic characteristics including age, education, marital status, language proficiency, rural/urban origin, or months of residency in the receiving country (Slonim-Nevo and Regev 2015, 127). In fact, the clearest determinant of culture shock was *gender* (Slonim-Nevo and Regev 2015, 128). According to Vered Slonim-Nevo and Shirley Regev, their 2015 study was the first to examine the determinants of culture shock revealing the discrepancy between men and women. Women showed significantly higher culture shock scores than men, and these scores seemed to increase with the time

spent in the receiving country rather than the expected decrease (Slonim-Nevo and Regev 2015, 128). Following this study, Slonim-Nevo and Regev (2015, 133) speculated that this variation was the result of a move from a patriarchal society to a more egalitarian society where women may assume new roles and negotiate new social and cultural identities for themselves. However, no studies have been conducted to address these different experiences between men and women specifically.

Andrea DeCapua and Ann C. Wintergerst (2016) in their book, *Crossing Cultures in the Language Classroom* outline five major themes of culture shock with one being the negotiation of cultural identity. Cultural identity is generally divided into three broad categories: human (the features that make us human), personal (the characteristics that individuals believe they possess that differentiate them from others), and social (identity that derives from societal roles) (DeCapua and Wintergest 2016, 132). Human and personal identities tend to remain stable throughout life; however, our social identities are subject to change, especially when one is immersed in a new culture. DeCapua and Wintergerst explain that these new roles and expectations create stress and anxiety, which, in turn, threaten one's self-identity. This literature suggests that refugee and immigrant women in particular are vulnerable to culture shock due to the process of negotiating one's cultural identity. By highlighting these moments of hesitation and negotiation in this study, I provide new insight into the experiences of Syrian refugee women resettling in the United States.

Refugee Resettlement Structure and Pressure

As I discuss how Syrian refugee women wrestle with the construction of their new identities here in the United States, it is important to note the structural and cultural pressures placed on them. Concerning structural pressures, the United States refugee resettlement system is founded on the assumption that successful refugee integration is synonymous with financial self-sufficiency (Darrow 2018a, 36; Office of Refugee Resettlement [ORR] 2017). This emphasis on employment is not a secret. In fact, agency employees are often tasked with the job of emphasizing the importance of employment to clients and will even withhold services from those who do not pursue every opportunity to obtain it (Darrow 2018a, 54). In her recent article, Jessica Darrow (2018a, 41) draws on her own ethnographic data to explain that because successful integration is synonymous with financial independence, resettlement agencies must submit annual reports to their state and the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) indicating how many clients they got to work each month and how quickly. Not meeting these job-placement quotas may result in the Early Employment Services (EES) contract not being renewed, jeopardizing the agency's ability to continue resettling clients (Darrow 2018a, 41). This policy creates an incentive for agencies to get as many clients to work as quickly as possible, and this is especially true for refugee women whose employment may result in their families becoming financially independent (Darrow 2018a, 41).

On the other hand, Syrian refugee women may experience social pressures from their original culture to avoid employment. None of the women I spoke with had ever worked outside the home prior to resettling in the United States, and when I asked whether they knew other women who worked, few could recall a friend or a relative in Syria who pursued a career or was employed. In 2005, before the war reduced economic activity, female participation in the labor force was at 16.3 percent while males were at 76.1 % respectively (Hudock 2016, 28-29). This is surprising when one considers that Syrian women typically obtained similar levels of higher education (Hudock 2016, 28-29). Instead, most women I met had married when they were fifteen or sixteen years old and immediately started families. When speaking with my interlocutors, it was apparent that these social norms were at the forefront of their minds when considering whether to pursue employment opportunities. After resettling in the United States, it seemed that some women embraced the new opportunities to further their education and seek employment. Meanwhile, others in trying to preserve one's original cultural identity and

reclaim a state of normalcy, reverted to more traditional roles. Still, most women were a kaleidoscopic mixture of the two that was more complicated than a simple dichotomy. The moments when each woman negotiates which roles or identities to take up is my ethnographic subject.

Radeyah: God of the Home

Radeyah calls to ask whether I would like mint in my tea. The sweet aroma of spice and sugar follows her back into the living room as she carries a tray of miniature teacups, mixed nuts, and *baklava*. Though she considers me her best American friend, I am still treated with the formality of an honored guest in her home. My knees are folded up to my chest as I sink into her couch, but I drink from her family's finest ceramic glassware. While her four young children play with toy cars and watch Arabic cartoons on YouTube around the coffee table, I ask Radeyah, "What do you think of women's roles in the United States?" Radeyah quickly let me know that she is uncomfortable most of the time with how women act here. She agrees that women should have freedom and that they should be able to get an education. More than anything, she wants her daughter to be able to go to college. But she is sad when she sees so many older women (women in their 30s and 40s) with no one to take care of them. Because of the freedom that women have, she worries that they are not in turn respected. Here, women flaunt themselves and sleep around. At least in her country, men respected women enough to approach the family before thinking about a possible relationship. Later in the summer, when it is announced that women are now able to drive in Saudi Arabia, Radeyah tells me that freedom for women in America is good, but the traditional Saudi Arabian culture is not ready for that yet. She predicts that it will bring more harm than good. I ask Radeyah if she ever considered applying for a job when she came to St. Louis, and surprisingly, she tells me that she used to work at a Middle Eastern restaurant as a hostess. But, when she started to make more money than her husband, she quit. Radeyah insists that her husband does not care whether she makes more money than him or if she works. She just could not shake her convictions about her role in the home. Radeyah ends that particular conversation with this: "In my country, we say that the man is the God of the home. Who am I to take that role?"

Amira's Decision

As I arrive at my interlocutors' booth at the farmers' market, I say a quick hello to Amira before taking my place behind the table of jewelry where Fatima and Yara are already drinking their morning tea. All the women in attendance had contributed to the booth—each arranging their own jewelry and macramé around the pop-up tent. But Amira's work clearly stood out and always sold first. She was a natural at weaving macramé, and customers would always stop and linger by her work. Amira also had a thriving business on Facebook where customers would message her pictures of yoga bags, blankets, or wall décor they saw on Pinterest. She would work throughout the week to have it ready for pick up the following Saturday (Figure 3). Amira was also an outstanding cook, and when she was not preparing for the farmers' market, she was catering dinner parties for her American friends. Some of the other women were jealous of her success, but most did not mind and were just glad to be spending every Saturday with friends.

I ask Amira if she ever thought about selling her work in a store. There were several local, fair-trade gift shops in the area and her work would fit both their style and clientele. At first, she tells me that she is interested and asks if I would go with her to show the store managers her work. However, when I bring it up again a few weeks later, she changed her mind. Instead of moving to a store, she expressed that she wanted to keep her work as a hobby. When I asked her how she came to this decision, she grew quiet and then explained that if she started a formal business and made more money, her family would no longer be eligible for food stamps. To her, this was a terrifying prospect, because she did not think that she could sell enough to make up the money that the food stamps were currently saving her. Why would she choose to work twice as hard to fill a storefront if she would ultimately end up with less money? Amira also wondered how well her work would sell in a store compared to the market, and ultimately, these barriers proved to

Figure 3. Amira's macramé hanging in her house before the farmers' market. Photo by author.

be too much of a risk. For now, she would continue cooking and selling her crafts at the market.

Radeyah: The Syrian Dream

During one of our visits, Radeyah asks me about the advantages and disadvantages of public and charter schools in St. Louis. Her Arab friends keep telling her that she should move out to the county as soon as she can because the public schools are better, but she likes the charter school her children are currently enrolled in. The teachers are friendly, and the school is in their neighborhood, so she and her husband walk the children to school every day. However, it seems like everyone idealizes life outside the city. Radeyah has heard that it is safer there, more private, and a better place to raise her children. I explain to Radeyah that her friends are probably relaying the advice that they received from other Americans. I then give her my opinion that county schools are, indeed, good schools, but an even stronger draw to the suburbs is the idea of achieving the "American Dream." I explain that, here, many American families have the goal of someday owning their own house in a quiet neighborhood where their kids are safe. Radeyah nods and says that there is such a thing as a Syrian Dream too. Radeyah explains that because many Syrians view authority figures as corrupt, the dream is to someday become your own boss. Business owners may still have to bribe the local government in order to stay open, but at least they maintain some control over their livelihood.

Once Radeyah explained this to me, I began to notice this pattern of entrepreneurism among her Syrian friends and extended family. Before setting foot on U.S. soil, they may have already started their own businesses, or they have an idea for one. In fact, St. Louis has capitalized on this refugee entrepreneurial mindset. Over the last decade, the economy of the St. Louis Metropolitan Area alone has experienced significant economic strain: wages have increased 14% less than other metro areas, expansion is 30% slower than other cities, and the region lost nearly 45,000 jobs (3.3% of its workforce) (Strauss 2012, 10). All these issues are attributed to outward migration and the aging baby boomers. However, a report by Jack Strauss, the Simon Chair of Economics at Saint Louis University, shows that "there is one specific way to simultaneously redress the region's population stagnation, output slump, tepid employment growth, housing weakness and deficit in entrepreneurship—Immigration" (Strauss 2012, 3). Therefore, in 2015, policymakers sought to boost the city's economy by making St. Louis an avenue for the resettlement of Syrian and Iraqi refugees. A study by the Fiscal Policy Institute reports that cities such as Detroit, Philadelphia, Minneapolis, and Nashville, all experienced economic growth thanks to their new refugee and immigrant residents. In Minneapolis, foreign-born residents opened 5,000 new businesses, while in Philadelphia, they opened more than 13,000 (Strauss 2012, 31). Most of these businesses were in poorer areas, resulting in economic growth for those neighborhoods needing it most. Today, St. Louis has and is projected to perform similarly.

Language Learning and Opportunity Costs

When refugees initially resettle in the United States, there are three main concerns: learning English, finding a job, and getting the children enrolled in school. Most resettlement agencies provide services that help with all three of these items, but the most difficult one to overcome is the language barrier. English courses are offered three times per week during the day and in the evenings at the local resettlement agency. Most of my interlocutor's husbands could not find the time to go to class before or after work. They either worked during the class time, or they are too exhausted to attend. However, with the children at school and the husbands working, this leaves refugee women with the most time to devote to English language learning. I saw the repercussions of this, especially in Radeyah's household. Although she had never received an education past 8th grade equivalency, she was a fantastic language student and became highly proficient in English in less than two years—something that takes other Arabic-speakers five to seven years. Her gift of language learning unknowingly gave her financial and social agency within her home. Now, she is the one who controls the finances. She calls the landlord about rent and the hospital about medical bills. She enrolls the children in school and even helps them with their homework. Radeyah's husband is an Uber driver with no English-speaking ability, and she could easily get a higher paying job. Radeyah's story is similar to other women who have gained agency through language learning, and what was once a Syrian Dream exclusively for men could now be a dream for women as well. The question is whether they will decide to take on the entrepreneurial role that has previously been reserved exclusively for men.

Juxtaposition on Arsenal Street

Over the course of the summer, I spent many nights in the townhouses on Arsenal Street. Situated side-by-side as neighbors, are two Syrian families—one from Damascus and one from Aleppo. Neither family is proficient in English, but the children act as translators. I met Hafsa's family (from Damascus) through an acquaintance who told me that she wanted to start her own catering business. In the past, Hafsa had cooked for different supper clubs run by Americans, but now, she felt that she had the network of friends to do it herself. We met during Ramadan, and she invited me over for several late-night meals (Figure 4). Over bowls of *molokhia*, a legendary vegetable stew which translates to "for royalty," I helped her develop business cards, set up an email account, and create a Facebook page. Hafsa has six kids ranging from six months to seventeen years old. When I asked her what she wanted her business to be called, she answered "Saarah's Kitchen" after her youngest daughter.

Figure 4. A typical Ramadan meal shared with Amira and her family. Photo by author.

One night after dinner, Hafsa invited her neighbor Nadira and her family (from Aleppo) over for coffee and *namoura*. Nadira, who was seven months pregnant, met me with open

arms and kisses on each cheek, then, dragging her oldest child, Mahdi, over to us, she promptly told him to translate an invitation to dinner and a request for English lessons. Because Nadira did not know her days of the week, it took us a while to settle on a time, but when I knocked on her door a few days later, she was ready for me (or she at least pretended to be). The layout of her house paired with the Islamic symbolism mirrored Hafsa's house. In the living room, four large couches, circled around three mismatched coffee tables that had been pushed together to create a long glass runner dividing the room in half. In addition to the family Qur'an on the mantle and a framed picture of the Kaaba in Mecca, Nadira's children had drawn pictures of their home in Syria paired with unfamiliar Arabic words in celebration of Ramadan. The two girls and two boys crowded by the window waiting for the sun to go down.

When it is time to eat, the kids pull the couch cushions onto the floor while Nadira and her husband, Hakeem, bound in carrying *yeb'r't, kibbeh,* and pita bread. During the meal, I notice a table-top sewing machine tucked back against the wall. After inquiring, Nadira tells me about her sewing experience in Syria. I suggest that she could easily get a job as a seamstress, but she immediately shuts that idea down. To her, a woman's primary job is to be at home caring for her children. I ask, "Nadira, what do you think about Hafsa wanting to start a business?" Nadira pauses to gather her thoughts. In the end, she tells me, with the help of her son, that she supports Hafsa as her friend, but "that life" was not for her.

Analysis

Each of these women, Amira, Radeyah, Hafsa, and Nadira, had to negotiate new cultural identities for themselves and decide whether or not that included employment. After living in the U.S. for a few years, Hafsa knew that she wanted to start her own business and began surrounding herself with both Syrian and American friends who could help her navigate that process. Similarly, Amira also wanted to start her own business either selling macramé or starting a catering company, but she was ultimately unable due to a combination of structural barriers and her own fear for the future. Meanwhile, Radeyah and Nadira were somewhere in the middle. Radeyah had thought that she wanted to work, but she changed her mind when she started making more money than her husband. Similarly, Nadira fully supported her friend Hafsa with her catering business and would even help her make, deliver, and serve the food. Still, she could not take the next step towards pursuing "that life" for herself. Additionally, none of the women I spoke with mentioned that their husbands approved or disapproved of them working. The hesitancy along with the ultimate decision seemed to reside with each woman's unique convictions, worries, and perspectives.

Conclusion

While I lived in St. Louis, one aspect of my internship was to spend time with Syrian refugee women in order to understand what types of employment work best for their lifestyles regarding cultural values, religious values, and individual preferences. With this information, different programs could be designed to help refugee women enter the labor force in ways that were beneficial to them and their families. With the goal of financial independence in mind, ILAD, like refugee resettlement organizations, knew that refugee women were the untapped resource to lifting refugee communities out of poverty. However, as I conducted this study, I came to realize that while they may have similar backgrounds, my interlocutors would oftentimes come to very different conclusions concerning women's roles and what their social and cultural identities might include. As I have shown, Amira, Radeyah, Hafsa, and Nadira's decisions were each unique to their personal convictions and perspectives. Ultimately, this study highlights the ways that that refugee women assert themselves and their desires as they resettle in a new country, and it demonstrates that the negotiation of refugee women's social and cultural identities is not necessarily a process of becoming more like American women or more like who they or their female family members were in Syria. Instead, it is a process filled with hesitations, contradictions, and paths unique to each woman.

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The Key to Translation: An Examination of Children's Human Rights Under Government Care and Protection in Manchester and Santa Cruz, Jamaica

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ABSTRACT

According to the Care and Protection Act of Jamaica (2004), protection and provisional rights have historically taken precedence over the participation rights of children – that is, the right to freely express views and maintain a voice in decisions that affect them. To fulfill the participation rights of children, as outlined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), government organizations are encouraged to develop practices that optimize the individual freedom, autonomy, and views of children. I conducted an ethnographic study of the practices used to address the human rights and social needs of abused and neglected children placed under government care and protection in Manchester, Jamaica. My ethnographic research reveals how government staff and caretakers prioritized children's participation rights, giving them input into their standard of care. As such, it illustrates the process of "vernacularization," which refers to the translation of global human rights ideas to socially relevant norms in communities.

Keywords: children's rights; human rights; participation rights; child protection; vernacularization

This paper examines the vernacularization of children's rights in Manchester, Jamaica, through the work of children's officers, families, and community members. Vernacularization is a social process of molding the global framework of human rights to fit local contexts to address community-specific needs (Merry 2006). My assessment of vernacularization is based on ethnographic accounts of the government spaces, community organizations, and solution-based practices that signify a commitment to uplifting the dignity of children in Manchester, Jamaica. By examining the nuances of advocacy for children's rights in Manchester, this study places a special emphasis on the development and usage of participation rights, which is a specific branch of human rights policy that underscores children's freedom to express views in matters that affect their personal wellbeing. I begin by providing background on the legal proceedings of children's rights in Jamaica and trends in youth experiences before discussing the methodology, including the location of fieldwork and demographics of those who chose to participate. Following that, I give a qualitative account and analysis of the approaches that the Children's Rights Bureau (CRB) and Crossing Waters Youth Home in Manchester, Jamaica, take to address rights violations while providing nurturing residence and centering the notion of participation.

Background: The Protection of Children in Jamaica

From Global to Local: Vernacularizing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

As one of the most widely signed and ratified treaties in history, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) outlined the "civil, political, economic, social, health, and cultural rights" of children regardless of ethnic or national identity (Cohen 1997, 74). Representatives from 194 countries came together to sign the treaty on 20 November 1989 (Cohen 1997, 74), thereby defending the rights of any persons under the age of 18, and setting a precedent to humanize and validate the individual and collective experiences of children (Cohen 1997, 74). Protecting the world's most vulnerable members of society is only possible through systems of accountability that obligate participating states to report nationwide strategies for upholding children's rights. The United Nations sought to replace "accusatory" critiques against member states for their modes of child protection with constructive dialogue to develop these fundamental rights (Cohen 1997, 74). The primary domains of "survival, development, protection" created by the CRC maximized all forms of social welfare, placed an emphasis on quality and policies of non-discrimination and respect for children's views, which are topics still salient to modern human rights discourse (Article 6, Part 1). These overarching guidelines are often contextualized as protection, provisional, and participation rights of children (Cohen 1997, 74), which contributes to our modern understanding of child development. To implement human rights ideology in common practice, it is helpful to view such efforts through the lens of "vernacularization." Vernacularization encompasses how global human rights language and policy is translated by local institutions to maintain relevance and specificity to the cultural, social, and national climates (Merry 2006, 39). This phenomenon relies on "translators" to redefine human rights discourse in specific contexts (Merry 2006, 39). The aim of my ethnographic research was to examine the implementation of the UN CRC in Manchester, Jamaica and evaluate specialized efforts that uphold each domain of human rights, but specifically areas that receive less recognition, such as participation or opportunities to express personal and independent views.

Care and Protection in Jamaica

The Care and Protection Act (2004) of Jamaica is an application of the UN CRC for the protection

of children, or individuals under the age of 18, from abuse and neglect (Prelim). With the purpose of "enforcing the rights" of a child, this legal declaration utilizes children's advocates, officers, and courts to uphold basic dignities (Prelim). Designated advocates and courts restore justice when a child's wellbeing is compromised to the extent that legal action is required to ensure safety (2004). Finding adequate representation is difficult and ensuring appropriate legal action, such as removal from homes, visits to homes, schools, or offices, family counseling or other forms of intervention, is under discretion of locally appointed officials (Gordon 2015).

According to pamphlets provided by the Child Rights Bureau (CRB), the child protection office where I conducted my fieldwork in Manchester, Jamaica, the Care and Protection Act (2004) is categorized by protection rights, provision rights, and participation rights, reflecting the major domains of United Nations CRC (2004). Protection rights shelter children from physical, emotional, mental, sexual abuse, neglect, and brutalization (Chambers 2007). Provision rights allude to resources required to achieve developmental milestones, which include but are not limited to food, proper nourishment, water, healthcare, and education. Participation rights endorse the voice of the child in decision-making (Gordon, 2015). Participation rights are a dimension of the Care and Protection Act (2004) that receive substantially less attention in children's rights discourse and still requires extensive development and solution-based practice to enhance quality of life. Scholars critique the implementation and efficacy of participation rights, suggesting that more safe spaces that encourage self-expression would help combat the stigma of children's views as "uninformed and dangerous" to themselves (Alderson 2000, 442).

Participation rights ensure every child can "express his/her views in all matters affecting him or her" to maintain "freedom of expression" (Article 12, UN CRC). This includes forming opinions and sharing thoughts on issues concerning their wellbeing, which in turn provides insight for legal officials working on their behalf (Gordon 2015). For example, during civil disputes between parents/guardians, a child's testimony should be considered in the final decision with appropriate consideration for state of mind, age, and maturity. Emphasis on participation rights preserves agency, while ensuring individual perspectives are valued in legal proceedings.

Participation rights receive less attention in comparison to other types of rights in children's lives, despite their relevance to cognitive and social development (Gordon, 2015). This neglect has been attributed not only to minimal resources for implementing solution-based practices of participation rights in day-to-day lives for children, but also to "cultural restraints" that potentially stigmatize the relevance of children's perspectives in legal matters (Gordon 2015). Although the argument of "cultural restraints" is used in academic discussion of children's rights, it is equally necessary to consider elements of cultural tradition, specifically in Jamaica, that benefit children through community bonds and strong social ties. Narrow understanding and limited acceptance of participation rights amongst children and adults has contributed to a conflict between "culture and idealism" on how to put participation into practice in Jamaica (Gordon, 2015). Subsequently, participation rights for children are often rejected due to traditions that prioritize the decision-making of adults, rather than the autonomy of children. Efforts to re-center children's narratives in advocacy to benefit children in Jamaica are thus ongoing.

Homelife and Violence and Youth in Jamaica

Longitudinal studies are some of the best ways of measuring long-term development, health, and behavioral outcomes of children in Jamaica and the implications of human rights protection. In a birth cohort study conducted between 1986 and 2003, Samms-Vaughan (2009) identified disparities in academic performance between children of lower and higher socioeconomic status, particularly in the absence of program recommendations and policy development for academic enrichment (Samms-Vaughan 2009). Regarding family structures, 70-80% of children living with single-mothers reported higher rates of parenting stress (Samms-Vaughan 2009). High rates of

stress partnered with low levels of parental education and limited engagement with children due to long work hours, correlated with adverse cognitive function, aggression, and low academic achievement (Samms-Vaughan 2009). However, children who reported participating in social and community-based activities, such as attending church (83%) or reading books for pleasure, sustained better outcomes in academic performance, especially in adolescence (Samms-Vaughan 2009).

Violence is an ongoing issue in Jamaica and children may be exposed to it while in their home, school, or surrounding community (Fernald and Meeks-Gardner 2003). Schools in the city of Spanish Town, Jamaica have disproportionately high exposure to violence, which includes gang activity and death of civilians due to gun crossfire (Bourne and McLymont 2020). Similarly, a cohort study conducted in Kingston, the capital and largest city of Jamaica, followed 123 primary school children and their exposure to violence. 91% of children reported experiencing or witnessing a form of violence within the home or academic setting, or through interpersonal interactions such as bullying from peers (Fernald and Meeks -Gardner 2003). In addition, many children admitted witnessing rape, murder, and shootings (Fernald and Meeks-Gardner 2003). Recent studies suggest school environments in Jamaica can be more violent when situated in neighborhoods with high crime rates, especially if boundaries between schools and surrounding urban areas are not fully secure (Fernald and Meeks-Gardner 2003). Social learning theories proposed by Albert Bandura suggest that children can learn to exhibit aggressive behaviors and visceral emotional reactions from social observation (Leff 2009). Based on these theories, if schools lack social boundaries, children are more inclined to imitate violent activities through games and other forms of play, which are patterns of violence and socialization reflected in both developed and developing nations (Fernald and Meeks-Gardner 2003). Thus, globally, exposure to violence in early years and participation in such activities can contribute to futile cycles of brutalization and increase the likelihood of developing depression, post-traumatic stress, and antisocial disorders later in life (Fernald and Meeks-Gardner 2003).

In addition, 30% of children reported experiencing violence when interacting with teachers and principals through corporal punishment, by being reprimanded with "licks" (a type of beating) if disobedient (Fernald and Meeks-Gardner 2003). Other moderate punishments such as collecting trash from the school yard during free time were also used. Although corporal punishment is common in Caribbean and Latin American schools, children exposed to higher rates of corporal punishment exhibit similarly high rates or maladaptive and antisocial behavior (Fernald and Meeks-Gardner 2003). Thus, it is necessary to consider the ways in which these hierarchies and forms of punishment could strain relationships between children, parents, and academic authority. In addition, students living in urban areas who are exposed to community violence demonstrated lower academic performance (Bourne and McLymont 2020).

The intersections of community violence, domestic stress, and development of maladaptive behaviors have considerable effects on children. Such trends indicate the need for government institutions equipped to mitigate adverse childhood events by providing care, refuge, and protective services, especially during human rights violations . Thus, I chose to examine how institutions preserve participation rights through specialized efforts, relationships, and means to convert global human rights theory into local and contextualized practice.

Methodology

This research took place in Manchester, Jamaica, the sixth largest parish of Jamaica in the West-Central region. My objective was to examine the direct practices used to address the social needs of abused and neglected children placed under government care and protection in the parish. I conducted ethnographic fieldwork, including interviews and participant observation, at the Children's Rights Bureau (CRB) and Crossing Waters Youth Home (both pseudonyms) for six weeks in the summer of 2017. The project was approved by the Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research of Wake Forest University in

April 2017. All but one of the participants in my interviews and observational studies were women in their mid-thirties to early fifties. Of the six staff members at the CRB, women occupied the primary positions, including a team leader, social worker, and investigator; there was one male intern in his mid-twenties. The team leader of the CRB had extensive experience in children's advocacy and worked with the CRB for 15 years. Although the other staff members and children's officers did not have the same experience, the social worker and primary investigator were familiar with the surrounding community, where they regularly visited children and families, as well as primary schools where they conducted human rights education workshops with parents. The demographics of staff at Crossing Waters were similar, as all the caretakers were thirty- to fifty-year-old women. The owner of Crossing Waters was non-native of Jamaica and opened the home in her early adulthood. She recruited caretakers from both the surrounding town and other nearby neighborhoods throughout her years owning the home.

I spent approximately 35 hours each week interviewing and conducting participant observation at each site. Through participant observation, I paid particular attention to daily interactions between children, caretakers, and children's rights officers, while also documenting the behavior of children and adults, the daily routines and strategies, conditions of the residential facility, and the local surroundings of the CRB and Crossing Waters Youth Home. Engaging in participant observation shaped my awareness of the spaces where legal proceedings took place and resident facilities for children. By communicating their experience and extensive knowledge as specialists, participants involved in the rehabilitation of at-risk youth provided a deep description of the practices sustaining the provision, protection, and participation rights of children. In addition, the methodology highlighted direct implications of the diverse practices that tend to the social needs and basic rights of children residing under care of the state. Ultimately, I identified clear patterns of interaction between staff and children or parents through participant observation, which highlighted not only the baseline standard of care provided, but also emphasized supplementary resources that promote better outcomes for youth stripped of basic social rights.

I also reviewed literature provided locally by the Children's Rights Bureau, detailing legal practices and strategies used to address the needs of children in Jamaica. This helped achieve the overall goal of this research, which was to explore positive social and developmental outcomes for abused, neglected, and brutalized children, while humanizing their experiences through ethnographic analysis of processes used for their care and protection.

The Child Rights Bureau, Jamaica

> *Countless manilla folders scattered across the room, each one varying in thickness and weight, lining the floor and desk of Shona's office in the CRB. During my first interview with Shona, the team leader, I learned the significance of these stacks. She stated that each folder held the faces of children across the region – names, ages, descriptions, pictures, backgrounds, and the individual stories of children under the protection and watchful eye of Jamaica's government. As we flipped through the first few folders, it was clear this small office of six staff members – a team leader, social worker, two clerks, investigator, and guidance counselor/foster care and adoption manager – had more than enough children to care for.*

Shona, the team leader at the CRB explained the jurisdiction of the CRB as an executive agency of the Jamaican government that intervenes when the rights or needs of a child are compromised, as outlined by the Care and Protection Act (2004). The office served as an extension of the regional CRB headquarters that oversaw satellite offices throughout the Southern Region of Jamaica. The weight of this responsibility was clear from Shona's tone alone. Addressing a range children's rights issues, including mental, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, was taxing as the CRB received limited external support. Because of

the cruelty that many children experienced, maladaptive behavioral issues were common, and often resulted in emotional scars difficult to repair.

To fully understand preparation for a case, it was useful to document the condition of the office. Although in the early mornings it seemed abandoned, especially in the waiting rooms (Figure 1), the depth of work behind the pale walls was only evident to those responsible for it. The CRB was a relatively small space located in a mall plaza at the beginning of the city center and couldn't hold more than 15 people comfortably at a time. Through the brown door (Figure 1) was the main office area with three small cubicles, where the team leader, social worker, and one other staff member worked during the day. Cubicles were adjacent to each other and used mostly for intake sessions, with each containing a desk and two chairs.

A separate office through the waiting room had two cubicles, where two additional staff members completed their daily tasks (Figures 3, 4, and 5). This office space was also used for intake sessions, but mostly functioned as a space to file paperwork. In addition, this second space was used for family counseling. It had a toy area, where young children visiting the office could play, especially if the legal proceedings of the day were taxing.

Both office spaces were simply laid out, with predominantly yellow walls and white tile floors. Comic-style posters lined the corridors with messages encouraging parents and children to learn more about children's rights (Figure 2). Colorful and friendly images functioned both to subtly promote human rights and to alleviate children's anxiety before meeting with CRB staff. Although I personally

Figure 1. The main entry into CRB. 2017. Source: Author.

Figure 2. Main entry of the CRB with posters and animations on human rights education. 2017. Source: Author.

Figure 3. Playspace for children waiting for sessions with CRB staff. 2017. Source: Author.

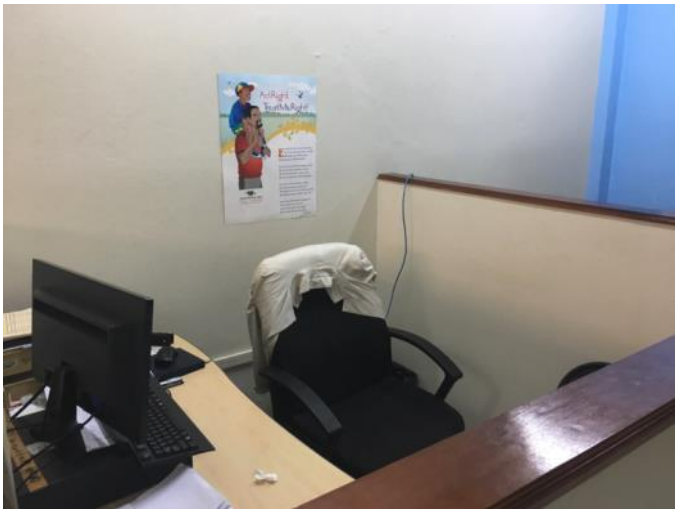

Figure 4. Additional office space for CRB staff. 2017. Source: Author.

never asked children or parents if they found these resources helpful, I frequently observed parents placing their attention on the posters as they patiently waited for their turn with the social worker.

Despite the staff's attempts to make the CRB

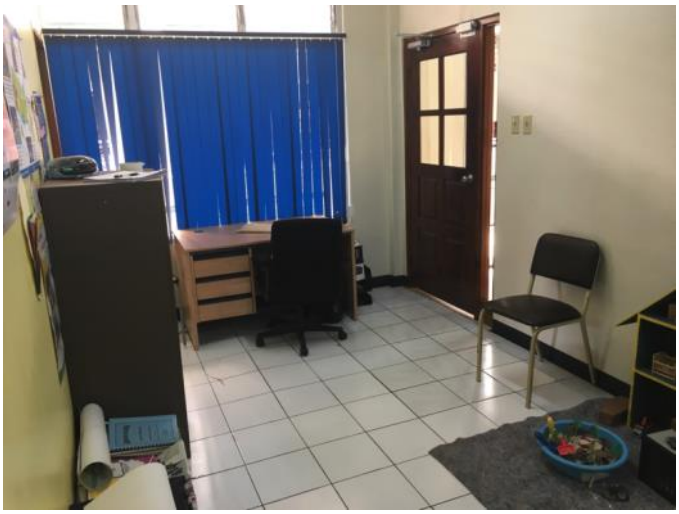

Figure 5. Another angle of the additional office space. 2017. Source: Author.

more comfortable, the social worker still expressed dissatisfaction with the general office infrastructure. Because the CRB had thin walls and lacked doors between cubicles, conversations often carried through the hallways. She worried the office layout jeopardized the CRB's ability to function as an effective safe space for parents, children, and community members to report delicate cases. Because community members often made anonymous reports , the CRB wanted the office space to reflect their organizational commitment to privacy and protection of vulnerable groups.

One of the foundational methods for vernacularization – that is, implementing relevant human rights practices based on community-specific needs – in Manchester was the "intake" process at the CRB, which occurred when an "informant" reported children's rights violations. Informants could report a case over the phone or in person at the CRB office, where details were transcribed into a five-page packet. Informants were usually relatives or friends . At times, some children served as informants and directly reported details of their personal experience of abuse, neglect, or maltreatment.

Cases like this helped the CRB incorporate the child's perspective and understanding of events into the CRB's official documentation. By observing approximately ten intake sessions, I acquired a deep understanding of an informant's responsibility during these initial steps, the depth of detail reported, and the range of cases that require attention from the CRB.

> *I observed an intake session at the beginning of my time with the CRB that involved an 11-year-old girl, Namira, who was missing for 36 hours and then spontaneously returned home. Namira's mother, Yasmin, hoped that reporting the incident to the CRB could help identify the man who fled with her daughter. As the young girl and her mother stepped into the social worker's small cubicle, there was an underlying tension between the two. With an exhausted look, in business casual attire from that day's work, the middle-aged mother answered questions about their home, schooling, ages, and health , which provided necessary background for the CRB. Once that segment of the intake process concluded, the social worker allowed Yasmin to report details of Namira's disappearance without any prompting questions. Yasmin's demeanor was uncertain – her eyes frantically bounced between the social worker and me, as if Yasmin looked to us for answers concerning her daughter's disappearance for those 36 hours.*
>
> *As the social worker redirected questions to Namira, the young girl spoke both candidly and vaguely of her disappearance. She explained that she "spent the night" with an unidentified man. However, slowly Namira's answers became riddled with incomplete sentences and the details were difficult to decipher. For example, when asked "Where did you sleep?" she responded "In a bed … after we got ice cream." The social worker then inquired, "And where did the man sleep?" and Namira with a hesitant look stated, "In the bed… with*

me" Retelling events of this nature, especially for a child, brings on an unprecedented emotional burden, making it difficult for fluent recall of potentially traumatic events, which the social worker listened to carefully. She was intentional and sensitive with her questioning to acquire pertinent details, while also creating moments of mutual trust with the two ladies. Despite her efforts, from the intake session, there was very little the CRB could do to un-write the wrongs of those 36 hours, due to minimal information. By the end of the session, Yasmin's face was stained with terror when considering the events that potentially transpired with her daughter, and an aura of helplessness filled the room.

Based on my observations of several sessions, the general intake process required the informant to have a thorough understanding of the child's or children's general home life, education, medical and family history and to convey the preceding human rights violation effectively and accurately. Reporting cases of abuse or neglect requires detail that is only available if witnesses are willing to come forward, even if it has no direct consequences for them. However, because there was not a concrete timeline of events, the CRB lacked the adequate evidence to launch an investigation as a children's rights organization directly for Namira. Although incorporating informant(s) into formal intake sessions is necessary for rights violations, it was at times difficult to predict whether the process would restore the rights of a child in a compromising state, as seen with Namira.

According to the leading children's officer, this CRB branch received approximately 70 new intake cases within a three-month period. It was open from 8am-5pm on weekdays, where the staff was responsible for the wellbeing of hundreds of children in the greater Manchester area. Emergent cases were sent directly to the police on the weekends. Although some desktop and laptop computers were available to the staff, case information was documented in paper packets and manilla folders, where the first page typically had a stapled photo for child identification. In a single day, I noted six staff who managed new cases, followed up on previous ones, and executed court orders, such as visiting homes and schools. Throughout my interviews, local staff members expressed their concern about the staff shortage in the regional office, which created an overwhelming work environment. Both the social worker and team leader found the synchronous management of new cases with old ones to be a major obstacle to creating an efficient work environment and preventing human rights violations in a timely manner. The staff had trouble estimating the amount of time that typically elapsed before "action" was taken on newly reported cases, since the process relied primarily on the severity. If a new case was categorized as "urgent" at the intake session, some form of action was required to occur within 48 hours of the session, such as court-ordered house-visits, counseling sessions, appearances before the court, or immediate removal of a child from a household. However, in Namira's case, since she was physically safe in the CRB with no immediate danger, the social worker declared her case as non-urgent leading to a referral to a different branch of law enforcement. By the end of the intake session, the mother's disappointment was apparent, and although the office hoped to provide more, the CRB was required to continue their work with the other families in need of more immediate attention, such as a 13-year-old girl in a nearby town with ongoing behavioral issues.

CRB utilized house visits to investigate violations of children's rights. I accompanied staff members on a series of house visits, observing the investigator work with parents and children to identify issues in child protection. These cases typically included mistreatment, neglect from parents, teen pregnancy, drug abuse, or behavioral problems. House visits were typically sanctioned after an intake session, if the staff members and principal investigator at the CRB believed there was an immediate threat to a child's safety or if the case could benefit from further evaluation. Such threats included instances where there was no parental or guardian supervision (neglect), suspicion/evidence of abuse, or strained relations between family members, among many possible scenarios.

During one of the house visits, the investigator and I traveled 50 minutes away to a green and brown brick home surrounded by barren land and dried mud. A young woman named Kendyall, in her 40s, owned the home and lived there with her six kids and several grandchildren. Her youngest daughter of 15 years, named Chevelle, was pregnant at the time. When we arrived, several apparently unrelated men were there, smoking on the patio. As we introduced ourselves and the purpose of the visit, I saw Chevelle peer around the corner with a tummy that extended far beyond her slender build. We came to speak directly with her. A nearby informant made a call to CRB with suspicions of sexual abuse, neglect and drug possession, after witnessing several unidentified adult men regularly enter the house both in Kendyall's presence and absence. Because Chevelle was a minor, these events created suspicion of sexual abuse that possibly resulted in Chevelle's pregnancy. With her mother present, the investigator asked a series of questions to encourage the 15-year-old girl to speak on her own behalf, despite her mother's interjections. The questions included "How are you feeling?", "Do you feel safe?" "Are you seeing a doctor?". Based on their responses, the local investigator provided a series of resources for both ladies to continue their personal health care. As Chevelle often avoided eye-contact, giggled to herself, and kicked the dried mud on the ground, it seemed as if she was either frightened by or unaware of the event's potential severity, being that cases of this nature typically resulted in removal of children from their guardians. Although the investigator initiated a conversation with empathy, she left the scene with even more questions than she began with.

Based on conversations with the local investigator, house visits reflected the process of vernacularization that provided children the opportunity to express their concerns and opinions and participate in decision-making. The local investigator began by stating the purpose of the visit, revisiting the pertinent issue with the parents/guardians and child (if present) in detail to develop an integrated perspective of interfamilial relationships. Practical solutions could then be proposed to maximize benefits for at- risk children. Upon visiting Kendyall and Chevelle, the investigator recommended they both begin visiting the local health clinic regularly to obtain prenatal care and to inquire about contraception. In addition, the investigator cautioned the mother against unfamiliar guests in the home during her absence. Although this may seem like a fleeting suggestion, the recommendation was well received and established a rapport on home security between the local investigator, mother, and daughter.

Although the CRB worked to incorporate children's views and opinions during house visits, it seemed that the visit with Chevelle lacked an opportunity for participation. In a separate case, the investigator visited the home of a 13-year-old girl with severe behavioral issues, where strained relationships with her stepfather and mother escalated to a violent altercation involving a weapon. The CRB chose to regularly follow up with the girl and her family and utilized a combination of both group and individualized counseling sessions to better evaluate dynamics in the home and offer opportunities for self-expression. Because this was an on-going case with the CRB, the investigator had a pre-established rapport with the family. During the visit, the investigator spoke with the young girl alone for 45 minutes with me present and then later invited the parents to join. The individual portion of the visit allowed the young girl to share recent updates in her life and express frustration with school, friends, and parents, and how she believed it related to certain emotional outbursts and inappropriate behavior on her part. The investigator believed it was necessary to create opportunities during visits where children could be vulnerable without input from parents or guardians. A house visit of this nature was different from the one with Chevelle, where she lacked the chance to speak with the investigator alone. Some cases were

premature, while others were habitual check-ins which led to families undergoing current supervision by CRB. The investigator often journeyed to rural districts of Manchester to conduct visits and stayed with families for 45 minutes to an hour. This method helped the CRB gain a comprehensive view of each child's social conditions, which governed future decisions on whether family counseling, weekly office visits, or court appearances would be most appropriate and best benefit the child.

The CRB can also temporarily or permanently remove children from their home, which occurred usually after formal investigation and appearance in court before a presiding judge who determines the best alternative. Typically, cases of suspected abuse or neglect result in immediate removal and faster response rates from the CRB. Residential care facilities (that is, children's homes) are under the jurisdiction of both the national government and regional CRB offices. Some children's homes are independently owned and receive a small government subsidy alongside external funding. Facilities with multiple sources of financial support were considered more stable and successful in comparison to children's homes that relied solely on government funding. Upon changes to custody, the court first considers placing a child with relatives or nearby community members to prioritize familiarity and normative family environments. The CRB would then follow up with regular check-ins and help the child reintegrate with original guardians if appropriate.

Crossing Waters Youth Home, Manchester, Jamaica

Crossing Waters Youth Home is an independently owned residential facility established for children under government care and protection in Manchester, Jamaica. Situated approximately 45 minutes' drive from the CRB, Crossing Waters was intentionally located by the owner in a quaint neighborhood of single and multi-family homes, to reflect relatively traditional family conditions and increase a sense of belonging and comfort. Under the direct supervision of the CRB, Crossing Waters housed 23 children between the ages of 0-8 years. According to the staff, other government facilities suited for older groups (9 years+) were located nearby. Although the age cut- offs may seem arbitrary, they had logistical significance since children were similar heights and weights making sharing clothes, high-chairs, and tables possible. Infants could crawl on the tile floors or lay outside on blankets without the risk of larger children not seeing them amid play. Housing children within a narrow age-range was crucial for the goals, comfort, and logistics of both individual children and the collective group.

Figure 6. Outside of the Crossing Waters home, 2017. Source: Author.

Children at Crossing Waters ate three meals and a snack every day, which consisted of various meats, grains, and fruits in the early mornings, evenings, and afternoons and multivitamins during snack time, particularly for children who left meals unfinished. Mealtimes were not only for nutrition, but helped the caregivers create formative moments of communal gathering and self-expression for the children. Meals were often times for energetic conversations, when kids discussed their food preferences while also listening to important teachings from the caretakers on finishing meals, maintaining good manners, and expressing gratitude through prayer. Together, the children recited the same prayer before each meal, holding hands. Caretakers encouraged children to remain active in mealtime prayers and discussions about their food because it created a comfortable atmosphere and allowed the caregivers to gain a deeper appreciation for each child's

Figure 7. Main street leading up to Crossing Waters, 2017. Source: Author.

mannerisms. For example, one caretaker noted how easily they could predict which kids would accept or reject new foods introduced at mealtime.

Providing meals that reflected natural products grown in Jamaica was an intentional effort of Crossing Waters' manager, who believed it was possible to cultivate affordable and healthy meals through dynamic activities. Nearby farmers invited the children to participate in harvesting from the trees that produced Otaheite apples, allowing each child to pick a few. Upon returning from the session, children enthusiastically snacked on their freshly picked fruits and proudly narrated to their caregivers the lesson they received from harvesters on how to appropriately pick the apples, the best temperatures for growth, and more. The children were provided with small brown bags to harvest extra apples that were served the following day during breakfast.

Crossing Waters adopted individualized approaches to their care practices by fostering spaces where children bonded with each other and their caretakers, in the context of hygienic needs and sleeping conditions. Every child received a daily bath from one of the caretakers

Figure 8. Crossing Waters dining room, 2017. Source: Author.

after lunch or in the evening. Hair-washing took place every other day for boys, while girls followed a different hair maintenance schedule. Caregivers braided young girls' hair every two weeks into dynamic protective styles specific to individual needs and hair texture. As one caregiver braided one child's hair at a time, all the young girls crowded the area – sitting together on benches and the floor nearby, talking, laughing, rummaging through books, sharing stories and exclaiming their style preferences. After each hairstyle was completed, the girls stared at their reflection in hand-held mirrors as their peers excitedly caressed each other's new styles. This streamlined process was more than just for hygiene: the caregivers believed these sessions allowed children to establish a baseline of self-expression through an appreciation for their hair by offering them the choice of styles. Caregivers formed these sessions with the intention of creating intimacy and kinship with and among the young girls, providing collective moments for bonding. As hair braiding is often shared between mothers and daughters in normative family conditions, caregivers did not want the children at Crossing Waters to lack proximity to parental figures or elements of traditional childhood experiences they believed were culturally salient, which could also strengthen communication and relationships between children and staff.

The central living spaces, bedrooms, and kitchen at Crossing Waters were cleaned by the caretakers daily to keep the home at a baseline standard of cleanliness for activities such as

naptime. During naptime, children slept in their individual cribs or beds (Figures 9 and 10) that were either stacked or placed adjacently. I often observed the kids giggling with one another and jumping between mattresses during designated naptime. Although the placement of the cribs made it difficult for children to settle down after an afternoon of activities, these sleeping arrangements expanded the opportunities for interaction and engagement between children. The light-hearted conversations and belly-aching laughter that filled the corridors cultivated a space where voices of children were centered, serving as a testament to the grassroots mission of the home.

Children's health and medical needs were provided for in ways that reinforced participation. The manager of Crossing Waters regularly brought medical professionals and staff directly to the home for health visits. I witnessed one afternoon when two health providers arrived at Crossing Waters with large first-aid kits. They unpacked sterile medical equipment to create a make-shift station in the center of the living room to vaccinate all 23 children. As the children were summoned to the station from the back corridor, some were intrigued by the contents on the table, others fearful, and a few unfazed by the strangers until seated. Each child was asked whether they preferred to sit in the chair alone or in a caregiver's lap, facing away from the medical equipment. Some confidently chose to take the seat alone, while others basked in the familiarity and protection of a guardian. I observed the caretakers at Crossing Waters hold, caress, and distract children from the pain of vaccines, alleviating fears and offering the sort of reassurance that all children inalienably deserve, especially during simple yet formative moments of childhood like doctor's visits. The ones who chose to sit alone endured the painful vaccination, but quickly turned to the solace of Crossing Waters staff. These small actions cultivated a space where the global and fundamental doctrines of human rights healthcare were united with the socially relevant goals of Crossing Waters. The background of each child varied, some lacking exposure to medical services. The manager suggested conducting appointments in a comfortable and familiar space so children did not have to confront fear and uncertainty alone, and instead could actively choose how to face such moments with designated support.

Figure 9. One of the common set-ups for sleeping. 2017. Source: Author.

Figure 10. Another example of the common sleeping arrangements. 2017. Source: Author.

> *By 8:55 AM, children were scattered around the living room talking, pretending to read books, and entertaining themselves before the day fully started. The main caretaker for the day simply yelled "Outside!" and all 23 children cheered because they knew the exact meaning. One older child struggled to drag a large green and grey rucksack, nearly double her size, across the floor into the middle of the living room and began to unleash its contents: shoes. Pink, yellow, red, burgundy, green, shoes of several types – flip-flops, sneakers, sandals, crocs, and more. Some nicer*

looking than others, but most worn with creases and dirt stains, were strewn across the floor. As the caretaker began helping to empty the bag , the children ran over with excitement, playfully pushing and shoving one another to grab a hold of their pair. Although no assigned names or initials were written on the shoes, everyone knew which pair belonged to whom, and often helped each other by stating "I found yours!" or "Here you go!" before even locating their own. The children knew this routine and proceeded to open the gate for playtime in the outside courtyard. Toys outside included coloring books, cars, swings, miniature playground sets, bubbles, and baby-dolls, and many of the kids gravitated towards the same activities each morning, singing along to a CD playing Christian tunes like "Jesus Loves You " on a loop as they colored in their books or ran around the courtyard.

As this field note suggests, morning activities were familiar, structured, and almost predictable. Although some children fought and cried over similar games, others peacefully enjoyed their time with new ones that caught their attention. Implementing and maintaining structure for 23 children is what the staff of Crossing Waters believed was necessary to uphold basic rights of children brought into their care and protection. Creating a consistent eating, sleeping, and playing schedule in the home required the staff to have a deep understanding of balancing basic needs. For example, meals were administered daily at 8AM (breakfast), 10AM (snack), and 11:30AM (lunch). Prior to eating, children stood in single file outside the bathroom and waited for their turn to wash their hands and then proceeded to the dining table. Once seated, all the children said a short prayer over the food in unison with their eyes closed, hands folded, and elbows off the table.

As caretakers were most influential for implementing practical structure into the home, they also believed it was vital to incorporate consistent strategies to encourage participation, particularly through discipline while eating and playing. For example, if children engaged in disruptive or inappropriate behavior, such as leaving the line to wash hands, discarding food to the floor, or excessively arguing over toys, caretakers reprimanded children in a manner that encouraged reflection and age-appropriate discussion. Reprimands often included placing the children in "time-out," where they were sent to their respective beds or common spaces for the remainder of a recreational activity. During those periods, caretakers occasionally revisited the child, and asked questions like "Do you understand why you are in trouble?" or "Why are you ready to leave time-out?" These conversations were usually with the children 4 years and older, and often staggered throughout the "punishment" period. Caretakers admitted that it was particularly difficult to hold such discussions with the children; however, once kids were able to achieve their "calmness" by responding to the inquiries, reintegration to the afternoon activities was permitted. Amid tears, temper tantrums, and flailing bodies to the floor, structuring these punishments was not simply to regulate behavior, but also to bridge connections between caretakers and children. Ultimately, the goal was that by the end of punishment, each child should demonstrate, either verbally or through gestures, why they were ready to continue with the day's normal activities. Caregivers approached modes of punishment with a similar framework but adapted the conversations to fit the temperament and needs of the individual – some kids were more readily able to explain their frustrations providing testaments such as "X hit me and I was sad," while others sat in in silence until the punishment was over despite questioning. If a child's behavior was not necessarily due to a rule violation, but due to excessive frustration during games or snack time, caretakers provided consolation by either holding the child or rocking them to ease.

Outside of maintaining structure through disciplinary measures, the caretakers prioritized recreational activity as means for child participation. There was an intentional effort by the staff to structure playtime and recreation throughout certain points of the day and outside the normative schedules. For example,

beach days and water games were some of the children's favorite activities, alongside building sandcastles and playing in inflatable pools, where they gathered amongst themselves and with caregivers. Other activities involved Vacation Bible School, special days for painting nails, and large inflatable bouncy houses that the manager rented on occasions. Vacation Bible school was considered one of the most important recreational activities to the Crossing Water staff – it encouraged the children to learn various biblical stories, which was reinforced with prayer times before meals and biblical CD tracks played during daily activities in the courtyard. Children enjoyed retelling their versions of bible stories and hearing the same songs on the audio during play time. The staff attempted to create a sanctuary for the children, making activities predictable but also engaging, to promote creativity, interaction , and leisure . Within a four-week period, caregivers, managers, and facilitators of the Crossing Waters demonstrated their commitments and understanding of physical activity and a wide range of play is an inalienable right referenced in Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF): Children at various stages of development at Crossing Waters, and in any context, should be provided with the opportunity to enable carefree, positive interaction with caregivers, peers , and other facilitators of their wellbeing. In addition, activities that deviated from the scheduled "playtime" allowed the children to engage in more diverse movement and action appropriate for their ages and enact their very basic right of experiencing the joy and pleasure of childhood.

Structuring discipline, recreation, and basic provisional needs, according to staff, was foundational for children under their protection. Because children at Crossing Waters lived in atypical conditions, sharing rooms and meals with over 20 other children, the structure set a precedent for behavior. It enabled children to develop an understanding of appropriate boundaries, differences between right and wrong, especially when interacting with other children at their age. In interviews, the manager expressed awareness of how much change each child had undergone both before and upon arrival to the Crossing Waters. This included moving houses, removal from the custody of parents or guardians, restricted family visits, and witnessing their peers who resided in the home depart unexpectedly for family reintegration. Thus, her hope was to limit the impact of instability and emotionally distressing events by providing certainty and security through consistent relationships with caretakers and offering diverse activities throughout the day to reinforce elements of childhood experience that she believed were likely absent from previous living conditions. These provisions could then result in improved communication and relationships between children and staff to facilitate opportunities for participation.

Unpacking the Final Key

It is a complex matter to address the social needs and rights of children under government care and protection while taking account of community- specific needs and translating universal rights into locally relevant practices. My ethnographic methodology, featuring observations and in-depth interviews, evaluated practices used by the Children's Rights Bureau and Crossing Waters children's home to address abuse, neglect, and mistreatment of children systematically and empathetically in Manchester, Jamaica, while encompassing the fundamental goals of the United Nations CRC. Human rights in practice reflects vernacularization, a process of translating global human rights theory by local institutions to remain both practical and socially relevant to national and community contexts (Merry 2006).

The CRB emphasized the importance of participation rights into the facility itself by strategically situating posters in the local office and by allowing children to testify during intake processes. House visits conducted by social workers, field investigators, and children's officers allowed children to incorporate their views concerning personal and family conditions while in their own home. This promoted constructive conversation not only between government officials, but also between parents and their children to increase transparency where it was lacking. Providing opportunities for young people to participate in

legal proceedings and disclose personal views was meant to reduce exclusion from matters that typically centered adults, counteract anxiety and distress from adverse childhood experiences, and increase willingness to personally and independently report cases of maltreatment to justice programs , especially if parents/guardians were the source of brutalization. The CRB demonstrated a commitment to understanding children's participation and the ways it was affected by parents, by organizing community outreach presentations, workshops, and projects in local schools that contextualized the role of human rights practice in daily life. During workshop sessions, some parents admitted having trouble communicating with their children and initiating discipline that was constructive, rather than destructive to the relationship with their middle -school aged children. CRB offered suggestions, such as engaging with children during their favorite activities to mend fractured relationships, reinforcing positive behaviors in children through verbal affirmation, or committing to open communication to encourage dialogue amid power dynamics. These were strategies many parents found were absent from their daily routines but were willing to try to promote healthy relationships and to ensure children felt prioritized.

Examining the CRB's role within intake sessions, workshops, and investigatory measures, it was clear the organization paid close attention to the role of parents in the participation of their children. Current challenges and tensions in participation rights theory suggest that if parents are unwilling to acknowledge power dynamics or to create shared spaces of authority with children (McMellon and Tidsall 2020), opportunities for participation will cease and adult agendas will remain at the forefront of child care and development. Often, it is easy to confine parenting and guardianship to "providing and protecting," and thus, child rights become coupled to conventional belief systems that characterize children as vulnerable or submissive in exchange for these resources. Thus, the CRB narrated clearly to parents that participation should exist as an integral part of care, in order to decrease rates of human rights negligence. Regularly engaging with the community helped expand social conceptualizations and understandings of a child's role in the home, while providing supportive resources to diversify human rights strategies for care and modes in parenthood that uplift children.

Vernacularizing human rights in government based residential facilities required a distinct approach, as these institutions provided sanctuary and safety for childhood victims of abuse and abandonment. Because many children in the youth home experienced brutalization, Crossing Waters established a suburban residence with little to no exposure to the main city. Drawing on social learning theories, this intentional barrier could be interpreted as an effort for resocialization – to create physical boundaries between the surrounding environment to decrease the likelihood of developing maladaptive behaviors as a result of emotionally distressing vectors (Leff 2009). The staff at Crossing Waters maintained provisional rights of children , which included but were not limited to food, nutrition, hygiene, and healthcare. By implementing a structured environment within a home of 20+ children, especially through meals, leisure, and surprise activities, caretakers, managers, and employees of the facility demonstrated their ability to protect and provide – a similar role and function occupied by traditional guardians as we commonly see in human rights narrative.

However, vernacularizing participation within the foundations of human rights is only possible through "those who translate the discourses" of international human rights into sustainable norms that directly impact the community (Merry 2006, 39). In Manchester, Jamaica, translating these macro-level principles of human rights to micro-level processes relied on both caretakers, who developed rich and sincere relationships with the children at Crossing Waters, and staff members at the CRB staff with extensive experience in the development of children's human rights policy. Because caretakers knew the daily behaviors and temperaments of children – such as preferred foods, favorite games and hairstyles – their attention to detail optimized the provided care and general wellbeing of children in the home. Caretakers functioned as translators for

participation rights by facilitating structured time for leisure, recreation, and creativity in the groups. For example, when caretakers braided hair styles that were chosen by each child and complemented individual hair length and texture , they nurtured a space for young girls to develop confidence in their appearance . In addition, encouraging children to select shoes and assist one another, offering support during medical visits, and creating dialogue during discipline reflected opportunities to execute autonomy even in the most ordinary moments.

Because the Crossing Waters staff nurtured rich relationships with the children through the administration of both protective and provisional rights, these heartfelt and sincere dynamics improved communication and strengthened opportunities for children to execute participatory rights in an age-appropriate manner. Human rights staff and caretakers were cognizant and sensitive to the backgrounds of each child, being that most came from homes of low socioeconomic status. Current challenges in participation rights suggest that children who have experienced poverty typically have fewer resources and unequal opportunities to embrace participation (Leff 2009). Thus, caretakers utilized their understanding of the social context and childhood realities in Manchester to establish a home where foundational elements of participation rights, which were possibly missing from previous conditions, instead were fostered under the care and protection of the state. I argue that from immersive opportunities to participate in legal proceedings to simple discussion that encouraged play time and leisure, the "translators" of Crossing Waters and the CRB worked to subtly equip children who were victims of brutalization with skills of independence, self-advocacy, and understandings of self-esteem that would help them on the path toward a bright future.

Conclusion

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child framework to preserve the protection, provision, and participation rights of children remains foundational. Expanding the discourse on participation rights helps deconstruct our conventional perceptions that paint children as incompetent or inferior. More specifically, vernacularizing participation rights for a subset of children who have endured maltreatment, abuse, and harm is only made possible through the work of those committed to child advocacy within their own context. Thus, as human rights guidelines continue to transform into culturally competent practices, it is important to recognize and honor the actors and initiatives that contribute to individualized care. This ethnographic study demonstrates how key institutions uphold children's rights through their labor, diligence, and relationship-building. Their work remains the key to vernacular translation.

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"Black Students Do the Real Work!": Maintaining Mental Health Among Black College Students at UCLA

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ABSTRACT

Black college students deal with academic and racial stressors due to the racism they experience at Predominantly White Institutions (PWI). Mental health care resources are universally available at UCLA; however, Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), the primary resource, is a mental health hub for 33,000+ students at UCLA. In this study, I explore how Black college students at UCLA view CAPS and utilize Black-run campus organizations to create their own "safe space." Through a mixed-methods approach, I found that Black students do not utilize counseling resources because they are unwelcoming and there is a lack of culturally trained psychologists or Black psychologists available to discuss the imposter syndrome, microaggressions, and racism Black students experience. As a result, Black students take on the role of community organizers. Through the creation and maintenance of the Afrikan Student Union and other Black-run campus organizations, Black students create safe spaces for themselves and provide race-based resources to maintain retention within their community.

Keywords: mental health; Black college students; UCLA; Counseling and Psychological Services

Scholars within the social sciences have found that Black college students face numerous difficult challenges when attending predominantly white institutions (PWI). Kim Stansbury, a professor of Social Work who studies mental health literacy, support groups, and the effects of social environments on Black communities, has identified Black college students as a group "at an elevated risk for depression due to racism, stress, sleep deprivation, and lack of academic and social support" (Stansbury et al. 2011, 497). Once Black students enter a PWI, they are immediately burdened with academic and racial stressors that temporarily bars them from academic success (Griffith et al. 2019). Compared to the majority of white students, they experience additional stress because of the prejudices they face as a marginalized group (CCP 2020). Black students who attend PWIs simultaneously experience hyper-visibility, invisibility, lack of belonging, and depression to name just a few issues. Altogether these stressors result in an unconducive environment that prevents Black students from feeling a sense of belonging in the general college community.

In the context of my research project, I have found that Black college students do not utilize counseling resources on university campuses because they are unwelcoming. Black students often find that the psychological services on campus do not offer a satisfactory safe space to discuss academic and racial stressors. As a result, given that the University fails in being the primary provider of psychological resources, Black students are forced to take steps to create their own *inhabitable spaces of welcome* (Willen 2014) to maintain their mental health and well-being.

While UCLA has long sought to provide mental health assistance to its student body, it has only recently started developing programs addressing the psychological challenges faced by Black students. This was achieved mainly through the labor of Black students on campus. Through membership in various Black organizations on campus like the Afrikan Student Union (ASU), Black students can receive positive racial messages and experience the community support and sense of belonging for which they look. Thus, it is thanks to Black social networks on campus that Black students can excel academically, socially, and mentally (Griffith et al. 2019; Mushonga 2020). In this paper, I address four themes that have been consistent throughout my data collection. They are (1) fitting in, standing out, and the in-between, (2) counseling and psychological services vs. looking for communal support, (3) inhabitable spaces of welcome, and (4) the double-edged sword of advocacy and its burden. These four themes illustrate the diversity of the experiences of the Black student community and the ways they address the racial stressors encountered throughout their academic journey by continuously attempting to create and maintain safe spaces for themselves. By looking at their diversity, I complicate the concept of "safe space" by foregrounding the multiple ways in which Black students are existentially able or unable to always inhabit such "safe spaces" depending upon their positionality (i.e. their racial composition, gender, sexuality, etc.).

Mental Health in the Black Community

Black students experience a multitude of stressors that influence the way they navigate a PWI like UCLA. These stressors are often race-related and affect the way in which they view the mental health care services provided on campus. Although Black college students experience a variety of racial stressors that often lead to depression and anxiety, many do not seek support from their university. Black college students are less likely to seek mental health services compared to White college students and are prone to seek help from clergy, non-mental health professionals, family, and friends (Barksdale & Molock 2008). Black

college students' perceptions of mental health care are affected by cultural and familial norms regarding help-seeking.

Kevin Foster is an educational anthropologist interested in improving academic outcomes for Black students at the University of Texas in Austin. He admits that "less often acknowledged is the diversity of perspectives and experiences among Black students on any given campus" (Foster 2005, 34). Black students are a diverse group that is the sum of different backgrounds and experiences which should be acknowledged in the spaces they enter. As a community that makes up 4% of the student population at UCLA, Black students are at a disadvantage and are treated as such when they enter the classroom. They are constantly reminded of this fact when they enter a lecture hall and see that there are very few of them in bigger or smaller classes. Some Black college students experience *imposter syndrome* and believe that they do not belong at a PWI due to their marginalized identity. Coined by clinical psychologists, Pauline Clance and Suzanne Imes in 1970, imposter syndrome is "feeling fraudulent, inadequate, and incompetent among peers" (Plaskett et al. 2018). Clance and Imes first studied imposter syndrome with high-achieving women who felt inadequate despite the accomplishments they had (Robinson 2017). Since then, this mental health phenomenon has been studied among different marginalized groups or persons faced with competitive new environments from which they were previously excluded.

Researchers have highlighted how institutions in the U.S. reproduce racial bias in the medical treatment of people of color. For example, psychological and medical anthropologist Neely Myers has focused on how people overcome mental health crises in the U.S. In her work with institutionalized Black men, Meyers recognized that Black men are three times more likely to experience clinical bias when diagnosed with psychosis (Meyers 2016). Additionally, she highlights that clinical bias plays a central role in shaping the experience of the social defeat of Black men receiving treatment at such institutions. Race affects the way a Black person receives treatment and copes with their mental illness. Meyers proposes "autobiographical power" as an alternative approach that has successfully improved the treatment and experiences of Black men in medical institutions. Autobiographical power is the ability to identify yourself in your narrative and tell your story without outside influence (Meyers 2016). This framework has improved the experiences of Black men within medical institutions. Rather than viewing themselves as "sick," they are able to share their narratives and empower themselves by becoming active protagonists in them. Taking control of their narratives and their lives is fundamental in shaping the recovery journey required of such individuals. The negative stigmas surrounding mental health often leave Black people with the idea that they will be called "crazy" or "sick" if they pursue mental health care. This is often also true in the way Black college students view mental health care and how they experience the resources the university offers.

Autobiographical power is a helpful framework to explain Black college students' attempts to construct safe spaces free of racial conflict or tension that are racial affirming. At UCLA, examples of such spaces for Black college students are the African American Studies department, the Afrikan Student Union, the Afrikan Diaspora residential community, and recently, the Black Community Center. These social spaces have a strong emphasis on community and advocacy, especially when encountering harsh political climates. Jennifer Nájera, an Associate Professor and Department Chair of Ethnic Studies at the University of California, Riverside, mentions that there is a third space dedicated to the politicization of Black college students that is faithful to organizing "civic engagement and advocacy on behalf of the [migrant] community" (Nájera 2020, 2). Although her work is dedicated to the Latinx undocumented community, it aligns with Black students' resilience in creating spaces where they can identify as themselves with full autobiographical power. Safe spaces are created to align with the identities of Black students as they continue to navigate predominantly white spaces. They are a space free from judgment that fosters growth as a community and at an individual level.

Despite the availability of mental health services on the UCLA campus, do Black college students experience discomfort when participating in these services due to racial or cultural mismatch? The "Diversity of Psychology Workforce," an article published by the American Psychological Association (APA), states that in 2015, 4% of all psychologists in the United States were Black and 86% were white (Lin 2018). White therapists often lack the cultural understanding of the challenges faced by Black students which are cause for mistrust and a lack of commitment to mental health care in the community. William M. Banks, an educational anthropologist, has stressed that school counselors must be knowledgeable about Black culture to serve Black students (Banks 1978). This ties back to the statement Foster made when understanding that the Black experience is not homogenous. The lack of understanding warrants various coping mechanisms among Black college students that do not always include mental health care. Banks further concludes that the purpose of school counselors is to help students adjust to their environment while considering the influence their cultural background has on their behavior. He furthers this conclusion by stating that "ethnic minority counselees perceive minority counselors as being more similar to themselves" (Banks 1978, 144). The availability of Black psychologists creates safe spaces for Black students to share their experiences that will guarantee them validation as they navigate foreign environments. The main purpose of having Black psychologists available for Black students is to create a safe, therapeutic space of shared cultural experience without any judgment. When this is not available, Black students often do not feel welcomed or safe when seeking mental health care. Banks mentions that "ethnic minorities received a lesser quality of service from ethnically dissimilar counselors" (Banks 1978, 145). The poor quality of mental health services can be a final straw from seeking mental health care because, on top of negative stigmas and race-related stressors, a Black student can experience invalidation.

Racial stressors stop Black students from seeking mental health services because Black students are focusing on dispelling stereotypes that limit other people's perceptions of Black college students as a whole. Aisha Griffith is an educational psychologist who focuses on supportive relationships between adolescents and non-parental adults. She conducted a study to interpret Black college students' experiences at PWIs and race-related stressors that develop their coping responses. Black college students experience psychological distress when they enter spaces where there is a limited amount of them in class. Additionally, Black college students endure discrimination, microaggressions, imposter syndrome, and isolation when they are the minority, which is the case in most spaces at UCLA. This becomes emotionally taxing as Black college students work harder to not only prove themselves in predominantly White spaces but to represent all Black people. Griffith et al. emphasizes that "while race-related stressors have been found to negatively affect academic performance, research on Black students in science, technology, engineering, and math fields suggests those who persist cope with race-related stress by working harder to disprove or circumvent stereotypes" (Griffith et al. 2019, 117). Mental health does not become a priority for these students. Therefore, mental health services unconsciously become inaccessible because Black college students are attempting to take advantage of the opportunity structures that they need in order to excel academically in preparation for their future. In pursuit of academic success, Black college students develop coping responses that include self-concealment, talking about their experiences with other people, and developing behavior strategies such as working twice as hard as the average white student to disprove stereotypes (Griffith et al. 2019). Furthermore, Black college students enlist Black mentors for support because they "are more experienced and knowledgeable than peers; and emerging adults can seek their advice without the same threats to autonomy present when seeking advice from parents" (Griffith et al. 2019, 117). Black mentors hold familial relationships, are peer and academic advisors, former residents, and neighbors to Black mentees (Griffith et al. 2019). Having a shared experience with their mentors diminishes the racial distress Black college students experience when actively

participating in spaces not made for them. Mentors become unofficial psychologists since they share a similar race which removes the fear of judgment based on race stereotyping and they can provide advice that showcases the support they have for Black college students.

While the main focus of this research is to understand the effects of academic, social, and race-related stressors, it is also important to consider how Black college students combat such stressors in order to succeed academically and socially. Earlier, I mentioned the importance of safe spaces for Black students to practice autobiographical power. These spaces are integral in the Black college experience because Black students are often in spaces that make their academic and social journey difficult. Safe spaces are spaces that all Black students are welcome to enter. *Inhabitable spaces of welcome,* a term coined by Sarah Willen, refers to a "small zone of familiarity, comfort, meaning, and safety in the shadow of laws, policies, and practices explicitly designed to make people—in this case, unauthorized migrants—feel unwelcome" (Willen 2014, 86). Sarah Willen stresses how migrants construct such spaces for themselves to sustain their existential imperatives despite the abjection they experience in their everyday lives.

Similarly, I argue that Black students at UCLA construct inhabitable spaces of welcome where they are able to satisfy their existential imperatives of belonging to the UCLA community. Belonging plays a central role in how Black students are able to process the imposter syndrome, racism, and mental illness they experience on campus and how they are able to discuss it with their peers.

Methods

This project focuses on Black college students at UCLA and their perceptions of mental health services on campus as they experience stigmas, stereotypes, and other race-related stressors. I employed a mixed-methods approach that included participant observation, surveys, and interviews to provide a more in-depth response to the research questions. This study sought Black or African-American undergraduate students who currently make up 4% of the total UCLA undergraduate population.

Participant observation took place at four events. The first event was the Black and Blue Mental Health Project hosted by UCLA Residential Life. This event was specifically for Black college students and had many resources present to share what the Bruin Resource Center, LGBTQ+ Center, CAPS, ASU, and the Academic Supports Program (ASP) offer. The second event was the UCLA Town Hall Meeting with the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor regarding the creation of the Black Resource Center and the steps the university will be taking to provide more support for Black college students. The third was the Black Resource Center Focus Group which provided a space for Black students to share what they wanted to see in a center dedicated to their needs and wants. Last, Conversations with Dr. Green, the Executive Director of CAPS. This event focused on the responsibilities of CAPS, funding, and what is currently being done to continue to support the mental health of college students. All events were public, and the target audience was Black college students.

In addition to participant observation, surveys were disseminated via social media (e.g. Instagram, Twitter, and GroupMe) and convenience sampling was used to obtain a dataset consisting of 84 responses from Black undergraduate students. The survey responses served as a tool to recruit interview participants. 81% of Black students who responded to this survey identified as female and 18% identified as male. In terms of academic breakdowns: 8% are freshmen, 14% are sophomores, 37% are juniors/first-year transfers, 39% are seniors/second-year transfers, and 1% are fifth-year students. Nine Black students were randomly chosen for an interview from the surveyed participant pool. They were given pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality. This was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Three participants have graduated, four are currently enrolled as seniors, and two as juniors. Recruited participants were asked in-depth questions relating to their survey responses via Zoom. The director of CAPS was also interviewed, given her experience as a former UCLA student and her expertise as Executive Director of mental health services directed to students.

Fitting In, Standing Out, and the In-Between

In his paper titled, "The Politicalization of Black Students," James Pitts (1975, 283) discusses the integration of Black students at Northwestern University, a PWI. He points out that "this nascent group [Black students], not simply individuals, became politicalized in their attempts to cope with the campus environment." Black students enter a PWI feeling isolated and have difficulty using their past experiences to negotiate their identity with the university climate. Pitts argues that this occurs because Black students come from a background of similar socio-economic status unlike their White peers (Pitts 1975). This, on one hand, allows Black students to celebrate one another and share similarities in their upbringing, but, on the other hand, this makes it difficult for them to acclimate to the university. Feeling a sense of belonging on campus is an integral part of the college experience. In their research article, "Minority-Related Stressors and Coping Processes Among African American College Students," Tawanda M. Greer and Kathleen Chwalisz discuss the person-environment incongruence Black students experience at PWIs. As a result, Black students experience emotional, psychological, social, and academic disadvantages. A change of environment that introduces race-related stressors impacts the psychological and emotional welfare of Black students as they find ways to navigate an environment where they are the minority and therefore, can hinder their academic performance. I found a similar pattern at UCLA with several Black students that I surveyed and interviewed.

Leanne Stevenson is currently a senior at UCLA majoring in sociology and double minoring in African American Studies and History. Leanne struggled with her academics. Before her current major and minor, she was in a major she did not like and did not know a lot of Black students on campus with whom she might build camaraderie. The feeling of isolation, imposter syndrome, and anxiety was internalized, therefore, affecting the way Leanne viewed herself as a Black student. She explained her struggles as a Black woman and a student on campus:

> My first year I felt like I didn't belong and then when I was struggling with my mental health my second year, I thought 'should I transfer to my community college and then come back or like what should I do?' It was just a lot, and I was like, I don't know if I made the right decision, or I don't know.
>
> I was definitely struggling from imposter syndrome. Um, and then obviously looking around and not seeing a lot of students that looked like me or getting, you know, funny faces or, you know, seeing certain remarks on the internet from people I know or in regards to Black students or overall students of color on campus. I was really disheartened. At the end of the day, no matter where I go or transfer to, I'm still gonna be a Black woman in America.

Leanne's experience with imposter syndrome and navigating the campus as a Black woman is a result of her internalizing racial stigmas projected onto her. These racial stigmas affect the ways Leanne tried to fit into the university climate and seek belonging with her peers, but her race and gender disrupted that. Her identity as a Black woman did not allow her to navigate the campus as a regular student. Her Blackness is hyper-visible to racial criticism and tokenism while it is also invisible and open to dehumanization.

University campuses are a microcosm of the wider world. Just like the real world, racism exists on college campuses and prevents Black students from solely identifying as students. When Black students enter a PWI, their racial identity is challenged because they are outside what they may have once considered their norm, and now are forced to reconstruct their racial identity. Black students have a double consciousness that works extensively on college campuses as they struggle to forge their identity in non-Black spaces. W. E. B. Du Bois defines double consciousness as a psychological struggle with Black identity where Black people see themselves through the racial stereotypes projected onto them by society (Du Bois 1903). On PWI campuses, Black students experience a double consciousness that targets

their identity as a Black individual and a student. Both identities create an overwhelming burden that affects their academic and social life. Upon arrival, Black students experience culture shock, anxiety, and depression but on top of that, they experience "racism, discrimination, undereducation, and acculturation" that feeds into the imposter syndrome they embody (Mushonga 2020, 1). The overwhelming identity as a Black student begins its effect when Black students enter a lecture hall where they are one of few Black students present in a room where other racial groups are more represented. The visual representation in the lecture hall, and now Zoom, acknowledges the hidden expectations of the university and the explicit expectation from the Black community.

Another Black student interviewed, Isaiah Jones from Fontana, California, fourth-year Biology major and African American Studies minor recalls his academic journey:

> I had a group of Black people I knew but a lot of them were in the same boat. We're all just First-generation, low-income students so we're all just trying to pull resources the best way we can together and make the best of it. So sometimes I sit here and think, 'dang, if we had an equal playing field, how far would we really go?' Because I think about how far we came with living on less than the average student. If they really nurtured and funded our education, how far would I really go? We do what we could without help and our own intuition.

Black students are not expected to succeed and that is shown by the lack of adequate support and resources from the university while they represent the Black community in unchartered territory. Double consciousness addresses Black students' struggle to maintain a positive image of themselves while navigating negative perspectives from their White peers. They begin to see themselves as racially excluded from a university that was not made for them. As students like Leanne and Isaiah enter UCLA, they become more aware of their Blackness which forces them to self-monitor themselves in their day-to-day lives on campus. As the saying goes, "you gotta work twice as hard to get half as much" to maintain retention and even sanity.

While struggling to find resources that cater to the needs of Black students, Isaiah Jones found ways to fit in. Isaiah found that support through the UCLA Black community and the Black fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha:

> I really gained a lot of social confidence once I joined my fraternity. So when I joined that, it allowed more confidence about being a Black man and being a Black student leader and just still using my senior year to influence more Black students.

Isaiah found a place where his Blackness was not ridiculed but appreciated. His fraternity instilled the confidence he needed to be visible in his community. Instead of standing out and being isolated, he found a space where his identity as a Black man became a vehicle for uplifting his community and lone students who walk similar paths. Although Isaiah found comfort with his peers, it is not always easy for other students.

While identity is a negotiation, that negotiation is not always simple and clear-cut. There is an in-between struggle between fitting in and standing out that affects how Black students see themselves in their community and outside their community. This in-between struggle emphasizes the struggle of double consciousness among Black students whose Blackness is not necessarily a one-and-done category. There are categories within Blackness that can overshadow being Black. David Crowder, a fourth-year majoring in Labor Studies mentioned his experience with being Queer and being Black:

> The Black students on campus go through a lot more race-related stress but I feel like I went through sexuality and gender stress. I identify as a cisgender queer male, but I don't really go through racism the same way Black people go through racism. When you're queer, it eliminates from maleness and Blackness because it goes hand in hand,

> so I don't think it was hard to be a Black man at UCLA, I had y'all [his friends]. But what I think was hard is being a queer student because I didn't have nobody but a few friends. I think being a Black student was easy. But I feel like my queerness made other nationalities see me as more approachable and more palatable.

Another student, Ariana Roberston, who is currently a sophomore with a major in Economics and minor in Spanish Linguistics, highlights a similar experience but as a biracial woman.

> I wasn't raised with Black culture as much as other people. And I think I've seen it with other people, especially biracial Black people. I find them not being as active in ASU [Afrikan Student Union] especially, you know, the jokes about the "White mom, Black dad." I feel like people tend to stray away from ASU and Black orgs because it kinda centers around Black culture. And if you've never been around that, being around Black people can be overwhelming and suddenly you're questioning your Blackness.

Both David and Ariana inhabit an in-between identity. While attempting to fit in, they still stood out. David's racial, gender, and sexual identity was visible and invisible in different spaces. When he was with the Black community, he was seen as a cisgender Black man. But when he was with other communities, he was seen as a queer man. While his Blackness does still put him at the forefront of racism, his gender and sexuality sets him apart and provides him with a different experience. This double consciousness he was experiencing was a psychological struggle between his sexual and gender identity and how others viewed him. His Blackness became emasculated by his sexuality because his sexuality affected how he was viewed by other people and how he navigated those spaces. His identities were situationally based on the spaces he occupied and the spaces where he found belonging. In spaces where he found belonging, his Black queer identity was externally legitimized by his peers and did not need validation to justify his existence because all of him was accepted. But when David said, "*my queerness made other nationalities see me as more approachable and more palatable*" it speaks to the idea that identity is a performance that situates an individual in the in-between. David was isolated and rendered invisible because only parts of his identity were acceptable. This forced him to internalize the negative perception he was receiving about himself. It made it difficult for him to seek belonging the same way cisgender heterosexual Black students sought belonging.

Ariana, on the other hand, is a biracial woman. Her in-betweenness is placed between being Black and White. Oftentimes, biracial individuals are characterized as not being Black enough, and, sometimes, they are forced to choose one side. You are either Black or you are White. Ariana mentions having a space where she feels safe which is with other Black students but because she has a White mother and was not immersed in Black culture growing up, she questions her Blackness by asking herself, "where do I belong?"

Both experiences speak to how Blackness is not a monolithic experience and there are other ways in which Black students can feel a disconnect with their racial identity that are not perpetrated by the university. There is much more to being Black that affects how students navigate the university and try to find safe spaces where they fit in instead of standing out. Both Ariana and David's experiences speak to how marginalized identities can still be marginalized within a marginalized community. Kimberlè Crenshaw coined the term "intersectionality" to describe how identities like race, class, gender, and sexuality intersect with one another (Coasten 2019). Therefore, highlighting how people with different identities experience discrimination. The discussion surrounding intersectionality first started to illuminate the oppression Black women experience in America. But now this discussion has expanded to include identities that place people within in-between spaces where they are both visible and invisible. This forces people to check their privilege and acknowledge the way they take up space forcing out individuals with little-to-no power out of the conversation.

Ariana and David did not experience discrimination per se, but a loss of power when they entered Black spaces that did not acknowledge their biracial and queer identities. Crenshaw explains that "intersectionality is a theory for addressing identity and power as broad and systemic (Stenberg and Hogg 2020)." Which speaks to how Ariana and David felt when they entered Black designated spaces that were not always welcoming to everyone within the Black community. They lost some power in these spaces and were rendered invisible because they did not fit the ideal image of a Black student, which the majority of Black students do. In conclusion, there will always be Black students who fit in or stand out which affects how they navigate their racial identity but also how they navigate UCLA and Black designated spaces.

Counseling and Psychological Services vs. Looking for Community

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) is UCLA's primary mental health resource on campus for undergraduate and graduate students. The services they offer are crisis counseling, individual counseling and psychotherapy, group therapy, psychiatric evaluation and treatment, psycho-educational programs, and workshops for students, staff, and faculty. According to the Executive Director of CAPS, some of the typical issues students experience are anxiety, stress management, trauma, and depression. On top of the typical mental health issues experienced by students, Black students seek help for the racial oppression they experience on campus.

In a survey I distributed in the Black undergraduate community, Black students were asked if they had ever been to CAPS. 55% responded yes, while the other 45% responded no. Leanne was among the 55% who have gone to CAPS. When Leanne visited CAPS, she first felt welcomed by the environment. Her therapist was White, but she acknowledges that maybe if her therapist was Black, she would have had a different experience. One thing Leanne noticed when she attended her appointments was the lack of Black students utilizing the services that CAPS provided. In an interview, the Executive Director of CAPS admitted that Black students had a lower utilization rate of 4% in comparison to their peers. This confirms what is revealed in other studies stressing the underutilization of mental health services among Black students, with only one-third of them seeking counseling (Mushonga 2020, 5). The negative perception of mental health services among Black students is affected by stigma and limited access to Black psychologists. Georgia Thomas is a UCLA undergraduate alumnus, former chair of the Afrikan Student Union, and current UCLA Law Ph.D. candidate. She delves into what she has heard about the issue with CAPS:

> I think CAPS comes from a reactionary approach. For me, I was only able to get an appointment when I asked for it because CAPS moved to telehealth, right? But a lot of people talked about how when they went to just talk to somebody and it wasn't an emergency situation, they couldn't get an appointment. It could be week one, week two, they're trying to talk to somebody. They couldn't get an appointment until week ten. So, I don't know. I don't think they are meeting the needs of Black students. They just so happened to meet my need and I don't think it relates to my Blackness. CAPS only became noticeable to Black people recently.

Black students know where to seek help; the issue is if help is readily available to provide resources for them? The issues Georgia listed in the beginning are typical issues all students experience with CAPS. Georgia's perspective regarding CAPS' "reactionary approach" comes from their recent establishment of Black Bruin Therapy Groups, and Black Bruin Healing spaces. These new programs are a reaction to the national protests as a result of the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, and police brutality in America. While the actions of CAPS are reactionary and can be seen as performative, CAPS' funding plays a role in how they provide resources for students, especially Black students.

Mental health is stigmatized and, because it is stigmatized, it is underfunded. CAPS is funded through permanent dollars and temporary dollars. According to the Executive Director of CAPS:

> The difference between perm dollars and temp dollars, for those of you who don't know. Perm dollars are dollars I get, same dollars year-to-year. It's allocated to me regardless. Temp dollars are like SBAC dollars. Like you get it, you have to apply for it, you may not get it again. Grant money is like that, SBAC money is like [that], donor money is like that. It can be a one-and-done, that's considered temp dollars to me.

The permanent dollars that fund CAPS predominantly comes from student fees and sold university insurance policies ($51 per sold policy). The same perm dollars that CAPS receives are used to pay for the unionized clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, and Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists they have on staff. With an increase in individualized sessions during COVID-19, CAPS needs more staff members which, in turn, calls for more perm dollars. There is a disproportionate ratio between staff and students at 30:46,000 students. This disproportionate ratio highlights the growing need for more CAPS clinicians to support the growing numbers of UCLA's population.

> The right ratio is supposed to be 1:1,000. I need 12 more positions honestly. And now I have the space for it, so I'm gonna keep advocating for 12 more positions to match UCLA.

CAPS cannot create a safe and welcoming space if it is underfunded and understaffed, and this alone plays a role in how mental health stigma is perpetuated. Mental health is not a priority. If mental health was a priority for UCLA, and arguably for the nation, it would be well-funded and properly staffed. Black students are seeking consistent, reliable, and stable care. But if CAPS is not able to be what Black students need, then they have to look to themselves to provide the support they need.

Inhabitable Spaces of Welcome

One of the questions I asked in the survey distributed among Black students was "Do you feel safe on campus? Why or why not?" Sussan Okoye, a senior double majoring in Sociology and American Literature & Culture, responded that she does not feel safe on campus. When asked to explain, she responded:

> I'm a Black woman. This school gaslights our grievances and Black students do the real work of protecting and looking out for one another. If it weren't for ASU and all the other Black-run organizations, I wouldn't be at this school.

The Afrikan Student Union, founded in 1966, serves as a cultural, social, and political space for students to embrace their identity without any conflict. This space was primarily founded to increase the retention of Black students because, before its establishment, the Black student population was made up exclusively of athletes (Agembah 2018). ASU continues to supply spaces for safe identity formation. They became a space for "mental distraction," "social support," and "spiritual activities" (Greer & Chwalisz 2007, 390). Without this organization, there would be no way for Black students to discuss the multitude of stressors they experience on campus because of their minority status. Many Black students who completed my survey and were interviewed commend ASU for being the supportive space they needed to connect with their Black identity and feel safe on campus. Georgia testifies,

> There were definitely instances of microaggressions that I didn't know how to handle until I got more deeply ingrained in the Black community and understood my place. I kinda knew after those things that the Black community is where I'm gonna go because that's what I know and I know they're gonna welcome me and accept me and that's what ends up happening. A lot of my development as a leader, and a person, I owe to different engagements with the Black community whether that be ASU, CurlsU, ASP was a really big one. I don't

> think my UCLA experience would be the same without them if they didn't exist. I don't know where I would be.

Before this statement, Georgia disclosed that she lived in Black and Brown communities her whole life. Her first time stepping away from those communities was when she started attending UCLA; that is when she started feeling like the minority and that is when the microaggressions began. Georgia understood her place on campus as a Black student and she was constantly reminded of that as she was one of the few Black people in her lecture and was often mistaken for other Black women on campus. This alone made her more aware of her Blackness but negatively. Her Blackness was a constant reminder that she did not belong on campus and the racism and microaggressions she experienced were designed to shatter her and take away any motivation she had to succeed. As she navigated campus, she was coming to terms with that until she stumbled upon ASU. ASU served as an "inhabitable space of welcome" (Willen 2014) for not only Georgia but for the 4% of Black undergraduate students at UCLA.

While ASU should receive credit for maintaining community support and retention, ASU is not able to be an inhabitable space of welcome for everyone. Ariana Robertson said, "ASU does a good job representing the community but there's a lot of community that they aren't able to reach." Similar to CAPS, ASU is only noticeable to Black students who attend targeted events for Black students such as Black by Popular Demand Admit Weekend or live on the Afrikan Diaspora Living Learning Community. ASU only has so much reach and while they are aware of that, they still do what they can to advocate and be a resource for all Black students.

The Double-Edged Sword: The Burden of Advocacy vs. Resilience and Community Building

Professor Jennifer Nájera conducted a study on the creation of safe spaces for undocumented students in higher education. In her study, she highlights that safe spaces are "for students to cultivate a sense of belonging" as they seek to create a refuge from the outside world and can "vent frustrations and cultivate friendships with people who share many of their experiences" (Nájera 2020, 2). Similar to inhabitable spaces of welcome, safe spaces constitute a racial-affirming space where Black students can create a community and be vulnerable. ASU sought to be Black students' "refuge from the outside world." Yet, it is hard to maintain that refuge when it is Black students seeking and maintaining resilience and support on their own. Georgia discussed her struggles as she prioritized community building and support within the UCLA Black community. She became the face of the Cultivating Unity for Bruins (CUB) Referendum, which called for students to pay a $15 increase in student fees to fund the Black Resource Center, pay rent for the Transfer Student Center, meditation space for Muslim students, and provide funding for underrepresented groups (Fredburg 2020). She was also involved in ASU as Administrative Coordinator and Chair. Although she helped to establish a community for Black students on campus, Georgia was still experiencing imposter syndrome and carried a burden that disrupted her academic and social balance. She did not feel like she was good enough as a student or a leader. In Georgia's words,

> I think a lot of student leaders, especially student leaders of color, especially Black student leaders, feel like they have to do so much for our community that they forget about being a student. There's a saying that says, 'there's a reason student comes before leader.' I had a hard time balancing all of that because I felt like the weight of the Black community was on my chest. And that could've been me taking all that on but that was my leadership role.

Black students establish their organizations to counteract the oppression they experience on campus. There is a double-edged sword that Black students experience as they find means of resilience and means of leading their community. The means of resilience for Black students are often found within their peers and their organizations which Georgia found when she first entered UCLA. But to maintain those

connections and their organizations, Black students experience a form of double consciousness that derives from seeing themselves through the white gaze. This external pressure pushes them to become leaders and provide for their community while also setting an unwarranted standard that Black students have to be leaders to enact change for themselves. Black students merely want to be seen, advocated for, and included in discussion with university administration so the burden of student advocacy does not always fall on them. This is a shared commitment. The Executive Director of CAPS recalled her undergraduate journey at UCLA and noticed similarities in today's student advocates:

> In my mind, you know, I've lived in this mother org for a long time. 19 meetings a week, 3-hour meetings, procrastinating on the weekends, and all that stuff that goes into 'I'm a student activist and I forget to put myself first.' It's a problem. So the more that student activism can be infused with self-care, the better off we're going to be. And so one of the main things that could be done is really address that issue. I think the culture around student activism is one that is about others and not-self. And while I don't think it should all be about self, I do think we could do a better job with the balance. It's nonsense and that does not really help mental health in any way and we could do a better job.

While ASU is a safe space for Black students to gather and support one another, it is difficult for Black student leaders in this space to infuse their student activism with self-care. Their form of self-care is providing resources and reaping the benefits of their success with their community.

Teary-eyed, Georgia felt, "As ASU Chair, I wanted so much for the Black community because they deserve so much." A lot of hard work goes into maintaining retention and the constant reminder of the small Black population at UCLA makes it difficult for Black student leaders to stop and practice self-care. There are Black students that need outreach and support to prevent them from experiencing isolation and culture shock. ASU is the damage control for Black students. ASU is the organization that Black students use to form race consciousness and constitute themselves as a political force able to challenge and change the structural inequalities which construct them as a disadvantaged group within the university. Race consciousness is defined as "behavior addressed to maintaining advantages or overcoming disadvantages accruing to one's racial group. These advantages and disadvantages are the product of structured inequality." (Pitts 1975, p. 281).

As her decisions were constantly questioned, Georgia continued to pressure the UCLA administration to provide spaces for Black students on campus. When I asked her if she felt seen by the university, Georgia responded:

> I feel seen but not heard. That's how I felt for most of my time. Like y'all [UCLA administration] saw me in these meetings constantly and y'all heard me say the same things and the struggles but y'all didn't do anything for a long time or until y'all thought the time was right. Which is why I feel like it was very inconvenient that it happened because these calls for Black Lives Matter and different things like that.

While the Black community is struggling between being hyper-visible and invisible, Black student leaders like Georgia fight for Black students to be recognized as students without any racial criticism assigned to their race. The Black Lives Matter Movement and the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor placed a magnifying glass on the mistreatment of Black people which resulted in UCLA committing to fund the Black Bruin Resource Center after several years of Black student advocacy. Under her chairmanship, Georgia was able to acquire the Black Community Center and the Black Bruin Resource Center. On July 1, 2020, Chancellor Gene Block and Vice-Chancellor Monroe Gordon Jr. hosted a Town Hall with 419 Black staff, faculty, and students present. In this town hall, they openly committed to finding a space to house the Black Bruin Resource Center by Fall 2020 and ready for use by Winter 2021. They also said the funding will be provided

through Student Affairs. The Black Bruin Resource Center began construction Spring 2021 and was finished by end of August 2021. On Monday, September 27, 2021, the Black Bruin Resource Center had its grand opening featuring a mural designed by a fellow Black Bruin. The Black Bruin Resource Center is located in Kerckhoff Hall where other student-ran organizations hold their student offices (e.g. Afrikan Student Union office) and has become a space where Black students can experience Black culture and feel safe.

Only six University of California (UC) campuses provide Black Resource Centers for their Black students, UC San Diego, UC Berkeley, UC Santa Barbara, UC Santa Cruz, and UC Irvine. As of the 2019-2020 academic school year, Black students made up below five percent at each campus, yet these campuses were able to fund a safe space that ensures the academic and social success of Black students (UCB 2016; UCSC 2018; UCR 2019; UCSD 2019; UCLA 2019; UCSB 2020; UCD 2020; UCM 2020). UCLA's Black Bruin Resource Center will serve as a hub for Black students who currently make up 3% of UCLA's undergraduate community. The hub will house activities and resources for Black students which will inherently improve the academic and social experiences of Black students as they continue to face racism and discrimination from a university predominantly made up of White, Asian, and Latinx students. This is a monumental step moving forward when exploring the emergence of mental health care among Black students as they do experience more stress than any other race on campus (Greer and Chwalisz 2007; Stansbury et. al 2011). This space can be an additional mental health resource along with CAPS because it will uphold a more culturally conscious space that specifically serves Black students with no room for judgment or lack of cultural awareness. Into the bargain, Black students want the Black Bruin Resource Center to coordinate with CAPS to provide mental health services with Black mental health professionals explicitly for them. This will then bridge the gap and diminish the negative stigmas that prevent Black students from seeking mental health services.

Conclusion

How can a university be inclusive when its allocation of resources is not inclusive? Why do Black students have to do additional labor to build community resources when it should be down in partnership with the university? UCLA's Equity, Diversity & Inclusion statement reads:

> The Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion is committed to fostering an inclusive campus community and advocating for equitable programs and resources — to provide pathways of success and dignity for all.

While the UCLA administration has declared this as their statement, UCLA has remained complicit in the racial violence Black students continue to experience on campus. Releasing a statement in solidarity with Black students and the Black Lives Matter movement is not enough. While UCLA has finally committed to creating a Black Bruin Resource Center as a step in the right direction, many Black students find this action as performative because it came as a result of the untimely death of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor.

Dr. James Pitts, a Northwestern alumnus, wrote "The Politicalization of Black Students" in 1975. He recounts that, when Black students integrated Northwestern University's predominantly White campus, they advocated for themselves while White students threw "beer cans at them from upstairs windows" (Pitts 1975, 295). The maltreatment of Black students is an act that has not changed and has permeated the walls of higher education. From White students scattering cotton balls outside of the University of Missouri's Black Culture Center in 2010 to the Blackface parties at UCLA in 2015 or White students singing songs about hanging Black people at University of Oklahoma in 2015, Black students have experienced blatant racism from their peers, and their respective universities have remained complicit in this. Black students should not have to ask for resources. Black students should not have to ask for support and validation from their university. Black students have an average population size of 4% which should speak volumes especially when a

university prides itself on diversity and inclusion.

Additionally, mental health is heavily stigmatized in the US which speaks to how underfunded and inaccessible it is for all people. But the negative stigmas surrounding mental health care within the Black community stem from 400 years of oppression and discrimination from white supremacy that has infiltrated the healthcare system. This prevents Black people from being vulnerable and dismantling generational trauma. The ongoing stereotype that "Black people have been hardened by certain life experiences, that they can deal with more pain, or they feel it less intensively, and therefore, they're forced to endure even more" is visible in the healthcare system and solicits limitations placed on the social equity of Black people (Silverstein 2013). This then becomes difficult for Black people to seek the care they need to maintain their mental health because the proper resources are not present in predominantly Black areas. Most important, these resources are not present in universities that "promote" diversity and inclusion. This is a systemic issue that continues to affect the academic, social, and psychological well-being of Black students who simply seek to pursue higher education.

The goal of this research has been to start a dialogue between the university and Black students on how the university can actively and intentionally provide an inhabitable space of welcome for Black students to practice mental health care. For decades, Black students have been exploited and forced to create spaces for themselves when the university should be the primary provider of what they need to pursue academic and social success. Although CAPS has recently taken initiatives to properly serve the UCLA Black community, these are only recent actions implemented in light of the current climate of the United States. I hope UCLA administration will actively listen to Black students and their needs. I hope UCLA will take our concerns seriously and act in a timely manner when we express that our safety has been compromised by racism. I hope UCLA will be an active member in a partnership between them and Black students when strengthening and uplifting our community. There must be more acknowledgment centered around the holistic needs of Black students that caters to their diverse backgrounds and honors the diversity of their experiences. This acknowledgment can be done through a university-created safe space, where different intersectional positionalities are at play in the lives of Black students.

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Cultivating Vibrant Gardens in Urban Communities: Success Factors of Community Gardens in Beijing and Shanghai

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ABSTRACT

Community gardens have emerged as community development initiatives with proven environmental, social, and public health benefits. While many studies evaluate the benefits of community gardens, fewer studies evaluate the success and failure of gardens, especially in China. This research uses four case studies of state-sponsored community gardens in Beijing and Shanghai to analyze social and organizational factors that help and hinder the success of community gardens. Factors impacting success are multi-faceted and interactive, and relations between residents and local government staff determine success throughout different development stages. In the design stage, the involvement of residents and their vision are important to success. In the maintenance stage, the leadership of key actors, including Residents' Committee staff and volunteers, residents' preparedness for self-governance, and external recognition are the most significant factors. The findings corroborate literature on factors of community gardens' success while contributing new insights about the organization and governance of community gardens in the context of a top-down political system.

Keywords: Community gardens; China; urban sustainable development; community governance; neighborhoods

Community gardens exist in various forms around the world as green spaces where citizens participate in gardening together. Most studies of community gardens have been done in Europe and America, but community gardens are rapidly emerging in metropolitan China, where the different socio-political context generates different forms of community gardens. While much research has been done on the benefits and organization models of community gardens, sociological studies that evaluate gardens based on the voices of residents—the actual users and caretakers of the gardens—are lacking. Based on participant observation at gardens in Beijing and Shanghai and semi-structured interviews of different actors involved in garden development and management, this paper analyzes why some gardens are more successful than others. Because community gardens aim to provide residents with common green spaces for gardening, recreation, and community-building (Liu and Kou 2019), their success can be measured by a high level of residents' engagement and satisfaction. I analyze four case studies, taking one case perceived to be more successful and one less successful in each city, and explore the factors that contribute to their success (or lack of it).

I first review the literature, focusing on factors enabling and inhibiting community gardens' success and the background of community gardens in China. Since the concept of community gardens varies, I introduce the type of state-sponsored community gardens that I analyze. Then, I give an overview of my case study sites and my research methods. The analysis evaluates the success of the cases and identifies the five most significant factors that impact the gardens' success. I conclude with a discussion of establishing community gardens where different actors can cooperate and autonomous local community groups can be formed to manage the gardens in the long term.

Community Gardens: Definition, Purposes, and Benefits

A community garden is an "organized initiative (s) whereby sections of land are used to produce food or flowers in an urban environment for the personal or collective benefit of their members who, by virtue of their participation, share certain resources such as space, tools and water" (Glover, Parry, and Shinew 2005, 79). Since this definition is very broad, community garden literature includes a variety of initiatives, such as urban agriculture systems, allotment gardens, and other ground-up gardening initiatives that involve the leadership and participation of the area's residents (Tidball and Krasny 2007).

The purposes of community gardens depend on the demographics and social context of the communities. In the US, healthy food access can be the main drive for low-income or ethnic minority gardeners, while leisure, aesthetics, and environmental sustainability can be the prioritized concerns for better-off or highly educated gardeners (Armstrong 2000; Aptekar 2015; Block et al. 2012; Butterfield 2020; Davis et al. 2011). McVey, Nash, and Stansbie's (2018) research in Edinburgh suggests that for migrants to the UK, food production and community engagement are the primary motivations to participate in community gardens, while environmental or political activism is the main drive for other gardeners. Kettle (2014) noticed an emerging trend of community garden involvement driven by urban residents' wish to reconnect with the land, traditional food practices, and a sense of community lost in modern urban life.

Research studies agree that community gardens bring multi-faceted benefits and enhance socio-ecological sustainability (Draper and Freeman 2010). There are lots of case studies on the positive effects of community gardens in underprivileged neighborhoods, including health benefits (Davis et al. 2011), food security (Block et al. 2012), stress-relief and empowerment (White 2011), and

community organizing (Aptekar 2015; Ghose and Pettygrove 2014b; Nettle 2014; Shur-Ofry and Malcai 2019; Block et al. 2012). The enhancement of social cohesion and cultural preservation are among the most common benefits of community gardening in past research (Guitart, Pickering, and Byrne 2012). For instance, Latino community gardens in New York not only enable people to grow vegetables from their own heritage, but also serve as venues for cultural and community events (Saldivar-tanaka and Krasny 2004). Liu et al. (2017) prove that community gardens increase connections between neighbors and contribute to building vibrant communities in metropolitan China. Community gardening also facilitates interactions and the exchange of knowledge between people across differences of age, race, ethnicity, and class, thus bridging social and cultural capital (Armstrong 2000; Aptekar 2015; Firth, Maye, and Pearson 2011; McVey, Nash, and Stansbie 2018; Nettle 2014).

Factors that Help or Hinder Community Gardens' Success

Current literature documents three broad categories of factors that help and hinder community gardens' success: biophysical and technical, sociocultural and economic, and political and administrative (Wesener et al. 2020). The first category, biophysical and technical, includes factors like climate, land access, and material resources. After reviewing 103 papers, Wesener et al. (2020) find that desirable garden location is the most frequently mentioned facilitator of a successful community garden, while frequent theft and vandalism are the most commonly mentioned barriers. Diaz et al. (2018) agree that garden site selection and land access are among the most important factors within this category. In addition, soil conditions, supply of water and electricity, and access to gardening equipment are other biophysical and technical factors discussed, especially in the context of urban agriculture (Surls et al. 2015).

The second category of sociocultural and economic factors dominates the literature. In this category, Wesener et al. (2020) summarize that individual motivation, leadership or governance, a sense of community, sufficient participants in the form of volunteers, and sharing knowledge are among the most significant enablers. Lacking a shared vision of the garden, conflict with neighbors, low involvement of residential communities, and poor funding are the most frequently mentioned barriers. Diaz et al. (2018) found that the three barriers most agreed upon by different community garden stakeholders are insufficient time dedicated to garden engagement, lack of committed volunteers, and inadequate community support.

The third category, political-administrative factors, refers to policies, regulations, and relations with local governments and administrators. Policies that discourage long-term land tenure present a salient challenge to garden development and sustainability (Drake and Lawson 2015). Wesener et al. (2020) also find that different national planning traditions and institutional settings significantly influence the barriers and enablers of gardens. For example, political-administrative factors are very significant in Germany because community gardens are situated in the city planning systems, while gardeners' internal group dynamics are more critical in New Zealand. Fox-Kämper et al. (2018) propose a continuum of top-down, bottom-up, and mixed structures for garden governance structures. They reiterate that a garden's success factors are dependent on the kind of governance structure the garden has. Given different national institutional settings' impact on gardens' governance structure, success factors of community gardens in China will be specific to China's unique urban political and administrative context.

Despite differences, there are some political-administrative factors that are common to studies across different countries. Actors' relations, which Wesener et al. (2020) define as "support and good relationships of gardening projects to local governments, administrations, and authorities," is the most frequently mentioned enabler within the political-administrative category. Attitudes of local governments and long-term land tenure rank second as factors of success. Peng, Zhou, and Zhou (2020) discuss the significance of actors'

relations based on a case study in China. They employ social network analysis in four stages of a school garden development and map out the relations between government, school, corporation, and students in each stage. They found that certain actors in the network are critical to the garden's development, especially positions that connect different groups of actors (referred to as nodes in social network analysis), like subject teachers and school principals. Their paper offers a new perspective on factors of success that focuses on important nodes in the actor network tied to a community garden.

The stages of garden development also impact which factors from the three categories are more significant to a garden's success and the challenges it may face. Fox-Kämper et al. (2018) find that for community gardens in both Germany and New Zealand, insecure land tenure is the most prominent barrier while community interest and shared vision are the most important enablers in the planning and design stage. In the management stage, the involvement of paid professionals is key because volunteers might not be committed long term. Availability of funding is crucial as both an enabler and a barrier throughout the garden development process. Strategies to overcome these barriers are relatively rare in community garden literature; some suggestions include building social networks that mobilize actors to support the garden cause (Glover, Parry, and Shinew 2005; Ghose and Pettygrove 2014a), supporting learning across communities (Twiss et al. 2011), and supporting key social processes like a leadership council (Teig et al. 2009; Diaz et al. 2018).

Community Gardens in China

Multiple forms of urban gardening activities exist in China that fit Glover, Parry, and Shinew's (2005) broad definition of community gardens, but I will focus on community gardens in urban residential communities because they best align with the concept of "community garden" (*shequ huayuan*) in Chinese. In China, community (*shequ*) refers to both an urban residential unit with geographical boundaries and an administrative subdivision in the municipal governance hierarchy (Bray 2006). Each community falls under a Residents' Committee (*shequ juweihui*), a community-level governance organization that bridges government and residents, delivering social services and maintaining public order (Mok 1988). Residents' Committee staff are not necessarily community residents because they are hired by the Street Office (*jiedao banshichu*), the lowest level of municipal government in China. This conceptualization of community means that a community garden should be in an urban residential unit and the local Residents' Committee is necessarily involved in garden development and management. Additionally, community implies a communal character of the garden, emphasizing communal participation and benefits. Instead of gardening for private gain, community gardens in China are mostly aimed at space regeneration, recreation, social cohesion, and residents' participation in community governance (Liu et al. 2017; Liu et al. 2019; Liu and Kou 2019; Liao, Liu, and Feng 2020; Ding et al. 2020). Therefore, gardens collectively shared by residents in an urban residential unit, "*shequ*," best capture community gardens in the Chinese context.

The land ownership and municipal governance structures in China are crucial to understanding the development of this type of community garden and their state-sponsored character. According to the Property Law of the People's Republic of China, residents collectively own public green space in residential communities, so it is illegitimate for individuals to start gardens without permission and coordination from property management companies or the Residents' Committee. Where property management companies are absent or weak, Residents' Committees are the main actor giving permission and coordinating, meaning that gardens are state-sponsored. In a state-sponsored garden, the Residents' Committee is responsible for organizing residents' participation and coordinating various actors involved in gardens' development, including social enterprises that do participatory sustainable design, NGOs, and other external organizations like university project groups (Figure 1). Friends of Nature·Gaiascape Studio (Gaiascape Studio), a social enterprise specializing in participatory design and

sustainable design, is a leading organization of community garden projects in Beijing. Clover Nature School, an environmental NGO, is the vanguard of community gardens in Shanghai.

Some research has analyzed the development and management model of community gardens in residential communities. Liu, Fan, et al. (2017) provide an overview of the origin, layout, and operation model of Train garden, Herb garden, and Knowledge and Innovation Community Garden (KICG) in Shanghai. Liu, Yin, et al. (2017) dive deeper into an analysis of the roles and needs of different actors in KICG. Government, property management companies, NGOs, and citizens cooperate in KICG. The challenges are the coordination between different actors in sharing responsibility as well as realizing the community's self-governance of the garden. As the authors of the two studies above are from Clover Nature School, the NGO that leads community garden initiatives in Shanghai, the papers' perspectives are from organization leaders. Other literature takes macro-perspectives with focuses on urban green space management and urban landscape design. Wang and Yan (2014) suggest incorporating community gardens into the urban green space management system as they do not have a place in the current urban green space classification system. This awkward situation with the green space management system hinders community gardens' development. Li and Wen (2018) recommend community gardening as a new form of urban public space and discuss its feasibility. The narratives of citizens and community-level organization staff

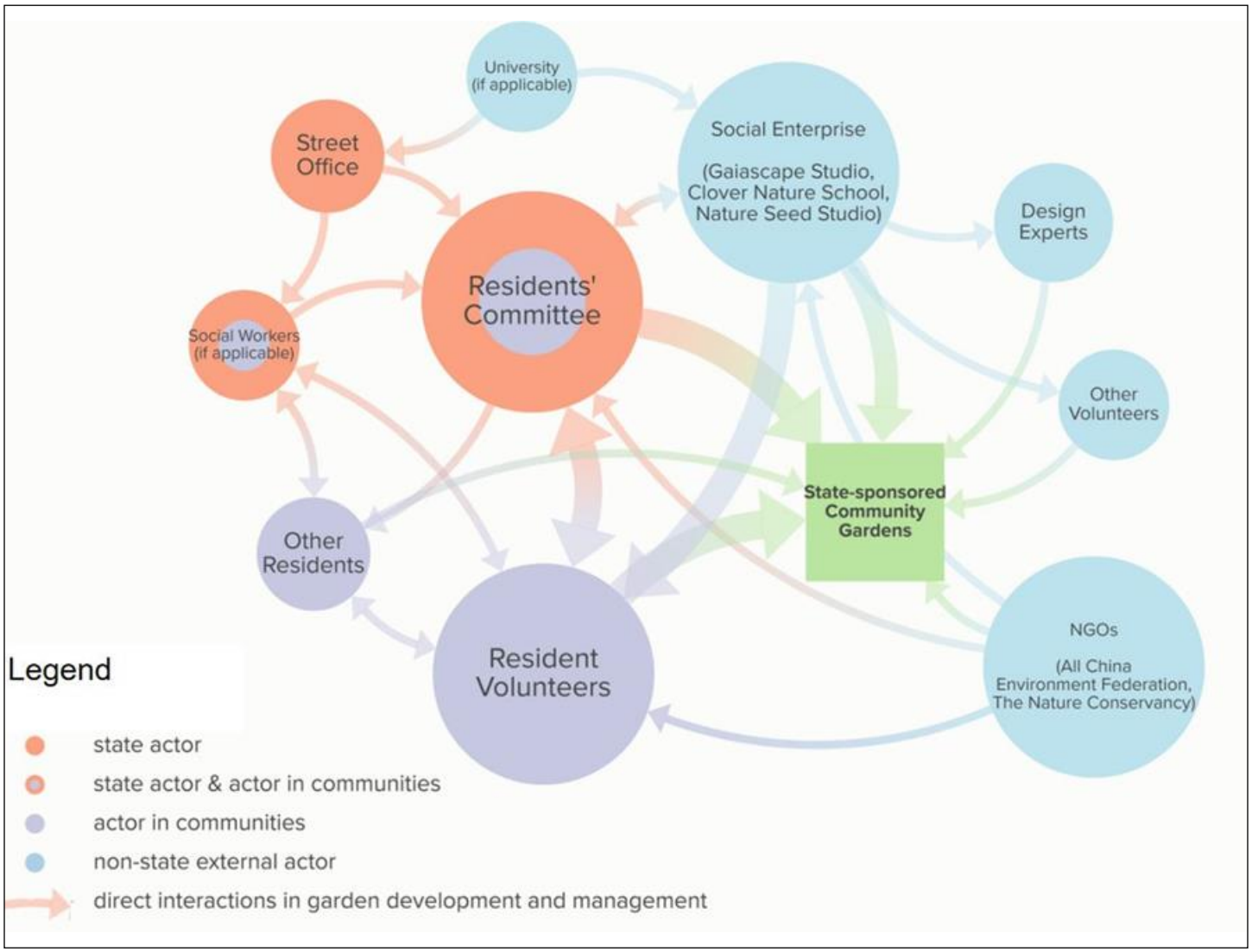

Figure 1. Map of Actors in State-Sponsored Community Gardens. Relative size of circles represents actors' importance. Thick arrows represent important relations that will be analyzed in factors of success.

who use and manage the gardens long term are rarely heard and analyzed.

This literature review highlights that community gardens generate various socio-ecological benefits, but there are many challenges in developing and maintaining gardens that serve as obstacles to realizing the promises they have for communities. While studies of community gardens are burgeoning in China, there is little analysis of success factors based on narratives of those who use the gardens. Moreover, given the profound influence of different national planning cultures and administrative systems on garden governance structures, it is important to understand the success factors of community gardens in China.

Methodology

Based on my online research and information from staff in Gaiascape Studio and Clover Nature School, two leading organizations that create community gardens in Beijing and Shanghai, I visited five state-sponsored community gardens in Beijing and six in Shanghai. As case studies, I chose four gardens that share characteristics and have the most prominent success and failure, where success is measured through residents' satisfaction and engagement with the gardens. These four gardens were all built around 2018 and 2019, are located inside fenced residential communities that did not have much green space initially, and have a mix of flowers and vegetables. These characteristics exclude gardens that are built too recently to observe their impacts, gardens located in open space outside of residential communities, and gardens built mostly for vegetable planting.

From mid-May to mid-July 2020, I conducted participant observation and interviews at gardens in Beijing and from mid-August to mid-September at gardens in Shanghai. In Beijing, I visited each garden about once or twice a week except for three weeks in June when quarantining during the COVID-19 pandemic restricted mobility. I completed my fieldwork in Shanghai over one month, and I visited the gardens once every two or three days. I visited around 8:00-11:00 or 15:00-18:00 when residents were most often present, observing who came to the gardens and how they interacted with the gardens. I asked the residents' consent to participate in interviews at the gardens and if they would also direct me to other key informants. The semi-structured interviews covered their engagement with the garden, personal history of gardening if applicable, and how they assessed the garden in terms of benefits and challenges, both the physical and social/political aspects. In addition, I interviewed non-resident actors involved in the gardens' development, including staff from Residents' Committees, NGOs, and social enterprises. The interviews were all conducted in Chinese and not recorded.

Figure 2: Cuifu Garden. Source: Author.

I conducted thematic coding of my observation and interview data. For measurement of success, I coded by two large themes: residents' engagement and residents' satisfaction. I measured level of engagement by the frequency of usage I observed at the gardens and interviewees' descriptions of gardening activities. The level of satisfaction is based on residents' narratives of the benefits and challenges of using or maintaining the gardens. I generated codes based on codes that Wesener et al. (2020) used in their research as well as new themes that emerged from my interviews.

The Case Study Gardens

Cuifu Garden, Beijing

Cuifu Garden is located in a resettlement housing residential community in southeast Beijing (Figure 2). The 180-square-meter garden

is built on a public green space between a residential high-rise and the Residents' Committee building. The garden is funded by an NGO called All-China Environment Federation, who invited Gaiascape Studio to

Figure 3. Happiness Garden in Jiaqichang Community, Beijing. Source: Seed Nature Studio.

design and lead garden construction. The construction started in June 2019 and was completed through three stages of workshops that residents participated in. The garden has planting boxes consisting of 90% perennial flowers and herbs and 10% vegetables. It also has a play area for children, compost bins, a rainwater collection system, and a pond. A Residents' Committee staff member organizes resident volunteers to clean up the garden, compost, and water from time to time.

Figure 4. Hongxu Habitat Garden in Hongxu Community, Shanghai. Source: Clover Nature School.

Happiness Garden, Beijing

Happiness Garden, built in June 2019 over two weekends of participatory workshops, is located in Jiaqichang residential community in northwest Beijing (Figure 3). Residents gave the garden a Chinese name "*xingfu*," which translates to happiness. Jiaqichang community used to be home only to the staff working in the Gas Filling Plant (a state-owned enterprise), and it did not open up to outside buyers/renters until recently. The garden sits on a 270-square-meter public green space between two residential high-rise buildings. Its design is based on permaculture principles, featuring

Figure 5. Xin Garden in Zhengli Road 580 Lane community, Shanghai. Source: Author.

diverse perennial flowers, herbs, and trees. The garden is funded by Tsinghua University's Tsinghe Experiment Project, which aims to innovate community governance approaches in partnership with Tsinghe Street Office. The university cooperated with Jiaqichang's Residents' Committee, a sustainable design social enterprise called Seed Nature Studio, and social workers from the Haidian Community Promotion and Social Work Development Center.

Hongxu Habitat Garden, Shanghai

Hongxu Habitat Garden is built on a vacant 450-square-meter lot in a corner of Hongxu residential community in west Shanghai (Figure 4). The community was built in the 1990s and has multiple problems, including a lack of public space and green space and littering. In 2017, The Nature Conservancy (NGO) initiated this

	Engagement (use of gardens)	Engagement (taking care of gardens)	Satisfaction
Hongxu Habitat Garden, Shanghai	Very High	Very High	High
Cuifu Garden, Beijing	Very High	High	Medium
Xin Garden, Shanghai	Low	Medium	Low
Happiness Garden, Beijing	Low	Medium	Low

Table 1: Evaluation of Success of the Four Cases

habitat garden project to promote urban biodiversity and invited the Residents' Committee, Clover Nature School, and the Shanghai Academy of Fine Arts to cooperate. The Nature Conservancy funded the project and paid a construction team to build the garden in December 2019. The garden has different zones for recreation, flower and vegetable planting, and wildlife habitat. Teams of resident volunteers take care of different parts of the garden every day, and children and grandparents claim boxes of plants to take care of as well.

Xin Garden, Shanghai

Xin Garden is about 150-square-meters and located between two residential buildings in Zhengli Road 580 Lane community, Shanghai (Figure 5). This residential community was built in the 1990s with limited green space. The garden is part of the Knowledge and Innovation community micro-renewal project that started in 2018 (Liao, Liu, and Feng 2020). Funded by the government, Clover Nature School and Guodingyi Residents' Committee cooperated on the micro-renewal project. Xin Garden was built in December 2018, and residents participated in building workshops. Four residents mainly take care of the garden and spontaneously plant vegetables and flowers.

Results and Analysis

Evaluation of Gardens Based on Residents' Engagement and Satisfaction

Among the four cases, Cuifu Garden and Hongxu Habitat Garden were more successful given a higher level of residents' engagement and satisfaction with the gardens (see table 1 for a summary). Xin Garden and Happiness Garden were less successful since residents had more complaints and less engagement. However, my evaluation of success and failure is not absolute, as residents also expressed complaints about the successful gardens and the less successful cases had successful aspects.

My observations show that residents use Cuifu Garden and Hongxu Garden much more frequently than Happiness Garden and Xin Garden. Out of the six times that I visited Cuifu Garden from late May to early July, residents were using the garden five times. Parents or grandparents took children there to play, some people walked their dogs, and others sat on the benches. There were residents in Hongxu Garden during all five times that I visited. Children played in the garden, and residents of all ages came for a walk or exercise. Even on a cloudy day, six residents came into the garden within a time span of 15 minutes. In comparison, during the six times that I visited Happiness Garden, there were two times that a couple was gardening—the only residents who took care of it. Most residents were out in areas

near the garden but they rarely went into it, and residents who lived further away did not come over at all. During the six times that I visited Xin Garden, I ran into residents only once. Besides the four volunteers who took care of Xin Garden, residents seldom came to or even know of this garden.

I also found a stark difference in the number of residents who take care of the gardens. Cuifu Garden has a volunteer group with around 40 residents, and usually five to six residents maintain the garden around twice a month. Hongxu Garden has around twenty volunteers who come in groups of two or three every day to sweep the floor, water, and compost. They also share vegetables from the garden with elders living alone in Hongxu community. In contrast, there are only two residents who take care of Happiness Garden and four at Xin Garden. Their attitudes toward working in the gardens are rather passive, saying that they take care of the gardens because no one else does.

Nevertheless, all resident volunteers affirm the benefits of gardening. They are predominantly retired residents older than 50 and usually horticulture lovers or active members in community events. They report that gardening contributes to physical health, happiness, a sense of achievement, and social cohesion with other volunteers. Gardening is a good way to spend time during retirement, beautify their neighborhood, and get to know others. In this sense, all gardens succeed in providing a chance for some residents to enjoy gardening and a community of peer volunteers.

In terms of satisfaction with the garden, the positive feedback from residents in Cuifu and Hongxu surpass their grievances. Residents not involved in gardening recognize that the gardens improve the community environment, provide public spaces for recreation, and increase chances for environmental education. All resident interviewees agree that Cuifu Garden provides a space for kids to play and is popular, although three of them complain about a slippery floor or the garden's design. In Hongxu Garden, all residents except one affirm the garden's recreational and ecological functions. For the other two gardens, residents acknowledge that gardens do bring some improvements, yet grievances predominate. In Happiness Garden, high satisfaction after the construction in 2019 gradually turned into discontent. Common complaints include the overgrowth of plants and mosquitoes, slippery trails, and lack of maintenance overall. When I visited Happiness Garden in July 2020, litter was spread over the garden's trails, plants blocked the trails, and mosquitoes made it impossible to stay. A social worker in the community reported that the residents continue to be dissatisfied and no one is managing the garden. A staff member from Clover Nature School says that Xin Garden is pretty desolate as well. A resident gardener said the organization of the garden team at Xin Garden was good in the beginning but declined after the previous team disbanded: "I am not satisfied with the garden now. It's desolate and no one manages it" (Xin resident 2).

Factors that Help and Hinder Success

This section explores the five factors that emerged as the most significant for influencing success: actors' relations, commitment of key actors, residents' preparedness for self-governance, residents' acceptance of the garden design, and external recognition. These five factors impact different stages of garden development, and some factors are more significant than others. Actors' relations, particularly the relationship between residents and the Residents' Committee, determine success and failure throughout different stages. In the design stage, a lack of shared vision and a low degree of resident participation can lead to poor acceptance of the garden's design. In the maintenance stage, which is the most critical stage for success, commitment of key actors—Residents' Committee staff and core volunteers—as well as residents' preparedness for self-governance are crucial to a garden's long-term success. External recognition in the form of media reports and compliments from the government also increases satisfaction and engagement.

Actors' relations: intergroup relations

The existing relationship between the Residents' Committee and residents is critical to residents' engagement and satisfaction with the garden. Since the Residents' Committee coordinates all garden activities and directly

communicates with residents, residents view the community garden as a Residents' Committee-led initiative. If residents are satisfied with the Residents' Committee's work in the community and there is good rapport between the two groups, residents tend to affirm and participate in the community gardens. In all four cases, there are residents with strong potential to become committed volunteers, but the relationship between the Residents' Committee and residents determines whether these residents can be mobilized. This is particularly important in the maintenance stage because mobilizing residents to form a committed team is key to the long-term success of community gardens.

In both cases of success, residents who actively participate in gardening activities appreciate the Residents' Committee's work. A retired male resident in Cuifu Garden says that he does not like gardening at all, but the Residents' Committee leaders are very nice so he attends almost all of the activities they organize. A resident in Hongxu Garden shows up whenever the Residents' Committee needs help because he is grateful for their support of his gardening hobby: "I am happy that, instead of moving away my flowers in front of the building, Residents' Committee agreed that I can plant and use them for the community center" (Hongxu resident 4).

On the contrary, existing conflicts between Residents' Committees and residents inhibit residents' support of community gardens. In Xin Garden, discontent with the community's overall environment and the government's neglect of the community is so strong that it hinders how residents view the garden. In Happiness Garden, a retired female resident stated that "there is no one to pick up the trash. The Tsing He Street Office does a poor job in general—they never visit the elders or give insufficient pension. They should solve these issues before implementing the garden" (Happiness resident 5). Other residents echo problems, including poor physical environment, lack of waste management, and parking space conflict, which are so enduring that a garden cannot help solve them. Distrust toward the Residents' Committee also prevents residents from participating in gardening. A retired male resident complained that "no one is here to manage the garden. I don't think the investment worth it. The Residents' Committee vice-director needs to debrief us… It's all formalism. He doesn't manage anything with our community" (Happiness resident 7). This resident actually has his own garden right beside Happiness Garden and several other residents do as well, revealing that the failure to form a garden team is not due to a lack of passionate residents but their antagonism toward the "Residents' Committee's garden."

Actors' relations: intragroup relations

After the community gardens are built, conflicts within the community can inhibit some residents' involvement in the gardens, and the conflicts can even intensify with gardening. In Happiness Garden, a group of local residents are exclusive toward residents who are non-locals, which causes non-local residents to disengage with the garden. A social worker stated that "it looks like a public garden, but it is actually just the garden of these few people… most people did not participate." In addition, conflicts over private vegetable planting in the garden repel some residents. One retired female resident who used to be the leader of the garden team said that "I participated in the garden building workshops and was very active in the beginning. But I got very angry when some residents privately planted vegetables in the garden and no one responsible for the garden project intervened." Without the garden usage conflict with other residents, she would have continued as an active participant.

Residents' engagement with the garden is enabled by relatively simple and harmonious relations among residents. In Hongxu Garden, the captain of the garden team describes that "we [the garden team members] all know each other. We garden together, chat together, and hang out together." The project coordinator from Clover Nature School also iterates that this coherence among residents is important: "a key factor of success is that the volunteer team members are friends with each other and the social relationships in the community are pretty simple. There are no conflicts, which makes a stable team and the coherence is strong." This factor of positive relationships among residents is most prominent in the maintenance stage.

The garden construction workshops are short and coordinated by external actors, so conflicts among residents are not conspicuous. However, upon completion, residents become the main body who use and manage the garden in the long term, so internal conflicts or harmony are crucial to the garden's decline or success.

Commitment and leadership of key actors in the community: Residents' Committee staff

Residents' Committees play a critical role in developing and supporting community gardens as they grant permission to use land, coordinate different actors, and organize garden activities in the long term. Similar to Peng, Zhou, and Zhou's (2020) finding of the importance of administrative and subject teachers in school gardens, Residents' Committees are the connecting node in the network of different actors involved in a community garden. In both cases of success, there is a Residents' Committee staff member who follows through each step of the garden project and supports it wholeheartedly. The designer and project coordinator from Gaiascape Studio reflects that "the key to Cuifu Garden's success is a committed and passionate leader in the community. The most ideal is for a staff member to participate in the whole process, be responsible, mobilize and work alongside the residents." Hongxu Garden's project coordinator from Clover Nature School affirms that a capable and trusted Residents' Committee is critical: "the Residents' Committee director, secretary, and social workers are all hardworking and practical. They give rewards to residents and provide lots of resources for residents."

Alternatively, incompetency and inaction of Residents' Committees lead to failure. Multiple actors in Happiness Garden point out that the absence of the Residents' Committee causes the community to be disorganized and lack leadership in maintaining the garden. The former resident leader of the garden's volunteer team states that "it is most appropriate for Residents' Committee to intervene [with private vegetable planting] as it is not effective for us to confront…The director doesn't do the job." A social worker argues that the Residents' Committee "is the main body for mediating garden issues. I hope that the Residents' Committee and the property management company can participate in the follow-up, but the Residents' Committee is always absent." These narratives triangulate the information that Residents' Committees' involvement and leadership are necessary for gardens' success.

Another reason that makes Residents' Committees' commitment critical is that residents are not able to be fully independent in managing the gardens yet, which I will discuss more in the self-governance section. The management of most state-sponsored community gardens combines top-down and grassroots approaches, so relying on residents alone to maintain the garden would lead to failure. In the two success cases, residents and Residents' Committee staff both recognized this reality: "the garden must have a community leader responsible for its organization and relying on resident volunteers alone are not feasible" (Cuifu resident 4). "Cultivating residents' autonomy is a very long process and we have to take it slow. We have to walk alongside the resident volunteer team and gradually see it grow" (Hongxu Residents' Committee staff).

If non-resident actors assume residents' self-governance before the residents are ready, their absence generates complaints among residents. A retired male resident in Xin Garden argues that "they [Clover Nature School and the Residents' Committee] invested a lot but no one managed the garden or followed-up. There lacks an organizer. If they step in I would never bother intervening!" Similarly, a female resident states that "there lacks one person specifically in charge for this and the power of residents alone is after all limited. We need to have people who are paid or whose job is related." This corroborates Fox-Kämper et al.'s (2018) finding that the involvement of paid professionals in the maintenance stage is key because volunteers might not be committed long term. To a certain extent, Residents' Committee staff are the most appropriate paid professionals because their job is to organize residents and improve community public welfare.

Commitment and leadership of key actors in the community: residents

In addition to Residents' Committees, the long-term commitment of core resident volunteers makes the garden's success possible. It is relatively easy for residents to participate in the design and building stages, but what matters most to a garden's long-term success is the commitment of residents in the maintenance stage. In Happiness Garden, lots of residents were involved in the beginning but quit as time passed because the garden failed to live up to their expectations and there were conflicts among residents. For Xin Garden, a core garden volunteer's leave impacted the whole team's functionality. There needs to be several residents who have a faithful presence at gardening activities. The Hongxu Garden volunteer team is led by a resident "captain" and consists of other steady members. In Cuifu Garden, even if some residents are dissatisfied with the garden design, the several individuals who faithfully show up and help out Residents' Committee staff with garden management enable the garden's success. There is a committed resident at Cuifu Garden who volunteers at almost all community events. He says that "I am a retired old Party member and I attend events as long as the Residents' Committee asks" (Cuifu resident 1). A non-gardener resident also recognizes that "the garden design is not what I want and I don't have time to get involved, but there are a group of active members… that's enough number of people" (Cuifu resident 8). It is not necessary to have a large group of active residents, but the faithful commitment of several core residents is indispensable to the long-term success of community gardens.

Preparedness of residents for self-governance

The long-term maintenance of community gardens relies on residents' self-governance, but the degree of preparedness for self-governance varies within communities. Self-governance (*ju min zi zhi*) refers to residents' agency in community governance. It aims to promote residents' participation in community affairs and decision-making. The concept is increasingly advocated for in China's urban governance. Preparedness for self-governance is also related to the leadership of key non-resident actors responsible for cultivating residents' awareness and practice of self-governance. In the two cases of success, the Residents' Committee or NGO has put effort into cultivating the residents' awareness of and participation in public affairs through organizing activities that encourage residents' involvement. This facilitates residents' participation in gardening when the community garden project comes: "we built another garden before that buried the seed of residents' self-governance. We held meetings to discuss plans, and residents could propose ideas. Gradually they discovered that their voice was heard, so they began to speak up more. If they find that they have a right of speech in community affairs and see real changes, they will participate more" (Hongxu Residents' Committee staff).

In Cuifu Garden, residents are prepared through a series of events that All China Environment Federation (NGO) holds before the garden happens. These events help the community accumulate social capital for the garden volunteer team: "We have cooperated with Cuifu community for three years. We invited residents to environmental education lectures and led sustainable lifestyle workshops in the community before the garden project…We are very intentional in growing resident volunteer team and every time after workshops more residents join the WeChat group" (NGO project manager).

In comparison, the foundation for residents' participation in community affairs is weak in less successful gardens. The Residents' Committees intended to realize self-governance, but there is a discrepancy between reality and the ideal. In Happiness Garden, the Residents' Committee vice director claims that "we fully trust the residents. We as the government build the platform and residents take care of the rest," but all the resident interviewees complained that there is no one in charge and they cannot handle the garden alone. As the social worker comments, "residents need a person in charge and they can follow… There is no way for residents to be fully autonomous at this stage…only a few residents participate in community events." In

Xin Garden, the Residents' Committee and other community leaders did not prepare residents to be self-governing either, as residents expect a staff member to be in charge. A resident who unwillingly takes care of the garden complained that "no one was in charge for follow-up. Those that they planted almost died and I watered. If they come, I will not intervene." Because residents are used to the top-down governance approach in China's institutional tradition, the default mindset is that community gardens should be taken care of by someone appointed. Extra effort is needed to communicate and cultivate self-governance among residents or else the inertia to rely on the state will continue.

Another aspect of residents' preparedness for self-governance is whether residents have the skills and knowledge to take care of the garden on their own. One resident in Happiness Garden expressed that no one teaches them how to take care of the garden: "we only know how to water and weed, but other than that we have limited planting experience. No one ever teaches us. Permaculture is really professional knowledge and we have never heard of it" (Happiness resident 2). On the contrary, in Cuifu Garden, the Residents' Committee staff gives instructions on how to manage the compost bin and puts up signs by the bin. Some residents have the human capital to engage in gardening and construction work. "There are lots of residents who are once artisans, technicians, and farmers in the community so they know how to build the garden and can contribute" (Cuifu resident 1).

Residents' acceptance of the garden design

The residents' acceptance of the garden design directly impacts their satisfaction and engagement with the garden. While the technical aspects of design are beyond the scope of this paper's discussion, I focus on two aspects, shared vision of the garden and involvement of the residents in the design process, that are found to be relevant to gardens' success in the literature (Aptekar 2015; Eizenberg 2012; Witheridge and Morris 2016).

The lack of a shared vision between residents and expert designers is a significant inhibitor in the Happiness Garden. The following quote is representative of the community residents' attitude toward the design: "the garden is poorly built. The theory is divorced from reality… those foreign permaculture principles are not applicable in China… Our needs are simple, we just want to see flowers and have a place for recreation. We don't need an expert designer and spend the wrong money" (Happiness resident 1). The designer also reflected on the discrepancy between their and residents' vision of the garden: "their needs center on neighborhood greening and beautifying, but we have gone to the next level of ecological awareness and bringing wildness to cities… Next time we would avoid imposing our values on them" (Project coordinator and designer from Seed Nature Studio). Since residents are the long-term users and stewards of the garden, a design that fails to match their needs hinders their satisfaction and desire to be involved.

While there is no linear relationship between residents' involvement in design and the degree of acceptance in my four case studies, a higher amount of involvement increases the chance of acceptance. In Happiness Garden, the residents' involvement is low because of hasty preparations and promotion: "there were only four days before the participatory design workshop…the information of garden workshops was not well delivered. On the first day, there were only one resident" (designer and project coordinator from Seed Nature Studio). This causes residents to complain about the design because it does not reflect their needs: "we don't even know of the design plan. They should listen to the opinions of the residents, and then make an assessment" (Happiness resident 1). In Cuifu Garden, residents told Gaiascape Studio about the space's existing problems during participatory design workshops and proposed plans to make a change. According to the project director at Gaiascape, the garden's ratio of 90% flowers and 10% vegetables was the residents' idea. In Hongxu Garden, residents were not involved in designing the garden, but the end product turned out to be satisfactory. In Xin Garden, residents joined the discussion during the design process, and there is no particular complaint directed at the garden design. Therefore, it is possible for residents to

embrace a garden's design without participating in the process, but high involvement in the design process can increase residents' acceptance of the garden design.

External recognition

I found that external recognition in the form of positive media coverage and government representatives visiting the garden to be facilitators of success in the maintenance stage. Hongxu Garden's project coordinator from Clover Nature School stated that residents in the garden team often get visits from the Street Office administrators and media reporters. Affirmations from the Street Office and positive media coverage make them feel accomplished and proud of the garden, which fuels the residents' passion for taking care of the garden. Similarly, the most active resident gardener in Cuifu Garden proudly introduces that "this garden is a scenic spot in the community. Fatou Street Office had representatives visiting us and taking pictures. We are an example for other communities to learn" (Cuifu resident 1).

In comparison, Xin Garden gets little media exposure. It is interesting to note that Happiness Garden won honorable mention in the International Federation of Landscape Architects Africa Asian Pacific Middle East (AAPME) Awards of 2020, but the impact on community residents was relatively small because it was an award for landscape design professionals. The recognition did not trickle down to the gardeners. I found that direct visits and affirmative interactions at the site are effective forms of recognition that boost residents' confidence in and engagement with their community garden.

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper evaluates residents' satisfaction and engagement with four state-sponsored community gardens in Beijing and Shanghai based on observation and interview data. It analyzes the five most significant factors that emerged from the four case studies, corroborating some findings in existing literature on community gardens while contributing new insights. Poor intergroup actors' relations inhibit success, resonating with research showing that conflicts between gardeners and steering committees as well as coordination issues are barriers to a successful community garden. Good relations between gardeners and authorities as well as adequate forms of governance and administration are important enablers (Wesener et al. 2020, 657). Dedicated leadership and a strong core group of volunteers lead to success and vice versa. A lack of shared vision of the garden between different actors inhibits garden success. What is unique to state-sponsored community gardens in China is the critical role of the Residents' Committee, as it connects the state with the residents and coordinates different actors. Some significant factors highlighted in existing literature, particularly funding and land-tenure, did not appear as significant in state-sponsored gardens in China because these issues are taken care of by the state and actors who are willing to cooperate with the state-sponsored projects.

I found two factors not discussed in previous research, the preparedness of residents for self-governance and the role of external recognition, that impacted the community gardens' success, which might be distinctive to the state-sponsored community gardens scenario. Because community gardens aim to promote self-governance and residents are expected to take care of the gardens, whether the residents are ready and willing to take on this role becomes key to the gardens thriving in the long term. While the encouragement brought by media exposure might have been a factor overlooked in other studies, the positive effect of government representatives visiting the garden may be particularly strong for the state-sponsored gardens. Because successful community gardens show the merit of Residents' Committees' work in organizing residents and enhancing public welfare, having government representatives visit the gardens is an affirmation that the Residents' Committee is doing their job well. Moreover, lots of gardeners are Party members who have strong faith in the government, so recognition from the government is especially heartening to them.

Furthermore, my results show that it is hard to isolate single factors that lead to success or failure, and different factors impact one another. Commitment of Residents' Committee

staff impacts their relations with residents as well as residents' preparedness for self-governance. The presence or absence of a single factor does not cause success or failure, and an absence of one enabling factor can be made up for by the presence of other enabling factors, usually more significant factors. For example, in Hongxu Garden residents did not get involved in the design and building process, but committed key actors and their strong relations led to success.

Since I focus on sociocultural and political-administrative factors, biophysical factors such as garden location, micro-environmental conditions, and the size of gardens are worth future research. There is a climate difference between Beijing and Shanghai, but success and failure cases are both present in each city. Residents did not mention soil, water, micro-environmental conditions, and land access as important factors, but how a garden's location, size, and physical arrangement impact engagement needs to be examined. Another limitation of my research is that I did not examine the impact of residents' age, gender, and status on satisfaction. Due to the subjective nature of residents' satisfaction, systematic surveys of residents in different age groups and economic and educational backgrounds will help determine if the perceived failure of gardens varies greatly among residents. Future studies of community gardens in China should also measure other aspects of success beyond satisfaction and engagement, such as enhancing social capital and participation in community governance.

This paper concludes that the following characteristics and strategies can increase state-sponsored community gardens' success. First, communities where residents approve of the Residents' Committee's work are highly inclined to succeed. Residents' satisfaction with community gardens is related to their feelings toward the Residents' Committee's overall effort in the community, and it is hard to gain residents' satisfaction with the community gardens alone if they are discontent with their Residents' Committee. More systematic and comprehensive community environment improvement also needs to happen. Second, leadership from a Residents' Committee staff member and a core group of resident volunteers is key to the success of community gardens. Residents' autonomous management of the garden should not be assumed, and clear communication and organization of the garden team are necessary. Third, communities that have started to cultivate residents' participation in community activities and public affairs prior to the community garden's development tend to construct a more successful garden. Organizing activities where residents can step in and feel accomplished facilitates their participation in community gardens. Fourth, getting residents involved in the design process and prioritizing their vision of the garden boosts the garden's success in the long term. The strategies above provide practical suggestions for successful community gardening in institutional settings where state actors are significantly involved in community gardens. It adds to the community garden literature by contributing case studies from a top-down institutional setting. These findings also shed light on community governance and community-based actions beyond state-sponsored community gardens.

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"One or Two?": Fertility Decisions After the One-child Policy in China

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ABSTRACT

The one-child policy, as a government-guided family planning and birth control policy, lasted for nearly thirty years beginning in the 1970s. As the decreasing fertility rate in modern Chinese society caused many problems, such as a demographic imbalance, the government decided to establish the universal two-child policy in urban areas in 2015. However, the fertility rate did not rise as much as the government expected. To study the reasons for the continuously low fertility rate, I conducted 20 semi-structured qualitative interviews with 20 young married heterosexual couples in the city of Jinan, Shandong province, China. Throughout this paper, I focus on the role of kinship and the socioeconomic barriers to having a second child in urban Chinese families after the establishment of the two-child policy. The main reasons explaining the unexpected low fertility rate after the universal two-child policy in urban areas are first, increasing cost of investing in children, and second, the lack of interaction with cousins. This research outlines demographic policy and how fertility ideology and family decisions changed through policy changes.

Keywords: child policy; kinship; China; fertility

The elimination of the one-child policy in China in 2013 has challenged existing ideologies of family planning and family structure. The policy not only institutionally regulated individuals' fertility decisions, but also gradually challenged Chinese fertility culture around having multiple children. However, to increase the fertility rate and slow down the aging of the population, it became necessary for the Chinese government to abolish the one-child policy and replace it with a new two-child policy. Yet, young people's conceptions of family likely changed under the influence of the one-child policy over nearly 30 years, raising the question of if and how young families will revise family-planning decisions under the new law. The concept of filial adjustment in Chinese society refers to changes from multiple children to single children at the beginning of the one-child policy among urban families, and the purpose of this paper is to examine people's different attitudes towards family planning and filial adjustment in urban areas by doing qualitative interviews with young urban couples in the process of family planning. The research question is therefore: what considerations do young couples in urban China make when facing filial adjustment while considering family planning under the new two-child policy?

Drawing on theories of family and fertility, I suggest that changes in line with the Demographic Transition Model (Hanks, 2019), socioeconomic concerns and cultural changes are potential influences on young urban couples' choices regarding fertility and the number of planned children in modern urban China. This research aims to complement demographic research that may guide further population policy in the future. To begin, I provide background on China's one- and two-child policies, and then I briefly discuss the differences in urban and rural areas with regards to these policies. Second, I review two possible considerations that young couples make when they are thinking about their fertility and the reason why using qualitative methods rather than quantitative methods is necessary when studying fertility-related research. Third, I present the qualitative research methods that I used. I then analyze the qualitative data from the ten couples. Finally, I summarize and compare the qualitative data and previous research to draw conclusions from this research.

Background: China's One and Two Child Policies

The most important issue that has affected family planning in China in recent years is the one-child policy. The one-child policy was established in the 1970s to promote economic growth. According to Zhang (2017), in 1969, China's population exceeded 800 million, and economic growth had stagnated. Therefore, China primarily implemented the one-child policy because its excessive population growth was detrimental to economic and social development. This family planning campaign was a success, and China's total fertility rate dropped by half between 1971 and 1978 (Zhang 2017, 141-143). While the population growth rate under the one-child policy was reduced, it also changed the traditional family structure and created a sex ratio imbalance with over 10 percent excess male births in the population (Feng, Gu and Cai 2016, 83-86). The traditional family structure and concepts of family were challenged, and people's desires and attitudes towards childbirth changed. Further, although per capita income has increased, the aging population has also become a serious concern (Feng, Gu and Cai 2016, 83-86).

Because the one-child policy has brought about these negative effects of demographic imbalances, the Chinese government decided to abolish the one-child policy in October 2015, and they established the universal two-child policy to replace it (Zeng and Hesketh 2016, 1930-1933). The two-child policy states that in rural areas, if the first child of a family is a girl, then they can have a second child. In cities, families can have two children regardless of the

gender of the first child (Zeng and Hesketh 2016, 1930-1938). However, the universal two-child policy has not had the expected impact on the population structure in China. According to Li et al. (2019), scholars estimated that the fertility rate would be 2.1 children per family after the new policy, but it was only 1.8 children per family – far lower than anticipated. Therefore, evidence suggests that fertility policy alone cannot explain family planning decisions in China.

However, the importance of doing qualitative research on fertility decisions was seldom discussed by researchers in China. Although quantitative research directly showed the demographic flows, the reasons why fertility rates change were often ignored. Commenting on family planning in Italy, Krause (2012, 362) argues that "The truth of the matter may be that this narrow conceptualization of human behavior—in leaving out emotions, desires, and ideologies—exposes the limits of a paradigm." The reason for doing qualitative research on fertility decisions is to delve into the stories and experiences behind the quantitative data. Krause's study of fertility in Chinese contexts also pointed out the significance of challenging the rationality of quantitative research. The cultural logic and rationale of doing qualitative research is that, according to Krause (2012), even though both Italy and China faced a declining population for different reasons, the aim of doing demographical qualitative research is to explore reasons for fertility culture change rather than simply defining shifts as 'rational' or 'irrational'. Settles et al.'s research (2013) explains the challenges confronting families after the implementation of the one-child policy through a small in-depth qualitative study. This research qualitatively explores the challenges behind the demographic changes that occurred after the one-child policy was implemented and its potential problems associated with education and childcare. Ultimately, both Krause (2012) and Settles et al.'s (2013) research highlights the importance of doing qualitative research within the context of fertility research.

Deutsch's research (2006) explored fertility decisions and family planning through ethnographic research among the first cohort born under the one-child policy. Deutsh mainly interpreted how the one-child policy changed notions of filial piety and patrilineality in traditional Chinese families. (Deutsh 2006). Short et al. (2001) use qualitative methods to explore the changes within traditional Chinese families under the one-child policy. According to Short et al. (2001, 918), "the in-depth interviews provide detailed information on caring for children, including the importance of caregiver involvement and how and why care varies for different children." Ulimately, qualitative research highlights the detailed differences and perceptions of individuals, and it provides researchers with multiple angles to explore the detailed perspectives of each participant.

Potential Explanations for Low Birth Rates Under the Two-child Policy

Various demographic theories suggest that China's economic growth would have reduced fertility rates independent of the one-child policy. Demographic Transition Model (DTM) countries develop from one demographic stage to the next over time as certain social and economic forces influence birth and mortality rates (Hanks 2019). Weintraub (1962) discovered that the relationship between the birth rate and per capita income is thought to be negative; it is normal for the birth rate of the population to decrease when a society experiences an economic growth, according to the third stage of the DTM.. Specifically, in the third stage of this model, due to the improvement of economic conditions, the improvement of women's status and access to contraceptive measures, the birth rate gradually decreases (Hanks 2019). Most developing countries are in Stage 3, where the growth rate of the population is low while population growth continues more slowly. As Kirk (1996) explains, China is currently in Stage 3, marked by wealthier small families in cities and increasing industrialization, leading to an increase in the cost of raising children at the same time as the possibility of children contributing economically declines within the household. According to Cai (2010), the year 1970 marks a point in time when the national fertility rate would have entered a continuous

downward trend due to the DTM, and in 1979, China implemented the one-child birth control policy. Therefore, it is challenging to disentangle what effect the one-child policy had on fertility rates independent of natural demographic trends. Specifically, after the two-child policy was established, the fertility rate remained low in Chinese society (Li, Zhou and Jia 2019, 183-203). This phenomenon is in line with what the DTM would suggest when there is no absent fertility policy and demographic transition flows naturally. However, the DTM could only predict the natural population flow. The one-child policy thus artificially and swiftly decreased the fertility rate, which created a unique process which is different from how the birth rate naturally diminishes at certain demographic stages. The influences behind the policy and model are worth studying in this research.

The DTM suggests that a downturn in a country's birth rate is related to social development, especially economic growth. Raising a child also became more expensive in urban China throughout this time period. As Cheng and Maxim (1992) explain, as a society develops, it tends to experience increasing urbanization, and industrial production gradually replaces agricultural production. A society's economy is no longer based on agriculture, and the working units shift to the signing of labor contracts between employees and enterprises. According to Zhang (2017), in the 1960s and 1970s, South Korea, Mexico, Thailand, and India had a slower decline in fertility rates than Chinese cities, but by 2010 their fertility rates were as low as China. This suggests that similarly situated developing countries experienced a natural decrease in birth rates without the one-child policy. Therefore, in the initial stage of introducing fertility policies, the one-child policy reduced China's fertility rate, but in the long run, the main reason for the decline in China's fertility rate may be social and economic development, not government policies.

More specifically, as the proportion of traditional agriculture in the economy decreases, the demand for labor is greatly reduced. Consequently, the requirements for the quality of labor are higher, so the financial investment in training the next generation is also higher, especially with education. Qian and Smyth (2011, 3392), drawing on a 2005 article in the *People's Daily* newspaper, reported that expenditure on children's education was the top reason for poverty among urban and rural Chinese. Increasing the number of children in the family means that the financial output for children is substantially higher. For instance, according to Qian & Smyth (2011), when the second child in the family reaches school age, a family's education expenditure will increase by 95%. If the second child reaches secondary school, then the family's education expenditure will double. Therefore, even if the country starts to implement the universal two-child policy in urban areas, because the cost of raising children is so high, Chinese families may still choose to have only one child or no children at all.

Several gaps in the theoretical and empirical literature emerge regarding the shift from the one-child policy to the two-child policy. Here, I focus on a major research gap regarding the unknown reason(s) why the two-child policy has not yet raised the fertility rate as anticipated. Although the DTM showed that the fertility rate will decrease naturally, it does not take into consideration cultural factors when exploring modern Chinese society. A lower fertility rate highlighted the effects of government-guided fertility policy in Chinese society, and quantitative research could only show the statistical results of the low fertility rate. However, low fertility rates among young couples in urban areas did not explain the formation of the small family culture which means the family size decreases when compared with traditional family sizes in the past. To further understand how young couples make fertility decisions under the two-child policy in Jinan, qualitative research is necessary to explore the nuanced reasons that the one-child policy influenced fertility decisions over a long period.

Methods

This research study used in-depth, semi-structured interviews with ten couples living in the city of Jinan, Shandong province, China, who are currently in the process of family planning

under the new two-child policy. My semi-structured interviews were open-ended interviews that provided some structure while allowing new ideas to be brought up during an interview because of things participants say organically (Watson 2015).

The combination of structure and flexibility in the interviews not only provides reliable information and a logical structure but also space for exploring ideas that had not been previously considered by the researcher. Semi-structured interviews also focus on lived experiences and can address theoretically-driven concerns of interest (Galletta 2013). Importantly, semi-structured interviews allow for participants' engagement during the interview. According to Firestone (1987), social phenomena are not entirely explained by logical causality like natural phenomena are. It is thus difficult to strictly control for variables when studying social and cultural phenomena. The advantage of this type of qualitative research is therefore that knowledge can be obtained through descriptive research and direct interviews to elucidate theoretical explanations (Firestone 1987, 16-18). The ways that modern urban Chinese families make decisions about fertility and family planning under the new policy are unclear when understood solely through statistics, and qualitative interviews are best suited to help fill this gap given their flexibility.

The study population of this project consisted of ten young, married, heterosexual couples who are both only children. Some couples did not have children but planned to have their first child in next two years, while others already had one child, and/or were planning to have their second child in the next two years. These groups were selected as the target population because young, married couples were likely to have the highest probability of actively and purposefully considering their fertility decisions. The sample was limited to heterosexual, married couples because social norms in China mean that same-sex and non-married parenting is very rare. Moreover, homosexual couples are not allowed to marry and have children in China at present. Of the ten couples I interviewed, two couples already have a second child, two couples have no children yet, and six couples have one child and have decided not to have the second one within the next three years. Interviews were conducted separately with each partner in public places for about an hour to allow for freedom of expression and any gender differences to emerge without influence from the other partner. Participants from all socioeconomic backgrounds and statuses were encouraged to participate to maximize the diversity of the sample.

I recruited participants by asking existing contacts in my social network to put me in touch with potential participants, in person or via social media. I also asked existing participants if they could suggest other potential participants (snowball sampling). In the end, due to limitations of time, all participants were recruited through contacts in one large workplace.

The interview guide contained five main thematic sections. First, I collected general background and demographic information, including questions about the participants' demographics, their family of origin, and their childhood. Second, I asked about participants' relationships with their partner. Third, I asked about socioeconomic influences on fertility decisions in relation to the first and second mechanisms proposed in the literature review, including the DTM and how policy changes culture through daily practices. Fourth, I probed participants' opinions on the one-child and two-child policies. This part of the interview aimed to examine the connection between policies and fertility culture among the couples from the single-child generation. Fifth, I asked about interpersonal influences on the participants' fertility choices, focusing on family and peer pressure on fertility decisions. While the interview guide was divided into these categories, I also allowed the interviews to flow naturally and for participants to bring up other topics that they felt affected their fertility decisions.

I audio-recorded all interviews, while taking notes about the participants' nonverbal cues. I transcribed the interviews verbatim and entered the transcripts and notes into the qualitative data analysis software NVivo. I took

an inductive approach to coding because the study is exploratory, and thus, the codebook was constructed based on the findings after doing the interviews (Deterding and Waters 2018). To analyze them, I used multiple rounds of coding. Specifically, the coding process started with descriptive coding, and then I coded iteratively to generate thematic codes. All coding used the qualitative coding software in NVivo.

Prior to beginning the study, I obtained approval from Dalhousie University's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board. In line with Canada's Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS2) expectations, the risk to participants was minimal because it would not exceed the risks they experience in their daily lives in relation to this topic (Government of Canada 2018). There was a small risk that the interviews and collection of sensitive data would cause some negative emotions in participants, especially, for instance, if fertility had been challenging for them. However, since participants knew the purpose of the study before agreeing to participate, they were expecting questions about fertility. Participants could also skip questions, take a break, stop the whole interview, or withdraw their data, without consequences.

Reproducing Childhood Kinship Experiences

From the macro perspective, the traditional concept of kinship influences the couples' fertility decisions. However, family interaction also plays a vital role in the micro perspective of making fertility decisions. In this section, my analysis will focus on how kinship relations and childhood experiences have influenced fertility decisions. According to the interviews, fertility decisions from young couples are partially related to their experiences of family interactions in their childhood. Hence, a couple's fertility decisions and preferences refer to their past family and kinship relations which means a couple's enculturation into a particular family structure and existing kin relations impacts fertility decisions.

Participants discussed two main issues related to kinship relations. On the one hand, they focused on the child-parent interaction, citing issues of the "spoiled child" under the one -child policy as the main reason that they would like to have a second child. Helping their first child to practice engaging with peers and socialization with family relations is an additional consideration. On the other hand, parents' experiences in childhood with other peers or family, for example their cousins, influenced their fertility preferences. Whether they had peers or not when growing up had a significant impact on further fertility relations among young couples. Participants unconsciously choose to reproduce their childhood family experience in their current family relationship. Childhood kinship experiences with cousins are a core issue when making fertility decisions. Interview data showed that participants with closer relationships with their cousins in their childhood prefer to have a second child in their own family. Cao, who had a close relationship with his cousin, said that:

> When my daughter said she wanted a little brother or sister to hang out with during the holidays, it reminded me of my childhood experience with my cousin. We both lived with our grandparents together, and the happiest experience with my cousin was after school when we went home together talking about our days. Also, Spring Festival and other traditional festivals were also interesting together. I immediately understood my daughter's feeling when she asked for a little brother or sister.

Parents would like to create the best conditions for their children to grow up in, especially in their own family. When their parents have positive memories of their own kinship experiences and consider them to be enjoyable, they often want their children to have the same experiences. A second child could have the same function as a close cousin that helps children to socialize and have company with peers; this is enjoyable based on their parents' past experiences.

However, participants without close relationships with their cousins when growing up made the opposite decision when talking

about having a second child. Some of my interviewees argued that growing up alone benefitted them. According to my informant, Zhang, "The one-child policy benefits me a lot. I enjoy fully using our family resources by myself. Growing up with my grandparents without cousins makes me happy too. My grandparents really like me because I'm the single child in our family." Zhang and Cao had distinctive experiences in their childhoods. Zhang also told me, "I only want one child in our family… I enjoy spending time alone and with my grandparents. Also, I don't have closer cousins when growing up because my parents divorced and our relatives did not often visit each other." These experiences suggest that participants reproduce their childhood experiences when considering the next generation. Even though some of them did not recognize the reproduction of their childhood experience when making fertility decisions, it still became a major issue when choosing whether to have a second child.

Whether or not people considered their childhood experiences to have benefitted their lives, this influenced fertility decisions for the single-child generation. Some of the participants claim this aspect as their "personal preference;" however, their fertility decision still stems from childhood experiences of kinship under the one-child policy. According to my participant Xia who already has one child, "I would not consider to have a second child even though my wife disagrees with me. I was not close to my cousins when growing up. Even though I enjoy being a single child in family, sometimes still want to experience childhood life with peers." Past experiences of having cousins did not benefit him as a child. In this circumstance, fertility decisions are all about personal preference, and reproducing childhood experiences that benefits the participants. Interviewees who had closer relationships with their cousins wanted the next generation to experience the same joy and happiness that they had in their childhood. Similarly, people who benefitted from having no cousins in their childhood create a family environment that benefits their child the most according to their past experiences.

All of the couples in my study agree that they want to give the best living conditions and life experiences that they can to their child. However, their perspectives on what these best conditions are are limited based on their own experiences. Although they considered their past experiences to be beneficial to them, they have not experienced different family situations. For example, participants without a closer cousin may not consider whether having a cousin in childhood would have had a better or different impact on their own development. Therefore, in this case, they will give the child the option that they think is the best based on their experience. However, some interviewees like Di and her husband did not express their children's feelings or preferences. So, they applied ideal assumptions to their children's childhood experiences based on their own experiences. The impact of the one-child policy is subtle when making fertility decisions. Even if the participant denies the cultural and familial impact of the one-child policy, it still influences the experiences of kinship and family relations, in turn influencing fertility decision-making.

Ideals of Child Rearing

Not only did the participants rely on their past experiences to make fertility decisions, but they also had their own expectations of fertility and how to better educate the next generation. There are two things that interviewees cited as necessary to successfully raise their child and to prepare for school. First, participants cited socialization within family interactions with peers as important, including learning to share with and respect other people. Parents seek to prevent their child from being bossy like a "little emperor" or "little princess." Second, parents wanted to keep their child from being lonely. One of my participants, Song, stated that, "since me and my husband are both doctors, we are very busy working at the hospital every day. If we only have one child in our family, he/she will lack company in daily life." When parents talked about the loneliness of the single child, they always mean a lack of company when their children are growing up. These two reasons for having the second child were frequently mentioned by my participants.

The idea of the "little emperor" or "little princess" was commonly used during the one-child policy period by media and newspapers (Chung, Holdsworth, Li and Fam 2009). It refers to the spoiled single child in the family. There are two reasons why a spoiled child is called a "little emperor" or "little princess." On the one hand, these terms were used to describe the poor temperament of a single child, attributed to over-attention from the grandparents and parents. Single children also tend to receive all the family resources, and parents tried their best to satisfy their needs as long as they were not too excessive. This made the single child think that they deserved all the of family resources as a matter of course. Once they failed to get what they wanted, they would show their spoiled temperament to help them garner more family resources.

The benefits of having a second child from the parents' point of view includes the ability to socialize their child through family interactions to prevent them from behaving like a "little emperor/princess." Having another child in their family can accomplish this. According to Cao:

> My daughter always asks me when her little brother or little sister will be born. She feels excited to have a sibling in our family because I have been pregnant for about seven months. Some of her classmates also have siblings, and I talked to their parents about educating and socializing our child in family interactions. It actually helps children to get a sense of sharing.

Cao is not the only interviewee who mentioned sharing and socializing in the interview. Other participants also have the same concern about a single child's socialization. According to Song:

> Even though I currently don't have children right now, I still don't want my child to be like a 'little emperor/princess' as the media showed. For me, the sense of sharing and respect for other people is the most important quality that I would like to teach to my children. Having two children means I could easily teach them the sense of sharing in family life and allow them to more easily get along with classmates in school.

However, parents also worry about the relationship between two children in a family. When planning fertility, they not only consider the socialization needs of children, but the mental wellness of the next generation.

Loneliness of the One-child Generation

Eight out of ten interviewees put much attention on their child's loneliness as a single child. According to Song, "As I mentioned in our previous questions, having two children is not only important for me to learn new things with my kids, but also for my children, so they could accompany with each other in the future." Growing up with peers both prevents children from being lonely and helps them socialize at an early age through family interaction. Di and her husband said:

> To ensure the mental well-being of our kid. Having a second child is necessary for the first one. Remembering my childhood experience, I always felt lonely when I went home from school. I don't want my children to experience the same thing as I did. Also, me and my husband are busy working so there is less time for us to stay with them. At least they can accompany each other.

Ideally, eight out of the ten couples preferred to have a second child not only because they want to, but also to help with the education and socialization of their first child. To provide their children a good environment for socialization is a core component of raising them before they attend school. The ideology of sharing and respecting others was frequently mentioned by the interviewees. Meanwhile, the mental health, especially the loneliness, of a single child is also a significant aspect of successfully raising a child. However, there is a prerequisite for fulfilling these wishes – that is, the financial status of every family.

Discussion

The conflict over the one-child policy's repeal centers mainly on the conflict between ideals and practical issues. Although all participants

grew up in a one-child culture, the close interaction with cousins created a similar upbringing to the non-one-child generation. This factor makes them believe that having the second child is necessary for the next generation when they are growing up. However, practical issues such as the increasing cost of education and cost of living have forced them to give up their vision of having a second child. These realities can often overcome participants' inner desire for a second child, as they are unwilling to lower either their standards pertaining to education or living conditions.

Having a second child is the ideal situation for most participants. Almost all participants who had close relationship with their cousin showed their willingness to have the second child after the two-child policy. According to the interviews, the results revealed two reasons that the desire for a second child was cited among eight of the ten couples. First, childhood relationships with cousins played a role in instigating fertility decisions. The participants who had closer interactions with their cousins in daily family activities preferred to have a second child in their own family. This factor seems to be predicated more upon personal desires than kinship relations. In fact, an individual's kinship relation is hardly influenced by the environment. According to the different attitudes between participants who grew up with cousins and without cousins, their preference of having a second child relies on their past family interaction with their cousin rather than their parents' expectation of having many children in their own family. Only one of the participants mentioned that their fertility decision relies more on their energy, free time, and economic condition rather than other external aspects such as how many children their peers and colleagues have or how many children their parents think is perfect for a family.

The second factor affecting the preference of having how many children a family has is the traditional perspective of having multiple children in Chinese society. Obeying the traditional ideology of Chinese fertility culture, people first considered the possibility of having a second child rather than only having one child under the two-child policy. Traditionally, having multiple children in a family is a normal phenomenon which influenced participants' fertility decision culturally.

Even though most of the participants showed their desire for a second child, my results show why the fertility rate did not rise as expected after the establishment of the two-child policy. There are two major barriers to having a second child according to my interviews. First, the increasing cost of children's education became a major issue for parents to consider when deciding whether to have a second child. Parents did not want to lower the second child's investment in education and preferred to give both children the same opportunity to get an education. The financial condition of their family might not be able to support both children to get a great education. The main reason for this is the cost of investing in both children, especially in urban areas. Parents not only spend money but also energy and time on their children. Even though their financial condition may have improved through economic growth, the cost of raising children has grown over the years. For a single child, there is no competition within the family which means no matter how terrible the financial condition is, the child will get the best educational investment. However, a family deciding to have a second child, according to the previous quotes from the participants, would prefer not to lower the standard of educational investment for the second child. Interviewees would rather sacrifice their own needs to pay for a child's education. So, in this circumstance, only wealthy families can easily make the decision to have the second child. However, as the participants in this snowball sample were already financially well off compared to the majority of people in Jinan, the fertility rate after the two-child policy will not increase as quickly as the government expected. The major concerns of having second children for parents are time investment and the financial consequences of raising them. Since the participants in this study are considered economically well off compared to the majority of people in Jinan, they decided not to have second children because of cost and the fact that it will reduce the first child's quality of life.

The second reason why the fertility rate did not rise after two-child policy was initiated is that, even though young couples saw the one-child policy as a temporary interruption and a necessity, inflation and the rising cost of education meant that the reality and the ideal could not be reconciled. In these circumstances, the fertility rate after the two-child policy will not show an increasing trend if the cost of raising a child does not change. The one-child policy does not change the cultural concept of how many children are best in a family, but on the contrary, it changes the cultural concept of what constitutes an appropriate investment in children. Unsurprisingly, all ten couples were willing to sacrifice their daily spending to invest in their children's education. Na and her husband both agreed that “taking extra courses outside of school is necessary. I would like to buy fewer clothes or accessories and put the money into the extra curriculum activities for my kid, no matter one or two.” No matter how many children a family has, parents are willing to guarantee the same opportunity in education for the next generation.

The reason why the participants kept talking about the educational investment for the next generation is shown in the DTM. In Stage 3 of the DTM, improved economic conditions result from improved access to education and, therefore, educated workers. According to one of my participants, Xin, “the cost of raising one child is 40% of the family income.” Qian and Smyth (2011) claim that the requirements for quality labor are increasing and so are the costs to produce quality labor, such as education, which is passed on to the families. Wahlberg (2020) claims that ideologically, previous generations understood having more children as a cultural responsibility, whereas the one-child policy turned that ideology upside down by insisting that having only one child was now the more responsible action. Cultural and social norms are often elusive. People are not always aware of how their thinking has shifted or has been shifted by the dominant message. According to the DTM, China is currently in Stage 3; wealthier smaller families and increased industrialization support this conclusion (Kirk 1996). This model cannot necessarily prove that the one-child policy became a cultural norm that is directly related to the decrease in fertility rate. Ultimately, the interruption of the one-child policy is affecting the normal DTM prediction of fertility rates.

Even though the interview data tracks most closely with the DTM, it is impossible to conclude from a small qualitative study if the demographic change truly caused changes in fertility. The DTM suggests that after Stage 3, the fertility rate will naturally experience a downturn because of the developing economy. Similarly, the purpose of establishing the two-child policy after 2015 was to encourage couples to have more children because the fertility rate had declined below replacement levels during the one-child policy. Even though Stage 3 of the DTM showed a downturn in the fertility rate, the one-child policy had a large impact on China’s decreased birth rate during the 1970s. At the same time, the DTM would suggest the same decline even without policy interventions, which means the population will naturally decline, whether the government implements the one-child policy or not. Because the one-child policy began at a time when other social factors were contributing to change, it is impossible to know whether it can claim any responsibility for fertility rates or was merely one factor in the reduced birth rate.

Furthermore, the theory that the one-child policy changed Chinese culture is not supported by my analysis. Culturally, the one-child policy gave couples a common understanding that having a single child was normative for the current generation. Although some of the interviewees claimed that they are a “traditional” person, they were still not willing to have a second child. Financially, the conflict between the ideal and reality manifested in the way family financial conditions influenced their willingness to have the second child in their family; in other words, it changed the culture of childrearing. The policy not only provided a common cultural understanding that having a single child is normal among young couples, but also contributed to the higher expense associated with raising a child in an urban family. The current situation does not match the theory of how policy influenced culture because eight of the young couples decided not to have their second child within two years.

However, for the filial adjustment theory, no participants regarded this as an important factor when making fertility decisions. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, fertility decisions were more about family financial conditions and personal preferences. Since all participants were able to support their own family, couples' opinions seem less influential than participants' own consideration of themselves and their own family.

While the research design is supported by qualitative data and theories, there are three limitations of my qualitative research. First, the sample size of this research is small. Compared to previous researchers, this study only interviewed ten couples which is not representative enough to show the trend of the entire country and population. Second, this research only focused on Shandong province, which is not representative of the whole country. The province is located in a relatively rich area, although it is not the richest area in China. In richer areas like Beijing and Shanghai, the financial pressure of owning an apartment and investing in children is much greater than in Shandong province, potentially creating additional pressures on parents. Thus, from a socio-economic point of view, the probability of having a second child is likely higher in Shandong province compared to Beijing and Shanghai, but lower than in some less expensive cities. Third, due to the snowball sampling method of recruiting interview participants, eight out of ten the couples in this sample were collected from a single workplace. Almost all couples have a relatively high income compared to most people in Jinan. This also makes the data not representative enough of the whole country's population, or even the entire city's.

Further research thus needs to be conducted among a larger sample population and should cover all income levels, not only in Shandong province. To ensure the results can be more representative for a larger population, the data collection process should not only use snowball sampling in future research. Despite these limitations, my research has highlighted the cultural interpretations of government policy and the potential reasons for lower fertility rates for high income people in Chinese society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, what does this research suggest about the demographic trends in China in the post- one-child policy era? This research showed two factors of concern for couples making their fertility decisions. The first factor centered upon the reproduction of kinship relationships from childhood experiences. The second was related to socio-economic factors impacting fertility, including apartment ownership and investment in children's education. To study the fertility decisions in the whole country, the economic growth of a certain area should be one of the core aspects under consideration. From the government and policy-maker point of view, mandatory fertility policies such as the one-child policy will only lead to an unbalanced demographic structure. The government should consider a more comprehensive policy on fertility instead of focusing on the rapid decline of fertility. Moreover, from the governmental point of view, an important intervention to encourage couples to have a second child will be to increase subsidies for young couples proportional to the number of children, control the rising price of owning an apartment, and increase the quality and affordability of education for children. Even though the ideology from the one-child policy era will not be easily changed by establishing the two-child policy in a short period of time, it will continuously influence the next generation's fertility decisions when society gradually solves the problem of high educational investment and housing prices.

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