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Physical Activity in Two Low-Income Detroit Neighborhoods: Disentangling Human Agency from Social Structure

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This article explores strategies developed by African American residents in response to barriers to physical activity in two low-income Detroit neighborhoods. Using 47 in-depth, qualitative interviews, a grounded theory approach allowed the analysis to be reframed around the ways in which structural factors conditioned, but did not determine the human agency of residents seeking physical activity. Interviews revealed numerous responses to structural barriers such as devising home routines, cognitive mapping to avoid perceived threats, and leaving the neighborhood to access resources. Differences in neighborhood contexts, along with unique individual concerns, showed that agency was neither a constant nor independent force, but rather was partially constituted by structural conditions, culture, and other factors.

Keywords: Physical Activity, Human Agency, Urban Neighborhoods, African-American, Qualitative Research, Grounded Theory
Introduction

Physical inactivity is an important risk factor for chronic disease (Booth et al., 2011). In Detroit, Michigan, the percentage of people engaging in adequate levels of physical activity (defined as doing moderate physical activities for at least 30 minutes on five or more days per week or vigorous physical activities for at least 20 minutes on three or more days per week) is lower (44.9%) than the state of Michigan overall (50.6%) (Anderson et al., 2009). Having no leisure-time physical activity is also higher in Detroit (31.9%) than the state overall (23.1%) (Anderson et al., 2009). Following Mayo’s (1992) study of working Black women, the use of the term “physical activity” can include both routine physical activities necessary for daily living and consciously planned exercise. In marginalized populations, the distinction between physical activity and exercise can become blurred, as numerous studies have shown that low-income individuals get more physical activity outside of “leisure” time compared to the more affluent (Bauman et al., 2011; Chaufan et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2018).

Several researchers have argued that at-risk individuals need to take personal responsibility for changing their physical activity and exercise habits (Dailey et al., 2006; Egan et al., 2012; Miller & Marolen, 2012; Rippe, 1996). In popular media, the argument that health is primarily an individual achievement is widespread, ignoring structural conditions that impact choices about physical activity (Hodgetts et al., 2005; Kim & Willis, 2007). However, in many Detroit neighborhoods, the barriers to engaging in physical activity are profound. In this article, I explore the obstacles faced by African American residents of two Detroit neighborhoods and the strategies they develop to engage in physical activity. I use a grounded theory approach to explore the following research questions: what resources and barriers to physical activity do residents view as salient, and how do those influence their decisions, actions, and routines?

Little is known about what residents actually do when faced with structural constraints. Grounded theory is well suited to exploring the role of agency within these environments. It allows for the identification of concepts and themes and the development of theory to fit those emerging ideas (Corbin &
Strauss, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). By framing and re-framing this research around the enactment of agency, I attempt to provide a more holistic understanding of physical activity in two Detroit neighborhoods. Building on Blacksher and Lovasi’s (2012) call for “taking agency seriously” in neighborhood studies, I move past cataloguing perceptions and preferences to fill an important gap by highlighting the innovative and adaptive strategies that emerge from human agency.

Background

Neighborhood Social Environment

In relation to physical activity, researchers have explored several facets of the “built environment,” defined by Weich et al. (2001) as “the characteristics of places that cannot be reduced to the characteristics of the people who live there” (p. 284). A systematic review of literature on improvements to the built environment showed mixed results, with inconsistent effects on walking and some increases in bicycling (Stappers et al., 2018). Another study examining sidewalk improvements showed statistically insignificant increases in walking (Knell et al., 2018). Owen et al. (2018) found neighborhood environments had mixed effects in data from 12 sites in 10 countries, specifically noting that street connectivity reduced sedentary time, while other seemingly positive attributes like pedestrian infrastructure and safety, as well as lack of barriers to walking, actually increased sedentary time. Incorporating race and social class to studies of the built environment can illuminate some broader structural patterns. In one study, sidewalks in block groups populated predominantly by African Americans had 38 times more unevenness, 15 times more obstructions, and 12 times more physical disorder (Kelly et al., 2007). Fewer free-for-use physical activity resources, such as parks and recreational facilities, are available in low-income and high-minority neighborhoods (Moore et al., 2008; Wolch et al., 2005).

These disparate resources have impacts on physical activity. Communities with fewer physical activity resources have lower levels of physical activity and higher proportions of obese residents (Roux & Mair, 2010). Better street lighting and cleaner
streets have been linked to increased physical activity (Addy et al., 2004; Taylor et al., 2007). Threats prevalent in the social environments of low-income, African American neighborhoods also have an impact. Residents exposed to disproportionate levels of crime, unattended dogs, and neighbors they perceive as untrustworthy get less physical activity (Sallis et al., 2007; Strong et al., 2013; Wilson et al., 2004), while examinations of neighborhood structural factors have found mixed results; linking these factors to race and social class offers some clarity.

The Importance of Human Agency

Despite the value of these structural analyses, an exclusive focus on macro-level influences on health behaviors risks overlooking an important component in the process: agency. Giddens (1979) argued that social actors are knowledgeable and capable of acting in creative and innovative ways that can become widespread. Rather than constraining agency, he saw structure as enabling and conditioning agency. Giddens argues in his theory of duality that structure and agency are not opposing forces, but rather are mutually constituted. Archer (1990) criticizes this conception by pointing out the relative autonomy of agency in relation to structure and calling for separate examination of their causal powers. While social actors have the capacity to pursue infinite responses to the challenges of doing physical activity, Emirbayer and Mische (1998) argue that Kantian free will is never completely independent of the influence of social context. Still, Archer (2003) points out that any policymaking effort must connect to the projects and desires of agents. So while agency and structure might be neither mutually constituted nor autonomous forces, the dialectic between them is one with real consequences for planned and lived spaces in urban communities.

Agency and Physical Activity

Research that specifically links agency to health behaviors is an important area for development. Black women in focus groups have identified strategies to reduce sedentary behavior, including finding ways to build movement into primarily stationary desk jobs, enlisting social support from friends and family, and using physical activity as a means to reduce
stress (Warren et al., 2018). Mayo (1992) found that while both environmental and personal factors influenced physical activity patterns among Black women, complex coping strategies were needed to maintain active routines. While these links between human agency and physical activity are important, researchers have not sufficiently studied this relationship in the context of neighborhood environments. As Schulz and Lempert (2004) argue in their ethnography of the ways in which Detroit neighborhoods affect health, “understanding the nature of inequalities and the strategies residents devise to address them are likely to be central to our understanding of, and societal efforts to eliminate, racial disparities in health” (p. 437).

Methods

To address the research questions, I used semi-structured, in-depth interviews from 47 residents in two Detroit communities: one in the near-northwestern part of the city known as Dexter, and the other on the lower-east side known as East Lafayette. I refer to the neighborhoods by their real names, but I use pseudonyms for all participants. I selected the two neighborhoods based on their compositional similarities and infrastructural differences. Both had approximately 40% poverty rates among residents and high school graduation rates ranging from approximately 70-80% (see Table 1). Dexter contains much older buildings, parks, and infrastructure from the 1910s and 1920s. East Lafayette was mostly demolished and rebuilt after being targeted for “Urban Renewal” in the 1950s and 1960s.
The Dexter neighborhood in near-northwestern Detroit is comprised of five contiguous census tracts, all of which contain similar neighborhood environments and demographic characteristics. The residential units are a mix of duplexes, apartments, and single-family homes. On the western edge of the neighborhood, Interstate-96 forms a difficult-to-traverse physical barrier. Before its construction, 15 streets at the western edge of the neighborhood went from the neighborhood into communities to the west. Today, 13 of those streets now end at the interstate. Only two streets and two pedestrian bridges cross the 1.96 mile stretch. The neighborhood contains six small “pocket” parks within it. Most of the parks contain damaged and outdated equipment, although the city has recently updated the

Table 1. Neighborhood Population and Poverty, High School Graduation Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Tracts</th>
<th>Individual Poverty Rate</th>
<th>High School Degree or Above</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dexter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tract 1</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tract 2</td>
<td>33.1%</td>
<td>71.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tract 3</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
<td>77.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tract 4</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
<td>71.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tract 5</td>
<td>33.1%</td>
<td>69.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Lafayette</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tract 1</td>
<td>52.7%</td>
<td>77.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tract 2</td>
<td>39.0%</td>
<td>82.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tract 3</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
<td>75.9%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Data are 5-year estimates from the American Community Survey. Poverty estimated based on income in the last 12 months. High School Degree attainment measured for adults aged 25 and older (including equivalency).

Settings

Dexter. The Dexter neighborhood in near-northwestern Detroit is comprised of five contiguous census tracts, all of which contain similar neighborhood environments and demographic characteristics. The residential units are a mix of duplexes, apartments, and single-family homes. On the western edge of the neighborhood, Interstate-96 forms a difficult-to-traverse physical barrier. Before its construction, 15 streets at the western edge of the neighborhood went from the neighborhood into communities to the west. Today, 13 of those streets now end at the interstate. Only two streets and two pedestrian bridges cross the 1.96 mile stretch. The neighborhood contains six small “pocket” parks within it. Most of the parks contain damaged and outdated equipment, although the city has recently updated the
playground in one small park and added a basketball court in another. The nearest city recreation center includes weightlifting, boxing, a swimming pool, a horseshoe pit, and a dancing room, but it is located 1.5 miles east of the neighborhood’s center. There are no other major gyms, fitness centers, or major physical activity resources in the neighborhood.

The vast majority (approximately 97%) of neighborhood residents identify as Black or African American. Individual poverty rates are approximately 40% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). A number of abandoned houses, apartments, and storefronts have been demolished and cleared while others await renovation or demolition. Urban prairies of tall grass, weeds, wildflowers, and trees grow unchecked on many lots. Although the population has declined, many blocks are still filled with sturdy homes and occupied by residents of varying economic status.

East Lafayette. I selected the East Lafayette neighborhood in the lower-east section of Detroit for comparison with Dexter. Massive urban renewal projects near Downtown Detroit began after World War II (Sugrue, 2014). These displaced thousands of residents and altered the built environment of East Lafayette significantly compared to Dexter. There are virtually no boarded up buildings or urban prairies in East Lafayette. Newer apartments, townhouses, and condominiums comprise the residential stock of East Lafayette today. In contrast to Dexter’s infrastructure, better maintained sidewalks, crosswalks, streetlights, and parks serve the residents of East Lafayette. It is home to one of the city’s largest recreation centers, which boasts the city’s largest public swimming pool, a football field, basketball courts, racquetball courts, and other amenities. The Downtown YMCA sits 1.4 miles from the neighborhood’s center. Residents in East Lafayette can also take advantage of their close proximity to many of the city’s recently developed riverfront parks and greenways.

Despite these differences, East Lafayette and Dexter have nearly identical poverty rates of approximately 40% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). The population also consists mainly of people who identify as Black or African American (94%). These settings offer an opportunity to compare agency and physical activity among individuals of similar demographic backgrounds in two distinct neighborhood environments.
Interviews

I designed the interviews to elicit detailed information about individual lives, neighborhoods, typical physical activities, and health-related experiences. These interviews were face-to-face and consisted of open-ended questions. When I began interviewing, I had three broad areas of inquiry. I attempted to develop rapport and get to know participants (“Tell me a little about yourself.”) I then asked about their neighborhoods (“How long have you lived in this neighborhood? What is it like there?”), and physical activities (“What kind of physical activities do you typically do? Are there places in this neighborhood you can go for physical activity?”). I transcribed the interviews myself. As resident strategies emerged in the coding of early interviews, I began to focus on how these strategies interacted with structural barriers and developed theory to explain this relationship, as detailed below.

Recruitment

I connected with residents primarily outside of the post offices in both neighborhoods. Post offices offered an opportunity to meet adults from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds. The mix of respondent modes of transportation reflected this diversity: some arrived in personal automobiles, some by foot, and some used public transportation. Twelve of these participants introduced me to other individuals who participated in the study. Hence, the recruitment involved a purposive sample, including personal contact and invitation, as well as snowball sampling. Interviewees chose to speak with me at their homes or local public spaces. Participants had to be at least 18 years of age or older and living in the neighborhoods defined in the settings section below. I received IRB approval to conduct the interviews and paid interviewees 15 dollars for their participation. I informed participants about the purpose of the study, as well as potential risks, and ensured them that they could withdraw at any time and keep their incentive.
Sample

I interviewed 25 Dexter and 22 East Lafayette residents over the course of 13 months. The sample size reflects an effort to develop theoretical coherence and have a robust number of cases to compare the two neighborhood environments. The interview times ranged from 28 minutes to two hours and 45 minutes. The median length was 49 minutes and the mean length was 57 minutes. Participants ranged in age from 18–56. There were 22 men and 25 women. All participants identified as African American, although that was not a requirement to be included in the sample. Of the 47 residents I spoke with, four owned their own homes, 22 were employed at the time of the interview, and 35 had at least a high school education.

Analysis

Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. I supplemented interview transcripts with field notes taken during and after interviews. During the early stages of analysis, I thoroughly reviewed the transcripts and field notes before moving into open coding. Using NVivo data analysis software, I coded all of the interview transcripts and field notes to discern relevant themes and then developed those themes into memos. The first round of coding involved line-by-line identification of categories such as biographical information, neighborhood perceptions, physical activities, and decision-making processes. From there, I used more focused coding to bring together conceptual categories that made sense as grouped themes. These categories initially revolved around gaps in the desires, intentions, and actions of participants. From there, I wrote memos that focused on the decision making process, which led into theoretical coding on barriers, strategies, and the relationship between them. As this theoretical framework emerged, I began to refine theoretical ideas using retroduction, moving from interview data analysis to conceptual reframing (Emerson, 2007; Katz, 1983). As theoretical concerns and conceptual categories emerged, I sought new forms of relevant data regarding the relationship
between neighborhood social environments and strategies for physical activity. This became the basis for a theory of a dialectical relationship between agency and structure in which neighborhoods conditioned, in part, the possibilities of agency. As the only coder of this data, I sought personal communication with other qualitative researchers for some triangulation and scrutiny of relevant codes and emergent categories. Additionally, as the data collection process went on, the interviews showed a dialectical relationship between physical activity agency and structure in neighborhoods that allowed for the development of the theory highlighted in this manuscript.

Results

Participants discussed numerous individual- and neighborhood-level barriers to getting physical activity and exercise. Many employed complex strategies to engage in physical activity, but the potency of these strategies varied, in part, according to neighborhood context. When asked about purposeful routines to improve or maintain health, the majority of interviewees felt that they did not get enough exercise (29 of 47), with the median age of those indicating they did not get enough exercise higher (38) than the median age of those who felt they did or mostly did (33). In this section, I present major findings on the structural constraints residents faced and the strategies developed by those seeking physical activity. I then highlight neighborhood differences.

Structural Constraints

Participants identified a number of neighborhood-level discouragements to both outdoor physical activity generally: dissatisfaction with local parks and recreation facilities, stray dogs and other concerns for personal safety, poorly paved streets and sidewalks, insufficient street lighting, and exercise specifically with regard to lack of access to facilities and equipment.

Sidewalks and streets. David, a 31-year-old living in Dexter, practiced his basketball shot at a hoop on his street, but uneven pavement prevented his engagement in more rigorous game competition: “The street’s messed up. It ain’t leveled off, and it’ll mess up your knees.”
Sharice, an 18 year-old female living in Dexter, discussed the dangers of walking on the sidewalks. She said, “Uh, [they’re] bumpy and crinkled and you can fall anytime...I walk in the streets to avoid them so I won’t fall and my baby won’t fall.” Many of the sidewalks in Dexter were riddled with unevenness, some pushed up by tree roots or cracked, with sunken pavement. Because of the severity of sidewalk problems, Sharice took a different risk by walking in the street with her child. Other Dexter residents indicated feeling forced to walk in the street because of the condition of sidewalks. On the other hand, East Lafayette residents were generally satisfied with the conditions of their newer sidewalks and streets, unless they were walking outside the immediate area.

Crime concerns. Kiara, a 27 year-old who recently moved to the older Dexter neighborhood with her boyfriend and three children, discussed how safety concerns prevent them from pursuing exercise outdoors. She explained,

I do not move around this area that much...It’s just not safe. It’s just—I mean I could walk that park [across the street], but it’s been so much commotion going on and shooting and things. I—we really stay in our box.

While Kiara made efforts to develop an exercise routine in the confines of her home (see below), she indicated that she would exercise outdoors if she lived in a safer area. Besides crime, concerns about safety related to other health risks. Paul, a 54 year-old Dexter resident, described,

There’s a lot of dogs around, you know, people drinking and standing on the corners. It’s unsafe—just unsafe living conditions. You know, health-wise, you’ve got people running around with diseases...Any given day, it’s broken glass and needles and stuff in the street.

Parks and recreation facilities. Almost all respondents were aware of nearby recreational centers, but many felt they were inaccessible or impractical for a number of reasons, such as cost, safety concerns, or lack of child care. Sheila, a 40-year-old cafeteria worker living in East Lafayette, wanted to exercise there, but a lack of child care access prevented her. She elaborated,
They have water aerobics. I was interested in that. That’s 40 dollars for, uh, six weeks...But, what am I gonna do with my son?...[I]f I could take him up there with me and they had a little day care, something that he could go to while I do that, it’d be different. I don’t have nothing to do with him while I go to aerobics...So, I just said, ‘Forget it.’

Neither of the recreation centers serving the two neighborhoods provided childcare. Other, more expensive facilities, such as the YMCA downtown, do provide childcare while members work out.

**Strategies**

Despite the barriers described above, many participants discussed strategies to engage in physical activity. These strategies included developing home exercise routines, leaving the neighborhood, sharing equipment or other resources, and cognitive mapping of threats in order to avoid unsafe areas. Others did significant amounts of physical activity through daily necessities, such as walking, employment, and childcare.

*Developing home exercise routines.* Eleven participants had access to exercise equipment at home. Seven reported using a friend or family member’s workout equipment. Of the participants that did not have any access to home equipment, the vast majority (27 of 29) stated that they wished they did. Learning about the desire for this resource early in the data collection pushed me to reframe and hone in on its importance, especially in light of concerns about neighborhood safety and a lack of other resources. Residents of both neighborhoods devised ways to exercise indoors. Gina, a 31-year-old who recently moved to Dexter, discussed her strategy for exercising when she did not feel safe outdoors. She elaborated,

Gina: I can get my exercise in the house. I climb these stairs. I’ll count ‘em off sometimes till I get to 100.

Dan: 100 steps?

Gina: No, 100 trips up and down! I’m serious! <laughs> I can get a good sweat going!
Kiara also mentioned physical activity at home. Childcare and household chores kept her active even when she felt reluctant to go outside. She even made efforts to develop a home exercise routing by repeatedly walking the length of her one-story flat, saying,

I’ve been thinking about [exercising]. I’ve been saying, ‘That’s what I’m gonna do.’ I started some diet pills, but I’ll just take it and consider the [activities in the] house as my exercise for the day. I’ll get up and just walk this house. I just won’t sit still.

Nolan, a 40-year-old East Lafayette resident, indicated that he exercises frequently during the daytime by jogging, going to the gym and playing basketball, but feels more comfortable exercising indoors at night. He expressed,

If I want to exercise at night, I’ll do some push-ups. I’ll stay in and do some push-ups. I don’t ever go jogging at night. I mean, the little young guys around that way, they just kind of act stupid. I feel like I don’t want to be a casualty for someone else’s mistake.

In addition to these self-guided routines, multiple residents mentioned using videos and “On Demand” cable exercise programming when they felt it was unsafe to go outdoors.

Leaving the neighborhood. Many residents pursued opportunities for physical activity beyond their neighborhoods. Terry, a 30-year-old male living in Dexter, described the poor condition of local recreational spaces, leading him to frequently take his two children to parks in the suburbs. Terry’s ownership of an automobile made leaving the neighborhood a more viable strategy. He said, “I go to the [local] park when the grass is cut… You know, other than that, we go outside the city, you know, to another park.” Terry rated his health as “excellent” and felt he got enough exercise “most of the time,” but concerns about crime in the neighborhood and parenting two children complicated his efforts to do so. He reported carrying a gun when he went jogging in the neighborhood with his kids riding bikes alongside him.
Nolan described his efforts to get across town for pickup basketball games:

Nolan: I travel to play basketball! <Laughter>
Dan: Do you take the bus?
Nolan: Yeah. Or sometimes some of the guys I play basketball with will come and pick up and take five people.

Sharing equipment. In addition to sharing transportation, exercise equipment was another resource that participants discussed accessing through their social networks. David used weights belonging to friends. He stated, “I do my push-ups, sit-ups, and all that stuff here in the house. I lift the weights [at a friend’s house] down the street.”

Cognitive mapping. Some residents developed cognitive maps identifying dangerous areas to avoid. Samantha, a Dexter resident in her early 40s without an automobile, felt unsafe walking in certain parts of her neighborhood. She cited a crime threat on the blocks immediately to the north of her apartment building. However, she insisted that it did not prevent her overall pursuit of walking in the neighborhood, saying, “I don’t go that way on [street]. Now, I will go up to, like, towards [street].” Although Samantha’s conception of safety in her neighborhood limits what she perceived as accessible streets and areas, it actually led her to more walking, as alternative, roundabout routes required longer travel distances. Residents also frequently reported safety concerns in low-traffic areas.

Neighborhood Differences

Even with similar poverty rates among residents, neighborhood contexts shaped the forms and potency of resident agency. Respondents in Dexter expressed concerns about personal safety more often than those in East Lafayette. Exposure to stray dogs was reported more frequently in Dexter. An initial memo about participant descriptions honed in on these differences. Kiara referred to Dexter as “Little Vietnam” (a reference to its war-like violence). She felt frustrated with her neighborhood environment and its impact on her physical activity, health, and parenting. June, an East Lafayette resident, described her
neighborhood as “a jewel for the city.” June felt fortunate to have the opportunity to walk in the neighborhood, having previously lived in areas she considered more dangerous. “When I walk, I count my blessings that I was able to be here as long as I have, because people don’t realize how hard it is to have a nice place,” she said.

Participants from Dexter mentioned dissatisfaction with the local parks more often than those from East Lafayette. The city did very little to maintain the parks in Dexter. Paul described the barriers to physical activity that deteriorating parks in Dexter presented:

> It’s not a big, huge park where you can do sports at ... You can throw the football, maybe something like that, but a lot of them are not in conditions where you can be going to ... And you have, you know, there’s people getting high, hanging out, doing their thing.

The differences between the two neighborhood environments conditioned the physical activity repertoires that respondents developed. Reggie, a 42-year-old living in East Lafayette, discussed walking to a variety of locations beyond his neighborhood. “I’ll walk to Herman Keifer, I’ll walk to Wayne State. I’ll walk to Belle Isle,” he said. East Lafayette residents had many parks near their neighborhood like Belle Isle (a large, public, island park on the Detroit River), as well as Lafayette Central Park (a greenway connecting many communities throughout the East Side), the Detroit Riverwalk (a recently developed riverfront park along several miles of the Detroit River), and the Dequindre Cut Greenway (a former railroad converted into a biking and walking path). East Lafayette residents seeking exercise could thus expand their perception of viable physical activity spaces in their proximity, while Dexter residents were surrounded by neighborhoods with similar problems in the built and social environments. Communities adjacent to Dexter were also hard to access, due to an Interstate with few crossings bordering the neighborhood. This made it more difficult for Dexter residents to pursue walking as a form of exercise, but some employed strategies to overcome those barriers. Destiny used public transportation to leave Dexter and
meet a companion for walks. “I catch the bus Downtown, and we walk up and down the Riverwalk, back and forth,” she said. Living in East Lafayette with fewer concerns about crime and better maintained parks nearby enabled the pursuit of more outdoor physical activity: Reggie and June pursued activities in and around their neighborhoods. Dexter residents Paul and Destiny either limited their physical activities or employed complex strategies to obtain them.

Discussion

Given the dual concerns of human agency and social structure, I have sought to provide a better understanding of physical activity in two neighborhood contexts. The grounded theory approach in this study revealed how structural factors conditioned, but did not wholly determine the forms and potential of human agency. Although statistics show residents of Detroit worse off on most indicators of physical activity and health, this sample of Detroiter made complex efforts to cope with injurious neighborhood environments. They faced challenges that academics, policymakers, and suburban residents cannot fully comprehend without having firsthand experience. Far from being passive victims of these obstacles, they devised elaborate, innovative, and adaptive strategies to engage in physical activity. Strategies included leaving the neighborhood to pursue exercise and other forms of physical activity, developing home exercise routines, sharing resources, and cognitive mapping of threats to avoid unsafe areas.

It is important to account for the creativity and innovation of individuals pursuing physical activity, but structural constraints remain significant and difficult to overcome. Neighborhood and social structures play significant roles in shaping the possibilities for agency. Still, the possibilities for agency are greater in communities with more resources and fewer barriers. Certain contextual factors, such as fear of crime, stray dogs, and a lack of street connectivity, diminish the potential for agency.

Other neighborhood factors, such as the well-maintained infrastructure and resources in areas adjacent to East Lafayette, enabled agency. It is important to see communities as embedded in wider contexts, potentially located near physical activity
resources or hindrances. This is especially true for activities such as walking and bicycling, which often involve travel into other nearby neighborhoods. These findings support other research that physical activity spaces often expand beyond immediate neighborhoods (Zenk et al., 2011).

Factors such as age, number of children, and health status also related to the development of strategies. Younger adults were more likely to feel that they engaged in a sufficient amount of physical activity, while several older adults mentioned feeling fatigued from their daily activities, suggesting support for the idea of a “weathering” effect of social structures that increases with age (Geronimus, 1992). Having children created new challenges, such as finding childcare, and exacerbated safety concerns. This resonates with general research showing lower levels of physical activity among parents (Berge et al., 2011), but appears to be compounded with neighborhood environmental concerns in this study.

Policy Implications

A number of policy actions could improve the physical activity opportunities for individuals in both neighborhoods. At the structural level, confronting segregation and poverty in neighborhoods like Dexter and East Lafayette would promote racial and economic justice and improve the physical activity and health of marginalized populations. Williams and Mohammed (2013) argued that residential segregation drives an array of racial inequalities, including health and wealth. Other scholars have suggested policies that could address these gaps, including strengthening the social insurance safety net (Brown, 2012), using mortgage interest deductions to promote racial and economic integration (Brown, 2009), and providing “baby bonds” that all asset-poor children would receive when they reach adulthood (Hamilton & Darity, 2010).

At the neighborhood-level, the deteriorating infrastructure of Dexter highlights concerns many Detroiters have expressed about public investments being made only in and around Downtown. Urgently needed upgrades to sidewalks, parks, and lighting in neighborhoods like Dexter, as well as resources to address the stray dog population, could facilitate more physical
activity, as well as overall improvements to community safety. Additionally, better public transportation to connect outlying Detroit neighborhoods to burgeoning physical activity resources along the riverfront should be made available.

Other community building efforts could combine with initiatives to encourage physical activity. For instance, concerns about fitness and crime victimization have led to the proliferation of martial arts in many cities, including Detroit (Prashad, 2003; Terry, 2006). Others have cited the potential of empowering neighborhood residents to learn and teach yoga for not only physical but also mental health benefits (Kinser & Masho, 2015; Mendelson et al., 2010). Community gardening programs, such as the Garden Resource Collaborative Program on the east side, could be expanded to encourage both physical activity and increased access to fresh produce.

At the individual level, previous research has found that those without home exercise equipment have lower levels of physical activity (Kerr et al., 2008). Many participants expressed a desire for home exercise equipment. Per the suggestion of Archer (2003) that policy address the desires and projects of agents, a program designed to connect low-income individuals with home exercise equipment should be designed and implemented.

Limitations

Although this work makes important contributions to understanding the relationship between human agency and social structures, several limitations warrant discussion. First, as the only coder of the data, I relied heavily on memo writing and consultation with other qualitative researchers to scrutinize the importance of themes emerging from the interviews. Second, due to time constraints, I did not perform member checking with participants to critically analyze my interpretations of our interviews. Third, my sample included only one participant who identified as physically disabled and no one over the age of 56. Fourth, changes in the built environments and residential compositions of neighborhoods alter the barriers faced by and strategies undertaken by residents. These data offer only a snapshot of what the relationship looks like. Conceptualizing
the relationship between people, their actions, and the context of place requires more than empirical observation (Macintyre & Ellaway, 2003). Indeed, there is a dialectical relationship between the people that live in a neighborhood and the neighborhood’s characteristics, which can be affected by everyday interactions, significant events, and social policies.

Future research should focus on whether these neighborhood contexts present barriers and engender strategies that are unique to older and/or physically limited populations. It can also gauge the effectiveness of enabling and encouraging resident strategies on a broader scale. For example, can researchers, residents, and community activists work together to demand better parks, recreation facilities, and other physical activity and exercise resources in public spaces? Here Lefebvre’s (1974) production of urban space has significant implications for physical activity and well-being. These understandings of human agency can be made more meaningful if they are used to transform social structures and increase the potency of agency with regard to physical activity.

Conclusion

This research demonstrates how a number of strategies are developed in the context of structural disadvantage. Barriers that have been commonly identified (lack of resources and facilities, poor infrastructure, and exposure to safety threats) are not impervious to human agency. The potential to pursue physical activity strategies varies, in part, according to neighborhood context. This research shows that even within structural constraints, many individuals devised strategies to undertake physical activity. The results suggest a theoretical framework that avoids both individualism and causal determinism and, instead, examines agency as part of a dialogue with structure, neighborhood context, culture, and the unique lives of individuals. Agency is neither completely constituted by structure nor completely independent, but rather a variable that cannot be captured in traditional macro/micro dialectics. Agency and structural barriers must be understood as operating in shared time and space. Future research must move beyond
simply cataloging the barriers and strategies faced by residents in low-income neighborhoods and instead work toward better understanding emerging patterns of physical activity.

References


Structured Savings and Asset Ownership: The Role of Rotating Savings and Credit Associations among African Immigrants in the United States

Habiba Ibrahim
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Rotating Savings and Credit Associations (ROSCAs) are commonly practiced in developing countries across the globe. The practice is also common among immigrants in developed economies. This study uses survey data collected from African immigrants in the United States to examine whether saving in ROSCAs is associated with asset ownership among the participants. The results found that after receiving the ROSCAs savings, asset ownership among participants increased. Home ownership increased by 13.6%, small businesses increased by 27.2% (including taxi and commercial trucks) and car ownership increased by almost 20%. In conclusion, ROSCA participation increased asset ownership.

Keywords: ROSCAs, asset ownership, immigrants/refugees, structured savings, rotating, savings and credit association
Introduction

Immigrants lag in both the use of financial market services and wealth ownership. It is estimated that immigrants are 12% more likely to be unbanked compared to native-born Americans (Bohn & Pearlman, 2011; Department of Consumer Affairs, New York City, 2013). A higher percentage of immigrant individuals (32%) are unbanked compared to 18.5% among the native born population (Rhine & Greene, 2006). Similarly, there is a substantial gap between immigrants and native born both in assets ownership and financial wealth (Osili & Paulson, 2007; Painter & Qian, 2016). Studies on immigrants’ homeownership consistently revealed that immigrants have low homeownership rates compared to the native-born U.S. population controlling for race and socio-demographic characteristics (Borjas, 2002; Mussa, 2013; Tesfai, 2016, 2017). The factors leading to this low participation are varied. The complexity of the U.S. financial system, such as not understanding required paperwork, how to begin the process, where to open accounts, bank fees and minimum balances (Department of Consumer Affairs, New York City, 2013) are partly responsible for low participation. Language barriers, negative experiences with financial markets in home countries and cultural and religious reasons were also found to contribute to the low participation of immigrants (Light, 1972; Light & Gold, 1999; Nam, 2015; Osili & Paulson, 2008; Paulson et al., 2006). As a result, many immigrant communities use alternative financial services such as rotating savings and credit associations (ROSCAs) as ways of pooling capital for larger purchases (Hevener, 2006; Light, 1996; Light & Deng, 1995; Light & Gold, 1999; Stewart, 2007). ROSCAs are “associations formed by a core of participants who agree to make regular contributions to a fund which is given, in whole or in part to each contributor in rotation” (Ardener, 1964, p. 201).

The use of ROSCAs for the purchase of durable goods and small business start-ups has been discussed in previous studies both in developing countries and among immigrant communities in developed economies (Besley, 1995; Besley & Levenson, 1996; Chiteji, 2002; Light & Gold, 1999; Stewart, 2007; Velez-Ibanez 1983). However, research has yet to explore the use of ROSCAs as a means to acquire assets including home purchases, autos and vocational training. This is especially true...
among the African immigrant community in the United States. Therefore, this study attempts to investigate the role of ROSCAs in enhancing savings and asset ownership among African immigrants in the United States.

The current study is modeled after individual development account (IDA) programs and therefore uses Sherraden's (1991) definition of assets, “the stock of wealth in a household” (p. 5). Individual Development Accounts are special matched savings accounts that enable low-income individuals/families to save for specified goals within specified time frames (Schreiner & Sherraden, 2007; Sherraden, 1991). Specified assets for IDA savings are home, small business, and post-secondary education/technical training that enhances person’s capabilities to gain employment. Over the past three decades, social policy scholars have advocated for policies that support low income households to acquire assets because asset ownership provides a pathway out of poverty and provides long-term financial security (Sherraden, 1991).

Immigrants have used ROSCAs to supplement the use of banking services for savings (Light & Deng, 1995; Stewart, 2007). Through ROSCAs, communities have created associations that facilitate savings in a way that they could not do individually (Gugerty, 2007; Hevener, 2006; Ibrahim, 2019). As such, these communities have used ROSCAs to save and accumulate capital for small business development and other investments. This study expands on this idea and examines ROSCAs as asset and wealth-building tools.

Using survey data collected from African immigrants living in the United States, the study examined the following questions: (1) Is participation in ROSCA associated with a propensity to save? (2) Does participation in ROSCA over time develop a savings habit/trend among participants? And (3) Is there a relationship between saving in ROSCAs and asset ownership among ROSCA participants?

Literature Review

Rotating Savings and Credit Associations

As defined earlier, a ROSCA is a rotating credit scheme for pooling money whereby a specific number of people form a
group and contribute a specified amount of money weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly (Addo, 2017; Ardener, 1964). Although ROSCAs operate with slight differences, they follow the same basic framework. In most cases, a group leader organizes among friends, neighbors, workmates, or relatives to form the association (Ardener, 1964; Light & Gold, 1999; Nelson, 1995). People in the group set an amount of money, and each member contributes weekly or monthly (Ardener, 1964). The group meets once a month, where members pay their contribution, eat and drink together, and sometimes share successes and challenges going on their lives. The lump sum collected is given to a designated member who has not yet received the allotment. When each member has received the lump sum at least once, the ROSCA group either dissolves or the cycle restarts (Ahn et al., 2016; Gugerty, 2007; Nelson, 1995; Nwabughuogu, 1984; Salamon et al., 2009; Stewart, 2007). Through the group savings, ROSCAs provide small-scale capital, and thus offer a measure of security to its members and credit on a very small scale, services that most financial institutions are unwilling to offer (Mbizi & Gwangwa, 2013; Nelson, 1995). ROSCAs also provide social support to the group members through the group meetings.

ROSCAs have existed across the world, especially in developing countries such as Africa, Asia, and Latin America, for a considerable period of time (Ahn et al., 2016; Ardener & Burman, 1995; Biggart, 2001; Bouman, 1979; Light & Gold, 1999; Nwabughuogu, 1984). While there is no known record of when the practice of ROSCAs began, the existence of ROSCAs was reported in Asia in the 19th century (Ardener, 1964) and in pre-colonial Africa (Ardener, 1953,1964; Nwabughuogu, 1984). ROSCAs have different names in different communities across the globe, such as Djangii in Cameroon, susu and tontines in west Africa, Kye in Korea, Tanda in Mexico, chit fund in India, hu in China and ho in Vietnam (Besley et al., 1992), and Equub in Ethiopia and Eritrea (Yimer et al., 2018).

ROSCAs are often embedded in existing social networks and constitute the main institutions for savings in rural areas where there are no formal financial institutions (Almedom, 1995; Burman & Lembete, 1995; Nelson, 1995; Niger-Thomas, 1995; Nwabughuogu, 1984). These associations allow members to save and accumulate large sums of money that they can use for large
purchases or entrepreneurial investments (Burman & Lembete, 1995; Light & Gold, 1999; Nelson, 1995). Historically, most ROSCA participants are members of the same community and personally know each other (Besley et al., 1993), therefore, ROSCAs are rooted in trust-based social backgrounds (Summerfield, 1995) and provide their participants with many of the services of a bank in a personal environment (Light & Gold, 1999).

Traditionally, anthropologists and sociologists have been interested in ROSCAs in terms of their ability to inspire group formation, social networking, and fostering conditions for individuals’ success. However, in the past few decades, ROSCAs have become an area of interest among economists as well, especially in their contribution to regional development. Besley (1995) argued that ROSCA participants do not have access to credit from the formal financial institutions, therefore they join ROSCAs to save for durable goods that they could not afford with their own savings. Besley and Levinson (1996) further asserted that ROSCAs might stimulate participants to save for durable goods, which constitutes an important feature of the development process.

In addition, ROSCAs allow individuals to acquire their savings goals earlier than if they were to save for it individually, which serves as a powerful motivator for participation (Besley & Levinson, 1996). Light & Gold (1999) argued peer motivation among ROSCA participants fosters “forced savings,” which is an unintended economic benefit of ROSCAs. Gugerty (2007) studied a sample of 70 ROSCAs with 1,066 members in Kenya and found that people join ROSCAs because saving requires self-discipline, and ROSCAs provide a collective mechanism for individual self-control. The common concept that “You cannot save alone” (Gugerty, 2007; Ibrahim, 2019) among ROSCA participants shows that ROSCAs also serve as a commitment device. This research could also be related to the work of Michael Sherraden (1991), who argued that there is a need for a structure to facilitate savings, especially in low-income communities. ROSCAs provide some form of an infrastructure based on community and social networks (Hevener, 2006), and participants have used their communities as structures to facilitate savings.
**ROSCAs as Institutions**

The most obvious function of these associations is that they assist in small-scale capital formation, or more simply, they create savings. Members could save their contributions themselves at home and accumulate their own ‘funds,’ but this would withdraw money from circulation: in a rotating credit association, capital need never be idle. (Ardener, 1964, p. 217)

ROSCAs serve as economic, social, and cultural institutions. As economic institutions, which are the focus of this study, ROSCAs serve various economic needs of the participants. They allow members to save, borrow, and insure themselves against unexpected expenditures such as emergencies (Sandsør, 2010). Thus, ROSCAs serve as both savings and credit institutions. Although ROSCAs are organized informally and usually keep poor records of the money that is collected and disbursed, they have well-established rules regarding reciprocity (Sandsør, 2010). ROSCAs use these established rules to improve their procedures against defaults until new members are known and integrated into the group (Ahn et al., 2016; Biggart, 2001; Niger-Thomas, 1995). One way this is achieved is by placing newcomers at the end of the rotations for receipt of the lump sum. In her study of Caribbean immigrants, Stewart (2007) reported that new members must be introduced by an established member who will take an oath at the group meetings that she will be responsible in case of a default. This kind of credit check has also been used in the United States when the financial market has not yet developed to the impersonal levels of the modern times. As noted by Monti (1999, p. 126), “being certified as morally qualified made it easier for entrepreneurs and craftsmen to establish themselves in the local market.”

ROSCA participants utilize social ties to achieve an economic goal. In a recent qualitative study among ROSCA team leaders in the United States, Ibrahim (2019) found that although participants joined ROSCA to achieve an economic goal, it is the structure and the collective mechanism from the group that motivates them to choose ROSCAs over banks. Additionally, the social obligation and group expectations make ROSCAs a preferred method of saving among participants (Ibrahim, 2019).
ROSCAs in Developed Economies

ROSCAs are not only found in developing countries, but also among immigrants in developed economies. Scholars who have examined these informal institutions found that they exist in countries with well-developed financial institutions, such as Great Britain and the United States (Addo, 2017; Ardener, 1995; Besson, 1995; Hevener, 2006; Ibrahim, 2016; Light & Deng 1995; Murakami-Fester, 2017; Stewart, 2007). In the United States, the use of ROSCAs for the purpose of small business capitalization has been well documented. Light (1996), who studied ROSCAs among Korean immigrants extensively, argues that ROSCAs have played, and continue to play, a valuable supportive role in the financial life of immigrant communities. These communities lack access to the financial mainstream, mainly because their members do not speak English or lack credit histories in this country. Therefore, these informal associations fill the gaps and enable immigrants to save and borrow. More recent studies among immigrant groups in the United States continue to find the practice of ROSCAs to pool capital for micro-enterprise development (Addo, 2017; Murakami-Fester, 2017).

Researchers have assessed the role ROSCAs play in filling the gap by providing savings and loans in immigrant economies in the United States (Hevener, 2006; Light, 1972; Light & Bonacich, 1988; Light & Gold, 1999; Velez-Ibanez, 1983). Hevener (2006), who assessed ROSCAs as alternative financial vehicles among immigrants, noted that although Asians were only 3.6% of the U.S. population according to the census of 2000, they owned 4.4% of U.S. small businesses, which was disproportionately larger than other minority groups. Also, ROSCAs among Chinese immigrants have evolved more for commercial reasons, such as pooling capital funds for small businesses (Light, 1972). Asians have been widely cited to be using ROSCAs to pool start-up capital for small business. Light (1996) noted that Chinese and Japanese immigrants achieved higher rates of self-employment and became entrepreneurs within a short period of time due to their use of ROSCAs.

Research has also indicated that ROSCAs are common among Caribbean immigrants. Stewart’s (2007) study of Caribbean women noted that the practice of ROSCAs is found within
every Afro-Caribbean enclave in the United States. The study found that ROSCAs are a supportive economic culture that grants access to capital resources these communities would not have otherwise been able to access (Stewart, 2007). Additionally, ROSCAs are practiced among African immigrants, although there is lack of research on how this community uses ROSCAs—a void this study intends to fill.

**Guiding Framework**

This study is guided by the institutional theory of savings (Beverly & Sherraden, 1999; Sherraden, 1991), which accentuates that institutional factors greatly influence individual and household-level savings because institutions shape individuals’ behaviors through restrictions, structure, expectations, incentives, and opportunities (Curley et al., 2009). The theory particularly emphasizes the role of institutions in savings and asset ownership among low-income households. This theory has identified several factors that influence the savings behavior of individuals and households, particularly in low-income communities. These factors include: (1) access; (2) information; (3) incentives; (4) facilitation; and (5) expectations (Curley et al., 2009). ROSCAs have similar institutional features that support savings among participants (Ibrahim, 2019). The structure, expectations and group facilitation that ROSCAs provide to savers has been identified as particularly helpful in saving for targeted investment (Ibrahim, 2019). Moreover, the concept that “you cannot save alone” (Gugerty, 2007; Ibrahim, 2019) underscores the key role of institutional support in savings and asset accumulation. Previous studies guided by this theory have all examined structured savings through formal financial institutions. The current study expands on this concept to examine whether structured savings through ROSCAs have similar outcomes—increased savings and asset ownership.
Methods

Research Design: Case Selection, Sampling Method and Data Collection

This study used a cross-sectional survey data collected from African immigrants living in four cities across the United States using a mix of nonprobability sampling. The main sampling methods used for case selection were availability and snowball sampling. The snowball technique is an important and commonly used technique in research on minorities and hard-to-reach populations (Rubin & Babbie, 2005) who are often obscured from the view of policy makers and researchers (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). This method takes advantage of the social networks of identified respondents to provide researchers with an expanding set of potential contacts (Thomson, 1997). This typically fits the specific population of the current study.

Using community resource centers such as places of worship, community ethnic stores, and personal contacts, survey questionnaires were distributed to the respondents both individually and in groups in four sites after receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board. The data used in this study was collected between September 2014 and July 2015. A total of 820 surveys were distributed, and of this, about 350 surveys were completed and returned, a completion rate of 42.6%.

Measures and Analysis

The dependent variable is assets owned after receiving ROSCA funds. This is a dichotomous variable created from whether the respondents owned at least one of the assets identified or not after receiving the ROSCA funds. The analysis controlled for demographic variables and any assets owned before receiving the ROSCA funds. The independent variables included: amount of monthly savings; number of years participated in ROSCAs; savings target; lump sum amount collected; received the lump-sum amount; and institutional factors.

As an initial step, descriptive statistics and crosstabs were conducted to test if there were any associations among the
variables. To further address the research question, binary logistic regression was conducted using the following equation:

\[ \text{Logit}(p) = \ln\left(\frac{p}{1-p}\right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \ldots \beta_7 x_7; \]  

where \( X_1 \ldots X_7 \) are the predictor variables and \( p \) is the probability of presence of the characteristic of interest.

Before conducting the logistic regression, multicollinearity diagnostics were conducted. All VIF values were less than 10 and the tolerance statistics were all over 0.6, therefore, multicollinearity was not a concern. The analysis was sequentially modeled. The first block consists of the demographic characteristics which are entered into the model as control variables. Controlling for the individual characteristics, the savings variables were entered as the second block of independent variables to determine the influence of each of these variables on the dependent variable, followed by institutional characteristics. Results are presented in Tables 1 to 6.
Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>N (294)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (years)</td>
<td>39.72 (10.06)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Residence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Louis</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minneapolis/St. Paul</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seattle</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbus</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of Origin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Years in the US</td>
<td>11.10(5.328)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 8th grade</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some High School</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Graduate</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>19.4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Degree</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Graduate Degree</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than $15,000</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15,000–20,000</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,000–30,000</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,000–40,000</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,000–50,000</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 50,000</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: ROSCAs and Savings Information of the Study Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>N(294)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Currently participating in ROSCAs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>82.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past ROSCAs participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>85.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of ROSCA participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 2 years</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2–4 years</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4–6 years</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6–8 years</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8–10 years</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 10 years</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household monthly ROSCA contribution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than $100</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$101–200</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$201–300</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$301–400</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$401–500</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over $500</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of group rotation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 6 months</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6–12 months</td>
<td>58.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12–18 months</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18–24 months</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savings target</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>89.5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly lump-sum amount collected</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Less than $1000</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1001–2000</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001–3000</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3001–4000</td>
<td>21.8</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4001–5000</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 5000</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know/not sure</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Received Lump sum yet?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>84.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>12.9</td>
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</table>
Table 2 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>N(294)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does ROSCA help you save?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>86.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have bank account?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>91.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever received financial education training?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given a chance would you like to attend financial education training?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Use of Lump-sum funds from ROSCA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Started or expanded a business</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home purchase</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational training</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tractor trailer (commercial truck)</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxicab</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car purchase</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home repair</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewelry</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency funds</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home for parents in home country</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business in home country</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4: Asset Ownership before and after receiving ROSCA funds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asset</th>
<th>Before ROSCA (%)</th>
<th>After ROSCA (%)</th>
<th>Difference (%)</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>(-32.9)</td>
<td>27.414*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>93.532*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small business</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>69.518*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxi-cab</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>77.337*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tractor trailer</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>75.194*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>98.709*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Frequency of Savings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Saving Frequency</th>
<th>Before ROSCA(%)</th>
<th>With ROSCA(%)</th>
<th>Difference (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once every other week</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>28.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once every other month</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>(-2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once every six-month</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>(-1.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not save</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>38.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6: Logistic Regression: Assets owned after receiving ROSCA funds (yes = owns at least one asset; no = none)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>2.93(0.65)</td>
<td>1.85(0.78)</td>
<td>1.24(0.87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.95(0.03)</td>
<td>0.95(0.04)</td>
<td>0.95(0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.74(0.19)</td>
<td>0.89(0.24)</td>
<td>0.94(0.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in U.S.</td>
<td>0.99(0.05)</td>
<td>0.92(0.06)</td>
<td>0.88(0.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household size</td>
<td>1.68(0.17)*</td>
<td>2.11(0.22)*</td>
<td>2.31(0.28)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>1.12(0.22)</td>
<td>1.03(0.28)</td>
<td>1.20(0.34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asset before ROSCA</td>
<td>29.74(1.08)***</td>
<td>34.96(1.18)***</td>
<td>27.77(1.18)***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in ROSCA</td>
<td>0.93(0.31)</td>
<td>0.85(0.33)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly amount</td>
<td>2.14(0.38)*</td>
<td>3.36(0.46)*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lump sum amount</td>
<td>0.58(0.25)*</td>
<td>0.45(0.32)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saving target</td>
<td>5.79(0.81)*</td>
<td>5.36(1.08)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received lump-sum</td>
<td>5.06(0.90)*</td>
<td>2.30(1.17)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.38(1.14)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.38(1.03)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitation</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.16(1.31)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectation</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.11(0.08)*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer motivation</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.09(0.11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networks</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.46(1.44)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Intercept                     | 11.23(2.14)  | 0.16(2.95)  | 0.34(3.44)  |

**Goodness of fit statistics**

-2 Log Likelihood: 79.88, 0.144, 0.387
Cox and Snell R2: 68.20, 0.182, 0.489
Nagelkerke: 60.56, 0.206, 0.553

Hosmer and Lemshow Test

Chi square: 98.44, 5.11, 1.50
Sig.: 0.276, 0.745, 0.993

Observations: 294, 294, 294

*Note: Odds Ratios followed by Standard Error in Parentheses
*p <.05     **p <.01     ***p <.001
RESULTS

Sample Description

The final sample used in the analysis after cleaning the data was a total of 294. The sample was 53% male and 47% female, with a mean age of 40 (SD = 10.06). The study sample had a wide range of educational levels, ranging from no education (23.1%) to post-graduate degree holders. The majority (61.2%) had a high school diploma or some primary education. A majority of the respondents (87%) were employed at the time of the survey. About 60% of the households earned less than $40,000 annually, with a mean household size of 4.95 (SD = 2.36). The mean number of years respondents lived in the United States is 11 (SD = 5.33) with a range of two years to 36 years. It is interesting to note that there are more men respondents (53%) than women (47%) in this study, since the literature indicates that majority of ROSCA participants are women (Anderson & Baland, 2002; Besson, 1995; Kedir & Ibrahim, 2011; Stewart, 2007). While the current study does not address the reason for this change, recent studies documented that more men are participating in ROSCAs among immigrants, due to the different financial demands in the U.S. and the need to meet financial challenges such as taking care of extended family members either in home countries or refugee camps (Ibrahim, 2016, 2019). Although more men are joining ROSCAs, women remain in command of ROSCA groups and an overwhelming majority of ROSCA group team leaders are women (Ibrahim, 2019; Steward, 2007).

ROSCAs and Savings Information

Table 2 shows information about respondents’ ROSCA participation and savings. All the respondents are either currently participating in a ROSCA group or have done so since moving to the United States for a period ranging from less than two years to over 10 years. Most of the respondents (86%) have participated in ROSCAs between two to six years, while the other 10% have participated in ROSCA savings for over six years. A small percentage (1.4%) reported they participated in ROSCAs for over ten years. These statistics suggests that this savings
approach has become part of their tradition, possibly contributing to a long-term savings habit.

The households’ monthly ROSCA contribution also ranged from less than $100 to over $500. Depending on the number of people in the group and the amount they saved monthly, they collected between $1000 to over $5000 a month that one of them would take home for immediate consumption or long-term investment. A majority (89.5%) joined the group to save for a targeted goal by the end of the ROSCA rotation/cycle. It is intriguing that as much as the participants are depending on the informal market, 91.8% have bank accounts.

**Use of Lump Sum Funds from ROSCAs**

Table 3 present the results of how participants used the lump sum funds. Many participants have indicated that they used the funds for more than one purchase. The uses were very diverse, but the results indicate that most of them used the funds for larger purchases or long-term investments. For major purchases, 28.6% indicated they used their ROSCA funds for a car purchase. This was followed by investment in small businesses (22.1%), including investing in commercial trucks and taxicabs, home purchases (7.8%), home repair (7.5%) and jewelry purchases (8.5%). While the majority of the savers joined ROSCAs to save for a targeted investment, the largest percentage of ROSCA funds (30.3%) were used for emergencies, an indication of competing needs against savings for future investment. Additionally, ROSCA savings were also invested in country of origin in small businesses, homes, land, or farms.

To test whether there was any change in asset-ownership, participants were asked about the assets they owned before ROSCA participation and assets owned after receiving ROSCA funds (see Table 4).

As the results in Table 4 reveal, more participants owned at least one of the major assets identified after receiving the funds than before. For example, home ownership rose from 8.5% to 22.1%, and small business ownership increased from 8.8% to 25.2%. Likewise, taxicab and commercial truck ownership rose from 2.4% to 7.1% and 8.5%, respectively, and car ownership rose by about 20% after participants received the lump sum funds from the ROSCA. Respondents also indicated they owned other
assets, including emergency funds, jewelry, small businesses, and homes in their country of origin.

Frequency of Savings

Table 5 shows the differences in the frequency of savings among study participants before and after joining ROSCA groups. In most categories, the frequency of savings went up after respondents joined ROSCAs. Most notably, those who saved monthly increased from 31% to 59.2%. This is an increase of over 28% in saving frequency. This huge increase in monthly frequency of savings was expected, as most ROSCA groups meet monthly. This is similar to findings from previous studies both in developing and developed countries that most ROSCAs make monthly payments (Anderson & Baland, 2002; Kedir & Ibrahim, 2011; Light, 1996).

Logistics Regression Results

As presented in Table 6, in the first model (block1), which has the demographic variables and assets owned before receiving ROSCA funds, only two variables are statistically significant. The household size is statistically significant (OR 1.686; p <0.005). This means larger households were 1.6 times more likely to own at least one of those assets compared to smaller households. Assets owned before ROSCA funds were also significant (OR 29.746; p <0.005). Age, gender, education, income, and number of years lived in the U.S. were not statistically significantly. In the second model (block 2), several other variables were added including: the number of years participated in ROSCAs; the amount of monthly savings; having a savings target; receiving the lump sum funds; and total lump sum amount. The amount of monthly savings is statistically significant (OR = 2.142; p <0.005). Those who deposit more money are twice as likely to own an asset after receiving funds than their counterparts. Having a savings target by the end of the ROSCA cycle/rotation is statistically significant (OR = 5.799; p <0.005). Those who have a savings target when they join ROSCA are almost five times more likely to own an asset after receiving the funds. Likewise, having received the lump sum funds is positively
associated with owning an asset (OR= 5.064; p < 0.005). The total lump sum amount is also significant (OR= 0.58; p < 0.005).

In the full model, institutional factors were added. The variables in this block included: access; rules; facilitation; expectation; peer motivation; and networks. The only variable that is significant from the institutional variables is expectation (OR = 0.118; p < 0.005). In the full model, the variables in the model explained between 20% to 55% of variability in asset ownership in the sample.

Overall, these findings suggest saving in ROSCAs makes it possible for participants in this sample to achieve a targeted goal of purchasing an asset, similar to an earlier study by Besley, Coate and Loury (1993), which suggested that ROSCA savings helped savers finance indivisible durable goods.

Discussion

The results show that among the African immigrants, men and women participate in ROSCAs almost equally. Most of the participants (60%) were in low-income households earning less than $40,000 annually. A majority (80.5%) were people who do not have a college degree. However, there are also few highly educated individuals who choose to participate in ROSCAs, as about four percent had post-graduate degrees. These individuals have the educational qualifications to obtain jobs that can give them access to formal institutionalized savings programs but join ROSCAs as a supplemental savings plan because of the social pressure and high expectations the group provides (Ibrahim, 2019; Steward, 2007).

This study commenced with the assumption that ROSCA users are mostly unbanked. The results indicate otherwise; over 90% of the participants have a bank account, yet still participate in ROSCAs to achieve a targeted economic goal. As such, ROSCAs help members diversify their holdings in much the way people who have more money buy stocks, properties, and other investments simultaneously. Hence, ROSCA as a “foreign” custom seems to fit quite well in American savings and investment practices, making upward mobility easier for those in the lower income bracket.
It is prudent to bear in mind that the study sample is not nationally representative, and therefore, the results presented cannot be generalized to African immigrants across the country. However, as one of the few ROSCA studies in the U.S., the findings from this study make generous contributions to the immigrants’ savings and asset-building literature.

**ROSCAs and Savings Habit**

The first aim of this study was to determine whether participation in ROSCAs over time helps develop a savings habit/trend. The findings indicate that, when the individuals in the community under study get access to this savings group, they save continuously for a long period of time. The descriptive statistics revealed that more than half (54%) of the respondents’ have continuously participated in ROSCAs for a period of two to eight years. Most ROSCAs pay their contributions monthly; a few do so more frequently, such as weekly or bi-weekly. On average, ROSCA group rotations take 12–24 months, and members are obligated to continuously pay their monthly contribution until everyone receives the funds. These regular contributions become part of their lifestyle. The social pressure and peer motivation encourages members to continue saving in ROSCAs, which suggests that ROSCAs build a saving habit among participants over time.

Previous research has suggested that due to the obligation to contribute regularly, “ROSCAs help to build the habit of savings” (Nelson, 1995 p. 54). Ardener (1964, p. 218) called it “the element of compulsory saving” in ROSCAs. The development of a culture of savings is regarded as crucial for economic improvement among the poor (Dichter & Harper, 2007). The concept of “you cannot save alone” is a major reason that attracts people to savings groups such as ROSCAs (Ambec & Treich, 2007; Gugerty; 2007; Ibrahim, 2019).

Scholars who study ROSCAs wonder why people choose to save in ROSCAs instead of saving individually, even when they have access to formal financial markets. Research suggests that people make this choice because ROSCAs provide a support mechanism to help them save, which is especially true for low-income households (Ibrahim, 2019). Those who participate in ROSCAs are mostly low-income working families. Currently,
the low-income threshold for a family of four is $45,622 (Mather, 2013). Close to 60% of the households in this study had an income of less than $40,000 a year and a mean household size of almost five, meeting the definition of the low-income population. Although they are willing to save, they do not have surplus income to deposit into a bank account and leave untouched over a period of time. Thus, ROSCAs provide support to control spending and enable savings. This is comparable to findings from the American Dream Demonstration (ADD), which evaluated IDA programs and found that disadvantaged populations can save when given access to institutional support (Han et al., 2007). In the absence of those institutional supports, community support systems such as ROSCAs come in handy.

Asset Ownership

The second goal of the study was to determine the relationship between saving in ROSCAs and asset ownership. Asset ownership has been recognized as an essential element in households’ upward mobility and transitions out of poverty (Moser, 2005; Shapiro & Wolf, 2001; Sherraden, 1991), thus, asset ownership creates opportunities and status that can be passed along to future generations.

The results of this study indicated that the savers have used their funds to purchase/invest in assets. Participants showed an overall increase in the amount of assets owned after receiving ROSCA savings, as detailed in the results section. This is consistent with findings from previous studies that ROSCA participants use their funds for durable goods that they cannot afford with their own savings (Besley et al., 1993). These results reveal that the main goal of saving in ROSCAs, among the study sample, is for future investment and not immediate consumption. Although previous studies documented the use of ROSCAs for small business capitalization among immigrants’ communities (Light, 1972, 1996; Light & Gold, 1995; Valez-Ibnez, 1983), research has not explored other investments, such as a home purchase, home improvement, or a car purchase using ROSCA funds, therefore this study did address these gaps in the literature.

Further, the results of the logistic regression indicated that there is a significant relationship between savings in ROSCAs and asset accumulation, even after controlling for demographic
characteristics. Thus, the findings suggest that ROSCAs play a vital role in poverty reduction among those who utilize them. Twenty years ago, Light (1996) suggested that ROSCAs are a self-help solution to urban poverty in the United States. He concluded that ROSCAs are effective at improving the economic welfare of low-income groups, and the laws and public policies should encourage their use. The current study suggests the same with data from a new group of immigrants not previously studied.

Study Limitations

One of the limitations of this research is the sampling method. The study used snowball and convenience sampling to recruit participants. These methods are cost-effective and help to reach populations that are not easy to access (Faugier & Sargeant, 1997), which was helpful to increase the sample size. However, because the researcher relied on referrals, units for inclusion in the sample were not based on random selection (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981), therefore, the representativeness of the sample is not guaranteed. This makes it difficult to measure the true distribution of the population and of the sample. The sample size was also small which affects the strength of the statistical power and reduces the ability to detect significant differences between values. Perhaps other significant results would have emerged if a larger sample were used.

In addition to the research design limitations, this data was all based upon self-report. It involved sensitive financial information, such that at times participants expressed concern over how their information would be reported. Therefore, there is the possibility of over- or under-reporting the actual amount saved and received. Subsequent studies in this subject could improve the reliability of the findings from this study.

Implications for Research, Policy, and Practice

Research. This is one of the first studies to identify ROSCAs as an asset-building tool among African immigrants in the United States. It is important to further interview individuals who have used ROSCA funds to purchase assets such as businesses and homes in order to validate the current survey results. Additionally, while participants joined ROSCA to save
for a specific goal, a significant number used the savings for emergency needs. This knowledge can help guide future studies to explore these competing needs and inform interventions for these emergency needs.

**Policy.** Research on the use of ROSCAs by different immigrant groups in the United States dates back to the 1970s. Light (1972, 1995, 1996) has shown how Japanese immigrants attained high levels of entrepreneurship within a relatively short period by raising capital through ROSCAs. There are also studies on ROSCAs among other groups (Light & Bonacich, 1988; Stewart, 2007). The current study adds to this body of work on the use of ROSCAs by African immigrants. Local-level policies to support these communities through existing community development financial institutions (CDFI) and integrating them into existing programs that support entrepreneurs and homebuyers, such as small loans and community development grants, could also be useful.

**Practice.** ROSCAs could be used as a bridge to the formal financial markets by expanding on existing initiatives. For example, Finanta, a non-profit organization in Philadelphia, has been working with two ROSCA groups—an African group and a Spanish-speaking group—since 2011. The savers in these groups are saving only for micro-enterprise capitalization. The agency is helping the participants use their custom as a gateway into the formal economy (Melamed, 2011). They are achieving this goal by facilitating the monthly ROSCA group meetings; when members pay their contributions, the organization reports that to the major credit agencies as loan repayments. Additionally, they provide other services, such as credit counseling, business consultation, and networking to ROSCA group members (Finanta, n.d). Agencies working with communities who use ROSCAs could replicate this practice and assist ROSCA members to build credit lines, so that ROSCA participants could also benefit from other services, such as credit counseling, home ownership programs, and training.

**Conclusion**

A key insight from this study is that ROSCA groups provide support that enable savings for its members. In the absence of supportive institutions to support savings for low-income households, these communities have shown that they can
identify, collate, and exploit the resources available to them to make upward mobility possible.

This study finds that immigrants maintain ROSCAs for two main reasons. Firstly, these communities want to save and invest in assets such as small business and home ownership. However, most of them are in low-income households without surplus money to put aside monthly to reach savings targets. These individuals also lack the credit history required for borrowing in this country. Additionally, borrowing from financial institutions comes with interest, which conflicts with some of these immigrants’ communities religious beliefs. Therefore, these individuals form ROSCA groups so they can pool their resources together on a regular basis to help each other reach their investment goals.

Secondly, saving requires structural support (Sherraden, 1991); ROSCAs provide that support to the members through several institutional elements (Ibrahim, 2019). These elements include rules and regulation, expectations, trust, and control mechanisms (Ibrahim, 2016, 2019). The notion of “I cannot save alone” suggests that ROSCAs provide both support and a control mechanism to postpone current consumption in order to improve the future. Some of these elements are similar to those identified in the institutional theory of savings and are known as the determinants of savings and asset-building for low-income households (Curley, 2004; Sherraden et al., 2003; Ssemawala et al., 2009). Therefore, these findings accentuate the importance of creating policies that will support low-income households to save and acquire assets.

Acknowledgements: The author wishes to thank Professor Daniel Monti for his review and feedback on this work.
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Parental Practices and Maternal Warmth as Protective Factors for Problem Behaviors in Mexican Preadolescents

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Epidemiological estimates indicate that approximately 12% of children and adolescents in Mexico are in clinical ranges for psychological disorders. Low-income families in need of psychological support generally encounter understaffed and sometimes inefficient public health services and thus, families frequently constitute the primary source of support for individuals affected by mental health disorders. Empirical studies in the Mexican context have demonstrated that positive parental practices are associated with positive developmental outcomes and low levels of problem behaviors for both children and adolescents. This study aims to identify if such practices act as protective factors for problem behaviors in 306 Mexican students in 4th, 5th, and 6th grades from 3 public elementary schools in Mexico City. Practices of maternal
autonomy and communication as well as maternal warmth were found to significantly diminish internalizing and externalizing problem behaviors, while parental involvement and communication only reduced externalizing problem behaviors. Findings have implications for social welfare programs that target positive youth development and supportive parenting.

Keywords: parenting practices, communication, involvement, autonomy, externalizing, internalizing

Background

According to UNICEF (2017), there are 39 million children and adolescents in Mexico, more than half of them living in poverty. Mexico was placed by UNICEF within the worst three countries in Latin America in relation to child-rearing and survival. Epidemiological estimates indicate that approximately 12% of Mexican children and adolescents are in clinical ranges for psychological disorders such as depression and anxiety (Mexican Association of Infant Psychiatry [AMPI], 2017). Yet during 2017 alone, less than a fifth of the general Mexican population diagnosed with a mental health disorder received treatment (Office of the Mexican Senate for Scientific and Technological Information, INCyTU, 2018). The National System for the Integral Development of Families in Mexico (SNDIF) is the main source of support for Mexican youth with psychological disorders from low-income families. Although the SNDIF states its psychological programs intend to provide youth the necessary resources to protect and guarantee mental, physical, spiritual, moral, and social development of Mexican youth (SNDIF p. 275), only a small number of services are preventive interventions, and most of these are aimed at diminishing childhood obesity, teenage pregnancy, and drug use. Regular consultation in the SNDIF is understaffed and sometimes inefficient as the service offers one worker for every 300 cases (UNICEF, 2018 p. 7) as well as scarce access to training in evidence-based mental health interventions. In addition, families in need of psychological support are confronted with the negative effects of stigma associated with mental health disorders in Latin America. Thus, families and other social networks frequently constitute the primary source of support for individuals affected
by mental health disorders (Gómez-Dantés & Frenk, 2018). For these reasons, the promotion of research with Mexican families focused on existing strengths is of great concern, as it refers to preventive interventions aimed to improve social welfare programs and policies.

The Mexican family has a marked hierarchical structure where Latin American mothers are expected to spend more time and be more involved in their child’s daily activities, while fathers act as providers who supply instrumental support. Mexican children and adolescents perceive their mothers as loving, helpful, protective, and responsible. They scold when necessary but are understanding and empathetic; therefore, maternal practices are perceived more positively and have a higher impact on children and adolescents as opposed to paternal practices (Cox, 2014; Diaz-Loving & Andrade-Palos, 1996; Kline et al., 2016). The foundation of adequate family functioning is understood as maintaining close and harmonious relationships based on demonstrating respect towards figures of authority (Cauce & Domenech-Rodriguez, 2002; Livas-Dlott et al., 2010), as well as staying loyal to family members and placing commitment to the family over individual desires (Cauce & Domenech-Rodriguez, 2002; Steidel & Contreras, 2003). These cultural values have placed Mexican preadolescents at risk of developing problem behaviors given parental expectations (Calzada et al., 2015), their developmental demand for autonomy (Kader & Roman, 2018), and a lack of efficient resources to help them navigate through this developmental period.

According to Chainé and Pineda (2014), the most prevalent problem behaviors in Mexican preadolescents are opposition-defiance, irritability, anger, resentment, aggression, and Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), which generally persist into adulthood (Frick et al., 2014). In Mexico, empirical studies have demonstrated that positive parental practices (e.g., autonomy, communication, and involvement) are not only associated with lower internalizing and externalizing problem behaviors for children and adolescents, but are also related to high self-esteem and self-efficacy during their later development (Andrade Palos et al., 2012; Chainé et al., 2015; Cruz-Santiago & Ramírez García, 2011). Parental practices of autonomy are characterized by parental encouragement, favoring of preadolescent activities, and positive reinforcements aimed to develop youth decision making
capabilities, competence, a positive self-perception, privacy, and control over their personal activities and emotions (Gurland & Grolnick, 2003; Smetana, 2011; Washington, 2018). Latin American girls and adolescent girls report experiencing less autonomy than boys and are generally more responsive to autonomy than males (Darling et al., 2008).

Preadolescent autonomy is a gradual and relational process consisting of commitment from youth, parental authority, discipline, and trust, given that parents generally believe their children are less autonomous and capable than they truly are (Rote & Smetana, 2015). When preadolescents perceive legitimate parental practices of autonomy, they generally feel obligated to show parents their capabilities as well as their tendency to follow rules (Kuhn et al., 2014; Vargas Barbosa et al., 2017). Parental practices of autonomy result in more adaptive development, as they provide youth with a sense of acceptance that makes them feel comfortable and safe in the relationship they have with their parents or other family members, thus directly and indirectly preventing the development of problem behaviors (Barbosa, 2014; Elmore & Gaylord-Harden, 2013).

Parental practices of communication include talking openly and frequently in the parent-child relationship, providing clear information, listening to each other, and being responsive to the messages shared by children and adolescents (Rodriguez et al., 2015). Preadolescents respond to these practices by verbalizing their own thoughts, ideas and feelings, listening actively, and respecting their parents (Seay et al., 2014). Communication is deemed key in the development of the parent-child relationship, as it both reflects and reinforces the quality of the relationship, while also favoring positive youth outcomes through the development of self-esteem, life satisfaction, social skills, and social support. It is also a means to reduce family conflict, improve collaborative problem solving, and foster trust within the parent-child relationship (Manczak et al., 2018). Empirical studies in Mexico have identified a negative association between maternal communication and problem behaviors in Mexican youth (Betancourt & Palos, 2011; Cobos, 2008). According to Castro-Castañeda, Núñez-Fadda, Musitu-Ochoa and Callejas-Jerónimo (2019), communication is not only a negative predictor of problem behaviors but aids in shaping parental involvement and supervision through building confidence and
Parental Practices and Maternal Warmth as Protective Factors

respect towards their parents and adults in general. Parental practices of communication convey the values, rules and expectations parents have of their children, which then facilitate incorporation into the cultural group and favors youth regulation and more favorable outcomes for Latin American youth (Moreno Carmona, 2013). Given that maintaining family bonds and elder approval is greater in preadolescents girls, it comes as no surprise that Mexican girls generally report higher levels of maternal communication when compared to their male counterparts (Galaz et al., 2019).

Parental practices of involvement are defined by monitoring and supporting children, displaying affection, spending quality time together, being responsive, and communicating expectations (Morales Castillo & Aguirre Dávila, 2018). Eshel, Daelmans, Mello, and Martines (2006) found that parental support and cognitive scaffolding in parental involvement favors social development during preadolescence, making youth increasingly autonomous, given that parental involvement reinforces and models both cultural values and norms in youth. According to Lara and Saracostti (2019), parental involvement has been associated with lower levels of externalizing problem behaviors in Latin American youth. Although physical and tangible parental involvement diminishes through preadolescent development, ongoing parental support of activities and autonomy during preadolescence and adolescence is associated with positive outcomes in Latin American youth (Morales Castillo & Aguirre Dávila, 2018).

Emotional warmth and communication in parental involvement are related to parental expectations. When interactions in the parent-child relationship are emotionally rich, parents have a higher capability of influencing their children’s emotional wellbeing and behavior (Inoa, 2017). For Anderson and Branstetter (2012), increasing parental involvement as a preventive strategy works best before severe problems emerge in youth. By knowing about the activities, relationships and locations of their children, parents accustom their children to supervision and parental involvement, leading to parents feeling efficacious and children experiencing a positive impact (Morales Castillo & Aguirre Dávila, 2018). Although involvement from both parental figures is paramount for Latin American youth, maternal resources and efforts have a higher influence than paternal,
especially in predicting academic and emotional outcomes (Lorenzo-Moledo et al., 2017). Mexican girls report higher involvement from both parents when compared to boys (Eguiarte & Arenas, 2019; Galaz et al., 2019). Latin American cultural beliefs influence ideas that girls should be looked after and paid attention to more than boys, as the latter are thought to be stronger, more aggressive, and independent (Buitrago-Peña et al., 2009).

Practices of maternal warmth consist of compliments, empathy, and physical and verbal demonstrations of love that develop confidence and support in children. This is a form of non-intrusive supervision and respect of children’s opinions and ideas which is fostered through emotional closeness, limit enforcing, and caring (Borda Mas et al., 2019; Dadds et al., 2012). For Mexican youth, maternal warmth has been proven to be a protective factor against problem behaviors and more serious mental health disorders, such as psychosis. Maternal warmth is also associated with stable and positive adolescent development (Benitez Camacho et al., 2005; Cumsille et al., 2015). Maternal warmth may also serve as a protective factor in lessening the impact of harsh and negative parental practices such as intrusion and hostility, particularly in communities in which families face economic hardships and challenges because of poor neighborhood environments (Caughy et al., 2006). Similarly, McLoyd, Kaplan, Hardaway, and Wood (2007) found that it is the perception of parental warmth and support which mediates the relationship between certain parental practices and childhood outcomes, especially in groups where physical punishment is normative. Across cultures, parental warmth has been associated with greater competence and better outcomes in children that experience excessive parental control, aggression, and anger (Yildirim & Roopnarine, 2015). In the Mexican context, these findings have been confirmed by Morales Chainé, Martínez Ruiz, Nieto, and Lira Mandujano (2017) where warmth significantly diminished the effects of a plethora of risk factors in non-clinical range Mexican adolescents. Surprisingly, Mexican girls and preadolescents report less maternal warmth than their male counterparts and older adolescents (Eguiarte & Arenas, 2019; Galaz et al., 2019).

Since the 1990s, Latin America has faced an increasing number of divorces and fragmented households, as well as the incorporation of more women into the workplace (Moreno Carmona,
As some Mexican parenting interventions build upon preexisting assumptions, such as stay-at-home mothers or intact and extended households, clinical interventions might not be efficient or effective in treating or preventing problem behaviors in Latin American preadolescents. To inform the design and implementation of evidence-based and culturally specific preventive parenting programs in Mexico, this research project seeks to identify the association that positive parental practices have on preadolescent problem behaviors by focusing on parental practices as perceived by children and their self-reported problem behaviors.

Our study hypotheses were: (1) A negative association between positive parental practices and both internalizing and externalizing problem behaviors will exist regardless of gender and grade level; and (2) There will be differences in problem behaviors and positive parental practices by grade, sex, and household configuration.

Method

Participants

Through a non-probabilistic sampling method, we recruited students from three public elementary schools in southern Mexico City during spring 2018. The project was carried out using the Mexican Psychological Society’s code of ethics (Sociedad Mexicana de Psicología, 2010). Prior to data collection, participants, parents and staff were informed about the purpose of the research project, potential risks, benefits, and confidentiality. All students from 4th to 6th grade were eligible, but only those whose parents had provided informed consent and were in school at the time of data collection were selected to take part. The analytic sample was comprised of 306 students (48.8% girls, age M=10 SD=0.92) from 4th (33%) 5th (31%) and 6th (36%) grades.

Data Collection

Students were instructed to first read each item in the questionnaire silently, followed by the teacher reading the item aloud. Students answered all items on paper anonymously.
Confidentiality was re-emphasized during the administration. Students completed a sociodemographic questionnaire that included information on household composition. Maternal practices of autonomy and communication were measured with Andrade and Betancourt’s (2008) scale of parental practices in its reduced version (Segura et al., 2011). The mother version contains 15 statements that reflect 5 factors (i.e., Communication [$\alpha=.92$], psychological control [$\alpha=.8$], imposition [$\alpha=.77$], behavioral control [$\alpha=.8$] and autonomy [$\alpha=.82$]) to which the student responds on a Likert type scale (4 points, ranging from Never to Always) to such items as “My mother respects the decisions I make.” The total scale of parental practices has adequate internal reliability with Mexican youth ($\alpha=.82$).

Parental practices of involvement and communication were measured using the Spanish version of The Alabama Parenting Questionnaire (Escribano et al., 2013), originally developed by Frick (1991). The APQ consists of 16 statements answered on a 5 point Likert Type scale (ranging from Never to Always) with 4 underlying factors showing moderate to high internal consistencies with Mexican preadolescents (Robert, 2009): inconsistent discipline ($\alpha=.57$), positive parenting ($\alpha=.56$), poor supervision ($\alpha=.63$), and parental involvement ($\alpha=.85$).

Maternal warmth was measured using a Spanish translation of Shaver and Fraley’s Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (Tay-Karapas et al., 2015). The scale consists of 9 statements (e.g., It is very helpful for me to go with my mother in difficult times) that are agreed upon by using a Likert scale (from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree), where higher scores indicate higher maternal warmth. The scale presents high internal reliability ($\alpha=.86$) when used as a self-report with Latin American youth.

Internalizing and externalizing behaviors were measured using a Chilean translation (Rivera Gutiérrez, 2013) of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman et al., 2000). The SDQ consists of 25 items answered on a 3 point Likert type scale that ranges from “Not true” to “Absolutely true,” where higher scores indicate a higher presence of problem behaviors in general (e.g., “I am easily distracted, it’s hard for me to concentrate). Internalizing problem behaviors ($\alpha=.82$) is a second-order latent variable derived from combining emotional symptoms and peer relationship problems ($\alpha=.81, \alpha=.63$), while externalizing problem behaviors ($\alpha=.88$) is derived from combining
conduct problems with hyperactivity/inattention ($\alpha=.76$, $\alpha=.86$). Both the SDQ and the ECRM were found to provide valid and reliable measures for internalizing and externalizing behaviors as well as parental attachment in Mexican preadolescents (Fuentes-Balderrama et al., 2020).

**Analysis**

Missing data were managed by series mean imputation, never exceeding 16 cases per variable (5% of the total $n$). Confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) were carried out to assess measurement invariance and model fit using AMOS 23. A series of exploratory factor analyses (EFAs) were then implemented to extract valid and reliable construct measurements of problem behaviors, maternal and joint parental practices. A series of mean comparisons were carried out to test our secondary hypothesis. The data were exported to Mplus 7.1, where SEM was carried out to test our primary hypotheses. The estimator used was Maximum Likelihood Mean and Variance (MLMV), given its robustness with non-normal data.

**Results**

CFAs depicted non-significant and cross-factor loadings that evidenced configural and metric non-invariance across all 6 instruments, thus exploratory factor analyses were carried out to extract valid and reliable measures of the constructs (see Table 1).

For all inventories, extreme group discrimination $t$-tests and internal consistency analyses were used to suppress items that did not discriminate or posed threats to scale reliability. As to the EFAs, the method used was principal component analysis with varimax rotation, following Kaiser’s criterion and these were paired with internal consistency analyses. Resulting KMOs ($\geq.7$) and sphericity tests indicated sampling adequacy as well as the presence of non-identity matrices and thus confirmed the appropriateness to perform EFAs. The ECR-M converged on a bifactorial solution identical to the one proposed by the authors. Maternal Warmth was measured by items 1-4 and presented an internal consistency of $\alpha=.86$.

The factorial analysis of parental practices was performed with both parenting inventories in a same item pool in order
to have more parsimonious measures and to deal with possible overlap between items. A 5-factor solution was achieved, but for the purpose of this research only two factors were used. Maternal Autonomy and Communication consisted of Parental Practices Scale mother version items 2, 14, and 15, while Parental Involvement and Communication was a joint measure of the Alabama Parenting Questionnaire items 1, 2 and 3 and the Parental Practice Scale mother version item 1. Each of the factor scales have an internal consistency of $\alpha=.7$.

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire presented a total internal consistency of $\alpha=.72$ and was subdivided into Externalizing Problem Behaviors (items 2, 5, 10, 15 and 18, $\alpha=.66$) and Internalizing Problem Behaviors (items 3, 8, 13, 16 and 24, $\alpha=.64$). Although Shapiro-Wilk tests indicated non-normality for the factor scales, skewness and kurtosis values were far from the absolute cut-off values that would suggest a need for data transformation. Factor scale descriptives for the global sample, boys, girls, different grades and household configurations are presented in Table 2.

As to mean comparisons, there were significant differences by sex where boys reported higher maternal warmth $t(293)=2.03^*$ Cohen’s $d=.23$ and externalizing problem behaviors $t(293)=2.017^*$ Cohen’s $d=.23$. Girls presented higher parental involvement and communication $t(285.33)=2.85^{**}$ Cohen’s $d=.33$. Schoolyear ANOVAs with Scheffé’s post-hoc test as a measure to deal with unequal group sizes resulted in differences for maternal warmth $F(2,303)=5.05^{**} \, \eta=.03$ and both internalizing $F(2,303)=3.56^* \, \eta=.02$ and externalizing problem behaviors $F(2,303)=6.86^{***} \, \eta=.04$.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>TLI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>C.I.</th>
<th>SRMR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ECR-M</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>67.88***</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.05–0.09</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPSm</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>136.49***</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.03–0.06</td>
<td>0.05</td>
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<tr>
<td>APQ</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>163.44***</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.03–0.05</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDQ</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>618.4***</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.06***</td>
<td>0.06–0.07</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ECR-M: Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (mother version), PPSm: Parental Practice Scale (mother version), APQ: Alabama Parenting Questionnaire, SDQ: Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire. * $.05$ ** $.01$ *** $.001$
Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations for factors among groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>M</th>
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<th>SD</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Internalizing</td>
<td>Externalizing</td>
<td>Maternal Autonomy and Communication</td>
<td>Maternal Warmth</td>
<td>Parental Involvement and Communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>8.84</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>9.76</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>16.08</td>
<td>8.24</td>
<td>12.55</td>
<td>2.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>8.19</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>9.09</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>9.53</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>17.22</td>
<td>7.83</td>
<td>12.12</td>
<td>3.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>8.49</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>8.53</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>9.98</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>15.29</td>
<td>8.55</td>
<td>13.07</td>
<td>2.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th grade</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>9.45</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>9.93</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>14.11</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>12.36</td>
<td>2.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th grade</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>8.89</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>9.77</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>16.39</td>
<td>8.76</td>
<td>12.84</td>
<td>2.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th grade</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>7.92</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>8.24</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>17.62</td>
<td>7.51</td>
<td>12.47</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intact</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>8.75</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>9.76</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>16.29</td>
<td>8.21</td>
<td>12.58</td>
<td>2.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fragmented</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>8.57</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>9.65</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>15.41</td>
<td>8.49</td>
<td>12.41</td>
<td>3.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sixth graders reported significantly higher maternal warmth when compared to 4th graders (Scheffé=3.5**) and significantly lower problem behaviors when compared to the same group (Internalizing=-.87* and Externalizing=-1.21***). No differences were found between fragmented and intact households. The model was specified using parental practices as covarying exogenous variables that directly affect both problem behaviors. Externalizing problem behaviors were regressed on internalizing problem behaviors as well to test for possible mediation paths. During model building, Lagrange multipliers suggested adding covariances between the error terms of items: PPSm1–PPSm2 as well as ECR-M2–ECR-M3 (both pairs related to the frequency and quality of maternal communication). The model path diagram is presented in Figure 1.

The model resulted in S-B $\chi^2$ (177): 207 $p=.06$, CFI: .97, TLI: .96, RMSEA: .02 (.00–.03), SRMR: .04, AIC: 16902.41 and BIC 17181.68, indicating absolute fit and low errors of approximation. All factor loadings were above the .4 threshold and significant; all latent variables presented significant variances as well.

Different Sobel tests with Bonferroni’s adjustment were carried out to determine the significance of the mediation effects of internalizing problem behaviors between parental practices and externalizing problem behaviors. Maternal warmth as well as maternal autonomy and communication presented significant indirect effects on externalizing problem behaviors (maternal warmth $\beta=-.17**$, maternal autonomy and communication $\beta=-.2*$). Both direct and indirect effects for both outcome variables account for a moderate amount of explained variance (Internalizing $R^2=9\%$) (Externalizing $R^2=63\%$).

Discussion

Our model demonstrated significant negative associations between positive maternal practices and both internalizing and externalizing problem behaviors, which supports our principal hypothesis and confirms previous findings in Mexico and Latin America (Andrade Palos et al., 2012; Chainé et al., 2015; Cruz-Santiago & Ramírez García, 2011). Maternal practices of autonomy and communication are greatly associated with parental involvement and moderately related to maternal warmth, demonstrating that when mothers communicate clearly and openly, preadolescents
Figure 1. Parental practices and their effects on problem behaviors. (Lagrange multipliers not shown for clarity purposes)


perceive their mother as supporting, caring, trustworthy, and involved (Betancourt & Andrade, 2011; Cobos, 2008; Darío Moreno Carmona, 2013; Rodríguez et al., 2015). As opposed to the findings of Benítez Camacho et al. (2005), maternal warmth was not associated with involvement. Preadolescents in our sample may not experience support, supervision or communication through practices of maternal warmth.

Maternal autonomy and communication was the strongest protective factor for internalizing problem behaviors in the model, which is consistent with previous international findings (Lorenzo-Moledo et al., 2017). The combination of communication and autonomy as a protective factor is experienced by preadolescents when mothers provide clear messages on values, rules, and parental expectations in an interactive way. This appears to bolster youth decision-making capabilities, commitment with parents and control over their own activities while shaping parental discipline and supervision (Barbosa, 2014; Co-
bos, 2008; Cuervo, 2010; Moreno Carmona, 2013; Morales Castillo & Aguirre Dávila, 2018; Smetana, 2011; Vargas Barbosa et al., 2017; Washington, 2018). By supporting and shaping autonomy, mothers demonstrate trust and acknowledge preadolescent resources which, in turn, help preadolescents acknowledge parental support and acceptance, thus acting as a protective factor for internalizing problem behaviors. The indirect effect on externalizing problem behaviors is explained by clear cues of socially acceptable behavior as well as preadolescent commitment and respect of parental authority, through which they may start to regulate their behavior to prevent disappointing their parents and losing their privacy, among other privileges.

Similarly, maternal warmth acts as a protective factor for internalizing problem behaviors, which confirms previous findings from Mexico, Latin America, and the United States (Benitez Camacho et al., 2005; Borda Mas et al., 2019; Cumsille et al., 2015; Mestre et al., 2010; Morales Chainé et al., 2017; Steinberg, 2001). By providing compliments, being empathetic and engaging in both physical and verbal demonstrations of love, mothers reinforce parental emotional support, which might motivate preadolescents to seek new activities, increase their social networks and develop their own confidence and self-efficacy against internalizing problem behaviors. Maternal warmth may reinforce preadolescent participation in their family through recognition and support, thus aiding in the development of communication and autonomy while reinforcing family loyalty as transmitted by the Mexican culture (Borda Mas et al., 2019; Cobos, 2008; Dadds et al., 2012). Maternal warmth presented an indirect effect on externalizing problem behaviors, which might be explained through maternal emotional discharge; through parental reinforcement of emotional self-efficacy, being aware of maternal emotional support and sharing concerns, any possible emotional distress is no longer channeled into the development of externalizing problem behaviors.

As proposed by previous Latin American research, parental involvement and communication act as protective factors for externalizing problem behaviors, probably due to the strong supervision component it conveys (Lara & Saracostti, 2019; Moreno Carmona, 2013). By providing support, cognitive scaffolding, and quality time, parents indirectly reinforce preadolescent self-esteem and self-efficacy (Eshel et al., 2006; Morales Castillo
& Aguirre Dávila, 2018; Mosmann & Wagner, 2008). Suppling preadolescents with culturally appropriate behavioral schemes, boosting their social development, and supporting their autonomy prove to be protective factors for externalizing problem behaviors, comparable to what occurs with maternal autonomy and communication.

As to our secondary hypotheses, sex differences were found where boys reported higher maternal warmth while girls presented higher parental involvement and communication; this was in line with previous Latin American research (Eguiarte & Arenas, 2019; Galaz et al., 2019). The gender difference may be due to the cultural belief that girls are weaker and less independent than boys, thus they experience more parental involvement and supervision. Additionally, they may be influenced by cultural beliefs that girls should be taught to maintain family bonds and seek parental approval (Buitrago-Peña et al., 2009; Darling et al., 2008; Galaz et al., 2019). In contrast with previous research in Mexico and the United States, no difference in maternal autonomy and communication was found between sexes (Darling et al., 2008; Galaz et al., 2019). By not encountering differences in problem behaviors or parental practices by household configuration, the results suggest an intact household is not a necessary condition for positive preadolescent development in Mexican families. SEM model comparison between intact and fragmented households would confirm if preventive factors have similar mechanisms that serve as protective factors for children in fragmented households, but that is beyond the scope of this paper. Age-wise, younger preadolescents reported lower maternal warmth and higher problem behaviors. This is probably due to developmental processes where 4th graders apparently have begun a separation process in favor of their own autonomy where they perceive their mothers as less supportive than their older, more experienced counterparts. Despite our results, the cross-sectional design of this study cannot establish causal relationships between our variables, nor can it provide a reliable measurement of preadolescent development. A longitudinal study would also be beneficial in describing the association between parental practices and problem behaviors over time.

Implications for Social Welfare Policy
In accordance with Chainé and Pineda (2014), more research should be done to identify the efficacy in parental behavior training interventions such as Modularized Cognitive Training (Chorpita et al., 2011), or PMTO (Patterson et al., 2010) with Mexican parents. Additionally, new and existing programs need to be adapted with the nature of Mexican culture and parenting in mind. Interventions centered around parental behavior training can serve the dual purpose of developing efficient employment of parental practices as well as successful implementation of protective factors in Mexican families. Before engaging in an intervention, Mexican parents should seek assistance in identifying the severity of preadolescent problem behaviors, as positive parental practices would not be as effective for children in clinical ranges of problem behaviors (Anderson & Branstetter, 2012).

Social programs for positive youth development and improved parenting need to be developed with an understanding that Mexican mothers benefit from developing communication skills aimed at reducing family conflict and improving collaborative problem solving with their children. By explaining the emerging need for autonomy of their children as well as including planning strategies aimed at maintaining respect among family members and acknowledging the importance of family loyalty, social programs will reinforce the mothers’ position and build effective communication channels during adolescence (Manczak et al., 2018). Increasing maternal communication that makes expectations clear and includes preadolescents in family decisions increases parental involvement and serves as protective factor.

By reinforcing and recognizing preadolescent compliance with parental expectations while also allowing children to explore their own autonomy, mothers develop trust in the mother-child relationship while also supporting preadolescent autonomy. If preadolescents cannot balance parental expectations and autonomy, instructing mothers to not lose their temper or employ negative responses would offer them with an opportunity to provide preadolescents with support and guidance to learn from their mistakes. By not reacting in antagonistic ways, mothers reinforce seeking maternal help in similar situations in the future, while also reinforcing unconditional support. Coaching mothers in discriminating involvement from supervision and intrusion might help preadolescents perceive
parental involvement as supportive, while providing parents with information of potential contextual and social threats to overcome, without being a threatening or uncomfortable presence to their children.

As to cultural values, gender roles are highly reinforced from childhood and by engaging in more neutral practices or beliefs, mothers might be able to provide preadolescents with the practices they need, and not just what culture expects them to need. Mothers could reinforce duty and loyalty to family while being less supportive of the belief that an individual’s behavior is representative of the whole family, or that individual desires and needs are less important than the family’s. Similarly, parents would benefit greatly from being flexible in their hierarchical structure when making family decisions, as children have a right to share their opinions of what happens in the family.

This study was not without its limitations. The use of self-report questionnaires might have rendered biased answers from the sample, despite the inclusion of a confidentiality statement and relative privacy while answering questions. Although valid and reliable subscales were extracted from the APQ and SDQ, the results should be interpreted with caution as those measures were not originally designed to capture preadolescent perceptions. Future directions in this line of research should employ a stronger sampling procedure in order to compare structural equation models between subsamples. Incorporating negative parental practices into the model would provide a more realistic test of these parental practices as protective factors, while a longitudinal design would further explain the mechanisms and limitations of these protective factors. Incorporating paternal parental practices would probably indicate how maternal practices herald paternal, therefore incorporating the household hierarchical structure into models would provide higher external validity.

Acknowledgements: The first author acknowledges the invaluable mentoring of Dr. Tiffany A. Whittaker.
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Psychometric Properties of the Job Burnout Scale among Social Service Workers: A Pilot Study

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This study examined the psychometric properties of the Job Burnout Scale among Social Service Workers (JBSSW). The JBSSW was administered among 248 social service workers employed in governmental and nonprofit social service agencies. Findings show that this scale has three independent dimensions: person-related burnout, work-related burnout, and agency-related burnout. All three dimensions have good reliability and construct validity. Work-related burnout and agency-related burnout also have good concurrent validity. This scale may be used by social service agencies, researchers, and practitioners to gauge staff burnout and alleviate it by changing the interactions between individuals, the nature of their work, and the agency environment.

Keywords: Burnout, reliability, validity, social service workers, job burnout scale
Job burnout has been defined as part of stress resulting from various aspects of one’s job, such as person-, work-, and agency-related factors. To many researchers, job burnout is a process that occurs as a result of continuous physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion (e.g., Pines & Aronson, 1988). According to Maslach & Jackson (1981, p. 99), “burnout is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who do ‘people-work’ of some kind.” It has also been defined by other researchers as a “syndrome of psychological problems experienced as a result of chronic work stress” (Milfont et al., 2008, p. 169). In a similar vein and more recently, Platsidou & Daniilidou (2016) articulated the notion of burnout as the exhaustion of employees’ capacity to maintain an intense involvement that has a meaningful impact at work. Many people working in the human service sector, including volunteer workers, experience job burnout. A review of the literature indicates that burnout has been studied among workers in child protective agencies (Anderson, 2000; Cahalane & Sites, 2008; Kim & Stoner, 2008; Poulin & Walter, 1993; Schwartz et al., 2007), school teachers (Platsidou & Daniilidou, 2016), marriage and family therapists (Rosenberg & Pace, 2006), and social service volunteers (Kulik, 2006).

Burnout transforms not only the worker but also the social service agency and the clients served by the agency (Anderson, 2000). Burnout has been documented to cause negative self-concept, negative job attitudes, and a loss of concern or feeling for clients (Rosenberg & Pace, 2006). Researchers have linked burnout to mental health outcomes such as depression and anxiety, which, in turn, could lead to decreased work performance (Maslach et al., 2001). Similarly, it has been argued that the burnout syndrome, such as exhaustion and disengagement from work, could lead to somatic complaints, diminished job performance, and turnover (Demerouti et al., 2001). Many empirical studies have confirmed that burnout is associated with turnover intention (e.g., Gharakhani & Zaferanchi, 2019; Kim & Stoner, 2008). For example, Kim and Stoner’s (2008) study among registered social workers in California found that burnout (including emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment) was positively associated with turnover intention.
Many researchers (Demerouti et al., 2001; Kristensen et al., 2005; Maslach et al., 1996; Pines & Aronson, 1988) have empirically tested the concept and theory of burnout by developing different instruments to measure burnout at the individual level. However, several of these instruments have a heavy focus on factors related to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. From a person-in-environment (PIE) perspective, this study broadens the concept of burnout to include important organizational and environmental factors such as the agency and nature of work. Thus, while existing scales measured burnout mostly from an emotional exhaustion and depersonalization angle, this scale provides a person-environment interactive framework that includes not only the person but also the organization and work-related variables. While several of the available scales were validated, we found that they did not adequately address the items included in the current research, particularly related to various social, environmental, and agency- and work-related factors among human service workers. For example, the burnout scale that we developed has a few items that are not commonly found in other instruments, such as having no input on decisions affecting your work, feelings of unfairness and favoritism in the workplace, constant exposure to crisis and pressure at work, constantly working with difficult or dangerous clients, and feeling underpaid for expected work responsibilities. Thus, this instrument broadens the conceptualization of burnout from emotional exhaustion to include a person-environment interactive framework. Therefore, we expected that the study would add to the existing knowledge by providing a more nuanced understanding and measurement of burnout among social service workers.

*Applying the Person-in-Environment Perspective to Burnout Research*

The PIE perspective is a theoretical framework that social work professionals often use to elucidate the origin and nature of problems experienced by clients. It highlights the role of individual and environmental factors in shaping clients’ social functioning (Karls & O’Keefe, 2009). Generally speaking, existing research has used the PIE perspective to study the origin
of burnout, linking both individual factors (e.g., demographic characteristics) and environmental factors (e.g., job demands and organizational resources) to burnout.

Informed by the PIE perspective, researchers have identified several individual factors associated with job burnout. Age is one of the most significant socio-demographic characteristics associated with burnout. Younger service workers reported a higher rate of burnout compared to workers over the age of 40 years (Maslach et al., 2001). This might be because senior workers are familiar with workload expectations (Acker, 2003; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Shirom et al., 2008). The literature also indicates that female social service providers, overwhelmingly, reported higher rates of job burnout than male workers in the same line of work, perhaps as a result of increased exhaustion associated with “emotional labor” (Erickson & Ritter, 2001; Maslach et al., 2001; Sprang et al., 2007). In terms of education, studies show that those with higher education who were often charged with higher responsibilities experienced higher levels of stress and burnout (Maslach et al., 2001; Schwartz et al., 2007). Finally, an individual’s personality characteristics, including levels of hardiness, locus of control, and coping style, also pertain to burnout. More specifically, low levels of hardiness, an external locus of control, and an avoidant coping style may be related to high levels of burnout (Maslach et al., 2001).

Many environmental factors have also been linked to job burnout. For example, Maslach et al. (2001, p. 414) reviewed “six areas of worklife that encompass the central relationships with burnout”: workload, control over work, rewards (both financial and social), a sense of community, perceived fairness, and organizational values. Informed by the PIE perspective, they argued that the mismatch or gap between these environmental factors and the person is likely to contribute to the person’s experience of burnout. While Maslach et al. (2001) did not further break these factors into work- or agency-related reasons, the first two can be categorized as work-related factors and the last four as agency-related factors.

Empirical evidence often corroborates the crucial impacts of these factors. For example, after testing the job demands-resources model of burnout, researchers (Demerouti et al., 2001) have found that high job demands and lack of job resources were both related to heightened burnout in 374 German workers.
across different employment settings. In Demerouti et al.’s (2001) categorization, job demands included workloads, time pressure, client contact, etc. and job resources included feedback, rewards, supervisor support, etc. Although not precisely the same, these two dimensions are similar to our conceptualization of the work- and agency-related factors.

Similar to Demerouti et al.’s (2001) study, a longitudinal study reported that job stress, supervisor support, organizational resources, and satisfaction with clients were predictive of burnout (Poulin & Walter, 1993). In the same vein, demanding workloads were associated with burnout among social workers and customer service representatives (Koeske & Koeske, 1989; Visser & Rothmann, 2008). Conversely, empirical evidence has supported the link between quality supervision and diminished burnout. For example, Edwards et al. (2006) conducted a study among mental health nurses and found that nurses who had effective supervision reported lower levels of burnout in the form of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Again, the factors covered in these studies could be categorized as work- and agency-related factors that contribute to burnout.

Existing Measures of Burnout

In the literature, four main measurement instruments have been rather widely used to measure burnout experienced by workers in various settings. The original Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is perhaps the most popular scale, which contains 22 items in three main areas, namely, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and inefficacy (Maslach et al., 1996). According to Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter (1996), exhaustion refers to the emotional pressure of the work environment, which often precludes the service provider’s capacity to interact with and address the needs of the client. Depersonalization is a conscious effort to create a degree of separation between oneself and the client (distancing); outside of human services, this is reflected by an indifferent or cynical attitude (cynicism). Inefficacy refers to a reduction in personal accomplishment from work-related activities, which leaves the worker with a sense of uselessness to the organization and clients. Although the original MBI primarily measures three different dimensions of burnout, critics argued that depersonalization is mostly
a coping strategy rather than a component of the burnout syndrome (Kristensen et al., 2005). Some critics also maintained that personal accomplishment is mostly different and even independent of the other two components (Schutte et al., 2000).

The Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI), which focuses on exhaustion and disengagement, was proposed as an alternative to the original MBI (Demerouti et al., 2001). With 16 items, the inventory contains eight items worded negatively to capture exhaustion and disengagement, and eight items worded positively to capture vigor and dedication, which were assumed to be the opposite poles of the dimension of exhaustion and disengagement, respectively. Exhaustion from work is defined as one’s direct reaction to high job demands and includes affective, physical, and cognitive exhaustion. This is different from the original MBI because the latter only covers the affective aspect of exhaustion. Disengagement from work refers to one’s negative attitudes toward work in general as a result of lack of support at the agency level. Again, this is different from the MBI because depersonalization from the MBI pertains to distancing oneself from service recipients, rather than from one’s work in general. Empirical evidence supported the reliability and validity of the OLBI when it was administered among different occupational groups (Demerouti et al., 2001). However, a subsequent study on the OLBI (Demerouti et al., 2010) found that vigor and exhaustion represented two different and independent constructs.

Unlike the MBI and the OLBI, the Burnout Measure (BM), developed by Pines and Aronson (1988), includes the exhaustion dimension but not the disengagement dimension. It contains three subscales representing emotional exhaustion, physical exhaustion, and mental exhaustion. The BM is composed of seven items within each subscale, totaling 21 items. While physical exhaustion refers to low energy, chronic fatigue, and weakness, emotional exhaustion includes feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and entrapment. The mental exhaustion component refers to negative attitudes towards self, work, and life (Pines & Aronson, 1988). The BM also has been criticized on several grounds: While some argued that the BM does not clearly articulate a theoretical framework which interconnects the three types of exhaustion (Enzmann et al., 1998), others pointed to the lack of support for the proposed factorial model (Ray & Miller, 1991).
Finally, Kristensen et al. (2005) developed the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI) that measures personal burnout, work-related burnout, and client-related burnout. This inventory has a total of 19 items (six items each in personal- and client-related areas and seven items in the work-related area). Personal burnout refers to the experience of physical and psychological fatigue and exhaustion. Work-related burnout refers to symptoms caused by their experience at the workplace; client-related burnout has to do with symptoms stemming from working with people. The CBI has been criticized on the ground that personal burnout is considered to be generic, which may also be experienced by the non-working population, such as the unemployed, the retired, etc. (Platsidou & Daniilidou, 2016). This is problematic because burnout is generally understood as resulting from or related to some aspect of peoples’ work.

Current Study

As shown above, existing instruments of burnout tapped into individual symptoms of burnout, such as exhaustion, depersonalization, and inefficacy. Although directly focusing on individual experiences, these symptoms are a clear manifestation of the underlying issues of job demands and organizational context. Alternatively, burnout can be tapped by measuring work- and agency-related issues more explicitly. This is the focus of the current study. More specifically, this study used the PIE perspective to guide the development of the Job Burnout Scale among Social Service Workers (JBSSW). It also explored the factorial structure of the JBSSW inherent in the PIE perspective (i.e., person-, work-, and agency-related burnout) and provided preliminary evidence on the reliability and validity of the scale.

Methods

Study Design and Sampling Procedures

We used a cross-sectional design for this study. We adopted a convenience sampling method as we did not have reliable and adequate information about the study population. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of our
Data were collected from a semi-urban area in central California. Based on the literature review, a short questionnaire on job burnout was developed after discussion with working part-time Master of Social Work (MSW) students enrolled in a research methodology class as part of the requirement of an MSW program in central California. The questionnaire was also pilot tested for accuracy and correctness. After completing the Human Subjects Protection Training conducted by the Institutional Review Board of the authors’ institution, these part-time student research associates identified and contacted research participants in various local social service agencies. These included government agencies (such as county jails and Department of Human Services) and nonprofit agencies (such as foster family agencies, homeless shelters, and mental health agencies). Student associates also helped to disseminate the research packet in an envelope (including the questionnaire and the informed consent form) and collect the completed questionnaires and signed consent forms. On rare occasions, student associates followed up with the participants to encourage participation. These efforts resulted in a 100% response rate. A total of 253 social service workers returned the completed questionnaire and the signed consent form.

Sample Characteristics

The analytic sample consisted of 248 participants (five cases with missing values on burnout variables were deleted). Participants’ self-reported race/ethnicity was White (41.9%), Hispanic (39.9%), African American (10.1%), and other (8.0%). Most participants were female (77.0%), were married (53.6%), attended some college or earned a college degree (60.9%), and worked full-time (92.7%). The average age was 38.1 years (SD = 10.0), and the average years working in the human services field were 10.0 (SD = 9.1). The average caseload was 75.9 (SD = 157.7). The average length of employment was 6.25 years (SD = 5.68). Many participants (43.6%) had a bachelor’s degree, while 29.8% had a master’s degree. Most participants (51.7%) considered their caseloads moderate or average, with 35.7% and 12.6% reporting high and low caseloads, respectively. Responses were evenly divided when asked if they were obligated to work overtime: 51% reported yes, and 49% reported no.
Measures

Based on the PIE perspective, we developed the JBSSW, which captures person-, work-, and agency-related burnout among social service workers. These items were first brainstormed by a group of part-time, working MSW students in a research class and then refined by the first author. In this pilot study, we included a version of the JBSSW that consists of 18 items, each asking to which degree the respondent agrees with a statement related to burnout (see Table 1). The questionnaire starts with

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for the JBSSW Items among Social Service Workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Very High (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lack of supportive supervision</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Having no input on decisions affecting your work</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Unrealistic agency expectations of client success</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lack of communication between management and direct service providers</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Unmanageable agency deadlines</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Lack of teamwork among agency colleagues</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Lack of support for personal time off</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Feeling of unfairness and favoritism in the workplace</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Uncertainty about job security</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Emotional exhaustion associated with work and caseload management</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Inadequate on-the-job training</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Constant exposure to crisis and pressure at work</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Lack of respect and recognition by the management</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Lack of job satisfaction and feeling frustrated</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Feeling trapped in a dead-end job</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Feeling overwhelmed due to increased job responsibilities</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Constantly working with difficult or dangerous clients</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Feeling underpaid for expected work responsibilities</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>33.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
an introductory statement: On a scale of 1-5, where “1” is very low and “5” is very high, please rate the following items to the extent they contribute to your job burn out (Circle the appropriate number that applies). One sample item was “having no input on decisions affecting your work.” Responses to the statements were rated on a Likert-type scale: 1 = very low, 2 = low, 3 = moderate, 4 = high, and 5 = very high. Using single-item questions, we collected participants’ demographic data such as age, gender, race and ethnicity, and marital status. Participants also filled out questions on work-related variables, including job type (i.e., full-time vs. part-time), length of employment, caseloads, and overtime work.

Analysis Strategy

When developing the items of the JBSSW, we tried to follow the theoretical framework identified in the literature review and incorporate items that captured person-, agency-, and work-related factors. Consistent with our a priori measurement theory, the main analysis method for the present study was Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), which tested how well our measurement theory fit the actual data and determined whether we needed to confirm or reject the theory (Raykov & Marcoulides, 2006). However, researchers have pointed out that, for the purpose of instrument development, performing an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) can provide “insight into the structure of the items and may be helpful in proposing the measurement model” (Hair et al., 2014, p. 612). Therefore, we decided to perform an EFA first to remove items with low factor loadings and items loading on more than one factor.

To examine the appropriateness of factor analysis, we used Bartlett’s test for sphericity and calculated the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy. Once the data were deemed appropriate for factor analysis, we first performed the EFA as a pretest to examine whether the proposed constructs were reflected in the factor loadings of the JBSSW items. Consistent with our measurement theory, we retained three factors for rotation. The Kaiser’s eigenvalue >1 rule (Kaiser, 1960) also suggested three factors. To derive the factors, we used maximum likelihood (ML) estimation and goemin rotation. As
an oblique rotation method, goemin allows for correlations between factors. Researchers have recommended a loading of .30 or larger for an observed variable to define a factor (e.g., Costello & Osborne, 2005; Ferguson & Cox, 1993). To improve factor saturation, we used a cutoff loading of .40 or larger. Items loading on two or more factors (i.e., loadings ≥ .40 on multiple factors) or failing to load on any factor (i.e., loadings < .40 on all three factors) were dropped.

The modified questionnaire was then subject to the CFA. Comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), root-mean square-error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) were used to assess model fit. Following conventional criteria, we deemed the model well-fitting when CFI and TLI ≥ .95, RMSEA ≤ .06, and SRMR ≤ .08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2016). To further validate the questionnaire, we examined the reliability and validity (including convergent, discriminant, and concurrent validity). We used Cronbach’s α to test internal consistency reliability, with α > .70 indicating acceptable reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). We calculated average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) to test convergent validity, both of which have been found advantageous comparing to the correlation method because measurement errors are adjusted for in the former approach (Brown, 2015). Following previous researchers’ (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2014) recommendations, the cutoff scores for AVE and CR were set at .50 and .70, respectively. Finally, when the AVE value of a latent construct was larger than the square of the correlation estimates between this construct and other constructs, we concluded that discriminant validity was good for the latent construct (Hair et al., 2014). The EFA and CFA were conducted in Mplus Version 7.4, and all other analyses were conducted in STATA Version 14.0.

Results

As shown in Table 1, social service workers generally reported a moderate level of burnout. However, they experienced moderate to high levels of burnout on a few items: “emotional exhaustion associated with work and caseload management,” “constant exposure to crisis and pressure at work,” “feeling overwhelmed due to increased job responsibilities,” and
“feeling underpaid for expected work responsibilities.” For example, 33.1% of respondents rated “very high” on “feeling underpaid for expected work responsibilities” (M = 3.49, SD = 1.44). Factorability analyses suggested that Bartlett’s test of sphericity was significant: χ² = 1580.99, df = 153, p < .001, providing evidence that the variables were correlated and suitable for factor analysis. The KMO measure was larger than .50 for all items except for item 5: “unmanageable agency deadlines,” with KMO = .49. This item was dropped from the subsequent analyses (Ferguson & Cox, 1993). For all the remaining 17 variables, the KMO ranged from .62 to .94.

As shown in Table 2, the initial EFA results suggested that four items (3, 6, 7, and 11) failed to load on any factor (i.e., loadings fell below .40), and item 13 cross-loaded on two factors. These variables were removed from the final EFA model. After removing these items, we reran the EFA. The remaining items, corresponding factors, factor loadings, communality values (i.e., variance in a given observed indicator explained by a factor), and eigenvalues are presented in Table 3. However, total variance in a set of observed variables explained by a factor was not reported because the factors are correlated in geomin rotation (Costello & Osborne, 2005). As shown in Table 3, four, five, and three items loaded on factor 1, 2, and 3, respectively. All items loaded on their factor significantly (p < .05), with factor loadings ranging from .37 to .87. The communality values for all items ranged from .21 to .72. The eigenvalues for the three factors ranged from 1.01 to 5.40.

Consistent with our theoretical framework, factor 1 was labeled as agency-related burnout (e.g., “Feeling of unfairness and favoritism in the workplace”), factor 2 was labeled as work-related burnout (e.g., “Constant exposure to crisis and pressure at work”), and factor 3 was labeled as person-related burnout (e.g., “Lack of job satisfaction and feeling frustrated”). The initial CFA tested a model with a factor structure described above and revealed a good model fit. Specifically, c²(51) = 94.13, p < .001; CFI = .97; TLI = .96; RMSEA = .06 (90% CI [.04, .08]); SRMR = .04. Standardized factor loadings are presented in Table 4, which ranged from .45 to .91. Ranging from .56 to .71, the correlations between the three latent variables were all significant (p < .001). This provided evidence that the use of geomin rotation was appropriate.
### Table 2. Initial Exploratory Factor Analysis Results (3 factors, 17 items)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item #</th>
<th>Factor 1</th>
<th>Factor 2</th>
<th>Factor 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Loadings estimates were unstandardized; Retained items for the final EFA are indicated by boldface.*
Table 3. Final Exploratory Factor Analysis Results
(3 factors, 12 items)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item #</th>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Loading</th>
<th>Communality</th>
<th>Eigenvalue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Agency-related</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>5.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Agency-related</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Agency-related</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Agency-related</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Work-related</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>1.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Work-related</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Work-related</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Work-related</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Work-related</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Person-related</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Personal-related</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Personal-related</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Loadings estimates were unstandardized.*

Table 4. Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results (3 factors, 12 items)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item #</th>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Unstandardized Loading (SE)</th>
<th>Standardized Loading</th>
<th>AVE</th>
<th>CR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Agency-related</td>
<td>1.05(.08)</td>
<td>0.74***</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Agency-related</td>
<td>1.00(.08)</td>
<td>0.77***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Agency-related</td>
<td>1.00(.08)</td>
<td>0.75***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Agency-related</td>
<td>0.92(.09)</td>
<td>0.64***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Work-related</td>
<td>1.09(.08)</td>
<td>0.80***</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Work-related</td>
<td>1.07(.08)</td>
<td>0.78***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Work-related</td>
<td>1.13(.08)</td>
<td>0.82***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Work-related</td>
<td>0.97(.08)</td>
<td>0.70***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Work-related</td>
<td>0.91(.09)</td>
<td>0.64***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Individual-related</td>
<td>0.59(.09)</td>
<td>0.45***</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Individual-related</td>
<td>1.20(.07)</td>
<td>0.91***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Individual-related</td>
<td>1.07(.08)</td>
<td>0.75***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: p < .001 for all factor loadings.*
The reliability score for each factor (i.e., agency-, work-, and person-related burnout) was acceptable (Cronbach’s α = .81, .86, and .74, respectively). The overall reliability for the scale was also good (Cronbach’s α = .89). Since .70 has been recommended as the cutoff for acceptable reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), these results indicated the entire JBSSW and its three sub-scales were reliable.

The JBSSW also had good construct validity, as evidenced by the following criteria. First, the standardized loadings of all items were larger than .50, except for item 9 “Uncertainty about job security” with a loading of .45. According to Hair et al. (2014), this provided evidence for adequate construct validity. Second, AVE estimates were greater than .50, and CR estimates were larger than .70 for all three latent variables, both suggesting adequate convergent validity. Third, the squared correlations between the latent variables were .31, .45, .50, respectively (see Table 5), all less than the AVE estimate of each latent construct. This provided evidence for good discriminant validity, according to Hair et al.’s (2014) criteria.

To preserve job burnout as a general construct and to obtain a more parsimonious model, we also performed a second-order CFA, in which the three burnout dimensions were specified as the first-order factors with the same items loading on them as the initial CFA. However, burnout was specified as a

Table 5. Correlations and squared correlations between the three latent variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agency-related</th>
<th>Work-related</th>
<th>Person-related</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agency-related</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-related</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person-related</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Squared correlations are indicated by boldface.
second-order factor with the three latent variables as its indicators (i.e., first-order factors). The second-order CFA yielded the same model fit statistics as the initial CFA: $c^2 (51) = 94.13, p < .001$; CFI = .97; TLI = .96; RMSEA = .06 (90% CI [.04, .08]); SRMR = .04. Also, the loadings of the items on the first-order factors remained the same as the initial CFA. The standardized loadings of the three first-order factors on burnout were .73 for agency-related burnout, .76 for work-related burnout, and .92 for person-related burnout, with $p$ values all significant at the .001 level.

To examine the relationship between burnout and predictor variables such as caseload size, we created a composite score for each first-order factor variable (i.e., each subscale) and total burnout. Perceptions about caseloads were correlated with agency-related burnout, work-related burnout, and total burnout based on the JBSSW ($r = .13, p = .04$; $r = .27, p < .001$; $r = .22, p < .001$; respectively). Agency-related burnout, work-related burnout, and total burnout were also significantly different between workers who worked overtime and who did not. Specifically, those who worked overtime reported higher levels of burnout ($t = 1.62, p = .05$ for agency-related burnout; $t = 5.43, p < .001$ for work-related burnout; $t = 3.69, p < .001$ for total burnout). It is worth noting that our analyses did not support the concurrent validity of the person-related dimension. We also examined the bivariate relationships between burnout and gender, age, education, and length of employment, but the results were not statistically significant. Taken together, these results provided partial evidence for the concurrent validity of the JBSSW.

Discussion

This study validated a shortened version of the original JBSSW, with 12 items loading on person-, work-, and agency-related burnout, thus broadening the theoretical framework of burnout to be consistent with the PIE perspective. Specifically, four items loaded on agency-related burnout, five items loaded on work-related burnout, and three items loaded for person-related burnout. Previously, many instruments on job burnout (e.g., the MBI and the OLBI) focused on individual factors such as exhaustion and disengagement. However, they did not include agency- and work-related factors in burnout.
Different from existing instruments, the JBSSW provided an alternative approach to the measurement of burnout by including agency- and work-related factors explicitly. We chose to include these factors because they are strongly related to burnout in the literature (e.g., Demerouti et al., 2001; Edwards et al., 2006; Visser & Rothmann, 2008), and because these situational and organizational factors are more important than individual factors in shaping burnout (Maslach et al., 2001). Based on our literature review, the only previous instrument that incorporated work- and client-related burnout was the CBI (Kristensen et al., 2005). However, its items are not specific about the underlying reasons related to burnout. This is another reason that we developed the JBSSW to incorporate items that reflect the specific characteristics of the nature of work and the agency. For example, the items “Do you feel burnt out because of your work” and “Are you tired of working with clients” on the CBI are vague about the nature of the work and clients. In contrast, items on the JBSSW are clearly defined when coming to the nature of the work and clients (e.g., “Constant exposure to crisis and pressure at work” and “Constantly working with difficult or dangerous clients”).

The personal dimension of burnout validated in this study seemed similar to the emotional exhaustion dimension of the original MBI. For example, the content of the MBI item “I feel frustrated by my job” and our item “Lack of job satisfaction and feeling frustrated” is essentially the same, but our item also captures job satisfaction. In addition, our results indicated that person-related burnout goes beyond emotional exhaustion and includes feelings about job insecurity and being trapped in a dead-end job, both of which are associated with burnout (e.g., Bosman et al., 2005; Demerouti et al., 2001; Visser & Rothmann, 2008). However, it is worth noting that this dimension appeared less well-constructed than the other two dimensions. For example, the item “Lack of job satisfaction and feeling frustrated” was a double-barreled question. Also, the other two items regarding job insecurity and being trapped in a dead-end job could be agency- or work-related, rendering it challenging to differentiate the person dimension from other dimensions. Nevertheless, these two items appear to be directly related to personal reasons that contribute to burnout. In other words,
feeling trapped and insecure is better viewed as personal feelings than as agency- and work-related difficulties.

Our findings indicated that the items of the agency dimension of burnout focused on administration and supervision issues related to agency policies and procedures. The work dimension highlighted issues in work such as unmanageable caseloads and responsibilities and constant pressure from work and difficult clients. Interestingly, although items 3, 6, 7, & 11 appeared to be agency-related, they did not load on agency-related burnout. One reason that these items failed to load on the agency dimension could be that these items, while important, are less likely to cause burnout than other environmental factors such as lack of supportive supervision, participation in decision making, and a sense of fairness. Previous studies have confirmed the correlations between burnout and lack of supervision and participation in decision making (Demerouti et al., 2001). Unfairness has also been postulated to cause both emotional exhaustion and cynicism (Maslach et al., 2001). Additionally, although the item “Lack of respect and recognition by the management” did load on the agency dimension (loading = .45), it was removed because it also loaded on the person dimension (loading = .40). It is difficult to explain why this item cross-loaded, but it could be due to the overall ambiguity of the person dimension of the JBSSW.

Based on the CFA results, our study provided some evidence that the reliability and validity of the scale are satisfactory. However, the reliability and validity of the person dimension were not as good as the other two dimensions, leaving some room for improvement. Specifically, the reliability score of the person dimension was less than .80, and one of the items (item 9) of the person dimension yielded a less favorable value of the standardized loading. Also, our findings did not support the concurrent validity of the person dimension. Again, this could be due to the wording problem of the double-barreled item “Lack of job satisfaction and feeling frustrated,” and might be remedied by splitting the item into two. This could also be explained by the overall ambiguity of the person dimension, as discussed earlier.

Finally, because we found strong correlations between the three burnout factors, we carried out a second order CFA. In this model, the three factors all significantly loaded on a more general
burnout construct. This suggested that the more general burnout construct does exist and it is meaningful to use our scale and generate a total score to represent the overall level of burnout.

**Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

The current study has a few limitations. First, during the construction of the JBSSW, we did not involve a panel of experts to ensure its content validity. Social work researchers have suggested that checking content validity should be the first step when constructing a new measure (Rubio, Berg-Weger, Tebb, Lee, & Rauch, 2003). They argued that conducting a content validity study is more cost-effective than conducting a pilot study, which involves evaluating and reconstructing a measure. They also gave step-by-step procedures on how to test content validity. Future researchers could consider adopting Rubio et al.’s (2003) methods when trying to refine the JBSSW. Second, because this is the first study on the development of the JBSSW, we performed the EFA first to trim questionable items. Using the CFA, we were able to validate the shortened version of the JBSSW. However, due to design constraints, we conducted both analyses using one sample. In the future, the three-factor structure of the JBSSW validated in this study should be reevaluated in an independent sample to provide stronger evidence for the psychometric properties of the JBSSW. Third, our questionnaire did not include a measure of retention outcomes (such as intent to leave or actual turnover rates) or an existing measure of burnout. Future research thus needs to examine the predictive validity of the JBSSW. Also, concurrent validity should be validated by comparing the JBSSW to an existing measure of burnout.

Finally, although we identified a measurement theory that focuses on the interactions between the person and the environment, our validated scale did not reflect the balance across the three dimensions. Most items in the original JBSSW were agency-related, although only four items were retained. Among the four items, some seemed to overlap with items of other dimensions. For example, although item 8 (“Feeling of unfairness and favoritism in the workplace”) addressed the issue of unfairness at the agency level, it could be understood as feelings related to the person dimension. On the other hand,
items of the person dimension need to be strengthened to better capture emotional, physical, and cognitive exhaustion. Although the number of items of the work dimension seemed appropriate, some items may overlap with each other or the items of the person dimension. For instance, item 16 (“Feeling overwhelmed due to increased job responsibilities”) and item 18 (“Feeling underpaid for expected work responsibilities”) both tapped into job responsibilities. Item 10 (“Emotional exhaustion associated with work and caseload management”), as a work-related item, overlapped with the person dimension because the wording included emotional exhaustion. These issues could be rectified by making small adjustments. One possible change could be to remove the wording “feeling” and “emotional exhaustion” in all items within the agency and work dimensions. Another amendment could be to include an introductory question in front of all agency- and work-related items. It seems to be appropriate to include a question such as “Have you been worn out (or burned out) for any of the following reasons?” to directly connect burnout experiences and environmental factors.

Conclusion

Informed by the PIE perspective for social work, the current study developed and evaluated a burnout scale that captures three dimensions of burnout: the person, the work, and the agency. This study is critical because none of the measures reviewed in the study have incorporated the PIE perspective. However, we consider our study a pilot, and we are still in the early stage of developing and evaluating the JBSSW. Although we validated a 12-item version of the JBSSW, we caution against the direct use of this version in social work practice and research. Nevertheless, this version of the JBSSW has good internal consistency reliability, construct validity, and concurrent validity, especially for the work and agency dimensions. This is the first step for social work professionals to integrate the PIE perspective in their work on burnout. Researchers need to start considering the importance of such an integrative framework (i.e., the PIE perspective) when developing and validating new measures of burnout. Based on our study on the JBSSW, we recommend conducting a second pilot study to correct the
wording for some items and expand the items of the person dimension. As for practice, it is our sincere hope that social service agencies start looking into the role of environmental factors that contribute to burnout. Only by changing the interactions between the person and the environment could the issue of high turnover rates faced by these agencies be solved.

References


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This paper presents the sociopolitical experiences of early Arab migrants in the United States (U.S.) and the process of contradictory and socially constructed racial categorizations favoring white supremacy. While there is much discourse of the racial formation of Arab immigrants since 9-11, the actual racial project started in the early twentieth century, through various entities including the social work profession where the “othering” process of early Arabs Americans existed in social welfare practice. Examples of the pejorative attitudes towards Arab immigrants from the early social work discourse are examined through proceedings from the National Conference on Social Welfare (NCSW) in the late nineteenth and twentieth century. Such conference proceedings from 1882 to 1982 highlight an Orientalist, ethnocentric and xenophobic stance towards early Arab immigrants. Implications for social work practice, education, and policy/advocacy are discussed.

Keywords: Arab, Syrian, Orientalist, NCSW, social work, racial formation theory, identity, “other”
While there has been increased government and media attention to Arab Americans in recent years, migration of Arabs (the term “Arabic-speaking” people has also often been used in the literature in reference to immigrants at the turn of the twentieth century because while they did speak Arabic, they did not necessarily identify as Arab) to the United States (U.S.) dates back to the late 1800s (Naber, 2000). The U.S. experienced a period of high immigration beginning in the 1800s through 1924 in which, along with other immigrant groups, Arab immigrants arrived in the U.S. in hopes of economic prosperity and new opportunities. These immigrants were from what was known as Greater Syria (also referred to as “Mount Lebanon”), which includes present day Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine and Israel (Naff, 1985). In this paper we use racial formation theory as the organizing framework, complemented by an Orientalist lens, to provide an explanation of the pejorative attitudes towards Arab immigrants from the early social work discourse evident in the proceedings from the National Conference on Social Welfare (NCSW) in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Although Arab immigrants have an extensive history in the U.S., and despite a need for a clear and distinct identity within social services, Arab legal classifications as identified through racial prerequisite cases from 1878 to 1944 suggest their ambiguous position within U.S. society and highlight the contradictory practices favoring White supremacy in both political identity and ultimately in social welfare. In this paper we provide a historical overview of the waves of Arab migration to the U.S. to provide context into Arab-American identity. We also address the social and legal construction of race through U.S. census classifications and racial prerequisite cases, particularly as it pertains to Arabs. Lastly, we explore the implications of incorporating the historical trauma, racial identity, discrimination and xenophobia facing Arab-Americans and Arab immigrants into social work practice.

Review of Arab Migration

Arabs are a heterogeneous ethnic group who are primarily speakers of the Arabic language, are originally found throughout the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and claim ancestry to any of the 22 Arab countries (Samhan, 2000).
Arabic-speaking immigrants entered the U.S. in three major waves. The first was between the late 1800s and World War I; the second occurred post World War II, from the 1950s to the mid-1960s; and the most recent, third wave remerged in 1965 and continues to the present day (Ford, 2013; Kayyali, 2006). Sociopolitical events both in the Middle East and in the U.S. complicate the identification of Arabs in the U.S. Naff (1985) suggests that immigrants to the U.S. from the provinces of Syria prior to 1920 should be referenced as Syrians and that the term “Arab” should be reserved for post-World War II Arabic-speaking immigrants. This nuance is important in understanding the sociohistorical identity of Arabic-speaking migrants and is particularly significant when later examining early racial prerequisite cases.

The First Wave (1880s–1924)

Beginning in the 1880s and continuing through 1924, the U.S. experienced a period of significant migration (Kayyali, 2006). As the largest wave of immigration in history on North American land, over 20 million people from around the world came to the U.S. At its peak from 1905-1907, the U.S experienced an influx of immigrants estimated at over a million each year (Naff, 1985). Immigrants comprising mostly of East-Central and Southern European descent constituted the largest number of arrivals. Arab immigrants from what was known as Greater Syria (present day Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, and Israel) and smaller numbers from Yemen, Iraq, Morocco, and Egypt were also among the newcomers arriving in the U.S.

While some records suggest approximately 90 to 95 percent of these immigrants mostly originated from Mount Lebanon, other records suggest that providing an estimation of numbers is challenging because of racial categorization conflation of all Arabs under the category of Turkey in Asia or Syria (Naff, 1994). In 1899, the Bureau of Immigration added the category of “Syrian” to its classifications (Samhan, 1999). It is estimated that by 1924, there were approximately 200,000 Arabs residing in the U.S. Immigration essentially came to a halt in 1924 with the passage of the Johnson-Reed Quota Act, thus virtually ending this wave of migration.
The Second Wave (1925–1964)

In addition to the Johnson-Reed Quota Act, the severe economic downturn after World War I and the Great Depression of 1929 greatly reduced immigration rolls to the U.S. (Samhan, 1999). In 1948 however, the Arab-Israeli war and the Palestinian exodus known as the nakba (catastrophe) reignited Palestinian immigration as thousands of Palestinians were expelled from their homes. By 1949 the war ended and resulted in over 750,000 displaced Palestinians (Said, 1994). In 1953, the U.S. congress passed the Refugee Relief Act, the U.S. second resettlement and refugee law, which granted Palestinian refugees their separate immigration category. It is estimated that 6,000 Palestinians sought refuge in the U.S as the result of the Act, and approximately 3,000 more after the extension of the Relief Act ended act in 1957 (Kayyali, 2006). Therefore, Palestinians constituted the majority of Arab immigrants in this wave, followed by Egyptians.

Overall, immigrants from this wave were both Christian and Muslim, more educated, had an increased fluency in English, came from middle class backgrounds, and had more resources than those that came before them (Naff, 1994). While earlier immigrants were skilled workers who were successful in certain trades, later immigrants had higher educational aspirations. Students entered the U.S. seeking higher education and stayed to begin their professional careers. Although sharing a common ethnic or racial origin, the differences between the first and second waves were significant and altered the racial project of Arab identity in the U.S. (Suleiman, 1994).

The Third Wave (1965–Present)

Civil rights movements, immigration laws, as well as political and economic instability in their native homelands resulted in more than 400,000 Arab immigrants entering the U.S. during 1965 to 1992 (Kayyali, 2006). Significantly larger than the first and second waves, the third wave of immigrants saw more Muslims and a greater number of refugees from Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria. The Lebanese Civil War of 1975 resulted in the migration of 120,000 Lebanese to the U.S.

Historically, immigrants from Greater Syria dominated the percentage of newcomers; albeit still significant, refugees from
Iraq, Sudan, and Somalia played a significant role in the new Arab and Muslim demographic. The 1991 Gulf War caused an influx of Iraqis who were fleeing from Saddam Hussein’s regime and food shortages. The 2003 invasion of Iraq by the U.S. and the U.S.-led coalition resulted in one of the largest diasporas in the world, but the greatest surge of Iraqi immigrants entering the U.S. was in the 1990s (Terrazas, 2009).

Between 1980 and 2010, Arab migration to the U.S. increased fourfold from 223,000 to 861,000 (Cumoletti & Batalova, 2018), and there was another 36 percent increase from 2010 to 2016 (861,000 to 1,167,000). Humanitarian migration from civil wars in Syria and Yemen during the early 2010s, as well as continued family reunification from the MENA region, continued the ongoing Arab migration into the U.S. From the 11 million people who have fled Syria or have internally been displaced, only 18,000 Syrians were resettled in the U.S. between 2011 and 2016. Despite the widespread displacement caused by the Yemini civil war, the U.S. accepted only 61 refugees from Yemen between 2011 and 2016. Executive orders and travel bans under the Trump administration greatly affected the inflows of MENA immigrants in 2017 (Cumoletti & Batalova, 2018).

Review of the Social Construction of Race

Racial Formation

According to Omi and Winant (2015), racial formation is “the sociohistorical process, by which racial identities are created, lived out, transformed, and destroyed” (p. 109). Racial formation theory is a pivotal change from previous understandings of race and racism. The essentialist notion of race is rejected, while maintaining that race has never been an illusion, but a socially constructed reality. Race is thus seen as a fluid, dynamic, socially constructed concept, and the state is perceived as “inherently racial.”

Omi and Winant (1994, 2015) further contend that since its inception, the U.S. has organized itself around racial lines and that this racial state is the preeminent site of conflict. Racial states are composed of institutions, policies, conditions, rules and social relations—all of which work to preserve racial hegemony (Omi & Winant, 2015). Preservation of racial hegemony is determined by social, economic, and political forces.
As a framework for deconstructing race as it stands today, racial formation theory and racial projects provide a useful tool in understanding how minority groups come to be seen as inferior. This inferiority status and identity diminishes certain rights and power of particular groups based on socially constructed racial classifications. As Omi and Winant (2015) contend, this is nothing new to the U.S. Rather, it is a system embedded in the core of our political, social, and economic structures and has been used to oppress and marginalize groups based on a “biological essentialist” framework. In the U.S., consensus on the meaning of race as a social construct as opposed to a biological fact has consequently opened doors of discussion in the conceptualization of race as a dynamic phenomenon (Feagin, 2010; Haney-Lopez, 1994; Rodriguez, 1994).

Racial formation provides an explanation of how Arabs and Muslims came to be seen by a substantial portion of the American public in a largely negative manner (Cainkar, 2009). Social scientists (Abdulrahim, 2008; Alsultany, 2008; Cainkar, 2009; Jamal & Naber; 2008; Read, 2008) contend that the events of 9/11 crystallized preexisting undesirable sentiments ascribed to Arabs and Muslims in the U.S., similar to how the status of Blackness is assumed primary for Black men walking through White neighborhoods (Anderson, 1990; Cainkar, 2009). The racialization paradigm developed by Omi and Winant (1994, 2015) is one that defines the contours of American social life since the inception of its founding, serving social practices and legislation that differentiated sets of rights for Whites, Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos (Cainkar, 2009). Racial projects, as presented in this paper and in reference to the Arab American experience, reflect “De Facto” policies in the U.S. Bedouin (2016) argues that the cognitive dissonance between Arab American identity and Whiteness are vividly revealed in the historical categorization of Arabs as “White” as well as the Orientalist legacy of conflating “Arab” with “Middle Eastern” and “Muslim” identity, highlighting a pervasive sociopolitical framing of Arabs.
Orientalism

Orientalism has been widely embraced in the humanities and the social sciences (Meer, 2014) because of its resonating affirmations with social and cultural justice and humanism as a scholarship and discourse. In *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Said makes the claim that Western European and American scholarship reinforces the age-old dichotomy of West vs. East. Such a portrayal assumes Western superiority and prejudice against non-Western cultures and people. The classification of Easterners as Orientals or “others” as Said suggests, places groups of people, particularly Arabs, in a precarious position, one that continuously distinguishes them as different (“people not like us”). Orientalism has been understood as a way of seeing the Arab world as exotic, uncivilized and backwards, and as contemporary times indicate, as dangerous (Said, 1997).

Said asserts the premise of Orientalism:

> There are Westerners, and there are Orientals. The former dominate; the later must be dominated, which usually means having their lands occupied, their internal affairs rigidly controlled, their blood and treasure put at the disposal of one or another Western power. (1978, p. 36)

According to Said (1978), Orientalism is embedded in the transaction between semiotic and political systems. Although race is still loosely defined (Baber, 2010), it is a social reality that has been utilized to perpetuate inequality, discrimination, and oppression by those who hold power in society. The rise of colonialism, slavery, and capitalism contributed to the legalization of oppression historically through the U.S. constitution, which set the stage for the social reproduction and reinforcement of racism and racial hierarchies. Political, social, and economic power created and maintained by Europeans (Whites) over non-Europeans (nonwhites) established a racial ideology (Fields, 1990) rooted in White supremacy (Rodriguez, 1994). The roles of “science” and “law” have been critical components in the preservation of White supremacy and its “legitimacy” in the U.S.
History of Arab Sociopolitical Identity and Race

“White by Census”: Arabs and U.S. Census Classification

Inherent in the experience of Arab migration to the U.S. is the social construction of race, specifically the way in which political identity can shape and be shaped by race. Returning to racial formation theory, social and political forces combine to affect the social identities of a group (Skocpol, 1995). Furthermore, the construction or reinforcement of social identity is involved in the politics of social policy making. Suleiman (1994) defines the term “political identity” as “the views, attitudes, orientations, and affiliations of Arab-Americans as these related to the political processes on all levels, whether local, regional, national or international” (p. 37). The political climate thus plays a crucial role in racial formation.

Considering the U.S. Census as a racial formation process, Census categories that serve the oppressor are a narrative woven within U.S. history. In 1893, Arabic-speaking immigrants were classified as “Syrians.” This classification was challenged, as Syrian immigrants were born in the confines of Turkey (Asian Minor) and thus, Syrians were caught between the “White” and “Asian” classification. Naff (1985) identified this period as the “yellow race crisis,” where Arabs were socially treated as Asian, however, by law were not grouped with Asians; rather, they were classified as “White.” Anti-Asian sentiment was thus directed towards Arabic-speaking individuals by society, but their racial status remained “White.”

Categories created in 1978, known as “Directive 15” drew distinctions not on skin color, but identified four race categories: American Indian, Asian or Pacific Islander, Black, and White (Samhan, 1999). Persons from the Middle East and North Africa were clumped into this “White” category. In 1980, a question regarding “ancestry” was introduced as means to fill the gap in identifying racial groups. Individuals that trace their ancestry to the Middle East and North Africa are currently classified as “White.”

Cainkar (2009) argues that the case of Arab identity is unique in that they have experienced a collective shift in the social status in American society:
Arabs were once seen as white, although often marginally so, and as such they benefited from a range of rights that were available to whites and denied to members of groups ascribed as nonwhite; they later experienced a reversal of this status through processes highly similar to racial formation. (p. 65)

Arab-Americans, although still classified as “White,” lost many of the privileges of Whiteness over time such as, “being perceived as unique individuals being associated with positive attributes, and being protected from structural discrimination” (Cainkar, 2009, p. 66).

Today, Arab-American lobby groups and organizations are advocating for a MENA category to be added to the 2030 census. Proponents (Arab American Institute, 2017) of this added box suggest that compiling accurate statistics on the number of Arab-Americans is critical for state and federal funding initiatives and gives voice and presence to a growing population. By broadening the Census Bureau’s options pertaining to ancestry, the census would more accurately represent the ethnic and racial composition of the U.S. The debates over racial classification within and outside of the Arab-American community are still pending deliberation.

“White by Law”: Arabs and Prerequisite Cases

Racial categorizations are the workings of human agents supported by the laws that govern society. Considering the law as a racial formation process, case law contributes to the preservation and legitimacy of White supremacy. In 1790, Congress passed a law that stated that naturalized citizenship may be granted or open to “free White persons”; however, who these “free White persons” were by definition was ambiguous and was subject to criticism.

From 1909 to 1910, Syrians were identified as “White” through three different racial prerequisite cases using varying rationales to justify “Whiteness.” In the first two cases illustrated below, Syrians were categorized as “White” by means of scientific evidence. Excerpts from the Najour case highlight support for presiding District Judge Newman’s appeal to scientific evidence of Syrians “Whiteness:”
Whiteness, I think, refers to race, rather than to color, and fair or dark complexion should not be allowed to control, provided the person seeking naturalization comes within the classification of the white or Caucasian race, and I consider the Syrians as belonging to what we recognize, and the world recognizes, as the white race. The applicant comes from Mt. Lebanon, near Beirut. He is not particularly dark, and has none of the characteristics or appearances of the Mongolian race, but so far as I can see and judge, has the appearance and characteristics of the Caucasian race. (In re Najour 174 F. 735, as cited in Haney-Lopez, 1996, p. 171)

Four years later, District Judge Smith held that Syrians are not “White” while presiding over the Shahid case. Common knowledge was provided as an explanation to deny Shahid naturalization. The judge’s statement indicates the premises in which the application of the applicant be refused.

He is now 59 years of age, and was born at Zahle, in Asia Minor, in Syria, and came to this country about 11 years ago, and is a Christian. He writes his name in Arabic, cannot read or write English and speaks and understands English very imperfectly, and does not understand any questions relating to the manner and method of government in America, or of the responsibilities of a citizen...In color, he is about that of walnut, or somewhat darker than is the usual Mulatto of one-half mixed blood between the white and the negro races...In the present case the applicant is not one the admission of whom to citizenship is likely to be for the benefit the country. (Ex parte Shahid 205 F. 812, as cited in Haney-Lopez, 1996, p. 172)

In sum, the subjectivity and socially constructed notions of racial classifications are evident. This illustrates the complex and confusing mechanisms of racial classifications and reiterates how judicial officials assert their position to socially construct political identities and deny naturalization based on those socially created identities.

Social Work Perception of Early Arab-Americans

To better understand how early social work advocates perceived and addressed the Arab population, a purposive search
of conference proceedings from the National Conference of Social Welfare (NCSW) was conducted. The findings highlight an Orientalist, ethnocentric, and xenophobic stance towards early Arab immigrants. This is important in understanding Arab immigrants as a racial project and in identifying the responsibility for the profession of social work to have a more culturally competent approach to this population. The conference proceedings show the paucity of coverage of Arab immigration, trends, and major events in the MENA region that prompted migration to the U.S. This evidence is contrary to social work’s values of inclusivity and democratic commitment to social justice.

Data Source/Sample

From 1874 to 1985, the NCSW was a pivotal forum for reform and social welfare service efforts in the U.S (Bruno, 1948). For over forty years (1874–1917), the organization was designated as the National Conference of Charities and Correction (NCCC), but in 1917, the organization changed its name to the National Conference of Social Work (NCSW). This change was not only one of name, but also of direction (to conform more to the times) and purpose, which was partially prompted by the denial of social work as a profession. In 1915, Dr. Abraham Flexner proclaimed at the NCCC that social work was not a profession (Ehrenreich, 1985; Morris, 2008), because a legitimate profession must possess specific properties (Brady & Moxley, 2016). According to Flexner, social work lacked a definitive and educationally transmissible technique, lacked a scientific knowledge base, and did not have a sort of unifying structure and organization that most other professions possessed, thus it was not socially sanctioned (Bruno, 1948). In 1956, the organization once again changed its name, now to the National Conference on Social Welfare, to address the diverse and complex issues the profession was encountering; this denoted significant pivots in policies that reflected changing social and cultural norms.

Every year for more than a century, thousands of social work luminaries in the field would convene to discuss and debate issues related to a broad range of social issues such as immigration, child labor, public health, mental health, poverty, juvenile delinquency, etc., with the purpose of developing new programs and initiatives to address societal ills. The Conference’s
published proceedings reflect attention to, and the professional framing of, a broad range of social concerns.

**Measures and Analysis**

Each yearly NCSW publication from 1892-1982 was analyzed, at first through a contextualization strategy and then with a second strategy utilizing purposive searches for specific identifiers. A “contextualizing strategy” (Maxwell, 1996) involves a review of content and a “marking” of the text as patterns and themes began to emerge, while a purposive search of predetermined codes or markers is an inherently deductive complement to the more inductive contextualizing method.

Search terms included: “Arab,” “Street Arab,” “Syrian,” “Turk,” “Levant,” “Middle East,” and “Lebanese.” Additionally, for the years 1948-1967, the search included the terms “Palestinian” and “Israel” to assess references regarding the creation of the Jewish state and the mass exodus of Palestinians to the U.S. Both the existing literature and contextualizing strategy guided the selection of these identifiers. For example, “Turks” was not a predetermined term but was eventually included after analysis suggested that, while not part of the Arab world, was often used and grouped with Arabs due to demographic proximity and phenotypical similarities. In total, there were 107 references found in the NCSW published proceedings.

**Themes of Orientalism**

Conference proceedings from 1882 to 1902 highlight a condescending and pejorative depiction of Arabs. Most significantly, the common reference to Arabs as “street Arabs,” paupers, having diseased parents and being in need of help by Westerners, is consistent with an Orientalist perspective. The term “street Arab” was first used in the mid-nineteenth century, a time when urban centers such as New York City received an increased number of foreign immigrants (Rohs & Estrine, 2011). Alluding to the nomadic lifestyle of some Arabic people, the term “street Arab” was adopted as a reference to children in poor communities that roamed the streets, often begging, stealing or finding alternative means to sustain themselves.
In 1882, the conference proceeding from President Elmore on charity and the children’s aid society mentioned Arab youth: “I have never been to Paris nor seen the sights of the great exhibition, but I have seen street Arabs from New York...I have never seen one that made a good boy” (National Conference on Social Welfare, 1882, p. 147). Two years later, a similar reference to Arab children was made:

So far, I have spoken only of boys who have been blessed with parental care. Many of the Arabs belonging to the community have no such care. They are left to fight the battle of life alone ...It takes far more innate virtue for a boy under such circumstances to grow into an honest, God fearing man than it does for a boy who is kindly watched and cared for; and for, this very reason, the more loudly comes the Macedonian cry, “Help us! Help us!” (National Conference on Social Welfare, 1884, p.105)

Later conference proceedings refer to Arabs of the docks and streets and then continue to state,

Diseased and enfeebled parents beget diseased and enfeebled children, and this is true of the mind as of the body...Heredity as surely dooms the progeny of the depraved as water runs downhill. It requires an outside force to save them. It is a hard saying to utter, that children are criminals by fate; and yet, with such antecedents and with such cruel surroundings, the birth of children is the prophecy of crime for the future. (National Conference on Social Welfare, 1887, p. 233)

In 1890 and 1892, the focus of the conference proceedings related to Arabs was immigration. In the seventeenth annual conference of charities, proceedings suggest that immigration policies should be stricter as to limit the number of gypsies and Arabs into the U.S. In 1892, Arab immigrants are again mentioned and identified as an “army of street Arabs:”

Out of every thousand immigrants thus moving from place to place, a few tramps are furnished; while of the children of immigrants [are] thrown upon the public for support by the
death, desertion, intemperance, or imprisonment of their parents, the army of street Arabs and roadside beggars is largely recruited. (National Conference on Social Welfare, 1892, p. 87)

In 1915, a discussion on the perceived negligence of Arab parents was discussed through the story of a Syrian boy and his mother who, per the excerpt, endangers her child by not adhering to medical advice:

To return to the subject of heart disease in children and its necessary medical-social treatment. The medical history of a Syrian boy of 12 years, with acute endocarditis is read as far as the point where he is discharged:

they see the recording line on the chart approach a red line by which we have indicated the establishment of good compensation, but soon after this line has been touched, the mother demands the return of the boy to the unhealthy, overcrowded, Syrian quarter, where he can again run wild on the streets. —“against advice” from the wards. (National Conference on Social Welfare, 1915, pp. 54–55)

Other proceedings (National Conference on Social Welfare, 1895, 1902) also highlight the charity given by non-immigrant individuals to Syrian boys to help them “dress better,” and be “more obedient,” as well as stating that they are “needing saving.”

These excerpts are only a few that underscore attitudes of social work luminaries at the time. Many other references to Arabs were made, mostly within negative contexts and labeled as “street Arabs.” Such Orientalist narratives that promote the inferiority of Arabs as compared to “native” Westerners are evident even with Arab American classification as “White.” The previous discussion, “White by Census,” complicates the Arab-American narrative, as being labeled “White” does not afford Arabs the societal privileges associated with that classification. Arabs have been historically and continue to be seen as the “other.”

Despite well-intentioned efforts by the profession to promote immigrant protections and advocacy for those marginalized by society (Beck et al., 2017; Varghese, 2016), as evident by the changing name of the NCSW organization, the social work discourse, as in the wider public discourse, continued to
promote an “othering” narrative of Arabs (Beck et al., 2017) as being unfit for American society (Park & Kemp, 2006). Furthermore, Park and Kemp (2006) argue that “despite good intentions, social workers often viewed immigrants as dependent, abject, and exotic subjects” (p. 705).

The growth of urban immigrant enclaves further promoted the call for social workers to act as brokers of American society to the newcomers, and while it is well documented that social workers were genuinely concerned about the well-being of immigrants, they did reflect the larger social contradictions which viewed immigrant communities as threatening (Jacobson, 2000; Park & Kemp, 2006) and as “evils to the community at large” (Park & Kemp, 2006, p. 720). While, to date, there is no literature that addresses the problematization of Arab immigrants in social work discourse, it is evident by the excerpts above that Arab immigrants were met with similar apprehensions, were viewed as problematic, and were viewed as abject, exotic subjects who needed to be civilized into American society.

Park and Kemp (2006) argue that despite social workers being at the forefront of efforts to promote immigrant protections, “many of these social work discourses supported (while purporting to redress) the larger discourses that made possible the exclusion of immigrant communities from full participation in American society” (p. 707). The authors’ analyses of social work’s public documents (primary and secondary) in the period from 1875 to 1924, which included proceedings of the NCCC and NCSW, underscore advocacy efforts to promote the inclusion of and well-being of early immigrants. At the same time, these records also show the efforts of social work being “fundamentally constrained by its position within prevailing social ideas and its own professional aspirations” (Park & Kemp, 2006, p. 726), further noting that “contemporary social work faces many of the same dilemmas in fashioning a response to immigration” (Park & Kemp, 2006, p. 705).

Implications for Modern Social Work

The National Association for Social Workers (NASW), which was founded in 1955, is the largest membership organization of professional social workers in the world (NASW, 2020). The NASW Code of Ethics is intended to serve as guide
for the profession and outlines the values that we collectively espouse. The six core values: social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships integrity and competence (NASW, 2020), all underscore the profession’s underlying responsibility to promote social justice, advance social policies, and enhance the overall well-being of people, families, and their communities.

Embedded or inherent in the values of the profession is a commitment to justice for racialized people (Beck et al., 2017), yet that cannot be achieved if the profession does not address its earliest practices with immigrants and their communities and neglects to discuss the theoretical tenets and social mechanisms that have been used to further promote the “othering” of diverse peoples. In Orientalism, Said (1978) asserts that “Arabs are practically the only ethnic group about whom in the West racial slurs are tolerated, even encouraged” (p. 26).

In modern history, Cainkar (2009) contends that Arabs and Muslims in the U.S. faced a continued racialization process, exacerbated by the events of 9/11, and which mirrored the experiences of Japanese Americans before and after World War II. The social construction of the Japanese “character” as treacherous existed before the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, but the events thereafter simply reinforced those preexisting negative stereotypes of group danger and collective complicity. Drawing parallels to the Arab experiences pre- and post-9/11, scholars (Abulrahim, 2008; Cainkar, 2008, 2009; Jamal, 2008, Naber, 2008) argue that Arabic-speaking people were largely invisible subjects pre-9/11, although having the racialized Arab immigrant experience of being “White but not quite” (Samhan, 1999). Arab-Americans became visible subjects post-9/11 and were subject to being viewed through the Orientalist images of barbaric, dangerous men and subjective women.

In Decolonizing Social Work, the authors (Gray, Coates, Yellow Bird, & Hetherington, 2013) address the limitations of imperialist frameworks and contend that the profession must acknowledge its complicity in the participation of colonizing projects, urging social workers toward contemplative review and paradigmatic shifts in practice, education, and research. This work extends beyond issues with Indigenous peoples to immigrants, refugees, and people of diverse cultures. Despite recent attention given to the othering of the Arab community since 9/11, a
critical examination of the historical context of these contemporary racial projects is seldom, if ever, incorporated into larger discussions around historical trauma, race, discrimination, and xenophobia. It is incumbent on the profession to understand both the history and current impacts of colonization (Tamburro, 2013) in order to work effectively with people from diverse backgrounds. The section below addresses how social work may incorporate discussion of Arabs and Arab-Americans into the profession.

**Practice**

Issues specific to Arabs and Arab immigrants and refugees have been noticeably lacking in social work curricula. The exclusion of this population(s) reflects an overall lack of attention on the diverse set of issues faced by varying communities of immigrants. At the micro level, much of the literature in the social work discourse discusses work with Arab populations through a clinical and mental health lens (Abu Raiya & Pargament, 2010; Ahmed & Reddy, 2007; Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2000; Dwairy, 2006; Griner & Smith, 2006; Roysircar, 2009), and while important, it does not address the racialization of Arabs in the U.S. and consequently is not discussed within social work curriculum.

At the macro level, even *Immigrant America* (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006, 2014), now in its 2014 expanded edition, the most widely accessed book on immigration in America (Bakalian & Bozorgmehr, 2009) and one often used in macro social work curriculum, provides a rich discussion on Islam and the plight of Muslims, particularly after 9/11; however, it fails to address the diverse immigrant experience of Arab people. In social work textbooks on international practice (Bettmann, Jacques, & Frost, 2013), the inclusion of case studies from around the globe seldom address cases from the Arab world and if so, discussion on the heterogeneity of the Arab world, customs, and traditions are virtually absent. Most often, the discussion centers around religious practices, underscoring the “backwardness” or incivility of Islam and its incongruence with Western values. While some literature (e.g., Ajrouch & Jamal, 2007; Al-Krenawi, 2016; Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2003; Al-Krenawi et al., 2004; Megahead, 2016) addresses the cultural and structural distinctions that discern citizens that fall within the pan-ethnic category of Arabs, the majority
of research within social work discourse generalizes the term “Arab” and is often conflated with “Muslims.”

When working with the Arab immigrant population in the U.S., practitioners should be aware of the possible attitudes and perceptions of the U.S. and Western culture that they may harbor which have been influenced by the legacies of colonialism. Understanding not only the immigrant experience, but also the unique and complex relationship that immigrants may have towards Western culture and Westerner practitioners is critical in the helping relationship. Without cultural awareness and sensitive practice, social workers perpetuate oppression when working with clients from other cultures. As a result, social work as a profession is truly misunderstood and not well received in the ethnic Arab community because it is seen as interference in the social well-being of the collective self (Abu Raiya & Pargament, 2010; Dwairy, 2006). In order to address this gap, social work practitioners should take into consideration levels of acculturation, historical and collective trauma, stigmatization associated with mental health services, cultural expectations, family (immediate and extended) involvement, roles of religious or spiritual intervention, and the possible inclusion of traditional healers (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2000).

Education

Despite progressive reforms throughout the course of history and advancements and awareness in the multicultural approach, racial and ethnic inequality and oppression continues to be a pervasive issue in society and social work education is lacking in responsiveness to these issues. Although social work has embraced the importance of a multicultural curriculum, scholars have raised concerns regarding how issues of diversity are addressed and taught in social work education (Daniel, 2011; DeCuir & Dixon, 2004; Ortiz & Jani, 2010; Razack & Jeffery, 2002).

These concerns are valid, as the literature suggests that there is a large discrepancy between stated goals and competencies and the delivery of practice behaviors in social work programs (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Constance-Huggins, 2012; Freeman, 2011; Razack & Jeffery, 2002). Students are thus left unequipped in dealing with issues of institutional racism and oppressions. Tamburro (2013) contends that social workers need
to understand the history and the current issues created by colonization in order to work effectively with those who have been colonized. One approach to furthering the profession’s goals of diversity and inclusivity is by incorporating approaches and theories that start with the history of diverse peoples to inform their current status in society. The inclusion of post-colonial theory, focused on orientalism (Beck et al., 2017) would serve social work well, as it would provide an alternative to the Western Eurocentric perspectives on culture and history mostly utilized by the profession (Baskin, 2009; Blackstock, 2009; Tamburro, 2013; Weaver, 2005).

Courses that promote and teach diversity with the human behavior and social environment sequence can benefit from the inclusion of both international and domestic concerns of the Arab and Arab-American population. Teaching and facilitating courses that allow for the inclusion of diverse topics such as Arabs in the U.S., as well as bringing in current and timely issues, such as the Iraqi and Syrian refugee crisis, opens the door to critical dialogues. Furthermore, including such conversations is critical, especially with the current social and political climate boasting xenophobic sentiment, particularly as it relates to Arabs and Muslims.

Social Work Policy and Advocacy

The work of Park and Kemp (2006) underscores the contradictory stances in the profession’s immigrant discourse. On one end, prominent Progressive Era social workers were at the forefront of early immigrant protections, intending to raise awareness of the challenging conditions they faced in their “little alien colonies” (p. 706), thereby providing a case for public intervention and advocacy initiatives. On the other end, social work discourse, as in the broader public discourse, promoted a pathologizing immigrant narrative, predicated on the emerging “scientific” work on race, heredity, diseases, and their effects on the environment. This inconsistency in the profession’s discourse was also reflected in its advocacy efforts. The historical and current racialization of Arabs in the U.S. is driven by a politico-legal and socio-cultural collection of “othering” founded by a structurally racist system (Khoshneviss, 2019).
According to the 2010 Census, there are 1.9 million Arab-Americans living in the U.S.; however, this number is a huge misrepresentation of the Arab population, due to the lack of ethnic categorization in the U.S. Census. According to research by the Arab American Institute (AAI, 2017) and Zogby International Research, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates of the Arab-American population is significantly lower than reported. This underreporting is due to the framing of the “ancestry” question in the U.S. Census. Reasons for undercount include: the placement of and vagueness of ancestry question (as distinct from race and ethnicity); the effect of sample methodology (small, unevenly distributed ethnic groups); the increased number of “out marriages” (interracial/interethnic marriages) by third and fourth generations; and the lack of trust and/or misunderstanding of government surveys by recent and long-standing immigrants (Arab American Institute, 2017). Therefore, the AAI adjusted population proposes that the U.S is home to approximately 3.6 million Arabic-speaking persons.

One key opportunity for social workers to engage in policy addressing the status of Arabs in the U.S. is promoting representation in the 2020 Census. The Census Bureau announced that it would not add a Middle East and North Africa (MENA) category to the 2020 U.S. Census, despite advocacy efforts of many Arab-Americans and Arab-American institutions (e.g., Arab American Institute) to be represented and not categorized as White. Executive Director of the Arab American Institute (AAI) Maya Berry asserts, “Our communities, like all others, rely on representation through legislative redistricting, civil rights laws, and education and health statistics. A continued undercount will cause harm” (Berry as cited in Wang, 2018, p. 1).

Despite this over decade-long battle with the U.S. Census Bureau to collect more detailed data on people with roots in the MENA region, there still can be much done around advocacy and awareness. For example, social workers can continue to promote the use of open-ended questionnaire items asking respondents to write in their “origins” under ethnicity to capture representation of the Arab community. Lebanese and Egyptian Americans are examples of the two largest MENA nationality groups and having their numbers reflect the Arab community in the U.S. would serve legislative purposes and provide increased access and allocation of resources to meet the growing
community needs. Looking toward the 2030 Census, social workers could work with Arab-American organizations locally and nationally to include a MENA category in the next Census.

Conclusion

Park and Kemp (2006) prompt social workers to think about “what are the slippages in today’s social work discourse on immigrants?” (p. 729). It is evident that the profession’s response to not only early Arab immigrants, but also to issues of concern to today’s Arab immigrants and Arab-Americans seems to underscore the continued negotiation of promoting its democratic commitment to social justice. Despite their long-standing presence in the U.S., the Arab-American constituency continues to struggle to find their identity within U.S. society. This identity, which has been fiercely contested by the dominant discourse, is supported by the law and census classifications that are intended to categorize individuals into socially prescribed racial groups. While communities of Arab-Americans have been here for decades and have in many ways assimilated into U.S. society, more recent waves of immigrants have struggled to maintain their cultural, religious, and ethnic identity amidst growing anti-Arab and anti-Eastern sentiment.

Since the beginning of the new millennium, there has been a heightened interest in the Arab world, particularly after: the attacks of September 11, 2001; the U.S invasion of Iraq in 2003; the Arab revolutions beginning in 2010/11; and the current crisis of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq (ISIS). Although it may seem as though this increased concentration on the MENA region is a recent phenomenon, the Arab and Muslim world have been subject to Orientalist narratives that reduce the rich and diverse cultures, traditions, and experiences of Arabs and Muslims for decades. Islamophobia, xenophobia, and anti-Arab sentiment have been fueled by the media (Said, 1997) through coverage of revolutions, wars and insurgency throughout the MENA region—all which reinforce a narrative of the “other.”

In looking at U.S. census classifications and racial prerequisite cases, the political identity of Arab-Americans becomes clearer, albeit still a complex issue that requires more attention and reflection. The social crossroad at which Arab-Americans find themselves is an interesting juncture of dialogue, but one
that cannot be simply reduced to a dichotomy of “White” vs. “non-White.” Current color-blind ideology and rhetoric suggests that we have moved into a post-racial era; however, this is far from the truth. Individual and group racial identities continue to promote racial divides that perpetuate oppression and discrimination. The Arab-American experience is not immune to race-based politics that promote exclusion.

Writing from the perspective of social justice workers, it is only appropriate to examine how social work platforms that were used to discuss the most pressing issues of the day and advance social welfare reform politics were in many ways culturally insensitive and discriminatory. A commitment to serving immigrant populations is not foreign to social work principles; however, in looking at the NCSW conference proceedings, that commitment to culturally sensitive practice and the promotion of human rights seems to fall short of fulfilling our mission of social justice.

References


Moving Beyond Race, Gender, and Education: Exploring the Relationship between Disability, Depressive Symptoms and Long-term Financial Outcomes

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Data on poverty status reveals that there is a distinct sub-population of individuals who are at a significantly greater risk of being chronically poor. Although many researchers have examined the demographic characteristics of individuals who are the most likely to be persistently poor, the emphasis has been on race, sex, and education. Little attention has been paid to the role that disability might play in long-term poverty. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to utilize longitudinal Add Health data in order to explore whether or not the presence of a disability might also affect an individual’s likelihood of experiencing financial hardship. We find that in addition to race, gender, and education, individuals with a disability are at greater risk of being poor than their counterparts without disabilities. Overall, having a mental health, physical, or learning disability in childhood or adolescence was associated with straitened socioeconomic outcomes in adulthood.

Keywords: Chronic poverty; disability and poverty; financial hardship and disability; learning disability; depressive symptomatology and poverty
Introduction

Longitudinal data on poverty status reveals that there is a distinct subpopulation of individuals who are at a significantly greater risk of being both chronically poor and dependent on public assistance for extended periods of time. These people frequently oscillate between cash assistance receipt and low-wage employment throughout their lives. Most researchers that explore the social characteristics of these households have focused mainly on demographic information such as education (Acs & Zimmerman, 2009; Grieger & Danziger, 2011; Neblett, 2007; Rank & Hirschl, 2009), race (Acs & Zimmerman, 2009; Grieger & Wyse, 2013; Sandoval, Rank, & Hirschl, 2009; Sharkey, 2008; Timberlake, 2007), gender (Acs & Zimmerman, 2009; Grodner et al., 2007; Sandoval et al., 2009), and their relationship with employment, cash assistance receipt, and other socioeconomic outcomes. However, only two scholars within this literature have included even a limited reference to some type of disability in their analysis (Acs & Zimmerman, 2009; Neblett, 2007). This is an important gap in the literature because disability has been shown to have a negative impact on lifetime earning potential (Erickson et al., 2010; Gerber, 2012; Mamun, O’Leary, Wittenburg, & Gregory, 2011; McLaughlin et al., 2012; Parish et al., 2010; Thomas & Hall, 2014; U.S. Census Bureau, 2015; Yin et al., 2014). Therefore, households dealing with disability may be at an increased risk of joining the subpopulation of chronically poor and suffering financial hardships.

To study this issue, this paper seeks to utilize longitudinal data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health Study (Add Health) in order to examine the relationship between disability and socioeconomic outcomes. We also examine a measure of depressive symptoms, as this has also been implicated in financial hardship. Our focus is on whether or not disabilities and depressive symptoms have adverse effects on an individual’s economic status as they move from adolescence to adulthood. In order to achieve this objective the following research questions are addressed:

(1) Is disability a factor that influences the probability of experiencing financial hardship in young adulthood?
(2) Does the presence of disability increase the likelihood of poorer financial and educational status as a young adult?
(3) Do depressive symptoms influence the likelihood of increased financial hardship and poorer financial and educational status as a young adult?

**Income Mobility Trends in the United States**

Scholarly research on poverty status and patterns of social mobility in the United States has found that almost half of all United States citizens will experience an episode of poverty in their lifetimes (Sandoval et al., 2009). These experiences are often temporary events caused by specific, destabilizing events such as unemployment and layoffs (Broman et al., 2001; Ross Leadbeater & Way, 2001; Valletta, 2006) or macroeconomic changes, such as recessions (Hofferth, Stanhope, & Harris, 2005; Pilkauskas, Currie, & Garfinkel, 2012; Sandoval et al., 2009; Slack & Meyers, 2014). During these periods of economic instability, many of these individuals and their families will suffer from serious financial hardship and access a variety of public assistance-related supports. These supports are designed to ameliorate some of the hardships faced during these typically temporary periods of hardship (Grieger & Wyse, 2013; Hofferth et al., 2005; Pilkauskas et al., 2012; Rank & Hirschl, 2009; Sandoval et al., 2009; Slack & Meyers, 2014). Since most of these families regain financial stability, long-term cash assistance receipt is unlikely. Furthermore, the children in these households are no more likely than the general population to experience long-term poverty as adults (Sandoval et al., 2009).

However, research has also found that there is a small group of persistently poor individuals (Acs & Zimmerman, 2009; Islam, 2013; Sharkey & Elwart, 2011; Worts, Sacker, & McDonough, 2010) who find it difficult to obtain or regain economic stability in the wake of a serious economic downturn. As previously mentioned, most of the research predicting and analyzing trends related to persistent poverty typically takes an intersectional approach by emphasizing the role of race, gender, and education as a proxy for socioeconomic status as predictors of financial hardship. Specifically, intersectional scholars ar-
gue that systems of oppression based on race, gender, and class interlock and create a matrix of domination where all three mechanisms of oppression occur simultaneously rather than separately (Collins, 1990; Collins & Chepp, 2013; Crenshaw, 1991). While examining the social experience of chronic poverty from an intersectional perspective is very valuable in itself, there are additional factors that go beyond just the classic three intersectional variables. For instance, Morgan (1996) expanded the construct of intersectionality when she developed the conceptual diagram called “the axis of privilege.” The axis of privilege includes race, class, and gender, while also integrating fourteen additional types of oppression. Some of the new intersections included in her diagram include references to religion, fertility, and (dis)ability, just to name a few. What is novel about the axis of privilege construct is its inclusion of an even more diverse range of complex and very personal social experiences of oppression and marginalization.

For purposes of this paper, both intersectionality and the axis of privilege are infused into the theoretical foundation of this thesis, as well as reflected in the title. For instance, while race, socioeconomic status, and gender are key variables analyzed in this paper, various forms of disability, ranging from physical and learning disabilities, as well as mental health challenges, are also examined. Inclusion of various types of disability as additional factors influencing an individual’s complex experience of marginalization is intended to enhance the discourse on chronic poverty and call attention to ways in which other experiences of marginalization compound the experience of chronic poverty, as well as the probability an individual will experience chronic or temporary poverty.

There is some research which indicates that disability can be a factor in predicting socioeconomic hardship (Erickson et al., 2010; Mamun et al., 2011; Parish et al., 2010; Thomas & Hall, 2014; U.S. Census Bureau, 2015; Yin et al., 2014). Yet, one of the limitations of research on disability’s role in predicting chronic poverty is that there is little research that has investigated the impact of different types of disabilities on financial outcomes from adolescence to young adulthood. There are also methodological concerns in the previous research that demonstrate the need for additional study. For one, most of the data
related to financial hardship and disability is not national in scope. Another issue is the small size of data used to investigate this issue. Studies often fail to use large random samples of the population. For example, the review of studies of the outcomes of disabilities by Gerber (2012) shows that many studies utilize small samples and/or convenience samples. For this reason, we use nationally representative data to determine which disability-related characteristics are significantly related to predicting financial hardship. This is important to establishing a more developed analysis of the relationship between disability and socioeconomic outcomes in adulthood.

Research has shown that learning disability is associated with difficulties in the labor market that lead to financial hardship. Gerber’s review highlights the fact that adults with learning disabilities have twice the national average rate of unemployment. Another study noted that listening, speaking, coordination and impulsivity got worse over time for those with learning disabilities (cited in Gerber, 2012). This would surely translate into poorer labor market and associated outcomes. Yin, Shaewitz, & Megra (2014) used data from the American Community Survey from 2011 which focused on physical disabilities. They examined difficulties in hearing, vision, cognition, ambulation, self-care and independent living. Their results show that people with disabilities are less likely to be employed than those without disabilities and have lower achieved education and much lower earnings. Prior research suggests that the population with learning and physical disabilities is likely to have greater financial hardships.

We also examine depressive symptoms as a factor in financial hardship. Some studies suggest that individuals suffering from depressive symptoms are at an increased risk of experiencing financial hardship. For instance, adults who suffer from depressive symptoms are generally more likely to have lower lifetime earnings than those who do not suffer from depressive symptoms (Kessler et al., 2008; Wilcox-Gok, Marcotte, Farahati, & Borkoski, 2004). Moreover, while many people who experience depressive symptoms are likely to be employed, their workplace performance is often adversely affected by their symptoms (Adler et al., 2006; Stewart, Ricci, Chee, Hahn, & Morganstein, 2003; Thomas & Morris, 2003). Lower productivity in the workplace
might, at least in part, explain the higher rates of job turnover amongst individuals who exhibit depressive symptoms (Lerner et al., 2004). It is also important to highlight that youth who struggle with depressive symptoms are less likely to graduate from high school (Fletcher, 2008; Needham, 2009; Wilcox-Gok et al., 2004) compared to their peers. Collectively, the findings in these studies related to depressive symptoms and socioeconomic achievement indicate that there is a negative relationship between depressive symptoms and an individual’s socioeconomic status. As these people fare poorly in the labor market, this is indicative of societal level costs incurred from poor mental health, such as joblessness, underemployment and poverty.

However, the causal direction relationship between depressive symptoms and financial outcomes is unclear in the current research. While most research indicates that poverty increases the likelihood that an individual will experience depressive symptoms (Belle Doucet, 2003; Galea et al., 2007; Simmons, Braun, Charnigo, Havens, & Wright, 2008), some studies conversely suggest that depressive symptoms increase the likelihood that an individual will be poor (Caspi, Entner Wright, Moffitt, & Silva, 1998; Frazer, 2011). Any conflicting results presented in these studies may be the result of the methodological problems we highlighted earlier, but particularly the issue of using of cross-sectional, rather than longitudinal data, to evaluate the relationship. The advantage of using longitudinal data, like the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) dataset used in this study, is that it allows for an assessment of the temporal relationship between disability, depressive symptoms and poverty (see MacInnes & Broman, 2013, for an example).

Based on the prior literature reviewed here, we expect that those with disabilities and with higher levels of depressive symptoms will have more problems in the gaining human capital skills and will thus experience greater joblessness. We now turn to a discussion of the data used and our methods.

Methods

This study uses data from the Add Health dataset, which is a nationally representative sample of adolescents, ranging from
grades 7 to 12 in the United States (Bearman, Jones, & Udry, 1997). The current study is based on secondary data analysis of the Add Health dataset. The first wave of data was collected in 1994–1995 and follow up interviews were completed in 1996, 2001, and 2007–2008. The study includes a series of questions regarding adolescent health, sexual behaviors, relationships, substance use, income, and other topics. The data collection process includes a school-based questionnaire in which approximately 90,000 public school students participated. A portion of the students who completed the in-school questionnaires were also selected to complete at-home interviews. In the first round of data collection (Wave 1) 20,745 students were interviewed, with 12,105 of the participants being the core sample and the remainder comprising a special sample.

There are two Add Health data sets available, one for public use and another for restricted use. In this study, the restricted data set is used, which required a contractual agreement and evidence of Internal Review Board (IRB) training as prerequisites to access the contents. The benefits of using the restricted data, compared to the public use set, include: increased access to comprehensive and detailed descriptions of the respondents; expanded questionnaires; variables added to correct design issues with the instruments; and the larger frequencies of responses to questions on each questionnaire. More information about the sample selection process, terms of agreement for access, and the Add Health data set itself is available from a variety of other sources (see Bearman et al., 1997, or Add Health Homepage: http://www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/addhealth/data)

**Methods and Measures**

STATA, a statistical software program, is used to perform analysis and assess the relationship between disability status and socioeconomic outcomes. An ordinary least squares (OLS) regression is used for the analysis, since three of the four dependent variables are linear. This method allows us to assess the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variables. The dependent variable, employment status, is a dichotomous variable, and logistic regression is the more appropriate technique to use. All analyses reported below uses OLS
regression to simply compare results. However, we did examine the employment status variable using logistic regression, and no differences were found from the results that utilized OLS regression for the employment status variable.

The variables of age, race, sex, and educational attainment are used as controls, since the research literature indicates that they all play an important role in the likelihood that an individual will suffer financial hardship. Age, sex and race were self-reported by respondents. Sex was a dummy coded variable with male = 1. Race was dummy coded for racial and ethnic groups including non-Hispanic white, non-Hispanic black, Hispanic, non-Hispanic Asian-American and non-Hispanic racial-ethnic others, with white non-Hispanic as the reference group. Racial and ethnic respondents not White, Black, Hispanic or Asian-American were combined into the ‘other’ category because of their relatively small numbers in the data. Age at Wave four is used, while sex and race are coded from wave one, when respondents were adolescents. Because of small numbers in some categories, education was collapsed into five categories, with one and two indicating the attainment of less than a high school diploma, three reflecting high school completion, and four and five reflecting participation in, or completion of, a post-secondary degree, respectively. Education at wave three is used as a control, while education at Wave four is used as a dependent variable. They are identically coded.

We use two indicators of disability, physical disability and learning disability. Physical and learning disability are obtained from wave one interviews, when respondents were adolescents. Physical disability is ascertained from a question that asked respondents “do you have difficulty using your hands, arms, legs or feet because of a permanent physical condition?” The answers were coded into a dummy variable, where 1 = yes, and 0 = no. Learning disability was measured as follows. In Wave 1, parents were asked two questions during the at-home interviews regarding the presence or absence of a learning disability in the adolescent respondent. First, parents were asked if their child showed signs of having a learning disability such as “…difficulty with attention, dyslexia, or some other math, reading, or spelling disability?” Afterward, parents were then asked if their child received any type of special education services
within the previous twelve months. If the answer to either of those questions was "yes", then the response was coded as a "1", otherwise, a "0" was recorded. Additionally, an answer of "no" to both questions was also coded as "0." Depressive symptoms are ascertained using items based on the well-known Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CESD) (Radloff, 1977), from the Wave one data. These items were in the original data and asked questions "in the past week, have you been"… items asked about sadness, trouble concentrating, having the blues, feeling depressed, etc. There are seven items in all. Higher scores indicate greater depressive symptoms. Alpha for this measure is good at .81.

Four socioeconomic outcomes are assessed. The first is a measure of current financial hardship from Wave four. This measure is created from a series of questions that asked about the past year loss of telephone service, failure to pay rent or mortgage, eviction, loss of utility service and worries about being able to afford food. Each was a yes/no question and we simply summed to number of yes responses. The measure ranges from 0 to 4. The second measure is current income at Wave four. The measure ranges from 1 to 12, where 1 = less than $5,000, and 12 = $150,000 or more. The third measure is years of education completed by Wave four. The measure is coded as noted previous, into five categories, with one and two indicating the attainment of less than a high school diploma, three reflecting high school completion, and four and five reflecting participation in, or completion of, a post-secondary degree, respectively. Again, it is coded the same as the Wave three measure of education completed. The last measure is employment status at Wave four. The measure is dummy coded, where 1 = yes, and 0 = no.

Results

Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics for all variables included in this study. The age range of respondents at Wave 4 was 25–34 years old, with a mean age of 29.1 years old. Half of all respondents were male and the racial composition of the sample included 51% White non-Hispanics, 21% Black non-Hispanics, 7% Asians, and 3% other races. The mean level of educational attainment at Wave 3 interviews was 2.61, or about completion
of secondary education. At Wave 4, the mean level of education is 3.08, indicating some post-high school education, on average.

There is little financial hardship in the sample; the mean is less than 1. Income corresponds to the range of $40,000 to $49,999. Education at Wave four is higher than at Wave three, with “some college” as the average. Eighty percent of the sample is employed currently. Learning disability is the most common form of disability present in this sample of respondents; 14% of respondents have a learning disability. Depressive symptom scores are low in Wave 1, when the sample averaged 21 years old. Finally, physical disability was the least common form of disability with a mean of 3% of the respondents with a physical disability.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (W 4)</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>25–34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex (1 = male) (W 1)</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0–1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (W 1)</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0–1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black (W 1)</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0–1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic (W 1)</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0–1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian (W 1)</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0–1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other race (W 1)</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0–1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (W 3)</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>1–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Hardship (W 4)</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0–4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income (W 4)</td>
<td>8.07</td>
<td>1–12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (W 4)</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>1–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed (1 = yes) (W 4)</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0–1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Disability (W1)</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0–1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Disability (W1)</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0–1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CESD depression (W1)</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>0–7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 presents the results of regression analyses of socio-economic outcomes on disability, depressive symptoms and other variables. First we discuss the results concerning the control variables. Age is important in three instances. As respondents age, they have more financial hardship, but more income and lower educational levels. Sex is of significance for all of the dependent variables. Men have less financial hardship than do women, and they have greater income. Men have lower levels of educational achievement than women do, and they are more likely to be currently employed. When compared to non-Hispanic whites, the comparison group, black non-Hispanics have more financial hardship, less income, lower educational achievement, and they are less likely to be currently employed. Results for Hispanics show that they have less financial hardship, greater income and are more likely to be employed than whites. However they have lower levels of educational achievement. Here it is worth remembering that this is a sample of people under the age of 34, and these results for Hispanics are the result of the fact that non-Hispanic whites may not be employed as much as are Hispanics because they are more likely to be in college, and not in the labor force at this relatively young age. Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Current Financial Hardship Coefficient</th>
<th>Income w4 Coefficient</th>
<th>Education w4 Coefficient</th>
<th>Working w4 Coefficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age W4</td>
<td>0.03***</td>
<td>0.03***</td>
<td>-0.08***</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex W1 (Male=1)</td>
<td>-0.14***</td>
<td>0.45***</td>
<td>-0.13***</td>
<td>0.08***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Non Hispanic</td>
<td>0.21***</td>
<td>-1.15***</td>
<td>-0.06***</td>
<td>-0.02*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>-0.07**</td>
<td>0.27***</td>
<td>-0.09***</td>
<td>0.04***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>-0.16**</td>
<td>0.48***</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other race</td>
<td>0.12*</td>
<td>-0.21</td>
<td>-0.17***</td>
<td>-0.06***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education W3</td>
<td>-0.21***</td>
<td>0.77***</td>
<td>0.77***</td>
<td>0.06***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Disability W1</td>
<td>0.11***</td>
<td>-0.70***</td>
<td>-0.26***</td>
<td>-0.07***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Disability W1</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>-0.31*</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.07**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CESD Depression W1</td>
<td>0.05***</td>
<td>-0.08***</td>
<td>-0.02***</td>
<td>-0.01***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>5.41</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N =</td>
<td>11,120</td>
<td>10,450</td>
<td>11,122</td>
<td>11,118</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
for Asians show that they have less financial hardship than do non-Hispanic whites, and they have greater income. Other race individuals, who are largely Native Americans, have more financial hardship, lower educational achievement, and they are less likely to be currently employed. Education at Wave 3 decreases financial hardship, and is associated with higher income and educational achievement at Wave 4, and the greater likelihood of current employment.

The results for disability and depressive symptoms generally show that controlling for the above variables, young adults with disability and/or more depressive symptoms suffer financial hardships. Young adults with learning disability in these data have more current financial hardship, less income, lower educational achievement, and they are less likely to be currently employed. Results for physical disability are consistent, if not in all cases statistically significant. For young adults with a physical disability, they have less income and are less likely to be currently employed. Results for depressive symptoms mirror those for learning disability. Young adults with more depressive symptoms have more current financial hardship, less income, lower educational achievement, and they are less likely to be currently employed.

Discussion

In this study we have found that young adults with disability or who have higher levels of depressive symptoms are at greater risk for poorer long-term socioeconomic outcomes than young adults without disability or more depressive symptoms. These findings are consistent with the research questions we outlined earlier. In previous research, very little attention was given to the role of disability in predicting the probability that an individual might be persistently poor or have decreased socioeconomic standing and achievement. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to utilize longitudinal Add Health data in order examine long-term financial hardship.

Overall, the results of this analysis regarding demographic variables are consistent with most other findings across a range of sources. Older young adults have more income but also more financial hardship. This may be due to their living outside of
the parental home, struggling to pay bills, and/or due to the lack of financial literacy, credit card debt, and poor money management skills many young adults suffer from (Kamenetz, 2007). Race-ethnicity, sex, and education were also found to be significant predictors of socioeconomic outcomes in later young adulthood. In particular, those who are African American, female, and have lower educational attainment are most vulnerable to financial hardship and lower incomes. These results are not surprising. Women were much more likely than their male counterparts to be poor, as were racial and ethnic minorities, other than Asian-Americans, when looking at National data. Results for gender could be attributed to the patterns of gender stratification that burden women with greater caregiving responsibilities (including elder care) than men. Disproportionate caregiving obligations also penalize women by reducing their earnings in the labor market (Dwyer, 2013). The combination of lower earnings and greater caregiving responsibilities would predictably make women more likely than men to experience decreases in their socioeconomic status in later young adulthood. During these periods of hardship, women, who are typically mothers, are also disproportionately more likely than men to rely on public assistance in order to support their households.

In terms of race, African Americans and Mexican Americans of both sexes face greater rates of discrimination in the labor force (Pager & Western, 2005). African Americans in particular have been hit the hardest by economic restructuring (Soss, Fording, & Schram, 2011; Wilson, 2009). As a result, they experience much higher rates of unemployment compared to any other racial and ethnic group in the United States (U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). African Americans are also more likely to experience chronic poverty (Greiger & Wyse, 2013; Rank & Hirsch, 2009; Sharkey, 2008; Timberlake, 2007) and be recipients of long-term cash assistance as a result of their socioeconomic disadvantage (Greiger & Danziger, 2011; Neubeck & Cazenave, 2001; Soss et al., 2011). However, we note that financial hardship and income is higher for Hispanics overall. This could be due to two factors. The first is that the Hispanic category in these data also includes Cuban-Americans, who have higher educational levels and income than do other Hispanics (Aguirre & Turner, 2010). The second possibility is due to the age of the sample.
As this is a sample of young adults, Hispanics are less likely to attend college than are White, Black and Asian young adults (Aguirre & Turner, 2010). Therefore Hispanic levels of income at this young age should be higher, as they are more likely to be in the labor market and to have gainful employment.

Finally, since educational attainment is significantly correlated with lifetime earning potential (Acs & Zimmerman, 2009; Carnevale, Rose, & Cheah, 2011), it is also predictable that individuals with lower educational attainment are more likely to be poor and experience financial hardship in late young adulthood. Lower educational attainment among members of the low-income population may contribute to persistent poverty in multiple ways. Low educational attainment is likely to stymie earning potential as individuals advance in age. On the other hand, low educational attainment may also be the result of low income. Since tuition and college expenses typically require a high amount of discretionary income, or the ability to get loans, those who are already categorized as having low incomes may be less likely to pursue college degrees. In either case, low educational attainment has a direct negative relationship to lifetime earnings. However, the direction of that relationship may vary depending on the model used to explore the relationship.

The results for disability and depressive symptoms in predicting socioeconomic outcomes in later young adulthood are of importance. While many researchers have argued that disability may not predict poverty and other socioeconomic outcomes (Belle Doucet, 2003; Galea et al., 2007; Simmons et al., 2008), we find strong support that disability is predictive of poverty. Our results are consistent with some research in that disability and/or depressive symptoms have a negative relationship to lifetime earnings (Erickson et al., 2010; Parish et al., 2010; Thomas & Hall, 2014; U.S. Census Bureau, 2015; Yin et al., 2014). However, this analysis extended previous research by exploring different types of disability in order to determine if there was a relationship between certain types of disability and socioeconomic outcomes in later young adulthood.

In almost every case, disability and/or depressive symptoms are an important factor in socioeconomic outcomes in later young adulthood. Having a learning disability in childhood was associated with decreased socioeconomic outcomes in later
young adulthood. The presence of a disability in childhood is associated with greater financial hardship, lower income, educational achievement and a lower likelihood of being employed as an adult. It is likely that the presence of a learning disability in childhood or adolescence acts as a mediator in the relationship between educational attainment and adult poverty. A great deal of research regarding learning disabilities has found that having a learning disability as a child has a negative effect on educational attainment (Fletcher, 2008; Needham, 2009; Wilcox-Gok et al., 2004), as we see here.

Results for physical disability were not as widespread, with income and employment of significance for those who had a physical disability as a teen. The lack of significance for financial hardship and education may be related to the fact that physically disabled individuals are more likely to receive federal Supplemental Social Security (SSI) benefits. This may decrease the financial burden for these young adults. Gaining a more detailed understanding of how physical disability does not significantly impact an individual’s financial hardship and educational achievement is another possible avenue for future research.

Depressive symptoms are associated with decreased socioeconomic outcomes in later young adulthood. Greater financial hardship, lower income and educational achievement and a lower likelihood of being employed are associated with having higher depressive symptoms as a teen. These results are also consistent with a variety of existing research that has found depressive symptoms to have adverse effects on employment tenure (Broman et al., 2001; Lerner et al., 2004), productivity in the workplace (Adler et al., 2006; Stewart et al., 2003; Thomas & Morris, 2003), and lifetime earnings (Kessler et al., 2008; Stewart et al., 2003; Wilcox-Gok et al., 2004).

Our results are consistent with an intersectional analysis that argues disadvantage is best understood as being impacted by multiple, interwoven, converging systems of disadvantage (Carastathis, 2014; Collins & Chepp, 2013; Crenshaw, 1991). We generally found that gender, race-ethnicity, poor education, and sometimes age, all serve as markers of disadvantage in this analysis. Women and Blacks have lower human capital levels than their counterparts. The disadvantage for Black women is likely consistently marked, as is consistent with the expectations from
an intersectional analysis. This analysis is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is likely given prior research (Crenshaw, 1991). At the same time, as many intersectional theorists argue, we must be cognizant of the within-group differences (Crenshaw, 1991). For example, while we find in our analysis disadvantage for Blacks, we don’t always find them for Hispanics, and we either see no differences from Whites for Asians, or less financial hardship and greater income than Whites. Thus not all racial and ethnic minorities suffer the same disadvantages. Further exploration of these patterns of intersectionality is beyond the scope of this paper but is a task for future research.

**Limitations**

Some limitations of the study presented here are that the data are older, with the last wave being conducted in 2008 and 2009. This may mean that patterns today could be very different. There are limitations of the Add Health data, as noted by Keyes and colleagues (2015). The data are based upon self-report, and there is some attrition across waves of the data collection. There is also a gap in time for the various data collections, Wave 1 being collected in 1994-1995, Wave 3 in 2001, and Wave 4 in 2008-2009. This may mean that the nuances may be lost across the two decades of data collection. However, this gap in data collection can also be useful, as it enables us to look across a longer time span and examine how factors in adolescence influence various patterns over a longer term.

**Implications**

The implications of these findings are quite significant. Longitudinal data reveals that there is a distinct subpopulation of individuals who are at greatest risk of experiencing chronic poverty for the majority of their lives (Acs & Zimmerman, 2009; Islam, 2013; Sharkey & Elwart, 2011; Worts et al., 2010). Where other research indicates that there is a significant negative relationship between disability and poverty, a temporal relationship could not be established, given that the data was cross-sectional. However, this study provides a unique opportunity to determine a temporal relationship between
disability and poverty that expands the range of demographic variables that can be predictive of socioeconomic outcomes. Unfortunately, this analysis also reveals additional barriers that many people with low income face as they work towards establishing self-sufficiency. In addition to challenges related to educational attainment, labor force discrimination, as well as racial and gender stratification, many low income individuals must also contend with disabilities that further inhibit their opportunities for upward mobility. Limited mobility as a result of multiple overlapping barriers to self-sufficiency is certainly an important factor contributing to the constant presence of persistently poor individuals within the national population.

Acknowledgements: This research uses data from Add Health, a program project designed by J. Richard Udry, Peter S. Bearman, and Kathleen Mullan Harris, and funded by a grant P01-HD31921 from the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, with cooperative funding from 17 other agencies. Special acknowledgment is due Ronald R. Rindfuss and Barbara Entwisle for assistance in the original design. Persons interested in obtaining Data Files from Add Health should contact Add Health, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Carolina Population Center, 206 W. Franklin Street, Chapel Hill, NC 27516-2524 (addhealth_contracts@unc.edu). No direct support was received from grant P01-HD31921 for this analysis.
References


Children and the Welfare State: 
The Need for a Child-Centered Analysis

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Variation in child well-being across rich Western nations suggests that the welfare state may play a role in shaping child well-being. However, welfare scholars have largely overlooked children in their analyses. This paper seeks to bring children to the center of welfare state analysis by examining how comparative welfare state theory can consider child well-being. The paper begins with an examination of Esping-Andersen’s seminal work, The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism, which has come to frame welfare state analysis for nearly three decades. Next, the paper explores the main critiques of Esping-Andersen’s work, with special attention paid to the feminist critique and the construction of alternative feminist and family policy regimes. Finally, this paper extends and reworks Esping-Andersen’s Three Worlds to offer a new framework for conducting child-centered welfare state analyses.

Keywords: child welfare, child well-being, child rights, welfare regimes, social policy
Introduction

Much has been written about the welfare state. Scholars of the welfare state have largely focused on social spending and services and their effects on the male breadwinner in rich Western nations. Over the last three decades, welfare state theorists have paid increased attention to how the welfare state affects women and gender relations. However, this evolving scholarship continues to suffer from an important omission: too few scholars have examined how the welfare state affects children. This paper critiques the inattention of welfare state theory scholarship to children and seeks to bring children to the center of welfare state analysis by examining how comparative welfare state theory can better consider child well-being.

Welfare state scholarship’s inattention to children is particularly problematic when we consider the new risks faced by children in rich Western nations over the last 50 years. In the post-war era, ample job opportunities and good wages for male breadwinners coupled with stable families served to meet the welfare needs of most children. But this began to change in the late 1970s. Men’s real wages began to decline as unions weakened and industrial jobs disappeared (Cohen & Ladaique, 2018; Western & Healy, 1999). To prop up family income, large numbers of women entered the labor market and outsourced their care work to childcare providers, often at high cost, particularly in liberal welfare states (Gornick & Meyers, 2003). This shift was accompanied by an increase in divorce rates and births to lone or single mothers and significant declines in fertility rates across wealthy nations (OECD, 2011, 2020a, 2020b; Thévenon et al., 2018).

While children’s well-being has greatly improved over the 20th century—children in rich countries now live longer, healthier, and more educated lives—the social and economic changes that emerged at the last century’s end, coupled with economic shocks in the early 21st century (including both the Great Recession and the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020), pose new risks to children and new challenges for the welfare state (Bradshaw, 2014; Cantillon et al., 2017; Kang & Meyers, 2018). In the current Western economy, we find a growing gulf between the children who receive the resources they need to
thrive and those children who do not—a gulf that has only become more visible as the most recent economic shock due to COVID-19 unfolds (Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020). Today, poverty is increasingly concentrated among families with children and is particularly high among lone parent households (Hakovirta et al., 2020; Richardson, 2015; Van Lanckner et al., 2014). This poverty comes at a high cost to children. Child poverty is associated with a host of negative child outcomes including increased mortality rates, greater risk of injury and maltreatment, higher rates of asthma and other illnesses, and depressed scores on a range of developmental tests (Aber et al., 1997; Chaudry & Wimer, 2016). Child poverty also affects children’s overall life chances. Research from the United States finds that child poverty is strongly associated with less schooling, increased pathology and criminal behavior, and lower earnings in adulthood (Danziger et al., 2005; Duncan et al., 1998; Haveman & Wolfe, 1995; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2019). European research has drawn like conclusions (Esping-Andersen, 2002).

While wealthy Western nations have experienced similar social and economic changes over the last fifty years, research finds significant differences in children’s well-being across these nation states (Engster & Stensöta, 2018; OECD, 2020a). For example, child poverty, long used as a proxy for child well-being (see Bradshaw & Richardson, 2008), ranges from a low 3% in Denmark to a high of 20% in the United States (OECD, 2020a). If we examine other indicators of child well-being, we find more evidence of differentiation. In Nordic countries, infants are significantly less likely to be underweight at time of birth than are infants born in the United States or the United Kingdom (OECD, 2020a). The child mortality rate in the United States is more than twice that of Sweden (OECD, 2020a). Adolescent fertility rates range from a low of 4.7 births per 1,000 women aged 15–19 in Nordic countries to a high of 22.3 births per 1,000 women aged 15–19 in the United States (OECD, 2020a). Turning from health to housing, research finds that over 25% of all Austrian children live in what is defined as overcrowded conditions, while in Norway, Belgium, Ireland, and the Netherlands less than 5% of children live in such conditions (OECD, 2020a). Examination of other child well-being indicators, including educational
achievement, maltreatment, asthma, social exclusion, and social mobility finds similar differentiation (Aspalter, 2006; Esping-Andersen, 2002; Gilbert, Parton, & Skivenes, 2011; OECD, 2020a).

Variation in child well-being across rich Western countries suggests that the welfare state itself may play a role in child well-being, but few scholars have examined this (Engster & Stensöta, 2011; Skevik, 2003). Prior to the 1990s, comparative studies of the welfare state focused not on what welfare states do and for whom, but rather on what and how much they spend. Classical scholars of the welfare state (see Titmuss, 1958; Wilensky, 1975) assumed the welfare state to be a mechanism for making society more egalitarian and failed to consider that the welfare state might affect groups differently (Orloff, 1993). Examination of the degree to which these systems actually promote citizens’ well-being and social equality only came to the forefront in more recent decades. Esping-Andersen’s (1990) influential work, The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism (hereafter, Three Worlds), has changed how scholars consider the welfare state by showing that what the welfare state does matters. But in his analysis, Esping-Andersen fails to consider whom the welfare state serves best. Instead, Three Worlds focuses on how the welfare state protects laborers, predominantly males, against risks of the market. How the welfare state affects women and children is not considered.

Feminist scholars have levied numerous criticisms upon Esping-Andersen for his inattention to women (see Lewis, 1992; O’Connor, 1993; Orloff, 1993; Sainsbury, 1996). Their criticisms have led to a reworking of Esping-Andersen’s power-resources framework to account for gender and have pushed mainstream scholars to re-examine their previous work. These re-examinations reveal new understandings of how the welfare state affects women and gender relations (see Esping-Andersen, 1999; Korpi, 2000; Lewis, 1992; O’Connor, 1993; Orloff, 1993; Sainsbury, 1996) and help us design systems of social provision that better respond to the needs of women (Esping-Andersen, 2009; Kang & Meyers, 2018). Attention to women and gender has brought an increased focus to how the welfare state affects the family; however, welfare state research on the family has been largely concerned with how the welfare state serves to help women reconcile work and caregiving responsibilities, not on
how the welfare state affects children directly (Skevik, 2003). This paper seeks to bring children to the center of welfare state analysis by examining how comparative welfare state theory can consider child well-being. To begin, I examine Esping-Andersen’s seminal work, Three Worlds, which, despite much criticism, has come to frame welfare state analysis for nearly three decades (Arts & Gelissen, 2002). Next, I explore the main critiques of Esping-Andersen’s work, with special attention paid to the feminist critique and the construction of alternative feminist and family policy regimes. Finally, I rework Esping-Andersen’s power-resources framework to account for children and begin to explore how a child-centered welfare state analysis could be carried out in relation to child well-being. Just as bringing women to the center of welfare state analysis has revealed new dimensions of welfare state variation, bringing children to the center of the analysis can help us to better understand how the welfare state affects child well-being.

**Three Worlds: Evaluating the Framework**

Building on the work of Marshall (1950) and Titmuss (1958), Esping-Andersen’s *Three Worlds* employs a power-resources analysis to re-conceptualize and re-theorize what we consider important about the welfare state. He argues that what welfare states do, their emancipatory power, is more important than their specific social policies or expenditures.

Previous comparative work has examined states’ commitment to the welfare state by measuring social expenditure. For example, when Wilensky (1975) found that levels of economic development, bureaucracy, and demographics (percentage of aged population) account for most welfare state variation (i.e., variation in social spending), he failed to consider variables such as class mobilization, how social spending affects different segments of the population (i.e., stratifying effects), and what the welfare state actually accomplishes. According to Esping-Andersen, the role of the welfare state is neither to tax nor spend—he argues that spending is a by-product of the welfare state, not its defining feature—rather, the role of the welfare state is to deliver on the social rights of citizenship.
At the heart of Esping-Andersen’s analysis is Marshall’s theory of citizenship rights. In *Citizenship and Social Class* (1950), Marshall distinguishes between three core elements of citizenship in the modern welfare state: civil rights, political rights, and social rights. He argues that these rights evolve over time. First, citizens acquire civil rights—the rights necessary for individual freedom, including freedom of speech, thought, and faith. Next, they acquire political rights—the right to vote and seek political office. Once workers are granted political rights they can mobilize to further their interests and in doing so they can achieve social rights—“the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standard prevailing in society” (Marshall, 1950, pp. 10–11). Once citizens have achieved social rights, they can use those rights to leverage their relationship against the market. When social rights become strong enough, workers are *de-commodified*—achieving the ability to “maintain a livelihood without reliance on the market” (Esping-Andersen, 1990, p. 22).

Esping-Andersen’s analysis seeks to understand how the welfare state meets the social rights of citizenship. He examines how the fulfilment of social rights varies across welfare states by examining three dimensions of the welfare state: (1) the relationship between the state, market, and family in providing welfare; (2) the stratifying effects of the welfare state; and (3) how social rights affect the de-commodification of labor. Using these qualitative dimensions, Esping-Andersen identifies three welfare state regimes or ideal types: *social democratic, conservative,* and *liberal,* each of which he argues are arranged around their “own discrete logic of organization, stratification, and societal integration” (Esping-Andersen, 1990, p. 3).

Liberal regimes most resemble what Titmuss (1958) describes as the *residual* welfare state and engender the lowest levels of de-commodification. Real type examples are the United States and Australia. Benefits are modest, the entitlement criteria are strict, and recipients are often means-tested and stigmatized. The state intervenes only when markets fail, and it does so minimally. Conservative regimes are characterized by their status differentiating welfare programs. Real type examples are Germany and France. In these regimes, most benefits are based on individual contributions and occupational status.
Welfare provision often mirrors existing social stratification and the family plays a crucial role in supporting the individual. Social democratic regimes, which most resemble what Titmuss (1958) describes as the *institutional* welfare state, are characterized by universal and comparatively generous benefits and score highest on Esping-Andersen’s de-commodification index. The state plays a strong role in income redistribution, is committed to full employment and income protection, and citizenship serves as the basis of entitlement. While there is no pure type welfare state, Esping-Andersen classifies Nordic countries as social democratic, much of continental Europe as conservative, and the Anglophone countries as liberal.

**Feminist Critique of Three Worlds**

Esping-Andersen’s three-welfare-state typology has brought analytic coherence to comparative welfare state research, but it also generated much debate and criticism. Three main critiques of Esping-Andersen’s typology have emerged that concern: (1) the range of countries examined and number of welfare regime types (Aspalter, 2006; Bonoli, 1997; Castles & Mitchell, 1993; Croissant, 2004; Ferrera, 1996); (2) the methodological limitations of his analysis (Bambra, 2006; Gilbert, 2004; Guo & Gilbert, 2007; Van Voorhis, 2002); and (3) the failure to examine how the welfare state affects women. While all three critiques warrant further investigation, the last is particularly relevant to this paper in that it asks that we examine what the welfare state does and for whom.

Feminist scholars argue that Esping-Andersen’s three dimensions of welfare state variation do not adequately capture women’s relationships with the welfare state (Daly & Rake, 2003; Lewis, 1992; O’Connor, 1993; Orloff, 1993; Sainsbury, 1996, 2001). They maintain that Esping-Andersen’s focus on the state-market relationship and the typical production worker (i.e., male laborer) fails to account for women’s unpaid work, the different ways the welfare state affects women, and how the welfare state serves to maintain or reinforce a gendered division of labor. Further, this focus fosters women’s dependence on men (Daly &

While deeply critical of *Three Worlds*, many feminist scholars find Esping-Andersen’s power-resources framework useful as starting point to examine what the welfare state does for women. Building on his work, they have developed new conceptual frameworks for analyzing the gender content of social provision. Orloff’s *Gender and the Social Rights of Citizenship* (1993) represents the most systematic effort to bring gender into Esping-Andersen’s three-welfare-state typology. Orloff reconceptualizes Esping-Andersen’s dimensions of welfare state variation by giving new emphasis to the family in the state-market-family nexus and reworks Esping-Andersen’s stratification dimension so that it examines the pattern of gender stratification produced by entitlements. Orloff is critical of Esping-Andersen’s use of de-commodification in that it presupposes social rights based on labor market participation. This conceptualization of de-commodification is problematic for women, because much of their work is uncompensated and occurs outside the labor market. Instead, Orloff supplants the de-commodification dimension with two new dimensions of variation: access to paid work and the capacity to form and maintain autonomous households. Access to paid work acknowledges that women must become commodified (i.e., have access to the market) before they can be de-commodified. The capacity to form and maintain autonomous households parallels de-commodification in that it frees women from dependence upon the male-breadwinner for maintenance.

**Through a Gendered Lens: Esping-Andersen’s Re-examination**

The feminist critique persuaded Esping-Andersen to re-examine his previous work. In *Social Foundations of Postindustrial Economies* (1999), Esping-Andersen reconceptualizes the welfare state as a response to market and family failures. While his earlier work skirted over gender, in this work Esping-Andersen turned his attention to gender as he explored the welfare state’s ability to reconcile work and family life. Esping-Andersen argued “that the ‘real crisis’ of contemporary welfare regimes lies in the disjuncture between existing institutional construction and exogenous
change” (Esping-Andersen, 1990, p. 5), namely the welfare state’s ability to respond to an economy now characterized by post-industrial production, male and female labor, unstable families, and dual-earner households. He argues that the crisis of the welfare state, particularly the solvency of the welfare state and its need for increased fertility, can only be resolved by addressing the new risks that plague the household economy.

In this work Esping-Andersen re-examined the 18 rich countries studied in Three Worlds—all members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)—and expanded his study to include additional Southern European OECD countries (i.e., Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain). Here Esping-Andersen focused more on the family and less on gender or gendered power differentials. Bringing the family to the center of his analysis, he identified a fourth dimension of welfare state variation which he terms defamilization, that is “the degree to which households’ welfare and caring responsibilities (i.e., traditionally women’s work) are relaxed either via welfare state provision or via market provision” (Esping-Andersen, 1999, p. 51). He measured the degree of defamilization across welfare states by examining social policies that encourage defamilization, such as family allowances/tax deductions, childcare subsidies, and services. Much like Orloff’s (1993) dimensions of welfare state variation—access to paid work and capacity to form an autonomous household—defamilization parallels de-commodification in that it promotes policies that reduce women’s dependence on the male breadwinner.

In his reanalysis, Esping-Andersen found general support for his original three-welfare-state typology, however the levels of defamilization between social democratic regimes and all other regimes form what is better described as a bimodal distribution. Esping-Andersen found that the social democratic welfare regime constitutes a distinct world of advanced defamilization characterized by duel-earner households, gender equity, state provision of care services, and high fertility. These states promote gender equity in both the workplace and the home through provision of caring services and subsidies and by compensating caregivers for the work they do outside the market. On the other extreme are the southern European welfare and liberal regimes. Southern European regimes are highly familialized in that they
rely heavily upon the family for delivery of social provision. Governments invest little in family services, and the traditional division of labor prevails. Turning to liberal regimes, Esping-Andersen found high rates of female labor market participation, similar to those seen in social democratic states, but also large income inequities between men and women and little effort by the state to alleviate the family care burden. Conservative regimes receive a mixed assessment. While not overly familialistic, conservative regimes do little to support defamilization. They discourage women’s participation in the labor market through inadequate levels of childcare support and tax credits that favor the traditional division of labor.

From Gender to Family

The feminist critique of Esping-Andersen’s work led both Esping-Andersen and other scholars to develop alternative worlds of welfare capitalism or to rethink the Three Worlds typology (Daly & Lewis, 2000; Esping-Andersen, 1999; Gornick & Meyers, 2004; Korpi, 2000; Lewis & Ostner, 1994; Sainsbury, 1996). Using a gendered lens, feminist and mainstream scholars identified what can be broadly described as family policy regimes (Kang & Meyers 2018). A family policy regime may be “defined as a distinctive set of policies for supporting families” (Engster & Stensöta, 2011, p. 85). These regimes vary in how they affect gender relations and in levels and types of support provided to families.

For example, Lewis and Ostner construct an alternative categorization of welfare state regimes based on the “traditional division of labor” that is breadwinning for men and homemaking/caregiving for women (Lewis, 1992; Lewis & Ostner, 1994). Examining women’s access to social security, social-service provisions, childcare, and women’s position in the labor market, Lewis and Ostner distinguish between strong, moderate, and weak male-breadwinner models or dual-breadwinner models.

Similarly, Sainsbury (1996) constructs two contrasting ideal types: the male-breadwinner model and the individual model. Her framework examines the dimensions of the state-market-family relations and stratification, but emphasizes “the importance of gender and familial ideologies as a key variation” and “highlights whether social rights are familialized or individualized”
(Sainsbury, 1999, p. 4), that is, whether women qualify for benefits in their own right or as their husbands’ dependents.

In Korpi’s (2000) examination of the relationship between welfare institutions, gender, and class, he identified three broad family type regimes: dual-earner (encompassing), general family support regimes (corporatist), and market-oriented (targeted/basic security). Dual-earner regimes encourage women’s labor force participation and the redistribution of care work in society and within the family by providing support for paid parental leave and childcare as well as low to medium cash and tax benefits to families with children. Real type examples are Sweden and Finland. General family support regimes presume a traditional gendered division of labor. They provide medium to high cash and tax benefits to families, but limited parental leave and childcare policies do little to support women’s labor participation relative to dual-earner regimes. Real type examples are Germany and Switzerland. Market-oriented regimes offer families marginal support; cash and tax benefits are low, and paid parental leave and childcare subsidies or service are meager or non-existent. Instead, services are purchased in the market and market forces play a stronger role in shaping the gendered division of labor than in other regimes. Real type examples are the United States and Australia.

Extending the Framework to Children

Mainstream, feminist, and family policy critiques refocus, reshape, and extend Esping-Andersen’s *Three Worlds*, but none outright reject his original model. In fact, empirical examination finds strong support for Esping-Andersen’s original typology (Arts & Gelissen, 2002; Gornick & Meyers, 2003; Korpi et al., 2013). As noted by family policy scholars Gornick and Meyers, “subsequent empirical efforts to establish welfare-state typologies that incorporate gender have largely confirmed Esping-Andersen’s classification” (2003, p. 23). This suggests that relations of gender and class may be similarly affected by welfare state mechanisms.

Variation across welfare states provides a “natural experiment” of sorts, allowing scholars to examine the social consequences of public policies (Korpi, 2000). Esping-Andersen’s *Three Worlds* and the typologies of others “serve as heuristic
tools for organizing and interpreting the wealth of information available in comparative studies” (Korpi, 2000, p. 129).

Feminist scholars have successfully expanded the scope of comparative welfare state analysis to include gender; in doing so, they have revealed how welfare institutions can shape gender relations, women’s labor force participation rates, and fertility. Family policy regime scholars have brought the family to the forefront, highlighting how welfare state institutions support or reshape the gendered division of labor, but extant typologies tell us very little about how the welfare state affects children (Engster & Stensöta, 2011; Skevik, 2003). In the world of comparative welfare state research, children remain in the shadows, hidden behind their parents, embedded in the family unit as objects rather than subjects of social policy. As the old adage goes, children are neither seen nor heard. A child-centered examination of the welfare state is needed. Just as “placing women at the center of the analysis brings out aspects of welfare state variation that less-gender sensitive analysis have neglected” (Skevik, 2003, p. 423) placing children at the center of the analysis can reveal new dimensions of welfare state variation and help us to understand how the welfare state can better support child well-being.

Building a Child-Centered Framework

Feminist scholars have used Esping-Andersen’s power-resources framework as a starting point to examine what the welfare state does for women and families by reworking the power-resources analysis to account for gender (Orloff, 1993). To understand how the welfare state affects children requires a similar reworking. However, applying a power-resources lens to examine the welfare of children is problematic for a number of reasons.

Power-resources analysts argue that capitalism oppresses the worker by transforming the worker’s labor power into a commodity. However, if the worker is granted political rights, as construed by Marshall (1950), he and his fellow citizens can mobilize to further their interests and, in doing so, they can achieve the social rights needed for de-commodification. Here we stumble upon the first difficulty in applying the power-resources
framework to the welfare situation of children. For Marshall and other power-resources analysts, citizenship rights are granted to the citizen worker (i.e., adult laborers), not to children (Qvortrup, 2004). In Three Worlds, Esping-Andersen identifies three distinct worlds of welfare based on indices that measure the stratifying and de-commodifying effects of social provision to the typical citizen, that is to say the "average" industrial worker. However, as Orloff (1993, p. 308) noted, “because of prevailing sex segregation in occupations and household composition,” the average industrial worker happens to be an adult man. Thus, both women and children are excluded from Esping-Anderson’s power-resources analysis.

Second, power-resources analysts assume “that civil and political rights are equally available to all citizens to use in mobilizing to secure greater social rights” (Orloff, 1993, p. 308), but this assumption overlooks the uncertain position of children in society. While political revolutions in the West resulted in the recognition of citizenship rights for all adults, albeit delayed for women and minorities, for children full citizenship rights have yet to come. Lacking full citizenship rights, children are rarely the direct recipients of social provision; rather, the welfare state channels resources to the child through the family. This, according to Qvortrup, is:

the precarious status of childhood in modern society. It may well be an empirical reality that children have access to the most relevant available resources in equal manner with other groups, but their precarious situation is highlighted by the fact that their access to welfare measures is not one that is assured by the law...children are in principle more exposed to market forces than other groups in society. This is only exacerbated by their status as dependents under the almost exclusionary guardianship of their parents, making children by and large a private matter. (2004, p. 3)

A child-centered analysis of the welfare state requires a reworking of Esping-Andersen’s framework. Analysis should examine how the state, market, and family work together to support children; how entitlements and social provisions, such as parental leave, child allowances, subsidized childcare and child tax benefits, contribute to patterns of stratification within and across
generations; and to what extent the welfare state recognizes the social rights of children—that is, to what extent does the welfare state guarantee an acceptable level of child well-being (i.e., well-being in the here and now) and well-becoming (i.e., well-being in the future), independent of one’s family of origin.

While children may not hold citizenship rights as construed by Marshall, the 1989 United Nation’s Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) makes clear that children are holders of social rights, including the right to both well-being and well-becoming (Bradshaw et al., 2006). Per the CRC, children have a right to an adequate “standard of living” (Article 27), the “highest attainable standard of health” (Article 24), education (Article 28), and safe housing and adequate food (Article 27) (UNICEF, n.d.). The CRC also makes clear that both family and state are responsible for the realization of children’s rights. “Parent(s) or others responsible for the child have the primary responsibility to secure, within their abilities and financial capacities, the conditions of living necessary for children’s development” (Article 27); however, states must also invest the “maximum extent of their available resources” (Article 4) to help realize these rights (UNICEF, n.d.).

In recent years, international organizations and scholars have taken up the task of evaluating the fulfilment of children’s rights by indexing child well-being across industrialized nations, but few scholars have examined the relationship between fulfilment of these rights and the welfare state. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) (Adamson, 2013) and the OECD’s (2020a) indices of child well-being provide the most comprehensive and complete indices of child well-being across industrialized nations. Each index takes a multi-dimensional approach to gauge child well-being. Using similar dimensions, each index seeks to measure children’s well-being and well-becoming, and whenever possible, uses the child, rather than the family, as the unit of analysis (Tables 1 & 2).
Table 1. Overall ranking for UNICEF child well-being organized by regime type, ranking by dimension, 1 ranks the best performing country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of child well-being</th>
<th>Overall child well-being</th>
<th>Material well-being</th>
<th>Health and safety</th>
<th>Educational well-being</th>
<th>Behaviors and risks</th>
<th>Life satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Democratic</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Conservative</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>Austria</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Liberal</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
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<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
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<td>United States</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Countries grouped by regime type based on Esping-Andersen's three-welfare state typology. Missing data were excluded from the rankings. Countries with insufficient data were excluded from the table, including Australia and New Zealand. Source: Adamson, 2013
Table 2. Rankings by select OECD indicators of child well-being organized by regime type, 1 ranks the best performing country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Select indicators of child well-being</th>
<th>Child poverty (Percentage)</th>
<th>Low birth weight (Percentage)</th>
<th>Infant mortality (Per 1,000 live births)</th>
<th>Average mean literacy score (PISA)</th>
<th>Youth NEET (Percentage)</th>
<th>Adolescent fertility (Births per 1,000 girls aged 15-19)</th>
<th>High life satisfaction (Percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Democratic</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>1 (2.9)</td>
<td>4 (5.0)</td>
<td>10 (3.7)</td>
<td>10 (499.8)</td>
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**Notes:** Countries grouped by regime type based on Esping-Andersen’s three-welfare state typology. Missing data were excluded from the rankings. Source: OECD (2020a)
The UNICEF and OECD indices find great variation in levels of child well-being across OECD nations (Tables 1 & 2). Examination of these indices suggests that, on the whole, children tend to fare better in welfare states classified as social democratic (Tables 1 & 2). For example, in the UNICEF index, social democratic welfare states such as Norway and Sweden receive top scores for overall child well-being and, on average, outperform both conservative and liberal regimes across all dimensions of child well-being (Table 1). Review of OECD child well-being indicators shows a similar pattern (Table 2). While the OECD index offers no overall assessment of child well-being, social democratic welfare states, on average, outperform all other regime types across a number of child well-being indicators (Table 2).

On the other end of the *Three Worlds*’ spectrum, children in liberal welfare states tend to fare less well than their peers in other regimes. Liberal welfare states, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, consistently receive poor scores across a range of child well-being indicators in both indices, ranking particularly poorly on indicators of poverty and material well-being. But alignment between Esping-Andersen’s *Three Worlds* and the UNICEF and OECD child well-being indices is not perfect, suggesting more inquiry is needed to understand the relationship between the welfare state (e.g., benefits aimed at children) and the realization of children’s social rights.

**Conclusion**

The UNICEF and OECD indices tell an incomplete story of how the welfare state fulfils the social rights of children. These indices offer information about child well-being outcomes, but not the way to child well-being and becoming. Moreover, the aggregate nature of these indices masks critical differences within each country, telling us nothing about how child well-being is stratified within and across generations or how the welfare state responds to the needs of marginalized children (e.g., children living in chronic poverty, children of color, children living in out-of-home care). While review of these child well-being indices suggests a relationship between the welfare state and child well-being, establishing cause and
effect is a complex task that requires multi-variate methods or experimental design, neither of which is employed here. In recent years, a handful of family policy scholars have taken up this task (Engster & Stensöta, 2018). In general, they find that welfare states that combine high levels of support for paid parental leave, child cash or tax benefits, and subsidized childcare have lower rates of child poverty and infant mortality and greater rates of educational attainment (Bäckman & Ferrarini, 2010; Bradshaw, 2014; Engster & Stensöta, 2011; Shim, 2016), but more research is needed to understand how the state, market, and family work together to ameliorate or exacerbate inequalities within and across generations and how the welfare state responds to the needs of children during social and economic crises, such as the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. It may be the case that children benefit from the welfare state’s decommodifying or defamilizing effects, but unless children are fully recognized as claims makers in their own right (i.e., holders of social rights), they remain more exposed to the vicissitudes of both the market and family life than the adults who are typically charged with their care. To date, little research has been done on how the welfare state works to fulfil the social rights of children; a child-centered welfare state analysis as a framework for future scholarships provides a beginning.

Acknowledgements: The author would like to thank research assistant Shailee Sran for her excellent work on this project and Anil Soni and Vicki Lens for their generous and helpful feedback on this manuscript.
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Over the one-hundred-year history of the social work profession, different generations of social workers have discussed, clarified, and debated the relationship between social work and science. Those recurring debates were pursued in the hope of creating theoretically-based social work practice, to professionalize and standardize social work education, to identify the best guiding perspectives for the profession of social work, and to give the social work profession a strong footing among other scientific disciplines. Such efforts have not yet resulted in a definite understanding or agreement; nevertheless, they have provided social work professionals with abundant intellectual wealth and a springboard to further this important topic.

The book carries into the present that self-reflective discussion. It is a culmination of roundtable consultations undertaken within a circle of social work leaders from North America, Europe, and Asia between 2012 and 2016 at the IslandWood conference center near Seattle. The book is largely a collection of the presentations, discussions, and consensus reports made by various scholars at those meetings, organized into four sections: Why? What? How? Then what?

Part 1 answers the question *why*; it provides a background and rationale for organizing the IslandWood roundtable meetings, and delineates its process, content, and overarching consensus achieved at those meetings. Part 2 seeks to answer the *what is a science of social work* question by articulating the intellectual foundations for social work science. In this section, John Brekke and others outline the domains, constructs, and characteristics of a social work science, exploring the identify issue faced by the social work profession. 
work profession within the larger context of academic sciences. They detail rigorous analyses of social work values and social work science and explore the centrality of theory in social work.

Part 3 examines how the application of a science of social work to practice and identifies essential issues, such as the challenges in converging the different concerns held by researchers (rigor) and practitioners (relevance), elucidating the conundrum of whether we ought to pursue evidence-based practice or practice-based evidence. Part 4 answers the question of then what by discussing the implication of adopting a realist/critical-realist informed perspective for future social work education and practice.

The accomplishments represented in this book are best summarized by the initiator and core sponsor of the IslandWood roundtable meeting, namely Marilyn Flynn, former Dean of the Dworak-Peck School of Social Work at the University of Southern California. In a succinct Forward, Flynn stresses that these chapters provide clarity, reaffirmation, and a comprehensive sense of science and the meaning of science in relation to social work. Through these intellectual discussions and debates, the roots of science can be firmly secured in all the professional undertakings. Building upon this secure foundation, future learning, teaching, and problem solving for social good can be nourished.

The book is an open invitation to the wider social work profession for participation in this important reflective process. Readers are invited to ponder the question of where and how the social work profession should position itself in the 21st-century. Such a soul-searching exercise is especially relevant to the social work profession in face of the grand challenges American society will encounter as it undergoes what has been called a “4th industrial revolution,” which will entail radical reconstructing of many social institutions and communities, as well as individual lives. This book serves as a valuable resource for social work academics, students, and practitioners as we seek to rethink just what does and will define our profession.

Yawen Li
San Diego State University

With social and economic development, population lifespan is continuously extended, and an aging population has become a major concern confronting all nations. Establishing a long-term care insurance system is a significant step in dealing with the increase in total demand and structure of care resulting from an aging population. At present, most OECD countries have established long-term care insurance systems and the proportion of long-term care expenditures in relation to total GDP continues to increase. Since 1999, China has recognized a new population pattern characterized as “gradually getting rich and quick getting old.” This means a population characterized by rapid aging, that is, advanced aging and increased longevity, along with the health problems this entails. This situation undoubtedly poses a serious challenge to the scale, structure, and quality of the demand for nursing services, including medical care and long-term life care. The informal care services provided by traditional families are gradually declining in the context of changes in the social structure, miniaturization of family structure, increases in the number of second children, and changes in female employment rates. The financial burden and time costs for families have intensified significantly as family members strive to meet the tasks of caring for family members. Therefore, how to use the social insurance system to solve this problem has become the starting point for the development of Qingdao’s (a city in eastern Shandong province of China) long-term care insurance system and the focus of the study presented in this book.

The book’s main author, Mi Hong, is an expert in demography and social security and Professor at Zhejiang University. Hong is a social security consultant and has remained informed on the process of establishing and improving the long-term care system in Qingdao. His research team obtained valuable operational policy data covering the recent decade, including costs and certification issues. This book is based on an in-depth analysis of the data of Qingdao coming from the past 10 years.
The book contains eight chapters, the titles of which are worth enumeration as a key indicator of the scope of the study: (1) The Development Background and History of Long-term Care Insurance in Qingdao; (2) Development Status of Long-term Care Insurance System in Qingdao; (3) Study on Operation Performance Evaluation of Long-term Care Insurance System in Qingdao; (4) Health Multi-State Life Table of Long-term Care Insurance Policy of Qingdao; (5) Analysis on Cost and Fund Income and Expenditure of Long-term Care Insurance System in Qingdao; (6) Establishment of Index System of Long-term Care Insurance System in Qingdao; (7) Comparison of Long-term Care Insurance System; and (8) Summary and Suggestions on Qingdao’s Long-term Care Insurance Research.

Hong’s team comprehensively sorts out the institutional evolution of the Qingdao model. Then, according to the actual operation data of Qingdao long-term care policy, they build multi-state life tables and provide empirical support for cost analysis and key scientific issues, such as disability-related influencing factors. This book also compares the implementation experiences of long-term care insurance among developed countries such as Japan, Germany, the United States, and Singapore, and analyzes other pilot policies and systems in China. Finally, the authors put forward suggestions for improving the long-term care insurance system in Qingdao, which provides local pilot experience for the establishment of the long-term care insurance system with specifically Chinese characteristics.

This study has theoretical and practical significance. First of all, with the aging population and the government’s limited fiscal expenditure in China, Qingdao’s long-term care insurance system innovatively solves the long-term care service needs of disabled and semi-disabled elderly people through medical insurance fund transfer. Prior to the establishment of Qingdao’s long-term care insurance system, medical insurance covered both chronic disease and other serious diseases of the elderly. Under this circumstance, chronic disease consumed much of the limited medical resources and increased medical insurance costs. The establishment of long-term insurance system has saved the government funds, so that the Qingdao Municipal
Government has funds to solve the problem of serious diseases of the elderly more effectively. This system won the “Chinese Local Government Innovation Award” in 2015.

Secondly, under the leadership of the government, combined with the characteristics of marketization, Qingdao explored four kinds of long-term care services, which are institutional care, hospital care, home care, and mobile care. The system gradually expanded its coverage to rural areas and then to its service target covered elderly people with severe dementia. This book provides empirical support for key scientific issues in the operation of the system by running microdata, such as the status of system operation, cost analysis, multi-state life table, life expectancy, cost analysis, indicator construction and so on. It also uses multi-state life table methods, building actuarial and financing models. China proposed the outline of the “Healthy China 2030” plan in 2016, which aims to protect people’s health and improve health equity. Material provided here lends theoretical and data support for the healthy life expectancy aspect that is not mentioned in the “Healthy China 2030” plan. Long-term care insurance in Qingdao not only provides experience for China in the initial trial of the system, but also provides reference points for other nations of the world implementing long-term insurance systems.

However, the long-term care insurance system in Qingdao is also facing significant challenges. The financing of the system is largely dependent on the medical insurance fund, which requires long-term actuarial balance. Further measurements and analysis are needed to ensure the sustainability of the system. Also, nursing service resources vary between urban and rural areas in China. Domestic institutions in the market can provide effective life care services in urban areas, but it is more difficult to provide simple life care services in the more remote areas.

Lingxue Sun
Zhejiang University

This book is a welcome addition to the academic resources available in social work education, specifically community-based social work. This work modernizes the traditional organizing approaches exemplified by experts such as Freire, Alinsky, Kretzman, and McKnight with a reinforcement of the technological and communication advances that characterize social movements within the global society. The author provides conceptual operationalization and application of social movements, contributing a theoretical base to existing knowledge to help explain how collective action emerges in various settings and eras.

Almeida provides an overview of how and why people organize together in large-scale social movements, along with defining what constitutes a social movement, the associated classification scheme, and methods of rigorous research. Examples of social movements discussed here include big data document protests, women’s marches in the anti-Trump resistance, the immigrant rights movement, and global protests against unjust economic policies in order to protect social citizenship rights and economic inequality. The author dives deeply into how shared interests, organizational structure, and group identity shape formation and emergence of social movements, and explores how social movements diffuse geographically. This book also examines the characterization of social movements as being collective and sustained over time, with participants traditionally motivated by a persistent exclusion from power.

The author thoroughly discusses research methods, theory, movement emergence, framing, participation, outcomes, and levels and examples of collective action. Using this methodical and systematic approach to cultivate deeper understanding with examples, the author employs clear writing that is easily understood with immediate application. The book includes several chapters essential for orienting social work students and those from other helping professions to the importance and structure of social movements. In particular, the chapter
on framing brings together the micro perspective on beliefs, the understanding of the opportunities and threats that support the emergence of social movements, and the resources that contribute to the infrastructure. Almeida examines successful social movements to identify organizing strategies, tactics, cultural deposits, and influences on society and value systems within the current neoliberal climate. As becomes clear, culture influences how organizers critically interpret conditions, opportunities, and threats within social movements as part of the framing process, impacting the emergence and outcomes of social movements.

The author connects potential social movement outcomes with the ensuing impact on individuals, government, organizations, culture, and greater society. This connection stresses the importance of explicitly identifying the goal of the social movement, the benefits for the population represented by the social movement, the prevention of worsening conditions associated with the threats, and/or the removal of social citizenship benefits. These skills suggest that organizers benefit from a deep reading of cultural influences, which this reviewer sees as connected with the social work skills of interpersonal and social empathy, developing a growing acknowledgement and understanding of widespread historical oppression and discrimination that can lead to engagement in social action in the form of social movements.

Social movements may result in the unity of people, political impact and pressure, attention to issues of structural oppression and inequality, mass communication and resource mobilization, and sustained deep societal changes. The impact of social movements on culture includes shifts in societal beliefs and individuals’ camaraderie, shared collective identity, and personal efficacy. A strength of this book is the inclusion of a reference to the dark side of right-wing mobilization and power devaluation both in the United States and other countries. The author identifies new directions in social movements, including social network analysis, geographic information system data, and big data, as well as modern communication technological considerations, such as email, mobile phone prevalence, websites, and translations.
This book will be useful to advocates, policy makers, and scholars due to the combination of community practice examples and research methods with historical and academic application while encouraging further research. There is a social work orientation in the combination of the discussion of micro motivation with the macro implications. The strengths of this book include the incorporation of the historic and current literature throughout the chapters to anchor this work to the greater body of knowledge. The author is successful in communicating justification for further research on advances in social media, survey methods, computer analysis, assessment, and measurement to strengthen an empirical research base and advance knowledge in this area.

Melanie Reyes
Arizona State University


David Scott Fitzgerald’s recent book is a work so topical it may well become outdated nearly immediately, a fact that only serves to underscore its relevance to modern international practices. Just as likely to cite early 20th century documents as it is to cite Trump’s recent twitter posts, *Refuge Beyond Reach* traces the history of an increasingly important development right up to the point of publication. As the title implies, the work is about the vast, interconnected, and semi-legal system that the Global North has created to repel refugees of the Global South.

In the 20th century, the concept of non-refoulement became a very strong norm by means of international treaty within the majority of the world’s countries. Non-refoulement is the legal principle that a country may not send back a refugee to their point of origin once within the country’s borders (refugees are distinguished from other migrants as people who are internationally displaced because their human rights have been threatened). While ostensibly a positive humanitarian principle, this has the unintended consequence that wealthy Western
countries do all they can to prevent refugees from stepping foot on their soil in the first place, in order to avoid their binding international obligations. Strong visa and travel restrictions prevent many nationalities, almost universally the most likely ones to be refugees in the first place, from ever setting foot in the Global North. Immigration quotas are only a very small fraction of demand, and winning a spot is random and akin to winning the lottery. There are no programs for applications in place at all for nationalities. What is less known, and what the book largely devotes itself to, is how Western nations have manipulated the very idea of territoriality in order to further their goals of repelling some people from entry.

Passports originated in the late 18th century, and visas around World War I, but FitzGerald strongly contends that the modern system originated in the 1930s and 1940s. It was in the wake of the Holocaust that the norm of non-refoulement was established in international law, partly as a response to the sheer scope and brutality of the Holocaust. Yet the majority of current tactics used to repel refugees originated as efforts to repel Jews. Nobody wanted to contend with the millions of Jewish refugees, and even while the Allied powers publicly opposed Germany, they quietly created tactics to prevent having to accept Jews at their borders. While originating around World War II, these practices have become significantly stronger in more recent decades. Individual nations originally put into practice small-scale ad hoc policies to prevent individual ethnic groups from reaching their territory along particular routes. As time went on, however, these small-scale policies became national law, countries copied other countries’ tactics, and the Western world began to converge on a defined set of policies.

The rest of the book analyzes the characteristics of this system, using an impressive number of case studies and individual examples. FitzGerald identifies two major and contradictory tactics that have risen to prominence, which he calls extra-territorialization and hyper-territorialization. Extra-territorialization is the expansion of border control policies and enforcement to hundreds and thousands of miles away from a country’s official boundaries. The most visible form of this to regular travelers is a country having screening and national security officers in foreign airports. In a world where air travel
has permanently become securitized and militarized, someone attempting to fly to a Western democracy may have to clear their customs halfway across the world before boarding their flight. In these transit zones, laws apply while rights often do not. A person in an airport in Abu Dhabi can be charged under U.S. smuggling laws, while simultaneously not being afforded the right to counsel enshrined in U.S. law.

More insidiously, stopping and detaining people in international waters, a practice strongly assumed to be illegal in the early 20th century, became commonplace after the 1970s. Even then, nobody was refouled in international waters, until an executive order in 1992 changed U.S. policy and set a precedent for other nations. Since then, the U.S. Coast Guard has intercepted over a quarter of a million people in the Caribbean. The result is that citizens of some island nations such as Haiti and Cuba cannot escape to any country at all, not just the United States, making their countries more like oceanic prisons.

At the extreme end of extra-territorialization, active military campaigns keep people caged. This can happen on subtler scales than outright invasion: the Italian government, for example, pays and trains the Libyan army and coast guard (who often have ties to organized crime) to heavily secure Libya’s borders, in order to prevent refugees from getting to Europe through Libya. In a sense, the Libyan military is a neocolonialist holding of the Italian government. Diplomatic threats are also common. The Italian government also heavily pressures NGOs into not saving the lives of refugees at sea. The general result is that there are numerous and ever more distant metaphorical walls to repel refugees before they ever get near a physical literal border wall.

Paradoxically, we also have hyper-territorialization, which is defining more and more strictly what counts as being “in” a country for non-refoulement to apply. It is not an exaggeration to say these distinctions can go down to the centimeter. In one case, a U.S. court decided that a man shot to death by a guard at the Mexican border did not have any rights under U.S. law, because although his dead body fell with his feet in America, his head was in Mexico, and slightly more than half his body was across the exact border. Spain built three concentric fences each a few meters apart at the borders of its enclaves in Morocco.
(Ceuta and Melilla). Originally, crossing the first one counted as entering Spain for purposes of non-refoulement. The government later changed the policy to require crossing all three, creating a paradoxical situation where the small area between the fences is not Moroccan territory but apparently not Spanish territory either, thus creating a space in which Spain can enforce its law without affording rights. Despite these practices being rejected by both local and international courts, Spanish border patrol continues to employ them. Sometimes countries even define their own undisputed land as places where non-refoulement does not apply. Australia has increasingly revoked this right from more and more of its territories and sovereign waters. In a more extreme example, Israel decided it had the right to refoul people who were within 50 kilometers of its border. The general trend has been the creation of legal minutiae and technicalities in order to prevent the legal obligation of affording asylum.

The book is, overall, a highly effective and very well-sourced illustration of the absurd and contradictory nature of the less-discussed aspects of the current world immigration system. The two weapons of the Global North to prevent having to accept refugees have been acting further and further outside the law, further from their borders, and acting within the exact letter of the law, at increasingly more precise and convolutedly specific borders. Which of these is applied in a specific case is based entirely on convenience. Even those who style themselves as anti-immigration must admit that this is a logically inconsistent system. The existing terms that FitzGerald uses to describe these practices, extra-territorialization and hyper-territorialization, are unfortunately rather obscure, garnering very few results when searching literature. This, perhaps, should change. Even outside the context of studying migration and refugees, these are two important pervasive trends that should be more thoroughly discussed in academic works.

Despite often being strongly worded, FitzGerald mostly avoids giving explicit moral judgments until the end of the book. On the first page of the final chapter, FitzGerald reveals a position that surprises no one who reads the book to that point. He is morally against the current treatment of refugees. Given the number of individual cases he describes, it would be hard for anyone with a predisposition to humanitarianism to
disagree. And yet, the fact that opinion is not necessarily infused throughout most of the book potentially also makes it a useful read for those who do disagree with it. The book is, at its core, a very large collection of information and individual facts.

The only significant point where the book suffers is organization. We go through a mound of information, including abstract statistics and real human stories, in the race to paint a coherent picture of the whole. FitzGerald makes several attempts to organize all this information, but does not fully commit to any one of them individually. In this review, I used his twin overarching methods of extra-territorialization and hyper-territorialization to organize the information, because I find this most interesting and useful. However, this is a categorization he mostly employs in the first half of the book and forgets by the second. Many of the chapters are organized by individual country or region of the world instead. This would be fair, if not for additional clumsy quasi-attempts to organize by a medieval metaphor of “moats,” “drawbridges,” and “fortresses,” which results in a few nonintegrated chapters about North American policy, including two separate chapters on the subject of U.S. naval intervention. Moreover, as previously discussed, the beginning of the book organizes itself by time as we trace the development of the current system, before we switch to the combination of location and medieval metaphor. The result is that, if one remembers a specific fact or case study, it is not always very easy to locate it within the pages. The book had the potential to transcend an important and interesting read into a scholarly reference book and relatively complete academic analysis, but unfortunately it did not quite make it.

Regardless, this book is a welcome addition to the exponentially growing corpus of literature on migration studies. Besides being an impressively thorough compendium of facts and sources, it is also certainly a noteworthy contribution to our abstract understanding of the big picture. Although the scope and constant evolution of the subject prevents the work from being definitive, this book is an important achievement and will become a much-cited work in the years and decades to come.

Wolfe Padawer
Koç University

Published originally in 2018, this book couldn’t be timelier in view of the upcoming presidential election. It supplements an edition first published in 2008, documenting with critical insights our country’s path toward a “post-truth culture.” Describing Donald Trump as “a commercially generated image” (p. 324), the author provides a persuasive argument that American society has been on an ongoing path of intellectual decline, in which acceptance of the administration’s post-truth doctrine is a logical consequence rather than primary cause.

Riffing on Richard Hofstadter’s famous 1963 essay on American anti-intellectualism, Jacoby cites his work as a forewarning to the insidious influence of “mind pacifiers,” such as television and social media. Highlighting Hofstadter’s warning, she contends, “Start engaging in these pastimes a few hours a day, though, and you are well on your way into the world of thoughtlessness” (p. 324). The consequence of giving in to the pull of social media for entertainment, information, and social connection, is a general state of distraction that makes it difficult to distinguish fact from fiction, let alone promote substantive understanding of complex issues. Yet more than the familiar critique of our dependence on technology and ever-increasing forms of diversion, the book details cycles of anti-intellectualism and its sources at various points in American history.

Depicting the enduring tension between cultural ideals of Enlightenment reason and rugged individualism, Jacoby reminds us that anti-intellectual posturing is not unprecedented in American politics. What is unprecedented is the current dominance of social media, the 24-hour news cycle, and the increased prevalence of media-generated images and soundbites in place of thoughtful analysis and discourse. At the risk being called a modern Luddite, Jacoby’s description of a multi-billion-dollar video industry for infants (despite research documenting detrimental effects in language acquisition and reading) clearly bolsters her argument.

Perhaps the most valuable of Jacoby’s insights is how our media-saturated culture elevates extremism on both the right and left. When discourse is reduced to buzzwords intended to grab
attention, only the most extreme voices garner significant notice. Jacoby identifies this phenomenon as a primary source of political polarization. This suggests that we can’t necessarily point the finger at boorish leaders and political pundits as the principal cause of our fragmented political state. On the contrary, Jacoby argues that anti-intellectualism and the decline in civil discourse has served to elevate the status of illiberal and proudly anti-intellectual leaders. Modifying this state of affairs requires challenging the ubiquitous presence of these sources of distraction, which have become so habitual they often go unrecognized.

What receives less attention in Jacoby’s critique is the influence of neoliberal economic policies, and their effect on critical social systems and institutions such as higher education and the press. For example, the author notes the increased focus on pop culture in university course offerings and indicts faculty for their failure to defend academic freedom and gravitas. At the same time, Jacoby fails to address higher education’s shift to a corporate university model, in which students are viewed as consumers, and the objectives for recruitment and retention compete with the goals of a liberal education. Within this model, members of the business community are often over-represented on university governing boards, bringing a hierarchical approach to academic governance. This relatively recent transformation not only undermines the traditional emphasis on shared governance in academe, but ultimately subverts the university as a unique space for critical thought and discourse.

Similarly, corporate consolidation has normalized a market-driven approach to the news media. The unfortunate result is a glut of consumer-driven news outlets designed to appeal to narrow ideological perspectives and to confirm existing biases. Reasoned debate on serous issues is replaced with simplistic sloganeering and cues to tribal alliance. Meanwhile, American elections appear to have turned into yet one more form of mass entertainment. This was made alarmingly clear by one network president’s waxing enthusiasm over the ratings garnered by the circus-like atmosphere of the 2016 presidential election, reportedly saying “It may not be good for America, but it’s damn good for CBS!”
Nevertheless, Jacoby suggests the future may not be completely dire and refers again to Hofstadter, who posited inevitable “cyclical fluctuations” in the struggle between reason and anti-intellectualism. As an example, she cites John McCain’s insistence that the economy was sound in the face of a collapsing housing market and devastating pension losses, which forced many Americans to seek the counsel of previously denigrated “experts” during the recession of 2008. Likewise, Jacoby points to the common association of intellectualism with anti-Americanism in the 1950s. She argues that this perception shifted to a renewed appreciation for science and technology following the successful launch of the Soviet satellite, Sputnik. The author suggests that history reveals the practical necessity for reason and knowledge, particularly in times of crisis. Accordingly, Jacoby contends that it is only a matter of when, not if, the current phase of American unreason is reversed by a critical event such as a major cyber-attack.

Perhaps the most valuable message of Jacoby’s detailed analysis is that our present age of American unreason is not a sudden cultural shift, but one in a series of historical cycles. Still, as Jacoby herself acknowledges, the unprecedented presence and influence of technology in contemporary culture, as well as an increasingly market-based conceptualization of social institutions and interactions, present unique challenges for affecting significant change. Toward this end, her admonishment to the academic community to be more assertive against the forces of anti-intellectualism is well taken. Educators have a responsibility to forcefully advocate for academic freedom and shared governance, drawing attention to its incompatibility with current trends in higher education toward bureaucratic and administrative bloat. Perhaps more importantly, rather than privileging a market-based, consumer-oriented approach to learning, educators must be willing to assert the value in the slow, often laborious process of knowledge building and intellectual growth.

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This is an excellent read that highlights the sociology of death by presenting research and personal stories told by families, caretakers, and healthcare professionals who work with the aging population. This book is not only beneficial for professionals but also families who are caring for an older adult. It is a practical guide that addresses how the system of living and dying is changing in America, the importance of having tough conversations about living and dying, what options are available for caring for the aging population, and what happens after we die. It is highly informative and conveys the message that learning about death is a lifelong process.

Stevens-Long and Bardell do an excellent job explaining and outlining how the system is everchanging. Families are now more spread out, the lifespan has expanded, and even the definition of death has changed. The distance in between families means that older people often live alone, or they become institutionalized once they are unable to take care of themselves. Also, people now live much longer than they ever have before, which impacts the cost of health care, retirement, and how an older individual is cared for. The definition of death has even changed. For many centuries a person was considered dead once their breathing or heartbeat stopped. However, because of improved technology and research there are now more ways to keep people living. Due to these changes, decisions about caring for an older family member and what a person wants in end-of-life care and after death are extremely important, though they make conversations about living and dying more complex.

The book suggests that conversations about death can be among the most difficult conversations people can have. However, the earlier we have those conversations, the easier that they will be. The author mentions starting where the problem is; for example, talking about who would care for a loved one’s children or who would make final decisions on their behalf if they are incapacitated and unable to do so for themselves. They encourage people not to just talk about what needs to be done
after they die, such as funeral plans, but also to talk about long term care and advanced directives. This is an excellent portion of the book, as the writing is not only personable but very informative. They also go on to explain why it is important to have conversations about death early on. Often people feel like it is too soon to talk about dying; however, they note that it is only too soon until it is too late!

After reading about the changes in the death process and the importance of having conversations about death, the authors discuss the different options that are available when caring for an older adult. When caring for an older adult there are a variety of different things to consider, such as finances, comfort, and location. Since we are so spread out and older adults are now living longer than ever before, this changes the way that older adults are cared for. Caring for an older parent could mean one of you must move hundreds or even thousands of miles to live with each other. This can result in serious financial challenges, elder abuse, caretaker burnout, and other significant challenges. Medication, therapy, home health, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, senior apartments, palliative care, and hospice are all options now available when caring for ailing older adults. The book does a great job explaining the differences, the costs, and just what the pros and cons of each of these options are, connecting these options to the changing care system in America, underlining the importance of having conversations early on to prepare mentally and financially for some of the care options that are available for older adults.

A final section of the book highlights the importance of planning for death in advance of any emergency. One thing very different from a hundred years ago is the cost of funerals and the many different options that people have for how their body is handled once they are deceased. It is extremely important to plan these things out so that family members don’t have to carry the financial and emotional burden of figuring out what a loved one wanted as their final wishes during the height of the grieving process. Some of the options people have after dying are being cremated, having a green funeral and burial, having a more traditional funeral, or just having a memorial service. All these things vary in price and demonstrate the reason why the
funeral industry is booming. The book highlights how the cost of funerals have increased over past years, making it imperative to prepare for these costs.

Finally, the book touches on grieving and mourning after the death of a loved one. It elucidates the stages of grief and emphasizes that although we all go through the same stages of grief, each one also grieves in a unique way as well, as we mourn and learn to accept our loss. People often go through identifiable stages of reconstructing their lives and learning how to live again. Mourning often is associated with negative emotions and it is a positive task for people to overcome their shock, disbelief, and denial. Overall, Stevens-Long and Bardell do an excellent job highlighting the importance of having conversations about living and dying, of connecting this to the changes in the dying process, emphasizing the importance of having conversations with loved ones early on, and outlining the different options that are available to take care of an aging population.

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This very important book is a strong reminder that while we are pushed in academic culture, and American culture in general, to prize the new, the novel and the latest, there is still a treasure of wisdom and worth in the old foundational writings in social analysis. Probably many readers of this journal have some acquaintance with the name of Emile Durkheim, and are perhaps vaguely aware that one of Durkheim’s major works was a study of the social contributors to suicide. But I venture to say that many of us have not actually read that tome, or like me, have only read parts of it. We can all benefit, therefore, from the fact that Stephen Marson has not only read it closely, many times over I suspect, but also has closely digested it and applied it to his work in teaching and practicing geriatric social work.
Durkheim looked at the social aspects of suicide by dividing suicide into four different types: egoistic suicide, altruistic suicide; anomic suicide, and fatalistic suicide. Egoistic suicide tends to occur in social conditions in which one feels isolated, anxious, and alone. Altruistic suicide tends to occur in social conditions in which one is so deeply embedded in group values that group welfare is emphasized at the expense of the individual. Anomic suicide tends to occur in social conditions in which rapid change undermines the individual’s sense of firm social norms and expectations. Fatalistic suicide tends to occur in social conditions in which chronic negative experiences of suffering (pain, poverty, sickness) appear to have no conclusion or expectation of improvement. Durkheim himself wrote mostly about the anomic and egoistic types of suicide, and hardly at all about the fatalistic type. One of the great values of this book is that Marson gives fairly equal treatment to each type within a well-orbed presentation, and uses a schema of pairing the anomic and fatalistic, and the egoistic and altruistic types such that they are seen less as opposites (as many other writers have done) than as ends of the same continuum. This especially helps make sense of the radical swings we often see from one end of the continuum to the other; for example, in suicide terrorism, in which an anomic sense of isolation is rapidly displaced by an altruistic willingness to sacrifice one’s own life in furtherance of a “larger” cause.

Marson supplies not only expert and engaging explication of each one of these types of social conditions, but also how each type leads some to suicide, and how to use the Durkheimian framework to recognize how individuals seeming part of the same social setting (such as a nursing home) may be experiencing that setting in very different ways. Thus, while certainly underlining the importance of theory in assessment and evaluations of clients, this approach also steers the theoretically-minded practitioner well clear of a “one size fits all” perspective; theory is used to facilitate insights into the social history of the individual, not as a mold within which to stuff the substance of individual social history.

One thing that I found particularly interesting in reading this book is the way that Marson consistently avoids using psychological, medical, or psychotherapeutic categories, in favor of a consistently
sociological take. As one who put in my own years working with older adults in hospital and hospice settings, I hardly even realized how much of my own professional views in initial case analysis have been shaded by an implicit bias toward medical and psychological categories. It was sometimes startling, refreshingly so, to watch Marson move in a completely different direction, and to recognize the valuable insights this produces. I still lean toward the medical and psychological perspective, but can easily agree that the sociological take that Marson demonstrates in this book is equally valuable for understanding, is just as compatible with social work values and ethics, and in a team setting in which MDs, nurses and psychologists already participate, facilitates the social worker in formulating interventions in the social environment that might likely be missing. Furthermore, many are recognizing the "overmedicalization" of many care issues in our society, especially in the population of older adults, and the sociological approach Marson presents here also points the way toward reconceptualizing care situations in non-medical terms, even while retaining an overall attitude of a caring professional.

This book will undoubtedly be of value to gerontology social workers, and they will probably pay closest attention to it, but hopefully it will not be simply pigeonholed there. For instance, the chapter on assessment and evaluation could be immensely useful for all social work practitioners, while the sections on qualitative/quantitative interaction will be useful for social work educators and researchers.

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Volume: XLVII  
Volume Year: 2020  
Publication Period: 1-20 to 12-20  
Publication Frequency: Quarterly  
Online Publication Dates: March, June, September, December  
Subscription Rates:

<table>
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Back Issues: $20.00 per issue, plus postage ($2.00 for U.S./ $5.00 for foreign)  
ISSN: 0191-5096  
Tax Free Registry No.: A-154961  
Federal Tax ID No.: 386007327  
Web Site: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/  
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