



RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Tigers bringing risk and security: Gendered perceptions of tiger reintroduction in Rajasthan, India

Kalli F. Doubleday , Elena C. Rubino

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**Abstract** Human–wildlife conflict has been documented to impact some communities heterogeneously, particularly along gender lines (e.g., women experiencing inequitably increased workloads and economic hardship, and decreased physical safety and psychological wellbeing), leading to different attitudes towards wildlife. Despite possible gendered discrepancies, women’s perceptions of conservation management are often insufficiently explored, leading to incomplete understandings of conservation dynamics, and unjust conservation policies. In an effort to investigate if and how perceptions of tiger reintroductions are disparate, we conducted focus group discussions with women and men living in and around Sariska Tiger Reserve in Rajasthan, India. Results demonstrate clear gendered delineations in perceptions, where male participants predominantly focused on economic and ecological benefits, and female participants highlighted threats to personal safety and hidden costs (e.g., potential abuse, dowry concerns). This research underscores the importance of documenting and understanding gendered perceptions of carnivores to achieve the broad community support necessary for successful reintroduction efforts worldwide.

**Keywords** Carnivores · Focus groups · Human–wildlife conflict · Qualitative analysis · Wildlife conservation

## INTRODUCTION

It is not uncommon for underlying conflicts between different human groups (e.g., between governmental authorities and local villagers) to manifest as human–wildlife conflicts (HWC; Dickman 2010), threatening human coexistence with wildlife species (Dickman 2010). Gender relations are one such social dynamic known to impact HWC, as it has been documented that men and women may experience HWC differently, which can be due to differing risks or perceptions of risk (Ogra 2008; Gore and Kahler 2012). Gender may play a role in how people perceive the same risks differently, if they perceive entirely different risks, and/or how they assign meanings to what are seemingly the same risks (Gore and Kahler 2012). For example, Ogra (2008) found that women bore a disproportionate burden of human–elephant conflict risks compared to men, including inequitably increased workloads and exposure to insect-borne disease, and decreased physical safety and psychological wellbeing. Similarly, HWC in Namibia’s Kwandu Conservancy disproportionately affects women, where existing vulnerabilities make women more susceptible to the negative impacts of wildlife (Khumalo and Yung 2015). Socioeconomic and cultural factors (e.g., gendered divisions of labor, marginalized positions in society) influence how rural women and men interact with nature differently, resulting in differing levels of risk and perceptions of risk, accounting for gendered differences in their experiences (Ogra 2008; Costa et al. 2017).

These different experiences can lead women to hold different attitudes towards wildlife than men. Although women generally ascribe greater preservation and mutualistic values towards wildlife and conservation (Gamborg and Jensen 2016), in landscapes where daily wildlife interactions result in loss through crop raiding or livestock

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depredation, women often view wildlife more negatively than men (Gore and Kahler 2012; Karanth et al. 2019). Differences in perceptions of wildlife between women and men often lead to gendered variations in tolerance, particularly in regard to living with wildlife (Carter and Allendorf 2016); tolerance is necessary for sustainable human–wildlife coexistence.

Despite gendered differences in many contexts, rural women’s perceptions of conservation management have been insufficiently explored (Costa et al. 2017), likely because they are often excluded from conservation discussions (e.g., Kodiveri 2015). This is particularly concerning given rural women’s potential roles as significant actors in the success, failure, and implementation of conservation strategies (James et al. 2021). For example, Agarwal (2010) found that when women comprise 25–30% of representation within forestry conservation programs in India, the programs lead to more equitable benefit sharing and improved conservation outcomes (e.g., 11% forest cover increases in the study areas). As such, women form a distinctive stakeholder group of importance in HWC-related management and their unique perspectives must be understood (Gore and Kahler 2012; James et al. 2021). Without an explicit examination of women and their experiences, conservation practitioners will continue to have an incomplete understanding of complex conservation dynamics. This is problematic for conservation, which should aim for socially equitable decision making (Greiner 2012).

To assist in addressing this gap, we explored the gendered perceptions of Bengal tiger (*Panthera tigris tigris*, hereafter referred to as “tiger”) reintroductions within Sariska Tiger Reserve in Rajasthan, India. Specifically, this study sought to identify patterns related to the different ways in which women and men perceive tiger reintroductions. To achieve this, we employed focus group discussions to examine gendered descriptions of the costs and benefits of tiger presence. By discerning differing experiences, we are able to understand disparate gendered attitudes towards tiger presence, which suggest unequal social impacts that may threaten reintroduction efforts. In doing so, we contribute to the explanation of gendered aspects of HWC and understandings of tolerance of large carnivores to inform reintroduction efforts in Asia (e.g., tiger reintroductions in Cambodia, Gray et al. 2020) and beyond.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Study area

The area of the Sariska Tiger Reserve (hereafter, “Sariska”) in Rajasthan, India was designated a wildlife reserve

in 1955 and upgraded to a tiger reserve in 1978 (Narain et al. 2005; Shah et al. 2015). The largest core area within Sariska was then established as a national park in 1982. This status banned resource exploitation (e.g., deforestation, wood collection) by local peoples, which had degraded tiger habitat (Sekhar 2003). Poaching had also been devastating Sariska’s tiger population, eventually leading to extirpation in 2004 (Narain et al. 2005). Human-assisted tiger relocations from Ranthambhore National Park to Sariska began in 2008 and continued through 2013, for a total of nine reintroduced adult tigers (Sankar et al. 2013). The population has now grown to 20 individuals, including cubs (Chauhan 2020). Sariska and Ranthambhore host the only arid zone metapopulations of tigers in the world (Shah et al. 2015), thus, ensuring the sustainability of Sariska’s tiger population is crucial to the species’ conservation.

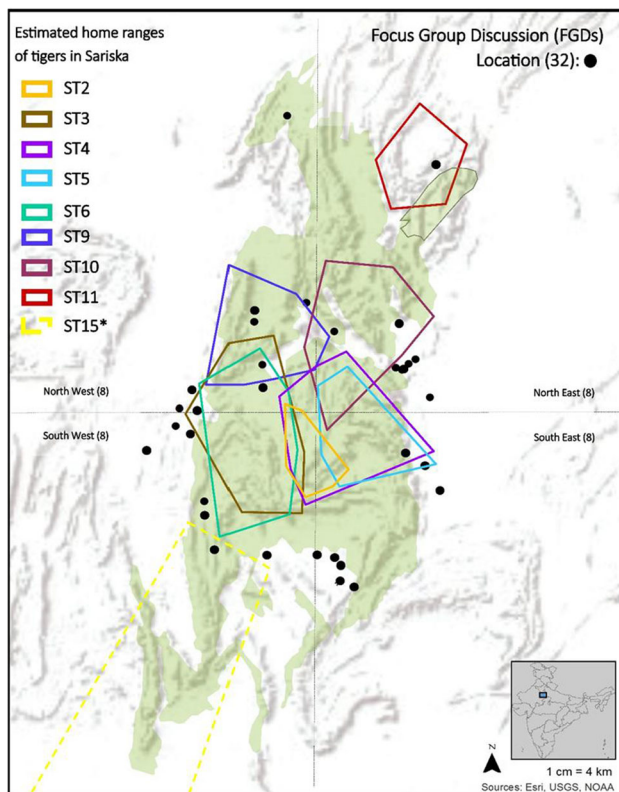
Clearly human presence is crucial in securing the continued existence of tigers in the area and maintaining support from locals is needed to prevent another extirpation event. However, understanding local support requires appreciating the cultural backdrop of the areas in and around Sariska, where increasing human and livestock populations have made locals more dependent on natural resources (e.g., grazing livestock, forest product collection), which has exerted greater pressure on the ecosystem. Despite a range of cultural traits (e.g., languages, religions, and castes) present in the area, most locals are pastoralists who rely on milk production (which requires natural resource extraction) as their primary economic activity and engage in other secondary livelihoods (Sankar et al. 2013). Women in Rajasthan are subject to a heavily patriarchal society where they experience low agency in many contexts (e.g., decision making in the home, comfort with public engagement; Richardson et al. 2019). This dynamic is amplified in natural resource-dependent villages in and around Sariska because, although women’s role and importance in natural resource extraction, land use, and how family members (particularly children) perceive tigers are paramount (Doubleday 2020), they are often excluded from natural resource or wildlife-related discussions (Kodiveri 2015).

### Focus group discussion data collection and analysis

Focus group discussions (FGDs) are ideal for understanding conscious and unconscious psychological and socio-cultural processes among groups; thus, we used this method to capture the gender-specific social dynamics influencing local attitudes to tiger reintroduction (Bryman 2001). We employed a semi-structured approach to FGDs, where broad, predetermined questions were used to guide the conversation, covering participants’ experiences living in/around Sariska and perceptions of tiger conservation,

while allowing participants to introduce personally salient risks and benefits of tiger presence (Bryman 2001) (e.g., “how is living near Sariska?,” “what are the benefits/negatives from the total loss of tigers/reintroduction?,” “how will you feel when 10 tigers [the population at the time] grows?”; Appendix S1). The conclusion of each FGD consisted of prompting participants to voice any lingering thoughts they had not yet shared.

Focus group discussions were conducted as mixed-gender FGDs (MG-FGDs; Fig. 1) and women-only FGDs (WO-FGDs). During the 2014 to 2015 MG-FGD field seasons, it became clear that, while these mixed-gender spheres were crucial for analyzing gender dynamics and social interactions, female participants were primarily dominated by male participants in the discussions and required significant encouragement to participate. Introducing WO-FGDs (2016–2017) allowed a space for female participants to contribute freely and address more sensitive topics. In addition to the previously mentioned topics from MG-FGDs, WO-FGDs included questions regarding their household work and caring for livestock (e.g., “If a buffalo is eaten by a predator, what problems do you face?”), which often prompted conversations on marriage, dowries, and gender-based violence.



**Fig. 1** MG-FGD locations in/around Sariska (green shading). (WO-FGDs are not identified due to confidentiality agreements). \*ST15 was sighted in between these locations in December 2017

We collected data from within a 10-km radius of Sariska, and this study area was divided into four sections to account for the mobility of tigers and how people encountered them differently across the study area (Fig. 1). A total of 256 people participated in 32 MG-FGDs and 160 women participated in 20 WO-FGDs, for a total of 52 FGDs (13/section). Quota and convenience sampling (Bryman 2001) were utilized to fulfill the requirements we set for our FGDs, including reaching gender and age bracket quotas, ensuring that participants were available for at least an hour, and confirming participants’ ability to access FGD locations. FGDs were composed of relatives, neighbors, and friends, representing natural groups who were comfortable conversing (Bryman 2001), yet still allowing for a diverse panel across demographics (e.g., livelihood, religion, and caste). Most FGDs lasted nearly 2 h and members of the FGDs were responsible for deciding the time and place of the meetings (per Bryman 2001).

The research protocol was approved by University of Texas IRB; verbal consent was given by participants; and anonymity was guaranteed. All MG-FGD participants agreed to have the location of the FGD recorded (Fig. 1), although WO-FGD locations are not identified due to stringent confidentiality agreements regarding violations of the law that were discussed (e.g., dowry, violence). Data collection continued until saturation was reached both within and across FGDs (i.e., when there was a high frequency of repeated information and no new information emerged in each FGD and across FGDs; Bryman 2001).

Recordings of FGDs were translated and transcribed by a local, professional transcriber who was fluent in Rajasthan, Hindi, and English. Field notes and transcripts were analyzed using qualitative analysis software Dedoose (2016). Our analysis focused on identifying themes and patterns in how male and female participants perceive tiger presence. Data were coded into major categories (Bryman 2001), namely risks, benefits, and associated cognitions identified by participants, and participants’ attitudes towards reintroduction.

## RESULTS

### Gendered perceptions of risks and fear

Women overwhelmingly identified costs and risks from tiger presence ( $n = 283$ ) compared to men ( $n = 63$ ; Table 1). Physical safety risks, and associated fears, were often mentioned as female participants described their daily activities, which involve walking, collecting fodder and wood, grazing livestock, and squatting to urinate and defecate (a vulnerable position not required as often for men) for up to 5.5 h a day within Sariska. For example, in

**Table 1** Gendered responses (prompted and unprompted) to perceptions of the costs and risks of tigers across all 52 FGDs

	Increased fear	Resource collection risks	Threats to livestock	Total
Men ( <i>n</i> = 202)	24	17	22	63
Women ( <i>n</i> = 214)	103	49	131	283
Total	127	66	153	346

response to “what is your daily routine?,” a participant answered, “Those who have the will go [to the jungle in the morning]. Not all go [because a] tiger attacked in this area.” Yet, women pointed out that completing their daily routines is mandatory, regardless of their fear; one remarked, “What does it matter if we [women] are afraid or not?... We have to go, how else [are we] to manage?” Another added, “We don’t want to go, we’re all scared, but what to do?” This fear was nearly universal, even when no one in the FGD had living relatives who had seen tigers.

Female participants’ roles as household livestock caretakers exacerbate these risks. Not only are livestock easy targets for tigers (theoretically drawing tigers near women), but women indicated that they are emotionally and socially linked to their livestock because their positions in society (i.e., marriages) are dependent on these animals (see Doubleday 2020). WO-FGD participants explained that, as women, they are responsible for milk production, the primary source of income for most families. They highlighted that tiger presence often prevents livestock grazing and fodder collection, which can lead to low milk production. When this occurs, they suffer the consequences through verbal and physical abuse from husbands and in-laws. Furthermore, decreased family incomes from low milk production can also reduce the size of dowries that are offered and/or stifle families’ abilities to pay dowries post-marriage, resulting in abuse of newlywed daughters by her husband or in-laws (Doubleday and Adams 2019). Essentially, threats to livestock safety and milk production by tigers are perceived as threats to women.

The differences in how tiger-related risks are perceived between women and men were frequently illustrated in MG-FGDs, where men often disregarded the risks of tiger encounters, while women attempted to verbalize their fears and have their perceptions acknowledged. For instance, the following exchange is exemplary of a common mixed-gender dynamic:

**Male 1:** No, we don’t have any problems.  
**Translator:** You don’t have problems where tigers roam?

**Female 1:** We’re afraid of them while we work in our fields.  
**Translator:** You feel scared in the fields? And what do you feel [pointing at another male participant]?  
**Male 2 (interrupting):** It’s fine.  
**Female 2:** No, we’re scared tigers will come outside.  
**Translator:** [Men] don’t have to worry?  
**Male 2:** No. Only if we have enjoyed [alcohol] when out [at night].

Such perceptions were common; in contrast to the constant fear of women throughout their daily responsibilities, men typically only expressed fear when are in the mountains or coming home late at night, if at all. For example, men responded that tiger reintroduction is, “no issue,” and “it’s a good thing.” Yet when we encouraged women to respond in MG-FGDs, one admitted that although she had never seen a tiger, she was still scared, “When we go to the field, then we’re afraid. And when we go to collect food for cattle, then. And when we go for grazing our cattle, then we’re afraid. However, I’ve never seen a tiger.”

### Gendered perceptions of benefits of tiger reintroduction: employment opportunities

While women tended to perceive tigers as detrimental to their livelihoods, men associated tiger presence with increased work opportunities (*n* = 30, Table 2). Male participants cited work opportunities stemming from increased tourism in hotels, as guides, and in construction, “It’s good because if tigers stay here then they will increase tourism and that will automatically provide employment to us, and bread to our children.” Conversely, female participants rarely mentioned increased employment opportunities (*n* = 5, Table 2). Furthermore, these scant mentions of employment by women were clear to differentiate that, although tiger presence is responsible for benefits to the community as a whole (in that it creates opportunities for men), it does not directly benefit women.



**Table 2** Gendered responses (prompted and unprompted) to perceptions of the benefits of tigers across all 52 FGDs

	Employment	Forest protection	Crop protection	Property protection	Livestock benefits	Total
Men ( $n = 202$ )	30	62	38	11	18	159
Women ( $n = 214$ )	5	3	2	0	0	10
Total	35	65	40	11	18	169

### Gendered perceptions of benefits of tiger reintroduction: forest protection

Men also viewed tigers as beneficial due to their perceived role as protectors, most frequently citing their importance to the forest in multiple capacities ( $n = 62$ , Table 2). The most direct forest-related benefit, which linked forest health to protecting communities' livelihoods, was tigers' role as deterrents to forest degradation from people extracting natural resources (e.g., cutting trees, removing firewood). One male participant explained that "people cut away at the jungle, [but tiger reintroduction means]...the forest will be protected," because people are too afraid of tigers to collect forest products. Men often framed women and "outsiders" as wrongdoers in these descriptions of resource collection. One male participant remarked, "Without tigers, women came into park at nights to collect firewood," further describing that these women live "far from Sariska." Other territorial language included, "If tigers are not available in the jungle then outsiders will come in and cut the trees and destroy the jungle" and "[When tigers are present] unwanted persons will not go into our [jungle] and the trees will remain protected." Male participants also described Sariska without tigers as "defenseless," noting that natural resources would be severely reduced for families living near or inside Sariska, who have a "right" to the resources.

As an indirect benefit, male participants identified forest preservation, due to tiger presence and political power behind tiger conservation, as valuable. Several male participants explained that without the status of "Tiger Reserve," "all the trees would be smashed by outsiders." They viewed Sariska's forests as "necessary for rain," and "rain is life-giving" for their crops in the dry landscape; thus, they considered tiger presence as beneficial to their farms. In a more abstract context, men also attributed tiger presence to the essence of their environment: "If tigers are not in the jungle, then the fear of jungle will not be there..." For these reasons, the sentiment that forests will "lose" if tigers are not present was widespread among male participants

Women rarely acknowledged these ecological benefits ( $n = 3$ , Table 2), and they specifically isolated these benefits from community benefits, "When there are no human

beings in the jungle, it's good if tigers live there." Another female participant explained:

[Tiger presence is] a benefit for the jungle...[but because of this] we will not go to the jungle for wood cutting. Now, because of this fear, no one will go to the jungle and trees will remain as they are... this is not good for [women] as we have responsibilities.

Female participants understood the benefits of tiger presence to the forest, but this appeared to be outweighed by concern for the safety of themselves, their families, and their livestock, being careful not to conflate benefits to the forest with benefits to their livelihoods.

### Gendered perceptions of benefits of tiger reintroduction: crop protection

Male participants also frequently credited tigers with protecting fields from crop-raiding animals ( $n = 38$ ), such as the large nilgai antelope (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*), whereas this benefit was rarely recognized by female participants ( $n = 2$ , Table 2). One male participant indicated, "If tigers live here, then it makes a good food chain as tigers eat [nilgai] which destroy our fields." Another explained:

It is good that tigers have come...wild animals from the jungle used to come here in the village [and fields] and they used to create harm. Now because of tigers, their entry into the village has been prohibited. It creates a balance, and now wild animals do not come to our fields.

### Gendered perceptions of benefits of tiger reintroduction: property protection

Men lauded tigers for protecting their property (e.g., cattle, crops) from outsider thieves ( $n = 11$ ), as well, although no women identified this benefit (Table 2). For example, a male participant stated, "In the absence of tigers, thieves come and hide in the bushes and steal our cattle," and another added, "The benefit of the tigers is that no one can trespass through our territory and come to our village, any unknown person. Even the [cattle] thieves are afraid of

coming here.” Another male participant placed this benefit into context:

In winter, we leave our children in the field to watch [for crop raiders], and then [tiger presence] is not in our favor. [However, at the same time] if tigers are there, then it's very good for us as our fields are secured by them because no one dares to enter if tigers are present.

### Gendered perceptions of benefits of tiger reintroduction: benefits to livestock

Men's perceptions of tigers as useful to livestock extend beyond property protection to include animal husbandry benefits ( $n = 18$ ), although these benefits were not identified by women (Table 2). Male participants noted tigers' role in disease prevention and reduction. For example, one participant stated, “When any disease occurs in our animals and tigers kill and eat that particular animal, then the disease is wiped out and we get rid of the disease,” and another mentioned, “[Tigers] also prevent diseases from entering in other animals' bodies. When our cattle go to the jungle, the tigers keep the diseases at bay.”

Male participants also attributed tiger predation to increased herd fertility. For instance, one participant explained that tiger predation is expected and natural, “[My] only fear from them is that they kill our cattle, but it's all a natural process of God.” He added that the long-term benefit of predation is that, “If one dies, two new take birth.... Tigers kill only those whose time is over according to God.” This explanation of two new animals taking the place of one that was predated was a common response. However, men also reported lavish fertility after tiger predation: “If one tiger hunts down a buffalo, then the buffaloes' population increases by 20 more buffaloes... Yes, over time.”

### Gendered attitudes towards tiger reintroduction

Consistently, male and female participants expressed opposing views specifically regarding the reintroduction of tigers to Sariska. Men highlighted that “tigers mean a lot of benefits” and they expressed support for increasing tiger populations, “the more they multiply, the more they will benefit us.” In contrast, women only occasionally acknowledged these benefits. More often, female participants voiced their desire for tiger removal because the potential safety risks overshadowed any benefits, “Because of these tigers, life is difficult” and “[Tiger presence] will cause loss, not benefit.” When discussing how women could adapt their duties to accommodate tiger presence in Sariska, one female participant asked, “We can't change our work, our patterns. What will we do?”

Corroborating our qualitative findings, when comparing sums of participants' positive and negative statements towards tigers in Sariska, it was found that there was a statistical difference between men's and women's attitudes,  $\chi^2(1, N = 515) = 266.53, p < 0.001$ , suggesting that men generally have positive attitudes towards tiger reintroduction and women have negative attitudes towards tiger reintroduction.

## DISCUSSION

Overall, our results demonstrate clear delineations between how women perceive tiger presence and reintroduction versus men. We found that while women were predominantly fearful due to perceived physical safety threats and the hidden costs of livestock-related familial conflict (e.g., potential abuse, dowry concerns) (Ogra 2008; Harvey et al. 2017; Doubleday 2020), men frequently highlighted the benefits of tiger presence. These disparate attitudes are consistent with previous research that examined gendered differences in perceptions towards predators across the globe. For example, female respondents living nearby four wildlife reserves in Rajasthan, India, were less likely to value wildlife and wildlife reserves than men (Karanth et al. 2019). Similarly, male gender was a significant predictor of higher tolerance towards jaguars (*Panthera onca*) and other wild cats in Belize (Harvey et al. 2017). In addition, analyses reveal that attitudes towards tigers in Nepal (Carter et al. 2014; Carter and Allendorf 2016) and Cambodia (Gray et al. 2017) are gendered, as well, where women are less likely to have a positive attitude towards tigers. In fact, in Nepal, two thirds of the gender gap in attitudes can be explained by beliefs about the benefits and costs of tigers (Carter and Allendorf 2016). This evidence suggests that, particularly in rural communities, women and men may be impacted differently by wildlife and conservation measures (Ogra 2008).

Our FGDs indicate that the gendered division of labor and responsibilities related to natural resources in villages in and around Sariska appears to strongly influence these different impacts of, and subsequent attitudes towards, tiger presence. These findings align with previous research that shows rural landscapes that experience HWC are also prone to the gendered divisions of labor, which exacerbate effects of HWC for women. Typical gendered labor roles in developing countries designate women as gatherers of natural resources (e.g., Ogra 2008; Harvey et al. 2017), as is true for our participants. This can disproportionately expose women to risks from wildlife (e.g., physical safety, insect-borne diseases, per Ogra 2008), as they spend considerable time in wildlife habitat (Ogra 2008; Harvey et al. 2017). Accordingly, women are also notable, but often

ignored, stakeholders in other wildlife issues, such as bushmeat consumption and wildlife trade, where they are involved in key roles (e.g., offenders, defenders, influencers, observers; Agu and Gore 2020).

The ecosystem service and financial benefits of tigers appear to be more salient to men based on their labor roles, explaining their focus on the benefits of tiger reintroduction. Men in the Sariska landscape believe that tigers provide protection and disease control benefits, some of which (e.g., protected crops) are documented indirect benefits of carnivore conservation to local communities (Thinley et al. 2018). In addition, men frequently noted the economic benefits from increased employment opportunities. This financial impact has also been lauded by the Indian government and Forest Department, and studies around other tiger reserves show significant economic contribution to local economies (Chundawat et al. 2017).

Of the benefits men recognized, a few women did acknowledge employment benefits from tiger presence in Sariska. Although they generally perceived these benefits as community benefits rather than benefits to women, this is an opportunity that can be seized to demonstrate how women can benefit from tiger presence. Communications can reframe this perception by highlighting how community benefits can lead to greater economic security and opportunity for women. Research has shown that communicating the benefits of species can increase tolerance and support for conservation (Slagle et al. 2013; Bruskotter and Wilson 2014; Glikman et al. 2019), and that positive messaging resonates strongly with women (Allendorf et al. 2017). As such, messaging emphasizing these economic benefits of tiger presence to women can be an effective strategy moving forward, and empirical research documenting and quantifying these benefits will continue to be helpful in crafting evidence-based messaging (e.g., Thinley et al. 2018).

Developing communications that reach rural women from historically disadvantaged populations in Rajasthan can be challenging (Gupta et al. 2017), but studies have shown that leveraging information and communication technology can result in the successful delivery of content to rural women (Gupta et al. 2017; Malhotra et al. 2018). As such, we suggest messaging that is delivered by community radio and mobile phone-based applications. In particular, youth are more likely to consume audio-visual and text content that is mobile based, even among indigenous communities (Malhotra et al. 2018); thus, we recommend social marketing campaigns directed at young women that focus on the economic security and opportunity generated by tiger presence in Sariska. Accordingly, efforts must be made to ensure that tiger presence indeed directly benefits women. This can include women-focused programs that diversify opportunities available to women.

Initial small steps could include access to and participation in out-of-home events like community meetings, eventually leading to opportunities that include women in decision making related to natural resource use, which may be beneficial to shifting their perceptions of tiger reintroduction (Carter and Allendorf 2016).

With local extinction a constant threat to carnivore species, in particular, reintroductions are a conservation tool increasingly used to strengthen long-term species survival in the wild (Gray et al. 2020). In addition to ecological assessments, part of maximizing the likelihood of reintroduction success is the inclusion of social acceptance and perceived risk measures (Gray et al. 2017). However, these social components are not always included in reintroduction assessments (e.g., Gray et al. 2020), sometimes resulting in poor reintroduction outcomes (e.g., Marx et al. 2020). In addition to negative conservation outcomes, when conservation authorities push for carnivore reintroductions despite sociocultural opposition, active political resistance by local stakeholders (Gray et al. 2017) and social inequalities (Jordan et al. 2020) can occur. In the case of Sariska, we see such inequalities along gendered lines—a problematic result of a conservation intervention that undermines the goals of just conservation (Greiner 2012; Martin et al. 2016). By shedding light on these inequalities, our research underscores the importance of documenting and understanding gendered perceptions of carnivores to work to improve community support.

## Limitations

Although our findings help extend the literature by providing insights into the gendered perceptions of costs and benefits associated with tiger presence, we recognize several limitations of the study. For example, we did not conduct men-only FGDs as a complement to WO-FGDs. Based on our experience conducting the FGDs, this did not seem to limit the perspectives shared by male participants, although it is possible. We also recognize the potential for bias inherent in the qualitative data collection and analysis processes. To attempt to mitigate bias, FGD questions were pretested with experts to ensure validity and findings were compared as intercoder reliability checks (Bryman 2001).

## CONCLUSION

This research revealed the gendered perceptions of the costs and benefits of tiger presence to villagers living in and around Sariska Tiger Reserve. Women's perceived and actual risks undermine support for tiger presence, whereas men laud employment, protection, and livestock husbandry benefits associated with tiger presence, leading to disparate

views about tiger reintroduction. Given these contrasting perceptions, obtaining robust community support for tiger conservation faces significant challenges. We suggest women-targeted communication campaigns focused on the benefits (e.g., economic security) of tiger conservation, as well as longer term efforts to empower women through programs that provide diverse opportunities to women and encourage their participation in natural resource conservation decision making. Conservation policies that include women are likely to be more effective and more just for all of Sariska's inhabitants.

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## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

**Kalli F. Doubleday** (✉) is a Research Fellow in the Department of Geography and the Environment at the University of Texas, Austin. Her research focuses on the human dimensions of carnivore conservation with a focus on hidden and gendered costs to human–wildlife conflict.

*Address:* Department of Geography and the Environment, University of Texas at Austin, 305 E 23rd St, Austin, TX 78712, USA.  
e-mail: kdoubleday@utexas.edu

**Elena C. Rubino** is an Assistant Professor of Conservation Social Science at the University of Arkansas at Monticello. She aims to improve wildlife conservation outcomes through applied human dimensions of wildlife research.

*Address:* College of Forestry, Agriculture, and Natural Resources, the University of Arkansas at Monticello, Forestry Building, B213, 110 University Court, Monticello, AR 71655, USA.  
e-mail: rubino@uamont.edu