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STRENGTH IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY: RESILIENCE AMONG MEXICAN NATIONALS AND MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS TO THE UNITED STATES

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ABSTRACT
This qualitative study explores resilience in Mexican Nationals and Mexican Immigrants. Eight Mexican Nationals and six Mexican Immigrants participated in one to three hour semi-structured interviews that asked about their perceptions of stressors, motivation and success in life. Participant responses were analyzed thematically for resilience using Thematic Analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). Contrastive Analysis of themes indicated that resilience can differ based on cultural circumstances (i.e., Mexican National/Mexican Immigrant) given that barriers and therefore potential gains differ by population. In further results, resilience was highlighted as the result of a process, or combination and interaction of experiences as opposed to being due to any specific trait. Specific emergent themes for facilitating resilience included Environmental Resources, Positive Attitudes, and Response Frameworks. Limitations, suggestions for future research, and implications for psychologists are discussed.

Keywords
resilience, immigrant, qualitative, adversity

RESUMEN
Esta investigación cualitativa explora resiliencia en los nacionales de México y los inmigrantes de México a EE.UU. Ocho Nacionales Mexicana/os y seis inmigrantes Mexicana/os a los EE.UU. participaron en un entrevista semiestructurada que duro uno a tres horas que pregunte sobre sus percepciones de estresores, motivación y éxito en la vida. Las respuestas de los participantes se analizaron temáticamente para la resiliencia utilizando el Análisis Temático (Boyatzis, 1998). El análisis contrastivo de los temas indicó que la resiliencia puede cambiar depende a las circunstancias culturales (es decir, inmigrante mexicano / nacional mexicano) dado que las barreras y por lo tanto las ganancias potenciales difieren según la población. En otros resultados, la resiliencia se destacó como el resultado de un proceso, o combinación e interacción de experiencias en lugar de ser debido a cualquier rasgo específico. Temas emergentes específicos para facilitar la resiliencia incluyeron Recursos Ambientales, Actitudes Positivas y Marcos de Respuesta. Se discuten las limitaciones, las sugerencias para la investigación futura, y las implicaciones para los psicólogos.

Palabras clave
resiliencia, inmigrante, cualitativo, adversidad

FUERZA EN LA CARA DE LA ADVERSIDAD: RESILIENCIA ENTRE LOS NACIONALES MEXICANA/OS Y LOS INMIGRANTES MEXICANA/OS EN LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS

Latin American immigration has been without precedent in U.S. history, rising steadily between

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the years 2006 and 2014. Mexican Americans are currently the third largest group of immigrants to the U.S.A. overall, behind China and India respectively (Zong & Batalova, 2016).

The Latino/a population faces many adversities, and the Latino/a immigrant population even more so. Hardships faced by these individuals are often associated with immigration, discrimination, and language barriers (Parra-Cardona, Bulock, Imig, Villaruel, & Gold, 2006). These types of difficulties have been shown to have negative effects on health (McEwen, 2002), and Latino/a children in particular have been shown to suffer detrimental effects, perhaps more than children in other minority groups (Arcia, Keyes, & Gallagher, 1994). At the same time, the Latino/a population exhibits many "protective" resources that lead to resilience (Massinga & Pecora, 2004; Morgan, 2006; Gonzales, 2006). Psychologists need to better understand the strengths and resources of this growing segment of our population, and also to better understand how psychological phenomena such as the experiencing of resilience may differ across people of different cultures.

Resilience has been defined as the ability for normal development despite obvious social and environmental adversities (Garmezy, 1993; Rutter, 1987). The concept of "normal" developmental achievement can be defined as outwardly evidenced competence or age-appropriate stage development (Luthar & Zigler, 1991). Specifically, the usual developmental tasks of adulthood often include: creation of intimate relationships, generativity, becoming a parent, and obtaining a career (Jaffe & Diamond, 2011). Adverse social and environmental barriers involve risk or exposure to difficulties that can interfere with development (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000).

Studies on Latino/a resilience focused on Mexican and Mexican-American populations have highlighted the importance of environmental or extrinsic variables to resilience. Specifically, sense of community and community relationships, parental attachment and parenting styles (i.e., levels of parental control and encouragement), as well as family support in general (i.e., *familismo*) have been shown to facilitate resilience (Morgan Consoli & Llamas,, 2013; Carranza, 2007; Clauss & Wibrowski, 2007). Similarly, religious values (*religiosidad*), community and generalized social support have been found to function as protective external factors (Rivera-Ledesma & Montero, 2005). Personal qualities such as adaptability, ambition, self-esteem, self-efficacy, well-being, a sense of competence, integrity, sense of identity, and perseverance also contribute to resilience (Morgan Consoli & Llamas, 2013; Massinga & Pecora, 2004). Other sources are instrumental and may include access to monetary resources as well as the use of interpersonal relationships and environmental resources to solve problems (Flores, Ciccheti, & Rogosch, 2005).

Among the under-examined aspects of resilience are specific cultural as well as individual and contextual factors that influence its manifestation. Culture has been found to be a pervasive and influential element of life, and cultural values, in general, have been posited as possible protective factors when facing adversities (Kasser, 2011). However, little is known about how immigrants and individuals from non-U.S. cultures, who may have differing values, experience and define resilience; particularly when those individuals originate from the same country. Exploring resilience in individuals from each of these groups allows for general themes to emerge regarding potential differences and similarities in resilience in individuals originating form the same culture but having different subsequent life experiences, in this case, an immigrant experience. Exploration of this contrasted experience is needed in order to address the needs of the growing immigrant population within the U.S., as well as to inform general cultural competence among psychologists.

Utilization of methods that allow for an in-depth contextual exploration of resilience is needed and qualitative research has been highlighted by multiple authors as an effective method to help explicate and explore less-defined areas of multicultural study such as this one (Morrow & Smith, 2000). In addition, qualitative research is considered ideal by some for cross-cultural investigations because it allows the researcher to attend to the significance of contextual factors as well as the influence of the researcher presence on the study (Morrow & Smith, 2000; Silverstein & Auerbach, 2009). Furthermore, qualitative research has been discussed as an appropriate way to investigate issues with individuals who may be fearful due to documentation issues (Ojeda, Flores, Meza, & Morales, 2011). Contrastive analysis is a method that allows for triangulation of data from different perspectives and cultural bases by

comparing them to better inform the overall understanding of a construct or phenomenon. It has been used in communication studies (Maxwell- Reid, 2011; Wang, 2013) and is based on the ideas of sociologist William Corsaro (1981/1985). It has also been employed in ethnography as epistemology used in education and anthropology (Green, Skukauskaite, & Castanheira, 2012).

This qualitative study explored resilience in individuals of two different cultural contexts through exploration of perspectives from both immigrant and non-immigrant individuals; specifically among Mexicans living in Mexico (i.e., Mexican Nationals) and among Mexican immigrants living in the U.S (i.e., Mexican Immigrants). Given that culture informs perceptions, values and actions of individuals within its purview, resilience may appear different in individuals living in different contexts. This exploratory analysis was undertaken to provide a starting point for how resilience may look different or similar in individuals who have the same country of origin, but have either remained in their native country or immigrated. Research questions in this study focused on the perceptions of barriers and gains related to resilience among individuals from both groups, with the goal of more fully understanding the phenomenon and process of resilience, or how individuals successfully face adversities.

Methods

A qualitative, multimethod, research approach utilizing semi-structured interviews and researcher observation was used in the study (Morse, 2003). Data was analyzed using Boyatzis' Thematic Analysis (1998), a qualitative methodology based in grounded theory in which the researcher identifies, analyzes, and reports patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clark, 2006). More specifically, Contrastive Analysis (Corsaro, 1981/1985) allowed the researchers to explore both overlapping and differing themes in an attempt to triangulate descriptive experiences of resilience across two cultural contexts (Green, Castanheira, Skukauskaite, & Hammond, 2015). Just as ethnographers seek to explore a "particular set of actors" in a "particular point in time" in a "particular set of circumstances" to illuminate a social phenomenon (Mitchell, 1984, p. 239), we attempted to uncover multiple perspectives from different individuals on resilience. The overall focus of the endeavor was inductive and the inferences gathered at each stage of the program informed the research questions, data collection, and data analysis of subsequent stages, as prescribed in qualitative research (Patton, 1990). This study was approved by the university Institutional Review Board.

Researchers

Because the researchers were the main information-gathering tool in this project, it is important for background and biases to be stated and acknowledged (Heppner, Kivlighan & Wampold, 1999). Both were trained in a social justice oriented counseling psychology doctoral program. The lead researcher identifies as an ethnically mixed (Mexican, European) female and has experienced immigration from Mexico as a part of her family history. The co-researcher identifies as an ethnically mixed (Mexican and Irish) male and also has family who immigrated from Mexico. The researchers were both interested in studying resilience in the Mexican and Mexican American populations given their own family histories and backgrounds.

Participants

Participants were selected according to a purposive strategy to help ensure that typical cases, which highlight what is normal or average for the communities, were chosen (Morrow & Smith, 2000). Participants were recruited with the help of community contacts and gatekeepers (i.e., individuals respected in their communities and holding positions of leadership, such as teachers, priests, and community leaders). Purposive criteria for participation in the study included individuals at least 18 years of age who did not have any severe psychological disorders that the community contact was aware of, and that evidenced successfully meeting developmental gains of adulthood that were expected within their communities (Jaffe & Diamond, 2011). Criteria were developed by the researchers with the help of the

community contacts, who, for example, could help to define what was seen as typical development in their communities.

Eight Mexican National participants were interviewed. See Table 1 for a summary of the Mexican National participants including general demographic information, education and employment background, description of the make-up of their family, and location of residence. Six Mexican Immigrant participants were interviewed. See Table 2 for a summary of the Mexican Immigrant participants including general demographic information, education and employment background, description of the make-up of their family, reason for immigration to the U.S., length of time in the U.S. and immigration status.

Table 1

Participant Descriptions: Mexican Nationals	
Pseudonym Age Gender	Education Employment/background Description of family Location
Celia Early 30s Female	• Female, early 30s • High school, training as a teacher • Spanish teacher in a language school catering to non-native Spanish speakers • Single, lives with and cares for her father, mother is deceased • Urban area, Southern Mexico
Thomas Late 20s Male	• Bachelor's degree • Psychologist • Single and lives alone • Urban Area, Southern Mexico
Tina Mid 30s Female	• Junior High School • Homemaker • Married, one adolescent son, husband living in the U.S. • Rural area, Northern Mexico
Lucy Late 30s Female	• Primary school • Homemaker • Married, three adolescent children, husband living in the U.S. • Rural area, Northern Mexico
Anna Late 20s Female	• High school • Receptionist and housewife • Married, two young children • Suburban area, Southern Mexico
Elena Mid 20s Female	• Some college • Owner and manager of a Spanish language school catering to non-native speakers • Single, lives with parents • Suburban area, Southern Mexico
Irene Late 40s Female	• High school, training as a teacher • Spanish teacher in a language school catering to non-native Spanish speakers • Married, two adult children • Suburban area, Southern Mexico
Hector Late 50s	• High school, training in business

Male	• Businessman • Married, two adult children • Suburban area, Southern Mexico

Table 2

Participant Descriptions: Mexican Immigrants		
Pseudonym Age Gender	Education Employment/background Description of family	Reason for immigration Length of time in U.S. Immigration status
Daniel* Early 20s Male	• Seminary high school in Mexico, currently in a U.S. seminary program • Unemployed student, lived a middle class background in Mexico • Married parents and four siblings, two brothers currently living in the U.S.	• To pursue higher education, unsure if intending to return to Mexico • 2 years, from Guerreo • Documented
Alice* Early 20s Female	• High school in Mexico, college degree from the U.S. • Unemployed recent college graduate, supported by parents • Married parents, two older siblings	• To pursue higher education, plans to stay in US • Born in the U.S., moved to Mexico at age 2 and returned to the U.S. 7 years ago • US Citizen (born in US)
Andres Early 20s Male	• High school and one year of college in Mexico, currently in a U.S. seminary program • Unemployed student, family in Mexico owns land and has some financial resources • Several older brothers in the U.S. who act as parental figures, rest of family in Mexico	• "To experience life," unsure if intending to return to Mexico • 3.5 years, from Michoacan • Documented
Pablo Early 20s Male	• Currently in a U.S. seminary program, English classes • Unemployed student, grew-up in a small rural town • No family in the U.S., all remain in Mexico	• To pursue higher education, unsure if intending to return to Mexico • 4 years, from Jalisco • Documented
Geraldo Late 20s Male	• Primary school in Mexico • Employed in a restaurant as a cook, grew-up in a small rural town with few resources • Parents and siblings in Mexico, lives with male partner of five years, many extended family members live in his neighborhood	• To earn money to send to his family, initially intended to return to Mexico, but currently plans to stay in the U.S. • 8 years, from Chihuahua • Undocumented

Sandra* Mid 30s Female	• 4th grade equivalent in Mexico • Employed in a restaurant as a waitress, grew-up in a small rural town with few resources • Married with three sons (ages 7, 16,18), brother and sister living in the U.S., husband's family living in Mexico	• To gain employment, to escape an abusive relationship, and to be with family, intends to move back to Mexico at retirement • 17 years, from Guerrero • Undocumented

*Interview conducted in English

Procedures

Interview Protocol. Interview Protocol. The interview protocol used in this study was designed by the researchers for the purposes of this study and questions were created subsequent to a thorough review of the relevant literature. The interviews were semi-structured and consisted of four main areas of questioning (a) daily living and adult development, (b) difficulties that the individual and their peers face in daily life, (c) ways that people are able to succeed despite those difficulties, and (d) descriptions of critical incidents where participants were able to overcome adversity. These areas were explored through eleven open-ended questions asking about daily life, difficulties faced, and ways of overcoming these difficulties. These were followed by unstructured prompts and clarification questions as needed. Interviews took between one and three hours for participants to complete. Most interviews were conducted in Spanish. Three Mexican Immigrants expressed a preference for conducting the interview in English (see Table 3).

The interview questions were translated into Spanish and piloted on two Spanish speakers to assure that they had (a) vocabulary equivalence (b) idiomatic equivalence (no non-translatable idioms were used) (c) grammatical-syntactical equivalence, (d) experiential equivalence (must refer to things that are real in that culture) and (e) conceptual equivalence (Sechrest, Fay, & Zaidi, 1972). Discrepancies noted through this process resulted in re-phrasing of the questions during the semi-structured interview (Sue & Parham, 2002).

Table 3

Semi-Structured Interview Questions English/*Spanish*
What is daily life (in general) like for people in your community? *¿Por lo general, describa la vida diaria de la gente en su comunidad?* Prompt/clarification What types of jobs do people in your community have? *¿Qué tipos de trabajas tienen las personas en su comunidad?* How do people in your community form good relationships with one another? *¿Cómo forman relaciones buenas las personas en su comunidad?* What are some dreams and goals that people in your community have? *¿Qué son algunos sueños o metas que tengan las personas en su comunidad?*
How about *your* daily life? ¿Y de *su vida* diaria, como la pasa? Prompt/clarification Do you have a job? What kind?

¿Tiene trabaja? ¿Qué tipo? What do you do during the day? Do you have a regular schedule or responsibilities that you do every day? *¿Qué hace Ud. durante el día? ¿Tiene horario regular o responsabilidades que haga cada día?* What types of relationships do you have? How do you form good relationships? *¿Cómo forma Ud. relaciones buenas? ¿Qué tipos de relaciones buenas tiene?* What are some dreams or goals that you have? *¿Qué son algunos sueños o metas que tenga Ud.?*
What are some of the stressors that people in your community are currently facing? *¿Qué son algunas cosas que causan el estrés en su comunidad?*
Do you feel that you are currently facing similar stressors? Please describe. *¿Piensa que Ud. tiene las mismas cosas que le causan el estrés en su vida? Descríbalas por favor.*
What would you say "keeps people going" in your community? *¿En su opinión, como persiste la gente en su comunidad?* <u>Prompt/clarification</u> How do people in your community know that they have been successful? *¿Cómo saben las personas en su comunidad que hayan tenido éxito?* Some people are able to find success, while others are not. In your opinion, why? *Algúnas personas pueden encontrar el éxito y otras no puedan. Es su opinión, ¿por qué?*
What keeps you going? *¿Y Ud., como persiste?* <u>Prompt/clarification</u> How do people you know define success? *¿Cómo sabe Ud. que haya tenido éxito?* How do you know that you have been successful? *¿Cómo define Ud. el éxito?*
Do you believe most people from your community feel motivated to succeed or reach goals? If so, where do they find this motivation? *¿Cree que la mayoría de la gente en su comunidad está motivada a tener éxito o lograr a sus metas? ¿Como encuentran esa motivación?*
How about yourself? How do you reach your goals or find success? *¿Y Ud., como cumple a sus metas y como le pasan sus éxitos?*
How does the average (Mexican, Mexican Immigrant) find the strength to survive? *¿En su opinión como un persona (del mexicano, o el inmigrante mexicano), encuentra suficiente fuerza para sobrevivir?*

Please describe some experiences where you feel you have found the strength to survive or successfully coped with a problem. *Por favor, describa algunas experiencias donde tenía suficiente fuerza para sobrevivir o donde había tenido éxito con unas problemas difíciles.*
Is there anything else you feel we should know? *¿Hay algo más que Ud. cree que debemos saber?*

Interview Procedures. Six Mexican National participants were recruited from a medium-sized city in Southern Mexico. The contact was a community leader who led an adult education center. Two more participants were recruited from a *rancho* in a small rural community in Northern Mexico (with an approximate population of 400). The contact was a 65-year-old woman whose family has resided on the *rancho* for several generations and who had lived there her entire life. She was well respected in the community and knowledgeable about most of its residents. Solicitation of participants was by word of mouth through the contact and interested individuals were referred to the researchers. Mexican National participants faced adversities and developmental barriers that included a lack of employment opportunities, difficult national economic situation, business problems, and personal financial problems.

The six Mexican Immigrant participants were recruited by word of mouth referrals from the contacts made during interviews with the Mexican Nationals, as well as through a community contact in the Midwestern U.S. city where interviews took place. Participants included friends and relatives of the Mexican National participants who had recently immigrated to the U.S., as well as individuals solicited through a Catholic parish in a predominantly Mexican immigrant neighborhood. A local priest involved with the community also referred potential participants. Mexican Immigrant participants faced adversities and developmental barriers that included employment difficulties, missing family back in Mexico, financial difficulties, and difficult work schedules. Mexican Immigrant participants were recruited until saturation of data was reached (i.e., additional collection no longer added to understanding of the concept of study; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Interviews were conducted in a location within the participants' communities that was convenient for them to access, and that allowed for audio-recording (with consent of participants). An interpreter was used when interviews took place in Spanish in order to capture language and dialect subtleties. Before the interviews, confidentiality was explained to the participants, they were asked to sign an informed consent, and told that they could withdraw consent at any time.

Researchers discussed the role and responsibilities with the two interpreters. Interpreters were asked to sign a contract, which stated that information heard in the interviews should remain confidential. The researchers had previous clinical experience working with interpreters, as recommended in the literature (Lopez, 2000). Interviews lasted one to three hours and all participants agreed to audio-recording. The interviews were transcribed by one of three bilingual (Spanish/English) transcribers into English or Spanish, depending on the language of the interview. If there was uncertainty on the part of a translator, a second translator was consulted. When the translators reached consensus, this meaning was used (McGorry, 2000). Translators signed contracts outlining their responsibilities and agreeing to maintain confidentiality.

Observation Procedures. In an attempt to bring multiple strands of information together to inform the construct of resilience and provide context for interpretation, general observations of the surrounding environment and culture of the participants were made and recorded by the researchers. The researchers' reflections on and participation in the environment while conducting interviews in the communities of the participants added a rich data source to supplement the information gathered from the actual interviews (Heppner, Kivlighan, & Wampold, 1999). Observations were made in both Mexican National and Mexican Immigrant contexts. These were public environments where people were

interacting in a natural setting and included the work, community and social environments of the participants. Observations in these areas were then used to help determine cases of resilience by giving a context to situations described by participants.

Data Analysis

Transcripts of the interviews as well as the researchers' observations were examined for themes related to resilience (i.e., an experience where a normal developmental gain was achieved despite an environmental or social barrier) according to procedures of Thematic Analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). The use of both participant interview data and researcher provided a multimethod approach to triangulating the data as a way to describe themes of resilience. The researchers first separately identified experiences in the data that were descriptive of resilience (i.e. an identifiable gain that was achieved despite some sort of barrier). After reviewing the data separately, the researchers then came back together to discuss each case of resilience that was identified and to come to agreement on its categorization. Once the data was initially reviewed, the types of resilience displayed were classified into categories and subcategories by the researchers. When a case was determined to exemplify resilience but did not fit into previously determined categories or subcategories, the categories were changed until all identified cases of resilience were accommodated. The final result included a coding scheme broad enough to encompass all cases from both groups studied.

The coding scheme was audited by an external auditor familiar with the constructs and study, but who had not participated in the data collection or analysis. This auditor was an expert in multicultural issues and work with Latino/a populations. The auditing process involved checking that raw data was represented by the coding scheme in an understandable and logical way. Auditor suggestions were discussed by the researchers and incorporated into the coding scheme as necessary.

Results

There were 148 descriptive cases of resilience in the Mexican National data (eight interviewees plus observations), and 72 cases in the Mexican Immigrant data (six interviewees plus observations) that were identified as meeting criteria for resilient experiences. Three main categories were identified and are described below.

Positive Attitudes

Defined as *internal perspectives that cause circumstances to be viewed in a favorable manner*, Positive Attitudes had three subcategories: (a) Hope (belief that there is a means and an ability for future expectations to be met, e.g., if one works hard and saves money their children will be able to have a better life), (b) Faith (belief that a higher power will help in some way, e.g., using prayer to heal a sick friend), and (c) Optimism (general dispositional attitude that things in life work out well, whether in the face of adversity or not, e.g., believing that occurrences in life will work out for the best). Most of the participants and some sources of researcher observation mentioned Hope. These descriptions ranged from hope about one's physical safety to general hope for a better future. One Mexican National participant, Hector (all participants' names are pseudonyms), discussed hope for a better government when he briefly stated, "Yes, that it how it goes, maybe whoever comes next will be better. That should not be but it is. Like, you have the hope that the next government will be good." Faith was also exemplified by the words of Hector, "I have faith in God to get me through rough times…"

A Mexican Immigrant participant exemplified Optimism by viewing crossing the border through the desert as "fun:"

> I was telling you about a dream, a success that I think I had, so for me it is …to understand the reality that immigrants that cross the border to the United States face and work here and understand the reality that they face in Mexico, in my country that lives with a minimum salary in Mexico. I also think that this is a success. Because it will help me to understand better the people when they come to the confessionary or when they come to speak with me, priesthood. …my

> experience while crossing the border, why not? …Because I am a adventurous person, when I came with the person he said that it was walking, morning and evening the first day and we were not there… is crossing from the desert of Sonora toward Phoenix, Arizona with the heat and everything. We never imagined we would cross from that area. But I am young, there was food, there was water, I took it like a camping.

Response Frameworks

This method of resilience was defined as *internal processes used in reacting to environmental experiences* and four subcategories were identified within it: (a) Perseverance (a reaction that causes a mental conviction to "keep going," e.g., stating that personal needs are unimportant in making daily sacrifices toward a goal), (b) Integrity, (relying on a personal set of values to respond to life circumstances, e.g., standing up for one's beliefs and or rights because of a sense of self-respect), (c) Ambition (motivation to use positive attitude and hard work to achieve, e.g., opening up a business and working hard at all of the tasks involved because it has been a long-standing dream), and (d) Adaptability (a change in the individual to accommodate changes in the environment, e.g., taking on a care-taker role in the family after the death of a mother).

For the Mexican National participants, many instances of resilience involving Response Frameworks were identified. Of these, most of the participants as well as a few sources of researcher observation discussed examples which involved Perseverance such as continuing to work hard for the sake of ones' children, persisting despite societal role limitations, or continuing in the face of a specific difficult situation. One Mexican National, Celia, discussed how people persevere despite difficult schedules to provide for their families:

> People get up at about 6:00 a.m. and sometimes people take the bus at 7:00 a.m. to come to the city, by bus to come here to work. The field people normally come at 4:00 or 5:00 a.m. to work in the fields. In reality people that are dedicated to work here arrive to their homes at 4:00 or 5:00 p.m. And the field people arrive home at 6:00 or 7:00 p.m....To survive, for the money. In reality pay here is poorly paid. So than, there is work, and work in order to live. To make a bit of money for the family.

Several Mexican Nationals discussed resilience through Integrity. These descriptions reflected various topics depending on what was valued by the individual. Themes ranged from being independent in ones' functioning to keeping one's work area clean. Researcher observation described the second as follows:

> There was an older woman, looked like she was in her 70s, selling woven materials, most baskets, off the big plaza. We decided to take a break and have some *raspadas*. We sat next to her. She did not have much business. She was bending over the bench and had a straw in her hand. She was moving something with it. I asked her if she needed help. She told me that she was just cleaning up the trash. She said that there were men who came by to clean up the sidewalk, but that they did not pick garbage out of the bushes. She was moving the wrappers and plastic and paper out of the grass and dirt so that it would be taken away. She told me that this was the bench that she always sat in and that she wanted to keep the place clean for when she returned the next day.

Two Mexican National participants described resilience through Ambition. One discussed fostering specific values in young people through work, and the other referred to continuing to work hard to achieve material goods. Tina exemplified the latter:

> What is different? Well they work very hard in order to have what they have, and they made an effort to save, and later they have everything they wanted. In contrast to those that want everything fast…they probably have faith that if they continue working and if they continue making an effort later, they will get what they want.

Several participants in both the Mexican National and Mexican Immigrant groups discussed Adaptability. Many types of adaptation were reflected, including adapting to new familial customs and life circumstances. Participants described Adaptation ranging from huge changes in ones life to minor inconveniences. Such reports were corroborated by three sources of researcher observation. The following researcher's description of a conversation with Anna reflected such adaptation by her townspeople:

> Anna also told us about a group of American hippies who had emigrated to (her small town) several decades ago, because of the mystical properties associated with the pyramid that was there. They had enacted several community type programs to better the town. They started a recycling program and also started awareness about how to care for pets. She said that as a result, the streets were cleaner and that there were less stray dogs roaming around the city and people eventually liked this.

For Mexican Immigrants, the category of Response Frameworks contained several descriptions of Integrity, or the ability to succeed by relying on a personal set of values that help guide action. One example of this subcategory of resilience is Sandra's description about how she rejected the advances of a *coyote* (a person who helps immigrants enter the U.S. illegally for a fee) while crossing the border into the U.S.

> Sandra: *El coyote trato tambien* (the coyote tried also) and I say, you know, "Hey, I'm gonna pay. Why are you like… I mean, like what do you want?" (laughs nervously). And he tried, to like "Hey, stay with me here in California." "Stay with me and my sisters." And of course they tried to take … aa…
>
> Interviewer: Advantage?
>
> Sandra: Exactly. And I'm not stupid, you know. Come on, I was like 17 years old, so I don't think that I was.

All cases of Integrity involved standing up for one's beliefs and some involved standing up for one's rights.

Resilience through Perseverance was mentioned by all six Mexican Immigrant participants. These descriptions typically involved finding the will to keep going in the face of general life difficulties, or the concept of generally "struggling" against life's adversities, such as Pablo, who stated, "I think they are motivated, but sometimes there is no time, all is not available and also the opportunities are not there…Sometimes there is no other way, the only thing left is to struggle."

Four Mexican Immigrant participants discussed Ambition. Some individuals described what motivates them, such as Pablo: "I see a lot of people who are above one, they know more than one, and that is what motivates me to want to be a bit more. Not wanting to be the same as others. Not to want to be below or less than others." Others saw the difficulties that are associated with immigration as "a challenge."

Cases of Adaptability, as discussed by three Mexican Immigrant participants and noted in three researcher observation sources, primarily involved flexibility in navigating between cultures. Some involved switching between languages when necessary.

Environmental Resources

This category, defined as *use of external and environmental resources in making an achievement*, included subcategories of Interpersonal Interactions (for example, mutually beneficial interaction between individuals, such as creating business partnerships that help increase income for both parties), Problem Solving (ability to solve problems in daily living, using the resources available, such as taking a discarded object and finding a new and creative use for it), and Entrepreneurship (ability to find and/or create

money making ventures, e.g., having a flexible job, such as a taxi driver, that will also allow you to act as a paid tour guide to tourists).

Mexican Immigrants participants described many examples of resilience through Problem Solving. Some of these instances concerned general stress management while others were about resolving specific problems (e.g., related to language difficulties). One example is depicted in Alice's description of her father's decision to return to the U.S. to work a few more years and collect a pension to solve financial difficulties:

> Well the thing is, my Dad came here first. He was working here like many, many years ago. He decided to come back…He decided to come back just to get his pension, because he had worked there (a company in the U.S.) like thirty years, and needed to work like five years more for his pension. So that was his idea, to come for just five years, and then go back to Mexico where his whole family was.

Several cases of resilience through the use of Interpersonal Interactions were described by Mexican Immigrants. These experiences were generally about knowing someone who helped the participant or about networking and advantageous relationship development. In another of Alice's descriptions, she discusses being encouraged and mentored by her uncle:

I've worked a lot with the Hispanic community. My uncle, he's a photographer and he's been living here for more than 30 years. So he's a photographer for the community. So every time he has a new event, he's like, do you want to come with me and help me with this and that. So that's the way I started working within the community, and right now t hat's something that is helping me to interact with the Hispanic community here in the city.

In the many cases of the subcategory of Entrepreneurship among Mexican Nationals, participants discussed ways they were able to make some income through creative or hardworking means. A few Mexican Immigrants also engaged in this. For example, Sandra discussed her attempt at waitressing, despite its requirement of English skills, as a way of bettering her career:

> On Saturdays, I usually work in the mornings for the restaurant. I hostess usually. Now I changed hostess to waitress, so… so now I'm doing waitress one day a week. Yeah, because everybody told me it's more money. And, like my English is not perfect, but I want to try because, I know the menu. Before I was working in the kitchen. When I started working [there] I started doing salad bar, so I worked for like 8 months. So I know the food.

Discussion

Semi-structured interviews and researcher observations were used to explore the themes that emerged from descriptions of resilience in a group of Mexican Nationals from two areas of Mexico and in a group of Mexican Immigrants who moved to a Midwestern U.S. city.

Overall, Mexican National participants discussed most frequently using Environmental Resources such as Entrepreneurship, while Mexican Immigrant participants did not mention this method of resilience. All participants discussed resilience through Response Frameworks such as Perseverance, whereas many Mexican National participants discussed Response Frameworks such as Adaptability.

Some of these differences are likely due to the fact that overall, among the Mexican Nationals in the study, resilience was most often exemplified as a process, which helped individuals to cope with the realities of the society such as economic hardship or systemic restrictions. For example, Mexican National individuals frequently exhibited resilience to achieve new or better employment through Business Practices as a means to provide for their families. This focus on securing employment was born of necessity, but did not preclude consideration of further goals and dreams, such as dreams for one's children or hope for a better government in the future. Resilience as a process was therefore mostly focused on utilization of external resources, which was often whatever specific resource was available

(e.g., capitalizing on a business relationship or coming up with creative way to make money). Another common theme for this group of participants was reliance on one's internal coping strategies such as perseverance or adaptability to overcome hardships. This theme surrounding utilization of external resources is reflected in the extant literature that highlights the importance of family support among Latino/as (Llamas & Morgan Consoli, 2012; Carranza, 2007).

Among Mexican Immigrant participants, resilience most often involved overcoming difficulties associated with immigration and acculturation (Kim & Abreu, 2001; Yoon et al., 2013). Many of the barriers (e.g. language barriers, economic barriers) were also related directly or indirectly to oppression by dominant society. Gains for this population reflected slightly more emphasis on the obtaining of money than on psychological gains such as Freedom or Security. There was, therefore, a significant emphasis on Problem-Solving as a means to resilience, with individuals utilizing whatever was available, in contrast to one specific type of resource, to counter adversities, or utilizing internal response frameworks such as Integrity or Ambition.

For all participants in this study, utilizing Environmental Resources was often discussed as a mode for being resilient. It is noteworthy that within Environmental Resources Entrepreneurship was not discussed for the immigrant population, but was the most noted subcategory for Mexican Nationals. This may reflect the different realities of the job markets as described in the participant contexts. Thus, it is likely much more difficult for an immigrant who is in the process of acculturation, to become an entrepreneur, than for someone who is in his or her native land. In addition, the Mexican Immigrant participants actually described having more choices for employment in their new land. Therefore, there may be less need to be entrepreneurial.

Also within Environmental Resources, Problem-Solving was discussed fairly frequently by both groups of participants. In many cases, the stressors or problems to be solved seemed more specific (i.e., worry about finances versus general stress) for the Mexican National participants than the Mexican Immigrant participants. Resilience through Interpersonal Interactions for Mexican Immigrants often involved relying on another individual to get by (e.g., being mentored by an uncle in a new community) while Interpersonal Interactions described by Mexican Nationals concerned various types of relationships with more varied purposes. It seems clear that immigrants need support when they arrive in a new country to cope with the multiple sources of stress and adversity (Padilla & Borrero, 2006; Reiboldt & Goldstein, 2000). Recognizing this and utilizing existing interpersonal resources as protective factors is supported by the resilience literature (Flores, Cicchetti, & Rogosch, 2005).

In addition to utilizing Environmental Resources, Mexican Immigrants also frequently described cases of resilience through Response Frameworks. They discussed Integrity, Adaptability and Perseverance as ways to "keep going," as did Mexican Nationals. Neither population discussed Ambition much as a way of getting ahead, although there was some mention of "getting ahead" as motivation to achieve. It has been found previously that personal qualities such as ambition, self-efficacy, and integrity also contribute to resilience (Massinga & Pecora, 2004). In the current study the strategy of Perseverance characterized almost everyone interviewed, making it seem a necessary feature of resilience among this group of Mexican people. Therefore, in order to survive and overcome an adversity, an individual must necessarily persevere. However, it is notable that all individuals interviewed were cognizant of this characteristic that they possessed. This finding seems related to a Mexican cultural phenomenon, perhaps best captured by the word *aguantar* in Spanish, which means to "endure" or "hold up." This cultural value stems from Native American culture, where one seeks to acquiesce to nature, not to fight it (Shorris, 2001). The finding of perseverance as an aspect of resilience in the Latino/a population echoes previous qualitative research findings with perseverance merging as a theme of resilience (Morgan Consoli, Gonzales, Cabrera, Llamas, Lopez & Ortega, 2011). Importantly for psychologists working with these populations, this cultural value of acceptance and perseverance may run counter to more U.S. based theories of mental health.

It is also noteworthy that Mexican Nationals discussed Faith in a higher power and Optimism minimally as a group. They most often discussed Hope in a better future or for a specific goal to be

fulfilled. In contrast, Mexican Immigrants more frequently discussed Optimism. It seems likely that the general predisposition of someone who immigrates would be optimistic, and, based on the cases described, this proves helpful to an immigrant when he or she arrives in his or her new land. It is worth noting only a few cases of resilience through Faith were identified. This was particularly significant given the religious affiliations and occupations of several of the participants. These findings are consistent to some extent with previous studies showing that Latino/as' religious values and beliefs (*religiosidad*) have been found to be protective external factors that lead to resilience (Rivera-Ledesma & Montero, 2005). Additionally, among immigrant populations religion has been found to be a particularly important source of strength (Comas Diaz, 2010). Psychologists should take into account optimism, hope, and religion or faith as a means of resilience when working with Latino/a immigrant clients by assessing the salience of this dimension of their lives.

Despite some of the differences in themes among Mexican National and Mexican Immigrant interviewees, the overall descriptions of resilience as a process among study participants in these two populations did not appear to differ substantially. At the beginning of the current study, it was speculated that immigrants might be self-selected for having more resilience than other populations, given their willingness to go through the immigration experience. In other words, an unusually high representation of resilience might be present in the immigrant population due to the fact that they are immigrants. Interestingly, this idea was not similarly highlighted by non-immigrants in this study. While adversities for Mexican National participants were different, this population described a strong presence of resilience as well.

Interestingly, despite previous findings correlating high sense of community, community relationships, and *familismo* (Carranza, 2007; Clauss & Wibrowski, 2007) with high resilience, participants in the current study did not speak of these as ways of *obtaining* resilience but instead spoke of family and community as *reasons for* being resilient. This role of family as a motivator, nevertheless, is still consistent with *familismo*. This finding is important for psychologists working with Mexican immigrant clients as it speaks to the importance of family as not only a part of treatment but also a source of well-being.

Implications

The results of this study may be used not only to inform traditional therapy or counseling, but also to inform programming based on the identified barriers, needs and strengths of Mexican and Mexican Immigrant individuals. Given the findings in this study, it seems clear that there are resilience strategies present which depend, at least in part, on the nature of barriers faced. With a difference in barriers, what is considered to be a gain is therefore different depending on circumstances. As a result, normal developmental gains in the face of barriers, or resilience, could be more likely to take certain forms in certain people or cultures depending upon the contextual circumstances.

The results of the study suggest that in clinical work with recent Mexican immigrants gaining information on barriers and gains specific to certain groups of people, and then assessing the strengths of particular individuals, would be important for treatment. For example, results of this study show that helping to point out, foster, or strengthen interpersonal interactions, facilitate problem-solving skills, and capitalize on the ability to persevere and have positive mental frameworks helped some of our participants to get through adversity. Assessment of individuals with this information in mind might be useful in developing treatment plans and formulating treatment interventions based on strengths. For example, given that Environmental Resources and Problem-Solving were identified as frequently used methods of resilience among our participants, a program for facilitation of resilience in immigrants might consider including identification of local resources and support people, as well as practice scenarios in problem-solving. This could be conducted in a group format to increase the knowledge base and support available in the room. Additionally, exploration of worldviews and values on perseverance and optimism could be beneficial tools for a therapist to help a client through difficult times.

Study results might also be used to inspire psychologists to participate in advocacy work for the needs of immigrant individuals, and or affect public policy in a more informed way on the currently hot

topic of immigration. It was clear in this study that barriers, which were either directly or indirectly the result of oppression, were present. In some of the situations individuals had to overcome economic or societal barriers. Whether on an individual or systemic level, the stories of these participants confirm that much remains to be done to ensure equal access to goods and services. This need for international and cross-cultural social justice should be a part of a call for social justice in the profession of psychology. This call can be answered by psychologists through raising awareness of oppression, advocating for the disenfranchised both nationally and internationally, and conducting more cross-cultural studies to inform the field of strengths and needs of various populations throughout the world.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

One limitation of this study was the cultural and linguistic differences between the researcher and the participants. While the researchers tried to be as aware of such influences as possible, it is not possible that such influences were removed from the study design, data collection, or data analysis and interpretation. The researchers believe, however, that the benefit obtained by the richness of the data resulting from this methodology far outweighed any limitations.

Another limitation was that the interpreters that helped us while in Mexico were not always native speakers from the region of the participant being interviewed. While this was the goal at the outset of the study, the reality of the situation once there was that there were not always native, local Spanish speakers available who were also fluent enough in English to interpret in an interview situation.

The number of participants in the populations being studied did not quite represent the range of stories that the researchers had initially hoped. Although community contacts were quite helpful in the recruitment of resilient individuals, the same numbers of Mexican National and Mexican Immigrant participants could not be obtained. Similarly, of the Mexican Immigrant participants, several were in training at a Catholic seminary, which was perhaps an artifact of which immigrants were willing to speak to the interviewers about their immigration experiences. This perhaps provided a specific perspective in results that should be acknowledged. While the current study illuminated themes of resilience in Mexican Immigrants and Nationals, it also presented many questions that may be addressed in future research.

Future directions include repeating this type of study every few years to illuminate the impact of current events on immigrant stories. Given the current political climate in the U. S. and the growing anti-immigrant sentiments and proposed legislation (Reyner, 2017), it is likely that barriers may be even more difficult for immigrants from Mexico, thus perhaps changing what resilience currently looks like for these individuals.

Conclusion

The findings of this study have furthered our knowledge of the meanings and sources of resilience in Mexican Immigrants to the U.S. and Mexican Nationals. It not only highlights what has worked for individuals from these groups in overcoming adversities, but provides information on patterns that may be compared and contrasted as a start for raising questions and generating hypotheses on cultural variations in resilience.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this study further highlights the need for psychologists to advocate for the needs of underserved populations like those represented by the individuals in this study, given that many barriers are systemic. The study findings have pointed out how far external resources can go in helping an immigrant survive and maintain mental health, for example. Therefore, it seems crucial that psychologists advocate for resources for this population in service of greater well-being.

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