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Relative Privilege, Risk, and Sense of Community: Understanding Latinx Immigrants'
Empowerment and Resilience Processes Across the United States

Abstract

Latinx immigrants regularly navigate adversity and oppression through resilience and empowerment; however, little research has sought to delineate when, how, and why they may engage in either process. Through the Transtheoretical Model of Empowerment and Resilience, this paper examines how Latinx immigrants living in distinct U.S. contexts interact with their communities. Seventy-three Latinx immigrants (ages 18 to 70, $M = 40.85$, $SD = 13.65$) participated in twelve focus groups in Albuquerque, NM; Maricopa County, AZ; Baltimore, MD; and Richmond, VA. Participants had lived in the U.S. for less than one year to 39 years ($M = 14.19$, $SD = 8.72$) and had varying immigration statuses. Analyses revealed that empowerment and resilience goals diverged by individuals' beliefs in the degree to which external change was vital, possible, and theirs to attempt. Beliefs coincided with the fundamental risk posed, based on the interaction of a context's conditions with an individual's characteristics and sense of community. Results indicate that while resilience is important to navigate risky settings, it may uphold oppressive power structures because it is consistent with the status quo. Interventions to spur external change should involve empowering processes, including facilitating gains in relative privilege and fostering sense of community.

Keywords: resilience, empowerment, sense of community, risk, immigration, Latinx immigrants.

Relative Privilege, Risk, and Sense of Community: Understanding Latinx Immigrants'
Empowerment and Resilience Processes Across the United States

Resilience and empowerment are potent processes for responding to adversity and oppression, experiences all too familiar for many immigrants¹, particularly those of color and those who do not have their migration sanctioned by their new government. Regardless of where they settle, most immigrants have to cope with a new system of values and lifestyles. Depending on their new contexts, immigrants often have to also navigate prejudice and discrimination, such as Latinx immigrants in the U.S. who face relentless systemic oppression across ecological levels – from interpersonal interactions to local and national institutions to the society at-large. While examples of Latinx immigrants' resilience and empowerment to navigate their communities can be found throughout the literature, the processes are rarely examined together and across diverse contexts to delineate when, how, and why Latinx immigrants engage in them. This study drew on the Transtheoretical Model of Empowerment and Resilience (Brodsky & Cattaneo, 2013) to examine Latinx immigrants' resilience and empowerment processes across distinct contexts.

Immigration and Contexts of Reception

Throughout its history, the U.S. has been significantly shaped by migration. Compared to the 1 in 30 people around the globe living outside of their country of birth, in the U.S., nearly 1 in 6 people was born outside of the country (UN, 2019). The number of immigrants in the U.S. has more than quadrupled since 1970, reaching 50.7 million, and an additional 10 to 12 million people living in the U.S. do not have authorization to reside in the country (Batalova et al., 2020; UN, 2019). Nearly half of immigrants in the U.S. are from Latin America, and increasingly

¹ In this paper we use the term 'immigrants' broadly to encompass all people who were born outside of the country where they live, regardless of reason for migration and particular immigration status, including refugees, asylum-seekers, and those often termed 'economic migrants', recognizing that these terms and distinctions are imperfect and do not adequately distinguish among the 'push/pull' factors of migration and migration experiences.

shape U.S. communities and the society at-large, influencing social and cultural systems, economics, and politics (Batalova et al., 2020; Schwartz et al., 2014).

The reception immigrants face differs by contexts that 'receive' them. Opportunity structures obtainable, social support available, and openness, acceptance, or hostility of their community towards them may vary depending on where immigrants reside (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Schwartz et al., 2014; Stepick & Stepick, 2010). Whereas in positive contexts immigrants may be welcomed and able to pursue goals, in negative contexts they may experience isolation, discrimination, limited social support, and challenges accessing opportunities, such as home ownership and employment (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Stepick & Stepick, 2010). Most contexts are not wholly positive or negative; rather, some aspects of them may support immigrants while other aspects may present adversity (Schwartz et al., 2014). Moreover, because people inhabit multiple spaces simultaneously (e.g., neighborhoods, municipalities, nations), their reception experiences may differ across these spaces (Golash-Boza & Valdez, 2018). Given its salience and immediate influence, a local context may matter as much as a national context in shaping experiences and responses (Ellis & Almgren, 2009; Smith & Furuseth, 2006).

Contexts of reception differ greatly across the U.S. Hundreds of immigration-related legislation and resolutions are introduced by states annually, many in direct reaction to and intended to impact the growing Latinx immigrant population (NCSL, 2018; Vargas et al., 2017). Some locales have policies that allow local law enforcement to participate in federal immigration enforcement, which has led to racial profiling of Latinx people; require national verification of immigration authorization for employment or a driver's license; and prohibit immigrants without authorization from enrolling in public universities or accessing utilities (ILRC, 2015a/b; NCSL, 2018; Shahshahani & Madison, 2017). Such legislation attempts to exclude immigrants, denying basic human rights and targeting all facets of immigrants' lives (McKanders, 2010). The laws

also signal to the public what is socially acceptable, and who can be excluded and from what facets of life. Other locales prohibit law enforcement from cooperating with federal immigration enforcement, prohibit the use of the aforementioned database, and provide in-state tuition and access to funding for unauthorized immigrants who graduate from state high schools (ILRC, 2015a/b; NCSL, 2018). Locales have created more positive contexts by demonstrating openness and sensitivity to diversity in public services, such as policing, social services, and health care (Paloma et al., 2014). Just as systems and policies can exclude and oppress, welcoming and inclusive systems and policies can create positive narrative shift. These narratives impact all community members, old and new, with and without government authorization to reside.

Immigrants' experiences also depend on the interaction of their characteristics with the context, what Schwartz and colleagues (2014) describe as a 'perceived' context of reception. This experience may depend on immigrants' cultural orientations (e.g., Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001) and personal, social, economic, and language resources (e.g., Erwin, 2003). Intersecting characteristics associated with relative privilege – race/ethnicity, age, Indigeneity, gender, (dis)ability, religion, nationality, sexuality, and immigration status – also shape experiences (e.g., Cisneros, 2018; Córdova & Cervantes, 2010; Oberoi & Trickett, 2018). Latinx immigrants' reception experiences diverge sharply from European immigrants, with the majority of Latinx immigrants reporting discrimination in many aspects of their daily lives (Lopez et al., 2018). There is also much within-group diversity in experiences based on other characteristics, such as immigration status and skin color (Cobb et al., 2017). For example, unauthorized immigrants experience more oppression at work, such as unregulated workplaces, unsafe conditions, harassment, and wage theft (Bauer, 2009; Stuesse, 2009). Persons of color are more often targeted by hate crimes and zealous policing (FBI, 2019). And, those in mixed-status families are facing unprecedented levels of forced family separation and deportation (Lopez et

al., 2018; SCRA, 2018). In sum, Latinx immigrants' experiences likely depend on the interaction of their intersectional characteristics with their contexts.

Responses to Adversity: Transtheoretical Model of Empowerment and Resilience (TMER)

Two regularly described processes in community psychology for responding to adversity are empowerment and resilience. They have been conceptualized and operationalized in various, often overlapping ways (Brodsky & Cattaneo, 2013). In this paper, empowerment refers to “a meaningful shift in the experience of power attained through interaction in the social world” (Cattaneo & Goodman, 2015, p. 84). Power refers to influence at any level of interaction, including in personal relationships, settings and systems, and the broader society. Resilience refers to “successful adaptation despite risk and adversity” (Masten, 1994, p. 3), and is operationalized as “more than the absence of pathology, as exemplified by not only surviving, but thriving, sometimes even with enhanced functioning, and as a dynamic process rather than a stable trait” (Brodsky & Cattaneo, 2013, p. 335). While their aims differ – to spur external change as opposed to adapting, withstanding, and resisting – the processes share key features.

The TMER (Brodsky & Cattaneo, 2013) distinguishes shared and nonshared aspects of the processes for the development, maintenance, and actions of resilience and empowerment. Its goal is to create a clearer understanding of when, how and why each is used to enable researchers and interventionists to more clearly distinguish one concept from the other. The TMER begins with shared resources (maintenance, self-efficacy, knowledge, community resources, skills) and processes (awareness and goal setting, action, reflection) that may contribute to actions and outcomes, and then lays out differences between resilience and empowerment: a) resilience always occurs within a context of fundamental² risk endemic to the context in which an

² In the TMER, risk associated with the context is referred to as fundamental to designate that it is “not merely an elevated chance that certain aspirations and desires might not be obtainable, but rather the heightened probability

individual is situated, while empowerment may or may not; b) resilience is focused on internally focused goals – adapting, withstanding, and resisting – while empowerment is aimed at power-oriented, external change. The processes can further the status quo or lead to a status quake (Cattaneo et al., 2014). This iterative model (see Figure 1) shows connections and points of differentiation between the context, desires, and actions of resilience and empowerment, and is useful for exploring why and how certain actions are performed, supported, and built upon.

The TMER has conceptual value and empirical support in applications to varying psychosocial contexts. It has shown explanatory value in exploration of the resources, goals, and actions of Afghan women activists and intimate partner violence survivors (Brodsky & Cattaneo, 2013); prediction of persistent participation of young people in Hong Kong Umbrella movement (Chan et al., 2017); and exploration of how the Black Lives Matter movement promotes resilience and empowerment among young Black men (Godsay & Brodsky, 2018). The TMER is applied here as both an additional test of the analytic potential of the theory and because analytic work with this dataset found themes that preliminarily aligned with TMER, suggesting that TMER may have utility in exploring Latinx immigrants' resilience and empowerment.

Immigrants' Empowerment and Resilience

Although infrequently described explicitly as examples of resilience, numerous responses to adversity and oppression that evidence resilience can be found in the empirical literature related to immigration. People may adapt to oppression by *assimilating* (Tajfel, 1981; Sonn & Fisher, 2003), rejecting their membership in a group being oppressed (e.g., 'Latinx immigrant') and attempting to be perceived as part of the group with more privilege. Latinx immigrants have adapted by quickly learning English and by keeping their immigration status secret, thereby

that basic needs, rights, and access to resources will be thwarted by circumstances beyond one's immediate control" (Brodsky & Cattaneo, 2013, p. 339).

masking their identity of 'immigrant' (e.g., Ko & Perreira, 2010; Negrón-Gonzales, 2014).

People may withstand oppression by *accommodating* (Tajfel, 1981), seeking to gain resources by strategically adapting to the population with more privilege while simultaneously maintaining their social identities. Latinx immigrants have developed counterspaces where they can develop a sense of community, engage in cultural practices marginalized by their context; and heal from their daily experiences of oppression (e.g., Pérez Huber & Cueva, 2012; Yosso et al., 2009).

Likewise, examples of empowerment abound, as Latinx immigrants work towards change locally and nationally. Often the empowerment processes documented involve highly visible, organized movements, such as grassroots organizations fighting for social justice (e.g., United We Dream, Movimiento Cosecha). Latinx young people who arrived in the U.S. without authorization as children are working to change systems, "coming out" of the shadows, saying they are "undocumented, unafraid and unapologetic" (Seif et al., 2014). These young activists have engaged in counter-storytelling and testimonio, organized mass mobilizations of votes, held rallies, participated in acts of civil disobedience and sit-ins, and met with elected officials to change unjust systems (e.g., Gonzales, 2008; Negrón-Gonzales, 2014).

Current Study

While examples of Latinx immigrants' resilience and empowerment can be found throughout the literature, they are rarely examined as such. Further, the examples documented, particularly of empowerment, tend to be highly visible nationally and organized as opposed to the more 'everyday' actions people take (Rosales & Langhout, 2020). Moreover, Latinx immigrants' resilience and empowerment are rarely examined together. As a result, little is known about when, how, and why Latinx immigrants engage in resilience and empowerment, and whether the TMER framework can accurately capture these processes. The current study applied the TMER to explore the ways in which Latinx immigrants in four distinct contexts –

Albuquerque, New Mexico (NM); Maricopa County (including Phoenix, Mesa, and Glendale), Arizona (AZ); Baltimore, Maryland (MD); and, Richmond, Virginia (VA) – respond to their contexts. The guiding research question was, *How do Latinx immigrants and immigrant communities respond to diverse community contexts via resilience and empowerment processes?*

Method

The study used a hybrid of inductive and deductive thematic methods (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Qualitative data were from a larger mixed-method study of socioecological acculturation with Latinx immigrants across four distinct contexts. Southwestern locales, AZ and NM, have comparable demographics, but divergent immigration-related policies. Likewise, Mid-Atlantic locales, MD and VA, have comparable demographics (that differ from the Southwest), and their policies diverge. For example, Latinx people comprise more of the immigrant population in the Southwest and fewer speak English fluently than in the Mid-Atlantic (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). One each of the Southwestern and Mid-Atlantic locales (NM and MD) have policies in place that seem intended to positively receive Latinx immigrants, including those without authorization, such as providing access to higher education and driver's licenses (NCSL, 2018). In contrast, AZ and VA have policies that likely exclude Latinx immigrants, particularly those without authorization, from engaging fully in their new communities, such as laws that allow for local law enforcement to participate in immigration enforcement (NCSL, 2018). Through inductive analyses of qualitative data from the larger study, it became apparent that Latinx immigrants expressed disparate goals and actions across locales with distinct contexts of reception, which led to this inquiry. The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at [REDACTED]. See REDACTED for a more detailed account of the methods employed in the larger study. We detail methods relevant to this particular inquiry below.

Research Team

The bilingual/biliterate research team involved in the original data collection consisted of 14 students and professionals: Five 1st generation Latinx immigrants, four 2nd generation Latinx immigrants, and five non-Latinx people whose parents were born in the U.S. The team was led by the first author, one of the non-Latinx people who trained the rest of the team in conducting community-engaged research with Latinx people and unauthorized immigrants (Ojeda et al., 2011). Four team members were involved in the secondary analysis. Our team holds a critical constructivist perspective on the creation of knowledge, believing that knowledge is contextually situated and inherently tied to power structures (Kincheloe, 2005). The team composition allowed for the balance of 'insider' and 'outsider' perspectives to conduct effective, culturally congruent, trustworthy research (Delgado-Romero et al., 2018; Fassinger & Morrow, 2013).

Participants

Participants were recruited from urban areas: Maricopa County, AZ; Baltimore, MD; Albuquerque, NM; and Richmond, VA. Participants had to be at least 18 years old; have emigrated from a Spanish-speaking Latin American country; speak English or Spanish; identify as Latinx, Hispanic, or Chicanx; and reside in one of the four locales. Seventy-three people participated in 12 focus groups (three per locale). Participants ranged in age from 18 to 70 ($M = 40.85$, $SD = 13.65$), and women were overrepresented (71.2%). A little more than half (57.5%) emigrated from Mexico, 9.6% from Central America, 28.8% from South America, and 4.1% from the Caribbean Islands between early childhood and later adulthood ($M = 26.66$, $SD = 13.48$). Participants had emigrated for a better quality of life, economic stability, education, employment, safety, to join family, and to leave crime, political instability, and war. They had lived in the U.S. from less than 1 year to 39 years ($M = 14.19$, $SD = 8.72$). At the time of the study, 26.0% had attained U.S. citizenship, 32.9% had authorization to reside in the U.S. (e.g., permanent residency, temporary permit), and 41.1% had no authorization to reside in the U.S.

Procedures

Participants were recruited primarily through the research team and community partners at establishments that serve Latinx immigrants and in settings frequented by an array of people (78.5%), as well as through flyers and word-of-mouth. A larger sample first participated in a survey (see REDACTED), and following the survey, those who indicated interest in participating in a focus group ($n = 191$) were randomly selected, with a maximum of 24 people invited from each locale. While efforts were made to have between 5 and 8 participants in each group, groups ultimately had 2 to 11 participants ($M = 6.08$, $SD = 2.78$), as a result of participants canceling, no-showing, or changing groups. When they arrived, participants got to know one another and the members of the research team while eating refreshments. Participants were then provided informed consent in written and oral form, given an opportunity to ask questions, and given \$25 in cash to thank them for participating. To protect confidentiality, consent was audio recorded with a pseudonym chosen by the participant prior to the focus group. Discussions were audio recorded. While some participants occasionally used English and 'Spanglish' words when responding to questions, participants largely preferred to communicate in Spanish, and so focus groups were facilitated by the first author in Spanish. Field notes were taken by at least one Latinx immigrant research team member from each local community (Delgado-Romero et al., 2018). At the end of the group, participants were asked to complete a short demographic questionnaire, which was linked to their focus group responses via their chosen pseudonym. Results were shared back with participants and community partners in oral and written formats.

Measure

A semi-structured interview was used in the focus groups. The primary questions posed to the groups were: (1) *"When you first came to the United States, in what ways did you want to adopt U.S./'American' culture?"* (2) *In what ways did you want to maintain your original culture?"*

(3) Has there been a time or event when you were (or were not) able to adopt U.S./‘American’ culture in the way you wanted? How come? (4) Has there been a time or event when you were (or were not) able to maintain your original culture in the way you wanted? How come?” The facilitator asked sub-questions and used probes to follow up on emergent information, clarify responses, and gain divergent and convergent perspectives. As such, themes were not limited to initial conceptions (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The facilitator and notetaker(s) made observations of nonverbal behaviors to enrich the transcripts (Weiss, 1994). Trustworthiness was established in multiple ways: Dependability was enhanced by posing the same primary questions to participants across multiple groups ($n = 12$) and contexts ($n = 4$). Credibility was increased through both member checking and negative case analysis. Confirmability and transferability were supported through the neutral, open-ended questions posed to each group, which allowed themes to emerge spontaneously and be rich in detail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data, involving a combination of inductive and deductive coding so that the analysis was data-driven while being informed by theory (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Data was transcribed in its original language (Tarozzi, 2013), checked for accuracy, and compiled with field notes. Each complete idea within the data was examined and given an initial code by subgroups of the research team (with the first author examining all transcripts and others only examining transcripts for the focus groups at their locales). Next, the team compared and grouped these initial codes into focused codes, informed by the literature, and created a codebook with definitions, instructions, and examples. The first author and at least two team members from the corresponding locale independently coded each transcript, resolving any discrepancies by consensus. The team compared coding across groups and locales, sorted codes, and connected them to construct themes. Because themes related to empowerment and

resilience arose from this analysis, the first author reviewed relevant literature and returned to the data with a codebook derived from the TMER. The first author and three research assistants recoded the data with these codes and connected them with the extant coding to discern further themes. Themes were described in memos and formatted into presentations to get feedback. They were compiled into this paper, with quotes translated into English. Established methods were applied to ensure that trustworthiness continued to be supported. Credibility was increased through peer debriefing and negative case analysis. Confirmability was supported through triangulation and audit trails. Transferability was supported through rich description and dependability was enhanced through external audits and reflexivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Results

Narratives revealed that resilience and empowerment goals stemmed from different beliefs, and were supported by distinct actions. Engagement in empowerment and resilience depended on interactions between an immigrant's context; personal characteristics; and sense of belonging; and revealed how privilege, risk, and sense of community shape these processes. In the pages to come, we first describe and illustrate the processes of resilience and empowerment with examples from participants across community contexts. We then delve into the factors that differentially fostered and shaped each process. Finally, we highlight the individual- and community-level resources that arose as critical to support both resilience and empowerment.

Resilience Processes

Participants most often described goals consistent with resilience. Those who delineated resilience goals often expressed that external change was impossible or not required. Jesse (NM, age 38, 14 years U.S., authorization to U.S. citizenship)³ put it simply, "Here you cannot change

³ Participants are described with a pseudonym they chose, their locale, age, years they have resided in the U.S., and immigration status when they first entered the U.S. (*no authorization*, i.e., undocumented; or *authorization*, i.e.,

anything, nor *should* you because they are rules of here.” Papa Ningo (VA, age 45, 13 years U.S., authorization to U.S. citizenship) explained differences she saw in those adapting (i.e., a form of resilience) and those working towards community change (i.e., a form of empowerment):

“I was lucky, because I came without any problem. ... I got a job without a problem. ... I work with Hispanic families, undocumented families who have the opportunity to send their children to school, to create a better future for them. ... They have to work, have to survive. So community change is what least interests them. They don't know how it is ... the opportunities ... the rules here. There are opportunities! ... But it's hard.”

Resilience goals usually involved *withstanding* and *adapting* rather than *resisting*. Immigrants frequently expressed desires to ‘not cause any trouble’ when they experienced challenges and oppression. Alombra (MD, age 51, 10 years U.S., no authorization to authorization) shared, “When something bad happens to us, we let it go and don’t saying anything because of fear – this is their country, it is not ours.” Walter (MD, age 57, 31 years U.S., authorization to no authorization) concurred, “Yes, sometimes we are fearful, we don’t want to cause a problem.” Alombra continued, “We can be in the stage of ‘my culture is mine and I am not going to change’, but now you are no longer in your country.” Participants also saw opportunities to ‘move forward’ via adapting, as Pedro (VA, age 48, 8 years U.S., no authorization) expressed:

“When I arrived, the first thing I asked was, 'How can I do this?' ... Because you have to seek to adapt to this new place where you are a citizen. ... I tell all of my friends: ‘You can do it.’ I invite them to English classes, GED classes ... because, since I am not allowed to drive, they can give me a ride. Because this is the only way that ... you can achieve a better position.”

Some immigrants described withstanding oppression by reframing it as resulting from ignorance or fear, fueled by politicians and media. In this way, they saw people who discriminated against them as ‘victims’ of an oppressive system, rather than oppressors and could more easily cope with the experiences. Diesl (AZ, age 45, 20 years U.S., authorization) explained:

temporary or permanent stay permit) and at the time of participation in the study if it changed (*no authorization*, i.e., never having documentation or a stay permit expiring; *authorization*; or *U.S. citizenship*, i.e., naturalization).

“[Politicians] do it as a game to win more votes. And people just don’t know the truth. People attack us for what these politicians are saying. Immigrants are not taking work, that is a lie. They say we arrive and ask for thousands of benefits, which is a lie. ... They use a lot of lies and poison the minds of the people.”

Actions taken to work towards resilience goals were usually, but not exclusively, individual in nature. Latinx immigrants frequently detailed ways in which they adapted their individual actions to match the context so that they and their families could ‘get by’ and ‘move forward’, as was clear from Canela’s (VA, age 60, 18 years US, authorization) narrative:

“When I arrived, I worked the very next month because we had to work. And I did not care about the kind of work ... nor was it hard for me to be sitting doing the same as the men or women by my side who were almost illiterate.”

Latinx immigrants also practiced resilience by seeking to be less visible in the community.

Patricia (MD, age 32, 12 years U.S., no authorization) shared how she withstood a risky context:

“Sometimes the helicopters would fly over our heads like this. [My roommates would say to me], ‘Hide, don’t make noise because [Immigration & Customs Enforcement] is going to get you.’ I cried in a corner. I wanted to go out, but since they told me that immigration was going to get me, I never left.”

Others, such as Arbolito (NM, age 58, 39 years U.S., no authorization to authorization),

responded to oppression by withdrawing from their contexts entirely:

“The most difficult time I had was in Arizona, where people who are undocumented have no right to anything. You have to be very careful on the street, you cannot drive. ... There is a racial profiling. They are going to get immigration after you. So, you have to take care of yourself. ... I said, ‘If they throw me out, what will they do with my children?’ All the time taking care, watching out. ... My ex-husband told me, ‘Let’s go to New Mexico. It seems that there is little more consideration there.’ ... Now it will be difficult for me to leave Albuquerque – they would have to drag me out!”

However, some immigrants did engage in resilience collectively. For example, some participants found support from fellow immigrants and engaged in cultural activities together as a way to withstand and resist the challenges they were facing, as well as locate resources needed to adapt. Stephanie (MD, age 26, 9 years U.S., no authorization) shared, “[In these immigrant parent groups] we can get together, learn from each other, celebrate our holidays, share our food

together, our culture.” Participants often described supporting each other to withstand and resist oppression, such as Tana (NM, age 56, 28 years U.S., authorization to U.S. citizenship): “Don't let yourself be alienated, don't let others make you change for them.” Angel (AZ, age 43, 28 years U.S., unknown immigration status) shared that, “Many people are doing support groups, and that is a good thing, including with people who already have [immigration] papers, because, well, we feel the same as those without papers. Because in certain years of our lives we have had the same fear as you, all the same as [immigrants without authorization].”

As the TMER predicts, actions taken to support resilience goals generally maintained the status quo. Participants reflected on their actions, framed and justified them, and had insight into the impact of their actions. This process appeared to be self-sustaining, as participants who described adapting, withstanding, and resisting continued to describe resilience as opposed to empowerment. Pequeña (MD, age 30, 10 years U.S., no authorization) reflected:

“I have felt discriminated against because I don't know English. I am getting better because we are in a country that is not mine. ... Once a checkout person did not take care of me. I told her I was ready to pay. ... She says, ‘I do not speak Spanish. Get out of here.’ And I say, ‘Ok, I'm going to pay you.’ ... And she almost kicked me out! I left the bread and left. ... Others stayed, laughing. ... A lady says, ‘Now you get very upset, but later you will take it more calmly.’ My son asked me, ‘Why didn't you report it?’ Well, because I did not want to get into trouble. ... We get used to it. I just wanted to pay.”

Overall, participants frequently described goals consistent with resilience, which usually entailed adapting to or withstanding oppression individually. Resilience appeared to be partially stimulated by beliefs that external change was not possible or not required. Possible origins of these beliefs are described in the distinguishing processes section to come. Resilience largely seemed to be self-sustaining, aligned with the status quo without change to oppressive systems.

Empowerment Processes

On the other hand, those immigrants who described empowerment goals believed that external change was possible, valid, and necessary. Patricia (MD, age 32, 12 years U.S., no

authorization to authorization) contended, "Here we are in a country of opportunities and, well, yes, we must fight to get ahead; it takes a lot of effort but we can make changes in this country, and we can raise our voices, and be heard in this place if we do it together." While empowerment goals involved eventual external change, immigrants' narratives reflected divergent paths to goal attainment. Some sought to make direct changes to their contexts, including policies, institutions, and attitudes, such as Mantequilla (NM, age 52, 20 years U.S., no authorization to authorization):

"As immigrants, we always have barriers, ... the border, the lack of opportunity, how we are asked for our papers, or that we are not allowed to share what we are with this country. ... So there are so many things to change. ... So we share our culture, music, art, folklore, traditions. ... There are 12 million undocumented immigrants left. ... We are here and we will not go away because this is a country of immigrants."

Aside from working towards change in personal relationships (e.g., working towards correcting perceptions of immigrants in conversations with neighbors or coworkers), actions supporting direct external change were usually taken in collaboration with others through leadership and participation in organizations, protests, and rallies. Mantequilla continued:

"When we have experienced discrimination, we have come together. ... And we have fought together to make changes in this community. We have had marches, many things. We are united, we have lost our fear, we have not been like ostriches with our heads buried in the sand. We have lifted our voices. And we have triumphed."

Participants in Maryland described this need for collective action in a different context:

Walter (age 57, 31 years U.S., authorization to no authorization): "When there is a protest in Washington, we always go to lift our voice. Others have to go too, to vote, to speak up. I miss work for this. ... We must be united in these situations."

Stephanie (age 26, 9 years U.S., no authorization): "We need to dream."

Walter: "We need more union among the other Hispanics and we need to spread the word. Because if a few people lift their voices, you might hear us, but that is not the same as when we are all united, and all raising our voices, fighting for the same dream."

Cusi (age 41, less than 1 year U.S., authorization): "We get strength from each other."

Others believed they needed to develop characteristics, skills, and positions in order to

facilitate change. They described the need to obtain citizenship or permanent residency, learn English, pursue higher education, and get into positions of influence, such as elected office.

While in service to a community outcome, actions taken to support this intermediate goal were taken individually. Tiki (AZ, age 41, 20 years U.S., authorization) shared:

“For me it was very important that I could go to school, that I could have a job that maybe makes me tired but that I enjoy. ... It changes you a lot when you feel successful, when you have a dream that your children will study and that you reach a certain economic level. Then you are able to raise your voice.”

The actions taken to support empowerment goals were designed to lead to a status quake. As participants reflected on their actions in service of empowerment, they observed the external changes, however small, that resulted from their actions, justified their actions, and gave themselves credit for the outcomes that they observed. Mantequilla, quoted earlier, reflected:

“This state has become multicultural because we have stayed, had families, made communities. And we have fought together to make changes here in the city. We have had marches, done many things together. We have succeeded because we have started our own businesses. Before, there were no street signs in Spanish; in the hospitals, there were no translators. Many of us made the decision to enter school. We have taken ESL courses, English, and we have tried to share what we know with others. We have made changes. It's different now. I like Albuquerque a lot because we don't see ourselves as strangers, we see ourselves as family. We work together to improve our community.”

In sum, participants sometimes described goals consistent with empowerment, which usually entailed making direct changes to context collectively. A transitional, intermediary step between resilience and empowerment was also seen in which changes to oneself were viewed as a necessary step to work towards empowerment goals of external change. Empowerment appeared to be partially supported by beliefs that external change was valid, possible, and necessary. As with resilience, possible origins of these beliefs are described below.

Distinguishing Processes

Three primary patterns arose in how Latinx immigrants differentially engaged in resilience or empowerment. Namely (a) the conditions of their community and (b) participants'

privilege stemming from individual characteristics interacting with their settings to form a context of fundamental risk. Additionally, (c) participants' sense of membership in a community helped to determine whether or not they worked towards external community-level change.

Community Conditions

Receiving contexts that seemed more open and welcoming of immigrants – vis-à-vis fewer restrictive immigration-related policies and more expressions of inclusion from community members and officials – were also the contexts in which immigrants' desires for community change were more apparent. While paradoxical at first glance, this is actually in keeping with the TMER model. In this study, most empowerment processes were described by participants who were living in MD and NM, locales that were chosen because they appeared to have more positive contexts of reception. Karina (MD, age 31, 8 years U.S., authorization) shared how positive aspects of the context of reception facilitated empowerment:

“Something good about Baltimore is when the mayor said that immigrants are welcome here, not like in other places where they are asking for papers or persecuting them. [The mayor said] that whenever immigrants do not commit any crime, they are welcome to work here. I think that is good. There are still many things to improve, and we are working on that together.”

In contrast, participants living in more risky areas seemed to dedicate their actions to resilience. Fundamental risks occurred across ecological levels and came from policies, authority figures, and community members. Chaparra (AZ, age 35, 14 years U.S., no authorization) described adapting to a risky context in which local law enforcement participates in immigration enforcement by withdrawing: “Well, here people only work and stay at home. ... We cannot go anywhere else for fear that *la migra* will grab us on the way and we can no longer come back here. We go to the same store always to walk around and come back.” Choclo (AZ, age 29, 15 years U.S., authorization to U.S. citizenship) adapted to survive oppression in his microsystems.

“[My workplace] told me, 'You cannot speak Spanish' because there were people who

spoke English and they told me that they would think that I am talking about them. ... There are several places that have forbidden me to speak in Spanish. You know what? I had to get used to that. ... And so I decided to stop speaking Spanish. I stopped listening to Spanish music, I stopped talking to everyone who spoke Spanish, watching TV in Spanish. I watched Law & Order. ... I started to cut out people who spoke Spanish for a time. I hated speaking Spanish and I didn't even talk to my mother, or my sister, no one, for a couple of years. I spoke very little Spanish and didn't even read in Spanish."

Altogether, immigrants living where they perceived more negative contexts of reception and thus more risk tended to describe engaging in resilience processes as opposed to empowerment.

Individual Characteristics of Relative Privilege

Risks were nearly always responded to with resilience unless a combination of personal characteristics such that individuals had greater relative privilege. Hector (AZ, age 21, 13 years U.S., no authorization to authorization) shared the change he experienced first-hand:

"Nobody will listen to you when you don't have [immigration] papers. ... They can hold that over you. That's something that affected me a lot – growing up without papers – because I always knew I was different, and I was very limited in what I could do here. And that was because of fear."

Relative privilege across contexts was associated with having an authorized immigration status and especially naturalized citizenship, English skills, and a higher socioeconomic status.

Immigrants who had less relative privilege generally described needing to gain a combination of these characteristics before engaging in collective actions that would lead towards external change and shifts in power. Diesel, quoted earlier, spoke for many when he shared that he did not believe he could make external changes, but that his children could because they "grew up speaking in English. Who will realize that they are not from here? Who will ask for the papers? No one. Because they can speak English well." Immigrants with greater relative privilege more often described engaging in collective actions aimed at empowerment. Rosario (VA, age 50, 10 years U.S., authorization to citizenship) described how citizenship shaped empowerment goals:

"When I became a citizen, one of the questions they asked me was 'What would you do for your new country?' If the decisions could be in my hands, I would give citizenship to

everyone ... In this way, our children have everything they need to move forward and achieve their goals. Now that I'm a citizen, I can work towards that."

Overall, immigrants with less relative privilege as a result of their intersectional characteristics, skills, and positions in their contexts tended to describe engaging in specific efforts to gain relative privilege in their contexts before taking actions towards community change.

Context of Fundamental Risk

Community conditions and individual characteristics of relative privilege interacted to shape the context of fundamental risk, appearing to determine differential engagement in empowerment and resilience. Having both greater relative privilege *and* a less risky community condition did not appear necessary for engagement in empowerment; rather, one could be sufficient. For example, unauthorized immigrants were involved in protests and rallies to push for community-level change in less risky contexts – NM and MD. And, immigrants residing in contexts they saw as risky were able to engage in empowerment if they gained some level of safety. For example, Angel (AZ, quoted earlier) shared how she and others got involved in movements to spur change once they had the safety of an authorized immigration status:

"From the bad things in politics, there are a lot of people joining together. So much is so bad. What our sheriff was doing. People who already have papers, we feel the same as those who do not have them. ... That's something that's happening thanks to the sheriff."

However, participants rarely described their resilience moving them towards empowerment unless there was a change in fundamental risk changed; rather, it was only actions aimed at shifting relative privilege that seemed to lead to empowerment. Alfy (NM, age 30, 12 years U.S., no authorization to authorization) described speaking out more once he had gained authorization:

"I think [the immigration process] steals part of your life because you live with a fear of being deported during the process. ... They sent me a letter to my house saying, 'If you do not deport yourself, you and your family, we will come and take you away.' ... Every time I see anti-immigrant license plates, I tremble. ... My neighbor [has] plates like that and I always greet him and try to have a conversation with him. A good conversation, a conversation that helps the Hispanic community, because this country is made of

immigrants. ... We have to talk with the community and let them know that they are not alone, that there are people who want to support, who want to share, who want to live in peace, who want a quiet life. We come to work and not harm anyone. ... Unfortunately, the media does not help. The media tries to get us down, tries to say that we are 'rapists' ... and when I hear those words I get angry. I say, 'I'm not doing enough. We will open our mouths more. Let's get together, let's do good as a community' because I think that as human beings, we all have to start at the same level and there is a lot of work to do."

Likewise, Arbolito, quoted earlier, shared how changing contexts shaped her empowerment:

"I have been in in New Mexico for 10 years. But I spent the last 22 years in Arizona. There yes, you feel the discrimination ... that you do not speak the language, that you are Hispanic, and don't even say undocumented. So here in New Mexico it's lovely, everything that I've experienced here. ... I got my papers here, everything helped me here. ... If you say, 'I will keep talking. You will listen to my voice' – in this way, it doesn't take long to change. And that's it. In my case, things completely changed. So I have learned that you have to demand things."

In sum, both individuals and their community conditions interacted to form a context of fundamental risk, which was largely navigated with resilience when the risk was high and more frequently responded to with empowerment as risk decreased.

Sense of Community

In addition to the context of fundamental risk, participants' senses of community was another factor that seemed to strongly differentiate between their resilience and empowerment processes. Whether or not a community was perceived as *theirs*, and thus something they could and should work to change, seemed to undergird decisions of whether to adapt, withstand, or resist (resilience) or work towards external change (empowerment). This was the case whether participants defined their community to be as small as a neighborhood or as large as the entire country. As already noted, many immigrants who viewed themselves as living in a community that was not 'their own' did not believe that they had either the ability nor 'right' to work towards change, regardless of the oppression they experienced. However, other participants, such as Tiki (AZ, age 41, 20 years U.S., authorization) provided a counter narrative. Here she responds to a group member who expressed hesitancy to become involved in the community:

“You are an immigrant who is perhaps in the process of being able to maybe get ahold of [immigration] papers. But you are part of this country. And you should feel that because you are already part of this country and we have to be aware and raise awareness among all our people. I think there is much to learn and to educate ourselves and educate our children so that we can make changes and one day be happy. ... All of us here are part of this country, even if we don't have [immigration] papers. You already live here in one way or another. You and your husband contribute. You have already lived here 12 years! So, yes, we have to work towards changing this country.”

Other Latinx immigrants also felt a stronger sense of community in communities of varying sizes, and their sense of membership in these communities, shared emotional connection with community members, and the needs the communities fulfilled supported their empowerment. For example, Thor (VA, age 30, 13 years U.S., authorization to citizenship) shared the importance of the sense of community that comes from small community entities:

“Something that helps a lot to create community is the church. I have witnessed that when people come to Richmond, they find community here. With the church, they begin to make friends, they begin to go out, to create friendships wherever they want. ... God says, ‘I will make you happy, but first I will make you strong.’ And how do we become strong? With experiences, with each other. And with experience, we can then do good things for the Hispanic community.”

The importance of sense of community for empowerment extended to entire states and transnational regions as well. Of the four locales, a sense of membership in the transnational region of the Southwestern part of North America seemed especially pervasive in NM, where immigrants expressed a deep sense of belonging to the land dating back to before the construction of the U.S.-Mexico border. This feeling appeared to facilitate their empowerment goals, as Enrique's (NM, age 43, 1 year U.S., authorization) sentiments illustrate:

"New Mexico belongs to Mexicans. ... Who wants to live here? Mexicans! ... Who is going to put a culture that is not Mexican here? ... If there is discrimination of businesses or jobs, we must see where they came from. ... The USA, who is it for? For me."

Thus, sense of community at various levels, from local to national and transnational, set the stage for empowerment goals and actions directed at those same levels. However, these nested communities were not divorced from one another; participants' lack of a sense of membership in

the country as a whole negatively shaped beliefs that they could influence their local community.

Resources

Finally, both empowerment and resilience processes were facilitated by resources that fulfilled needs. As previously mentioned, individual resources associated with privilege (e.g., immigration status, particular skills such as language fluency, socioeconomic status) were seen as supporting empowerment. Other more internal resources such as self-efficacy, hope, optimism, grit, and determination often supported both resilience and empowerment. Cony (VA, age 47, 14 years U.S., no authorization) shared:

“You don't have the same language. That was something very difficult. Another thing was also the transport. If you don't have a document, you don't have the opportunity to buy a car, to drive, to buy a house. There are many things that you cannot access, and you have to look for someone. Someone to do you a favor, to take you somewhere, and you have to pay them. Or, to get a house, mobile home, whatever. You always have to look for someone. And not all people help you, right? ... Also, when you arrive you do not know the social services that exist, the opportunities there are. ... But after a while, you figure things out. I found the opportunity to study English ... adult education in English. And I started there. I love it – I love studying, and I like to motivate people, so for me it was a beautiful opportunity. ... You find the opportunity to overcome and be someone.”

Shared resources – including people, organizations, institutions, and even entire communities that provided social support, knowledge, skill development, and fiscal resources – were important for both empowerment and resilience. For example, Tana (NM, age 56, 28 years U.S., authorization to citizenship) described how a foundation provided the resources needed to them advance their community: “Now that the Cesar Chavez foundation has come, we have the support we need. They give us support, give us grants, they give us money for schools, for adults and for our children, to change our city.” Without resources, or the knowledge that they exist, resilience and empowerment were challenging, as Alombra, quoted earlier, articulated:

“Our community needs a lot of information, many relationships, and knowledge, because those of us who work in the community know that yes, this, organization does this and that other organization does that. But often people stay in place, like stagnant in life, because of the little information they have and because of fears that this is a country that

is not theirs, as this is not the country of origin for any of us, and that brings us fear, especially when we're trying to face all of this alone. Especially when you have children, and you have no knowledge of where to go, where to get help, and what to do."

Still, even in places where participants described a more hostile context of reception in the broader community, smaller contexts, when implemented well and known to the community, could provide the shared resources needed to cope. Luis (AZ, age 35, 7 years U.S., authorization) explained, "In those topics related to Spanish or Transborder Studies, there are also open, liberal spaces, because Arizona is actually a very conservative, anti-immigrant, racist state. But in these spaces of art and theater, I think that it is a different and more receptive environment."

Discussion

Results suggest that the TMER largely captures when, how, and why Latinx immigrants engage in resilience and empowerment in the U.S. Consistent with the TMER, similarities between resilience and empowerment abound in this sample. First, a series of shared resources at various ecological levels provided social support, knowledge, skill development, and financial capital needed for both processes. Resources often originated from within Latinx immigrant communities. Immigrants often describe their greatest strengths as coming from within immigrant communities, as they provide help in community navigation, resource location, and cultural participation (e.g., Yakushko & Morgan-Consoli, 2014). Internal resources or 'psychological capital' such as self-efficacy, hope, optimism, determination, and grit were also important for both processes (Hur, 2006; Luthans et al., 2006; Masten, 1994). Moreover, individual characteristics of relative privilege, such as immigration status, English fluency, and socioeconomic status, were seen as supporting empowerment in particular, largely because they shaped the context of fundamental risk. Finally, it appeared that engagement in resilience and empowerment fit the TMER. Many articulated awareness of concerns and resources that led to goal setting, action, followed by reflection on the action, outcome, and next steps.

There were also significant differences in resilience and empowerment, as suggested by the TMER. Specifically, the goals Latinx immigrants set after developing awareness of an issue largely depended on their interpretation of the community conditions and resources they were aware of, both of which ultimately shaped their belief system about change. The results suggest that in more negative contexts of reception – those with more exclusionary policies, institutions, and people, and fewer resources and opportunity structures – Latinx immigrants may be more likely to withstand, adapt, and resist (resilience) rather than working towards community change (empowerment). The point to stress here is that neither the presence nor absence of actions aimed at community change *necessarily* signify a positive or negative context of reception. Immigrants may be more likely to work towards community change in more positive contexts and more likely to use resilience to protect themselves in particularly risky contexts.

Latinx immigrants who viewed external change as impossible, not required, or not theirs to undertake, generally formed resilience goals to cope with the adversity. They tended to describe a need to ‘get by’ and ‘not cause any trouble’ so that they could ‘move forward’ individually or as a family. In this way, Latinx immigrants generally engaged in resilience by withstanding and adapting to oppressive conditions, rather than resisting. This was often seen in descriptions of engaging in assimilation and accommodation (Tajfel, 1981; Sonn & Fisher, 2003). That is, the possibility of empowerment was not within reach for some reason (discussed further below), an assessment of the situation is described in the work of Cattaneo and Goodman (2014, p. 84) who define empowerment as involving a “personally meaningful goal.” Their resilience actions, particularly regarding adaptation, were largely individual in nature, but they sometimes withstood and resisted adversity and oppression collectively, maintaining cultural practices and giving and receiving social support to and from one another, consistent with accounts of counterspaces in the literature (Pérez Huber & Cueva, 2012; Yosso et al., 2009). As

the TMER predicts, these actions generally were aligned with the status quo, and self-sustaining.

In contrast, immigrants who saw external change as a meaningful goal that was possible, valid, necessary, and theirs to undertake tended to form empowerment goals. Latinx immigrants generally took two routes to reach these goals. Some immigrants sought to directly and collectively change their context's policies, institutions, and community attitudes. These actions often took place in highly visible ways, such as organizing and participating in protests and rallies, but occasionally happened in the context of individual interpersonal relationships. Other immigrants believed they needed to gain more relative privilege through characteristics, skills, or qualifications in order to facilitate external change, and described taking individual actions to work towards that goal, such as gaining citizenship, learning English, or pursuing higher education. While often these individual actions were deemed by participants as needed prior to a focus on external change, when collective action was taken to spur community-level change, they were designed to create what Cattaneo and colleagues (2014) would term a 'status quake'.

The context of fundamental risk was key in shaping resilience and empowerment. Nearly all Latinx immigrants shared experiences of discrimination and fear of harm in interpersonal interactions. However, fear of state-sponsored harm, including detention and deportation, was particularly salient for Latinx immigrants who did not have authorization to live in the country, and thus risk was heightened for certain participants. For the Latinx immigrants in this study, risk appeared to be comprised of the interaction of their community's conditions with their own characteristics and circumstances, largely associated with privilege, aligned with Schwartz and colleagues' (2014) notion of 'perceived contexts of reception'. For example, communities with xenophobic leaders, exclusionary policies, and members who expressed anti-immigrant sentiments were particularly risky for immigrants who did not have authorization to reside in the country and could not speak English. As TMER predicts, Latinx immigrants overwhelmingly

responded to risk with resilience processes, adapting, withstanding, and occasionally resisting the adversity and oppression they experienced. Participants rarely described their resilience moving them towards empowerment unless there was a change in their relative privilege and/or a change to the context, shaping the context of risk. Without resources and belief that meaningful change to power structures was possible, they chose goals that focused on individual adaptation. While the positive outcomes often associated with resilience are certainly preferable to negative outcomes, because resilience actions maintain the status quo, they may fuel a self-sustaining cycle in which resilience in response to oppression may inadvertently uphold power structures. This is important for any advocate, interventionist, or activist to acknowledge. Without meaningful change to power structures, it may be very difficult for members of disempowered groups to envision and work towards changing the status quo alone. Those who create and uphold systems of oppression must be held responsible for changing these power structures.

There were three key factors that appeared to facilitate shifts between resilience and empowerment. When (a) contexts were less risky due to more positive, supportive contexts of reception and/or (b) immigrants had greater privilege in their contexts due to their intersectional characteristics, skills, and circumstances, they were more likely to work towards external change. Finally, (c) when a community was perceived as something an immigrant belonged to, they seemed more apt to describe the context as something they should, could, and would work to change. This sense of community seemed to undergird a tipping point for many between engaging in personal change (resilience) when they did not feel they belonged and working towards external change (empowerment) when they saw the community as *theirs* and were not hindered by a message that they did not belong. This proposes potential refinement of the TMER model, suggesting that sense of community may be a resource that particularly facilitates empowerment. The association between sense of community and empowerment has been

identified in the empowering settings literature (e.g., Maton, 2008; Maton & Brodsky, 2011; Maton & Salem, 1995). Empowering community settings have been described as providing a sense of community, and in this study, it was that sense of community that impacted individuals' efforts to act to empower their communities. It is not clear from this study if certain elements of these settings or of individuals shaped senses of community; however, it was clear that varying senses of community at multiple nested levels impacted one another. For example, a sense of membership in the country or to the land facilitated belief in the possibility of influence in local communities. Illuminating the best starting point and level at which to build on the association between sense of community and empowering actions will be key to future social change.

These results point to a number of opportunities for intervention. First, findings suggest that while resilience is important for navigating risky settings, resilience in the absence of empowerment may inadvertently uphold oppressive power structures. Therefore, groups, organizations, and settings aimed at supporting resilience through counterspaces that provide social support, engagement in cultural activities, and healing (e.g., Pérez Huber & Cueva, 2012; Yosso et al., 2009) as well as sanctuary (e.g., Gleeson & Sampat, 2018) should keep in mind the importance of dismantling systems of oppression to address the root of many adversities immigrants face. This may happen through building resilient actions that sum to a real change in resources, extra-individual change in the fundamental risk of the setting by those very people who uphold and/or benefit from the status quo, or collective action by allies and immigrants alike to make necessary changes in both resources and setting risks. While external change can be challenging to undertake in negative contexts, results suggest that actions at the individual level may lead to external change because increases in relative privilege decrease fundamental risk for a given individual. Therefore, organizations focused on creating more equitable communities and fostering social action should simultaneously focus on developing community resources, such as

affordable legal counsel to resolve immigration status issues and educational programming (e.g., English, GED, and university courses). Finally, fostering immigrants' senses of community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986) in their new communities via welcoming initiatives (e.g., Welcoming America), sensitivity to diversity in public services (Paloma et al., 2014), adequate resources to fulfill needs, and opportunities for connection and influence (Buckingham et al., 2018) may set the stage for community change.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations to this study. Most notably, data are cross-sectional and provide only a snapshot in time. Had participants been followed over time, we might have seen a summative effect of processes, resilience and empowering actions, that may have resulted in empowerment. Moreover, focus groups were not designed to probe specifically for resilience and empowerment. While group interviews provided for a breath of experiences, individual interviews may have provided more depth into the processes. Therefore, conclusions we can draw regarding the change in resilience and empowerment over time are limited. Anonymous participation, a diverse bilingual and multicultural research team to balance insider and outsider perspectives, and community partnerships likely helped bolster the trustworthiness of our study, as participants gave every indication that they were forthright. Still, a different set of researchers and participants may have resulted in other findings to highlight and discuss. Additionally, while care was taken to stay as close as possible to the meaning of participants' words, some level of nuance is always lost during translation. Finally, data was collected in 2015 and 2016, during the U.S. presidential race, but before the election of President Donald Trump. The years that have followed have been marked by increasingly negative immigration rhetoric around the U.S., and rapid policy changes at the federal level with swift responses from local communities. Resilience and empowerment seen today may differ from what was observed at the time of this study.

Future Research

Future research is needed to further validate and expand the TMER. Research should expand to communities with distinct contexts of reception, immigration and organizing histories, and immigrant populations. Longitudinal studies that examine contexts of reception and individual and collective action over time and responses from immigrants would help to elucidate the processes of resilience and empowerment and how one process may or may not lead to another. In particular, research should examine how individual characteristics and circumstances, including authorization status and membership in mixed-status families, interact with community conditions to form contexts of fundamental risk, and how risks can be mitigated by individual and collective resources to support resilience and empowerment. Finally, future research should further explore how sense of community may facilitate empowerment.

Conclusion

This study suggests that Latinx immigrants across the U.S. routinely engage in resilience to cope with adversity, and sometimes engage in empowerment. Fundamental to empowerment is the belief that external change is possible, necessary, and valid. Such belief appears shaped by the fundamental risk posed, based on the interaction of one's relative privilege with the context of reception in the community. Those who experience less fundamental risk seem more likely to engage in empowerment, and thus immigrants may engage in empowering actions – gaining more relative privilege – prior to empowerment. While a myriad of individual and shared resources across ecological levels support both resilience and empowerment, sense of community seems to particularly support empowerment, with those who feel a sense of belonging to their communities more apt to describe the communities as something they should, could, and would work to change. Therefore, initiatives to increase equitable resource access and foster sense of community may set the stage for community change.

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