"I Feel Like We're Going Backwards:" Post-Presidential Election Resilience in Latinx Community Members

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Abstract

The 2016 U.S. presidential election brought many reactions on a global scale. World leaders, national leaders, and everyday citizens experienced intense emotions on varying levels. Latinx communities in the U.S., specifically, were impacted significantly, with rhetoric about immigration and issues regarding border security (i.e., build a wall). While much about these sentiments have been reported at the journalistic level, little has been published at the research level to date: specifically, how Latinx community members reacted on an individual level, how they confronted concerns related to fear and adversities (i.e., their resilience), and what the impact may be for their future. The current study employs a community-based, qualitative approach that involved conducting semi-structured focus groups with self-identified Latinx community members in a U.S., West Coast town. Participants were asked about their emotions and reactions, as well as plans regarding the results of the election. Emergent themes included three broad categories: (1) perspectives on the outcome of the 2016 U.S. presidential election; (2) observed impacts of the U.S. presidential election, and (3) ways of dealing with the election results. Sub and tertiary thematic categories were also identified.

Keywords: 2016 U.S. Presidential Election; Latinxs; Resilience

Introduction

The 2016 U.S. presidential election brought about many reactions worldwide (Rich & Ueno, 2016). For many, the election reaffirmed white, heterosexual, male privilege (WHMP: Helms, 2016), and thus left others feeling even more oppressed. More blatant racism began to blossom immediately after the election, and many have spoken of the "Trump effect," which allows individuals to more freely express racist/sexist sentiments with little fear of repercussions. Latinx communities, specifically, were impacted significantly by rhetoric about immigration and building a wall (Ross et al., 2017). Briefings at that time reported many Latinx[1] people feeling that they had awakened "to a nightmare" and either experiencing constant worry or numbness (Cruz & Perez-Chavez, 2016, p. 13). Recent findings by the Pew Research Center indicate that Latina/o individuals in the U.S. feel their situation has worsened and their fears of deportation and penalty have increased under the current administration (Lopez, Gonzalez-Barrera, & Krogstad, 2018). As a social justice issue, these individuals are feeling disenfranchised from the country in which they live. However, little research has been conducted which documents the individual, psychological difficulties experienced by Latinxs immediately after and since the 2016 election, and how they are managing to cope with such adversities. The purpose of the current study was to redress the lack of information on the psychological impact of the 2016 presidential election for Latinxs in the U.S.

Through qualitative methodology and focus group interviewing, the researchers hoped to facilitate synergy and saliency in conveying why this topic was important to participants (Stokes & Bergin, 2006). Through the lens of social justice, the authors used Thematic Analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) to explore the views, feelings, ways of coping and future of several Latinx community members in a medium-sized West Coast town in the U.S. Thus, these participants were provided a platform through which their voices could be joined and heard, employing methodology appropriate for under-explored multicultural issues (Morrow & Smith, 2000). Using a unique two-team/Spanish-English design, the researchers were able to highlight the multicultural realities for this group of people in their own words and language and around a political issue that has impacted their lives significantly. Such work is an attempt to answer the social justice informed call for considering all contexts in our psychological and educational work.

Political Adversities and Resilience

Research on political adversity is broad, encompassing a range of difficulties that vary in form, severity, and course. These difficulties are driven by political objectives and may directly or indirectly involve state institutions and actors. Examples of political adversities include but are not limited to institutional discrimination, police brutality, rebellion, revolution, terrorism, war, and genocide. In fact, pervasive colonialism from with the U.S. is likely at the root of most of these issues and has been noted as a systemic problem to be overcome if equity for all is to be achieved (Grosfoguel, Maldonado-Torres, & Saldivar, 2005). While a significant amount of scholarship has been dedicated to understanding why and how political conflict ensues, attention to the psychological effects of such upheaval is growing. Some research has shown political difficulties to negatively affect overall wellbeing (Barber, 2009; Barber et al., 2014). For example, studies have demonstrated how national and cultural traumas such as slavery in the U.S., the Holocaust, the internment of Japanese Americans in the U.S. during World War II, and the September 11th attacks in the U.S. in 2001 have resulted in psychological

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[1] The term "Latinx" reflects gender inclusivity; however, when other studies are cited, or when participants self-identified, the original language is retained.

distress and psychopathology for groups directly and indirectly exposed to such events (Abu-Raiya, Pargament, & Mahoney, 2011).

The psychological impact of the 2016 presidential election and its results has been widespread and cited in both scholarly and popular publications (Solomonov & Barber, 2018). In an annual survey put forth by the American Psychological Association (APA; 2017), over half (52%) of Americans identified the election to be somewhat to a very significant source of stress. This same survey also found that nearly 60% of Americans felt stressed by the current climate of sociopolitical polarization (American Psychological Association, 2017). Psychological effects were also documented in a study by Lench et al. (2018) examining post-election subjective wellbeing (SWB). Not only did they discover a significant change in people's perceptions of their quality of life after the election, but they also found that partisanship predicted these changes such that SWB improved among Trump supporters and decreased for Clinton supporters. Although the election's effect on SWB eventually diminished, these findings are notable, given that SWB is considered relatively stable (Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003).

The prevalence of stress response symptoms (e.g., worry and fear, sleep disturbance, feelings of helplessness and loss of control, low mood) to the election have led some to "medicalize" these reactions with labels such as "Trump Anxiety Disorder" (Panning, 2017) and "Post-election Stress Disorder" (Sweeton, 2016). While these labels represent a social phenomenon rather than an official clinical diagnosis, they do underscore a high level of distress across the nation. It should be noted, however, that impact of the election and political climate may be more complex and enduring for certain minority groups such as the LGBTQ community (Flaskerud, 2018; Gonzalez, Pulice-Farrow, & Galupo, 2018; Gonzalez, Ramirez. & Galupo, 2018), Muslims (Abu-Ras, Suárez, & Abu-Bader, 2018; Kteily & Bruneau, 2017), immigrants (Cerezo, 2016; Torres, Santiago, Walts, & Richards, 2018; Vasquez,Salgado, Ramirez, & Greenfield, 2018), and survivors of sexual assault (Grant, 2016; Raskin, 2018; Velez, 2018).

For the Latinx community, which was openly and directly targeted by presidential candidate Trump throughout his presidential campaign, this is especially true. Trump's attacks helped to create a challenging climate for the Latinx community with 60% of Latina/os reporting feeling afraid and 78% feeling angry during the 2016 election season (Barreto, Frasure-Yokley, Vargas, & Wong, 2018). In comparison, only 19% of Latina/os reported feeling hopeful during this time. After the election, Trump and his administration have continued to express anti-immigrant rhetoric and enact anti-Latinx policies (e.g., rescission of DACA, "zero-tolerance" policy). As such, estimates of dissatisfaction with the government and the direction of the nation are comparable to those during the Great Recession in the U.S. (December 2007-June 2009). Included in this dissatisfaction addressed by this article are fears about deportation, high unemployment and economic circumstances, and discrimination (Lopez, Gonzalez-Barrera, & Krogstad, 2018). Additionally, hate crimes against Latina/os increased significantly since 2017 across the nation, with rates as high as 52% in California (Abrams, 2018).

Despite the political hardships facing Latinx communities pre- and post-election, Latinx individuals have been found to possess strong ethnic pride (Lopez et al., 2018) and a "radical hope" which helps them to persevere (Cruz & Perez-Chavez, 2016), or, be resilient. Research suggests that Latinx and their communities demonstrate extraordinary resilience in the face of political adversities (Ifeagwazi, Chukwuorji, & Zacchaeus, 2015).

Resilience or the ability to make normal developmental achievements in spite of adverse social and environmental conditions (Garmezy, 1993; Rutter, 1987) has been studied relatively extensively in light of many different adversities. Although less is known about resilience in the face of political adversities, evidence of resilience in the aftermath of political conflict can be found throughout the scientific and professional literature. For example, studies have found psychological growth among Israeli Jews (Hall, Saltzman, Canetti, & Hobfoil, 2015), Palestinians (Aitcheson, Abu-Bader, Howell, Khalil, & Elbedour, 2017), and individuals from Northern

Ireland (Simms, 2015) exposed to ongoing political violence. Positive psychological changes were also found among Muslims living in U. S. after the September 11th attacks (Abu-Raiya, Pargament, & Mahoney, 2011; Abu-Ras, Senzai, & Laird, 2013).

While the results discussed thus far are illuminating, the impact of the 2016 U.S. presidential election on the Latinx communities is not fully understood nor is it clear how Latinxs' responses to the current political adversity have helped or hindered their ability to overcome such challenges. To better understand this large and growing sector of the U.S. population, research into what contributes to such perseverance is needed.

Methods

Researchers/Positionality

The first author is a cisgender female counseling psychology faculty member who identifies as Mixed Latina (Mexican) and European. The second author is a cisgender male, counseling psychology faculty member who identifies as a Latino immigrant. Subsequent authors are doctoral students in Counseling Psychology. They identify as, respectively, a cisgender, Filipina female, a cisgender Latina of Mexican descent, a cisgender Latina of Cuban descent, a cisgender male Caucasian, and a cisgender Mexican American male. All are working with Latinx communities and other minoritized racial/ethnic communities, and have been trained to work through a multicultural and social justice lens.

The researchers divided into two analysis teams that analyzed focus group interviews conducted in both English and Spanish language according to the preference of participants. Prior to beginning analysis, each team discussed their beliefs and experiences related to the 2016 presidential election, the Latinx population, and resilience. Several members identified as liberal Democrats and expressed initial shock and disappointment regarding the 2016 presidential election results. Members expressed feeling an indirect impact of the election on family, friends, and the community. Others expressed current and future worry about family and friends' immigration status. There was a general consensus that highlighting the voice of participants gives an opportunity for them to share their thoughts and feelings as well as provides information for assisting the local community through programming and resources.

Participants

Participants in this study were nineteen Latina/o self-identified community members (15 female, 4 male; 18 Mexican nationals or Mexican Americans and one Guatemalan), who ranged in age from 18 to 81, $\chi = 51.10$. Sixteen participants identified as first-generation (born outside the U.S.), two participants identified as second-generation (born in the U.S., parents born in another country), and one participant identified as third-generation (participant and participant's parents were born in the U.S., one of the participant's grandparents was born in another country). Participants were recruited via purposive sampling through social media outlets, local flyers, snowball technique, and community contacts familiar with Latinx community organizations and individuals on the West Coast. Criteria for participation included self-identification as Latina/o/x, having opinions, beliefs, and reactions about the 2016 presidential election and the desire to express them, and being 18 years of age or older.

Procedures

Interested respondents meeting criteria were invited to complete a demographic questionnaire and participate in a semi-structured focus group with other community members. In some instances, participants were members of pre-existing groups (e.g., community center breakfast group). Four focus groups were conducted, ranging in size from two to nine participants. Upon arriving for the focus group, the study was explained, and participants signed a consent form which outlined the limits of confidentiality and asked for permission to audio record the focus group (all consented). The focus groups ranged from approximately one hour to one

hour and a half in length, beginning with the initial set of semi-structured questions, but also allowing for any related topics or questions to arise as part of an inductive study approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The focus groups were conducted in English or Spanish at the preference of the participants and occurred between March and June of 2017. In most cases, one researcher led the group, while one or two other researchers attended to the tape recorder and took written notes of content and observations. This study received institutional review board approval.

Instruments

Semi-structured Interview protocol. The interview protocol included questions about reactions to the 2016 presidential election results and government, ways in which participants dealt with their feelings about the election results and government, and plans on dealing with election results and the new administration. The researchers transcribed the focus group protocols verbatim (see Appendix 1).

Research Paradigm

The research paradigm in this study is based on both social constructivist and postpositivist perspectives (Boyatzis, 1998). Social constructivism aims to understand participants' subjective experiences, asserts that there are multiple realities shaped by our contextualized experiences, and affirms that meaning is co-constructed through researcher-participant interactions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Similarly, in practice, postpositivism assumes multiple perspectives shared by participants, yet follows logical and rigorous procedures during data collection and analysis to minimize bias (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This paradigmatic framework was selected to create a platform for participant voices and perspectives to emerge and inform the findings (Boyatzis, 1998). A grounded theory method was selected to move beyond description and provide a unified theoretical explanation of how participants in this study have experienced a period of time after the 2016 presidential election (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Specifically, the data were analyzed using Boyatzis' Thematic Analysis, a hybridized grounded theory approach which provides a thick, rich description of participant responses by identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns that emerge within the data (Boyatzis, 1998).

Data Analysis

The researchers divided into English and Spanish analysis teams to code and discuss interview data in its original language, as per suggestions of international researchers who have worked with multilingual data (Smith, Chen, & Liu, 2008). Data remained in its original language throughout the analysis process and was translated only internally as the team discussed a final coding scheme.

During the analysis phase, the team first discussed preconceived notions related to the current presidency and political climate, Latinx populations within this context, and any other relevant perspectives. Researchers within both teams each independently reviewed the transcripts and noted significant statements and themes, then came together to come to a consensus on the coding of the data. The lead author served as an internal auditor and was present during analysis team discussions to help prevent groupthink by analysis team members, and to promote adherence to the data, thus deriving codes and themes strictly "grounded" in data (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 82). Finally, all researchers involved in this study (including members of both analysis teams) met routinely to discuss and create one, consolidated coding scheme consisting of separate identifiable and distinct, but broad and overarching themes, subthemes, and tertiary categories encompassing the attitudes, beliefs, reactions, and ways of dealing or coping with times of political change and adversity for these participants, as per Boyatzis' Thematic Analysis (1998). The language used by participants was retained where possible. In some cases, participants in both English and Spanish groups said the same thing; therefore themes titles are bilingual.

The coding scheme was then audited by the two lead authors, who served as external auditors and have each worked for many years in multicultural issues with Latinx populations, and in qualitative inquiry. These

external auditors ensured raw data was logically reflected in the coding scheme and provided feedback to the researchers at all stages of the data analysis, which were discussed and incorporated as necessary.

Results

Data from participants were analyzed and organized into three broad categories, then the overarching categories were divided into subcategories, and even further separated into tertiary categories as necessary for the purpose of constructing meaning and representing the depth of the input offered. The first broad category was labeled Perspectives on Outcome of the 2016 Presidential Election and defined as "the attitudes and points of view about the 2016 election," which included the subcategories of Aversion to President Trump and Negativism Surrounding Socio-Political Environment. The second broad category was labeled Observed Impacts of the Presidential Election Results and defined as "specific ways in which the results of the 2016 election have impacted the participants or the community, as experienced by participants." Subcategories identified for this broad theme included Negative Emotions and Systemic Changes. The third broad category was labeled Ways of Dealing with the results of the 2016 Presidential Election and defined as "the various approaches employed by participants in response to the 2016 presidential election results;" subcategories included Personal Methods and Action (see Table 1 for an overview of all themes, categories, and subcategories). Definitions and descriptions of the subcategories, as well as significant quotes from the participants in the focus groups for each of the tertiary categories, are presented next. All quotes are presented in their original language.

Table 1. Coding Scheme of Categories, Subcategories, and Tertiary Categories

Categories	Subcategories	Tertiary categories
1. Perspectives on the Outcome of the 2016 Presidential Election	A. Aversion to President Trump	*1. Negative Personal Characteristics*
		2. "Not my president/No es mi presidente"
	B. Negativism Surrounding Socio-Political Environment	*1. Regression of Government*
		2. Increased Sense of Hostility and Heightened Discrimination
2. Observed Impacts of the Election Results	A. Negative Emotions	*1.Personal Emotional Responses*
		2. Pity for other people/Lástima por otra gente
	B. Systemic Changes	*1. Schools*
		2.Immigration/Inmigración
3. Ways of Dealing with the results of the 2016 Presidential Election	A. Personal Methods	*1. Spirituality/Espiritualidad*
		2. Persistence
		3. Hope
		4. Disconnecting
	B. Action	*1. Building Community*
		2.Proceed with Caution

1. Perspectives on the Outcome of the 2016 Presidential Election

  1 A. Aversion to President Trump. This subcategory was characterized by dissatisfied thoughts and opinions about President Trump's personal characteristics, skills, and behavior. It consisted of two tertiary categories.

  The first tertiary category, 1 A *1,* was labeled Negative Personal Characteristics. Several participants expressed critical views of President Trump's traits or qualities, criticism, and doubt about his eligibility and ways of being, demeanor, or competence. Representative quotes by participants include: "Tiene una manera de expresarse tan fea y tan grosera que cada vez que él habla me parte el alma, me duele el estómago, me da un dolor de cabeza. Su manera de hablar me afecta a mi físicamente..." [He has such a rude and ugly way of expressing himself that every time he talks it breaks my soul, my stomach hurts, I get a headache. His way of talking affects me physically...] and, "I just see him as a very divisive president in all ways, shapes, and forms… and it's frustrating for me to see a man who is a misogynist, who is a racist, who like wants to oppress us, you know, and women just in general." Another participant, mixing English and Spanish, stated:

> Y yo pienso que no he dormido bien desde ese día. Ha habido muchos presidentes y gobernadores que uno no esta de acuerdo con ellos, eso no es nada nuevo pero este hombre trae… 'guacala'… [and I think that I haven't slept well since that day. There have been many presidents and governments that one does not agree with, that is nothing new, but this man has something like… Disgusting!] Cuando el habla yo siento así como ugh, [When he talks I feel like ugh] I think I'm gonna throw up a little bit… como que da asco... [he is just gross…].

  The second tertiary category, 1 A *2*. Not my president/*no es mi presidente*, involved a perceived lack of representation by, or identification with Trump by some participants. Representative quotes include: "Que están subsistiendo separados injustamente por este señor que, perdóneme Dios, pero no lo puedo ver como presidente." [They are surviving separately unjustly due to this mister, who, forgive me God, but I can't see him as president]. Another participant stated, "I don't think that he represents my family and the community that I belong to." Yet another indicated, "Trump is not my president. He does not represent me and my generation."

  1 B. Negativism surrounding socio-political environment. This second subcategory within the broad category of Perspectives on the Outcome of the 2016 Presidential Election included negative comments about the current socio-political climate and a heightened sense of hostility, prejudice, and overt discrimination. This subcategory encompassed two tertiary categories. The first tertiary category, 1 B *1*, Regression of Government, involved perception of the government as taking a step backward in political, social, and economic progress. Representative quotes by participants included: "Yo no siento que estamos en democracia, no siento que somos seres libres. Yo no siento que las cosas han mejorado… Vivimos en una cultura de miedo, de terror, desde hace muchísimo tiempo." [I do not feel like we live in a democracy, I don't feel like we are free beings. I do not feel like things have improved…we live in a culture of fear, of terror, and have been for a long time now]. Another participant stated, "… mentalmente es demasiado, ya estamos viviendo tiempos muy difíciles no estamos mejorando como sociedad, ni en lo económico ni en nada. Creo que ahora, emocionalmente ahora, la salud mental está a punto de reventar." [… mentally it's a lot, we are living through very difficult times and we are not improving as a society, not economically or anything. I believe now, emotionally now, mental health is about to explode]. Yet another participant stated, "…Están empeorando las cosas. Se están llevando cantidades grandísimas de nuestro dinero… yo me siento así como que tú creaste el problema, tú nos das la solución…" [… They are making things worse. They are taking large quantities of our money…I feel like you created the problem, you give us the solution…]. Another participant succinctly concluded, "I feel like we're going backwards."

  The second tertiary category, 1 B *2*, Increased Sense of Hostility and Heightened Discrimination, involved an apparent change in increased tolerance of negative thoughts/actions towards marginalized groups, more

permission for discrimination, and a growing awareness of aggression towards Latinx community members. Representative quotes by participants include: "Porque esto está creando… este tipo de situaciones donde ahora es evidente que existe, que ha estado ahí, pero ahora con el apoyo de él, pues como que es el último ingrediente para que todo reviente." [majority of group members nodded head in agreement] [Because this is creating…this type of situation where it's evident that it exists, it has been there, but now with his support, well it's like it was the last ingredient needed for everything to burst.]. Another participant stated, "I have felt through family members, through friends increased prejudice and things that have come back to the surface …" "Unos peleándose con otros… creando una ola de discriminación." [Some fighting against others…creating a wave of discrimination.]. Several participants indicated feelings of being attacked either personally or the observation of it within their larger community. Participants stated the following, "¿Por qué atacan a las personas? "¿Por qué? "¿Por qué tiene tanto poder un grupo de personas?" [Why do they attack people? Why? Why does one group of people have so much power?] "El racismo lo hemos visto siempre y siempre va a haber, pero ahora explotó…" [We have always seen racism, and there will always be racism, but now it exploded…] Finally, "As a woman of color, I feel like as a woman he's attacking me, as a person of color he's attacking me, as a young, you know, middle-aged working mom he's attacking me…"

2. Observed Impacts of the Election Results

2 A. Negative emotions. This first subcategory involved instances where participants expressed their heightened anxiety, guilt, fear, pain, and shock. This subcategory consisted of two tertiary categories.

The first tertiary category, 2 A *1*, Personal Emotional Responses, encompassed negative emotions personally experienced at an individual level. Representative quotes by participants included: "Yo, en lo personal de verdad que ahorita estoy a ciegas porque desde que inició la administración este señor hubo reacciones todos los días de sorpresa. Y mucha ansiedad, con mucho estrés." [Personally, since he started the administration I am blind right now because there were daily reactions out of nowhere. Lots of anxiety, with a lot of stress.] "Cuando amanecí en la mañana como que se me fue la respiración y fue un día, ugh, de muy baja energía como una depresión muy fuerte." [When I woke up in the morning, I felt like I could not breathe and it was, ugh, a low energy day, it was like a deep depression.]. Another participant stated, "Para mi cada elección, a veces es menos, esta vez fue mas fuerte, creo que al otro día de la elección se podía sentir afuera el clima diferente como muy silencioso. Yo decía, oh, que será, pero era todo lo que estaba pasando…" [For me every election, sometimes it's less, but this time was a lot stronger, I believe that the day of the election one could feel the climate outside was different like very silent. I would ask myself, what could it be, but it was everything that was happening…].

The second tertiary category 2 A *2*, Pity for Other People/*Lástima por otra gente* involved feelings of sadness and sympathy for individuals directly impacted by the new administration, proposed laws and perceived an increase in deportations. Representative quotes by participants include: "Sí mire, bueno a mí no me afectó con mis hijos gracias a Dios, pero sí lo estoy mirando con los vecinos donde vivo con mi tío. Está una pareja, yo no sé cuánto tiempo tienen aquí…" [Look, well, it did not affect me with my children thanks to God, but I am seeing the effect on my neighbors where I live with my uncle. There is a couple, I do not know how much time they have been here…]. "A mí no me afecta porque mis hijos son nacidos aquí, pero me pongo en los zapatos de otra persona y digo… padre santo… ayuda a la próxima generación que son los niños. Que están subsistiendo separados injustamente por este señor." [It did not affect me because my children were born here, but I put myself in other people's shoes and think…Holy Father…help the next generation that are the kids. They are surviving separated unjustly because of this man.]. "Yo no tengo que temer porque yo soy ciudadana americana, pero me da mucha lástima por los niños, que están separando a las familias." [I don't have be fearful because I am an American citizen, but I feel bad for the children, I feel bad that they are separating families.]. Another participant stated:

Mi mamá cuando yo era joven, no tenía documentos *so* esto era un miedo para nosotros y yo pienso

que parte de mi frustración ahorita es porque estoy reviviendo los temores que yo tuve en mi niñez… afortunadamente nunca se la llevaron y no pasó nada, pero ese golpe, ese dolor, ese trauma, ese miedo lo viví, aunque ella no fue deportada nunca… Yo siento dolor pensando en cuantos niños están viviendo ese mismo temor. [When I was young, my mom did not have documents so that was scary for us and I think that part of my frustration right now is because I am reliving the fears I had when I was young… fortunately they never took her and nothing happened, but even though she was never deported I lived that punch, that pain, that trauma, that fear. I feel pain when I think about how many children are living that same fear].

Yet another participant stated:

At family, or at home it's been the same but it's more like what happens if something does happen. Like what if there's a mess up and he takes away one of my parents right? I'm 18 now so I can legally- so if they were to leave I'd be in charge of the money but I know for a fact that I'm not ready to be in a position of taking money or working to support my younger brothers who are still in high school or in junior high. So, I don't know. Yeah, it's scary to think about what could happen if he was to take out all the immigrants that he claims he would.

2 B. Systemic changes. The second subcategory within the broad category of Observed Impacts of the Election Results, included real and anticipated changes in participants' social ecologies. This subcategory involved two tertiary categories.

The first tertiary category, 2 B *1*, Schools, captured a concern about a possible decrease in educational funding and resources. One participant stated:

Mis hijas veo la frustración de ellas que me dicen ma todos los cambios que han hecho y también les ha perjudicado a ellas en lo que es lo de las escuelas…porque tenían como mas ayuda y también ahora se los cortaron también y me dijo mi hija ma y que vamos a hacer, y le digo pues tenemos que esperar que pase los cuatro años. Pero en cuatro años cuantas cosas pueden pasar y si veo la frustración de ellas también y de otras personas con los que he platicado que ven la diferencia de todos los cambios y recortes. [I see the frustration in my daughters where they tell me of all the changes they have done and that have harmed them with regards to school… because they had more help but now they've cut those resources too and my daughter told me, mom what are we going to do, and I tell her well, that we have to wait till the four years pass. But in four years many things can happen, and I see the frustration in them and in other people who I talk with that see the difference that the changes and cuts make.].

Another participant stated:

I've been very active in my kids' schools, and I believe in public education. And when you talk about taking funding away, you're taking away that from my kids' schools, and it's going to impact what you know provided for them. And I don't think that's okay. So, it's a direct impact, and not everyone sees the public policy, and you know politics as it directly impacts you.

The second tertiary category, 2 B *2*, Immigration/*Inmigración*, involved concerns about the increase in deportations, detainment, and anti-immigration policies. One participant stated:

El estar ahí en la oficina todos los días oyendo 'mi esposo ha sido detenido, inmigración lo tiene. ¿Qué puedo hacer con mis hijos? El es el único que trabajaba. Tengo miedo salir por mis hijos, ¿cómo voy ahora seguir adelante sin el sustento de mi esposo?' [To be there in the office every day hearing 'my husband has been detained, immigration has him. What can I do with my children? He is the only one

who was working. I am scared to go out for my children, how am I going to move forward without the support of my husband?'].

Another participant stated:

Mi hijo acaba de ser detenido porque estaba manejando... Estaba manejando y la policía le pidió los documentos, y pues como él no pudo presentarlos lo detuvieron y ahora se lo dieron a inmigración, ¿qué puedo hacer yo? [My son has just been detained because he was driving... He was driving, and the police asked him for his documentation, and well because he could not provide them they detained him and now they sent him to immigration. What can I do?].

3. Ways of Dealing with the Election Results

3 A. Personal Methods. This first subcategory was characterized by individual resources used to sustain and enhance one's well-being following the election. This subcategory was specified further into four tertiary categories.

The first tertiary category, 3 A *1*. Spirituality/*Espiritualidad*, involved using, seeking, or looking to a higher power for hope, peace, and comfort. Representative quotes by participants include: "Pues mire, le doy gracias a Dios, que Dios es el que me da la fuerza y la fortaleza cada día." [Well look, I give thanks to God, God gives me the strength and fortitude every day.]. "Pero esperemos que Dios le toque su corazón a ese hombre (referring to President Trump)" [But let us hope that God touches that man's heart]. "Yo siempre he pensado que orar mucho por la persona, orar por la persona. No podemos pedir mal a nadie. No podemos, no debemos pedirle mal al mal. Eso seria, seria ir en contra de lo corriente…" [I have always thought that praying for the person, pray for the person. We can't wish bad to anyone. We can't, we shouldn't wish for bad to the bad. That would be to go against the ordinary].

The second tertiary category, 3 A *2*, Persistence, involved the will to keep living in spite of current national conditions and challenges. Representative quotes by participants include: "Mi plan es seguir, somos muy fuertes en general, somos una comunidad muy fuerte, muy trabajadora e inteligente. Muchas personas tenemos carreras profesionales mas no podemos ejercerlas. Pero mi plan es, pues seguir viviendo." [My plan is to continue, we are strong in general, we are a very strong community, hardworking and smart. Many of us have professional careers but we can't practice them. But my plan is, well, go on living]. "Seguimos en la lucha… Obedecemos las leyes que, aunque las leyes a veces están en contra de nosotros… Pero seguir, seguir portándonos bien. Salir adelante, seguir contribuyendo al país que construimos por mucho." [We continue the fight… We abide the laws despite laws sometimes being against us… But continue, continue behaving well. Move forward, continue contributing to the country that we've constructed by a lot.].

The third tertiary category, 3 A *3*, Hope, involved the belief that things will change and get better. Representative quotes by participants include: "… if he goes down, we go down with him. So, we just have to put up with him and hope for the best. I can't always be scared, that's my takeaway. Yeah, you got to be worried but don't do it to the point where you're scared, and you don't know what to do, and it dominates your life." "And I said one of the main things that I truly believe in no matter if Trump's president or if somebody else or you know the tide, the political tide always comes and goes, and things change."

The fourth tertiary category, 3 A *4*, Disconnecting, involved actions that participants engaged in to avoid the political atmosphere. Representative quotes by participants include: "Yo trato de ignorarlas, como que yo no miro las cosas, no las escucho para que no me afecte tanto." [I try to ignore them, I act as if I don't see the things, I don't listen to them so that it doesn't affect me so much.]. "No miro televisión, no miro noticias." [I don't watch television, I don't watch the news.]. "Turning off the news, turning off the social media, taking a break from things…"

3 B. Action. This second subcategory, that has the pursuit of social justice at its core, encompassed decisions and behaviors made to help oneself and one's community. This subcategory was further specified into two tertiary categories.

The first tertiary category, 3 A *1*, Building Community, involved working together to take social justice steps towards finding solutions for issues affecting participants' communities. Representative quotes by participants include: "Creo que el trabajar para educar a nuestros niños es lo único que podemos hacer para que ellos en el futuro ese trauma que ahora lo están viviendo quizá no lo olviden pero que puedan valorar y lo puedan voltear a algo positivo." [I believe that the only thing we can do is work to educate our children so in the future the trauma that they are living now they might not forget it but perhaps value or be able to turn it into something positive.]. Another participant stated: "Mi hija me dijo, mom puse en FB 'en tal lugar esta la migración'... y ya todos le mandaron a decir oh gracias por decirnos donde van a estar…" [My daughter told me, Mom I put on Facebook that 'immigration is at such place'… and everyone sends her a thank you for telling them were they are going to be.]. Yet another participant shared: "I've actually started to become more active with some advocacy groups … I'm reading more, I'm you know supporting and becoming more of an ally." And another: "If I don't participate in the march is there another way I can contribute … like always trying to find a way to be involved in the community again." Another: "I feel like people who are joining advocacy groups or trying to give back to their community by doing volunteer work that's growing, that's nourishing, that's flourishing and creating positive energy." And finally: "For me, as a mom of four kids I think it's really important that I role model and the adults in the community role model that we won't tolerate going backward."

The second tertiary category, 3 B *2*, Proceed With Caution, involved participants' alertness or carefulness in moving forward in situations perceived as dangerous. A participant stated:

> Mi hijo, tiene una condición, el es especial y he trabajado tanto con el para hacerlo un niño normal. Para el es traumático vivir sin mamá, porque el sabe que necesita de alguien que este siempre con él. Y el me decía y yo ¿qué voy a hacer si tu te vas? ¿Qué vamos a hacer? 'Tenemos que hacer el plan para que el disability que alguien este junto a mi', y tengo que decirle, no tu eres una persona completamente normal, vas a salir adelante tu solo. O sea, es bien traumático porque como que para él su futuro ya no esta encaminado en el mismo sendero que llevábamos. [My son has a condition, he is special education and I have worked a lot with him to make him normal. For him it is traumatic to live without Mom because he knows that he needs help from someone, someone who is with him at all times. He would tell me, what am I going to do if you leave? What are we going to do? 'We have to create a plan so that disability can provide someone to be with me' and I have to tell him, no you are a completely normal person, you will move ahead on your own. It's very traumatic because his life path is not the same as we had planned it.].

Another participant stated:

> Yo oí que era una familia y a la, creo que a la mamá, le cortaron la mica, y no la dejaron entrar. Entonces yo estaba pensando el otro día, dije okey, yo soy ciudadana no voy a cargar unos papeles pero, sí se me ocurrió sacar una copia de mi pasaporte y traerla conmigo. Porque, si me para la policía… [I heard that there was a family and I believe the Mom, they cut her *mica* (Legal Permanent Resident Card) and they didn't let her enter the country. So, I started thinking the other day, ok, I am a citizen, I won't carry my papers, but it did occur to me to make a copy of my passport and carry it with me because if the police stop me…].

Another participant stated:

> Yo ahora mismo, antes ni siquiera la había visto, mi residencia la tarjeta siempre estaba guardada, y

ahora la cargo en mi cartera todos los días. O sea, que si pierdo la cartera pierdo mi residencia pierdo todo. Pero yo la traigo en mi cartera y le estoy regañando a mi esposo. 'Llévate tu mica, tráela en tu cartera, ¿qué tal si te agarran en por donde andes trabajando y te avientan para afuera?' Y yo estoy diciéndole así, y ahora yo la traigo siempre en mi cartera por miedo, porque digo, no sé si me van a parar en alguna parte o me va a tocar. Eso es lo que me ha hecho el miedo a mí. [I, right now, I hadn't even looked at it before, my residency card was always put away, and now I carry it in my wallet every day. So, if I lose my wallet, I lose my residency, I lose everything. But I carry it in my purse and I have been scolding my husband, 'Take your green card, carry it in your wallet, what if they get you where you are working, and they deport you?' And I keep telling him like that, and now I carry it in my wallet because of fear, because I say I don't know if they are going to stop me somewhere or it is going to be my turn. That is what fear has made to me.]

Discussion

The current study sought to honor the voices of Latinx community members in a West Coast U.S. town in reaction to the 2016 presidential election. This study makes a significant social justice contribution in that it is one of the first studies to create a research platform for voices of our community members who would otherwise be unheard. The study also highlights the types of social justice action efforts that can be implemented by community members to improve existing contextual challenges. Importantly, these community members were among those who stood to lose the most, given immigration reform and threatened restrictions. It is important to note that this study was a "snapshot in time" in that many other events have occurred on the world stage since these focus groups. However, the intent was to capture the psychological responses and ways of coping being used in the first months after the election. The use of focus groups as a data collection method allowed for more casual conversations to take place among community members while shifting the focus away from the researchers (Wilkinson, 1999). Moreover, the use of a novel two-team approach, one in Spanish and one in English, and then coming together with both for one final coding scheme, captured and represented the complexities of the Latinx American identity – part Latinx, part U.S. culture, and at times, part Spanish, and part English.

Another contribution of this study includes documenting the experiences of some members of the Latinx community. Researchers were careful to frame questions in a non-leading manner, and at no time indicated a satisfaction or disappointment with the election results themselves. Despite this, all participants discussed adversities related to the election results, and no one discussed any positive outcomes. Discussions ranged from fears to physical difficulties, and all appeared to be struggling to cope with these reactions on a daily basis. This occurrence at such a level warrants the attention of educators and helping professionals.

Despite such adversities and detailed descriptions of negative reactions, most participants in the study discussed having hope for the future and devising social-justice focused approaches to deal with their current negative feelings and emotions. This ability to overcome adversity or resilience, is notable as well. Many individuals discussed persistence, which may be related to the Mexican American cultural value of *aguantar* (to persevere no matter what) (Morgan Consoli, Cabrera, Llamas, Noriega, & Gonzalez, 2014). There was also a sense of persistence for their families and communities, drawing on a history of community strength and *familismo* (family first, Losada et al., 2010). Such values seemed inherent in the descriptions of facing adversity. Some participants described going even further and taking action, educating others, and doing community service. While the adversities experienced should in no way be minimized by this display of resilience afterward, it was notable that most participants viewed the hardship as a catalyst for perseverance and service in seeking social justice. This sense of community and its sustaining qualities has been explicated in other literature which

suggests that the strength of bonding among community members and a willingness to accept and help others may assist in the healing process after adverse situations (Ramos, Suarez, Leon, & Trinidad, 2017; Schultz et al., 2016). For these participants, it seems that the role of connection to their community created a sense of unity and responsibility to speak on their experiences as well as a desire to take action.

The spur to action may be similar to the process of conscientization, a Freirian concept in which people who experience oppression come to realize their own conditions and work to take action to change society (Freire, 1973, 1993). Often, experiencing adversities serves as a catalyst for the development of such critical consciousness (Quintana & Segura-Herrera, 2003). Therefore, for many of the participants who spoke of how the election caused them to engage in more community action and service, a process of social-justice awareness and action may have been ignited, and such a process may contribute to overcoming the adversity. Such a finding is important from a social justice perspective, in that increased critical consciousness by more people is more likely to lead to political change. The injustice, however, is that people must experience this in the first place.

Limitations/Future Directions

While this study makes several contributions to the extant literature in this field, it does so with limitations. As noted above, this study captures feelings in the months immediately after the 2016 presidential election. Much has happened since that time, which has impacted the Latinx community even more greatly. In the future, a longitudinal study might be helpful as fully understanding this type of adversity and resilience entails a process rather than only a point in time. Additionally, while beneficial in many ways, the design and analysis process of two analysis teams and two languages was not without challenges. For example, when the teams came together to combine the coding into one coding scheme, they often had to determine whether the sentiment was expressed more in Spanish or in English. Additionally, it was a challenge to combine a vast amount of data from two different teams into one synthesized coding scheme.

Lessons Learned

As with any research that involves community participants, the necessity for trust, and a good relationship had to be established. In particular, given the inherently political nature of the topic and the fear around the deportation of the times, trust became vital. The relationship with the community contacts, as trusted members of the community and including one who became a participant herself, helped us to overcome the initial difficulties. Beyond this, we attempted to create a comfortable and informal atmosphere, providing food, holding some of the meetings in the living room of a home or at a meeting room of a community center, to help put participants at ease. However, even with community contacts, some participants voiced concern about expressing views and opinions to the researchers. This issue of trust has often been a challenge in conducting community research (Jagosh et al., 2015). Future studies might consider further ways to help address this often-present concern so as to increase participants' level of comfort.

Another lesson learned is that conducting focus groups in the language of the participants' choice, and then continuing to analyze and code in the language of the interview, was extremely beneficial to the richness and completeness of our findings. While logistically challenging at times, the themes brought forth from the Spanish groups and the themes brought forth from the English groups differed slightly. It is beyond the scope of this article to address these differences. However, it was clear that different perspectives were being consolidated into the final coding scheme from the different groups. In other words, had all focus groups been conducted and analyzed in only one language, a sizable breadth of data would have been lost and may have even misrepresented what some of the participants intended to convey.

Finally, as with all community-based research, flexibility was key. At times groups were formed and then canceled due to schedule conflicts by participants, more or fewer participants showed up than anticipated, or

participants came to a group that was not in their preferred language. In all of these instances, researchers needed to decide at the moment how to best handle the situation, and the value of genuinely representing community voices had to be weighed against more traditional and strict "best practices" of research. As an example, when both Spanish and English preference participants showed up for an expected Spanish focus group, researchers decided at the moment to split into two different groups, though smaller than anticipated, rather than not hear the voices of those participants or reschedule.

Implications

Several implications can also be drawn from this study. The study represents the specific psychological effects of changes in government and the increasing polarization in the U.S., through the lived experiences of some of its marginalized members. By providing a humanized "snapshot" of what some members of the Latinx community have gone through in regard to the 2016 presidential election, we are better able to envision the best means of providing support. Through using a strengths-based lens, perhaps, more importantly, we are able to highlight the immense fortitude of many of our Latinx community members. Specifically, counselors and psychologists working with Latinx clients who are suffering from current climate issues, being careful not to minimize the reality of the barriers, can be aware of and focus on the strengths of the person and community. Through a liberation psychology lens (Martin-Baro, 1983), it is our responsibility as more privileged society members to bear witness to and accompany those less-privileged, and to attempt to educate, elucidate and right wrongs when we can; particularly, given the current WHMP being highlighted in our nation today. As psychologists and counselors committed to social justice, the current study gives us the information we can use to engage in this commitment.

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Appendix 1. Post-election Reactions and Coping Among Latinxs: Focus Group Protocol English and Spanish

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate today. We will have an approximately one-hour conversation in which I will ask you some questions about your feelings and thoughts regarding the results of the recent national election and the new government. The purpose of this focus group is to understand your reactions to and ways of coping with post-election.

Interview Questions

1. What are your main thoughts and feelings about the recent political election and the new government? (prompts) Do you have any fears? Are there things you are happy about?

2. How have you and/or your family been coping with your feelings about the election results and the new government?

3. What do you plan to do in the future to cope with your feelings about the government and election? How will you be able to get past any concerns you have?

At the end: Thank you very much for sharing your time and your views.

Spanish

Muchas gracias por participar en el estudio. Estaremos conversando por una hora, aproximadamente. Les estaremos preguntando sobre sus perspectivas y reacciones, sus emociones y pensamientos relacionados con los resultados de las elecciones nacionales y el nuevo gobierno nacional. Nuevamente, el propósito de nuestra reunión es conocer sus reacciones y las diferentes maneras en las que sobrellevan sus reacciones, pensamientos y emociones.

Preguntas

1. Cuáles son sus principales perspectivas y reacciones, sus sentimientos y pensamientos sobre los resultados de las elecciones y el nuevo gobierno nacional? ¿Tienen algún miedo en particular? ¿Estan contentxs?

2. Les invitamos a compartir las maneras en las cuales tanto Uds. como sus familias le están haciendo frente o sobrellevando sus reacciones, sentimientos y pensamientos con respecto a los resultados de las elecciones y el nuevo gobierno nacional.

3. ¿Qué planes tienen Uds. para lidiar con sus reacciones, sentimientos y pensamientos en el futuro (sentimientos y pensamientos relacionados con los resultados de las elecciones y el nuevo gobierno nacional) ¿Cómo superarán sus preocupaciones?