Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology
2013, Vol. 19, No. 3, 279–287

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1099-9809/13/$12.00 DOI: 10.1037/a0033176

"Why We Stay": Immigrants' Motivations for Remaining in Communities Impacted by Anti-Immigration Policy

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Although restrictive immigration policy is intended to reduce incentives for unauthorized immigrants to remain in the United States, many immigrants remain in their U.S. community despite the anti-immigration climate surrounding them. This study explores motivations shaping immigrants' intentions to stay in Arizona after passage of Senate Bill 1070 in 2010, one of the most restrictive immigration policies in recent decades. We conducted three focus groups in a large metropolitan city in Arizona with Mexican immigrant parents ($N = 25$). Themes emerging from the focus groups described multiple and interlocking personal, family and community, and contemporary sociopolitical motivations to stay in their community, and suggest that some important motivating factors have evolved as a result of immigrants' changing environment. Implications for research and social policy reform are discussed.

Keywords: Mexican immigrants, anti-immigration climate, SB1070, motivations to stay

Despite a downturn in unauthorized immigration since 2007 (Passel, Cohn, & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2012), concerns over unauthorized immigration have prompted legislators to introduce restrictive U.S. immigration policies. In the early months of 2010 alone, more than two-thirds of U.S. states considered 1,180 immigration bills (Casas & Cabrera, 2011). Prior to 2010, Arizona had passed laws enforcing racial profiling, criminalization of false identification, workplace raids, English-only education, and restricted employment opportunities and access to public social services (Androff et al., 2011). In April of 2010, Arizona passed Senate bill 1070 (SB1070), mandating law enforcement to determine the legal status of individuals when stopped or arrested based on suspicion of unauthorized status, to penalize immigrants for not carrying documentation of immigration status, and to penalize persons who employ, harbor, or assist unauthorized immigrants (Lacayo, 2012).[1]

Although the commonly termed "papers please" provision of SB1070 was blocked in federal court when we conducted our study in October of 2010, verification of status had already been in place for many years through the sheriff's office in the metropolitan city in Arizona where we conducted this study. In addition, a U.S. district judge put this provision back into effect in September of 2012. Beyond SB1070, Arizona legislators have attempted to block federal mandates to grant identification cards to young adult immigrants seeking higher education and employment. Other states, including Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina, have passed policies similar to SB1070 (Passel et al., 2012).

A consequence of these bills is the legitimization of discrimination, detention, and deportation targeted primarily at low-skilled Latino immigrants (Lacayo, 2012). These practices instill fear and uncertainty among immigrants about the family's preservation and economic future (Androff et al., 2011). Immigrants cope with this climate by minimizing public exposure, including their involvement in social services and institutions central to their children's well-being (Garcia & Keyes, 2012). The present study focuses on the motivations shaping immigrants' decision to remain in communities affected by an anti-immigration climate. It draws on focus group interviews conducted with largely unauthorized Mexican immigrant parents in a metropolitan city in Arizona. Our study employs a social ecological framework to examine the emotional, social, and economic motivations to remain in U.S. communities in the context of an anti-immigration climate.

Although several studies have examined the economic and social processes driving permanent settlement in the United States (Durand, Massey, & Zenteno, 2001; Lindstrom, 1996), these studies predate the current sociopolitical climate. It is unclear whether the same motivations operate for immigrants intending to remain in a community marked by an anti-immigration climate, or

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We thank Steve Quintana for his thoughtful comments on earlier drafts of this article. We would also like to express our appreciation to the families who participated in the Children, Families and Schools Project. Research funded by R01HD051762-01A2 from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), and by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), U.S. Department of Education (DOE), through Grant #R305B090009 to the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not represent views of NICHD, IES, or DOE.

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[1] In the time that has elapsed since our focus groups were conducted, the constitutionality of parts of SB1070 has been challenged by the Supreme Court. However, Arizona legislators have proposed laws similar to SB1070, and denied recent federal mandates to create a pathway to work for young adults who arrived in the United States illegally as young children.

whether some of these motivations might have become more or less important, or have shifted in nature.

Our article begins with a brief review of research on the psychological, social, and political factors that have been used to explain immigrants' transition in orientation from temporary to permanent settlement. Next, we present our overall study purpose and our method employed, followed by the results emerging from our focus groups. The article concludes with observations on the implications of our findings for future research, practice, and policy.

A Social Ecological Framework of the Decision to Stay

Our framework is grounded in a social ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), in which personal characteristics, family and community factors, and social and political forces that change over time influence well-being (American Psychological Association, Presidential Task Force on Immigration, 2012). Extant research on immigrant settlement in the United States engages these various dimensions, which might operate independently or in conjunction to motivate immigrants to remain in their host communities. Thus, a social ecological perspective provides a comprehensive framework from which to contextualize motivations to remain in Arizona.

Personal Characteristics

Research shows that most Mexican immigrants come to the United States with a strong sense of hope and self-determination, and that even when they encounter challenges, they are optimistic that their prospects will be more favorable than they could ever be in Mexico (American Psychological Association, Presidential Task Force on Immigration, 2012). This is especially true for immigrants from impoverished regions and for whom the new environment offers opportunities for social mobility (Guthey, 2001; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994).

Immigrants' resilience and optimism, which supports their willingness to settle, despite adversity in the host country, may follow from their initial motivations to immigrate to the United States (Berger Cardoso & Thompson, 2010). Immigrant families come to the United States with a deep commitment for hard work and sacrifice for a better life for their children (American Psychological Association, Presidential Task Force on Immigration, 2012; Hagelskamp, Orozco, & Hughes, 2010). This determination enhances their ability to cope with persistent stress and to manage difficult situations (Casas & Cabrera, 2011).

Family and Community Factors

Leaving one's native land for children is often a more significant motivator than financial gain (Hagelskamp et al., 2010; Tabor & Milfont, 2011). Not surprisingly, parents' investment in the prospect of a better life for their children can be a significant motivator to settle as well. U.S.-born children of immigrant parents have access to government-sponsored services and resources that may outweigh the costs of living in a particular environment (Casas & Cabrera, 2011). Returning to Mexico would take away benefits to the health and education of children.

Research also indicates that individuals with stronger ties through family or job prospects in the United States are more likely to emigrate; analogously, those with weaker ties to Mexico and stronger ties to the United States are more likely to remain in the United States (Lindstrom & Lopez Ramirez, 2010; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Moreover, feeling connected with a community seems to influence immigrants' decision to settle permanently (Chavez, 1994).

Social and Political Forces

Social and political currents both in the United States and in Mexico also affect immigrants' decision of whether or not to settle in their U.S. communities. Anti-immigrant sentiment nearly always escalates in times of economic crisis or stagnation (Massey & Sánchez, 2010). Recessions bring with them unstable employment opportunities, but a decision by immigrants to relocate would only be expected if they perceive other communities to offer better job opportunities (Wampler, Chávez, & Pedraza, 2009). In addition, returning to Mexico may not be viable, given the risks and costs associated with transnational travel, which have escalated dramatically with border enforcement in the last two decades (Cornelius & Lewis, 2007; Durand et al., 2001).

Purpose of Study

We use qualitative methods to explore the motivations shaping Mexican immigrants' intentions to stay in Arizona after passage of SB1070 in 2010. Drawing on focus groups conducted with immigrant parents in a large metropolitan city in Arizona, we describe the personal, family and community, and contemporary sociopolitical factors that intersect to motivate immigrants' decision to remain in their community despite a hostile environment. We use the same social ecological framework employed in the literature review to organize our results, investigating the extent to which various motivations to stay in Arizona may have shifted in the context of a harsh anti-immigrant climate. By exploring immigrants' motivations to stay in high-risk environments, psychologists and policymakers can more fully understand the holistic nature of risk and mitigating circumstances on the psychological well-being of immigrants, helping to guide policy decisions, interventions and advocacy efforts on behalf of this population.

Method

Choice of Inquiry Method

Focus groups were chosen as our method of inquiry for this context because immigrants' experiences with sociopolitical events are not just individual but collective. Thus, we borrowed from Hughes and Dumont's (1993) culturally anchored focus group model and Morgan's (2010) interactional analysis to help us identify personal as well as collective perspectives regarding immigrants' willingness to stay in Arizona. Focus groups are particularly promising with minority populations, such as ours, because the process of self-reflection facilitates connections between the person and culture that are revealed through language, metaphors, and shared experiences (Hughes & Dumont, 1993; Yeh & Inman, 2007).

Study and Participants

Our research is part of a larger study evaluating the causal impact of social capital on children's academic and behavioral outcomes in 52 elementary schools in Arizona and Texas with large Mexican student populations (Gamoran, Lopez Turley, Turner, & Fish, 2012; Valdez, Mills, Bohlig, & Kaplan, 2013). In the larger study, social capital was manipulated by random assignment of schools to a comparison condition or a treatment condition. The treatment condition consisted of an 8-week multifamily afterschool intervention, Families and Schools Together (FAST), designed to build relationships of trust and shared expectations among parents, teachers, and young children (McDonald et al., 2006). Because of the relationships we had established with families in our FAST schools, we selected families from three schools who had participated with their first-grade child (target child) in FAST during the previous year. In addition, to enhance our ability to recruit unauthorized immigrants without having to explicitly ask for immigration status, we targeted Title I elementary schools with high enrollments of children from immigrant families. Our local agency partner has extensive knowledge of schools in our study and worked with us in identifying these schools.

Data originate from three focus groups with 25 Mexican adults ranging in age from 23 to 54 years, with each group consisting of 6 to 11 participants. Most participants identified as female (84%), foreign-born (96%), and living in the United States for less than 15 years (71%). To protect participant privacy, immigration status was not asked. However, 96% of participants openly disclosed having unauthorized status. Participants had an average of 2.5 children living in the home. All target children met eligibility for free lunch at school, which is defined by the Department of Agriculture (2012) as living in a household with a reported income at or below 130% of the federal poverty guidelines. Target children were 7 to 8 years old at the time of the focus groups with their parents.

Procedures

Study procedures were approved by the institutional review board at our university. We invited participants by phone to participate in a focus group about their life in the United States, offering $15 compensation. Focus groups were held in their children's school. When parents enrolled in the larger study, they read and signed a written consent form, which ensured confidentiality and explained their potential participation in focus groups throughout the study.

We developed the interview protocol based on the literature on anti-immigration climate, in consultation with a colleague who is a scholar in qualitative methods with Mexican immigrants. We piloted the protocol with Mexican families in Texas who participated in the larger social capital study, finding that the language and order of questions was acceptable to the pilot participants. Our final protocol consisted of 10 open-ended questions about life as a parent in the United States, perceptions of and experiences with immigration policies, and motivations to remain in Arizona (see Table 1).

The first and third authors moderated all focus groups in Spanish, which were audiotaped and lasted between 60 and 90 min, and later debriefed and took extensive field notes about their impressions. Authors of this study are a faculty member (first author) in counseling psychology and two doctoral students in counseling psychology and sociology. All authors are fully bilingual in English and Spanish, two identify as Latino, and all have extensive qualitative research experience with Mexican populations.

Table 1
Focus Group Protocol Questions

Tell me what it is like to be a parent in the U.S.
How is parenting different from your country of origin?
What issues have you faced with your children?
What supports have you had as a parent in the U.S.?
What supports have you lacked as a parent in the U.S.?
Now let's talk about anti-immigration laws.
What is your understanding of these laws?
How have these laws affected Latino families?
How have these laws affected your ties to the community, your children, your children's school?
What keeps you in Arizona in spite of these laws?
Is there anything else I need to know about anti-immigration laws and Latino families?

Analysis and Validity Assessment

All authors analyzed the focus group content, in a process consisting of three phases. First, we read transcripts in their original language, reviewed field notes, and listened to audio recordings in order to (re)familiarize ourselves with the interview content, the sequencing of information, and the emphasis behind participants' responses. Consistent with Hughes and Dumont (1993) culturally anchored model, we paid particular attention to participants' descriptions of their experiences, the stories that support these descriptions, and their collective understanding of the topics discussed. Second, as recommended by Krueger and Casey (2009), two investigators independently transformed the transcripts into descriptive statements—verbatim statements of one or more sentences aligned with a particular topic—in order to capture experiences and meanings, and compared coding schemes in order to arrive at consensus on descriptive statements. Third, descriptive statements from all three transcripts were grouped into themes and categorized under the three macro-level themes identified by our social ecological framework. Disagreements in coding were handled by rereading the transcript and discussing the various pieces of evidence in support of a theme. This process was done until consensus was reached among all investigators. Interactions were also noted to enrich the shared knowledge emerging from the themes (Morgan, 2010). Quotations were translated into English by the first author, who is a native Spanish speaker.

Several measures were undertaken to secure theme stability. In addition to our systematic process of analysis, pretesting our interview protocol with families in Texas and conducting multiple focus groups within Arizona helped to ensure theme stability and provided a check against statements that were potential "outliers." In addition, an independent auditor with expertise in qualitative research with Mexican populations compared our final categories with the raw data to ensure that data stability had been reached and that categories were characterized under appropriate domains and labeled to faithfully represent the data.

Finally, authors were reflexive about their own philosophical positions and openly discussed biases in order to maximize objec-

tivity. We acknowledged our belief that an anti-immigration climate can be detrimental to immigrant families, and we took extra care to manage this bias by searching for contradictory evidence and by consulting experts in both the development of our protocol and in validating our coding and results.

Results

We organized our results around three broad themes related to participants' motivations to stay in Arizona: (a) personal characteristics, (b) family and community factors, and (c) social and political climate. We begin by summarizing the consequences of an anti-immigration climate on our participants. Themes (see Table 2) are illustrated with quotes, each one presented with the person's sex, age, length of U.S. residence, and number of children.

Anti-Immigration Climate as a Context of Families' Lives

The overwhelming majority of participants in Arizona had been negatively affected, either personally or indirectly through family members and friends, by what they considered to be restrictive immigration policies. Twenty percent of participants had either been detained or deported (and had returned), or had a close family member who had been deported. Even for those without direct experience with deportation, participants expressed the sentiment that it could happen to anyone at any time, as expressed by one participant: "God forbid but [deportation] could happen to anyone." Fear associated with deportation was heightened by perceived discrimination and racial profiling by non-Latino community members as well as by law enforcement officials. More than one third of participants reported being stopped by police for reasons they either did not understand or perceived to be the result of racial profiling. In addition to the stress associated with fears of deportation and racial profiling, participants noted increased economic stress due either to fear of working (and thereby exposing oneself to possible deportation) or to employers' reluctance to hire unauthorized immigrants.

A common justification provided by participants for staying in Arizona was that the alternatives to staying—returning to Mexico or moving to other states—were similarly fraught with risks and uncertainties. Thus, participants' decisions to stay in Arizona reflect tradeoffs between their current situation and their perception of what alternative scenarios might entail.

Table 2
Themes and Subthemes Relating to Immigrants' Motivations to Stay in Communities With Anti-Immigration Climate

General themes	Specific themes
Personal motivations	Perseverance and optimism, resignation and fatalism
	Religious faith
Family and community motivations	Dreams and hopes for their children
	Access to community resources
	Social ties and belonging
Socioeconomic and political Motivations	Economic conditions in United States and Mexico
	Violence in Mexico
	Perceived sociopolitical constraints in other U.S. states

Personal Motivations

Perseverance, resignation, and fatalism. Participants agreed that their lives in the United States had become more difficult with the passage of SB1070. However, given the nearly universal unauthorized status of these participants, most had been living in the shadows for many years prior to this policy. Many immigrants exhibited great perseverance and optimism in light of an increasingly difficult situation in Arizona. However, accompanying these statements of optimism, many immigrants expressed a certain amount of resignation to their fate, as illustrated by these two participants:

> What I tell my husband is that we should never be pessimistic. Sometimes he says, "Oh, I won't go out because [the police] can stop me." I tell him, "It's never good to be negative about things.". . . I go out and I even walk along the main avenues.. . . If it's our fate to be caught, let it be our fate. (Female, 25 y.o., 16 to 20 years, 5 children)

> We have to think positively; whatever will be, will be. . . . It's worse to be negative [about our chances of being deported], much worse. (Male, 44 y.o., 11 to 15 years, 3 children)

Religious faith. Participants also described their personal faith in God as a source of hope and strength, which bolstered their resolve to stay in Arizona. Again, the statement below reflects both a sense of optimism and a sense of resignation to a situation that is out of one's hands:

> I'm not afraid anymore and I go out and about freely. As soon as I wake up every morning, I put my life in the hands of God so that He will protect me from the moment I step out of the house. And I don't ask God to protect me only, but all of us who don't have papers here. . . . If God is with us, who can be against us? (Male, 44 y.o., 11 to 15 years, 3 children)

Family and Community Motivations

Dreams and hopes for their children. Participants' sense of hardiness derives, in large part, from the hopes and dreams they hold for their children. Although many participants did not have children when they left Mexico, all of them are now parents (or grandparents) raising children in the United States. Nearly all participants agreed that the ability to provide opportunities for their children—most of whom are U.S. citizens—was a primary reason they had remained in Arizona. Participants held high hopes and dreams for their children, and the belief that they are offering their children the best educational opportunity possibly reinforces parents' resolve to remain in a harsh climate:

> My four children are from here. I want them to have a future, to do well in life. I want to help them go to college. I already told my husband, who was detained, "We have two years to recover from what we've been through with you . . . then I want to focus on the oldest daughter to go to college; then we'll focus on the [other] children.. . . We don't want to give them the message, "Oh, you finished high school, it's okay to get married." No, we want to support them until they have their own career. I tell my husband, "What you and I didn't have in Mexico, I want my kids to have here." That's why we haven't left. (Female, 38 y.o., 11 to 15 years, 4 children)

This strong desire by the majority of participants for children to do better than they did was usually contrasted with the sacrifices participants had to make in their own childhood:

> [I want to stay] so that my son . . . gets to finish school. I only attended up to elementary school and then I had to work. I would love for him to work in a bank here. (Female, 31 y.o., 11 to 15 years, 2 children)

Access to community resources. The most commonly discussed community resource was children's school. Relations between parents and school personnel were not uniformly positive, but most considered the schools their children attended to be superior in terms of teacher quality and child supervision compared with schools in Mexico, as noted by participants:

> Well I think schools are better here than they are [in Mexico]. Teachers work with children better here, they pay more attention to them. And I think [teachers] are stricter here too.. . . It's a big difference with how it is there. Here they are very strict. That is a good thing so that kids can learn to behave and learn better and to listen more. (Female, 31 y.o., 6 to 10 years, 2 children)

> Children fail school in Mexico more easily. Here, if they fail, teachers will call you on the phone, but they wouldn't do that there. In Mexico, my brother is battling with his daughter who's refused to go to school for a week. [Teachers] there would just say, "Okay, if she doesn't want to go to school, she doesn't have to." Here, they'll call you. (Female, 31 y.o, 6 to 10 years, 4 children)

In addition, participants perceived schools to have more financial resources to make it possible for children to stay in school, as this exchange between participants illustrates:

> Participant 1: In terms of education, there are more opportunities here for scholarships and loans, but not [in Mexico]. . . . You have to buy everything. (Female, 42 y.o., U.S.-born, 2 children)

> Participant 2: And over there [in Mexico], you have to work really hard for those things. (Female, 35 y.o., 11 to 15 years, 2 children)

> Participant 3: And work and pay for school with the little money you make. (Female, 31 y.o., 6 to 10 years, 4 children)

Participants perceived U.S. schools as providing resources not only to their children but also to parents. In addition to family programs, one parent mentioned other resources that filter through schools designed to assist low-income parents:

> Many of the schools here help single mothers who don't have a lot of resources. They help you with food for your child at school, and even give you clothes if needed. (Female, 31 y.o., 6 to 10 years, 2 children)

Social ties and belonging. Whereas parents could presumably find comparable school resources in other U.S. states, their social resources are firmly rooted in Arizona. Connection to family and friends upon whom they can rely and to whom they are committed makes the thought of leaving Arizona unthinkable for most participants, despite the anti-immigrant sentiment surrounding them. Participants in the following exchange explained how their social ties in Arizona helped them to find job opportunities, and deter them from moving to another state:

> Participant 1: I know a lot of people here. For example, if I can't find a job through one friend, I'd call another and so on. But if we were to move to another state, we might as well be starting from scratch. (Male, 44 y.o., 11 to 15 years, 3 children)

> Participant 2: Besides, other states have the same problems. (Female, 30 y.o., 11 to 15 years, 3 children)

> Participant 3: That's right. Our neighbors across the street left [Arizona] because of the law. They left but now they regret having done that because they didn't have any money and didn't know anybody in the new state. (Female, 54 y.o., 11 to 15 years, 3 children)

> Participant 1: Well, I've been here for so many years . . . my entire life I've been in Arizona, here in this city. (Male, 44 y.o., 11 to 15 years, 3 children)

As illustrated in this previous exchange, participants residing in Arizona most of their lives felt a strong sense of belonging to Arizona. A participant from another focus group stated that he could not imagine living anywhere else and added, "I came to Arizona when I was 2 years old . . . I grew up here. I don't know any other place."

Although connection to friends and other families upon whom they could rely arose as a central reason that participants had decided to stay in Arizona, the strongest bonds were those of family. One grandmother explained,

> Now I have all my grandchildren and others here. I could never return to [Mexico]. . . . I even told my husband, "If you want to go back, fine. But I won't." I couldn't separate from them. "There may not be anything for me to do here," I tell him, "but it would be too difficult to separate from them." (Female, 54 y.o., 11 to 15 years, 3 children)

However, discussions among participants suggest that harsh immigration policies have both strengthened and weakened social bonds within their communities. On the positive side, community members often band together to support individuals who are directly affected by the anti-immigrant climate. Exchange of information among parents arose in the focus groups themselves, for example, regarding how to seek assistance from professionals (e.g., immigration lawyers) and how to assert one's rights if detained. On the negative side, fears of deportation and the perception of discrimination by non-Latinos and by authorized Latinos expressed by so many participants led more immigrants to self-isolate within their homes, weakening opportunities for community involvement. One participant recalled, "My neighbor, who was Chicana, she would always stop me outside the apartment and tell me she was going to call immigration on me. I had to be careful."

Socioeconomic and Political Motivations

Economic conditions in United States and Mexico. Many participants, particularly those originating from smaller towns, reflected on the aspects of their lives in Mexico that they longed for, such as a greater sense of community among neighbors, or a simpler and more carefree environment in which to raise their children. Despite these positive reflections, however, participants consistently cited a lack of resources, services, and economic opportunities in Mexico as a major deterrent to moving back to their home country. Indeed, limited opportunities in Mexico were mentioned by the majority of participants as their main reason for coming to the United States in search of a better life in the first

place. One participant compared economic opportunities in Mexico with the United States:

> Well, over there, you earn less. And work is a lot harder. Employers pay very little and you work from 8 a.m. until 10 p.m. and only rest one day a week. At least, that's what it was like for me. I only had Sundays off . . . and I got very little pay. Here, you earn more and you only work 40 hours a week. (Female, 31 y.o., 6 to 10 years, 2 children)

In addition, participants in one focus group discussed the greater ability to "stretch one's dollar" in the United States. Providing basic necessities to children, such as food and clothing, was perceived as more difficult in Mexico, as follows:

> Life is very difficult in Mexico. More than anything, laws have made it difficult to work there. There's no way one can survive on one's work. . . .[Here in the United States] it is easier to feed children. (Female, 31 y.o., 6 to 10 years, 4 children)

> My son is really struggling in Mexico. He's always complaining that he doesn't have a job and doesn't have enough to feed his children, or even to buy them clothes. (Female, 42 y.o., unknown length of residence, 2 children)

However, similar to the shift mentioned in social ties, an anti-immigration climate may also be weakening some immigrants' motivations to stay in Arizona because of their economic opportunities, as noted by the following participant:

> But it's gotten a lot harder to work here. I've been here for 11 years and I've worked for five of those years. I haven't been able to work because the laws have made it difficult. It's getting really hard to be here. It's been much too difficult for me. (Female, 35 y.o., 11to 15 years, 2 children)

Violence in Mexico. In addition to perceived limitations on economic opportunities in Mexico, many participants cited escalating violence as a major reason they had decided not to return to Mexico. Especially in their role as parents, participants expressed a desire to protect their children from the violence and dangers they had heard about through the media or through relatives who had remained in Mexico, as illustrated by participants from separate focus groups:

> I am from Mexico; I've been in the States for 14 years and I don't go back to [Mexico] because of all that's happening there. I don't want to see my kids with a drug problem or beheaded. Like last night they showed on TV bodies dumped on the streets, all mutilated. I don't want that for my children. (Female, 38 y.o., 11 to 15 years, 4 children)

> I don't think it's possible to go back to Mexico. Violence is very bad.. . . The other day my 7 year-old son . . . asked what it means to be a "hit man." He asked because they talk about it on the news. "What are hit men, mamá?" And I had to explain to the best of my knowledge. "Oh," he said, "and that's where Grandma Flora lives?" "Yes, son," I said. (Female, 31 y.o., 6 to 10 years, 2 children)

> My father [who lives in Mexico] tells me, "Stay there. If you're working there 3 days a week, keep at it there. Keep trying to make it in the United States because you just can't come back here to Sinaloa." And even more so because I have an adolescent son and that's the age that [criminals] recruit into their gangs. (Female, 36 y.o., 11 to 15 years, 2 children)

Perceived sociopolitical constraints in other U.S. states. Although the prospect of moving back to Mexico seemed out of the question for most focus group participants, the anti-immigration climate in Arizona had escalated to such an extent that some participants considered the possibility of moving to another state. However, the prospect of moving to other U.S. states was met with skepticism. In addition to feeling rooted in Arizona and the common sentiment that moving to another state would be "starting from zero" both economically and socially, participants were skeptical that a move to another state would improve their situations. Stories from friends and family who had moved to other states and who were also struggling reinforced the notion that the effects of restrictive Arizona laws were being felt across the nation:

> It's not true what people say about there being more jobs in other states or about other opportunities. That's not the case anymore. The effects of this Arizona law are felt nationwide. It's not this state only, it's the whole country. (Male, 42 y.o., 11 to 15 years, 4 children)

In addition to uncertainties regarding whether or not their lives would be qualitatively better in other states, some participants noted that the financial costs associated with moving would be prohibitive:

> Besides, to move from here, we would need a lot of money. To rent a house . . . and the way things are going, where would we get that kind of money from? Many of us don't have money saved in the bank. Many of us just don't have anything. We live day to day. (Female, 23 y.o., 11 to 15 years, 4 children)

Discussion

This study uses a social ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) to examine immigrants' willingness to remain in Arizona, a state significantly affected by recent restrictive immigration policy and climate. Immigrants in our Arizona focus groups described multiple and interconnected personal, family and community, and contemporary sociopolitical motivations to remain in a community with anti-immigrant sentiment, despite the significant psychological, social, and economic costs they sustained in this environment. Our model is adapted to illustrate motivations to stay in Arizona based on factors in Arizona, Mexico, and other U.S. communities (see Figure 1). Importantly, our research sheds light on the ways in which some of the psychological and social resources that immigrants draw upon, and which help motivate their intentions to remain in their communities, might be *evolving* as a consequence of an anti-immigrant climate. Immigration policies similar to SB1070 are being passed in other states, and our study can shed light on how contemporary sociopolitical events shape immigrants' psychological experiences of and adaptation to these contexts, and point to ways in which this population can best be supported.

Overall, immigrants reflected on an emotional connection to the home they have known for some time, and rationally assessed the costs and benefits associated with staying. Although there were strong incentives to leave, given the harsh sequelae of the passage of SB 1070, there were stronger incentives to remain. As a whole, participants seemed to be resilient and persevering and unwilling to abandon the hopes and dreams for a better life for their family, especially for their children, which originally led them to immi-

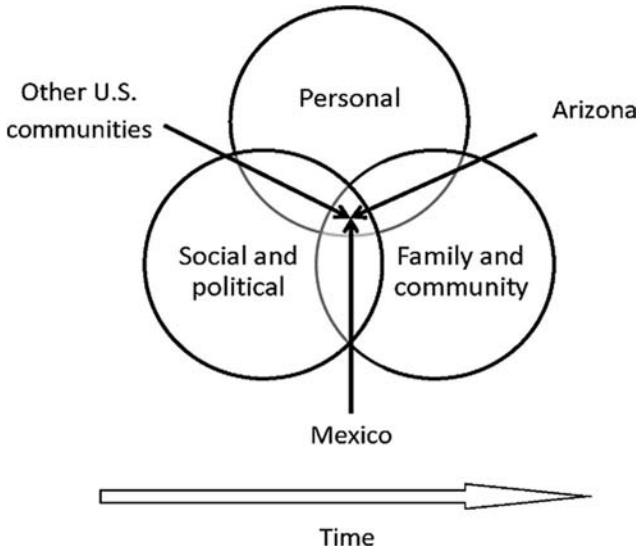


Figure 1. Immigrants' motivations to stay in Arizona based on factors (actual or potential) related to Arizona, Mexico, and other U.S. communities over time.

grate to Arizona. A decision to return to Mexico seemed the least viable of options to our participants for several reasons: Many of their children were native-born U.S. citizens with access to U.S. resources. Economic prospects were perceived to be better in the United States than Mexico, and rising drug-related violence made life too uncertain in Mexico. Finally, a decision to relocate to another state was also considered less viable, as immigrants perceived that the anti-immigrant climate was spreading to other states.

Although many of our findings confirm those of previous studies regarding the factors that motivate immigrants to settle permanently in their host communities, other findings suggest that many of these factors might be shifting as a result of the current sociopolitical climate. In terms of psychological factors, our study found that a strong sense of resilience contributes to immigrants' resolution to remain in the United States despite social and employment constraints. However, in the context of an anti-immigration climate, a sense of resignation and fatalism was also present. In this sense, immigrants exhibit both resilience *and* resignation as a mechanism for coping with the uncertainties of their futures. Although religious coping has been associated with psychological well-being among Latino immigrants (Dunn & O'Brien, 2009), parental resignation has been associated with depression and social withdrawal in Latino children (Weiss, Goebel, Page, Wilson, & Warda, 1999). Thus, families who resign to their fate in communities high in an anti-immigration climate may become vulnerable to negative mental health outcomes. This finding points to the need to develop resilience-based mental health interventions for these vulnerable families.

Family and community factors were also found to be a strong motivational force behind immigrants' decision to endure an anti-immigration climate. In particular, the opportunity for immigrant parents to provide a better education to their children, through higher quality teachers and lower costs of schools, were commonly mentioned by participants. Our results also suggest that extended U.S. community networks influence immigrants' motivation to stay, as indicated in prior research (Massey & Espinosa, 1997; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Wampler et al., 2009). Specifically, our findings illustrate that connections and commitment to other community members increase awareness of, and access to, important resources and opportunities, as well as added support via solidarity.

However, here, too, our results suggest that unauthorized immigrants' ties with their communities are shifting in both positive and negative ways as a result of anti-immigrant sentiment. Although an anti-immigrant environment has appeared to strengthen ties among some immigrants as they band together and support one another in the face of a common hardship, immigrants have lost some opportunities for social connection as well, due to increased isolation driven by fear. Moreover, heightened tensions within the Latino community, as well as between Latinos and members of other ethnic groups, have grown more pronounced, consistent with the research conducted by Lopez, Morin, and Taylor (2010). Thus, strengthened bonds may come at a high cost to immigrants living in a hostile environment, such as Arizona, as they also experience exclusion from other social networks, mainly from nonimmigrant persons (Nelson & Hiemstra, 2008). Reliance on unauthorized immigrant networks perhaps serves as a survival mechanism in light of an anti-immigration climate, rather than just as means of accessing employment and housing, as it did prior to recent strict immigration reform. Programs aimed at building social networks may provide an important source of support to immigrants coping with an anti-immigration climate.

Finally, our results indicate that returning to the socioeconomic and political climate in Mexico may not be a feasible nor desirable option for immigrants. Many expressed reluctance to return to Mexico due to various hardships that drove them to emigrate in the first place, whereas others were reluctant to return due to rising drug-related violence. As for moving to another U.S. state, many immigrants expressed their belief that the restrictive laws would be spreading to other states, further justifying their desire to remain where they are. Because of even more restrictive laws appearing in southern U.S. states since our interviews, these beliefs were not far off base. However, a small number of participants also viewed economic motivators weaning in their decision to stay. Thus, for a few participants, the financial cost of moving and the dire economic conditions in Mexico prohibited them from leaving Arizona, but the economic downturn associated with strict immigration policies were nonetheless impacting their ability to cope with their harsh environment.

In conclusion, unauthorized immigrants living in a community affected by strict immigration policy and anti-immigration climate are motivated to remain in the community by interrelated personal, family, community, and sociopolitical factors. Although our results suggest that these immigrants draw on many of the same resources as millions of immigrants before them in their decisions to stay, results also suggest that some of these psychological and social resources have shifted as a result of more restrictive immigration policies. If it is true that tighter border enforcement has the unintended consequence of making unauthorized immigrants want to stay rather than leave (Cornelius & Lewis, 2007), it is also true that creating a hostile climate for them to live in will serve to widen a class of individuals that is less educated, less healthy, and less self-sustaining (Wampler et al., 2009).

Limitations and Future Directions

One limitation is that our participants were drawn from parents of elementary school-age children. As such, it is perhaps unsurprising that a major motivation for remaining in Arizona was a desire for better educational and other opportunities for their children. Future research should investigate the motivations for staying by nonparents, by men (as most of our participants were women), and by immigrants at other stages in the family life cycle; ideally, this research would include children as well, as a growing body of research considers children's agency in influencing a family's decisions to remain or return to communities of origin (Dreby, 2010; Orellana, Thorne, Chee, & Lam, 2001).

Our research captures the multiple motivations behind immigrants' decision to remain in a hostile community. Research focusing on the motivating factors and experiences of those who *do* relocate as a result of an anti-immigration climate would provide increased clarity with regard to which immigrants remain and which depart. Understanding differences between those who remain and those who depart would also guide our tailoring of mental health interventions to promote resilience in the face of a harsh environment. Moreover, Pérez and Fortuna (2005) highlight the importance of early assessment of psychosocial stressors with Latino immigrants with unauthorized immigration status. Clinicians working with Mexican and other Latino immigrants in communities marked by an anti-immigration climate should explore their clients' difficult dilemmas, as they weigh the factors motivating them to remain in or depart from a harsh sociopolitical environment. In addition, clinicians could assist their clients in finding emotional, legal, and economic supports as they face their decision to remain or depart in their community. Although working with other professionals to assist in the multifaceted needs of low-income clients has been a long tradition for social workers, psychologists are faced with the need to collaborate with professionals outside their field (e.g., attorneys, school officials, and law enforcement) in promoting their immigrant clients' access to psychological, occupational, safety, and legal rights.

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