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Critical Latinx Indigeneities and Education

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Aprendiendo y Sobresaliendo: Resilient Indigeneity & Yucatec-Maya youth

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Abstract

Relatively little research has focused on the experiences of students and families of Yucatec-Maya origin in the U.S., and even less has focused on Yucatec-Maya youth and resilience, a normative process of positive adaptation despite exposure to adversity. Using Critical Latinx Indigeneities, which centers on Indigeneity across multi-national spaces, sociohistorical colonialities, and migrations, this study examines how Indigenous identity, familial linguistic and cultural practices, and resilience processes relate to one another for 10 (three girls) California-based Yucatec-Maya students. Through interview data, the themes that emerge expose discrimination as one form of adversity Yucatec-Maya students experience. There are three overarching themes related to the students' collective resilience process and the emergence of resilient Indigenous identities: 1) their lived, linguistic, familial, and community-based experiences; 2) familial support and academic resilience; and 3) transformational welcoming spaces. These protective processes contribute to the students' agency in [re]defining their resilient Indigenous identities in the U.S.

Keywords: Indigenous identity, resilience, families

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Introduction

Latinxs comprise 18% of the U.S. population, making them the largest ethnic minority group in U.S. society (U.S. Census, 2018). As this population continues to grow, it is important to understand the ethno-racial diversity and within-group differences of Latinxs. For example, compared to their non-indigenous counterparts, Indigenous Latinx youth are more likely to exit high school and to not pursue higher education (Ruiz & Barajas, 2012). However, there are only a limited number of research studies that focus on the school experiences of Indigenous Latinx youth (Casanova, O'Connor, & Anthony-Stevens, 2016; González, 2018; Kovats-Sanchez, 2018). In particular, studies that focus on Yucatec-Maya students, their families, and communities (Baquedano-Lopez & Janetti, 2017; Cornejo-Portugal, 2015) and resilience (Casanova, 2012) are scarce. This study explores how resilience and Indigenous identity relate to one another for Yucatec-Maya youth. The study considers resilience from an interdisciplinary Critical Latinx Indigeneities (CLI) lens, which centers on Indigeneity across multi-national spaces, sociohistorical colonialities, and migrations (Blackwell, Boj Lopez, & Urrieta, 2017). Specifically, how do familial, schooling, and community linguistic and cultural practices inform the Indigenous identities and collective resilience processes of Yucatec-Maya students?

Critical Latinx Indigeneities and Resilience

Resilience is a dynamic and normative process in which a person can positively adapt to difficult experiences, such as exposure to adversity, trauma, and other life stressors (Kuperminc Wilkins, Roche, & Alvarez-Jimenez, 2009; Luthar & Zelazo, 2003; Masten & Powell, 2003). Suárez-Orozco, Motti-Stefanidi, Marks, and Katsiaficas' (2018) integrative model of risk and resilience for immigrant-origin youth grounds itself in the challenges faced by the youth and their families at the micro-, exo-, meso-, macro-, and chrono- systems. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) socio-ecological systems theory situates the child within multiple contexts, in which interactions occur which relate to the child's development. The microsystem, for example, includes the relations between the child and persons in her immediate environment such as parents. A resilience framework traditionally consists of identifying risks, or conditions associated with a higher likelihood of negative or socially undesirable outcomes, which lead to developmental challenges. There is abundant research on risks specific to immigrant-origin youth (Suárez-Orozco, Motti-Stefanidi, Marks, & Katsiaficas, 2018). Some of the risks for immigrant-origin

Latinxs are acculturative stress, or the stress associated with adapting to a new culture, and perceived discrimination, which is an individual's interpretation of discriminatory encounters.

Resilience also consists of protective processes that lessen the likelihood of negative consequences from exposure to risks (Kuperminc, Wilkins, Roche, & Alvarez-Jimenez, 2009; Suarez-Orozco, Stefanidi, Marks, & Katsiaficas, 2018). Some protective processes include positive experiences and relationships with parents, peers, and community members (Benson, Leffert, Scales, & Blyth, 1998). For example, teacher mentorship (Casanova, 2012) and community involvement (Kovats Sánchez, 2018) for Indigenous students contribute to their academic resilience. Other protective processes for Latinxs, in particular, include familial socialization into the cultural value of hard work, as well as the development of positive ethnic identities and biculturalism (Kuperminc, Wilkins, Roche, & Alvarez-Jimenez, 2009).

Indigenous scholars have problematized resilience due to its individualistic nature. Resilience theory tends to place fault on Indigenous youth that are not successful in school instead of on the systemic inequalities and barriers they face (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008; LaFromboise, Hoyt, Oliver, & Whitbeck, 2006). Latinx, immigration, and Indigenous scholars have begun to unravel the shortcomings of resilience theory and recommend ways to incorporate more culture-specific contexts in understanding resilience for each of these communities. The integrative model of risk and resilience acknowledges the reciprocal interactions and relations with family and community that serve as protective factors for immigrant-origin youth (Suarez-Orozco, Stefanidi, Marks, & Katsiaficas, 2018). Casanova, O'Connor, and Anthony-Stevens (2016) have considered the collective transformations of Indigenous Mexican families in diasporic contexts and called attention to transborder networks they traverse as they face exclusion in multiple nation-states. However, these scholars have not critically examined resilience for Latinx Indigenous communities.

Critical Latinx Indigenities (CLI) is a fitting lens to complicate theoretical frameworks such as resilience. CLI considers the multi-dimensional, intersectional identities of Latinx Indigenous communities, integrating the interlocked oppressions that they face across transnational spaces, while centering on Indigeneity (Blackwell, Boj Lopez, & Urrieta, 2017). Critical Latinx Indigenities emphasizes the Indigenous voice by drawing from narratives and Indigenous knowledge systems to inform research (Blackwell, Boj Lopez, & Urrieta, 2017). CLI refocuses on the complex, lived experiences of Indigenous peoples while also critiquing

colonial-based practices, systems, and power structures that often invalidate, exclude, and erase their experiences from our academic fields and from theories such as resilience. In this article, Critical Latinx Indigeneities is used to present the collective resistance of Indigenous youth that challenges established individualistic norms of psychological processes like resilience, which at times render invisible Indigenous Latinx identities and cultural ways of being. The present study focuses on protective processes that are specific to Indigenous, Latinx, immigrant-origin students' Indigenous identity development across multiple contexts (e.g., school, home, etc.)

The Transborder & Schooling Experiences of Yucatec-Maya youth

The unique experiences of Yucatec-Maya communities begin prior to living in the U.S. context. Due to a violent and oppressive history of colonization which has shaped cultural systems of inequality in Mexico, Yucatec-Maya youth migrate within the country into urban centers for service jobs (Castellanos, 2008). The lack of jobs available for Indigenous Mexicans in urban areas forces them to migrate to the U.S. (Casanova, O'Connor, & Anthony-Stevens, 2016). Much of the literature on Indigenous Mexican migration has focused on the transnationalism of Purépecha, Zapotec, Mixtec, and Guatemalan Maya communities (Fox & Rivera-Salgado, 2004; Popkin, 1999; Stephen, 2007). Notably, Cornelius, Fitzgerald, and Fischer (2007) examined the migration flows and adaptation of adult Yucatec-Maya men, while Whiteside (2006) explored the linguistic choices made by Maya adults with Maya colleagues at work. However, these studies do not focus on youth.

Once in the United States, Yucatec-Maya youth are faced with different structures of oppression and macro-systemic ideologies that continue to invalidate their Indigeneity. Immigrant-origin Latinxs are often profiled as a homogeneous group, and stereotyped as reluctant to learn English, and a threat to American values (Suárez-Orozco, Motti-Stefanidi, Marks, & Katsiaficas, 2018). Among these broader stereotypes of Mexican-origin Latinxs is the intra-group stereotype of being *indio*. Indigenous Latinx students in the U.S. experience intersectional discrimination for being Mexican, immigrants, and Indigenous, including from their non-Indigenous or *mestizo* Latinx peers, and feel less welcomed in schools (Cooper, Gonzalez, & Wilson, 2014; Ruiz & Barajas, 2012).

There are a number of research studies that focus on the experiences of Indigenous Mexican students in the U.S. Most of these studies have examined the experiences of Purépecha, Zapotec and Mixtec youth (Barillas Chón, 2010; Ruiz & Barajas, 2012; Mesinas &

Perez, 2016; Kovats Sánchez, 2018; Velasco, 2010). Scholars have investigated the challenges Oaxaqueño students, or students who come from the Mexican state of Oaxaca, encounter in high school and college due to their Indigenous cultural, linguistic, and racial backgrounds such as stereotyping, discrimination, marginality, and lack of sense of belonging (Barillas Chón, 2010; González, 2018; Kovats Sánchez, 2018; Ruiz & Barajas, 2012). Scholars have also explored the consequences of colonial, internalized beliefs about the “inferiority” of Indigenous languages which lead parents to not teach their children their Indigenous languages (Velasco, 2010). However, research has shown that more inclusive teaching pedagogies (Ruiz & Barajas, 2012); after-school newcomer clubs (Barillas Chón, 2010), college experiences and community activism (Kovats Sánchez, 2018; Mesinas & Perez, 2016); and transnational networks (Machado-Casas, 2012) can create supportive spaces. In these counter-spaces of collective resistance, students can adapt to the U.S. and also maintain and reaffirm their Indigenous identities.

Researchers have documented the pre-migration and migration experiences of Yucatec-Maya youth and families which include the economic and educational reasons that they migrate, as well as the use of familial and community networks during the journey north; and adult responsibilities youth take on as they adapt to the U.S. (Casanova, 2012; Cornejo-Portugal, 2015). Scholars have focused on the stress of family separation and reunification, poverty, documentation status, and intersectional discrimination (e.g., being an immigrant, Mexican, and Indigenous) that impact Yucatec-Maya children’s mental and physical health (Casanova, 2012; Perez-Rendon, 2011). A handful of studies have focused on the migration experiences of Yucatec-Maya youth to places such as California (Cornejo-Portugal, 2015; Perez-Rendon, 2011). Few researchers have examined Yucatec-Maya youth experiences in schools (Casanova, 2016), familial linguistic practices (Baquedano-Lopez & Janetti, 2017), or Yucatec-Maya youth resiliency (Casanova, 2012), especially from a critical lens such as CLI.

Yucatec-Maya students experience higher levels of stress due to discrimination than their non-Indigenous or *mestizo* peers (Casanova, 2016). Baquedano-Lopez and Janetti (2017) reveal the pedagogical strategies teachers in a Northern California school used to support and affirm the Yucatec-Maya students’ identities. The authors urge educators to understand the Indigenous diasporic consciousness, or “awareness of multiple and often contradictory epistemological hemispheric locations” (p.178), that the students navigate alongside notions of being Latinx.

Similar to the Purepecha, Mixtec, and Zapotec youth, Yucatec-Maya youth and their families experience many obstacles in migrating and in the U.S. school systems yet have various sources of support that enable them to academically succeed and adapt to their transnational, intersectional, diasporic identities (Casanova, 2012). Using the integrative model of resilience for immigrant-origin youth and Critical Latinx Indigeneities, this study examines the relation between familial, schooling, and community linguistic and cultural practices, Indigenous identity, and collective resilience processes for Yucatec-Maya youth.

Method

Participants

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 ($M_{age} = 16.39$, $range_{age} = 5$, $SD_{age} = 2.07$, 3 female) Yucatec-Maya students in the U.S. The participants were from the southern state of Yucatan, Mexico or had parents that originated from Yucatan, Mexico. Four of the participants were second generation immigrant origin. These students were born in the U.S., but their parents were born in Mexico (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). Five participants were born in Mexico and came to the U.S. after the age of 12, making them first generation immigrants (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). One participant was 1.5 generation. He was born in Mexico and came to the U.S. before he was 12 years old. The participants all ethnically identified as Maya and/or Yucateca/o alongside other ethnic labels (see table 1).

The students went to two different public high schools. Some went to a school located in a suburban middle-class area of Southern California. These students lived in the lower-income neighborhood of this suburban city. The Southern California high school had a 95% graduation rate. Students' ethno-racial demographics breakdown consisted of 69% White, 21% Latino, 5% Asian, 2% Black, 1% American Indian/Alaska Native, and 2% other. Fifty-two percent of the students at this high school were male and 48% were female, 20% were low-income, and three percent were English Learners. The other students went to a high school located in a large urban city in Northern California. The Northern California high school had a 71% graduation rate. Students' ethno-racial demographics breakdown consisted of 50% Latinx, 18% Asian, 15% Black, 11% White, 1% American Indian/Alaska Native, and 5% other. Fifty-nine percent of the students in the Northern California high school were male and 41% were female, 68% were low-income, and 40% were English Learners.

Student pseudonym	Birthplace	Age	Immigrant Generation	Ethnicity	Race	Number of Discriminatory Experiences Reported ^c	GPA ^d
Antonia	California ^a	14	2	Yucatecan American	Maya	9	3.00
Jenny	U.S. ^a	14	2	Yucatec-Maya, Mexican	Mexican/American	7	n/a
Jose	California ^a	18	2	Mayan	Mexican/Mexican-American	7	3.78
Luis	California ^a	15	2	Yucateco, Mexican	Latino/Hispanic, Mexican	9	3.50
Mateo	Yucatan, MX	19	1.5 ^b	Mexican, Yucateco	Mexican/Mexican-American	9	2.50
Ricardo	Yucatan, MX	18	1	Maya-Yucateco	Maya	10	3.00
Gaby	Quintana Roo, MX ^a	14	1	Mexicana, Yucateca	Maya, Mexican/American	9	4.00
Juan	Yucatan, MX	17	1	Yucateco-Maya	Latino/Hispanic	9	2.50
Alberto	Mexico	17	1	Latino, Yucateco	Latino/Hispanic	7	2.50
Miguel	Yucatan, MX	19	1	Yucateco-Maya	Latino/Hispanic	11	3.00

^a Parents were born in Yucatan, MX

^b 1.5 generation refers to students who migrated to the U.S. before the age of twelve

^c Range of incidents 1-17; some examples: due to your race/ethnicity you...got a lower grade; were unfairly disciplined; kids thought you did not know English well; kids did not include you in activities; kids called you racially insulting names; teachers expect less from you

^d Based on a 4-point scale

Procedure

Non-probability, purposive sampling was used to recruit the participants. Students were recruited through networks formed with Northern and Southern California schools and cultural organizations that offer services to the Yucatec-Maya communities of Muna and Oxcutzcab (Indigenous, rural towns in Yucatan). Parents or guardians gave permission for the students to take part in the study and then students assented to participating in the study. The participants took a survey which included perceived discrimination, ethnic identity, and acculturation scales. Ten participants who took this survey were randomly selected for an interview. The findings for this article are based on the interviews, which were conducted after school or at times convenient for the students. The interviews explored school experiences; educational attitudes; familial, cultural, and linguistic practices; and discrimination. Initial interview prompts and questions included: *Tell me about your family. How do your parents feel about school? What do your parents tell you about the Maya culture?*

Analysis

Grounded theory open-coding was conducted with the semi-structured interviews (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Relevant raw text was coded, then repeating ideas were organized into significant themes in which theoretical constructs regarding the topics emerged (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Throughout this process, the codes and themes were refined. Once the codes were established, content analysis was conducted. NVivo 12 (QSR International, 2018) was used to organize the major themes and memos that emerged from the analysis.

As an Indigenous, Yucatec-Maya woman born in Yucatan, Mexico and immigrant in the U.S., the author is a partial insider of the Yucatec-Maya community. Yet, being labeled a researcher with all the privilege it carries due to the education and training received, the author of this study is also an outsider immersing into these young persons' lives. The author had to continuously evaluate her own multiple academic and Indigenous identities within the context of the analysis of the participant narratives. Through constant self-awareness, and in line with Critical Latinx Indigeneities as a methodological tool, the author aimed to avoid any simplification of the complexities and heterogeneity of the Yucatec-Maya experience. Furthermore, research with Indigenous peoples who have been geographically, psychologically and socially colonized throughout history, and continuously lack visibility in academic and

sociopolitical discourse, must be conducted with complete respect for the agency the Indigenous persons have toward their own lives and social processes (Smith, 2013).

Findings

The interviews reveal various themes aligned within Critical Latinx Indigeneities and the integrative model of resilience. The participants discussed discrimination experiences, which reflected the interlocked marginality and at times invisibility that they face across geographical and sociocultural borders (Blackwell, Boj Lopez, & Urrieta, 2017). However, the main focus of the findings are the protective processes of resilience which fall into three overarching themes: 1) resilient indigeneity across their linguistic, familial, and community contexts; 2) familial support and academic resilience; and 3) transformational welcoming spaces. In line with Critical Latinx Indigeneities, these themes emphasize Indigenous voices by drawing from narratives and Indigenous knowledge systems.

Discrimination

The Yucatec-Maya students experienced discrimination in their daily interactions with peers and adults. Seven participants reported witnessing discrimination from Latinxs and non-Latinxs. The ten participants experienced an average of seven out of a possible 17 instances of perceived discrimination due to their ethno-racial background. Some of these instances in which students perceived that they were discriminated against included: being called racially insulting names and teachers expecting less from them (see Table 1). Jose described how having an accent in their Spanish led to being discriminated, “I’ve seen Yucatecos discriminated a lot, either because of the way they speak, or cuz of their um, their, their accent, or just because the way they’re dressed or who they are, you know?” Jose became visibly distressed when he spoke about this type of discrimination, and stated in a louder tone, “It makes me feel really upset, like dude cannot talk to this person this way.”

Furthermore, experiences with discrimination were associated with being embarrassed to be part of Maya cultural organizations. Alberto expressed that young people “may want to join a Maya Yucateco group, but they don’t because they are scared to be embarrassed, that they will be criticized and judged, discriminated.” The fear of being discriminated against if you form part of Indigenous cultural organizations is problematic. Indigenous community cultural organizations are important in creating spaces for youth to positively explore their Indigenous identity and serve as a resource for Indigenous Mexican families (Casanova, O’Connor, &

Anthony-Stevens, 2016). These community organizations support youth and their families with the stress of adaptation; serve as a transnational link to the families' hometowns in Mexico; and increase civic participation for adults and youth in the United States (Popkin, 1999; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006).

The discrimination findings are examples of the complex, and sometimes contradictory nature of the lived experiences of these Indigenous youth. Six participants, while facing the fear of being shamed by others for being Maya due to the sociohistorical colonial remnants of racialized hierarchies of being "indio", still wanted to learn about their Maya culture. Some of the participants were part of Maya community organizations and challenged the adversity of discrimination. The following themes will focus on the protective processes that support these students' complex and paradoxical desire to explore and [re]claim their Maya identities, despite or in some cases due to the discriminatory experiences they faced.

Resilient Indigenous Identities: Protective processes enacted across contexts

Although discriminated against, the youth reflect a collective resilient Indigenous identity. Eight of the ten participants believed that their culture is defined by the familial and linguistic practices and traditions they follow. They defined being Maya through language, family, and community.

Maya identity as language. Nine of the participants understood a little Maya and had heard it spoken at home, however, less than half of them spoke Maya. All the students stated that they wanted to learn the Maya language. If they already knew some Maya, they expressed wanting to learn more of the language. The participants who valued Maya stated it was necessary to learn the language to preserve the culture after Yucatec-Mayas migrate to the U.S. They believed it was harder for people to learn Maya in the U.S. Jose felt sad to "see my people just forgetting where they come from, or their language, Maya." Ricardo stated:

Some people who are Yucatecos do not really know Maya. And I say, for me, that our culture should not get lost, right? Because it is important. And I say, it is not fair that nowadays other people from different countries and states are interested in our culture and we are not, and I say, that we as youth now have the opportunity to learn it [Maya] because we have time to learn it.

Several participants described the Maya language as an important part of identifying with their Indigenous identity. The students spoke about the Maya language as a marker of Maya

culture that differentiates it from Mexican culture. For example, Mateo said, “the way we speak, like certain [Spanish] words have different meanings and like the accent is different too.”

Although eight out of the ten students interviewed discussed the importance of learning English to succeed academically, six of the participants equally spoke about [re]claiming their Indigenous identity through the learning of Maya. As Jose stated:

Because, though, then I'll have a little piece of where I'm from, and, and, and the way I am, and I could just probably go back to my roots and just talk to people, you know? And so they could remember um, 'cuz a lot of people here in U.S. they come and they forget their, their native language, Maya.

The participants stated that they would like to learn Maya through classes and from their families. Miguel said, “I would like to speak it [Maya] because it is the dialect of my hometown. I would like to learn it from my parents and from the people that are native from there.” The students wanted to learn Maya to be able to communicate with their family, and with other members of their Yucatec-Maya community. Gaby commented that learning more Maya would allow her to communicate with her uncles who only speak Maya. Gaby defined her cultural identity as Maya partly because of the language and the connection to her family. She stated, “Maya, because it is the culture of my parents, the language of my mother, and I really like learning more about it.” Mateo discussed his want to learn Maya so he could communicate better and connect to his roots. He stated, “I would like to learn it because it's a language they speak *en de donde soy* (where I am from). And it's just, I don't know, like I would like to communicate with people through not just English and Spanish.” Like Mateo, six out of 10 of the participants wanted to be more connected to their culture and identity through the language. Alberto, for example, felt “that not speaking it, I am not following what my culture is, like following the traditions of my ancestors.”

Maya identity as familial practices. Parents socialize youth into their cultural repertoires and play a key role in the preservation of Indigenous culture (Casanova, O'Connor, & Anthony-Stevens, 2016). Eight of the participants spoke about their family as a source of knowledge of their Maya culture. Parents actively engaged in passing down knowledge and stories regarding the Maya culture. The Yucatec-Maya parents' effort and labor in socializing their children in daily lived Indigenous practices (e.g., language) and activities (e.g., traditional

dance groups) was recognized by the students. For example, Alberto described what his parents and family have taught him:

Um, my parents have always talked to me about what the Maya culture is and how it is. Inclusively, thanks to my grandmother, she has always told me stories of what, when she was, of her infancy and childhood, and I have learned various things, and like when one starts to like learn something and do not feel like you learn, like you start learning something and you don't feel like you have really learned it, you get a desire or want to find more information about what they have told you or what you have heard, and so thanks to my grandma that always, all the time, has talked to me about it , I have tried to find information in the internet, in books, I have even tried that when I meet [Maya] people tried to ask them questions in Maya so they can speak to me in Maya.

Eight other participants had similar responses regarding their family actively teaching them about their Maya culture. Miguel discussed his grandparents' stories of hardship. His grandparents would tell him how hard it was for them to maintain their Maya culture, yet Miguel, discussed their resilience and how "they were able to get ahead, and well little by little our culture is being exposed." Interdependent, familial ties seemed extremely important for the Yucatec-Maya families. The Yucatec-Maya students were motivated to preserve their Indigenous culture through the support of family and transnational community networks.

All the participants could list and describe traditional Maya dishes. Antonia stated, "...sometimes I help out my mom to make them," while Ricardo talked about when these dishes are made: "Well, in Yucatan when we wanted to eat something for example the *cochinita*, or the *escabeche* my family would make it...for example the custom is when it is for special events like a birthday or a wedding." Whether it is learning how to make the dishes or understanding what food is served for celebrations, both participants described the consumption and preparation of traditional foods as rituals linked to being Yucatec-Maya.

Maya identity as affect and community. The participants defined their Indigenous identity as a strong connection to home and community. The participants discussed their diasporic Indigenous identities within the context of what Blackwell and colleagues (2017) term transregions of Indigenous migrations (p. 132). They described being Maya beyond the borders of nation states, which includes understanding their positions within their Indigenous immigrant families in the context of the U.S., but also having an awareness of their own Indigenous

worldviews that transcend regional and hemispheric post-colonial borders. One way the participants expanded their notion of being Maya was by describing this Indigeneity as an emotion or feeling. Ricardo describe his Maya culture as historical traditions from home:

In reality the Maya culture is something very beautiful, very gorgeous because of its history,...the great accomplishments that were left permanently,...One of those that we can observe is like the ruins of Chichen [Itza], as the representation of the calendar,...For example the traditions of the home towns... the dance of the head of the pig, ... the dance of the turkey, the traditions that they do in honor of the saints or their gods,...even nowadays, the culture continues, the traditions.

Jose discussed a lived and enacted indigeneity:

Being Mayan, I don't know how to explain it...if you're Mayan, you're Mayan from blood. You know we're family, and I always feel comfortable with other Mayans. The way we grow up, it's just in the head, it's like Bixa Wani, saying how you doing, and it's just like joy to hear the language again...like a feeling.

He mentioned a Maya phrase and stated it is that happiness when you hear Maya. He could not fully articulate the feeling, but defined being Maya as “in the head,” transcending an actual physical place. From a Critical Latinx Indigeneities perspective, Jose not only embraced his Indigeneity, but resisted limiting the identity to a single location, and instead identified being Maya as having a translocal community, which is connected by Maya language and ways of thought. Miguel also stated that his culture is defined by the “way of thinking that is being passed down by the older generations, like his parents.”

The participants spoke about their community and the collective experiences that influenced their Indigenous identities. They mentioned *jarana*, which is a dance that blends pre-Colombian Maya and Spanish dances, that is performed during traditional gatherings. One of these gatherings is the *vaquería*. The *vaquería* events organized by hometown organizations and the Yucatec-Maya social networks in Los Angeles and San Francisco provide a space for Yucatec-Maya families to dress in traditional *huipiles* and perform *jarana* dances. The *vaquería* also brings bands from Yucatan and provide the attendees with traditional Maya cuisine. Miguel described his experience at a *vaquería*:

And yeah, I like it, I like seeing how they dance *jarana* and sometimes it gives me this emotion, to listen to the music of the *jarana*. And, well, I think that, that it is something

good for the people of different states and even the people of this country to know that culture, what is the dance, and the dress of our culture.

Miguel expressed an emotional reaction, almost a sense of nostalgia, to being part of this event and desired to share his culture with others. Eight of the students expressed their interest in the *jaranas* as an activity in which they would like to participate.

Six participants stated that they participated in cultural programs such as *jarana* dance classes to learn more about the Maya culture. Luis, stated:

I am in the group Chan Kaajal, and we dance folkloric dances of Yucatan. One time we participated with [the] government of Yucatan to promote the Maya culture for the people to be proud of it. And we have also gone to dance at the Chabot [Science Center]...because they were promoting a movie about the pyramids of Chichen Itza. And after the movie, it was not like other documentaries, it was interesting, and it didn't only have the history, but also had the rituals and legends, and like the Bible of the ancient Maya [Popol Vuh].

It is evident from the excerpt above that Luis learned a lot about his Maya culture through his involvement with the dance group. By participating in the dances, he was able to attend informative events on the history of the Maya, where he learned a part of Maya history. The experience allowed the students to [re]claim their history and feel proud and empowered by this cultural knowledge. The dance represents the existence of Maya culture in the present in these students' lives. Jenny, one of the participants taking *jarana* dance classes, stated that she always attended the dances with her family. In addition, six participants discussed their exposure to Maya culture through storytelling. Storytelling has always been part of the traditional practices of Indigenous communities (Casanova, 2012). Mateo recalled, "I get to interact with like Yucatecan people,...So I get to like, listen to what they say, and how they tell it. And sometimes it's sort of... it's interesting. Like the stories they get to tell, they have a lot of stories." Family, and parents in particular, actively engage in passing down the Maya culture to the Yucatec-Maya youth through participation in community events like the *vaqueria*, *jaranas*, and storytelling.

The Yucatec-Maya students' resilient Indigenous ways of being were supported and enriched by both local community practices as well as enacted through ideologies and transformations of Indigeneity that crossed hemispheric borders and regions. Blackwell, Boj

Lopez, and Urrieta (2017) ask for researchers to “acknowledge the multilayered ways of being Indigenous across national borders and within migrant transregions crossing multiple ethnoracial structures” (p. 129-130). In line with this component of CLI, the findings from this study reflect how Yucatec-Maya participants develop and expand their ideas of what it means to be Maya from local, individual ways of being and feeling to translocal, collective ideologies cultivated by familial practices, histories, and experiences of migration.

The transformative preservation of Maya identity. The students did not only acknowledge the need to preserve their Indigenous culture, but also understood the importance of transforming the cultural practices in the context of their diasporic positions in between and within multiple ethnoracial and nation-state structures (Blackwell et al., 2017). Four participants believed that their culture was consistently being transformed in the diasporic contexts of the U.S. Alberto talked about the saliency of the Mexican identity in the U.S. context:

I identify with the Maya culture, most of my life I have lived in Yucatan,..we have traditions and customs, we try and conserve our culture,...to be here [U.S], it's like you shed a little more of your [Maya] culture, and like you kind of take other cultures,... and a part of the Mexican in you comes out.

Seven participants identified strongly with the Maya culture. Antonia described her indigeneity as equally important to her American identity. She stated, “I practice *jarana* and I also...sometimes wear the *huipiles* and *ternos* that my grandma makes, and [I'm] American, 'cuz I speak English and I also have part of the American culture.” She has integrated both cultures without losing her Maya culture. Of note, she equated her American identity to speaking English which, according to current literature (i.e., Suárez-Orozco, Abo-Zena, & Marks, 2015) has continued to be a marker for *becoming American* in the U.S. Nonetheless, Antonia had also taken Maya classes. This tricultural adaptation (American, Maya, and Mexican) is important in developing resilience. Biculturalism is associated with better educational and mental health outcomes for immigrant- origin and Indigenous youth (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Padilla, 2008).

Five participants spoke about the importance of Maya culture preservation. Alberto discussed that “to not lose the Mayan culture in whatever state you might be...try to form groups, do meetings to be able to interact with more Yucatec people and do the

celebrations...People will start coming together.” He described a process of empowering youth and Maya people in general through meetings, groups, and organizing celebrations in the U.S., in order to reclaim and conserve their culture. Similarly, Gaby stated that “there are not a lot of people who preserve their writings [language] and we have managed to and safeguard our culture.” Jose believed people were starting to know more about Maya culture, but he also wanted Maya classes and outreach programs available for the youth community. Four of the participants emphasized the need to target Maya children at a younger age. Luis also noted that there was a need for programs here in the U.S. like the ones in Yucatan:

We need to teach our sons and daughters what the Maya culture is at a younger age, to be proud of their culture and all the beautiful things...I am proud of it too, I like the language, and all and that is why I learned about it. Other places do not have pyramids like the ones we have; a history like ours. The Maya were very intelligent with astronomy and a lot of other cultures do not have something like this. They [the Maya] sometimes overcame, like the way they could predict things without the technology we have today. I believe that it is being conserved more with what the government is doing [in Yucatán], but here I do not see much, only in a couple places where there are more Yucatecos...

All 10 participants had a wide range of ideas as to how to reclaim their culture in order to sustain it, and at the same time transform it in the context of being in multiple transregional spaces. They believed that creating spaces to share the cultural knowledge and teach young people the language, dances, stories, etc. was crucial in preserving the Maya culture, but they also rejected the idea that there is a particularly “correct” or more “authentic” way to be Maya. The students’ conceptualization of their Indigeneity acknowledged the CLI diasporic complexities of bridging their indigenous, migrant, Mexican, and American intersecting social identities (Blackwell, Boj Lopez, & Urrieta, 2017).

Apoyo Familiar: Indigenous Families and Academic Resilience

Four participants defined American culture as opportunities and advancement, and as different from their own culture. Miguel spoke about this sense of advancement, “the U.S....here it is easy to obtain what you want sometimes, what one wants, right, and if one is motivated to do it, one can achieve many things.” To the students, being American represented educational opportunities and success. The Indigenous students saw school as a chance to

“make something” of themselves and most of them are looking forward to going to college. Seven students felt school was a place to be able to succeed and secure a good future. Nine students had positive feelings toward school, while three admitted to encountering challenges. Gaby stated, “Yeah, because I want to have a good future, and I want to prepare myself to do something with my life.” Six of the participants had a positive view of American culture and the “American dream” ideology. The students were motivated by their parents to believe school was an opportunity to better themselves and to “*sobresalir*” or excel.

The students spoke of the hard work ethic their parents instilled in them in order to persevere in their educational trajectories. All the students acknowledged that their parents had supported them in going through school. Six students discussed their parents’ emphasis on the importance of school in order to obtain a career and grow as a person. Antonia stated, “they [parents] encourage me more to go to school and to like be successful.” Mateo discussed how his parents always continuously motivated him to finish school:

Well, my parents like always wanted me to do good in school and I did. And they would always push me to do better and better, to get my grades up when I had to and yeah they really supported me in school.

Jose stated that his parents told him school is “my number one priority, and they um, they say school is my job.” Another participant stated that his parents are usually happy with him, but consistently push him and sometimes tell him “he can do better” and to put in the effort at school so he can “become someone.” Parents encouraged students to develop an academic identity, which is important in developing academic resilience (Suárez-Orozco, Motti-Stefanidi, Marks, & Katsiaficas, 2018). Parents were proud of the participants for pursuing an education, Jose stated:

They feel proud of me because they say that even though I come from another country, which is Mexico, and my culture is different I have managed to be successful here, and well they are proud of me. But, well for example, youth like us we base the knowledge we learn and success on them [parents].

Educational success for the students was not only an individual goal, but a familial aspiration that validated their contribution to a larger collective purpose within their community. Seven participants stated that their parents constantly motivated them to attend college. Their educational ideologies were aligned with their familial practices and cultural ways

of being Indigenous, while at the same time embracing the American dream ideologies of success. These students' sense of agency to academically excel formed part of the multilayered and complex ways in which they navigated their diasporic and transregional resilient Indigeneities within the educational structures of the U.S. (Blackwell, Boj Lopez, & Urrieta, 2017).

Transformational Spaces: Critical Latinx Indigeneities in Schools and Communities

Two of the participants were involved in clubs at school. Alberto, who went to the Southern California school, described the club as being a family for him at school, stating, "Latin Network, in which the members are Latinos or Mexican, and well there we coexist, uh, well there I feel like I am part of a family at school because we all interchange ideas, and we are a group and we are good." Jose, who went to the Northern California school, discussed the club as a welcoming space for him in school, especially to speak about "cultural things." The other eight participants did not belong to cultural school clubs. Yet, the two participants that stated they were part of a Latinx club had a clear sense of belonging at school and felt empowered, two important protective processes. The two students that were part of the Latinx school club did not state that the Latinx students in the club discriminated them due to their Indigenous identity. On the contrary, the club served as a positive, transformational space for dialogue and sharing of their diverse experiences as Yucatec-Mayas, while also commiserating over similar experiences as Latinxs. Club spaces can assist with increasing sense of belonging and participation in schools (Gibson, Bejinez, Hidalgo, & Rolon, 2004).

Antonia and Alberto were part of youth church groups. Ricardo also recalled being involved with a youth group prior to immigrating to the U.S. This group focused on issues such as drug and alcohol addiction. School and church organizations provided a place for the Yucatec-Maya students to engage in the intersection of their identities, whether it is their pan-Latinx or their religious identities. To understand the complex, multi-layered experiences of Indigenous youth, scholars must also understand how other identities intersect with their Indigeneity (Blackwell, Boj Lopez, & Urrieta, 2017).

Seven participants found school was a positive space where they could speak about their Indigenous culture. Alberto did a project in which he could talk about where he was from and he stated, "I noticed that all my peers liked knowing about the Maya culture, because of everything that exists in Yucatan." Antonia spoke with her teachers and friends about her

culture. Mateo spoke about “try[ing] to explain, to let [people] know how the culture as much as I know at least. And I like, I just try to get my culture out so people know about it.” These school spaces where students felt comfortable speaking about their Indigeneity are key in creating a strong sense of school belonging which is linked to motivation, increased self-efficacy, greater success in English learning, and academic performance (Huo, Molina, Binning, & Funge, 2010). The incorporation of classroom activities in which students can share their cultural knowledge are crucial to developing resilient Indigenous identities and academic resilience (Yosso, 2005).

Discussion

For Yucatec-Maya youth, the Maya identity is strongly rooted in a common history and collective memory passed down through generations and the way everyday life is lived and acted. Maya language is constantly mentioned in the participant interviews, but not exclusively what defines their Indigenous identity. The participant interviews expose familial and community practices representative of the diasporic Indigenous consciousness described by Baquedano-Lopez and Janetti (2017). The students [re]created their Maya identities in the U.S. context. The youth cultivated and constructed a resilient Indigenous identity, pushing back against the discrimination they experienced. The *vaquerías* are examples of Critical Latinx Indigeneities, as they expose the multifaceted aspects of being Maya and reflect a hybridity of cultures and identities. In other words, the *vaquerías* support the notions of intersecting and crossing the borders of Maya, Mexican, and American spaces proposed by Blackwell, Boj Lopez and Urrieta (2017). The collective history and cultural ways of being in these community gatherings reflect the transregional dimensions of their Indigeneity (Blackwell, Boj Lopez, & Urrieta, 2017). Centered on their families’ and some of their own experiences of transmigration, these multifaceted ways of being Maya and enacting Maya ideologies are part of the daily lived experiences of the youth. The students’ negotiation of their Indigenous, Mexican, immigrant, and American identities shows the cultural transformation and [re]production of being Maya within U.S. school structures, their collective communities, or through their familial practices. These experiences illustrate the Yucatec-Maya students’ bicultural efficacy which LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton (1993), describe as a protective process associated with positive social and developmental outcomes.

Parents encouraged the participants to go to school and obtain a higher education for a better future. This form of support is important for these students' school and academic resilience processes (Suárez-Orozco, Abo-Zena, & Marks, 2015). Parents and family also served to catalyze cultural discussions and pass down cultural knowledge to the students. Many of the participants felt their families were the strongest connection to their cultures and motivation for doing well in school, which aligns with findings from previous literature on the importance of family and parental support for immigrant-origin students (Suárez-Orozco, Abo-Zena, & Marks, 2015; Suárez-Orozco, Motti-Stefanidi, Marks, & Katsiaficas, 2018).

The participants were most involved with cultural community groups. These cultural networks became crucial in the development and cultivation of their resilient Indigenous identities. School was also a place where many of the participants discussed their culture informally with peers and teachers. The persistence, inclusivity of other cultures, and transformation of these students' Indigeneities reflect an identity that is dynamic, intersectional, malleable, and constantly adapting in order to be resilient across diasporic settings.

Implications & Conclusion

Immigration scholars have called upon researchers to focus on "intersecting inequalities," or multiple dimensions of identity that shape unequal outcomes for immigrant-origin children and youth (Suárez-Orozco, Yoshikawa & Tseng, 2015). It is critical to consider Indigeneity as a dimension of intersectionality for U.S. Latinx youth. By incorporating Critical Latinx Indigeneities, this article begins to do so and, more importantly, exposes how resilient Indigenous identities serve as protective factors that contribute to larger collective resilience processes. Future studies should use a larger sample size and expand participant recruitment to other Indigenous Latinx communities beyond the Yucatec-Mayas. A longitudinal study of Indigenous Latinx students would serve to better understand other ways resilient Indigenous identities foster positive development. Future research should include teachers' and parents' perspectives.

This study expands the understanding of Indigenous youth in the U.S. who make up our growing culturally and linguistically diverse Latinx student populations. The prevailing themes described in this study emphasized Yucatec-Maya students' agency in [re]defining their resilient Indigeneities. The research has implications in starting to develop resources and culturally competent classrooms in which these students can be academically successful. Educators would

be wise to expand their culturally responsive curricula through the lens of cultural community wealth (Yosso, 2005) to counter the discriminatory experiences these students face and encourage academic resilience.

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