



Cultural Wealth Model: Celebrating Strengths and Building Resilience with Immigrant Communities

Dr. Susana A. López, PhD

Co-Founder/Co-Director Resilience Psychological Collaborative, Inc.

**Assistant Professor, Psychology and Child Development
Department, Cal Poly, SLO**

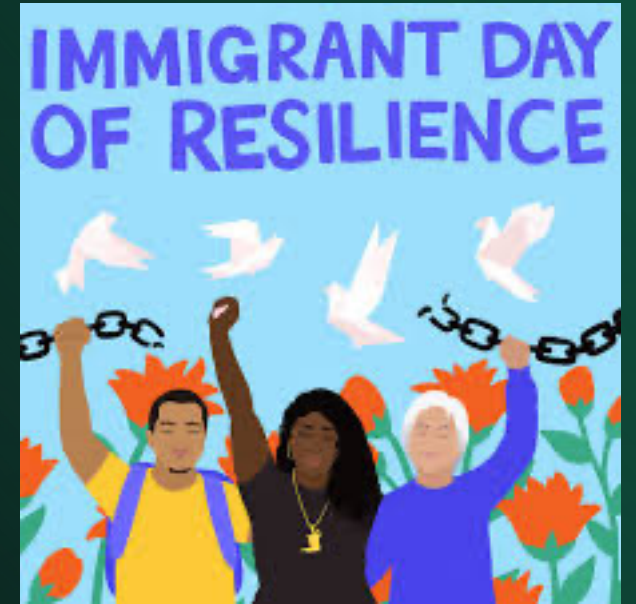
**Bridges to Resilience Conference, Coastal Tri-counties
Santa Barbara, November 04, 2024**



Warm-Up Reflection Prompts

Quickly introduce yourself to your table mates


- How does your cultural identity and lived experience impact the way you connect with immigrant families?
- What brought you here today?





Disclosures: None

Dedication: This presentation is dedicated to all immigrants that have come here to the USA seeking a better life.





*In this session, we will expand on the Latine/x
immigrant and refugee experience of resilience
and belonging.*



Engagement Invitation Today

1. Keep your positionality central
 2. Practice **humility and curiosity**
 3. Differentiate between **intent vs. impact**
 4. Recognize **how you bring your social identities into the room**
 5. Expect **non-closure and complete safety.**
 6. **Immigrants are not a monolithic** group and we cannot possibly talk about all immigrants today.
 7. All immigrants have **their story.**
-



Define immigrant and refugee adversity and resilience along the context of multicultural wellness and mental health care.

Who moves and why?

Migration: 2 phenomena Immigrants and Refugees

“

THE BLOOD RETURNS TO YOUR
BODY ...

BUT IT BOILS BECAUSE OF
RAGE...

BEFORE, LIFE WAS NOT LIKE THIS.
THIS IS LATELY...SO STRESSFUL....
THIS IS THE STRESS THAT WE
GET.

”

*“Mujeres Tan Estresadas” - Recollections
of Mexican immigrant mothers’
experiences*

Immigrants

- Voluntary or “Voluntarily” move
- May have time to plan the move
- Moving situation may still prove difficult

Refugees

- Forced displacement
- Involuntary move – due to danger
- Moving is immediate
- May not know which country they’ll end
- US has drastically declined the number of refugees it accepts

Examples:

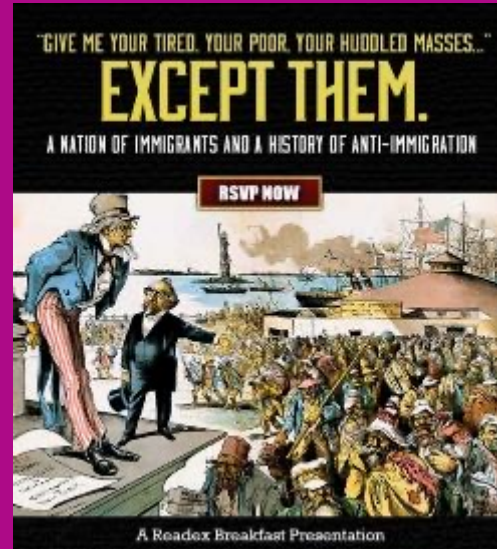
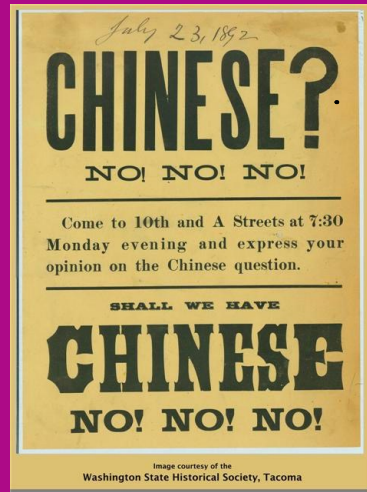
- Central America
- Vietnam
- Syria
- Haiti





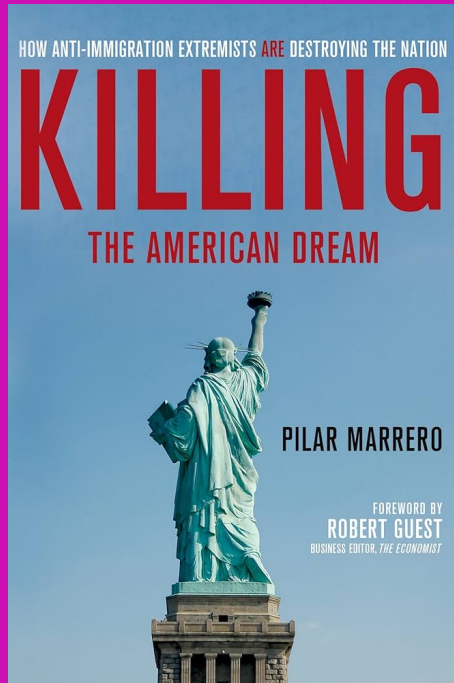
The Migration Process...

- Premigration Period
- Migration Period
- Postmigration Period



Historical Anti-Immigrant Sentiment and Actions

Violence, Dehumanization and Discrimination



How we think of and treat immigrants & refugees now

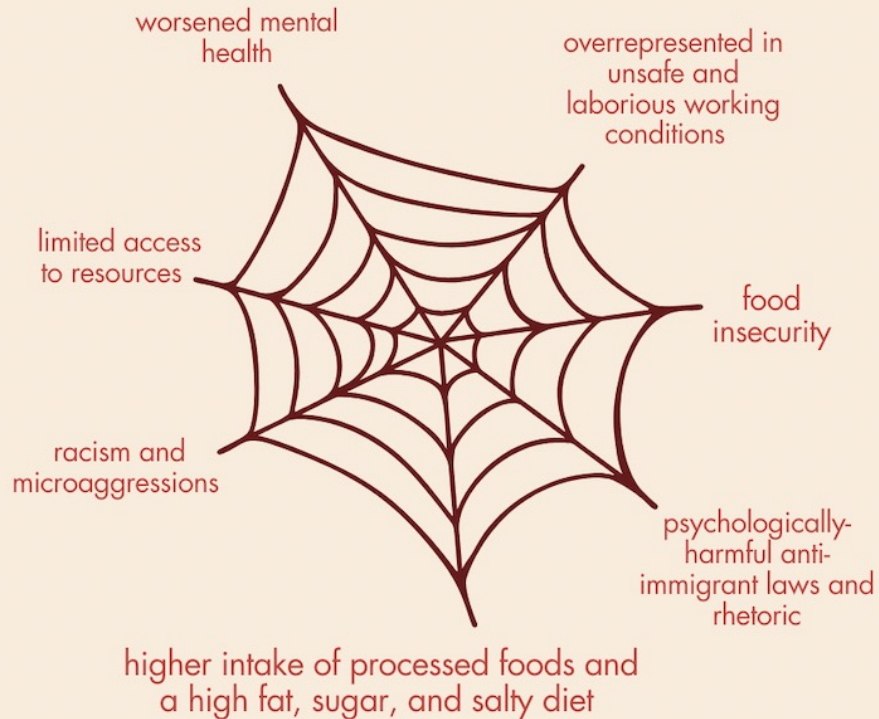
- Criminalize & Dehumanize individuals and families
- Violence, racism and abuse
- Narrow View/ Stereotype- xenophobia
 - “American’s first”
 - Not all are undocumented!
 - Not all from Latin-America
- Scapegoating & for our advantage: “Financial burden”
- Non-welcoming: Forget our history
- Political Rhetoric
- DACA uncertainty and threat

Mental Health is a social
justice issue

Mental Health Impact

What roles do mental health and other professionals take on to support healing in the context of ongoing oppression and the intergenerational effects of historical trauma?

Reasons for this decrease in health profiles is best understood in the concept of a web:

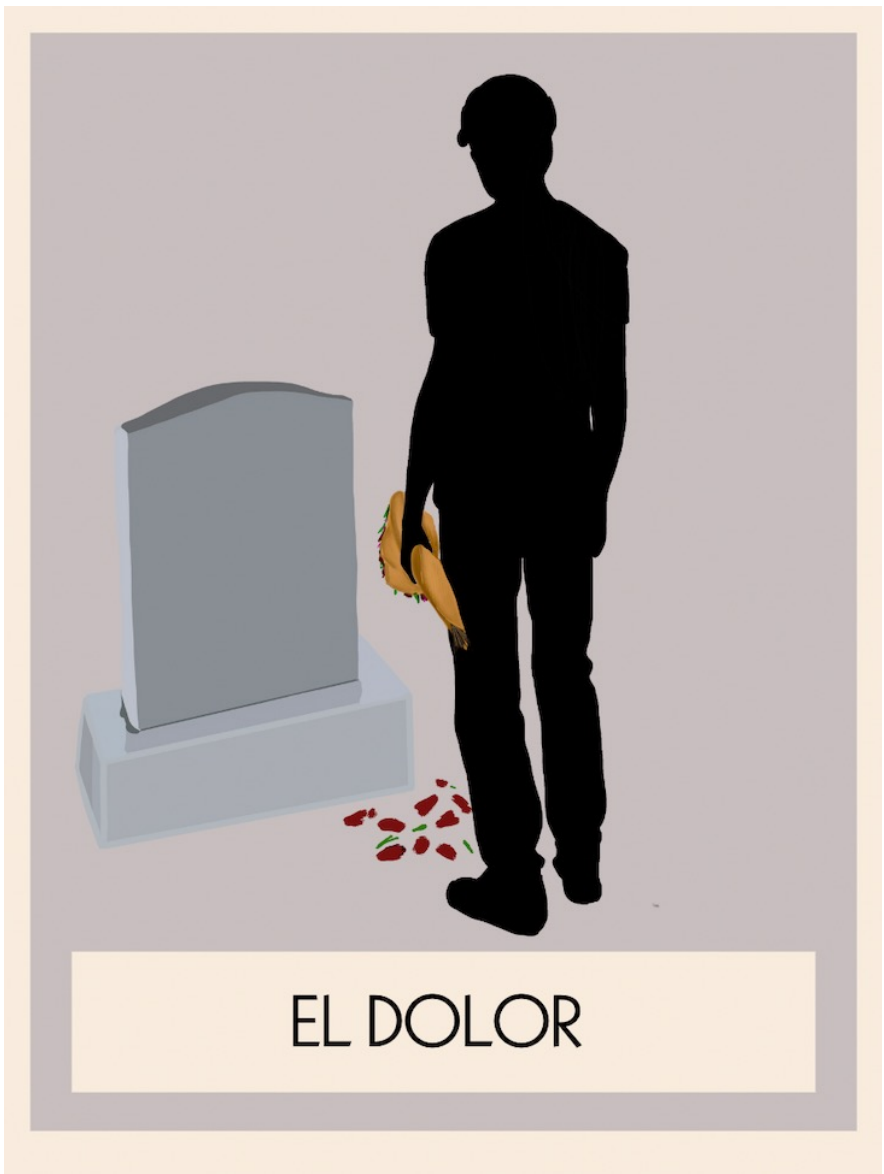


These are some examples of how systemic disadvantages intersect to create disparities for Latinx immigrants

The Latine community **continue to experience disparities in access, utilization and outcome** to treatment for mental health, and these appear to be worsening with time, **even after adjusting for education, health insurance, and socioeconomic factors** (Cabassa, 2016).

Foreign-born immigrants and less acculturated Latinos/as **are also more susceptible to mental health care disparities** than their U.S. born and more acculturated counterparts (Cabassa, 2016)

While the Latinos/as face numerous structural barriers to mental health care, **mental health stigma and low mental health literacy** limits help-seeking, service use, treatment engagement, and quality of care (Ahmedani, 2011; Mascayano et al., 2015; Vega et al., 2010).



Assimilation & Grief

Immigrants transitioning to their adoptive country face multiple stressors and contextual challenges



For many Latinx immigrants, their migratory experience is filled with ambiguous loss and grief because of uncertainty about whether they will ever reconnect with their homeland or family.



Regardless of their reasoning for migration they may feel guilt, a common theme felt by immigrants due to them being pushed out of their country while being pulled to the pursue the American Dream.



Along with the underutilization of mental health resources, Latinx immigrants are often separated from friends and families and will lose the social, emotional, and cultural resources they used to cope with



Bhugra D, Becker MA. Migration, cultural bereavement and cultural identity (2005). World Psychiatry, 4(1):18-24.



LA SALUD MENTAL

Immigrant or Latine/x Health Paradox- the phenomenon where Latine immigrants and foreign-born immigrants tend to have better mental health outcomes than US-born Latinos or long-term residents of the U.S.:

- Impacted by generation, acculturation level and nationality.

However, we are also seeing...

Higher rates of poor mental health in Latinx immigrants living in states with more exclusionary policies. The authors conclude that “**restrictive immigration policies may be detrimental to the mental health of Latinos in the United States** (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2016)

Association between immigration enforcement fear and PTSD among first and second-generation Latinx youth in immigrant families (Berger et al., 2023).

**OUR GRIEF AND
LOSS IS HEAVY
AND COLLECTIVE**

**BUT SO IS OUR
STRENGTH AND
RESILIENCE**

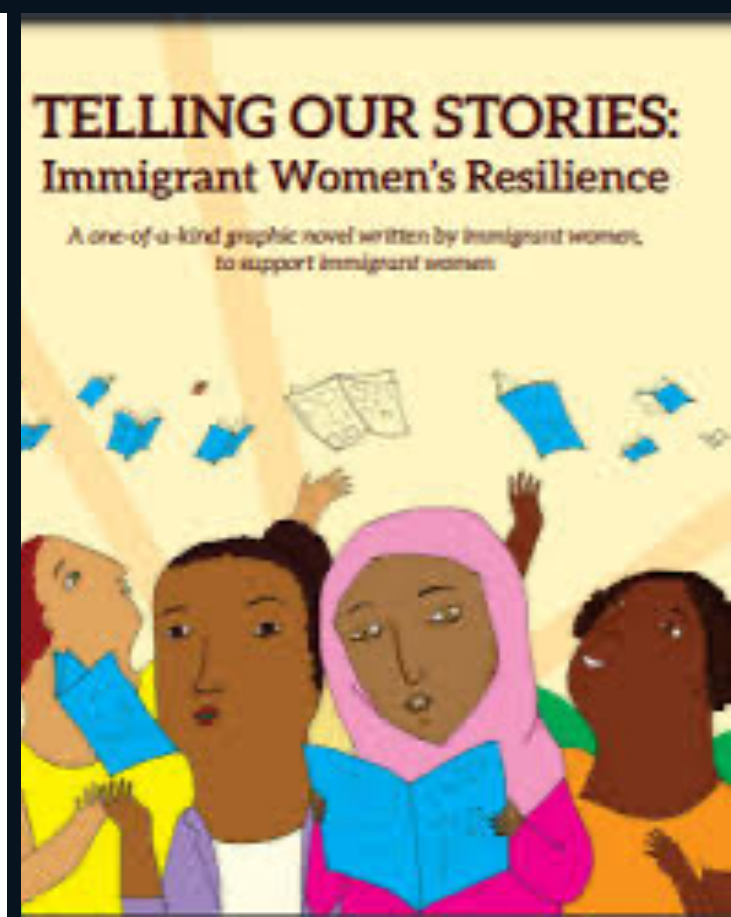


Replace a deficit model with a strength-based model of immigrants and their families.

What's the immigrant's personal narrative? & Who gets to decide?



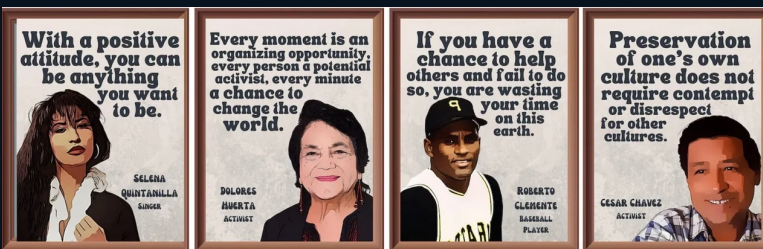
- Nar·ra·tive. /'nerədɪv/.
noun
- a spoken or written account of connected events; a story.
- Reclaiming our stories
- Immigrants defining their story and narrative
- “Shame dies when stories are shared in safe spaces”



The Need for this Model



- Representation
 - Whose stories are being told and valued?
 - Are we learning about the strength, resilience and achievements of Latine/x people currently and throughout history?

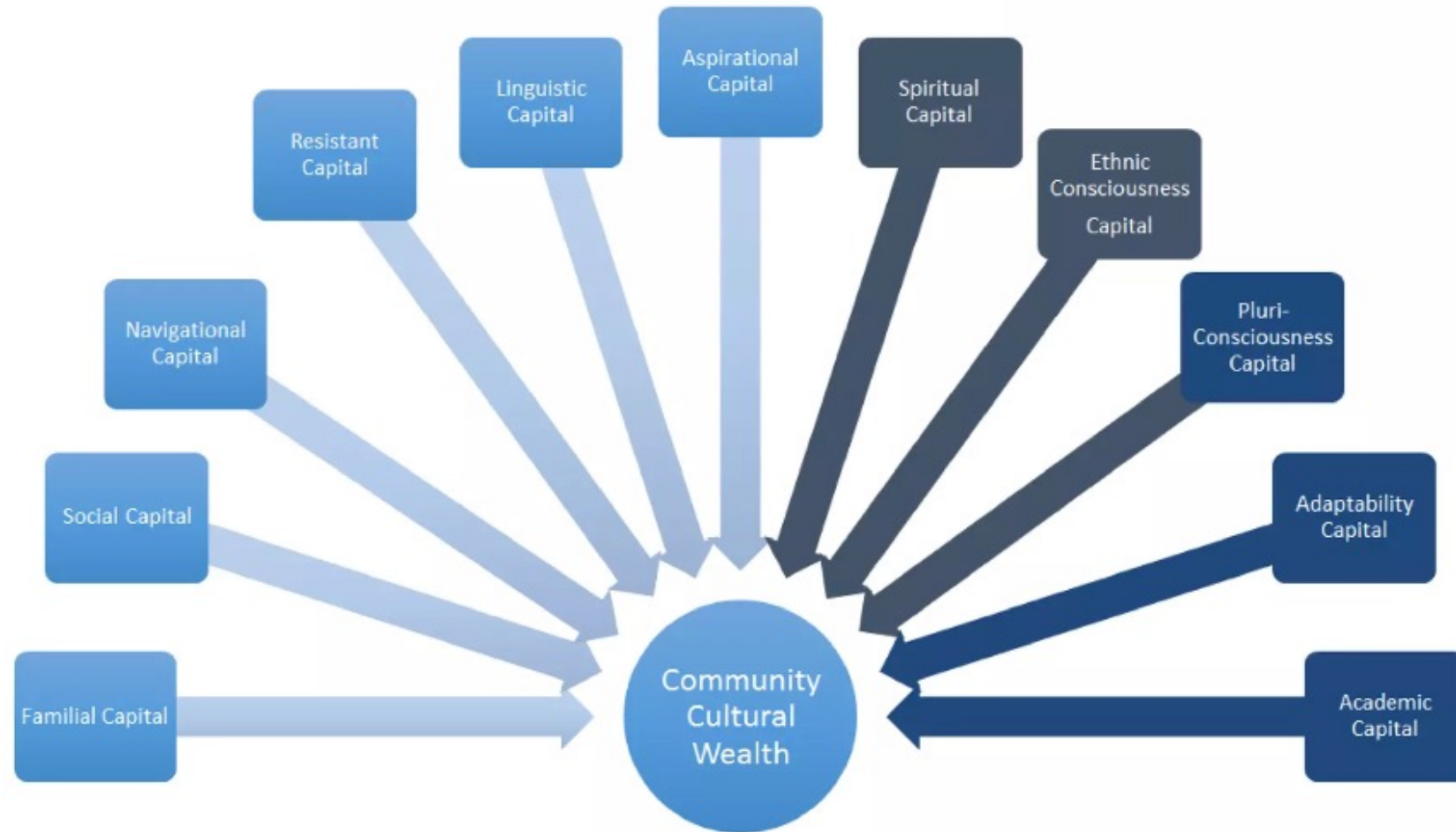


- Identity
 - A positive racial identity is associated with many positive outcomes and feelings.
- Belonging
 - Feeling like you belong and are valued are also associated with positive outcomes and feelings.



Image source: [Teaching Channel](#)

Latino Cultural Wealth Model



Rendon's (2014) Cultural Wealth Model. Adapted from Yosso (2005)



Understand how immigrant individuals actively resist and survive attacks on their humanity using cultural wealth.



Aspirational

- An ability to maintain hopes & dreams for the future, even when they encounter barriers.
- What are immigrants hopes & dreams for their future?



Your identity is your superpower

AMERICA FERRERA



Aspirational examples

Navigational

- Skills and abilities to navigate “social institutions,” including community, political, financial, and educational spaces.



Navigational examples

Familial

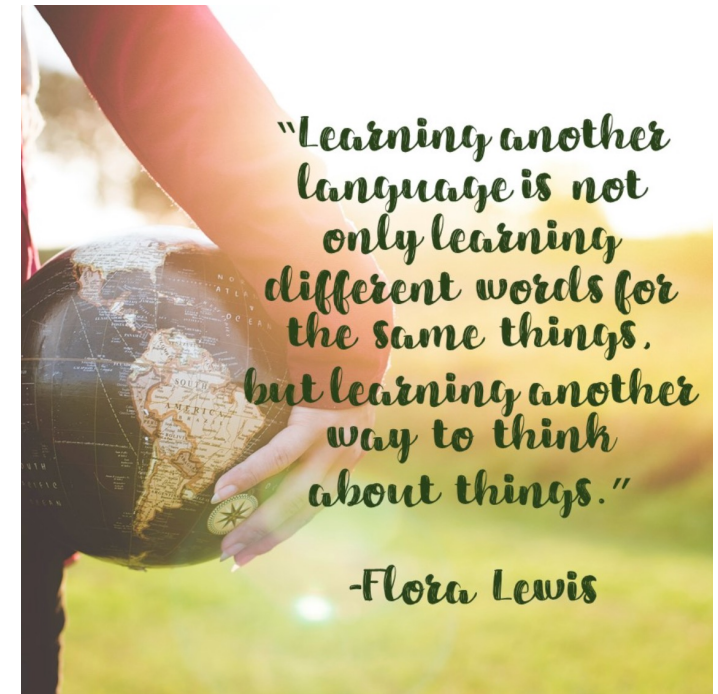
Cultural knowledge, skills, & resources that come from our family, our communities, and our ancestors.



Familial examples

Linguistic

- Intellectual and social skills of speaking in more than one language or style
- Storytelling traditions, oral histories, cuentos, dichos
- Code-switching



is fearful of our linguistic
process

We need to stop
apologizing for the Spanish
we speak or don't speak.



TikTok

2 views

Linguistic examples

Resistance

- Resistance capital is the ability of marginalized groups to persist and resist oppression, and is passed down through generations.
- It can help immigrants navigate their institutions and create change in their communities.
- **La Cultura Cura** (Dr. Jerry Tello, National Compadres Network)
 - Keep true to yourself and your community





200%



Resistance examples

Social

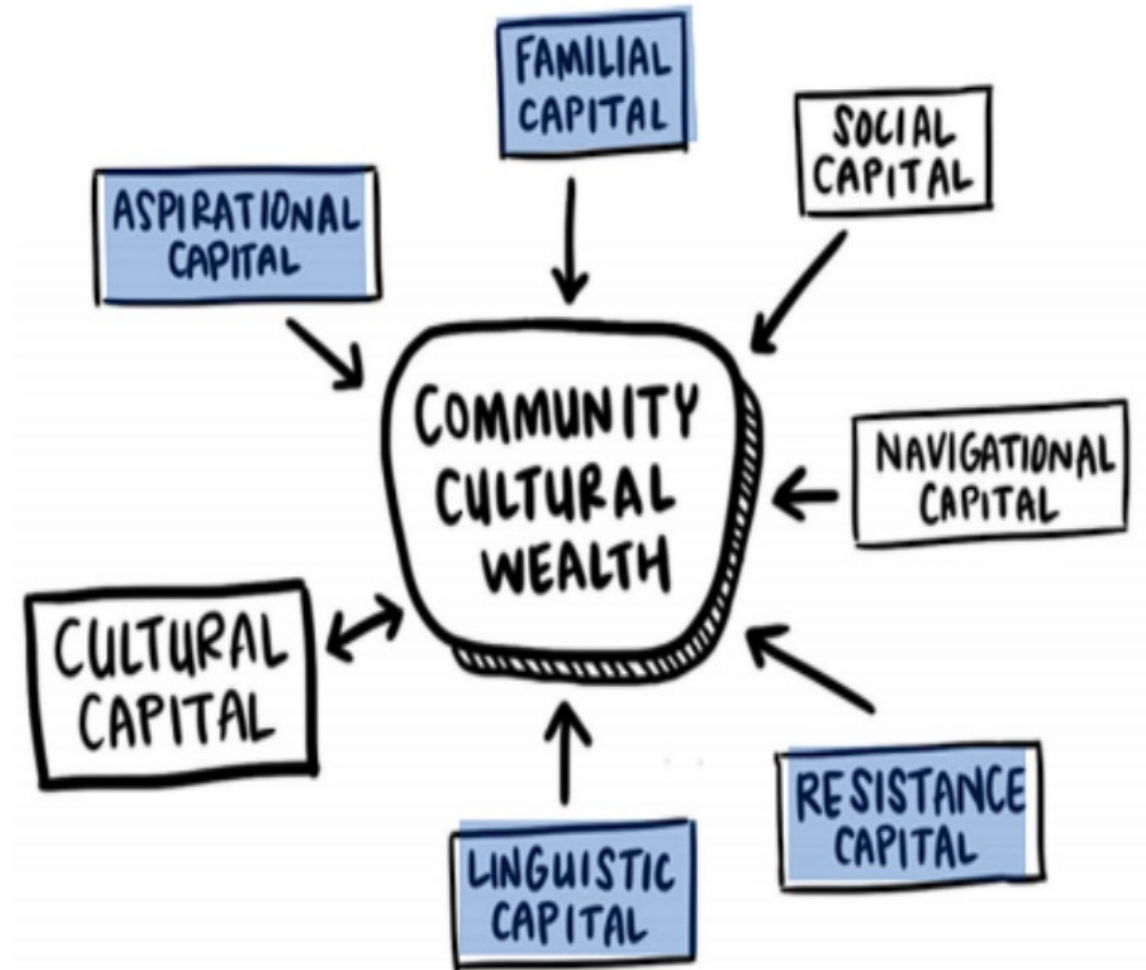
- A sense of trust, shared norms and values, and interconnectedness.
- Community belonging
- Shared cultural pride
- Social Networks



Social examples

Let's chat!

- How many of these have you looked for and seen in immigrants/refugees?





Co-create tools and techniques that can increase cultural humility and help address the intersectionality of immigrant families

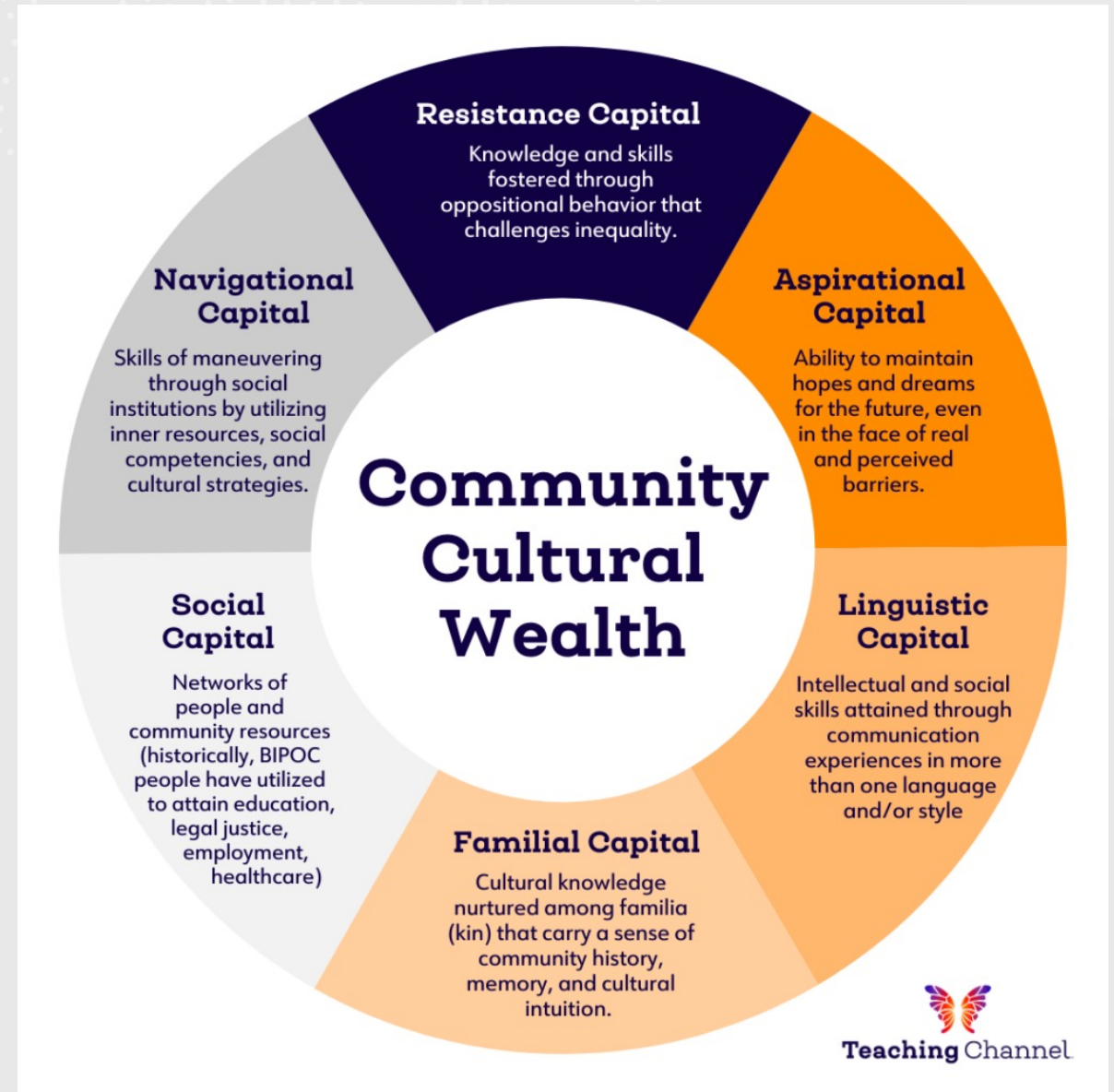


How can providers help immigrant and refugee families from a strength-based framework?

Assessment Tool:

Reflection Questions:

- Which form of capital would you like to continue to become more familiar with?
- In what ways do you hope to harness and leverage these forms of capital in support of immigrants, their(your) families and their(your) communities?
- How does the immigrant's intersectionality (with race, ethnicity, gender, ability, SES, education, etc.) impact and influence their wellness and mental health?



Break Out ACTIVITY: Immigrant Case Vignette

THINK OF AN IMMIGRANT YOU HAVE WORKED
WITH.

How do you foster immigrants' cultural
strengths?

What cultural traditions do you want to
continue supporting in the children and
families you serve? What cultural
resilience factors?



Affirmations:

Affirmations are positive statements or phrases that can help immigrants challenge negative thoughts and build self-confidence.

Cultural affirmation and self-determination play a central role in healing and mental health promotion (Sparrow & Watson, 2022)

Sample Affirmations from the Handout

Adapted from <https://latinbusinesstoday.com/25-latina-confidence-affirmations-for-self-love-english-spanish/>

My culture is valuable (Mi cultura es valiosa)

I am worthy of love and respect. (Soy digna de amor y respeto.)

My voice matters. (Mi voz importa.)

My culture is my strength. (Mi cultura es mi fortaleza.)

I am resilient. (Soy resiliente.)

I deserve to be happy and successful anywhere I am. (Merezco ser feliz y exitoso/a/e donde quiera que este.)

I will not let anti-immigration rhetoric define me. (No dejaré que la retorica anti-imigrante me defina.)

My immigrant dreams are valid. (Mis sueños de inmigrantes son válidos.)

I am worthy of achieving my goals. (Soy digna de lograr mis metas.)

I will not let fear hold me back. (No dejaré que el miedo me detenga.)

I am worthy of good things even when other do not think so. (Soy digno/a/e de cosas buenas aunque otros no lo crean.)

I forgive myself for my mistakes. (Me perdono por mis errores.)

I am learning to love myself unconditionally. (Estoy aprendiendo a amarme incondicionalmente.)

My heart is brave, and my spirit is free without borders. (Mi corazón es valiente y mi espíritu es libre sin fronteras.)

My path is full of light and possibilities in this country. (Mi camino está lleno de luz y posibilidades en este país.)

I am a unique and unrepeatable immigrant. (Soy un inmigrante única/o/e irrepetible.)

I shine with my own immigrant light! (¡Brillo con luz de inmigrante propia!)

Now Create you Own Immigrant Affirmations

Created by RPC, Inc.

I am proud of immigrants because...

Immigrants bring joy/happiness by...

Immigrants' cultural wealth helps them...

I am grateful for immigrants because...

Immigrants help me by...

I am best able to support immigrants when...

I am a strong immigrant advocate ...

I can build immigrant cultural wealth bin my community by...

Immigrants...



Share in community

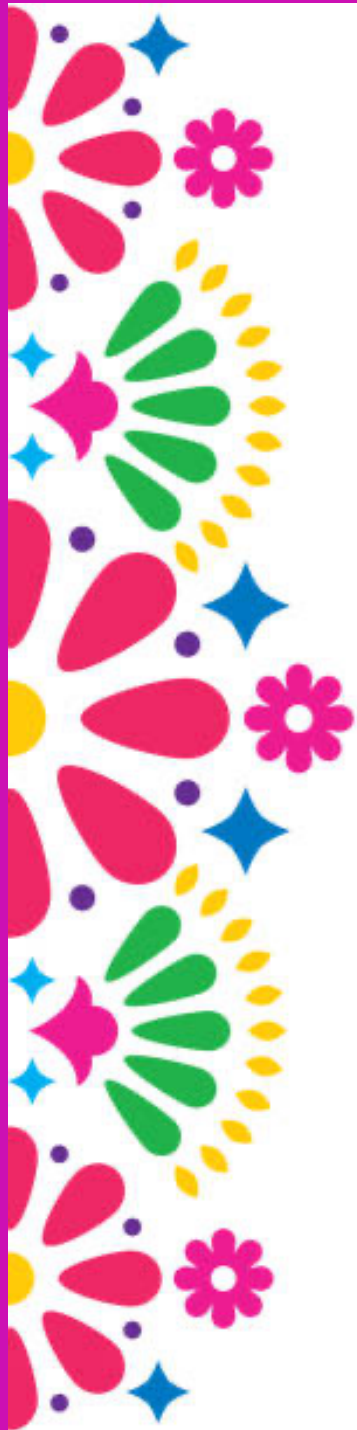
- Share **1 way** you will use this information in your professional and/or personal life.

Everyone you meet is
fighting a battle you
know nothing about.

Be kind.

Always.

iBelieve.com





Thank you! !Gracias!

If you
light a lamp
for someone else
it will also
brighten your path.
— Buddha

Dr. Susana A. López, PhD
DrLopez@Resiliencepc.com
Slopeza@Calpoly.edu

Follow me on Instagram: 😊
[@Dr. Susana.A.Lopez](https://www.instagram.com/Dr.Susana.A.Lopez)





Resources

- Immigrant Hope Santa Barbara
- UndocuSupport San Luis Obispo
- IMPORTA Centro de Inmigración (Santa Maria Office)
- La Hermandad (Oxnard)
- Immigration Advocate network (tri-counties)
- Undocumented Americans

<https://www.apa.org/topics/immigration/index.aspx>

- Immigrant stories

<http://immigrants.mndigital.org/exhibits/show/immigrantstories-exhibit/stories-a-m>