Long-Term Housing Recovery Among Mexican-Origin Immigrants: How Service Providers Navigate Active and Passive Anti-Immigrant Disaster Recovery Policies

Melissa Villarreal

Department of Sociology

University of Colorado (CU) Boulder

Master's Committee

Dr. Lori Peek, Sociology, Chair

Dr. Christi Sue, Sociology

Dr. Jill Harrison, Sociology

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Introduction

Disasters are increasing in frequency and intensity. In 2017, the United States experienced 16 billion-dollar disaster events, with the cumulative cost of these events reaching a new record of over $300 billion in total damages (Smith 2018). While the financial toll of disasters is staggering, it is also important to consider the societal impacts. Disasters affect individuals and social groups in numerous ways, including but not limited to death, injury, mental health issues, social and educational disruption, and displacement. Research suggests that Latino populations are especially vulnerable to disasters due to structural constraints that affect their access to public assistance (Bates and Swan 2007). Latino immigrants face enormous challenges in post-disaster housing recovery. For instance, due to low socioeconomic status (SES) and a lack of homeowners or flood insurance and disaster aid, Latino immigrants may turn to inexperienced family members or neighbors for help with their post-disaster home repairs rather than relying on trained professionals (Maldonado et al. 2016). Nonetheless, there is a dearth of literature on how organizations that serve Latino immigrants are navigating post-disaster recovery to help these populations overcome such challenges.

As such, this study will look at organizations that are embedded within the community, with a majority of the service providers being a part of the Latino immigrant community themselves. Organizations that are embedded in this way typically hold more trust within the community and are better able to disseminate resources and accurate information to community members (Fussell 2018). Studies suggest that in order to be successful, service providers in disaster recovery agencies need to hold a certain level of cultural competency and engage with immigrant groups long-term (Nguyen and Salvesen 2014). Likewise, Scott (2008) found that

NGOs that were unknown to the community or did not work directly with immigrants had trouble collaborating with Latino community members. Faith-based organizations that included members that were also Latino, spoke the language, and were a part of the community, on the other hand, developed strong bonds and were able to cross cultural barriers and provide direct disaster recovery assistance (Scott 2008). This unique ability to intervene and assist the Latino immigrant community can shed light on the way that these organizations help the community recover despite their distinctive challenges.

Omi and Winant's (2014:109) theoretical framework of racial formations can help illuminate this process. Of particular interest to this research is the concept of racial projects, which signifies the ways that "racial meaning becomes embedded in social structures" (Omi and Winant 2014:13) and the subsequent distribution of resources along racial lines. Though formative for the study of race, scholars have pointed out a lack of analysis across the macro, meso, and micro levels when it comes to racial formations (Saperstein et al. 2013; Ray 2019). Ray (2019:31) begins to address this discrepancy through his theory of racialized organizations, categorizing organizations as racial structures and moving "beyond models using race as merely a demographic variable, focusing instead on the mechanisms reproducing racial inequality and the relation between racial structures and agency."

I explore this theoretical concept in the context of disaster recovery. Classifying the disaster recovery system as a racial structure reveals how certain racial groups are disadvantaged by the disaster recovery process. I investigate how non-governmental (NGOs) and community-based (CBOs) organizations that assist Mexican-origin immigrant communities in Houston, Texas with post-disaster housing recovery navigate the racial structure of the disaster recovery system. I begin by outlining the theoretical framework of racial formations and racialized

organizations and explaining how the disaster recovery system fits into this framework as a racial

structure. Specifically, I make the argument that the disaster recovery system is made up of

active and passive anti-immigrant policies. I then discuss how NGOs and CBOs navigated the

anti-immigrant racial structure of the disaster recovery system after Hurricane Harvey in 2017.

Understanding how these organizations operate within this anti-immigrant racial structure will

reveal how organizations can reproduce or challenge racial formations at multiple levels of

analysis. As such, I show that the Mexican-origin immigrant community is constrained by active

and passive anti-immigrant policies and demonstrate that these organizations must also navigate

these constraints in order to provide relief to the community.

Literature Review

Racial Formation

Omi and Winant (2014:3) frame race as a category of "inequality, difference/identity, and

of agency, both individual and collective." Linking race to inequality implies that race is

connected to social conflict, which explains how race can disadvantage people of color, such as

through slavery and colonization, and allows for discussions about racism[1] beyond individual

hate for another group (Bonilla-Silva 2010). Further, racial projects, or "interpretation" of racial

dynamics with the purpose of distributing resources along racial lines (Omi and Winant

2014:56), showcase how resources are connected to racial meanings and how this process is

either challenged or reproduced by political actors. This process signifies that U.S. society is

inherently racial and ruled by a racial contract wherein the reality is an "unjust, *exploitative*

society, ruled by an *oppressive* government and regulated by an *immoral* code" (Mills 1999:5).

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[1] I use Feagin's (2006:2) concept of systemic racism here: "systemic racism encompasses a broad range of white-racist dimensions: the racist ideology, attitudes, emotions, habits, actions, and institutions of whites in this society. Thus, systemic racism is far more than a matter of racial prejudice and individual bigotry. It is a material, social, and ideological reality that is well-embedded in major US institutions."

However, there is little discussion of how this process is reproduced across multiple levels of analysis, beyond macro level power relations and micro level identity concerns (Saperstein et al. 2013). This is an important gap to consider given that individual and group actors hold immense agency in producing and reinforcing racial meanings (Jones 2012). For instance, Jones and Brown's (2017:546) work on Alabama's HB56 immigration bill suggests that efforts made by actors at federal, state, and local levels interact to reproduce this process and argue that these institutions "ultimately work together to preserve racial hegemony." Likewise, Ray (2019:27) characterizes organizations as "constituting and [being] constituted by racial processes that may shape both the policies of the racial state and individual prejudice," highlighting how racial inequality is institutionalized and how it changes over time.

This process is illuminated in today's immigration policies. Pido (2016:1207) claims that citizenship, borders, and the racial meaning attached to them are defined by "often-arbitrary policies." This apparent instability of citizenship boundaries-and of race as a concept more broadly (Winant 2006)-suggests a constant "rearticulation of race through racialization… [that has] direct implications for… entire racial categories, and subsequently the very boundaries governing citizenship" (Pido 2016:1207). The claim that oft-changing policies result in constantly changing racial categories reinforces the idea that federal policies influence individual racial meanings and vice versa. This has a direct impact on immigrant communities and their access to resources. When resources are distributed via racial schemas, or implicit biases, racial structures, defined as "cultural schemas connected to social resources," arise (Ray 2019:30). It is also the case that these racial structures are usually colorblind (Bonilla-Silva 2010:2) in that they are explained as being the outcome of "nonracial dynamics," thereby affording those in power the ability to dismiss unequal outcomes as pure chance. Further, it has been found that different

contexts differentially shape racial outcomes for immigrants (Jones 2012), and as such, it is necessary to consider how organizations specific to a particular community navigate federal and state policy and attempt to make changes at the local level.

Social Vulnerability to Disaster

The social vulnerability perspective in disaster literature considers how political, social, and economic factors influence individuals' ability to prepare for and recover from disasters, and how these factors can exacerbate pre-existing inequalities. From this standpoint, disasters are seen as socially created rather than as "natural" events (Wisner et al. [1994] 2004; Thomas et al. 2013). This perspective sheds light on how "some groups in society are more prone than others to damage, loss, and suffering" due to characteristics such as class, occupation, ethnicity, gender, disability and health, and immigration status (Wisner et al. [1994] 2004:11). These groups are not innately vulnerable but rather, "vulnerability is dynamic and it may build in a cumulative manner when post-disaster needs are not met" (Browne and Peek 2014:94).

Research has shown there are class and racial/ethnic differences in disaster recovery. Wealthy, white populations are more likely than poor, race/ethnic minority communities to receive assistance because they often have the knowledge, experience, and social capital to navigate disaster recovery programs (Fothergill 2004; Grube 2015). In contrast, racial/ethnic minorities are more likely to be poor and to experience housing instability due to systemic racism (Pastor et al. 2006; Weber and Peek 2012). As such, racial/ethnic minorities are less likely to have insurance, financial savings, steady employment, or access to communication channels and information (Peacock, Morrow, and Gladwin 1997). These individuals also find it more difficult to make trips to disaster recovery organizations due to work obligations and lack of access to transportation (Dash, Peacock, and Morrow 1997; Fothergill and Peek 2004;

Jerolleman 2019). Indeed, Bolin and Bolton (1986) found that lower-income Black individuals received less support from fewer sources, were less likely to receive small business administration (SBA) loans, and as a result, recovered much slower than their white counterparts. Consequently, the lack of opportunities and resources intensifies existing poverty and disaster vulnerability (Thomas et al. 2013).

Latino immigrants have been similarly disadvantaged in their disaster recovery. Immigrant communities are widely mistrustful of police and the federal government due to the sociopolitical climate, unauthorized legal status, language isolation, and limited social ties (Fussell et al. 2018). Indeed, "fear of deportation and loss of jobs overshadows the fear of a natural catastrophic event" (Scott 2008:72; Yelvington 1997). This is unsurprising, given the anti-immigrant sentiments often expressed by governmental entities in times of disaster (Flaherty 2011). In addition, while Spanish speakers and other language minorities are more likely to live in areas with high disaster risk, they are severely marginalized by lack of emergency information in their own language (Peha and Yu 2017). As a result, immigrants choose to trust word-of-mouth, which can often be inaccurate (Messias, Barrington, and Lacy 2012; Fussell et al. 2018). This affects how immigrant populations respond to disaster, which can have implications for the mental health (Drogendijk, van der Velden, and Kleber 2012), physical health, safety, and even deportation of these communities (Fox and Gibbons 2005).

McConnell (2017) found that Latino undocumented immigrants have more compounded housing vulnerabilities than other racial groups. Latino immigrants are primarily renters (Hall and Greenman 2013), but financial assistance for housing recovery is largely reserved for homeowners (Pastor et al. 2006; Logan 2008; Jerolleman 2019). Even among homeowners, white homeowners are the main receivers of assistance for a number of reasons (Logan 2008).

For one, they are identifiable and easy for authorities to contact (Logan 2008). In contrast, Latino immigrants, especially those that are undocumented, work hard to remain under the radar, often choosing not to open bank accounts (Suro et al. 2002) or sign housing contracts. Further, the assumption that Latino immigrants are undocumented sometimes leads to Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) officials withholding important information on housing assistance to eligible individuals (Muñiz 2006). Additionally, FEMA assistance is set up for nuclear families with the one head of household model, excluding nontraditional households (Morrow 1997; Jerolleman 2019). Latino immigrant households often have several families living together due to lack of affordable housing (Hall and Greenman 2013), leaving many in need of assistance with no help. The lack of housing assistance for Latino immigrants is alarming because trouble with post-disaster housing extends to a number of other issues, including health care needs (Comerio 2014:54). This results in a feedback loop where these households are hit even harder during the next disaster.

Active and Passive Anti-Immigrant Policies

There is little focus on the interweaving effects of disaster recovery and immigration laws at times of disaster. The authority for federal disaster response, the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act) (2016:14), states:

> Such regulations shall include provisions for insuring that the distribution of supplies, the processing of applications, and other relief and assistance activities shall be accomplished in an equitable and impartial manner, *without discrimination on the grounds of race, color, religion, **nationality**, sex, age, or economic status*. (Emphasis mine)

As Horton (2012:141-142) points out, this appears to require that "all federal assistance should be distributed evenly without regard to citizenship." In reality, federal disaster programs "perpetuate injustice, often in the name of objectivity" (Jerolleman 2019:16). These programs are

designed using a cost-benefit approach intended to compensate for monetary losses to allocate

disaster assistance, which privileges areas with higher value properties with no consideration of

need (Kamel 2012; Jerolleman 2019). Federal programs also demand burdensome amounts of

information from applicants (Grube 2015), which Latino immigrant populations are usually

unable to present. The issue here is that this colorblind view (Bonilla-Silva 2010) of disaster

relief ignores the reality of Latino immigrants, excluding them from receiving recovery

assistance and exemplifies how racial structures "decouple formal commitments to equity,

access, and inclusion from policies and practices that reinforce, or at least do not challenge,

existing racial hierarchies" (Ray 2019:42).

While disaster recovery policy ignores the unique needs of Latino immigrant populations,

it is the active exclusion in laws that address the general distribution of aid, such as the Welfare

Reform Act (Fox 2016), that make a lot of these services inaccessible to Latino immigrants even

after a disaster occurs (Horton 2012). In fact, such restrictions are reflective of a history of racial

discrimination in public assistance provision, a history that has affected Mexicans

disproportionately (Fox 2016). Although citizenship was not a federal requirement for access to

welfare up until the 1970s, Mexicans often faced discrimination from local relief officials in the

form of collaboration with immigration officials to deport dependent Mexicans (ibid). Further,

changes in policy in the 1960s led to an increase in Asian and Latino immigrants migrating to the

United States, with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) reporting that up to 97% of

unauthorized immigrants were from Mexico (ibid). This, paired with the rising Chicano civil

rights movement in the late 1960s, led to increased racial anxieties against Mexicans (Massey

2020), which ultimately led to a federal citizenship requirement for welfare eligibility (Fox 2016)

and an increased demand for more restrictive immigration and border policies (Massey 2020) as

an attempt to curve immigration from Mexico. This had severe consequences for Mexican immigrants, many of which have an effect to this day through institutionalized forms of racism. For instance, the citizenship requirement disproportionately affects Mexican immigrants, as they are often mistakenly presumed to lack citizenship. This results in discriminatory treatment when seeking assistance, such as being denied hospital services for being unable to provide proof of citizenship (Fox 2016) or increased policing along the U.S.-Mexico border (Massey 2020), which can affect American citizens if they are perceived to be of Mexican origin (Fox 2016).
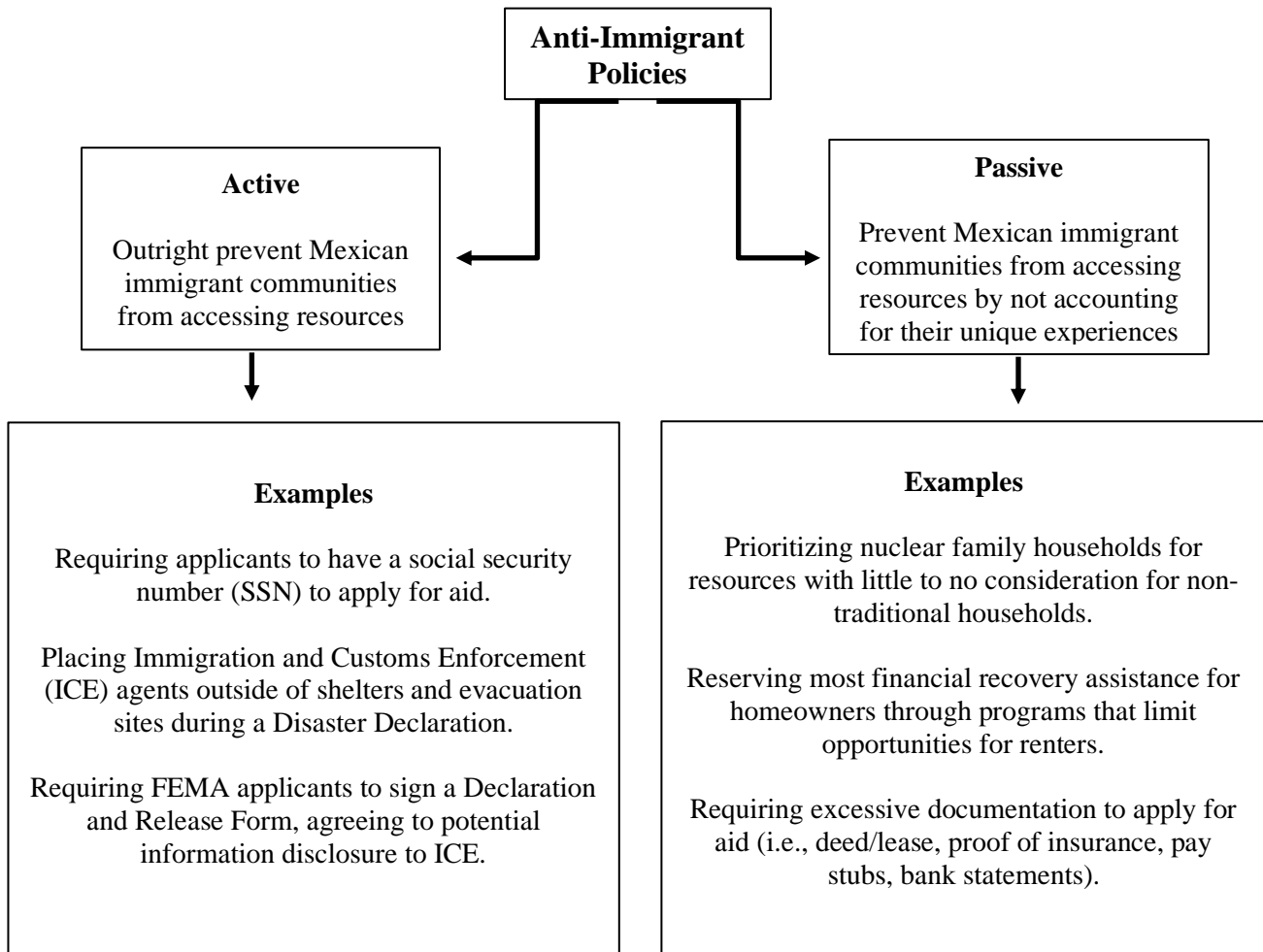
Further, immigrants are often seen as competitors for post-disaster resource allocations, which then "justifies" intentions to limit assistance for them (Andrighetto et al. 2016:755). This exemplifies the "hard" expectation of citizenship, where established populations believe that unauthorized immigrants should not be permitted access to public resources because there is a perceived lack of contribution from them, such as the belief that immigrants do not pay taxes (Jiménez 2017), a discourse that was weaponized against Mexicans in particular in the 1970s (Fox 2016). This portrays Mexican-origin immigrants as undeserving victims of disaster (Tierney et al. 2006; Vickery 2017; Jerolleman 2019). In turn, this assertation creates a cycle where the Mexican-origin immigrant community continues to be left behind in recovery efforts by political figures tasked with expediting recovery, specifically because they are considered "illegal" and are pit against other disaster-affected communities (Flaherty 2011:371).

Hence, clear bias exists in the ways that these disaster relief programs continue to be operated, especially when taking into consideration the immigration laws of the Trump administration (Pierce 2019), which only further reinforce "racialized anxieties" by labeling Latino immigrants as threats (Provine and Doty 2011:262), particularly those of Mexican origin. Indeed, FitzGerald and Cook-Martín (2014) find that pre-existing ethnic and racial prejudice can

influence immigration policy via racialized anti-immigrant sentiments. So, while there is no single, universally accepted definition of what anti-immigrant policies consist of, I use this term to refer to *policies that actively or passively discriminate against and disadvantage Mexican-origin immigrants through the restriction of access to resources* (see Figure 1)*.*

Due to anti-immigrant disaster recovery policies, Mexican immigrants are left to seek assistance from outside of government programs, often through churches and NGOs (Comerio 2014). This has implications as to who is actually responsible for post-disaster recovery. The neoliberal idea that state and national government entities are "ineffective" in helping communities recover puts the burden of recovery on non-governmental actors; however, these organizations lack the resources to conduct this work, often leaving them unable to properly help with the community's recovery (Tierney 2015:1337). As a result, these organizations are left to operate under a racist structure of anti-immigrant disaster recovery policies that affect the distribution of resources according to racial biases (Ray 2019) without any concrete help from government actors. Understanding how NGOs and CBOs navigate these anti-immigrant policies will shed light on how these processes work across multiple levels of analysis. This will show "what race means when it really matters for determining life chances: not in the abstract, as when formulating policies, but when it comes to applying those definitions and legislation to individuals in everyday life" (Saperstein et al. 2013:368).

Figure 1. Active and passive forms of anti-immigrant policies.

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                        │  Anti-Immigrant     │
                        │     Policies        │
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            ┌──────────────────┘         └──────────────────┐
            ▼                                                ▼
┌───────────────────────────┐              ┌───────────────────────────┐
│          Active           │              │          Passive          │
│                           │              │                           │
│  Outright prevent Mexican │              │  Prevent Mexican immigrant│
│   immigrant communities   │              │  communities from accessing│
│  from accessing resources │              │  resources by not accounting│
│                           │              │  for their unique experiences│
└───────────────────────────┘              └───────────────────────────┘
            │                                                │
            ▼                                                ▼
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Examples	Examples
Requiring applicants to have a social security number (SSN) to apply for aid. Placing Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents outside of shelters and evacuation sites during a Disaster Declaration. Requiring FEMA applicants to sign a Declaration and Release Form, agreeing to potential information disclosure to ICE.	Prioritizing nuclear family households for resources with little to no consideration for non-traditional households. Reserving most financial recovery assistance for homeowners through programs that limit opportunities for renters. Requiring excessive documentation to apply for aid (i.e., deed/lease, proof of insurance, pay stubs, bank statements).

Context

In August 2017, Hurricane Harvey dropped an unprecedented amount of rainfall on Houston, Texas, leading to catastrophic flooding. Based on the latest Migration Policy Institute report, Houston is home to 1.6 million immigrants, with an estimated 30 percent being undocumented (Capps and Ruiz Soto 2018). Mexican-origin immigrants account for 612,000 of the total, with 290,000 having undocumented status (ibid). Overall, Mexican-origin immigrants make up over 57% of the unauthorized population in Houston (ibid). Further, many families in Houston are "mixed" legal status families, with 20% of unauthorized immigrants being married

to someone with some form of legal status (ibid) and 15% of U.S.-born children having at least one unauthorized immigrant parent (Atkiss, Vickery, and Stys 2019). Importantly, those who are unauthorized are likely to face more barriers for future legal status changes (Capps and Ruiz Soto 2018), making repercussions from the changing political climate have greater impact.

Because of its proximity to the Rio Grande Valley, the busiest stretch of the U.S.-Mexico border, the Mexican-origin immigrant community in Houston strongly feels the effects of asylum and border enforcement policies (Capps and Ruiz Soto 2018). In addition to Mexican-origin immigrants being targeted in the 2016 presidential election (Phillips 2017), extended wait-times for asylum seekers in Houston (Capps and Ruiz Soto 2018), and attempts to increase the detention of immigrants at the U.S.-Mexico border (Pierce 2019), the Texas Senate Bill 4 (known as SB4) went into effect in September 2017, immediately after Harvey. This bill makes it against the law for local law enforcement and public institutions in Texas to refuse to work with the federal government on immigration enforcement. It also allows police officers to ask about the immigration status of anyone they detain (American Civil Liberties Union 2018).

In 2018, the Department of Homeland Security proposed a change to public charge law (Immigrant Legal Resource Center 2019). The current law involves an evaluation of immigrants seeking entry into the U.S. or of already-present immigrants looking to change their status to assess whether they are likely to become dependent on the government for support (through welfare, for example). The proposed 2018 change would deny entry or the ability to change current legal status if they or their family members (even if U.S.-born) have simply used public benefits, either in the past or currently. In other words, there would no longer be an evaluation to understand *why* and *for how long* individuals have used these benefits; any use would lead to immediate denial (Immigrant Legal Resource Center 2019). Service providers indicated that,

because of conversations surrounding the proposed change in the year following Harvey, many Mexican-origin immigrants chose to not seek either publicly or privately funded assistance because they wanted to avoid tarnishing an immigration case.

Further, while a large percentage of both naturalized citizens and undocumented immigrants in Houston are homeowners (Capps and Ruiz Soto 2018), Houston is primarily a city of renters (Way and Fraser 2018). The city suffers from an epidemic of older and dangerous apartments, which mostly affect African American and Latino tenants. Many of these buildings are severely rundown with conditions ranging from sewage pouring into units to collapsing ceilings. Faced with an inadequate supply of safe, affordable housing options, however, low income African American and Latino families are more likely to end up trapped in dangerous housing conditions (Way and Fraser 2018:8).

This led to several repercussions for Latino immigrants after Harvey. Just one year after Harvey, low-income neighborhoods, predominantly Latino, were already lagging behind in the recovery (Plott 2018). Almost 50% of immigrants with damaged homes expressed concerns that seeking assistance would draw attention to their or a family member's undocumented status (Wu et al. 2018). Many undocumented immigrants faced significant housing damages after Harvey but were less likely than U.S. born residents to have homeowners or flood insurance or to apply for financial assistance (Capps and Ruiz Soto 2018). Many undocumented Latino immigrants also reported instances of abuse through forced eviction or through refusal from landlords to repair hurricane damage (Kriel and Planas 2018).

To clarify, although the findings outlined in this front end mostly reflect the experiences of Latino immigrants more broadly, I am focusing on the experiences of Mexican-origin immigrants. I made this decision due to the racialized nature of discrimination in public

assistance provision against Mexican immigrants that I outlined earlier. Given this racialized

discrimination and lack of access to resources, as well as the large reported number of Mexican-

origin immigrants in Houston, I argue that they are the most likely to have been constrained by

anti-immigrant policies and as such the most vulnerable in their housing recovery. For the

purpose of this paper, the term Mexican-origin immigrants does refer to both documented and

undocumented immigrants, but it is important to note that the issues the broader community

faces are only exacerbated by undocumented status.

Nonetheless, this context made post-Harvey Houston an ideal location to explore how

anti-immigrant disaster recovery policies affect the Mexican-origin immigrant community's

housing recovery. Although the City of Houston-and Texas more broadly-may be unique in its

location near the U.S.-Mexico border, conducting this study in a city with such disparate housing

and immigration enforcement conditions for Mexican-origin immigrants will shed light as to

how the dynamics of anti-immigrant disaster recovery policies may operate in other contexts.

Methods

This project involved semi-structured interviews, ethnographic observations, and content

analysis of seven organizations' websites, news stories, and policy documents (see Table 1 for

full list of data sources) to answer the following research question:

> *How do service providers in NGOs and CBOs navigate anti-immigrant disaster recovery policies to help the Mexican-origin immigrant population in their long-term housing recovery post-Harvey?*

Interviews were conducted with members of NGOs and CBOs that a) served the

Mexican-origin immigrant population, and b) addressed housing recovery post-Harvey (see

Table 2 for overview of organizations). To be clear, these organizations all served other

immigrant and non-immigrant populations; nonetheless, some providers did say that most of the

individuals reaching out for help from their organization were Mexican-origin immigrants. I reached out to all organizations in January 2019 to introduce my project and intentions and to establish relationships to service providers. After receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval in April 2019 (Protocol #19-0140), I followed up with all organizations that communicated interest to share how my research plans had progressed and to begin formal recruiting. This approach seemed to foster trust in me by the participants. It is also important to note that I am a Mexican-origin Latina with immigrant parents and a bilingual Houston-native. These factors helped facilitate my access as I was often seen as an insider. I also employed snowball sampling and shared a study flyer to meet other possible participants as I got more embedded within the community.

Table 1. Data Collected

Type	Number
Formal Interviews	10
Informal Interviews	8
Blog Posts	9
News Reports	16
Press Releases	8
Organizational Reports	6

I recruited participants based on the single criterion that they had worked at their organization for at least three months, giving them enough time to adjust and get a sense of the community needs, challenges, and overall recovery. I chose three months as opposed to a longer time period as initial conversations with providers made clear that the needs from immediately after Harvey to two years later had not changed. I pre-screened all interested participants prior to scheduling or conducting their interviews to ensure they were eligible. All but four of the individuals that participated are Mexican-origin, and some are immigrants themselves. I translated all of my interview materials from English to Spanish so that each individual could choose to participate in either language. I am a native Spanish speaker, fluent in speaking, writing, and reading the language, so I completed the translations myself and did not need interpreters during interviews.

I conducted interviews during two trips to Houston, one from May to August 2019 and

the second in November 2019. In some cases, interested participants did not have the time or the ability to complete a full interview due to not being "on the ground" with the community in their regular day-to-day activities. In these cases, I conducted short, informal interviews either via Zoom or in their organization headquarters. Unlike the semi-structured interviews, informal interviews were much shorter, typically 30 minutes or less, and while these conversations were guided to cover the general themes, they did not involve going through the complete interview guide as a majority of the specific questions involved inquiry into direct work with the community. Each in-depth interview was one to one and a half hours long. All chose to speak to me in their offices, where I collected observation notes as I witnessed the providers in their day-to-day work environments. I audio recorded every interview with the consent of participants.

Table 2. Overview of Organizations[2]

Organization	Population(s) Served	Services Provided	# of Interviews[3]
Houston Education Outreach*	Immigrant families	Legal advice, DACA applications & financial aid for students, help with income tax and divorce paperwork, translations, immigration cases, disaster recovery assistance, tenants' rights	5
Texas Allegiance*	Low-income communities	Disaster recovery and homeowners' assistance, community-organizing, public interest research	4
Neighborhood Assistance Group*	Low-income communities harmed by Harvey	Disaster recovery assistance, case management, home rebuilding, community organizing	3
Immigrant Outreach	Immigrants and refugees	Disaster recovery assistance, adult education & training, driver's school, employment, legal, & refugee services, professional counseling	3
Houston Housing Help	Low-income communities	Disaster recovery assistance, home rebuilding, education/head start programs, job and career development, senior services, help with income tax paperwork	1
Houston Legal Resource	Immigrants and refugees	Legal services, immigration cases, asylum, DACA assistance, disaster recovery resources, Violence Against Women Act cases	1
Lone Star Coalition	People of color, immigrant and low-income families, and low-wage workers	Disaster recovery assistance, homeowners and renters' assistance, community-organizing	1

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[2] An asterisk following the pseudonym of the organization indicates that I conducted observation at the site, attended community meetings with, or participated in a go-along with providers.
[3] Includes both formal and informal interviews.

Questions covered each person's work as an organization and collaboration with other NGOs or CBOs; the general impacts of Harvey on the Mexican-origin immigrant community; the barriers to housing recovery for the community; and how they helped community members move forward despite challenges. The semi-structured nature of the interviews meant I had the general themes I wanted to touch on, but participants were able to guide the conversation themselves in accordance to what they found significant. As such, not all interviews were identical, nor did I get to every question in my interview guide with all participants. This was deliberate on my part and based on best practices for ethnographic interviewing (Lofland and Lofland 1995). I made sure to take notes on emerging themes as they came up in order to ask about in my next interview, and in some cases, asked past participants informally the next time I saw them in their office.

After I completed each interview, I transferred audio recordings to my password-protected laptop, after which I transcribed them in whatever language they were conducted in and de-identified them. One participant completed a formal interview in Spanish, three completed an informal interview in Spanish, and a few others spoke a mix of both languages. I wrote all fieldnotes in English, and quotes included in the paper were also translated to English.

In addition to interviews, I also visited the office and collected ethnographic observation notes for three of the organizations. In each of these instances, I arrived at a time previously agreed upon with a service provider, and spent a few hours observing and jotting down notes while shadowing a few of the providers as they spoke to community members. Having the ability to observe these interactions gave me insight that I would not have had otherwise as I may not have thought to ask about a particular issue or topic. On two occasions, I was also invited to "go-along" (Carpiano 2009) as service providers attended press conferences, meetings held in the

homes of community members, and meetings with city council officials in Houston. At the end

of each day, I dedicated about two to three hours for organizing the notes collected during my

time with the service providers, typing them up and making them more thorough for coding and

analysis (Emerson 2001).

I also incorporated content analysis of website materials, news stories, and organizational

and state reports. The content analysis of website materials, including linked news stories that

contained features of the organizations, permitted me to understand, beyond what the service

providers told me themselves and what I observed, how they "advertised" themselves to the

community and others via what they featured on their website (Warren and Karner 2015). I

searched for and compiled news stories by scouring through the organizations' websites. All of

them had news stories or news sections linked and highlighted on their website. For each

organization, I carefully read through each of the news articles and verified that they were about

Harvey, housing, and the Mexican-origin immigrant community. For those that had hundreds of

news articles on their website, I utilized the search function to search for combinations of the

following key phrases: "Hurricane Harvey + disasters + immigrants + housing," and verified the

posts were about Mexican-origin immigrants. In addition to the news stories, I found that three

of the organizations also kept up regular blogs. I ran the same searches using those key phrases

and compiled several blog posts to include in my analysis. These blog posts are significant

because they represent what members of the organizations themselves have written on this topic

and how they represent their work to the community in their own words.

Finally, several service providers also shared organizational reports with me. I conducted

further searches of the websites to collect other relevant reports. These reports included insights

regarding policy challenges for members of the Mexican-origin immigrant community and the

service providers working to assist them.

All interviews, fieldnotes, reports, news stories, and website materials were coded on the qualitative software, Atlas.ti, which allows me to keep track of quotations and to attach codes to them. I began by coding descriptively (Richards 2014), and drafting memos and concept maps as I began to note emerging themes and connections in the data. As I began to identify the most prominent themes, I re-visited those particular descriptive codes and began to attach analytical codes to them (Richards 2014), all the while refining my memos and concept maps. Once I completed the coding process, I generated several documents of quotation output for the main themes.

How Service Providers Navigate Active and Passive Anti-Immigrant Policies

The data gathered support the assertion that disaster recovery programs do not account for the reality of the Mexican-origin immigrant population, often barring their recovery through the active and passive anti-immigrant policies that encapsulate them. The data also show that NGOs and CBOs lack the resources to provide the necessary assistance to the community. As a result, organizations were forced to find different avenues to assist. The sections below summarize the actions that NGOs and CBOs took to navigate these barriers. These approaches were utilized by all organizations I spoke to.

Community Embeddedness with the Mexican Immigrant Community

Through their embeddedness in the community, these organizations were able to establish trust with community members and give them the assistance they needed. Because a majority of providers in across several organizations were also Mexican immigrants themselves, they had a personal stake in helping the community at large, often emphasized through their use of the phrases "us," "my community," and "our community" in interviews, blog posts, and news

stories. Many of the providers, when asked about why community members came to them for help, spoke about their unique position in the community and the trust that this fostered between them and those they were assisting. "It helps to be a Mexican woman talking to a Latino family. It's completely different," Jenny from Neighborhood Assistance Group observed.

Establishing trust in a victimized community

The Mexican-origin immigrant community is difficult to access for their lack of trust of governmental entities. These organizations, though they were embedded within the community, still had to *work* to get members to trust them. One reason cited by several providers was that "denial fatigue" simply left them too exhausted to interact with these organizations. To prove they were willing to make an effort, providers insisted on connecting community members to resources and continued trying to motivate them to seek resources. As Joshua from Neighborhood Assistance Group summarized:

> [And they're like,] I'm done [with looking for assistance]. And we're like, 'Can we put a roof on your house? Like literally, can we give you a roof?' And then, 'Will you hang out with us a little bit?' And then, 'Can we try to apply for the city program and see how that goes?' And we're pretty cynical too. We're like, 'It's probably not going to work, but let's try and now you know you at least have a roof and you have people who you can call.'

> Similarly, Vanessa from Houston Education Outreach described her organization's

commitment to motivating community members to organize and take action:

> We had a couple of tenants [when] we first started… maybe 10 of them at [one] apartment complex. They had all been affected by Harvey, so one of the things that we did was we took action. We… talked to everyone individually, told them what we could do, how to demand some of these repairs that needed to be done... All of us went up to the manager *together* (emphasis mine).

This approach eventually led to providers being known in the community, to the point of being invited to homes or beloved community settings, such as churches, to have community meetings, which actually served to bring individuals closer to other people affected by Harvey. For

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instance, I was able to attend and participate in a community meeting hosted by providers from

Neighborhood Assistance Group and Texas Allegiance. The meeting was intended to organize

community members to brainstorm solutions to post-Harvey housing problems. This meeting

was held at a community church in the evening and dinner was provided in order to allow people

to attend after work. The space also included a room for children to play in and remain safe and

entertained away from the discussion. This was the second meeting of its kind, and community

members already seemed to be comfortable with each other and the providers. It was clear that

the providers had spent ample time getting to know the community members, referencing

specific issues individuals had been struggling with, asking about loved ones that were not

present, and joking prior to the start of the meeting. The meeting was productive, with all

community members participating in the discussion by sharing updates on their issues, asking

questions of the providers, and suggesting possible ways to address problems. This was

facilitated by having translators in the room for those that communicated primarily in Spanish.

This would not have been possible had these providers not made the attempt to engage with

community members to gain their trust.

Joshua from Neighborhood Assistance Group further discussed the importance of giving

that trust back:

> So, this woman had her wages stolen. And her house was destroyed by Harvey.
> When we found out about the wage theft, we just gave them five hundred
> dollars... They were like, 'Why are you giving us five hundred dollars?' […]
> 'Well, you don't own your house, so we can't really do work on it, but we heard
> about this wage thing and that's the limit of how much we can give within case
> management - 500 dollars - and we just heard your story and… we don't *need* to
> see a copy of your contract… we're just going to *trust* - we're gonna trust you
> because it's only $500.'

Eduardo from Houston Education Outreach reiterated this point by stating they rarely requested

any documentation or proof when giving resources: "We really relied on people to be honest

with us, and [we] knew that this was the type of help that we were going to be offering to the community." This process of establishing trust with each other was vital to the ability of these organizations to assist the Mexican-origin immigrant community. Because the community had lost trust in and held fear of recovery programs due to constantly being negatively affected by anti-immigrant disaster recovery policies, these organizations' efforts, abilities, and trust in them became the primary way that community members began to slowly move forward in their recovery.

Exhibiting pride in their unique position to assist

There was a sense of pride from service providers in their ability to assist the Mexican-origin immigrant community. Many of these organizations see themselves as not only separate from government entities, but as completely *different*. They see themselves as having the community's interest at heart and as *actually* wanting and being able to help the community as opposed to city, state, and federal government organizations lacking the interest and ability to appropriately assist the community. As one report from Neighborhood Assistance Group stated, "We've learned to expect the city will be unresponsive. Let's enable ourselves to be responsive in our best form, not theirs." Although Christina from Texas Allegiance mentioned wanting to give them the benefit of the doubt, overall, providers stated that government officials have gone through this before with the multiple hurricanes Houston has experienced in the past and that they should know better by now. Christina herself expressed her frustration via comments like: "It's not the first time you do this… This is not the first time the state of Texas does this. Why haven't we learned?!"

There is also a common distinction of "us" versus "them." These providers expressed frustration with the "big nonprofits" and "organizations downtown" in addition to the

government organizations during interviews. According to Victoria from Lone Star Coalition, organizations that were more "grassroots" in origin would differ in their approach from organizations with "more resources," referring to the lack of presence in the community from such NGOs. Joshua from Neighborhood Assistance Group expressed the advantage of being located close to the community:

> The main neighborhood we serve is a bit north of here. But we're very close… it's never like… you need to come to our office and give us these documents. It's like, we're gonna sit in your living room and you'll make fun of me for wearing the wrong clothes, and you'll say, 'Oh you're a man who doesn't know how to hang drywall, what's wrong with you?' [Laughing]

Joshua explained, "'cause a lot of times, the family actually is eligible for a program and they just need to… they don't understand why they've been denied [housing assistance], and the organization isn't doing a good job of telling them." As a result, these providers often are the ones to reach out to get answers on behalf of the community members, usually finding out the ineligibility came from the failure to meet anti-immigrant bureaucratic requirements.

This perceived distinction led to providers advocating for the work they are doing by stressing how their efforts have "clearly demonstrated" they are "holding space for a critical conversation and creating tools that are genuinely needed," as quoted in a blog post from Houston Legal Resource. Eduardo from Houston Education Outreach explained in a news story, "we became a beacon of information… People are afraid, but they identify with us." Providers are proud to be the ones assisting their community in times of disaster. A Houston Housing Help report succinctly claimed, "[we] keep Houston a welcoming place of opportunity by staying connected to the community. We listen. We respond. And we deliver."

It was striking to see that two years after the storm, the Mexican-origin immigrant community in Houston had yet to fully recover, if at all. As previously mentioned, several providers did say that the needs from immediately after Harvey to two years later had not changed. What had changed was a) the resources that the organizations had available, and b) the motivation of community members to seek resources. Community members became discouraged after being consistently denied because they failed to meet the standards of the anti-immigrant policies of disaster recovery programs. Jenny from Neighborhood Assistance Group described that it was up to them to do what they could to "unstick," or to provide a "morale boost," through "a little bit of work" on smaller details, such as helping to install doors or helping to organize against a landlord (as described earlier) as opposed to rebuilding an entire home. However, this becomes difficult to do with the lack of organizational resources that they were dealing with two years into the recovery.

Providing direct assistance to Mexican immigrants excluded from other resources

Several providers mentioned in their interview that community members were seeking resources less and less as time went on. Instead, it was up to service providers to reach out to community members, often through community meetings or simply knocking on people's doors. Providers often discussed the difficulty community members experienced when applying to federal programs like FEMA due to both active and passive anti-immigrant policies. For instance, many were unable to apply without anyone in the household having a SSN. Those that were eligible had a frustrating time trying to meet bureaucratic expectations, such as providing the deed to their home and the numerous other documents requested by federal programs. Of those that did apply, very few received any assistance, and even less received enough to make

substantial progress in their recovery. As a result, many gave up. Although community members were feeling less motivated to look for resources, service providers made sure to stress that there was still a need. However, these organizations were not equipped for providing any direct assistance-material resources given directly to the person in need-either.

The limited resources as well as the precarious realities of the Mexican-origin immigrant community's housing situations place CBO and NGO providers in a position where they must decide who and what project is given priority. Even though many providers mentioned they disliked the bureaucratic process of governmental organizations, some providers discussed needing to request documents in order to ensure they were able to help those most in need. As Joshua from Neighborhood Assistance Group described in his interview:

> When we work on a $30,000 repair of the full house, we do ask for a lot of documents… What we would worry about is that we would build the house, and then someone else would come and kick the person out that we thought we were helping. It's not like we don't trust the person there. It's… kind of making sure, do they understand their own situation? And a lot of times we find out that they don't. They're like, 'I own this house,' and then we see the contract and the first sentence is, 'The tenant,' and then 'blank' and then that person's name. It's like, how are we going to break this to you, but you don't own the house.

For all organizations, this also meant that they had to prioritize a specific subset of the community to help because they wanted to avoid stretching themselves too thin. As Vanessa from Houston Education Outreach explained in her interview, "We did it tactically. We didn't necessarily put out an announcement to everybody. It was just calling our [clients]." Vanessa also described reaching out to their specific neighborhood by knocking on people's doors to assess needs and offer resources. This was a particularly effective way of providing assistance given that community members were not aware of all the resources available to them, often due to a language barrier, as discussed below. Further, many community members were unable to seek resources outside of their own neighborhoods due to lack of transportation access.

At some point, though, organizations simply run out of resources, such as money or materials for rebuilding. Take the following description by Jesus from Houston Education Outreach:

> People seek tangible and direct help. A lot of times, we don't have the ability to solve the problem because, at the end of the day, people think… perhaps they have the wrong impression that coming to an organization like Houston Education Outreach means they will have their problem entirely resolved. An example at times of disaster is, "I need money to pay my rent." We can't help. It's a tangible request. It's urgent. It's a very valid need, but we don't always have [the money].

Providers discussed raising money via fundraisers and donations to address these needs, but all explained that those funds ran out after a few months. Josie from Immigrant Outreach described that they were able to receive some funds by applying for grants, but this was not feasible for all organizations as not all organizations had staff that were trained in grant writing. In these cases, providers would try to refer them to other agencies when possible because one organization is typically not able to provide all that community members need on their own.

Collaborating to combine limited resources for an underserved community

Many organizations in this study were interconnected with one another. Providers knew that they could, and often would, refer community members to each other because they trusted that their clients would be treated well, and they worked together often enough that they knew what the other organizations were able to provide. Houston Legal Resource, known for providing legal services to the broader immigrant community in Houston, raised money and provided small grants to assist the immigrant community in post-Harvey recovery to several NGOs and CBOs. These smaller NGOs and CBOs relied on collaborations like these for monetary donations to do their work. As Eduardo from Houston Education Outreach stressed, this type of assistance was particularly valuable since it meant they were able to provide *direct* assistance to the Mexican-

origin immigrant community because they did not have to go through what Christina from Texas Allegiance called the "red tape:"

> We were going through different organizations like [redacted] and other organizations like that to be able to have those funds. And like I said, they were unrestricted funds, so as soon as we were getting them, we were turning them around and turning them into the checks to cut to people for rent assistance and things like that. So there was no… there was no middleman [in those cases].

Collaboration with organizations working with the Mexican-origin immigrant community outside of disaster recovery was significant as well. Jenny from Neighborhood Assistance Group worked as a case manager at a different organization in addition to Neighborhood Assistance Group. After Harvey, based on conversations with her clients, she realized that they were dealing with housing issues. She "put on her other hat," and was able to begin "referring" clients to the recovery organization. As this organization's only Latina and Mexican immigrant member, her connection as a case manager gave rise to the ability of this organization to serve the Mexican-origin immigrant community. Without this connection, members of the community may have perceived this organization as a government entity and refused to seek any assistance from them. Indeed, this provider claimed she was the only one in the organization to work directly with the community.

In other cases, these organizations were able to advocate on the behalf of community members to other organizations with more resources when asking for assistance. Joshua from Neighborhood Assistance Group provided a particularly succinct example:

> [Name of organization] might be like, 'We're not doing the house because the house isn't in the person's name,' and we're like, 'Can we get an affidavit that the house is in her [late] mom's name and they're gonna work to transfer the deed if you connect them to a lawyer?' […] And then we're like, 'Let me send you pictures of how fucked up their house is, and how bad the condition is.' […] And then we're like, 'Okay, and how about you come visit the house with us and meet her and her kids?' and then [they're] like, 'All right, we'll do the affidavit!' We

escalate in that way where we aren't asking them to break their rules, but we're asking them to be as flexible as they can within their rules.

This is reflective of what a few providers described as some NGOs adopting the passive anti-immigrant policies from federal programs. Said differently, by implementing unnecessary bureaucratic requirements at the local level that reflect those of federal programs to approve assistance, such organizations are further limiting the recovery of Mexican-origin immigrants. Nonetheless, providers adopt processes like the one described above to challenge these policies and practices within their limited abilities.

Helping the community navigate anti-immigrant bureaucracy

There are a number of systemic barriers to equitable disaster recovery. Joshua from Neighborhood Assistance Group attributed this to a false narrative of "double-dipping" or duplication of benefits when seeking aid. "No one trusts poor people," he said, which subsequently affects Mexican-origin immigrants. According to him, rather than finding paths to assist those in need, many of the "larger" non-governmental organizations find ways to disqualify them, relying on the assumption that if they actually need assistance, they will be able to properly complete all requirements. However, barriers such as requesting SSNs, a deed to a house or lease to an apartment, proof of insurance, pay stubs, and bank statements when they are not required reflect how such policies are passively anti-immigrant. As Joshua described:

> It's like there's this contradiction between what the stated goals are and often so many programs are like… 'We're going to prioritize rebuilding homes for undocumented people. All they have to do is submit their mortgage and proof of their income. And all these things that undocumented people can't produce.' So there's a disconnect… [speaking to Jenny] Remember when [name of program redacted] had that event… they were like, 'We're gonna give $1,500 to people and we're prioritizing the undocumented community.' And us and [redacted], another organization, collectively brought 85 people there and *seven* got the assistance because… there's just a lot of barriers even though they told us, 'It's going to be super easy. We're going to work with undocumented people; we'll take whatever documents they have. The burden of proof is on *us* not on them.'

Instead, Mexican-origin immigrants were asked for numerous documents, which many community members were unable to provide. Several service providers also described how there is a requirement to ensure that damage to a home is truly storm damage, with some organizations sometimes denying assistance if they deem that it was pre-storm damage that caused water to enter the home. This requirement significantly affects Mexican-origin immigrants since, as previously pointed out, they were likely to live in homes that were unsafe prior to Harvey. This process is one of the ways in which federal programs, such as FEMA, assess eligibility, but according to service providers, many "larger" NGOs were known to adopt these same procedures.

As such, the most valuable resource that these organizations were able to provide community members with was information. By sharing with community members what resources they are eligible for, and how they can navigate the complex, bureaucratical anti-immigrant disaster recovery system, these organizations were able to help community members overcome fear and misinformation, such as the myth that all Mexican-origin undocumented immigrants are ineligible for FEMA assistance. This misinformation can be detrimental to the recovery of the Mexican immigrant community. Take, for instance, the example provided by Houston Legal Resource in a report:

> One lawyer reported an immigrant who approached the legal assistance table at the emergency shelter at [name of shelter redacted]. After a woman stood in line for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) assistance for over two hours, she was told she did not qualify for assistance because she did not have legal documentation. She immediately left, too intimidated to ask additional questions. The lawyer took her back to the FEMA representative to begin the application process, having determined with a few simple questions that her child is eligible as he was born in the U.S.

Additionally, many organizations conducted their own surveys to collect data on who has gotten help, from who, and in what ways. This helped them streamline how to help community members directly with their unmet needs. This is important since, due to a language barrier and lack of access to technology or other forums where information on disaster recovery assistance is shared, the Mexican-origin immigrant community is often left without appropriate information. As Vanessa from Houston Education Outreach described:

> I think that process is really complicated, even for somebody that speaks both English and Spanish, so the fact that sometimes it's only in English makes it more difficult for people to understand, even if somebody is trying to translate that for them in person.

This meant that providers were often taking the time to translate the application process for people that only spoke Spanish, which was a majority of the Mexican-origin immigrant community that needed assistance with post-Harvey housing. In addition, many providers spoke about taking the time to learn the application processes for the different assistance programs that were available. This allowed them to sit down with community members and help them with their applications. Vanessa further explained:

> We try to demystify [the process]. So, we try to give people the truth, try to get people to understand… presenting that information to people and [making sure that] people know they qualify for this or that, or things like that, is something that we try to do.

Significantly, Houston Education Outreach took the initiative to help community members with the bureaucratic difficulties by storing documents for the Mexican-origin immigrant community in case of flooding, which helped with program applications and insurance claims after Harvey. In some cases, it was small bouts of help like these that helped community members get back on their feet, which was one of the primary goals of these organizations.

Providers emphasized that they want to reduce misinformation and spread awareness. Although they want to encourage immigrants, particularly Mexican-origin undocumented immigrants, to not be fearful, they want to ensure that they have all of the necessary information so that they can be careful with how they go about applying for recovery programs or, in more dangerous scenarios, reporting an abusive landlord so that community members can make their own educated decisions. As Ernesto from Houston Education Outreach summarized, "Sometimes, not knowing… causes you more [trouble]."

Conclusion

This study sheds light on how NGOs and CBOs navigate anti-immigrant policies at the national, state, and city levels that both actively and passively bar the housing recovery for the Mexican-origin community after Hurricane Harvey. The community had been actively disadvantaged by anti-immigrant policy changes occurring in the years before and after Harvey hit, such as an increasingly hostile national political climate, the Texas Senate Bill 4 (SB4), and the 2018 proposed change to public charge law. News of these was prominent in Spanish media outlets and through word-of-mouth in the community. Due to the fear of detainment, deportation, and family separation, Mexican-origin immigrants refused to seek out help from shelters during the storm and in the subsequent recovery. They were also disadvantaged by colorblind and passive anti-immigrant disaster recovery policies that did not take their unique experiences into account. Many Mexican-origin immigrants faced several hurdles that they had to overcome, including navigating complex applications, acquiring paperwork they do not typically have access to, and carrying the burden of proof that their home damage was actually a result of Harvey.

Previous research and the political context in Houston support the idea that the disaster

recovery system works as an anti-immigrant racial structure (Ray 2019), which actively and

passively limits access to disaster recovery resources for the Mexican-origin immigrant

community. As alluded to earlier, while many of these hurdles are tied to low socioeconomic

status, these issues are exacerbated by the racialized anti-immigrant policies that the Mexican-

origin immigrant community faces. The Mexican-origin immigrant community is more likely to

be living in poverty prior to a disaster, and as a result, are disproportionately affected and are

likely to recover much slower than their wealthy, white counterparts (Bolin and Bolton 1986).

The lack of resources and ability to navigate the recovery process (Fothergill and Peek 2004) are

compounded by the subsequent racial and anti-immigrant discrimination during the recovery

process-through being denied information about important resources for example-which only

intensifies already-existing poverty (Thomas et al. 2013).

As such, the disaster recovery system is a significant case study as it reveals larger racist

forces and elucidates the social process by which Mexican-origin immigrant populations are

disproportionately excluded from resources via both active and passive discrimination. This

process also highlights the ways that this exclusion is perpetuated by individuals and reinforced

by institutionalized anti-immigrant policies (and vice versa). For instance, non-immigrant

communities reinforce "the underlying cognitive schema" (Ray 2019:32) that affects how

resources are distributed post-disaster, which we saw with the adoption of several passively anti-

immigrant policies.

Further, these findings shed light on how NGOs and CBOs navigate disaster recovery as

a racial structure, and how they go about assisting the community despite the challenges imposed

on them by this process. Although these NGOs and CBOs were lacking in organizational

resources, such as funding, they were able to provide direct services to the community for as long as possible via collaborative efforts and strategic planning. These organizations took it upon themselves to host events and fundraisers, to collaborate, and to apply for grants to gather necessary material resources. Organizations also provided accurate information to the community on the recovery programs available and how to navigate anti-immigrant bureaucratic challenges. The fact that most of these service providers were also Mexican immigrants meant that they were personally invested in the community's recovery and felt pride when they could provide for these individuals in a way that government programs and organizations could not. This also increased the trust that the community had for these organizations. These organizations were able to operate outside of the anti-immigrant disaster recovery policies that both actively and passively restricted the distribution of resources for the Mexican-origin immigrant community at the federal level. Many providers spoke about their ability (and responsibility) to be as flexible as possible with eligibility criteria for resources when it came to the Mexican-origin immigrant community. To summarize, these organizations remain committed to responding to the policies that disadvantage the community in disaster recovery, and thus hold the power as local actors to bring change to the racial order (Ray 2019).

This is not to say that state and national government officials should be absolved of their responsibility to appropriately provide resources to Mexican immigrant disaster victims. These providers have lost belief in the disaster recovery system, and as such perceive themselves as being uniquely positioned-and indeed they are-to assist the community in their recovery, but they simply do not have the organizational resources to function long-term without support from government officials. It is only a matter of time before the next disaster hits and further affects the Mexican-origin immigrant community still working to recover from Harvey. These

community-embedded organizations are a vital part of the disaster recovery system and they need to be involved in the decision-making processes at the local and national government rather than being left to figure out how to assist communities on their own.

Future research should seek to explore the long-term outcomes of this type of intervention by NGOs and CBOs in the recovery of immigrant communities, especially long after organizations begin to run out of resources and after more disaster events have affected the community. Additionally, a few providers are working to organize undocumented Latino immigrants more broadly in community-led groups to raise these issues to the City of Houston and attempt to create change in the policies disadvantaging them. However, even two years after Harvey, it is too early to tell what organizing in this manner will accomplish and whether service providers will generate new plans to address these issues in the future. These processes should also be explored in other cities and states where disaster recovery policies differ in order to identify how the actions taken by local organizations serving the Mexican-origin immigrant community change according to specific policies. This will further illuminate the process by which NGOs and CBOs navigate the racial structure of anti-immigrant disaster recovery in ways that may enable change to the racial order and to existing racial schemas (Ray 2019).

Understanding these processes can give new consideration as to how racial formations (Omi and Winant 2014) are either challenged or reproduced across multiple levels of analysis, giving new meaning as to how Mexican-origin individuals navigate the racist, structural-level processes that disadvantage them. Without accounting for these dynamics, Mexican-origin immigrant populations will continue to fall behind in post-disaster housing recovery, and as a result, become more disadvantaged in society.

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