STORIES OF RESILIENCE NEW MEXICO

How New Mexicans Have Faced the COVID-19 Pandemic

APA New Mexico | NMRA
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How New Mexicans Have Faced the COVID-19 Pandemic

APA New Mexico, the New Mexico Resiliency Alliance and an Interdisciplinary Team of UNM Students

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Thank you to everyone who took the time to create and share their art work with us! We have included as much of the art work as possible in the body of this report. Please see the appendix and/or the website for all of the art work submitted. We also greatly appreciate the time and energy people spent participating in the interviews. The stories we have included in this document are representative of the larger themes we found amongst all of what people shared with us. This project was made possible due to an APA Chapter President’s Council Grant and a generous contribution from the New Mexico Resiliency Alliance.
Contents

PART I
PRE-PANDEMIC
1

ISOLATION
17

CONNECTION
21

RESILIENCE
25

THE NEW NORMAL
31

PART II
STORIES OF RESILIENCE + IN YOUR OWN WORDS
37 73

PART III
ENGAGEMENT METHODS + BIBLIOGRAPHY & APPENDIX
85 94
Introduction

As we all struggled to adjust to the unprecedented changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, the APA New Mexico Board began to discuss ways we could help as a Chapter. As the long-term implications of COVID-19 were still unclear and seemed overwhelming, we began to discuss the possibility of creating a special project to help planners and New Mexicans better understand the effects of the pandemic on their communities.
A Year Like No Other

Back in April of 2020, as we began to conceptualize this project, we were already hearing stories from people about how they (and their communities) were staying resilient in the face of the multiple challenges posed by COVID-19.

It seemed that these stories of resilience were at the heart of everyone’s experience, and that sharing them would help more people grapple with a difficult time.

From this initial idea to collect and share stories of resilience, our Chapter applied for and received funding from APA National (via a Chapter President’s Council Grant) and the New Mexico Resiliency Alliance to hire five UNM students to carry out this project.

After forming the student team in the fall of 2020, we began meeting regularly, starting in November. The students quickly took the lead on refining the initial project plan, developing an ethics statement, conducting research, and designing and implementing an engagement strategy to hear from people around the state. They then conducted over 20 interviews with individuals around the state, which are documented in Part II: Stories of Resilience.
The heart of the project has been collecting stories from fellow New Mexicans, which we have compiled in this document. The additional goals for this project have been to:

1. Collect relevant and timely stories about how COVID-19 is affecting individuals and communities in New Mexico.
2. Provide a hands-on research project for students to gain valuable professional development experience, mentorship, and explore their own resiliency as they prepare to enter the workforce.
3. Share these stories within the framework of resilience to enhance planning practices in New Mexico in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Essentially, our team has been committed to giving New Mexicans a platform to share their stories and understandings of resilience (see Part II: Stories of Resilience) throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. More information on the project methodology can be found in Part III. Engagement Methods.
What We Heard

As we heard from more and more people during this project, themes started to emerge.

After conducting approximately 20 interviews, the team met for a brainstorming session in March 2021. Over the course of two hours, everyone reflected on the major themes that interviewees had shared. By connecting similar ideas and topics, the team narrowed the initial list to four major themes, shown in the graphic on the next page.

We found that many people first experienced (1) **Isolation**, along with uncertainty, fear, and self-reliance.

After the initial feelings of isolation, many people said they became (2) **Connected** in new ways and formed or joined new communities and networks.

Between the twin poles of isolation and connection, many people experienced (3) **Resilience** as a process that was sometimes forced on them, but also involved supporting others and becoming more flexible in the face of uncertainty.

As the pandemic ends, we enter a (4) “**New Normal**” where the lessons we have learned can begin to inform our lives in a post-pandemic world.

The next chapters delve into more detail on each of these themes.
Focus Communities

Written by Mia Held & Andrew Gorvetzian

New Mexico is a state with unique cultures, history, and traditions representing thousands of years of human civilization. There are hundreds of communities in New Mexico. While distinct in their own ways, each an important part of the fabric of this Land of Enchantment.

The “Stories of Resilience” team felt it was important to select a small number of focus communities that would allow us to gain a more in-depth understanding of how the COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on both individuals and communities. In selecting Albuquerque, Las Cruces, Santa Fe, Roswell, Gallup, Las Vegas, Truth or Consequences, and a focus on Pueblo Communities, we represent more than eight New Mexican counties and a wide-range of income-levels, peoples, and perspectives.

While the limitations of the project preclude an analysis of each and every NM community, we hope these communities will provide a broad spectrum of stories to help each New Mexican feel represented.
Albuquerque, New Mexico, is the largest city in New Mexico, and is the economic, transportation, and a cultural center of the state. The land over which Albuquerque sprawls has been used by humans for thousands of years, with Pueblo connections that go back as far as 2000BCE and continue today (VisitAlbuquerque.org). Spanish colonizers led by Hernan Cortes arrived in this area in 1540, and in 1706 a group of Spanish colonists received a grant to found the villa of Albuquerque, named in honor of the Duke of Alburquerque in Spain. Located in the Rio Grande River valley in the foothills of the Sandia Mountains, the city’s metro area has grown to just under a million residents as of 2020 (United States Census Bureau, 2019). Albuquerque is home to several hi-tech research facilities such as Sandia National Laboratories, the film and movie industry, a diverse culinary scene, the central campus of the University of New Mexico, and a large variety of cultural and arts venues such as the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, the National Flamenco Institute, the National Hispanic Cultural Center, and the annual International Balloon Fiesta. While the city struggles with persistent poverty (~17% living below the poverty line according to 2019 US Census data) and higher-than-average crime rates, its natural beauty, history, economy, and deep communal ties make it home for almost half of all New Mexicans.

Albuquerque By the Numbers

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<td>$51,281</td>
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STORIES

• “Resilience by Force”, (p. 40)
• Keeping UNM Connected, (p. 44)
• Overcoming Partner Violence & Being Resilient During COVID-19, (p. 48)
• “We Recognize Resilience When We Tell Our Stories”, (p. 50)
• Latinx Immigrant Families Facing COVID-19, (p. 54)
• Supporting Our Communities & Fighting Asian Hate, (p. 56)
• “Excluding Anyone Affects Everyone”, (p. 58)
Gallup is home to just over 20,000 residents. Due to its location near the Navajo, Hopi, and Zuni reservations, 43% of the population is Native American, the highest percentage of Native American residents in the United States. This high concentration of Native residents makes Gallup a center for indigenous arts such as jewelry, beading, weaving and ceremonial dance. It is also a gathering site for many Native groups from across the Southwest. Gallup’s location on Historic Route 66, and its gorgeous natural beauty, have brought many movie stars through town, and its landscape has been the backdrop of countless Hollywood Western films. Tragically, the pandemic has hit Gallup hard, with the most cases per capita of any metro area in the United States (New York Times). The story of the pandemic in Gallup has captured national attention, and it will be vital to ensure that the experience of this community and its residents finds itself into planning and strategic decisions going forward.
Las Cruces is a city born of the Mesilla Valley, inhabited for thousands of years by its indigenous people, the Mogollons. Many of the indigenous pueblo people in New Mexico trace their ancestry back to these first peoples. A rest stop on the El Camino Real, or “Royal Road,” Las Cruces was an important mid-point for Spanish settlers traveling from Mexico to Santa Fe, and was named Las Cruces or, “The Crosses” as a result. (History: Visit Las Cruces, 2021) Today, Las Cruces is New Mexico’s second largest city by population, with about one-fifth of the population of Albuquerque. Home to more than 100,000 residents, Las Cruces boasts the state’s second largest university—New Mexico State University, the only land-grant university in the state of New Mexico. In addition to New Mexico State, its largest employers include nearby White Sands Missile Range and the Las Cruces Public Schools. The stories of the residents of Las Cruces are especially significant due to its’ close-proximity to COVID-ravaged El Paso, TX and proximity to the US-Mexico border.

Las Cruces By the Numbers
Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau data.dato.egov

- Median Household Income (2019): $40,651
- Persons in Poverty (2019): 32.5%
- Bachelor’s Degree or Higher (2019): 27.3%

STORIES
- “The Show Must Go On” (Even in a Pandemic), (p. 42)
- Being a Grandmother and Teacher During the Pandemic, (p. 52)
Las Vegas, New Mexico is a boom-bust town steeped in history. Established in 1835 by a group of 29 settlers through a land grant from the government of Mexico, the area was viewed as an optimal location for settlement due to the environmental value of the Gallinas river, making it a viable place for agricultural development (Schlesinger, 1971). Railway development led to what is today called the Las Vegas Plaza, the biggest stop on the Santa Fe Trail. Today, Las Vegas is a proud member of the New Mexico MainStreet Program and designated as a New Mexico Arts & Cultural District, with over 900 buildings on the National Registry of Historic Places. According to the 2018 American Community Survey estimates, Las Vegas has just over 13,000 residents and a median household income of $27,790 (United States Census Bureau, 2018). Las Vegas community-assets include the Gallinas River and its connection to the Acequia Madre (or Mother Ditch), educational institutions, Luna Community College, the United World College, and New Mexico Highlands University, and its largest employers, Alta Vista Regional Hospital and the City of Las Vegas itself (Mahoney, 2013).

In reviewing the Las Vegas local newspaper, *The Las Vegas Optic*, it is clear the economic impact that COVID-19 and the resulting shut-downs have had on this small New Mexican town.

**STORIES**
- “We Came Out Stronger Than We Went In”, (p. 68)
Roswell, NM is a small city in southeastern New Mexico of about 50,000 people and is the seat of Chaves County. While Roswell is a city whose very name inevitably evokes images of aliens coming to Earth, it has also been a site for those who have sought to launch humans into space. The city was the site for Dr. James Goddard’s work on launching rockets, which was crucial in the eventual US moon landing in 1969. In addition to this stellar history, Roswell hosts the New Mexico Military Institute, whose alumni include Conrad Hilton, Roger Staubach, and Sam Donaldson. Home to multiple museums dedicated to arts and to space, in addition to the world’s largest producers of mozzarella cheese, Roswell is an important hub for Southeastern New Mexico.

**STORIES**
- COVID-19 As a Lesson for Inclusive Planning, (p. 66)
Santa Fe

Santa Fe is the capital of New Mexico. Nestled at the foot of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, it has been inhabited for over a thousand years, first by Tanoan communities and then Tewa communities. The Spanish conquistador Don Juan de Oñate arrived in 1598 and in 1610 it was established as the territorial capital for New Spain, making it one of the oldest cities in the modern US. Home to one of the world’s biggest fine arts markets, numerous art and cultural festivals and museums, and multiple colleges and think tanks, Santa Fe draws visitors from all over the world for its vibrant cultural scene, architecture, and natural beauty. This attractiveness is a blessing and a curse. Economic inequality in the city is higher than average, with a gini coefficient of .505 (higher than the U.S. average), and increasing costs of living are making it challenging for families who have lived in the city for generations to continue living there. However, Santa Fe in many ways continues to be the cultural, political, and historical heart of the state.

Santa Fe By the Numbers

- Median Household Income (2019): $55,262
- Persons in Poverty (2019): 13.5%
- Bachelor’s Degree or Higher (2019): 41.4%

Santa Fe | 15 CONTACTS | 3 INTERVIEWS

STORIES
- Self-love: The Key to Resilience, (p. 60)
- Reimagining Resilience, (p. 64)
- Teaching Resilience, (p. 70)
New Mexico is a state dependent on its small towns, and Truth or Consequences, or “T or C” is a great example of a small New Mexican town with big community character. A storied and celebrated town located off the I-25 between Albuquerque and Las Cruces, Truth or Consequences is renowned for the healing properties of its hot springs. According to the Sierra County website in Truth or Consequences, “one can stroll among businesses on WPA-era sidewalks, take a soak in T or C’s ancient hot springs, or dine at a steakhouse straight out of the 1980s.” (City of Truth or Consequences New Mexico: Hot Springs, Cool Town!, n.d.) Part of the New Mexico MainStreet Program, MainStreet Truth or Consequences is dedicated to the continued revitalization of this small New Mexican town. With a population of just under 6,000 residents, Truth or Consequences represents the smallest town of focus in our Stories of Resilience Project. Economic inequality is high within the city, with nearly 30% of residents living below the poverty line. However, with promising projects like the development of Spaceport America, the FAA-licensed spaceport and home to Virgin Galactic, Truth or Consequences is well-situated for economic growth and development into the future. Truth or Consequences became a hotspot in December when a COVID-19 outbreak at the New Mexico Veterans Home, New Mexico’s only nursing home for veterans experienced the city’s largest coronavirus outbreak of the pandemic so far.
Pueblo Communities | 30 CONTACTS | 1 INTERVIEW

No discussion of resilience in New Mexico could be complete without an exploration of the indigenous peoples of New Mexico. Their great nations and their resilience in the face of untold atrocities and hardship is weaved into the fabric of the history of the state of New Mexico. New Mexico is home to nineteen Pueblos: Acoma, Cochiti, Isleta, Jemez, Laguna, Nambe, Picuris, Pojoaque, Sandia, San Felipe, San Ildefonso, San Juan, Santa Ana, Santa Clara, Santo Domingo, Taos, Tesuque, Zia, and Zuni. The pueblo people are the oldest culture in the United States and have thrived for thousands of years through hunting, farming and governance based on a matriarchal clan system (Weiser, 2019). The Acoma Pueblo is the longest-inhabited community in North America, and Taos Pueblo and has been designated as both a National Historic Landmark and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The contributions of the Pueblo people are countless and inextricable in culture, art, and traditions in every New Mexican Community. Pueblo communities have also been hit especially hard by the COVID-19 pandemic and their stories are of special significance to the “Stories of Resilience” project.
Isolation

Written by Mia Held, MCRP Candidate

The word isolation brings to mind a number of thoughts and feelings, a sense of loneliness or mental images of sickness and illness. As humans we thrive on our interactions with others: within our families, between friends or co-workers, and even kind and casual interactions with strangers—picking up our morning coffee or holding the door for someone on an errand.
The isolation that began for New Mexicans in March 2020 relegated each of us to our homes and had different implications for each individual person. For those who lived on their own, isolation meant connections to the world only through hurried essential trips to the grocery store or, through a screen via Zoom. For those in large families, the isolation may have taken different forms as family members isolated themselves into individual rooms in their homes to create a make-shift office or classroom. Colleen, a new mother from Albuquerque, isolation was self-imposed due to fear and for the preservation of her baby’s health, “My 5-month-old baby, having him has really shaped interactions. I’m really protective of his health. My friends are seeing each other, but I’m really protective.”

Perhaps one of the most impacted groups was students, many of whom faced uncertainty about their abilities to finish school and persevere. For Rosa, a student from Albuquerque, uncertainty was followed by grief and then letting go, “I just ignored it (the pandemic), and assumed it would go away soon. But then when they canceled graduation, that was when it became real and I cried for the first time. I understood why they canceled it, but still, that didn’t take away the sadness. Let me be sad, and just be with this pain.”

Colleen is an Education Coordinator for Truman Health in Albuquerque, an organization that works with individuals with HIV, and talked about the isolation her patients feel. “There’s generally an isolation that people are feeling and we have tried to bring together patient groups—though it took us a while to get there. There’s an excitement to participate as a group... As an organization, we are attempting to build that community structure because it’s so important for our people.”

Kerry, a grade-school teacher from Las Cruces echoed this uncertainty, loss of connection, and feeling of isolation, “First, I had to learn to Zoom and then other interactive digital tools. Even so, it has not been easy because we do not have one-on-one interactions, and we do not have the possibility of playing in the classroom. The hardest part has been not having contact with the students, the families, and the community. It is not the same level of human interaction.”

Perhaps one of the most impacted groups was students, many of whom faced uncertainty about their abilities to finish school and persevere. For Rosa, a student from Albuquerque, uncertainty was followed by grief and then letting go, “I just ignored it (the pandemic), and assumed it would go away soon. But then when they canceled graduation, that was when it became real and I cried for the first time. I understood why they canceled it, but still, that didn’t take away the sadness. Let me be sad, and just be with this pain.” Perhaps isolation also implies missing things—that “Fear of Missing Out.” New Mexicans missed weddings, graduations, birthdays, the birth of a grandchild or, death of a loved one.

Kenya, from African American Student Services at the University of New Mexico, expressed both the positives and negatives from this period of isolation. Being at home meant more time for some things and less time for others. “I’ve had to spend more time at home—cleaning and organizing, and I also take care of plants...candles and incense, too.” But as a STEM student at UNM, it’s also meant a developed sense of self-reliance, “teaching myself the curriculum, and a lot more self-starting when it’s online because there are limitations. It’s way different than high school (and) made me stronger and more patient. In high school I would feel frustrated if I didn’t get it at first. If I can make it through the pandemic as a STEM major, I can get through anything!”

Alejandra, a UNM graduate student from Paraguay, struggled with the switch to online and more self-directed learning as well as the isolation of being an International Student, “when I started classes and started spending so much...
time zooming in, I began to feel bad, not wanting to go to school, like it was all a tremendous effort. I usually go home every year and a half, but this summer, it was impossible to return and see my family. My graduation was canceled, and then I moved to graduate school at once without seeing my family and unable to return even though I tried. During the summer when I moved in, I didn’t have a job or work permit and basically couldn’t do anything."

Liv, the director of Ignited Minds in Albuquerque expressed insights on the isolation of students and lack of stability for a range of grades and ages during the COVID-19 pandemic, “NM citizens need to know what students have been challenged.” Liv has a student that lost both parents to COVID, students who don’t have WIFI, others who barely received their school-issued laptops, and students that are from an area in Chama and live off the land—preventing them from focusing on academics. According to Liv, these challenges are hard, and these students are really trying to finish out the year, in spite of some support. Liv’s students are isolated, “being cut off socially from their peers and teachers…young people tend to follow social cues from their peers. Being online, they do not have any access to these social cues from peers—this is difficult for them socially and academically. Many freshmen students have not met teachers or went to their high schools and many seniors have not had the year they envisioned; this has decreased their engagement.”

**WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF ISOLATION ON A COMMUNITY?**

For the No Strings Theater Company in Las Cruces, the focus on case counts in Bernalillo County and vaccination efforts in Albuquerque made these Las Cruces residents feel isolated. Their primary concern was the, “equitable distribution of the vaccine…vaccines are being inequitably distributed in Albuquerque and Santa Fe as opposed to in the southern part of the state.” With the location of Las Cruces as a city next to El Paso and Juarez, virus spread is maximized, and the state government has not been acknowledging the vulnerable populations in that city.

Which groups are so isolated that we cannot hear from them? Mark, a UNM Communications Director is concerned with the unheard voices of children who have slipped through the cracks in our educational system. “Children who are high-risk, in a high-risk situation where they need to be protected. In kindergarten through twelfth grade in the Albuquerque Public School system more than 27,000 students have not shown up for online class.”
El Cerro de Los Lunas
New Mexicans practiced resilience during the pandemic by reimagining how they connect with one another, both in their local communities as well as by extending their social networks across and beyond New Mexico through technological adaptation. This “resilience through connection” also affirmed the strength of social networks, shined a spotlight on inequality, and highlighted the inherent human need for connection.
Communication & Connection

Written by Andy Gorvetzian, MA in Anthropology Candidate

A grandmother learned how to send GIFs and bitmojis to her grandchildren. A Spanish teacher found that Zoom offered a unique platform for performing short skits to practice the language. A recent retiree founded an online tutoring program that hopes to hire 100 volunteers across the state. A church community in Roswell began to connect weekly via phone, and were able to extend their ministry to reach folks in Texas and California. When a theatre company in Las Cruces was forced online, some members couldn’t afford a green screen to change their backgrounds on Zoom, so they went to JoAnn’s fabrics and bought green fabric to make green screens of their own. A non-profit in Albuquerque raised funds to provide stimulus checks to people who are undocumented, yet continued to work essential jobs and services during the pandemic.

No longer constrained by geography and travel logistics, they began to meet every Friday. These more frequent meetings invigorated the group, allowing for a greater exchange of ideas and getting to know one another. “The hybrid model will be ongoing...in this way the pandemic has been a surprising time,” said Michael, a member of MainStreet, Las Vegas. Going forward, New Mexico MainStreet partners will combine the human touch of quarterly in-person meetings with the convenience of weekly Friday Zoom meetings.

AFFIRMING NETWORKS & COMMUNITY TIES
The process of resilience through connection also came about through affirming community ties. Amid the pandemic and the racial justice protests over the summer, African American Student Services (aka The Fro) at the University of New Mexico offered support to incoming students via Zoom, and underwent a retooling of their office when the physical space became restricted. Despite those changes, the affirmation of community ties pulled them through. “We instill a commitment to community, it’s our motto,” said J, a student support specialist at the office. That commitment allowed for the transition to an online summer bridge program that helped incoming students to adjust to the university amid the racial justice protests. A freshman work-study at The Fro spoke about the importance of these community ties for transitioning to the academic year.

“I’m not from New Mexico, so when I did the summer bridge program and then arrived on campus, it was really cool to see that there were folks who cared about Black students here.”

- Kenya, UNM Work Study Student

SHINING A SPOTLIGHT ON INEQUALITY
While connections allowed for some groups to reimagine their relationships, the pandemic also shined a spotlight on the structural, racial, and economic inequalities that already existed and that the pandemic exacerbated. The community of undocumented immigrants continued to go to work in person and expose themselves and their families to potential infection. Grocery store clerks faced heightened anxiety about exposure in the workplace yet had no choice but to show up. Accurate infor-
Information about COVID testing, vaccines, and safety measures were published in English and Spanish, but accurate information in other languages was hard to find (even Spanish-language resources became more scarce as the pandemic continued). Students in rural parts of the state drove two hours to access WiFi in a McDonald’s parking lot in order to go to school.

Liem, who works for the New Mexico Asian Family Center (NMAFC), focused on how crucial it was for organizations like NMAFC during the pandemic in light of such inequalities: “We do a lot to bridge the gap between our communities and the main system.” Facing language barriers, cultural barriers to navigating social services, and heightened fear of being attacked as part of rising anti-Asian sentiments, the pandemic highlighted how resilience is anything but equal.

**THE FUNDAMENTAL VALUE OF HUMAN CONNECTION**

The relationship between resilience and connection highlights the value of human connection for its own sake. Before the pandemic, the possibility of such prolonged isolation wasn’t a thought on many people’s minds as they went about their lives. In that old “normal,” the necessity of human connection could be taken for granted. The pandemic changed that. Alejandra, an international student who had just moved to New Mexico, shared,

“I think one of the things I have gained is learning the value of human communication itself, with no specific purpose beyond just being with people and appreciating the details and updates of their lives.”

-Alejandra, Albuquerque

**STORY: EXCLUDING ANYONE AFFECTS EVERYONE**

While many experiences of resilience allowed for innovation and reimagining, it’s vital to recognize the systemic and structural conditions that forced some New Mexicans to be much more resilient than others.

In response to these issues that demanded resilience to unequal degrees, some New Mexicans concluded that it was necessary to consider collective well-being instead of just the individual. “The pandemic made it clear that excluding anyone affects everyone,” said Sandra, a consultant who works with nonprofit organizations that serve people who are undocumented in Albuquerque.

**READ MORE - P. 58**
In recent literature, resilience is defined as a “process by which individuals, families, and communities” use strategies to “cope with, adapt, and take advantage of assets” when facing unprecedented challenges or disaster, such as a public health crisis (Ungar, 2012). Being resilient is not coping or adapting itself, but using a variety of coping strategies to adapt and even flourish; therefore, resilience is not a skill acquired once, but a “continuous choice not to be defeated” by unprecedented challenges; as explained by our interviewee from the African American Support Office, “it’s not a one-time act”. 

Resilience

Written by Fiore Bran Aragón, MA in Latin American Studies
Resilience as a Process

Written by Fiore Bran Aragón, MA in Latin American Studies

“It is a rebound, but now, beyond the return, it is also the evaluation of what was lost and the understanding of what needs to be restored or built. It is a continuous choice not to be defeated, it is not a one-time act.”

- J, Office of Support for African Americans, UNM

BEING RESILIENT AND FEELING RESILIENT

When interviewing New Mexicans about their experiences of resilience during COVID-19, one of the first reactions were doubts and even resistance to the idea that they were being resilient. For some of them, thinking and feeling that they have been resilient has been a challenge: “Thinking about resilience is difficult because I just live day by day” (Andrea). However, in the storytelling sessions, many people realized that they and their communities were being resilient, even if they did not think about it: “It took a while to adapt. I felt denial, then I accepted that there was a pandemic and that I needed to take measures (…) and let go of control. But at the moment I did not know that it was part of being resilient” (Rosa). Some interviewees also recognized resilience in others but not themselves: “It was easier to see that others were resilient, but I felt I wasn’t” (Alejandra). And some even reflected on how they provided support for others and helped them build resilience together: “We provide assistance to navigate life in the United States, but it’s our families who build their own support systems and seek strategies to thrive” (Norma, Encuentro, Albuquerque).

All New Mexicans who shared their stories with us recognize that resilience is a process of coping, adapting, and taking advantage of the resources they have and have obtained during the pandemic. Being resilient is usually a diverse, non-linear process. For most of our interviewees, at the beginning of the pandemic resilience occurred “by force” (Colleen), but over time it became a process based on “flexibility and versatility” (Mark) to cope with uncertainty and changes. In navigating this process, New Mexicans have implemented some individual, family, and community strategies and practices that have allowed them to build resilience in all aspects of life during COVID-19.

RESILIENCE BY FORCE, AND RESILIENCE AS FLEXIBILITY

Because resilience is a diverse process, New Mexicans have experienced the ups and downs of the pandemic in different ways. In the beginning, for many, the need to be resilient came as a result of sudden and unprecedented changes that quickly shook the fabric of life (Sandra). For this reason, when the pandemic began, New Mexicans were resilient “by force” (Colleen); because there were no options to face the uncertainty and the lack of structure brought by the pandemic (Meredith). For some, resilience “by force” involved creating family bubbles quickly (Sandra, Colleen), moving to another city and house (Kerry), isolating themselves from family for safety reasons (Rachael), facing unemployment (Norma), and even racial discrimination and hate crimes that arose with disinformation at the beginning of the global health crisis (Liem). But after this first stage in which uncertainty and isolation, New Mexicans found ways to live resilient as a process of flexibility and versatility.

At this stage, New Mexicans created work routines suitable to the new life at home. For example, Andrea found new ways to communicate with family and friends abroad, while many more learned to meet with loved ones...
while practicing COVID-safe measures. This understanding of resilience as flexibility and adaptability to change has allowed New Mexicans to innovate, learn new strategies for teaching online (Kerry), conduct business online (Michael), celebrate in family and community (Norma). For some, flexibility has been an unexpected positive result of the lack of structure during the pandemic (Rachael). For others, it has been the result of learning to look at what is going on from “other perspectives” by focusing “on the present moment” (Meredith) or even by seeing with different “eyes” (Kerry). Usually, they have learned to look with the “eyes” of family and community support networks that work together to keep life going on despite the pandemic.

RESILIENCE AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL
Among the practices to be resilient at the individual level, were some focused on keeping physical, mental health, and connections to the self and others, such as going for walks every day, doing art, meditation, yoga, or listening to their favorite music. Most interviewees performed these practices routinely to maintain the “stability and structure” (Meredith) interrupted by the pandemic, and for some of them, these were “new activities” that they tried, or learned, during quarantine. Overall, these activities have generated a sense of connection to peace amid the chaos. For example, Rachael, one of the interviewees, started taking long walks through the park in her neighborhood when the pandemic started. First, she walked to get out of the house, but then she began to pay attention to bird species, trees, and other beings around her. These have been “life-changing experiences” that have helped Rachael improve her physical and mental health, and connect “to the outside world” during isolation.

RESILIENCE IN FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES
RECONNECTING THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA
In general, the participants in this project agree that individual resilience would not be possible without family and community support networks that helped them and encouraged them to embrace practices to cope with the pandemic. For those who did not have the possibility of meeting family and friends during quarantine, social media and phones were important devices to reconnect, look for and share information about the pandemic, and even “strengthen social relations and affections” (Alejandra). Those who had to move to live full time with family or return home faced challenges regarding coexistence and new routines, but this was also an opportunity to prioritize interpersonal relationships and family well-being over “pre-pandemic” priorities like work or academic life (Marc).

STORY: TEACHING RESILIENCE
For most of us, resilience requires learning. For students in 2020, learning requires resilience. At least, that’s what Liv Turner emphasizes in her advocacy for New Mexican students.

Resilience, to Liv, is about not being defeated by COVID-19. She is inspired by the resilience of the students she has worked with and emphasizes the strength they embody, despite the challenges they have faced throughout the pandemic.

READ MORE - P. 70
COMING TOGETHER TO FIGHT FOR OUR RIGHTS
In other cases, the economic and social challenges brought by COVID-19 prompted families to organize to get social and financial support from community organizations and the state. For example, according to the New Mexico Asian Family Center and the Latinx Community Center Encuentro, the demand for their services has increased during the pandemic. During this period, they have provided reliable information on COVID-19 in various languages and have helped families to request financial support for people without unemployment benefits (Liem, Norma).

Families and communities have also reorganized their own social, economic, and caregiving dynamics to adapt to the pandemic. For example, in Las Vegas, the NM MainStreet group implemented a Cash Mob project following a similar initiative implemented in Raton. Las Vegas Main Street used it to connect local businesses and entrepreneurs with the community via an online platform to buy products and services (Michael). Meanwhile, Latinx migrant families in the South Valley have restructured caregiving dynamics during COVID-19; now, those who have jobs share resources with the community, and those who do not, take care of school-age children (Norma). In these cases, New Mexican families and communities have come together and worked to tackle challenges and improve their lives during the pandemic.

New Mexicans also have carried out cultural, artistic, and recreational activities to connect with their families, local communities, and even with other communities within the state.

COMING TOGETHER TO SHARE ART, CULTURE, AND NATURE
New Mexicans also have carried out cultural, artistic, and recreational activities to connect with their families, local communities, and even with other communities within the state. For example, the No Strings Theater Company has continued to broadcast its performances online to reach Las Cruces and all of New Mexico’s population. They have even continued training senior citizens to be part of the company (Focus Group, No Strings Theater Company).

In Albuquerque, Latino migrant families who attend Encuentro have organized family trips to explore the Sandia Mountains and other surrounding areas (Norma); they now have a self-organized hiking group. Also, community members who attend the NM Asian Family Center and Encuentro have organized cultural activities, cooking classes, and potlucks to share food with migrants and refugees from other countries living in Albuquerque (Liem, Norma).
TAKING CARE OF EACH OTHER
For all these individuals, families, and communities, the pandemic has represented an unprecedented challenge but also an opportunity to build resilience, to “bounce back” and even go beyond and flourish whether the adversities are new (Aleandra) or there have been other crises before (Michael). In all their stories, COVID-19 seems to have provided New Mexicans with experiences and lessons for “taking care of one another”, learning from one another, and coming out of the pandemic “even stronger than when we went in” (Michael).
Understanding resilience as a continuous process lends itself to the notion that resilience consists of a series of lessons with necessary periods of reflection. As one progresses through the phases of isolation, connection, and adaptation, they are necessarily confronted with internal and external signs of growth. That is, they embody a new worldview from which to evaluate their previous actions and assumptions, to ultimately consider what lessons they have learned and how they can integrate those understandings going forward. In a way, the lessons and reflections that emerge from the process of resilience can be thought of as the “things we take with us” as we move forward from traumatic and life-changing events.

Written by Abrianna Morales, BS in Psychology
Understanding resilience as a continuous process lends itself to the notion that resilience consists of a series of lessons with necessary periods of reflection. As one progresses through the phases of isolation, connection, and adaptation, they are necessarily confronted with internal and external signs of growth. That is, they embody a new worldview from which to evaluate their previous actions and assumptions, to ultimately consider what lessons they have learned and how they can integrate those understandings going forward. In a way, the lessons and reflections that emerge from the process of resilience can be thought of as the “things we take with us” as we move forward from traumatic and life-changing events.

Isolation has forced people to become, at least temporarily, more introspective. The disruption of routine and immediate loss of normalcy could have been emotionally distressing, contributing to feelings of depression, fear, and uncertainty as they became more accustomed to the “new normal”. Temporarily many have been in a state of limbo, feeling stagnant or otherwise stunted. As time goes on, however, they were more able to positively relate to their situations, particularly as they advanced through the other phases of the process. Carli, for example, had to watch her friends move forward, continue to create, and spend time together—making her feel stagnant after losing her job, ending her relationship, and moving to another part of the state. This period of isolation and uncertainty contributed to negative self-perception and self-talk: “I was putting myself down, so far, all the time—about little things. The voice in my head was speaking really negatively. It was like, “yeah, my boyfriend didn’t want me anymore, I’m not around my friends, they’re not hitting me up as much because I’m not in town.” So I just felt, like, really abandoned. And I was like: “Am I even worth not being abandoned?”

As relationships, connections, and social networks transformed, people were forced to redefine and reflect upon the value of their relationships in a new context. In the context of the pandemic, connections and social networks became increasingly distant, and with the advent of technology like Zoom, digital. The transition between the “normal” state of social connection and the “new” way highlighted dissonance between old and new ways of navigating relationships.

This was displayed by Erick Aune’s experiences with the transition to working at home (for both him and his children), especially as it pertained to the changes in relationships in relation to the changes in their context (e.g., having to reinvent their celebration of family holidays, while a positive experience, introduces dissonance between old and new ways of navigating relationships).

Adaptation, on a basic level, is a state of change. At this point, people were able to recognize their evolution and critically examine their current position in reference to where they started. It is at this point that they were

Photo Courtesy of Jessica Roybal

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able to embody their new worldview, evaluate their previous actions and assumptions, consider what they learned, and integrate those newfound understandings going forward.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND REFLECTIONS
Many individuals, when asked about what recommendations they had for planners and officials, touched on issues of accessibility. Although the state’s efforts for vaccine distribution were admirable, some communities felt excluded from these processes, particularly in the Southern part of the state, “…with Las Cruces as a city next to El Paso, [Texas] and Juarez, it maximizes spread, and the state government has not been acknowledging the vulnerable populations in that city people have to commute from Cruces to El Paso, which also maximizes spread.”

These grievances are met with suggestions for improvement, one of the most prevalent being a desire for more consistent and clear communication from public officials. With regard to the pandemic, individuals expressed a need for more effective communication about the transmission, prevention, testing, and vaccination against COVID-19. To most participants, more effective communication would have combated widespread confusion and the subsequent spread of misinformation on social media.
An additional note on communication focused on improving accessibility of information to those that do not use or have access to social media/internet by having informational “hubs” in community spaces. For example, “[putting] the message out there in neighborhoods through community radios, fliers, etc. [and working] on venues where people meet, like grocery stores, bus stops, etc.”

In addition to recognizing the importance of effective communication, the process of adapting to and continually working to reach vulnerable populations as school, work, and social events become digital is equally important. The pandemic has brought higher rates of suicide, domestic abuse, child abuse, and sexual abuse as a result of stay-at-home orders preventing individuals from leaving abusive environments to go to school or work. With those increases come concerns about how to address and ensure safety from afar, especially when it comes to ensuring that endangered individuals are not “lost” as a result of mandated social distancing. This could manifest in the form of improved (digital) outreach from teachers/counselors to “check in” with students about their mental and emotional well-being, including discussions about the conditions of their home lives.
A CALL FOR EMPATHY
At the heart of these issues and recommendations, though, is a call for heightened empathy and collectivism. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, many New Mexicans continue to reflect on their experiences and ultimately, express gratitude for their families and communities—citing them as a primary motivator for their resilience. In the words of Michael Perentau, “[the pandemic] brought us to value what we already have in our town and we learned to appreciate it all in a big way”. More than anything else, participants indicated that community—professional, religious, familial, etc.—played an exceptionally large role in shaping their experiences throughout the pandemic, and by extension, their resilience.

When considering what has been learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and what will constitute the “new normal”, it seems that interventions that promote accessibility for vulnerable populations are paramount. Beyond practical implementations, heightened appreciation for empathy, collective attitudes, and gratitude may prove to gain importance. As we look back at the COVID-19 pandemic in New Mexico, and more critically at ourselves, we might emphasize the importance of resilience as a fluid process—a collective narrative of surviving and thriving. Much like resilience and its propensity for improvement, collecting and sharing these stories has been a way to improve the communities we live in. Ultimately, though, this collection of shared experiences has come to serve as a testament to the beauty and resilience that’s always been there.

“The Pandemic] brought us to value what we already have in our town and we learned to appreciate it all in a big way.”

-Michael Perentau, Las Vegas
PART II

Stories of Resilience

The following are some of the stories recorded by our team during story telling session conducted between February and April of 2021. These stories are representative of the larger themes we found amongst all of what people shared with us. We greatly appreciate the time and energy that people spent participating in interviews and group sessions. We have included as many stories, pictures, and artwork as possible, and additional artwork is included in the body of the main report. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this project!
Stories of Resilience

PERSONAL NARRATIVES

40  “Resilience by Force”
42  “The Show Must Go On” (Even in a Pandemic)
44  Keeping UNM Connected
46  Baked-in Resilience at Fleur De Lys
48  Overcoming Partner Violence & Being Resilient During COVID-19
50  “We Recognize Resilience When We Tell Our Stories”
52  Being a Grandmother and Teacher During the Pandemic
54  Latinx Immigrant Families Facing COVID-19
56  Supporting Our Communities & Fighting Asian Hate
58  “Excluding Anyone Affects Everyone”
60  Self-love: The Key to Resilience
62  Traveling Cross-Country During the Pandemic
64  Reimagining Resilience
66  COVID-19 As a Lesson for Inclusive Planning
68  “We Came Out Stronger Than We Went In”
70  Teaching Resilience
In Your Own Words

ONLINE SUBMISSIONS

74-75
ADAPT
SURREAL

76-77
OUTDOORS
MOVING FORWARD

78-79
FAITH
CHALLENGE

80-81
MAIN STREET
SILENCE

82-83
PARENTING
INEQUALITY

POSITIVE
“Resilience By Force”
Reported by Mia Held, MCRP Candidate

Colleen is originally from Santa Fe, New Mexico and moved to Albuquerque in 2002. A Health Education Coordinator at UNM’s Truman Health Services, Colleen is passionate about sexual health education and prevention. During the pandemic, Colleen completed her Masters in Community and Regional Planning and, moved into a new role coordinating UNM’s HEP-C Program.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Colleen described herself as an introverted person, and not very social. Pre-pandemic life in January 2020, “was going to work, coming home, visiting breweries or going for different food and seeing girlfriends a lot more. I live and work within a 5-mile radius around my house.”

Post-pandemic is similar to what Colleen was doing before. Her level of interaction with people has been the biggest change, “You can feel that distance (between people, co-workers). What is really new is my 5-month-old baby who has really shaped interactions. I’m really protective of his health. My friends are seeing each other, and I’m really protective.

When asked about becoming a new mother in a pandemic, Colleen was honest, “It’s a very different experience than other new mothers – the isolation is hard. I saw my Dad for the 1st time today in a year and a half. It’s a bummer. I want him, my baby, to know family.” Colleen wonders, “Is my baby going to be weird with other people? He’s a friendly little guy, but there’s a lot that’s sad to me. But it is what it is. He is with me in my workspace and work meetings. I’m thankful I get to work from home. ”

“My sister offered to have a baby shower, but at the time I was really nervous and didn’t. Later my workmates had a little shower, but I said, we all have to wear masks. I got a lot of great little books to start a library. I didn’t realize how much I needed that shower. I have no other choice; (my baby) is really cool and really grounds me. I have this little being that consumes so much of my energy and my time. In a lot of ways, I made a bubble around myself (for better or for worse). And it has been, resilience by force.”

What does resilience mean for Colleen? “I looked at the website and the questions you sent me. I’ve been trying to process resilience and it’s like that Ani DiFranco line, ‘buildings and bridges are made to bend in the wind.’ Resilience feels to me different, before it was confrontational, and you pushed through to persist. Now, it feels more interactive with whatever is coming and bending with it. You have to move out of the way, but also interact with it. Resilience is more delicate to me now. It has been interesting at Truman, which is an HIV primary care clinic. HIV is a crazy virus that was a huge epidemic and highly stigmatized. When we first started in this pandemic, there were parallels in that it was very shaming for people. As if to say, ‘You weren’t protecting yourself; you went and got this COVID.’ There was a lot of talk about that shared shame, and stigma.”

“I’ve been trying to process resilience and it’s like that Ani DiFranco line, ‘buildings and bridges are made to bend in the wind.’”

-Colleen, Albuquerque
patient groups—though it took us a while to get there. There’s an excitement to participate. We had World AIDS Day for the first time online. As an organization, we are attempting to build that community structure because it’s so important for our people.”

**Overall, Colleen expressed satisfaction with the local and state response to COVID-19,** “I work with UNM Medical Group, the non-profit clinic wing of UNM Health Sciences and felt like I was really well informed throughout COVID. We would have weekly check-ins about updates on PPE and we were kept really well-informed and well-equipped. I work in Infectious disease; our clinic director is an Infectious Disease doctor. I don’t know if Albuquerque as a city has done anything unique, but I’m happy with Lujan Grisham at the state level; shutting things down, require masks et cetera. (At the same time) I feel for business owners.”

**Colleen has learned a lot from her COVID-19 experience.** “On a personal level, I hope that we don’t put things off too long because you just don’t know. I know you aren’t guaranteed tomorrow but it feels heavier now. When you have moments, you should really step into them and this has put into perspective what is important and what is demanding of my time. I don’t know if I would have had that same perspective before. I hope we live more thoughtfully now about the things that matter to us. I would like to be more prepared next time.”

**What wisdom will Colleen take from the pandemic?** “I will say it was hard (but) you keep moving. I hope that I shed a lot of this, and it falls off me. On the other hand, I’d be so happy to never shake another hand in my life! But I am a hugger; I want people close and want to embrace them. I want to share food and have close, intimate moments. I hope a lot of this falls away. I hope we can encourage people to not be so afraid of science and medicine and things that keep us safe.”

“I hope we live more thoughtfully now about the things that matter to us. I hope we can encourage people to not be so afraid of science and medicine and things that keep us safe.”

-Colleen, Albuquerque
“The show must go on” even in a pandemic, and for Ceil and Peter Herman, the Artistic and Technical Directors of No Strings Theatre Company (NSTC) in Las Cruces, NM, the show has gone on, first online and in April, out of doors. The independent theatre company has shown its resilience by streaming performances throughout the pandemic, rather than wait for the governor to clear in-person performances.

They chose to adapt by maintaining creativity throughout the challenges of the pandemic. For them, the choice of whether or not to continue was not a choice at all. For Ceil, Peter and troupe members, Ed Montes, Genno and Nancy Tafoya, Rachel Thom- as-Chappell, and Autumn Gieb, performance is almost necessary for preserving a certain outlook on life. All agree that NSTC is a resilient group, “used to doing theatre on a sandwich — you just have to do what it takes to make sure the show goes on,” said Peter.

“It’s easy if you’ve got a lot of money, or you’re Andrew Lloyd Webber, but the little theatres make do and are resilient by nature Ceil said. NSTC has worked tirelessly to continue to connect with their audiences and to keep production values high. Peter said “Many cast members in the productions have old computers that couldn’t support Zoom backgrounds, so they made their own green screen by buying some fabric and taping it up behind them. Making do with the resources you have at hand, whether that’s in theatre or in any other endeavor you’re engaged in and maximizing the utility of what you have defines resiliency.”
Ed retired about four and a half years ago and decided to participate in community theatre, not having done so since high school. When COVID stopped the live theatre world at NSTC, where, ironically, Ed was in a play about the plague, he discovered that NSTC was looking for actors who were interested in streaming. Ed said that the resilience of NSTC has been inspiring and in some ways gave him more opportunities. Transitioning to the internet was different and difficult because of the “permanence” of the performance. “However, you are eventually compelled to be a part of the creative world again. Keeping theatre going is a way for NSTC to bring joy, happiness, and creativity to a time that is depressing and sad.”

Autumn has a Theatre and Film background so doing things online is not something new to her. Theatre is a passion and “a huge part of my life.” Although Autumn once considered herself an asocial person, she has come to realize that she desires and needs social connection. With theatre there is an immediate connection while film is more of a “hurry-up and wait.” In the past Autumn has enjoyed interacting with people after an in-person performance, which she really misses. Autumn feels that “theatre, art, etc. are so connective. As long as it makes you feel something, it is valuable.”

When asked if they will miss anything about the pandemic, Genno stated he, “will definitely miss being able to go to work without leaving the house. Being home has given people the time to do more theatre, more creative endeavors and rehearsal time has been cut down in many ways.” Peter agreed that, “Life cycles of plays have definitely shortened — less need to memorize things, which makes things go faster. COVID has definitely changed how theatre has looked and been presented, which has been surprisingly positive and innovative.”

Artistic Director Ceil feels that the company owes something to their audiences — it’s not the same for them or us as it was before, but they too have managed to be resilient enough to keep in touch with us through streaming during these many months. Ceil explained that theatre is a “family” and maintaining the connection between actors, directors and audiences is crucial. She adds that NSTC is very lucky to have had enough money to maintain this connection in spite of the hardship of COVID-19. She is glad that the audience still considers itself to be a part of the theatre community online even if expanded technology was originally out of their comfort zone. Ceil is grateful that “the audience is being resilient by sticking with us throughout all of the experiments and changes.”

Funding from the City of Las Cruces earmarked to help small businesses survive the pandemic was really important and helpful for NSTC. “The city staff worked to get each of the qualified applicants as much support from the special pandemic funding as they could” Ceil and Peter agreed.

Their advice for planners, officials, and the state leadership is poignant, “You cannot rely on resilience forever. There are limits to people’s strength. Give more thought to fairness in what sacrifices you expect people to make. People will make sacrifices they feel are fair” Peter said.

“You cannot rely on resilience forever. There are limits to people’s strength.”

-No Strings Theatre Company, Las Cruces
Mark grew up in New Mexico, served in the U.S. military in Vietnam, then worked at “two of the best colleges in New Mexico.” He now supports the 2nd largest telephone system in New Mexico as the head of Informational Technology at UNM, University Hospital, UNM Health Sciences, and the UNM branch campuses, with more than 25,000 phone lines. Mark is also on the Board of Directors for Big Brothers & Big Sisters in Albuquerque. For Mark, Resilience is, “knowing that you can only change what you control – if you don’t control the outcome or direction – you cannot spend energy on that.”

Pre-pandemic, Mark’s life was still very complicated, as he is engaged with many agencies within the University on many levels as an Associate Director working to manage 400+ staff in Information Technology. Today, Mark expressed that he is busy but in different ways. “It’s a trade-off on changes, I am on 24/7 and 365 because of the nature of remote work.” Most of Mark’s team is work from home and manages the connectivity for UNM’s 27,000 students, 5,000 faculty & staff. Mark is part of the Consortium for Higher Education and believes that “higher education (Institutions) were not prepared for what happened. We (in Information Technology) think this will be the new norm. We wonder what brick and mortar will look like tomorrow. We need ubiquitous communications.”

When asked what Mark believes we have learned from the pandemic, he expressed our lack of overall preparation for national or world-wide emergencies, “FEMA, the National Guard, and first-responders are only ready for short-term emergencies. Nobody in this era thought (the pandemic) would be this long, but here we are a year later.” Mark feels that, “we’ve lost the personal connection, the human touch, and human factor” and fears another wave of the COVID-19 virus shutting New Mexico down again. “We’ve come a long way with robust technology but we as humans weren’t ready for that. Mentally, we can’t absorb another shutdown, I worry that if the virus spikes again, emotional capacity will shut down ten-fold.”

Mark is very active in New Mexico both through UNM and through his volunteerism. His role with Big Brothers and Big Sisters has him concerned about the success of donation-based organizations during this and future emergencies. “Big Brothers & Big Sisters is a donation organization; we live by people donating to the cause. Savers had to shut the door because of COVID and a source of income that was removed” for Big Brothers & Big Sisters.

Mark has been fortunate in that he is able to work from home and has helped to support his daughter, who works as a teacher in Las Cruces, and his grandkids at his home. “It has been quite traumatic for most families, we’re lucky we are able to work from home. It’s like the show Survivor. Our family situation is now 90% family time and 10% co-work-
er time. With your family you can’t disengage, and you have to learn to roll with the punches.” After the pandemic resolves, Mark will miss the, “lower rates on car insurance and being able to do things between meetings. You can vacuum, clean, work in the yard...things you usually would save for a weekend. The pandemic forces you to do things with family: board games, card games, watching Netflix together, we like to watch Jeopardy and Wheel of Fortune.”

The legacy of COVID-19 will be different for different age groups. Mark believes the COVID-19 pandemic will be for his grandkids as Vietnam was for his generation, “this is what they’ll remember as their normal. This is one thing that happened to everyone without boundaries or prejudice.” While Mark feels his grandkids are doing well, he worries for, “children who are high-risk, in a high-risk situation where they need to be protected” and remarked that in the Albuquerque Public School System Kindergarten through twelfth grade that, “27,000 students have not shown up for online class (and) A&B students have now become C&D students.”

Mark wants New Mexican leadership and planners to know that, “we need digital diversity throughout New Mexico and smarter technologies, not children going to a car and sitting in a parking lot. (We need to) look at buildings holistically for the future. European Countries have taken buildings and pushed them out into the community—community centers with conference centers, labs shared by different companies that are for everyone, not just one specific use or need.” In thinking about future pandemics or emergencies, Mark feels strongly that the community should be involved in learning about what government agencies are doing for tomorrow to prepare for the unknown and making the best use of the limited funding that the state of New Mexico receives.
Baked-in Resilience at “Fleur de Lys”

Reported by Mia Held, MCRP Candidate

Marcel is a scientist and business-owner from Los Alamos, NM. “My wife and I are originally from France. We studied in the U.S. starting on the East Coast and we moved to Los Alamos in 2013 to work for Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). We started a small French café and grocery store called Fleur de Lys, with pastries, desserts, cheeses, crepes and more than two-hundred imported grocery items as a hobby in January 2018 while continuing to work 20 hours per week at LANL. I enjoy using both parts of my brain, the analytical part at LANL and the creative part with the restaurant.”

Pre-pandemic, Marcel spoke of his family’s difficult decision to relocate to France for a short time or, to stick out the pandemic and lockdown in Los Alamos. “Before the lockdown we knew we had to take the chance, two weeks before US lockdown we knew France was shutting down. We made the decision to stay in Los Alamos. We had a baby during the pandemic at home in July 2020 with a midwife. It was our first home birth.”

Running a business is difficult under normal circumstances, and Marcel found that was especially the case during COVID-19. “We accepted early that we would need to move our operations online even though we resisted that pre-pandemic. “We started working 150% of our time on the business. [It was] twenty-hour days, no sleep to put together [the business]. We did what we had to do, we did it. The restaurant industry is really a test of yourself, there is no work-life balance. If you can make it through the pandemic, you can make it through anything.” For Marcel, it was “surprise resiliency, very few of our staff members quit and we felt supported by our community.”

As with the Los Conchas Fire in 2011, people drew people together during the pandemic: “It’s a small town in the middle of nowhere but we helped one another like we did back then. People pull the best out of themselves.” Marcel is proud that, in Los Alamos, people are respectful and wear masks, they follow whatever means of ordering that was provided at Fleur de Lys. The Los Alamos Chamber of Commerce was also supportive of small businesses during the pandemic and guided local businesses with grants and loans application processes. “The chamber of commerce came to us; we wouldn’t have had time to learn about available grants and funding.” That is how Marcel learned about the James Beard Foundation Grants, which he applied for and received in Summer 2020.

For Marcel, it was “surprise resiliency, very few of our staff members quit and we felt supported by our community.”

-Marcel, Los Alamos

“I’m still trying to process the fact that there are so many children at home, our kids never felt alone we haven’t been isolated.” Marcel has learned to be more open-minded and flexible during the COVID-19 pandemic. “Six months before the pandemic, I didn’t want to go online. We were forced to be flexible and change the way things work. The pandemic has been financially and emotionally devastating. [We had to] switch from a Parisian café to a French Dominos, driving 150+ miles per day for deliveries in Los Alamos and Whiterock, NM.”

Marcel’s advice for our state and local leadership is rooted in his role as a business-owner. “In Los Alamos, the local government has been super understanding but also somewhat powerless. Regulations came
from the Federal and State level.” Marcel watched the governor’s conferences on Facebook and felt sympathy for people who couldn’t adapt and use the online tools. “The governor did not understand the gravity of finances for business and PPP loans.

**Businesses running for 30+ years were shut down,** but a chain grocery store was allowed to have two-hundred or more people inside. This looked unfair to the small business community, they were treated like little kids.” In the face of future disasters, Marcel feels that, “government should have more compassion towards people who suffer and learn to lead by example.”

“Government should have more compassion towards people who suffer and learn to lead by example.”

- Marcel, Los Alamos
Overcoming Partner Violence & Being Resilient During COVID-19

Reported by Fiore Bran Aragón, MA in Latin American Studies

Andrea is an international student from Central America. She arrived in Albuquerque in 2019 to pursue a masters in Humanities at UNM. At the time, she left her country to flee a violent intimate relationship and find a new career pathway.

When asked about her life before the pandemic, she explains that adapting to Albuquerque and the United States has been challenging due to language and cultural differences, but also because she has had to learn “how to navigate the system”, including the university, and her new job in a matter of months. Despite all of that, during her first semester as an international student, she was able to “build meaningful connections” with other international students, mostly Latinx people who were also pursuing graduate school. According to Andrea, “when COVID-19 hit, I was just starting to build a life here. I had only been in classes for one and a half semesters, and then everything changed. It was like a limbo for a few months.”

This “limbo” was all the “uncertainty, lack of safety” that she felt when she suddenly found herself “isolated”, not being able to see her friends, return to her country, or find reliable information how the virus was transmitted. At the beginning of 2020, Andrea began dating a man that she met at school. By April, she was feeling “completely alone” and due to lack of economic resources, she decided to move in with the man. “I really felt it was convenient, and it made sense. I was in a new country, did not have enough money to pay for an apartment on my own, and was not sure if I was going to spend a lot of time in isolation, so it made sense to move in with someone I knew.”

The first couple of months with her new partner, everything was fine. But then he started being aggressive towards her: “...yelling, throwing things, manipulating me with verbal violence. I already knew how that works because it happened with my previous partner, so I decided to put a stop to it in a matter of months, but it was not easy.”

At the time, Andrea did not look for institutional support at UNM because she did not know of resources in Spanish and did not feel completely comfortable talking about her personal experiences in English. Thanks to some of her friends, she found support in community-based organizations working on Intimate Partner Violence prevention in Albuquerque. At the end of 2020, she finally left her partner.

Though her family is not here, Andrea was able to keep in touch with them when things were difficult. She used to call her parents and friends in her home country to feel “close to home”. While social media and zoom where important to maintain communication with her

“It was a process of some months. I had to make sure I had enough resources to leave him before looking for a new place. It was hard. But I relied a lot on my friends here, and my family over there to cope with challenges I haven’t faced before, like going through a violent relationship in a foreign country [...] Now I feel very proud of myself, I see I am resilient for being able to overcome that situation, but I could not have done this without my friends and my family.”

-Andrea, Albuquerque
family during the pandemic, Andrea also felt “overwhelmed” because she was receiving a lot of news about the COVID-19 situation in her country while working or taking classes on Zoom. She was also informed that some relatives died because of COVID via Zoom. All of this made her feel helpless because she was not able to go back but got information about the public health crisis and how her country’s government was managing the pandemic. Eventually, she had to take some “self-care measures” to cope with the stress and uncertainty that came from “being here but with my head over there.” She started going for walks every afternoon, uninstalled some social media apps from her phone, and she and her friends created a “safe bubble” to meet every week. With these strategies, she was able to feel less isolated and was able to “emotionally support my family while going through many changes and challenges here.”

**Because of her experience with intimate partner violence,** Andrea became interested in public health communication in Spanish. In 2021 she began to work on a research project to analyze the availability of public information on COVID-19 in Spanish in Albuquerque. According to her, although there is substantial information available, there are still challenges that need to be tackled to favor accessibility for Spanish-speaking people and other minorities in New Mexico. She argues that at the beginning of the pandemic, there was more information regarding COVID-19 available in Spanish in key public spots, such as highways alert signs and at bus stops, but now “most information in public areas is displayed in English only.” Also, although there are translation services for some languages in vaccination centers, sometimes there are not interpreters or vaccine cards with information in other common languages among Albuquerque’s growing diverse population.

**Moving forward, Andrea hopes to continue researching public health communication,** and advocating for health services for language minorities in Albuquerque.
“We Recognize Resilience When We Tell Our Stories”

Reported by Andy Gorvetzian, MA in Anthropology Candidate

Rosa is a graduate of UNM with a Masters degree in Spanish and is currently a Spanish teacher in Albuquerque. She is originally from Venezuela, and has lived in the US for over a decade.

Before the pandemic, Rosa was working on her Masters exam, and so in a way was self-isolating and social distancing before everyone else. Preparing for her exams and taking care of her family members were an ample distraction, and so she felt like she could continue on and ignore the pandemic until it went away. “I didn’t really feel the change so much at first. But when I finished my exam, and realized that I couldn’t go out dancing to celebrate, that was when things started to hit me.”

It was in those moments that Rosa’s process of practicing resilience in the face of the pandemic began, even if she wasn’t aware of it at the time. “My reaction to that news of canceled graduation was to just be with my sadness. I needed to be with the pain,” she told me. Rosa had learned how to practice resilience in her childhood, growing up in a dangerous neighborhood in Caracas, the capital city of Venezuela. It was there that she learned to seek refuge in books and in her classes at school. Education was an escape from the world around her, a world to which she knew she would never really belong. She reflected on how strange it was to be from a “developing” country, “as if one day we were going to be developed.” Unsure of what that meant, she nevertheless held onto the hope of something better to come. That orientation towards better days ahead was the source of her resilience.

That contrast between the experiences of the pandemic between the United States and Venezuela helped to give Rosa some perspective. Seeing the dramatically unequal ways in which the two countries could address the pandemic given the resources they each had helped her to both feel grateful to be in New Mexico, but it was also hard to be away from family members in Venezuela who did not have access to those same resources.

Resilience was a long process of denial, then mourning, and then acceptance. Coming to the stage of acceptance, Rosa did not realize these steps until she had the space to think about it in our interview. Many of those realizations were not clear in the moment, but rather only emerged in hindsight. In this way, Rosa echoed other people who shared their story with us and brought to light a striking facet of resilience: there is a difference between being resilient and feeling resilient. We may be resilient even if we do not feel resilient, and often our awareness of our resilience only emerges in the retrospective narration of our stories.

“The Pandemic] has helped me realize the importance of ‘now,’ which meant to accept the uncertainty and let go of control. I learned to accept that here is where I am and I have no control over others, but I do have control over how I react.”

-Rosa, Albuquerque
Rosa’s adaptation process carried over into her new role as a Spanish teacher in Albuquerque, where she faced the challenges of teaching online to an age group whom she had not taught before. Facing those new challenges opened a space for innovation and new means of connecting, teaching, and learning that she did not expect. “I kept thinking, I have never done this, and I’m afraid, but then I did it and beautiful things happened as a result, and I realized there were tools on Zoom that we could play with that wouldn’t be available in the physical classroom.” One example was how they would turn cameras on and off when they were doing a play in class. Students turned the camera on when they had a speaking role and off when they weren’t speaking, generating a fun and interactive space not possible in the physical classroom.

Rosa’s story also captures some of the ways in which resilience is a process that doesn’t end once the pandemic ends, as the transition to the “new normal” will bring its own challenges and opportunities. When we spoke, Rosa had just begun returning to in-person teaching, and she shared some reflections on that process. “It was strange, because I have taught other grade levels before, but I began my high school teaching career on Zoom, so I didn’t have any in person experience with this age level. I found it was a bit of a challenge to build community in the physical classroom after we had gotten used to the zoom classroom.” Wearing a mask to teach students a second language is another challenge. “Teaching with a mask on is really hard, because you can’t see their whole face or their mouth!” Curiously, learning to teach in person with a mask on was proving to be more challenging than anything she had to adapt to on Zoom. Teaching with a mask was matched by another wardrobe related challenge: “I miss being able to wear sweatpants whenever I wanted to, which Zoom teaching allowed me to do!” she laughed.

Going forward, Rosa hopes that in crises to come, there is not so much politicization of a crisis that demands a collective response. She felt that individualistic thinking “came at the expense of solidarity with everyone else” and emphasized the importance of the collective over the individual in addressing the next pandemic. A key part of this is strong leadership. Administrators at the school had Plans A, B, C and D and a degree of flexibility to adapt those plans, which made her feel more secure in the workplace. An important caveat is that strong leadership, especially in schools, needs to go alongside having enough resources to be able to follow through on a variety of plans. Addressing funding gaps for public schools will be an important piece going forward.

Despite the challenges, Rosa is taking the pandemic in stride, grateful for all she has learned and for those who stood by her during this time. “I’m really just trying to make learning engaging and fun, especially because it is really hard to teach with a mask on!”

Photo Courtesy of Karen Hymer
**Being a Grandmother & Teacher During the Pandemic**

Reported by Fiore Bran Aragón, MA in Latin American Studies

**Kerry is an elementary teacher working in Las Cruces.** She is originally from Albuquerque and before the pandemic used to commute between both communities. When COVID-19 started, she decided to move back to Albuquerque “to spend more time with my family”. Although her family is settled in the Duke city, the return was difficult because many of her social connections and her employment are in Las Cruces. The main challenges of the pandemic for Kerry were isolation and learning how to teach online in such a chaotic context, especially because she works with 3 and 4 year-old children.

**To cope with isolation,** Kerry has been “taking things day by day” by focusing on the present moment, and on things that she can handle while staying home and teaching online. According to Kerry, at the beginning, “There were many unknowns about going back to school, we were waiting to go back soon, but then we accepted that it was not possible, and just started working together and learning how to teach online. For me, resilience been a matter of acceptance and of being proactive. And family and co-workers have been crucial to feel resilient.”

When asked about an experience of resilience, she explains how she and her co-workers have been meeting every week to plan classes together, share resources and learn how to use zoom and other digital tools.

“For me, resilience been a matter of acceptance and of being proactive. And family and co-workers have been crucial to feel resilient.”

-Kerry, Las Cruces
platforms to improve their teaching. At the beginning, it was very challenging “we learned through trial and error”, but now they are seeing positive results. For example, when I interviewed her, Kerry have just finished classes. That day she was teaching math and had prepared an activity to teach geometric figures together with other two teachers.

According to her: “We asked our students to bring to the class any material available at home to make a giraffe. The giraffe was made of different shapes: triangles, circles, etc. They brought colored paper, play-doh, and even toothpaste. After we finished, the students described their creations together. And I noticed how they were enjoying the activity even though we were on zoom, I saw they were having fun. The week before we did yoga poses, other activities with toothpaste. We have been innovating to make online classes fun, and I think it is working. I still miss my students, but it is good to see them happy in remote classes.”

According to Kerry, the transition from classroom to online classes has also been successful thanks to collaboration between the school and parents. However, one of the main challenges has been to maintain clear communication about COVID-19 data in the community, and about risks of transmission, and vaccines. Even though she believes in “freedom of choice” and does not think that anyone should get the vaccine if they do not want to; she also believes that Las Cruces’ population needs to have access to clear information regarding the vaccine to make an informed choice about it. She also emphasizes that both “parents and teachers” need to “take care of themselves” to prevent spreading the virus. This is the only way that “our kids” will be able to “go back to school safely.”

Though she misses her community in Las Cruces, Kerry thinks the pandemic has brought opportunities to see the life from a new perspective, that of her grandchild. During the pandemic, she became a grandma, and even though in the beginning returning to Albuquerque was difficult, her grandchild has been the “silver lining” to her experience during the pandemic. By spending time with her grandchild, Kerry has learned to see life in a new fashion: “My grandson has been like a window to see life in a new way. He is so innocent and does innocent things of a normal kid growing up. He is not aware of what is going on outside”. That makes her feel “that the pandemic is over, and that there are possibilities for a new life”. A life with “hope, joy, peace” and in which everyone will be able to meet with their loved ones and celebrate again.

“We have been innovating to make online classes fun, and I think it is working. I still miss my students, but it is good to see them happy in remote classes.”

-Kerry, Las Cruces
Norma is a case manager of the “Pathways” program at Encuentro, a Latinx community center based in Barelas, Albuquerque. Barelas has traditionally been a Latinx and Hispanic neighborhood with a high concentration of Mexican immigrants. To serve this population and other immigrants, community organizers founded Encuentro. The center provides immigrant families with access to education and career development opportunities for their empowerment and to support economic and social equity. Their “Pathways” program connects immigrant families with local and state resources to successfully navigate the American system while “fully embracing their culture.” Encuentro also has education programs focused on English, finances, informatics and the Citizenship civics test. They have also successfully developed a home health aid program to support migrant women working in that industry.

According to Norma, in recent years, “the Encuentro family has grown in diversity. Before, 90% of users were migrant women,” but in more recent years the population of migrant men who look for support at Encuentro has grown, and now they are “20 or 30%” of beneficiaries. Also, migrant families have diversified in the last few years, now Encuentro attends Mexicans, Central American and Caribbean immigrants. In this context, the demand for services offered by Encuentro has increased as well. And they have responded by expanding their education programs and building alliances with local and national organizations.

Nonetheless, the COVID-19 pandemic brought new challenges for Encuentro and the families they serve. When asked about it, Norma argues that the main challenge faced by Encuentro staff has been the “uncertainty” and difficulties in “connecting” with families and their students at the beginning of the pandemic. By “connecting” Norma refers to being able to provide services and connect families with community resources, but also to provide symbolic support to immigrants directly affected by COVID-19. According to her “at the beginning of the pandemic, it was difficult to switch to online classes because many of our users did not know how to use computers. Then we taught them to use zoom, and we also got donors who provided computers for some families, and thus we were able to restart the classes.”

Before the pandemic, Encuentro served some 300 students. But since they switched to online classes in Fall 2020, they started with a “pilot project” of 100 students. Until now, the project has been successful and has provided access to previous and new users who are joining the online community. In Spring 2021, they have 200 students and plan on expanding their program to get “up to 300” next August.

For Norma, one of the most important achievements has been “knowing that we can adapt to changes, and that we have successfully continued with our work. Now we plan to provide online classes, but even if we return to a face-to-face format, we will not lose the knowledge we have learned.”
When asked about the challenges faced by Latinx migrant families, Norma explains: “the main challenges have been at the economic level, and the reorganization of family relationships and care as a result of that.” When many businesses closed, at the beginning of the pandemic, migrant families working in agriculture and care became unemployed, and “due to restrictions in access to unemployment benefits some stayed without any type of protection.” Since then, Encuentro has looked for support from state institutions and other stakeholders to provide migrant families with access to food and housing, and in general, they have been successful. But for Norma, the families themselves have been “particularly resilient” and eager to create their own support systems at the family and community level.

She explains it with a story:

“Of course, we provide assistance to navigate life in the United States, but it’s our families who build their own support systems and seek strategies to thrive. For example, during the pandemic and since some families lost their jobs, they have restructured family and community dynamics to provide support to each other [...] those who have work or who have found other jobs, go to work and those who do not stay at home taking care of the children, making food for their families and neighbors. They provide care, food, information, to support each other when necessary. For example, a mother told me how staying at home has made her enjoy more time with her children, and how she is also learning English by helping her child with homework and zoom classes.”

-Norma, Albuquerque

The families themselves have also organized groups to do outdoor activities in Albuquerque. “They meet to go to the Sandias or the Bosque, and those are free recreational activities that they can do with all the family.” For Norma, “seeing how they are proactive, and how they try to see the bright side in every situation is being resilient.” To take advantage of community resilience, Encuentro has expanded its “Pathways” program, now they have two “navigators” (including Norma) and forty “community focal points” who meet twice a month to share resources, and translate reliable information on employment, food and housing services, and COVID-19 in New Mexico.

During this period, Encuentro and the community focal points have been able to strengthen alliances to “provide better services and avoid duplicating efforts.” For example, they have created alliances with El Centro de la Igualdad y Derechos (Center for Equity and Rights) and some immigration lawyers to provide reliable information on unemployment benefits, workers rights and migrants rights. They have also worked with the “Lions Club” who provides support on visual health to migrant communities, and with Three Sisters Kitchen that works with refugee women on agriculture and provides workshops on nutrition. Recently, they also started to organize cultural exchange activities with the UNM Refugee Wellbeing Project to connect the latinx community with other migrant and refugee communities in Albuquerque.

Norma emphasizes that despite these achievements, there are still many challenges for migrant and refugee families during the pandemic. The most relevant are “lack of updated information on COVID-19 in all languages” and the excess of “bureaucratic requirements for undocumented migrant families to access complementary state support.” She invites policymakers to “think about the diversity of families in Albuquerque, to make services accessible to everyone.”
Supporting Our Communities & Fighting Asian Hate

Reported by Fiore Bran Aragón, MA in Latin American Studies

Liem is a case manager at the New Mexico Asian Family Center (NMAFC), based in Albuquerque. In his interview, he shared some of the challenges, coping strategies, and achievements of the NMAFC and their beneficiaries, the Asian community in New Mexico.

COVID-19 brought multiple challenges to the NMAFC and the communities they support. NMAFC provides culturally tailored services to the Asian community in Albuquerque to help them “navigate the US system” and adapt to their home communities. Among their services are support circles for sexual assault survivors and domestic violence survivors, interpretation and translation services for refugees and other Asian immigrants with limited English proficiency. They also provide mental health and legal counseling for individuals and families who are survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and other crimes.

When asked about the challenges faced by NMAFC during COVID-19, Liem explains that at the beginning of the pandemic it was difficult to change their services’ format from face-to-face to online encounters. This was a challenge because a high percentage of their clients did not know how to use a computer and internet, or did not have access to internet. This lack of access created barriers for their clients to access up-to-date information on the pandemic, unemployment benefits, and state and federal support services for the population.

On the other hand, Asian families began to face new challenges during the pandemic. Among them, there was a significant increase in unemployment, due to the fact that many Asian families work in restaurants, which as a result of the pandemic were temporarily closed. Unemployment increased food and housing insecurity, and increased difficulties accessing health services and government protection. The NMAFC has also registered a significant increase in cases of intimate partner violence, cases of labor exploitation, and hate crimes. All of this has made the Center’s services even more urgent, as a result they are offering most services online, and more individuals and families are reaching out to them.
To respond to communities’ demands, NMAFC staff have implemented some “new strategies” to reach out to more families during the pandemic. According to Liem, they began to provide support in the use of zoom, and began broadcasting information sessions on Facebook Live, and in this way, they have reached more users in different languages. These sessions focus on sharing resources for health care, food, legal services, updated information on COVID-19, among others. Furthermore, in the last few months, they have been collaborating with the NM Department of Health to translate and share relevant information on COVID-19 throughout the state.

When asked about the relevance of partnerships and alliances to provide services to their beneficiaries, Liem explains that COVID-19 have brought unique challenges and opportunities for their communities, and that those challenges have been relevant to creating new partnerships. On one hand, at the beginning of the pandemic they saw an increase in hate crimes and violent acts against Asian Americans and Asian immigrants in Albuquerque. Even though that changed after a few months, hate crimes in other states sparked attention to the presence of Asian communities in New Mexico: “more people started reaching out to us, asking how they could support our mission and our community, especially after the Georgia shooting, which was clearly a hate crime.”

Through partnerships and solidarity with other community centers, human rights centers, and national organizations attending Asians and other minorities, NMAFC has had significant achievements in the last year. For example, according to Liem, they were able to get financial aid to support families in need to pay for rent and food. They are also working with ACLU to support some community members to get unemployment benefits, and are working with immigration lawyers to support Asian immigrants who have been victims of human trafficking networks.

Since COVID-19 they have also come together with other community centers and grassroots organizations working with immigrants and other minorities, which has been useful to share community resources and creative strategies to better serve communities. One of the most powerful experiences of NMAFC during the pandemic has been sharing their communities’ stories with key authorities in the state, to raise awareness about Asian hate and to provide suggestions on better practices to help Asian communities. For example, “We have been gathering and sharing our stories with the APD (Albuquerque Police Department) and Department of Health’s officials so that they can hear from community members what are their challenges in accessing services and support from authorities. Even if there are language barriers, by establishing a dialogue between communities and authorities, we are bridging gaps between immigrants and the system [...] We have also collected best practices to provide services and information in culturally supportive ways because it is important for us that our communities know the authorities, and that they know our communities’ needs [...] that way, we can contribute to fight Asian hate.”

Based on his experience working with Asian families, Liem encourages policymakers to tailor information on COVID-19 and community resources to different “languages and cultures” in the state. He also emphasizes the need to work on prevention and early interventions to tackle challenges such as COVID-19: “We had enough time to prepare for this pandemic with the information that was available, but we didn’t. It is necessary to change that approach to support all communities in New Mexico.”

“We had enough time to prepare for this pandemic with the information that was available, but we didn´t. It is necessary to change that approach to support all communities in New Mexico”

-Liem, Albuquerque
“Excluding Anyone Affects Everyone”
Reported by Andy Gorvetzian, MA in Anthropology Candidate

Sandra is a consultant in Albuquerque who serves as the President of the Encuentro Board of Directors. Through her consulting company, she serves numerous immigrant and refugee serving organizations in Central New Mexico, in addition to being a graduate of the Department of Community and Regional Planning at UNM and a mom of two young children.

Her initial reaction to the pandemic was one of shock, confusion, and general bewilderment. “I didn’t get it at first,” and she wondered if perhaps much of the worry was overblown. But as the days went on, and the magnitude of the crisis revealed itself, it became clear that adapting to a new normal was the only option.

Sandra and her family put themselves into a bubble and sought social connection through Zoom, celebrating Jewish seders, Friday happy hours, and other online events, but the novelty soon gave way to fatigue. That prompted them to expand their bubble to a few other families, and the strength of those connections that endured throughout the pandemic taught Sandra about priorities. “The fluff got skimmed off in a lot of ways and I was able to see what my priorities were in terms of work, life, and my relationships,” she commented.

Resilience was key for Sandra not only in confronting the pandemic, but also in handling life crises that would be hard without the added stress of the pandemic. Her mother died of non-Covid-19 related causes in Florida in June 2020, demanding a new adjustment to life during the pandemic. She traveled to Florida where she had to learn how to negotiate the funeral proceedings while also exercising caution to protect her own health. That trip to Florida shifted her strategy once again as she realized, “Life does not stop for Covid, and the passing of my mother made this especially clear.” It opened her up to new adaptations that she and her family would take to make it through the coming months. She began to be more social, looking for ways to safely be together. She bought a heating lamp and heated stadium chair pads so people would be able to come over and be outside at the house without being too cold in the winter. “I’m proud of myself for having gotten through this,” she noted at the end of our interview.

Professionally, Sandra saw firsthand how the pandemic shined a bright light on the many inequalities that existed in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and the country as a whole. Her work with nonprofits showed how many undocumented immigrants continued to go to work and expose themselves and their families in order to maintain essential services to society while also providing for their families. Encuentro, a nonprofit in Albuquerque, organized a fundraiser to be able to provide $500 payments to those who were not eligible for federal stimulus money. This experience showed her both how public health systems need to be stronger in providing social services for everyone. It also made her see the importance of a shift in thinking more broadly. “Excluding anyone affects everyone, and the pandemic has shown how important it is for us to think collectively rather than individually all the time,” Sandra said. Because of these inequalities, many folks with whom Sandra worked were forced to be much more resilient than others.

“Excluding anyone affects everyone, and the pandemic has shown how important it is for us to think collectively rather than individually all the time.”

-Sandra, Albuquerque
“This happened on top of the fact that people are having to work twice as hard for half of the impact during the pandemic, and expectations of the same or greater impact despite the much harder circumstances put a lot of pressure on people.”

- Sandra, Albuquerque

**Looking ahead, Sandra hopes that the legacy of the pandemic** offers a chance for us to see one another as more complex than our professional lives allowed before. As we spoke on Zoom, Sandra’s two young children came into the screen and showed her a flower and a book that they had been coloring in. They said hi to me and then ran away to continue to play, and Sandra commented, “I will miss this time with my kids. But I also hope that it helps us be more aware of the balance we need in our lives. People in the professional world have families, pets, and homes. I hope this realization leads to more humane treatment of workers.”

**That more humane treatment takes on different forms.** Many who worked at nonprofits during this time were pushed to the extreme at work. Without the connection of in-person communities, they found online work isolating. Sandra continued, “This happened on top of the fact that people are having to work twice as hard for half of the impact during the pandemic, and expectations of the same or greater impact despite the much harder circumstances put a lot of pressure on people.”

**The work ahead lies in policy that addresses those structural inequalities whose gaps provide the space in which many non-profits operate.** Public investment in infrastructure, higher wages for workers, better quality information about public health and services available in Spanish, Vietnamese, and the many other languages spoken in Albuquerque, and recognition of the importance of nonprofits and the relationships and trust they have with their community partners and beneficiaries will all be key in working towards a more resilient New Mexico going forward.
Self-Love: The Key to Resilience

Reported by Abrianna Morales, BS in Psychology

This pandemic has changed the world and we have changed along with it. This change is difficult, but from the right perspective, it’s an opportunity. Carli has taken this opportunity by creating something new—by reinventing herself and her worldview.

In March of 2020, Carli was getting used to her job at Meow Wolf—she had been working there for about seven months and enjoyed it, immensely. When she wasn’t working, she was spending time with her friends in Albuquerque, with whom she would plan and create art installations for their gatherings, sometimes referred to as “arty parties.” She enjoyed going to concerts and going out to bars with friends. Her immersion in her work, art, and social circle was not just important, it was integral to her and her way of life.

Like most others, she was unaware of how suddenly her life was about to change. All at once, she lost her job at Meow Wolf, her relationship ended, and she moved to Ruidoso to live with her aunt, increasing the physical and social distance between her and her group of friends in Albuquerque, “...it was like an explosion, at first. I was kind of riding this high and then everything just dropped real low, real suddenly.”

Carli felt alone and, for lack of a better term, “stuck.” Now in a different part of the state, Carli had to watch her friends live the life she had been forced to give up on social media. Watching them move forward, continue to create, and spend time together made her feel stagnant. “I was putting myself down, so far, all the time—about little things. The voice in my head was speaking really negatively. It was like, ‘yeah, my boyfriend didn’t want me anymore, I’m not around my friends, they’re not hitting me up as much because I’m not in town.’ So I just felt, like, really abandoned. And I was like: ‘Am I even worth not being abandoned?’”

It wasn’t until she reached a point of self love and acceptance that she was able to move forward. It started with speaking more positively to herself, a fifteen-minute ab workout, and a daily stretching routine. Soon enough, she purchased a gym membership and began focusing more intensely on her fitness as a demonstration of self-love and improvement. “The change wasn’t like, ‘today I’m going to do all this.’ It was definitely a slow, slow process...And eventually it was like, ‘if no one’s going to love you, you’re going to love you.’”

Photo Courtesy of Carli Stringfellow
“I thought of resilience a lot in this time period more than any time in my life and it’s brought me to where I am today.”

-Carli, Albuquerque

This transformation follows her personal philosophy on resilience, which has been significantly informed by sustainability classes she took in college. For Carli, resilience is: “In school, we talked about resilience...I’ve really thought about that and I think that it’s what’s gotten me to bounce back. I see resilience as being elastic [and] being able to adapt.” And now, more than ever, she thinks about the role of resilience in her day-to-day life—about how resilience has brought her to where she is today.

A year later, she is able to look back and see how far she has come. And this year, in particular, has taught her (and many others) plenty of lessons. When asked about the most significant lesson she has learned, Carli reflected on the importance of family, relationships, and self-care. “Family is important...When hard gets worse, the people that have got your back are your family..., and self-care is not a luxury, [it is] an essential.”

Creativity and resilience, as processes, are variable, non-linear, and continuous. For Carli, and many others, these processes are an endless series of baby steps and practices in self-love: a journey with an ever-evolving destination.
Traveling Cross-Country During the Pandemic

Reported by James Foty, NMHU Masters of Social Work Candidate

It was September 10, 2020 in the late afternoon, and I found myself in Oklahoma City. I’d just arrived in town after driving from Albuquerque, NM that morning. As always happens when I leave the desert and arrive somewhere else, the humidity hit me as soon as I got out of the car. Even though it was September, it was still hot. Ostensibly, I was headed to Florida to visit my brother, but as soon as I arrived in OKC, I realized that I’d probably lost my mind. What the hell was I doing in this strange place during the height of the pandemic?

I’d been in Oklahoma City the year before, traveling from Albuquerque to Chicago. That time, I’d stayed in the Bricktown neighborhood and been pleasantly surprised by all the investment going into redevelopment efforts to make the city more tourist friendly. I’d spent the evening walking around, absorbing the unexpected nightlife, sampling some breweries, and then flirting with a waitress who had described the Oklahoma City Memorial site as “neat.”

This time, I stayed in the more hipster Plaza District, which is a mile or so from Bricktown. After settling into my Airbnb, I went out and walked the three or four commercial blocks of the District, which was surprisingly full of people out and about. This was the first time I’d seen a real crowd of people in several months and it was exciting to be in a new place after being mostly stuck in Albuquerque the whole year. Seeing so many people gave me hope that some of the magic of the previous trip could be recreated. But because it’s 2020, COVID year, and everything has changed, nothing turned out as I hoped.

After checking out the scene and being impressed by the number of cool looking shops and hip restaurants, I went into a local brewery which was only serving drinks if you drank outside on their small, improvised patio arranged with old wooden picnic tables. Inside, the place was totally dead without its normal Saturday hustle and bustle. Because I’m a lightweight, I ordered a 10-oz pour of a local IPA and went outside to sit at one of the picnic tables close to the sidewalk. I sipped my beer and watched the street scene of people walking with family members, or out on dates, laughing, looking at their cellphones, pushing their babies in strollers, walking their dogs, taking hits from vape pens, and doing all those other things that people do in public when you let them. The overall level of mask wearing was hit or miss, with maybe half of the people wearing them fulltime and some only putting them on temporarily to enter a restaurant or another business.

“Sipping that beer, watching these people, I saw more clearly than before how COVID [had] clawed away at our existing connections and commitments and made it harder than ever to have the goddamn energy to seek new ones.”

-Pat Speak, Albuquerque

Seeing so many people (and maybe because I’d quickly finished my beer), made me nostalgic for crowds, even though I’ve always hated them. I wanted to be part of this crowd and feel at home here. But the more I watched everyone attempt to go about their lives in the “new normal”, the lonelier I felt. Unlike in the past, when it has always seemed possible to strike up a conversation with a stranger in a bar or public place, all that seemed impossible this year. The chance of meeting a cool new person or having a random adventure was zero. Sipping that beer, watching these people, I saw more clearly than before how COVID has clawed away at our existing connections.
and commitments and made it harder than ever to have the goddamn energy to seek new ones (never mind the logistical challenges). Although I had felt compelled to get out of Albuquerque and away from the mental claustrophobia of the last few months, now that I was actually on the road, I just wanted to be home again.

At some point, I finished my beer and thought about getting another one or trying out one of the restaurants, but I was suddenly tired. The evening felt like a bust or a crappy reality show, but I also wasn’t ready to leave.

I’d been watching a lot people go down what looked to be a narrow road or alleyway across the street. No one seemed to be coming back the same way. Curious, I crossed the street and entered the alleyway and immediately saw why it was so popular. The side and back walls of all the buildings were painted with colorful murals and psychedelic street art, including several large scenes that used the whole sides of the buildings. The art extended around to the back of the block and meandered down the alleyway connecting to the other side.

At first, all I could think was: what the hell is this doing here? The art seemed out of place and transported me to Brazil, where I’d been the previous September. Although there is street art throughout Brazil and Latin America, there is an especially cool neighborhood in Sao Paolo that has several blocks of street art called “Beco do Batman” or Batman Alley. The walls of the buildings there are covered with fantastic street art for several blocks, including some homoerotic renditions of Batman with Pele. It’s awesome, you should visit.

The art in OKC had a similar vibe but was executed on a much smaller scale. It only took me a minute or so to walk to the far end of the alley. The art on this side was unfinished, with scaffolds still in place to reach the top of the walls. The title of whole place, “Plaza Wall Oklahoma City” was done up in a retro 80’s arcade font. Only one side of the title was painted, the rest was blocked out with painter’s tape. The artists were wrapping things up for the day. Still at work, however, was someone’s seven- or eight-year-old son, who was standing on a scaffold and going to town with a small paintbrush.

As I was watching the little boy doodle on an unfinished section of the wall, a young couple rounded the corner of the alleyway. Something about them caught my eye. The woman was beautiful, wearing a pink dress and heels; the man was well-dressed and handsome. They were the picture of a perfect couple out on maybe a second or third date. They stopped to view one of the paintings and the woman raised her hand to point at something. Confidently, the man reached out and put his arm around the woman’s waist, bringing her closer. Even from a distance and even though they were wearing masks, I could tell they were both smiling. They were young, out on the town, maybe falling in love, and clearly enjoying themselves despite the pandemic. Watching them, the loneliness from just a few minutes before lifted, and I felt the future, like this couple, once again held promise.
Reimagining Resilience

Reported by Abrianna Morales, BS in Psychology

For some, resilience feels quite a lot like peace. And for Erick Aune, a typical day in early 2020 might have gone a little something like this: He’d get up (early) to get himself ready for work and the kids ready for school. His daughters would walk across the street by 7:50, leaving him just enough time to get to work by 8:00.

The ten-minute commute to the Railyard District, where he worked as a transportation planner for the Santa Fe Metropolitan Planning Association, brought him to a lively environment—he’d find himself surrounded by the numerous restaurants, strolling past bicyclists and people who, like him, were getting themselves to work. Although a day of work was never identical, it was always done around 5:00 when he’d go home, make dinner, help the kids with homework, and do it all again the next morning. For Erick, life was consistent. It was normal, until it wasn’t.

Life, as he knew it, came to a screeching halt. His daughters, who once walked to the school across the street, attended Zoom classes at home. He no longer made the ten-minute drive to work. Instead, the family car sat in the driveway and he sat at his desk, now working at home. The Railyard District, once teeming with life, was now quiet.

While his family was one among many becoming accustomed to the new realities of the COVID-19 pandemic, the experience felt isolating. “There’s been a reconciliation over time of not having that, sort of, dynamic social contact with staff, with friends, colleagues, and just citizens or anybody. Like, sitting down in a restaurant and chatting with the waiter or waitress. Sort of, recalibrating the social connection needed from that broader community to pretty much, our bubble of family.” Despite these feelings of apprehension, Erick and his family were inured to change. Particularly, they were in the midst of defining what would be a recurring theme in this new way of life: reimagination. Erick’s work as a professional planner requires this, to some degree. However, the pandemic has led to many other aspects of his life being reimagined. For instance, his family’s approach to celebrating holidays: “Planning ahead, having time to get costumes, and doing something that was not even close to traditional—a backyard scavenger hunt in the safety of the ‘bubble’, and then realizing that those events...are really memory makers. My kids and my partner’s kids really enjoyed it and it was better than a traditional Halloween.”

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“We all share the same threat. How are we dealing with it, individually and collectively?”

- Erick, Santa Fe

While there have been many epiphanies brought on by the experience of the pandemic (the realization that working from home might actually be more productive, among other things), one of the most significant is his understanding of resilience. “There was resilience prior to the pandemic. But like the virus mutates, I think resilience [has] mutated.... it does have more of a humbling aspect to it.”

He feels the most resilient when he watches his kids play: As they step into their reimagined, dynamic world, there’s an overall feeling of peace. An understanding that “…they’re off on their own, but we’re all here together, [and] we’ve got a safe and secure environment for ourselves.” Despite the fear, anxiety, and uncertainty of the real world, there is not only potential for adaptation and reimagination, but the capacity to feel safe and secure.

For some people—like Erick—that is both peaceful and resilient.
“There was resilience prior to the pandemic. But like the virus mutates, I think resilience [has] mutated.”

-Erick, Santa Fe

“When I look at communities that were doing good work and still are, [they had to] really rethink their baseline decision making... [it requires] a recognition of what an individual’s capacity is to survive, what they need to do, and then, what the collective community doing together to harness that ‘survival mode’.”

-Erick, Santa Fe
COVID-19 As a Lesson for Inclusive Planning

Reported by Fiore Bran Aragón, MA in Latin American Studies

Meredith is a certified planner who works as a planning administrator in Roswell and is also an adjunct faculty at New Mexico State University. Before the pandemic, Meredith used to commute between Roswell and Las Cruces, to spend time with family members who live in both communities. For her, the pandemic has been a life changing experience because social activities and traveling stopped, and she found herself spending all her time at home. Although this has given her the opportunity to spend much more time with her family, she recognizes that this change has had implications for her mental health, social relationships, and for the wellbeing of some family members: “I have had more time to spend with my family, but it felt like a huge change when I had to stop going to lunch with friends, or going to church... I feel it has been more difficult for my daughter, who is a college student. Since she did not have in-person classes anymore, she wanted to look for a job. She got one but then the internet did not work in her apartment, and she had to stopped working. Now she has another job, but all those changes have been challenging since we do not have stability and structure.”

When asked about some of the most pressing challenges for her community, Roswell, she explains that “uncertainty” and “fear” were generalized among the population, especially at the beginning of the pandemic, when it was not clear how COVID-19 was transmitted. According to her, the lack of clear information caused certain chaos: “in the supermarket, people taking all the food, all the toilet paper. It was impossible to know what was going to happen next. And that caused anxiety and confusion among the community. Even later, when there were clear indications to avoid the transmission of the virus, people did not follow the rules because of lack of access to that information, or because they did not believe in the virus”. Likewise, the uncertainty made isolation harder for her and for other community members: “even if I continued to go to my office, isolation is difficult emotionally and for mental health.”

Despite these challenges, Meredith, her family and community have found some strategies to cope with isolation and create new connections. For example, since the pandemic started, she takes long walks every afternoon, meditates everyday and goes swimming during the summer. She also has created new significant social connections and support groups via zoom; the most important ones have been her church community and connections with other community planners working in the Southwest.

In her own words:

“When the pandemic started, and we were not able to meet at church anymore, it was very difficult, because church is a significant community, especially for the elderly who attend to connect with others and worship. We then decided to meet over zoom every week, and until now it has been a great experience. We have been able to connect with other churches and worship together, it feels like a family where we support each other.”

-Meredith, Roswell
Another relevant community experience during the pandemic have been partnerships and connections with other community planners in New Mexico and other Southwest states. According to her, Roswell community planners used to meet periodically to discuss relevant topics on planning, but since the pandemic started, they have been able to expand their social network and outreach. A few months ago, they organized online meetings and conferences with community planners in Texas, which has been a great success, and is a relevant partnership that they hope can last: “especially for communities such as Las Cruces, or Roswell, who are near Texas. Creating connections with them and supporting each other to share ideas and experiences in community planning is a relevant achievement”.

According to Meredith, New Mexican communities have been able to cope with the pandemic, but there are still many challenges that are important to consider when planning for more inclusive and healthy communities in a post-pandemic world. She suggests that, “this is probably just the first pandemic of many that we will probably have to face. So, it’s important to get prepared.” To successfully plan for upcoming public health crises, she suggests that authorities need to create programs to “provide affordable housing and health services for all New Mexicans”; and that they also should “strengthen institutional communication to reach out to people in different formats”. From her experience, in Las Cruces and Roswell, New Mexicans did not have the same availability of information as in Albuquerque, despite local efforts. This led to misinformation regarding COVID-19 transmission and testing procedures.

To reach out to most people in Southern New Mexico, and especially in rural areas, she suggests that communication campaigns and information regarding the coronavirus should not be posted in social media and highway billboards only, but also through “community radio, flyers, and venues where people meet like grocery stores, bus stops, etc.” This is especially important to reach out to the elderly and other populations that do not have access to social media. “Only by planning for more inclusive communities, and with clear information, New Mexico will be able to prevent and face new public health challenges, such as a pandemic.”

-Meredith, Roswell
“We Came Out Stronger than We Went In”

Reported by Andy Gorvetzian, MA in Anthropology Candidate

Michael is the Director of MainStreet de Las Vegas, a community development organization which seeks to support local businesses and historic preservation in the Northern New Mexican town of 13,000 people, many of whom have lived there for generations. Through connections to other MainStreet organizations, he learned about a “Cash Mob” program that they were doing in Raton, NM. The idea of a Cash Mob is to highlight a specific local business, and on a specific day, everyone from the town goes and shops at that business. “It’s a great way to help businesses get a large infusion of cash with a one-time event,” Michael told me.

Michael decided to try to do some Cash Mobs in Las Vegas just prior to the pandemic, but when the pandemic struck, they were forced to move it online to Facebook Live. They got two local business owners to be the emcees and found that this model worked quite well despite the new online format. From June through March 2020/21, they raised over $85,000 for local businesses. Beyond the income from sales, the Cash Mobs allowed for people to get to know their local stores and what they had to offer. They hope to continue to expand this idea across the rest of the NM and they have already helped Tucumcari, Taos, and Truth or Consequences.

As a result of Cash Mob, they ended up looking for more ways to support local businesses during the pandemic. One of those ways was applying for and receiving a grant from Main Street America, because they realized that many of the local businesses had no online presence whatsoever. With the money from the grant, they are hoping to carry out a “tech audit” and partner with some businesses that have no online presence to be able to create logos, websites, and a digital footprint in order to boost the visibility and reach of their businesses. “If it weren’t for the Cash Mob, we would never have had any idea about what many of these businesses needed,” Michael noted.

The Cash Mob idea, and getting to know people better, is tied to two other important aspects of resilience for Michael and the community of Las Vegas during the pandemic: developing a stronger network across New Mexico, and growing stronger ties in Las Vegas itself to adapt and address the needs of the community. “We didn’t have a lot of other options other than working together to figure out how we were going to get through it. So that’s what we did. Las Vegas has always been different, which has been one of its strengths. The people here are absolutely great.”

“We didn’t have a lot of other options other than working together to figure out how we were going to get through it. So that’s what we did. Las Vegas has always been different, which has been one of its strengths. The people here are absolutely great.”

-Michael, Las Vegas
“Resilience is the ability to rebound, to be tough in coming back from adversity. For Las Vegas, we’ve been through adversity before, this wasn’t our first crisis, and because we’ve been overcoming crises for a long time, we came out of this one even stronger than when we went in.”

-Michael, Las Vegas

The community of Las Vegas demonstrated resilience in other ways. New Mexico Highlands University said they were not going to allow anyone to be laid off, and so kept many workers on by giving them the task of repainting every single building on the campus. The New Mexico Behavioral Health Institute was able to hire dozens more staff and expand operations. The food bank in town has shown both the devastating impact of the pandemic but also the ways in which the community has rallied to support those living in poverty in the town, as they have given away more than 11 million pounds of food. As Michael ran through the checklist of all that has happened, he paused and commented thoughtfully, “In these ways and more, the pandemic has been a very surprising time. People have really been taking care of one another.”

Another unexpected outcome of the pandemic was that it gave people time to work on projects they had always been thinking about doing but never had the time to get around to doing. “The pandemic gave us time for thought that we didn’t have before,” Michael explained as he described how the Citizens Committee for Historic Preservation (CCHP) developed an idea that some NMHU students came up with a few years ago for an app that people could download with extensive information about the historical buildings around town. Folks from CCHP were able to finally develop this app because they had the time to do it and people have reacted positively to it. The app also creates a library of information about Las Vegas.

Summing up the ways in which Michael and others in Las Vegas have demonstrated resilience, he spoke to the importance of deep community ties and to the fact that Las Vegas has been through tough times before. Community, and knowing that it has carried them through tough times before, may prove to be a potent combination going forward. “In 2019 people were talking about a renais-ance in Las Vegas, and then the pandemic happened. But I think we’ve shown that this possibility is still very much alive.”

-Photo Courtesy of Penny Duncklee
Teaching Resilience

Reported by Abrianna Morales, BS in Psychology

For most of us, resilience requires learning. For students in 2020, learning requires resilience. At least, that’s what Liv Turner emphasizes in her advocacy for New Mexican students.

Her advocacy, in part, is inspired by her own experiences within the educational system. When she was 14, she dropped out of school because of a lack of support for her own learning difficulties. After working in cosmetology for a period of time, she decided to go back to school as an adult, obtaining an English Literature degree and eventually her juris doctorate.

She retired after several years of work as an attorney in 2018, settling down in Santa Fe, where her son attended school. In her spare time, she decided to work as an educational assistant at the school her son attended, to give back to the community. In the summer of 2020, Liv Turner founded Ignited Minds, a non-profit focused on providing free online tutoring services to middle and high school age students, in effort to continue her work with students as they transitioned to an online learning format. Currently, the organization is working to hire 100 tutors for students, all coming from professional backgrounds (law, engineering, etc.).

“The picture [of education] isn’t as dim as the media has portrayed it in the newspapers.”

-Liv, Santa Fe
Resilience, to Liv, is about not being defeated by COVID-19. She is inspired by the resilience of the students she has worked with and emphasizes the strength they embody, despite the challenges they have faced throughout the pandemic. “I have a student who has lost both parents to COVID-19 and is trying to still pass this year’s school work...I have one student who doesn’t even have wifi and I have a bunch of students who have intermittent wifi...Even with all these various challenges—some of them devastating—the students are really trying to finish out the year successfully, in spite of everything.”

Beyond the difficulties that have arisen as children have transitioned to online learning, she believes that there is a bright side to this new format. Most notably, she believes that the pandemic and online learning will have changed the way we, as a society, organize public education. “I think that [in the future] there will be a hybrid model where some students are in the building and other students will be learning online.”

“What I’d like students to remember is that they weren’t defeated by COVID-19 and nor does their education have to be defeated by anything else.”

-Liv, Santa Fe

More than anything, Liv is proud of how students have handled this past year and believes that others should be more understanding of the obstacles students encounter every day. As she moves forward as an individual and advocate, she intends to advocate for educational reform that benefits students, going forward—including new metrics for evaluating attendance and graduation for high school students.

For advocates like Liv and New Mexican students, it is clear that resilience is a significant aspect of education and that it is up to the rest of us to support and guide students as they navigate a new, changing social and educational landscape.
In Your Own Words

The following is a selection of stories and artwork that were submitted via the project website (resiliencenm.org) by people around New Mexico. These stories have been edited lightly for typos or grammar. Additional art and photo submissions are included in the interview narratives in the previous section.
Dispatch from Roswell

My experience during the era of COVID-19 has been challenging, but also encouraging as I see people pivot and adapt with such creative ideas and hard work. Businesses in our downtown district learned how to set up online shops, worked with MainStreet Roswell to use Facebook live-stream to do virtual sales, inviting viewers to see and purchase their merchandise, in real time, while sitting at home, and were willing to change their sales strategy... offering phone purchases and curbside pickup or delivery. Our volunteers worked hard to plan events that met covid safe restrictions, and our businesses in the downtown district worked with us to find new ideas for how to keep their businesses alive.

Art Submission: “Cloud Patterns Before Friday Sunset in Las Cruces”
By Penny Duncklee
Surreal Experience in Los Alamos

My experience, and that of Metzger's Hardware in Los Alamos and White Rock has been surreal. From the beginning, when most in our community were told to stay home, we have operated our business as usual - albeit with many new restrictions. It's been hard to relate to the stories of most because we have been getting up every morning and coming to work just as we did before the pandemic. (It's hard not to notice the lack of traffic on the roads coming to and from work.)

We have gone from feelings of dread in the beginning not knowing how long we could go before COVID hit our staff. We realized soon that ours is truly an essential business, as we saw the extent that residents depend on us. Over time we became comfortable with our COVID Safe Practices and their ability to keep us safe. It seems strange to say, but after a year, it's hard to remember what "normal" is.

“It seems strange to say, but after a year, it's hard to remember what 'normal' is.”
Getting Outdoors in Las Cruces

My experience during the era of COVID-19 has been greatly varied. As an artist I felt I could still do my art (which keeps me sane, not only during COVID), but I miss very much the exchange with others. With the first lock-down I came to realize that I am an entirely ‘non-essential’ human being; all my activities were cancelled. All, except hiking. I still do that with only one or two friends and wearing masks while driving. Getting outdoors is a very important part of my life. Otherwise I dove into all manner of art projects. My house is proof of that. In late January I read about the Free Little Gallery project by Stacy Milrany (Seattle). Within a week I copied her idea (with her permission) and I am now proud owner and curator of my own little gallery. Just like the libraries, one can take a piece, leave a piece or both. It has uplifted all our spirits and everyone hearing of it. The pieces are usually not bigger than 5”x7” and we even have little patrons gazing at the artwork. More images on gabrileteich.com

“With the first lock-down I came to realize that I am an entirely ‘non-essential’ human being; all my activities were cancelled.”
“To me that means keeping yourself in check and grounded about what is truly important in life, focusing on those things and moving forward from there.”

**Moving Forward in Albuquerque**

My experience during the era of COVID-19 has been interesting to say the least. I returned from a deployment two days before former President Trump put the travel ban on Europe. From then on I was quarantined in Fort Bliss, Texas for five months before returning home. I was fortunate enough to be able to get a job that was deemed essential. But watching society actively fall apart, and then having my own hobbies stripped away was not an easy thing to go through. However, as this survey states, it is all about resilience. To me that means keeping yourself in check and grounded about what is truly important in life, focusing on those things and moving forward from there.
“Resilience means that you can continue to grow in your life and accomplish goals, no matter what circumstances you find yourself in.”

*Keeping the Faith in Albuquerque*

Resilience means that you can continue to grow in your life and accomplish goals, no matter what circumstances you find yourself in. The pandemic and its accompanying quarantine created some challenges for us. We are a blended household of four with a mom, an aunt, and two young adults nearly done with high school. We were not used to all being home in our small apartment to accomplish work and school tasks. Some of us needed to talk with a counselor over the summer to make it work. We established a schedule of working and playing together that helped us look forward to something. The most important thing that kept us moving is our membership in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Even though we couldn’t go to church, we were prepared to have church at home. Our home worship deepened our faith and helped us to make pandemic goals and accomplish them. We took advantage of opportunities to serve others through our church and forgot our own problems.
Challenge in Silver City

My experience during the era of COVID-19 has been challenging! I moved to Silver City and opened my new business (an art gallery and teaching space) one and a half years before being forced to close in March of 2020. I had a full year of programming scheduled, including juried exhibitions and workshops taught by artists from out of state. For the first 2 months, I was optimistic and took advantage of my free time by working in the studio on my own artwork. As time went on it became clear this was going to last all year long and at that point, my positive attitude wavered. I live alone and am new in town so I do not have a strong network of friends yet. I became very lonely. I missed my son in LA and other family and friends in Tucson. I have managed to stay healthy and did open my gallery off and on in the fall. I took great precautions and visited my family over the holidays and that gave me the emotional strength to keep going. I am grateful and optimistic since we have a new government that is being proactive and listening to science.

Art Submission: “Tea on the Desert Oil” By Margaret
Mainstreet Cash Mob in T or C

As the MainStreet Director in Truth or Consequences, I assisted our downtown businesses during the COVID-19 shutdown. This included staying current on regulation changes and resources. In the beginning, things changed quickly and often. I relayed information about grants and loans and served as a resource for those who had questions about the process or requirements. Our organization conducted Online Cash Mobs to help generate sales for our local businesses.

Not only did the Cash Mobs ring registers, they contributed to secondary sales from the exposure. Throughout the shutdown, a representative group of local leaders has been gathering virtually to develop the place brand for the City of Truth or Consequences. We are preparing for a Fall Rollout that will include a logo and branding messages, a new tourism website, and wayfinding signage that all reflect the new brand. As part of Main-Street, I have worked for TorC to come out of the COVID era with our best foot forward.
Silence in Los Lunas

When the COVID-19 pandemic first started the hardest thing for me to face was being the only person in my family at home alone. With the start of 2021 I not only stayed at home, but our family has been hit with many other tragedies. The year started off normal—me starting another year of college and again sitting at home alone.

The silence can sometimes be very challenging, but then a wave of despair hit and we started to feel it wasn’t going to end. My already depressed mood was met with three family deaths. After a couple weeks I felt like I could at the least fake an online encounter with my peers. Then a friend of mine passed and as challenging as school has been two more friends became ill with covid. As a retired military veteran I have felt like resilience was my only option. Who do I turn to, who do I bother with my problems! I mustered up enough courage to reach out to my Lobo teachers where they gave me a very warm reception which let me know I do have someone in my corner!!
“I saw the inequalities of our society become more apparent and the inequalities that capitalism perpetuates even more on people who are at the most vulnerable.”

Parenting in Albuquerque

When our daughter’s day care closed down at the start of the pandemic, it was clear from the start that working from home with a toddler was going to be difficult, if not impossible. My husband and I tried making a schedule where one of us would watch her while the other tried to get their work done. When it reopened, it was suggested that only essential employees send their children in. We asked if our payments could be waived during the time she wasn’t going, but were told the only way to do so would be to disenroll her, which would lose her spot. We kept her home for months, but either we were able to work, and she was “neglected” in the sense that she wasn’t having her normal routine of learning, or she was being entertained by us and our work suffered. Our childcare is more than our mortgage and while we are a two income household, every penny is accounted for. We decided it was best to return her to daycare so she could be looked after, and we can work from home without issue.
Inequality Revealed in Albuquerque

My experience during the era of COVID-19 era has been life changing. I saw the inequalities of our society become more apparent and the inequalities that capitalism perpetuates even more on people who are at the most vulnerable. I have become more cynical in the way I view things, but in that cynicism I have also found more people who share my anger towards the inequalities and injustices that we are experiencing as of now, in not just the previous administration, but this newly inaugurated one as well.

Keeping Positive in Albuquerque

I think this pandemic has helped me learn a lot about myself and grow as a person. I am on the UNM volleyball team and we have faced a lot of adversity during our season. From testing 3 times a week to having to wear a mask and practice in groups of 4. We have still kept a positive mindset and I think that’s what’s important during this time.

“We have still kept a positive mindset and I think that's what's important during this time.”
The engagement process for this project involved multiple approaches designed around the eight focus communities described in the Introduction. In addition to direct outreach to individuals in these communities, our process included: 1) background research and the development of an ethics statement; 2) a project website; 3) story and art submission surveys; 4) individual storytelling sessions; and 5) collective storytelling sessions. The process for selecting communities and the recruitment process for individuals is documented in this chapter.
Initial Research & Defining Resilience

Written by Fiore Bran Aragón, MA in Latin American Studies

Our concept of resilience resulted from weeks of collective discussion, reading multidisciplinary sources on resilient communities, and sharing our own stories of resilience. This process lasted approximately one month, from October to November 2020.

After our initial discussion, we developed a working definition of resilience that we have refined throughout the project:

Resilience is a process that individuals, organizations, and communities undergo in response to adversity... (It) involves a) adapting to new circumstances by seeking new opportunities that those circumstances present, b) combining those opportunities with previous sources of strength to move forward in a meaningful way, c) It manifests in many ways, depending on cultural values, power relations, and historical factors that inform the respective processes.
What Guided the Project?

After formulating our definition of resilience, we wrote an ethical statement that guided our research and drafted story-collection instruments considering the following aspects:

- Resilience as a personal, interpersonal, community process.
- New challenges brought about by COVID-19.
- Adaptation and community.
- Change of plans.
- Support systems.

With these variables in mind, we developed qualitative instruments that would allow us to collect complex and diverse stories from New Mexican communities. Our intention from the beginning of the project was to compile and share with planners and policymakers and to ‘humanize’ quantitative data and produce compelling support for addressing the short and long-term impacts of COVID-19.
Community Selection

Outreach to each Stories of Resilience community began with baseline research using U.S. Census and American Community Survey data (from data.census.gov) to create community profiles. We used this baseline data, which included population, educational attainment, median household income, poverty rate, and unemployment percent change, to help us gain a better understanding of each community before beginning our outreach.

When thinking about reaching out to a community for interviews we aimed to be as representative as possible, so we created community information sheets for each community with contacts from the following seven categories:

1. Education
2. Health & Social Services
3. Government & Economic Development
4. Community Organizations
5. Businesses of Focus
6. Arts & Culture
7. Religious Institutions
We then contacted community organizations and individuals from each of these categories with an initial email (and a follow-up phone call if necessary). The emails included a flier or “one-pager” that could be shared with interested community members. The flier directed interested individuals to our website, resiliencenm.org, where they could obtain information about the ways that stories could be shared.

We had great success scheduling interviews through the New Mexico Resiliency Alliance and by contacting the NM MainStreet Directors in a number of New Mexican cities including Roswell, Las Vegas, Truth or Consequences, Albuquerque, and Santa Fe. We also had a very positive response from educational institutions like the University of New Mexico. By far our most successful method for collecting stories and scheduling focus groups was a “snowballing technique” where an interviewed individual referred us to fellow New Mexicans with an interest in the project.

Our outreach efforts to Pueblo communities proved to be a challenge, and the lack of a perspective from a member of the Pueblo communities represents one of the more significant shortcomings of this project. The Pueblo Communities are the original residents of New Mexico and understanding their experiences during COVID-19 should be the focus for subsequent projects.
Engagement Methods

After selecting communities, we opted to use multiple qualitative instruments that allowed us to understand resilience at a personal, interpersonal, and community level, and that also allowed us to collect stories of resilience in written, oral, and graphic form. Our means of engaging people were:

- Project website;
- Story submissions via the website (Survey);
- Individual storytelling sessions (1 on 1 interviews via Zoom);
- Collective storytelling sessions (Focus groups via Zoom);
- Art submissions

STORY SUBMISSION VIA THE WEBSITE
To collect these stories, we developed a survey with a guiding prompt and open-ended questions (see Appendix B). The survey included a brief informed consent form. Prompts asked people to think about: a) New challenges, b) Adaptation and community, c) Change of plans, d) Support systems, e) How do you define resilience. The second section of the survey provided space for people to share a story of resilience (up to 1000 words). We also offered an option to submit pictures to complement the written story. The final section collected unidentifiable demographic data.

ART SUBMISSIONS
In addition to story submission options on the website, we created an option to submit graphics, photos, art, and multimedia submissions anonymously. This submission option was designed to collect non-verbal representations of the resilience of New Mexicans during COVID-19.

INDIVIDUAL & COLLECTIVE STORYTELLING SESSIONS
To collect individual (one-on-one interview) and collective (focus group) stories, we developed semi-structured interview guides. Although the instruments differ in terms of the target audience, they both consider these aspects:

- General demographics
- Life before the pandemic
- Change of plans and challenges
- Support systems and strategies
- Adaptation and community
- Lessons
- Recommendations

Consent forms were requested for both types of storytelling sessions.
PARTICIPANTS: SELECTION CRITERIA & RECRUITMENT PROCESS

The criteria for participant selection differed depending on the story-collection instrument. For stories and art submissions via the website, the selection criteria were a) New Mexico resident, b) Adults (at least 18 years old), or minors with parental consent. For individual and collective storytelling sessions via zoom, the selection requirements were a) New Mexico resident, b) Adults (at least 18 years old).

The recruitment process started with sending emails to key individuals and organizations in the focus communities. Ultimately, participants self-selected while also helping us to reach other interested community members.

We completed the story collection process in April 2021. At the end of the process we have collected 20 stories in individual sessions, including personal stories and stories from people who represent community organizations. We also held two group sessions with local organizations in Albuquerque and Truth or Consequences.
Reflections on the Project

What did we miss during this project? Probably a lot, since there are many people who we were not able to hear from during the limited duration of this project. These include people in communities that we did not contact directly, as well as many people who may not have wanted to share their stories.

There are also plenty of people who have not felt resilient during the last year. It is worth doing further outreach to those who are still struggling with the ongoing challenges brought about by the COVID-19 Pandemic and whose stories have not yet been heard.
Team Member Reflections

This project began with the seed of an idea during an APA-NM board meeting. James and I weren’t exactly sure how the project would evolve but took a leap of faith with an interdisciplinary team of students. The team was comprised of individuals from vastly different fields—Psychology, Anthropology, Latin American Studies, Community & Regional Planning, and Film & Digital Media—and people with a mix and breadth of personalities, skills and knowledge; everyone contributed ideas to the entire project, not just the part they knew the most about. Working with this particular team was an incredible experience: it was a healing experience during a difficult year, and it was a learning experience I will forever value. Thank you all for teaching me about communities in New Mexico, resilience, and collaboration.

-joni

New Mexicans are even tougher than I already thought! Interviewees lost family members, had children, endured job loss and struggled in the pandemic. Nevertheless, everyone expressed optimism about the future instead of focusing on these struggles. We are a strong and resilient state- it has been an honor to be a part of this inspiring work.

-Mia

This project was itself a process of resilience, as we struggled to coordinate everything through Zoom and email and Slack and every other digital platform. But then, when we were all finally able to get together in person and share some of our initial findings, the challenges proved to be a source of really amazing stories and efforts. Then, when the report came together, it was a moment of celebration. It was really satisfying to know that this was an effort from people (and a cat) across the state. I hope these stories serve as a memory to future New Mexicans about this moment in history, and serve as a source of resilience for the next crisis!

-Andy

Collecting stories from New Mexicans and getting the chance to take a look at how different communities have been resilient throughout the COVID-19 pandemic has been one of the best, most rewarding experiences. I genuinely believe that stories are among the most special things that people can share with one another and I am honored to have contributed to a project that will immortalize New Mexicans’ experiences throughout the past year; hopefully, this project will serve as a reminder of how resilient New Mexicans have been and will continue to be.

-Abrianna
Bibliography

CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF RESILIENCE


DATA


ETHICS


LITERATURE REVIEW


**METHODOLOGY**


Appendix

A. Ethics Statement
B. Online Survey Instrument
C. Storytelling (Interview) Protocol

Compiled by Roxy
APPENDIX A. ETHICS STATEMENT

Ethics Statement
APA-NM Stories of Resilience Project

Land Acknowledgement: With the words of the University of New Mexico Community and Regional Planning Department we would like to honor the lands on which we reside and the rightful peoples of New Mexico. “The original peoples of New Mexico – Pueblo, Navajo, and Apache – since time immemorial, have deep connections to the land and have made significant contributions to the broader community statewide. We honor the land itself and those who remain stewards of this land throughout the generations and also acknowledge our committed relationship to Indigenous peoples. We gratefully recognize our history.”

Who We Are: We are an interdisciplinary team made up of board members from the American Planning Association New Mexico Chapter (APA-NM) and student researchers from the University of New Mexico. We are also proud members of the New Mexico community who respect, admire, and love this state and the people, animals, and plants that call it home.

Our Funding: “Stories of Resilience: How New Mexican Communities Are Facing COVID-19” is a special project funded by an American Planning Association (APA) Chapter Presidents’ Council Grant. It is a collaboration between the APA New Mexico Chapter, the New Mexico Resiliency Alliance (NMRA), and students at the University of New Mexico (UNM).

Our Work: Our project, Stories of Resilience: How New Mexico Communities are facing Covid-19, is intended to collect stories from individuals around the State of New Mexico about how they are staying resilient in the face of the unprecedented challenges posed by COVID-19. In our work, we strive to tell the stories of underrepresented communities and marginalized groups whose contributions are an important part of the story of New Mexico. The aim of the project is to collect written and multimedia accounts and compile these stories into a printed and digital booklet, storymap, presentations, and other online content that can be shared widely with planners, policy makers, and as valuable tools for communities. In telling stories about resiliency and struggles against adversity, planners and communities can give a human face to numbers and statistics and produce compelling support for addressing the short and longer-term impacts of COVID-19 and other catastrophic events.

What We Believe: As a group of New Mexicans working with fellow New Mexicans, we believe strongly that we are not separate from, but rather in relationship with, the research we are conducting and the people with whom we are working. As researchers, we seek to maintain respectful and professional relationships with all who choose to work with us. In this spirit, below is our code of ethics to which we aspire.

1. We acknowledge that we are funded by an American Planning Association Chapter Presidents’ Council Grant and have an obligation to share the results of our research with APA, the University of New Mexico, and city and state planners in order to inform planning projects in the future. We will strive to balance obligations to our funders and organizations with those of the communities with whom we work.

2. We recognize that we are still in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, and that this represents a significant burden in living our day to day lives. In honor of that, we aspire to respect all health regulations here in the State of New Mexico leadership in addition to specific requests from research participants to maintain a safe and healthy research environment.

3. We believe in the principles of “nothing about us, without us” and “feedback and reciprocity.” We commit to sharing our results with our research participants before final publication in order to ensure that our representation of our participants is accurate and respectful. We are committed not to “taking from” communities but rather to giving back with full transparency. We intend to collect stories and data that can be analyzed and packaged in such a way as to benefit the communities who have both contributed to and inspired our work.

The APA-NM Stories of Resilience Team
November 2020
Declaración de ética

Proyecto de Historias de resiliencia APA-NM

Reconocimiento de la tierra: Con las palabras del Departamento de Planificación Regional y Comunitaria de la Universidad de Nuevo México, nos gustaría honrar las tierras en las cuales vivimos y a los pueblos originarios de Nuevo México. “Los pueblos originarios de Nuevo México - Pueblo, Navajo y Apache - desde tiempos inmemoriales, tienen conexiones profundas con la tierra y han contribuido significativamente a la comunidad en todo el estado. Honramos a la tierra misma y a quienes siguen siendo administradores de esta tierra a lo largo de las generaciones y también reconocemos nuestra relación comprometida con los pueblos indígenas. Reconocemos con gratitud nuestra historia”.

Quienes somos: Somos un equipo interdisciplinario compuesto por miembros de la junta del Capítulo de la Asociación Estadounidense de Planificación en Nuevo México (APA-NM) y estudiantes investigadores de la Universidad de Nuevo México. También somos miembros orgullosos de la comunidad de Nuevo México que respetan, admiran y aman este estado y a la gente, los animales y las plantas que viven aquí.


Nuestro trabajo: Nuestro proyecto, Historias de resiliencia: cómo las comunidades de Nuevo México enfrentan Covid-19, tiene como objetivo recopilar historias de personas de todo el estado de Nuevo México sobre cómo se mantienen resilientes frente a los desafíos sin precedentes que representa COVID-19. En nuestro trabajo, nos esforzamos por contar las historias de comunidades subrepresentadas y grupos marginados cuyas contribuciones son una parte importante de la historia de Nuevo México. El objetivo del proyecto es recopilar historias escritas y multimedia y compilar estas historias en un folleto impreso y digital, un mapa de historias, presentaciones y otro contenido en línea que se pueda compartir ampliamente con planificadores, legisladores y como herramientas valiosas para las comunidades. Al contar historias sobre resiliencia y lucha contra la adversidad, los planificadores y las comunidades pueden dar un rostro humano a las cifras y las estadísticas y producir un apoyo convincente para abordar los impactos de corto y largo plazo del COVID-19 y otros eventos catastróficos.

Qué creemos: Como grupo de Nuevo Mexicanos que trabajamos con otros Nuevo Mexicanos, creemos firmemente que no estamos separados de la investigación que estamos realizando y las personas con quienes estamos trabajando, sino más bien en comunidad con ellos. Como investigadores, buscamos mantener relaciones respetuosas y profesionales con todos los que eligen trabajar con nosotros. Con este espíritu, a continuación se muestra nuestro código de ética al que aspiramos.

1. Reconocemos que somos financiados por una subvención del Consejo de Presidentes de Capítulos de la Asociación Estadounidense de Planificación y tenemos la obligación de compartir los resultados de nuestra investigación con la APA, la Universidad de Nuevo México y los planificadores municipales y estatales para informar los proyectos de planificación en el futuro. Nos esforzaremos por equilibrar las obligaciones con nuestros patrocinadores y organizaciones con las de las comunidades con quienes trabajamos.

2. Reconocemos que todavía estamos en medio de la pandemia de COVID-19, y que esto representa una carga significativa para vivir nuestro día a día. En honor a eso, aspiramos a respetar todas las regulaciones de salud según el liderazgo del Estado de Nuevo México, además de las solicitudes específicas de los participantes de la investigación para mantener un entorno de investigación seguro y saludable.

3. Creemos en los principios de "nada sobre nosotros, sin nosotros" y "retroalimentación y reciprocidad". Nos comprometemos a compartir nuestros resultados con los participantes de la investigación antes de la publicación final para garantizar que nuestra representación de los participantes sea precisa y respetuosa. Estamos comprometidos a no "quitarle" a las comunidades, sino a retribuir con total transparencia. Tenemos la intención de recopilar historias y datos que puedan ser analizados y empaquetados de manera que beneficien a las comunidades que han contribuido e inspirado nuestro trabajo.

El equipo de Historias de resiliencia, APA-NM
Noviembre 2020
Welcome!

How New Mexican Communities are facing Covid-19

Thank you for your interest in our project. “Stories of Resilience. How New Mexican communities are facing COVID-19?” is a collaboration between the APA New Mexico Chapter, the New Mexico Resiliency Alliance (NMRA), and faculty at the University of New Mexico (UNM) to collect stories from individuals around the state of New Mexico about how they are staying resilient in the face of the unprecedented challenges posed by COVID-19. You can find more about us here.

We aim to collect stories like yours, your family’s and community’s, and share with planners and policy makers. In collecting stories about resilience, we want to “humanize” data and better understand the long-term impacts of COVID-19 in New Mexico. If you would like to access resources regarding resilience please, click here.

Agreement*

- I Accept

Back Next Page 2 of 6

Your participation in this survey is voluntary and you may withdraw from the project at anytime. You may freely decline to answer particular questions that may feel uncomfortable to you. If you wish to withdraw after submitting your story, please contact us directly at social@apa-nm.org.

If you want to participate further in this project (one-on-one or collective story collecting sessions), you may leave your phone number or email address at the end of this form, or contact us at social@apa-nm.org and we’ll get back to you.
Stories of Resilience

My Story of Resilience
Here are some useful prompts to guide you before you write your story. You can begin to write on the next page.

(Note: If you want to tell your story through images, a drawing, or another medium, please upload it on the following page).

New Challenges
Did you face new challenges due to the pandemic? What are they?

Adaptation and Community
How did you, your family, and your community cope with these new challenges? Has your family and community come together during COVID-19? How?

Change of Plans
What were your plans before the pandemic? Has the pandemic forced you to adjust your plans? If so, How?

Support System
What are some sources of support for you, your family, and your community during COVID-19? How do these sources support you?

Your Resilience
What does resilience mean to you? Some potential synonyms: Strength, adaptability, ability to bounce back (Suggested word count: 100 words)

Tell Your Story
With the prompts in mind, you are ready to write! Use the box below to write your story.

If you want to share a photo, image, or another document, upload them below. Thank you!

My experience during the Covid Era has been...

External Upload
The maximum file size is 10 MB, but feel free to email us at social@apa-nm.org
APPENDIX A. SURVEY INSTRUMENT, CONTINUED

Stories of Resilience

**Demographics**

**What's your Zip Code?**

- Please Select -

**How old are you?** *

- Please Select -

**What's your gender identity?**

- Female
- Male
- Non-Binary
- Other

**What's your race and ethnicity?**

- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian
- Black, African, or African American
- Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin
- White/ Caucasian
- Other

**Your Email Address**

If you'd like to hear about project updates or participate in other aspects of the project.

-
Roles for APA-NM Team Members:

The roles for individual story-collecting sessions will likely be similar to the roles outlined in the group story-collecting session guide, which has been included below:

1. **Outreach responsible.** Is in charge of sending emails and calling participants before the session, and serves as co-facilitator in the group session.
2. **Co-facilitators:** 2 people, preferably at least 1 bilingual person in each session.
3. **Tech support person/note taker:** in charge of zoom chat, taking notes, supporting participants with questions regarding tech.

It is possible to have the individual interviews conducted by one person that would be responsible for directing the session, taking notes, and hosting/recording the Zoom call.

However, it is also an option to have two team members conducting the individual interviews, with one person being responsible for directing the conversation and the other for taking notes/recording and tech questions.

We can determine ahead of time whether or not interviewees would need/want to have the interview conducted with a bilingual interviewer.

**Organization of Individual Story-Collecting Sessions:**

Assuming that we want to conduct at least five interviews with participants from each of our target communities, we can divide the “work”/communities amongst all team members.

We would like these interviews to take place throughout February and early March.

Pre-Session Outreach:

When scheduling the interview, it is important to establish what language the participant is most comfortable using (so we can make sure we schedule the interview to be conducted by a bilingual team member).

After the interview has been scheduled, the outreach procedure would be similar to the procedure outlined in the group-session protocols, which has been included below:

- Make sure to contact participants via email or phone 1 week before the session and 24 hours before the session. The email will include the following:
  - Description of the storytelling session (adapted from Story Center example)
  - The zoom link and clear instructions for participants to connect to the zoom session.
    - Zoom User Guide: Zoom video tutorials – Zoom Help Center
      - Guía de usuario (Español): Cómo unirse a una reunión – Zoom Centro de ayuda
  - Consent form
  - Ethics statement

Obviously, we would change/edit the description of the storytelling session and the consent form to be applicable to the individual story-collecting process. In addition to including the information outlined above, it may be prudent to ensure that they have already taken our online survey.
**Session Structure and Procedure:**

Session duration: 1 hour - 1 hour and thirty minutes

1. Introduction of Project and Overview of Procedure and Consent (5 minutes)
   a. Explain project purpose, outline of session, introduction of interviewer, and overview of consent with opportunity for participant to ask questions

2. Collecting basic information/background (10 minutes)
   a. Collect relevant biographical/demographic info
      i. What their life was like pre-pandemic, information about their occupation pre-pandemic, etc.
      ii. Could be informed by information previously obtained from their online survey response (given that they have completed the survey)

3. Story-Collection and Additional Questions (45 minutes)
   a. Asking questions about how they define resilience and collecting their story of resilience
      i. What makes someone resilient?
      ii. Would you say that you/your family/community have been resilient throughout this pandemic? Why or why not? If so, how?
         1. This serves as an opportunity to segue into their story of resilience
   b. Asking other, compelling questions about their experience with the pandemic
      i. How has your life improved during the pandemic?
      ii. What will you miss about life during the pandemic, when things return to “normal”?
      iii. If you lived through another world event/pandemic, what would you do differently? Would you perceive it differently?

   iv. What is something that you want future generations to remember about this pandemic and what it was like to live through it?
   v. What lessons have you learned/what lessons do you hope that our society has learned?
   vi. Has your understanding of resilience changed from before the pandemic, if at all?

4. Closing Remarks (5-10 minutes)
   a. Expressing gratitude, imploring them to complete the survey if they haven’t already, inviting them to submit a photo/video, etc.

5. Follow-up (24 hours after interview)
   a. Taken from the group session guide:
      i. 24 hours after the story collecting session, send a follow up email to participants with the following information:
         1. Invite them to submit a written version of their story (or an artifact/photo/object) if they haven’t done so already
         2. Invite them to share our project/survey with others in their communities
         3. Tell them to keep their eyes out for a preliminary draft of our report that they can comment on and give feedback before publication
         4. Express our gratitude again (and maybe provide resources that they may be able to share with their communities in terms of vaccination info, food banks, etc.)
      ii. In addition to the email, the note taker should ensure that all notes/recording of the session are saved to our Google Drive folder.