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Women & Language

Maternal Resilience After Hurricane Maria: The Foregrounding of Productive Action and Use of Alternative Logics in the Development of Proactive Maternal Agency

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Abstract: In the aftermath of Hurricane Maria that hit Puerto Rico in 2017, mothers were not merely vulnerable subjects but critical agents of post-disaster recovery for families, communities, and social systems. This narrative analysis highlights two processes of Buzzanell's (2010) Communication Theory of Resilience through stories collected from two site visits in 2019 and 2020. In an expansion to Buzzanell's (2010) theory, the stories of Lourdes and Mariana acknowledge the proactive agency of maternal resilience as enacted through communication, contextual, and relational elements of life in the aftermath. Through Lourdes and Mariana's feminist mothering practices, they rewrote the scripts for good mothering, discursively and materially reconstructing the mandates that shape motherhood within our culture. As they came to take on multiple intersectional maternal agencies, they leveraged their anger and activist orientations for collaborative empowerment that enacted mechanisms for restorative justice across the island.

Keywords: Buzzanell, resilience, mothering, narrative, Hurricane Maria

SHORTLY BEFORE SUNRISE ON SEPTEMBER 20, 2017, Hurricane Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico as a category four hurricane. As the storm hit the island's southeast coast, Maria drove a diagonal path right through the heart of the island. With sustained winds of 155 mph and a ground speed of 10 mph, the slow onslaught of terror and destruction spared no one. Extending over half of the 100-mile-long island, Maria decimated the natural landscape and destroyed the livelihoods and homes of tens of thousands. As Morales (2019) detailed, "Entire communities that had previously been invisible, cocooned in foliage, now emerged, ghostlike" (p. 208). For example, Callé Lõiza, a barrio outside of Old San Juan, lost 90% of its homes. At a hospital outside of Luquillo, those suffering from scabies, conjunctivitis, and gastritis tripled every day. Worse yet, people were so desperate for water that they turned to superfund sites, creeks, city runoff, and bleached the water before finding the means to boil it to avoid sepsis and giardia (Clemente, 2017).

Despite his acknowledgment that "Puerto Rico was absolutely obliterated" the day after Maria made landfall, President Trump left the White House to spend the next few days at his golf club, where he tweeted about NFL protests, his Muslim ban, and leveraged attacks on Obamacare, North Korea, and the news media (Andrés & Wolffe, 2019, p. 9). It took five days before anyone in the White House contacted the Puerto Rican leadership. An investigative report by *Politico* revealed the inequity in this response:

> While the U.S. deployed seventy-three Northern Command helicopters over Houston within six days, it took three weeks for the same to happen in Puerto Rico. FEMA sent three times as many meals to Houston and 40 percent more liters of water, and four times as many blue tarps for temporary roofing despite the hurricane damaging 50 percent more homes in Puerto Rico than in Houston. (Morales, 2019, p. 214)

Even more striking is that it took "43 days for the administration to approve permanent disaster work in Puerto Rico, as compared to seven days for Houston" (p. 214). Although the population density and the extent of the destruction were clear, Puerto Ricans found themselves stranded with no way out and no help coming.

The feuds between politicians and the exculpation of responsibility were mixed with screaming pleas from those stranded on rooftops and women crying as they tried to get food for their starving families and communities. As the issues with power, water, and food continued, the death toll expanded with each passing day. In a plea for help, Andrés and Wolffe (2019) wrote, "the sea of desperation and the need was best summarized by the mayor of San Juan's outcry, 'we are dying here'" (p. x). Waiting for help was not an option. Alone, Puerto Ricans reclaimed the island and their homes despite the overwhelming situation. They mobilized and relied on the strength of their relationships with neighbors, friends, and family to reconstruct their lives.

As the storm's second anniversary passed, communities and families continued to struggle under the weight of the inadequate emergency response after and since Maria. With the watermarks on the walls outside a now open restaurant still visible, mothers

lined up outside a Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) office, standing in the heat for hours to get their assistance. As the electricity would go on and off, sometimes for a week, nearly 60% of residents found their FEMA claims denied, losing any hope of securing their homes for the next storm (Johnson, 2022). For the residents of Vieques, their hospital would remain shuttered, forcing residents to go by ferry to another. In a searing account of the U.S.'s betrayal of Puerto Rico after the hurricane, Morales (2019) charged, "With cell service and internet out, island residents like my mother were caught up in a pervasive wave of disconnection and chaos, one that exposed the inadequate response by the federal government as well as [Puerto Rican Governor] Rossello's reeling government bureaucracy" (p. 204). The former administration had only released 30% of the federal disaster relief aid promised, even as the island neared the fourth anniversary of Maria (Acevedo, 2021). Despite decades of historical mistreatment and endemic, large-scale failures of social support, a bricolage of community innovation emerged as islanders found new ways to hold home and family together. People leveraged relationships to intercede in the social unevenness the storm made visible to restructure both governmental and material forms of power.

As a case site, Puerto Rico presents an ideal vantage point to work through, critique, and advance a definition of resilience that more aptly captures what emerges in post-disaster life for women, mothers, families, and communities. Using the narratives of two mothers who experienced Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico in 2017, this article examines the multidimensional aspects of maternal resilience and explores further the complex cultural and contextual factors, including pre-storm humanitarian crisis conditions that influenced the overall recovery of the mothers. Although their stories parallel the processes of resilience as outlined by Buzzanell (2010; 2021b), their stories also expand her framework to include elements of belongingness, creative entrepreneurship, collaborative empowerment, and intersectionalities that are interlinked within histories and material exigencies. Further, by centering the maternal subject position, we can critique the shortcomings identified within popular conceptions of resilience, as scholars have often imbued these models with a view of social desirability

that omits classist, racial, gendered, and politicized elements. The two stories presented in this article paint a different picture of mothers' experience of post-disaster life, revealing places where mothers cultivated multiple kinds of agencies, rewired networks for restorative justice, and pushed back against the myths that shape the maternal experience. In an expansion to Buzzanell's earlier framework, resilience here is situated in a culturally diverse and contextually complex environment that draws in the pre-storm humanitarian crisis conditions that are entangled in mothers' overall recovery.

Literature Review

Models of Resilience

Current research models on resilience after disasters often ignore the contextual, historical, and cultural elements that run as undercurrents in disaster environments. Instead, frameworks for resilience often generalize relief responses that advance normative, factor-focused models attempting to restore communities to pre-disaster status. One pernicious theme that permeates resilience literature and discussions is that resilience is a community's ability to recover or "bounce back" to a pre-upheaval state. Here, presumptively, people, families, and communities can return to "normalcy." Kelman et al. (2016) rightly ask why a society that "bounces back" should return to the same "normal" state that disadvantaged some groups pre-disaster, noting:

> If the aim is to return to that "normal" of the vulnerability process, then when the next disaster is created—it would look similar to the disaster which just happened. States of normalcy are an insufficient goal if pre-disaster conditions involved women's oppression, racial segregation, and endemic poverty, which increases peoples [sic] level of disaster risk before impacts. (p. 137)

Encouraging people to live with or avoid hazards instead of removing the systems that tie them to those hazards in the first place further institutionalizes and enables systems of inequity and inequality to persist, leaving those recovering from a disaster in perpetual struggle.

A second assumption in the literature is that resilience is specific to a trait or disposition and/or enacted through a particular policy. These approaches to resilience propose that resilience results from character traits instead of interactive, changing, and lived relationships. As Houston and Buzzanell (2018) note, a pitfall of this approach is that "resources necessary for individual and system coping may not be prioritized or provided because resilience is understood to be an innate trait of people and systems, rather than a capacity that is ultimately the product of support, opportunity, and assets" (p. 26). In this sense, this assumption further burdens those at risk because they either do or do not possess the capacity for resilience.

Neoliberal arguments about recovery hold that rebounding from a crisis is a personal responsibility; assistance towards long-term recovery should not be the responsibility of the state or aid organizations, but rather the individuals and communities facing the threats. Entangled in this approach is the belief that accepting risk is a part of resilience and that the impact from storms is innately natural and not man-made, thereby exculpating much of the responsibility for recovery onto the local communities themselves. In a critical reading of resilience recovery models, Houston and Buzzanell (2018) warned that a neoliberal conception of recovery could blame the lack of progress on the very people who need assistance. The neoliberal perspective placed blame on the general populace, the island's culture, and its administrators for what was actually the failure of the Trump administration's recovery efforts in Puerto Rico. Despite the apparent inadequacies in federal relief assistance, this view of recovery attributes the lack of adaptation in people and systems following a crisis to their own shortcomings. As Bonilla (2020) argued, the slow and absent aid response in Puerto Rico is testament to the "dominance of neoliberal forms of governmentality seen through the cuts in social safety nets, that call upon individuals to take up entrepreneurial modes of self-care" (p. 2). Although I certainly do not contest the necessity of stabilizing the conditions of post-disaster life quickly and efficiently, I question the assumptions that seem to underwrite such a priority. In sum, these notions of recovery and models of resilience tell us that rebounding from a crisis is our responsibility alone.

In order to understand what recovery should look like, Buckle (2006) added that a definition of resilience must account for the interplay of the different characteristics of disasters, such as types of damage, duration of event, and intensity of event, and the physical, social, economic, political, historical, and cultural elements that make different places affected by disasters differently. As Bottrell (2009) identifies, a useful corrective is that recovery models should account for "the reciprocal interplay of individuals in relationships and environments- families and neighborhoods" (p. 323). I embrace the conceptualization of Jones (2020) that describes resilience as a "movement toward mutually empowering, growth-fostering connections in the face of adverse conditions, traumatic experiences, and alienating social-cultural pressures. It is the ability to connect, reconnect, and resist disconnection" (p. 78). When juxtaposed against the events leading up to and after Maria, it becomes apparent that new models of resilience are needed. Given this, it is important for future models of resilience to acknowledge the cultural and social context of Puerto Rico as an area affected by disasters. By emphasizing the interactive and discursive dimensions of resilience, which have a significant impact on those who are most affected, these models can be better suited to address the unique challenges faced by disaster-affected communities in Puerto Rico.

Further, although there is a small but growing literature documenting women's and mothers' agency in such situations, additional voices can add texture and nuance to our understandings of resilience. Accordingly, this work turns to a neglected figure of resilience in post-disaster research and intervention: the mother. As the maternal element is a critical locus of agency and meaning in post-disaster narratives, the accumulating evidence that gender matters in post-disaster recovery informs a focus on mothers and mothering.

Women and Disasters

In *Gender: The Missing Component of the Response to Climate Change, Lambrou and Piana* (2006) demonstrate that gender is a significant factor for survival of those impacted most severely by disasters fueled by climate change, arguing that climate

change affects men and women differently. One reason for this difference, as Hilhorst et al. (2008) address, is that "social processes generate unequal exposure to risk by making some people more prone to disaster than others, and these inequalities are largely a function of the power relations operative in every society" (p. 2). Aguilar (2014) adds, "Before, during, and in the aftermath of disasters, human beings perpetuate social patterns of discrimination, and these entrenched patterns cause certain groups of people to suffer more than others" (p. 73). Enarson (2012) points to patriarchal social structures within society as a major contributing factor in women's risk before, during, and after disasters.

The disparity between men and women in disaster-prone environments is largely driven by their economic and familial situations. Enarson's (2012) research found that in the United States, these disparities are further exacerbated by racial differences. For instance, prior to Hurricane Katrina, women of color in New Orleans were more likely to live in poverty, earn less, and lack access to preventive healthcare compared to Caucasian women. Likewise, similar conditions were also present in Puerto Rico before Hurricane Maria, where women, particularly women of color, had lower rates of homeownership, employment, and access to healthcare services compared not only to men but also to women of color on the mainland United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). As an additional example, Enarson (2012) found that gender, cultural, and economic/class positions constrained the trek for aid. Recovery resources and relief efforts are often male-controlled, which causes a restriction of access for women on the margins, such as single mothers, divorced women, lesbians, women of color, and other intersectionalities that disadvantage women. To adequately realize sustainable recovery for families and communities, it is critical to start with the recognition that much of the mundane survival work that keeps families and communities going post-disaster falls to women.

Mothering in Disasters

Beyond the gendered and racialized tensions women experience, women who are mothers face additional, multiple

oppressions that intersect and reinforce one another as mothers are differently impacted when their families and communities call on them in post-disaster settings. In *Displacement, Gender, and the Challenges of Parenting after Hurricane Katrina*, Peek and Fothergill (2008) found that women's domestic labor changed because of the disaster, increasing their burden as they not only have to attend to the regular duties of the home but they must do so in challenging environments that might not have access to electricity, running water, transportation, employment, childcare, and/or safe housing. Specifically, because of a lack of schooling and childcare mothers are often pulled back into the home while the demands for money and repairs to the home push men back into the provider roles (p. 72). Mothers are additionally more susceptible to hazards of place because they are the primary users and managers of the household essentials. As food preparers and childcare providers, mothers stay behind, stay put, or return to unsafe places where they encounter mudslides, gas explosions, and isolation (Cutter et al., 2008). Research following Hurricane Katrina confirms these findings as David and Enarson (2012) witnessed firsthand the impact of the disaster on families, finding connections between disaster vulnerability, gendered impacts, and recovery resilience. As one of the researchers remarked, "Greeting me early in the morning were women [already in line for resources]: tearfully exhausted, impatient African American and Latina women with babies, children, teens, and grandmothers in tow" (p. ix). Given that gender is a primary organizer of domestic life and carries with it certain expectations and role negotiations regarding work inside and outside the home, when a disaster strikes, mothers are immediately involved in meeting survival needs and stabilizing home life. The challenge here is that the responsibilities that fall on mothers in the aftermath of a storm are critical to family survival. No matter what happens in or to a family, the mother navigates the needs of the families' emotional and physical well-being as mothers are the "shock absorbers of the adjustment efforts" after a disaster (Enarson, 2012, p. 3).

There is an eerie correspondence between the idealized maternal subject and the traits of the resilient subject. The discourse of intensive mothering positions the maternal subject as selfless, self-sacrificing, always prioritizing the care

of her children, responsible for making the private sphere of the family a haven for its members, and indefatigable about domestic chores. As O'Reilly (2016) describes, related to the social, economic, political, and cultural problems mothers face is the patriarchal institution of motherhood, which entrenches certain hegemonic ideologies that inform the identity of the mother and work of mothering. Popular models of resilience that presuppose personality or character traits as the basis for a positive adaptation map readily onto the cultural ideal of the mother. Furthermore, society imposes unrealistic expectations on mothers to be the "ideal mother" and engage in intensive, selfless care work, even in difficult circumstances. This can lead to models of resilience that perpetuate myths about motherhood, as I observed during my visits to Puerto Rico.

The similarities between models of resilience and neoliberal discourses of intensive mothering are not surprising. In western discourses mothers are typically expected to be the primary caregivers for their children and families. They are also expected to maintain a sense of normalcy and provide unwavering care, even in challenging situations. These expectations are often deeply ingrained in societal norms, and can place a significant burden on mothers in times of crisis. Additionally, these societal expectations can create the impression that mothers must possess certain traits in order to be considered resilient, placing a significant burden on them to "mobilize the discursive, interactive, structural, and material resources at any given moment" (Houston & Buzzanell, 2018, p. 3). These models reinforce the notion that mothers must take on the work of recovery for their families and communities alike. Both the trait model of resilience and cultural ideals of mothers and mothering promote individualistic conceptions of resilience that lend themselves to neoliberal responsibilization and deficit assessments.

Theoretical and Methodological Considerations

Matricentric Feminism

To flesh out an alternative to dominant approaches of resilience and disaster recovery models that accounts for gender

as a missing component within disaster research, O'Reilly's (2016) matricentric feminist theoretical approach, in places like Puerto Rico, can more inclusively address the labor—emotional, social, physical—and identities of those at the heart of affected families and communities. Importantly, as O'Reilly (2016) notes, when researchers regard "mothering as a site of power, wherein mothers can create social change through child rearing and activism, they enable mothers to enact an empowered model of mothering" (p. 19). Using matricentric feminism as a theoretical framework can work to "contest, challenge, and counter the oppressive patriarchal institution and narratives of intensive mothering with the goal of imagining and implementing a maternal identity and practice that is empowering to women" (p. 7). As briefly detailed, such considerations are important for mothering in disaster contexts as unmasking the patriarchal discourses that frame maternal subjectivity works to correct to the power relations operative in disaster environments. As Tierney (2014) advocates when writing about the social roots of risk and resilience, "confronting risks means confronting power" (p. 9). Because the meaning of disaster emerges from the confluence of personal and local stories about events and conditions, understanding how these stories are re-contextualized, silenced, or celebrated must involve examining mothers' work, the risks they assume, and how they enact processes of communicative resilience. This lens can expand our understanding of resilience to consider other contexts that help to avoid preoccupations with solutions or traits, identifying ways the demands of post-disaster situations can reproduce restrictive, gendered, institutionalized practices and discourses of mothering. In sum, this matricentric feminist theoretical approach offers a critical perspective for rethinking the resilience of mothers in post-disaster scenarios.

Communication Theory of Resilience

To understand mothers' experiences, Buzzanell (2010) offers us a helpful analytical framework for broadening conceptions of resilience through a more critical and contextual perspective. Buzzanell's (2010; 2021b) Communication Theory of Resilience (CTR) avoids the preoccupations with solutions and traits, offering an alternative understanding that limits

neither resilience nor mothering to normative models but re-situates the dynamics of the complexly articulated material and discursive tensions that frame mothers' lives. CTR focuses on how society constructs and enacts communication processes of adaptation and transformation, reactivity and proactivity, disruption and reintegration, and stability and change. In addition, CTR emphasizes the contexts in which material resources, policies, and ideological structures constrain and enable these processes within families. Importantly, this framework approaches resilience as emergent and constantly regenerated or revised, rather than a static state that is achieved or not. Hallmarked by five communication processes, Buzzanell's (2010) model includes:

1. *Families craft new definitions and conditions of normalcy.* In developing the "new normal," Buzzanell and Turner (2003) looked at how families negotiated job loss. Despite job losses causing turmoil in their family systems, the families in the study continued to practice family rituals, such as going out to eat. These rituals provided a sense of stability during uncertain times.
2. *Individuals within the family work to affirm identity by reframing self-other relationships.* Buzzanell and Turner (2003) identified how the individuals wanted to maintain or enhance a particular identity and performed in ways that reinforced pivotal identities for individuals and their families. These identity anchors enacted in a time of difficulty are those that the individual or the collective find the most meaningful.
3. *Individuals within the family may foreground productive action while backgrounding negative feelings.* Buzzanell (2010) describes this part of the resilience process as acknowledging the "right to feel anger or loss in certain ways" or "backgrounding" negative feelings so that those feelings are not counterproductive but channeled those feelings into productive action (p. 9). During her experience navigating the premature birth of her twins, Buzzanell (2010) notes she focused on the positive and worked to create feelings that reframed the situation into one of hope instead of hopelessness.
4. *Families put alternative logics to work, designing new ways of handling the problems created by their changing circumstances.*

Buzzanell (2010) describes this piece of her framework as attending to the "seemingly contradictory ways of doing organizational work through development of alternative logics or through reframing the entire situation" (p. 6).

5. *Families build and maintain communication networks.* Buzzanell (2010) advocates for utilizing social capital as essential to resilience, emphasizing the role of external support mechanisms in helping people respond to stressful situations. She draws on work by Doerfel, Lai, Kolling, Keeler, and Barbu (2008) that found that "resources embedded in organization-to-organization social relations, helped local organizations survive" (p. 6).

In her keynote address, Buzzanell (2021a) referred to her latest application of CTR, stating that her theory of resilience broadens the application of these processes to consider the politicized nature of resilience as it has become embedded in policies and solutions that have "simplistic kinds of outcomes." She advised scholars to look at the "multiple intersecting deeply embedded inequities" that families experience, demonstrating how resilience can provide them with mechanisms for adaptation and transformation. Noticeably, in extending the application of a matricentric lens, Buzzanell (2021b) adds that these communicative and relational processes take place within hierarchies, which is of value when considering the elements of privilege and oppression those living in Puerto Rico experienced both before and after Hurricane Maria.

Although Buzzanell (2010) has been widely cited for her development of a communication theory of resilience, the use of her five processes has not been used exclusively to study the impact of disasters on mothers. To show the variation in mechanisms for recovery and resilience and draw on specific types of "structural and infrastructural aspects as well as communicative processes" that impact mothers' lives, this paper will highlight two specific processes, "backgrounding negative emotions to foreground productive action" and "the use of alternative logics" (p.10). As Buzzanell (2010) notes, these processes are "the stuff of community rebuilding after widespread flooding and fires, and of a nation's ability to turn devastating events into potential growth and reputational opportunities" (p.10). Focusing on these two processes in conjunction with the

narratives mothers share can reveal context-specific strategies women and mothers used in the aftermath of a disaster. This can inform policy, organizational, and community infrastructure elements to promote more effective post-disaster relief and further highlight the role of human agency. Importantly, these processes can elucidate the need for narratives that can shift conceptions of mothering to envision recovery practices that encourage efforts for empowerment, transformation, and culturally sensitive, justice-based systems of recovery. Future work could attend to additional processes as the experiences of mothers living through the aftermath of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico can offer a unique vantage point to understand how disaster contexts can bring about conditions for crafting new definitions of normal, anchor family life, community, and cultural discourses, and build and maintain communication networks. As such, I conducted this project with the following research question: "How do mothers' stories illustrate the processes of CTR in the post-disaster environment following Hurricane Maria?

Method

I conducted two site visits to Puerto Rico between 2019 and 2020. While there, I interviewed 10 women and conducted a focus group with a Midwifery organization, as well as several other informal interviews with community members, university professors, and business owners. To understand the lived experiences of mothers living in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, I collected stories as a primary data source through these interviews, alongside some ethnographic observations collected as a secondary method. I encouraged the mothers to tell me the story of what happened during Hurricane Maria and in the two years since.

Given the possibility that my participants would not speak English and my desire to meet my participants in their home locations, it was important to bring a translator with me as I collected my data. The first member of my team was Kristen Erdmann, who has a background in international studies, is a certified community health worker, is multilingual, and has lived in Spanish-speaking environments. My second translator was

Laurel Paputa, who has a background in communication and health, is fluent in Spanish, and has lived abroad.

After transcribing the interviews, I used Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional space approach to analyze and engage with the stories. As well as other ethnographic elements gathered and transcribed from the two site visits. Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) approach has three aspects: interaction, continuity, and situation. *Interaction*, which involves both the personal and the social, asks the researcher to analyze a transcript or text for the personal experiences of the storyteller and for the interaction of the individual with other people. To do this, I worked with the stories to understand the women's relationships with one another and how those relationships ebbed and flowed in relation to changing circumstances, families, and communities. *Continuity* asks that the researcher analyze the transcript or text for information that considers the past, present, and future. As I engaged in re-storying my interviews, I organized the mothers' experiences chronologically, first situating their narratives in the everyday aftermath, then exploring how mothers moved through the in-between phases as they waited for aid to arrive and electricity to return, to finally exploring the work mothers were doing to improve the conditions of their lives as long-term transformational strategies for their future. *Situation* asks researchers to look for specific situations in the storyteller's landscape. To do this, I analyzed the interactions within the context of the social, historical, and cultural factors that shape the understanding of the experiences depicted in the interview data. The process of analysis was an iterative one. I returned again and again to my field notes, transcriptions, and even photos, "creatively reimagining how these elements might be put together, and then creating an assemblage that one hopes has significance, salience, and meaning for those who experience [or in my case, read] it" (Ellingson & Sotirin, 2020, p.7).

In mapping Buzzanell's communication processes, I followed storylines that related to her framework of resilience, re-envisioning resilience as contextually, culturally, and relationally orientated. From this iterative process I chose two particular stories, the accounts of Lourdes (given name) and Mariana (pseudonym), as concentrating on two stories makes it possible to share the level of detail necessary to gain insight into

the two particular processes of Buzzanell's (2010) model I have highlighted.

Analysis

Backgrounding Negative Emotions to Foreground Productive Action: Lourdes

Green (2004) argues that there are still missing elements to motherhood studies, urging that we need to continue to examine how women are using opportunities within motherhood "to explore and cultivate their own agency, and to foster social change" (p. 16). As the crisis in Puerto Rico persisted for months and years, so did mothers' mounting anxieties and uncertainty over what the future would look like for their families. Many mothers lamented feeling lost or discouraged as resources continued to be scarce. The work they did in reframing the situation to find the positive and pursue goals that moved them forward towards recovery allowed them to determine actions that were productive for activating change and feeling some sense of control and agency over their lives. Buzzanell's (2010) framework for resilience advances communication processes that are evident in the agentive interventions that Puerto Rican mothers enacted post-disaster as they attempted to change the conditions in which they were mothering.

For some mothers, the difficult circumstances they faced during and after the disaster resulted in feelings of frustration and anger towards the injustices they experienced and witnessed. However, they found it challenging to express their anger publicly. This is in part because there are expectations for how women are supposed to behave under stress. For mothers, in particular, the romanticized discourses of the all-loving maternal figure assume that "emotions such as anger, hostility, and frustration are not only deemed insignificant but almost entirely ignored" (Duquaine-Watson, 2004, p. 125). Further:

> at its best, American cultural understandings of motherhood contribute to the shaming and admonishment of mothers who articulate negative emotions. At its worst, it renders certain maternal feelings

> virtually unspeakable and, thus, an important aspect of women's experiences invisible. (p. 125)

Thus, framing an issue as feminist or honing in on the sense of injustice that particular exigencies create can help to legitimize anger for women.

Additionally, the framework Buzzanell (2010) proposed is useful as it acknowledges negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, frustration, and hopelessness, but it does not encourage denial or coping mechanisms like avoidance or defensiveness. Instead, it recognizes that individuals, families, and organizations may legitimately express negative feelings, but in ways that are productive for recovery, such as seeking social support and reframing the situation. Anger can also be seen as a productive emotion, as feminist scholars have identified how women, particularly those in minority or intersectionally oppressed groups, use anger to re-articulate the conditions of their oppression (Ahmed, 2010). Through legitimizing negative feelings, mothers in particular can affirm their positions and encourage different courses of action. To sum up, while mothers push some feelings like discouragement or fear into the background, they channel other feelings, like anger, and bring them to the forefront to use as internal motivation for mobilizing towards change, despite societal expectations.

Living in a gated community 30 minutes to the west of San Juan, Lourdes described herself as "poor" and was nervous to show us inside her quaint one-story blue home. As a single mother of two children, 9 and 11 during Hurricane Maria, an activist, lactation consultant, and a researcher, she spoke about having trouble keeping up with the mess and finding time to do the repairs to her home that were still visible today. Although her ex-husband helped with the kids from time to time, Lourdes still bore the sole responsibility for preparing for the storms and in managing the aftermath. Being trained in infant and youth feeding in emergencies, she understood the precarity children were in regarding water and electricity. She filled every water container they owned and charged all of their devices. "I was the given Drs. Ruth Lawrence and Audrey Naylor Legacy Scholarship by the states Breastfeeding Committee. I had worked as a La Leche Leader for nearly 10 years. You know, I knew what

needed to be done." Yet, despite all of her training, nothing could prepare her for the aftermath of Maria.

Lourdes had just finished her training as an International Board-Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) and had drafted emergency response protocols to assist new mothers when Hurricane Maria made landfall. In the immediate aftermath of Maria, Lourdes called the midwives from Centro de Mam to open a clinic in San Juan, conducting lactation support and free IBCLC consultations:

> I realized there were a lot of moms who had to dump their milk stashes down the drain because they had no way to store them or keep them cold. There was a police officer and his wife was breastfeeding. He was able to get a freezer that one of the gas stations had donated to the police station, and that's where he stored his wife's milk. There was a woman whose baby was born in the hospital, but she was in the room right next to the generator, and it was so hot that she's like, "Take my baby to the nursery," so she didn't breastfeed. We would go do a home visit, and somebody whose baby wasn't latched on, you were supposed to keep stimulating yourself. And I'd be like, "Well, are you pumping?" They're like, "Yeah, at night when I turn the generator on." But that's 12 hours without pumping! So, I learned hand expression, and we started teaching hand expression.

Because relief organizations failed to address material conditions, these situational needs and creative responses were happening all across the island. Mothers called attention to how the food supplies kept them alive but were not healthy, were unequally distributed, and were hard to find, or limited, given their family size and need. With infant feeding protocols, similar issues emerged. One stark issue was the delivery of much-needed baby formula post-hurricane. Lourdes recalled her frustration that aid for mothers included powdered baby formula rather than the safer liquid formula:

> Okay, so I know that liquid ready-to-feed formula is the cleanest and the safest, but what we're getting here is powder, and we will continue to get powder here because nobody's thinking. Powder is cheaper; powder is lighter because you could fit it on a flight... And I think that

> there were places in the mountains where literally they were airdropping [powered] formula. They made these formula mothers feel like villains because they wouldn't give them the help they really needed. And I'm like, how were they supposed to make bottles without water? How were they supposed to disinfect them? I don't think that anybody who's donating formula is saying, "How can we send powdered death to babies in Puerto Rico?"

This failure to recognize the needs of the mothers in Puerto Rico had deeply troubled Lourdes. The powdered formula issue draws out the tensions of a resource-based solution-focused conception of post-disaster resilience as it presupposes access to resources and generalizes the needs of vulnerable people and women's experiences. Thankfully, her experience working with SafelyFed, a non-profit organization out of Canada that works to ensure families can get the support, information, and supplies to feed and care for their babies in the aftermath of emergencies, gave her the knowledge to use the opening created by the storm as an opportunity to repair and rewire the networks of support and resource distribution for nursing mothers and their infants. As a result, she started her own LLC, Alimentación Segura Infantil (ASI), a service organization dedicated to helping mothers in Puerto Rico.

Lourdes discovered that the issues on the island were far more complex and deep-rooted than just the type of formula government and aid organizations provided. Part of what encouraged her in the aftermath was her distrust in support systems. Long-standing infrastructure decline and inequitable political policies left mothers struggling before the storm. Issues included increasing poverty rates, the local memory of historical programs to sterilize Puerto Rican women, superfund waste sites that contaminated their water, and the disparity of social programs such as WIC and health care resources. In the aftermath, mothers relied on bottled water to make their babies' formula and needed electricity to sterilize and warm bottles. However, neither of these critical resources were reliably available. Lourdes lamented that the responsibility to come up with solutions always seemed to fall on the mothers themselves.

One of the motivating forces for Lourdes was that she was a mother herself. Each night after she had spent the entire day

driving all over the island to help mothers whose babies were on the verge of dying or who themselves were on the verge of dying, Lourdes got in her bed and cried herself to sleep. "No one came to help them. I decided we had to do something." Her visit to the Tao Baja temporary shelter was catalyzing. Although women were given "a bucket, a brush, and soap," without a kitchen or hot water, they could not sanitize baby bottles. A properly cleaned bottle, as Lourdes instructed, is an essential step in ensuring that the formula prepared for the infants does not contain harmful bacteria that could make them sick. So, Lourdes learned a method of cold-water sanitation. She and her team also became experts in making formula:

> We learned that one tablespoon of unconcentrated regular unscented bleach to one gallon of water. You soak clean infant feeding bottles or pump equipment for two minutes; you take it out; you let it evaporate, has the same sanitation effect as boiling for five minutes or steaming for seven minutes.

She also noted that mothers were using flooded reservoir areas or possibly contaminated water from superfund sites. As such, they also had to teach people how to ensure their water was potable. This included the water they were using to sterilize their bottles. She recalled, "We teach people how to collect that, how to sieve [water], that even if you use like a T-shirt, and then how to use Clorox or how to boil to make that water potable." Without doing all of this, Lourdes feared infants would get sick and the government would blame mothers for not properly feeding their children when the responsibility to ensure that these protocols for clean water and sterilized bottles should have been on the organizations providing that aid initially.

It also frustrated her that the formula cans FEMA and the Red Cross were sending had instructions and labels written only in English, pointing out that these resources were not sensitive to the language of the population they were trying to help. These organizations' actions in the aftermath made little sense to Lourdes, which increased her overwhelming sense of injustice:

> They're like, "Read the can." And our cans are in English, so there's that problem. And they don't follow the World Health Organization recommendations, which is to boil to kill the pathogens, because they don't, they can't read

> them. Who are we to them? If they really wanted to help us, they would see what they were giving us. People couldn't even read the cans.

Lourdes recalled how she telephoned one of the relief organizations to explain what mothers needed but had difficulty reaching anyone because the service on the island was so spotty. When she did finally get through, the woman on the other end was about to hang up, and Lourdes recalled shouting into the phone, "You're not doing me a favor; you're doing your job. So, my question to you is, are you going to do your job or what? We're dying here."

Although creative problem-solving gave some mothers a sense of empowerment, Lourdes argued that the responsibility to change should not have fallen on the mothers, but on the support structures and resources providing the aid. "Why weren't they doing their job?" she questioned. She firmly believed that community organizations such as Centro de Mam should not be solely responsible for addressing the challenges faced by mothers and their families. However, if they were to bear this burden, they must ensure that positive changes were made. Lourdes used the anger and frustration she felt to center mothers' experiences and develop goals and an activist commitment to justice-based recovery. "It looked like a nuclear bomb had dropped, and feel like I was talking to God and saying, 'Okay, I understand what I need to do.' I'm the idea girl, and I'm the organizer. So, I started grabbing my friends, and we began to tackle these bottle-fed babies."

Lourdes shared that the failures in infant and young child feeding during emergencies were not limited to bottle-feeding mothers, but also impacted breastfeeding mothers. In emergency situations, the SafelyFed model, promoted by the World Health Agency, encouraged breastfeeding initiatives in disaster-prone environments by promoting the "breast is best" motto. However, this presented another challenge for Lourdes as breastfeeding requires clean, safe, and accessible water, to which many women did not have access. Lourdes acknowledged that she was not supposed to ask for formula, but felt conflicted as formula donations were necessary in emergency situations. She said, "I'm not really supposed to ask for formula. But how can you say don't send formula donations to the islands? The moment of

the crisis is not the moment to give that message." Lourdes was frustrated because, regardless of the feeding method, mothers were still facing difficulties and feeling as if they were doing something wrong. She added, "So, basically, no matter what mothers did, it was wrong, or [U.S. relief organizations] were making it hard for them."

To provide more context to Lourdes's concerns over the "breast is best" motto and related issues of inequity in Puerto Rico, she noted that Centers for Disease Control (CDC) was excluding data from U.S. territories in the most recent national breastfeeding estimates. The lack of data was alarming because, without understanding the demographics of infant feeding, Lourdes noted, "that in emergencies, it would be hard to know how much formula to bring or how much water would be needed to support those breastfeeding." It begged the question, "Why was and is Puerto Rico excluded from the data the U.S. gathers on infant feeding and on the needs of nursing women when we are U.S. citizens?" Lourdes noted that nearly 74% of Puerto Rican babies are being partially or fully formula-fed, identifying that this statistic becomes problematic when considering the conditions mothers faced in the aftermath. Given Puerto Ricans had limited access to formula and clean water, some babies required much more intervention. Lourdes noted that occasionally, they would have to insert a nasogastric tube, a tube that would go through the nose into the infant's stomach, and feed nutrition through a syringe. Lourdes recognized that without access to formula, ASI would need to help mothers with re-lactation. "We realized that the breastfeed, breastfeed, breastfeed, breastfeed message is turning off 74% or 80% of people. So, we realized we had to have a little bit more of a generic message about how we relayed information for feeding their babies after."

ASI's strategy to help women re-lactate after days or weeks might seem illogical given that it required ample access to fresh water, foods such as lean meats, proteins, and oatmeal, as well as supplemental pumping and a stress-free environment. As Lourdes's interview attested, difficult situations required creative approaches, and when looking at the intricacies of Puerto Rican mothers' lives, a one-size-fits-all solution did not account for these tensions. In this context, various techniques

for feeding infants and caring for mothers became necessary, including "breast is best" messages, back-to-bottle methods, re-lactation practices, and combination feeding techniques.

Lourdes also acknowledged the impact of intensive parenting and the overwhelming feelings mothers experienced, especially when faced with mothering and feeding their families in these conditions. Importantly, as Lourdes noted, the "breast is best" motto in this context-imposed rules and expectations on mothers that inadvertently labeled them as "good" or "bad" if they chose not to or could not breastfeed and thus contributed to increasing mothers' anxieties. She also noted that although a stress-free environment aids breastfeeding, the lack of resources and support was not reducing mothers' stress but exacerbating it. As Lourdes lamented, without the mechanisms for support and culturally relevant resources, Puerto Rican mothers continued to be "left to fend for themselves. We really have to know how to help mothers who are feeding their babies to support them with the breast or to provide them help with formula if they need it."

The communicative process of productive foregrounding while backgrounding negative feelings in Buzzanell's (2010) resilience framework is evident as Lourdes backgrounded some concerns she and others had and foregrounded action to move her community in a direction that reduced their vulnerability and helped mothers and families across the island long-term. When the complexity of the conditions after Hurricane Maria and the historical context of Puerto Rico are layered together, a more intimate portrait of infant feeding dilemmas on the island emerges, demonstrating that for this context and for mothers, in particular, different approaches to relief and recovery efforts are necessary. Lourdes did not remain passive while mothers were ignored and neglected by aid organizations in post-disaster interventions. This is where the model that Lourdes created through ASI became an integral piece in helping mothers on the island to move forward.

Lourdes wanted mothers to know that they could trust ASI to help provide them with safe options, no matter how they fed their baby. Emerging out of the necessities of post-disaster relief and epitomizing the features of resilience as proactive communal agency, the resilience of mothers inspired Alimentación Segura Infantil: in Spanish, *seguro/a* means safe. As Lourdes noted,

"The concept was that it would provide free or low-cost services to the community in lactation at the same time as it would create learning and training opportunities for people who either just wanted to become more hands-on lactation specialists or who wanted to become an IBCLC." Within just a few weeks of Maria, leveraging other relationships, like the one she had already forged with Centro de Mam, Lourdes conducted her first free infant youth and child feeding in emergency training. Her goal was to reach:

> anybody interested in receiving information about how to increase breastfeeding rates while still treating with love and dignity families who are formula feeding or combination feeding, [is] invited to this training. It's free of charge, as long as you promise to use the information to help other people.

To do this work, she built a large-scale social network of mothers and additional collaborations with organizational networks of women to diffuse knowledge, mobilize on the ground support, train women to provide infant feeding and lactation support and develop longer-term solutions that the local and state governments could not, seeing their social connections and community as critical for their recovery. In 2018, a year after the storm, Lourdes's groundbreaking work won her the Miriam H. Labbok Award for Excellence. As Agustina Vidal noted at the Breastfeeding and Feminism International Conference (2018),

> When the emergency has passed, we will have a roadmap on what knowledge and skills communities need to keep babies safe, a solid roadmap on how they can organize themselves, and put themselves at the service of families and babies.

Within two years, ASI had changed the local lexicon and culture around infant feeding and became the largest infant and young child feeding organization in Puerto Rico. Further, the model of training local women that Lourdes developed gained recognition from the U.S. Department of Health, the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine, and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

Rooted in Lourdes's concern and resistance is the acknowledgment that continuing to live with pre-storm conditions or accepting the continued risks they, as Puerto

Ricans, continue to face, such as lack of clean water and unreliable electricity, is "unacceptable." In her work with ASI, Lourdes saw a hierarchical system rooted in the "large-scale mistreatment of women and mothers for decades," one that she noted was only getting worse as disaster aid trickled in and "the failures to care for Puerto Rican women and mothers became more and more obvious." She reminded me, "They show us hours after this or that on the television, but here, in reality, it was weeks before the helicopters came. Babies starved, and it was weeks before formula came. And when it did, it was powder."

Despite the AAP modifying policies to support mothers in the aftermath of disasters better, Lourdes argued that their work still has room for growth because "those policies need to reflect different emergencies" and the needs and resources of different locales and exigencies. For example, snowstorms in the Upper Peninsula could create electricity blackouts "for days or weeks," or forest fires in California could force people to "live out of their cars." Such scenarios could generate conditions where boiling water for formula would become an impossible necessity.

In the aftermath of Maria, access to basic needs such as clean water came head-to-head with the precarity that existed before the storm, such as school closings, large-scale poverty, and food scarcity. Lourdes felt the frustration over the consistent mistreatment of Puerto Ricans as indicative of the contradictions embedded in their lives. Using her work with ASI, she hoped to shed light on their immediate needs after the storm and the conditions of the island long-term. As Lourdes exclaimed, "It's not okay for [the U.S. government] to treat us this way. It shouldn't be something we just have to suffer with and deal with. Or you know, just part of living here and being Puerto Rican. If you come here, it's all about tourism, but we're dying." She hoped that through the change enacted by ASI, she could empower other mothers and women across the island to resist living with the persistent struggles they faced. In summary, she acknowledged her deep anger:

> I was really, really angry that they would do this to [mothers and infants]. How could they? It was a calling for me to do something to build something better, more equitable for all women and mothers, not just on our island, but all over.

Lourdes's story draws awareness of the emergence of entrepreneurial activities by women and mothers after disasters, as they not only absorbed the shock for their families but also empowered their communities by creating new response mechanisms. One major impediment to building back is that "the bureaucratic gap between funding agencies and policies de-emphasizes collective action and the importance of inclusion and equity in the resources and funding allocation process" (Borges-Méndez & Caron, 2019, p. 11). Inadequacies in post-disaster infant feeding mechanisms exposed the problems with gender-blind relief efforts and one-size-fits-all recovery processes. As a result, women such as Lourdes had to mobilize resources themselves, "creating new organizations and businesses, and harnessing autonomously the knowledge required to participate in reconstruction" (p. 14).

Such gender-blind problems show a need to document women's specific experiences and further mothers' voices in these environments, as "motherhood is an important category of analysis for understanding women's oppression" (Bueskens, 2016, p. xiv). Lourdes's story about the issues with infant feeding after Maria demonstrates the invisible but interwoven conditions that continued to intensify the historical oppressions that these women faced. Her work challenged the ideological assumptions about motherhood and the expectations and presumptions around infant feeding. Importantly, through documenting their stories, the intersectionalities that oppress mothers became visible. Lourdes's anger became transformative, giving her a renewed sense of purpose. Through her work with ASI, she shifted the dynamics of power, determining new conditions for mothering and providing more options and support, which allowed mothers to feel hopeful and connected. Drawing on her anger and acknowledging it as legitimate, Lourdes enacted entrepreneurial creativity illustrative of feminist resilience, situating her as one figure of maternal agency.

Using Alternative Logics: Mariana

Buzzanell (2021a) notes that sometimes what turns out to be productive action can be seen as contradictory to the work needed for recovery, as those in crisis determine what they find

to be productive. In Puerto Rico, where long-term historical conditions created a humanitarian crisis even before Maria, post-disaster conditions, as one mother described, "turn[ed] our world upside down." Actions mothers took before the storm no longer seemed possible or made much sense. Behaviors that once seemed unsafe or worrisome became sensible. For example, one mother remarked that she let her kids play with trash on the side of the road to create some novelty in the aftermath, or as another mother noted, "We swam in the water. It was dirty, but we were hot, and he (her son) hadn't had a bath in days." In addition, this communication process might entail resistance to comply with rules and regulations or behaving in a way that may at the time seem irrational. Coutu (2002) argues that "resilience offers an alternative when rational thought and action may be ineffective" (p. 49). This is in part because conditions and contexts may require creative workarounds for exigencies that create barriers to, as one mother aptly put, a "just recovery" and, as such, demand change. Mariana, another figure of maternal agency, had a difficult time reconciling her frustrations and instead employed what might have appeared to be non-rational resistance towards recovery resources as a means of advocating for change in the systems she viewed as unjust and inequitable.

Mariana, a single mother of two children, ages three and five during Hurricane Maria, she prepared for the storm similar to Lourdes. "I filled up all the water containers and made sure to shut everything up." Given that Mariana was just shy of eight months pregnant and her daughter was still "small enough that she needed to be carried sometimes," she questioned how she would manage if something went devastatingly wrong during the storm. "I couldn't do things the way I would have normally, you know." This meant that she had to be open and honest with her other children about the dangers and encourage them to be more responsible, despite how young they were. She described, "[My kids] had backpacks packed. They'd cry, but because it's just me, I needed them to understand how we would have to do things to survive. I wanted to be prepared." Despite her best efforts, her small bungalow style home could not withstand the damage caused after both a tree and a utility pole fell on the roof. "The water poured in and everything was damaged. It wasn't safe, so we left. I didn't have another choice.

I just couldn't go to those camps." As a result, Mariana moved her family back in with their father. "He was very abusive, you know. But only to me. I knew I could manage. It was to keep them safe." Within a few weeks' time, the relationship slid back into its abusive patterns and Mariana once again had to move her children:

> It's very complicated because you can learn about how trauma works in the body and mind, but experiencing it is different. I've been working with the community and women that have been abused by their husbands, and I've been doing sexual education, and when that happened to me after the hurricane, I couldn't react because you could not believe it's happening, and I was processing so much at the same time.

In the aftermath of Maria, Mariana began working within her community as a first responder, doula, and community volunteer. Her work took her to the temporary camps established by FEMA and the Red Cross to help aid those who had lost their homes in the storm. While triaging various needs, she struggled with seeing the large disparity in aid response, finding that there were exclusionary practices happening at the intersection of race, class, and gender:

> It was hard to see children that were living in these camps by the street, and all I could think about was how vulnerable they were and what would happen to them. These pregnant women, they were not eating. They were taking care of their babies and not themselves. I told [the women from FEMA] these camps are full of sexual aggressors, and then they found out that these people in the camps were taking advantage of women and children. Then you go to these houses that have particular needs, elders, people just in their beds and their caretakers are in trauma and they are very tired, the pregnant ladies and babies and they are getting nothing either: Trump said that 93 billion was coming to Puerto Rico. Well, we didn't get that money because it stopped after 1 million.

The shortcomings in post-disaster relief, coupled with the Trump administration's lack of accountability and inadequate response, led to the dissemination of harmful messages, such

as emphasizing personal responsibility, perpetuating myths of intensive parenting, and reinforcing stereotypes about women of color and Puerto Ricans. As Mariana observed, these messages enabled the U.S. government to continue the historical mistreatment of Puerto Ricans. “They took schools away, and they’re taking our help away. There are already more deaths than births in Puerto Rico. They want a Puerto Rico without Puerto Ricans,” she said.

Furthermore, the societal expectation that mothers are responsible for absorbing the impact of disasters for their families, inadvertently blames the mothers themselves for the neglect and trauma they experienced. Mariana felt the weight of the challenges she and other mothers faced profoundly and recognized that this was not just the distress of the moment but a culmination of historical mistreatment and deprivation that, without resistance and change, would continue to oppress Puerto Ricans and their families:

> I thought, you have this privilege. I have water, and I could find a new place to rent. Then I’d hear about these kids who were found on the roof of their house, and their parents died because they gave all the food to the kids. I had to stop listening. At the same time, I’m here having this struggle, but I’m adding to that because I can’t help them. At the same time, it doesn’t take away my ability to be accountable to where I live. To be responsible to what my role here can be. What kind of world do I want for my kids?

Mariana found that her role as a mother conflicted with her community role and the expectations placed on her to enact certain maternal instincts. Instead, Mariana channeled her anger and frustration into what she considered productive action in an attempt not only to fight her marginalization, but the marginalization she was witnessing around her. To drive home her rationale for the choices she made in the aftermath, she told me about a study done by Refugees International that illustrated the failures of emergency shelters on the island. Quoting this study:

> Domestic violence shelters were not included in the island’s emergency plans. When help came, it was haphazard and misinformed. According to one shelter

> director, one day, FEMA simply dropped off some boxes of menstrual hygiene materials, which were not a priority need. In another case, they gifted a shelter with expired baby formula and pampers. (Vigaud-Walsh, 2018, p. 4)

Mariana's feminist awareness and her maternal identity impelled her to weigh in on the cost-benefits of her participation in inequitable, failed systems. She recognized that the blame placed on Puerto Ricans for the conditions prior to the storm and the expectations for them to recover independently required a shift in her mothering practices, an added dimension to her resilience. She described the moment that she did something that seemed irrational at the time, but for her, devoting herself to care work for survival would not solve any problems. The only way to make change was to enact it herself. She stated, "So, I decided not to take assistance from the government. Everyone asked, why would you do that? They judged me for not providing for my kids. But I saw it as providing for them even more so. I could work, and we could live." Through such contrary choices, Mariana refashioned herself into what O'Reilly (2019) calls a "mother outlaw": "Mothering could be experienced as a site of empowerment and a location for social change if the mother lives her life, and practices mothering, from a position of agency, authority, authenticity, and autonomy" (p.11). For Mariana, the storm brought a desire to resist the systems of power, the oppressive structures, and defeating discourses that make mothers' lives harder.

In addition, she rejected assistance to call direct attention to the losses and contradictions she saw in the recovery efforts. Although her loss was material, her experience helping others in the aftermath unmasked for her some of the historical amnesias about the colonial treatment of Puerto Ricans, the subjugation of women, and the oppression of marginalized groups. Though many Puerto Ricans often subscribe to the harmful practices against people of different sexual and racial identities, Mariana witnessed contradictions in solidarity when working as a community first responder. For example, although a church organization came to the aid of their local community, providing food and emergency supplies they had received as donations, they refused to give those resources to community members that were part of the LGBTQ community. The church acted as

a shelter, a community center for aid relief, and a larger social resource for some families, whereas for others it acted as a barrier to survival and recovery. For Mariana, the church's role called into question the identity of solidarity among many islanders and as well as the frayed relationship between the island and the United States. Further, as a Black Caribbean woman, Mariana's experiences of identity oppression and discrimination align with the systemic subordination and disconnection experienced both before and after the storm aftermath. As Beatson (2013) observed about the otherness of Puerto Rican women:

> Black Caribbean women interact with the patriarchal state differently because their citizenship status and racial location are consequently different from the perceived Western population. This otherness limits their feeling of belonging and isolates Black Caribbean diasporic women because they may not feel supported by their community and the nation at large. (p. 76)

These intersectional forces and frustrations became apparent for Mariana in the aftermath, as she stated, the humanitarian crisis on the island had many feeling as though they were "second-class citizens" or "undeserving of aid because we aren't really from the U.S."

Although the conditions of her life exacerbated her internal struggle prior to and after the storm, Mariana repositioned herself in light of social, familial, and cultural identities and her role as a first responder to cultivate more maternal agency. She shifted how she was going to care for her family and the work she was going to do in her community, hoping that through this effort, she could reduce some of the amplified anxieties they were experiencing and reconcile their struggles.

Because of her deep introspective work, Mariana reframed her situation. She refused government help and assistance from churches as activism against what she described as a failed system that continued to limit the possibilities for families and replicated resource insecurities affecting women, children, the aging, the infirm, and those that "have identities others might not understand":

> I feel the frustration over our government deeply. It never really helped. I don't want to say they're helping me because they never did. So, I didn't take their

> assistance. I could see my privilege. I didn't want to be a part of letting this happen to us. There's too many hurts articulated together.

Given the large-scale failures and the prejudices that excluded members of her community from elements of the recovery process, including one of her children, who had come out as non-binary, Marianna channeled her anxiety, anger, and frustration to realign her mothering practices as a site of resistance against the larger cultural narratives that situate Puerto Rican mothers.

Mariana understood that not taking the assistance offered through FEMA's informal housing in the shelters or aid provided by the Red Cross was risky. But the risk of moving into the shelter, where she and others attested to the violence and harassment women and children experienced, and the likelihood of predators being allowed to live there unchecked, seemed more problematic. She contended that the help that came was not helping at all, so the recovery efforts were illogical to her. "If they wanted to help, where was the help? Who was in charge? Why would they leave us so vulnerable like that?" Her choice to live with an abusive partner short-term was, for Mariana, a situation she had more control over than the uncertainty of the camps, which "lacked any organization or security" for those staying there. As Buzzanell (2010) observed, individuals in crises often respond to oppressive logics with "ongoing and concerted efforts to alter the organizing system itself" (p. 6). Although her resistance made things more challenging, she felt more in control: "They didn't get to decide how I lived anymore. I would take charge of that. I would decide how we lived." By embracing situations that might seem contradictory to their immediate well-being, Mariana tried to help her children "feel safe again." She matched the contradictions in recovery efforts with her contradictory behavior, reframing her risky choices in relation to the risks they faced taking the help. Mariana linked her losses, choices, and the action and inaction of others with her maternal identity to subvert the issues of gender inequality that affected women's post-disaster mothering experiences and shifted from "being the victim" to embracing her form of self and family preservation.

In sum, even as she was mothering in the harsh conditions of post-Maria, which included an abusive relationship, homelessness,

and financial difficulty, Mariana mothered in a way that not only empowered herself but actively resisted and called out some of the social injustices that her family confronted in the aftermath. Mariana's feminist child rearing exemplifies what O'Reilly (2004) describes as the work of mother outlaws: this is care work that "challenges the traditional practices of gender socialization for both mothers and sons and, as Rich argues, depends upon motherhood itself being changed" (p. 328). Mariana also used her anger about the deprivation she experienced after the storm as a driving force for change to develop more maternal agency for herself and her family. Despite embracing alternative logics and enacting behaviors that seemed at odds with safety, Mariana became another figure of agency. By opposing both the practices and demands of patriarchal mothering and entrenched patterns of discrimination, Mariana positioned herself outside of the institution of motherhood, which contributed to her ability to adapt and transform. In doing so, she showed how resilience is not only dynamic and full of contradictions, but transformative. In the end, Mariana hoped that by mothering this way, "my son will know just how much I fought to ensure that they have a right to live and that my daughter recognizes that I fought so that she gets the right to make a choice about how to live."

Conclusions

Through Lourdes's and Mariana's narratives, we can see how mothers negotiated material, interpersonal, and discursive tensions in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. As they navigated demands, contradictions, and exigencies, they constructed a variety of responses to the disaster aftermath that led to maternal identities and mothering practices that empowered them. Although Buzzanell (2010) identifies communicative and interactional elements through her development of CTR, my work expands on two specific components of her framework to suggest additional considerations. By adding a unique context site, a matricentric lens, and a narrative emphasis, a model of maternal resilience emerges. This model expands on her original processes to include:

1. Anger, often attributed as a negative emotion, became a productive force for the mothers' feminist activism and

creative entrepreneurship that worked towards restorative justice and equity. The familial and community work of mothers in the hurricane's aftermath attests to the value of women's participation in recovery efforts and further legitimizes the feelings of women.

2. Although governmental organizations enacted recovery mechanisms, many mothers saw this work as merely temporary and illogical and took issue with the gendered inequities they were experiencing. As a result, they resisted rationalizing risk in favor of strategies that challenged and opposed dominant recovery models. Their resistance was part of their dynamic adaptation and transformation.

As part of Buzzanell's (2010) theory, she notes that resilience involves the deliberate process of working to move forward instead of letting negative feelings create stagnation. In her description of the communication process, "foregrounding productive action while backgrounding negative feelings," Buzzanell (2010) addressed how individuals focus on the positive in crises, reframing the situation and their feelings to find hope and meaning in the experience. The work Lourdes and ASI did to ensure resources and information for post-disaster infant feeding illustrates the communicative processes of foregrounding productive action and backgrounding negative feelings. In response to the lack of action and inappropriate protocols for infant feeding practices that were insensitive to mothers' and infants' regions, situations, language, race, economic conditions, and cultural traditions, Lourdes developed goals and an activist commitment to righting those wrongs. The relationships forged between Centro de Mam and ASI advocated emancipatory, equity-based design and historically situated relational and transformational practices: attending to language, establishing contextually situated infant feeding practices, and addressing the current challenges of medical care across the island. Using her frustration over the deep-seated inequities and the consistent mistreatment of Puerto Ricans, Lourdes developed a business model that improved the methods and protocols for infant feeding, alongside access to improved resources, educational services, and medical care for other mothers and their infants across the island.

In an extension to Buzzanell's (2010) framework, the maternal perspective allows us to examine how women use the opportunities within motherhood to become agents of change within families and communities at large. Although women and mothers are expected to deny feelings of anger or frustration, Lourdes focused her energy instead "against those oppressions, personal and institutional, which brought that anger into being" (Lorde, 1997, p. 280) to harness the knowledge of her community, activating relational networks to mobilize resources in new ways. Taken together, the emotional labor of Lourdes and Mariana helped to confront challenges and constraints linked with gendered ideologies. Instead of silencing these "negative emotions," they pushed them to the forefront, intervening in both the personal and institutional constraints they faced. Their anger became a productive force for their feminist activism and creative entrepreneurship that worked towards restorative justice and equity. An understanding of the maternal experience brings the emotional labor of women/mothers to the forefront, attesting to how mothers used often silenced feelings to enact productive behaviors that interceded in the disparities and develop solutions that benefited them long term.

In the second process of Buzzanell's (2010) framework, individuals and organizations might enact workarounds that are contradictory to the work necessary for their survival or adaptation when faced with complex conditions. Sometimes in crisis, actions and behaviors enacted prior are no longer possible or seem rational. As a result, new conditions and situations will shift the way people behave, the groups to which they belong, and their expectations. For example, aid organizations were sending in powered formula despite mothers' limited access to clean water and sterile equipment necessary for feeding, leading to global policy modifications that improve access to the liquid ready-to-feed formula in disaster environments. Buzzanell (2010) describes how behaviors that might seem counter-productive can open up opportunities that were not available before a crisis as, "putting alternative logics to work, designs new ways of handling the problems created by changing circumstances." Contradictions and tensions mothers faced in their new normal tasked them with meeting expectations that rationalized risk. For Mariana, Maria exposed the gendered

hazards and inconsistencies embedded in recovery mechanisms and advocated for collective resistance to barriers they, as a community of mothers, had always experienced in Puerto Rico.

Although Buzzanell's (2010) framework accounts for the ways people reframe situations, enacting workarounds to maneuver failing systems and adapt, the stories here expand this part of the model to include the work of resistance in transformation. Mariana had to rework her relationship with her family and work to gain more control and agency in her life, which meant a drastic departure from what disaster relief workers and analysts might expect of individuals in disaster environments. For example, when their homes are damaged, aid organizations expect them to join shelters, and when they are without food, aid organizations expect them to join the church lines and take the military packets offered. Without jobs and income, relief workers might expect disaster survivors will take the checks the government provides. Mariana instead rejected government aid and live temporarily with her abusive ex-partner. Her seemingly impossible choices drew attention to the increased danger temporary shelters meant for women and children, revealing the problems of recovery efforts. From her perspective, she could protect her children and herself from a singular and familiar threat, but could not protect them from the unknown probability of child predators in the camps. For Mariana, embedded in the money FEMA offered were constraints that would further entrench Puerto Ricans in a cycle of poverty and scarcity, calling her to reject their offer of aid. From her perspective, taking their money or help further allowed the United States to see her as a victim and continued to treat her as such.

In sum, as Lourdes's and Mariana's narratives reveal, the aftermath of Maria exposed the paternalist and incongruent recovery processes that were not only one-size-fits-all, but continued to replicate inequities all across Puerto Rico. Through their feminist anger, activist orientations, communal coalitions, and mothering practices, they reframed their situation to enact behaviors that were productive for the recovery of their island and allowed them to feel more control and agency in their lives. Facing additional tensions of notions of gender, race, work, and self within the cultural landscape, they renegotiated

relationships and identities to create new resource avenues to survive and thrive and live well. As they came to take on multiple intersectional maternal agencies, they found collaborative empowerment and pushed back against accepting "what was" to rework their lives for "what could be." In doing so, they became powerful agents of transformation and restorative justice across the island.

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