"If you're down, you know, get up, be proud of yourself, go forward": Exploring Urban Southwest American Indian Individual Resilience

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Abstract: The diverse American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) population suffers health inequities perpetuated by colonialism and post-colonialism. The urban AI/AN population is steadily increasing in part because of federal policies relocating AI/AN away from tribal lands. However, studies of AI/AN urban communities are rare, and efforts to understand and ameliorate health inequities in AI/AN communities typically emphasize deficits rather than capacities. Resilience is an important resource in this context but mainstream, rather than community-derived definitions of resilience, predominate. The present study used multi-investigator consensus analysis in a qualitative study to identify urban American Indian (AI) derived concepts and construct a definition of resilience. The study included 25 AI adults in four focus groups in three urban locales in the southwestern United States. Four resilience themes emerged: 1) AIs built strength through toughness and wisdom; 2) the value of traditional 'lifeways' (i.e., elements of traditional culture that help people navigate their journey through life); 3) the importance of giving and receiving help; and 4) the interconnectedness of Native lifeways, family relationships, and tribal and urban communities. Themes overlap with extant resilience conceptualizations but also provide unique insights into structure and function of urban AI resilience in the Southwest United States.

INTRODUCTION

American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) peoples represent a heterogeneous population with diverse languages and cultures, unique histories, and contemporary experiences, varied geographic locations and residences (living on or off Tribal Nation territories), and lifeways (Kahn-John et al., 2021; Struthers & Peden-McAlpine, 2005; Willeto, 1996). Federal relocation

policies (i.e., a series of Relocation Acts) have fueled the growing AI/AN urban population, with up to 78% of AI/AN people currently living in urban areas (James et al., 2018; U.S. Census, 2012). Despite the large proportion of AI/ANs residing in urban areas, they have been described as an "invisible population" (D'Amico et al., 2019; Hartmann et al., 2014), largely because of their limited representation in health research (Gone & Kirmayer, 2020) with estimates that are likely to be flawed given their underrepresentation in the data (Urban Indian Health Institute, 2016).

The 1950s Urban Indian Relocation programs contributed to challenges with the current mental health and emotional well-being of urban AI/AN people due to assimilative and acculturation policies embedded therein (Gone & Trimble, 2012; Walls & Whitbeck, 2012). These histories have contributed to depression, suicide, homelessness, substance/drug abuse, and intimate partner violence among urban AI/AN people (Caetano et al., 2020; Evans-Campbell et al., 2006; Gone & Trimble, 2012; Olivet et al., 2021; Wendt et al., 2017). These disparities are partly due to the geographical separation from most Indian Health Service facilities, including access to urban tribal facilities (Forquera, 2001; Whitesell et al., 2012), and these facilities underfunded status (Hartmann et al., 2014). In addition, the well-established health inequities observed among AI/AN groups on tribal lands (Espey et al., 2014; Gone & Trimble, 2012) extends to urban AI/AN populations (Weaver, 2012). Thus, the combination of health inequity and a paucity of work with urban AI/AN people is a major impetus for our study.

Although much AI/AN health research is deficit-focused rather than asset-based (Kirmayer et al., 2009; Oré et al., 2016), greater attention to strength-based inquiry is emerging, particularly with regard to the concept of resilience (Burnette, 2018; Burnette et al., 2017; Teufel-Shone et al., 2016). Resilience refers broadly to "…good outcomes in spite of serious threats to adaptation or development" (Masten, 2001, p. 228). Although early descriptions of resilience focused on individual-level characteristics (Masten, 2001; see Kirmayer et al., 2009; Ore et al., 2016; Teufel-Shone et al., 2016 for reviews of these studies), social, cultural and spiritual domains, which are themselves embedded in families, communities, and larger social structures, are increasingly recognized as important for Indigenous mental health (Wexler et al., 2015; Gone & Kirmayer, 2020; Gone & Trimble, 2012) and well-being (Kirmayer et al., 2009; Oré et al., 2016; Stumblingbear-Riddle & Romans, 2012). Further, AI perspectives, including Indigenous frameworks, were absent in earlier investigations (Hunter et al., 2022; Kirmayer et al., 2009).

In addition to recognizing sociocultural embeddedness, it is also desirable to inform resilience inquiry by first ascertaining the definitions, conceptualizations, and/or meanings of

resilience within the populations of interest (Rudzinski et al., 2017). This approach is illustrated by the resilience conceptualization generated by a multinational study of diverse youth (Ungar 2008; Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011):

> In the context of exposure to significant adversity, whether psychological, environmental, or both, resilience is both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to health-sustaining resources, including opportunities to experience feelings of well-being, and a condition of the individual's family, community, and culture to provide these health resources and experiences in culturally meaningful ways (Ungar, 2008, p. 225).

Although common elements of resilience were observed across a wide variety of cultural contexts (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011), a key message from this work is the importance of context-specific characterization of how resilience is represented and enacted within specific cultural frameworks (Gone & Kirmayer, 2010). In line with this insight, the present study is embedded in the context of urban AIs in the Southwest United States.

This study employed qualitative methods to examine resilience among urban AI community members residing in the Southwest United States. AI people tend to distrust researchers and their studies (Dickerson et al., 2020; Smith, 2012), particularly since non-AIs (*etic* or outsiders) usually conduct these studies (Teufel-Shone et al., 2006). This work, led by AI (*emic* or insider) scholars, adhered to both formal institutional research guidelines and to informal cultural norms to better engage urban AI communities for discussion on resilience encompassing the mind, body, and spirit (Manson, 2020). Given AI peoples' lived experiences of persisting through post-colonialism and descending from survivors of colonialism, it was deemed essential to give voice to AIs' definitions of resilience (Kirmayer et al., 2009). Based upon work conducted at three sites in two states, we report on two major open-ended queries: What is resilience? and What makes you strong?

METHODS

From February to May 2017, we conducted an exploratory phenomenological qualitative study with urban convenience samples in Albuquerque, NM; Phoenix, AZ; and Flagstaff, AZ. The sample also included homeless AIs. Three urban AI centers collaborated with the study

investigators. One focus group was held in each of these centers and a fourth focus group was held on a university campus. To follow community-based participatory research (CBPR) principles (Burhansstipanov et al., 2005), the investigators engaged AI center directors in New Mexico and Arizona. The team included the Northern Arizona University (NAU)–University of Arizona Center for American Indian Resilience (CAIR) Community and Executive Advisory Boards (CAB and EAB) who provided guidance on protocols for working with local AI people and using a CBPR approach. To enhance trustworthiness, fairness, and accuracy of qualitative data, we conducted member-checks (Schwandt et al., 2007; Thomas, 2017) of the original transcripts and to review our preliminary findings (Hartmann et al., 2014). The initial focus group discussions ranged from 135 to 195 minutes for a total of 15 hours of data collection, including member checks.

Participant Recruitment

Two settings hosted recruitment: three AI urban centers and one university center. Inclusion criteria for recruitment involved: (1) self-identifying as urban AI/AN; (2) for non-university locations: adults 50 years and older; and (3) for the university location: adults 18 years and older. For non-university locations, an emphasis was placed on recruiting Native elders who are wisdom holders and not usually included in resilience studies (Fullerton et al., 2019). Recruitment flyers were posted at places frequented by the urban AI/AN populations such as urban Indian Centers and their websites (when available), health care facilities including Indian Health Service, social service organizations, and restaurants in close proximity.

Development of Study Items

The investigators developed focus group protocols, open-ended questions, a demographic form, and recruitment flyers per their previous research with AI community members and review of the literature. The investigators obtained feedback on the study items from the CAIR CAB and EAB and the Chief Executive Director of an urban AI center.

Although this study posed 15 questions to focus group participants, this manuscript presents and discusses the analysis of two questions: "What is resilience?" (and its associated prompt, "What does the word 'resilience' mean to you?") and "Please discuss what makes you strong." These questions were conceptually distinct with a micro-level (or individual-level) of analysis from the remaining focus group questions, which focused on a meso-level of analysis (e.g., family). This 'strong' or strength-based phrasing derives from the AI perspective that all AI

cultures evidence strength (Pepic et al., 2022). The justification for reporting this focused analysis and findings is grounded in the need to address the gap in literature about AIs participants' definition of resilience and asset-based experiences.

Project Approvals and Notification Letters

This study was approved by the NAU Institutional Review Board (Project Number 977165-1) and NAU's AI Tribal Liaison (Arizona Board of Regents, 2016). Respecting tribal sovereignty and nations' oversight of research with tribal citizens, the investigators sent letters of notification about potential study activities to the Navajo Nation Human Research and Review Board, the Hopi Tribe, the Inter-Tribal Council of Arizona, and the New Mexico All Pueblo Council of Governors. Although approval by these tribal entities was not a requirement (the status of data protection for urban AI/ANs is yet undetermined), we value transparency and openness and, therefore, notified these tribal authorities (Haozous et al., 2021). All urban AI center directors approved the study and provided permission to recruit at their centers and use center facilities to conduct focus groups, including networking and dissemination activities.

Procedures and Informed Consent

Upon verbal agreement to participate, two duplicate informed consent forms were given to each participant. The consent form, which included permission to be audio-recorded during the focus group, the time commitment for multiple visits (Thomas, 2017), and a description of the purpose of the research, was read aloud to the participants who followed along on their copy. One informed consent form was signed, dated, and maintained in a secure location in the study office and the other was given to the participant. All individuals who appeared in the information and consent phase consented to join; no one declined or withdrew. Participants received a $10 gift card for focus group participation and an additional $10 gift card if they returned for the in-person member check or the dissemination meeting; receipt of up to $30 was possible. Also, food was provided at every meeting for each focus group site (e.g., focus group discussions, in-person member check and disseminations), and some gift items (tote bags, water bottles, and notebooks) were distributed.

Focus Group Moderators

The senior principal investigator (PI) with moderator experience conducted the first focus group while the junior PI observed and took notes. The senior and junior PIs reversed roles for the

second focus group. The remaining focus groups were led by the senior PI. Discussions were digitally recorded, and researchers took comprehensive field notes.

A slide presentation was used for introductions and to present the two open-ended focus group questions ("What is resilience?" with the associated prompt, "What does the word 'resilience' mean to you?", and "Please discuss what makes you strong"). To protect participant identity, participants picked a number from a bowl; that number was used on their demographic form and for self-identification throughout the discussion. Participants would speak by first stating their identification number. Focus group questions were typically answered in English, although phrases from Native languages were sometimes provided initially and then translated by the respondent. The moderators reminded participants that private information revealed in the groups was not to be discussed outside of the focus group setting. To confirm the accuracy of the quotes and interpretation of the analysis, the investigators collected contact information for member checks on transcripts; investigators also invited participants to dissemination workshops after preliminary data evaluation (Birt et al., 2016; Hartmann et al., 2014).

Theoretical Approach

Phenomenological theory, wherein the researcher seeks to understand social phenomenon from people's viewpoint (Welman & Kruger, 1999, p. 189), framed the study as we were interested in the participants' lived experiences (Groenewald, 2004). Significant in their lived experiences included the essential meaning contained therein (Freeman et al., 2019; Murphy et al., 2009). Investigations with AI peoples are compatible with the phenomenological approach due to use of narratives (e.g., storytelling) and culturally embedded context.

> The phenomenological method is able to capture the lived experience and illuminate the words of indigenous people themselves and, thus, is able to represent, through written accounts, the lifeworld of indigenous peoples. … The research process of phenomenology is circular, moving back and forth between the part and the whole during thematic analysis. Thematic analysis of the whole produces findings that offer an in-depth understanding of the whole of a phenomenon. Phenomenology, thus, is looked on as a harmonious, amenable, and acceptable research method to use in societies, such as those of indigenous peoples, that possess a holistic worldview (Struthers & Peden-McAlpine, 2005, p. 1267).

Data Preparation and Analyses

Transcription

The digital audio recordings from the focus groups were transcribed verbatim. Investigators performed accuracy checks of the transcripts wherein team members would initially transcribe the audio recording. In a separate session, another investigator would follow along the transcript and audio recording, making corrections as needed. At this stage, the first author then finalized the transcripts, again making corrections as required. When applicable, member check audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and incorporated into the final, community member-approved transcript. The research team returned to one location to conduct in-person member checks because phone contact was limited for some homeless participants at that site.

Codes

The community member-approved transcripts from each focus group were combined into one master transcript, with responses grouped by question. These transcripts were first coded independently by three investigators. Coders generated preliminary emergent themes through recurring words, ideas, and concepts (Teufel-Shone et al., 2006). Code creation was generated inductively (i.e., data-driven based on the group discussions). An inductive approach aligned with our phenomenological approach and with AIs' own lived experiences of resilience and strength.

Patterns and Themes

Once the three investigators coded all the data, the next step was to identify patterns (Teufel-Shone et al., 2006). The three sets of coded data were combined in tabular form displaying investigators' names and their coded data and were shared among the three investigators. Coders then ascertained *patterns* as evidenced by recurrent elements in the discussions identified by at least two coders. When only one investigator identified a pattern, discussion involving interrater reliability based upon team members' reasoning ensued, followed by consensus building, leading to an agreed upon set of patterns (Chief et al., 2022; Pederson et al., 2020; Teufel-Shone et al., 2006). These identified patterns were used to construct emergent *themes* and *sub-themes* arising from the participants' words (Chief et al., 2022; Sanderson et al., 2018).

Dissemination

In accordance with CBPR research principles, the lead author returned to each setting that hosted focus group discussions to share the study results and to converse whether the results reflect

participants' meanings, perceptions, and accounts of the data (Freeman et al., 2019; Hartmann et al., 2014; Murphy et al., 2009). All attending participants endorsed the preliminary findings.

RESULTS

Participant Demographics

Focus group participants included 25 AI adults, ranging in age from 18 to 75 years (Table A1). Participants' educational attainment ranged from nursery school to master's degree recipients. Participants reported their household size was from 1 to 6 people. Their annual income spanned from $2,500 to $150,000. The majority (56%) of participants were women; however, men were well represented (40%), and one participant identified as transgender and Two Spirit. Marital status of the participants reveal that the majority were single or never married (44%), while almost a quarter were divorced (24%), and 12% were currently married (Table A2). Most participants were fully employed (52%). Over half (56%) of participants spent their childhoods on AI reservation communities. Most participants affiliated solely as Christian (52%), and others adhere only to their tribal belief systems (16%). Eighty-eight percent identified solely as AI. Seventeen different tribal affiliations were noted, with five (20%) having affiliations with more than one tribe. The wide-ranging backgrounds of the participants provides rich context for their lived experiences (Austin, 2013).

Focus Group Discussion

Participants described their knowledge and meaning of the term 'resilience' and their descriptions of what makes them strong via their lived experiences. Analysis of these responses revealed four themes and seven sub-themes (Table A3). Discussion of themes include excerpts from focus group discussions.

Theme 1. American Indian People Built Resilient Strength via Toughness and Wisdom

Participants shared words, phrases, metaphorical examples, and wisdom conveying their meanings and thoughts regarding the word 'resilience.'

Sub-theme 1. Active Resistance. Discussion on endurance, perseverance, resistance, self-survival, stubborn/stubbornness, and toughness were presented. To illustrate, a middle-aged woman's phrase about resistance included, "standing like a bump on a log." Participant's voicings

involve action-oriented choices that are future leaning and feature not giving up when faced with trials. One elder man's discussion conveys pride and perseverance. "If you're down, you know, get up, be proud of yourself, go forward. And, if you get knocked down again, you know, keep going." (See Table A3, Theme 1 for additional examples).

Sub-theme 2. Recovery, Strength, and Wisdom. Numerous participants report that recovery and bouncing back from hardships shows resilience. However, they point out that learning from difficult events or problems is a crucial element of resilience wherein you resolve the issue and do not repeat the problematic behaviors. A university student participant agrees with other discussants about 'bouncing back' but emphasizes the importance of learning from hardships. "I would say resilience for me is like going through tribulation, you know, so like, and able to pull through it and you know and learn something from it, so it doesn't happen again [chuckles]." (See Table A3, Theme 1 for additional examples.)

Participants actively listened to their fellow discussants and agreed with their statements but also built upon their utterances. Thus, participants endorsed that not only should one learn from problematic situations, but they also should be enriched through this process, such as enhancing strength and returning to health. An elder woman explains:

> Resilience is, you're able to come back stronger from a situation that you've gone through. Or life that kinda beats you down but you come back up. And you're a better person because you have learned something from that situation. And you come away from whatever situation it is, stronger, and knowing that you are able to be healthy again.

The significance of looking towards the future and dealing with impending challenges was also stated,

> Keep on going one foot in front of the other. Regardless of what happen in the back, it's already past tense. Next step, you don't know, face the battle and go at it again. Because you will face another battle. ... [Laughs] For me [chuckles] that's all, anyways, so just keep on going. Face your fears. Stand up to it. Don't back down. Bump it in [sic] head, like a resilient goat! [Scattered laughing]. (Middle-aged woman participant)

Withstanding lifeway challenges, building multi-dimensional (mind, body, and soul) strength, and acknowledging one's success were also disclosed. One middle-aged man shared that 'resilience' is unfamiliar. "To be honest with you, I gotta look that word up. I really don't know the definition of resilience [laughter]. Like I said I really don't know [laughter]. [Loudly] I'm educated but that's a new word to me."

Participants' explanations of the meaning of the term 'resilience' grew increasingly sophisticated as discussion evolved. In some cases, participants shared culturally applicable examples and personal stories to illustrate how they experienced resilience.

Theme 2. Lifeways Involve Choices to Walk Toward Resilience: The Value of Traditional Native Lifeways

In the second emergent theme, participants invoked action-oriented choices to overcome impactful lifeway challenges and return to or seek balance and harmony.

Sub-theme 1. Resilience is Dependent on Impactful Experiences. Participants recalled personal examples of resilience; the common denominator was how impactful these events were in their lived experiences. One elder participant shared how a colleague encouraged her to fill an Indian educator position thousands of miles from her home. A middle-aged woman participant who experienced homelessness with her young children struggled when revealing that although a harrowing event occurred at the urban community center, she also feels drawn to the warmth and support there, while simultaneously recollecting this traumatic experience that built resilience (Table A3, Theme 2). Thus, participants evidence complexities and impactful events surrounding AI resilience.

Sub-theme 2. Storytelling Conveys Lifeway Challenges. Participants shared stories of contending with lifeway challenges. A middle-aged woman participant recounted her heartbreaking experience of homelessness. "I mean I had everything, and I went to nothing. I was in a shelter, I had nothing, I was in the streets, we slept in a car. I almost froze to death with my kids." Further along in the focus group discussion, this participant relates later successes in leaving an abusive partner, securing employment, and attaining a stable home for her family. (Table A3, Theme 2).

Sub-theme 3. Surviving Post Colonialism Leads to Wisdom and Resilience. This sub-theme arose from discussion likening resilience to perseverance, overcoming obstacles and hardship from contemporary and past events that impacted AI people. Participants connected a

contemporary lifeway challenge, the North Dakota Access Pipeline, to a past historical traumatic event, "… isn't it a repeat of Wounded Knee, just saying?" [Others nodded in agreement.] In the member check, this same participant further elaborated by stating how the U.S. administration under President Trump was undermining Native sovereignty. Participants discussed colonialism via federal policies' negative impact on their lives, such as assimilation suffered in Indian boarding schools. Participants' discussion also conveyed wisdom gained through these lifeway challenges (Table A3, Theme 2).

Sub-theme 4. Resilience Promotes Harmony and Balance. Participants were particularly expressive and expansive on this sub-theme. Discussion featured resilience as faith, a Native worldview that embraces mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual dimensions of life, and as returning to health after adversity consistent with seeking harmony and returning to balance.

A middle-aged woman participant expressed the strengthening AI spirituality imparts. "Resilience to me is that we're spiritual people and we draw our strength and that's how we are resilient. [Chuckles] That's who we are!" Another middle-aged woman located her resilience in discovering her tribal roots (Table A3, Theme 2). These accounts resonate with the Native worldview regarding the importance of harmony and balance in all things, including their communities. Further analysis finds that spirituality and religion are their primary source of strength in their harmony and balance, followed by their extended families (Table A4).

Theme 3. Help: Giving and Receiving

The third emergent theme stressed the need for resources when undergoing resilience processes. This resource importance was also reflected by participants' emphasis on the importance of giving back once their situations improved. This included the concepts of asking for help, reciprocity, and that good citizenship makes you strong. Stability and civil conduct also foster strength, as relayed by a middle-aged male participant. "I say, be strong, go to work every day. You know, pay bills and everything. Keep on going, don't be lazy."

Theme 4

This complex theme involves three interconnected and somewhat overlapping themes: **1) Lifeways Involve Choices to Walk Towards Resilience: The Value of Native Lifeways; 2) Family Relationships and Dynamics; and 3) Communities: Tribal and Urban**. Specifically, Native lifeways and Christian spirituality infuses through dynamic family relationships and tribal and urban communities. Participants discussed that a connection with spirituality/religion and

family build strong communities. A middle-aged Two Spirit participant points to the importance of the AI urban center in shoring up their well-being and spirituality by metaphorically connecting this urban center's community life with the powerful pounding of drums (Table A3: Theme 4).

A middle-aged woman participant discussed the importance of Christianity in her life, "What made me strong was functional goal-minded, positive contributors in the community, to know there is a Creator and to have that hope and faith and positive outlook of being function-able and contributing in our community." Another elderly man participant elaborated by stating, "Okay, being a part of a thriving community and helping others with the knowledge you have based on your life, skills, and education." A middle-aged woman participant shared about the urban community as a beautiful home-like (akin to her tribal nation community) place of warmth that empowered her resilience. Accordingly, Theme 4 reflected an interconnectedness with lifeways (Native and mainstream spirituality), family relationships and dynamics, and tribal and urban community.

DISCUSSION

In this study, urban AI participants provided their meanings, perceptions, and voiced resilience through their narratives, storytelling, and examples (Struthers & Peden-McAlpine, 2005). Discussions reveal AI viewpoints on individual resilience from participants who are currently urban dwellers, albeit the majority were raised within or near Indian Country communities. Results center on AI conceptions of resilience (Kirmayer et al., 2009) rather than researchers' preconceived definitions, thereby addressing an important oversight embedded in most studies involving AI people which often do not include the direct gathering of AI voices on the important concept of resilience (James et al., 2018; Smith, 2012).

Prior research shows that AIs generally talk about their individual resilience and strength in a storytelling format (Burnette et al., 2017; Denham, 2008, Gone, 2013; Struthers & Peden-McAlpine, 2005) that grows increasingly complex as focus group discussions progress. Their narratives and storytelling promote teaching, advice, and lessons learned, consistent with observations elsewhere (Kahn et al., 2016; Grandboise & Sanders, 2009). Aligned with an AI worldview, discussion included both positive and negative elements of participants' lived experiences but eventually sought to reach a sense of balance and harmony. Through their

discussions, participants were pleased as their storytelling about resilience indicated their actively overcoming challenges.

Studies related to AI resilience find that culture is a significant positive element (Kahn-John et al., 2021; Kahn et al., 2016; Manson, 2020; Stumblingbear-Riddle & Romans, 2012; Grandboise & Sanders, 2009). This study also finds the concept of culture prominent in the lives of the participants; however, the use of the term 'culture' did not strongly resonate as a descriptor of this powerful element throughout their discussions. Hence, the theme, Lifeways Involve Choices to Walk Towards Resilience: The Value of Traditional Native Lifeways, better encapsulates this multi-faceted, influential, and fluid concept as reflected by the lived experiences of these AI participants (Kahn-John et al., 2021; Gone, 2007).

Based on the themes and sub-themes derived from the AI participants' voices, AI resilience is a journey created by past and present lifeway (Kahn-John et al., 2021; Willeto, 1996) challenges, during which an individual: (a) seeks to return to harmony and balance (Morehead et al., 2015), (b) is strengthened in some way (Pepic et al., 2022), and (c) attains wisdom during the journey, thereby avoiding future difficulties of the same sort. Importantly, this definition encompasses the past, present, and future which are important for AI people (Struthers & Peden-McAlpine, 2005). Participants also discussed how AI resilience is demonstrated or accomplished. From their viewpoint and through their narratives and storytelling, participants described resilience as: (a) asking for help when needed (Burrage et al., 2016) and reciprocating or giving back (Gone, 2007) when lifeway challenges have decreased; (b) drawing from their spirituality, both traditional Native lifeways and/or Christian religions (Goodkind et al., 2010); and (c) through their families (Burnette, 2018; Robbins et al., 2013) in order to build strong communities–urban and tribal (Grandboise & Sanders, 2009; Kirmayer et al., 2009).

Participants illustrate how resilience is shown through help-seeking when needed, and when their lives are better, they practice reciprocity consistent with the Native worldview of harmony and balance. This relationship aligns with other work showing that reciprocity is embedded within AI societies (Gone, 2007) and with prevalent help-seeking behavior observed among urban AI women experiencing intimate partner violence (Evans-Campbell et al., 2006).

Throughout the focus group discussions, an intersection between Native spirituality and Christianity related to tribal or nontribal lifeways became evident among some participants (cf. Goodkind et al., 2010). In other words, a specific higher power did not predominate but rather a shared valuing of the Creator and Jesus and/or God was observed (Portman & Garrett, 2006). A

case study of a multi-tribal middle-aged woman exemplified her synthesis of Navajo, Native American Church, and Christian religious belief systems (Begay & Maryboy, 2000). Perhaps participants in this study felt intrapersonal strengths from both the Creator and Christian God.

AIs' immediate and extended families are also a source of strength (Burnette, 2018; Robbins et al., 2013). Likewise, participants identify their immediate, extended, and multi-generational families as critical reserves of strength. Participants also distinguish central features of their families, such as their determination and the important teachings conveyed regarding physical, mental, and spiritual strength.

Studies have identified AI communities as an important source of resilience for AIs (Grandboise & Sanders, 2009; Kirmayer et al., 2009). In urban settings, AI people also find resilience in community. For example, in this study, participants discussed the urban community center as a welcoming place where they greeted each other with warmth and hugs. The community and university center venues were considered a home when away from their Indian Country homes. Thus, community gatherings are an essential ingredient of resilience where relationships are cultivated (Hulen et al., 2019). Place is particularly important given the greater likelihood of AIs living in cities to experience social isolation and both explicit and subtle discrimination (D'Amico et al., 2019), as well as the detrimental impact of racism on their health and well-being (Williams et al., 2019). Our study participants likewise discussed poverty, overt racism out in the streets, and social inequities suffered when living in cities.

In this study, several AI participants' statements were congruent with the resilience definition of Oré et al., which states resilience is "the ability to adapt or respond positively (i.e., to exhibit growth and transformation) to stress and adversity" (2016, p. 135). Growth and transformation following stressful circumstances is clearly evidenced by the discussants. However, 'adapting' to adverse circumstances was not revealed in participants' discussions. Ungar's (2008) definition also finds partial support (e.g., dynamic character), but substantive differences exist as well (e.g., the magnitude that learned wisdom denotes for AI focus group participants). Furthermore, just one AI participant expressed a lack of knowledge regarding the term 'resilience.'

There is partial support for prototypical definitions of individual resilience, such as "the ability to adapt or respond positively (i.e., to exhibit growth and transformation) to stress and adversity" (Oré et al., 2016, p.135) or "positive adaptation in spite of adversity" (Rudzinski et al., 2017, p.2). Specifically, urban AI participants affirm that resilience involves dealing with adversity (e.g., lifeway challenges) and positive responses (e.g., exhibit growth or transformation or return

to/seek harmony and balance) to these challenges. However, adaptation, positive or otherwise, was not revealed in the focus group discussions. Instead, participants emphasized the necessity to move away from adversity rather than adjust to it. Their focus was to proactively journey toward harmony and balance, thereby moving away from negative lifeway challenges. Participants also voiced through narratives and storytelling the importance of wisdom by learning from those challenges and not repeating them.

Partial support for elements of Ungar's (2008) resilience definition is also evidenced in our study. For example, participants discussed individual and contemporary lifeway challenges such as work and university responsibilities. Participants also revealed harsh experiences such as prejudice, discrimination, and institutional racism. Similarly, the fluid nature of Ungar's definition is likewise championed by our study participants (i.e., navigate vs. journey). We might also accept that "health-sustaining resources, including opportunities to experience feelings of well-being" (2008, p. 225) approaches what is meant by 'seeks to return to harmony and balance.' Yet, Ungar's phrasing has more passive overtones than what our participants conveyed. Participants actively sought to return to harmony and balance and are strengthened during this journey. Further, lifeway challenges are conceptually broader and more encompassing than psychological and environmental adversity. For example, participants pointed to historical and contemporary lifeway challenges such as Indian Boarding Schools, Relocation, North Dakota Access Pipeline, and Wounded Knee. Hence, when experiencing adversity, the discussants acknowledged and applied historical lifeway challenges in their examples. Participants also emphasize the central role of wisdom during their resilience journeys. It's insufficient to simply bounce back, but rather one must emerge stronger than before, learning from challenging experiences so as to avoid repeating them, thereby demonstrating wisdom. Finally, Ungar's (2008) definition explicitly includes the individual's culture, family, and community as culturally meaningful resources. Similarly, our study participants address these elements when discussing the raised question of how AI resilience is demonstrated or accomplished.

These participants resided in cities at the time of the study, although the majority were raised within the territorial borders of their tribal nations and communities. The first two authors noted that many conversed in their Native tongues during focus group breaks and after the focus groups concluded. Several participants approached the first two authors to request our tribal heritages, including our tribal nation clans as appropriate. Further, most of the participants moved to nearby cities fairly recently or were temporary urbanites while attending university. Although

these AI conceptions of resilience are drawn from urban AIs voices, these participants were also robustly endowed with their tribal nation's lifeways stemming from their Indigenous worldviews (Haozous et al., 2021).

Limitations

These findings may not pertain to other AI people including other urban AIs because research activity was limited to the Southwest United States. Due to resource constraints, just one student focus group was conducted on one university campus. Recruitment settings such as community centers may shape resilience trajectories and thus appear more central than they are among those who do not frequent these centers. Conversely, the integration of such places may suggest pathways for greater community integration outside of reservation boundaries.

Implications

We suggest that utilizing AI urban community driven conceptualizations and definition of AI resilience may be more reliable and valid with strength-based studies, including interventions, with urban AI people (Kirmayer et al., 2009; Manson, 2020), particularly as most interventions have been designed from an *etic* (outsider) framework (Dickerson et al., 2020; Gittelsohn et al., 1999). For example, when designing interventions with urban AI people, care should be taken to encourage intervention participants to return to or to seek harmony and balance; emphasize that undergoing lifeway challenges strengthens intervention participants; and promote the wisdom participants have gained through lifeway challenges to help them avoid future difficulties.

CONCLUSION

The study developed a culturally relevant definition of AI resilience built upon urban AI participants' voices as exhibited through the themes and sub-themes derived in a qualitative multi-investigator consensus analysis. AI resilience is a journey created by past and present lifeway challenges during which one: (a) seeks to return to harmony and balance, (b) is strengthened in some way by lifeway challenges, and (c) attains wisdom during the journey, thereby avoiding future difficulties. Hence, conceptions of AI resilience are multi-faceted, center on impactful events, manifest Native values, are movement-oriented, and build strength and wisdom.

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APPENDIX

Table A1
Descriptive statistics – Age, household size, household income

Indicator	Mean	Range	Standard Deviation
Age	49.46	18.5 – 74.5	16.28
Household size	2.64	1 – 6	1.85
Household annual income	$27,039.68	$2,500 – $149,999.50	$32,979.00

Table A2
Descriptive statistics – Gender, marital status, employment status, education, religious/spiritual affiliation

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Men	10	40
Women	14	56
Transgender and Two Spirit	1	4
Marital Status		
Single (never married)	11	44
Married	3	12
Cohabiting (living with partner but not legally married)	3	12
Divorced	6	24
Other (separated, widowed)	2	8
Employment Status		
Employed	13	52
Unemployed	4	16
Retired	3	12
Full-time student	5	20
Education Attainment: Highest level of school completed		
8th grade and less	2	8
Some high school, no diploma	1	4
High school graduate, diploma or equivalent (GED)	2	8
Some college, no degree	10	40
Trade/technical/vocational training	4	16
Associate's degree	1	4
Bachelor's degree	3	12
Master's degree	2	8

Table A2
Descriptive statistics – Gender, marital status, employment status, education, religious/spiritual affiliation

	Frequency	Percentage
Religious/Spiritual Affiliation		
Tribal Belief System	4	16
Native American Church (NAC)/Peyote Road/Way	1	4
Christian	13	52
Unaffiliated	1	4
Don't know	1	4
Tribal Belief System & Catholic	2	8
Tribal Belief System & Christian	1	4
Tribal Belief System & NAC/Peyote Road/Way	1	4
Tribal Belief System & NAC/Peyote & Christian: Catholic	1	4
Totals	**25**	**100**

Table A3
Themes (1-4) and sub-themes: Example quotes

Themes	Sub-themes (S) and Quotes
Theme 1. AI People Built Resilient Strength via Toughness and Wisdom	**S1. Active Resistance** • "Endure toughness, yeah. Or the hardships, yeah something like that." (University man) • "It's how you survive, how you stand strong, even though there are challenges. There might be hard times and stuff like that. How you keep yourself strong and standing." (Middle-aged woman) **S2. Recovery, Strength, and Wisdom** • "I feel like resilience is like the ability for something to be able to take a hit, or like a large blow and see how fast it recovers." (University woman) • "I also think it's being able to come back with a vengeance, like stronger" [another participant chuckles]. [This elicits agreement from two other discussants]. (University woman) • "I think resilience is coping mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually." (Middle-aged woman) • Resilience to me means to be able to withstand whatever comes your way and being able to come back with as a stronger person body, mind, and soul. To be able to stand there and say, "I've done it. I got through this." (Middle-aged woman)

Table A3
Themes (1-4) and sub-themes: Example quotes

Themes	Sub-themes (S) and Quotes
Theme 2. Lifeways Involve Choices to Walk towards Resilience: The Value of Native Lifeways	**S1. Resilience is Dependent on Impactful Experiences** • That's my resilience, okay [chuckles]. No, [softly] resilience it just. [Bit louder]... We still come back to, to where we're at because we know that this community center- this Center is available to us, but yet like we, we don't want to come back because there's certain things that you know happened and that exist and you don't wanna really like face it. (Middle-aged woman) **S2. Storytelling conveys Lifeway Challenges** • And I'm a really hard, persevering type a guy, you know, and when I were working for the forest services, I had crews under me, and, a lot of times a lot of decisions had to be made right away. And the whole crew, man, they just look at you and you got all these eyes on ya, "What are we gonna do?" "Where are we gonna go?" You always plan ahead of time so I've learning that at a really early age just to plan ahead of time... And expect the unexpected so I'm always, I guess, a believer in expecting the worst, planning for the best and a residual plan [chuckles]. That's what keeps me strong is that mind, the stable mind, but never forgetting where--what you believe in as a Native American man. (Middle-aged man) **S3. Surviving Post Colonialism Leads to Wisdom and Resilience** • Resilience seems to be encapsulated in what's going on with the North Dakota Access Pipeline where everyone's coming together to relive this like cultural hurt but they're growing from that experience, and kinda showing strength in numbers and strength in culture. (University woman) • Native American land is sovereign land but you know [sic] US invaded over like 100 countries without permission like breaking US international law because like the UN's put a call on everything that doesn't relate to us and I feel like it's just like history repeating itself you know. And like they're actually going through camps and actually going into fight full on body armors or like live ammo going into these camps and they're kicking people out and arresting people like this just because Trump signed the executive order, I mean. Like more of a dictator's running this country now. (University woman) • My mother lived on the reservation she was with seven or eight or nine, I can't remember, brothers and sisters. And she taught herself to read English by the newspaper as wallpaper. She watched her grandmother sweep the dirt floors with water to get the dust from flying around. And she couldn't wait till the bus came to relocate them to Sherman in Riverside. And she became very educated, I guess, through the boarding school and she met my father there and they got married, you know the story. And she had me, the one and only, and it was very difficult because I wanted to be Indian and she didn't want me to be Indian. And, she wouldn't teach me the language, she wouldn't teach me the culture, she wouldn't teach me. And then on top of that I end up going to an all-white school through grammar school, junior high, and high school. And I was spit at, I was kicked, I was called n***er [sic], every [sic] and I'd come home crying and my mother would say "Be tough. Say a prayer for them." I said, "Oh brother". So [laughs] years ... it was hard for me. And I always wanted to be Indian. (Elder woman)

Table A3
Themes (1-4) and sub-themes: Example quotes

Themes	Sub-themes (S) and Quotes
Theme 3. Help: Giving and Receiving	**S1. Asking for Help, Reciprocity, and Good Citizenship Makes You Strong** • What makes me strong is putting down my pride. I was very prideful of having everything and going down to nothing. And asking for help from people that I wouldn't think that would give me anything. And it was given to me from people that I wouldn't expect it from, and it made me stronger to get into like the community here. Now that I got back onto my two feet, I give here in the community, I help. (Middle-aged woman) • It was hard for me to humble myself too. Cuz [sic] I had custom homes and places and stuff, and I came down to nothing. I had to ask for help and these people here, they do help. And they joke with you, make you smile again. Give you good stuff and food everything, you know what I mean? It's a really good place to be. Not just, this woman here, there are many of them out there that can come here for services, and it's really nice. I like to see them--family. (Middle-aged woman)
Theme 4. Lifeways Involve Choices to Walk towards Resilience: The Value of Native Lifeways: The Value of Traditional Native Lifeways' • Family Relationships and Dynamics • Communities: Tribal and Urban	**S1. Spirituality/Religion and Families Builds Strong Communities** • I still come back here because I love this place and I love the people here and just to see just to feel that just like you said the warmth and the feeling that everybody gives to, I mean just to see everybody back here is like, yeah, it's cool. [chuckles]. (Middle-aged woman) • Everybody here we all gather up here but sometimes we visit each other once in a great while and we meet up at [urban community center], but then we come back here [referring to a different urban community center]. We come back together. **This is a powerful pounding drum of life here** [emphasis added]. (Middle-aged Two Spirit) • I come here every time I just need, I mean just need a hug or just a smile or just to look at somebody or just to have, have like something that I have and give it here. You know because it's where I got what I needed to move on to, to live my life the way I am living it now. And I love everybody that comes here and I just love this place, it's a home away from home. And this is a community for everybody no matter where you're at, no matter what you're doing, or where you come from, this is where everybody comes to and it's a beautiful place to be. (Middle-aged woman)

Table A4
Additional sub-themes

Sub-theme	Quotes
Spirituality and Religion	• For me, I think my strength comes spiritually. I practice like traditional [tribal] teachings but we're also Catholic, and we also dabble in Native American Church. So, it's like you got all these spiritual stuff coming at you. But spiritually I try to focus on [tribal nation] teaching like [tribal specific lifeways]. (University woman) • My Native American and Christian belief, that's what keeps me strong is that mind, the stable mind, but never forgetting where--what you believe in as a Native American man. I believe in spirituality as Native Americans do. I believe in my tribal beliefs. And I'm also Christian too. I believe in both of them so I don't forget either one. (Middle-aged man) • I'm one of those people who I've seen God. I've been in and out of Heaven. I've experienced a lot of phenomena, networking with angels. So it's more than a belief it's been my existence. And I like to pass on to people in the community to be, you know we're forerunner, spiritual people. And we're--everything's, in my beliefs in what I have experienced, is we are Prayer Warriors. And so we have that within us, to know there is a Creator and to have that hope and faith and positive outlook of being functionable and contributing in our community. (Middle-aged woman)
Family	• And especially, I get my strength from my mother. She was a very strong, determined woman. And, she would never let me say "I can't." She would say, "You do this." And I would. I never questioned her. So that's where I get my strength from. (Elder woman)
Extended Family	• My strength, my other strength I think I gained from my family. My father, my mother, grandmother. [Short pause] And, in my old age I think I gained my strength from my children. They're my best teachers. And, I guess that's where I am today as an elder. (Elder woman) • And not only that, my sisters stand behind me, they're really, very supportive. And my [late] dad used to be supportive, and my grandmother. So, my immediate family, they're really, really-we're there for one another, so they do make me strong. And my mom, although she's not--limited in a lot of things, but she's able to help and be there for us, so. (Middle-aged woman)
Family: Reservation-Based and Practicing Native Culture	• What I think makes me strong, is from the beginning it's always been my family. My family's been the foundation for everything I've accomplished and everything I will accomplish, and that goes for mental, spiritually and physically because it is rigorous to be culturally active, and physically and mentally and spiritually. It requires a lot of putting your faith in the natural world as well as people, which now a days that's kind of hard. But, I believe that my family is the ground work for my strength, and then I am my own strength basically because I'm trying to take it all in, and apply it wherever I go and trying to never leave it behind no matter how far I am from home. (University woman)