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WHEN DARKNESS DESCENDS: A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF MATERNAL RESILIENCE FOLLOWING HURRICANE MARIA

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RESILIENCE FOLLOWING HURRICANE MARIA

By

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Dedication

Puerto Rican
mothers know that
fear exists
in the same place
as

love.

This is for the mothers.
Tu compasión mejora el mundo.

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Acknowledgements

guidance, and for your patience when I did not always have the answers. Love, soul, beautiful!

Finally, to the women and mothers of Puerto Rico who trusted me with their stories, with their hearts, you are the reason there is light in all of the darkness. I hear you, I see you, and I will never forget about you. In memory of Ramon and Benjamin and the countless other lives that were lost. You are not forgotten.

List of Abbreviations

ASI	Alimentación Segura Infantil
CDC	The Centers for Disease Control
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigations
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
IBCLC	International Board-Certified Lactation Consultant
IYCFE	Infant, Youth, and Child Feeding in Emergencies
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning
PROTECT	Puerto Rico Test Site for Exploring Contamination Threats
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
U.S.	The United States
WIC	Women, Infant, and Children

Abstract

Within the last 40 years, academic research on disasters has focused on resilience as applied to individual adaptive capacities, rebuilding resources, and policy-driven solutions. While there has been an increased awareness of the many gendered dimensions of post-disaster recovery, women's and mother's agency in such situations is still largely ignored. Thus, this dissertation adopts a maternal focus, arguing that mothers are not merely vulnerable subjects but critical agents of post-disaster recovery for families, communities, and social systems more generally.

To analyze mothers' resilience, I looked to the aftermath of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico as an illustrative case and field site. Combined across two site visits in 2019 and 2020, I interviewed nine mothers and conducted a focus group with eight midwives. Their interviews were framed as stories using Clandidin and Connelly's (2000) restorying techniques. Additionally, I drew from Buzzanell's (2010) Communication Resilience Framework to map five communicative processes of enacting resilience onto these stories. By studying their stories, I was able to extend Buzzanell's framework to acknowledge the proactive agency of maternal resilience as enacted through communication, contextual, and relational elements of life in the aftermath. My analysis identifies how mothers reproduced and revised configurations of personal, family, and community life post-disaster.

Overall, these embodied research practices revealed how these women remade their daily practices, renegotiated relationships and identities, and created new resource avenues not just to survive but to thrive and live well. When interlinked with histories, material exigencies, and cultural discourses, "getting back to normal" required mothers to seek the routine and advocate for change simultaneously in both motherwork and domesticity. All across the island mothers used anger as a productive force for activism and creative entrepreneurship and leveraged communal coalitions as key components to establishing collaborative empowerment and belongingness. The relationships they had with one another enacted their own brand of resilience. I argue that maternal resilience broadens discussions and understandings of what resilience is and how mothers, through their mothering practices, enact transformative approaches to disaster recovery.

Keywords: resilience, mothering, narrative, disaster, Puerto Rico, Hurricane Maria, Buzzanell, communication

Introduction

This dissertation elaborates the multidimensional elements of maternal resilience by drawing on the narratives of mothers who lived through Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico in 2017. As a case site, this locale presents an ideal vantage point to both 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.

Chapter 1 situates this study within the conditions facing residents in Puerto Rico, not just in the immediate aftermath but in the months and years following Maria. This *after* Maria picture helps situate their stories by drawing out the layered and evolving contradictions and complications among natural and human-made elements of the disaster terrain. As I detail, while mothers faced chaotic conditions and failures in aid response, they were additionally tasked with rewiring support networks that before Maria had failed them, historical failures that produced added exigencies mothers were forced to contend with.

Further, current research models on resilience in disaster environments often ignore these contextual, historical, and cultural elements that run as undercurrents in these environments. Instead, they often generalize relief responses and develop models to resilience that advance normative, factor-focused models in attempts to restore communities to pre-disaster status, which can reinforce preexisting inequalities that continue to perpetuate vulnerability, leaving those recovering from a disaster in perpetual struggle. As Buckle (2006) addressed because different disasters have different characteristics—types of damage, duration, and intensity—and different places are

impacted by disasters differently given physical, social, economic, political, historical, and cultural elements, a definition of resilience must account for the interplay of these conditions to understand what recovery should look like. 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). Further, as Flynn, Sotirin, and Brady (2012) posit, "Resilience realizes possibilities and resources by shaping and enacting relationships among selves and others…things and dreams, bodies and needs, and so on" (p. 9). When juxtaposed against the events leading up to and after Maria, it becomes apparent that new models must be developed that emphasize the interactive and discursive dimensions of resilience that frame the lives of those impacted most.

Chapter 2 makes the case that women and, more particularly, mothers are differently impacted and called upon in post-disaster settings. I review the literature on gender and disasters and the impacts on women and families to identify the issues women face when living through a catastrophe within the family and the gendered confines of society and disaster aftermaths themselves. As Enarson (2012) argued, to fully understand the problems women encounter in these contexts, disaster research must include their work as mothers. As women are already in precarious positions in disaster-prone environments, mothers in specific are asked to take on extraordinary burdens, often increasing their vulnerability as their responsibilities for family care and survival are magnified. I turn to feminist critiques of mothering practices and motherhood as a cultural and social institution to attend to the contextualizing forces of cultural histories,

social expectations, patriarchal legacies, and neoliberal notions of mothering. Adopting a maternal focus, I argue that the subject of the mother is complexly articulated within these complex and intertwined material and discursive tensions. I argue that mothers are not merely vulnerable subjects but critical agents of post-disaster recovery for families, communities, and social systems more generally. This "matricentric" feminist theoretical approach offers a critical perspective for rethinking the resilience of mothers in post-disaster scenarios.

Ironically, centering mothers within a maternally-focused conception of resilience maps quite readily onto the dominant model of individual resilience, the trait model. I review the research that defines these personal traits of resilience and acknowledge that idealizations of the mother imbue her with similar traits. Yet, such a mapping illuminates the shortcomings of both trait approaches and cultural ideals of mothers and mothering. Instead, I look to a communicative framework of resilience because such a framework avoids both the preoccupations with solutions and traits and emphasizes the discursive and material engagements of resilience instead. I explain Buzzanell's (2010; 2021) Communication Resilience framework, which identifies five communicative processes, crafting a new normal, maintenance of identity anchors, backgrounding negative emotions to foreground productive action, using alternative logics, and maintaining and developing communication networks. Drawing from my interviews and observations in post-hurricane Puerto Rico, I flesh out the tensions and possibilities of Buzzanell's processes by exploring how the maternal subject is continually re-constituted in the narratives of mothers' recovery experiences. Through these explorations, I develop a richly textured model of maternal resilience.

To understand the lived experiences of mothers living in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, I traveled to Puerto Rico twice between 2019 and 2020 for a total of 20 days. While in Puerto Rico, I interviewed ten women and conducted a focus group with a Midwifery organization, along with several informal interviews with community members, university professors, and business owners. Through these interviews, I collected stories as a primary source of my data alongside some ethnographic observations I collected as a secondary method. I encouraged the mothers to tell me their stories of what happened during Hurricane Maria and in the two years since. Their accounts provide poignant portraits of how mothers lived this disaster- the complexities, the tensions, and the intricacies of their struggles and accomplishments. I found that these mothers navigated multiple interwoven and often conflicting constraints and difficulties that challenged the identities and survival of themselves, their families, and their communities within broader socio-cultural contexts.

It is the stories that ground this study, told by the mothers who lived through Maria and have worked through the chaos and struggle to move forward. One mother remarked that Maria transformed her: "I am who I am because of what has happened." Chapters 5 features a variety of narratives from mothers whose stories frame their identities, experiences, recovery strategies, and lived conditions to demonstrate how they enacted resilience within the family and broader socio-cultural contexts. While their stories, in many ways, parallel the processes of resilience as outlined by Buzzanell (2010; 2021), 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. Through the centering of the

maternal subject position their stories help to critique the shortcomings of popular conceptions of resilience that are imbued with social desirability and often omit classist, racial, gendered, and politicized elements that frame the experience of post-disaster life revealing places mothers cultivated multiple kinds of agencies, rewired networks for restorative justice, and pushed back against mothering for survival. Additionally, in an expansion to Buzzanell's earlier framework resilience is situated here in a culturally diverse and contextually complex environment that draws in the pre-storm humanitarian crises conditions.

In sum, in engaging with their stories, I argue that the maternal is a critical focus because it brings into stark relief how the demands of a post-disaster situation can reproduce the restrictive, gendered, and institutionalized practices and discourses of mothering while at the same time, offering alternative trajectories that might not have been possible in "normal" times. The Puerto Rican context juxtaposed contrary forces: despair and hope, loss and renewal, failure and celebration. For example, mothers' participation in public sector relief efforts (raising money, developing new training protocols, building new models for relief aid) was taken up out of despair over the extensive devastation and lack of federal assistance. Still, their participation broke down the barriers of the private-public divide, giving them greater authority, competence, and feelings of accomplishment. For many of these mothers, these processes led to changes in their family structure and how they saw the trajectory of the rest of their lives, their plans, their goals, and their futures. As such, I take up such observations in an analysis of maternal agencies articulated under desperate circumstances that both reproduced and revised the configurations of personal, family, and community life post-disaster. My

analysis constructs a communicative framework of maternal resilience, constituted in a

confluence of stories about agency, change, and hope in post-disaster Puerto Rico.

1   Puerto Rico as a Case Site Alongside Post-Disaster Recovery Models

Puerto Rico as a territory, environment, and cultural space, is a particularly apt location for a study of post-disaster resilience, as resilience efforts are situated in a particular geo/political space and contextualized by historical, political, and economic relations. In Puerto Rico, a tenuous relationship with the United States further compounds the interplay of context and relationships that impacted both the internal and external elements of recovery. The devastation in Puerto Rico and the post-disaster failures call into question the adequacy of approaches to resilience centered on systems for resource distribution, recovery of physical infrastructure, and sweeping policies focused on recovery metrics designed for measurable "bounce back" progress toward pre-disaster status.

Henningfeld (2014) notes that the word "disaster" implies "a sudden overwhelming and unforeseen event," such as, but not limited to, droughts, hurricanes, tornadoes, and earthquakes; however, disasters are not merely a natural occurrence as they are more complicated than just a single event in nature. Further, the label "disaster" may be readily applicable to innumerable situations but as Bonilla (2020) cautions, disasters do not operate as "great levelers" (p. 1). In Puerto Rico, the challenges after the storm exposed the extent of inequitable and failed response mechanisms. Still, these failures also drew attention to the racial, economic, and social inequities on the island, which had significant impacts even before the storm on both people and the environment. So, the effects of the storm were experienced differentially across the island, compounded by relations of inequality based on preexisting hierarchies of race, class, and

gender. As Bankoff and Hilhorst (2009) detail, merely "attributing disasters to natural forces, representing them as a departure from a state of normalcy to which a society returns to [sic] on recovery, denies the wider historical and social dimensions of hazard" (p. 29). The historical, economic, political, and social inequities of life *before* Maria in Puerto Rico are critical contexts for the failures in aid response that depressed the recovery of the island and remain significant impediments even today.

1.1   Before the Storm

Pre-dating the storm, the semi-autonomous relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico resulted in a lack of political representation and massive economic deficits that led to large-scale cutbacks to education and infrastructure repair funding and a lack of access to healthcare, clean water, and consistent electricity. Puerto Rico was quietly in the midst of a humanitarian crisis, even before the hurricane's landfall. Before the storm, the material conditions of Puerto Rican life were already sparse. The electrical grid was failing, which required rolling blackouts to keep some of the most necessary lights and power on. The roads and infrastructure were in such disrepair that in places, authorities did not fix the problems but rather rerouted traffic. Economically, the unemployment rate was 10+%, the island was $72 billion in debt, its capital appreciation bonds had an effective interest rate of 785%, and the poverty rate was at 43% (three times higher than that of the mainland) compounded by a 12-year-old recession (Goodell, 2018). To accommodate their financial situation, the Obama administration implemented the PROMESA law that increased the sales tax from 0% in 2005 to 11.5% in 2017, representing the highest of any U.S. state or territory (Bonilla, 2020). As a result of this

debt crisis, the outmigration of financial stakeholders on the island due to the closing of tax loopholes was devasting.

Critical infrastructure had begun to fail well before Hurricane Maria. PROTECT, which stands for Puerto Rico Test site for Exploring Contamination Threats, has been funded by the National Institute of Health to study exposure to environmental contamination in Puerto Rico for nearly a decade. They found extensive contamination of the drinking water island-wide, with significant health consequences including adverse pregnancy outcomes and preterm births. Conditions on the island pre-Maria portended the devastating impacts post-disaster:

Clean drinking water is critical to waterborne disease control and public health protection, yet it is vulnerable to extreme environmental events such as hurricanes. Environmental pollution in Puerto Rico was extensive even before the 2017 Hurricanes, with over 200 hazardous waste sites, including 18 active Superfund sites primarily contaminated by pesticides, chlorinated volatile organic compounds (CVOCs), and heavy metals. Various mixtures of toxic substances can be released into water sources due to flooding, which may inadvertently be introduced into drinking water supplies (PROTECT, 2020).

Further, PROTECT's findings from research conducted a year after Maria found,

Elevated levels of micropollutants; among which arsenic, sucralose (sweetener), perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA, perfluorochemical), atrazine-2-hydroxy (herbicide degradation product), benzotriazole (ultraviolet stabilizer), acesulfame

(sweetener), and prometon (herbicide) were at significantly higher levels in the post-Hurricane Maria than in the pre-Hurricane Maria tap water samples" (PROTECT, 2020).

The post-Maria PROTECT report demonstrated that 70% of the water supply was contaminated, as medical authorities were calling attention to water-born threats that had begun to impact the most vulnerable, including pregnant mothers having preterm babies.

Water was not the only poorly managed resource; electricity was another. After hurricanes, Irma and Maria, over 80% of the island's power lines were destroyed. Because their grid operated on a centralized system, it meant that fixing the problem after the hurricane became more complex than just fixing the lines (Economist, 2017). Before the storms, 70% of the power generated by PREPA, the island's power authority, was generated in the southern part of the island. This system was designed to meet the demands of large pharmaceutical companies that came to the island to take advantage of tax loopholes. While those companies left the island in the '90s after President Clinton changed the tax codes, the electric system was never updated to consider the shifts in populations, the changes in municipal needs, and developments in technology (Gallucci, 2018). Now 70% of the demand comes from the northern part of the island where San Juan is located, the most prominent tourist destination on the island.

PREPA has since its inception been the sole provider of electricity on the island for decades. In 2017, the Puerto Rican electric infrastructure was some 30 years behind that of average mainland municipalities. Yet, the company was charging customers anywhere from 2-8% more for electricity than the average customer in the states. Despite

not having done any updates, PREPA was estimated to be nine million dollars in debt (Economist, 2017). Hurricane Maria exposed the utility's structural failures and history of unreliable electrical service, given regular implementation of rolling blackouts in the years/weeks before the hurricanes. After Maria, FEMA awarded a $300 million contract to reconstruct the electric grid to a small company, Whitefish, that drew enough concerns that it was eventually canceled and remains in litigation today (Hellman, 2017). One solution cited as necessary in the aftermath of the hurricane was to privatize PREPA. This issue of rebuilding their grid further emboldened the [now ousted] Governor of Puerto Rico to pursue privatization, which gained the approval of PROMESA, the Puerto Rico Oversight Management and Economic Stability Act put in place by President Obama to oversee Puerto Rico's financial situation.

Summarily, Puerto Rico needed policies, infrastructure, and resources capable of responding to these problems well before the 2017 hurricane disaster. Blakeman (2017) alleged that "even without damages caused by hurricanes or storms Puerto Rico was heading for a crisis with a huge human toll of man-made causes." Because of the lack of appropriate infrastructure before the hurricane, Puerto Rico was ill-equipped to handle the dramatic aftermath of Maria.

> In Puerto Rico, the things we normally think of as necessarily aligned to constitute a nation or a region—its people, language, geographical borders, government, economy, and myths, histories—can be radically discontinuous, occupying entirely different spaces. Puerto Rico's situation was typical of many of the regions termed the 'Third World' (Briggs, 2006, p. 196).

These issues are not simplistic or newly emergent but are instead created through colonial histories, decades of fraudulent and corrupt government actions that sow distrust in the will or ability of a government to care for its citizenry, placing the responsibility for basic needs onto the individuals and communities themselves. Among U.S. policymakers, a profit over people mentality by big business, a trend toward privatization of municipal services, and political policies further entrenched the dismissive perception that Puerto Rico was too broken to be fixed and that the "population must continue to endure future forms of structural violence" (Bonilla, 2020, p. 2). As NPR's reporter Laura Sullivan (2018) aptly put it, "a century of colonial neglect left 3.5 million Americans struggling to survive." Puerto Ricans were in serious trouble even before Maria hit.

With conditions on the island already in a state of emergency, the actions and inactions after the storm intensified and exacerbated the devastation of the island. Bonilla (2020) admitted, "I was struck by the irony of all of this." Historical injustices, political mismanagement, and infrastructure crises on the island before the storm had left Puerto Ricans in a "deep state of vulnerability, that was both societal (in terms of the fragile infrastructure) and personal (in terms of financial precarity) at the precise moment they were called upon to act as agents in their own recovery" (p. 7). The fragility of the island and the precarity of its residents offered no escape from the worst impacts of a massive storm when it came.

1.1.1 Landfall

Shortly before sunrise on September 20, 2017, Hurricane Maria made landfall on Puerto Rico as a category four hurricane. As it 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 ten mph, the slow onslaught of terror and destruction spared

no one. Extending over about half the island's length, Maria decimated the natural

landscape and destroyed the livelihoods and homes of tens of thousands. "What her sister

Irma had weakened with a glancing blow, less than two weeks earlier, Maria finished off

with a direct hit" (Andres & Wolffe, 2019, p. 8). "Entire communities that had previously

been invisible, cocooned in foliage, now emerged, ghostlike. There was no light

anywhere, just the full moon that seemed to swallow all of Route 66 as it cut through the

beginning of the mountainous interior" (Morales, 2019, p. 208).

     Despite his acknowledgment that "Puerto Rico was absolutely obliterated" the day

after Maria made landfall, President Trump left to spend the next few days at his golf

club, where he tweeted about NFL protests, discussed his Muslim ban, and leveraged

attacks on Obamacare, North Korea, and the news media (Andres & Wolffe, 2019, p. 9).

It took five days before anyone in the White House contacted Puerto Rican leadership.

While the President was missing in action, the Pentagon had prepared a vessel ahead of

Maria to deliver supplies and airlift 22,000 pounds of supplies to Puerto Rico and the

Virgin Islands, "the equivalent of 30,000 bottles of water for a tropical island of 3.4

million people" (p. 20-1). Yet an investigative report by *Politico* revealed the inequity in

this response:

     While seventy-three US Northern Command helicopters were deployed 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). While the

population density and the extent of the destruction were evident, Puerto Ricans found

themselves stranded with no way out and no help coming.

For a few weeks after, I watched as the full devastation unfolded, as the issues

with power, water, food, and even the rising death toll expanded and intensified with

each passing day. 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. I watched as President

Trump threw paper towels to people bussed into his photoshoot on the promise of a meal

they never received. As Chef Jose Andres wrote in *We Fed an Island* (2019), in a plea for

help from the federal government, "the sea of desperation and the need was best

summarized by the mayor of San Juan's outcry, 'we are dying here'" (p. x). In Callé Lõiza,

a barrio outside of Old San Juan, 90% of homes were lost. At a hospital outside of

Luquillo, those suffering from scabies, conjunctivitis, and gastritis began to triple in

number every day. Worse yet, people were so desperate for water that they turned to

superfund sites, creeks, and city runoff, putting bleach in the water before finding the

means to boil it in an attempt to avoid sepsis and giardia (Clemente, 2017). As Mariana

Reye Anglero, the leader of La Callé Lõiza, Inc., described, "I think about the average

people who live here. The people we employ are mostly at the poverty level and now have no job and no source of income, and maybe the roof flew off their house. What are they going to do? Where is the help?" (Morales, 2019, p. 206). But the mainland ignored the humanitarian crisis, and the media coverage stopped.

Waiting for help was not an option. Despite the overwhelming situation, Puerto Ricans began to reclaim the island and their homes without assistance from the government. People took matters into their own hands, carving out a path for emergency vehicles with machetes and chainsaws, walking miles to check in on family and friends, and taking turns standing in lines for eight hours to make a phone call and get water and military meal packets for their neighbors. In a documentary about the hurricane's aftermath, a survivor, commented, "We possess something, and I wonder what it is. But we have something that's alive within us, something beating with us still. We have to make our own path and eventually rebuild everything" (Clemente, 2017).

1.1.2 The Aftermath

In the next 60 days after the hurricane, growing concerns and issues plagued the most marginalized and impoverished as more and more people became ill due to unsafe living conditions. Nearly half the population remained without power, an estimated 1 million still lacked access to clean drinking water, and 90% of homes in hardest-hit areas remained destroyed. Children were not attending school, roads remained impassable, and while most hospitals were operational, they were overwhelmed, relying on generators and fuel to keep the lights on and the machines working. For expectant mothers or premature infants, there was only one neonatal intensive care unit on the island, even as preterm

birth rates were increasing. And the death toll was rising: "At the Institute of Forensic Sciences in San Juan, they would need eleven refrigerated trailers to hold all the bodies" of those that died as a result of the storm (Andres & Wolffe, 2019, p. 8).

Frustrations with FEMA and the Red Cross mounted. In places like Utuado, the third-largest city on the island, no provisions or medical care of any kind came for nearly 30 days. Eventually, FEMA was serving 200,000 meals a day across the island, yet they were still coming up short by over two million. Additionally, FEMA estimated 70,000 homes were destroyed, yet at the 60-day mark, the agency had not visited 75% of the hardest hit portions of the island. It seems that while helpful, those efforts were neither sufficient nor quick enough (Barclay, 2017).

Additionally, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) was nowhere to be found as concerns over deaths due to leptospirosis were growing. While the Governor had set up eleven additional aid centers throughout the island, the aid being delivered to those centers did not match up with the populations they were meant to serve. Mayor Soto of Cánovanas stated, "I received 10,000 meals so far, and we're a city of 54,000. We need more water. We need more food" (Healy, Robles, & Nixon, 2017). While Puerto Rico asked Congress for $94.4 billion in aid, the U.S. government had at this point only committed $5 billion, given through loans for relief and reconstruction of the island, as opposed to the $7.4 billion in grants given to Texas and Florida in September (Morales, 2019). In sum, these federal and ground-level failures caused disparity in much of the immediate and subsequent relief access following the storm that prolonged the recovery process and exacerbated the crisis conditions.

A year out, *The Washington Post* and the Kaiser Foundation (2018) conducted a study to explore the experiences of Puerto Ricans after the storm, trying to determine their ongoing needs and their rebuilding priorities. As of late 2018, over 25% of residents said their day-to-day life was still somewhat (18%) or very (7%) disrupted, 13% said their housing conditions were not safe, six percent reported that their home was still unlivable, 31% said they still needed help repairing damage to their home, and 21% said they needed help navigating systems for aid. Concerning family life, 25% reported needing more help getting medical and mental health care for themselves and their families, and 39% reported concerns that their children were not going to get a good education. Further, they said that they had difficulty paying for food, had fallen behind on housing payments, taken on second jobs, and even struggled to find clean water to drink (DiJulio, Munan, & Brodie, 2018). This data, collected a year after the storm demonstrated the extent of what had not been done to help families and communities recover.

What emerged in the two years that followed the hurricane is more of the same. Stories of need and inadequate relief were rampant: aid that trickled in, price gouging for repair work, FEMA claim denials, structures covered in mold, economic instability, micro-political battles, families, and people in crisis, and an unpromising battle to correct the injustices that had plagued the island long before Hurricane Maria made landfall. Over 60% of those who submitted FEMA claims were denied, and of those, many remained in informal housing, homes that were not structurally sound and, in some cases, were patently unsafe. Slowing down progress was a delay in the disbursement of federal funding due to a reappropriation of funding by the U.S. government for border wall

construction and the shift of aid meant for Puerto Rico into Florida and Texas

infrastructure repair. Actions and inactions taken by the U.S. federal government

exacerbated the existing racial, economic, and social inequities on the island. In a searing

account of the 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).

When I first began my visits to Puerto Rico for research, the storm's second

anniversary had just passed. On the island for the first time since the summer before the

storm, I found communities and families continuing to struggle under the weight of

failures to act after and since Maria. The watermarks on the walls outside a now open

restaurant were still visible, mothers lined up outside a Women, Infant, and Children

(WIC) office, standing in the heat for hours to get the assistance they needed, the power

went on and off sometimes for a week at a time, and the only hospital on Vieques was

still shuttered forcing residents to go by ferry to another. These disparities continued into

year three, as Puerto Ricans faced rising unemployment nearly double that of the U.S.

mainland, causing a general strike. The University of Puerto Rico's students and faculty

went on strike as more cuts to education funding deepened, thousands of people shut

down an eight-lane highway and ousted the corrupt Governor, hundreds of pallets of

water and aid supplies from the initial response were found in a warehouse resulting in

the firing of the Housing Secretary, the Secretary of the Department of Family, and the

Director of the emergency management agency (Coto, 2020).

Yet, despite decades of historical mistreatment and endemic, large-scale failures of social supports, what I also saw was a bricolage of community innovation, networks of support, and new ways to hold home and family together. People leveraged relationships to intercede in the social unevenness made visible by the storm and to restructure both governmental and material forms of power. Given the historical and socio-economic circumstances before the storm, Puerto Ricans have had to create and adapt to meet the demands of post-storm life, resisting their relegation to second-class citizens. They have mobilized and relied on the strength of their relationships with neighbors, friends, and family to reconstruct their lives.

This brief overview evidences an appalling failure of governmental response and inadequacies in non-governmental aid as well. Organizations established to provide families with resources dedicated to empowering them to thrive in the aftermath were unprepared for the size and scope of the disaster. As the adverse conditions on the island persisted, these organizations struggled to pivot their response to meet the emergent demands of those in the hardest-hit areas. The prevailing post-disaster recovery models emphasize response mechanisms and policies designed to help families in the immediate aftermath of disasters like Hurricane Maria, and yet that did not happen. A brief review of such models suggests that it is not the models per se but their assumptions that might offer insight into what did and did not happen post-disaster in Puerto Rico.

1.2 Post-Disaster Recovery Models

This section considers the models that are supposed to inform large-scale, data-based response plans for both making communities resilient and activating that resilience

in recovery efforts during post-disaster periods. These plans are necessary but not sufficient. First, they do not adequately recognize the deeply embedded weaknesses of many community and regional systems that hinder the development of resilient resources and capacities and that impede progress toward post-disaster recovery. Puerto Rico demonstrated these weaknesses, but there are many areas around the world that suffer from colonial and neocolonial legacies, historical mismanagement, fragile infrastructure, economic disparities, deeply ingrained social injustices, and living conditions that make life for all but a small stratum of the populace precarious. Thus, the starting point for many places is multidimensional vulnerability.

The second reason that the prevailing models of resilience and recovery are inadequate is that they focus on adapting to local conditions rather than changing those conditions with an overriding priority on recovery rather than transformation. While I certainly do not contest the necessity of stabilizing the conditions of post-disaster life as quickly and efficiently as possible, I question two assumptions that seem to underwrite such a priority. Both are associated with the way resilience is understood. The first assumption is that resilience can be planned and produced. Resilience is taken to be specific to a trait or disposition and/or something that can be written and enacted through a particular policy. Second is the assumption that resilience is static. This assumption risks ignoring the messy and often contradictory elements of resilience that are entangled within specific historical, cultural, social, and material contexts. Once again, I do not mean that there should be no policy-based or programmatic responses to disasters. Rather, there are elements that are not given due consideration in models that emphasize metrics, progress toward a state of recovery, and adaptive resources.

The issue is that recovery must be sustainable, yet without due consideration of the elements that make life precarious in the first place, a sustainable recovery may be compromised. Further, a prevailing assumption throughout the post-disaster literature is that resilience means a return to normal or a "bounce back" to what is familiar, routine, and embedded in material and social relations that have organized life in a particular locale in the past. As I discuss, such an assumption inadvertently disavows the injustices and oppressions that contribute to failed recoveries and overlooks the need for a transformative element in our conceptions of resilience.

Post-disaster models have developed careful analyses of the elements critical to large-scale aid and recovery. For example, Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum, Wyche, and Phfefferbaum (2008) proposed a model for resilience that considers the severity and duration of a stressor, the mobilization and/or deterioration of resources, and the robustness of resources in one's ability to function, adapt and thrive in an altered environment stating that "resilience rests on both the resources themselves and the dynamic interplay of resources" (p. 136). Through their literature, Norris et al. (2008) found that resources included economic, social, informational, and communicative elements. Breaking these down further, we see accessible housing, health services, schooling, and employment as further resources for both individual and community-based adaptation (p. 136). These resources, however, depend on additional resources. For example, when individuals are relocated to temporary housing, their access to health, school, and work may become more complicated or inaccessible. The resources that individuals rely on to adapt require their own set of adaptation and resources as

"resilience depends not only on the capacities of all the entities that depend on them but on those on which they depend" (Norris, Sherrieb, & Pfefferbaum, 2011, p.163).

In Puerto Rico, adaptation was compounded by additional exigencies that included not just a physical location, topography, and the size and scope of the disaster, but the fragility of all infrastructure and civil systems and the general lack of preparedness for recovery efforts. The result was limited short-term solutions and additional failures. When systems leaned on federal and non-profit resources and organizations for relief, they found limited responses and policies that perpetuated historical denigrations and inequities. In Puerto Rico's case, the "failure of everything" occurred both before the storm as well as post-disaster.

Literature on resilience often seeks to advance policies and create training programs that work towards recovery-based approaches instead of thoroughly investigating the challenges and opportunities that emerge in post-disaster life from within the context sites themselves. Paton and Johnston (2001) offer a different definition of resilience through the interdependence of the different categories: physical, ecological systems, social, community, and individual levels of resilience. Yet, much like Norris et al. (2011), it leans on the resources located within each category, presupposing what resources are needed for recovery instead of attending to the cultural and contextual elements of resilience. Nonetheless, Paton and Johnston draw attention to models as helpful tools for forging a path both for preparedness and disaster response. Still, they carefully recognize that communities may differ dramatically from one another, making these models hard to generalize across all situations. Bruneau, Chang, Eguchi, Lee,

O'Rourke, Reinhorn, and Von Winterfeldt (2003) expand on Paton and Johnston's work through their inclusion of intra/interpersonal elements and their insight that resource diversity is a major influence on recovery.

Despite the apparent need for large-scale intervention from organizations based on expert assessments and recommendations, resilience must also emerge from within communities themselves. An instrumentalized, metric-focused approach may impose necessary measures but imposes its own limitations: "A checklist type of framework of disaster recovery which outlines principles for resilience can be criticized as being too descriptive [and prescriptive], focusing narrowly on instrumentalizing recovery to resilience" (Sou & Cei Douglas, 2019, p. 155). Further, the disjuncture between policy rhetoric, implementation, and actual lived experiences can lead to recovery efforts that are not sustainable, leaving those in recovery vulnerable to future threats and/or creating an effort that is rejected by the people the efforts are meant to serve. Sou and Cei Douglas (2019) detail how "policies which misconstrue some vital part of context or overlook the context altogether make policies ineffective" (p. 145). Ungar (2006) finds prevailing policy-driven or solutions-based approaches concerning in that they eliminate contextual and cultural understandings of the challenges, opportunities, and even what counts as a risk in a particular locale: "What may constitute risk in one cultural context may not apply to another or elsewhere those risks may constitute protective processes, based on specific condition, cultural values, and norms" (p. 324). Ungar (2006) worries that policy-driven research is often informed by reductive understandings that, in turn, can further marginalize those in recovery.

A 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." The foundation of resilience is, after all, derived from the Latin word *resilio*, which means to jump back (Klein, Nicholls, & Thomalla, 2003). Bankoff and Hilhorst (2009) state that "restoring a certain set of social, economic, and political relations can bring these systems back to their state before the disaster" (p. 696). Manyena (2006) addresses the "bounce back" theme as it emerges in resilience scholarship, arguing that the approach is outcome-oriented and has consequences for how people live post-disaster, potentially harming the people it seeks to help, however inadvertently. Paton and Johnston (2001) also critique this assumption for not considering "new possibilities opened by the changes wrought by disaster" (p. 270).

Manyena, O'Brien, O'Keefe, and Rose (2011) expand on earlier work addressing how a return to a pre-disaster state has the potential to recreate or suture into place previous structures and institutions that increase risk, vulnerability, and/or inequalities rather than increasing resilience, the goal to restore things to what was "preserves the status quo further entrenching exclusion" (Manyena, 2006, p. 438). Promoting short-term solutions that emphasize fixing infrastructure instead of getting at the root causes of community and individuals' vulnerabilities can leave already marginalized people vulnerable (MacKinnon & Derickson, 2013). Kelman, Gaillard, Lewis, and Mercer (2016) rightly ask why a society that "bounces back" should return to the same "normal" state that disadvantaged some groups pre-disaster:

Overcoming racial segregation and giving women equal rights are based on overturning the standard functions, structures, identities, and feedbacks of society. The assumption that society would not wish to, or should not, change is questionable because there are fundamental aspects of society's controls, functions, and processes that have changed in the past and that should change in the future. If the aim is to return to that 'normal' of the vulnerability process, then the next disaster is created—and would look similar to the disaster which just happened (p. 167)

Kelman et al. (2016) further suggest that current resilience frameworks that promote "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 indebt them to those hazards in the first place further institutionalizes and enables systems of inequity and inequality to persist.

The assumption that resilience means returning to normalcy or bouncing back may adopt a neoliberal emphasis on personal responsibility (MacKinnon & Derickson, 2013). 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:

In this critical reading, people and systems that do not recover following a crisis are blamed for their lack of adaptation. At the same time, 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)

Indeed, this was the case in Puerto Rico. The general populace, the island's culture, and

its administrators were variously blamed for the failure of recovery efforts despite the

apparent inadequacies in federal relief assistance.

Additionally, when recovery emphasizes economic growth and physical

reconstruction, it can essentially ignore the elements of social well-being integral to

overcoming a crisis. Sudmeier-Rieux (2014) identifies this as "passive resilience." The

focus by disaster scholars on a return to normalcy encourages reconstruction over

transformation. Instead of a passive resilience, an activist orientation can "get at the

underlying vulnerability that intensifies risk during and after storms" (p. 75). For

example, current policies established by FEMA prevent monies from being used for a

new, more updated electrical grid in Puerto Rico. Instead of developing a decentralized

grid that utilizes more sustainable, cost-effective, and hurricane-proof components, the

infrastructure was repaired to the state it was before the storm. As opposed to the

transformation of their grid, the result of the repairs is that the electrical system in Puerto

Rico is still unstable, resulting in frequent blackouts, and importantly, it is vulnerable to

additional failures when another storm hits. While these repairs have helped people, other

elements of their lives condemn them to a cycle of precarity that will not only perpetuate

their daily struggle but could further harm them when and if another disaster strikes.

Buckle (2006) argues that it is important to recognize that different disasters have

different characteristics—types of damage, duration, and intensity—and different places

are impacted by disasters differently given physical, social, economic, political, historical, and cultural elements. Thus, a definition of resilience must account for the interplay of these conditions to understand what recovery should look like. Scholars critical of the bounce back assumption offer that seeing resilience as a "move forward" or a "better than normal" necessitates a different understanding of resilience, one that considers the social, cultural, and relational needs of disaster-affected peoples (Bankoff & Hilhorst, 2009; Kelman et al., 2016).

These critiques advance resilience as much more than just rebuilding, repairing, and restoring extant systems. Instead, they advocate change in the underlying socio/cultural systems. What may be forgotten in mainstream resilience models "is what often endows a place with its defining essence and identity" (p. 142) and "the local aspirations, cultural practices, and social contexts" (p. 154) that connect people. Along with metrics, measures, and data-based planning, resilience research needs methodological approaches that support investigations into the "interrelations of individuals and collective biographies, social identities, cultural and institutional practices that are discursive and relational in nature" (Bottrell, 2009, p. 335).

1.3 Correctives: Activist Resilience

A useful corrective is that recovery models should account for "the reciprocal interplay of individuals in relationships and environments- families and neighborhoods" (Bottrell, 2009, p. 323), along with cultural centers and discursive practices. Cutter, Barnes, Berry, Burton, Evans, Tate, and Webb (2008) found that those with limited access to resources are already quite resilient in surviving conditions others would not

endure. They poignantly argue that pre-disaster precarity does not negate either post-disaster needs or that systems in place need to be improved to improve lives. Individuals, families, and communities need capacities such as infrastructure, fair access to resources, and strong networks of support to adapt and enable them to cope with disasters. Physical, economic, and social vulnerabilities increase the likelihood recovery will be slow.

A conception of resilience that "embodies both cultural and social dimensions" (p. 323) is needed as, without it, recovery programs can run the risk of short-term responses that fail to be sustainable. Further, as Brunner (1991) adds, such a conception necessitates investigation into the "needs and concerns that fall outside the dominant conceptualization of resilience" (p. 145). Rather than a preoccupation with the return to the status quo, a proposed alternative is "bouncing forward" (Buzzanell & Houston, 2018, p. 3). Given that it is often not possible to return to a "normal" state of disaster results in massive and wide-scale changes to environments, community resources, infrastructure, and people's lives, post-disaster recovery may move toward a "new normal" that is characterized by a different set of resources, connections, and communication. As Bonilla (2020) observed, "Models of recovery aren't about bringing places like Puerto Rico back to their previous states as sites of imperial capitalism, it is a matter of attending to the deep inequities and long histories of dispossession that had already left certain populations disproportionately vulnerable to disaster" (p. 10).

These arguments contend that resilience is constrained not only when pre-disaster precarity or vulnerabilities are unaddressed but also when post-disaster models reproduce long-standing injustices and inequities. A notable example of a more activist approach to

resilience and recovery is the PROTECT report, *Hurricanes and the Environmental Justice Island: Irma and Maria in Puerto Rico* (2018). The report makes the case that Puerto Rico requires a recovery approach based on environmental and social justice measures:

> The entire island of Puerto Rico must be engaged through environmental justice, not only to address its racial/ethnic composition and poor income levels, but also in view of:

> > its long history of annexation, colonial exploitation, the high number of Superfund and other hazardous waste sites, the Vieques naval bombardment site, unethical contraceptive testing in the 1960s, massive sterilization during the first half of the twentieth century, and the Jones Act which requires that all goods transported by sea between U.S. ports be transported by U.S.-owned and - operated ships. (Brown, et al., p. 150).

> PROTECT's mission is to implement long-term solutions that will continue to provide islanders with clean, safe water no matter the weather conditions or infrastructure failures; specifically, to build "new water treatment technologies that will be developed for potable and robust water treatment systems." In the years since Maria, PROTECT has called upon every federal agency from FEMA, Department of Energy, Department of Education, Health and Human Services, Department of Defense, the Environmental Protection Agency, among many others,

to replace the extractive strategies with relationships based on principles of

reciprocity and regeneration that would provide a justice-based recovery. An

approach to massive and deep-rooted disaster recovery that would rebuild Puerto

Rico's infrastructure, boost its economy, and show social solidarity while

developing cutting-edge approaches and technologies that would be broadly

applicable elsewhere. (p. 151)

This model is a different conception of resilience that is not just about rebuilding,

although it certainly is that; in addition, it is activist in its commitment to a "justice-based

recovery."

After all, "disaster response seems to assume that families live in social and

cultural vacuums" (Knowles, Sasser, & Garrison, 2015, p. 111). Instead of attending to

the contextual, historical, and cultural elements that run as undercurrents in these

environments, large-scale models often generalize relief responses and seek to restore

communities, albeit with improvements but retaining institutionalized patterns and

practices that reproduce engrained injustices. Instead, a more activist model of resilience

reframes post-disaster relief based on emergent, interactional, and discursive dynamics.

Within the last 40 years, academic research has focused on resilience as it is

applied to various contexts emphasizing elements such as individual adaptive capacities,

community planning, rebuilding, economic development, and improvements to the

physical environment. Yet, as the ongoing situation in post-hurricane Puerto Rico

illuminates, it must also "listen to and integrate local needs that may fall outside

dominant conceptualizations of resilience" (Campanella, 2006, p. 155). Accordingly, I

turn to a neglected figure of resilience in post-disaster research and intervention: the

mother. As I show in the following chapters, the maternal element is a critical locus of

agency and meaning in post-disaster narratives. My focus on mothers and mothering is

informed by the accumulating evidence that gender matters in post-disaster recovery.

2   "This Woman's Work": Impact of Disasters on Women and Mothers

Enarson (2012) points out a truism: "Disasters do not happen to people; they are experienced by people" (p. 8). In *Gender: The Missing Component of the Response to Climate Change*, Lambrou and Piana (2006) argue that climate change affects men and women differently, as there is a strong correlation between gender and survival when it comes to those most severely impacted by disasters fueled by climate change. One reason for this difference is, as Hilhorst, Bankoff, and Frerks (2008) address, "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). Henningfeld (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). While there is a small but growing literature documenting women's and mother's agency in such situations, much more is needed. As such, this chapter attends to the gendered injustices that are central to but ignored in post-disaster situations.

Early research by Enarson and Morrow (1998) found that following a disaster, women are not only more vulnerable but their needs and concerns often remain invisible. One of those social patterns includes male-dominated perspectives, often found in disaster research and primarily attributed to deep-seated social processes that privilege a more patriarchal view of disasters and disaster responses. Yet, because, historically speaking, "disaster research has been largely indifferent to it [gender], disasters have only relatively recently been subject to a gendered analysis" (Fordham, 2008, p. 176). Over the

last two decades, there has been an increased awareness of the "many gender dimensions [and gendered impacts] of climate change that academic, gender and development practitioners, and women's rights advocates have begun to grapple with" (Terry, 2009, p. 5). Fordham (2008) argues, "Women's varied, but gendered experiences give them a distinctive starting point for critiquing familiar assumptions from the position of the oppressed" (p. 176). In other words, the lived experiences of women and mothers offer a critical perspective for understanding the relations of power and injustice that permeate post-disaster recovery.

Accordingly, I review the few studies that directly engage with women's and mother's post-disaster experiences, focusing on three issues.

1. Gender is an underlying principle of disaster that puts men and women at different places when a disaster strikes, increasing women's precarity and risk. These differences are in large part a result of multiple dimensions of inequity, including but not limited to the gendered economic differences that existed before the disaster and the continued private/public divide that increases a women's caregiving responsibilities after a disaster.

2. We often only hear of how disaster disempowers women. Yet, women may be called upon to support not only their families but their communities, and their public involvement can offer greater autonomy and confidence. Reviewing how women are constrained and transformed during the disaster cycle provides a fuller picture of how they live resiliently.

3. Little attention has been paid to the extra burden placed on mothers themselves after a disaster. Insights on the relationship between gender and disaster can emerge from the experiences of mothers, as "many of the biggest challenges in the aftermath of a disaster occur in arenas that women are responsible for in everyday life, thus placing a disproportionate strain on women after a disaster occurs as they must continue to do care work under adverse conditions" (Reid, 2012, p. 113).

I turn now to a discussion that situates these issues. First, I review studies of women's post-disaster vulnerability and empowerment; then, I review the literature on the situation of mothers post-disaster. I take a brief digression into the literature on resilient traits to show that the "intuitive traits of motherhood" that are perhaps most expected of mothers in disaster situations can be mapped onto the traits of resilience, suggesting both the limitations of both and the connections between mothering, care work, and post-disaster resilience.

2.1   Women and Disasters: Vulnerability and Empowerment

In her exemplary study of a disastrous flood in Grand Forks, N.D., *Heads Above Water*, Fothergill (2004) argued that women's vulnerability during and after such disasters is multidimensional: "Since the 1990's studies have found that women's vulnerability is due to their structural location, the devaluation of their work, and their caregiving responsibilities" (p. 8); further, "this is true in developed countries, and even more so in developing ones" (p. 8). "The knowledge base on women and disasters is largely from surveys that included gender as a demographic variable and provided only

basic information on gender differences" (Enarson, 2012, p. 8). Commenting on climate change vulnerabilities and resilience, an intergovernmental panel report noted that gendered roles lead to differing disaster impacts and that women are particularly disadvantaged post-disaster:

> Differential impacts on men and women arise from distinct roles in society. These roles are enhanced or constrained by other dimensions of inequality, risk perceptions, and the nature of the response to hazards. Women often experience additional duties as laborers and caregivers as a result of extreme weather events and climate change, as well as responses (e.g., male outmigration), while facing more psychological and emotional distress, reduced food intake, adverse mental health outcomes due to displacement, and in some cases increasing incidences of domestic violence. (IPCC, 2014, p. 50)

Much of the disparity has to do with how women are situated economically in society. Enarson (2012) found that "differences within groups of women were often larger than between women and men" (p. 12). For example, women are more likely than men to live below poverty, be the primary family caregivers, be solo caregivers, rent, experiences sexual trauma, and be less likely to have a college degree. In comparison, she found that women of color were more likely to earn less, live in poverty, be solo caregivers, and lack preventative healthcare than Caucasian women. These conditions were evident in Puerto Rico: women were (and still are) more likely than men to live below the poverty line, earn less than men, are less likely to own a home, are less likely to be employed, and have less access to healthcare services than not only their male

counterparts but also those living in the mainland of the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019).

Further, 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, women are immediately involved in meeting survival needs and stabilizing homelife; as Naidoo (2008) noted, "The most urgent tasks of rebuilding daily life in a devastated region usually fall to women" (as cited in Henningfeld, 2014, p. 75). Gendered inequalities such as "economic insecurity, (a result of home-based unpaid labor/care-work and disproportionate economic power of most men), and patriarchal social structures can increase a women's risk before, during, and after a storm" (Enarson, 2012, p. 30). Further, 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 (p. 31). The control over recovery resources, and other compounding issues, results in significantly more women dying than men in disaster environments (Henningfeld, 2014).

Humanitarian aid relief is also gendered, and these support structures are implicated in the recovery efforts reaffirming gendered role division. For example, due to a lack of schooling and childcare, post-disaster women are often pulled back into the home while the demands for money and repairs to the home push men back into the provider roles (Peek & Fothergill, 2008, p. 72). The trek for aid (food, water, medical services) is also gendered and constrained by cultural and economic/class positions. The

challenge here is that the responsibilities that fall on women in the aftermath of a storm are critical to family survival: "Women's work is a key element of survival, since their participation in local urban labor markets has increased and their incomes have become necessary components of their devastated household economies" (Latapi & Gonzalez de la Rocha as cited in Chase, 2002, p. 204). For Puerto Rican women, they needed to get back to work to help their families survive financially. Still, due to constraints in the lack of jobs available, the closing of schools, and the lack of consistent food and water, many women were forced into the care provider role and remained home. To understand the vulnerability of women, disaster research must include the work they do within their families, how they navigate kin relationships, and how they adjust family structures in these contexts (Enarson, 2012). It follows that the creation and implementation of disaster policies and resources should incorporate the "capacities of women which could significantly contribute to disaster risk reduction policies and building resilience" (Henningfeld, 2014, p. 74).

While women's vulnerability during and after disasters may be increased, there are also ways in which living in disaster environments can offer empowering opportunities for women. Fothergill (2004) found this to be the case following the Grand Forks Flood. Women's participation in public sector relief efforts (making sandwiches, rebuilding schools, sandbagging) allowed them to break down the barriers of the private/public divide, giving them greater authority, competence, and feelings of accomplishment. Further, to recreate domestic culture and domestic family life, women constructed new living spaces and rituals; they reconnected with family and their pasts,

renegotiated their gender roles, and gained domestic power, allowing them to reclaim sites where they had some autonomy (p. 209).

My observations in Puerto Rico confirmed the expansion and significance of women's work in post-disaster life. Here I offer another example of how women's actions after disasters can intercede in some of the tensions between vulnerability and empowerment. Through the work of a women's organization, the midwifery clinic, Centro de Mam, individual women took on an expanded role in the recovery process and transformed the experiences for mothers on the island. In the two days after Maria, Centro de Mam became a community hub, distributing infant formula, water, batteries, flashlights, and other supplies to all community members. The clinic midwives raised ten thousand dollars to distribute 3000 pounds of additional medical equipment around the island for mobile clinics created to service the medical needs of the broader community. By doing blood pressure checks, providing fluids, suturing wounds, and helping people deal with stress and trauma created by the storm, midwives acted as first responders, putting their medical training to use. While their main priority was to service their preterm, birthing, and postpartum mothers, the women of Centro de Mam expanded their services beyond providing pregnancy-related medical care. Their participation in the relief efforts did not go unnoticed: Centro de Mam gained the respect of larger local and national entities that have funded their organization ever since. This funding means that care for women, children, and their families is free, helping to right the injustices of care accessibility that too often depends on financial means.

Before the hurricanes devastated Puerto Rico, marked disparities in maternal health and pregnancy outcomes already existed. Many women were left without adequate care as there were approximately five doctors for every 2,000 people, and the rate of preterm birth was 23% higher than that of the U.S. mainland (March of Dimes, 2016). Research on natural disasters demonstrates that disparities in maternal care widen after storms (Cohan & Cole, 2002). Storms affect more than just a family's home but can have added impacts on infant health outcomes, increased maternal stress, and expanded economic hardships. For women in Puerto Rico, the storms complicated their birth plans further. Many hospitals were closed, and those that remained open were operating by generator power and flashlights, and all but one neonatal intensive care unit on the island stayed operational. For women on the smaller island of Vieques, their only remaining hospital closed, and when the ferries broke down, many pregnant women became stranded without access to medical care. In the 90 days post-Maria, the 11 midwives of Centro de Mam volunteered their time and assisted hundreds of women with their preterm, birth, and post-birth care. Through the equity of their care and the emphasis on women's birthing choice, Centro de Mam helped birthing women reclaim their birthing experiences, renegotiate their intimate spaces, and exercise some control. Despite their challenges following Maria, midwives became agents of transformation, helping mothers make decisions "based on context and real, lived experiences and in the constellation of relationships and institutions in which caring is positioned" (Stephens, 2012, p. 475). Two years after the storm, childbirth in Puerto Rico remains far from routine, but through the work of Centro de Mam, thousands of women, families, and babies have received the care they needed. As Centro de Mam transformed midwives from specialized birth

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workers to general care providers, they helped Puerto Rican women move beyond the limited and often inaccessible care system to have greater choice and feelings of empowerment even when the odds were stacked against them. This extended example illustrates both the vulnerability of women in areas where medical facilities and basic care are unavailable as well as the opportunities for responsive assistance by women for women in post-disaster settings.

2.2   Mothering and Disasters

As acknowledged by the above examples, women are already in a precarious position living in disaster environments, yet they experience disaster differently as mothers. As O'Reilly (2019) observes, "any understanding of mothers' lives is incomplete without a consideration of how becoming and being a mother shapes a woman's sense of self and how she sees and lives in the world" (p. 14). For example, in the wake of a tsunami in South Asia, Bari (1992) observed the intersection of disaster, gender, and family firsthand, "at the end of each day it was the wife/mother who had to cook for whoever survived in her family. At the heart of the disaster, survival and recovery were the mothers, feeding, hugging, clothing, healing, and loving" (p. 58). Additionally, Always, Belgrave, and Smith (1998) found that women took on more nurturing roles post-disaster and that men took on the role of the protector. This reproduction of traditional gender roles, even as these roles are expanded beyond "normal" responsibilities, features in many disaster recovery narratives.

While these studies provide us with some insights into mothers' experiences, there have been a few longitudinal studies that evidence the need for and conditions of the current study's focus on maternal resilience. As place-based studies, they provide grounded details about what mothers do and the conditions they face post-disaster and show that most women are already in precarious positions in disaster-prone environments. Still, as mothers, their vulnerability increases even as their responsibilities for family care and survival are magnified. Notably, as a study of one disaster reported, the burden of responsibility on women and mothers significantly increased after a disastrous storm because as "household size increased- through the joining of familial households, parents and their married children, relatives and non-relatives, the domestic chores that simultaneously increased, increased women's responsibilities inside the home" (Latapí & Gonzalez de la Rocha, as cited in Chase, 2002, p. 196).

In *Displacement, Gender, and the Challenges of Parenting after Hurricane Katrina*, Peek and Fothergill (2008) found that women's domestic labor changed as a result 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, work, childcare, and/or safe housing. 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, they stay behind, stay put, or return to unsafe places where they encounter mudslides, gas explosions, and isolation that compounds the aftermath of disasters (Cutter et al., 2008).

Later work on the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina confirms this as David and Enarson (2012) witnessed firsthand the impact of the disaster on families, finding connections between disaster vulnerability, gendered impacts, and recovery resilience (p. ix). "Greeting me early in the morning were women [already in line]: tearfully exhausted, impatient African American and Latina women with babies, children, teens, and grandmothers in tow" (p. ix). David and Enarson (2012) and Fothergill's (2004) work here forges a path for narrative approaches to disaster research. It makes valuable contributions to understanding what mothers do in disasters and what they contend with in dealing with environmental and institutional issues. No matter what happens in or to a family, the mother finds herself navigating the needs of the families' emotional and physical well-being.

The mothers in Fothergill's (2004) earlier study on the Grand Forks flood paralleled these additional studies confirming that mothers in crisis environments often experienced role strain as they not only perceived themselves as the families' primary caregiver but also had additional responsibilities to their workplaces and communities. These stresses and strains made them particularly vulnerable to self-doubt based on normative expectations about "good" mothering (Hayes, 1996; O'Reilly, 2006). Green (2015) expands the work on maternal experiences of the motherload as proposed by O'Reilly (2006) to offer the use of a matricentric feminist lens to problematize the notion of intensive mothering. She draws attention to the idea of the "good mother" as "normalized into culture and as a political standard for mothering and motherhood" that carries with it certain assumptions and expectations of what constitutes "good mothering" (p. 198). The "good mother" is selfless, all-in, and as Hays (1996) described, "child-

centered, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labor-intensive, and financially expensive" (p. 15). Green (2015) suggests that to move away from the patriarchal discourses that constrain mothers and their mothering practices that "parenting needs to be rearticulated in ways that challenge how we collectively regard motherhood, think about and judge mothers, and perform mothering" (p. 197). Drawing attention to the motherload mothers carry, especially for those that work outside the home, "attempting to 'do it all out of necessity, lack of support, or having internalized motherhoods' unreasonable expectations affects all mothers and also contributes to the challenges, along with the guilt and anxiety that many, if not most mothers experience" (p. 200).

Gender impacts both risk/vulnerability and expectations/responsibilities for mothers in disaster situations because "caretaking is a gendered activity, understanding the experiences of mothers leads to a better grasp on the relationships among gender, family, and disaster recovery" (David & Enarson, 2012, p. 106). 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. Looking more closely at the work mothers do post-disaster suggests tensions of constraint and empowerment: the intensification of domestic roles, familial responsibilities, and Mothercare in the disaster environment is juxtaposed against opportunities for communal, collective, and public work outside the home that is critical to community survival. Yet, even though there are empowering opportunities, as Greaves, Pederson, Varcoe, Poole, Morrow, Johnson, and Irwin (2004) argue, "a focus on mothers, especially in crises, is often erased or subsumed by an intense focus on the safety of the children" and/or large-scale needs of the community that reinforces existing

gendered inequalities (p. 17). Thus, despite the acknowledgment that gender is a missing component in disaster research, "the task of documenting women's specific experiences in disasters and their contributions to disaster management remains incomplete" (Fordham, 2008, p. 178).

When we think of mothering in disaster scenarios, we must additionally consider how a mother's experiences of identity and maternal subjectivity are issues not addressed in much of the current literature on families in disaster environments. Here I want to focus more specifically on the identities and positioning of Caribbean mothers. Despite the intense work that mothers do in the aftermath of a disaster, hegemonic notions of "the mother" and the nuclear family seem to anchor identities and criteria of mothering and parenting. The race/class exclusions of such hegemonic notions also remain pertinent as "parenting is still largely seen by scholars as a gendered endeavor that occurs in a society stratified by race and class" (Peek and Fothergill, 2008, p. 69). Analyzing the challenges of material survival and the impact of cultural expectations on their struggles to 'do family' and 'how to' mother in the face of continued normative discourses around gender Safa's (2002) work on female-headed households in the Caribbean found that "gender, motherhood, marriage, and informal labor participation were flexible relationships that were both historically determined and responsive to social policy, economic conditions, and opportunities for migration" (p. 147). When reviewing the shifts in production, employment, and poverty in the Caribbean, she notes that the response to globalization and neoliberalism resulted in low wage working women, and particularly single mothers, having to rely on more fluid living arrangements, often living in three-generational homes (p. 146-7.) This, in turn, reproduced the patriarchal myth that women's economic

participation demonstrated a "lack of commitment to family" (p. 147) and further reinforced the divide between the private and the public and between 'good mothers' as selfless and 'bad mothers' as selfish.

For Caribbean mothers, mothering can empower and disempower, especially as they "frequently have to face various forms of oppression and resistance, such as the interplay of race and gender discriminations" among economic and historical conditions (Smith Silva & Alexander, 2013, p. ix). In referencing Puerto Rico specifically, Smith Silva and Alexander (2013) stated, because "the Caribbean mother is a committed provider and protector, whose devotion to her children is complete and selfless, mothering and mothering practices can function as both a site of community dis/empowerment and celebration and contestation of kinship and migration" (p. xiii). When considering the rise in crime Puerto Rico was experiencing as a result of declining social safety nets and economic prospects, she notes that the "emerging frictions between intensive mothering and empowered mothering in these violent times, calls for an extension of motherhood to include extended family members and communities" (p. xiii).

Their work parallels many of the stories mothers from Puerto Rico have shared, their narratives attesting to how their extended families played a critical role in supporting them and their families following Maria. They not only provided housing and childcare so that women could go back to work but negotiated some of the work needed both physically and financially to recover. In some cases, these networks relieved mothers of their sole obligation to care for their children and instead recognized the other kinship relationships that could play a pivotal role in their children's development. These

demands elucidate the need for narratives that can shift our conceptions of mothering to envision practices that do not punish the mother for finding alternative and creative ways to mother but rather encourage the development of informal and formal networks as added mechanisms for familial support.

These added contradictions and tensions pull in dimensions of their social realities that are situated within cultural stereotypes and the conflicts that shape the everyday lives of women and mothers in the Caribbean. In sum, disaster scenarios may significantly affect the demands for mothering acts and intensify the responsibilities of the mother, changing the personal and familial experiences of motherhood. As is detailed in this chapter, women's vulnerability and empowerment are entangled together. The significant constraints, lack of material resources necessary for survival, and historical conditions that left mothers in already precarious positions before the storm were in tension with the often active efforts for empowerment as mothers developed systems of support for other women and mothers in their community and rewired kin networks to open up new possibilities for *seeing* and *doing*, not only the work of being a family, but the work a mother is doing within their family in the context of dramatically altered conditions. Therefore, a framework that draws on the lessons of studies that have identified the significance of women's gendered work and mothercare can not only offer women and mothers more support but can contribute in meaningful ways to efforts at post-disaster relief, recovery, and resilience. In the following chapter, I expand on a maternal resilience framework.

3   Maternal Resilience Framework

3.1   Matricentric Feminist Theory

This chapter develops a framework for analyzing evidence of mothers' post-disaster significance for resilience and recovery in order to flesh out an alternative to dominant approaches that more inclusively addresses the labor—emotional, social, physical—and identities of those at the heart of impacted families and communities. It begins with a review of matricentric feminism, that is, feminism that begins with mothering rather than from a perspective on women, the feminine, or the family. This mother-centered feminist perspective was advanced by Andrea O'Reilly, a Canadian feminist theorist and activist, in order to rectify what she argues is the failure of feminism to center issues of mothering, motherhood, and the maternal. As O'Reilly (2016) accounts in her book *Matricentric Feminism: Theory, Activism, and Practice,* "Mothers are the unspeakable of feminism, the 'problem with no acceptable name'" and "the unfinished business of feminism" (p. xvi). O'Reilly characterizes matricentric feminism as "critical, political, avowedly feminist, and mother centered" (p. xv-xvi). She sets out several assumptions in support of matricentric feminism. First, she contends that, for women who are mothers, mothering is significant, if not a defining dimension of their lives and maternity matters more than gender. Second, the category of mother is distinct from the category of woman and many of the problem's mothers face—social, economic, political, cultural, psychological, and so forth—are specific to women's roles and identities as mothers. Third, mothers are oppressed under patriarchy as women *and* as mothers. Fourth, motherhood is socially and historically constructed and mothering is understood as a practice (p. 2). In light of these assumptions, O'Reilly positions mothers' needs and

concerns as the theoretical and political starting point for matricentric theory, research, and advocacy.

Using matricentric feminism as a theoretical framework for inquiry advances scholarship through a set of provisional governing principles, including:

1. Takes the topics of mothers, mothering, and motherhood as deserving of rigorous and sustained scholarly inquiry that can be multidisciplinary and multi-theoretical in its perspective;

2. Holds mothering as work as important and valuable to society and problematizes notions of intensive mothering that places the burden for care work as the sole responsibility and duty of mothers;

3. Contests, challenges, and counters the oppressive patriarchal institution and narratives of motherhood with the goal of imagining and implementing a maternal identity and practice that is empowering to women;

4. Develops research from the experience and perspective of mothers as opposed to scholarship that "frames motherhood through a child-centric perspective; centers mothers' voices to articulate "counter-narratives of mothering";

5. Regards mothering as a site of power, wherein mothers can and do create social change through childrearing and activism, enabling mothers to enact an empowered model of mothering;

6. Understands mothering and motherhood to be culturally determined and

variable, holding the maternal experience to be diverse, encompassing issues of

race, class, culture, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, age, and geographical location

(O'Reilly, 2016, p. 7-20)

Using this framework asks researchers to consider the relevance of context and social location for any given mothering strategy (Bueskens, 2016, p. xv) and as I have argued in Chapter 2, such considerations are of particular import for mothering in disaster contexts. When we "articulate and theorize 'the voice of the mother,' begin with the mother in her own right and hold fast to the maternal perspective, we can 'unmask' motherhood by documenting the lived reality of mothering" (O'Reilly, 2016, p. 4). Additionally, in an extension of this work, we can unmask the patriarchal discourses that frame maternal subjectivity.

As O'Reilly (2016) describes, the social, economic, political, and cultural problems mothers face are related to the patriarchal institution of motherhood, which entrenches certain hegemonic ideologies that inform the identity of the mother and work of mothering (p. 2). In the next section, I elaborate those tensions.

3.2 Maternal Tensions

When investigating the maternal subject, a critical feminist approach takes up the often-contrary tensions that position this subject and the institution of motherhood. To do this, I consider three tensions in detail.

1. The myth of intensive mothering constitutes mothering as selfless and self-sacrificing and places the demands for care work solely on the mother. Further, it entrenches the notion of a neoliberal maternal subjectivity.

2. The public/private divide that not only traps mothers in the role of domesticity but essentializes their carework as love rather than unpaid labor and deters their agency in public spaces, roles, and engagements.

3. The cultural idealizations of "good" and "bad" mothers further anchor their identity in their families. Internalizing the unreasonable expectations affects mothers as they carry guilt and shame for mothering outside the institution of motherhood.

We 'do gender' through our everyday discourses and related practices in the context of larger cultural and structural forces. One way we 'do gender' is in relation to the cultural expectations ascribed to the subject position of woman as mother. As women move from womanhood to motherhood, they are repositioned within society. As Ruddick (1980) describes, the maternal is a social category through which the mother is positioned and through which she becomes tasked with not just taking on "the values of the families and subcultures to which they belong" but also "mothering practices that respond to particular historical realities, shaped by a relation to her child" (p. 355; p. 346). Further, because "families and societies have an interest in reproducing their members in a manner and with a result that they can appreciate," the maternal subject may embrace discourses and practices that replicate cultural and structural forces that may, in turn, be to her detriment as both a mother and as a woman (p. 354). Hays (1996) notes that to "unpack and analyze the cultural model of mothering," we must attend to some of the

cultural contradictions mothers face as they navigate standards and expectations for mothering that are often contradictory to modern parenting demands.

3.2.1 Intensive mothering

The discourse of intensive mothering reveals the contrary tensions of mothering that both elevate a cultural ideal of the mother and mothering while devaluing motherwork and relegating the mother to the private sphere. As Hays (1996) argues, "the ideology of intensive mothering is a gendered model that advises mothers to expend a tremendous amount of time, energy, and money in raising their children" (p. x). Further, "this motherhood mandate declares that mothering is exclusive, wholly child-centered, emotionally involving, and time-consuming" (as cited in Arendell, 2000, p. 1194). Mothers are socialized to believe and behave as though they are the only type of care an infant and child needs and that that position is related to their position as a woman, despite infants not being "sensitive to the gender of the mother" (Ruddick, 1980, p. 362). Hays (1996) extends this argument to include that the position of a mother creates the "underlying assumption that the child absolutely requires consistent nurture[ing] by a single primary caretaker and that the mother is the best person for the job" (p. 8). Further, cultural discourses prescribe that "when the mother is unavailable, it is other women who should serve as temporary substitutes" (p. 8). Womanhood and motherhood are linked biologically and discursively. Further, mothering is construed as a "natural" practice, which can further "injure both mother and non-mothers" as enacting maternal practices becomes linked to the female body and the work of women within their families (Ruddick, 1980, p. 366).

The discourse of intensive mothering "create[d] a communal understanding of power in relationships and for appropriate rules of conduct" related to the practice of mothering and the work of the mother within the household specifically (Horwitz, 2006, p. 44). This model of intensive mothering promotes the notion that mothering is to "be centered on children's needs, with methods that are informed by experts, labor-intensive, and costly" (Hays, 1996, p. 21) and that mothers must be "intensive, nurturing, and moral" (p. 10). For example, well known child psychologists in the twentieth century championed standards of attachment parenting that further entrenched the expectations for intensive mothering on the maternal subject (Spock; Bowlby); positioned the mother as key to the moral development of her children (Leach); and emphasized mothers as responsible for cultivating Godly well-mannered children (Dobson). These experts negated the voice of the mother in favor of reliance on their expert outsider opinions for child-rearing and development. Positioning the mother as subordinate to child experts further institutionalized the mother's responsibility for but lack of agency over children's care and development. Hays (1996) notes that "in most societies, the rearing of small children is shared among women or among women and older children," thus drawing in the relationship to women's subordinate position in societies in addition to their household (p. 20).

Horwitz (2004) found that these contradictions and the ensuing feelings motivated some mothers to reimagine their mothering. They did this by reframing their notions of care work, not seeing themselves as the only caregivers in their children's lives as well as not seeing themselves as the only ones with the responsibility for that care, developing a belief in community involvement in the parenting of their children, and recognizing the

other factors to children's development beyond their mothering practices. Further, mothers questioned the social forces that affected their experience and feelings around mothering. They began to speak out against the "darker side of motherhood" that pressured them to feel loving towards their children at all times (p. 51). Horwitz's (2004) work found that the experience of resistance empowered mothers through their liberation from the social expectations and pressures, mothers reporting that they felt less maternal guilt and perceived themselves as having more agentive power in their lives and their choices as a parent. With that said, Horwitz (2004) emphasizes that empowered mothering practices should also be cautious of repositioning mothers' autonomy and agency as requirements of their children. O'Reilly (2006) adding that "patriarchal culture will accord mothers resources if they use them on behalf of their children. Certain strategies can backfire as real change for mothers cannot be achieved if such is always defined as for, and about children" (p. 329). Through the maternal narratives of life in the aftermath of Maria, we can extend the work of Green, Horwitz, and O'Reilly to move beyond the normative forces and dominant ideologies implicit in the maternal subject position.

3.2.2 Mothering in the Private Sphere

Historic constructions of intensive mothering demonstrate a connection to the dichotomy of private and public spheres: the private sphere of intimate and family life is set in contrast to public, economic and political life (Hays, 1996). Both the Industrial Revolution and capitalism fostered and reinforced the distinction between public and private life. Motherhood operates as one of the central terrains in which the tension

between private and public life happens. One belief promoted throughout these historical shifts is the expectation that mothers need to devote all of their available time to their children. As Hays (1996) notes, "Individual mothers take on this work as principal caretakers of children and . . . mothers must be the persons who raise the children" (p. 20).

Hays (1996) extends the concern for a mother's subordinate position by situating intensive mothering as not just bound up in the larger cultural and structural forces but as a subordinate position to their children and their husband. An example that she describes is the need for mothers to work outside the home as current economic forces might demand. In this example, she questions, "one might well wonder why our culture pressures women to dedicate so much to themselves in child rearing" (p. x) when caring for a child, as Hays elaborates, is done within the private domain of the home. It would seem that the economic forces that necessitate family survival on paid employment by all members of the household would work to undermine the ideology of intensive mothering. Yet, instead, the maternal subject finds herself fragmented between multiple conflicting identities and multiple conflicting messages about how to mother in addition to expanded expectations for domesticity. While women entering the public workforce could have been seen as their emancipation from the private sphere, cultural lines were not redrawn. For working mothers, in particular, Hays (1996) notes that "mothers are faced with the power of both logics simultaneously and are forced to make choices between them" (p. 9). This sets up the false logic of an either-or, setting mothers up for further conscription into the private over public. As something mothers do from home, intensive mothering can be seen here as shifting, doubling down on the expectations for mothers who are now

faced with the task of "doing-it-all." Hays (1996) addresses that "intensive mothering is neither a choice made by women nor a symbol of love and progress in society; rather, it is an indication of the power of men, whites, the upper class, capitalists, and state leaders to impose a particular form of family life on those less powerful than themselves" (p. 153).

3.2.3 Good and Bad Mothers

Arendell (2000) observed that patriarchal discourses that ascribe mothering as part of feminine subjectivity set up additional standards for being a mother and the practice of mothering: women are not only to become mothers but are also to become "good" mothers. In *Feminist Mothers*, Green (2004) collected stories from women about how they navigate the tension between the "institution" and "experience" of motherhood (p. 31). Through their stories, these women addressed issues such as patriarchy's attempt to privatize the family and delegate the role of childcare to the mother, the myth of intensive mothering, and the impact of ideals of "good" mother versus "bad." For example, privatization of the family and the standard of the "good mother" are threads woven throughout the ideological messaging mothers received in the 1980's onward, that "mom will handle it. That what was really at stake was that women, despite whatever threats they faced, preserved and buttressed their identities as good mothers" (Douglas & Michaels, 2005, p. 234-5). Over time, the messages ingrained common sense norms and practices of mothering that "promote the notion that 'good' mothers invest themselves and the majority of their time and resources into developing their children's well-being, that 'good' mothers are constantly available and responsible for nurturing the success of their children" (Lamar, Forbes, & Capasso, 2019, p. 203).

Moreover, while these dominant discourses promote ideals about mothering that can limit the potential for mothers, these discourses can also increase the emotional toll on mothers. As Arendell (2000) found, mothers who fall short of the cultural discourse's expectations or who are unable to meet the demands of their children, ideologies, and practices that are in themselves socially constructed are positioned as "bad" mothers. As Warner (2005) stated, "that caught-by-the-throat feeling so many mothers have today of always doing something wrong. This wide-spread, choking cocktail of guilt and anxiety and resentment and regret—is poisoning motherhood for American women today. It's a mix of things, a kind of too-muchness. A 'mess'" (p. 3-4). For many mothers, these standards and pressures leave them with feelings of guilt and inadequacy that erode their self-confidence in their ability to mother. The resulting message is that "there is a correct way to be a mother and those women who do not meet this standard are 'bad'" (Green, 2004, p. 34).

Research suggests that while many mothers attempt to conform to these discourses, mothers' individual experiences can be quite different. In narrative accounts of mothering, Green (2004) found that women resisted these pressures by mothering in ways that challenged the status quo. One example she cited was of a single- mother, Willow, who allowed her pre-teenage daughter to live with another mother for a few weeks to find a solution to some problematic behavior. The result was that Willow shifted the responsibility of caring for her daughter to a neighbor, which allowed her to meet the needs of her child and benefitted Willow in meeting the demands she faced outside the home and reconciling some of the negative feelings she had about her mothering. Further, in thinking about these stories in a collective historical context,

Green (2006) found that through a mother's connection to stories of other feminist mothers, they were able to draw a sense of individual mothering authority that empowered them to analyze their thinking about the work they do as mothers and reframe their feelings around mothering. Green (2004) advocates that what is still missing from motherhood studies is the examination of how women are using opportunities within motherhood to "explore and cultivate their own agency, and to foster social change" that develops new ways of seeing motherhood, mothering, and the identity of the mother beyond the "good" or "bad" ideals (p. 35).

Motherhood is not inherently disempowering or oppressive but rather can provide openings for moving beyond the constraints often imposed on mothers. Notably, women should not be faced with having to absorb and mitigate all of the issues for their families and societies. The most significant critique of empowered mothering is that it does not work to correct the cultural and social structures that frame women's lives as the antithesis to intensive mothering. Nor does it correct the existing gendered hierarchies that limit the private to "women's work" and the social norms that expect mothers to perform this work perfectly. Instead, it has the potential to place the responsibility on the mother, necessitating "that all the troubles of the world can be solved by the individual efforts of the superhuman women" (Hays, 1996, p. 177). As Hays (1996) argues, these experts, while "represent[ing] a reflection of the dominant cultural model of appropriate child rearing…tells one nothing about how present-day mothers interpret such advice or the extent to which women have made the ideology of intensive mothering their own" (p. 70). Matricentric feminism can provide insight into new forms of mothering that may challenge the hegemonic notions of care work.

As Longo (2001) summarizes, "the challenge of women's history is to develop a way of looking that allows us to see economic and social relationships not as 'natural,' but as socially and systematically constructed arrangements by a patriarchal state that benefits one group at the expense of the other." Just as we "do gender" we can undo and rework gender through our language and social interactions so that "both men and women experience in their daily lives contradictions in modern society that now plaque women primarily. With this newfound sharing of responsibility, however, the cultural contradictions of parenthood will perhaps become more open to public view and be confronted more equally, by all" (Hay, 1996, p. 177). To intervene in these contradictions, Hays (1996) calls us to examine the "social contexts in which ideas arise and persist" as these contexts can help to tease out the "framework of relations between groups and the ideas and practices that are accepted as appropriate in an effort to understand why certain ideas come to achieve salience over others, in certain contexts, among certain groups of people" (p. 15). As well as examine the "content of the ideology: it's logic, its component parts, and the meaning it holds for its carriers" (p. 15).

Green (2015) notes the "experience of mothering is fundamental to feminist theorizing about the complex, layered, and gendered work of raising children" (p. 198). By extension O'Reilly (2016) suggests that mothers need a feminism all of their own as "motherhood is socially and historically constructed, and positions mothering more as a practice than an identity" (p. 4). Through matricentric feminist theory, the focus shifts from mothers themselves to mothering as an institution that can elucidate the complexities of women's lived experiences as they attempt to navigate patriarchal mothering archetypes and the cultural contradictions they experience. As Buzzanell said,

opportunities for "[t]he construction of new stories, rituals, organizing new logics, identities, emotions, and framing" are necessary "to reintegrate new realities into their everyday lives" (Buzzanell, 2010, p. 9). In this sense, mothers' narratives can offer new constructions of motherhood and mothering, alongside a re-envisioning of their identity as a mother. Therefore, attending to the mothering narratives allows us not just to see how the mother "understands, articulates, and constructs her own individual identity," but additionally, how the relationship between multiple intersecting identities and family identity demonstrate for family scholars how we as a culture and society "see" and "do" family. Situating the views and voices of the mothers at the center of a matricentric feminist narrative analysis can further attest to the destabilizing forces and structures of neoliberalism that are constructing notions of motherwork along with notions of the traditional nuclear family.

Through a maternally-focused lens, we can begin to challenge the institution of motherhood that "encompasses a set of rules and regulations imposed upon and internalized by mothers (and others) that dictate not only how-to mother but also who is a 'good mother' and who is a 'bad mother'" (Rich, 1995, p. 42). At issue is an ideological idealization of mothers that diminishes rather than empowers women by insisting that mothers possess a "maternal instinct rather than intelligence, selflessness rather than self-realization, relation to others rather than creation of self" (p. 42).

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. Popular models of resilience that presuppose personality or character traits as the basis for positive adaptation might map quite readily onto the cultural ideal of the mother.

3.3   Mapping Traits: Resilience and Mothers

Mothers are the "shock absorbers of the adjustment efforts" after a disaster (Enarson, 2012, p. 3) given that their caretaking work mediates their families' post-disaster disruptions and changes. This characterization suggests that mothers possess the attributes that enable them to enact resilience. The trait model promotes the idea that resilience is in many ways innate, part of a personal disposition or genetic backgrounds such as temperament or personality style. Similarly, a "mother's intuition," a mother's innate, selfless love for her children, and her protectiveness for her family are popularly presumed to be based on inherent traits and in women's essential nature. Further, the discursive neoliberal subject of intensive mothering makes requisite the individualistic, autonomous, and self-reliant agency that is evident in the extensive literature on resilient personal traits. In short, the traits of resilience correspond at least ideologically to the ideal characteristics of mothers. I offer a brief review of the trait model of resilience to inform this suggestion.

In the 1970s and 1980s, psychologists worked to understand individual risk factors to propose predictive models for understanding how adversity and trauma will impact an individual throughout their life, attempting to understand why some individuals recover from crisis whereas others do not. Garmenzy (1974), widely credited with being

the first to study resilience in an experimental setting, proposed that it was the "protective factors of elements of an individual's background or personality that could enable success despite faced challenges" (p. 81). Garmenzy further advocated that resilience was linked to an individual's disposition. His findings later led scholars such as Werner (1989) to see resilience through an individual's psychological traits, such as temperament or personality style. Werner's (1989) work advocated that an individual's ability to persevere through adversity and be resilient in the face of mounting challenges was in many ways related to their mental toughness, their overall individual capacity to cope with stress, as opposed to their connection to community relationships or something interactive, changing, and lived. Bonanno (2004) later expanded this work to argue that "hardy individuals are also more confident and better able to use active coping and social support, thus helping them deal with the distress they do experience" (p. 25).

In a 32- year longitudinal study, Werner followed nearly 700 children from the westernmost county in the United States from birth to their 30's. While 30% of this cohort were exposed to risk factors including poverty, parental psychopathology, and family discord, Werner's work found that not all people responded to risk in the same way. She felt that the capacity to overcome adversity was associated with more autonomous and independent individuals, who sought out new experiences, had a positive social orientation, and believed that they were in control of their circumstances. Bonanno (2004), who much like Garmenzy (1974) and Werner (1989), studied resilience for 25 years, looked at the variation in both individual experiences and contextual elements to explain the shifts other researchers, such as Florian, Mikulincer, & Taubman (1995) found in their work. Bonanno (2004) posited that one's hardiness, meaning their

ability to shift their appraisal of their environment and the event to something less

threatening, could impact their coping capacity. He found that when an individual

constructed the event in a way to reframe it positively, they had more positive outcomes:

"hardy individuals are also more confident and better able to use active coping and social

support, thus helping them deal with the distress they do experience" (p. 25).

These approaches to resilience propose that resilience results from character traits

instead of interactive, changing, and lived relationships. While resilience traits can be

taught, the starting point is an assessment of a flawed or deficient outlook hindering a

person's ability to "bounce back" from adversity. In this sense, this assumption further

burdens those at risk because they either do or do not possess the capacity for resilience.

Additionally, neoliberal notions of recovery tell us that rebounding from a crisis is our

responsibility alone. Not surprisingly, then, fierce determination to pull ourselves up by

our bootstraps, self-reliance and mental toughness are traits that predict how we will

recover. The similarities with a neoliberal discourse of intensive mothering are not

surprising. Mothers are solely responsible for all aspects of the well-being of their

children and families. They are expected to face adverse circumstances with selfless

determination, a positive orientation, and unwavering care. Wilson and Yochin (2017)

found in their work on mothering in the rust-belt that, "In response to the generalized

insecurities of advanced neoliberalism, mothers step up their affective labors, confronting

the precarious status of the family with intensified and expanded practices of women's

work organized around privatizing happiness" (p. 19–20).

Seligman (2011) extended Bonanno's work on resilience traits by asserting that we can not only measure resilience capacities but teach people how to be more resilient through the creation of a new narrative. Those who seemingly recover from early childhood trauma had more positive mental health through an overall positive life outlook and the ability to translate negative experiences into something that they reframed as positive. Training them to change their cognition of trauma from "internal to external, from global to specific, and from permanent to impermanent" allowed them to persist and remain mentally tough through challenges (de Noronha, Vaz, & Pinto, 2018, p. 3). Seligman proposed that an individual's optimistic outlook could be a critical factor in their recovery. However, resilience as a learned disposition does not replace but supplements the idea that there are character traits of resilience. Instead, crafting a new narrative can be understood as a way to create a "new normal" in a communicative rather than a psychological model of resilience, as I discuss in the next section.

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. Bonilla (2020) observed that the failure of the state to provide aid in disaster environments is linked to "new ideologies in which the state is imagined as incapable of eliminating threats—both political and environmental—or addressing their causes. In turn, communities and individuals must bear the brunt of mitigating rising threats of violence both slow/structural and spectacular" (p. 2). As Bonilla (2020) note further that 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). Not surprisingly, when taken together, the emergence of the individual capacity for resilience as fierce determination to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps, self-reliance, and mental toughness are proposed as traits that predict how we will recover.

These models can spur complications for mothers as they are asked to live up to societal expectations of the "ideal mother" and engage in care work that is intensive and selfless even in harsh conditions where "no one is coming for you," as I often heard in my visits to Puerto Rico. Further, it gives us the impression that mothers must have these traits to be resilient, placing the burden of "mobilizing the discursive, interactive, structural, and material resources at any given moment" on the mother (Buzzanell & Houston, 2018, p. 3). The focus upon somehow flawed internal characteristics further burdens those at risk because they either do or do not possess the capacity for resilience. The link between an individual's disposition, temperament, or personality style is dangerous for mothers as it reinforces prescriptions for how a mother must be and what a mother must do. These models reinforce the notion that mothers must take on the work of recovery for their families and communities alike.

Some scholars reject individualized notions of resilience. Butler (1997) studied children in dire circumstances and argued that it is the "relationship of inner strength and outer help that resulted in their resilience" (p. 26). She held that it is not one trait or another but rather a web of relationships and experiences throughout a person's life span that determines their ability to be resilient (p. 22). Brown and Kulig (1996) also critiqued the character trait approach, holding that "resilience is a fundamental human potential

which is both enabled and constrained by the social context people construct and within which they carry out their daily lives" (p. 29). Masten (1994) concludes that it is potentially dangerous to limit our view of resilience to personality traits or individualistic characteristics because that limits the potential of everyone to recover. This more expansive approach to resilience remains bound to psychosocial perspectives that, while helpful, remain limited by a focus on personal coping mechanisms.

3.4   Mothers, Families, and Communicative Resilience

Both the trait model of resilience and cultural ideals of mothers and mothering promote individualistic conceptions that lend themselves to neoliberal responsibilization and deficit assessments. Instead, I look to a communicative framework of resilience as this offers an alternative understanding that does not limit either resilience or mothering to normative models but resituates both the dynamics of the complexly articulated material and discursive tensions that frame mothers' lives.

Because the meaning of disaster emerges from the confluence of personal and local stories about events and conditions, understanding how these stories are recontextualized, silenced, or celebrated must involve examining mothers' work and thus drawing on and contributing to matricentric feminism as central to maternal scholarship. 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. Mapped onto Buzzanell's (2010) communication framework of resilience, a matricentric approach allows us to follow research principles that center the

mother's voices, shift the analysis off of mothers onto mothering practices, and expand the model to include additional exigencies that both enable and constrain the recovery process for mothers and families alike.

Buzzanell (2017) offers us a helpful framework for broadening my conceptions of resilience through a more critical and contextual perspective. The framework proposed seeks to understand, through interviews, how resilience is built by understanding how people use "discursive and material resources to constitute the new normal of their lives after disruption, loss, trauma, and disaster" (as cited in Braithwaite, Suter, & Floyd, 2018, p. 100). It integrates family and interpersonal communication with health and organizational contexts to uncover how the various dimensions of resilience are articulated interdependently. In sum, Buzzanell's work offers a different stance on resiliency, adding that because the other approaches and models, as discussed previously, emphasize adaptation over transformation, they limit the scope of their work, failing to "acknowledge the tension-filled and critical-cultural dynamics" that underline the communicative dimensions of resilience (Buzzanell & Houston, 2018, p. 3).

The communicative resilience framework focuses on ongoing communication processes of adaptation and transformation, reactivity and proactivity, disruption and reintegration, stability and change, in addition to focusing on the contexts in which material resources, policies, and ideological structures about the nature and characteristics of families are socially constructed and enacted. To do this work, Buzzanell (2017) looked at narratives of family loss, finding that the stories families told were framed in specific ways (i.e., through language, routine, interactions, and rituals)

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that helped to integrate the loss, crisis, or trauma into their everyday lives. Through the crafting of a new normal narrative, families were able to reconcile tensions brought on by the crisis. Buzzanell's framework expands on how families reinvest in new relationships through existing and newly emergent communication networks. Importantly, this framework approaches resilience as emergent and constantly regenerated or revised, rather than a static state that is either achieved or not. Additionally, seeing her framework as feminist, 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 experienced by those living in Puerto Rico both before and after Hurricane Maria. While her earlier framework was somewhat restrictive, mainly focusing on research conducted with middle-class women and her own experiences with crisis, her revised framework offered through her keynote address in 2021 takes into account broader applications that also consider the politicized nature of resilience as it has become embedded in policies and solutions that have "simplistic kinds of outcomes." Instead, she advises looking at the "multiple intersecting deeply embedded inequities" that families experience, demonstrating how resilience can provide them with mechanisms for adaptation and transformation. When applied to disaster environments, researchers can avoid deficit approaches to post-disaster resilience (i.e., focusing on when someone does not "bounce back" from trauma) and see human resilience as "neither something we do alone nor an inherent characteristic that only some people have" (p. 99). By studying stories, her work forges a path for seeing resilience as enacted through communication, contextual, and relational elements.

To do so, Buzzanell (2021a) offers a framework for resilience that is hallmarked by five communication processes which include:

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. Their findings found that families "literally talked normalcy into being" through the implicit and explicit reframing of relational messages (Buzzanell, 2010, p. 4). Despite job loss throwing their whole family system into turmoil, families in their study continued family rituals, such as going out to eat and modifying their material realities to match up with their circumstances but in a way that provided stability in uncertain times.

2. *They work to affirm identity by reframing self-other relationships.* In the same job loss study, Buzzanell and Turner (2003) identified how the individuals wanted to maintain or enhance a particular identity and performed in ways that reinforced "pivotal identities that operated as identity anchors" for individuals and their families (as cited in Buzzanell, 2017, p. 101). The identity anchors enacted in a time of difficulty are those that the individual or the collective find the most meaningful This perspective is particularly relevant when setting this framework alongside a discursive formation like intensive mothering and the subject positioning of the mother. For example, in their research, they found that the wives of men who lost their jobs faced difficulties with the traditional gender roles (husband breadwinner/wife homemaker). In response to their identity anchors, they "put aside their own feelings and operated for the good of

their families" despite many of these women being the breadwinners of the family and desiring acknowledgement for their sense of accomplishment (Buzzanell, 2010, p. 5).

3. *They 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 rather channeled those feelings into productive action (p. 9). This communicative process is a deliberate process of working to move forward instead of letting negative feelings create stagnation. She clarifies that experiences might provoke anger or other negative emotions, but anger can change when it is recognized as a motivating action. During her experience navigating the premature birth of her twins, she notes that she focused on the positive and worked to create appropriate feelings that reframed the situation into one of hope instead of hopelessness (p. 9). Extending this, Buzzanell (2021a) noted that the individuals and families experiencing crisis determine what is productive. However, she qualifies that this process is not just "putting on a happy face"; rather, it is about choosing to acknowledge their feelings as legitimate and using those feelings to energize them towards change.

4. *They 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). In sum, when exigencies demand change, individuals and organizations enact workarounds and maneuver systems that create "their own organizing logics or conditions that under other conditions might defeat them" (Buzzanell, 2010, p. 7). While some behaviors might seem counterproductive at the time of the crisis, for those individuals experiencing such instability, those actions can seem logical and, in some ways, may open up opportunities that were not available before the crisis.

5. *They 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" (as cited in Buzzanell, 2010, p. 6). Her work on networks stresses communication as a critical element to network construction, seeing the linkages between organizations as key to transformation and growth.

This framework has several advantages:

1. It emphasizes communication, interaction, and materiality dimensions of resilience that are not often included in other factor-focused, policy-oriented models.

2. It offers us a feminist-informed communication-focused perspective to expand our understandings of resilience in new contexts. Applying this framework to mothers' narratives can expand this model to include elements of culture and context that are otherwise not attended to.

3. It reveals that the maternal subject is continually re-constituted through narratives, the stories mothers tell can reveal multiple mechanisms for recovery processes that affect different parts of the population and inform policy, organizational, and community infrastructure elements that could promote more significant post-disaster relief.

Most important, in the context of this dissertation, is that the framework Buzzanell offers can help analyze mothers' experiences in a disaster by adhering to the matricentric dictum to situate women's everyday lives at the center of this analysis and further broaden our understanding of the role mothers play in navigating disasters. In particular, the experiences of mothers living through the aftermath of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico can add to this body of scholarship as their stories offer a unique vantage point through which to understand the tensions that historical, political, social, cultural, and economic conditions had on their lives both before and after the storm. Seeing resilience as open-ended, emergent, and transformative and bringing a matricentric focus to bear on post-disaster recovery promises to offer a productive frame for understanding how disaster changes and transforms the lives of those who experience them. As such, this project was conducted with the following research question in mind: Taking a matricentric approach to Buzzanell's framework of communicative resilience, how do mothers' stories enact resilience in a post-disaster environment?

4 Doing Feminist Research into Mothers' Stories

As we fly into Puerto Rico, my colleague's nearly two-year-old daughter Indira, stirs in her seat looking out the window as we bank left over Old San Juan. I look out the window with her wondering if the remnants of Maria are still visible now more than two years since the storm, thinking of those blue tarps we saw in all of the aerial photos days and weeks after. There are a few tarps sprinkled here and there in the outskirts of San Juan, but the island looks almost as I last left it. Green, busy, warm.

Heading out of the airport, Indira dances in her carrier to the sound of Afro-Cuban beats. She munches on dried mango and asks for her sandals. I take in the first moments of this first research trip. As the back of my knee caps start to sweat, I notice how much harder it is to bump my suitcase over the curb which is filled with gravel and surrounded by orange road cones. Work still to be completed. This is November, not even the height of their summer, not even as hot as September. Maria hit in September.

As I leave the airport, I pay close attention to what has changed and what has remained as I remember it from a previous trip. The highway signs are new. The electric poles on the freeway are new, lines hung in neat tight black rows. The road has been resurfaced with fresh black asphalt. Everything seems from this vantage point to be back in working order.

I take a turn off the freeway to a smaller barrio. My companions want to get a feel for what the island is like. It is in the interior, farther away from the tourist traps and large hotels that new gives way to the old. The lines here are different. They have been tangled, untangled, and jumbled back up again. They are hurried and connected in a chaos of

disconnection. The roads are still out in many places, rerouted and rerouted until it feels like we have driven in a circle. Blue plastic cisterns fill side yards and sit obvious in driveways. As I pull onto a block that looks half empty I am struck by the water lines several feet up on the outside of the diner we are about to enter. They are 30 minutes from the ocean, nowhere near a river or waterway.

M (they/them/their) the owner of the restaurant is outstanding. They engage the two-year-old, appear genuine in their interest for our travels, offer cold beer, and the best black beans I have ever had. We ask M about the storm and they detail how they nearly lost everything. The water, the tables pushed up against the back wall, the darkness, the smell. Their mother's place was destroyed, their sister's place flooded and full of thick dark muck. Four months of backbreaking 24-hour work brought the business back, "people needed a place to go." While the restaurant gave them hope, a place to socialize, and home cooked goodness, "it didn't bring back people's homes." Today the restaurant bears two scars, the emotional memories and the faded water marks of a storm that threatened their way of life and lost. They rebounded; but others are still struggling under those blue tarps, still cleaning the water out from their walls, and still praying that the lights go on and stay on, two years later. This is just the first few hours of what was two trips, twenty days in Puerto Rico, and dozens of interviews.

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the conceptual framework and research methodology for this qualitative study investigating maternal resilience in a post-disaster environment, a collaborative effort that began with a trip to the island in November 2019

for 10 days and another in March 2020 for an additional 10 days. This chapter details the research plan, introduces the mothers who trusted me and welcomed me into their homes and their lives, and explains the procedures, analysis methods, and field site considerations.

The goal of this study is to examine, through maternal narratives, how mothers live through disaster and the complexities, tensions, and intricacies that constitute and complicate their resilience, using the aftermath of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico as an illustrative case and field site. Mothers' experiences, through a narrative approach, are a critical and missing component to my understandings of maternal resilience in disaster contexts. I chose to conduct on the ground immersive qualitative work in a very specific way that was informed by feminist epistemological and maternal theoretical principles. While my work sought to collect stories, my goal was to listen, to see, to feel all that their lives have entailed since Maria.

Combined across two visits, I interviewed nine mothers and conducted a focus group with eight midwives from a local midwifery organization, along with eight other informal interviews with community members, university professors, and business owners. Throughout these interviews, I gathered stories as a primary source of data alongside some ethnographic observations I 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. My interpretations are based on my engagement with field notes, audio/video recordings, photographs, participatory data, interviews, walks with the

mothers, beach days with other mothers, debriefings with my team, and many more experiences from the two site visits.

4.2   Interpretive Framework
4.2.1   Feminist Epistemology

In their essay, *Male is to female as ___ is to ____*, Cirksena and Cuklanz (1992) identify how a feminist framework for research in the field of Communication can provide us with an opportunity to reformulate our traditional epistemological notions of truth. They call us to challenge the notions of scholarship in the humanities by "seeking to eliminate or reverse patterns of oppression by redefining what can constitute as a legitimate object of analysis, what counts as knowledge, and whose experiences are significant" (p. 40). Research with a feminist epistemology in mind works to advance the following goals: to give voice to women's lives through their experiences and stories, explore the historical, material, and social power relations that oppress women, investigate the interlocking inequalities in women's lives and examine society through women's eyes. By beginning with women's lives as they experience them, centering their voices throughout my research, I created a starting point for new knowledge about the diversity among and between women's lives. Overall, feminist research can work to grant "authentic expression to women's experiences and to the knowledge they cultivate" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2014, p. 58) and to understand the relations of power found throughout society in the experiences of those most marginalized (Bowell, 2018). As feminist scholars, our particular epistemological point of view is important as our experiences and perspectives are implicated in our conceptions of meaningfulness and how we "interpret differencing concepts of knowledge for people of differencing

experiences" (Cirksena & Cuklanz, 1992, p. 40). Further, as meaning-makers and researchers we actively construct what it is we know about our subjects and therefore establish what it is others will know about them; the meaningfulness of their lives and trying to co-construct that meaningfulness through our work.

In following Cirksena and Cuklanz (1992), an investigation of maternal stories not only meets the goals of feminist scholarship but additionally to remain self-reflective about how we as researchers respond to those stories. Both in disciplinary and epistemological terms, self-reflections about the assumptions and categories found within my work can "shed light on the consequences our work may (or may not) have in the lives of others" (Ganguly, 1992, p. 65). These considerations help us to tease out my own situated responses to my participant's narratives and inform my reconstruction of those narratives, always remaining accountable to differing interests, goals, and backgrounds. Lugones and Spelman (1983) succinctly summarize these commitments:

> as feminist communication scholars, we want to develop theories, research
> questions, and methods of inquiry that allow the perspectives of women from
> non-dominant groups to guide our interpretations of their communication. To do
> this we must do something unusual, by placing women's ethnic cultures, rather
> than theory-testing or the communication experiences of dominant groups, at the
> center of our research. (p. 575)

A feminist framework for studying mothers and mothering helps explore how different mothering experiences reveal and reflect relational contexts, shared understandings, and bridge larger cultural and societal expectations; this framework puts the focus on *seeing*

and *doing*, the work a mother is doing within their family in the context of dramatically altered conditions.

4.3   Feminist Qualitative Practices
4.3.1   Ethnography, Interviews, and Narrative

In following a feminist, matrifocal framework and given the need to consider the particular constraints of the field site, the use of both observational and narrative qualitative methods was appropriate for this study. Attending to the lived experiences, daily activities, and social contexts of the everyday lives of mothers living through and since Maria allowed me to gain more in-depth intimate information and a more holistic understanding of the lived experiences of mothering in a disaster *in situ,* as well as insight into the situated, place-based meanings of their stories. O'Reilly (2005) offers the minimum definition for ethnographically-informed study as,

> iterative-inductive research (that evolves in design through the study), drawing on
> a family of methods, involving direct and sustained contact with human agents,
> within the context of their daily lives (and cultures), watching what happens,
> listening to what is said, asking questions, and producing a richly written account
> that represents the irreducibility of human experience, that acknowledges the role
> of theory as well as the researcher's own role and that humans as part
> object/subject. (p. 3)

In the chapter, *The Feminist Practice of Ethnography*, Buch and Staller (2007) describe the three principal ways a feminist approach to ethnography is distinguished from traditional ethnographic methodologies. Feminist ethnography includes, "a focus on

women's lives, activities, and experiences, methods or writing styles [that are] informed by feminist theories and ethics, and analyses that use feminist theoretical lens and/or pays particular attention to interplays between gender and other forms of power and difference" (p. 190). Through the narrative method detailed below, I unite my approach with a deep commitment to the voices of the mothers in my project in order to render visible aspects of their lives that might have otherwise been overlooked using other methodologies. Using elements of reflexivity, I follow Pink's (2015) advice: "Explore how representations might be developed to communicate something of both the ethnographer's own experiences and those of the people participating in the research, to their audiences, while simultaneously making a contribution to scholarship" (p. xv). This feminist ethnographic practice enhances narrative research by including the material and environmental elements of mothers' lives. I become immersed in the everyday realities of post-disaster through my embodied experiences: walking while interviewing, engaging in community events, and reflecting on images given to me by my participants. These embodied research practices provide insights about how these women remade their daily practices, renegotiated relationships, and created new resource avenues beyond simply surviving in this terrain but thriving and living well.

While there are many advantages to using qualitative methods, in disaster research specifically these methods are valuable because they prioritize experiences centered within a dynamic environment site that can "capture human behavior at its most open, realistic movements, as disasters challenge communities in unexpected ways, and with unanticipated consequences" (Phillips, 2014, p. 185). Further, the research design is more flexible in that it allows the researcher to be responsive to the natural environment

and contextual factors that may necessitate pursing a new line of inquiry, identifying new questions, and/or altering the research design (p. 186). Additionally, because qualitative methods are not limited to just interviews, additional opportunities for engaged research methods such as observation, photography, and textual analysis are available options for interview-based data. Through a variety of data and interpretive forms I enhance the credibility of my findings, allowing for richer contexts, and facilitating emergent insights in the investigation of my research question (p.185). Lastly, the intertwining of qualitative methods with disaster contexts affords a more textured engagement with a complex topic and informs a multi-layered analysis (p.185).

In disaster research, interview-based, case study approaches are currently the most popular method for investigating mass emergencies. The use of lived experience data has a relatively long tradition beginning with Prince's (1920) Halifax study that focused on documenting and analyzing the social consequences of a massive explosion in Halifax, Canada that left a 22% hole in a community's population. Over two years, Prince conducted interviews alongside secondary methods of document analysis and observations. Within the fields of health, family, and communication studies, research using qualitative methods has advanced over the last few decades. Journals such as the *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters* has published qualitative research since the early '80s that emphasizes cross-cultural frameworks and projects that center on crisis generating situations as seen from fields such as sociology, communication, and public policy. Journals such as *Disaster Prevention, Disasters, Humanity and Society, the Journal of Emergency Management, Natural Hazards Review,* and *Environmental Hazards* have begun publishing more papers with qualitative designs

and analysis in the last 10 years. While much of the work focuses on problem-solution or policy-oriented outcomes, the work is none-the-less drawn from a variety of disciplines. As disaster research centers and programs expand in universities across the world, increased attention to qualitative data in understanding the disaster experience has gained even more acceptance. As Creswell and Poth (2017) discuss, through a qualitative approach including narrative research, researchers can explore the personal experiences of an individual in an attempt to understand the relationships between variables in a given context. Additionally, because this project was working towards the goals of feminist research, qualitative data gathered through semi-structured, conversational interviews allowed for the complexities of mothers' lives to be brought to light by centering the voices of my participants. This interview approach gave voice to the plethora of other experiences that are often silenced in disaster studies, the stories their stories echoed, resisted, reframed, etc. Using multiple stories collected from several participants allowed me to then trace themes across stories to shed light on tensions, interruptions, opportunities, and/or challenges so as to understand maternal resilience from a first-person perspective (Polkinghorne, 1995).

While my methodological approach drew on ethnographic methods, within this study, my focus is on my participant's stories/narratives as my primary line of inquiry. Creswell and Poth (2017) define narrative inquiry as a specific type of qualitative design that often follows or runs alongside interviews. From this perspective, interviews can be both research practices and explorations into everyday life. However, because interviews involve stories they are also part of the creation of understanding about not just everyday practices, but how those practices are socially constructed. Further, people give multiple

meanings to their lives, "meaning to their bodies, their feelings, their situations, and they often try to fit their lives within a social context that they feel a part of" (Blumer, 1969, p. 65). Thus, narratives allow for an understanding of how the everyday practices, communication, and lived experiences of my participants create and complicate their world-view and self-concept and how meaning is created through their actions and interactions.

A narrative focus provides an opportunity to further integrate feminist mothering research into the field of family communication through a more diverse understanding of the complex ways mothers' lives are interwoven in the stories their families tell, as family stories help families make sense of and cope with stress both within and outside of the family (Langellier & Peterson, 2004). How mothers manage the challenges of disasters and foster resilience is one particular angle within narrative research that could offer feminist mothering scholars a useful lens for understanding and interpreting mothers, mothering, and motherwork as enacted and operationalized within the structure and experiences of the individual experience, the family as a whole, and the larger socio/cultural environment. Because "resilience is a process that is created and maintained through communication," a narrative approach is particularly apt for exploring resilience because mothers' stories detail how post-disaster situations and conditions affect their ability to forge and maintain necessary relationships (Afifi & Harrison, 2017, p. 326) and how they forge a new normal for their families.

In summary, given that mothers are navigating their lives amid multiple interwoven and often conflicting messages about how to mother—conflicts that are exacerbated by other narrative contexts and exigencies, in addition to changing and

shifting conditions and resources for mothering that get more complex in disaster environments—interviews and stories are extremely important and are relevant data for conducting feminist research. Mothers' experiences, accessed through a narrative approach, are rich and textured contributions to my understandings of maternal resilience in disaster contexts. Their stories frame their identities, experiences, recovery strategies, and lived conditions and how these are enacted within the family and the larger socio-cultural contexts. Centering mother's stories expands on disaster recovery models by bringing in the experiences of those too often left out of the conversation and silenced.

4.4 Collecting Stories

4.4.1 Interviewing Mothers

Data were collected through both formal and informal interviews. My final research design included:

- Eight semi-structured interviews with mothers of dependent children who are currently living in Puerto Rico, who lived through Hurricane Maria and remained on the island.

- A semi-structured interview with a mother who was pregnant during hurricane Irma, delivered her baby in the days following, and moved to Spain for two years after Maria before returning to Puerto Rico.

- A focus group with a midwifery organization that included, eight midwives who conducted over 100 births in the 60 days following Maria. Six of the midwives have dependent children, were living on the island

during and since Maria. One midwife was traveling on the mainland during Maria, but returned in the weeks after.

- Two informal interviews with professors from the University of Puerto Rico.

- An interview with a local emergency responder and community planner.

- Six informal interviews with various community members throughout the island, which included a nurse, a business owner, a university student, a local tour guide, and Airbnb hosts.

- An informal focus group of mothers that I met through Facebook. The four mothers that I joined for an afternoon at the beach are all a part of a separate group of mostly stay-at-home mothers.

Throughout these interviews, I encouraged the mothers to tell me the story of what happened during Hurricane Maria and in the two years since. I began with "tell me what happened" and as the conversation progressed, I asked for elaborations in the form of "what happened next." Additional questions emerged, such as:

- Did your family life change after Hurricane Maria and if so, how?

- How have you and your family managed over the past two years?

- What were your biggest challenges after the hurricane?

- What challenges have emerged more recently?

- What opportunities have emerged more recently?

- What is your day-to-day routine? What is different about these routines from what you did before the hurricane? What was your routine like during the immediate aftermath of Maria?

- Tell me about the future: what are some things that may be more difficult and what are some things that may change for the better?
- Tell me about the moments after Maria where you felt capable, empowered, motivated, and hopeful, etc.? Were their moments where you felt down, hopeless, confused, disadvantaged?

In following the semi-structured interview approach, I attempted to work these questions into the conversation. However, because this project emphasizes a narrative approach to data collection as well as a commitment to the goals of feminist scholarship, it was more important to remain a listener in this process so that my participant's stories remained central to the data that was collected overall. I made every effort during the interviewing process to conduct interviews in such a way as to allow the participant's own experiences and perspectives to be captured. In the following section, I discuss the considerations in choosing a translator, my participant selection, the field site, and ethical considerations.

4.4.2 Participant Selection

My selection criteria for participants were mothers with dependent children that were living in Puerto Rico during the hurricane and remained on the island since. While this is broad selection criteria, Puerto Rico is very diverse in its population, as there are many single mothers, blended families, and multigenerational families living together. Because I wanted to capture the textures of everyday life during and after the disaster, all mothers with dependent children living through the hurricane and remaining on the island in the years after were potential participants. This also included mothers that were pregnant during Maria and gave birth after. While my goal of this research was to have as

diverse a sample as possible, there were multiple constraints in accessing participants because I did not live on the island.

While I was originally going to gain access to participants through a key informant living on the island, there were some concerns over her lack of communication with me as I planned my travel that caused me to consider additional means for identifying participants. As I traveled, many of my participants were identified in process, as I booked local places to stay, located mothers through friends that knew of my project, and through participant snowballing. For example, when I booked my Airbnb in Isabella, a city on the northwest part of the island, for the second half of the first trip, I put a brief description of the reason for my trip in my stay request to my host. My host turned out to be a mother who met my research requirements and immediately responded with her interest in participating in my study and more:

> There are more moms too that I can introduce you too. One of my cousins in Puerto Rico has kids (who also speaks English) was here during the storm and since... she has so many stories. My sister was visiting during the storm and she and her kids have stayed living in our community. There are so many stories there too. It was such a sad thing. They are so terrified now every time they hear a hurricane is coming. You will get plenty of stories from the mothers here. I will help!

For the first part of my stay, which was in Luquillo, in the Northeast part of the island, my host informed me that the women checking us in might be interested. Within a few minutes of talking with her, her friend contacted me through WhatsApp, expressing

her interest in participating. That friend directed me to a mom's group on Facebook and added me to it. She introduced me and from that post, I received three more mothers interested in participating. Many of those moms indicated that they too had mothers they knew and offered to introduce me. Additionally, my translator had a friend who had recently moved to the island and was working with a local midwifery group. We met early in the trip and she agreed to make a post on her personal Facebook page with my contact information. Through that, I elicited the majority of my interview participants. Lastly, through my discussion with colleagues, I contacted a professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Puerto Rico who offered to meet with me and helped me locate additional participants through a study her sister was conducting on Hurricane Maria. While I anticipated approximately 5-10 participants for this study, over the two visits to the island I conducted 18 interviews and one focus group.

Along with these interviews, I used secondary methods in the form of observations and analyses of documents and artifacts exploring the material contexts that in themselves offer narrative frames. In Fothergill's (2004) site visits during her research based on the 1997 Grand Forks flood in Grand Forks, North Dakota, she participated in local events, spent time at diners, parks, coffee shops, and other family homes to gain a sense of family and gender relations in the community (p. 232). Similarly, and as a result of participating in the San Juan moms Facebook group, I was invited to participate in beach days, hikes, horseback rides, street festivals, and mommy and me brunches. Immediately after these meet ups and experiences, I took detailed field notes and journaled every evening. Glaser and Strauss (1967) indicate that these field notes are important as they help to explore thoughts or concerns related to the study, can make note

of initial interpretations of interviews and any emerging codes/themes, allow for immediate reflection on observations of people, places, and events, and make note of elements in the study that needed further investigation.

In addition to these observations, I analyzed official, personal, and cultural data. These included sources of additional narratives, newspapers, essays, pictures, and art as "these tell us a great deal about how humans live because a person's conscious or unconscious beliefs, attitudes, values, and ideas are often revealed in their communications" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996 as cited in Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 233). Fothergill found that her interview participants often showed her photographs, shared with her their calendars, diaries, and even showed her spaces in their homes where remnants of the crisis remained. Quarantelli (1994) found that these are important data to understand the whole picture of the disaster experience, but sadly, these types of data are often ignored. My participants shared with me photographs, took me on walks throughout their neighborhoods, and later gave me poems, postcards, food, and music to take home. Through the use of observations, interviews, and personal and mediated texts I was better able to understand the current issues and relevant contexts of the mothers' disaster stories.

4.4.3 The Island as Field site

I visited Puerto Rico on November 15-25, 2019 and again in March 1-11, 2020. Puerto Rico is a uniquely situated environment offering a longitudinal look at how these mothers are living and enacting resiliency beyond just the scope of the initial moment their lights went out. As an illustrative case and field site, it offers a rich and diverse place to investigate the underlying dimensions that unconsciously drive their experiences

and their narratives. Further, this locale offers a unique vantage point from which to see how these mothers enact resilience as they are situated within particular cultural discourses and articulated relationships emerging out of the ongoing recovery efforts and struggles on the island. The contexts and complexities of both possibilities and constraints are worth exploring as what may be productive or not cannot be read off the immediate situation or a set of predetermined relations but must consider what Hall (1985) terms "frames of intelligibility" drawn on contextualized understandings and the ideological articulations of sense-making *in situ*. Importantly, there are significant differences among the post-disaster contexts and responses of other research that emerged out of past disasters, such as New Orleans/Katrina and Grand Forks/North Dakota, not the least of which is Puerto Rico's territorial status and pre-disaster economic distress. Further, Puerto Rico as a field site invites exploration into the interplay of physical destruction/disruption, social and economic power imbalances, and agencies and organizations that additionally affected mothers' abilities to mother in this particular disaster context.

Meeting face-to-face with my participants allowed me the opportunity to be sensitive to the experiences of mothers in places where power and privilege "cluster" as forces of privilege and oppression do not work autonomously but rather converge. Disaster environments are one arena where the tensions and struggles and gains and losses are made evident. Most important, because this project explores how the construction of what it means to be a mother simultaneously empowers and marginalizes women, especially in post-disaster contexts, and how mothers' disaster experiences demonstrate these tensions and complexities, a place-based study was necessary

(Arendell, 2000). The relationship of women's experiences in context additionally tied their social location to the epistemological goals of my project. As Chapter 1 of this dissertation detailed, the timeline of events that affected these mothers from the immediate after-math of the storm through the following three years of recovery.

4.4.4 The Research Team

Given the possibility that my participants did 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. Importantly because "language carries with it a set of assumptions, feelings, and values that the speaker may or may not be aware of" the translator is in a position to transfer meaning, create new meaning where there is not direct translation and/or could even miss the importance of a particular turn of phrase (Phillips, 1960, p. 291). Since people using different languages might construct different ways of seeing social life, a translator is an integral part in the process of not only interpreting the spoken words but in producing knowledge (Temple & Young, 2004, p. 164). "Translation itself has the power to reinforce or to subvert longstanding cross-cultural relationships but that power rests in how translation is executed and integrated into the research design, not in the fact of translation per se" (p. 175). This created an interesting dilemma for me both in the use of a translator and in the selection of that individual as there were translator-researcher-participant dynamics to consider.

I concur with Edwards (1998) that interpreters are "key informants" and not just a mouthpiece, merely transmitting messages, invisible in the process and product. I viewed my translator as working "with" me rather than working "for" me (as cited in Berman &

Tyyskä, 2011, p. 186). As such, my translator's perspectives of the interviews and the transcription process were of importance. I needed to ensure that whoever was helping me was someone with whom I felt comfortable freely discussing these interviews, debating and inferring the multiple meanings, interpretations, and perspectives of a particular story. Because of the heavy amount of debriefing I intended to do with my translator, involving them in the front portion of data analysis through those initial perceptions of the interview, I wanted to ensure that the translator was equally comfortable working with me. Moreover, in adherence to a feminist research framework there is a strong need for translators to be aware of the research goals, protocols, and the value of their feedback. Additional considerations were the individual's language competency, research experience, the time period they would be available, their ability to travel with me to meet participants, and funding available for their participation. A solid working relationship with my translator was an important part of the analysis, as through the divergent perspectives of my team I uncovered nuances in the interviews and revealed new layers of meaning in the mothers' experiences. With excellent translators, I was able to collect additional data and enrich my interpretations and analyses through their interpretations and observations gathered in our daily debriefings.

To balance the time constraints and add other perspectives, I chose two translators. I chose these two women because both had the time to devote to the project and were comfortable traveling with me. In addition, both have studied and worked in other countries before. The first member of my team was my friend Kristen Erdmann, who has a background in international studies, is a certified community health worker, has spent time in Spanish speaking environments, and is multilingual. Because I have

known her for over a decade and have worked closely with her on other projects, I trusted Kristen to be honest and open with me. I knew that she understood the importance of this project, and beyond just the simple act of translating these stories, she was willing to provide me with feedback, ideas, contradictions, support, in all parts of the research process. Her training in community health was also integral to ensuring the research process held care and compassion at its core and did not retraumatize or harm the mothers who were reliving a potentially traumatic event. Kristen's expertise ensured I had someone there who was certified in dealing with and handling community-based trauma. One constraint was that Kristen had to travel with her two-year old. While this initially presented a challenge to the project, I saw her mothering in Puerto Rico alongside these mothers with whom I was interviewing as an opportunity. As a mother, actively mothering during this project, Kristen could provide me perspective and insight I might not have, given that my children were at home hundreds of miles away. Further, as a mother actively mothering during the research process, Kristen's daughter Indira gave us a different kind of access as we were welcomed in mothering spaces. Any discomfort in my team joining a mommy and me brunch or a beach day with a group of mothers was eased by the presence of her child and her active engagement with the mothers and their children.

My second translator was a past student of mine with whom I have since developed a close working and personal relationship. Laurel Paputa's background in communication, her interest in health issues, her fluency in Spanish, and her work on Spanish culture, brought an additional and needed perspective to my project. The addition of Laurel to the team brought another perspective to these interviews, helping me to

check my perceptions of mothering with those of someone who is not a mother herself. Importantly, Laurel was comfortable asking questions about what she was learning, and well-practiced at conducting analyses that blend both knowledge and experience. The work she had done previously in my classes was an asset for me in the debriefing of this project as Laurel was already accustomed to participating in a feedback loop with me.

With the generous support from my Michigan Technological University (MTU) King-Chavez Parks Fellowship, the MTU graduate school, and the MTU Humanities department, I had the funding available to bring these two women with me. They were not paid for their translation services as their help was in exchange for covering all their travel expenses and providing them with additional opportunities to travel and explore a new place--one that neither of them had previously experienced.

4.4.5 Interview Protocol and Procedure

Approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) case number 1492138-1 was granted from Michigan Technological University in September 2019. Once approval was given, I followed up with potential participants and other professional contacts to confirm their participation. During the first part of the initial meeting an informed consent form, as shown in Appendix A, was explained, and signed by each participant before participating. The research process began before the two trips to the island and continued after I transcribed interviews and analyzed the data. Yet this project continues in informal ways. My team and I continue to have contact in which we engage and reflect on the data. I also remain in contact with several mothers on the island as we have over the last

few months come to develop a friendship. I have plans to go back to Puerto Rico as soon as it is COVID-19 safe and hope to meet with a few of them again.

4.5   Analyzing through Restorying and Mapping

Oral interviews from both trips were transcribed verbatim and sent to each of the interviewees for review. During this member check, the interviewees were asked if there were any edits or corrections; those edits or additions were made to the transcription. Additionally, all field notes and reflections of interviews and debriefings with my research team were gathered into these files. One of the main critiques of conducting a narrative inquiry is that there is a wide variety of analysis techniques available. Given that I have asked what we can learn about resilience from mothers' stories, I found Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional space approach to be valuable for analyzing and engaging with the stories and other ethnographic elements gathered and transcribed from my site visits. In sum, "their process of restorying, includes reading the transcripts, analyzing the stories to understand the lived experience and then retelling the stories" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000 as cited in Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002, p. 330). This approach has three aspects: *interaction, continuity, and situation*. In the process of restorying, I became very familiar with the mothers' stories. As I describe this process below, I draw on examples from my restorying. Note that all names are pseudonyms.

The first element in restorying is *interaction*, which involves both the personal and the social. The researcher analyzes a transcript or text for the personal experiences of the storyteller as well as for the interaction of the individual with other people. These other people may have different intentions, purposes, and points of view on the topic of

the story. For example, in what I came to call the collective narrative of a group of "stay-at-home-mothers," I worked to understand their relationships with one another and how those relationships ebbed and flowed in relation to changing circumstances, families, and communities. I looked for points of convergence and tension within their individual and collective experience. Two shared concerns were their living arrangements and their personal feelings about independence for Puerto Rico. Their shared challenge of navigating childcare was layered onto their individual relationship to partners, work, housing, economic circumstances, and the larger impacts that failed safety and security systems have had on their lives before and after Maria. Together they designed a resiliency network to find a balance in those tensions, setting aside the subjective differences that often divide mothers. This relational web became a vital part of their individual and collective experience and an integral part in how I retold the story of their resilience.

The second element of *continuity or temporality* is important in restorying. The researcher analyzes the transcript or text for information about past experiences of the storyteller. In addition, it is analyzed for present experiences illustrated in actions of an event or actions to occur in the future. In this way, the analyst considers the past, present, and future. For example, Lourdes's story attests to how historical structures and political systems shaped the aftermath response and how organizations on the island are working to redesign those systems and structures to be more equitable and sustainable for the long-term future of Puerto Rican mothers and families. Additionally, Yarelis's story elucidates the importance of motherlines and intergenerational knowledge for the preparation and recovery after storms and as Lourdes's mother-in-law testified, their

strategies were framed within their past experiences. Lastly, as I engaged in restorying my interviews, I organized their 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 are doing to improve the conditions of their lives as long-term transformational strategies for their future.

Thirdly, restorying is sensitive to the *situation* or place needs in a transcript or text. Researchers look for specific situations in the storyteller's landscape. This involves the physical places or the sequence of the storyteller's places (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002, p. 339). For example, Natalia found that living in the rainforest not only provided her with natural protections from the storm's winds and rains, but became a metaphor for how she saw her own transformation after the storm. Mariana encountered multiple shifts in her living arrangements. Her overall transformation ran parallel to her experience being homeless in the aftermath of Maria and having to live in an abusive environment, as those places helped to inform how she felt about mothering in disaster, how she reframed her own identity as a Puerto Rican, and how she shifted her mothering practices to be more open and inclusive.

In sum, restorying highlighted individual/collective relationships, temporalities, and emplaced interactions in the interview data (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). In addition, the stories are multilayered, including scenes and relational dynamics from the more intra/interpersonal level to the familial and communal level to the broader contextual and cultural level. In short, restorying attends to the unfolding meaningfulness of the lived experiences of participants (Kim, 2016).

Along with restorying the interview data, I mapped Buzzanell's five communicative processes onto those stories by moving from the interview data to the concepts of communicative resilience and back. During this iterative process, I was careful not to assume correspondences. Instead, I adopted Connelly and Clandinin's (2000) inductive analytical tools: *broadening* and *burrowing* in order to see if there were connections with Buzzanell's five processes.

The first analytical tool of *broadening* has to do with looking for a broader context of the story, including a description of the participant, implied in the told story. It is about making a general description of the participant's character or values, or of the social, historical, or cultural milieus in which the research takes place by looking at your field notes and the literature review. For example, the mothers I interviewed represent a diverse set of educational, economic, familial, and geographic positions. Further, they represent a diverse set of perspectives on issues such as mothering identities and practices, cultural tropes, and the value of relational networks in their transformation after Maria. I considered these positions in relation to the larger exigencies that were represented alongside the cultural and historical frames that situated their lives. While their individual identities are valuable to the overall narrative, through broadening I backed out of their stories to consider how the context site and cultural schemas shaped their stories and situated their lived experiences within larger narratives.

The second analytical tool that Connelly and Clandinin's (2000) call for is *burrowing*, which is used to focus on details such as the participants' feelings, understandings, or dilemmas, or a certain event's impact on the participant's surroundings and to ask questions about why and how those details influenced their

narratives. As I listened to each interview and subsequently read through the transcripts of their interview I made note of those feelings, their impressions of why and how events happened, and the tensions and complexities of their experience. Throughout the interview process there were often points where mothers were direct about specific experiences, and while I noted these admissions I also dove deeper into the interconnectedness of other feelings, complexities, and events in their lives. For example, when Luana experienced fragmentation as a result of the loss of a family member, I attended to this moment, attuning myself to her feelings. I attempted to connect that experience to the dilemmas she faced renegotiating her relationship to work, faith, and family. While she was direct in describing how that loss shaped her behavior after Maria, in restorying her interview, I attempted to layer together other feelings and tensions she experienced to draw in on the relational elements of her resilience.

The process of analysis was an iterative one. I returned again and again to the data, "the piles of field notes, transcriptions, photos, maps, memos, reflections, sticky notes, PDF's, journals, and books" (Ellingson & Sotirin, 2020, p. 7), "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 [read] it" (Markham, 2013, sect. 4.2, n.p. as cited on p. 5). Clandinin and Connolly (2000) ask us to consider what the stories mean and what their social significance is so that a broader, more holistic understanding can emerge. In mapping Buzzanell's communicative processes, I followed storylines that related to the processes in her framework of resilience, re-envisioning resilience as contextually, culturally, and

relationally orientated. Through this process of restorying and mapping communicative processes I found I was "negotiating relationships, negotiating purposes, negotiating ways to be useful, and negotiating transitions" while "keeping in mind theoretical, methodological, and interpretive considerations" (Kim, 2016, p. 129; p. 206). I reassembled story fragments in order to flesh out the work of resilience, "reassembling or rearranging the told from interviews and other sources of data" (p. 203). For example, I spent six plus hours with the group of "stay-at-home" mothers. Their interview represented a considerable amount of interview data to work through. Through broadening and burrowing, I was able to draw out the social, communal, and contextual layers of their experience. This restorying provided a basis for mapping communicative processes in order to understand how maternal resilience happens.

4.5.1 Reflexivity

I continued to reflect on my assumptions and my subjectivity throughout the analysis process. My role as observer-as-participant transitioned to participant-as-observer as my engagement with these mothers grew. As I walked with them through their communities and enjoyed time with their children on beaches, I began to feel the pull of deep commitment to their stories, to their experiences, to them not just as women but also in the communal aspect of mothering. At every step of my research process, every twist and turn of the roads of Puerto Rico, I considered the key ethical dimensions of my work.

To begin, I followed the advice from Glass and Ogle (2012) and treated each of my mothers with care, such that "each interaction should be fundamentally relational and

visibly be an ethical moment of care" (p. 17). This involved compassionate communication in the form of "listening deeply, giving undivided attention, and authentic caring about another person as participants and researchers make data together" (Ellingson & Sotirin, 2020, p.13). I acknowledged the co-determined nature of their narratives and the relational elements of our engagement. The relationship we have to each other, the relationships they have with members of my research team, and the relationships they have to the other members that may have shared their experiences with them (as was the case with the midwives and the stay-at-home mothers). I endeavored to decenter myself "as the crucial agency involved in participatory research and saw myself as merely one element in the data assemblage" (p. 101.). As Gullion and Tilton (2020) advocate, I tried to "think about how the research design complements the social structure of the people you are working with. That knowledge is holistic, embodied, and not just cognitive" (p. 44-5).

As such I also attended to other affective and embodied elements of the interviews. After each interview I noted feelings, movements, nonverbal moments, tones, words, and expressions that added to the depth of their stories. I reflected in my nightly journals and in my conversations with my research team about my impressions of the mothers' accounts, honing in on the intricacies of the interactions, describing (even attempting to paint or draw) images of their homes and their communities that they showed me from their phones, and recording soundscapes of the environments I engaged them in. I also asked the same of my research team and collected their field notes. However, because field notes have representational limitations, my team and I also recorded all debriefing sessions which were additionally transcribed. Even still, it must be

acknowledged that "the liveliness of such data can remain resistant to textualization" (Ellingson & Sotirin, 2020, p. 21).

To help, I drew on the layering of the data including the audio of their interviews, their verbal descriptions and transcripts of their interviews, and my fieldnotes, photographs, maps and other audio/video recordings. In retelling their stories, I tried consciously and compassionately to embody their experiences so that their experiences living in disaster can be both heard and felt. I considered the interpersonal and intrapersonal elements of our developing relationship and the temporality of these meetings in the scope of the developing weeks and months since Irma and Maria first struck the island. Lastly, I worked to meet mothers where they were which included listening to their stories in their native language first before attempting to translate and involving them in the transcription and ongoing translation work. This often involved moving back and forth over a phrase or word so as to represent their impression of their experience. For example, a member of my research team was more familiar with proper Spanish. In the interview with Luana they worked together to break down a phrase that was connotatively different in the Puerto Rican dialect in which this mother was fluent. Moving back and forth they worked together to find a meaning that represented what Luana was trying to convey.

Lastly, I protected and respected the needs of the mothers in my study. There were times where the mothers asked me not to include certain places, names, or events in my final product, but felt that telling me was important for narrative context and an overall understanding of the experience they had. To honor their request, in some places I have

omitted certain elements of the story or changed names and minor details in an effort to maintain confidentiality where the mothers asked for it. Due to the ethnographic nature of the project, I had other stories, observations, and texts that I could draw in for any gaps.

In the process of listening to the mothers and in the sharing of their stories, I considered the sacredness of our interactions, the deep trust they had with me to share both their trauma and their successes. The vulnerability was in not just what they shared but, in their willingness, to open their lives, their homes, and the spaces that are sacred to them. I worked as Blumenfeld-Jones (1995) encouraged:

> [I] honored the told story and preserved the value and dignity of the teller. While acknowledging that the original storyteller is also reconstructing her experiences, a narrative inquirer must maintain fidelity both towards the person's story and toward what that person is unable to articulate about the story and its meanings. (as cited in Kim, 2016, p. 111)

Throughout my work here, operating on the feminist principles from which I set out, I held these mothers and their stories at the heart of all parts of my research process.

5   Analysis of Buzzanell's Communication Framework of Resilience

Mothering in a disaster environment is different from everyday mothering for most mothers. Buzzanell's (2010) summation of the responses of mothers in her study is apt: while one mother may respond to her situation through "the reframing of the situation linguistically and metaphorically to one of constrained hopefulness," another mother might make "the conscious decision to acknowledge that legitimate right to feel anger or loss while backgrounding those feelings as counterproductive to more important goals" (p. 9). Whichever strategy she chooses, the effort of a mother to resist structures of power that constrain her life as both a woman and a mother, attests to the construction of resilience as both a communicative activity and one that is bound up with the relational aspects of the lives of mothers.

Additionally, mothers in post-disaster environments face the expectations of intensive mothering paradigms and the need to rewrite their domestic lives. As they navigate the disaster environment, the work of holding home and family together reflects larger socially and historically significant identities that are subject to negotiation and readjustment. Put differently, they are not immune to cultural and societal norms that are not only engendered by care work but place this work solely on the mother; additionally, such norms place the responsibility for resilience on the individual as opposed to the family or community at large. As a result of the added weight of these pervasive messages and the expectation for them to return to normal, feelings of guilt and inadequacy can intensify, further burdening mothers as they struggle to meet post-disaster challenges.

For mothers living in Puerto Rico specifically, as their routines disappeared and their domestic responsibilities doubled, they found themselves absorbing the impact of the disaster for their families. While they have had to bear the burden of decades of structural and economic decline, the hurricane changed the stakes overnight, and their mothering practices needed to yet again adjust, in the words of one mother, "on the march." The lack of support structures and the failed humanitarian aid response amplified their already existing anxieties over their children's education, community and personal safety, and stability of home and economic prospects. Mothers in Puerto Rico had to come to terms with not just the broken promises of the past but the present.

The mothering narratives in this chapter detail how mothers reconciled the material, interactive, and the discursive tensions by shifting not just the way they mothered but also how they came to feel about mothering and themselves in light of the narratives about them. In doing so, they constructed a maternal identity and mothering practice that empowered them. Taken together, we can see how, for these mothers, resilience took on different forms in a dynamic unevenness. Through the mapping of matricentric feminism, their stories also attest to the use of anger as a mobilizing strategy for change enacting feminist principles of social justice. Mothers in Puerto Rico called into question the systems that both enabled and constrained their lives prior to the hurricane and in some cases, they actively pushed back and resisted certain forms of support in the aftermath and worked to rewire critical connections to build more gender equity not just into care work but into other systems such as health, birth work, and humanitarian aid work. Their experiences facilitate a concrete understanding of the way particular contexts and exigencies frame how these mothers lived post disaster. Attending to their movements

and their everyday patterns of communication and actions revealed the places where their stories paralleled and expanded on Buzzanell's (2010) communication resilience framework, highlighting their work as women and mothers. Buzzanell's (2010) framework identifies five key processes and through the analytic framework of narrative their stories capture how mothers enacted these processes and more.

1. Crafted new definitions and conditions of normalcy
2. Worked to affirm identity by reframing self-other relationships
3. Foregrounded productive action while legitimizing or backgrounding their negative feelings
4. Put alternative logics to work in designing new ways of handling problems created by their changing circumstances
5. Built and maintained networks of support

5.1 Crafting New Definitions and Conditions of Normalcy: The Normal, New Normal and the Next New Normal

In developing the "new normal" for their families, mothers creatively approached mothering in disaster conditions. By seeking out the old familiar routines, they attempted to provide a sense of normalcy for their children. Despite family systems being thrust into turmoil or crisis they worked through their actions and interactions to find stability in uncertain times. In the crafting of normalcy for their families I found two tensions that ran as undercurrents to their experience after Maria:

1. They instinctively activated their maternal role, grounding themselves in the expectations and responsibilities of "good" mothering in an effort to buffer the effects of

the storm for their children and family. To do this work they drew on familiar routines and renegotiated routines as conditions persisted.

2. Although traditional gendered roles became more sutured into place, these Puerto Rican mothers acknowledged that in the aftermath of Maria alternative trajectories were possible. For example, they configured a temporary normality through territorializing spaces, organizing children's play, and sharing intimacies (fears, anxieties, plans) through conversations and presence--all routinized in their daily meetings at parks, mall playscapes, or in their homes. For these mothers crafting a new normal involved creating and inhabiting spaces physically, relationally, and discursively that allowed them to enact mundane routines of connection and care. As such they engaged in relational work that attempted to craft something less isolating and more empowering.

5.1.1 The Normal

The labor necessary to help their families "get back to normal" or create "a new normal" was not just situated in the aftermath of the disaster, but was connected to their roles and routines prior to and in preparing for the storm. Given their position in the Caribbean, families on the island are accustomed to preparing for storms. Many islanders I spoke to lamented that the end of the summer brings a certain level of anxiety and fear as hurricane season bears down on them. The mothers' stories I listened to attended to this fear: "Every time there's another storm season or another chance of a storm I call on them [friends and family] for support. I'm worried, I'm scared I'd tell them. They'd say they were too. And I would know I wasn't alone. Again." As such, they were proactive in helping their families prepare for the storm, one mother noting that "it was my

responsibility to do the work inside the house and he, he did the work outside." Nearly every mother I spoke to talked about both their own preparations and discussing preparations with partners or neighbors.

For Natalia, a mother of two children, living in a forest town hidden in the mountains of the rainforest El Yunque, her preparations for the storm were similar to the work she did in her typical day-to-day. Before the storm, she ran the kids to school in the mornings and picked them up after work. She and her husband shared the responsibilities of making meals, helping with homework, and balanced time for each to enjoy exercise or time away with friends. When it came time to prepare for the storm, her role as a mother continued to take on that same pattern. She noted that while her husband ordered solar panels, shored up their windows and doors, cleared loose debris, and gathered supplies, she was in charge of gathering two weeks of water and food to ensure that they had what they need for their children. "I knew the electricity would go out. If often does during storms. I made sure we had books and snacks. I charged all of their devices in advance and did all of the laundry."

For those living in nuclear households, preparation routines continued to be drawn along gendered lines. "I was in charge of the food and the kids. He was in charge of the windows and the generator. The gas and the batteries." Another mother noted that her husband had gone to the hardware store "a million times in two days" to try and get all the supplies he needed to keep their home safe from water and debris.

Single mothers did not have the same opportunity to negotiate their role dynamics, and as a result they experienced more pressures and fears. Lourdes, a single

mother, bore sole responsibility for preparing for storms Irma and Maria for not just her children, but for her mother-in-law as well, who came to her house during every storm that held the promise of flooding or significant winds. As such, she took extra precautions to protect her family before the storms. She had a handyman secure her air conditioner and the solar panel that they used for their water heater. Even though she had prepared two weeks of food ahead of hurricane Irma, the night before Maria, after she picked the kids up from their father's, she headed to the 24-hour grocery store to stock up on more groceries and last-minute supplies. Despite fears of still not having enough food, given that she was trained in the field of infant and youth feeding in emergencies, she understood that the precarity they were in regarding water and electricity was more important than other instrumental concerns. She recalled, "I knew we needed to store more water and I was worried about how I'd reach my people without a way to charge my phone." So, she did what her mother-in-law and her mother before her had done: they filled up empty containers, pots, the tub, and bottles with as much water as they could. Similar to Natalia, Lourdes charged all of their lights, phones, and other devices to ensure they would have a few days of power.

Mariana, another single mother whose family was left homeless after the storm, prepared by acknowledging their pre-storm situation, the precarity they were already in as she worried how she would manage if something went devastatingly wrong during the storm. "I was pregnant during Maria and so 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 at the time. She described, "They [her 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."

5.1.2 The New Normal

In the aftermath of Maria mothers were initially reactive in their responses. Without hesitation they began buffering the impact of the storm for their families as they instinctively activated their maternal role, grounding themselves in the expectations and responsibilities of "good" mothering. Despite her concerns over the damage from the storm, at about midday, Natalia helped her kids put on their rain jackets and head outside to look around and see what had happened. As her husband jumped in to help neighbors clear debris, Natalia began immediately to sooth her children's fears over the scope of the damage around them. "I tried to help them understand as much as I could and to make it fun for them." She allowed them to climb on downed trees, jump in mud puddles, get "incredibly messy" despite knowing that "there would be no showers for a while." "I mostly tried to keep them away from broken glass or metal." She enacted the elements of fun and adventure as one creative mechanism to help her children cope with the toll of losing everything.

Another group of mothers headed to the Mall of San Juan, a familiar place where they would sometimes bring their kids to play. They recalled how the mall was one of the first places to be cleaned up and opened in the aftermath. The space became a safe haven for mostly mothers to sit in "sad silence" trying to grasp the depth of their situation. "It was a safe place to rest for a bit. People came here because it was clean, the sun coming in through the windows and the kids could all play while the parents talked."

Despite the initial feeling of shock, as the aftermath of the disaster continued to worsen, their responsibilities expanded and as result, "mom will handle it" became more sutured into place. Natalia lamented that "as the mother I had to put everyone else first. As a mother, I was with my kids all the time in the beginning because I didn't feel comfortable leaving them alone or to leave them with someone I don't know well."

As conditions persisted, mothers drew on familiar routines and renegotiated routines. Many of the mothers developed creative ways to keep the adventure going and continue familiar patterns their children and their families were accustomed to. For Natalia, the routines they had prior--going to gymnastics or going out to restaurants in the evenings--were no long available options as the electricity was out island wide and nearly all the buildings in their nearby barrio had significant storm damage. Instead, she crafted new routines, trying to bring in more novelty by finding creative ways to navigate the now complex and sometimes dangerous everyday tasks of domesticity. She and the kids set up tents in the yard and had a campout; they read books cuddled up with flashlights; they made forts and shared meals with their neighbors. While they lived in the rain forest and were used to hiking and exploring their natural surroundings, she used this time to explore new spaces and places.

> I had to shift the things I would normally do with them. We couldn't go to the beach, so we went to the river instead. Without light it was dark early, so they used the flashlights to play after dark. We collected rainwater and did laundry by hand. The kids would even play with the trash near the road. I worried about that, what would other people think about me letting them do that, but at that moment

it was all they could do. My kids needed that, so I said okay and let them play with it.

Despite her labor and the intensive effort to bring about more normalcy, the adventure-filled feeling was short-lived. The solar power panels they ordered had not arrived, so they found themselves without power once again. Their water and food lasted them two weeks, but when no more came and no additional help arrived, she knew the situation for her family and their community was about to become life-threatening. She, along with her family, knew that without help, within a week, they would be without food. As a result, Natalia had to rethink how she was going to manage the increasing demands of domesticity alongside the work she was doing as a mother. As I discuss shortly, Natalia's situation became increasingly demanding.

For the mothers from the mall, the food situation was the most unsettling part of their lives after Maria. Together, they worked to keep their kids' dinner routines similar. "We'd sort our military rations and what we each had from before. We'd make up meals using all of that, even giving them silly names to get the kids to eat it." They described looking at everything they had available to them in the aftermath and shaping it into something else. One of the mothers in particular noted how church services were still held and how she and her family went to a service the first Sunday morning the church reopened and continued to go every Sunday after. "It gave us something to do that we were used to. We needed that space to remind us that we could get back to our lives as they were." For these families, community spaces became places where they could enact familiar routines and rituals that made them feel as though life was getting back to

normal. The mothers often remarked about how wonderful it felt to talk with friends, share time together with their neighbors, or hold hands in a prayer circle. While their lives were in near chaos outside of the church services or the shared comradery of meal time, their resilience was tied, in part, to the communicative processes that were embedded in these material realities.

Yarelis, a mother living near downtown San Juan, found that helping her family maintain some sense of normalcy or stability in the aftermath of Maria was different from others across the island. "We didn't lose water or the toilets because we had a generator. We did get one bag of food supplies and one box of water each week for two or three times [a week]. It was enough to get through the tough spots." She added that there was "always a struggle the next day." Regardless of the dynamic differences in their lives in the aftermath, Yarelis still had to help her daughter say consistent with her schooling, noting that despite schools being closed she was still expecting her daughter to "do her studies" each day. But there were new learning experiences as well: "I wanted her to remember it differently. She did have fun not being in school and learning to roller skate." She helped her daughter learn to ride a bike and build new friendships in the neighborhood, reframing the experience of the disaster into a chance to grow and learn new things.

The work that began in the immediate aftermath continued for months until things were cleaned up enough for people to start making trips to San Juan for gas to refill their generators and grocery stores to start having food on the shelves. This was a turning point for most of the mothers as they started to feel that normalcy of the before Maria

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returning. As Yarelis recalled, "That day the market opened there were so many people there. Everyone wanted something fresh to eat. But, to be honest you couldn't trust what you eat anywhere because you don't know to what extent that food was last refrigerated or not." For Natalia, in specific the doubling down of domestic responsibilities and mothering through the chaos began to take a toll as she found herself "tired in a new way. The stakes had changed. I was busy trying to get to the point just to function." While she worked to maintain normalcy for her children her new normal looked different. Behind the façade of the domestic routines, and the familiar role of mother, she no longer exercised, aside from the walks she took with her kids in the rainforest or the waiting in line she did for ice or water. There was no time for yoga or coffee with friends. In the evenings, when it got dark, she tucked the kids into bed and then got to bed herself, exhausted from the day, stating that "You don't have a desire to do much else besides the basics." During this time, she did the best she could with what she had while navigating her increasingly intense feelings as the lack of aid continued.

> So, I did the best I could. I had to change the way I did things, but everything is harder and takes longer. We just had to keep moving forward. I tried to keep things as normal and as the same as I could for them. You have to do it on the march. They didn't really understand why all this was happening. They'd get bored, angry, sad, and you just have to help them. As the mom, you just have to work it out somehow.

Natalia's determination to create normalcy "on the march" is a critical element of the resilience that marked her efforts to move forward into a "new normal."

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It took six to nine months before their routine from "before Maria" started to emerge again. The kids were back in school but soccer practice was in a new field farther away because FEMA still occupied their home space. Yarelis's gas stove allowed her to make a fresh cup of coffee. Natalia's husband installed the solar panels that allowed them to have two fans at night. They bought a little fridge so they could get things semi-colder, and eventually, he built their system up enough so they could do laundry at home, as opposed to the river. The moms at the mall still frequented the mall for the air conditioning, but with beaches cleaned up and gas available, they were able to have more playdates outside of their homes and the singular play area. As their homes were repaired, they even found that they could begin to host friends over for dinners that were not comprised of military food. As one mother noted "we still had to do it by candle and lantern though because there was not power here for a year." Little by little, there were improvements.

While many of the mothers spoke explicitly about reframing their situation to keep things as similar and stable for their children as they could, others focused on rebuilding their lives. For Lourdes, the conditions of normalcy she was adjusting to after Maria intensified her frustration. She grew more and more concerned that Puerto Ricans were being forced to accept the harsh conditions in their aftermath as their new normal, a status quo that replicated past failures, and were having to continue to adapt with little to no help. "The water issue wasn't our only problem. Electricity was equally an issue, especially when we think of what people needed after." Much like Natalia she lamented about how complex their routines became and how exhausted she was from having to consistently shift her practices in relation to their changing conditions. "Everything

required extra steps. You need to boil 12 bottles twice a day, just for drinking water. At night I'd crawl in my bed and cry myself to sleep." Her frustration over the blackout that lasted nearly a year was palpable as Lourdes observed that it was not an isolated event, noting that there was a national blackout in 2016 that left millions without power. Additionally, as was noted in Chapter 1, the conditions on the island prior to the storm were already precarious. One of the critical elements to crafting normalcy that Lourdes alluded to was accepting that the new normal was going to continue to have the same vulnerabilities they faced prior to storm. In addressing the inconsistent electricity, she lamented, "Maybe that's why it's so kind of like improvised and why it doesn't work right because there wasn't really anyone in charge making sure that things were getting done the right way and consistently for everyone." As Lourdes recognized, the reframing of normalcy or the "new normal" was enormously difficult. The mothers found it hard to fulfill their normal functions given the exhaustive amount of work they had to do in order to consistently renegotiate their roles and routines to keep up with the constant and long-term demands of living in a disaster environment. As Dekle (2004) found in her work understanding the experience of mothers living in Israel during terrorist attacks, "even as they were determined to preserve or create joy, normalcy, and routine for their children, the mothers labored under a heavy burden of fear, anxiety, depression, and, in some cases, despair provoked by the terror" (p. 34). While terror environments involve more exigencies that uniquely situate their experience, mothers living in post-Maria Puerto Rico were under similar demands (i.e. homelessness, starvation, threat of death, gender violence, and lack of aid support) in their mothering practices that resulted in some of the same feelings.

5.1.3 The Next New Normal

With schools starting back up, the motherload lessened. As roads opened up across the island and people began to feel more secure in their homes, they began to move around more. Friends and family could finally reach one another. As one mother noted, "Once my friends, those that I trusted, got better, I was able to leave them [my kids] more. I'd think 'okay, I can leave this child with this friend. This gave me time to finally think clearly about how to move forward, about how we were going to do this new life." Similarly, other mothers desired to have back the simplicity of their lives before the storm despite acknowledging the tenuous position they were in with regards education, economic, and public services.

As Hall (2018) notes, "What makes resilience strategies different from coping strategies is their focus not only on recovery or bouncing back, but also on growth" (p. 321). As circumstances changed so too did mothering practices. Their resilience was not just a static state relative to disruption but an active ongoing attempt to reframe their circumstances.

For Natalia, the storm left a mark on her life that was not "completely bad." As she described what she meant by "there were things to be amazed by too," she referred to the rebirth of the rainforest as a metaphor for her own story.

> It was powerful, its transformation. I would go for walks in the forest and every
> few weeks it would change. Two months later, it was a completely other world.
> At some point flowers started to grow and the understory started to grow. You

saw flowers you had never seen before. Because in order for that to happen, you can't have a canopy, and with there being no leaves, the sun was getting down there for the first time. Seeing all the stages of how the forest recovers...how it gets back...it's beautiful...sort of like us here.

Natalia used her experienced seeing the regrowth of the rainforest to reframe her own experience mothering after Maria. For her, the rainforest was a special place and its recovery symbolized that transformation and recovery for her family was possible. Instead of merely coping with the loss of the rainforest and the loss of her home life as she knew it, she shifted her perspective to find new meaning in their situation, one that was both hopeful and reassuring.

Importantly, mothers had to navigate contradictions embedded in post-disaster mothering practices and expectations. Particularly for Lourdes and Natalia, their intensive mothering practices set alongside their material realities were not only unsustainable immediately after Maria, but also for their lives as they desired them to be in the future. As Lourdes recalled,

I drained the battery on my car twice in that [first] week because we would charge our devices in the car. Then the gas in my car was running out so we walked miles to the plaza. For about two months, I would go out every three or four hours and turn the car on. We even slept on the front stoop for the first month after the storm because it was so hot inside. I'm like what am I going to do with my life, now? What am I going to do with them [her kids]? Is this some kind of joke to them [the U.S.]?

I thought we would die.

Natalia paralleling Lourdes's frustration by describing the ongoing processes they had to engage in to try and resolve some of the disparities and contradictions they were experiencing.

> The work I had to do then with my family, holding us all together, all the extra work of the house and our life, it changed me mentally. It all built up. I was living in the moment and doing what I needed to do for that moment or for that week. I never felt like it was enough for them. I wanted more for them. I wanted more for myself too.

This required relational work, talk in action, to find ways to establish routines that would be more empowering and less depleting. Natalia recalled having to have a serious talk with her husband about how frustrated she was with having to take on all the added work of the house, the care work, navigating the paper work, food preparation, boiling water, etc. She told us,

> I was a little angry with him because I felt like all of the kids and house stuff fell on me. As I started to see my life come back, I knew there would need to be changes because I couldn't live like that again. We've spent a lot of time talking about how we are going to be more together now on things.

Natalia's and Lourdes's struggles testify to the desire for change and the on-going communicative process they engaged in to try to transform the way things were, find a new normal that drew in elements of the familiar. To do this, both of them had to

restructure their role in the household and their family routines to find more balance. As Natalia summarized,

> My family is different now. Like I said, it showed me that your motherhood requires changes. You have to do it on the march. You have to do it as you go. You look back and suddenly you're different. We're not going back to that time, we're going to go forward. Just like the rainforest I... we're growing again.

For Lourdes, a different shift was required as the aftermath of Maria required her to set aside some of her differences with her ex-husband to develop a more cohesive co-parenting arrangement and consistent routines of shared care so that she could build the business she was in the process of developing.

In summary, part of the work that Buzzanell (2021b) advocates for in her updated conception of crafting normalcy is the work individuals and communities do to reintegrate and transform in the aftermath of crisis, essentially rearticulating the old familiar routines with the newly emergent ones. The push-pull discourses required mothers to use their newly emergent routines and family rituals to give new meaning to the experience of living through Maria. In the crafting of normalcy for their families I found two tensions that ran as undercurrents to their experiences after Maria:

1. Mothers instinctively activated their maternal role, grounding themselves in the expectations and responsibilities of "good" mothering in an effort to buffer the effects of the storm for their children and family. To do this work they drew on familiar routines, renegotiating routines as conditions persisted.

2. Mothers acknowledged that in the aftermath of Maria alternative trajectories were possible even as traditional gendered roles became more entrenched. As Yarelis commented, "and that's the best we could do. We'll do things differently next time. We will never be the same. After we go through something like Maria, we change."

As they enacted behaviors that moved them towards the familiar they did so with the acknowledgement that crafting a new normal would necessitate change. Their simultaneous desires moving them in two directions. Working to reconcile the tensions and contradictions mothers like Yarelis, Lourdes, and Natalia, crafted a new normal that was both new and routine. Their stories attest to how mothers "bring a new normalcy to life--one embedded in material realities and generated by talk-in-interaction" (Buzzanell, 2010, p. 4). The critical focus on the work mothers did in crafting the "new normal" in the aftermath of Maria brings into stark reality how the demands of a post-disaster situation can reproduce the restrictive, gendered, and institutionalized practices and discourses of mothering while at the same time, offering alternative trajectories that might not have been possible in "normal" times.

5.2 Identity Anchors: Anchoring in Family Life, Community, and Cultural Discourses

Buzzanell's (2010) framework for resilience suggests that individuals work to affirm identity by reframing self-other relationships. This communicative and interactive process of sense-making involves negotiations, often over conflicting identity anchors that are discursively upheld or renegotiated in light of changing contexts and conditions. Domestic labor responsibilities, hobbies, family matters, work obligations, faith, and

community involvement are all influential aspects of identity work and as such enact

pivotal identities that can help individuals "rebound or reintegrate from a difficult life

experience" (Buzzanell, Shenoy, & Remke, 2010, p. 293). As O'Reilly (2019) advocates,

"Any understanding of mothers' lives is incomplete without a consideration of how

becoming and being a mother shapes a woman's sense of self and how she sees and lives

in the world" (p. 14). For several mothers their maternal identity was influenced by the

formation or maintenance of a particular identity dimension such as family identity

anchors, patterns and roles of the wife, mother, and daughter, the work of community

first responder, and the cultural identity imbued in the values of Caribbean life such as

the framing of faith and being Puerto Rican. "One way to understand women's roles in all

three spheres of social life—the domestic arena, the workplace, and the community—is

to examine a disruption of their daily routines and explore the work and roles they take

on when the social world is in crisis" (Fothergill, 2004, p. 35). Through a reflection of the

conflicts and tensions experienced in the management of their identity two tensions

emerged. One, mothers often reverted back to previously upheld identities and replicated

the discourses that maintained them despite those roles not serving in their best interests.

Two, as they managed their identities in light of social change they called into question

the institutions and relationships that previously disempowered them to develop new

roles that brought them more clarity and optimism in their post-disaster life. Their stories

can serve as a basis for more adequately addressing experiences and identities in complex

contexts, as resilience can be seen as constituted in a confluence of stories that include

mothers, institutions, scholars, and cultures.

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5.2.1 Family Life and the Mother

If she had to describe herself as a color, Yarelis was yellow. "Like a sunflower, always facing the sun," her daughter added. Yarelis lived with her husband and her daughter, who at the time of Hurricane Maria was eight. As a daycare provider before the storm, she navigated full-time employment caring for other mothers' children while balancing a home, caring for her aging parents and her daughter. Her husband was "very supportive" of her but took on more traditional roles as he too worked outside of the home and often "longer hours from 11 at night until 3 in the morning." Her neighborhood was different from the other mothers who live in the mountainous areas, the rain forests, or barrios farther outside the reaches of "big city life." Yarelis's family lived in Carolina, a municipality that represents 13 different barrios with about 170 thousand people. It has been one of the most important tourist centers on the island, with quick access to the airport. The family lived in a duplex, her parents upstairs and Yarelis and her family on the lower level. Prior to the storm her parents still worked and Yarelis and her husband worked, so most days and weeks went by with little communication and few visits. Maria called to attention the contradictions in her own life. While Yarelis described family being "everything" she also noted that "living close to my parents didn't mean I was close to my parents."

After Maria, both families temporarily lost their jobs, her daughter's school was closed, and the damage to her parent's portion of the duplex meant that they temporarily moved in with Yarelis.

We're on the first floor, so because of that we didn't lose a lot. But for my parents it was different. Water came in through their windows. Half their ceiling blew out and they lost a lot. We had to throw out a lot of their things. It was hard. My parents came to stay with us at that point.

Even as their food supply ran low, Yarelis and her family counted themselves lucky. They not only had one another to lean on, but thanks to her grandma's portable gas cook stove, they had warm meals and clean water. The wisdom of her grandmother helped to ease the burdens while they waited for more help to come. In crisis situations the role of the mother helps to negotiate the problematics their families face as they are "often the bearers of tradition, culture, and oral history" (Beatson, 2013, p. 80). The generational legacies enacted a structure of support for Yarelis and her family that continued to provide stability for the family in this uncertain time. For Yarelis, the relationship to this motherline extended beyond just her immediate familial ties, as it was threaded into the larger identity anchor that became part of how she defined her connection to her family and her community at large.

For Lourdes, a single mother of two kids ages 9 and 11 during Maria, identity was similarly shaped by the anchoring of family life. Her mother-in-law, who was then in her 80's, frequently stayed with Lourdes when the weather was severe enough to cause concern over flooding. Lourdes described, "She and I are very close. My mother-in-law is the kind of person who, every storm season she'll get old Clorox containers and just everything and fill it up with water because that's how they raised her." Although she was divorced, her relationship with her mother-in-law provided support during and after the storm when the older woman stayed with her for several weeks so that Lourdes could go

out into her community and help provide support to other mothers. These generational ways of preparing for storms and the knowledge gleaned from their motherliness became embedded into the work mothers did within their families not just in the aftermath of storms, such as Yarelis's grandmother's gas cook stove, but in their preparation as they canned food and stored water. This work was layered within their cultural and familial histories, as their mothers passed down methods of water storage and food preparation drawn on lessons they learned from their mothers.

As illustrated by Yarelis's family, inter-generational living arrangements offered support for the mothers and vice versa as it allowed these mothers to provide support for their aging parents. Yet, the double and triple burden thus placed on these mothers necessitated creative approaches to preparation and recovery strategies. As Yarelis described, despite the luck and the companionship of family, there was "always a struggle the next day." As a result of the changes within her family structures, Yarelis faced additional crisis-induced identity challenges. As similarly documented in Fothergill (2004), the shifts in their family living arrangement meant that more of the domestic responsibilities fell on Yarelis. In particular the loss of jobs and her daughter's school closing complicated things more. As they now shared a household with her parents, they also had more expenses. With little work or money coming in, the burden of managing her home amidst the chaotic aftermath of the storm while meeting the combined needs of another family meant a triple burden that necessitated a shift in her mothering practices again. She recalled the agreement with her husband to switch bread-winning roles by becoming a daycare provider who served as the "neighborhood mother" taking on the childcare work for neighbors and friends.

A lot of people lost their jobs. My husband lost his job. We didn't go back to work. They [her parents] didn't go back to work. I was in an office in a boring job 8-5. My husband worked in the middle of the night and slept most days. Neither of us were happy. We decided to make our own thing. With my parents at home and my husband there, I could do that.

I said to my husband, 'you know this is what I'm going to do.' He said to me, 'if you want to do this I'm going to support you 100%. I'm going to be in charge of the house and not get a job. I'll do the cooking and cleaning.' We switched our roles. But now I'm a mother to these other kids all day. That was the weird part. So, my mom staying with us helped. She stayed with my daughter to try and help too.

This shift by Yarelis and her husband to rewrite the roles of domesticity paralleled the shift in care work by the mothers as they developed the new normal. Despite the intense work that mothers do in the aftermath of a disaster, hegemonic notions of "the mother" and the nuclear family seemed to anchor identities and criteria of mothering and parenting.

For Yarelis, renegotiating family roles anchored her further in the role of the mother. As such, Yarelis relied on her own mother for help in navigating care work, while simultaneously becoming another mother for her neighbors' children.

At first, I started babysitting four kids. They were the kids of friends and other people in my neighborhood who needed someone to take care of their kids so they could clean up or go back to work. I started babysitting these twins between eight

months and one year. Their mom had to work. There were no daycares, no

schools, no options. She can't take twin babies to work. So, I stepped in.

As she reconstructed her life in the aftermath for transformation, she aligned with familial

and ideological identities related to the values of family and cultural discourses of

motherhood. Not surprisingly, Yarelis embraced these values and discourses, describing

herself as a "mother to all."

My street is mostly older people. The parents of my dad's generation. They've

been living in the same house for 30 or more years. So, it was difficult too

because the older people don't know how to manage a hurricane well or what to

do because for them and their kids who are my parents' age--in their 50's--it took

a while for them to go back home to help their parents. My daughter and I had to

help them a lot. My husband and my parents had to help them a lot. One of our

neighbors didn't know how to turn on their generator so we'd go over there. Or

another neighbor had flat tires so my husband changed them. The sharing wasn't

just within our own family but within all the families. When you hit bottom, you

change plans. You move forward. You go up. Maria was that bottom.

For Yarelis, mothering for her community was a natural choice, something that she could

easily take up and advance as a mechanism for a smoother recovery. "I like taking care of

children. I'm good at it. They seem to gravitate to me." Despite the ease at which she

transitioned from uncertainty to having some agency in the aftermath of Maria, she noted

that she had to go to the beach first thing in the morning, to have coffee and some alone

time, to ground herself before taking on the worries of her community for the day. As we

sat and listened to Yarelis, she mothered us as well, offering lavender for our bug bites

and intermittent advice about places to take my colleague's two-year-old daughter to play.

Yet the work she was doing as the mother within the community was navigable as a result of the roles others within her home where willing to adjust to as well. I was struck by the increasing strain on Yarelis's family and how they always seemed to make the best of it. The work they did together as they navigated the stressors of their everyday helped to keep them hopeful and oriented towards the future. Yarelis's daughter chimed in to tell us about how being Puerto Rican was "awesome." That, for her, hurricane Maria was not scary because she got to spend time with her grandparents and made new friends. For her and her mother, the storm brought people into their lives in new ways. The possibilities for growth she and her family were able to experience in the aftermath was directly related to the work her grandmother and her mother did in the aftermath. She mentioned how after Maria, her Grandma gave her the Secret Garden to read and at night they cuddled up together and sat reading by flashlight. She liked going with her mom to babysit and cook with her grandma at home. With her parents and her grandparents around more, Yarelis's daughter felt safe and protected as well as optimistic about what things could be like for her in the future. Yarelis noted this change in her daughter and was appreciative of the time her mother spent with her daughter in the aftermath as it helped to ease her stress in the whole situation as well.

Yarelis added in,

> I realized I lived in a hurry. I was always working. I was always doing something.
> It made me realize that I could do so much more that I was already doing. It made
> me realize that I didn't want to work at the daycare forever. That I could start my

own thing. That I could make it happen. I just have to do it. It helped me so much

more to build the relationship with my parents. You know who you trust, who's

going to be there no matter what. Who's going to make the extra effort. Luckily, I

was surrounded by the right kind of people, my family. People who do whatever it

takes. It helped me be the person I am today. To have a purpose.

As we see with her daughter, Yarelis, and their whole family, the challenges after Maria

became opportunities for growth, not just in reaffirming the importance of family and

community for survival, but in the enacted communication and behavioral elements that

threaded in and between nested identity systems that allowed for their personal and social

empowerment.

Bailey (1999) found that even as women acknowledged tensions between

different parts of their lives, mothering "operated as a narrative pivot in the construction

of their sense of self and self-worth" (p. 351). While Yarelis chose her new career path

based on the opening created by the storm, seeing it as an opportunity for personal

growth and bringing about more stability for her family, she also defaulted to this

position because it was what she knew and loved to do. Her role as a mother in some

circumstances could be disempowering but the choice to dive into the full-time role of

caregiver was something that empowered her. The work she did in the community would

later win her awards. Yarelis was able to use a traditional female role to gain some

maternal agency. In turn, by providing care work, Yarelis helped the other mothers in

their community find more fulfillment as they were able to return to work. Through the

negotiation of their roles as mothers and as community members, they were able to

develop a sense of nested agency that influenced their work outside the home, their family communication, and family legacies.

5.2.2 Grounding Identity in Community

For another mother the negotiation of the maternal self was seen in direct conflict with and constrained by material conditions and cultural discourses outside of the home, rather than within the home or in familial ties. For Mariana, living in a wooden house in the countryside was beautiful, but when Maria came, the roof could not withstand the damage it sustained when both a pole and a tree fell on the gables. The damage forced her and her two kids, the third on the way, to return to San Juan to live with her ex-partner. Living with her children's father was not a long-term solution as the relationship quickly 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.

She 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 her 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. They started moving them out and dispensing that. That's hard too, how do you treat them, do you just treat them like trash or take care of them? 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.

While she recognized that she had to be sympathetic to others, she also had to renegotiate the expectations she set for herself and others. She acknowledged that sometimes she judged others because they did not do what she thought they should do. "Think about that. Why did I think like that?" This was just the beginning of a new narrative for Mariana, as she resisted the need to evaluate her own maternal identity in relation to others and judge mothering strategies against the prevailing "ideal mother." Helping others made Mariana step back and consider changes she needed to make in her own life, not just with her parenting, "by embracing inclusive language and learning about sexual diversity," as well as with her larger identity, "the story I told myself had to come to terms with what I was experiencing. I had to shift that."

She began to connect much of what happened after Maria in her everyday life to a community identity that was both helpful and problematic. She described this collective resistance to barriers they, as a community of mothers, had always experienced. Puerto Ricans are deeply connected to one another because they are used to shifting their practices when the electricity is inconsistent or when economic prospects and the education systems are collapsing. They have had to pull together to make do with what they have left. This work, as Mariana noted in her example of the temporary camps, fell on the shoulders of mothers and those doing care work:

> Most of the solidarity here is about looking out and taking care of each other. You have solidarity, and you end up with more than you can ask for. I think most of us help each other because it's too painful to realize that no one else was. We don't have that much anymore, of material things, but we don't want to lose those other things that are important to us. Our family, our friends, the community that they have. Maria asked me to think about what makes me, me. My children are my future. If they were to die, I'd lose my future. And so, I had to work to protect that.

The solidarity that became so important to Mariana was not only rooted in family, friends, and community but deeply anchored in her identity as a Puerto Rican. For many mothers I interviewed the identity anchor of 'being Puerto Rican' was deeply embedded in their everyday commitments to home and community. Many noted that they would never leave because Puerto Rico remained their home. As Yarelis noted,

> Family matters. We all matter to each other. That's how we are. That's our culture. Puerto Ricans are all family. People always say that Puerto Ricans are

inviting and have a vibrant spirit. The states aren't like that. People here are

appreciative of what we have because we know what it's like to lose it all. People

here will tell you the story of their life and open their homes to you. People will

say, 'when one eats and shares we all eat.' We also like to celebrate life. We like

to party here. We like to keep things happy even when they're not. We're caring in

a way that other people are not. You can see that all around. We don't wait to

help. We just show up and work. We work for each other and for everyone.

Always. Always. We care for you...Always.

Like Mariana, she saw the solidarity of the islanders expressed in their efforts after the

storm, "They are going to stay and do what they can." Being Puerto Rican was part of a

narrative about identity, community, and commitment.

Yet, in contrast to these narratives is another theme that Mariana's story exposed,

the harsh reality that for many Puerto Ricans, especially women and mothers, "they don't

have anyone or anywhere to go, so they have no choice." While Mariana spoke about the

collective community, she also spoke about other injustices that seemed to directly

counteract the work people were doing to help in the aftermath. There was a tension that

was dramatically illustrated in a story she told about local food aid that was being

distributed by a church whose pastor withheld that aid from the LGBT community.

For people that are in the official camps, there's some help from the government.

But there's no help really for the other camps. It's very frustrating. Who is taking

charge--who is the leader? The pastor of this church stepped in because there

was no one. Then we started noticing that they weren't giving food to the LGBT

community because they weren't part of the church's view, so they didn't give

them food. We were taking food there because we trusted that they were going to

feed the community. But now they had the power, so they only fed the people of

the church and if they wanted food, they had to go through conversion.

Given the struggles Mariana's gender diverse son had already navigated and her concern

over their future, this situation deeply troubled her. She desired an environment where

her son could be free to express who they were, an environment where there were more

choices for her as a single mother in housing, in her children's school, and in having a

medical system women could trust. 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 found that the larger story of her anxieties after the storm--her struggle for

safety and identity--was linked to much larger issues both within the home and outside of

it. As Beatson (2013) observed about the otherness of the island women,

Black Caribbean women experience patriarchy differently than women who

would be deemed 'natural' citizens. They interact with the patriarchal state in a

different way 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).

Mariana's experiences of identity oppression and discrimination resonate with the

situated subordination and disconnection of Black Caribbean women. The humanitarian

crisis on the island had many feeling as though they were "second-class citizens" or

"underserving of aid because we aren't really from the US." As noted in Chapter 1, this

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was an underlying assumption in the rhetoric from the Trump Administration in the first few days/weeks of the storm.

All of these intersectional forces and frustrations became apparent for Mariana in the aftermath. While her internal struggle was exacerbated by the conditions of her life prior to and after the storm, Mariana repositioned herself in light of Caribbean 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. She commented that "you have to go to the shadows, the dark parts of us, to see who we are. Maria was that dark part." As such, she questioned her identity as both a Puerto Rican and as a United States citizen, her introspective efforts challenging the socially constructed relationship mothers have to a patriarchal state. Yet she valued her "ability to be accountable to where I live" and part of that involved crafting a new world for her kids while recognizing the history of colonial imperialism that defined Puerto Rico. Unlike all the colonialist stories about what Puerto Ricans were not—not Spanish, not US citizens—"So much has been lost and gained. All the stories you're told about who we are not. Our story here about Maria is important to who we are." She prefaced her story of life after Maria as just a small part of her life story, explaining that it is pulled together from these intersectional "layers" of who she is.

How I identify now as a mother and as myself is part of the therapy I had after and the work I did reimagining how I was going to get money and pay the rent. How I was going to help my son find a new school, how I moved to feel safer, and the frustrations I felt in the response.

A poem, *The Layers* by Stanely Kunitz, had particular significance, giving her an understanding of unfolding layers as change, "I am not done with my changes. We are never done. Stop looking for things and start listening to yourself. Maybe the real loss is not the material, it's more about identity. I prefer to move away from things and think about the journey. You carry it all with you. It doesn't go away."

Mariana's final message to me adds a dimension to resilience by highlighting that identity anchors are fluid and shift in light of crisis-induced exigencies. Further, resilience is "always in process, messy and full of contradictions" (Buzzanell, 2021). Through Mariana's story, the layers of disaster are evident, some recovery strategies do not reconcile the past, but are rather carried forward reflexively and used as an instigation to change. Through her retelling, she detailed how she pushed back against the cultural discourses that blamed the islanders for the catastrophe and resisted the structures and discourses that shape not just how we see Puerto Ricans but how they see themselves. She struggled with what it meant to mother in this environment and what it meant to be Puerto Rican. "I think I feel like I'm living in the diaspora even though I've always lived here and never left." As she challenged the cultural paradigms and narratives that frame Puerto Rican lives, an historically-situated sense of self became an added relational dimension of her resilience.

5.2.3 "Grounded in God:" A Faith-Based Identity

Much like Yarelis, who anchored herself firmly in the legacy of her family history and mothering identity, or Natalia, whose crisis-induced identity underwent a shift as a result of conflicting identities, Luana found that family and fragmentation were critical

pieces of resilience in weathering the aftermath of Maria. Specifically, her relationship to God guided her as she navigated the tension between her role as a mother to a then two-year old and as a daughter caring for her aging parents, noting that after the storm, "I needed to think that everything was going to be fine and some angels, God, were going take care of me because I find that that helps me stay focused on what I can do." When I asked if her faith was strengthened because of Maria or if it had always been this strong, there was a considerable pause. During that moment, I understood what 'sad silence' felt like, the way the mothers from the mall recalled sitting in solidarity with each other, unsure of what to talk about given all they had been experiencing, while at the same time feeling the pull and need for connection. Surrounded by prayer flags and candles, she described for us the role faith played for her after the storm. "I always stay in the present and have faith and we do whatever we have to do in that moment to see ourselves through. I learned that from my family. It's the way I was raised. We always have faith." Clearly, faith was a grounding identity anchor for her.

Luana's struggle was less material and more emotional after the storm. Her sense of fragmentation was profound, less about busy schedules or the stressed routines of caring for family and more about the loss of family. During the interview, Luana used a Spanish word I recognized, "*fallecer*," although she said something about "*desvanecerse*," a word I did not know. I looked at Kristen, my colleague helping in the translation of Luana's interview, as *fallecer* means to die. Kristen looked at me and acknowledged that the fragmentation Luana experienced was not just in her routines, but was in the actual loss of someone. Kristen helped to translate that *desvanecerse* meant to fade away, that what Luana was describing was the splitting of a spirit from the body.

Luana described for us what happened as the spirit of Benjamin, her father, slowly faded away after Maria. It was on February 10, 2018, that Luana lost her father.

The day before Benjamin's passing, Luana called him, and he told her to come over and sit with him. She had known for weeks that he was tiring and that the "light of his candle was flickering." On that day, they sat and talked about many things. "It was the best conversation of my life and my father looks at a photo of my son Christian and we talked and we smiled and we laughed. He brought the best of him that day. But his light faded after Maria." She told me that it was his choice to go and that she stayed in the present by "*tiene fe*." February 10 marked the day that "something changed in me. We all changed after Maria, but I knew then that moving through this and feeling through the memory of this would require me to have much much faith. More faith than I had ever had. That I can do." Luana believed that Benjamin's spirit remained with her and as such, she lit a candle and talked with him.

For Luana, the hurricane brought about rebirth and rejuvenation. Her father's death was her rebirth. She reflected, "Now that I've lived through this disaster, I feel more conscious about the things that are the important things in life. I asked myself, what are the things that are going to lift me up, and what are the things that we need to take time for? I think that Maria gave to me the opportunity to decide where I wanted to be, where I wanted to stay." Prior to Maria, she worked two jobs and had little time left for her son. She came to realize that her energy as a mother was a critical element of her life. "So, this gave me time to reflect that I need to have more time for my son and for me too. My father taught me that. To go out, to live, to play, to really appreciate living again." For Luana, the experience of Maria was about staying rooted in faith, she

reconnected with family, and explored more deeply "the parts of you [her] that get lost as we live in our lives." As she backgrounded the sadness over the loss of her father, she focused on actions that were productive for her and her family. Separated from her husband for months after Maria because of his work, Luana became attuned to the changes that were precipitated by the storm. While the relationship to her faith was a less visible part of her life, it allowed her to reconnect with her inner-self. As she waited for their lives to become more grounded, certain, and steady, she emphasized that the storm brought her back to where she was meant to be and taught her where to put her energy.

> I choose to be here completely. I choose to be here more. Maria changed my practice because I am here in all of my, without fragmentation.
>
> I am able to do things that before I would never do. I started a YouTube channel and podcast where I do regressions, and I talk about the things I do here for everyone. I was afraid to do that before because of what people would say about it. I lost my fear of what other people think about that, and I do the things I know I have to do to bring mental health to the people. So, I put all my energy and soul here to get them to their starting point. It was a gift of Maria. It was the gift of my father.

Importantly, Luana identified that the storm created an opening to move forward instead of back. Although it was hard for her to escape the pressures of intensive parenting and the desire to commit all of her energy to her son, she faced the dilemma with a renewed sense of agency. She felt that she could change the way she lived her life. She redesigned her relationship to work, she devoted more time to perusing her other passions, and she committed to being fully present for her family.

This type of disaster was different. Something changed in me. I think whenever

we go through something like that, we will never be the same. After we go

through something like Maria, we change. I changed. I think in this time, I deal

with that suffering, with that pain, with that sadness, and whatever was still inside

of me. With my father, I light a candle or incense, and I meditate, and he comes to

me. He says to me all sorts of things. I asked him how can I deal with these

things, and he says to me, you can do it, have faith, my child. So, I listen.

In sum, despite her life being messy and full of contradictions, she affirmed that her

family was integral in keeping her "light shining on." The change she enacted in her life,

her transformation after the storm, was rooted in the work she did anchoring her identity

against the fragmentation and uncertainties she experienced in the aftermath. Using her

faith and the relationship she had with her father as resources Luana was able to

reconstruct an orientation towards work and life that enabled her to feel a stronger sense

of accomplishment.

5.2.4 Identity Anchors: Lessons Learned

In summary, the stories mothers told me about enacting the behaviors and

fulfilling the expectations of good mothers, daughters, and community members were

tension-filled. On the one hand, mothers often reverted back to previously upheld

identities and replicated the discourses that maintained them despite those roles not

serving in their best interests. On the other hand, as they managed their identities in light

of social change, they called into question the institutions and relationships that

previously disempowered them to develop new roles that brought them more clarity and

optimism in their post-disaster lives. Similar tensions were documented in Bailey's (1999) work, where women acknowledged that there were tensions between different parts of their lives, and that mothering "operated as a narrative pivot in the construction of their sense of self and self-worth" (p. 351). Regardless of post-disaster challenges and the efforts they made, "what was really at stake was that women, despite whatever threats they faced, preserved and buttressed their identities as good mothers" (Douglas & Michaels, 2005, p. 234). It is little wonder that the mothers I interviewed both affirmed the dominant "good mother" anchoring identity even as they recrafted mothering narratives to enable alternative identities and possibilities. It is through their stories that we begin to understand the "ongoing process of self-invention and bricolage that is about communal relations as much as self-identity" (Flynn, et al., 2012, p. 11).

After a while, Yarelis, her mother, and the other mothers could not wait for help to come. Yarelis's work as a babysitter within the community not only acted as a mechanism for other mothers to return to work but provided her family with more economic security and changed the amount of quality time they spent together as a family. Appreciating that living next to one another was not enough; they built their lives around one another and for another, staying true to their cultural roots that anchored and mobilized their identities for the good of their families. As Safa (2002) addresses, in Caribbean communities,

> Extended families play a critical role in supporting women workers, especially single mothers. They provide not only housing and other forms of financial support, but childcare for those who are employed. In extended households, there

is an expectation that every adult will contribute in some way, but financial

responsibility is flexible, adjusting to changing circumstances. The flexibility of

these complex, fluid household arrangements allows low-income households to

survive and strengthens ties among consanguineal kin. (p. 147)

These families reconfigured their living arrangements and reconfigured their relationship

to work combating the economic crisis and doubling down on care work precipitated by

the storm. By incorporating additional wage earners into the household, acting on

entrepreneurial opportunities, and leveraging the multigenerational living arrangement,

they reconnected and forged bonds that benefitted them more long-term than other

recovery options. Braided together with the generational knowledge gained through the

passing down of traditions and routines, alongside the material support, and cultural

identities their relationships fostered belonginess and empowerment throughout the

recovery phases.

In this same regard, Mariana's story attends to the relationship she has to her own

identity as a mother but added the larger narrative identity construction of what it means

to be Puerto Rican. She drew attention to the embeddedness in cultural systems that

frames gender identities and shifted her mothering practices after Maria as a site of

resistance against a failing social contract. Her story illustrates how mothers' narratives

can offer new constructions of motherhood and mothering, alongside a re-envisioning of

their identity as a mother. Despite the conflicts experienced by role accumulation,

mothers participation in public sector relief efforts (making sandwiches, rebuilding

schools, sandbagging) allowed women to break down the barriers of the private, public

divide, giving them greater authority and feelings of accomplishment as well as opportunities to develop new competencies.

For Caribbean mothers, the work to anchor identity in their families or to reconstruct identity anchors in the aftermath of a crisis "reveal how home, resistance, identity, and culture profoundly shape the tensions and possibilities within diasporic existences as women negotiate the 'in-between' spaces that allow them to engage in empowered mothering" (Beatson, 2013, p. 78). Their stories help them understand themselves, create family identities, and relate to elements of their cultural histories (Trees & Kellas, 2009; Arendell, 2000). Therefore, attending to the mothering narratives allows us not just to see how the mother "takes on the full responsibility of mothering in the face of numerous changes to her identity" but additionally, how the relationship between multiple intersecting identities alongside the larger family identity demonstrate for family scholars how we as a culture and society "see" and "do" family (Speier, 2004, p. 147).

Luana's father's passing became a catalyst for change. It was not sustainable for her to work two jobs, for her husband to travel away for work, all while trying to be the type of mother to her son that her father was to her. Quitting their jobs and investing in each other and in other people, they worked to build a life anchored on family and faith. "Emphasize[ing] a strengthened sense of faith, and a much greater appreciation of their families, friends, and communities, extended networks have played a vital role in mother's ability to balance vulnerability and resilience after a disaster" (Laditka, Murray, & Laditka, 2010, p. 1022). Luana's story testifies to the importance of relationships,

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"individuals, families, and larger collectivities in the aftermath of tragedy, loss, and/or disaster and the communicative work they do towards building resilience" (Buzzanell, 2010, p. 8); further "underscoring the need to provide support to reconnect kin and reestablish homes following disasters" (p. 10).

Rather than continuing to be defined by identities that at times constrained them, the mothers altered their mothering practices to suit their preferences and needs in their new normal. For some mothers this meant drawing in aspects of the maternal self that were sometimes in line with intensive parenting practices while others resisted prescriptions of "being something I'm not" to pivot and enact a maternal identity that was more empowering, not just for themselves, but for their families and their communities at large. Altogether, their stories provide a snapshot of the work mothers did in navigating the responsibilities of home and care work while enacting resources such as intergenerational cohabitation and spiritual practices that enabled them to affirm identity anchors that were pivotal in constructing their resilience.

5.3 Backgrounding Negative Emotions to Foreground Productive Action: Righting the Wrongs

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" (as cited in O'Reilly, 2004, p. 16). 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.

As Buzzanell (2010) notes, one communication process that enacts resilience involves the "deliberate foregrounding of productive action while simultaneously acknowledging that the circumstances perceived as detrimental could legitimately provoke anger and other potentially negative feelings" (p. 7). This process of foregrounding productive action while acknowledging negative feelings recognizes that while individuals have the "right to feel anger or loss in certain ways," it is often the case that "these feelings are counter-productive" (p. 8-9). As the crisis in Puerto Rico persisted for months and years, so too did mothers' mounting anxieties and uncertainty over what the future would look like for their families. Many mothers lamented feeling lost or discouraged as the disaster continued and resources continued to be scarce. The work they did in reframing the situation to find the positive and to pursue goals that moved them forward towards recovery allowed them to determine actions that were productive for not just activating change but feeling some sense of control and agency over their lives.

For other mothers, their situation caused them to feel frustrated and angry over the continued injustices they experienced and witnessed, yet they found it difficult to express their anger socially. An important aspect to Buzzanell's (2010) framework is that negative feelings are not subjected to denial or coping; instead they are viewed as legitimate emotions expressed by individuals and organizations. Yet, as Hercus (1999) found, anger can be more problematic for women than for men. Framing an issue as

feminist or honing in on the sense of injustice created by particular exigencies can help to legitimize anger for women. However, "it does not necessarily make the expression of such anger any more acceptable in the wider community" (p. 52-53). This is in part because there are expectations for how women are supposed to behave under stress. For mothers in particular, the romantized discourses of the all-loving maternal figure assumes that "emotions such as anger, hostility, and frustration are not only deemed insignificant, but almost entirely ignored" (Duquanie-Watson, 2004, p. 125). Further,

> American cultural understandings of motherhood, at its best, contribute to the shaming and admonishment of mothers who articulate 'negative' emotions. At its worst, it renders certain maternal emotions virtually unspeakable and thus, an important aspect of women's experiences invisible. (p. 125)

Through the work of legitimizing the anger, fear, sadness, and frustration individuals and organizations can affirm their position and construct actions that encourage different courses of action. Ahmed (2010) points to anger as a productive emotion, as feminist scholars identify how women, particularly those that are in minority or intersectionally oppressed groups (Black, Indeginous, Queer, Trans) use anger to rearticulate the conditions of their oppression.

In the next section, I consider how backgrounding negative feelings can lead to productive action. I highlight one interviewee, who for me is a figure of maternal agency. Lourdes used her anger over the long standing and continued inequities in infant feeding and postpartum maternal care to create a business network that worked to correct not just issues with disparity in the inequitable recovery processes but led to long term resilience

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networks helping to improve conditions on the island permanently. Further, she developed a business in the aftermath of Maria that has not just improved the lives of other mothers and their families, but has begun to change the trajectory of infant feeding and care in disasters worldwide. Her narrative counters processes of recovery as one-size fits all by revealing the danger of infant feeding protocols that are incongruent with local conditions and cultural knowledge and instead replicate procedures and ideologies that are not productive for mothers or their contexts. Her work implements alternative logics that are enacted both by those experiencing the disaster and those trying to help.

5.3.1   The Mother as Change Agent: Entrepreneurial Creativity in the Face of Crisis and Oppression

Lourdes had just finished her training as an International Board-Certified Lactation Consultant or an IBCLC and had begun preparing emergency response protocols to assist new mothers when Hurricanes Irma and Maria made landfall. Thankfully her experience working with SafelyFed before the storm gave her the necessary 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. Immediately after the storm, Lourdes called upon her midwife Vanessa from Centro de Mam. Their partnership allowed Lourdes to begin work in the Centro de Mam clinic in San Juan conducting lactation support and free International Board-Certified Lactation (IBCLC) consultations in the immediate aftermath of Maria. For Lourdes, it was not just her own story about mothering after a disaster that impacted her decision to immediately foreground the service organization she wanted to establish--Alimentación

Segura Infantil or ASI. As she recalled, it was the stories within stories, the stories told to her by other mothers, that were deeply impactful.

> 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.

These situational needs and creative responses were happening all across the island. The stories upon stories that motivated Lourdes challenged the lack of response and access to aid as well as the failure to address material conditions. Mothers called attention to how the food supplies kept them alive but were not healthy and how the food supplies were unequally distributed, hard to find, or limited given their family size and need. When it came to 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. But maybe the formula companies are thinking, 'How can we make these families dependent on our product?' But I don't think that anybody who's donating formula is saying, 'How can we send powdered death to babies in Puerto Rico?'

Powder is cheaper, powder is lighter, so it's cheaper again because you could fit it on a flight and you don't have to... And I think that there were places in the mountains where literally they were airdropping 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?

The failure to recognize the needs of the mothers in Puerto Rico 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.

For Lourdes the problems on the island were much deeper. Part of what emboldened her in the aftermath to consciously support change in these systems was her distrust in the systems of support. Long-standing infrastructure decline and inequitable political policies had left mothers struggling prior to the storm. Issues included increasing poverty rates; the local memory of historical programs to sterilize Puerto Rican women; superfund wastes 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. This is my moment I thought." Her visit to the Tao Baja post-disaster shelter was catalyzing. She found that women had been given "a bucket, a brush, and soap" to sanitize their infant feeding equipment. She noted that access to a kitchen and hot water were necessary to sanitize baby bottles. A properly clean bottle, as Lourdes instructed, is an important step in ensuring that the formula prepared for the infants did 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 on making formula.

> We learned that one tablespoon 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 because mothers were using flooded reservoirs areas or possibly contaminated water from superfund sites that they also had to teach people how to

properly ensure their water was potable. This included the water they were using to sterilize their bottles. She recalled how, "We teach people how to collect that, how to sieve 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 that infants were going to get sick and mothers were going to be blamed 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.

She was also frustrated with the formula cans FEMA and the Red Cross were sending, pointing out that these resources were not sensitive to the language of the population they were trying to help. The actions that these organizations were taking in the aftermath did not make 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.

> 'Well, I'm not really supposed to ask for formula,' [because of the whole breastfeeding message.] 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. Instead, I said, 'If you send formula, send liquid ready to feed.'

Lourdes recalled how she telephoned one of the relief organizations to explain what mothers needed but had a hard time reaching anyone because the service on the island was so spotty. When she did finally get through, the women on the other end was about to hang up and Lourdes recalled shouting into the phone. "I said, '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.'"

While 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 rather on the support structures and resources that were providing the aid. "Why weren't they doing their job?" she questioned. She was determined that if local organizations like ASI and Centro de Mam were going to have to bear the burden of responsibility for fixing the issues that plagued mothers and their families, then they were going to make it better. Lourdes used the anger and frustration she felt to center the experiences of mothers 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."

She also recounted that the issue was not isolated to just mothers who were bottle feeding but additionally impacted mothers who were breastfeeding. As an IBCLC she was trained to promote the "breast is best" motto and even within the SafelyFed Canada model of infant and young child feeding and emergency program that she trained with

she was taught to advance breastfeeding initiatives in disaster prone environments. This drew in another complication for Lourdes. Breastfeeding requires clean, safe, accessible water. Frustrated she added, "So, basically, no matter what mothers did, it was wrong, or they 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 all were well grounded. Data from U.S. territories were excluded from the most recent Center for Disease Control (CDC) national breast-feeding estimates. The lack of data was alarming because without an understanding of the demographics with 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?"

When I asked Lourdes if she could provide some statistics on feeding infants in Puerto Rico, she showed me some charts that found 26% of babies in Puerto Rico were exclusively breastfed at six months. By one year of age only about 16% of mothers in Puerto Rico breastfeed. This drop in breastfeeding is not Puerto Rico-centric as the CDC (2020) data finds that in the U.S. states, breastfeeding stats drop when looking beyond the first 6-months. However, some socio-demographic differences demonstrated a more profound disparity between the U.S. and Puerto Rico. For example, 39% of non-Hispanic white women breastfeed through 6 months in the U.S., 13% higher than that of both Hispanic women and non-Hispanic black women on the island. Lourdes noted that it is

hard to adequately compare these two populations because the data is not collected. In her work on infant feeding with Canada, the U.S. states, and Puerto Rico, she has seen and experienced these differences first-hand.

> What that means to me is, wow, we're doing really well, nationally, but that means that 74% of babies in Puerto Rico are either being partially or fully formula-fed. And we know for a fact that the way you feed your child doesn't mean how much you love them. This statistic is problematic when you consider the disaster problem.

> We realized that the breastfeed, breastfeed, breastfeed, breastfeed message is turning off that 74% or 80% of people. So, we realized we had to have a little bit more of a generic message in how we relayed information for feeding their babies after. And if you're partially breastfeeding, you can breastfeed more and talk more about bottle feeding and just be more open to formula feeding parents. So, if we trained these people... and we had a lot of re-lactation kits. We just use a nasogastric tube and a syringe. And we would distribute those kits. We did a lot of re-lactation.

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, oatmeal, as well as supplemental pumping and a stress-free environment. As Lourdes's interview attested to, difficult situations required creative approaches, and when looking at the intricacies of their lives, a one-size-fits-all solution did account for these tensions. In this context, a variety of techniques to ensure infants were fed and mothers were cared

for was necessary, which includes the breast is best, back-to-bottle methods, re-lactation, and combination feeding, etc.

Lourdes's account also acknowledged the impact of intensive parenting and the intense feelings that 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 choose not to or could not breastfeed and thus contributed to increasing mothers' anxieties. She also noted that while breastfeeding is aided by a stress-free environment, the lack of appropriate resources and support was not reducing mothers' stress, but rather exacerbating it. As Lourdes lamented, without the mechanisms for support and culturally appropriate 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 resilience framework is evident as Lourdes backgrounded some of the 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 and historical context are layered in, a more intimate portrait of infant feeding dilemmas on the island emerged, demonstrating that for this particular site, and for mothers in particular, different approaches to relief and recovery efforts are necessary. Lourdes did

not sit by while mothers continued to be neglected in the Puerto Rican 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.

ASI emerged out of the necessities of post-disaster relief and epitomizes the features of resilience as proactive communal agency. This began with the initial incorporation of the organization. Because she had no internet access and needed to be a fully incorporated organization before she could begin her work, Lourdes used her contact with Dr. Aunchalee Palmquist from the Carolina Global Breastfeeding Institute to complete her registration. This was an alliance that continued to be valuable to ASI. The title Alimentación Segura Infantil or ASI itself was inspired by the resilience of mothers: in Spanish seguro/a means safe and she wanted mothers to know that they could trust ASI to help provide them safe options, no matter the way they chose to feed their baby. "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 Save the Children, Lourdes was able to conduct her first free infant youth and child feeding in emergencies training. Her goal was to reach,

> anybody who's interested in receiving information about how to increase the rates
> of breastfeeding but 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 information, 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. I have no doubt that the lessons from ASI will have a long-lasting imprint on the field of infant feeding during emergencies.

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. Lourdes used the relationships on and off the island to enact cultural change, work that is emblematic of feminist resilience.

The model Lourdes developed gained recognition from U.S. Department of Health. Further, the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine and the American Academy of

Pediatrics have rewritten their policies for infant feeding in light of some of the issues that have emerged in recent disasters. Lourdes again argued that while that is well intentioned, 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.

Rooted in Lourdes's concern and resistance is the acknowledgment that continuing to live with pre-storm conditions or having to accept the continued risks they, as Puerto Ricans, continue to face such as lack of clean water and inconsistent electricity in "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 began to trickle 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."

The persistent inequities and injustices grounded in the dominant popular view that Puerto Rico is not a territory of the U.S. but rather a colony are evident. "The constant mistreatment that you don't get to see. They won't show you. You won't read about it or hear about it. If you come here, it's all about tourism, but we're dying." In the

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aftermath of Maria, access to basic needs such as clean water came head-to-head with the precarities 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 not just their immediate needs after the storm, but the needs of the island long-term. As Lourdes exclaimed, "it's not okay for them 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." 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. Drawing on her anger, acknowledging it as legitimate, Lourdes enacted entrepreneurial creativity that is illustrative of feminist resilience, thereby situating her as one figure of maternal agency.

As we left her home, we passed a stump from a 200-year-old giant tree that fell on the front of Lourdes's house during the storm, sparing her family from flying metal debris. She wondered out loud, "How many storms had it stood through? How much had it survived?" Using the tree as a metaphor for their experience she expressed how it was sad to see the tree finally give way to the pressures of the storm, but that in the fall it also managed to give back and prevent another catastrophe for her family. Just as with her experience starting ASI and working to correct the injustices that angered her in the aftermath, she told me that the stump reminds her that there are things that have happened, are continuing to happen, but "those things can be shaped into something more."

In summary, she pushed aside the "deep anger, I was really really angry that they would do this to them [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 to the emergence of entrepreneurial activities by women and mothers after disasters, as they not only absorbed the shock for their families but empowered their communities through the creation of 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). The inadequacies revealed in the story about post-disaster infant feeding testify to the problems in gender-blind relief efforts that were exacerbated by these gaps. 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).

Moreover, such gender-blind problems demonstrate a need to document women's specific experiences and further mother's 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 the documenting of their stories the intersectionalities that oppress mothers became visible. The anger she felt became transformative, giving her a

renewed sense of purpose. Through her work with ASI, she worked to shift the dynamics of power, thereby determining new conditions for mothering and providing more options and support, which allowed mothers to feel hopeful and connected. Her entrepreneurial creativity illuminates the agentive power of both the communicative and relational work of women and mothers.

5.4   Using Alternative Logics: Feminist Anger and Resistance

As Dilorio and Nusbaumer (1993) suggest, "emotions play a critical role in the reflexive and intersubjective processes through which we create and sustain ourselves" (p. 411). Mariana, a mother who worked tirelessly to negotiate a maternal self more in line with her values, 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. As described above, in her work as a community first responder she was able to background some of her anger and frustration to help others find a new way forward, a critical strategy of maternal resilience. However, as her family's struggles persisted and her awareness of the atrocities impacting Puerto Ricans after Maria grew, she demonstrated another of Buzzanell's communication resilience processes, putting alternative logics to use as she navigated the crisis for her family and developed agentive actions for her new normal.

Buzzanell (2010) notes that sometimes what turns out to be productive action can be seen as contradictory to the work needed for recovery. This is because those in crisis "determine what they find to be productive" (Buzzanell, 2021a). In the context of Puerto Rico, where long term historical conditions created a humanitarian crisis even prior to

Maria, post-disaster conditions, as one mother described, "turn[ed] our world upside down." Actions that mothers took prior to the storm no longer seemed possible or made much sense. For example, as another mother Laia observed, "We used to go on walks after dark when it had gotten colder. There were no lights here anymore so I worried about crime and if that was safe." In turn, behaviors that once seemed unsafe or worrisome became sensible. For example, when Natalia 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 sum, this might entail a resistance to comply with rules and regulations or behaving in a way that may at the time see irrational. Coutu (2002) argues that "resilience offers an alternative when rational thought and action may be ineffective" (as cited in Flynn et al., 2012, p. 9). This is in part because conditions and contexts may require creative workarounds for exigencies that create barriers to a "just recovery" and as such, demand change. While Lourdes was able to background her anger and persist in developing an organization that made long-lasting change, Mariana, another figure of maternal agency, struggled to reconcile her frustrations and instead chose what might have seemed like nonrational resistance to recovery resources as one way to demand change in systems she saw as inequitable.

5.4.1 The Mother Outlaw

Damaging messages like the myth of intensive parenting, layered with pervasive stereotypes about women of color and Puerto Ricans, were pushed during the Trump administration's communication in the aftermath that sought to devalue and negate the

administration's need to provide assistance. These messages further justified this position before the storm and the vapid recovery efforts by blaming the islanders. As Mariana saw it,

> Trump said that 93 billion was coming to Puerto Rico, but then we only got 15 million. Well, we didn't get that money because it stopped after 1 million. And our government here is very corrupt and all the decisions they're making. They just want to take people out of the island. They started to build places to consume and bring people here to visit but not for 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.

Because mothers are the shock absorbers of disaster for families, this also inadvertently blamed the mothers themselves. As described earlier, Mariana was a single mother of two (with one on the way) whose home was destroyed, forcing her to move into an abusive environment due to her desire to avoid the unsafe FEMA camps. She 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 [I] 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 was at times in conflict with her community role and the expectations placed on her to enact certain maternal instincts. Importantly, as Lucas and Buzzanell (2012) discovered, resilient people develop "identities aligned with well-being and agency rather than victimhood and lack of control" (p. 191). Mariana channeled her anger and frustration into what she considered productive action in an attempt to not only fight her own 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 that was done by Refugees International and the issue of gender-based violence that it raised. The article she referenced, by Francisca Vigaud-Walsh (2018), illustrated the failures of emergency shelters on the island:

> 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 at the time. In another case, assistance came through a Red Cross chapter in the form of boxes of water, and nothing more. In yet another case, a shelter was gifted expired baby formula and pampers. (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 described the

moment that she decided to do something that seemed irrational at the time, but for her, devoting herself to motherwork for survival was not going to 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 apparently 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, to use Rich's words, women became 'outlaws from the institution of motherhood'" (p. 22). 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. While 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. As she addressed in her work as a community first responder, she witnessed contradictions in the solidarity to which Puerto Ricans often subscribe in the harmful practices against people of different gender and sexual identities. For example, while a church organization came to the aid of their local community, providing food and emergency supplies they had received as donations, they refused to provide those resources to community members that were LGBTQ. The church, for some, acted as a shelter, a community center for aid relief, and as a larger social resource for families allowing them to foreground productive action. For Mariana, the church's role called into question the identity of solidarity among many

islanders and exposed one of the discursive and material systems of power operating in the post-disaster terrain.

As a result of her deep introspective work, Mariana reframed her situation, and refused government assistance as a form of activism against what she described as the failed systems that continue to limit the possibilities for families and replicate 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.

Mariana could have let her anxiety, anger, and frustration over the material failures and the prejudices that excluded members of her community from elements of the recovery process take over, including her own son who had recently come out as non-binary. Instead, she used her mothering practices as a site of resistance against the larger cultural narratives that situate Puerto Rican mothers. She understood that not taking the assistance offered through FEMA's informal housing in the shelters or aid offered 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 help at all so to her the recovery efforts were illogical. "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 crisis situations often respond to oppressive logics with "ongoing and concertive efforts to alter the organizing system itself" (p. 6). While 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, what at the time might seem contradictory to their immediate well-being, Mariana tried to help her children to "feel safe again." She matched the contradictions in recovery efforts with her own 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 in order to subvert the issues of gender inequality that impacted women's post-disaster mothering experiences and to shift from "being the victim" to embracing her own 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, she chose to mother in a way that not only empowered her but actively resisted and called out some of the social injustices that her family confronted in the aftermath. Mariana's anti-sexist childrearing exemplifies what O'Reilly (2004) describes as the work of mother outlaws: this is motherwork 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). Opposing both the practices and demands of patriarchal mothering placed Mariana outside the institution of motherhood, which was one dimension of her ability to adapt and transform. Despite embracing alternative logics and enacting

behaviors that seemed at odds with safety, Mariana became another figure of agency—an "outlaw" mother. In the end Mariana noted that she 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." This is a form of maternal agency that extends Buzzanell's framework and contributes to an understanding of maternal resilience.

5.5 Maintaining and Using Communication Networks: Chosen Kin and Community Care as Resiliency Nets

As government organizations and agencies failed to offer even the necessary material resources alongside the continued erosion of public infrastructure after the storm, Puerto Rican mothers had to find new ways to share the motherload and develop proactive strategies that focused on "growth through the connection with others" (Lucas & Buzzanell, 2012, p.191). In Buzzanell's (2010) framework of communicative resilience, resilience is emphasized as a collective strategy. Through sharing resources embedded in social relations, the communication networks of "local, peer, industry-related, and professional associations could build and develop social capital that could be cashed in during rough times" (p. 6). Further, Buzzanell found that "interventions such as building and sustaining communication networks and storytelling especially through the development of memories and sensemaking around the particular instances of disruption" contributed to cultivating resilience for the "inevitable next time" (Buzzanell & Houston, 2018, p. 3). However, as Buzzanell (2010) notes, while these organizational networks can work to develop resilience, frameworks for resilience must also attend to and not "bypass

conditions of inequity in resources" (p. 3). Buzzanell's framework recognizes that systemic action and networks are necessary for communities to restore elements of their infrastructure and communal connections needed for stability. Yet, the Puerto Rican mothers show why it is important to extend Buzzanell's framework to the work that both families and chosen kin do in reconfiguring their support networks to adapt when other systems of support fail. As I discuss, the nuances of these extended interpersonal relationships can aid in the renegotiating of maternal roles and help reduce the tensions placed on mothers.

The next section explores how mothers organized around their precarities to find "different means of connection that allowed them to make sense of their situation," as they enacted resilient processes that transformed their lives post-disaster (Buzzanell, 2017, p. 122). Through the development of chosen kin networks and women-led volunteer groups, mothers reconstituted motherwork beyond their individual family responsibilities. They embraced community care allowing motherwork to be done equally by others. Their actions can be framed as countering notions of biological maternality and the medicalization of infant care and pushing back against the structural forces of neoliberal precarity that isolated them into the private domain of the household. Their collective motherwork countered the generalized insecurities and narratives that framed motherwork for survival as requisite even before the hurricane. Through their emergent communication networks, they navigated and reconciled the challenges of the everyday work of raising children in the aftermath as they built mechanisms for material and affective support. I call these emergent networks "resiliency nets." As coined by Wilson and Yochim (2017) resiliency nets are constructed "through often mundane practices of

community, mothers weave together caring nets that make them feel supported, nurtured, and recognized" (p. 150). These "nets are spaces and practices that provide 'real help.' They are material and affective infrastructures for making life feel livable and for helping mothers stay afloat" (p. 151). The following sections analyze how other mothers and familial networks welcomed each other into their lives and shared the challenges of this crisis through kinship and community care.

5.5.1 Chosen Kin

During my second research trip, I met with the mothers of a group that formed in the weeks after Maria at the mall playscape that became part of their new normal. Porchya, Laia, Carmen, and Rose formed a self-described stay-at-home moms' group not just because they needed someone to confide in and share their insecurities but also because through sharing mothering responsibilities, they could find negotiating recovery processes a bit "simple[r]...less exhausting." For example, Porchya explained one way that another mother helped her navigate the FEMA rules:

> Our kids are all in the same age range and play so well. My parents are living in New Jersey right now. I didn't really have anyone to talk to. She [Carmen] knows a lot about the laws, so I often had questions for her about applying for things and how to fill out some of the sheets they [FEMA] gave me.

Each of the women would connect for different reasons, but in the end, they came together to form a support network that helped them manage not only the immediate aftermath of Maria but that carried them through years later.

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At the time of my interviews--two years post-Maria--Porchya and Laia lived in a small community half an hour outside of San Juan. Porchya had a bachelor's degree and worked at a local hotel as an event planner. Her husband worked long hours doing security for a company nearby. Together they had two children, who during the hurricanes, were two and four. Laia graduated high school and spent time working retail, eventually moving up to management. Her husband did repair work on cars and worked as a carpenter on the side. They had one child, who was three during the storm, and the family lived in a home very similar to Porchya's on the same street. The two mothers knew each other before the storm as their kids had played together on a few occasions, but the aftermath of the storm brought about new connections that would be both surprising and necessary.

As the storm bore down on them, Porchya's house began to flood, and by the storm's end, her family was faced with the near loss of their home. As they moved down from their second-floor, they found their home covered in ankle-deep thick, black-brown mud that coated every surface. Her kitchen was unrecognizable due to the damage: cabinets in piled heaps, doors, and wood splintered, black and white tile peeled up and pushed into the living room, leather couches that blended in with the mudscape. During the first day of clean-up, they resorted to using shovels to clear out the mud. They needed all new furniture, appliances, electrical wiring, and a front door. The reality of nowhere to go weighed heavily on them as their house was no longer safe to occupy. As Porchya described, "The damage was...well it was too much. I looked at it all and just didn't know what to do. I went to San Juan and stood in line for five hours to talk to someone to get help. They told me that they'd come by to assess it. They didn't come." She was offered a

tent in a temporary camp set up by the Red Cross, but with two small children, she worried that it was unsafe. "My husband wanted to go there. We fought all day because I was like, how, how am I going to do this there? I just wanted to be back in my home."

For Laia and her family, the immediate aftermath was different. Their house sustained relatively minor damage, so they left to walk around their neighborhood to see if there was anything they could do to help their neighbors. She recalled that when she saw the state of Porchya's home, she made an immediate decision to take the family in. She recalled,

> It was hard for her because her [Porchya's] house was nearly destroyed, but mine was fine. I invited her over immediately because I was worried about how they'd make do over there. I turned to my husband and told him that we had to do something. They have kids, I said. We can't just leave them. They're alone here.

In response to Porchya's situation, Laia and her husband reworked their living arrangements to absorb their neighbors into their own home. They put all of the kids into one bedroom, giving each couple their own room as they needed "space to breath each night." Porchya recalled how she, too, upon hearing the offer from Laia, decided to choose this arrangement over moving into the temporary tent camp. "When she said, 'Hey just come here, we can make room,' I figured it'd be hard and tight, but that it'd be better than being over there. I just had to trust her as a mother. I had to trust her." This element of trust among mothers is key to the maternal resilience that these women enacted.

While it seemed surprising that in the immediate aftermath of Maria, two families who were previously strangers connected and ultimately reconfigured their homes to cohabitate, the images Porchya showed me of her home took my breath away. The failure of support resources to come to their aid further compounded their concerns. It was apparent from the damage that her family had little choice. The impoverished conditions and lack of traditional community supports meant that they had to collectively revise their assumptions for how life in the aftermath of the hurricane would be, choosing to trust in the relational connection they had with another family over moving to a temporary shelter. As the chaos around them grew and the lists of "to-dos" piled up, the mothers joined together to balance and navigate the additional roles they took on in the aftermath. While for Porchya, the offer by Laia became a refuge, for Laia, the move meant that she had someone to help confront some of her concerns. Both of them felt relief that there were now two mothers managing the work of one household and three kids. As Laia recalled, "During that time, we shared nearly every meal together. We'd sort our military rations and what we each had from before. We'd make up meals using all of that. We were taking turns; I guess you could say, taking each other's kids for the day." Porchya chimed in to add, "Sometimes I'd watch them [the kids] so that she could go and stand in the line again to try and get the [FEMA] paperwork filled out or she'd watch them while I went off for the water lines." As mentioned before, trust was key to the collaborative rhythms that these mothers created together to manage the ongoing demands of the aftermath.

Family cooperation and collaboration were also critical to post-Maria recovery for both families. For example, the two husbands cleaned up Laia's damaged home faster

than if they had waited for FEMA to come. Once their home was repaired, Laia, her husband, and her son moved back into their home although it took an additional six months before the FEMA money came for them to replace furniture and appliances. While their initial cohabitating living arrangement was temporary, the support network they developed was not, as they continued to cook together, do laundry together, and take turns with the motherwork so that each one of them had the time to figure out their employment options, file paperwork, run errands, etc. As pragmatic needs turned to affective communities of support, the relationships they forged enhanced their own identities and options as they built additional connections with other mothers in their community. The connections forged with two other mothers at the mall, Rose and Carmen, became especially important in navigating the ongoing trials of post-hurricane life.

Rose was a single mother of two kids, a son who was four and a daughter who was three during the hurricanes. She worked at a local daycare center, so she could take her kids with her when she went to work, thereby offsetting some of the cost of care while giving her a workable wage that was enough to support her family and their two-bedroom apartment. After Maria, the daycare center closed for several months, leaving her stranded without a paycheck. "I went to their table [FEMA unemployment table] and tried to get some support. They gave me some food and water, but could only help me sign up. I wasn't sure how I was going to get the money." She recalled how in the days after the storm, she took her kids to the mall playscape so she could relax while they played and "have a bit of cool air" as their apartment complex was excruciating to be inside of during the hottest part of the day. During one of these trips to the mall, she

struck up a friendship with Carmen, who offered her not just emotional relief but a place to go that "was not up six flights of stairs" with no elevator. Rose recalled those first few weeks: "Carmen took me [in] after we met. Not like they [Porchya and Laia] did, but she let me come over often. We sat in her room with the air conditioning on. She had a generator that she ran in the evenings so we could have air on and have a little bit of light." Often at the end of these long hard, exhausting days, Rose and her two kids stayed at Carmen's house, a reprieve from the dark, heat, and bugs that consumed nights in their apartment. With no income coming in and her savings draining, Rose relied on her relationship with Carmen to help navigate the paperwork and policies of the aid organizations so that she could eventually achieve financial stability. She recalled how at one point, Carmen gave her money to put gas in her car and often helped her find extra food or water.

Carmen was a bit older than these other mothers. As a lawyer, she spent her 20's and 30's attending law school and building her practice. Her kids were five and two during Maria and having had children at the end of her 30's and early '40s meant that she had more resources to help with her children at home while working full-time and devoting herself to a practice she loved. While Rose was used to taking on all of the responsibility of care work as a single mother, Carmen had the means and options to leverage out-of-home support for her children. She noted that before the storm, she sent her kids to daycare each day as she was the majority income provider for her family and often worked long hours that necessitated "someone else jumping in from time to time." Her partner took the task of taking the kids to and from daycare and cooking most meals for them. She had a house cleaner and arranged for someone to walk her dog during the

day as well. She detailed how things fell along different gender lines in her home because "they had to" but also because "I wanted them to." Being a lawyer for Carmen was an identity anchor that held precedence over the responsibility she felt as "their mother." However, as Carmen explained in the interview, the aftermath of Maria changed this for her family and many others.

With schools and daycare centers closed and many employers shutting down due to lack of water and electricity, the challenge of care work was a leveler for many mothers. Mothers like Carmen, who worked out of the home sometimes 60 hours a week, were now home full-time caring for her children and managing all of the meals and other domestic tasks. Her partner was part of the emergency response team and so was gone during most of the first few weeks after Maria. This left Carmen struggling to manage it all for the first time. For other mothers like Rose, with little family support and as a one-parent household, responsibilities after the storm increased significantly. She found herself taking on full-time childrearing in adverse conditions along with the added strains of domestic responsibility without income.

When Carmen brought up these exigencies in our group interview, there was a collective pause among the four women. Their frustration came out in their side-glances as they shifted in their seats and gave large, exuberant sighs. "It made everything harder for us." Laia explained, "We didn't know when the school would open back up. It had such damage. The roof. The flooding. It was a mess. What could I do? I stayed home first for a short time, but then it became permanent as it took time. The school by us never reopened." Two years after the storm, an additional 250 schools were still closed due to

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the impact of the storm, the money for repairs "never being enough." Department of Education officials stated that storm damage would be repaired when funds from FEMA become available.

Post-hurricane school closings were devastating for families struggling to recover and yet, it is important to recognize that these closings just added to the already hundreds that had closed in the preceding years. *The New York Times* staff writer Katz (2019) revealed that by the end of the 2016-2017 school year 183 schools were closed at the direction of Julia Keleher, the founder of a small Washington education consultancy appointed by Governor Rossello. Alongside school closings were cuts to pre-k programs, KinderCare programs, funding for WIC, and other mechanisms that support children and their families. Prior cuts in 2017 to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant meant that direct financial assistance to families to meet basic needs was limited to four out of 100 families well before Hurricane Maria. Further, cuts to Medicaid contributed to families with children of special needs being left with heavy medical debt (Keith-Jennings & Wolkomir, 2017).

Mothers in the mall playgroup detailed the challenges of these cuts before the storm: added commutes to their children's schools, random shutdowns and days off, increased concerns over safety and health, parental concerns over academic progress, and the damage that these changes did to the physical makeup and the social elements of the surrounding communities, including the support that mothers specifically needed. "It fell on me every time," Porchya recalled. "I'd have to stay home because my job had more flexibility and my income wasn't as much as his [her husband's income]." Rose saw the

impact of these issues similarly. When the center she worked at had to close, she stayed home and did not earn money on those days, but more frustrating for her was how heavily the expectation to absorb these changes fell on the mothers. Often their daycare center would have to close early or remain closed, and it was the mothers who had to leave work and come pick up their children or the mothers who stayed home for days while they waited for the electricity to turn back on. Carmen described a group of mothers in another community that worked to reopen a school that had closed. Together this group had admonished many of their politicians and the utility company specifically for failing to fix the problem and just assuming that "we'd just take it." These stories contributed to a narrative network as well as material and social support that confronted inadequate recovery measures and upheld mothers and families: a resiliency net constructed out of chosen kinship care.

Even as external support mechanisms around them failed, these mothers worked together to provide stability not just for their families but for the families of their now chosen kin network. Rose added that they talked about the impact these closings would have on her and the other mothers in the group. Carmen said, "What were we to do? They keep closing the schools and we have to keep picking up the pieces." As the support structures failed to come back online, many mothers were forced to stay at home instead of returning to work or pursuing other opportunities outside of the house. With the schools closed and daycare options limited, Carmen made the transition to stay-at-home permanent. Albeit, she noted that staying home full-time while working and homeschooling was easier because she had a partner who was also home and could share the motherload. With that said, she was adamant that the "other mothers" became a

"lifeline" to making it all work, noting "it was less stressful on us [her and her partner] this way and the kids needed this time away too." Laia recalled how sharing childcare became a necessary part of how she navigated around these roadblocks. "She [Porchya] takes my son for me three days a week so that I can work, do my school work. I'm back in school because I lost my job [after Maria] and haven't found anything. I want to be a nurse instead." She added that going back to school was also made possible because of these women. Not just taking care of her children and running the occasional errand so she could attend class or study, but the social support they offered her. "They won't let me quit," she said somewhat sarcastically. "I'm going to be a nurse and then I'll be in charge of all the Band-Aids." Together the four of them have seven kids under eight for whom they share mothering.

The failing support mechanisms before the storm and the failed response to refashion those systems in the aftermath meant that the mothers were continuously being repositioned in relation to their children and the domain of their household. For Laia, going back to school was the only way to improve her economic position and financially provide more stability for her family. Still, she recognized the importance of collaborative care in being able to have that as an option. Rose chimed in, "I haven't had to pay for care [when schools are closed] or sitting for an evening [as she often picks up extra shifts at a serving job she has]. That helped me make the bills work after Maria because now I didn't have that to pay every month. They [the other mothers in the group] help me with that care." The rotation of care meant that each mother got time alone to pursue education, work, or other activities. This rotation also meant that they saved on childcare expenses when the kids were home and reduced the isolation many of the

mothers experienced before and after the storm. Their stories paralleled the impact of this storm on them, not just physically and economically, but on their ability to have more agency and opportunity. Together they reconstructed motherhood to fall more in line with their needs, their current conditions, and to structure and organize their days so that they were more fulfilling.

However, their stories also attest to how crisis contexts can replicate a gendered model for not just care work but also domesticity. While this repositioning would be more challenging for some mothers as Carmen had to shift her position more dramatically than Rose, they all collectively took issue with the notion that it had to "all fall on us, as mothers." They noted that it seemed the requirements of their mothering increased after as "they were pushed to be more and more flexible…had to deal with less and less…made to give up work… and lost any chance of anything else." Even as I sat and talked with them three years later, they still referred to themselves as stay-at-home moms because of their work taking turns caring for the kids. They see this care work as not just a home-based activity, despite most of their kids going to preschool or KinderCare, but as related to being mothers who have to do this care work. On the one hand, they challenged the notion that motherwork was the sole responsibility of the biological mother by relying on a network of other mothers to take on the mothering and childrearing of their children. On the other hand, their work engaging in communal mothering practices draws attention to the gendered dimensions of care work and how crisis contexts can further entrench the mother's subject position.

An added dimension to their resiliency is how they also navigated the expectations that mothering must be overtly positive and that mothers must feel loving towards their children at all times. Each of them recalled various points in the aftermath where they felt badly about how they were mothering or remorseful about the feeling of being "stuck" with their kids. Rose addressed how she felt ashamed over the resentment she sometimes felt for her children, with Porchya adding that having a child who did not sleep during the night was so exhausting that there was little joy. While taking on the motherwork of other children was exhausting at times, they also talked about how the arrangement they created together helped them enjoy being a mother more. They felt significant support from a community of other mothers coming together for walks at the park, coffee dates at the nature preserve, or beach days, which gave them reprieves from the intensity of intensive mothering and allowed them to take turns navigating "all the tantrums and spills" and ambivalence mothers had about child rearing.

In sum, their chosen kinship network enabled them to feel better about how they were mothering and about how their lives had changed in the aftermath. Porchya added,

> It's better this way. I know they're getting what they need. I feel better about it. Now everything just works better. Even though I work. I work on the weekends a lot or do nights because I do event work. I am happy to help them with their kids, their house, schooling. Whatever they need.

They laughed as I struggled to understand their schedule: who watched whose kids, when, and how often. They had it all down as a routine. Each week they repeated this process, meeting up on the weekends for extra playtime. In thinking about the

inevitable future, they also saw their connection, collaboration, and communication as allowing them to have more options and security for when the next crisis unfolds. "We have a plan for helping each other," Laia said. Rather than embrace the ideology that they must bear the burden of their recovery alone or that mothers must be pitted against each other, the mothers in these stories found solace in each other. By evoking solidarity, embracing collective action, and leveraging communal and familial relationships, they built networks of support that acted as resiliency nets. These resiliency nets, constructed from their chosen kin "catch women in the throes of everyday precarity, holding them up through trying times and reconstituting them when their mother loads break them down" (Wilson & Yochim, 2017, p. 151).

5.5.2 Community Health Workers: Rewiring Community for Connection

Embedded in the constellation of mother's experiences and stories are the additional material and discursive realities that had to be renegotiated after the storm. Beyond the smaller networks individuals and families constructed, organizational and extra local relationships expanded in the aftermath to create larger communication and collaboration networks that would reenergize and affirm social safety nets. These were not just in response to the location or the size and scope of the disaster but in the relationship to certain assumptions we make about needs and mechanisms of care both from within and outside of site-specific communities. As we read about the development of ASI in Lourdes's initial story, the infant feeding protocols for recovery were designed with particular prescriptions about the mother's behaviors in mind. Those policies and

ways of knowing created certain conditions that, as Lourdes addressed, were continuing to shape the lives of women in Puerto Rico.

As we have seen in many of the mothers' stories, organization and resource distribution was clumsy, lacking, and inequitable. The overall impression of the aid response was "failure." As such, more had to be done outside of FEMA and the Red Cross to provide the much-needed support for mothers and families across the island. In an effort to bypass the conditions of inequity they were facing and in response to the lack of national bureaucratic action, a coalition of community health workers organized to meet the immediate and on-going needs of mothers across the island. Utilizing community connection as "horizontal micro-connectivity" their work lead to "localized learning" taking place (Borges-Méndez, R., & Caron, 2019, p. 11). The social networks of mothers and the organizational networks of women created by ASI worked to diffuse information, mobilize on the ground support, and develop longer-term solutions that the local and state governments could not. By leveraging the communal coalitions of other women and mothers forged together in the aftermath ASI constructed the largest infant and young child feeding organization in Puerto Rico.

> If you've heard anything about the Taino culture [an extinct Caribbean tribe], women were the leaders. And we've decided that our Casicas, who are our volunteers, are the most important component of the organization. The Porta Voces or community health workers are Casicas.

Throughout those first few weeks, Lourdes brought on a midwife, two nurses, and a doctor. She noted that "nobody was functioning as a health professional. We were all

just functioning as peers." As a result, of this foundational work, by the end of November, within just eight weeks since Maria had made landfall, an island-wide network of volunteers had been recruited. Her roadmap emphasized a few key principles. For starters it is an all-volunteer model, but the volunteers were to be highly trained in a variety of infant feeding and emergency feeding techniques. Through the use of everyday community members such as teachers and hairdressers volunteering ASI members could expand their range of care all across the island, leveraging the social resources from within communities offsetting the belief that only medical personal could do lactation support. This worked to support the island in two ways. Medical personal could stay rooted in the immediate medical needs of their communities, triaging injuries, managing care for those with diabetes or heart conditions, helping with emergencies, etc. At the same time, these community members were productive and empowered; they became integral and valuable members of the recovery process instead of being situated outside of it.

> We feel the peer network is the most important thing to get this going. Other people might disagree. I know that there's a lactation educator course that comes out of the University of Puerto Rico that feels strongly that the only people who should be touching people's breasts or chests have to be health professionals. One of the strong emphasis of ASI is to train the community because health professionals are going to be... it would be much easier if a brick fell on somebody's leg to be dealing with that injury than trying to latch a baby onto somebody's breast or teaching hand expression to somebody when a hairstylist

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could teach somebody how to latch a baby onto the breast and how to...we have to be very prepared.

As David and Enarson (2012) have argued, "The most urgent need of all is for those most affected to reclaim their sense of place, some degree of control and autonomy, and the certain knowledge that their views count too in the reimagining of the future" (p. 12). As a result of ASI's work to build a new way forward for mothers across the island, Lourdes and these other mothers developed over 70 support groups in all but four municipalities across the island.

> I wondered if we should be fixing things that way. Why do we want to continue to live like this? I wanted them to improve it. Make it better. It was really hard. It was really, really hard. People don't realize the level of PTSD they have until they announce another storm.

> It's really about developing a sustainable community network. Because what we kind of realized was that nobody was going to come to help us.

To draw in volunteers and make the training accessible throughout the island, ASI's model included scaling the cost of the training, a consideration that manifested ASI's commitment to equity and justice:

> [To be] more fair for the market because we want to have this information being more accessible to people. We want more IBCLCs. We talk a lot about equity. We talk about skin color. We talk about poverty. We talk about LGBT issues. Those things intersect here, and so we just couldn't expect to get help and training

to people with their costs, so we had to invent our own model that was more financially equitable and intersectional.

In addition to financial considerations and principles of gender equity and equality, Lourdes's model also focused on transportation and location of the trainings. She worked to find both online and in-person options for delivering lactation training, acknowledging the need for a safe environment as an added priority for their work.

> You also have to create spaces for these trainings, and that's what the other aid organizations that came forgot to do, was just create one space where we could get together and cry. We took the training to Ponce. We all met at a shopping center, and then we went up in a caravan to this chiropractor's office. We keep looking for people to collaborate with. We don't want to hold our support groups in hospitals or in churches, but other than that, we're willing. We've done support groups in chiropractic offices, in health clinics, in people's homes, in stores. Yeah, anywhere you can get people together, that's a good, safe, comfortable space for everyone. When you move into hospitals, you move into churches, you might eliminate populations from doing so, and that's not equity.

This reduces the inequity because people don't have to travel to find you, which decreases their costs. It's a small Island, but I can't get everywhere, and I have my kids, and I have to take my kids to school in the morning, and I pick them up at three in the afternoon. They have those issues too.

From that first training session conducted in collaboration with Save the Children Lourdes worked with her social networks and her extensive knowledge of communities all around Puerto Rico to expand care resources for mothers in the immediate aftermath. With that said, her work was not just an "in the moment" challenge to the past and status quo. Rather, Lourdes developed new communication networks and utilized social capital to promote the resilience of women and mothers across the island. This network of community health workers and volunteers (Casicas), provided the necessary resources for the short-term recovery of their island; in addition, their collective community efforts forged the relationships that developed long-term resilience.

Beyond ASI, other organizations and even small local groups across the island joined in the effort to help women and their families. This included the women-focused organizations of Mama Aicha and Taller Salud that were also attempting to re-wire the island and bring reproductive and racial justice to "woman-identified persons (regardless of their assigned sex)." The objective of these organizations is to "bring health prevention and wellness practices to where it always ancestrally belonged, through the creation of a database of Midwives, Birth Workers, Doulas, Community Clinics, Healers, Alternative Health Services and other services" (Cruz, 2008). They also aim to return leadership to the Casicas (women as volunteers) throughout the island. While their work began before Maria, the need for their services has increased in the years since. The storm increased their need to develop new partnerships with other organizations on the island, train and empower a growing network of volunteers, and raise money and awareness to fix some of the localized structural issues like power outages and transportation issues that continue to prevent women from accessing the care they need. "We're working diligently to adapt

to new circumstances while planning for the future with you. Our communities have always been, and will always be, the heart of our work" (Cruz, 2008).

Lourdes's response to develop ASI demonstrates how "people, organizations, and nations bring a new normalcy to life--one embedded in material realities and generated by talk-in-interaction" (Buzzanell, 2010, p. 4). As Lourdes lamented, "We're tired. When will they come and give us the just recovery we need, we deserve?" This idea of a just recovery is not something new for Puerto Rican people. Puerto Rican independence and recovery are often tied together, bound up in their history, this storm, and the future they cannot quite see through the still settling dust. "Separate but equal," Lourdes indicates, just means "that the U.S. government should help them the way they helped everyone else." The work done by these women-focused organizations is based on the idea that "when women thrive, their communities get stronger. That is why we are convinced that the health of a town begins with the health of its women" (Taller Salud, 2019). Rather than a one-size-fits-all response to communities in need, when asked how they knew what their communities needed after Maria, they responded by saying, "We just went to the women and asked them what they needed" (Kacmar, 2018). Through the leveraging of organization-to-organization, community-to-community, local, and peer relations, ASI, along with other women-led groups on the island, were determined to help their island grow and thrive despite the failure of large-scale federal and state recovery mechanisms.

In sum, through the leveraging of communal and inter-organizational networks, the work of families, and chosen kin to reconfigure their support networks they were able to not only adapt when other systems of support failed, but continue to thrive as adverse

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conditions persisted. In doing so they worked to reduce the tensions and expectations placed on them as mothers. The nuances of these extended interpersonal relationships aided in the renegotiation of maternal roles and development of new communication and volunteer networks that challenged dominant resource conceptions and intensive mothering paradigms. Further, these community networks provided more inclusive practices and created openings for the emergence of new social security mechanisms and resiliency nets that hold women up when their mother loads become unbearable.

For the stay-at-home mothers group, the relationships forged during the aftermath helped them to navigate the isolation that emerged while they waited for recovery efforts and in turn constructed and developed "resiliency nets" as a mechanism for material and affective support. As Wilson and Yochim (2017) attest, when communities of women come together with a common goal, "they could make amazing things happen. Things they never could have done alone" (p. 151). Calling on their community and neighbors as an extension of family helped the stay-at-home mothers renegotiate the normative discourses that constitute mothering as isolating, biological, and all-loving. In doing so, they transformed their neighborhoods and communities into places that fostered belongingness.

The examples from Puerto Rico of women's collective action attest to the value of familial and community networks for creating new organizational and policy mechanisms that resist inequitable status quo solutions and seek better material conditions for mothers and families alike. As Aldrich (2012) puts it, networks and relationships are the "wires" or "core components through which information and resources run" (p. 30). The "wires"

created by ASI (as well as other organizations) allowed mothers to receive the care and support they needed following the hurricanes. By building on the localized knowledge gained from their engagement within their communities and gathered from their Casicas, ASI's work continues to expand to ensure every infant is safely fed.

5.6   Conclusion

The mothers' narratives in this chapter show 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. Their stories paralleled and expanded on Buzzanell's (2010) communication resilience framework by highlighting the work they did as women and mothers.

In crafting new definitions of normalcy, mothers enacted behaviors that were at times moving them in two different directions. In the immediate aftermath, they instinctively activated their maternal roles relying on familiar routines and drawing on creativity and novelty to keep their families happy and safe. They questioned their actions as relative to "good" mothering and buttressed whatever came their way for the good of their families. Yet, as their responsibilities expanded, they began to see the storm as an opportunity for change and growth. They acknowledged that alternative trajectories were possible and that crafting a new normal necessitated change. As such, many mothers renegotiated their roles, developed new routines, expanded familial maintenance behaviors, and embraced places within their communities where new normalities were

created by "talk-in-interaction" (Buzzanell, 2010, p. 4). As the simplicity of their lives slowly returned, the constant reframing of their circumstances continued, as mothers began to acknowledge the other more invisible and tenuous parts of their lives that they desired to change as well. In working to reconcile the tensions and contradictions, mothers like Yarelis, Lourdes, and Natalia, crafted a new normal that was both new and routine.

As they navigated the new normal, the communicative and interactive process of sense-making mothers engaged in involved additional negotiations, which took place over conflicting identity anchors that were discursively upheld and renegotiated in light of their changing contexts and conditions. In looking at the roles mothers occupied in the aftermath in comparison with those they settled into--the domestic, the workplace, and the community--I identified how their maternal identity was influenced by the formation and maintenance of particular identity dimensions related to the work they do as women and as mothers. For some mothers, identity anchors allowed them to develop new roles that brought them more clarity and optimism in their post-disaster lives. Yet, for others, identity anchors at times resulted in the sense of fragmentation as other crisis-induced identities required shifting their mothering practices. Yarelis, for example, used the traditional female role to gain some maternal agency. In her work as an "other mother" and a daycare provider, she helped mothers in her community find more fulfillment in a return to work. Taking on the role of primary breadwinner was not always an easy task for Yarelis. She also navigated her identity as a daughter taking on the care work of her parents, who lived with them after the storm, and her role as a mother to her daughter. Like Yarelis, Mariana embraced her identity as a mother but found that it was in tension

with both the isolation and empowerment of cultural expectations at times. She struggled to resolve the parts of her maternal self that were in direct conflict with and constrained by material conditions and cultural discourses outside the home. Where one mother struggled with the tensions experienced by these identity shifts, Luana found that family and fragmentation were a critical piece in her resilience weathering the aftermath of Maria. Guided by the loss of her father and grounded in her faith-based commitments, Luana transformed her life in the aftermath to feel a stronger sense of accomplishment both in her work and as a mother. Their stories demonstrate that even as they worked to recraft mothering narratives to enable alternative identities and possibilities, they were simultaneously bound up in the dominant "good mother" anchoring identity. As they embraced and renegotiated their roles as mothers, daughters, and community members, they developed a sense of nested agency that influenced their work outside the home, family communication, and family legacies.

As they renegotiated their nested identity anchors, some mothers saw the opening created by the storm as an opportunity to developed goals and activist commitments towards recovery. Lourdes and Mariana's resilience was tied to the agentive actions they undertook as mothers. The aftermath of Maria exposed a sense of anger and frustration that motivated them to counter the paternalist and incongruent recovery processes that were not only one-size-fits-all but continued to replicate inequities all across the island. They reframed their situation to enact behaviors that were not only productive for the recovery of their island but allowed them to feel more control and agency in their lives.

Lourdes worked with her anger and frustration as a motivational force to develop island-wide support mechanisms to counteract the counterproductive processes and

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bureaucratic gaps of other aid and recovery organizations. Rather than negate her feelings over the injustices mothers were experiencing, she used her knowledge and training to enact entrepreneurial creativity by developing an island-wide emergency infant feeding network. Her work enacted cultural change and empowered women and mothers across the island to resist the historical inequities and pervasive ideologies about "good" mothering as it related to infant feeding practices. Importantly, by calling into question prevailing notions of what was productive for the long-term recovery of mothers and families, Lourdes's work made visible the intersectionalities that oppress mothers. In addition to Buzzanell's (2010) framework and parallel with Buzzanell's (2021a; 2021b) reworking of her processes, Lourdes's work in the aftermath demonstrates the agentive power of women and mothers as they enacted feminist resilience through the productive actions they undertook in the aftermath.

Productive action, however, is defined by those experiencing the crisis. As Lourdes's story demonstrates, alternative logics can be enacted by those trying to help. Yet, alternative logics are also used by those living in disasters as the conditions and contexts may require resistance to rules or creative workarounds to barriers they are experiencing. Mariana's anger motivated a different type of action. As she rejected the recovery aid offered to her family and declined temporary housing at a FEMA camp, she leveraged an alternative logic as a form of maternal agency. She refused to feel like a victim. In an attempt to fight the marginalization that she witnessed and her family experienced, she refashioned herself in opposition to larger cultural narratives about Puerto Rican mothers and instead used her mothering practices as a site of feminist resistance. Through her own seemingly contradictory or illogical behavior, she reframed

her definition of risk and embraced a mothering identity that opposed the demands of patriarchal mothering. Juxtaposed to each other, Lourdes and Mariana's stories demonstrate the ways maternal agency was enacted, albeit differently, to bring about transformation and growth, a key component to their maternal resilience.

One of the results of actions taken by mothers across the island was the creation of resiliency nets. Social relations in the form of mothering groups and organizational networks allowed mothers to make sense of their disruption and cultivate a resilience that allowed them to develop a sense of safety and stability when other support mechanisms around them faltered. Taken together, the work of the stay-at-home mothers and the Casicas rejected biological maternity, the gendered model of domesticity, intensive mothering paradigms, and the expectation that mothering must be overtly positive and all-loving. Through the embracing community as family and engaging in communal coalitions with other women, they were able to renegotiate their collective material and discursive realities, reclaiming a sense of purpose and satisfaction in their lives. Importantly, in addition to Buzzanell's (2010) communication processes of resilience, belongingness became a key component to their empowerment and transformation after the storm. They recalled feeling a sense of acceptance and unwavering support through these relational connections that allowed them to pursue their aspirations and find more satisfaction and happiness in their new normal.

When analyzed through the analytic framework of narrative, this chapter captured how mothers enacted and expanded Buzzanell's (2010) five processes of communication resilience. Importantly, it draws attention to the contradictions and complications that mothers faced as they navigated not just material deficits of the aftermath but the slow

and often inequitable recovery mechanisms. The failure of the past came head-on with their lived realities and "the systemically placed social pressure on women to conform to culturally defined and monitored constructions of the ideal, perfect, and good mother" (Green, 2019, p. 89). Lastly, drawing on their movements and their everyday patterns of communication and actions revealed the places where their stories paralleled and diverged from existing models of resilience, exposing the problematics of a one-size-fits-all model of resilience, critiquing the bounce-back approach, and expanding elements of a communication-centered framework of resilience. Importantly, through the polyphony of voices juxtaposed alongside Buzzanell's five processes, mothers' resilience is evident in the stories they tell others and, in the stories they tell themselves. Taken together, these stories highlight resilience as communicative, communal, and relationally enacted.

6   Towards a Model of Maternal Resilience

When darkness descended on the island on September 20, 2017, Puerto Rican mothers found themselves faced with a new reality. As one mother aptly put it, "Every time there's another season or another chance of a storm, I call on them [friends and family] for support. I'm worried, I'm scared, I'd tell them. They'd say they were too. And I would know that I wasn't alone. Again."

Through these narratives, we can see the nuances of life in the post-disaster terrain. Nuances and textures that consider, colonial, and neocolonial legacies of life in the Caribbean and the historical mismanagement of public policy, infrastructure, and economic systems that continue to ingrain social inequities and impoverished living conditions on the island of Puerto Rico. Progress towards disaster recovery following Maria was not only impeded by these deeply embedded weaknesses, but exacerbated by post-disaster recovery models that emphasize short-term solutions, reconstruction over transformation, and metric-focused approaches towards a return to normalcy that imposed limitations on communities and families ability to move beyond the states of survival. As many of the stories in this dissertation demonstrate, one of the major risks is that these efforts do not offer recovery at all, rather recreate or suture into place previous structures and institutions that increase risk, vulnerability, and/or inequalities that limit the possibilities for transformation.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the disjuncture between policy, rhetoric, implementation and actual lived experience developed recovery efforts that were not sustainable, leaving those in recovery vulnerable to future threats. As a result, women from Centro de Mam and Lourdes of ASI took on activist orientations. Through their

creative entrepreneurship and the development of communal coalitions of other women and mothers, they broke down the barriers of the private/public divide, gave mothers a sense of confidence, agency, and empowerment, and became agents of transformation within their communities.

Extending the critique of recovery-based resilience models and assumptions Chapter 2 expanded the focus of disaster contexts to include the gendered injustices that are often ignored in post-disaster situations, advocating that the lived experiences of women and mothers offer a critical and missing perspective for understanding the relations of power and injustices that permeate post-disaster recovery. An added relationship included how mothers are centered differently not just within the family but within the gendered confines of society and disaster aftermaths themselves. As women are already in precarious positions in disaster-prone environments, mothers in specific were asked to take on a double and in some cases, triple burden, their vulnerability increased as their responsibilities for family care and survival were magnified. Turning the attention to include deep-seated social patterns and processes that privilege a more patriarchal view of disasters and disaster responses, I drew in on the hegemonic notions of "the mother," and the identities and positioning of Caribbean mothers and maternal subjectivity more broadly. The demands placed on mothers in the aftermath of Maria as the "shock absorbers for their families" 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. While previous research recognized gender as an organizing principle of the family and the patriarchal legacies of existing gender roles, my work here draws attention

to the contextualizing forces of cultural histories, social expectations, neoliberal notions of mothering, the contact they have with institutions, using and resisting them, and how mothering and mothers are situated by and engage with these articulated tensions and complexities.

Additionally, popular models of resilience presuppose personality or character traits as the basis for positive adaptation. There is a correlation between the idealized maternal subject and the traits of the resilient subject. For example, the discourse of intensive mothering positions the maternal subject as selfless and self-sacrificing asking the mother to take on the work of recovery for their families and communities alike. Juxtaposed with neoliberal arguments that call upon individuals to be self-reliant and mentally tough we can see how the trait model of resilience and the cultural ideals of the "good" mother can promote individualistic conceptions that lend themselves to neoliberal responsibilization and deficit assessments.

Given that the maternal perspective often imbues mothers with a certain set of prescriptions for how to mother, disaster environments can further compound these tensions. In the aftermath of Maria, mothers found that those prescriptions did not serve their best interests and reframed or resisted those expectations as a way to remain in balance and navigate the tensions in their lives. For example, Yarelis and Natalia fell back onto traditional gender roles as they took on the full-time, intensive task of motherwork and domesticity, despite the increasing demands as they navigated lack of electricity, running water, transportation, work, childcare, and safe housing. The stresses and strains of having to "do it all" made them particularly vulnerable to self-doubt and internalized unreasonable expectations that at times caused them to feel guilt and anxiety.

Yet, where there was constraint there was empowerment, as each mother worked within her home to rework domestic roles, family responsibilities, and Mothercare, to find beauty in their struggles, open up new possibilities for fulfillment, and find meaningful ways to reconnect with their families and communities. Through the use of a matricentric feminist framework in Chapter 3, I was able to unmask the patriarchal discourses that framed maternal subjectivity and explore how the often-contrary tensions that position the subject and the institution of motherhood are complexly articulated in the material and discursive tensions that framed mothers lives in the post-disaster terrain.

Importantly, to expand our understanding of resilience to consider other contexts that help to avoid preoccupations with solutions or traits, factor-focused models, and identify ways the demands of disaster situations can reproduce restrictive, gendered institutionalized practices and discourses of mothering, in Chapter 4 I drew on Buzzanell's (2010) framework of communicative resilience. Pulling in the matricentric approach, mapped onto Buzzanell's communication processes, I was able to center mother's voices, shift the analysis off of mothers and onto mothering practices, and expand the framework to include additional exigencies that revealed places where mothers were both enabled and constrained. When analyzed through the analytic framework of narrative I was able to capture how mothers enacted Buzzanell's (2010) five processes and I identified maternally-focused elaborations of those processes as well as additional processes including negotiating identity anchor dialectics and forging resiliency nets.

6.1 Additional Considerations

While Buzzanell (2010) identifies communicative and interactional elements in her five processes of resilience, my work expands on this framework to suggest five additional considerations. Through the addition of a unique context site, a matricentric lens, and a narrative emphasis a model of maternal resilience emergences. This model expands on her original processes to include;

1. Crafting new normalcy is not as simple as just "getting back to normal." Beyond navigating the challenging conditions of post-disaster life, mothers faced additional tensions and contradictions between intensive and empowered mothering. This required mothers to seek both the routine and advocate for change in both motherwork and domesticity.

2. In crises, identity is more complexly articulated. When interlinked with histories, material exigencies, and cultural discourses identity anchors can act as pivot points to enable alternative identities and develop more maternal agency.

3. Anger, often attributed as a negative emotion, was channeled as a productive force for their feminist activism and creative entrepreneurship that worked towards restorative justice and equity. The emotional labor of women, alongside their work in the aftermath, attests to the value of women's participation in recovery efforts.

4. While immediate recovery mechanisms might offer help and assistance many mothers saw this work as merely temporary and took issue with 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.

5. To build new communication networks, mothers leveraged communal

   coalitions as key components to establishing collaborative empowerment

   and belongingness. As agents of change, together their work to rewire

   connection established resiliency nets that would extend beyond the

   recovery phases.

6.1.1 Layered Challenges: Navigating Tensions and Contradictions of Life in the "New Normal"

In the first process of communication resilience, Buzzanell (2010) notes that in

crises normalcy is "literally talked into being" (p. 4). Titled as "crafting new definitions

and conditions for normalcy" Buzzanell (2010) addressed how families use relational

messages to reframe the experience, drawing on family rituals, and modifying their

material realities to match up to their circumstances to provide normalcy and stability. In

the aftermath of Hurricane Maria mothers desired more stability and security and to do

this they developed new routines that were modified to fit alongside previous ones. In my

analysis, I drew on Natalia and Yarelis's story as a testament to this work by Buzzanell as

communication was at the center of their stress response. As they enacted familiar

routines and family patterns they also had to infuse their day-to-day with novelty and

creative activities, in an attempt to provide their children with a sense things were

"getting back to normal." Natalia in specific drew a connection to living in the rainforest

as a metaphor for transformation and to the physical structure of her home as both

elements that she felt helped her weather the storm and the aftermath. Whereas the stay-at-home mothers took their kids to the mall playscape and to church services where they could interact and act in familiar ways that brought them a short reprieve from the chaos around them. Additionally, they talked to their partners and children about their stressors working to reaffirm or resolve the tensions they were experiencing. Their stories testify to the emergent changes in their routines and the adjustments they made to embrace their current situation.

In an expansion to Buzzanell's (2010) framework the labor necessary to help their families "get back to normal" or create a "new normal" brought on pressures and fears that caused mothers to rethink how they were going to manage the increasing demands of domesticity alongside their motherwork. Behind the façade of the familiar mothers began to recognize that the reframing of normalcy was enormously difficult and that despite instinctively activating their maternal role they desired a new way forward that was less isolating and more empowering. As such, many mothers began to question the ways a return to normal was going to continue to replicate the same gendered vulnerabilities they experienced before the storm. These layered challenges brought out contradictions that resulted in many mothers feeling as those they were "hitting the maternal wall" (O'Reilly, 2016, p. 1). As a result, mothers like Natalia enacted behaviors that attempted to balance the need for a return to normalcy with a desire for change.

The maternal perspective allowed for a deeper understanding of the tensions and contradictions experienced by mothers as they worked to find new trajectories for mothering that moved beyond the restrictive, gendered, and institutionalized discourses. While the new normal reframed the event and familiar routines, the longitudinal nature of

the crisis brought a need for transformation as they shifted into the next new normal. For example, Natalia addressed in specific that while her relationship with her husband was strong before the storm there was work that was needed so that she could find more balance and meaning in her life. She reworked her domestic roles, as well as their familial rules and patterns to shift away from the intensive mothering expectations. Her new normal resulted in an increased demand for shared responsibility both in the child care and domestic spheres. For Yarelis, the new normal pushed her further into the role of the mother, as she took on mothering for her community. Even as Yarelis was embracing normative ideals around motherwork, devoting herself to the needs of the children in her community, she enacted a maternal role that allowed her to feel a stronger sense of agency and empowerment. She left behind unfulfilling work, renegotiated the domestic, and redesigned her life so that she felt more joy and passion. In addition, through her care work, she allowed other mothers to go back to work, school, and balance the friction between intensive and empowered mothering. Interlaced with their identities as mothers and the extreme amount of disruption they faced they had to consciously reframe the event, their familial roles, rules, and patterns. Braided together their stories attest to the work mothers did in renegotiating their relationship to work and restructuring their lives to create new family rituals that helped them to stay connected. In sum, while mothers crafted new definitions and conditions of normalcy they did so balancing the layered challenges, navigating the contradictions they experienced as they buffered the effects of the storm for their families.

6.1.2 Interlinked Histories and Material Exigencies: Nested Identity Systems and Intersectional Identity Anchors

In the second communicative process, Buzzanell (2010) notes that crisis contexts can involve the negotiation of identity anchors. Titled as "working to affirm identity by reframing self-other relationships," Buzzanell (2010) adds that during times of difficulty individuals want to maintain or enhance identities that they find to be the most meaningful. These identities can involve domestic labor responsibilities, hobbies, family, faith, and community anchors that help individuals make sense of their difficulties and rebound from crisis. Through an analysis of three pivotal identity anchors--family life and the mother, community first responder, and faith-based identities—I found that as mothers reconstructed their lives in the aftermath for transformation, they also aligned themselves with familial and ideological identities related to family values and discourses. In parallel with Buzzanell's (2010) findings mothers activated their maternal self to not only bring about stability for their families but to additionally find opportunities for personal growth. Mariana, in witnessing sexist inequities in aid distribution, rooted herself more firmly in her feminist mothering practices by embracing language and behaviors that would support her gender-diverse son through their many changes, aligning her identity as a mother with the needs of her children. For Lourdes and Yarelis, the relationship they have to their motherliness and extended family networks allowed them to enact maternal identities that were more empowering, not just for themselves, but for their families and their communities at large. Taken together, these identity anchors allowed mothers to navigate the stressors of their every day, helping their families to adjust and buffer the impact of the storm.

In an expansion to this part of her framework, the use of maternal narratives here attests to Bailey's (1999) work, where women acknowledged that there were tensions between different parts of their lives, and that mothering "operated as a narrative pivot in the construction of their sense of self and self-worth" (p. 351). Additionally, as O'Reilly (2016) argues "many of the problems mothers face are specific to their role as women and their identity as mothers" (p. 2). While Buzzanell (2010) emphasized particular identities and draws in on the negotiation between conflicting identity anchors, the mother's stories here amplify additional identity systems and intersectional identity anchors. Interlinked with historical and material exigencies, the mothers faced additional struggles including conflicts among larger cultural discourses about Puerto Rican identities; oppression and discrimination within the situated subordination and disconnection of black Caribbean women; relationships to and involvement with systems of oppression more broadly; and the fragmentation of conflicting identities with socially constructed definitions and expectations of "the mother."

The mothers I interviewed offered differing stories of crises, struggles, and resilience. For Yarelis and Luana this meant navigating the changes within their families and their own identity as both women and mothers. They navigated their responsibilities to their families and drew strength from those they loved as they battled job loss, fragmentation, and deep loss, and embraced generational knowledge, time together, and their renewed sense of faith. In this same regard, Mariana's story attends to the relationship she has to her own identity as a mother but added the relationship she drew to the larger narrative construction of what it means to be Puerto Rican. She draws attention to the embeddedness in cultural systems that frames gender identities and shifts

her mothering practices after Maria as a site of resistance against a failing social contract. She repositioned herself in light of the identity prescriptions of the Caribbean mother and in the identity of what it meant to be Puerto Rico to reduce her anxiety, reconcile the material struggles, and cultivate more maternal agency. Layered into their stories are the cultural, organizational, and contextual elements of disaster life that further complicate the work they do to maintain and negotiate identities. There are additional relationships that can be drawn between the material conditions, discourses, beliefs and values, and systems that are co-constitutive and interdependent within the disaster environment as well. The nested identity systems and intersectional identity anchors seen here draw in on how identities become additionally more complex in crisis contexts, some identities are carried forward reflexively and used as an instigation towards change whereas others are enacted as a way to stay grounded and connected to previously held identities. Importantly, their stories are taken together, move away from deficit approaches and see identity as positioned within power dynamics. For some those dynamics reproduced risk that continued to disproportionately impact them as women and mothers. Whereas, for other mothers, the storm was a pivot point for them to recraft mothering narratives to enable alternative identities, possibilities, and maternal agency.

6.1.3 Anger as a Productive Force for Activism, Creative Entrepreneurship and Restorative Justice

In the third process of communication resilience, Buzzanell (2010) notes that resilience involves the deliberate process of working to move forward instead of letting negative feelings create stagnation. Titled as "foregrounding productive action while backgrounding negative feelings" Buzzanell (2010) addressed how in crises individuals

focus on the positive, reframing the situation and their feelings to find hope and meaning in the experience. In addition, this emotional labor results in action that brings people closer to achieving their goals. 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 the situation, language, and cultural practices of mothers and infants, Lourdes developed goals and an activist commitment to righting those wrongs. Despite her frustration over the deep-seated inequities and the consistent mistreatment of Puerto Ricans that she witnessed, she 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 are using opportunities within motherhood to become agents of change within the families and communities at large. They leveraged their emotional labor and their anger in order to confront challenges and constraints linked with gendered ideologies that not only limited them as women but further dually oppressed them as mothers. For women, prescriptions of "femininity" might imbue more expectations for subordination. For mothers, the cultural understandings of "the mother" expect that they remain positive and upbeat during the crisis. Women's expressions of negative emotions such as anger and frustration are generally subject to social sanctions; women and mothers are expected to deny those feelings and/or adapt or cope with them. Yet, as Lourde (1997) notes, "Every woman has a well-stocked arsenal of anger potentially

useful against those oppressions, personal and institutional, which brought that anger into being. Focused with precision it can become a powerful source of energy serving progress and change" (p. 280). As seen from the maternal narratives of Lourdes and Mariana, anger was a driving force for action to change their circumstances. 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. Both Lourdes and Mariana used the opening created by the storm to find new opportunities not just for work and family life, but to additionally call into question cultural prescriptions of the mother and the expectations for the traditional role of women to enact change that closed bureaucratic gaps, exposed the gendered hazards, and help others gain more control and agency in their lives.

Lastly, Lourdes's story attests to the work women do in the aftermath of disasters specifically. With response and recovery mechanisms additionally stratified by gender, women are often pushed out of participating in the recovery efforts. As Longo (2001) adds, "Women, working within the spaces where public and private worlds collide, operating at the interstices of the public and the private, are providing new role models for active political citizenship" (p. 269). However, as is seen through the maternal perspective mothers are creative entrepreneurs and were able to empower their communities through their activist commitments. Further, despite the gender-blind and culturally inconsistent recovery efforts, mothers harnessed the knowledge of their communities and activated their relational networks to mobilize resources in new ways. The relationships forged between Centro de Mam, ASI, Taller Salud advocated

emancipatory design and historically situated practices that were both relational and transformational: attending to language, establishing contextually situated infant feeding practices, and addressing the current challenges of medical care across the island.

In sum, through an understanding of the maternal experience, the added element of the emotional labor of women/mothers is brought to the forefront. As mothers utilized often silenced feelings, they enacted productive behaviors to intercede in the disparities in the immediate aftermath and develop solutions that benefited them long term. In some cases, this involved using the energy of their frustration and anger in order to challenge extant arrangements and assumptions and to demand more inclusive practices such as ensuring that LGBTQ individuals have access to food and water. In other situations, their frustration and anger were directed at challenging policies and rewriting protocols for infant feeding. Together, mothers' narratives demonstrate that women and mothers pushed back against accepting "what was" to rework their lives for "what could be"; they became powerful agents of transformation and restorative justice across the island.

6.1.4 Resistance as Dynamic Adaptation and Transformation

In the fourth process of Buzzanell's (2010) framework individuals and organizations, when faced with difficult conditions, might enact workarounds that are seemingly contradictory to the work necessary for their survival or adaptation. Titled as "putting alternative logic to work, designing new ways of handling the problems created by changing circumstances" Buzzanell (2010) explores how behaviors that might seem counterproductive can open up opportunities that were not available before a crisis. For mothers like Natalia, this might mean letting their children play with garbage on the side of the road, despite the potential danger, for a quick reprieve from the demands of

mothering. For organizations, this might result in sending in powered formula despite the mother's limited access to clean water and sterile equipment necessary for feeding. There are times in crisis where actions and behaviors enacted prior are no longer possible or seem rational and as a result, new conditions and situations will shift the way people behave, the groups they belong to, and the expectations they have.

While Buzzanell's (2010) framework accounts for the ways people reframe situations, enacting workarounds to maneuver failing systems and adapt, the stories here expand to include the work of resistance in transformation. When layered with the myth of intensive mothering and the contradictions and tensions mothers faced in their new normal, mothers were tasked with balancing strategies that pitted them against the ideals of "good" and "bad" mothering. For one mother, in particular, the opening created by Maria meant a drastic departure from what we might commonly expect of individuals in disaster environments. When their homes are damaged we expect them to join shelters, when they are without food we expect them to join the church lines and take the military packets offered, without jobs and income we expect that they will take the checks offered by the government. Mariana instead chose to reject government aid and to live temporarily with her ex-partner. Her seemingly illogical choices drew attention to the increased danger temporary shelters meant for women and children, revealing the illogical 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 such as the probability of child predators in the camps. For Mariana the money offered by FEMA was embedded with 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, taking their help, further allowed them to see her as a victim and continued to allow them to treat her as such. Through her work within the community, Mariana worked enough to feed and house her family without formal assistance, and despite how challenging that was in the aftermath, for her, that was the better option. While she was asked to adapt to her situation by accepting assistance in the form of a temporary tent community, military rations, and FEMA protocols she became angry over how these adaptations further victimized groups of individuals and created the potential for additional unsafe and unhealthy conditions. While immediate recovery mechanisms might offer help and assistance, Mariana saw this work as merely temporary and took issue with the gendered inequities they were experiencing. Despite the conditions she faced and the expectations placed on her in the aftermath, she mothered in a way that empowered her to actively resist resources she saw as infused with social injustices. By opposing both the practices and demands of patriarchal mothering and entrenched patterns of discrimination, Mariana demonstrated how resilience is not only dynamic and full of contradictions but potentially transformative. While resisting aid could have been seen as illogical given the precarity of her situation, Mariana used this resistance to gain what she saw as more control and provide safety and security for her children.

In sum, many of the narratives here attest to motherhood as a site of resistance, demonstrating how mothers subverted patriarchal notions of care work, the performance of gender, and the myths of intensive mothering, mothering in ways that empowered them to overcome the marginalization they experienced before and after Maria to open up new possibilities for mothering practices. Many of these mothers resisted rationalizing risk in favor of strategies that challenged and opposed dominant recovery models. Their

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resistance was part of their dynamic adaptation and transformation. These mothers'

narratives demonstrate that mothering and the care work mothers do in the aftermath of

disasters to build a new normal can be both sites of empowerment and oppression.

6.1.5 Resiliency Nets: Communal coalitions as key components to establishing collaborative empowerment and belongingness

In the fifth process of Buzzanell's (2010) framework, she identifies the ways

external resources and organizational networks help individuals and other organizations

respond to stressful situations. The process of "building and maintaining communication

networks" emphasizes organizational communication and the role of collective social

capital in organizational transformation and growth following a crisis. Similar to what

Buzzanell and Houston (2018) describe in their analysis of organizational resilience,

Lourdes developed ASI by attending to the often tension-filled and critical-cultural

dynamics in which organizational work is situated. In developing an island-wide network

of trained volunteers to improve processes that expanded and affirmed social safety nets,

Lourdes's organizational model accounted for issues of accessibility including financial

and transportation constraints that were added issues she contended within developing a

sustainable community network. In leveraging existing organization-to-organization ties

and expanding organizational networks to include community volunteers and peer-to-

peer networks she was utilized social capital as a key process to the resilience of women

and mothers across the island. In doing so she rewired communication networks to

provide more inclusive practices and create openings for the emergence of additional

social security mechanisms and resiliency nets that moved beyond the initial recovery

phases. In constructing these island-wide coalitions among organizations that support women's health and gender equality initiatives, she developed new support structures and resources that attempted to account for some of the problems of the past and bring communities all across the island into a more sustainable and just future. In doing so, she transformed the island support networks for mothers, empowering mothers.

Through the organizational lens, we can see that some of the previous conceptions of resilience as a "return to a previous state" or as determined in resources and policies can reproduce dangerous material and ideological formations that continue to cycle risk and precarity long-term. Lourdes's story allows us to see the ways resilience is tied to both the empowering and disempowering forces within the interplay of relationships and structures. This informs a definition of resilience that is shaped by the very people who are interacting with hazards, systems, and each other and foregrounds the collaborative efforts by cultural members in the development of solutions to complex problems. The larger story Lourdes tells is that "resilience rests on both the resources themselves and the dynamic interplay of resources." (Norris et al., 2008 p. 136). The collaborations among people, as she observes, are valuable resources themselves.

Extending beyond the dynamics of organizational resilience to consider the other communication networks that emerge in disaster environments, mother's narratives attest to the importance of families and chosen kin in reconfiguring support networks to adapt when others systems fail. Mothers found connections with others in their neighborhoods and social environments to be key components of not just their survival, but their ability to weather the impacts of the storm long term and transform their lives for long-term stability and growth. As they sat together in community spaces, joined together in the

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making of meals, came together in prayer circles, and redesigned neighborhood spaces for collaboration and connection their stories emphasize the value of collaborative empowerment for resilience. For example, in renegotiating their maternal roles Porchya, Laia, Carmen, and Rose found that their neighborhoods and social relationships were key factors in how they were able to navigate the stressors of not just the immediate aftermath but the liminal space of waiting for help to come. Rather than take on their struggles individually and fall into the trap of intensive mothering they organized together around their precarities and reconstituted motherwork to embrace the community as other mothers. As they joined together and navigated school closures, lack of housing, food scarcity, and the strains of domesticity, their emergent communication network constructed new mechanisms for material and affective support. While crisis contexts can replicate a gendered model for motherwork and domesticity, the stay-at-home mothers refashioned those systems and repositioned themselves in relation to their children and the domain of the household to find more fulfillment and empowerment in their day-to-day.

In sum, the contradictions women and mothers faced in the aftermath of Maria caused them to leverage communal relationships differently. At times the recovery processes enacted did not seem to fit the needs of their communities and as such, mothers found alternatives in care work that were more culturally and contextually sound. Across the island, other mothers worked together to rewire networks to better allow them to navigate the bureaucratic gaps that limited access to resources that kept their children fed and safe, stretched out repair work and unemployment benefits, and continue to navigate the complex dynamics of school closings and increased domestic demands. They took

turns and scaffolded other mothering into their weekly routines and worked

collaboratively as friends and family to share the motherload. Rather than see themselves

in comparison or in friction with one another, they drew on their need for support to

foster belongingness and empowered one another through the recovery phases. Through

connections with their families and chosen kin networks, they reduced the tensions and

expectations they felt as mothers and renegotiated the normative discourses of mothering

as isolating, biological, and all-loving. Through these communal coalitions, they rewired

communication networks and communities to foster collaborative empowerment

developing resiliency nets that worked to build long-term social resources and security

networks for the future of families and the island.

6.2   Summary

This examination of women's stories about post-disaster Puerto Rico has attended

to the specificities of those experiences yet it resonates to the observations about the

critical yet undervalued work of women and mothers made by David and Enarson:

> In the dreary months ahead, after the nation's attention wanes, the burdens of
>
> women will be exceptional and exceptionally invisible. Imagine cleaning just one
>
> flooded room, helping just one toddler or teen to sleep well again, restoring the
>
> sense of security to a widowed mother's life. The basic domestic chores of
>
> 'homemaking' gain new significance and are vastly more difficult in a FEMA
>
> trailer, a friend's apartment, or the basement of a church. Nothing will change in a
>
> hurry as women pack and unpack, moving from place to place across the nation
>
> with distracted partners, bewildered children, pets, and whatever possessions

remain or are gathered piecemeal. The demands on the women who take them in

and make them at home are incalculable. (David & Enarson, 2012, p. 10)

As their routines disappeared and their domestic responsibilities doubled, women of

Puerto Rico found themselves absorbing the impact of the disaster on their families. The

lack of support structures and the failed humanitarian aid response amplified their already

existing anxieties over their children's education, community, personal safety, and

stability of home and economic prospects.

While they were not immune to cultural and societal norms that place care work

solely on the mother, and the responsibility for resilience on the individual, mothers from

Puerto Rico reconciled the material, psychological, and discursive tensions by shifting

not just the way they mothered but also how they came to feel about mothering and

themselves in light of the narratives around them. In doing so, they constructed a

maternal identity and mothering practices that empowered them. They stepped up their

affective labor, pushed back against generalized insecurities and narratives that framed

mothering as an intensive selfless act. Rather than embrace the ideology that they must

bear the burden of their recovery alone or that mothers must be pitted against each other,

the mothers in these stories found solace in one another. Through collective action and

the leveraging of communal and familial relationships, they built networks of support that

acted as island-wide resiliency nets. Their work in the aftermath draws in the value of

maternal resilience.

Maternal resilience as seen through communication processes can avoid deficit

approaches to post-disaster resilience that situate it as something we do alone, something

that is relegated to an inherent characteristic that only some people have. Disaster

scenarios can significantly impact the act of mothering and the experience of motherhood in multiple complex ways. Their relationships interceded in those differences and made a formative difference in how they lived disaster. The tensions identified here demonstrate that mothers not only negotiate their place within the larger cultural landscape of notions of gender, work and self, but that families additionally negotiate these tensions within the material walls of their home and communities. In light of their struggles to find stability in the new normal and rewire their communal connections for the next new normal, they reworked what family means and how the family is enacted. Additionally, through their feminist anger, activist orientations, and communal coalitions, they rewrote the scripts for good mothering and discursively and materially reconstructing the mandates the shape motherhood within our culture. As they came to take on multiple, intersectional maternal agencies they found collaborative empowerment that enacted mechanisms for restorative justice across the island.

Here narrative sensemaking shows us the variation in recovery and family communication processes demonstrating that disaster resiliency is not one size fits all, it is rather always in motion. In the narratives here, there are reasons to favor a matricentric focused definition of resilience, as it can help us see the multitude of intersecting, layered, evolving, and complex elements that shape women's and mother's lives. Each relationship draws in new connections, enabling new conditions, rippling and cascading out. Each story revealing something new.

Woven together, the stories Puerto Rican mothers tell demonstrate a greater understanding of agency, change, and hope. The relationships they have with one another enact their brand of maternal resilience. The stories of Natalia, Mariana, Porchya, Laia,

Carmen, Rose, Yarelis, Luana, Lourdes, and the women of Centro de Mam, among the thousands of other mothers on the island, attest to the power of the phrase "alone-together." When darkness descended and no one came to help, they showed up for one another and through their maternal resilience, they found new ways of not just surviving and thriving but of holding each other together for when the next storm approaches.

7   Future Directions

While my work here adds to the body of research on resilience and on the gendered elements of disaster life, the maternal narratives highlight the value of qualitative methods in understanding, conceptualization, and practices of resilience. Resilience research needs to emphasize methodological considerations that support an investigation into the "interrelations of individuals and collective biographies, social identities, cultural and institutional practices that are discursive and relational in nature" (Bottrell, 2009, p. 335). While quantifiable attributes or baseline indicators of resilience proposed by other scholars are valuable, we must move beyond a "one and done" solutions-based approach. The stories featured in this work expand on elements of communication-centered frameworks that more aptly capture how resilience is "constituted through storytelling, messages, routines, rituals, networks, and other means" (Buzzanell, 2018, p. 16). As such, research conducted on resilience should utilize a more qualitative approach to draw attention to the intricacies of the lived experience and the textures of everyday life in disaster environments that are often left out.

Furthermore, we must advance a framework for understanding resilience that moves beyond the dominant ideologies and practices found within disaster recovery research. The narratives featured in this work develop an understanding of resilience as built through an analysis of how people use "discursive and material resources to constitute the new normal of their lives after disruption, loss, trauma, and disaster" (Braithwaite et al., 2018, p. 100). Not only can qualitative research capture the gendered contexts of the lived experience it can "elicit and add power to minority 'voices' which

account for unique localized definitional outcomes" (Ungar, 2006, p. 85). Moreover, current models of resilience framed through a feminist lens can, "listen to and integrate local needs that may fall outside dominant conceptualizations of resilience" (Campanella, 2006, p. 155). To gain an understanding of what life is really like we need to "create spaces for those voices in our work rather than rely on expertise and elitism" (Dutta, 2008, p. 45).

Research with a feminist epistemology in mind works to advance the following goals: give voice to women's lives through their experiences and stories; explore the historical, material, and social power relations that oppress women; investigate the interlocking inequalities in women's lives; and examine society through women's eyes (Brooks, 2007). By beginning with women's lives as they experience them, centering their voices throughout research, can create a starting point for new knowledge about the diversity among and between women's lives. Overall, feminist research can work to grant "authentic expression to women's experiences and to the knowledge they cultivate" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2014, p. 58) and work to understand the relations of power found throughout society in the experiences of those most marginalized (Bowell, 2018). Along with a focus on how to best achieve resiliency through objective analysis, we should emphasize the lived subjective experience (Sou & Cei Douglas, 2019, p. 145). It can be argued more interpretive models of resilience must be conceptualized for us to forge a new path that can work to reconcile these tensions. Lastly, using feminist qualitative methods can draw in a variety of disciplines that further broadens understanding through a multi-layered analysis (p.185). In sum, "it's going to take us conveying information in new and different ways because what we're doing is not working. We've reached a

threshold. If we want to see more movement, we need new and creative approaches"
(Weiner, Frederick, & Novus, 2020, p. 20)

Beyond the qualitative and feminist approaches to research, I found there to be several lines of inquiry beyond the scope of this project that warrant further exploration. Currently, there is a "significant lack of longitudinal research, as disaster researchers often use the onetime case study far too frequently. Intensive immersion in the field over long periods could be meaningful in augmenting the limited-time glimpses of human behavior in a disaster" (Phillips, 2014, p. 189). While I went to Puerto Rico in 2019 and 2020 the work towards recovery remains incomplete. As such, staying connected and reconnecting with the mothers in this study over additional years can work to reveal additional complications and tensions as the impacts from Maria continue.

As is noted in Chapter 1, since Maria they have experienced additional crises that many of these mothers are attending to. Driving back from the airport, after arriving back in Michigan in early 2020, I learned that Puerto Rico was shutting down, implementing strict curfews, beach closures, school closures, and stay-at-home orders as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the year since my writing began the impact of COVID-19 has hit the island quite extensively. While this study focuses on a natural disaster, it applies to other crises. Because resiliency is not static, but emergent and ongoing, their ability to be resilient has embedded and flowed in relation to the ongoing management of different crisis contexts and their relationship to each other. Continued work on maternal resilience in specific should account for what happens when social distancing prevents the face-to-face connection with networks outside of the family unit. Asking questions such as: How

did this experience shift the way the stay-at-home mothers adapted their care routines? How has the context of COVID-19 shifted the material, environmental, and economic conditions, and in turn how have those elements impacted Puerto Rican mother's ability to be resilient? What was it that was learned through the experience of Maria that provided insight into surviving continued layers of impact from these events while still amid recovery from Maria? While families faced new struggles stacked on top of still piled debris, many of them describe relationships as key in their lives throughout COVID-19. For example, Yarelis yet again reworked her career aspirations doing more with technology and implementing new requirements for home-based care. This addresses the digital entanglements that were not addressed through the narratives featured in this work. Questions such as, in what ways did their engagement with digital technologies shift in light of COVID-19, and how did the use of technology enhance or constrain their relationships?

Further, there are concerns that resilience is not always a happy picture. When layered on top of existing prejudices, social relationships across certain groups can slow down the recovery of out-groups. More specifically, "peripheral or marginalized groups within society that hold less social capital benefit little and often are harmed by the groups holding stronger social capital after a disaster" (Aldrich, 2012, p. 14). This is a concern because not all relationships are created equal. Other marginalized groups whose voices and stories of resilience remain unheard could be additional lines of inquiry as they can continue to tease out how relational entanglements shaped their lives in the aftermath. For example, as Mariana addressed, work on the LGBTQIA experience in

disasters is limited and could advance the understanding of the experience and struggles related to gender or sexual identity.

Moving outside those that stayed on the island in the aftermath my work could extend to include those that came to the mainland or moved to other countries entirely. I interviewed a woman who left the island in the aftermath of Maria on a humanitarian flight because of her 72-hour old infant. It was two years before she returned to Puerto Rico. While she was gone she experienced life in the diaspora, noting that she wished research attended to those that left the island after the hurricane and the struggles they faced attempting to "find home." Her story calls us to ask questions such as: What was the experience of evacuation like for Puerto Ricans and/or for Puerto Rican mothers? How do their stories of displacement and loss illuminate maternal resilience? One might expand further by considering the displacements of those who left and those who stayed. I invite further elaboration of post-disaster maternal resilience.

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A   Consent to Participate in Research

Maternal Resilience following Hurricane Maria

INTRODUCTION

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Sara Potter and Patty Sotirin from the Humanities Department at Michigan Technological University. This study is being conducted as part of a doctoral dissertation. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

You have been asked to participate in this study because you are a mother with children who lived in Puerto Rico during Hurricane Maria and have continued to live in Puerto Rico in the two years since. There will be approximately 5-10 additional mothers involved in the study. Interviews should be 1-2 hours long with the possibility of additional follow-up communication.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study seeks to use your stories to understand how mothers live disaster- the ins and outs of how you are living through the aftermath of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico. Since the experiences of mothers and maternal resilience in disaster environments has rarely been studied directly, it is through your stories that we can discover a better understanding of mother's lives in these situations.

PROCEDURES / RISKS / DISCOMFORTS

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:

Spend a few hours speaking with me in your home about your experiences living in the aftermath of the hurricane. We'll do this during an initial visit in November. Further, I may ask you to participate in any necessary follow-up communication by requests for additional interviews, phone calls, and/or emails. Total length of participation throughout this study will be limited to 5 hours, although you may continue to communicate with me beyond that if you desire to do so.

During the interview participants will be taped so that the interview can be recalled later. You may elect to participate in the study but not be recorded. While all names will be changed to protect your privacy, sections of our interviews may be used in my research both submitted and published.

Discussing your experiences living through Hurricane Maria and in Puerto Rico in the aftermath may be at times uncomfortable. You can opt out of participating at any time. You can choose to skip questions or limit discussion of any subject at any time.

INJURY RESULTING FROM RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS

In the event of physical and/or mental injury resulting from participation in this research project, Michigan Technological University does not provide any medical, hospitalization or other insurance for participants in this research study, nor will Michigan Technological University provide any medical treatment or compensation for any injury sustained as a result of participation in this research study, except as required by law.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Although you may not directly benefit by participating in this study, we hope that what we learn will help us understand further how disasters impact the ways in which mothers are mothering and understand further how the conditions of post-disaster environments impact you. Your stories also offer us a different point of view through which to see this event and the aftermath.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and/or that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained as all names of participants and names referenced by participants will be changed in all submitted and/or published material. Recorded files and transcripts of interviews will remain with the investigators in a locked drawer in their office and will only be accessed by the principle investigators. Federal IRB regulations require that records such as interview tapes and transcripts are to be kept for at least three years after the completion of the dissertation. Any use of tapes and/or transcripts beyond IRB's three year requirements, will have names and identifying data permanently changed.

If information is released for publication or presentation, participants will be quoted using an alias. Any information that could lead to you being directly or indirectly identified will be changed in an effort to protect your confidentiality. Additionally, recordings and transcripts could be used for educational purposes, however names will be changed or omitted to protect your privacy.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether or not to be in this study. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer. There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact:

Principal Investigator (PI), Dr. Patty Sotirin, Pjsotiri@mtu.edu, 906-487-3264 or Co-Investigator, Sara Potter, spotter@mtu.edu, 815-786-4848.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

The Michigan Tech Institutional Review Board has reviewed my request to conduct this project. If you have any concerns about your rights in this study, please contact the Institutional Review Board, Michigan Tech-IRB at 906-487-2902 or email IRB@mtu.edu.

☐ I agree to participate and be recorded

☐ I agree to participate but I do not agree to be recorded

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I confirm that I am age 18 years or older and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

_____

Printed Name of Subject

_____   _____

Signature of Subject   Date