SCALE OF COMMUNITY RESILIENCE: ANALYSIS OF PSYCHOMETRIC ASPECTS AND RELATIONS WITH CRIMINAL VICTIMIZATION IN MEXICAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

ESCALA DE RESILIENCIA COMUNITARIA: ANALISIS PSICOMETRICO Y DE RELACIONES CON VICTIMIZACION CRIMINAL EN ESTUDIANTES UNIVERSITARIOS MEXICANOS

Abstract

The aim of the study was to determine psychometric behavior of the Community Resilience Scale (CRS, Ruiz, 2015). in two non-random samples (total n=2500) of university students from three Mexican cities. **Method:** The study was divided into 2 samples: Study 1 is a psychometric approach to determine the internal and factorial reliability of the Community Resilience Scale (CRS) in a sample of n=1007 Mexican university students**.** Study 2, the sample comprised 1525 Mexican students from the same cities and institutions as those in sample 1. **Results:** In the first sample it was found high internal reliability in the scale, with three items being excluded. A factor solution comprising three dimensions was found: coping, humor and creativity, and collective-self-esteem, with suitable adjustment indices, replicated in a confirmatory analysis with the second sample. Moreover, it was found that a) the more victimization events, the lower the levels of community resilience, and b) the greater the collective humor, the lower the inclination to change place of residence and work. **Conclusions:** Results are discussed in relation to previous studies with the CRS and the impact of violence on the social fabric.

Key words: Community resilience, College students, Criminal violence, Communal coping, Humor and creativity, Collective self-esteem.

Resumen

El objetivo del trabajo fue conocer el comportamiento psicométrico de la Escala de Resiliencia Comunitaria (ERC, Ruiz, 2015) en dos muestras no aleatorias (n total=2500) de estudiantes universitarios de tres ciudades mexicanas. **Método:** el estudio se dividió en dos muestras: estudio 1 es una aproximación psicométrica para conocer la fiabilidad interna y factorial de la Escala de Resiliencia Comunitaria (ERC) en una muestra de n=1007 estudiantes universitarios mexicanos. Estudio 2, integrado por una muestra de 1525 estudiantes mexicanos de las mismas ciudades e instituciones de la muestra 1. **Resultados:** Con la primera muestra, se halla una alta fiabilidad interna de la escala, excluyendo tres ítems. Se obtuvo una solución de tres factores -afrontamiento, humor y creatividad, y estima colectivos-, con adecuados índices de ajuste, replicados en un análisis confirmatorio con la segunda muestra. Además, se halló que a) a más sucesos criminales vividos, niveles más bajos de resiliencia comunitaria, y b) a más humor colectivo menos disposición a cambiar de lugar de residencia y trabajo. **Conclusiones:** Los resultados son discutidos con relación a estudios anteriores con la ERC y el impacto de la violencia sobre el tejido social.

Palabras clave: Resiliencia comunitaria, Estudiantes universitarios, Violencia criminal, Afrontamiento comunal, Humor y creatividad, Estima colectiva.

Introduction

Community resilience refers to the health of the community, as a function of multiple, interdependent political, physical, cultural and psychological dynamics (Caye, 2011). In studies focusing more on individual and family resilience, a group, social or community component, which favors the individual processes, tend to be present in one way or another. For example, in a study of a hundred families living in extremely deprived neighborhoods to study paths and chains of life events, Davidson (2008) suggests that individual adaptation processes are supported by both formal and informal social resources. Along the same lines, in their study of the influence of risk factors –normative stress, discrimination and racial problems– and protective factors –racial socialization and social identity– on the educational performance of young African-Americans, Miller and Macintosh (1999) indicate that the main source of socialization and protection from racism is the transmission of values, norms, morals and beliefs in the family and other settings, to succeed in a racist environment. In this case, it is the family that can transmit this set of beliefs and protective values that contribute to individual adjustment in these young people's schools. Social support, which included promoting a sense of belonging to the community and society, and fostering communication with family, friends and peers, was one of the components of a program to promote the resilience of teachers and students in parts of Israel whose schools were attacked by rockets (Shacham, 2015), while other studies designed to identify individual resilience factors have shown the importance of the role of group support. For example, Bailey, Sharma and Jubin (2013) find that social support is one of the main variables with a positive direct and indirect effect on the level of resilience in African American women who had suffered the death of a son as a result of a firearm, measuring this resilience with the CD-RISC. In their recent, interesting study on resilience factors drawn from interviews with former American POWs in Vietnam, crime victims or families with a member with a serious disability or illness, Southwick and Charney (2014) show that several of these factors are based on group support and/or the connection with affordable, effective institutional or health resources. In fact, one of the resilience factors they identify is social support, expressed in the case of the former combatants interviewed in the development of forms of communication between them, despite the restrictions imposed in the POW camps, or the optimism and humor that can be learned from observing models.

Because of its impact on the lives of people and communities, it is worth exploring the components of resilience and its processes (Grotberg, 2001; in Pacheco-Mangas & Palma-García, 2015), particularly community resilience, since it is possible to learn from these factors to create social services that promote and leverage these dynamics of resilience. They could therefore provide individuals, perhaps especially the youngest and most vulnerable, and communities with opportunities to find a way out of a life and an environment perceived as chaotic and hopeless (Pivnick & Villegas, 2000). Appropriate individual leadership (as shown by various experiences of creating services, partnerships, programs, etc.), may be the source of certain community resilience processes, although this does not require its members to be resilient at an individual level (Barrientos, 2003, in Carvalho-Juliano & Mattar-Yunes, 2014), although they may be positively influenced by this resilient environment, bearing out what has been advocated for

decades by the social psychology of the link between the individual and the environment (Páez, 2003).

One of the pioneering proposals for community resilience is put forward by Suárez Ojeda, La Jara and Marques (2007, in Carvalho-Juliano & Mattar-Yunes, 2007; Suárez Ojeda, 2001). Suárez Ojeda considers core elements of community resilience to be solidarity-communion of attitudes and feelings, adherence to common goals-, social humor -the ability to maintain a positive outlook in adversity, making it possible to step back from the situation and to think and make decisions about it, cultural identity-identifying with customs, language, and a sense of belonging-, collective self-esteem, understood as the place where we live and the satisfaction of belonging to a group- and administrative honesty. This proposal coincides at least partly with others that also identify humor (Garret, Parrish, Willians, Grayshield, Agahe-Portmant, Torres Rivera & Maynard, 2014; Southwick & Charney, 2014), solidarity towards disasters that affect communities (Ride & Brethenton, 2011), and the appraisal of one's own cultural elements as components or factors of community resilience in American Indians (Waller and Patterson, 2002. Garret et al, 2014) in young Mexicans with dual cultural heritage (Jackson, Wolven & Aguilera, 2013) or African Americans (Miller & Macintosh, 1999) who cope with discrimination and racism, or Bhutanese refugees in the United States (Chase, 2012).

Suárez-Ojeda's community resilience model (2001) forms the conceptual basis of the Community Resilience Scale (CRS for its acronym in English, although the original scale was developed in the Spanish language and is called Escala de Resiliencia Comunitaria, ERC) (Ruiz, 2015) applied to Colombian university students in ten Colombian cities. A factorial analysis of fourteen of the sixteen items in the CRS yielded two dimensions: communal coping and collective self-esteem. The first was associated -both individually and aggregated by department-, with higher crime rates, especially homicide, extortion, drug-related crimes and illegal possession of weapons, which could be interpreted as the fact that the higher a society's crime rate, the more efforts it makes to address its problems. Conversely, higher crime rates were also associated with lower levels of collective esteem.

The overall objective of the first study in this research project was to determine the psychometric properties of the CRS in samples of a society such as Mexico, which has seen a rise in violent crime rates in recent years (Poiré, undated; Dudley, 2014 Cumplido, 2015; INEGI, 2015). An analysis of the contributing factors to the growth of this violence, although necessary, is beyond the scope of this paper (see Poiré, undated, Cumplido, 2015). However, since it is worth asking how this violence impacts the fabric of Mexican society, specifically community resilience levels in Mexico, this study will analyze the convergent validity of the CRS with criminal victimization indicators. The second study seeks to confirm the factorial structure of the scale obtained in study 1.

Methodology Study 1

Design and sample

Study 1 is a psychometric approach to determine the internal and factorial reliability of the Community Resilience Scale (CRS) in a sample of n=1007 Mexican university students from the cities of Puebla (39.9%), Chihuahua (n=19, 8%) and Guadalajara (40.4%), drawn mainly from the bachelor's degree programs in criminology (22%), psychology (23.5%), law (17.1%), medicine (8.0%) and nursing (7.5%); 68.9% of the respondents were enrolled in the first and second semesters. The average age was 19.7 years (95% CI: 19.5 to 19.83); the majority were women (65.1%) and single (93.3%), obviously related to the youth of the sample members. The majority regarded themselves as middle class (86.4%), followed by those who considered themselves to be lower-class (11.2%) and upper-class (2.4%).

Regarding their willingness to stay or change their place of residence and work, 41.9% came out in favor of remaining in the current place, 14.8% would change to another municipality or state in Mexico and 43.3% would move to another country.

Instruments

As part of a broader study on perceived safety indicators, social fabric and criminal victimization, the following instruments were applied:

-The Community Resilience Scale (Ruiz, 2015) consists of sixteen items with four response options in the Likert format, in each of which respondents show their degree of agreement with each of the claims-items on the scale, from 1 (totally disagree) to 4 (totally agree). Some of the items, regarding the statement on the scale, "In my municipality, the community ..." include No. 3 ("Deals with everyday problems with good humor"), and No. 7 ("Can laugh at their problems and that helps overcome them"). The internal reliability of the scale in the original study was .87.

-List of Criminal Victimization Events (Ruiz & Turcios, 2009): this is a list of sixteen types of criminal victimization. Respondents must indicate whether they have occurred in the six months prior to answering the survey. These crimes were grouped into five categories, on the basis of an analysis of hierarchical classification (Chan, Morales, Ruiz & Vaca, 2017): 1) killings and kidnappings, 2) sexual crimes and harassment, 3) own and family members' road injuries, 4) robbery and persecution and 5) extortion and obscene calls.

-Willingness to change one's place of residence and work: choose one of the following options: "Stay in the same city", "change town or state" or "change country".

-Socio-demographic and academic data: age, sex, socioeconomic class (low, medium, high), degree course and semester enrolled in at the time of answering the survey.

Procedure

The instrument was applied online. The link was sent to students from the three universities covered in the study after the paperwork had been carried out and the respective academic permits had been obtained. The survey entailed first obtaining the subject's agreement (informed consent) to answer the scale.

Data Analysis

The SPSS v.18 program was used to obtain descriptive statistics of the sample in the sociodemographic and educational variables related to the CRS, calculating the Cronbach coefficient to determine its internal reliability. The Factor 10.0.3 program with a parallel analysis of the CRS was calculated together with a factorial analysis of main components, which includes several adjustment indices. Pearson correlations were calculated between CRS dimensions and victimization scores.

Results

The internal reliability of the scale was .88, with items 9, 10 and 11 being recoded (see Table 1, with the homogeneity coefficients for items 9, 10 and 11 in brackets before recoding). The low item-scale correlation for items nine and ten prompted the decision to discard them in subsequent analyses.

Table 1 *Distribution of responses (%) in each item of the CRS, Homogeneity Index and Cronbach's alpha of the scale extracting each item*

ITEM	Totally disagree	Disagree	Agree	Totally agree	IH	α
Item 1	5.4	8.6	35.1	50.8	.557	.874
Item 2	4.0	13.9	39.3	42.6	.611	.871

Item 3	6.9	21.7	49.9	21,5	.484	.877
Item 4	6.1	28.3	43.8	21,8	.622	.871
Item 5	6.8	18.2	46.4	28,6	.566	.873
Item 6	3.9	18.1	53.7	24,4	.635	.871
Item 7	5.6	19.5	47.9	27,1	.619	.871
Item 8	6.72	23.8	45.0	24,5	.620	.871
Item 9	10	34.2	34.7	21,1	.081 (-.104)	.894
Item 10	42.4	36.3	17	4.3	.185 (-.175)	.889
Item 11	13.9	26.2	38.5	21.4	.469 (-.414)	.878
Item 12	8.5	25.4	46.6	19.5	.619	.871
Item 13	3.3	10.6	35.6	50.5	.566	.873
Item 14	4.2	19.2	52.7	23.9	.685	.869
Item 15	5.6	15.2	46.9	32.3	.656	.869
Item 16	4.9	13.8	47.7	33.7	.596	.872

The FACTOR program was subsequently used to undertake a parallel analysis (Lloret-Segura, Ferreres-Traver, Hernández-Baeza & Tomás Marco, 2014), which focuses on the number of factors to be explored, yielding an indication with three factors. The same program was used to conduct an analysis of the principal components and varimax rotation of the CRS items (excluding 9 and 10), having previously obtained satisfactory indices in the KMO and the Barlett sphericity test (see Table 2). This table identifies three fairly clear factors as regards their content, although item 11 has low, similar charges in two factors, as a result of which a new factorial analysis was undertaken, in which item 11 was excluded (see Table 3).

Table 2 *Analysis of Principal Components of Community Resilience Scale*

ITEMS	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
1-You feel proud of the culture you live in: dance, music, theater, art.		.786	
2-You highly value your history and group identity		.796	
3-You are able to deal with everyday problems with a sense of humor.			.618
4-You trust your abilities as a community to resolve your difficulties		.312	.537
5-You are happy to live in your community		.374	.371
6-You have the creativity required to progress despite the chaos and difficulties	.371		.63
7-You can laugh at your problems and that helps you overcome them			.764
8-You act for the collective good rather than the	.412		.419

benefit of a few			
11 You take symbols such as the flag and anthem very seriously.	.351	.309	
12-You think how to solve problems together rather than waiting for them to be solved from the outside	.593	.51	
13- You are proud of the local climate, landscape and natural riches	.363		.334
14-You know how to look for legitimate alternatives to solve your problems	.713		
15-You are able to see what can be improved, rather than blaming others for problems	.796		
16-You realize that other countries provide knowledge that contributes to progress	.654		
Eigenvalue:	6.239	1.258	1.165
% Variance:	44.50%	8.98%	8.32%
Cronbach's alpha:	.763	.779	.723
KMO: .913 Bartlett: 6140.4****, gl:91			

This factorial solution yields clearer factors as regards the content of the items and distinguishes between them. The first refers to *community coping*, which involves the search for solutions at the group level; the second factor identifies *social humor and creativity* as a salient aspect of community resilience, while the third axis is related to collective self-esteem in relation to positively valuing the respondent's history, cultural identity and natural environment where they live.

Table 3 *Principal component analysis of CRS with 13 items*

ITEM	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
1-You feel proud of the culture you live in: dance, music, theater, art.			.995
2-You highly value your history and group identity			.959
3-You are able to deal with everyday problems with a sense of humor.		.758	
4-You trust your abilities as a community to resolve your difficulties		.583	
5-You are happy to live in your community		.323	.315
6-You have the creativity to advance amid the chaos and difficulties		.684	
7-You can laugh at your problems and that helps you overcome them		.919	
8-You act for the collective good, rather than the benefit of a few		.355	

12-You think how to solve problems together rather than waiting for them to be solved from the outside	.605		
13- You are proud of the local climate, landscape and natural riches			.527
14-You know how to look for legitimate alternatives to solve your problems	.754		
15-You are able to recognize what can be improved, rather than blaming others for problems	.951		
16-You realize that other countries provide knowledge that contributes to progress	.732		
Eigenvalue:	6.01	1.221	1.152
% Variance:	46.23%	9.39%	8.86%
Cronbach's alpha:	.88	.856	.876
KMO: .909 Bartlett: 5854.0****, gl:78			

The FACTOR program provides a series of adjustment indices of the factorial model applied through parallel analysis. Table 4 shows these adjustment indices for each of the factorial solutions analyzed (Tables 2 and 3) and one can see that these indices are still fairly acceptable in both solutions. They are better when items 11, as well as 9 and 10 are excluded from the analysis. The internal reliability of the scale when these three items were removed was .90.

Table 4 *Adjustment indices of the CRS*

Number of items in factorial solution	RMSEA	RMSR	CFI	GFI
14 items (items 9 and 10 excluded)	.068	.031	.96	.99
13 items (items 9, 10 and 11 excluded)	.066	.027	.97	.99

p <.001

As a result of these results, the next step was to confirm the three-dimensional structure for which a second study was conducted.

Methodology Study 2

The sample comprised 1525 Mexican students from the same cities and institutions as those in sample 1. The mean age was 19.67 (CI 95% and from 19.55 to 19.79), with 62.5% women, 94.4% single, studying degree courses such as criminology (22.4%), law (18.1%), psychology (25.8%), medicine (6.1%) and nursing (5.8%), enrolled in their first or second semester (68.6% of subjects), the majority of whom describe themselves as middle class (86.1%). There were no significant differences between the samples in study 1 and 2 in any socio-demographic or academic variable, including city of residence, or inclination to stay/move from the current place of residence.

The instrument used was similar to the one in Study 1, limiting the confirmatory factor to the thirteen items retained in the preceding analysis (Table 3). This instrument was also applied online, and once again included the registration of informed consent. The analyses were carried out using the MPlus v. 6 program.

Results

On the basis of the results of Study 1, a three-dimensional model of CRS was proposed, which is reflected in Figure 1 and yields coefficients with suitable coefficients: RMSEA: .077 (IC 90% .074 – .081; CFI: .928; TLI: .922, RMSR: .052, with Chi2: 15.413, p <.0001.

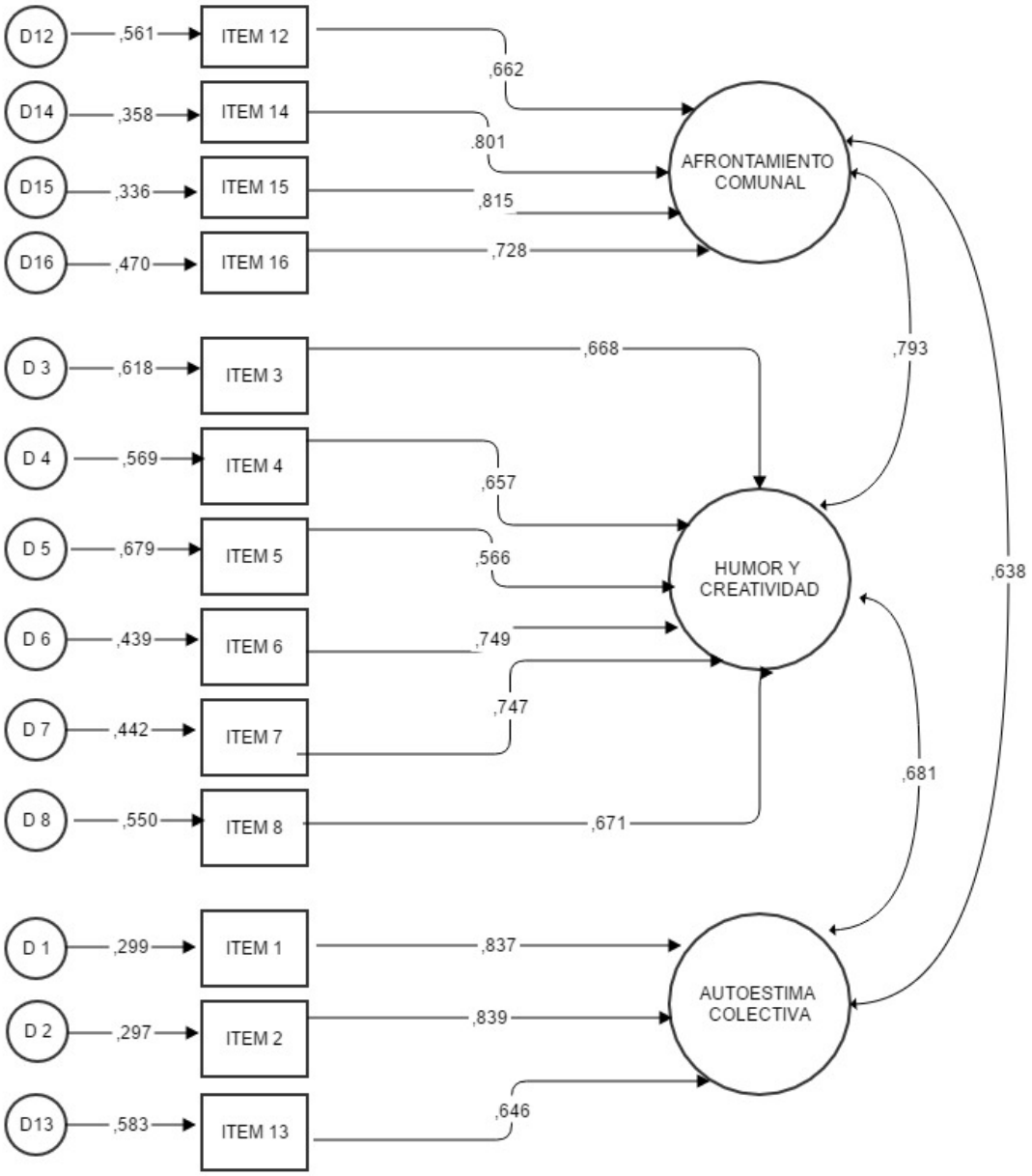

Figure 1 *Confirmatory analysis of the CRS based on a three-dimensional model (Extraction method: maximum probability)*
Note: The concepts in the circles mean in English: Community coping, Social humor and creativity, and Collective self-esteem

Lastly, some scores for each subject were calculated for each factor of community resilience (community coping, humor and creativity and collective self-esteem), combining the samples of the two studies while discarding any items with similar low loads in more than one factor. These scores were correlated by the Pearson coefficient with victimization indicators and the inclination to change or remain in the place of residence and work indicator (see Table 5). The results show that in general, greater experience of crime is associated with perceiving fewer aspects of community resilience in one's environment. Considering the size of the correlation coefficients, the negative impact of crime is higher in the collective self-esteem component. Second, the higher the crime rate, the greater the inclination to change one's place of residence, yet the greater the social humor and collective self-esteem, the less inclination to make these changes (communal coping does not seem to have any link with this willingness). Third, and in keeping with previous factorial results, a high direct correlation was found between the three pillars of community resilience.

Table 5 *Pearson correlations between criminal victimization and community resilience indicators (n> 2450 for all correlations)*

Variables	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1-Violent deaths and kidnapping	.517***	.505***	.357***	.430***	-.069**	-.079***	-.137***	.045*
2-Sexual aggression and harassment	1	.370***	.379***	.391***	-.035+	-.062**	-.094***	.101***
3-Traffic injuries involving self and relatives		1	.380***	.402***	-.041*	-.040*	-.084***	.070***
4 Theft and persecution			1	.387***	-.050*	-.076***	-.085***	.101***
5-Extortion and obscene calls				1	-.017	-.055**	-.067**	.092***
6-Communal coping					1	.581***	.567***	-.016
7-Humor and Creativity						1	-.484***	-.073***
8-Collective memory self-esteem							1	-.050*

9-Willingness to leave one's place of residence	1

* p <.05; ** p <.01; *** p <.001

Discussion and Conclusions

As Carvalho-Juliano and Mattar-Yunes (2007) point out, for decades, Latin American societies have been exposed to major natural disasters and/or socio-political and economic processes of social inequality in the distribution of wealth. According to the OECD (2014), half the Mexico population lives in poverty. Moreover, recent years have seen high crime rates, often involving criminal drug trafficking organizations, which has led to several countries and cities in this part of the world being ranked among those with the greatest violence (Dudley, 2014). However, one must also recognize the important processes of democratization that have recently been experienced by several of these Latin American societies, the reduction of crime rates in some of them and even the dismantling or demobilization of armed groups, as has recently been the case in Colombia.

How can one strengthen or contribute to the resilience of human societies, and the communities that form part of them, to the economic crisis, crime and natural disasters? Perhaps part of the answer lies in deepening knowledge about how the components and processes of the social fabric, such as community resilience, operate. It is therefore necessary to have instruments to measure these components, and within this framework, the psychometric results are presented of a Community Resilience Scale, originally applied in Colombian samples (Ruiz, 2015) and in this study, in samples of Mexican students from three cities.

The scale showed high internal reliability, ranging between 0.88 and 0.90, with all the items or a 13-item proposal, respectively. At the factorial level (Study 1), a three-dimensional structure was initially found and subsequently confirmed (Study 2), which differentiates between community coping - such as the willingness and initiative of the community to seek solutions to their problems-, collective self-esteem -pride in their history and cultural elements- and humor and creativity. The link between humor and creativity confirms the proposal by Suárez Ojeda (2001; Suárez-Ojeda, La Jara & Marques, 2007), that humor makes it possible, both individually and collectively, to take a step back from problems, see them differently and increase the chances of finding solutions or alleviate the situation. In this respect, humor could be linked to the capacity for the cognitive re-evaluation of situations, which is part of the capacities of resilience, according to some authors (Bayley et al, 2013; Southwick & Charney, 2014).

On the other hand, the experiences of criminal victimization are associated with a decrease in the perceived resilience of the community, reflected in lower collective self-esteem and a greater willingness to leave the city where the respondent lives. In this regard, the impact between victimization and collective self-esteem is similar to that found in Colombian students (Ruiz, 2015); however, in the latter, higher crime rates -measured in captures by the police and self-reported victimization- were associated with greater communal coping, in other words, an inverse correlation to that found in the students in the present study. This could be because the Colombian study covered 32 cities with highly variable population sizes, ranging from nearly

13,000 inhabitants in the department of Guainia to more than 7,900,000 in Bogota[*], according to estimates for 2016-which could be related to very different weather conditions, urban infrastructure, modes of production, human development and daily exposure to the violence of the Colombian armed conflict between regions, where communities often had to learn to survive and carry on with their everyday lives despite various adverse circumstances, whereas the respondents in this study come from medium-sized cities, with populations of approximately 878,000 (Chihuahua), 1,500,000 (Puebla) and 4,600,00 (Guadalajara) in 2015[†]. As for the inclination to stay or change one's place of residence associated with lower collective self-esteem, this study confirms one of the psychosocial effects of collective violence and crime, the weakening of the social fabric through residents' displacement to safer places, correlative to a diminished sense of community, as has been found in research on the impact of fear of crime (Skogan & Maxfield, 1981, in Ruiz, 2014).

Another striking feature is the different factorial structure of the scales found among the Colombian data, with two dimensions involving communal coping and collective self-esteem, while the present study reveals a third dimension, namely humor and creativity. This result, together with the psychometric behavior of certain items that have yet to be refined and adjusted, and in relation to the debate on which components, processes and results are essential to community resilience, suggests future research that will permit the development of instruments to measure this type of social constructs, which are conceptually solid, psychometrically robust and socially useful.

Conflict of Interest

The authors of this article declare no conflict of interes

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