“This is a Healing Space”: Cultivating Latinx Immigrant-Origin Youth’s Radical Healing Practices

by

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Dedication

To my nephews: Elijah, Jacob, Gabriel, y Ezequiel.
To my nieces: Bella, Frida, Michelle, Sofia, Dayra, Abby, Cassey, y Emma,
May this work remind you that regardless of the challenges that you face as you grow up that you can do great things through God who strengthens you. May you always be strong and courageous to boldly pursue justice and freedom, and all your dreams.

&

To all young people growing up in the U.S who have experienced marginalization. May this work be an offering of love, and a commitment to walk alongside you in your pursuit of joy, healing, and liberation.

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Abstract

Radical healing is the process of becoming whole in the face of ethno-racial trauma by institutional systems rooted in white supremacy, patriarchy, and xenophobia. Grounded in Radical Healing frameworks and Chicanx Feminist epistemologies, my dissertation develops a holistic learning space that embodies healing for Latinx immigrant-origin youth, who have matriculated through U.S. educational systems and who experience legalized violence. Specifically, my study explores the following two questions: 1) How do Latinx, immigrant origin young people learn about and develop understandings of healing for themselves? And 2) How do Latinx immigrant-origing young people draw on their previous experiences with trauma and healing to co-create a sanctuary space? This community engaged study draws on critical participatory action research with an *EntreMundos* lens. Using photovoice, and pláticas, we interrogate our personal experiences in the U.S. school systems, the trauma experienced, as well as potential sites for healing. Thirteen (13) Latinx immigrant-origin youth between the ages of 18- 24 years old participated as co-researchers in *Unidos en Acción,* a program I developed to better understand the experiences of trauma and healing of Latinx immigrant-origin youth. To address the first research question, four themes were generated to illustrate how co-researchers conceptualized and developed understandings of healing: (1) *Life is Really Worth Living*: *Vulnerable Sharing within the Unidos en Acción (UeA) Sanctuary*; (2) *Interrogating Experiences of Trauma and Creating Counternarratives*; (3) *Drawing on Intergenerational Wisdom and Cultural Healing Practices* and (4) *Healing through Consciousness Raising and Social Action*.

To address the second research question, three themes were developed that elucidate the process of co-creating a sanctuary space: (1) *Promoting Safety through Community Norms, Rituals, and Agency, (2) Nourishing Belonging through Collaboration and Inclusivity,* and *(3) Facilitating Cultural Connections and Identity Exploration through Art, Creativity, and Movement.* Through their engagement in *Unidos en Acción,* Latinx young people participated in the critical analysis of their lived experiences and identified systemic roots of experiences of marginalization. They engaged in embodied cultural practices that nurtured their ethnic-racial identities and connections. Young people also engaged in meaning social action for the betterment and healing of Latinx immigrant communities. Together, the findings from this dissertation provide novel empirical insight on how culturally sustaining and embodied sanctuary spaces can support the radical healing efforts of Latinx immigrant youth.

Chapter I: Introduction

Mi familia, Mis Amigues, y Mi Comunidad

I grew up in an undocumented household in the U.S. in a rural small town in the piedmont region of North Carolina. When I reflect on my experiences growing up in the U.S., the images that are most salient in my mind are those of the wonder that I experienced during the winter of 1999. That snowy December was the first time in my life that I experienced a snowfall and the festivities that come with it. I think about the first time I ate a burger and remember thinking "*que rara torta*.[1]" I think about the church where I grew up singing with my dad as he led the worship band with his guitar and my brother accompanied us playing the base guitar and keyboard at the same time. I remember playing in the church playground with my childhood best friends, Gina, Ivan, and Priscilla. I think about Deyanira, the preacher's wife and my afterschool tutor who helped me learn English so that I wouldn't be held back in the first grade.

Though my family's immigration story contains a lot of uncertainty, fear, pain, and hardship, it would be remiss to portray that as our *only* story. In fact, amid our journey, what is most visible to me in my memories is the joy, passion, resiliency, strength and most importantly, love that I experienced. It is a love so powerful and unconditional that led my parents to brave the uncertainties of immigrating to the United States from México in search of medical treatment for my sister, and greater educational and economic opportunities for our entire family. I think

[1] Translates to "what a weird torta." A torta is a Mexican style sandwich.

about the unimaginable strength my parents embodied in leaving behind not only material possessions, but familial ties. In the case of my *Apa*, this strength empowered him to say goodbye to his mother, *mi abuelita Juanita*, whom we would never see again, since she passed before my parents became legal residents of the United States. For my *mami*, it meant not being able to say goodbye to three of her siblings who also passed before she could return home.

I think about the resiliency of our family as we each faced our own struggles with racism and discrimination; my own personal experiences, beginning with my first-grade teacher screaming in my facing because I did not understand English and couldn't complete the weekly spelling test. Lastly, I think about the community that welcomed my parents, and helped them adjust to life *en el otro lado*. Through it all, *mis padres, mis amigues, y mi communidad* cultivated the audacity needed to jumpstart my journey to becoming a *Doctora*. Thus, when I think of my experiences growing up in an undocumented family in the U.S., I cannot deny that there were moments of hardship and fear, but those were not the only, nor most salient, moments of my family's story. Instead, the most salient moments were moments in which we cultivated joy, love, and healing with our community despite the many interlocking systems of oppression working to destroy our hope, our joy, and our dreams.

Latinx Communities, Trauma, & Healing

My family's story is not unique. Many immigrants from Central and South America and all over the world come to the U.S. searching for a better future. Like my family's story, there are many Latinx, immigrant origin families who manage to find ways to not only survive but to cultivate loving communities and forge new pathways for thriving and healing. They create such communities within the U.S. in spite of the dangers, trauma, and state sanctioned persecution

they have been subjected to. State-sanctioned persecution and trauma is evidenced through racist nativism (Huber et al., 2008) that affects all immigrant communities. Latinx critical race scholars theorized racist nativism to explain anti-immigrant attitudes that are often rampant in mainstream U.S. society (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002; Huber et al., 2008). Huber and colleagues (2008) defined racist nativism as "the assigning of values to real or imagined differences" between white individuals who are perceived as being native to the U.S. and Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) who are perceived to be foreign or non-native to the U.S (Huber et al., 2008). Thus, racist nativism is a tool that enables us to understand the racializaton of BIPOC individuals as "other" and how such racialization creates avenues for Latinx immigrants to be subjected to violence rooted in white superiority. Huber and colleagues also posit that racist nativism particularly affects Black and Brown Latinx individuals who are perceived as being unwilling to assimilate to U.S. culture (Huber et al., 2008). Thus, racist nativism creates pathways for legalized violence and state-sanctioned terrorism to be enacted against immigrant, mixed-documentation, and undocumented communities, as they are perceived as being communities of foreigners who are taking resources from "native" and more deserving U.S.-born individuals (Fleming & Lopez, 2019; Menjívar & Abrego, 2012; Huber et al., 2008).

One of the main ways the U.S. enacts legal violence against Latinx immigrant communities is through highly militarized and violent responses to unauthorized immigrants currently living in the U.S. through immigration enforcement efforts. These agencies are used as legally sanctioned sources of domestic terrorism against immigrant communities. When it comes to immigration from Central and South America, there is an ingrained assumption that immigration to the U.S. is innately criminal. *Crimmigration* is a social phenomenon in which the distinctions between criminal, civil, and immigration law are slowly subsiding (Stumpf,

2006). Crimmigration results in an environment in which documented and undocumented immigrants alike feel perpetually persecuted and are subject to legally sanctioned racial profiling, discrimination, and terrorism carried out by both local and federal law enforcement agencies. Lopez (2019) argues that cooperation between local police and sheriff's departments with immigration enforcement agencies to facilitate ICE raids in immigrant communities further entangles the roles of criminal law with immigration law. Thus, crimmigration and the continued entanglement of criminal and immigration law creates legal violence (Lopez, 2019; Mejívar & Abrego, 2012). Legal violence (Menjívar & Abrego, 2012) refers to how U.S. immigration law has become intertwined with U.S. criminal law, often causing a sense of perpetual persecution within undocumented and mixed-status immigrant communities. Latinx immigrants, particularly Spanish-speaking immigrants from México, Central, and South America of darker skin tones, experience legal violence through the ways that they are mischaracterized to imply criminal tendencies. The increased experiences of racism and discrimination through increased surveillance and racial profiling leads to poorer health outcomes (Becerra et al., 2013; Almeida et al., 2016; Ybarra et al., 2016; Vargas et al., 2017; Brown et al., 2018). Indeed, Menjívar and Abrego (2012) theorized that legal violence not only refers to the physical harm caused to individuals in the enforcement of restrictive immigration laws, but also includes the violence caused by the harmful socioemotional outcomes of living in increased states of anxiety, fear, isolation, and stigmatization that are often associated with undocumented status.

Living in such hostile conditions also threatens the physical wellbeing of Latinx immigrant community members. Extant research indicates that members of Latinx mixed-status communities report higher levels of anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorders, and social isolation as well as greater prevalence of chronic illness such as heart disease,

hypertension, and diabetes (Page-Reeves et al., 2022; Gonzalez-Guarda, et al., 2021). This decline in Latinx health outcomes can be partly attributed to the underutilization of health services by Latinxs caused by structural barriers such as restrictive policies and limited access to culturally responsive health services (Ayón et al., 2020). Furthermore, the possibility of jeopardizing their eligibility for adjusting their legal status can lead to social isolation. Rooted in the fear of interactions with immigration enforcement agencies, this isolation impedes Latinxs usage of health services (Ayón et al., 2020; Lopez, 2024; Vernice et al., 2020). Thus, the violence experienced by Latinx mixed status communities disrupts daily life routines, loving relationship dynamics, and individuals' sense of safety, as well as their mental and physical health.

Experiencing ongoing and persistent violence related to immigration status combined with experiences of ethnoracial discrimination and exclusion results in trauma (van de Kolk, 2014; Menakem, 2017; Forde et al., 2019; Haines, 2019). Yet, understandings of trauma vary across psychological disciplines. Among traditional and more clinical disciplines, trauma is understood as an emotional response to a terrible event (e.g., natural disaster, violence, accident) and the after-effects that follow (e.g., shock, flashbacks, long-term psychosomatic symptoms) (APA, 2023). However, Indigenous and community psychology scholars have been spearheading efforts to expand our understandings of trauma to include more holistic notions of wellbeing (Gone, 2013; Menakem, 2017; Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019; French et al., 2020; Tujague & Ryan, 2021). Thus, more holistic understandings of trauma define it as being our body's attempts to ensure our emotional, physical, and spiritual protection and safety in the face of real or perceived danger (Delauney, 2012; Menakem, 2017; Haines, 2019).

In his book, *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized trauma and the pathway to mending our hearts and bodies*, Resmaa Menaken (2017), challenges perceptions of trauma as a singular event that elicits an emotional response. Specifically, he writes, "contrary to what many people believe, trauma is not a primarily emotional response…It is a spontaneous protective mechanism used by the body to stop or thwart further (or future) potential damage" (Menakem, 2017, p.7). He then elaborates that trauma is not a "flaw or weakness" but rather a highly useful tool whose sole purpose is to ensure our survival by alerting us to potentially dangerous situations or events (Menakem, 2017, p.7). When the brain sends signals to the body to alert it to potential danger, our brain attempts to make sense of the sensory information that it receives. Carrion and Wong (2012) explain that when the brain senses danger, a neurobiological stress response activates to release cortisol, thus triggering our fight or flight responses. Once the fight or flight response is triggered, our body begins to process and metabolize stress hormones (Carrion & Wong, 2012; Menakem 2017). To metabolize stress hormones, the central nervous system attempts to break the cortisol released so that it can be absorbed by the body. The brain and body work together to metabolize stress hormones to ensure a return to a state of safety and balance, or homeostasis (Haines, 2019; Van der Kolk, 2014). However, Menakem (2017) also clarifies that trauma becomes a less effective strategy of survival when we are unable to fully metabolize and release trauma and stress hormones from our bodies. When individuals are unable to process trauma, it becomes "stuck" within our nervous systems, causing our brains to become unable to distinguish actual danger from perceived danger (Haines, 2019; Menakem, 2017; van der Kolk, 2014).

For my dissertation, I draw on definitions of trauma as being a *protective* response within our bodies to actual and potential danger, and whose effects can become maladaptive if not released from the body (Haines, 2019; Menakem, 2017; van der Kolk, 2014). This understanding

of trauma allows me to make connections between racist nativism, crimmigration, and legal violence, to the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wounds existing within Latinx immigrant communities. In doing so, we can understand mental health (anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorders, and social isolation, etc.) and physical health (chronic illness such as heart disease, hypertension, and diabetes, etc.) concerns as symptoms of unprocessed trauma caused by the ongoing and seemingly inescapable persecution of Latinx immigrant individuals and communities. The longer that Latinx immigrant individuals and communities experience legalized forms of oppression and marginalization, the greater the experiences of trauma that become trapped, so to speak, within the bodies of Latinx individuals and communities.

Schools as Sites of Trauma

Yet, Latinx youth are not only experiencing institutionalized trauma within the context of mixed status, immigrant communities. They also experience trauma within the context of their education and schooling. Indeed, formal systems of schooling and education have historically served as sites of trauma and death for all students of color. Dumas (2019) contends that "schooling is *not merely* a site of suffering, but it is the suffering that we have been the least willing or able to acknowledge" (Dumas, 2019, p.2). Furthermore, Dumas also argues that when schools are acknowledged as being sites of trauma and suffering, we often glaze over the severity of the harm caused by schooling-related atrocities, particularly those committed against communities of color. Indigenous boarding schools, for example, were initially used as a modern genocidal practice aimed at disrupting the communities and bloodline of Indigenous peoples (Schickler 2021; Stanley, 2021). Similarly, Black communities were systemically denied access to education and schooling, and had less access to educational resources for learning materials.

Once desegregation efforts began, Black students were removed from their communities and bussed to often violent and dangerous white school districts (McPhearson, 2011; Dumas 2013; Brown, 2016). Though the goal of desegregation efforts was to ameliorate Black–white achievement gaps as well as creating more favorable intergroup attitudes, desegregation resulted in the continued discrimination and increased exposure to racism of Black students by their white peers and teachers (Reber, 2010).

For Latinx students specifically, schools continue to be sites of trauma that expose students to the carceral crimmigration systems, encourage students to forego their linguistic ties, and dismiss cultural knowledge that they bring into classrooms with them (e.g.,Valenzuela, 1999). Indeed, Sánchez and colleagues (2019) indicate that cultural ways of knowing and transmitting knowledge, such as heritage language use, are often stripped from students to continue the subjugation, exploitation, and domination of racialized student groups. For many Latinx immigrant, and immigrant-origin youth from mixed documentation status communities, schooling spaces therefore often serve as institutions that perpetuate legalized violence and trauma. Trauma often manifests because of experiences of ethnoracial violence perpetuated by peers, teachers, and school administrators against Latinx immigrant origin students (Galindo, 2021; Mellom et al, 2018; Starck et al., 2020). For example, in 2016, a group of seventh grade students at a middle school in Royal Oak, Michigan were filmed chanting “build a wall” in the lunchroom the day after the presidential election results were determined (Larimer, 2016). Similarly, in 2018, a group of elementary teachers from Middleton, Idaho made headlines for dressing up as the “Border Wall” and Mexican stereotypes (Mervosh, 2018). In both cases, Latinx students attending these schools reported feeling afraid and othered. Thus, Latinx students must learn how to navigate and heal from the trauma they experience within current school

systems as well as the state-sanctioned violence and persecution they experience in their communities.

Embodied Healing Practices as a Holistic Response to Trauma

Given that trauma is a process that physiologically manifests in the body (Menakem 2018; van der Kolk, 2014), approaches to healing and metabolizing trauma must also be attentive to the body. Additionally, trauma is experienced both individually and collectively–living within our bodies causing physical, emotional, and spiritual harm to all experiencing direct and indirect forms of legalized violence and crimmigration. As a response, Indigenous psychology scholars highlight the importance of using culturally rooted and systems-oriented approaches to facilitate healing from historical, generational, and collective trauma in holistic ways (Gone, 2013; Delauney, 2013; Tajugague & Ryan, 2021). To experience holistic healing, it is important to draw from individual and communal ***embodied healing practices*.** Embodied healing practices refer to culturally rooted, Indigenous practices that emphasize the importance of nurturing the connections between the brain, the body, and the spirit (i.e. pedagogies of *bodymindspirit;* Anzaldúa 2002; Lara, 2002). Comas-Díaz (2007) describes *spirit* as being "personal, ancestral, ecological, natural, divine, and/or cosmic entities" (p. 104). Indigenous healing processes center "calling back the spirit" (p.104) to remind individuals who have experienced trauma of their ethnic-racial, cultural, historical, and spiritual roots to reconnect to hope and become whole again (Comas-Diaz, 2007). Given that "calling back the spirit" is a process that people can engage in whenever they feel their bond to their ethnic-racial and cultural ties ruptured, engaging in embodied healing practices to heal from ethnic-racial trauma can be understood as a continuous and ongoing process rather than as a linear pathway for becoming "healed".

Embodied healing practices rooted in Indigenous ways of being include participating in healing circles, meditation, herbal cleanses, and labyrinth walks, for instance (Comas-Díaz, 2007). For Latinx young people, reconnecting with culturally rooted healing practices can involve participating in important cultural traditions such as *Dia de Muertos* to help process grief, or engaging in the sharing of *dichos* and *refranes* to invoke oral wisdoms that have been passed down through generations (eg., Detroit Institute of Arts Museum's - Dia de Muertos Exhibit). Students who experience embodied healing practices can learn to disrupt cycles of trauma and instead experience freedom from the unique forms of violence associated with being from undocumented or mixed status communities, and more research is needed to identify best practices and empirically tested strategies that encourage Latinx youth to heal holistically and flourish emotionally, physically, spiritually, and civically.

Considering Latinx students are the fastest-growing student population in U.S. schools, (Patten, 2015; Census Bureau 2023; Najarro 2023), there is an urgent need to transform formal (i.e. schools) and informal (i.e. community spaces) learning spaces into what are known as ***sanctuary spaces***. Sanctuary spaces are equitable, safe, and hopeful learning spaces in which Latinx youth can effectively metabolize the physiological aspects of trauma in their bodies, re/connect with important cultural traditions, find rest and reprieve from ongoing persecution, cultivate fun, joy and creativity, and join ongoing efforts to disrupt systems of oppression (Ginwright & Camarota, 2002; French et al., 2020; Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2021). In this dissertation, I conceptualize sanctuary spaces to include embodied healing practices.

Statement of the Problem – Why does healing matter?

Latinx youth growing up in immigrant-origin, mixed status communities are dealing with compounded experiences of trauma (Barajas-Gonzales et al., 2021; Rubio-Hernandez & Ayón, 2016). Anti-immigrant sentiment has led to the implementation of discriminatory policies and laws that legalize the racial profiling and persecution of Latinx individuals and community members (Abrego & Lakhani, 2015; Ayón & Becerra, 2013; Menjívar & Abrego, 2012). Within school settings, Latinx youth are experiencing interpersonal violence rooted in white supremacy, racism, and xenophobia (Mancini, 2020). The combination of experiences of discrimination and persecution related to their ethnic-racial backgrounds and immigration status creates social environments (i.e. schools, community) that are perpetually unsafe for Latinx individuals. The continuous exposure to hostile sociopolitical conditions affects the socioemotional and physical wellbeing of Latinx individuals. Thus, there is a higher prevalence of mental and emotional health issues, such as heightened anxiety, depression, and social isolation, within members of Latinx immigrant communities (Ornelas et al., 2020; Rabin et al., 2022). There is also documented evidence of the declining physical health of Latinx individuals over time (Santacrose et al., 2021; Page-Reeves et al., 2022). Thus, Latinx youth experiencing violence within their schools and communities are having unique experiences of ethnoracial trauma that has important implications for their holistic wellbeing.

Accordingly, it is important to explore the ways that Latinx individuals can heal physically, emotionally, and spiritually from their experiences of ethnoracial trauma. However, there is a dearth of research on the ways in which Latinx individuals can experience holistic healing that is attentive to cultural roots as well as systems of oppression. Additionally, though sanctuary spaces have been integral to the immigrant rights movement (Hamilton et al., 2022; Santacrose et al., 2021), there is less known about how sanctuary spaces can contribute to the

healing process for Latinx youth. Accounting for unique ways that Latinx youth experience trauma, while exploring culturally-rooted ways of practicing healing (e.g., embodied healing practices) contributes to a more robust understanding of how radical healing operates across different contexts. Furthermore, there are many theoretical conceptualizations of what healing is and can look like (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019; French et al., 2020; Ginwright & Camarota, 2002; Ginwright & James, 2002), however, few empirical research transfer theoretical conceptualizations of healing into practical applications of how healing manifests in day-to-day experiences. Thus, my goal for this dissertation is to conceptualize what healing is and what it can look like in tangible, empirical, and evidenced-based ways, and to do so alongside Latinx youth in the context of sanctuary spaces.

Significance of this Research

Given the harmful impacts of experiencing perpetual trauma for Latinx young people, and, conversely, the healing potential within sanctuary spaces, it is imperative that scholars and practitioners alike learn to create culturally sustaining and sacred learning environments, such as spaces that integrate embodied healing practices. My dissertation project aims to respond to current shifts within the fields of education and psychology calling for trauma-informed, healing-centered, and culturally sustaining engagement to address wellbeing more holistically. This project is both timely and innovative as it sheds light on underexplored aspects of educational systems, namely identifying the characteristics, experiences, and practices of healing spaces in education (i.e. embodied healing practices in constructive sanctuary spaces). Additionally, I highlight how trauma may inf0rm mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing of Latinx immigrant individuals who have experienced trauma. My research builds on current definitions

of trauma in schooling by focusing on its holistic, systemic and ecological effects, and operationalizes how trauma manifests as physical, emotional, and spiritual wounds in needs of collective healing that can be addressed in sanctuary spaces.

By taking an interdisciplinary approach, my research weaves together different bodies of literature that are not often in conversation with one another. Therefore, I attempt to bridge these bodies of literature from a community-oriented and assets-based perspective. Moreover, this project also uplifts non-traditional and embodied notions of education and healing, with a particular emphasis on family, community, and cultural strengths. By drawing on participatory action research methodologies (e.g. photovoice), this research also challenges and disrupts deficit and traditional understandings of who knowledge creators are. In this research, I intentionally center Latinx immigrant youth as the experts of their own experiences, using culturally sustaining methods (i.e. pláticas) to elevate and elucidate their expertise in the research process. Latinx youth are a rapidly growing population who are often excluded from mainstream research on youth development or whose theorizing is often conducted from white supremacist, deficit perspectives (e.g. Bañales et al., 2023) Moreover, as one ultimate goal of photovoice methodology is to address societal ills, this research has the potential to inform policy and practice while simultaneously addressing important gaps in the fields of education and psychology, and offer ways to disrupt narratives rooted in crimmigration and systemic racism.

Brief Overview of Guiding Frameworks

To better understand how Latinx communities engage in embodied healing processes, I draw on two interrelated radical healing frameworks. Radical healing refers to the process of restoring marginalized individuals to well-being by "building hope, optimism, and vision to

create justice in the midst of oppression" (Ginwritght, 2010, p.9). The first framework I draw on is the Social Justice Youth Development (SJYD) framework (Ginwrght & Camarota,2002). SJYD theorized radical healing as the process through which individuals become whole in the face systemic and structural oppression and marginalization. SJYD is particularly attentive to the social contexts in which youth develop that enable them to build their awareness of the often hidden and politicized systems that shape individuals' day to day experiences (often referred to as critical consciousness). Ginwright and Camarota (2002) posit that to experience radical healing, young people need access to spaces in which they can safely engage in the exploration of their identities, connecting to heritage roots and traditions. Ginwright and Camarota (2002) explain that as youth engage in ethnic-racial identity exploration as well as critical consciousness development, they do not only learn about their own experiences of marginalization but also those of others, ultimately prompting them to want to engage in social action to transform marginalizing social conditions for all communities. Thus, according to Ginwright and Camarota (2002) healing happens when youth who have developed their critical consciousness and ethnic-racial identity cultivate their capacity to engage in collective social justice action. The goal of engaging in social justice action is to facilitate healing and liberation not only for one's own group, but for every community of color that experiences oppression and marginalization.

The second framework that theorizes radical healing is the Healing Ethno and Racial Trauma (HEART; Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019). Chavez-Dueñas and colleagues proposed this framework to explain what healing can look like specifically for Latinx immigrant origin communities. The HEART framework theorizes that healing is a cycle that manifests through four different yet important phases: 1) establishing sanctuary spaces; 2) acknowledging, reprocessing, and coping with trauma; 3) strengthening and connecting to survival strategies and

cultural traditions that are healing; and 4) liberation and resistance. Chavez-Dueñas and colleagues (2019) also paid particular care to situate individuals' experiences of trauma and marginalization within the context of larger systemic and sociopolitical structures that contribute to oppression. Drawing from liberation and Indigenous psychology, Chavez-Dueñas and colleagues (2019) posit that Latinx immigrant-origin individuals can experience healing from ethnoracial trauma. To experience this healing, HEART theorizes that individuals must have a systems-oriented understanding of oppression and marginalization. This understanding propels individuals to join in collective social justice efforts for the liberation of all people.

Dissertation Aims and Research Questions

This dissertation sought to elucidate how Latinx immigrant-origin youth learn to protect one another, experience and embody the radical healing process, and leverage their embodied knowledge to envision liberated futures and enact positive change within their communities. Operating from an ethos of communal liberation and community care, Latinx young adults were invited to interrogate their in-school and out of school learning experiences as well as their experiences belonging to mixed-status communities. Specifically, this project aimed to reveal how learning spaces might be co-created and shaped into sanctuary spaces that involve embodied healing practices (i.e., containers of love and care) (Cariaga 2018; Hannegan-Martinez, 2019). Together, we identified the experiences that encourage healing, versus those that exacerbate systemic trauma. As a whole, this project aimed to consider the ways in which Latinx young people who have matriculated through U.S. education system (1) begin the journey to heal from ethnic racial and immigration-related trauma; (2) draw on important cultural assets and traditions

to facilitate their healing journey; and (3) cultivate sanctuary spaces within learning and community systems to support their healing. The questions guiding this research are as follows:

Overarching Research question: How do Latinx immigrant-origin communities experience healing from ethnoracial trauma?

Research Question 1: How do Latinx, immigrant-origin young people learn about healing, develop their own understandings, and conceptualize healing for themselves?

Research Question 2: How do youth's previous experiences and understanding of ethno-racial trauma and healing inform how they co-construct a sanctuary space?

Organization of this Dissertation

This dissertation is organized as a traditional dissertation. Chapter 1focuses on the background, the statement of the problem, research questions and dissertation aims. Chapter 2 focuses on empirical literature regarding the three main concepts of focus for this dissertation: crimigration and education-related trauma, embodied healing practices as positive features of sanctuary spaces, and healing in community. First, I discuss the ways that Latinx immigration has been systematically criminalized over time. This systemic criminalization underlying trauma in the minds, bodies, and spirits of Latinx individuals and communities. The effects of experiencing such traumas can be felt across multiple social contexts. Next, I discuss the potential for healing existing within Latinx communities through the creation of sanctuary and fugitive spaces, the importance of nourishing the *BodyMindSpirit* connection, and the need for healing approaches to be embodied and trauma informed. Lastly, I discuss the histories of resistance among Latinx communities, the importance of moving in community, and the ways in which engaging in social action efforts can facilitate the embodied healing process. Chapter 3 provides details of the study design, the nature of my community partnerships that facilitated this work, the context for this study, research collaborators, and how I managed and analyzed my

data. Chapter 4 presents the findings corresponding to each of my research questions. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the findings, implications, and future directions of work in this area.

Chapter II: Literature Review

In this chapter, I discuss the theoretical frameworks guiding this research, the political nature of trauma, as well as the politicized nature of experiencing healing. First I discuss social justice youth development theory (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002) and the healing ethno and racial trauma framework (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019). Both are related, yet different approaches to theorizing radical healing. This discussion is followed by a review of current literature on the systemic roots of trauma for members of marginalized communities, and how these systems of oppression and trauma permeate across social contexts, including legal, educational, and community contexts. Next, I review the healing literature with particular attention to how healing and activism can serve as a response to Crimmigration and legal violence. This chapter concludes with a summary paragraph restating the research questions driving this research.

Theoretical Frameworks

Social justice youth development (SJYD) (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002) locates young people as agents of social change, capable of challenging the oppressive structures that shape their experiences. In doing so, Ginwright and Cammarota expanded accepted understandings of youth development to include and acknowledge the role of systems in shaping youth's social contexts. By positioning youth as active agents of social change, they uplift youth's capacity to respond to societal issues affecting their communities. Furthermore, SJYD recognizes youth's potential to heal from socioemotional and ethno-racial trauma through the integrations of youth's critical consciousness and engagement in social action. More specifically, SJYD incorporates

Freirean approaches to critical consciousness, or *conscientizaçao,* the awareness that the social conditions that affect and shape daily experiences are not static (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002). Ginwright and Cammarota argue that developing this awareness is a necessary first step towards engaging in efforts to change oppressive social systems. The more the people engage in resistance efforts, the greater their understanding of oppressive systems. As such, one key aspect of SJYD is that critical consciousness and social action *must* go together. Engaging in social action to change oppressive conditions that shape individual's lived experiences leads to a sense of agency to transform those same social conditions affecting one's quality of life.

SJYD also draws from Freire's notion of praxis, which involves reflecting on the conditions that shape lived experiences and engaging in action to transform society (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002). Ginwright and Cammarota claim that youth's engagement in praxis expands their levels of awareness and understanding of their own experiences with marginalization and privilege. Praxis is key to SJYD because it provides practical avenues for youth to better understand the underlying systems of oppression that facilitate social inequities and marginalization. The expansion of their understanding makes it possible for youth to make connections between their own experiences and the experiences of other marginalized groups. This thereby sets the stage for coalition and solidarity building across groups through gradual development of youth's awareness. Each level of awareness expands youth's understanding of the underlying causes of injustice and encourages youth to take action to transform their environment. Moreover, as youth act to transform their environments, they themselves also undergo personal transformation, increasing their level of critical analysis and reflection. Depicted in Table 1 are the three levels of awareness outlined in the SJYD framework that youth

must reach as they engage in praxis. Each level highlights the interplay of critical consciousness and social action as well as the corresponding social justice outcome goals for each.

Table 1: Critical Consciousness and Youth Outcomes for Social Justice

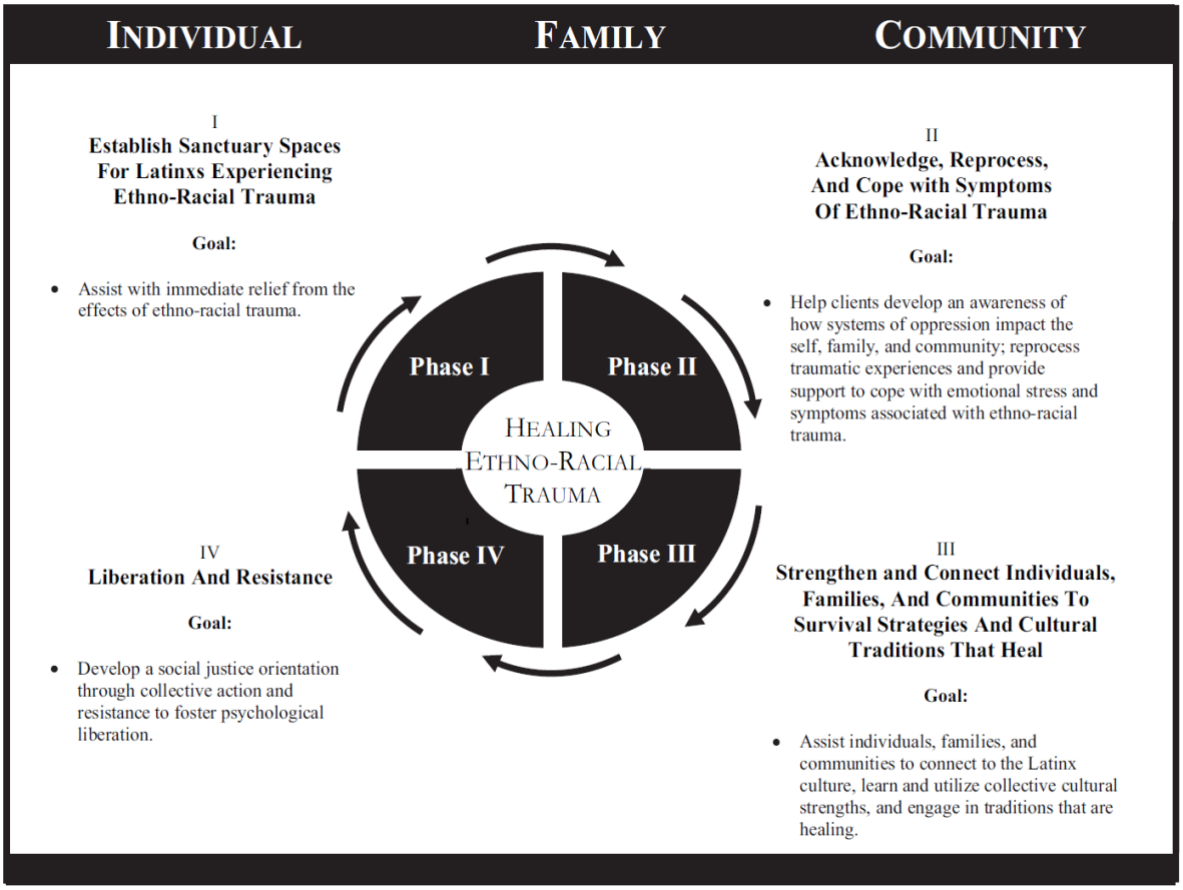
Awareness Level: Self
Forms of Action: Critique of stereotypes; active engagement in identity development. **Community/Social Outcomes:** Political awareness and actively engaged citizens; general emotional, spiritual, psychological wellness. **Youth Social Justice Outcomes:** Pride of ethnic physical features; positive self-regard, racial, and ethnic esteem. Empowerment and positive orientation toward life circumstances and events.
Awareness Level: Social
Forms of Action: Community organizing; political education; youth exercising power in community institutions. **Community/Social Outcomes:** Equitable institutional practices; innovative solutions to community and social problems. **Youth Social Justice Outcomes:** Social problematizing, critical thinking, asking and answering questions related to their social environment. Capacity to change personal, community, and social conditions. Feeling of being a part of something meaningful and productive.
Awareness Level: Global
Forms of Action: Connection to others' struggles. **Community/Social Outcomes:** Safe and healthy community; social well-being. **Youth Social Justice Outcomes**: Sense of life purpose, empathy with the suffering of others, optimism about social change.

Healing is an important outcome of SJYD, which is defined as "the process of fostering emotional, spiritual, psychological, and physical wellness" (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002, p. 92). According to SJYD, healing happens when youth have a strong and clear understanding of their ethnic-racial identity, are able to question the social conditions that affect their lived experiences, and make connections about their group's experiences of marginalization to that of other marginalized groups. Furthermore, Ginwright and Cammarota (2002) also emphasize the importance of social spaces to facilitate youth's healing processes. Creating spaces in which

youth feel free to be their authentic selves and express vulnerabilities makes way for youth to build strong socioemotional ties with one another, grow together, and develop a sense of purpose (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002).

The second theoretical framework undergirding this dissertation is the Healing Ethno-Racial Trauma (HEART; Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019) framework. HEART is grounded in the principles of liberation psychology specifically for Latinx immigrant population. It elucidates important and practical mechanisms for healing within Latinx immigrant and mixed-status communities. HEART acknowledges the need for healing to happen at both the internal and external levels, by focusing on individual and collective health as well as systems of oppression. HEART considers the healing needs of individuals, families, and communities (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019) and incorporates African and Indigenous cultures and beliefs, which "represents an approach to healing…that centers on cultivating and promoting self-determination which fosters hope and resistance" (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019, p. 55.). HEART consists of four different phases, stemming from theories of trauma-informed care and liberation psychology: 1) establishing sanctuary spaces for Latinxs experiencing ethno-racial trauma; 2) acknowledging, reprocessing, and coping with symptoms of ethno-racial trauma; 3) strengthening and connecting individuals, families, and communities to survival strategies and cultural traditions that heal; 4) liberation and resistance (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019). Figure 1 outlines the four phases of HEART as well as the overarching goal for healing associated with each phase.

Figure 1. HEART Framework



The creation of safe or *sanctuary spaces* is the first phase of HEART. Chavez-Dueñas and colleagues (2019) argue that for Latinx immigrant communities to heal from systemic oppression and legal violence, they must have access to physically and emotionally safe spaces. Given the sociopolitical persecution that Latinx immigrant communities face, the establishment of sanctuary spaces may not be entirely feasible due to the ever-present threat of detainment and deportation. However, Chavez-Dueñas and colleagues (2019) believe that providers and organizations can create environments that are welcoming and affirming of the Latinx immigrant

experience, even if it is only for short periods of time. Sanctuary spaces provide a necessary, albeit temporary, reprieve from ethno-racial trauma and sociopolitical persecution as they operate as conduits for solidarity and empowerment for Latinx youth and communities. As such, the goal for sanctuary spaces is to meet the immediate and most pressing needs of individuals experiencing trauma (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019).

Phase two of HEART involves acknowledgement, reprocessing, and coping with the symptoms of ethno-racial trauma. Drawing again on Freirean concepts of *conscientizaçao*, HEART phase two encourages individuals to situate their marginalization within the context of oppressive systems. This contextualization allows people to shift their attitudes away from self-blame for their current oppressive social conditions. Instead, this development of critical consciousness allows for individuals to engage in critical reflection of their social conditions, such that they can transform their understanding of marginalization as a systemic issue rather than a pathologized, individual issue. Thus, the goal of HEART phase two is for community members to develop an awareness of how systemic oppression affects the daily lived experiences of individuals, families, and communities (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019), motivating individuals to engage in collective action towards liberation.

HEART phase three focuses on the development of healthy ethnic-racial identities, the strengthening of cultural bonds, and drawing on ancestral strength and cultural traditions for resisting oppression. In fact, Chavez-Dueñas and colleagues (2019) highlight seven psychological strengths that have been found in Latinx populations, which include determination, esperanza, adaptability, strong work ethic, connectedness to others, collective emotional expression, and resistance (Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017, p. 29, as cited in Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019). These psychological strengths are used to emphasize the spirit of

resistance alive within Latinx communities, given that these strengths were able to flourish despite the oppressive and traumatizing social conditions affecting them.

The final phase of HEART is rooted in liberation and resistance efforts to enact social justice change within Latinx immigrant communities. Using a liberation psychology framework, Chavez-Dueñas and colleagues (2019) theorize that healing happens when individuals develop a better understanding of systemic oppression and engage in action to resist oppression and enact societal change. Through the engagement of individuals and communities in collective social action, the goal for the final phase of HEART is for members of Latinx immigrant communities to develop social justice orientations that foster liberation.

Both SJYD and HEART frameworks theorize how individuals can experience healing from ethno-racial trauma. In developing the awareness of the hidden systems that uphold white supremacy and contribute to the marginalization of communities of color, individuals can take action to transform their realities. Taking actions provides individuals with a sense of efficacy to change not only their own circumstances, but also transform the oppressive circumstances affecting other marginalized groups (Ginwright and Camarota, 2002; Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019). However, one important aspect that is present in the HEART framework, but missing from SJYD, is the emphasis on drawing on cultural connections and ancestral practices of healing and resistance. Drawing on cultural connections and ancestral practices is a key part of the frameworks informing this dissertation, as I am proposing a project rooted in cultural strengths. Thus, HEART expands on Ginwright and Camarota's understandings of radical healing as HEART's focus on cultural strengths, traditions, and practices goes beyond rejecting ethnic-racial stereotypes and cultivating ethno-racial pride. For this project, community collaborators had the opportunity to critically interrogate their experiences of marginalization as

resulting from unjust social systems. Conversely, also reflected on the ways that family and community members nurtured a sense of pride, community, and safety by engaging in cultural practices and traditions. This was accomplished using photographs and narratives during the photovoice sessions. Through pláticas, narratives, and photographing their experiences, community co-researchers had opportunities to engage in social justice action, an important component of healing that is also highlighted in both frameworks. As we collectively moved through a process of learning alongside one another and determining a focus for the "action" component of Critical PAR, trusting relationships were formed. As I am conceptualized community partners are the experts of their experiences, I centered their expertise to determine the specific critical social justice actions with which we engaged in. Within the sanctuary space that we co-created as a research collaborative composed of myself, community partners, and community research collaborators, we were also able to engage in activities meant to provide opportunities for fun, rest, creativity, and cultural connections, thereby engaging in the radical healing process.

Part 1: Trauma as Political – Permeating Legal, Educational, and Community Spaces

(Re)Imagining How Trauma Operates

Understanding what healing looks like for Latinx communities experiencing ethno-racial trauma requires us to (re)imagine what trauma is and how it operates outside of traditional understandings of trauma. In psychology, trauma is typically categorized within three subcategories–acute, chronic, and complex (Feriante & Sharma, 2023). Acute trauma which results from a single incident, whereas chronic trauma can be understood as resulting from exposure to repeated and prolonged incidents, an example being experiencing domestic violence

(Feriante & Sharma, 2023). Complex trauma refers to trauma that is multilayered, persistent, and inescapable (Danylchuk & Connors, 2023).

Operating from these definitions, prior research emphasizes the links between short and long-term trauma and physical health detriments (Andrade et al., 2021; Bird et al., 2021; Gone et al., 2019). Specifically, health researchers argue that individuals who have more exposure to traumatic experiences throughout their lifetime have chronic illnesses that affect the cardiovascular, metabolic, endocrine, and respiratory systems in the body (Sumner et al., 2023; Schurr, 2022). Indeed, individuals with higher exposure to traumatic events in childhood are more likely to develop a serious chronic illness later in life (Schnurr, 2022). Additionally, greater experiences of trauma were highly associated with cardiovascular heart disease, leading to premature aging and death in such individuals (Sumner et al., 2023). These health patterns mirror research on health disparities amongst marginalized communities that have resulted from U.S. colonialism and imperialism. Indeed, Black, Latinx, and Indigenous communities in the U.S. have had the worst health outcomes, access to health resources, and lower service usage due to racism, discrimination, and white supremacy embedded within healthcare systems (Hammonds & Reverby, 2019; Churchwell et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the racialized nature of health disparities within the U.S., given that the communities that were most affected, had the highest death tolls, and the least vaccinated populations were Black, Indigenous, and Latinx communities (Mein 2020; Mackey et al., 2021; Williams et al., 2022).

Although this research is necessary to understand how trauma has a very pronounced effect on physical wellbeing, it is limited by a framing that view physical effects of trauma as being separated from its mental and emotional effects. Indeed, recent work on intergenerational trauma indicates that it can be transferred from parents to children across multiple generations

through genetic and biological embedding of its secuelae as well as through modeled behaviors (Zhou & Ryan, 2023).

Prior to understanding how youth can experience individual and collective healing from trauma, we need to understand how trauma comes to be, its physiological implications,, and how it may be processed in their body (i.e. how trauma is embodied). When inidividuals experience trauma, their bodily senses internalize these experiences to make sense of and navigate new potential dangers. Trauma resulting from experiences that violate our need for safety, belonging, and dignity can manifest in harmful ways of coping that lead to spiritual, emotional, and physical isolation (Haines, 2019; Menakem 2017).

Trauma is Political

Rooted in white supremacist and settler colonialist ideals, the United States has a history of denying, silencing, and disregarding the state sanctioned trauma that is executed against communities of color. Arline Geronimus (1992) put forth the "Weathering Hypothesis" to explain how an individual's social conditions can affect their livelihoods as well as their physical, emotional, and spiritual health. The constant exposure to incessant hostility created by the U.S. government's policing institutions are examples of how "weathering wears our bodies down, like the weather wears down the side of a cliff" (Benjamin, 2022,). The murdering of Black people by the police (Graham et al., 2020; Gunawan et al., 2023), the practice of separating families and kidnapping of children (Bhatnagar, 2019), increasing militarization of police enforcement efforts within communities of color (Farmer et al, 2019), and modern genocidal practices against Black, Indigenous, and Latinx communities through forced sterilization (Guitiérrez et al, 2009; Schickler et al., 2021) are all insidious examples of how all

etnoracialtrauma ***is*** state-sanctioned (Hannegan-Martinez, 2023). Additionally, U.S. institutions often deny that this trauma is real, and when it does acknowledge it, it constantly tries to police the ways in which communities respond to trauma. Moreover, institutional actors also often appropriate and distort narratives of trauma to place the blame on individual or ethnic-racial shortcomings, rather than recognizing the deep-rooted racist and systemic nature of the trauma experienced by communities of color in the U.S (Haines, 2019; Menakem, 2017; Ruffin, 2021).

Individual trauma that is experienced by many members of the same ethnic-racial groups, becomes collective trauma (Haines 2019). Lopez (2011) describes collective trauma as being trauma that manifests when an "emotional and psychological injury is suffered by a community" (p.301). She further argues that the resulting trauma directly affects the daily experiences and has the potential of rupturing trusting relationships and interactions at both the individual and collective level (Lopez, 2011). Experiencing collective trauma for prolonged periods of time may change our physiology and is potentially passed down from one generation to the next (Haines, 2019; Menaken, 2017; Van der Kolk, 2014). Thus, collective trauma becomes generational and historical trauma (Haines 2019; Menaken 2017; Lopez, 2011). When individual, collective, generational, and historical traumas intersect due to multiple experiences of marginalization that exacerbate them, such intersecting trauma becomes complex trauma. As such, when the conditions that facilitate the experiences of all types of trauma by individuals and larger communitiy, are socially constructed to uphold the status quo and inequitable and unjust power differentials within society, individual trauma becomes systemic trauma (Haines, 2019; Menaken 2017). Therefore, trauma is a political and systemic experience given that individual, collective, historical, systemic, and complex trauma are all sustained by socially constructed policies, norms, and statutes whose purpose is the continued subjugation of non-white communities. For

Latinxs, and immigrant origin Latinx communities specifically, the political nature of trauma is evidenced in multiple ways: harsh immigration policies and enforcement efforts (Menjivar & Abrego, 2012;); placing of migrant children in metal cages (Mendoza, 2018); historical stripping of native language and cultural practices in schools (Hartman, 2003), and kidnapping of migrant children and placing them with white families and who have yet to be reunited with their parents despite the U.S. Supreme court mandating it (Dickerson, 2018); exploitation of migrant workers for cheap labor (Paret, 2014); the incessant terrorizing of immigrant communities by immigration enforcement agencies (i.e. ICE, CBP; Lopez, 2019); and public positioning of immigrant communities as inherently dangerous and criminal by U.S. state and federal government officials (Rojas-Perez, et al., 2023). Efforts to pass new legislation targeting people who help undocumented immigrants compounds such manifestations of trauma.

As such, when aiming to heal individual and collective trauma, special care must be taken to also consider the systemic roots that create the social conditions for individual marginalization. Traditional interventions to treat trauma are often imbued with westernized, colonialist, and white supremacist ideals that perpetuate rugged individualism, bootstrap mentality, and hyper individuality. All of these contribute to a greater disconnect from the collective, thus resulting in perpetration of greater harm rather than the creation of pathways for holistic healing (Comas-Díaz & Jacobsen, 2024). Though an individualized approach to trauma and healing is important, interventions and healing approaches that are solely focused on the individual experience, may fail to recognize the systemic roots of oppression and marginalization as well as the collective impacts of trauma on our bodies, our minds, and our spirits.

Crimmigration and Legal Violence

Over the last four decades, the U.S. has experienced undulating shifts in attitudes regarding immigration to the U.S. In general, attitudes towards immigration are more favorable during times of labor shortages, when the hiring of cheap immigrant labor is necessary to sustain the U.S. economy(Lee, 2023; Shepperson, 2024) . However, favorable attitudes tend to morph into more deficit and fearful perspectives of immigration during times of occupational shortages and economic downturns (Buck et al, 2004). More recently, however, attitudes towards immigration have drastically become more fearful and mistrustful of immigrant laborers due to the shortages in labor opportunities and the increased criminalization of immigrant people more generally (Middlestat et al., 2011). Furthermore, the racialization of immigrants also heavily impacted shifting fearful attitudes about immigration, with immigrants of color being met with suspicion and distrust, whereas white immigrants experience a more welcoming reception and greater access to resources (Armenta., 2017; Sáenz et al., 2015).

The restructuring of the Immigration and Naturalization Services agency into the Department of Homeland Security, represents the blurring of criminal, civil, and immigration law. According to Stumpf (2006), by 2005, the largest group of federal prosecutions had to do with immigration related matters, so much that immigration-related prosecutions outnumbered the prosecutions related to drugs and weapons. Additionally, the punishment for the violation of immigration as well any criminal or civil laws by any non-citizen, including legal residents, can often culminate in U.S. removal proceedings (Abrego & Lakhani, 2015; Stumpf, 2006).

Crimmigration is reflective and the direct result of the white supremacist and racialized values that are woven into the fabric of U.S. structures (Armenta, 2017; Rosenbaum, 2018). Specifically, colorblind arguments fail to recognize the role of race in the enforcement of immigration policies and in the persecution of Latinx immigrants. Thus, concealing the ways in

which colorblind and seemingly race-neutral policies serve to sustain, uphold, and perpetuate the criminalization and persecution of Latinx immigrants. As such, legal violence intentionally disrupts the successful assimilation and integration of immigrant communities into more mainstream U.S. societies. Furthermore, this provides the federal, state, and local legislature the power to persecute both documented and undocumented immigrants outside the scope of the law in ways that hold them legally accountable to punishment without guaranteed legal protections (Caraballo, 2020; Felker-Kantor, 2022; Menjivar et al., 2018). As U.S. criminal laws become intertwined with immigration law, it is unlikely that members of Latinx immigrant communities will seek out legal justice when necessary and putting them at risk for exploitation. Legal violence illustrates the ways in which privilege and power are leveraged to socially construct conditions of liminality meant to criminalize, target, and subdue specific groups of people. Urbina and Peña (2019) illustrate how the conditions that have led to the increased militarization of the U.S.-México border have been purposefully socially constructed to continue the exploitation of immigrant labor, feeding the capitalist machine that is U.S. economy. Specifically, they describe how the U.S. - México border has been heavily militarized and serves as a testing site for wartime technology meant to target new immigrants (Urbina & Peña, 2019). The militarization of the U.S. -México border contributes to the trauma and violence that Latinx immigrants experience in two important ways. First, it contributes to the trauma experienced during individuals' migration journey as they must avoid tools used in active warzones. Secondly, it contributes to the marginalization and trauma caused by ongoing enforcement policies and interactions with police. Thus, crimmigration and persecution creates hostile environments that not only threaten the livelihood and socioemotional safety of immigrant communities but aims to murder their spirits.

Drs. Menjívar and Abrego also highlight the crimmigration phenomenon through their scholarship on legal violence (2012). However, unlike the legislative focus of Stumpf's work on crimmigration, the legal violence (2012) framework, highlights the fundamentally violent nature of immigration enforcement measures and agencies, and the detrimental effects their perpetual persecution has on the bodies, minds, and spirits of immigrant communities. Specifically, they theorized that legal violence not only refers to the physical harm caused to individuals in the highly militarized enforcement of restrictive immigration laws, but violence also includes the socioemotional outcomes of living in increased states of anxiety, fear, isolation, and stigmatization that are often associated with undocumented status. Legal violence also operates within the family, educational, and employment contexts. For example, Van Natta (2019) revealed that Latinx undocumented immigrants living in a remote county found themselves assessing the potential benefits and risks of accessing necessary healthcare. The risk of potentially bringing attention to their unlawful presence in the U.S. is a risk that not all undocumented individuals are willing to take. Thus, for individuals with undocumented status, their liminal status can serve as a barrier to accessing necessary healthcare (Van Natta, 2019). Given that, health, schooling, and employment contexts are the spaces in which mixed-status and undocumented immigrants are most likely to intersect with legal institutions, many undocumented immigrants find themselves foregoing important resources to avoid potential interactions with police or immigration enforcement agencies (e.g., Evans et al., 2020; Cross et al., 2021; Ayón, 2014; Ayón et al., 2013). Thus, the purpose of legal violence is to instill fear, traumatize, and isolate undocumented and mixed-status community members. As such, legal violence actively hinders community mobilization and engagement in healing practices (Menjívar & Abrego, 2012).

Immigration Trauma

Immigration-related trauma refers to trauma resulting from unsafe social and economic conditions that precipitated the immigration journey to the U.S., such as civil and political unrest, as well as traumatic experiences during the journey to the U.S., such as physical or sexual assault (Peña-Sullivan, 2020). Once in the U.S., immigration trauma can also encompass interpersonal interactions or the persistent *threat* of interactions with highly militarized immigration enforcement agencies, immigration officers, and police officers that have the potential to result in family separation, deportation, and detainment (Grafft et al., 2022). The U.S. has a long history of enacting crimes against communities of color, particularly when whiteness is threatened. Current immigration enforcement actions have provided the U.S. with the opportunity to perfect their strategies of state-sanctioned terrorism, particularly through modern genocidal practices that are endemic to settler colonialism. In particular, family separation tactics, detention and internment camps, and kidnapping children of color are all practices that the U.S. has utilized historically to exert control over communities of color. These tactics have resurfaced in immigration enforcement tactics, particularly the privatization and expansion of the prison industrial complex to detain immigrant and separate families (Ackerman & Furman, 2013; Barak 2019; Dow, 2007).

The practice of separating families, though honed during the first Trump administration, did not begin then. The U.S. has been separating families and kidnapping children since the enslavement of Black and African people and continued this practice with Indigenous peoples through Indigenous Boarding schools (Menaken, 2019). Current Indigenous scholars argue that in kidnapping children and forcefully sterilizing Indigenous women, the US has effectively committed genocide of Indigenous peoples while simultaneously erasing the history of genocide

(Schickler 2021; Stanley, 2021). In regard to Latinx immigration, the restructuring of immigration policies during the first Trump administration, particularly zero tolerance immigration policies, made it so that any unauthorized individual that was detained at the U.S.–México border was criminally processed for illegal entry to the U.S. This policy targets all migrant people equally, regardless if they are seeking asylum or if they were families immigrating together, or unaccompanied children (Linton et al., 2017; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2020). This revised longstanding practices that attempt to decimate and rupture family dynamics within communities of color (Barak, 2021). In doing so, Latinx immigrant families who have experiences of family separation, detentions, and deportations are more likely to struggle economically as well as spiritually and emotionally within the family context (Conway et al., 2020; Dreby, 2015). Furthermore, Lee (2019) argues that the practice of family separation in the U.S. subjects individuals to a slow death, which refers to harms that "stem from broader structural conditions leading to the physical wearing out of a population and the deterioration of people in that population" (Lee, 2019, p. 2327). Thus, in separating families, the U.S. is subjecting Latinx immigrant communities to a slow death that will continue to rupture community and family dynamics until the practice is disbanded and socially just systems put in place.

Family separations are not the only way that Latinx immigrant communities have experiences of trauma inflicted upon them. Highly militarized immigration raids are an extremely violent way in which Latinx immigrant mixed-status communities experience state sanctions persecution and trauma (Lee 2019; Lopez, 2019). ICE raids in mixed-status immigrant communities contribute to the isolation of Latinx immigrant individuals who are afraid of having encounters with immigration officers (Barak, 2021; Lee 2019). The collaboration of local police

agencies with immigration enforcement agencies also contributes to mistrust of state services. This existing mistrust prompts immigrant adults with U.S.-born children to forego access to resources to which their children are rightfully entitled, to avoid bringing attention to themselves and their precarious documentation status (Ayón et al., 2016; Cross et al., 2021). Lopez and colleagues (2019) explain that immigration raids further isolate communities. Ongoing surveillance of immigrant communities makes it so that mixed-status individuals are less likely to interact with their children's schools and participate in sociocultural activities. In fact, mixed-status individuals may become fearful of engaging in routine life experiences such as grocery shopping (Lopez et al., 2019). Furthermore, in his book, *Separated - Family and Community in the Aftermath of an Immigration Raid*, Lopez (2019) highlights the extremely violent way in which immigration officers made their way into the home of an immigrant family carrying heavy machine guns, threatening everyone present as they detained their target. The nature of this militarized home invasion left the mother and children behind struggling with emotional and physical health issues–so much so that the mother was unable to continue nursing her baby (Lopez, 2019). Thus, in carrying out such violent immigration efforts, the bodies and spirits of all who witnessed the home invasion were deeply affected not only as individuals, but also in the ways in which they are able to relate to one another, since the mother was forcibly deprived of her ability to continue developing a healthy bond with her baby through nursing (Lopez, 2019).

Education Trauma

One main way in which schooling systems operate as sites of trauma and death for all students is through the disembodiment that results from processes of over surveillance and punishment to exert control of students (García & Lissovoy, 2013; Wun, 2017). From an early

age, students learn that they must sit still and quietly, be submissive to the authority of their teachers and school administrators, and operate under a schedule that they had no say in shaping. Indeed, García and Lissovoy (2013) argue that such rigid structures and the exertion of control over students' bodies is how schools' hidden curriculum prepares students not only to enter carceral systems, but also relate to authority figures from perspectives of precarity and servility. Thus, suggesting that from the moment they enter schools, students are learning to relate to their teachers in ways that highlight existing power differentials and inherently position students as subordinate. Furthermore, students of color, in particular, are learning that being subjected to incessant surveillance and scrutiny is a normal part of their lived realities.

Another way in which schooling systems continue to demoralize Latinx students is through the discourse surrounding their academic achievement. Historically, this discourse has focused on the shortcomings of Latinx students particularly when compared to their white peers. However, these discourses do not acknowledge that achievement gaps between Latinx students and their peers have more to do with the systemic ways in which assessments were normed, in ways that privilege whiteness and English only education (Ogletree & Griffin, 2020). Furthermore, Ogletree and Griffin (2020) also claim that teachers, particularly pre-service and novice teachers, often espouse problematic beliefs about the strengths and *educability* of their Latinx and English learning students. Similarly, Mellom and colleagues (2018) found that a significant number of teachers in their treatment sample had negative or deficit attitudes towards Latinx students who were dual language learners and often prohibited bilingual students from speaking their home language in their classrooms.

In addition to viewing students as being inherently deficient, deficit perspectives of Latinx students also extended to the deficit perspectives of Latinx families. Research focusing on

Latinx families has inaccurately portrayed Latinx families as not being interested nor invested in the academic achievement and success of Latinx students, while dismissing evidence that proves otherwise (Leo & Wilcox, 2023). Additionally, deficit perspectives also include associating Latinx cultures with violence, addiction, and poverty (Galindo, 2021). In fact, some teachers have associated the student's and their family's use of their home language with poverty, heathenism, engaging in criminal activity and drug use, and violence (Mellom et al., 2018). These deficit perspectives of Latinx students and their families creates a hostile learning environment in which Latinx parents and family members do not feel safe, welcomed, or valued as part of the school community. When Latinx parents encounter this hostility, they begin to view schools as oppressive structures that will further reproduce unjust dynamics of power and privilege, rather than viewing schooling as a resource for upward social mobility (Galindo, 2021).

Furthermore, current research trends show that harsh disciplinary practices that contribute to disembodiment particularly target Black, Indigenous, and Latinx male students with disabilities and from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Cruz et al, 2021; Pena-Shaff et al., 2019). Harsh exclusionary practices include in- and out of school suspension, expulsion, and office discipline referrals as well as referrals to the juvenile justice system; such practices are associated with a host of negative academic outcomes for students (Skiba et al., 2011; Whitford et al., 2019). Furthermore, a smaller and often overlooked student group that is also experiencing higher exclusionary disciplinary practices are dual language learners and immigrant students residing in what are known as Border Towns (e.g., El Paso, TX, San Diego, CA, Gadsden, AZ; Whitford et al., 2019). Approximately 80% of language learners being Spanish speaking Latinx immigrant students (Galindo, 2021; Iwama et al., 2022; Whitford et al., 2019). Due to current

trends in exclusionary practices, Latinx immigrant students are at risk of experiencing legal violence, as exclusionary disciplinary practices often intersect with the juvenile justice system. It is necessary to transform educational spaces into settings that are free from exclusionary disciplinary practices that push out students of color and instead provide loving support, understanding, and cultural sensitivity to meet the unique needs of Latinx students.

In their mixed-methods research focusing on school climate and school wide responses, Blitz and colleagues (2020) found that students' socioemotional needs are often going unmet due to unresolved or ongoing experiences of trauma. Their findings also indicate that teachers care deeply for their students and are sympathetic to the struggles that their students face. However, findings also show that teachers are often not equipped with the tools necessary to help students cope with and address their trauma (Blitz et al., 2020). Furthermore, teacher's lack of expertise in trauma informed teaching practices and colorblind perspectives resulted in teacher's preference for harsh disciplinary punishments. Given their findings, Blitz and colleagues proposed a model for trauma-informed sanctuary schooling to respond to trauma experienced by students as well as teachers and staff. Their model for trauma-informed sanctuary schooling also seeks to provide alternatives to harsh and exclusionary disciplinary practices, and instead transform schooling into more democratic decision-making processes that are inclusive of all members of the school community (Blitz et al., 2020). Blitz and colleagues explain that a trauma-informed school is cognizant of the ways that trauma impacts student's physical and emotional health, learning, and behaviors. Furthermore, a culturally responsive school is attentive to students' cultural and ethnic heritage traditions as well as student's experiences with oppression (Blitz et al., 2020). The trauma-informed sanctuary model supports inclusive and restorative practices by espousing a commitment to non-violence, ensuring psychological and

moral safety, encouraging social responsibility, and appreciating students' emotional intelligence (Blitz et al., 2020).

When Immigration and Education Trauma Intersect

Drawing on ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner 1992), it is well established that development is dependent on the interactions between the micro-, meso-, and macro-systems. Just as development across settings is interconnected, experiences of trauma are also experienced at the intersections of multiple systems rather than in silos (e.g. Ferreti et al., 2020;Sabina et al., 2022). When immigration and education trauma intersect, the negative effects of experiencing each of these are compounded. This creates experiences of complex trauma in which educational trauma from deficit perspectives, racialized violence in schools, and exclusionary practices is layered on top of traumatic pre and post migration experiences, particularly regarding the inescapable threat of family separation, detention, and deportation that plagues many immigrant communities (Galindo, 2021; Frankling & Medina, 2018; Torres et al., 2022). When schools reproduce unjust dynamics of power and privilege, parents with liminal documentation status become mistrustful of schooling spaces, preventing them from forming fruitful relationships with their children's teachers and school administrators (Levin, 2020; Menendez & Suárez-Orozco; 2024). Furthermore, when students themselves are undocumented, and are targets of exclusionary disciplinary practices that expose them to systems of policing, schools become unsafe and violent places that can lead to the detainment and deportation of student. Thus, the school-to-prison pipeline effectively becomes school-to-deportation pipeline for undocumented youth (Hlass, 2017; Rios Vega, 2023; Verma et al, 2017;). Furthermore, when educators and administrators also espouse deficit and stereotypical perspectives of Latinx students, they are

unable to recognize trauma symptoms in students, leading to mislabeling and overrepresentation of students as defiant, hyperactive, or autistic (Villareal Sosa, 2019). Additionally, when teachers, administrators, and other student uphold racist and white supremacist beliefs against Latinx students, they become perpetrators of overt racialized violence. Examples of such racialized violence include students chanting "build the wall" in school lunchrooms (Larimer, 2016) as well as teachers dressing up as the Border Wall and Mexican stereotypes (Mervosh, 2018). Thus, when immigration and education trauma intersect, schools transform into violent and unsafe spaces of learning in which Latinx students are exposed to even more instances of racism, discrimination, and xenophobia.

Part 2: Healing is Political – Reimagining Legal, Educational, and Community Spaces

(Re)Imagining Healing

Theoretical work within the fields of education as well as community and Indigenous psychology, emphasizes the need for communities of color to engage in embodied *radical healing*, the process by which individuals belonging to marginalized communities become whole in the face of individual and collective trauma caused by interlocking systems of oppression (Ginwright, 2010; French et al., 2019; Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019). One key premise of radical healing is the development of a critical conscious that enables youth to recognize and name the systems and structures that contribute to the marginalization of their communities. In becoming critically conscious, youth can understand that individuals alone are not to blame for the conditions of their own or their community's oppression. Instead, through their expanding understanding of systemic oppression, youth can shift from personal feelings of shame and guilt to focus instead on changing the systems that uphold the conditions of their oppression. Another

important aspect of radical healing involves youths' ability to engage in radical hope and dream of new possibilities for their futures (French et al, 2020; Ginwright 2010). Engaging in radical hope allows individuals to imagine new possibilities and propels the joining of efforts towards creating more socially just communities.

However, these frameworks are limited in that they fail to attend to the reconciling of the *bodymindspirit* connection (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002). The *bodymindspirit* connection refers to the connection between individuals' physical body, emotional, spiritual, and social selves. Mark and Lyons (2014) liken the *bodymindspirit* connection to the biopsychosocial-spiritual model used in health research. They explain that the interconnection between the body, the mind, and the spirit allow for holistic interpretations of mental and physical health. Such interpretations include a focus on the body's physical wellbeing, psychological, mental, and emotional wellbeing, as well as spiritual and social impacts on wellbeing, Anzaldua and Keating (2002) discuss that the connection between the body, mind, and spirit often gets ruptured when we are forced to intellectualize or compartmentalize ourselves within settings in which it is unsafe for individuals to show up as their holistic and authentic selves (i.e. the cartesian split). Without the connection of the *bodymindspirit*, disembodiment occurs, leading us to live disconnected from our spirits, from the land, and in capitalist environments that require us to forgo community (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002; Haines 2019; Menakem 2017). Instead, radical healing approaches for trauma should center somatics, "an intentional change process by which we can embody transformation individually, and collectively" (Haines, 2019, p. 19). Though there are many theoretical conceptualizations of what radical healing is and can look like, few works transfer theoretical conceptualizations of healing into practical applications of how healing manifests in day-to-day experiences. However, by integrating somatics into our approach to healing, we are

encouraged to look inward at how we experience life through our bodies. Thus, my goal for this dissertation was to (re)imagine what healing is and what it can look like in tangible, empirical, and evidenced-based ways. I aimed to do this through my community partnership with FaithAction International and community collaborators.

Healing as Reconciling the *BodyMindSpirit* Connection

Embodiment[2] refers to the notion that the body is not simply reacting to what goes on around it, but it is an active agent in shaping our realities. Csardas (2002) explains embodiment as the understanding that the body "is not an *object* to be studied in relation to culture, but it is to be considered as the *subject* of culture or as the existential ground of culture" (p. 58). As such, because trauma happens and lives in the body (Geronimus, 1992; Haines, 2019; Menakem, 2017), healing also must happen within our bodies. Our bodies are keepers and shapers of knowledge, experiences, and our sense of self (Cariaga, 2019; Longo et al., 2008). As such, theories of embodiment create space and provide us with pathways to receive and acknowledge cultural and ancestral ways of being as legitimate sources of scholarly knowledge. Furthermore, theorizing within the bodymindspirit emphasizes the capacity of marginalized indivuals to resist injustice, as the body which has been "layered upon by histories of oppression becomes a fractal of our capacity for resistance and creation of new life, for it 'carries within it the genetic material for creation– of newness and possibility" (Sosa-Provencio et al., 2020, p. 348).

In this dissertation, I draw on the work of Black, Indigenous, and Chicana women theorizers (e.g. Anzaldua & Keating, 2013; Moraga, 2019; Lorde, 2012) to emphasize the

[2] In this dissertation, I use somatics and embodiment interchangeably to refer to the intentional and transformative change process that centers both the individual and collective and acknowledges that the systemic roots of trauma and healing are felt within the body as well as within our social realities.

importance of centering the soma within healing scholarship. By integrating somatics in my theorizing, I acknowledge and aim to understand "both the individual and collective as a combination of biological, evolutionary, emotional and psychological aspects [and how these] are shaped by social and historical norms" (Haines, 2019, p. 19). Thus, when I reconcile the *bodymindspirit* (Lara, 2002) divide to center embodied healing in my scholarship and practices, I am able to accomplish the following: 1) create room for critical reflection and social analysis to interrogate the systemic roots of the collective oppression of communities of color, particularly mixed status Latinx immigrants; 2) create and establish of sanctuary and fugitive spaces that allow for rest, advocacy, and the restoration of our spirits; and 3) step into and embody the legacies of resistance and activism that are innate to historically marginalized communities of color and have allowed for our continued survival.

Healing as a Political and Spiritual Practice

Rooted in liberatory scholarship as well as Indigenous and collective strategies for survival and resistance, embodied/somatic healing provides youth with the opportunity to return to an interconnected way of being (Fosler, 2021; Lara-Cooper et al.,2021; Goodkin et al., 2012;). In returning to Indigenous, ancestral, and spiritual roots, we can grow our critical consciousness and interrogate the systematic conditions that contribute the experiences of marginalization and oppression experienced by communities of color (Pipe & Steohens, 2021; Soto, 2024;Suzuki et al., 2023). Embodied healing also enables us to reconnect with cultural practices, knowledge, and traditions that help us to restore the connection to land that was severed by colonization, white supremacy, and xenophobia (Sosa-Provencio et al., 2020; To et al., 2023;, Meyer et al., 2024). Indeed, Mayorga and Rosales (2019) draw on a participatory action research collaborative

between Latinx high school students and undergraduate co-researchers to better understand how youth's social environments contribute to their experiences of trauma. Secondly, they investigate how using PAR *EntreMundos* can serve as a pathway for healing, working collectively, connecting with culture, and engaging in social action. Through their collaborative, they formed the #BarrioEdProject to nourish "youth leadership, development, and activism" to produce knowledge and work towards liberation (Mayorga & Rosales, 2019, p.560).

By engaging in the #BarrioEdProject, youth engaged in *conocimiento* (knowledge). *Conocimiento* is where "the inner life of mind and spirit is connected to the outer worlds of action with the struggle for social change" (Mayorga & Rosales, 2019, pg. 569). Participants engaged in *conocimiento* by exploring and sharing their identities through arts-based practices such as collaging, and poetry. By engaging in *colectividad* (collectivity), youth and adult facilitators engaged in power-sharing that allowed for youth's experiences to be centered. In doing so, the #BarrioEdProject served as a counterspace to youth's schools, in which they often felt ignored and censored (Mayorga & Rosales, 2019). Given that the conditions of marginalization and oppression for many Latinx youth are caused by state sanctioned legal violence or institutionalized exclusion within schools, to actively resist and find ways to thrive and collectively heal is an important act of political resistance. When the social conditions surrounding our experiences have been purposely constructed to subdue, spirit murder, and eradicate our ability to dream envisioning a future that is free of systems of oppression is also in and of itself, a political act of resistance. Thus, as trauma is political, so too, are our efforts to radically heal.

Furthermore, Anzaldúa and Keating (2002) remind us that in addition to being a political act, healing is also an act of spiritual activism. Spiritual activism refers to the awareness of the

interconnected nature of humanity. Anzaldúa (2002) further explains that in developing the awareness of the interconnection of humanity, we become motivated to transform our environments to disrupt the systems of oppression that plague not only humans, but all living things. As Anzaldua and Keating (2002) state:

> With awe and wonder you look around, recognizing the preciousness of the earth, the sanctity of every human being on the planet, the ultimate unity and interdependence of all beings – somos todos un paíz…This conocimiento motivates you to work actively to see that no harm comes to people, animals, ocean – to take up spiritual activism and the work of healing. Te entregas a tu promesa to help your various cultures create new paradigms, new narratives. (p. 558).

Thus, when we engage in action to disrupt systems of oppression affecting all marginalized communities, we are engaging in a spiritual praxis. Furthermore, Hersey (2022) posits that "resistance is a rich, spiritual posture" (p. 33) through which we can enact radical hope and dreaming to envision transformed futures for ourselves and our communities that are free of the lies of white supremacy and settler colonialist ideals.

Desai (2020A) outlines that through his partnership with Leaders Organizing 2 Unite & Decriminalize (LOUD), he was able to partner with BIPOC youth who had experienced the carceral system. Together, they critically interrogated their experiences with the juvenile justice system (Desai, 2020b) and developed a smaller youth participatory action research (YPAR) project with four Chicana and one Diné youth. In this smaller project, Chicana youth between the ages of 17 and 20 drew on cultural traditions, critical hope, and social action to engage in the radical healing process. The goal of this YPAR project was to learn about, educate, and honor the extrajudicial killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Amaud Arbery that sparked the

Black Lives Matter movement (Desai, 2020b). In their interrogation of extrajudicial killings, youth discovered that their community was also plagued by police brutality and the extrajudicial killings of other Black, Indigenous, and Latinx youth. As part of the YPAR project, youth engaged with the Indigenous concept of In Lak'ech and African concept of Ubuntu. According to Desai, (2020b) In Lak'ech provided a platform for Chicana youth to critically interrogate their environments from a lens of equity and justice. Through the process, youth were positioned as equal partners who "are learning to transform the world" (p. 773). Similarly, the concept of Ubuntu focuses on justice and the interdependency of individuals with one another, and cultivating harmony through compassion, trust and fairness (Desai, 2020b). As part of the project, Chicana youth built a Día de Muertos float that would be a part of the local Día de Muertos parade. The theme of the parade was "*Reclamando Nuestra Querencia,*" which parade organizers interpreted as their "taking a stand against injustices within their community" (Desai 2020, pg. 776). Through their float, Chicana youth honored youth of color and trans youth who had been murdered by police and used the opportunity to express their frustrations and educate their community about this issue. As such, Desai (2020b) claims that integrating indigenous perspectives in the YPAR project informed the youth about their work being a connection to a greater "Spirit" and thus, it was meant to promote universal justice.

In Desai's work, he and his youth partners were able to draw on practices that were indigenous to Africa and the Americas. They also engaged in Latinx cultural practices to process grief, express righteous anger, and indignation, while also engaging in social action to raise awareness on the issue of extrajudicial killings. In doing this, Desai (2020b) argues that he as a facilitator alongside the Chicana youth were able to experience radical healing and hope.

Healing as a Response to Crimmigration & Legal Violence

Latinx immigrant and immigrant-origin young people are developing within social contexts in which they are criminalized and persecuted (Cardoso et al., 2020; Torres et al, 2022). Crimmigration and legal violence are white supremacist and colonialist tools that have served to aid in the persecution, terrorization, and subjugation of immigrant communities in the U.S. However, engaging in embodied healing practive and social justice activism can serve to disrupt some of the harm cause by crimmigration and legal violence. Indeed, resistance efforts by Black, Brown, Indigenous and Queer communities have created pathways for embodied healing. Indeed, drawing on Chicana feminist epistemologies, Pérez Huber (2017) found that undocumented Chicana and Latina women that currently work with other undocumented and mixed status immigrant communities draw on ancestral knowledge, activism, and the embodiment of a mestiza consciousness within their current professions. Using testimonio methodology, Perez Huber (2017) shows how participants heal the rupturing of the *bodymindspirit* they had previously experienced due to their undocumented immigrant status. Perez Huber highlights one participant, Alicia, whose experiences struggling to be healthy as an undocumented student led her to participate in community activism focused on accessible healthcare for undocumented individuals. By participating in talking circles, Alicia, along with other undocumented community members, were able to share painful experiences and form meaningful bonds. During the talking circles, participants identified accessible healthcare as an important community concern. As a response to the community concern, Alicia and her peers were able to partner with their university's social work department to create a community organization. The work of the community organization focuses on providing community education, resources, and services to undocumented youth. Thus, Perez Huber (2017) argues that

by engaging in talking circles, identifying a community concern, and engaging in collective social action provided Alicia with the necessary tools to heal the bodymindspirit split she had experience as a younger student. Similarly, Morales and colleagues (2023) explained that Latinx immigrant community members found that healing circles were an effective tool to reconnect with severed Indigenous practices and ways of being. Additionally, healing circles were also helpful in creating a safe environment in which mixed status immigrant community members could grow their critical consciousness, engage in resistance practices, and build a community in which they can cultivate critical hope as they envision liberated futures (Morales et al., 2023). Furthermore, Armas and colleagues (2023) engaged Latinx young adults, aged 19-22 years old, in arts based project to better understand how youth conceptualized wellbeing. Engaging in arts through painting and music lyrics facilitated youths communication over difficult topics that affect Latinx youths' wellbeing rooted in experiences as immigrants and immigrant-origin young people. Furthermore, youth closed out their interviews by elevating the ways in which they tap into healing and joy by being embodied through dance, singing, and crafting (Armas et al., 2023) Their findings indifcate that Still, little empirical research has been conducted to understand what healing practices that integrate somatic and trauma-informed radical healing look like within Latinx immigrant communities. My dissertation addresses this important research gap.

Critical Analysis in Healing. Engaging in critical analysis od social conditions contributes to youth healing as they are able to name, often unnamed systems of oppression that contribute to their experiences of marginalization (French et al., 2020; Ginwright & Camarota, 2002) Critical analysis stems from Paulo Freire's work on the development of critical consciousness (Freire 1970; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). Critical consciousness draws on the notion that to disrupt systems of oppression and marginalization, members of marginalized

communities must first develop the necessary awareness and understanding of the social conditions that uphold and perpetuate oppression and marginalization (Hope & Jagers, 2014; Freire, 2005). Engaging in critical analysis not only increases youth's awareness of the structures that uphold white supremacy culture, but it also enhances their ability to talk about our experiences. Our potential to experience radical healing grows when we can engage in meaningful and critical discourse about our experiences of marginalization. For Latinx immigrant young people specifically, developing their critical consciousness and engaging in critical analysis involves interrogating the ways in which the U.S. sociopolitical climate is purposely designed to contribute to their subjugation enforced by militarized anti-immigrant efforts (Cardenas et al., 2023; Gallo & Corral, 2023). However, to fully experience freedom from the binds of white supremacist ideals, engaging in critical analysis must also include interrogating the ways in which Latinx folk in the U.S. as well as Central and South America have benefited from the subjugation of Indigenous, Black, and Afro-Latinx communities, colorism, and anti-Black racism (Bañales & Rivas-Drake, 2022; Terriquez & Milkman, 2021). In doing so, young people can begin working towards building coalition, honoring the interconnectedness of humanity, which the realization that the liberation for one marginalized group is tied to the liberation of all marginalized communities (Desai, 2020A; Terriquez & Milkman, 2021;Walker 2021). Thus, to fully experience radical healing, young people must not only expand their awareness and understanding of the social conditions of marginalization, but also be equipped with the knowledge and tools necessary to engage in meaningful discussions in which previously invisible systems are made visible.

Healing as a Response to Traumatic Schooling Spaces

Schooling spaces have often served as sites of trauma and death for Black, Latinx, Indigenous and other students of color. However, learning spaces center a somatic and justice-oriented teaching approach, students are able to see that they belong in the space and establish meaningful connections with their peers. Kotler and colleagues (2024) found that fifth grade Latinx students were able to grapple with issues of social justice surrounding people's access to clean water and lead contamination within the context of an embodied, art-based science class. Through their embodied engagement with the theater and dramatizing, students practiced perspective-taking, empathy, and solidarity as they interrogated the Flint water crisis. By engaging in imagination play, students were able to visualize different futures predicated on current actions. Thus, by learning about social justice issues in embodied ways, and engagement in social actions such as writing to their elected officials to raise awareness and advocate for change, youth became "scientifically knowledgeable allies and activists" (Kotler et al., 2024; p.879). In a different approach to embodied and somatic teaching approaches, Rosario-Ramos (2018) found that when teaching autoethnographies to her students using methodologies that aligned with radical healing, youth were able to make connections between individual and collective experiences of struggles and marginalization. They were also able to use writing as a practice through which they were allowed to express their dreams, hopes, and desires (Rosario-Ramos, 2018). Similarly, Cariaga (2019) found that when engaging in humanizing and embodied pedagogies as well as pedagogies to sustain the *bodymindspirit* can serve to cultivate love in the classroom. In creating classrooms that explicitly reject white supremacy, patriarchy, and center justice, teachers aid in the transformation of classrooms into sacred spaces meant to protect students of color and provide a space in which students can engage in the process of healing (Cariaga, 2019).

Furthermore, community and after school spaces can be key environments that nurture youth's embodied healing practices that counteract that harm done within the context of schooling (Ginwright, 2010; Goessling, 2021). Indeed, Terriquez and colleagues (2021) discus how community organizing spaces serves as educational spaces that equipped young Latinx and Asian youth with community organizing skills necessary to become community leaders, building community support for the Black Lives Matter movement in their communities. Thereby evidencing the powerful role that grassroots community organizing spaces can serve in equipping skills with community organizing school and engaging them in the radical healing process. Similarly, Salas Pujols (2022) discusses that ways in which a community organization that provides programing for girls and gender-expansive youth of color with a safe third space in which they could interrogate the invisibility of Afro-Latinxs. By engaging girls and youth of color in intentional programming aimed at supporting positive identity development, girls began to embrace their identity as Afro-Latinx in spite of their school and larger social contexts provide anti-Black messaging (Salas Pujols, 2022). Thus, third, youth, and other types of community and after school spaces can engage youth in the radical healing processes from the harmful messaging that receive within school contexts.

Healing Happens in Community

Healing is a Communal Practice of Care

Engaging in the process of radical healing is a communal practice. The knowledge of how to survive and *thrive* has been passed down in the form of modeling, oral traditions, and

spiritual practices from community members who came before us. In line with the notions of interdependence and interconnectedness of spiritual activism, when people engage in efforts to heal as individuals, they must also engage in social justice change practices to heal their collective wounds (Dillard, 2008). For young people, this involves rooting communal relationships in an ethos of care. It is through the development of caring relationships that youth of color can experience and receive love, care, and the trust necessary to engage in the disruption of white supremacy culture. Ginwright (2010) proposes that within marginalized communities that have experienced the most violence and disruption at the hands of unjust sociopolitical structures (e.g., poverty, racism, sexism), caring relationships serve to counteract and remedy trauma by facilitating healing and involvement in social justice action. These relationships encourage healing by guiding youth to confront injustice in their lives and view personal trauma as a result of systemic trauma. Moreover, they welcome youth to a unified community with a common understanding of their plight within U.S. society. It is within this network of care that young people develop a sense of hope and motivation to act on behalf of the common good. Within Latinx immigrant communities specifically, the communal aspect of healing, caring, and protecting one another is evidenced through the creation of sanctuary cities and spaces in which U.S. citizen community members have used their bodies as physical barriers to protect undocumented community members from immigration enforcement officers as well as offered sanctuary within churches and other places of worship (Perla & Coutin, 2012; Paik et al., 2017; Stoltz Chinchilla et a., 2009). Furthermore, for young people who experience familial separation, community enclaves and chosen family that are aware of the systemic violence they experience as well as the resources available to them, can help young people navigate the family separation and reunification process from legal, socioemotional, and basic safety perspectives (Lovato &

Abrams, 2021). In addition to resources, these communities ultimately provide love and instill hope for young people experiencing legalized violence.

Sanctuary Spaces

Sanctuary spaces are a large part of the immigrants' rights movements, in which communities have come together to protect families and individuals from being detained and separated (Lippert & Rehaag, 2013; Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019). To theorize how sanctuary and fugitive spaces may operate to facilitate healing, we can turn to social justice and healing scholars. Ginwright and Camarota (2002) theorize about social spaces that center healing, where young people can share, listen, and learn from each other. They posit that such social spaces allow for young people to engage in critical conversations in which they can problematize the conditions of marginalization that they experience (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002). Chavez-Dueñas and colleagues (2019) expand on this conceptualization to better apply to sanctuary spaces, as they pertain to immigrant communities. They define sanctuary spaces as being "places created to offer protection, affirmation, and validation to those who live in fear" and use collective coping to address marginalization (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019, p. 55-56). However, at the root of sanctuary spaces must be the shared value and philosophical belief that oppression and liberation cannot co-exist in there (Hersey, 2022). In order to be in a sanctuary space, young people must have the ability to return to their original ways of being, a return to and healing of their inner childhood. Hersey (2022) adds that sanctuary spaces must be places in which children, young people, and adults alike can rest knowing they are safe from persecution (Hersey, 2022). Community members can rest knowing that within the sacredness of these spaces there is an acceptance and encouragement of the integration of their knowledge, culture,

and values (Villazon, 2008). Moreover, they build the critical consciousness of communities thereby challenging misconceptions of how race and racism operate and building young people's capacity to identify and disrupt the structures that oppress them (Casanova, 2024). These spaces are conducive to liberation of Latinx youth and communities that experience marginalization and are crucial to the facilitation of the radical healing process.

Brief Summary

Given the many contributors to the experiences of complex trauma of Latinx immigrant youth–crimmigration, legal violence, state sanctioned persecution through militarized immigration enforcement–it is imperative to support the embodied and holistic wellbeing and radical healing practices of Latinx immigrant-origin youth. Radical healing refers to the process of becoming whole after experiences of marginalization by holding on to hope, engaging in critical analysis of systemic oppression, nurturing strong cultural ties, dreaming of better futures, and engaging in meaningful social action to actualize those futures (Chavez-Dueñas, 2019; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002). The overarching goal of this dissertation was to understand how Latinx immigrant youth are experiencing healing from experiences of ethnoracial trauma. I investigate this process by addressing the following two research questions: 1) How do Latinx, immigrant-origin young people learn about healing, develop their own understandings, and conceptualize healing for themselves; and 2)How do youth's previous experiences and understanding of ethno-racial trauma and healing inform how they co-construct a sanctuary space? In the next chapter I address the methodologies and specific methods used to address my research questions.

Chapter III: Methodology

Design

Critical Participatory Action Research Methodology

To answer my research questions, I draw on qualitative case study methodology (Yin, 2017) situated within the context of critical participatory action research (CPAR) with an EntreMundos lens (Torre & Ayala, 2009; Machado-Casas et al., 2018). Critical participatory action research (CPAR) is a liberatory approach to conducting science, as it actively challenges traditional and supremacist notions of who can create new knowledge by engaging community members in the research process (Lee et al., 2023). When trying to gain a better understanding of a social phenomenon that manifests within specific subgroups of a population or community, traditional research methods often take a hierarchical approach to research, whereby, researchers are considered experts and knowledge creators and members of the community are positioned as passive research subjects to be studied (Fine et al., 2021; Bañales et al., 2024). CPAR methods by contrast, intentionally center members of communities as experts in their own lived experiences. That expertise is then used to help guide the research inquiry process, placing community members as active collaborators of the research process (Lee et al, 2023; Fine et al., 2021; Bañales et al., 2023). The goal of CPAR methods is twofold:1) the creation of new knowledge about a social phenomenon and 2) provide opportunities for community members to engage in social action aimed at addressing an issue affecting their communities (Lee et al, 2023; Fine et al., 2021). CPAR approaches inherently challenge traditional approaches that incorporate

more top-down hierarchies and instead prioritize a more lateral approach that positions community members as equal contributors to the research process.

Fine and colleagues (2021) posit that when engaging in *critical* participatory action research, research teams are particularly intentional about acknowledging and bridging power differentials. In doing so, research teams prioritize and center the expertise of community members, since it is they who are most affected by experiences of marginalization. Aldana and Richards-Schuster (2021) expand on the work of Fine and colleagues (2021) by weaving together critical race and participatory action research methods to conceptualize youth PAR (YPAR) as an antiracist way to approach developmental science. Similarly, Bañales and colleagues (2024) posit that centering youth voices in developmental science research is a way to combat white supremacist practices as it subverts paternalism, power hoarding, and ideas of objectivity. Lee and colleagues (2023) proposed a framework for research methodologies that facilitate the healing process for communities of color that experience marginalization. Within their framework, they center reflexivity, intersectionality and emotion. Aligned with these transformative approaches to research, I employ critical participatory action research methodologies to address my research questions.

Case study methodology allows for the study of a specific phenomenon while being attentive to the context in which it manifests (Yin 2017). Case study methodology also allows for the centering the experiences of participants by incorporating multiple sources of evidence that create space for different perspectives, realities, and meanings to emerge. As such, case study methodology has the flexibility to embrace different epistemological orientations (Yin, 2017). Underlying my combination of CPAR and Case study methodology is *EntreMundos* (i.e., between worlds), an epistemology that uplifts the realities of living in the in-betweenness, both

physical, mental, and spiritual borderlands and that "transgresses, edge-walks, and bridge-builds" (Machado-Casas et al., 2018). By utilizing an *EntreMundos* lens, I acknowledge that "knowledge production is a political activity" (Torres & Ayala, 2009, p. 388) that reflects both my experiences and those of my research collaborators. I also acknowledge that our relationships to research are rooted in historical power differentials that disadvantage marginalized communities (Torres & Ayala, 2009, p. 388). Drawing also on Anzaldúa's notion of *nepantla*, *EntreMundos* "situates the in-betweenness as a source of knowledge and a space to question, critique, and reckon with our most painful realities" (Ybarra, 2018). Latinx mixed status young people often find themselves at the crossroads of belonging and unbelonging, *ni de aqui, ni de alla*, (Torre & Ayala, 2009) as we learn how US society offers a liminal inclusion (Menjivar, 2006; Ybarra, 2018). Thus, case study methodology with a CPAR *EntreMundos* lens allows me to better capture the experiences of Latinx young adults as they interrogate their experiences of oppressions, particularly as they have had to learn to navigate living within two different and often opposing worlds.

Researcher Positionality

As I engaged in this research, and in line with critical methodologies, I have been intentional about acknowledging how my identities, positionalities, and my own experiences growing up in an undocumented household have informed my conceptualization and design of this project. As I implemented the photovoice project alongside my community partners, I continued to engage in critical reflexivity (Norton & Sliep, 2018) by looking inward and reflecting on the ways in which my identities and positionalities shaped my interactions with my research collaborators. Growing up in a mixed-status community, in an undocumented family,

means that I experienced first-hand the rupturing that happens when targeted ICE enforcements are carried out within communities. Furthermore, throughout my educational experiences, I had to navigate teachers who had deficit views of Black and Latinx students and viewed my academic achievements as an anomaly. Thus, rather than drawing my linguistic and cultural knowledge as a well of knowledge, I was discouraged from using Spanish language in the classroom, and instead received messages that encouraged me to aspire to whiteness. Moreover, being an able-bodied, cis-gender, heterosexual, well-educated, and light-skinned Latina means that I am also able to navigate the world from a position of these privileges. Growing up, I found myself internalizing deficit and problematic narratives of meritocracy and exceptionalism that positioned immigrants as being either deserving or undeserving. Once I had the opportunity to engage in critical conversations with my peers and professors during my undergraduate studies, I developed an understanding and the language necessary to name often unnamed systemic and structural roots of inequity and social injustices. Engaging in a critical interrogation of my lived experiences and identifying the structural barriers that shaped my experiences allowed me to change my perspective. Most importantly, I recognized the ways in which members of my community mobilized to protect one another and worked to subvert harmful policies. At the same time, they created opportunities to connect with our home cultures, nourish ourselves spiritually, and cultivated opportunities for joy and healing to ensure our continued survival. As I have continued my education into my graduate journey, I think of other Latinx immigrant communities, navigating harmful and dangerous deficit narratives that affect their interactions across social contexts. Here is where I root my motivations for wanting to conceptualize ways of healing and reimagine how schools and communities can serve as spaces of sanctuary alongside Latinx immigrant origin young adults.

Before beginning data analysis, I engaged in a reflective activity with my research assistants to identify potential biases and discuss ways that these can impact the way that we interact with the data. Potential biases for me include my closeness to my community, the similarities between my own experiences and the experiences of my community co-researchers, and positionality as a DACA-mented scholar. All of these can potentially affect how I relate with the data and the stories shared. However, given that I am drawing on Chicana feminist methods (i.e. CPAR *EntreMundos*) that purposely reject researcher objectivity, I consider my closeness to my community as a strength that enabled me to better interpret the data with particular attention to the nuances of shared community and cultural experiences.

Community Partnerships

This project was carried out with a community-based organizational partner. FaithAction International (FAI) is an immigrants-rights non-profit organization in North Carolina. Their mission is to "serve and advocate alongside thousands of newcomers each year, while educating and connecting diverse communities across lines of culture and faith - turning strangers into neighbors!" FAI is led by members of Latinx immigrant communities who have witnessed first-hand the effects of harsh immigration policy enforcements. Their Immigrant Assistance Center strives to meet the day to day needs of immigrant and refugee communities through their food pantry, providing funds for overdue bills, and making social services more accessible. Their Education and Advocacy Center (EAC) focuses on lobbying for legislative change, educating community members about common misconceptions about the immigrant population, providing and bridging connections across diverse religious communities. I began volunteering for the EAC during my sophomore year of my undergraduate career where I volunteered in one of their

ID Drives, in which they provide a community ID to individuals who are ineligible to get U.S. identification documentation. To this day, I am an active volunteer member of FAI and support events each time I travel home. Their commitment to advocating alongside community members aligns with my own commitment to create meaningful change alongside my own community, thus making them an ideal partner organization for this project.

Community Co-Researchers

In line with CPAR *EntreMundos*, throughout my dissertation, research collaborators were fully incorporated in the research process and in the communal knowledge creation process. Thus, community participants who participated in my dissertation research are referred to as community co-researchers throughout this dissertation. In being intentional about the ways that I relate and refer to community co-researchers, my goal is to honor and acknowledge the expertise and experiences that they brought throughout the photovoice project. Community co-researchers had agency to shape the weekly photovoice prompts and focus of our pláticas (discussed below), identify the community issue to bring awareness to, and design and implement a change effort project that was showcased to the community and key stakeholders.

Methods

Photovoice

Photovoice methodology (Wang & Burris, 1997) centers the perspectives and experiences of individuals who have often experienced marginalization and isolation at the hands of unjust structural systems. Photovoice challenges researcher-participant dynamics as shared power and flexibility are inherent aspects of photovoice methodologies (Latz, 2017). As such,

photovoice is often considered to provide avenues to engage in shared meaning-making since it relies heavily on the embodied learning experiences of participants, that they make visible using photographs, images, and narratives.

Pláticas

Pláticas are a culturally-rooted research method that challenges white supremacist notions of objectivity and instead centers and honors the embodied experience of engaging in the research process (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). Though similar to focus groups, pláticas are an intentional departure from focus groups and interviews in that they are purposely conducted with a rejection of researcher objectivity. Instead, pláticas center the cultural practice of *platicando* around a dinner table, akin to a roundtable talk, amongst friends and family (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016; Flores & Morales, 2021). In order to do this I first by developed community and trust with and amongst the community co-researchers and FAI staff. By developing trusting relationships and drawing upon our cultural intuition for how to engage with one another, engaging in pláticas did not feel like engaging in a formal and more sterile research method or environment. Furthermore, as a Chicana feminist method and as a Latinx cultural practice, pláticas can feel familiar and comforting to community research collaborators who may have little experience with traditional research methods. Using pláticas, research collaborators engaged in the interrogation of educational spaces as state-sanctioned sites of trauma and death. They also reflected on the ways in which their community has taught them to protect themselves as well as one another, and how community members have mobilized to subvert harmful policies affecting their community. Together, we drew not only on lived experiences, but also on the ways in which our bodies reacted as we engaged in conversations and co-created embodied

knowledge. Furthermore, I drew on Hannegan-Martinez's (2023) notion of communal and peer pláticas. Communal pláticas will allow for culturally grounded community building as well as joint meaning making of concepts such as healing, love, and protection within the context of mixed-status families and communities. Peer pláticas allowed for research collaborators to connect with one another as they dove deeper into the interrogation of formal and informal learning experiences that have shaped their healing processes.

IRB approval for this research was obtained before recruitment and data collection efforts began (UM IRB HUM00250441; PI: Saraí Blanco Martinez).

Recruitment & Incentives

To recruit community co-researchers for this study, English and Spanish flyers were disseminated on FAI's online platform and were also distributed in person to their clientele. Flyers explained that Unidos en Acción was a program focusing on the educational and immigration experiences of Latinx immigrant-origin youth and, as such, participants would be invited discuss their experiences with education, immigration, learning about how to keep themselves and their family safe from immigration related dangers, and healing using art (photography, storytelling, etc) to create positive community change. Flyers also included information detailing the duration, time, and location of the Unidos en Acción program as well as participant incentives. Community co-researchers were compensated $400 for their participation across the ten weeks of Unidos en Acción given that their participation often lasted for two hours and fifteen minutes each of the ten weeks. This breaks down into $40 per week, and roughly around $17.78 per hour.

Participants

Drawing on a purposeful selection (Creswell, 2003) sampling method, I recruited 13 young adult (ages 18-25) self-identified members of local Latinx immigrant-origin communities and who are also members of mixed-status families and communities. I specifically recruited this amount of community members given that the ideal number of participants for photovoice sessions is 7-10 participants (Wang, 1999; Sutton-Brown 2014) to allow for in-depth conversation and the creation of meaningful connections between community co-researchers. I purposely recruited more than the identified number to account for folks who might not be able to participate in all 10 sessions. This meant the group was small enough to allow for meaningful connections and conversations during the weeks that all co-researchers were present. For their safety and confidentiality, each recruited co-researcher was asked to create a pseudonym that would be used throughout the entirety of the Unidos en Acción program. Co-researchers were majority second generation Mexican, and their ages ranged from 18 to 24 years old. Immigrant generation status[3] indicates whether co-researchers themselves immigrated from their heritage country (first generation) or whether their parents immigrated (second generation). Information regarding the documentation status of co-researchers and their family was not collected.

Table 2: Co-Researcher Demographics

Pseudonym	Heritage Background	Immigrant Generation Status	Age
Mabel	Indian and Mexican	Second Generation	18
Max	Mexican	Second Generation	18
Angie	Mexican	Second Generation	19
Brianna	Mexican	Second Generation	19
Jasmine	Mexican and Black	Second Generation	19

[3] I want to emphasize that the immigration generations status of my community co-researchers does not indicate their documentation status, as information regarding the documentation status of co-researchers and their families was not gathered.

Angel	Mexican	Second Generation	19
Blue/Pedro	Mexican	Second Generation	20
Mia	Venezuelan and Colombian	First Generation	21
Camilla	Mexican	First Generation	22
Lorna	Mexican	Second Generation	22
Carlos	Mexican	First Generation	23
Ana	Mexican	Second Generation	24
Mika	Canadian and Mexican	First Generation	24

Unidos en Acción Sessions

Unidos en Acción (UeA) is a ten-session program that I designed to learn about the healing experiences of Latinx young people. For the purpose of my dissertation study, UeA took place over the course of a little over two months, beginning August, 2024 and ending October, 2024. UeA was designed so that the first two weeks focused on community building, crafting community norms, and becoming comfortable sharing stories with one another. During the first two weeks, we also engaged in education surrounding the research process as well as photovoice and pláticas as a method. Sessions 3–7 were photovoice sessions during which each co-researcher took and shared photographs that pertained to the topic of each week. Session 8 and 9 focused on preparing for and hosting the community exhibition, and Session 10 served as a wrap-up and debrief session. More detail about each specific session can be found in Appendix A.

Each 2-hour and 15 minute UeA session was structured to begin and end with a 20-minute check-in and check-out reflection activity focusing on how co-researchers were entering and leaving the space. The check-in was followed by a plática focusing on the photovoice images of the week. Following the first pláticas was a 10-minute break that encouraged co-researchers to eat snacks and attend to their bodies (i.e., bathroom breaks). After the break, we engaged in a

second plática focusing on reflection regarding emotions, comments, or shared experiences that community co-researchers notice as co-researchers shared their photos and the meaning they ascribed to the photos during the first plática. The second plática also served as an opportunity for community co-researchers to reflect on the feelings and bodily sensations that were stirred or came up for them considering the images shared. Following the second photovoice plática, we engaged in an embodied activity. These activities are meant to serve as a grounding experience following what was in some cases, an emotionally heavy experience, depending on the topics and prompts for pláticas and photos in a given week. Examples of embodied activities that we engaged in throughout the ten weeks include candle painting, weaving friendship bracelets, making slime, finger painting, ceramic pot decorating and seed planting, among others. The goal of these embodied activities was to encourage our collective connections to one another, our bodies, and the land we inhabit. In addition to the embodied activity, each week we also took part in a quick five-to-ten-minute activity that encouraged reconnecting with our bodies through movement and inward reflections. These activities included playing games (i.e., Simon Says, Pass the Hula Hoop), stretching, progressive muscle relaxation, chair yoga, and dancing. In incorporating these practices, my goal was to engage in the healing process by providing avenues to metabolize stress and tension built up in our bodies during pláticas in real time. This practice was particularly important during days in which we discussed heavy topics. We closed out each Unidos en Accion session with a check-out reflection focusing on how we were exiting the space. Specifically, check out reflections asked co-researchers how they felt as they prepared to exit the space, something that stood out to them or that they enjoyed the most about the day's sessions, and one thing they would do to engage in self-care after leaving the space.

Session 1. Each week, the UeA sessions had a different focus and guiding topic. The focus of the first photovoice session was building community and getting to know one another. I also used this session as an opportunity to share about who I am as a researcher, what my commitments are and how they inform how I approached this research, and how their participation in UeA would help me to complete my dissertation work. In this session, I also shared about that we would be engaging in our conversations using plática and photovoice methodologies and explained what each of these was. Co-researchers also had the opportunity to share about any previous experiences they had with research and pose any questions regarding who I am, the research process, and what we would be doing during our shared time together across the next ten weeks. The embodiment activity for week one was playing games, such as "Simon Says," "Pass the Hula Hoop," and "Guess the Leader." The goal of playing games the first session was to support coresearchers in feeling more comfortable.

Session 2. The second UeA session focused on education regarding the photovoice process in more detail. This included the ethics of photography, learning about important elements of photography and storytelling, and counter-narratives. Digital cameras were provided to co-researchers to use to capture the photographs that they wanted to share during the photovoice sessions. I opted for providing co-researchers with cameras rather than asking them to use their phones as an added measure of safety and security, given that photos with the digital cameras were stored in the provided memory card and only transferred onto the UeA photos Google Drive folder. Asking participants to use their phones could have created potential safety issues since photographs taken with phones are automatically stored on Google or Apple cloud photo drives, thereby creating the potential for breach of privacy and confidentiality. Providing cameras was also an attempt to be equitable, since co-researchers did not need to use their own

resources to ensure they had enough data storage space on their phones nor a working camera on their phones. For this session, I invited Jasiel, who is FAI's resident photographer, and he spoke to us about the steps that FAI takes to protect their clients' identity and privacy when they are photographed at FaithAction community events. Jasiel also provided education on the ways to take a good photos and how to use the digital cameras provided to co-researchers.

Sessions 3-7. The following five weeks focused on engaging in photovoice pláticas to discuss prompts and co-researchers photographs and shared responses to those prompts. The first prompt focused on establishing our understanding of who their community is and who they refer to when they say, "my community." The following sessions focused on thinking about their immigration experiences, their educational experiences, valuable lessons learned from their elders, and ways that our communities can experience healing. The topics for each week can be found in Table 2 below, and in the appendix. Community co-researchers and I co-developed the prompts for the photographs that they took throughout the week, at the end of each session. To co-develop the photograph prompts, I would summarize the broad topics of the session and remind co-researchers of the overarching goals of the project. I would then invite co-researchers to brainstorm with me how they thought we could build upon that sessions' topic expand on it in the next session. One example of what this looked like practically was at the end of the second session, I reminded co-researchers that the embodied activities for that day focused on building community with one another within the UeA space, and asked what we could take pictures of to expand on the theme of community. Co-researchers responded by suggesting that we could take photos of family members, neighborhoods, and physical surrounding to show who we meant when we said "our community" with the space. We would repeat this process week after week. Following each session, at the halfway point between sessions, I sent out a reminder of the

prompt to all the co-researchers to remind them to be taking photos throughout the week. Each week, co-researchers would display their photos and share their narratives during the photographs plática portion of the session, and after the break co-researchers would share reactions to each other's photos, photo-taking experiences, and narratives during the reactions plática portion of the session.

Session 8. During session 8, we engaged in collective data analysis to prepare for the community exhibition. This session was structured in a *think-pair-share* format, such that co-researchers first engaged in individual reflections of our time together as they looked through all the photographs that were shared during the previous five weeks and on the pláticas had. Co-researchers were encouraged to use the photographs to remind themselves of the conversations that we had about the photographs and co-researchers reaction. The overarching themes and topics that co-researchers identified informed the structure of the community exhibition. During the individual reflection of the think-pair-share, co-researchers were prompted to think about the conversations and photographs that stood out to them as well as the reasons why those pláticas and photographs stood out to them. Following the individual reflection, co-researchers formed small groups of three and engaged in peer pláticas informed by their individual reflections. We then engaged in a communal plática in which each group shared out the main topics that they had identified during the peer plática. Co-researchers identified three main topics that had stood out to them throughout our collective conversations: Education and language access, mental and physical health, and immigration. We also collectively decided that co-researchers would present in both English and Spanish, such that if a group presented in Spanish, a different co-researcher who comprised the interpretation team would interpret to English, and vice versa. Co-researchers decided that they would each sign up for a topic and work together to create a call to action that

they would present at the community exhibition to community stakeholders. The community exhibition was titled "*Voces del Futuro: A call to Action*."

Session 9. The final photovoice session was the community exhibition for key stakeholders (i.e., educators, researchers, policymakers). The community exhibition took place in the fellowship hall of a local church that often partners with FaithAction International to host community events. Each co-researcher chose three photos that they felt best represented the three topics and calls to action that they chose to uplift at the community exhibition. The photos were printed out and displayed on 16x20 poster boards and were set up throughout the event venue on along the walls and on the tables were stakeholders sat. Key stakeholders in attendance included educators, community organizers, faith leaders, and members of local governance.

As part of their engagement with the exhibition, stakeholders were invited to reflect upon how they can contribute to efforts to (1) craft policies with the needs of mixed-status immigrant communities in mind, including greater language accessibility and educational access; (2) establish support programs that nurture the physical and emotional healing of Latinx immigrant community members and (3) Create schooling, learning, and living environments that are free from policing and state-sanctioned persecution from immigration enforcement agencies. In asking stakeholders to reflect on these questions, the goal was to raise awareness about the current experiences of trauma that immigrant Latinx young people face within U.S. schools and to mobilize communities and people in power to advocate for legislative change to benefit immigrant communities in North Carolina. While no formal process for collecting feedback from community stakeholders was established, through informal conversations had amongst co-researchers, community members, and I, we learned that stakeholders felt inspired to engage in immigrant justice activism to support the healing and wellbeing of immigrant communities. In

alignment with our commitment to intentionally reconnect to our bodies, strengthen cultural connections, and heal through movement, community co-researchers also invited community members in attendance to close out the event dancing to *Payaso de Rodeo*.

Session 10. In the last week that the community co-researchers and I spent together, we engaged in a communal plática to reflect on our experience as community co-researchers in the Unidos en Acción program. Together, we debriefed the community exhibition as well as everyone's overall experiences in UeA. A large focus of that experience was to dream of ways that sanctuary spaces like the one we created through UeA could be recreated, particularly within school contexts. The final UeA session did not follow the same structure as the rest of the weeks. Rather than engaging in our check-in, then engaging in pláticas that are followed by an embodied activity, and closing out with a check-out, co-researchers engaged in an embodied activity of their choice while the debrief communal pláticas took place. The plática debriefing the community exhibitions asked co-researchers to reflect on how they felt after the event specifically thinking about what stood out to them, what went well, and what they wished we would have done differently. Co-researchers were also prompted to share what they hoped that each person in attendance had learned or walked away with as a result of attending our community exhibition. The plática focusing on debriefing the UeA experience prompted co-researchers to reflect on how they would describe our time together, the elements of the program overall that stood out to them and made our experience together unique, and the ways we can recreate spaces like UeA across educational settings. The final check-out activity also differed slightly from the established routine. For the final check-out, co-researchers were prompted to share something that they learned throughout their participation across the ten weeks of UeA that

they wanted to continue putting into practice outside in their daily lives, outside of the UeA space.

UeA Video and Audio Recordings. Each session was video and audio-recorded. Originally, sessions were recorded using one iPad on a swivel robot device and audio markers placed throughout the room to capture co-researchers' audio. There was one marker that was passed around among co-researchers that prompted the swivel device to pivot and focus the camera on the person speaking, and also served as a talking stick amongst the co-researchers, such that only the person holding the marker spoke, while the rest of us listened. Swivel robot recorders were designed specifically to be used to record classroom video to support teacher education. Swivel robots are paired with five audio markers that record independent audio tracks, and one maker is used for tracking, so that it automatically tracks the wearer as they move about the space. The five independent audio tracks were placed throughout the UeA space and were used to capture individual and peer pláticas taking place organically amongst co-researchers without my facilitation. Once the video was transferred onto Premiere Pro video editing software, I was able to pick a specific marker's individual audio to listen to and thus was able to also transcribe the individual pláticas taking place. This would likely not have been possible without the use of multiple audio markers and Swivel robot technology.

During session three, one co-researcher accidentally pressed the recording button and paused the recording. Thus, for session three, data is based off the recording of the check-in and check-out reflections and my extensive field notes from that session. This prompted the setup of a stationary iPad to also record the sessions as back up, in case further technological issues arose. The main video recording utilized iPad and Swivel robot technology that followed the tracking

marker and focused on each co-researcher as they shared. The back-up recording was a stationary iPad, set on an iPad stand.

Table 3: Unidos en Acción Topic Overview

Session 1: Introductions, Norm Setting, & Community Building	**Session 6:** Photovoice Session 4 – Cultural & Spiritual Strengths learned from Elders
Session 2: Photography Methods & Ethics	**Session 7:** Photovoice Session 5 – Healing Our Communities
Session 3: Photovoice Session 1 – Community and Identity	**Session 8:** Photovoice Session 6 – Collective analysis, identifying themes, & choosing exhibition photographs
Session 4: Photovoice Session 2 – Immigration, Education, & Daily living	**Session 9:** UeA *Voces del Futuro* Community Exhibition to Policy Makers and Key Stakeholders in collaboration with FAI
Session 5: Photovoice Session 3 – Parent's Teachings & Lessons in Finances and Overcoming Barriers	**Session 10:** Debrief & Wrap-Up

UeA Topics & RQs. Given the planned topics for each week, I expected that the pláticas discussed during Sessions 3 –10 would address the first research question focusing how co-researchers were developing their conceptualizations and understandings of healing. The broad topics chosen for each week were meant to provide a gradual introduction into topics of trauma and healing. We began by defining who our community, which intentionally provided co-researchers with a low stakes sharing opportunity that allowed them to gauge how comfortable they felt sharing, and to what extent they felt comfortable sharing in. Topics gradually became heavier or more serious, so that by the time that we reached those topics, co-researchers had already developed a strong sense of trust, belonging, and community with one another. This, in turn, facilitated co-researchers' more vulnerable sharing and interrogating their experiences of trauma. Whereas the embodied practices and enactment of community norms engaged in week after week would help answer the second research question focusing on how co-researchers co-created a sanctuary space.

Data Sources

Multiple sources of data were collected and analyzed for this. dissertation, in line with rigorous qualitative case study methodology (Ying, 2017). Data includes Unidos en Acción session transcripts, extensive field notes for session three given the technological mishap that interrupted the video and audio recording of session 3, and my reflexive memos.

Photovoice Sessions and Pláticas.

As mentioned above, during the UeA sessions, the co-researchers and I engaged in individual, peer, and communal pláticas to discuss and reflect on the weekly prompts and photovoice images. Co-researchers engaged in a series of individual, peer, communal pláticas to think about the ways that cultural practices have contributed to their healing processes. I facilitated the communal pláticas with co-researchers, while peer and individual pláticas happened organically within and among co-researchers without my facilitation, although sometimes, co-researchers would involve me in their peer pláticas by asking me questions and incorporating me into their conversations. Communal pláticas took place across each UeA session and served as the tool through which co-researchers provides the narratives and context for the images that they shared. Given the informal research nature of pláticas, peer pláticas often happened organically in the space without requiring my facilitation nor interference as a researcher. As such, it was important that I use swivel technology to video and audio record how community co-researchers and I related to one another in the space. Using swivel technology allowed me to place multiple voice recorders throughout the room, which also recorded the side pláticas and conversations that took place organically.

Memos. At the end of each Unidos en Acción program session, I wrote memos about the session experience, including my initial reactions paying particular attention to the mind-body-

spirit connection. This is in line with Chicanx feminist theories that argue for the need of healthy spiritual connections to facilitate the liberation process (Isasi-Díaz, 1993; Comas-Díaz, 2016). Memos included discussions of where in my body I experienced each feeling, to be true to the process of embodiment, and a general summary of the events of that particular day. Reflexive memos were also used as a space to process and reflect on the photographs and narraticeMemos were also a space for me to engage in active reflection of any tensions, questions, and general thoughts that arose for me throughout the UeA sessions.

Artifacts & Photographs. Photographs taken by collaborators throughout the photovoice process were kept along with the narratives that co-researchers shared during the photovoice pláticas to provide additional meanings and insights to their chosen images. Though photographs used during the photovoice sessions are considered as data antecedents, rather than data in and of themselves (Latz, 2017), I include some photos as supports or examples of overall themes that are developed from the transcripts of the photovoice sessions in Appendix D.

Data Management and Analysis Strategy

Thematic analysis of dialogue transcripts, along with my memos, was conducted to explore how Latinx immigrant young people learn about and conceptualized the radical healing process (RQ1), and drew on their lived experiences to co-construct a sanctuary space (RQ2) (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The majority of the sessions were conducted in English, with a few instances of Spanglish, thus transcripts of the sessions was coded in the language that community researchers use.

RADaR Technique

Thematic analysis of ten session transcripts were conducted using the "Rigorous and Accelerated Data Reduction" (RADaR) technique (Watkins, 2017). RADaR uses readily accessible software (i.e. Excel, Google Sheets) to organize, revise, and reduce the data rather than using a specific computer software that may take time to learn or be costly. The goal of RADaR is tho systematically reduce large amounts of qualitative data, and only retain the data that directly responds to the research question. This process of data reduction takes place throughout four iterative phases.

Training. I recruited four research assistants (RAs) to assist with the data analysis process. Two of them were bilingual and bicultural and the other two were not. I trained each research assistant on the "Rigorous and Accelerated Data Reduction" (RADaR) technique (Watkins, 2017) protocol that explicitly outlined each step of the process. During the training meeting with RAs, we also engaged in self-reflections to identify potential biases that could impact that way we each interacted with the data. Each research assistant wrote a positionality statement in which they reflected on their identities and experiences and how these can shape the ways in which they approach the data collection process. Reflection questions guiding positionaility statemetns encouraged RAs to think back on their own developmental experiences from when they were between the ages of 18-24 years old. I partnered with each of the four RAs to form four different coding team pairs to collaborate in the data analysis process. One pair worked to code for RQ1 and one other pair worked on coding for RQ2.

File Preparations. Transcripts of the sessions audio recorded were converted into excel spreadsheet files. Each excel spreadsheet had the relevant research question clearly visible in the top row of the file. Each excel file had seven pertinent columns: Speaker Name, Text, Notes, Codes, Subcodes, Concepts, and Examples. The rows with the RQ and column headings were

frozen so that RA's could be reminded of the research question as they worked through each file. A sample of a prepared RADaR file can be found in Appendix E.

RA Coding File Assignments. In a Google Sheet titled "TASKS." RA pairs signed up for the Session that they were working one, and once completed with that session they indicated this by highlighting the row in a dark lilac color, and they linked their final coded file as well as the document with their final concepts for each file.

RADaR Folders Organization. Data transcripts were stored on Dropbox in a Folder titled Qualitative Data Analysis that was stored in a larger Unidos en Acción Dropbox folder. Within the Qualitative Data Analysis folder were two subfolders titled "RQ1" and "RQ2," a Google sheet file for the Codebook, as well as the above mentioned "TASKS" sheetWithin both the "RQ1" and "RQ2," folder, were folders for each of the ten UeA sessions. Within each session folder, were four folders – one for each phase of the RADaR process. A master excel file of each session transcript was created and included into the corresponding session folder. Once the coding process began, RA's created a copy of the master file, renamed it following the naming conventions outlined in the protocol document and moved their files into the Phase 1 folder. Then, RA pairs began their thematic analyses.

Phase 1. During the initial RADaR phase, RAs familiarize themselves with the data and identify data that does not relate to the research questions and can be removed. This is done by highlighting rows in either red, yellow, orange, or leaving rows of pertinent data to be analyzed in white. Rows highlighted in red indicate rows of data that do not directly relate to the research questions and will be deleted. Rows highlighted in yellow indicate that the data within that row are providing important context but are not data to be analyzed. Lastly, rows that are highlighted in orange indicate that the RA was unsure whether to remove the row or to keep it as data to be

analyzed, and thus require a deeper conversation among the coding teams to make that decision together. For each row that was marked either white or orange, co-researcher would take notes in the notes column focusing on their interpretation of what was happening in the text and how it reslated to the research question. Once RAs coded their individual files, they a coding meeting in which they would compare each individual RADaR file. During the coding meeting, one RA would volunteer to be the notetaker. The notetaker created a notetaker spreadsheet file by creating a copy of their own individual coding file. RAs then discussed each row and together decide whether that row should be highlighted red, yellow, ortange, or be left white. The notetaker recorded each decision made in the notetaker file and documented the the reasoning for each decision made in the notes column. After the Phase 1 Coding meeting, the notetaker would make a copy of the notetaker file, delete all rows marked in red, and copy the file into the Phase 2 folder. The cleaned copy of the notetaker file became the master file for phase 2.

Phase 2. In phase 2, co-researchers repeat the process for step one. RA's begin by reading their individual file and engaged in a deeper reading of the data and identified rows to delete, and rows to keep. During phase 2, RAs make final decisions regarding any rows that were marked orange, indicating that RA's wanted to think more about what to do with that specific row. During phase 2, notetakers took notes focusing on how each row of text directly answers the research question. Following the individual coding, RA's met again and repeat the coding meeting process. One RA served as the notetaker and took notes regarding decisions made. All final changes and decisions were tracked on the note taker file. Once RAs were in agreement, the notetaker would make a copy of the notetaker file and move it into the folder for phase 3. All rows marked red would be removed from the phase 3 file, such that only rows marked in white as data, or yellow for context, were left in the file.

Phase 3. During the third phase of data analysis, researchers developed codes and subcodes to applied them to the data that directly answered the research questions. Codes and subcodes were defined and refined to create a codebook that was iteratively revised with each transcript that was analyzed Each new code was included in the codebook along with its definition and any pertinent subcodes. New codes and subcodes were highlighted in yellow to be discussed during the coding meeting. RAs first created and applied codes individually, and then met with their coding partner to discuss any new codes generated and which codes were applied to the data rows. The notetaker would once again create a notetaker file where all decisions were recorded.

Phase 4. In phase 4, RA's read each coded file and grouped the codes to identify overarching concepts within each transcript. Concepts are sentences that directly respond to the research question and summarize the phenomenon that codes are trying to capture. RA's individuallygenerated three to five overarching concepts that best captured what was happening within each transcript. Each concept was color coded and applied them to their phase 4 coding file. During the phase 4 coding meeting, RAs created a began the meeting by creating a "Concepts" Word document in which they would each paste in their developed concepts. RA's would then identify similar or overlapping concepts generated, and combine them to create the final concepts. RAs would then apply the final concepts to the phase 4 excel files. Given that concepts were generated from grouped codes, not every row had a concept assigned to it. After concepts were generated and applied, RAs identified quotes from the data segments that best exemplified each of the concepts generated.

Thematic Mapping. To generate the overarching themes across all data transcripts analyzed, RAs engaged in the thematic mapping (Braun & Clark, 2022) of final concepts. RAs

engaged in thematic mapping by combining all final concepts for each transcript and grouping them together into clusters. Each RA created their own individual clusters and then we shared each individual file and discuss the areas of overlap and difference across each of our generated clusters. We did this process twice, focusing on each of the two research questions. Each cluster became a generated overarching theme for the specific RQ. I used the co-generated thematic maps and used them to write up initial findings. Thematic maps and clustered were reworked and refined during the writing process, and final themes for each research question was generated.

Using the RADaR technique is a rigorous way of conducting qualitative analyses, given that it is a consensus and team-based approach to data analysis. The rigor of this technique is rooted in the repeated review, engagement, and analysis within each individual transcript, which are discussed and agreed upon by multiple researchers. At each phase of coding, RAs check in with each other and discuss data that they chose to eliminate or codes they created and the motivations for these Through this frequent check in, RAs engage in consensus coding – comparing their results at a one-to-one basis. This is an iterative and rigorous process in the analysis because RA's do not advance on to the next phase until they reach an agreement via dialogue. This differs from other methods of reliability that rely on separate and overlapping coding that often fail to reach a full consensus. RADaR ensures 100 percent agreement between coders.

Chapter IV: Results

The overarching goal of this dissertation is to better understand how Latinx immigrant-origin young people conceptualize healing from ethno-racial trauma. Specifically, I address this overarching aim by exploring how Latinx immigrant-origin young people develop their own understandings of healing (RQ1). I further explore how youth experiences and understandings of ethnoracial trauma and healing inform how they co-construct a sanctuary space (RQ2). Guided by radical healing frameworks for youth of color and immigrant-origin youth, I present the findings for both RQ1 and RQ2 (Ginwright & Camaarota, 2002; Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019).

RQ 1: Conceptualizing Healing within/through Unidos en Acción (UeA)

I developed four themes that elucidated how Latinx immigrant-origin young people conceptualize and develop their own understanding of healing from ethno-racial trauma. Specifically, young people's understanding and experiencing of healing were informed by (1) *Life is Really Worth Living*: *Vulnerable Sharing within the Unidos en Acción (UeA) Sanctuary*; (2) *Interrogating Experiences of Trauma and Creating Counternarratives*; (3) *Drawing on Intergenerational Wisdom and Cultural Healing Practices* and (4) *Healing through Consciousness Raising and Social Action*. My findings suggest that healing is a collective experience that was facilitated within the UeA space. These four themes give us insight into how youth are not only experiencing healing for themselves but are also supporting each other as they embark on their healing journeys. Each theme is discussed below.

Theme 1: Life is Really Worth Living - Vulnerable Sharing within the UeA Sanctuary

To facilitate the healing journeys of Latinx immigrant-origin young people, the Unidos en Acción space had to be curated into a sanctuary space that would hold the vulnerabilities, tensions, and sorrows as well as hopes, dreams, and visualizations of better futures. Youths' trust and commitment to the space allowed UeA to transform into a space of vulnerability where young people felt comfortable sharing the tensions and struggles they experienced relevant to their identity and immigration journeys. Photographs provided a starting point for making sense of experiences that can be difficult to verbalize. During our discussion of cultural and spiritual strengths in Session 6, Mika shared a photo that she took at an interactive museum in a dark hallway with different multicolored lights. Mika explained that the photo represents how she has learned from her parents that although the future is unknown, we should be prepared to face it by keeping our peace and happiness and being authentic. During the second plática, Jasmine shared the following quote as a reaction to Mika's photo:

> Um, I wanna say, um...I really...The picture that, you Mika, had, um, for the museum, with like the...I don't know. That really touched me. Like...Like I felt that in like my chest. Like...about to cry type. Like I was like...You know, life is really worth living. And I think I really needed that reminder. (Jasmine, 19, Session 6)

Jasmine's quote is a powerful example of how the exchanges that happened at UeA served as a sanctuary space that not only facilitated conversations about healing, but also an example of how healing happened in real time. Jasmine was experiencing difficult life circumstances outside of UeA, however, within the sanctuary that UeA became, she was reminded that life is worth living without feeling pressured to share specific details about the struggles she was experiencing. This exemplifies how UeA operated as a sanctuary space that offered the flexibility necessary for co-researchers to share according to their comfort level.

While it was not necessary for Jasmine to share specifics of her situation to feel supported and encouraged, other co-researcher did engage in more explicit vulnerable sharing. Examples of more explicit sharing that co-researchers engaged in because of UeA operating as a sanctuary space had to do with struggles and pressures regarding their cultural identities and experiences. These included sharing about topics such as feeling the pressure of being worthy of their parents' sacrifice in immigrating to the U.S. as well as struggles regarding identity and belonging. When speaking about the pressure of being the daughter of immigrants, Brianna shared a photo of her university homework assignment and explained the following:

> So I took a picture of, like. Where I'm studying. My parents, they didn't finish school, and so they really prioritized my education. And also my siblings'. And so being the first born. Well, yeah. Being the first born, like, getting into college, has really put like pressure on me because my parents want me to have a career, have, have a good life. And it it's, it's hard sometimes because like I said, so much pressure on me, towards my parents. (Brianna, 19, Session 4)

Brianna's experience is a common experience that many children of immigrants face. UeA participants were no exception, as they saw their experiences mirrored in Brianna's. Indeed, during the reactions plática, Angie responded to Briana's narrative and expanded on it by sharing her experience:

> And another reaction that I had was for, Bree, Brianna's picture of, the school, and I just wanna say that I agree how much pressure there is. I'm not first gen, but, just how much that is pushed, to be, you know, a scholar to have a nice, a good career. It gets hard. And sometimes it's hard when you don't know, like, exactly what you're doing and you can't really reach out to your parents, just like for advice. And like being at school you see a lot

> of other kids that their parents do have, like degrees and like. Things like that. And, have all the school experience and they're able to get more, more of a guide through college and through just school in general and kind of in a way, you kind of, you feel a little jealous, but you just have to, you know, push through and at the end you'll, you'll just look back and you'll just be grateful for everything that you had to go through, and you'll just feel stronger. (Angie, 19, Session 4)

While in the quote above Angie affirms Brianna's experience, she ends by reframing that experience as a source of strength. This reframe evidences that the sanctuary space is operating as it should, not only affirming co-researchers' experiences but also providing counternarratives for inequitable experiences.

UeA operating as a sanctuary space that could hold the vulnerability and honesty among co-researchers' sharing, allowed for even more vulnerable sharing. Like Briana and Angie sharing about the pressure they experienced as children of immigrants, Lorna felt safe enough to share about her struggles connecting to her Mexican identity. She shared:

> I've been struggling with my, like, identity as a Mexican, recently, for some reason, when Hispanic heritage, when the topic of Hispanic heritage came up, uhhh ughhh I dunno what I'm trying, hold on, let me breathe. Mexican Independence Day just passed, and it felt like that entire weekend, I was trying to, like, convince not just myself, but like, even my family. For some reason, I felt like I was not Mexican enough, and I felt like I was putting on this costume. That's how it felt. It was dumb because it's dumb to think that. Like it. I just feel like I can't do anything to prove to people that I'm Mexican enough for them…I don't know. That's just why I wasn't able to have a picture for today. (Lorna, 22, Session 4)

In the above quote, Lorna shares vulnerably about how she has struggled with her identity as a Mexican and how that struggle surfaces across multiple times and contexts. However, as a testament to the loving and supportive community co-researchers cultivated within the UeA sanctuary space, co-researchers responded to Lorna's vulnerability with love and tenderness by affirming, relating to, and reciprocating her vulnerability. Angel (19) was the first to respond saying, "Nah, I be feeling that way too, like I don't even know how to speak Spanish. Like well, you know, like, them Hispanic kids that come from Mexico and they be saying them long words like that, like nothing." Mika also responded to Lorna by not only affirming her experience, but she also shared wisdom that she learned through her own experiences and identity struggles.

> So, Lorna, I relate a lot to that because when I came to the country, I came not speaking Spanish. I actually came speaking French. So people would say, oh, you're not Hispanic enough, you're not French enough, you're not American enough, you're not enough. So, for many cultures, you are never going to be completely something. And I learned that the hard way. I learned that I didn't need to be full something in order to really be Hispanic, that sometimes, like, even knowing my country, knowing the languages, listening to the music, I was enough, I was enough. (Mika, 24, Session 4)

Mika's sharing about her experiences with French being her first language and navigating her multiple identities also served as a gateway to engage in further pláticas on how one's physical presentation informs their experiences of belonging and unbelonging. Still, it is important to note that while these conversations can be uncomfortable, they were all happening from a lens of trying to understand and relate to each other's experiences from a position of love, support and care. This is partly captured in the following interaction among Blue and other co-researchers:

Blue	00:21:49:01	00:21:57:26	I do have a question. From the people that saw me the first day, did I look Mexican enough to be here?
Angel	00:21:57:29	00:21:59:03	Nah, everybody was different, so like
Carlos	00:21:59:03	00:21:59:23	I thought you were Argentinian
Mabel	00:21:59:26	00:22:06:13	I can understand that, cause I was kind of thinking that I look too Indian to be here.
Carlos	00:22:06:15	00:22:19:12	I thought you were Hispanic, but like, you know, like Uruguay, Chile, you know, there's like really, you're like European, Hispanic.

This interaction prompted Mabel to also engage in vulnerability as she shared her own identity struggles, particularly as she navigated both her Indian and Mexican identities. She shared:

> Actually, I can relate to that a lot because, like, growing up, even though I was in contact with a lot of my Hispanic family and, not a lot of my Indian family, I considered myself Hispanic for a long time. And then as I grew up, I realized I finally started to see that a lot of people saw me as Indian. And I was wondering why, like, you know, despite being out with my family a lot and like my family's whole Hispanic, they'd go up to my dad and immediately started speaking Spanish. But the second they looked at me, they just assumed I was someone else's kid. Yeah. And so, it got hard sometimes because, like, you know, I wasn't the same. And even with my siblings, I look a lot more Indian than they do. They look a lot more Hispanic than I do. So, it just gets hard sometimes with, like, you know, trying to convince people that you are. And I have to bring up my last name a lot just to, you know, prove that I am like some sort of certificate of being Hispanic. (Mabel, 18).

Mabel's sharing further reflects Lorna and Mika's experiences of straddling the in-betweeness of belonging and unbelonging. Still, relating across shared vulnerable experience contributes to both conceptualizations of and experiencing healing.

Summary of RQ1: Theme 1. Unidos en Acción became a sanctuary spaced that allowed for vulnerable sharing amongst co-researchers and facilitated conceptualizations and experiences of healing. Vulnerability was displayed first and foremost through the photographs and narratives that co-researchers took and shared with the groups. However, co-researchers' vulnerability and trust in the curated sanctuary and in each other was most evident in co-researchers' responses to the photographs and narratives shared. During the pláticas focusing on co-researchers' reactions, they were able to affirm each other's lived experiences and connect over similar experiences and struggles. Co-researchers were also able to voice deep personal struggles as they navigated belonging, unbelonging, and the in-betweenness in the ways that they presented their cultural identities. These instances were received with tenderness, love, and care. Through these vulnerable exchanges, UeA served as a sanctuary space that facilitated the youths' (co-researchers') understandings of healing.

Theme 2: Interrogating Experiences of Trauma and Creating Counternarratives

Conceptualizations of healing also took place as co-researchers engaged in the critical interrogation of their experiences of immigration trauma and named the ways in which these experiences were systemically facilitated. These conversations included topics such as limited job opportunities for undocumented immigrants in the community, flaws within the immigration system, and limited access to culturally responsive services within the fields of education, mental and physical health services, and in various social settings. Still, as co-researchers engaged in conversations regarding experiences of trauma, healing was evidenced and conceptualized in the ways that co-researchers reframed their experiences in ways that not only acknowledged the

unjust ways that they experienced trauma but also highlighted their strength and resilience and created counternarratives.

During a plática that took place during session 5 about co-researchers' hopes and dreams for the future, Mika demonstrated her understanding of systems in shaping community members day to day experiences. She shared:

> One of my biggest hopes is for not only the immigration system, the educational system, just systems that are beyond our control. And people are always voicing like, oh, you can vote, right? But sometimes people within their votes, they're not just voting for the right people…So I saved this quote, it says we can disagree and still love each other. Unless your disagreement is rooted in my oppression and denial of humanity and right to exist. So that's [sic] pretty much sums what I think about voting and, how it impacts other people because of systems. (Mika, 24)

While the whole of this quote highlights Mika's awareness of inequality being rooted within larger systems of oppression, her comment also highlights the need to critically reflect and interrogate the people on voting ballots, and whether their platforms will be beneficial to the members of her community. In the rest of that conversation, Mika also shared her hope that all immigrant students would have access to higher education, and the promotion of more language access for the members of her community.

Another example that points to the co-researchers' awareness of larger systems affecting the lived experiences of communities is Ana's discussion of ways that that families and communities could experience healing. More specifically, she discussed the difficulties of dealing with the distance of being away from close family members. In her reflection, she also notes issues within the structures of current immigration systems:

> I feel like distance is something that's really hard on the Hispanic community. And also, I don't think it's that easy for people in Mexico to come over here. Because I have an aunt like my mom's sister…She lives in Mexico, and she, like, does everything right. She's got, like, all the papers and things that she needs to be able to apply for a visa. But they just deny it, like she's been trying for, like, so many years. It's been like 15, 18 years. And they just like, even though she has everything she needs, they still deny it just because they feel like it…But I feel like there needs to be something fixed there. Like if they have everything right, that they need to be able to come over here, that they should be able to. Not just because someone that works at the I don't know, visa place just felt like saying no. Like that's just not fair. (Ana, 24)

Yet, Ana also shared that although the current immigration structures are unjust barriers preventing families from being united, she has witnessed her mom's resilience as she copes with family separation by developing a chosen family within her church community and by developing really close-knit relationships with the family that they have near to them.

Similarly, Mia also engaged in reflection that demonstrates an awareness of the impacts of systems on individuals' daily living. Though she does not demonstrate the same level of systemic awareness as Mika, Mia is also able to note the ways in which being overworked contributes to mental health struggles of her parents as she shared the following:

> So when our parents originally came here, they have had to work multiple jobs. Like, for example, my father, he had to work three jobs at the same time. My mom, two jobs. And here they were. Work very long hours, be super exhausted. And eventually this led to them having, like, mental health problems such as depression and anxiety, which my

> parents were never really educated at about it, how to properly handle it and things of that matter. (Mia, 21)

In Mia's quote, she demonstrates her understanding that working conditions can have a significant impact on wellbeing, particularly mental health. Mia further demonstrates understanding that it is unjust societal conditions that led her parents to working multiple jobs, and it is her parents' resilience that has sustained them. In fact, in a later discussion among co-researchers Mia also highlights the ways that she has witnessed both of her parents, but her mom especially, take steps to improve their wellbeing. She says:

> I get impressed by mom. She, she's been doing research about mental health. Like, she's never done that before. She's been learning so much about it, even about certain disorders like, everything. And, she's just done an amazing job with really trying to be, aware of everything. But they've both done a great job with, being open minded in everything. And then hopefully they can teach that to other people as well. (Mia, 21)

Another way in which co-researchers engaged in the critical interrogation of their experiences of trauma, and centered healing was by developing counternarratives that focused on uplifting the progress and resilience that they have witnessed within themselves and their family. Indeed, during Session 5, in her check out reflection, Mika affirms another co-researcher who shared that one thing he learned during that particular session was that it is a shared experience amongst the eldest immigrant child to serve as interpreters for their parents. However, she also provides a counternarrative that highlights how she has capitalized on her experiences interpreting for her family to her benefit:

> As the first child, I can confirm that I was the interpreter, and I actually got a certificate, so I'm a medical interpreter right now, so my experience actually helped me. So, thank

> you, parents, for helping, for giving me experiences…And, one thing that stood out to me is just how resilient we are, all pretty much are, our parents and even us. (Mika, 24, Session 5)

Both Mia's and Mika's quotes note the ways that their or their parents' experiences have been shaped by unjust and culturally unresponsive systems. However, both highlight resilience in counternarratives in two key ways. In Mia's quotes, she expresses pride in the effort that she has witnessed her mom put forth to educate herself and improve her mental health. In Mika's quote, she demonstrates resilience by reframing an often burdensome experience for children of immigrants into an avenue for her success and wellbeing.

Another important way that co-researchers engaged in interrogating their experiences of trauma and creating counternarratives was by focusing on the privileges that they have been afforded through their parents choosing to immigrate to the U.S. In the following quote, Blue is describing the photographs that he thought of taking in response to the prompt asking co-researchers to reflect on the ways that they have experienced the impact of immigration systems on their daily living and educational experiences. He shared:

> The first thing I thought of [was] a school, cause if there's one thing my dad has taught me more than anything is that I have a chance here more than he did over there in Mexico. So, I was going to take a picture of two different elementary schools that I went to. And obviously I can't say what the schools are. But I think that that just strikes sort of the, uh, the opportunity you have because, you're the child of an immigrant parent. (Blue, 20, Session 4)

Similarly, Angie discussed the ways in which she feels privileged by having the opportunity to pursue higher education but she also highlights that acknowledging privilege can also be healing for both parents and young people. She shared:

> So most of our parents, they came here to the U.S. with the same idea to come and have, a better life to get more opportunities…to give us a better life because, you know, they're already grown, but they wanted us to grow up, with a good life. And so what I think, something that I think, is healing for our communities is…realizing, how much of a privilege we have to, have an education and be able to pursue, higher education and be able to give back. So…one of my goals is for when, you know, I have my career, I'm able to give my parents back, what they gave, gave up for me…So I feel like it's healing for the child as well as for the parent to see. The parent will see, "Oh they really do appreciate, everything that we did for them" and then the child will just be happy with them. (Angie, 19, Session 7)

Thus, both Blue and Angie provide counternarratives in the ways that they reframe their immigrant experience to uplift the privileges that they have been afforded as a result of their parents' decision to immigrate to the U.S.

Summary of RQ1: Theme 2. Theme two focused on the ways that UeA co-researchers were able to name the ways in which societal structures and unjust systems contributed to either their own or their parents' experiences of trauma. Importantly, however, co-researchers also engaged in the healing process by also providing counternarratives to their experiences of trauma. While they honored the harm that they witnessed their parents experiencing, co-researchers also intentionally uplifted strengths, growth, and resilience. One way that co-researchers critically interrogated their experiences of trauma was by engaging in discussion

about the importance of voting but also highlighting that it is even more important to ensure that the candidates support the rights of immigrant communities. Similarly, co-researchers discussed the ways in which immigration systems currently operate are unjust and inconsistent. Co-researchers also discussed the ways that they have reframed their own experiences as children of immigrants to set themselves up for success. In doing so, co-researchers recognized the many privileges they have been afforded as a result of sacrifices their parents made in immigrating to the U.S. Thus, co-researchers also expressed their desire to give back to their parents to thank them for their sacrifices and providing them with better life opportunities.

Theme 3: Drawing on Intergenerational and Communal Healing Practices

Within the UeA space, co-researchers conceptualized and engaged in the healing process by drawing on the wisdom shared with them by the elders in their family and on cultural practices that contribute to healing. These practices included intentional reconnecting and awareness of their bodies, minds, and spirits as well as drawing on spiritual and faith-based practices. Specifically, co-researchers drew on intergenerational wisdom and cultural healing practices through (1) *Soul nourishment through faith and spirituality;* (2) *Intergenerational healing through family and community;* and (3) *Healing through embodiment*.

Soul nourishment through faith and spirituality. Co-researchers engaged in conceptualizing healing by discussing the ways in which they have witness or experienced socioemotional and spiritual nourishment by tapping into spiritual and faith-based communities and practices. The saliency of co-researchers' spiritual and faith connections became evident early into the UeA experience. In fact, in their "Quien soy yo" poems—an activity that took place during session two with the goal of prompting co-researchers to reflect on the most salient

aspects of their identities—co-researchers began incorporating the importance of their faith and spirituality into their sharing about themselves. Two prominent examples are Blue's and Mika' poems:

> I am Mexican from the trailer park I grew up in. I am from sunflowers. And mango trees. I am of Dia de Gracias and dark hair. Padre, madre, and abuela. I am of "ponte las pilas" and Lijador. Of "ponte listo" and "todo lo tengo en Cristo." I am from Dallas, Texas and mole and tamales. Of my parents crossing the border. And my parents buying their first home. I am from the trailer park I grew up in. (Blue, 20, Quien Soy Yo Poem, Session 2)

> Soy Latina y Católica. I am from a garden full of roses. Y del frutero de arboles. I'm from doing everything together and long thick hair. From mi mamá y papá y mis hermanos y mi familia. Yo soy de "echale ganas y no te rindas" y a little bit of everything. De "que te vaya bien" y "hasta luego," "et la vie et belle." Yo soy de donde crecí, the places donde crecí, mole poblano y pan con cafe. Of creating new opportunities for yourself and graduating college. Yo soy de dining table and little, living room where we hold the most precious memories of my childhood singing, talking, eating. Dancing and relaxing together. (Mika, 24, Quien Soy Yo Poem, Session 2)

Thus, while faith and spirituality were not the central component of both poems, being part of faith communities proved to be a salient aspect of both Blue and Mika's lived experiences. Both included references to their spirituality in their poem early into UeA and continually referenced their faith-based orientations throughout the remaining UeA sessions. In fact, references to faith and spirituality were common across the entirety of UeA by most of the co-researchers. Co-researchers shared examples of the ways that parents had taught and modeled practicing faith and

spirituality as a coping mechanism when facing difficult life circumstances. In Mia's case she shares:

> Cause you know, at least for me, I pray a lot. Um, my parents have taught me to, you know, make sure you pray every night, um, kind of do like, a small prayer, um, with every meal and things like that. That's, um, kind of what's been passed down…at times, you know, at the moment you can think, oh, you know, I'm going through so much. Um, but you know, it's a reminder of that, hey, you know, it could be worse. And uh, it's essentially a comfort item to have to be like, hey, you know, I have God with me and you know, He'll get me through this. (Mia, 21, Session 6)

Brianna also provides an example of how she has been socialized to draw on her spiritual and faith practices to engage the healing process:

> When I went to the trip, I saw this, virgencita, that they put there, it was outside of my house. And I feel like religion, also plays like a big role in the healing. How, like, most of the community goes to, like, God or like, you know, to, like, heal from, like, ask for forgiveness. Ask for healness, like when they struggle, they, like, come together and like, they, they just let, you know, God, take control of it. (Brianna, 19, Session 7)

Furthermore, co-researchers also described conceptualizing healing from the pain of being separated from their families by creating a chosen family through their church family. Angie shared:

> This weekend we did a little cookout at my house with, for my church's youth. I don't know if I said it last week, but that is also my community. The church, that's our family. Being there for so long, I was able to meet, like, a lot of families, a lot of people that kind of have similar stories. We all come from different places, different backgrounds, but we

> all have came [sic], like a lot of them have immigrated from where they're from to here. And having no family like us, for example, we have no family here. So the church really is our family, and it's just good to know that we are all connected in that way. (Angie, 19, Session 4)

Similarly, Blue also describes how being a part of a faith-community has been an avenue for healing and source of support:

> Because if they've [parents] taught me anything is, that always take advantage of what you have. Always use what's available, basically not take anything for granted. The church wasn't really my thing, but they were religious since I was born, apparently. But…the young adults thing at church started to get up and go into that sense. And I think it's really been helpful, and it really makes me realize how much taking advantage of things really can make a little bit of a difference. Because I was offered to go to that when they started doing it last year, and I didn't go, but now I'm realizing how much of a good thing that really is for me. Yeah, not to mention, people from church can be helpful and you can get a lot from that. (Blue, 20, Session 5)

Co-researchers also appreciated learning that this was a common experience that was shared amongst co-researchers. As such, in her check-out reflection Lorna shared, “I liked everyone's pictures and how we all kind of related. Especially on the like, the religion thing. I thought that was nice to see, um, and hear about everyone else's like, experience with it, growing up with it.” Similarly, Carlos shared:

> So, I felt pretty, uh, you know, intrigued. Not surprised, but, well, yeah. Kinda surprised, but not really surprised in the sense of like, a lot of us, in our pictures talked about

> religion. And that's pretty much, I think, something that I figure that we all connected in some way since like week two. (Carlos, 20, Session 6)

As such, healing was conceptualized and experienced in the ways that co-researchers have drawn strengths and felt empowered by engaging in cultural faith and spiritual practices as well as having that be a shared experience among co-researchers.

Intergenerational healing through family and community. One particularly important aspect through which co-researchers conceptualized and experienced healing was through close-knit relationships with their families. Co-researchers expressed that their roles as role models for the younger generations within their families served as a source of motivation that encouraged them to try their best. Furthermore, co-researchers also often expressed feeling empowered by witnessing strength and resilience from older members of their families. Thus, there was an intergenerational exchange of motivation and strength as co-researchers were inspired and strengthened by their elders. In turn, co-researchers were also motivated to be the best versions of themselves by the younger children in their lives. Indeed, many of the photographs that co-researchers shared during the UeA pláticas often centered various family members. However, examples of intergenerational conceptualizations of healing also included examples of healing in community. Brianna captures the intergenerational aspect of healing as she shares:

> My second picture is, um, my cousins. They're in the soccer team and, I feel like, like I stated before, my family, it's like I prioritize so much. Yeah. My grandma, she came here to the United States recently, and she's leaving soon. And so spending time with her, seeing, like, her grandkids ya know, play, grow up, and just having her around and her, seeing also her kids have like their family and stuff it's like, really, I'm happy that she also gets to, see us and see how...Cause it’s really different from Mexico and how where

> I'm from is, like, really hard and, just seeing her here, I guess, um disfrutar. (Brianna, 19, Session 5)

In a separate conversation on Session 7 focused on healing practices, Brianna expanded on how family unity has contributed to her family's experiences of healing as she shared the following:

> I took a picture of my family, here. I feel like coming together as a family heals each other. Some can, like, understand our problems, and, also, like, I don't have a picture of my grandma, but, having my grandma here, healing my…parents. And, like, well, my dad and my aunts and uncles, healing them, like, from the inner child, seeing their mother here, having that connection, being away from them for a very, very long time, just like having that connection again, there, when they had as a childhood being separated for a very long time, just like makes them feel more at home I guess. And yeah, having this opportunity for them to meet again is just, I guess heals their heart. (Brianna, 19, Session 7)

Brianna's quote exemplifies the ways she has conceptualized intergenerational healing by witnessing the interactions between her dad and uncles with her grandma. Mia, on the other hand, exemplifies how intergenerational healing happens as she shares how her parents' sacrifices have motivated her to pursue higher education:

> So basically, I took a picture of this because it reminded me of how much my parents did to get here. And, I'm kind of like, an example of what they've achieved. For example, my parents have always been a huge advocate for education, making sure, you know, you study a lot, achieve a lot, you know, and part of that is the reason why, I'm pursuing my master's right now and everything. (Mia, 21)

Furthermore, Angel conceptualized intergenerational healing by the ways that he's witnessed community mobilization in response to natural disasters:

> So, you know how recently, it was like hurricane Helene…Yeah, for me, like, Like, what is, healing look like or like there's people helping out or rescuing people that are, affected by the flooding or the storm. So, like, that kind of represents like helping and, like moving forward because like, like right now they probably like their house or whatever is flooding and everything…And then that's like the whole community because it's not just some people, but and you have other people helping out, like there's people doing like fundraisers, food drives and all that. And then I feel like that's also part of, like, how the community helps because, like, there's people from all over the world that help, you know, those in need. So, like, you're not really by yourself, you know, there's people all around helping and that's motivation. (Angel, 19, Session 7)

Carlos also engages in conceptualizing healing in community as he reflects on his experience in UeA:

> Where I grew up in, personally, I never really interacted with a lot of Latinx due to certain schooling and programs I was in. And I found it is interact. Well, this interaction is quite fascinating, and just kind of like finding like distant kin, in a sense, because we have similar experiences. (Carlos, 23, Session 10)

Being in community with co-researchers who understood and had similar experiences gave Carlos a sense of family, thereby evidencing how simply being seen and having personal experiences reflected in the spaces one inhabits contributes to the healing experience.

Healing through embodiment. Another important way in which co-researchers conceptualized and experienced healing within the UeA space was through embodiment.

Embodiment can be understood as the intentional attunement to our physical bodies that allows us to describe and notice how our emotions manifest and affect our bodies (Hemphill, 2024). Within the UeA space, embodiment was encouraged during the check-in and check-out rituals and through the encouragement of movement. Throughout the ten UeA sessions, co-researchers' comfort with embodiment grew as they grew more comfortable with one another. Co-researchers were able to articulate the ways that they noticed embodiment manifest within their UeA experiences. During her check out reflection for week 3, Jasmine shared "Usually after these meetings, you know, I usually sleep really well. I don't know why, I guess I'm just more in touch with myself." In addition to feeling more in touch with themselves, co-researchers often described the UeA space as a space where could relax and experience a brief reprieve from the stress they experience because of their responsibilities outside of our co-created space. Angie is a prime example as she shared the following during her check-in reflection for session 3:

> My name is Angie, and I'm doing pretty good today. I'm excited to see everyone's pictures and excited to paint the candles. And I'm coming into the space feeling excited. And I'm ready to, like, de-stress from work. I like it because it's a calm environment. (Angie, 19)

Additionally, during her check-in for session 7, Angie also shared the following:

> I'm pretty tired today. And I'm coming into the space feeling excited to be here because it's been a stressful week, and I like being here because it's like, I don't know, like a, like, it's relaxing. And I'm excited for the, the yoga, the chair yoga. (Angie, 19, Session 7)

Like Angie's experience, Mia also shared, "I'm feeling burnt out today. But I am excited to be here to relax. It's feels relaxing here." Furthermore, throughout the course of the ten weeks spent together, although co-researchers often expressed coming into the space feeling tired or stressed,

by the end of the session they would usually share they were leaving the space feeling more relaxed when they came in. One striking example of this is Jasmine stating, “Um, I'm leaving the space, um, my headache went away. I feel a lot better. I don't know. I'm just in a better mood now, and happy.”

Embodiment was also experienced and contributed to healing within the UeA space through the movement and embodied activities that co-researchers participated in from week to week. The effects of the embodied activities were felt since the very first UeA session. During the first session, co-researchers played games that were meant to help them become more comfortable with one another. As I checked in with them on how they had experienced engaging in games, co-researchers reported having fun and Jasmine specifically shared that she “felt looser.” During session 4, co-researchers engaged in a progressive muscle relaxation guided meditation activity after engaging in a particularly emotional and vulnerable conversation about identity exploration. Following the activity, co-researchers shared that they felt more relaxed afterwards. However, during the check-out reflection, Blue shared that progressive muscle relaxation was a practice that he aimed to incorporate into his routine for self-care. Specifically, he shared, “But something I am going to do is the whole like destressing thing. More so for sleeping than anything else. I feel like that's going to help a lot.” Also in session 4, the embodied activity that co-researchers engaged in was making slime. In response to getting slime and food coloring all over her fingers, Mabel shared the following during her check-out reflection, “I can go next, while one of my hands is still nice. I'm feeling actually relaxed. This was a lot of fun.”

Co-researchers also experienced healing through embodiment by internalizing the practices and norms that were established within the UeA sanctuary space. This was particularly salient as co-researchers prepared and planned for the community exhibition during Session 9.

While co-researchers were practicing their presentations, I reminded them that the fidget toys were still available to them should they need them to help work out their nerves. In response to that reminder, Mabel asked, “yeah, but wouldn’t it be silly to be on stage with a fidget toy while we present?” Before I could respond to Mabel, Brianna responded by saying, “It’s not silly, this is a safe space, we’re comfortable.” This demonstrates that even though we were no longer within the physical sanctuary space of UeA in the FaithAction office, the principles that were established within the space were embodied across contexts. Additionally, the community exhibition also served as a platform for embodied healing through visual storytelling, as co-researchers shared photographs and presentations about important issues. Co-researchers closed out the community exhibition by inviting community members to join them in partaking in a cultural dance, thereby also engaging in communal, intergenerational healing practices through movement and embodiment.

Summary of RQ1: Theme 3. Theme three highlights how co-researchers engaged in cultural and communal practices that facilitate conceptualizing and engaging in the healing process. Co-researchers tapped into cultural wealth and community by joining faith communities and spiritual practices. Faith communities became chosen family for co-researchers who were separated from their extended family due to their residence in the U.S. Co-researchers also engaged in the healing process by drawing strength from younger family members such as siblings and cousins as well as from their elders including parents, aunts and uncles, and grandparents. Co-researchers also conceptualized healing in community through the ways they witnessed communal responses to natural disaster. Likewise, communal healing was also conceptualized within the UeA space through the shared cultural experiences rooted in their identities as children of immigrants who were raised in often hostile sociopolitical climates.

Lastly, co-researchers also engaged in healing practices through embodiment and movement. By engaging in activities meant to engage bodies, minds, and spirits, co-researchers developed stronger connections and attunement to the self, thus demonstrating how healing was not only being conceptualized but also experienced in real time.

Theme 4: Healing through Consciousness Raising and Social Action

Conceptualizations of healing were also facilitated within the UeA space by co-researchers' development of critical consciousness and engagement in social action. All co-researchers within UeA entered the space with a different level of understanding and experience engaging in critical social analysis. For some co-researchers, being in the UeA space was the first time that they were encouraged to take an ecological systems perspective by considering how their lived experiences were impacted by unjust systems at the personal level, across various community contexts such as school health, and legal, as well as the larger society. However, other co-researchers were entering the space with many rich experiences engaging in community organizing efforts, critical social analysis, and coalition-building. Co-researchers with greater critical consciousness levels were instrumental in helping to grow and support the critical consciousness levels of less critically conscious co-researchers. For some co-researchers, hosting and participating in the UeA *Voces del Futuro* Community Exhibition was the first time that many of them engaged in social action. Therefore, engagement in consciousness raising conversation and in the community exhibition also served to conceptualize healing.

One way that co-researchers conceptualized healing and engaged in social action was by participating in efforts to expand higher education access for members of Latinx communities. Mia shares her experience participating in summer bridge program at her alma mater:

> That photo was a group of my students that I had for, like a week. This was a program for Latinx students, high school students to attend, at the university, that I had graduated from. And I was one of the mentors. And essentially our job was to guide them through, you know, explain to them what college is like, and also convince them to go to college, too, because during this time, I was getting to know all the students that we had, of course, all different backgrounds, different situations, and, essentially some did hesitate to even want to go to college…At the end, when the program was over, I had two students who specifically told me, that they were going to college because of me and that I helped them through a lot of processing and things like that…And so it was very impactful for me as well as for them…And I told them that my hope is that they can do the same for other individuals, especially in our community, because the values, the things that we learn. (Mia, 21, Session 7)

In her quote, Mia shows her engagement in social action to improve educational opportunities for young Latinx students. In the comments that followed she also points to the reciprocal nature of healing as this was a healing experience not only for Mia to partake in, but also for the students on whom she impacted through her educational advocacy efforts.

Co-researchers also conceptualized healing by engaging in consciousness efforts combined with social action. One more critically conscious co-researcher engaging in educating of other co-researchers involved Mika in a conversation that took place on session seven focused on ways that our communities can begin to experience healing. She shared the following regarding her work as an employee of FaithAction International:

> Here we do a lot of things that serves the community. Everything that involves advocacy, serving and empowering and I think it's not for profits exists because the system the

> government makes laws, it helps. Right. But then it doesn't help everyone. People fall in the cracks of the system and it's up to not for profits. It's up to congregations to kind of lift those people. So I think we can support be volunteers, interns in not for profits. (Mika, 24, Session 7).

Within her sharing, Mika also provided tangible examples of how she has engaged in social action to directly benefit members of mixed status and DACA-mented communities:

> And then the last thing, that's a Zoom meeting that I had with Yoshi, my baby. And so being part of, Zoom meetings…I was, going to start a presentation that involved how to help, people that have DACA. And so I got to do a presentation on that and kind of like raise money for help, to help a person apply for their renewal of DACA. (Mika, 24, Session 7).

Furthermore, Mika also engaged in educating co-researchers of different ways that they can also get involved in social action.

> So it just it's it's a matter of getting involved. And even if you can't go in-person, there's still something you can do online, promote like good things when you see them. Like how to support this country, how to support like, shelters, little things like that that you can share on, like your social medias matter as well. (Mika, 24, Session 7)

One other particularly powerful example of co-researchers engaging in consciousness raising with one another is a conversation that took place between Angel, Carlos, and me regarding the genocide of the Palestinian people happening in Gaza. In this particular conversation, Carlos was sharing that one way that he believed social and systemic change regarding immigration laws affecting immigrants is through different levels of advocacy. Angel responded to Carlos by asking him what “advocacy” meant. Carlos provided the following response:

It's like pro-, no no no, I think yeah protesting in a form of advocacy. So advocacy is basically when you have like, like when you protest to tell the government or your representative in government how you feel about a certain topic because you care a lot about it. That's advocacy. (Carlos, 22)

Carlos's response led the following interactions:

Carlos:	0:29:39	kinda like petitions, signatures or stuff like that
Saraí:	0:29:39	mmhmm, boycotts, there's a lot of different ways to advocate[inaudible 00:29:59].
Angel:	0:29:39	bro what?
Carlos:	0:29:39	Boycott
Saraí:	0:29:39	Boycott, so you refuse to buy a certain product or shop at a certain store. Like people are boycotting Starbucks, they stopped buying from them [inaudible 00:30:08]
Angel:	0:29:39	bro nah uh,
Carlos:	0:29:39	Nah?
Angel:	0:29:39	I still be going in.
Carlos:	0:29:39	You still be going there? That's unfortunate.
Angel:	0:29:39	Wait, why?
Carlos:	0:29:39	They fund the IDF[inaudible 00:30:27].
Angel:	0:29:39	What's that?
Carlos:	0:29:39	Israel Defense Force [inaudible 00:30:31].
Saraí:	0:29:39	And they're committing genocide against the Palestinian people,

This example of how one more critically conscious co-researcher engaged in the educating of a fellow co-researcher who had a lower level of awareness regarding societal issues. Though the rest of the conversations was not fully captured by the audio markers and recordings, due to other groups began conversing a bit more loudly, Carlos, Angel, Mabel, and Angie continued their conversation regarding their participation in various boycotts in direct response to the

Jose:	2:02:14	I wanted to ask you all, you know, what has your experience been so far with the- with the- with the program? Has it been- have y'all enjoyed it?
Saraí:	2:02:26	They hate it (laughs) nah, i'm kidding.
Angel:	2:02:26	Nah we love it
Group:	2:02:26	(laughs)
Brianna:	2:02:26	It's like a place where you can be comfortable and get your mind off of other things.
Jose:	2:02:26	That's awesome
Mika:	2:02:26	This is a healing space
Blue:	2:02:28	It's been therapeutic.

Palestinian genocide being carried out by Israeli military forces. This exemplifies how co-researchers' engagement in social action extended to efforts towards the collective liberation of other oppressed communities.

Furthermore, participating as co-researchers in UeA was also a way that co-researchers conceptualized and experienced healing through social action. UeA was designed as a critical youth participatory action research project. Accordingly, their continuous participation in the space *was* a form of social action. Week after week, co-researchers critically interrogated their experiences of trauma through photographs and activated cultural healing practices through storytelling and their pláticas. Co-researchers often described the UeA space as being therapeutic, healing, and a place where they could be comfortable and relax. In the following interaction, Jose, the executive director of FaithAction International stopped by to say hello and introduce himself to the co-researchers, and asked them about their experience with UeA:

Co-researchers' responses to Jose's question clearly demonstrate their perceptions of UeA being a healing and therapeutic space. Blue's following quote is a clear example of how connected his experience in UeA to enacting social change. In response to the prompt asking co-researchers to reflect on different ways that we can heal our communities, Blue took the following photo:

Figure 2: Photograph taken by Blue, displayed on Session 7



After displaying the photo on the projector, Blue explained the following:

> I think this is such a good thing that has potential and healing. Like it says there, healing our communities. I feel like the biggest player in any of this, is what you are doing, doing these studies…I think what's really going to be the kicker is the next two meetings. The

> ninth and tenth, because we said that we're going to pick out sort of testimonies, pláticas and present them. I feel like the only real way to bring awareness to something as serious as you know, not having an identity as an immigrant, is to do things like this where you get a bunch of people's ideas and just opinions on the matter. I think that's what's really going to push it. Maybe not all the way, but I know that we give it a push. (Blue, 20, Session 7)

Thus, in his quote Blue indicates that engaging in spaces like UeA whose explicit intent is the betterment of our communities in healing, since it provided a platform for co-researchers to share their stories.

Furthermore, other co-researchers also echoed the sentiment of UeA being a healing space, as it encouraged movement and reconnection between the body, mind, and spirit. During the last session, Jasmine shared the following reflection in response to a prompt asking co-researchers to reflect on their overall experiences in UeA. She says:

> How I describe it, it was very much fun. I didn't really expect that at all, like he said. I thought we're just gonna kind of come here and just be like, "yeah, immigration! Ewww!" And stuff like that, you know, but um, end up like, like, I said, um, it kind of brought out a side that I forgot that I had inside of me, in a way, like, I feel like you really brought our inner child out again. And it was like, very like, you know, happy. (Jasmine, 19, Session 10).

Furthermore, Angie echoed Jasmine's sentiments as she shared:

> So I would describe this time together as I guess, memorable, like everything that we did, I can recall back to it, and everything has been a good experience, whether it's like coming here after a really long day, like coming here just gets your mind off of it, no

> matter what we're doing, and then you end up the night on a good note, and every week, I would just come looking forward to Wednesday afternoon to be here, something that stood out to me about Unidos en Accion was definitely just as Blue and Jasmine had said the activities at the end, and the movement, the body movement, just getting in tune with our body. I think that just made everything very lighthearted, especially in the beginning. It was very not tense, but we were very just still coming out of our shell. And I feel like doing all of those activities, whether it was like the painting or dancing or stretching, like it just made us get out of our own comfort zone and just get closer with each other and feel more comfortable to talk about our personal experience. (Angie, 19, Session 10).

In these three quotes, co-researchers described the ways that UeA became a sanctuary that facilitated the healing process. Angie and Jasmine highlight how they were better attuned to themselves while engaging in meaningful conversations. On the other hand, Blue highlights the impact of engaging in social actions. Furthermore, one aspect that I want to highlight that is not immediately apparent in the exemplary quotes included in this manuscript is that healing happened because joy, playfulness, and laughter were always central to each and every conversation that was held across the ten weeks. Within the UeA space, we engaged in social action towards liberation through our conversations, and we resisted by collectively cultivating joy.

Summary of RQ1: Theme 4. Theme 4 focused on the ways that co-researchers conceptualized healing by engaging in pláticas that raised their awareness of social justice issues in their community and around the globe. Furthermore, co-researchers also conceptualized healing by engaging in social action. Pláticas aimed at raising co-researcher's consciousness also included ways that co-researchers are currently engaging in social action for the collective

liberation of marginalized people. In the process of discussing their experiences in engaging in social action, co-researchers also helped to educate other co-researchers on practical ways that they could also become more involved in justice-oriented social action. Educating co-researchers also involved exposing them to larger social justice issues going on worldwide. One such issue was the genocide of the Palestinian people, and in advocacy efforts that co-researchers are involved in to resist the genocide and support Palestinian liberation. Lastly, conceptualizations and experiences of healing were also captured by co-researchers' participation in UeA. The criticalYPAR nature of UeA inherently makes the experience a type of social action geared towards justice. Within the program, co-researchers engaged in critical analysis of they lived experiences as first- and second-generation immigrants, they engaged in cultural healing practices, created counternarratives, and developed calls to action and invited community members to join in efforts to improve the social conditions of immigrant mixed-status communities.

RQ2: Co-constructing a Sanctuary Space

Three themes were developed to elucidate how co-researchers drew on their previous experiences to inform how they intentionally co-constructed and transformed the UeA space into a sanctuary space. Specifically, co-researchers co-created a sanctuary space by (1) *Promoting Safety through Community Norms, Rituals, and Agency, (2) Nourishing Belonging through Collaboration and Inclusivity,* and *(3) Facilitating Cultural Connections and Identity Exploration through Art, Creativity, and Movement.* While the developed themes uplift and discuss the different practices that supported UeA's metamorphosis into a sanctuary separately, it is important to note that these practices were all intertwined and mutually informative.

Furthermore, findings indicate that cultivating a sanctuary space is a nuanced and intentional process that must actively center safety, belonging, and joy. The following themes provide insight into how co-constructing a sanctuary space can contribute to overall experiences of healing and provide safety and security in spite of the ever present threat of immigration enforcement efforts. Each theme is discussed below.

Theme 1: Promoting safety through community norms, rituals, and agency.

The UeA space became a collectively curated sanctuary space. Each week was intentionally structured to incorporate self-awareness and reflection, co-researchers' pláticas, and embodiment through movement and creativity. Having established rituals created a familiar routine that contributed to comfort and safety, as it removed uncertainty related to what would happen in the space. Furthermore, the structure and establishment of rituals contributed to facilitating the enactment of community norms and agency overall.

Engaging the established rituals also provided opportunities for co-researchers to share their reflections with one another, and to metabolize anxious feelings through movement. One important ritual that was implemented in UeA was engaging in check-in and check-out reflections. Each week, co-researchers would take turns reminding the community of their chosen pseudonym, describe how they were entering the space, and share about how they were doing overall. Check-in rituals encouraged co-researchers to check in with themselves and reflect on their energy, and what their comfort level for sharing and interacting was for the day. Another important ritual that promoted a sense of safety for co-researchers was engaging in embodied activities through movement and art. Furthermore, I always practiced transparency regarding the motivations informing the activities that we engaged in, as shown in the following quote:

> The next activity that we're going to do is to help us be in our body a little bit more. We are going to do a progressive muscle relaxation technique. Since there is a lot of tense energy, kind of or not tense, but like heavier energy in our conversation today. So progressive, muscle relaxation is a way of releasing stress from your body in a way that kind of makes you pay attention to your body a little bit more. (Saraí, Session 4).

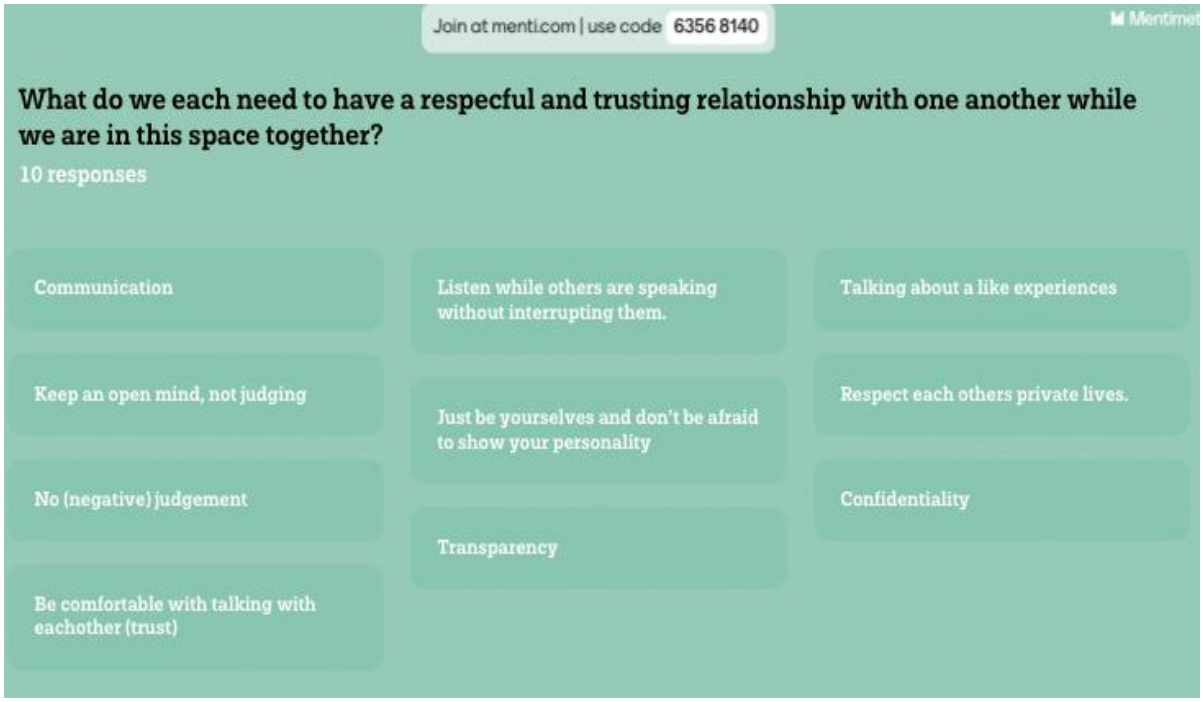
In the exemplary quote, co-researchers had just wrapped up a heavier conversation, thus, by engaging in progressive muscle relaxation, co-researchers could physically process the vulnerable emotions that were shared. Thus, in this way, they could experience both emotional safety in the way they were held by their co-researchers as well physical safety within an environment that actively promotes healthy connections to the body.

Furthermore, engaging in embodiment through art and creativity also became an important ritual that contributed to the UeA space becoming a sanctuary. Creativity and play enabled intentional connections to the inner child, and simply allowed to enjoy themselves. Indeed, when engaging in a platica on what healing was experienced within UeA, during our last session together, Brianna shared, “doing activities like this, like healing, like our inner child…like, for example, like painting can be as like when you were younger.” Thereby indicating that engaging in creative projects aligned with the goal of UeA becoming a sanctuary space. Along those same lines. Taking breaks also became important ritual that contributed to UeA operating as a sanctuary space that promoted healthy connections to the body, minds, and spirits. During breaks, co-researcher were encouraged to nourish their bodies by eating snacks and keeping themselves hydrated, to walk around the space and become energized, and to also respond to their bodily needs by using the restroom. Co-researchers relied on snacks and water

being provided as sources of energy, particularly when they were coming into the space extra tired.

Co-researchers constructed a sanctuary space by collectively identifying community norms that informed how co-researchers related to one another within UeA. In creating community norms, co-researchers set the standard for how they needed to experience emotional and spiritual safety that would facilitate their ability to show up authentically and share transparently. Community norms were developed during the first UeA session, thus, to forefront co-researchers' comfort and encourage their participation in the space, community norms were developed using Mentimeter.com. Mentimeter is an interactive online polling site that allows participants to respond to interactive polls in real time. I posed the question "What do we each need to have a respectful and trusting relationship with one another while we are in this space together." Co-researchers were able to respond to the prompt by going to the mentimeter website, joined the menti by entering the code displayed. All co-researchers were able to submit multiple responses to the menti prompt. As co-researchers submitted their responses to the prompt, responses were immediately populated and displayed on the screen. Figure 2 is a screenshot of the mentimeter poll that co-researchers utilized to voice the needs that would have to be met to facilitate their physical, spiritual and emotional safety while we shared the space.

Figure 3. Screenshot of Mentimeter poll used to develop community norms



As shown in Figure 3, co-researchers identified that it was important for them to not be judged, to be listened to without being interrupted, connecting across shared experiences, and feeling comfortable developing personal relationships with one another. It became a weekly ritual to remind co-researchers of the community norms that were collectively established at the beginning of each session.

While it was imperative for co-researchers to voice their needs to create an environment that would contribute to their sense of safety and comfort within the space, it was particularly important for co-researchers to know that they also had agency in shaping the space. Thus, after being reminded of the community norms, I would also remind co-researchers that their consent was important and that everything that we did together was voluntary. While I also encouraged co-researchers to try an activity before deciding not to participate, they ultimately had the final

say on whether they engaged in an activity or their level of participation. The one activity that two co-researchers, Mia and Blue, refused to participate in was during session 6, when the movement activity was engaging in cultural dances. Blue and I had the following interaction after I explained to co-researchers that I had prepared 5 songs that we could potentially dance to:

Blue (01:20:10):	This fits into the whole, um... What's the word? It's the one word. Everything that we do here is... Voluntary? Voluntary.
Saraí (01:20:13):	Yes.
Blue (01:20:13):	Right. [inaudible 01:20:29] got it. Thank you.
Saraí (01:20:30):	Yes, everything is voluntary. So, if you really, really don't wanna dance-
Blue(01:20:35):	I'll do-
Saraí (01:20:35):	... obviously you don't have to.
Blue(01:20:37):	I'll do the Macarena, but like that's it.
Saraí (01:20:37):	But-
Group (01:20:37):	(laughs)
Saraí (01:20:40):	I would encourage y'all to be open-minded. To be flexible. To be courageous. And give things a try that you normally wouldn't. But again, it's all... It's all voluntary. Um, so we could dance all five of them. We could pick one or two. Um... How are we... What are we thinking? What are we feeling?

Still, while Blue was generally uncomfortable with dancing, he was able to set the limits for the level of participation that he was comfortable with. Thus, he did not engage in all of the dances, but he did join the dancing from his seated position when “La Macarena” was danced. Thus, the acknowledgement that co-researchers have agency in their involvement in the UeA space was an important reminder that contributed to safety within the co-created sanctuary space. Co-researchers not only exercised agency in the ways that they participated in the session activities, but also through the level of sharing that they felt safe engaging in with the larger group. In the following example of her check-in from week 2, Lorna demonstrates restraint for how she chooses to engage in the check-in, she shared, “My name’s Lorna, I go by she/her. I’m tired

today. That's all." However, there is a stark difference in how and what she chooses to share in the following check-in reflection from week 6:

> My name is Lorna. She/her/ella pronouns. I'm coming in today in a good mood. I wanna be in a better mood than I was yesterday, so I'm, I'm good. Uh, and I am looking forward to the tie-dye activity. I'm excited. (Lorna, 22, Session 6)

The difference in the two examples of Lorna's sharing in her check-ins is a clear example how agency promoted safety, that allowed for co-researchers to share more and more week after week.

Summary of RQ2: Theme 1. The UeA space was intentionally transformed into a sanctuary space in by creating a supportive structure through rituals that supported co-researchers authentic engagement. Rituals included check-ins and check-outs, embodiment through movement as well as art, and having strategic breaks throughout our time together that allowed co-researchers to nourish their bodies and take care of bodily needs. Co-researchers developed community norms that set the standard for how to relate with one another while in the space, to promote safety and facilitate sharing. Community norms included being their authentic selves without harsh or negative judgements from others, respecting each other's privacy by maintaining confidentiality and engaging in respectful communication practices, and keeping an open mind about the planned activities. Community norms also made it easier for co-researchers to exercise their agency in the space as it was emphasized that enthusiastic consent was important and that every activity planned was voluntary. The emphasis on consent made it so that co-researchers felt comfortable opting in or out of activities, or for them to delineate boundaries within which they were willing to participate in specific activities.

Theme 2: Nourishing Belonging through Collaboration and Inclusivity

UeA became a sanctuary space through the ways that co-researchers nurtured an inclusive and collaborative environment that promoted belonging within the space. Belonging within the UeA space was emphasized through collaboration and democratic decision-making. A democratic approach to problem solving and collaboration also promoted inclusivity, as co-researchers ensured that everyone's voices within the space were heard and considered. Inclusivity was also promoted in the space by accepting everyone as they were. Co-researchers were accepted and included when they voiced entering the space in bad moods just as much as when they entered in good moods. Furthermore, sense of belonging within the space was nurtured by ensuring that everyone's questions were answered and by being accepting of everyone in the space. Belonging was particularly felt in the ways that co-researchers were able to relate with one another across shared experiences.

Collaboration was evidenced within the UeA space very early on in the program. The creation of community norms was a collaborative process in which all co-researchers weighed in and voiced their needs for safety. Furthermore, collaboration within UeA was further evidenced in the ways the decisions were made collectively. When making decisions, co-researchers engaged in dialogues about best options and came to a consensus on how to proceed. However, when these conversations did not yield a consensus, final decisions would be made by anonymous voting. The following quote is an example of this process:

> Do you wanna vote? Okay, everybody close your eyes. Raise your hand if you wanna dance Payaso de Rodeo. Okay. Hands down. Um, raise your hand if you wanna dance la Macarena. Okay. Raise your hand if you wanna dance Asereje. Okay. Raise your hand if

you wanna do the Cha Cha Slide. Okay. Uh, what about the Cupid Shuffle? Okay. So there is a tie between the Cupid Shuffle, Asereje, and la Macarena. (Saraí, Session 6)

This is a clear example of how decisions were not only made collaboratively but also encourage co-researchers voice in being active contributors to the decision-making process. Though this is but one example, throughout the entirety of UeA, co-researchers were actively encouraged to partake in collaborative decision making, and to feel ownership over the space and experience, since it was being collectively co-created.

Furthermore, collaboration was also exemplified in the space in the ways that co-researchers felt comfortable asking for help and support when they needed it. The following interaction is an example of a Mabel asking for support, and Jasmine stepping up to provide the support, although she was hesitant about it:

Mabel	00:57:47:17	00:58:04:03	Yeah. I don't know! Uh. Simon says clap your hands.
Saraí	00:58:04:06	00:58:11:08	Do you want someone to help you be Simon? Do you want to pick someone to help you?
Jasmine	00:58:11:11	00:58:16:14	Oh, me? Oh, okay. Okay. Do I need to stand up. You want to switch?
Mabel	00:58:16:16	00:58:18:07	Yeah.
Jasmine	00:58:18:09	00:58:25:19	Okay. um, um, AHHHHHHHHHHH.
Mabel	00:58:25:21	00:58:26:10	It's hard cause you don't know what to do

While the example shown above is a lighthearted example of asking and receiving support, it set the supportive foundation that would facilitate more vulnerable support seeking in the future. Thus, knowing that they were supported and held with the small requests, allowed co-researcher to know and trust that they would receive support when they were ready to share more vulnerably.

Inclusivity within the space was promoted in several different ways. First, co-researchers all were very intentional of interacting with one another within the boundaries set forth by the community norms. As such, everyone took care not to interrupt one another when speaking, and they also kept track of folks who wanted to contribute and circled back to them to ensure that they were given the opportunity to share. The following interaction is an example of how co-researchers intentionally practiced inclusivity, beginning in Session 1.

Saraí	01:24:35:03	01:24:45:07	Does anyone have anything else you want to share regarding how we're leaving the space, what we're looking forward to, or what we're going to do to take care of ourselves?
Angel	01:24:45:10	01:24:49:17	Nah, y'all ain't even answer the question about where was, like what's y'all's favorite food.
Mabel	01:24:49:19	01:24:51:24	Exactly! I was thinking about that. Y'all just ignored my question!

In the example shown here, Angel gently reminds me that we had skipped over Mabel's question regarding co-researchers' favorite cultural foods growing up. His reminder allowed Mabel to voice feeling like her question had been ignored, and it gave all of us the opportunity to respond to the question.

Belonging was also promoted within the space inclusively in the ways that everyone was encouraged to show up authentically and to do what they needed to do to be present in the space. Co-researchers were encouraged to stand up and stretch, eat snacks, and drink water at any point of the conversations, not simply during the break. Also, co-researchers always had access to fidget toys that included silicone poppers, finger traps, play-doh, an assortment of squishy balls, and pop tubes as an outlet for any uncomfortable energy that could arise throughout the pláticas. It was the norm within the space for co-researchers to choose their fidget toys as they walked into the space, and trade them out during the break.

When relating to one another, belonging and inclusivity were also seen and felt in the ways that co-researchers responded to children being in the space. Camilla has two young daughters who she brought to the space with her every week. While a FaithAction International employee provided child-care during the pláticas to support Camilla's full participation in the space, they would both join us and the oldest also participated in the creative embodied activities. Though most co-researchers were single, non-parents, none of them voiced any issues or behaved in ways that indicated discomfort at the children being present. In fact, they did the exact opposite by trying to fully include them in all aspects of the experience. For example, co-researchers made nametags with their fake names on them each week, and they always made sure that both children also had nametags. Their acceptance and inclusivity of the children in the space can be seen in the following interaction that took place during Session 3:

Blue	**00:05:13:12 - 00:05:20:00**	I'm leaving the space a lot more comfortable. So -
Baby	**00:05:20:00 - 00:05:24:**	(baby coos and babbles)
Angel	**00:05:24:11 - 00:05:32:13**	Yes, she's giving us her experiences
Blue	**00:05:32:15 - 00:05:37:23**	This is becoming more and more fun as it goes.

Not only we co-researchers welcoming and accepting of their presence in the space, but they also noticed their growth, as evidenced in the following interaction from Session 8:

Angel:	2:13:29	Wait. Low-key, during the timeframe that we've been here, she- what's it called- She grew a- a lot of hair.
Co-researchers:	2:13:29	(laughs)
Saraí:	2:13:29	[Baby Name], you grew hair while you've been here. Yeah?
Jasmine:	2:13:29	Was she bald?

Angel:	2:13:29	I think so.

While the above interaction is a lighthearted and humorous example of interactions with the children, they also reveal that children in the space were not simply tolerated. Co-researchers were welcoming, accepting, and attentive to them, thereby, also supporting Camilla's belonging in the space by facilitating her ability to be to be fully engaged in the space.

Summary of RQ2: Theme 2. UeA became a sanctuary space that nurtured belonging through collaboration and inclusivity. Co-researchers were encouraged to be their whole, authentic selves and were received with acceptance and care. Collaboration was evident in the democratic practices (e.g., anonymous voting) used to make collective decisions. It was also evident in the ways that co-researchers were able to ask for support and know that one of the other researchers would respond to their call by coming to their aid. Inclusivity was also an important practice that contributed to UeA becoming a sanctuary space. Co-researchers were encouraged to be attuned to their bodies and provide it what it needs, whether it was nourishment, hydration, restroom breaks, stretching, or releasing excess energy through fidget toys. Co-researchers were also inclusive of each other by ensuring that everyone was given the opportunity to share their thoughts with the rest of the group, and by being fully accepting of the children in the space. The commitment to being inclusive of all identities, experiences, and people promoted safety, comfort, and belonging that contributed to UeA serving as a sanctuary space.

Theme 3: Facilitating Cultural Connections and Identity Exploration through Art, Creativity, and Movement

Engaging in embodied activities promoted co-researchers' cultural connections through movement, creativity and play. Co-researchers engaged in art that was intentionally rooted in

cultural practices to promotes their connections to Latinx culture. Furthermore, by engaging in embodied art that encouraged messiness and creativity, co-researchers were also encouraged to re-connect with their inner child. Lastly, embodied activities also served to promote co-researchers attunement to their bodies by taking intentional pauses and noticing when the body was feeling tension, activated, stressed, and happy by engaging in meditative practices such as yoga and progressive muscle relaxation techniques. Engaging in these practices was indicative that UeA was operating as a sanctuary space because co-researchers engaged in these practices even when they felt unfamiliar, silly, and sometimes even dumb to them. Entering the sanctuary space, also allowed co-researchers to give themselves permission to be let down their guards, be playful, and to rest.

Co-researchers engaged with embodied and creative activities that aimed to promote their cultural connections. The activities included weaving friendship bracelets which descend from Central and South American Indigenous weaving practices, making *papel picado* flags (a type of Mexican folk art that descend from indigenous Aztec cultures), planting seeds, and dancing contemporary cultural dances. Furthermore, engaging in the "Quien Soy Yo" poem activity encouraged co-researchers to reflect on their culture and different identities, and the ways that these inform each other. To create their "Quien Soy Yo" poems, co-researchers were given a three-page worksheet. The first two pages had 19 boxes that posed different questions, and they were instructed to write the response that first came to mind. The third page of the worksheet packet contained several numbered lines that corresponded with each of the questions previous askes. Once co-researchers had responded to each question in the boxes, they were instructed to transfer their responses to the corresponding numbered line. The finished product became their "Quien Soy Yo" poems. A copy of the poem handouts can be found in appendix D. While

working on their poems, co-researchers also engaged in conversations about their cultural experiences. One conversation that Angel, Carlos, and Blue engaged in while working on their poem was about the use of language and their ability to read and write in Spanish. While co-researchers were free to choose the language in which wrote their poems in, both Angel and Carlos decided to write their poems in Spanish as a way to challenge themselves. When I reminded everyone that they could choose the language they felt more comfortable with, including Spanglish, Angel responded saying, "Nah, I gotta learn how to do it," referring to improving his reading and writing skills in Spanish. The following interactions depict the ways that Angel worked his way through the struggle and confusion that stemmed from his decision to write his poem fully in Spanish:

Angel	01:41:18:29	01:41:23:01	No but how does that make sense. Like "yo soy Hispano" and then jugeton
Saraí	01:41:23:04	01:41:24:12	Yeah.
Angel	01:41:24:14	01:41:27:14	That makes sense? You soy hispano juegeton
Saraí	01:41:27:16	01:41:29:02	Y playful.
Angel	01:41:29:05	01:41:48:03	Ohh That's how you say playful like jugeton.
Saraí	01:41:48:06	01:42:33:03	Yeah.
Angel	01:42:33:05	01:42:35:25	Bruh it doesn't make sense
Saraí	01:42:35:27	01:42:38:14	Just trust, trust the process.
Angel	01:42:38:17	01:42:41:11	I put cilantro for 3. Yo soy del cilantro

Angel's processing and making sense of the use of the language in his poem indicates how the creative activities provided opportunities for co-researchers to engage with cultural practices in new and creative ways. While he struggled through it, Angel completed his poem and shared it out with the rest of the group. It read:

> Yo soy hispano y jugeton. Yo soy del cilantro y del hoja de platano. Yo soy Día de Reyes y pelos. Apa, hermano, y madre. Yo soy de "ni empiezes" y soldador. De...I forgot what I

> put there... y “la cabeza no nomas son pa los piojos.” Yo soy de E-Town y tamales, y pozole. De La Llorona y lo dificil que fue darme a luz. Yo soy de Mexico. (Angel, 19, Session 2).

Angel used this activity to navigate his Spanish language ability and to uplift cultural experiences. In Jasmine’s poem, however, she highlights the fusion of her two identities as person who is mixed Black and Mexican. Her poem reads:

> I am Mexican and Black from a cozy, full, fun home. I am from poison ivy, and you know the white dandelions that you blow. I am of New Year Eve parties and curly hair. Funny. Briseña, Artemio, and Shabrielle I am of “we're not a normal family” and work in construction. Of “you better be inside before the street lights come on.” And “you either stay outside or stay inside.” I am from [City Name] and green spaghetti and baked mac and cheese. Of playing red light, green light, loudly eating sunflower seeds. And I'm from the living room. The family room. (Jasmine, 19, Session 2)

While not everyone chose to share their poems out loud, co-researchers expressed writing the poems had been a “thought-provoking” experience that encouraged them to reflect on the ways that family and cultural practices had contributed to their identity developments. This further shows how UeA became a sanctuary space that made it safe for co-researchers to struggle and muddle their confusions.

The UeA space also served as a sanctuary because it provided a safe environment where co-researchers could engage with their inner child through playfulness, being silly, and being messy. Though it was an uncomfortable experience for some of the co-researchers, over time it contributed to their ease and sense of safety within the space. Blue is a clear example of how

engaging in the messier embodied activities at first felt awkward and uncomfortable for him, as show in the following interactions:

Blue	01:02:46:22	01:02:54:18	I'm going to be leaving this space, confused as to why this isn't working.
Saraí	01:02:54:20	01:02:57:14	What do you mean? It is working!
Blue	01:02:57:17	01:03:24:18	This *gestures to activity* is definitely standing out. I feel like this was unexpected. I kind of just thought it would be pictures.. Was there something else?
Saraí	01:03:24:21	01:03:27:08	How are you going to take care of yourself today?
Blue	01:03:27:11	01:03:29:10	Yeah. The whole, de-stressing thing
Saraí	01:03:29:13	01:03:33:21	Okay yeah. Look
Blue	01:03:33:24	01:03:34:25	It is working
Saraí	01:03:34:27	01:03:37:15	You just have to work it in your hands,
Blue	01:03:37:17	01:03:43:15	Okay, this is awkward *feeling slime*.

While Blue's discomfort is clear in the above interaction, across his time participating in UeA, Blue expressed surprised and often voiced that the experience was not what he had in mind when he signed up for it. When he first saw the UeA recruitment flyer, he had honed in on the picture-taking aspect and was expecting an experience similar to a photography class. However, by the Session 7, he highlighted that UeA served as a healing space. Thus, Blue's gradual sense of comfort with embodied activities also indicates how UeA served as a sanctuary, because it allowed him to ease into his comfort, and provided a safe environment where he could engage with discomfort in ways that were supportive. While it would have been easy for Blue to stop trying, he always kept going, which can be partly attributed to the safe and supportive environment that the UeA sanctuary space provided.

Furthermore, while being messy was an uncomfortable experience for Blue, it was a relaxing and enjoyable experience for other co-researchers sharing the space with him. From the initial session, co-researchers began voicing curiosity about what engaging in embodiment would

look like within the space. As part of her check-out reflection for session 1 focusing on how co-researchers were leaving the space and naming what they were looking forward to about the experience, Mika voiced curiosity about connecting with the inner child. She shared,

> I was gonna say a mixture of, like, happy And also, like, curious because it was fun and play, but also like a lot of things that you mentioned about your inner childhood and just getting to know your body. (Mika, 24, Session 1).

Mika's curiosity is an example of how she was looking forward to engaging in the embodied activities that would allow for reconnection with the body but also tap into childlike creativity and play. Similarly, when making slime, Mabel had a particularly fun time mixing different food coloring colors into her slime to try to make it look like a galaxy. While her slime did not turn out well because she messed the recipe up along the way, she was very enthusiastic to wave at the swivel camera to show the messiness of her hands, and during her check-out reflection, she voiced having lots of fun with the activity. Similarly, when we engaged in the finger-painting embodied activity during session 5, Mabel also particularly enjoyed the activity and shared, "I'm leaving the space a little more relaxed. One thing that stood out to me or that I liked today is, the painting. I lowkey cooked with mine. So, like, I cooked today for real." However, Mabel was not the only one who enjoyed engaging in these types of embodied activities. During a reflection plática on Session 10, Brianna engaged in reflection about engaging in embodied activities was healing because it allowed for her to tap into childlike energy and experiences. She clarified, "doing activities like this, is like healing, like our inner child, I think like doing these, like, for example, like painting can be as like when you were younger." Mika's, Mabel's, and Brianna's quotes all indicate how UeA was a sanctuary space that allowed co-researchers to engage in rest and play by being creative and free through the silly and often messy embodied art activities.

UeA also served as a sanctuary space that allowed for connecting with the self and with cultural practices through movement. By engaging in the embodied meditative activities such as yoga, progressive muscle relaxation, and stretching breaks, co-researchers also tapped into self-awareness. Although co-researchers were skeptical and hesitant about the stretching breaks at first—mainly due to my asking them to stretch their arms out wide to give the world a hug, and then encouraging them to engage in the opposite stretch by giving themselves a hug, and encouraging to tell themselves that they loved themselves—stretching breaks became a ritual that co-researchers would look forward to. By the end of the sessions, most of them were more comfortable in voicing self-love out loud. However, professing self-love was not the only aspect that co-researchers were skeptical of. Engaging in body movements sometimes made co-researchers feel silly. In fact, after the first time that co-researchers collectively engaged in progressive muscle relaxation, Mabel said, "I'm not gonna lie, I felt a little bit dumb doing that," and Angie agreed with her, particularly when they were encouraged to touch their elbows to one another from behind their torsos. Still, despite initial feelings of silliness, hesitation, and skepticism, engaging in some type of body movement became such an important embodied ritual within UeA. So much so, that co-researchers decided that they wanted to incorporate dancing at the community exhibition, after Blue suggested that the co-researchers who participated in the embodied activity of partaking in cultural dances during session 6, should also dance at the community exhibition. Jasmine responded to his suggestion saying, "That'd be kinda fire," thus, the community exhibition concluded with Ana sharing that engaging in movement was an important practice that was cultivated within UeA and inviting all community members to dance "Payaso de Rodeo" with us. This evidences how engaging in movement contributed to the UeA space becoming and operating as a sanctuary space, since it provided a sense of ease and comfort

and intentional connections between our bodies, our minds, and our spirits. In fact, it became a common occurrence during check-out reflections for co-researchers to voice that they were leaving the space feeling much more relaxed then when they came in, in spite of often coming in feeling tired, stressed, and experiencing different sorts of body aches and pain.

Summary of RQ2: Theme 3. UeA became a sanctuary space that facilitated and encouraged co-researchers' connections to self and culture and provided avenues for identity exploration and reflection through embodied activities that incorporated art, creativity, and movement. Engaging in artistic activities that are grounded in Indigenous cultural practices provided a less common avenue for cultural exploration and connection. This was particularly evident when co-researchers wrote and shared poems that encouraged them to think about the customs, people, foods, experiences in nature, and stories that have contributed to their identity development. Furthermore, engaging in art also provided avenues for silliness and playfulness that allowed co-researchers to experience childlike wonder and amusement within the UeA space. Although this was a new and sometimes uncomfortable experience, the fact that co-researchers looked forward to it each week serves as a testament to the success of UeA being a sanctuary that provided a sense of safety, comfort, and freedom. Not only was the sanctuary space able to hold the spiritual and emotional freedom associated with silliness and creativity, it also held the physical freedom and silliness that accompanied the embodied movement activities. We were in a relatively small space, and yet, co-researchers still danced and took up as much space as they needed to while laughing, joking, and uplifting joy—evidencing that sanctuary spaces must allow for physical, emotional, and spiritual freedom through the intentional taking up of space.

Chapter V: Discussion

"May we do work that matters. Vale la pena." – Gloria Anzaldua

As the U.S. moves further into an anti-immigrant era marked by increased surveillance, nationalism, racist nativism, and xenophobia harming communities of color, specifically, undocumented and mixed-status immigrant communities, it is of utmost importance to support the radical healing efforts of immigrant-origin young people. Radical healing can be understood as the process through which young people work to become whole, and work towards personal and collective justice and liberation to heal after experiencing ethno-racial trauma (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002; Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019). One facet of engaging in the radical healing process is critically interrogating and developing a systems-oriented consciousness of their experiences of marginalization and exclusion. They move further towards healing as they partake in justice-oriented social action to counteract their experiences of marginalization. The current study aimed to elucidate how Latinx immigrant-origin young people are tapping into communal and ancestral power and strategies of survival to support their holistic wellbeing and experience healing. Drawing on case study and critical youth participatory action research methodology with an *EntreMundos* lens, the goal of this dissertation is to illuminate how educators, scholars, practitioners, and community leaders can best support the radical healing process from ethno-racial trauma of Latinx immigrant community members. Culturally rooted methods, like photovoice and pláticas, allow scholars to theorize liminal spaces to capture the nuances taking place in-between healing and unhealing/belonging and unbelonging. As I demonstrate in this

project, healing work may take place through the critical interrogation of lived experiences within the security of sanctuary spaces.

Discussion of Research Findings

This research contributes to scholarship in education and psychology by bridging together important topics that are not often examined in conjunction: trauma-informed practices, culturally sustaining education research, and immigrant health and wellbeing. One important theoretical contribution of this dissertation is providing empirical evidence for *how* youth sanctuary spaces were co-constructed. There are many conceptualizations of what sanctuary spaces have to offer, such as a space to: reprocess trauma, engage in consciousness raising and sociopolitical development of youth, engage in freedom dreaming and justice-oriented activism, and engage in cultural and indigenous spiritual practices (Ginwright & Camarota, 2002; Comas-diaz, 2007; Chavez-Dueñas, 2019; French et al., 2020). This dissertation contributes new knowledge about the specific practices that supported the creation of a sanctuary space.

Furthermore, this dissertation is informed and provides empirical support for two interrelated theories for radical healing. I draw from Ginwright and Cammarota (2002) social justice youth development theory as well as Chavez-Dueñas and colleagues' (2019) healing ethno and racial trauma (HEART) framework. My findings provide empirical support to expand both theories for healing by paying particular attention to embodiment through movement and art. Neither theory for healing pays specific attention to nurturing the *bodymindspirit* connection for embodied trauma healing. Furthermore, the HEART framework was conceptualized primarily for use within therapeutic mental health settings. My findings provide support for how the HEART framework for radical healing can be applied outside of therapeutic spaces to

support the radical healing journeys of Latinx immigrant groups within communal spaces for healing and activism.

RQ 1: Co-researchers' Conceptualizations and Understanding of Healing

Through my first research question, I explored how Latinx immigrant-origin young people developed their understandings and conceptualizations of healing as they participated in *Unidos en Acción* (UeA). Co-researchers' engagement in photovoice pláticas demonstrates a desire for the individual and collective wellbeing of Latinx immigrant communities. Four themes were generated to capture how Latinx immigrant young people are experiencing and developing their conceptualizations of healing within the UeA a space: (1) *Life is Really Worth Living*: *Vulnerable Sharing within the Unidos en Acción (UeA) Sanctuary*; (2) *Interrogating Experiences of Trauma and Creating Counternarratives*; (3) *Drawing on Intergenerational Wisdom and Cultural Healing Practices* and (4) *Healing through Consciousness Raising and Social Action*. The generated themes provide important insights regarding how co-researchers were making sense of their individual and collective healing journeys as they engaged in pláticas informed by the photovoice photographs.

Discussion of RQ1: Theme 1. The first theme generated uplifts the co-researchers created a sanctuary space that facilitated their sharing vulnerably. This process aligns with theories of radical healing that posit that the first stage of the healing process is developing youth spaces that nurture youth's feelings of safety and belonging (Chavez-Duenas et al, 2019). Within UeA, co-researchers demonstrated a sense of trust with one another through the photographs that they displayed, the narratives that accompanied the photographs, and in the ways that co-researchers responded to each other's sharing. These findings are aligned with current literature

emphasizing the importance of trusting and nurturing relationships within youth oriented spaces (Erbstein & Fabionar, 2019; Ginwright, 2010; Moncloa et al., 2019). When co-researchers engaged in vulnerable sharing they were met with care, understanding, affirmations, and tenderness. Together, co-researchers navigated struggles related to their ethnic-racial and cultural identities, deconstructed mainstream narratives vilifying their communities and responded to these with counternarratives of strength, resilience, and resourcefulness. Co-researchers also conceptualized healing within the UeA sanctuary space by engaging in social action.

The development of sanctuary spaces in which young people can engage in vulnerable sharing and develop loving and caring relationships with one another aligns with Ginwright's (2010) conceptualizations of communal healing. Ginwright argues that developing loving and caring relationships can serve to counteract and heal some of the trauma and harm that young people experience. Healing was further conceptualized within UeA through the reframing and reprocessing experiences of ethno-racial trauma into evidence for resilience and strength that is a significant defining feature of Latinx immigrant communities. Through this process, co-researchers were able to name often invisibilized systems that contributed to shared experiences of ethno-racial trauma, including covert and overt experiences of racism, discrimination, and targeted exclusion.

Discussion of RQ1: Theme 2. The practice of reframing and reprocessing ethnoracial trauma aligns with Solorzano and Yosso's (2002) conceptualizations of counter-storytelling as a critical race tool for liberation. They argue that counter-storytelling centers the lived experiences of individuals who are often pushed to the margins of society by oppressive social systems and helps to counter some of the harm experienced (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Additionally, while it was important for co-researchers to acknowledge the harm and fear that often ruptures the

livelihood of immigrant community members, co-researchers intentionally chose to highlight witnessed examples of resilience, strength, and overcoming of systemic barriers. Co-researchers emphasized how they now experience privilege due to their parents' choices to immigrate to the U.S. in search of better educational and socioeconomic opportunities. In their acknowledgment of harmful experiences, and reprocessing them into counternarratives of resilience, co-researchers also expressed a desire to improve social conditions not only for their families but also more broadly for the immigrant community. This orientation aligns with growing empirical research that utilizes counternarratives of historically marginalized youth as tools for actively resisting systems of oppression (Del Rio, 2023; Ender, 2019; Pender et al., 2023).

Discussion of RQ1: Theme 3. Conceptualizations of healing were further evidenced and supported in three important ways. First, through their photovoice pláticas, co-researchers shared how they have tapped into ancestral practices of faith and spirituality as a source of communal cultural wealth. In joining active faith communities, co-researchers developed positive coping skills through prayer and spiritual meditative practices, and found extended chosen families that helped to ease the pain of the separation from their biological families that remained in their heritage countries. Faith communities also contributed to the creation of loving and supportive communities that share the burdens of family separation and provide avenues for the reframing of familial ties. This finding aligns with current theoretical and empirical findings that identify spiritual practices as an important protective cultural value within Latinx culture (Pinetta et al., *in press*; Medina & Gonzales 2019). Additionally, Comas-Díaz (2021A) argues that among Afro-Latinx individuals, spirituality and faith practices serve as an effective tool for healing ethno-racial trauma.

Secondly, co-researchers uplifted bidirectional and intergenerational examples of familial and communal healing. Co-researchers expressed a desire to be worthy of parental sacrifices evidenced by their own success and positive development. In turn, co-researchers discussed the ways that witnessing their success was also a healing experience for parents. Co-researchers often engaged in pláticas focusing on the ways in which their wellbeing and access to greater educational and socioemotional opportunities for success had served as motivating factors in their parents' immigration choices. Thus, it was a healing experience to witness how co-researchers had taken advantage of those opportunities to become thoughtful, caring, and contributing members to society. Furthermore, the bidirectional and intergenerational aspect of healing was also evidenced in the ways that co-researchers were motivated to become successful and actualize the best versions of themselves to serve as positive role models for their younger siblings, cousins, and community members who admired them. Co-researchers' strong family ties mirror current research that identifies familial support and family-oriented behaviors as being protective factors against experiences of marginalization for Latinx young people, and as contributing to Latinx youth's sociopolitical development and socioemotional well-being (Stein et al., 2023; Pinetta et al., 2025*;* Cahill et al., 2021).

Lastly, co-researchers conceptualized healing by nurturing the *bodymindspirit* connections through embodiment. Nurturing the bodymindspirit connection allowed co-researchers to strengthen their connections to the self. One way co-researchers nurtured the bodymindspirit connection was by engaging in arts-based practices. Co-researchers often voiced leaving the space feeling much more relaxed than when they entered it. This aligns with recent empirical research arguing that the use of arts-based practices with Latinx youth and young adults contributes to their wellbeing and healing (Armas et al., 2023). Furthermore, co-

researchers' embodiment of healing through movement aligns with Meyer and colleagues' (2024) research findings indicating that for migrants waiting for asylum at the U.S.-Mexico border, participating in cultural dances serves as an important act of resistance that promotes healing and cultivates joy. Thus, co-researchers' engagement in embodied activities contributes to emerging research on the importance of connecting to the self and body as radical act of resistance, self-love, and healing.

Discussion of RQ1: Theme 4. In alignment with existing healing literature, co-researchers' conceptualizations of healing also included engaging in social action geared towards improving the social conditions of Latinx immigrant communities as well as engaging in larger justice actions for collective liberation (Freire, 2002; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002; Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019 French et al, 2020). For some co-researchers, participating in UeA was the first time engaging in justice-oriented actions, while other co-researchers were highly civically engaged and had a history of participating in community activism for the collective liberation of all marginalized people. Given the large range in levels of social justice engagement, healing was conceptualized and experienced differently among co-researchers. For those who were less engaged, their experiencing of healing within UeA had to do more with their development of critical consciousness, and beginning to name the ways that unjust systems contributed to their experiences of marginalizations. Thus, being a co-researcher within the UeA program supported them in starting their healing journeys. For co-researchers who were more highly engaged, their conceptualization and experiences of healing had to do more with taking direct actions. Within the UeA space, direct action for higher civically engaged included contributed to the sociopolitical development of their less critically conscious co-researchers. Highly civically engaged co-researchers often engaged other co-researchers in pláticas and conversations where

they educated other co-researchers about the different ways that they could also be civically engaged. These pláticas addressed topics such as voting, advocacy, boycotts, and raising awareness on issues that affecting the wellbeing of Latinx communities.

RQ2: Co-researchers' Co-creation of UeA as a Sanctuary Space

My second research question explored the ways that Latinx immigrant-origin young people co-constructed a sanctuary space. Sanctuary spaces have historically been important components of the immigrant rights movement. Churches and other places worship have offered physical sanctuary to individuals and families targeted by immigration enforcements for deportation proceedings (Lippert & Rehaag, 2013; Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019). Ginwright and Camarota (2002) as well as Chavez-Dueñas and colleagues (2019) argue that sanctuary spaces must allow for their inhabitants to be able to return to a childlike socioemotional state that is characterized by freedom, a sense of safety and security, wonder, and dreaming. Furthermore, sanctuary spaces also serve as social justice educational spaces that support the civic and sociopolitical development and the healing journeys of those within the space (Fernandez et al., 2024; Goessling, 2020). In the previous section, I discussed how UeA contributed to co-researchers' conceptualizations and experiences of healing. In this section, I discuss the themes generated to capture the practices that were collectively developed that served to transform UeA into a co-created sanctuary space: (1) *Promoting Safety through Community Norms, Rituals, and Agency, (2) Nourishing Belonging through Collaboration and Inclusivity*, and *(3) Facilitating Cultural Connections and Identity Exploration through Art, Creativity, and Movement.*

Discussion of RQ2: Theme 1. The primary way that UeA became a sanctuary space was through development of supportive rituals of embodiment that provided a sense of safety and

security and encouraged co-researchers' agency over the space. The specific attention to rituals is an important contribution of this research to the radical healing literature and expands the theoretical frameworks guiding this research. Neither Ginwright and Cammarota's (2002) social justice youth development theory, nor Chavez-Dueñas and colleagues' (2019) HEART framework incorporate rituals of embodiment in their theorizing of radical healing. Indeed, theorizing rituals as a healing practice occurs most often within the grief work literature (Barton, 2022; Hannegan-Martinez, 2023; Weller 2015). However, Cariaga (2021) discusses how embodied rituals can contribute to the creation of anti-racist and embodied classrooms as they contribute to bodily attunement and meeting the socioemotional needs of students. One specific ritual that co-researchers collectively engaged in within UeA, that Cariaga (2021) also discusses as being imperative to promoting student's agency and safety, was the naming of co-researchers' needs. By naming what they needed from the space, and from each other, co-researchers developed community norms that informed how they expected to behave and relate to each other. The weekly reminders of these norms contributed to the sense of safety that facilitated co-researchers' authentic and vulnerable sharing with one another. Rituals also provided a routine that co-researchers could rely on that demystified the happenings within the space. Co-researchers knew that they could expect to begin each session being reminded of the voluntary nature of all activities and of the co-created community norms. Co-researchers also knew to expect that check-in reflections would follow the weekly reminders, and the first photovoice plática would come after the check-in reflection. The first and second photovoice pláticas would be separated by a ten-minute break, and each session concluded with embodied activities that encouraged co-researchers' reconnections to their body-mind-spirit through movement and art. My research findings align with current literature indicating that for youth of color who have

experienced ethno-racial trauma, consistent routines and predictability contribute to overall sense of safety, belonging, and wellbeing across social contexts, including schools and family environments (Davis & Glynn, 2924: Hernandez & Darling-Hammond et al., 2023; Selman & Dilworth-Bart, 2024). Having consistent rituals contributed to the co-creation of sanctuary spaces given that many members of mixed-status immigrant communities often live in fear of immigration persecution and with uncertainty of when, if ever, their families will be affected by immigration enforcement.

Discussion of RQ2: Theme 2. Co-researchers also co-constructed a sanctuary space by developing an inclusive and collaborative environment that nurtured a sense of belonging for everyone in the space. Co-researchers embraced a spirit of collaboration in the way that decisions were made collectively and in the ways that they actively supported one another. Fernández and colleagues (2024) posit that challenging hierarchical dynamics and encouraging collaboration amongst youth contributes to belonging by developing a culture of collective care. They further claim that collective care is a healing-centered value that youth organizing spaces, such as Unidos en Accion, should espouse to contribute to the sociopolitical wellbeing of the youth within the organizing spaces (Fernández et al., 2024). Co-researchers often made decisions together by voting anonymously for how we were to engage in certain practices, such as which songs were danced, whether pseudonyms or real names were used at the community exhibition, and who was "it" during games played. Co-researchers also demonstrated their commitment to collaboration in the ways that they responded to each other's need for support. When co-researchers voiced specific needs, including affirmations and validation, co-researchers were quick to provide them. Similarly, when co-researchers asked for help within the space, other co-researchers responded by stepping up to provide the help that was needed. These contribute to

extant research indicating that incorporating democratic practices, such power sharing between youth and adults to make collective decisions, within schools and other youth-focused spaces contribute to youth's sense of belonging and overall empowerment (Collins et al., 2019; Dinzulu et al, 2024; Serriere & Riley, 2024) Furthermore, co-researchers also cultivated an inclusive environment in the way that they were mindful of how much space they each took within the space. Belonging in the space was also facilitated in the ways that co-researchers were encouraged to show up as their full authentic selves and accommodated the needs of co-researchers. One important example of what accommodating the needs of co-researchers looked like within UeA was providing childcare for Camila, who had two daughters that she brought with her to every meeting. Having childcare facilitated Camila's full participation in the UeA space during the pláticas, and the children joined for the embodied portions of each session.

Discussion of RQ2: Theme 3. Aligned with theories of radical healing emphasizing the importance of sanctuary spaces to support the positive development of cultural identity connections, UeA also provided opportunities for the development of cultural and ethnic-racial identity exploration (Chavez-Dueñas et al., 2019; French et al., 2020; Ginwright, 2016). Youth's endorsement of cultural connections and strong ethnic-racial identities have been linked to youth's positive sociopolitical development and civic engagement (Blanco Martinez et al., 2022; Pinetta et al., 2020). Further literature also suggests that engaging in arts-based cultural practices, is another way in which Latinx youth and adults can resist societal injustices by cultivating joy, play, and rest (Armas et a., 2023; Causadias & Neblett; 2024; Meyer et al., 2024). Thus, my findings contribute and bridge both bodies of literature, since arts-based practices were used as a tool to facilitate the collective wellbeing of the UeA co-researchers, as well as an active and intentional practice of resistance and healing. By engaging in cultural and

arts-based practices, UeA co-researchers felt more connected to one another, to themselves and their bodies, and to the larger immigrant Latinx communities. As co-researchers engaged arts-based cultural practices and reflections, they co-created a sanctuary in which it was safe for them to explore and strengthen cultural and ethnic-racial identities and to collectively working through shared identity struggles.

The findings for RQ2 focus on the practices that contributed to UeA becoming a sanctuary space. Although theories for radical healing conceptualize how healing happens within sanctuary spaces, there is no empirical evidence for how to develop a successful sanctuary space. However, there have been spaces created to support the development of Latinx youth activism. Johnson and colleagues (2014) created a crtitical classroom in which undocumented students supported one another in growing their awareness of resources for undocumented and mixed status families. Their research aligns within RQ2 findings in which co-researchers supported and contributed to each other's learning and awareness of systems. Furthermore, in order for students to share their documentation status with their teacher, they had to feel a sense of safety and security that allowed for sharing vulnerably, which is also reflected in the RQ2 findings. Furthermore, Santa-Ramirez (2022) posits that counterspaces contribute to a sense of belonging through shared experiences and collaborations. Thus, while there is no empirical evidence that speaks specifically to the creation of youth-oriented sanctuary spaces, there is evidence for counterspaces and critical spaces that support the wellbeing of historically marginalized youth, including immigrant-origin youth. The practices highlighted in RQ2 findings extend the fields of fields of education, psychology, and trauma studies as they specifically illustrate the importance of co-creating embodied and healing-centered sanctuary spaces for Latinx immigrant origin youth. Thus, providing further support for existing literature focusing on the benefits of creating

youth spaces for marginalized youth that nurture their sociopolitical development and facilitate engaging in meaningful social justice action.

Contributions & Implications

Methodological Contributions

As Latinx immigrant young people make sense of how to navigate and respond to an increasingly hostile and anti-immigrant sociopolitical climate, there is a great need to engage in culturally sustaining research methodologies that provide avenues for healing and sociopolitical development and action. As such, this dissertation also provides important methodological contributions as it builds upon existing research that leverages participatory action research methodologies to facilitate youth activism and healing (Goessling 2021; Rombalski et al.,2023; Baker, 2024). Furthermore, this dissertation combined photovoice with pláticas methods. As such, there is opportunity to theorize and propose an emerging combined methodology of "photovoice pláticas," a culturally sustaining, visual method that allows for more nuanced understanding and theorizing of the experiences of individuals existing within liminal spaces in between societal margins. Members of mixed status communities often find themselves operating between the margins of "ni de aqui, ni de alla," (Torre & Ayala, 2009; Ayala et al., 2018) navigating the privilege of U.S. citizenship, with the persecution of undocumented status; not being fully accepted as "American," but also losing their connections to heritage countries as they assimilate or acculturate to U.S. society; and being fully committed to the liberation of Latinx peoples, yet espousing anti-Black sentiments often common within Latinx cultures. It is within these spaces of contradiction and liminality, that *photovoice pláticas* allows us to theorize within, thus contributing to the more nuanced understanding of the Latinx

immigrant experience. By also approaching *photovoice pláticas* from a critical, anti-racist, and *EntreMundos* (Ayala et al., 2018) lens, we can gain important insights for how to approach coalition work committed to the collective liberation of all marginalized communities, from the river to the sea, from border walls to freedom.

Application Contributions

Implications of Practitioners. With the marked rise in anti-immigrant sociopolitical climate that accompanied the new U.S. administration, Latinx immigrant and immigrant origin students are at high risk for experiencing targeted persecution. States such as Oklahoma are attempting to pass laws that would require schools to collect documentation status information from all students that could have detrimental consequences to the access to culturally sustainable resources and education by immigrant community members (Martinez-Keel, 2025). As such, it is imperative that immigrant-serving mental and physical health practitioners and other social service providers to take bold steps to ensure the safety and access to resources of all community members. This research has important implications for mental and physical health practitioners and other social service providers since it provides specific practices that practitioners can employ to create sanctuary community spaces that contribute to the healing, safety, and wellbeing of Latinx immigrant community members (Adames et al., 2023). Specifically, healthcare facilities can commit to operating as a sanctuary space that prioritizes the wellbeing of immigrant communities and refuses to cooperate with immigration enforcement operations. Many of the conversations with co-researchers revolved around their witnessing their parents and other members of their communities navigate language barriers across social settings. As such, one way healthcare facilities can ensure that they provide services that are accessible in multiple

languages and be responsive to healthcare concerns by being attentive to the spiritual and cultural orientation of clients (i.e being aware of cultural stigmas). Furthermore, practitioners can ensure that they offer culturally sustaining services that tap into indigenous healing practices (Lucana & Elfers, 2020; Pearson 2007).

Implications for Educators. Given the current efforts to dismantle diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives within schools and higher education spaces, this dissertation has important implications for educators (Shwartz. 2025). The current federal administration is not only attacking DEI initiatives within a wide range of educational spaces, but also actively targeting immigrant communities. As such, educators have a responsibility to respond to the current hostile sociopolitical climate by engaging in culturally sustaining teaching practices that encourage the embodied learning of students. Furthermore, educators should also be transforming their classrooms into sanctuary spaces that contribute to the sense of safety and security of immigrant students in the space. Thus, my current research has increasingly important implications for all educators that care about the safety and wellbeing of all students in the space. But strengthening their commitment to operating as sanctuary classrooms or sanctuary schools, educators have the potential to intervene and disrupt the school-to-prison, and school-to-deportation pipelines for immigrant students and other marginalized students of color.

Implications for Community Organizers & Scholar Activists. This dissertation also has important implications for researchers, community organizers, and scholar activists conducting social justice-oriented work. One important implication of the present findings for community-engaged scholarship is that work encouraging resistance and social justice activism must center love and joy. Throughout the entire Unidos en Acción experience, co-researchers were able to engage in critical analysis of their social condition and look towards engaging in actions for the

betterment of their communities because they were leading with love, and centering joy in the process. Furthermore, there was an intentional attunement to the physical wellbeing of coresearchers, and engaging in activities that actively nurtured the *bodymindspirit* connections. Thus, when engaging in resistance work, whether it be in the context of community or the academy, there must also be an intentional attunement to the body. By ensuring that there are opportunities to engage in embodied healing through the metabolizing stress and tensions that arise from conversations or experiences taking place, engaging in resistance efforts has the potential to become holistic and embodies avenues for engaging in the radical healing process.

Limitations & Future Directions

While this dissertation was a labor of love that supported that radical healing efforts of immigrant-origin young people, that has important implications for research and practice, it is not without limitations. One important consideration is that when assessing the success of UeA as a sanctuary space that facilitated conceptualizations of healing, co-researchers self-selected to become part of this experience. Thus, it can be argued that co-researchers were able to conceptualize and experience healing because of outside socializing factors that contributed to their healing journeys. However, regardless of whether co-researchers had begun their radical healing journeys outside of UeA, co-researchers named UeA as a space where healing happens. Thus, their experiences of healing cannot be denied or dismissed. Similarly, Greensboro, NC has a rich culture of civil rights activism. Thus, as an immigrant welcoming destination, there are more available resources for members of mixed-status immigrant communities that are not typically available in less immigrant-welcoming locations. Accordingly, future work should consider implementing the Unidos en Acción program within states that have higher levels of

anti-immigrant sentiments, thus, also a greater need to support the radical healing efforts of community members, to examine whether co-researchers across different settings and contexts engage in the radical healing process in similar ways. Furthermore, UeA was limited to taking place over a ten-week time period, which is a relatively short time to fully capture all of the nuances of critical consciousness and sociopolitical development. Thus, while UeA did contribute to co-researchers' consciousness raising and development, there would be further evidence for more sustainable growth if UeA took place over a longer period of time. Expanding the length of UeA would allow for deeper dive into the topics discussed such that each topic could span multiple weeks rather than the one week that we had time for within the current UeA time frame. Furthermore, while we did engage with Indigenous healing practices, future iterations of UeA could engage in Indigenous healing practices even further by planning some of the embodied activities to take place within nature, or by learning directly from Indigenous healers or curanderos. Additional future directions of this work include building school partnerships to explore how classrooms can be transformed into embodied sanctuaries of learning that disrupt the school to prison nexus. Project-based learning and transformative socioemotional learning practices provide opportunities to engage in healing-centered, democratic, and justice-oriented teaching practices (Jagers et al., 2019; McGovern et al., 2023; Ward et al., 2023). These practices would create more opportunities for youth to exercise more agency over their learning, and contribute to youth efficacy and empowerment, sociopolitical development, provide opportunities to engage in the radical healing process. Within the current understandings of youth organizing spaces, adults engage in power sharing with youth to facilitate youth's learning, activism, and healing (Goessling, 2020). Therefore, future directions of this work also include the incorporation parents and other adult caregivers to be active

members in community organizing spaces *alongside* young people, to engage in intergenerational healing justice and activism.

Conclusion

Unidos en Acción (UeA) was a culturally sustaining 10-week program that centered the radical healing efforts of thirteen co-researchers who partnered with me in this learning journey. Throughout our time in UeA, co-researchers engaged in photovoice pláticas in which we were able to connect with one another over shared experiences of liminality, resistance, and healing. Together, we conceptualized how healing is experienced withing Latinx immigrant contexts using photographs, and we collectively experienced healing by engaging in cultural practices that encouraged joy, laughter, creativity, and play. As the current presidential administration actively engages in state-sanctioned persecution and terrorism of immigrant communities, cultivating embodied spaces that center joy, healing, sociopolitical development, and social justice actions is one of the most important ways that we can engage in collective resistance for the liberation of all oppressed people. Above all, healing and resisting injustice must be fueled by love.

> *The moment we choose to love, we begin to move against domination. Against oppression. The moment we choose to love, we begin to move towards freedom. To act in ways that liberate ourselves and others. That action is the testimony of love as the practice of freedom*. bell hooks.

APPENDICES

Appendix A. UeA Overview and Guide

Unidos en Acción: Uplifting Latinx Young Adult's Embodied Healing Practices using Photovoice

Sessions Overview

Session #	Topic	Activities
1	Introductions, Norm Setting, & Community Building	- Intro Check-In: - Creation of Community norms - Games - Plática to get to know one another - Check-out
2	Photography Methods & Ethics	- Intro Check-In - Guest speaker to teach us about photography & ethics. - Practicing using the camera, setting up a frame, and taking good quality photos. - Create photo prompts for PS 1. - Embodied experience – friendship bracelet making - Closing check- Out
3	PS 1: Understanding and Defining Community	- Intro Check-In - Photo experience debrief. - Photovoice Pláticas - Create photo prompts for PS 2. - Embodied Experience – Candle painting - Closing Check-out
4	PS 2: Individual and Systemic Trauma & the Body	- Intro Check-In - Photo experience debrief. - Photovoice Pláticas - Create photo prompts for PS 3. - Embodied experience – Making slime - Closing Check-out

5	PS 3: Immigration & Education -related trauma	- Intro Check-In - Photo experience debrief. - Photovoice Pláticas - Create photo prompts for PS 4. - Embodied Activity – Progressive Muscle Relaxation & Finger painting - Close session with embodied experience
6	PS 4: Physical, Emotional, and Spiritual Wellbeing	- Intro Check In - Photo experience debrief. - Photovoice Pláticas - Create photo prompts for PS 5. - Embodied experience- Progressive Muscle Relaxation &
7	PS 5: Ancestral ways of survival, & Protection	- Intro Check In - Photo experience debrief. - Photovoice Pláticas - Create photo prompts for PS 6. - Close session with embodied experience
8	PS 6: Understanding and conceptualizing healing	- Intro Check In - Photovoice Pláticas - Create photo prompts for PS 7. - Begin identifying & reaching out to community members for exhibition. - Close session with embodied experience
9	PS 7: Embodiment & Sharing of Healing Practices	What does it mean to be a healer? - Intro Check In - Photo experience debrief. - Photovoice Pláticas - Choose photographs for exhibition and follow up on community partners. - Close session with embodied experience
10	PS 8: Collective analysis, identifying themes, & choosing exhibition photographs	What does it all mean & how can we leverage it for social action? - Intro Check In - Photovoice Pláticas – why those images? - Finalize community exhibition preparations. - Create photo prompts for PS 8. - Close session with embodied experience
11	Exhibition to Policy Makers and Key Stakeholders	- Introduction to our community - Share narratives surrounding images - Invite community members to reflect and join social justice efforts.

		- Interact with community members
12	Debrief & Wrap-Up	- Intro Check In - Exhibition debrief - Final embodied activity - Close out reflection circle.

Rapport – community building – intro to photovoice research – intro to trauma – intro to healing — deeper dive into healing – analysis – exhibition – wrap up

Weekly Guide: Each Session will last roughly around 2 hours and 15 minutes

Week 1: Introduction, Norm Setting, & Community Building

Hour 1:

- 20 mins - Check-in: Names, pronouns, how is everyone entering the space?
    - Have folks been involved in research before? What are folks expectations for this process?
- 30 min- Introduction to who I am, what I do, what this project is for, setting norms for discussion and for how we want to relate with one another in this space.
- 10 break - bathroom & snacks

Hour 2

- 30 mins – Hula hoop game, Broken telephone game,
- 20 mins - Check out: How is everyone leaving the space? One thing they are looking forward to doing for themselves.

Week 2: Intro to Photovoice, Photography Ethics, & Picture-taking

Hour 1:

- 20 mins - Check-in: Names, pronouns, how is everyone entering the space?
    - Do folks have experience with photography? What are folks expectations for this process?
- 30 min – Intro to Photovoice as research & ethics of photography
- 10 break - bathroom & snacks

Hour 2

- 30 mins – Who are researcher, positioning themselves as researcher activity, & getting to know the camera and practicing photography, co-developing first photovoice prompt.
- 25 mins - Embodied activity - cultural & ancestral healing practices
- 20 mins - Check out: How is everyone leaving the space? One thing they are looking forward to doing for themselves.

Week 3: Community – What/Who is it***?***

Proposed Prompt: Capture images of your understanding of "community"

Hour 1:

- 20 mins - Check-in: how is everyone entering the space? What was it like to think about the prompt and try to capture it with photographs?
- 30 min- Photovoice pláticas – displaying images and listening to image narratives about understandings of community
- 10 break - bathroom & snacks

Hour 2

- 30 mins - Photovoice pláticas – how are the narratives landing for each person? Similar? Different? Reactions? Co-developing next photovoice prompts.
- 25 mins - Embodied activity - cultural & ancestral healing practices

- 20 mins - Check out: How is everyone leaving the space? One thing they are looking forward to doing for themselves.

Week 4: Trauma & the Body

Proposed Prompt: What is Trauma? What does in our bodies does it hurt?
Hour 1:

- 20 mins - Check-in: how is everyone entering the space?
- 30 min - Photovoice pláticas – displaying images and listening to image narratives
- 10 break - bathroom & snacks

Hour 2

- 30 mins - Photovoice pláticas continued - how are the narratives landing for each person? Similar? Different? Reactions? Co-developing next photovoice prompts.

- 25 mins - Embodied activity - cultural & ancestral healing practices
- 20 mins - Check out: How is everyone leaving the space?

Week 5: Systems as Sources of Trauma – Immigration & Education

Proposed Prompt: Capture images of what represents immigration, education, and systems. What does justice/injustice look like?
Hour 1:

- 20 mins - Check-in: how is everyone entering the space?
- 30 min- Photovoice pláticas – displaying images and listening to image narratives
- 10 break - bathroom & snacks

Hour 2

- 30 mins - Photovoice pláticas – how are the narratives landing for each person? Similar? Different? Reactions? Co-developing next photovoice prompts.
- 25 mins - Embodied activity - cultural & ancestral healing practices

- 20 mins - Check out: How is everyone leaving the space? One thing they are looking forward to doing for themselves.

Week 6: Physical, Emotional, and Spiritual Wellbeing

Proposed Prompt: Capture images of what wellbeing means to you. What does Physical/Emotional/Spiritual wellbeing look like? How do we find it?
Hour 1:

- 20 mins - Check-in: how is everyone entering the space?
- 30 min- 30 min- Photovoice pláticas – displaying images and listening to image narratives
- 10 break - bathroom & snacks

Hour 2

- 30 mins - Photovoice pláticas – how are the narratives landing for each person? Similar? Different? Reactions? Co-developing next photovoice prompts.

- 25 mins - Embodied activity - cultural & ancestral healing practices
- 20 mins - Check out: How is everyone leaving the space? One thing they are going to do to care for themselves, and what are they looking forward to about this experience.

Week 7: Healing Our Communities

Proposed Prompt: Capture images of what it means to be well. How do we heal from wounds we can't see but we feel? How did we learn about this?

Hour 1:

- 20 mins - Check-in: how is everyone entering the space?
- 30 min- Photovoice pláticas – displaying images and listening to image narratives;
- 10 break - bathroom & snacks

Hour 2

- 30 mins - Photovoice pláticas – how are the narratives landing for each person? Similar? Different? Is Social Action event important? What does it mean for Latinxs?
- 25 mins - Embodied activity - cultural & ancestral healing practices
- 20 mins - Check out: How is everyone leaving the space? One thing they are looking forward to doing for themselves.

Week 08: Collective analysis, identifying themes, & choosing photos

Hour 1:

- 20 mins - Check-in: how is everyone entering the space?
- 30 min- what have all of these pláticas been for? How can what we've learned, created, conceptualized be used to create meaningful change? What kind of ancestor do we want to be? What cultural and ancestral knowledge do we want to pass on to others?
- 10 break - bathroom & snacks

Hour 2

- 30 mins - Photovoice pláticas – choosing exhibition images (depending on total number of participants, researchers will choose 3-5 images each to display; budget allows for 45 12x12 images.
- 25 mins - Embodied activity - cultural & ancestral healing practices
- 20 mins - Check out: How is everyone leaving the space? One thing they are looking forward to doing for themselves.

Week 09: Community Exhibition (Will ***likely*** last longer than scheduled)

Hour 1:

- 20 mins - Check-in: how is everyone entering the space?
- 30 min- 30 min- Setting up & preparing to welcome community stakeholders

Hour 2

- 1.5 hours: Photovoice Exhibition with community members & being in community
- 20 mins - Check out: How is everyone leaving the space? One thing they are looking forward to doing for themselves.

Week 10: Debrief & Wrap-Up

Hour 1:

- 20 mins - Check-in: how is everyone entering the space?
- 30 min- What was this experience like for everyone? Reactions to exhibition? Things we liked, things we disliked, things we wish we could have done differently?
- 10 break - bathroom & snacks

Hour 2

- 30 mins – What is something we learned throughout this experience that we will take with us and share with others?
- 25 mins - Embodied activity - cultural & ancestral healing practices
- 20 mins - Check out: How is everyone leaving the space? One thing they are looking forward to doing for themselves.

Appendix B. Sample RADaR File

RQ 1: How do Latinx, immigrant-origin young people learn about and develop their own understandings of healing for themselves?						
Session 1_8.28.24						
Speaker	**Text**	**Notes**	**Codes**	**Subcodes**	**Concepts**	**Examples**
Saraí	So. Introductions. If anyone wants to tell us your names, your names, your fake names. And the pronouns that you use. How you're coming into this space. So, if you're maybe feeling a little confused, a little nervous, don't know what to expect. I'd love to hold that. A fun fact about you that you'd like to share with the group so that we can get to know you. That isn't obvious just by looking at you. If you have any previous experiences with research and what you expect the experience to be like. Is there anything that would like to go first, or would you like me to get it going?					
Saraí	Okay, so my name is Saraí, I use she/her/ella pronouns. I am coming into the space with a lot of feelings. I'm very excited to finally get this going, but I'm also nervous because I don't know what this experience is going to turn to. But like, a good kind of nervous. A fun fact about me that isn't obvious I love to dance. I started dancing in Michigan. I take classes, for salsa, and bachata. And, So that's what I do to de-stress from the grad school. I have participated in research before. I've never led research. This is my the first program that I research experience that I developed on my own from beginning to end. And I'm expecting this experience to be exciting. Full of learning and full of community.					

Mia	I can start. My name is. Mia. I use she/her/ella pronouns. So I'm currently feeling excited. I love research. Is, really fun. What you're doing is really interesting. So that's what feeling, fun fact about me. I play the violin. So, yeah, I love Music. With research. I have a bit of experience with that. For my undergrad, I study psychology.					
Mia	So there's a bunch of, like, labs that I worked in. Currently grad school, also working on a research project for some of my colleagues, too. And also in my workplace, I work for Toyota, and we do a lot of I.O. psychology studies, a lot of research and data. And I'm expecting this to be a good experience.					
Saraí	Oh thank you					

Appendix C. RQ 1 Codebook

RQ 1: How do Latinx, immigrant-origin young people learn about, develop understandings of, and experience healing for themselves?			
Code #	**CODE**	**SUBCODE**	**DESCRIPTION**
1	**Code** **Broad definition of code**	**A. Subcode here if necessary**	Description of subcode
		B.	
		C.	
		D.	
2	**ERS** **Youth discuss receiving ethnic racial socialization messaging from parents, adults, and peers in their communities.**	**A. Cultural**	Youth discuss receiving messages of cultural pride, cultural strengths, and engaging in traditions and customs to keep the culture alive.
		B. Prep for Bias	Youth discuss receiving messages preparing them to deal with experiences of racism, discrimination, persecution.
		C. Doc Status	Youth discuss receiving messages about documentation status, how to interact with immigration enforcements, what to do in case of deportation and family separation, and who to trust.
4	**Community** **Young people discuss the places in which they found community**	**A. School**	co-researcher express finding community within their school
		B. Pets	co-researcher express including pets in their understandings of community
		C. Mexico	co-researchers describe their community being found in Mexico

		D. Family	Co-researchers describe finding community within their family
		E. Church	Co-researchers describe finding community within their church family.
		F. Co-Workers	Co-researchers describe finding community within their co-workers
		G. Animals	Co-researchers describe finding community within their farm/work animals, that is separate from pets.
		I. Neighborhood	Co-researchers describe finding community within their neighborhoods
5	**Critical Consciousness / Conocimiento Journeys**	**Critical refection**	"the process of learning to question social arrangements and structures that marginalize groups of people"
		Critical motivation	"the perceived capacity and commitment to address perceived injustices"
		Critical action	"engaging individually or collectively to change perceived injustices"
6	**Identity Affirmation Co-researchers affirm their own and each other's ethnic-racial identities.**	**Ethnic-Racial Microaffirmations**	co-researchers affirm each other's value, integrity, and shared humanity
7	**Cultural Customs Co-researchers share about their culture with one another**	**Food**	Co-researchers discuss cultural foods
		Art	Co-researchers use art to share about their culture
		Language	Co-researchers use Spanish as a way to share and bond over their culture
		Celebrations	Co-researchers share engaging in community by celebrating important cultural holidays, bautizos, quinceañeras, and other culturally rooted celebrations.

8	**Safety** **Participants describe what they need to have a sense of safety**	**Community Norms**	Co-researchers create community norms for the space together
		Familiarity	Co-researchers share how repeated exposure to each other supports sense of safety and comfort
9	**Expression** **Co-researchers articulate a feeling**	**Confusion**	Co-researchers express feeling confused
		Clarification	Co-researchers express needing clarification
		Delight	Co-researcher express joy
		Need	Co-researcher articulated a need
		Curiosity	co-researcher express curiosity about one another, the activities, or shared experiences
		Nervous	Co-researchers share feeling nervous/uncertain
		Hypervigilance	co-researchers share feeling exposed or on guard as if something ill will happen
		Awkward	Co-researchers share feeling awkward
		Relaxed	co-researchers express feeling relaxed, particularly as they get ready to leave the space
		Symbolism	Co-researchers utilize symbolism to describe feeling or experience
		Wistful	Co-researchers describe a sad longing for something in the past (such as a different outcome or different approach to a situation)
		Pride	Co-researcher expresses pride
		Sad	Co-researchers express feeling sad
		Pressure	Co-researcher shared about feeling pressure from parents/community
		Energized	Co-researchers express feeling energized
		Hurt	Co-researchers express feeling hurt
		Excitement	Co-researchers share feelings of excitement
		Gratitude	Co-researchers expresse feeling gratitude, particularly towards their parents
10	**Mutual Support** **Co-researchers demonstrate and provide support in a shared context**	**Community**	Co-researchers find healing in supporting and helping their larger communities

11	**Community Building Co-researchers engage in activities meant to build community and rapport**	**A. Laughter**	Co-researcher laugh with each other as they build community
		Playfulness	Co-researchers engage in playful behavior with one another
		Shared-Space	Co-researchers ensure that everyone has same access to the space and that everyone is heard
		Games	Co-reseaerches play games together
		Fun	
		Learning	Co-researchers build community by asking questions to learn more about each other.
12	**Attunement (embodiment) Co-researchers are aware of and can respond to needs and experiences of other and themselves.**	**Body**	Co-researchers are aware of physical/somatic experiences and needs
		Emotional	Co-researchers are aware of their emotional experience/reactions/needs.
		Social	Co-researcher express being aware of how they are perceived/racialized by society.
13	Agency Co-researchers are aware of and eact their ability to make change in themselves and their surroundings	**Mutual Organization**	Co-researchers are organizing themselves during group activities
14	Socialization Co-researchers engage in socialization towards one another or discuss receiving a specific type of socialization from family/community	**Political**	Co-researchers describe the ways in which they received political socialization messages from the family/commuunity.
		Modeling	Co-researchers engage in modelings positive behavior for their family/community.
		Values	Co-reseachers describe the values that they have learned from their parents, family members, and larger community (i.e. hard working).

		Privileges	Co-researchers share they were taught about having opportunities and other privileges comapred to their country of origin.
15	**Wellbeing** **Co-researchers discuss practices that contribute to their overall wellbeing.**	**Self-Care**	Co-researchers discuss the ways that they will engage in self-care practices
		Barrriers	Co-ressearchers discuss barriers that affect their overall wellbeing
16	Expectations Co-reasearchers express their expectations across different contexts		
17	**Confianza** **Co-researchers interact with each other in a way to depicts comfort, familiarity, and trust**		
18	Reflection Co-researchers engage in introspection about their culture, experiences, and interactions	**group outcome**	co-researcher shares about outcomes from participating in group
		photo progression	co-researcher shares about their developing experiences regarding photo project
		history	co-researcher shares about reflecting upon their history
		White Priviledge	Co-researchers recognize their white privilege
19	Sanctuary Co-researchers describe feeling uniquely spiritually, emotionally, and physically	**Exploration**	Co-researchers share about willingness to or engaging in exploratory behaviors stemming from security/safety

	safe specifically within the Unidos en Acción space		
20	Ethnic-Racial Identity (ERI) Co-researchers describe their E-R/Cultural Identity, and/or the process of building & feeling connected to that identity.	**Exploration**	Co-researchers describe their process of exploring their ER/Cultural identities
		liminal (Ni de aqui/Ni de alla)	Co-researchers describe feeling like they're in a liminal space in their identity where they don't fully fit in to perceptions of Latinidad nor perceptions of what it means to be American.
		Contact	Co-researcher describe maintaining regular contact with immediate and extended family from country of origin to be more connected with culture/identity
		Dance	co-researcher shares about engaging in cultural dance to maintain connection to heritage
		Festivals	Co-researchers describe attending festivals centered on culture as part of their efforts to maintain connection and celebrate heritage
		Music	co-researchers share about listening to music to mantain connection to heritage
		Food	Co-resarchers share that food is a way to maintain connection with heritage
21	**Shared Experiences Co-researcher use narratives to describe life experiences that others in the room have also experienced and are able to connect with.**	**A. Struggle**	Co-researchers talk about enduring similar sociopolitical, economic conditions.
		B. Adaptive	Co-researchers talk about adapting and being flexible are necessary as immigrants
		Labor	co-researchers share about having similar employment in manual labor
		Tradition	
		Distance	Co-researchers describe how physical distance and documentations status impacts capacity to be with family or attend other important events
		ESL	co-resarchers share connections about translating for family or having difficulty with learning English
22	**Immigration Journey**	**Complex (or multifaceted?)**	co-researcher shares that immigration process and journey is complex and difficult to capture/define (in a single image or in a few words)
		Resilience	co-researcher shares about overcoming obstacles

		Disfrutando	Appreciating joys due to immigrating
		Motivation	Co-researchers discuss their parents immigration journey as a sacrifice that motivates them
23	Conviviendo Co-researchers find healing in sharing space with and witnessing their friends, family, and community members experience joy/happiness.	**Family Time**	Co-researchers describe bearing witness to their family's experiences of joy and healing through shared family time.
24	**Healing**	**Divergent**	Co-researchers describe an experience that was healing to their family members, but that doesn't necessarily align with their own healing journey, and vice versa.
		Dialectical	Co-researchers decribe experiences that serve as both stressors and motivators or empowering sources of healing.

Appendix D. RQ 2 Codebook

RQ2: How do youth's previous experiences and understanding of ethnoracial trauma and healing inform how they co-construct a sanctuary space?			
Code #	**CODE**	**SUBCODE**	**DESCRIPTION**
1	**Code** **Broad definition of code**	**A. Subcode here if necessary**	Description of subcode
		B.	
		C.	
		D.	
2	**Safety** **Participants describe what they need to have a sense of safety**	**A. Community Norms**	Co-researchers create community norms for the space together
		B. Familiarity	Co-resarchers share how repeated exposure to each other supports sense of safety and comfort
		C. Expectations	Co-researchers are informed of what they can expect from the Unidos en Acción space.
		D. Modeling	Saraí and Co-researchers engage in modeling of wanted behaviors/practices/actions
		E. Confidentiality	Sarai informs Co-researchers about program privacy & upholding of personal security.
		F. Rituals	Co-researchers engage in weekly rituals to support the establishment of routine and support feelings of safety
		G. Voicing Needs	Co-researchers are comfortable and feel safe voicing needs they have from the group

3	**Community Building Co-researchers engage in activities meant to build community and rapport**	**A. Introductions**	Co-researchers introduce themselves and share fun facts
		B. Laughter	Co-researcher laugh with each other as they build community
		C. Playfulness	Co-researchers engage in playful behavior with one another
		D. Shared-Space	Co-researchers ensure that everyone has same access to the space and that everyone is heard
		C. Games	Co-reseaerches play games together
		E. Thoughtfulness	Co-researchers act in ways that demonstrate throughfulness and care towards the other co-researchers in the space.
		F. Reciprocity	Co-researchers express appreciating the reciprocity in their sharing.
		G. Check-ins	Co-researchers check in and share how they are doing.
		H. Humor	Co-researchers use humor to build community
4	Agency Co-researchers are aware of and enact their ability to make change in themselves and their surroundings	**A. Mutual Organization**	Co-researchers are organizing themselves
		B. Sharing	co-researchers demonstrate agency in the level of explicit sharing that they choose to partake in.
		C. Language use	Co-researchers choose what language they want to express themselves in
		D. Flexibility	Co-researchers enact their agency by being flexible in the way they use the UeA space and engage in sharing.
		E. Willing	Co-researchers are eager and desire to volunteer for an activity, or to answer a qustion.
		F. Collaboration	Co-researchers are invited to/and do collaborate with one another
		G. Power Sharing	Co-researchers share power with Saraí and makes decisions collectively
		H. Democratic Practices	Co-researchers engage in democratic practices such (i.e. voting) to come collective decisions.

5	Comfort co-researchers demonstrate a sense of comfort in their sharing and engagement with one another	**A. Anticipation**	co-researcher demonstate a sense of anticipation and excitement for the activities that will happen in the space together.
		B. Questions	Co-researchers demonstrate feelings of comfort in the kinds of questions that they ask and the frequency with which they ask them in.
		C. Trust	Co-researchers demonstrate vulnerability and trust in the way they share with one another.
		D. Inclusive	Co-reasearchers in a general way, in which not one person is directly being forced to answer.
6	Physical Inclusivity Saraí and co-researchers work to ensure that everone is included in the physical space (i.e. everyone is part of the conversation circle;physical space inclusivity.)	**A. Personal Space**	Co-researchers are interntional about respecting each other's personal space.
		B.	
		C.	
		D.	
7	**Engagement Co-researchers interact with one another in a way that demonstes growing comfort with one another.**	**A. Mutual Support**	Co-researchers ask and step in to support each other
		B. Clarification	Co-researchers ask Saraí specifically for help/clarification during activities
		C. Reflection	Co-researchers engage in reflections about the activities and exercises they engage in during the sessions.
		D. Collaboration	Saraí & Co-researchers collaborate in setting the rules/prompts for activities
		E. Relating	Co-researchers express being able to relate to each other's stories, photos, or experiences
		F. Transparency	Co-researcher engage with one another in really transparent and honest ways.

8	**Expression** **Co-researchers express their emotions, thought, and reactions to activities, conversations, or general happenings.**	**A. Proud**	Co-researchers express proudness as they reflect.
		B. Mixed Feelings	Co-researcchers express multiple feelings over an activity or reflection
		C. Appreciation	Co-researchers demonstrate appreciations for their family
		D. Gratitude	Co-researchers express feeling gratitude for their families
8	**Affirmations** **Saraí & Co-researcher affirm one another throughout the activites.**	**A.**	
		B.	
		C.	
		D.	
9	Space Descriptors co-researchers describe how they feel in the UeA space, or how their moods and feelings change as a result of being in the space	**A. awakened**	co- researchers describe feeling awakened when they enter the UeA space
		B. excited	co-researchers describe feeling excited when they enter the UeA space
		C. Better	researchers describe feeling better when they enter the UeA space
		D. relaxed/stress free	co-researchers describe feeling better when they enter the UeA space
10	Cultural Connections Co-researcher describe how they or their families stay connected to their cultures	**A. Dance**	
		B. People	
		C. Customs	Co-researchers tell stories or customs they are involved in due to thier culture
		D. Events	Co-researchers talk about connecting to their culture by going to specific cultural events
		E. Lessons Learned	co-researchers talk about the lessons they've learned through the values instilled in them by parents or other adults

		F. Struggle	Co-researchers talk about and relate with one another over the struggles they have witnessed their family/community face/overcome.
		G. Resilience	co-researchers talk about and relate with one another over the ways that they witness resilience in themselves and their families
11	**Acculturation** **Co-researchers discuss ways that they have adapted to US culture**	**A. Resourcefulness**	Co-researchers disscuss the ways that they have witnessed their family and community members be resourceful as they adapt to life in the U.S.
		B. Parental Sacrifice	Co-researchers discuss the different sacrifices they have witnessed their parents make as they adapted to life in the U.S.
		C.	
		D.	
12	**Embodiment** **Co-researchers describe connecting to their bodies, minds, and spirits.**	**A. Somatic**	co-researchers describe being aware of or attuned to their bodily reactions and feelings
		B. Spiritual	co-researchers describe connection spiritually to a higher power/ religious connections.
		C.	
		D.	
13	**Hopes for Future** **Co-researchers discuss their hopes for a better, healthier, happier future for themeselves and their community**	**A.**	
		B.	
		C.	
		D.	

Appendix E. Quien Soy Yo

Instructions: read each topic and write the first thing that comes to your mind/ Lee cada tema y escribe lo primero que venga a tu mente.	
1. 1.What you consider to be your heritage, race, ethnicity, religion / Tu ascendencia cultural, etnia, religión.	2.Location or description of your neighborhood or house where you grew up. Ubicación, vecindario, o casa en
3. Plant, flour, or something from nature/ Planta, flor, o algo de la naturaleza	4. Plant, flour, or something from nature/ Planta, flor, o algo de la naturaleza
5. A family tradition/ Una tradicion familiar	6. A family feature/ Un rasgo familiar
7. A family member's name/ Nombre de un miembro de la familia.	8. A family member's name/ Nombre de otro miembro de la familia.

Instructions: Fill in the blanks with the answers that you filled out in the first part to create a poem. / Llena los espacios en blanco con las respuestas previas para crear un poema.

9. A family member's name/ Nombre de un miembro de la familia.	10. A saying commonly used by parents or family members while growing up/ Un dicho que usaban tus padres o algún
11. A job or a skill held by a family member/ algo a lo que se dedica un miembro de su familia.	12. A saying commonly used by parents or family members while growing up/ Un dicho que usaban tus padres o algún
13. A saying commonly used by parents or family members while growing up/ Un dicho que usaban tus padres o algún familiar	14. Where you were born/ lugar en donde naciste.
15. A food that represents your family/ Un alimento que represente a tu familia	16. Another food that represents your family/ Otro alimento que represente a tu familia
17. A family story about a specific person/ Un cuento familiar sobre alguien especifico.	18. A family story about a specific person/ Un cuento familiar sobre alguien especifico.

19. Location or setting of family photos, or where your favorite or most important memories take place/ Lugar en donde tomaron fotos, hicieron memorias familiares, o recuerdos más importantes.

Spanish:

Yo soy (1)_____ y (2) _____.

Yo soy del (3)_____ y del (4)_____.

Yo soy de (5)_____ y (6)_____,

(7)_____ y (8)_____, y

(9)_____.

Yo soy de (10)_____ y (11)_____.

De (12)_____, y

(13)_____.

Yo soy de (14)_____ y (15)_____, y (16)

_____.

De (17)_____, y

(18)_____.

Yo soy de (19)_____.

English:

I am (1)_____ from (2) _____

I am from (3) _____ and (4)_____

I am of (5)_____ and (6)_____ ,

(7)_____ and (8)_____, and

(9)_____.

I am of (10)_____, and (11)_____.

Of (12)_____ and

(13)_____.

I am from (14)_____, and (15)_____, and

(16)_____.

Of (17)_____ and (18)_____.

I am from (19)_____.

Appendix F. Photos of Co-Researchers Engaging in Embodied Activities













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