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There is a Monster in my House, Cultura Cura
Uncovering 11 Milliones de Sueños:
Understanding the Emotional and Psychological
Experiences of Undocumented and Mixed-Status
Youth and Finding Healing Spaces

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The University of San Francisco

THERE IS A MONSTER IN MY HOUSE, CULTURA CURA UNCOVERING 11
MILLONES DE SUEÑOS: UNDERSTANDING THE EMOTIONAL AND
PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPERIENCES OF UNDOCUMENTED AND
MIXED-STATUS YOUTH AND FINDING HEALING SPACES

A Dissertation Presented
to
The Faculty of the School of Education
International and Multicultural Education

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

by
Belinda Hernandez-Arriaga
San Francisco

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THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Dissertation Abstract

There is a Monster in my House, Cultura Cura Uncovering 11 Milliones de Sueños:
Understanding the Emotional and Psychological Experiences of Undocumented
and Mixed-Status Youth and Finding Healing Spaces

This research gives voice to the emotional experiences of mixed-status and undocumented youth, and explores the Mexican cultural arts as a healing space for this community of children. This research expands our mental health understanding of undocumented and mixed status children, capturing the undocu-trauma these participants describe in narrating the chronic fear they live with. Their stories speak to the monster of fear, la migra, witches in the field, Trump, racism, societal violence and trauma that is invisible in their home but alive in their daily lives. The participants in this study narrate the power of the cultural arts to heal and create comunidad through a non-profit that has concentrated its efforts on using *ballet folklórico*, Mariachi, education, culture, and social justice and social work as a temascal of healing in their community.

This qualitative research journey represents a critical discursive space that examines these youths' narratives to emphasizes the urgency of addressing the psychological consequences of being an undocumented or mixed-status child in the United States. This qualitative research uses testimonio as methodology to document how culture rises as a shield of protection and has inspired these youth to reclaim their identities, heal societal wounds, and find strength through using the cultural arts as resistance and power. Their participation in a Northern California cultural arts non-profit

organization opened the doors for a community to unite behind these children and families using a combination of the cultural arts, education, and social justice to uncover the cultural citizenship of these folklore heroes. The program of 11 Millones de Sueños has transformed into a space of *cariño* to capture the *orgullo, esfuerzo, corazón*, and resistance of these youth to help them withstand the emotional suffering that has gone unrecognized for too long. Their participation in the program, their cultural wealth, resistance, determination and *familia* has inspired a cultural citizenship that extends beyond papers. Their citizenship is rooted in character, leadership, community service, *comunidad, orgullo y alegría, danza, mariachi y folklore*. No longer afraid to be seen, these youth stand strong against the societal monsters that have attempted to dismantle their humanity.

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

<u>Belinda Hernandez-Arriaga</u>	<u>May 18, 2017</u>
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INTRODUCTION

I approach this dissertation as a Latina licensed clinical social worker and educator who has journeyed through hidden spaces witnessing stories of suffering, *tristezas*, *miedo*, racism, and strength in undocumented and mixed-status children, all the while discovering Mariachi heroes, *alegría*, and *zapateados* along the way that have healed a community of children and inspired this dissertation. In my work and education, I have had the privilege of working with undocumented and mixed-status Latino youth who have opened my heart to see, hear, and understand the complicated emotional experiences they grapple with in silence on a daily basis. I have seen the fear in their eyes, and at the same time have witnessed these young people take center stage to transform an audience with their *gritos* of Mariachi pride and *zapateados* to the rhythms of Mexico. This research specifically addresses the emotional experiences of mixed-status and undocumented youth and at the same time to understand cultural arts as a healing intervention. In finding a way to narrate the power of the cultural arts to heal, this research explores one specific program that has concentrated its efforts on using *ballet folklórico*, Mariachi, education, culture, and social justice as a circle of healing in their community.

This research journey represents a critical discursive space that presents the voices of these youths and emphasizes the urgency of addressing the psychological consequences of being an undocumented or mixed-status child in the United States, particularly now that we have entered the Trump era. Their *testimonios* document how culture becomes a shield of protection and has inspired them to reclaim their identities, heal societal wounds, and find strength through using the cultural arts as resistance and

power. My hope for this dissertation is that the *testimonios* will push this community of children to center stage, shining the spotlight on how one non profit organization opened the doors for a community to unite behind these children and families using a combination of the cultural arts, education, and social justice to uncover the cultural wealth of these folklore heroes. 11 Millones de Sueños in Northern California has captured the *orgullo, esfuerza, corazón*, and resistance of these youths while using a shield of cultural wealth to help them withstand the emotional suffering that has gone unrecognized for too long. Their participation in the program and their voice that has grown in the community has uncovered and ignited a cultural citizenship that extends beyond papers that is rooted in character, leadership, community service, *comunidad, orgullo and Corazon para su familia*. No longer afraid to be seen, these youth stand strong against the societal monsters that have attempted to dismantle their humanity.

¿Quién Es Este Chupacabra? (Who Is This Monster?)

As an educator and clinician, I dedicate this work as a counter-model of therapy that uses the power of *cultura* to support the healing of a community of children while creating spaces of cultural wealth, resistance, and cultural citizenship that rally against the societal injustices that have become the *chupacabras* in their home. The fear that many children have of the scary Mexican urban myth monster, La Chupacabra can be an analogy to consider the visible monster they fear of Immigration Customs and Enforcement. For many, the emotional struggle they live with has never been given a name or description, it is a feeling, worry, fear, or unknown illness that is buried in their daily struggle to push through, resist, and move forward.

An abundance of research exists that underscores the impact of trauma or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) on brain development and academic functioning in children. Existing research makes clear the connection of trauma to neurological development, and the ways it impacts how children learn and engage with the world. This research study underscores the need for an urgent response to support both the emotional and physical development of children using culturally relevant practices that can have numerous healing benefits. The challenge is to expand our understanding of the notion of trauma, which may be unique for culturally diverse populations of children. Specifically, we must develop language that gives voice to the trauma of undocumented and mixed-status children while exploring this trauma's connection to educational achievement. Until expanded research in education and psychology motivate our understanding of how this chronic fear, stress, anxiety, and the effects of societal racism have on undocumented and mixed-status youth, we cannot fully understand the consequences these symptoms can have on the neurological, emotional, and educational development of these children.

This study also explores the use of cultural arts as indigenous counter-spaces of healing trauma that give these children a voice of collective pride and resistance and defines them as cultural citizens, rooting them in their community and identity. Rethinking ways the cultural arts can be used as sensory motor interventions with healing properties for the brain is critical. The cultural arts symbolize power, and 11 Millones de Sueños is evidence of the impact this work is having in one rural community. It is important that we begin to document the power of the cultural arts as a clinical intervention in healing this community of children.

¿Quién Soy Yo?

In this dissertation, I include my own *testimonio* as a Latina social worker in an agricultural community providing mental health counseling and support for both undocumented and mixed-status children contending with chronic trauma that stems from racism, stigma associated with their immigration background and/or that of their families, and cultural, economic and social disenfranchisement. As a doctoral student in Education at the University of San Francisco my research has been inspired by cultural wealth theory, racial trauma and cultural citizenship, all of which recognized and give voice to the strengths and struggles of community of color. In my 18 years of working as a licensed social worker, specializing in working with Latino/a children who have experienced chronic trauma, the general areas I focused on within community mental health are domestic violence, abuse, and recovery from serious victimization. Over the years, I have witnessed first-hand the impact of trauma on children. I have also observed that, given support, care, and safe spaces, children are capable of healing and transitioning from being victims to survivors.

As the years passed, I noticed patterns of behavior and took note of the many different experiences of Latino/a children I worked with in juvenile hall, schools, community programs, county services, and even faith-based support programs. Living in a rural and agricultural Northern California community that will remain anonymous for confidentiality of participants, I realized there was a need to begin a private practice focused on serving the Latino/a children in my community. Due to our rural location and the limited number of Spanish-speaking social workers in my community, I wanted to work with children who had little access to resources for mental health counseling.

Particularly, I wanted to focus on children who were struggling in school and who were undocumented, whose parents were undocumented, or were from a mixed-status home.

My private practice in a predominantly Mexican agricultural community with many hard-working families with strong family values opened my eyes to new perspectives. My past work with community mental health limited my opportunities to be fully cognizant of whether clients were undocumented, in addition to their experiences with domestic violence, abuse, and other traumas. My immersion into understanding the psychological impact of a child's immigration status grew as each case that was referred to me either consisted of a child who was a U.S. citizen with undocumented parents, or an undocumented child living with his/her family. Parents who attended counseling sessions displayed a great deal of courage in openly sharing their legal status with me.

Looking around at who fuels the economic engine of our community, it became obvious to me that the parents of the children I work with are the foundation of our Northern California tourism industry. Many of them work in the agricultural industry or well-known fisheries, while others support our thriving tourism industry at local restaurants and hotels. Yet others work in community service sectors, such as schools, construction, daycare support, and much more. These families work tirelessly to provide for their families and children. Our community, like many others, is built and sustained on the hard work of Latino/a immigrants who consistently make the United States stronger.

Many children who came to me through either self-referral or physician referral were struggling in school, with most being in the age range of kindergarten to 5th grade. Each child that I worked with identified school as a significant challenge in their lives.

As I listened to each story, similar patterns became apparent. Parents would share that their child was a *buen niño* or a good kid. They also expressed, *Él/ella está dedicado a su escuela; Le gusta escuela, pero está batallando* (He or she is dedicated to school; they like school, but they are struggling). They expressed that their children worked diligently at home on their homework, but were concerned about their overall academic performance. Approximately three-quarters of children I have worked with identified behavioral challenges in school along with general complaints of not feeling good, feeling alone, worried, or experiencing low self-esteem and an overall feeling of *tristeza*, or sadness. Many also shared that their children had issues with anger or frustration that manifested while they were in school.

Outside of the school setting, parents identified similar symptoms in their children. I was surprised to hear the same symptoms repeated in case after case. Parents described their child as “sick to their stomach” and experiencing “stomach pains” and unexplainable feelings of nausea. I referred each child who came in with these issues to a physician for medical evaluation. However, I learned that many children had already been seen by a general medical practitioner and were following up on the medical recommendation to seek out counseling services. Time after time, parents shared that their child’s medical results indicated no significant physical diagnosis. The frequent explanation for these physical symptoms was psychological stress.

Other clinical symptoms I observed in the children that I worked with was chronic fear, insomnia, hypervigilance, and excessive worry that something was going to happen to them or their parents. Even in this heightened emotional state, at both school and home the children seemed to be developing socially and communicating well with

parents and peers. Each parent I met was invested in their child's well-being and wanted to be a proactive part of creating support networks for them. I began to gather weekly narratives from children and the parents, visiting them frequently at schools to meet with the children as well as school staff.

As I listened to the children and parents' *testimonios*, I was struck by the hidden emotional toll they had suffered with for years. I began to see the similarities in clinical symptoms, behavior, and academic performance in many of the children. I also witnessed and identified symptoms of trauma I had seen before in my practice. Over time, it became clear that the children in my practice were primarily suffering from chronic trauma, but I was also aware that many had not been direct victims of crime or serious accidents. As I began to delve deeper into their lives, I unraveled the common symptom shared by all of them: fear. The daily stress and fear of being separated from their parents due to the undocumented status of either one or both of their parents framed many of their daily experiences and interactions. While many of the children could not articulate their feelings through words, they shared their emotions through drawings and the telling of stories and *testimonios*.

I remember vividly the day the spotlight was shone on what had always been right in front of me. Over several months, I had been treating a young girl who had suffered from chronic stomach pain resulting in several visits to the emergency room and eventually a recommendation from Stanford University for counseling, as they determined there was no medical basis for her pains. From the beginning, the family fully disclosed their legal status, sharing that both parents were undocumented. All of the children were citizens and doing very well in school and in the community. Using my

play therapy training and attachment therapy models, I delved into all areas of play and work that focused on the latest neuroscience work. However, I never considered the trauma of fear about possible separation from the girl's parents related to deportation until one day, after months of play therapy, she drew a picture for me of a "mama cat and a baby cat." On the baby cat, she wrote the words "papers." On the mama cat, she wrote the word "no papers" with a circle and an "x" over the words. With tears flooding her eyes, she shared with me the following story: "The baby cat is really worried what will happen to the mama cat when she is taken away because she doesn't have papers."

Until that moment, no one had been able to identify the source of the girl's stomach pains or night terrors. It was in this moment that her words released the psychological flood gates of the reality of what she and many children live with daily. She spoke for the countless children who carry chronic trauma and fear with them daily in an invisible backpack. There is not a clear description of this type of trauma experienced by children that I know of. In all my 18 years of counseling, I have not had a training model that identifies and teaches ways of working through these emotional experiences that are lived by these children and their families. It is through their eyes, their stories, and their resistance through the cultural arts that I have learned and am energized to write about healing spaces for this community. For the purposes of this dissertation and my work with these youths, I am using the term *undocu-trauma* to narrate the emotional symptoms experienced, as it relates to the specific fear of being separated from family, the fear of being undocumented, or having one or more undocumented parents. For this research, I have defined undocu-trauma a phenomenon, that can sometimes be experienced as a result of racism, can include uncategorized stress,

anxiety, fear, panic, chronic separation anxiety, and other emotional symptoms that directly impact the emotional experiences of these children and youth.

This little girl's case and her bravery to speak of her fear marked a significant moment in how I came to understand this population, and provoked in me a need to redefine healing for this community of children. For this child and the many I have seen, they suffer from a rich cultural identity marked by societal inequities and political oppressions that marginalize their identities and label them with a stigma as *the other, the outsider, the immigrant, the criminal*. In my clinical practice, it was clear that individual therapy was beneficial, but I began to wonder if this was enough. As I began to consider what unique needs this community needed to heal, I became increasingly aware that there was a glaring gap in our community related to cultural recognition of these children. In other words, there was nothing in our community that identified their cultural wealth as Mexicans/Mexican-Americans or honored them as significant for who they were as contributing community members. Rather, they were pushed to the margins of our town in low-income housing, the children were bused across town, passing two schools they could attend, to be placed at the furthest one away from their home. The consistent negative messages they received at school for being English-language learners insinuated that Spanish, their first language, was not valued. Finally, the societal message of belonging includes having *papeles*, which reinforced the societal action of pushing these children aside.

Watching tears that were pushed down, seeing the fear arise in their narratives, and listening to children speak with shame about their Mexican roots, I knew that there was a critical component of cultura, arte, baile canto, comunidad, orgullo and social

justice advocacy that was needed for a deeper level of healing to begin. After years of building trust with community members, I began to work to build a cultural arts program that celebrates our Mexican culture in a space that lacks recognition of who we are. Using the cultural arts, our program birthed a space of resistance, cultura and healing that has inspired cultural citizens to come out of the shadows and lead our program of 11 Millones de Sueños forward. I have given this non-profit organization a pseudonym to protect the youth and families in my research study. The name 11 Millones de Sueños gives voice to the many individuals who are the backbone of our country, working tirelessly to make a difference in the workplace, in communities and within their *familia*.

11 Millones de Sueños recognizes the impact emotional disparities can have on both development and academic functioning. This work seeks to find alternative healing spaces birthed out of culture, the arts, community, *familia*, social justice, and resistance that gives hope and provides new culturally relevant methods of treatment and therapy for working with undocumented and mixed-status children and families. My research challenges academia to further consider the impact of the mental health of our Latino and mixed-status children on their educational advancement. It forces us to recognize *undocu-trauma* and understand the neuroscience research that demands sensory practices to heal trauma in order for children to achieve healthy development and learning. It is critical for me, as a researcher and licensed clinician, to share their stories and bring awareness to the mental health and developmental needs of undocumented and mixed-status children, centralizing their experiences in the national debate about immigration reform. Moreover, it is necessary to understand their capacity to be resilient and thrive when they are provided the necessary spaces for healing. Understanding how the cultural

arts can transform these youth and create spaces of cultural citizenship is necessary and imperative, giving them cultural *superhero powers* needed to fight against the *chupacabra* of fear.

CHAPTER I: THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Background and Need

There has never been a more critical time to stand with the community of undocumented and mixed-status children in our country. As we witness the pomp and circumstance of anti-immigrant rhetoric in the Trump era, we must not forget about the millions of children who are living in fear of forced deportation for their families. Already we are hearing of the threat to dismantle the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program instituted by President Obama, which has existed as a beacon of hope for our Latino/a community. For decades, the United States has welcomed immigrants, boasting that our differences make up the fabric of our country. As the rhetoric has become heated and painful for the undocumented community, we have failed to fully understand the fear of the growing number of children and families living through this emotional crisis. In the United States there is an increasing number of Latino/a children who are undocumented or living in mixed-status families who are unaccounted for in the latest census counts. According to a 2013 Pew Research report, there were 775,000 undocumented children under the age of 18 in the United States who lived with unauthorized parents, as well as 4.5 million U.S.-born children whose parents were unauthorized. The latter group is defined as belonging to “mixed-status families.” The Pew Hispanic Center defines these families as having “at least one unauthorized immigrant parent and at least one U.S. citizen child” (Passel and Cohn, 2015). 14.6 million individuals in the United States are estimated to be living in a mixed status home. (Passel 2006) One of the results of this demographic shift has been greater focus on this

population. In addition, youth-led activism, the DACA program, and an increased push for immigration reform in Washington, D.C. have all invigorated dialogue on issues of education, poverty, and health care as they relate specifically to the experiences of undocumented young people. Along with the wave of activism calling for reform, we are also witnessing one of the worst eras of anti-immigrant rhetoric in U.S. history. Our contemporary moment is marked by greater border entrenchment and increasing anti-immigrant sentiment and legislation across the country that vilifies undocumented families.

The heightened focus on immigration reform and migration as a human right, while necessary and critical in many ways, is largely devoid of conversations regarding the psychological struggles and mental health needs of undocumented Latino/a youth and children, including those who are part of mixed-status families. Daily experiences of undocumented youth and children with trauma, fear, racism, and anxiety have largely gone unacknowledged by mental health professionals, educators, and others, as is evident by the minimal research available. The drive for basic survival in a society that has criminalized the undocumented population has overshadowed the psychological toll that many live with silently.

Fear of being separated from family members is a constant reality for this community. For most undocumented immigrants, the fear of being outed is a persistent fear that carry daily as part of their routine. Families must keep their status a secret from nearly everyone they meet because there is an immense fear that they may be reported and suffer deportation and separation from family. The looming threat of deportation forces families to stay hidden. They avoid things that will draw attention to themselves

or have others ask questions. They do their best to blend in and disappear because there is safety in not being noticed (Androff, Ayon, Becerra, Gurrola, Salas 2011). Immigrant rights activists have ignited a movement to demand a change in policies. Nonetheless, the study of mental health implications of how stressful experiences can lead to a number of negative emotional and behavioral outcomes for undocumented children – including anxiety, fear, depression, anger, and social isolation – has been limited.

According to Chaundry, Capps, Pedroza, Castañeda, Santos, Scott 2010),

In the short term, six months or less after an arrest, about two-thirds of children experienced changes in eating and sleeping habits. More than half of children in our study cried more often and were more afraid, and more than a third were more anxious, withdrawn, clingy, angry, or aggressive. (p. 23)

It is imperative to understand the psychological implications for Latino/a children living under this type of stress. It is also critical to highlight the many ways structures, institutions, and ideologies both contribute to the chronic trauma experienced by these children, and function to silence them.

Trump Trauma

Immigration reform and policy changes are necessary, critical and urgent. During this political context of vilifying immigrants in the United States, the shouts of “build a wall” ring out as the new mantra in 2017. This reality must be quelled by relentless advocacy for immigration reform. At the same time, it is increasingly important that we respond to the psychological healing of undocumented and mixed-status children. Every news report of harsher immigration policies that these children hear, the newspapers that glare, “Make America Great Again,” reignite this fear. These psychological wounds that

are continuously scratched open by societal injustices can have significant and long lasting consequences if we do not take action to create community healing spaces. The wall that we must build is our own cultural resistance to protect a community with steel enforcements of cultural wealth and a concrete foundation of indigenous knowledge that grounds us in collective healing. Six years ago, when I began this research, I saw glimmers of hope for immigration reform, the possibility of making dreams come true for millions. Sadly, this hope turned to shock during what I witnessed as the harshest political rhetoric that has demonized and plagued our immigrant communities with a fear that is energized by a political agenda focused on silencing immigrants, the undocumented community, women, Muslims, the LGBTQ community, and anyone else considered to be *the other*.

Even in the face of all of this xenophobic rhetoric, undocumented students and youth are rising up across the United States and declaring themselves “undocumented and unafraid.” The immigrant community can no longer can we wait for immigration policies to make the difference. Sanctuary cities are not going to be the sole saving grace from ICE raids or forced deportation. *Comunidad* must become sanctuary to these youth. The action must come from a collective effort to create culturally relevant community spaces of healing. In order to have strength to withstand the anti-immigrant forces, our communities must be unified, prepared and emotionally cared for by each other. Of particular importance is that of our children, we must be on the front lines ready to find ways to shield them from this undocu-trauma. We must understand and return to indigenous and folklore ways of healing and amplify the power of cultural wealth to heal. Using *danza*, Mariachi performance, *comunidad*, *orgullo*, and *familia*, we can create our

own *temescals* of cultural healing and resistance for these children, families, and ourselves. There must be a continued movement on the front lines to create sanctuary from within, using our professions as teachers, counselors, educators, elders, along with our indigenous practices, *nuestro orgullo, y nuestra cultura para sanar*.

I hope to contribute to this movement by shifting these powerful youth *testimonios* from the margins, a position they occupy all too often in their lives, to the center. Furthermore, I hope to center their voices to understand how the cultural arts can be used *para sanar* (to heal), proposing the notion of *cultura cura* as a purposeful direct practice for healing the open wounds society has cut open in these children, creating the monster they fear.

In finding a way to narrate the power of the cultural arts to heal, this research explores one specific program that has concentrated its efforts on using *ballet folklórico*, Mariachi, education, culture, and social justice as a circle of healing in their community. This research opens doors to understand how cultural wealth, resistance, identity, the arts, and social justice practices combine to create a space for healing a group of children in a Northern California community non-profit program. With no funding or initiatives to begin, 11 Millones de Sueños began with a grass roots effort to develop a cultural arts program that infuses a combination of the arts, education, counseling and community leadership that has molded a rich experience of youth transformation and resistance. 11 Millones de Sueños has shown the spotlight on these youths with the shout of *presente!* front and center. No longer do these children have to be suffocated of their identity. Their pride shines on the main stage, inspired by their own cultural strength and that of their family. With *zapateos*, songs of Mariachi, *trajes* that represent generations of those

before them, their voices and danza stand as a collective resistance to being silenced of culture and identity. With chants of “build the wall” echoing loudly on the political front, 11 Millones de Sueños has broken down border walls to create a community cultural arts *temascal* to celebrate, honor, heal and rise as leaders in the community. We can no longer ignore the healing that this population of children demand; it is time to further the research and development of community programs that will support the emotional crisis of this community of children to uncover their dreams for a better life.

Statement of Problem

With the growing population of Latinos/as in the United States, there is an increasing need for culturally specific mental health research and practice. Latino/a mental health research continues to have significant gaps, especially in the area of working with undocumented and mixed-status children. In sharp contrast, the field of education boasts an abundance of scholarship focusing on Latino/a children and disparities surrounding issues of race, health, and economic barriers (Androff, Ayon, Becerra, Gurrola, Salas 2011) There is a growing body of research that focuses specifically on the “academic achievement gap” and persistent “underachievement” of Latino/a children in U.S. schools. (Tienda & Haskins 2011). Despite the growing research in the general child population focusing on the medical and mental health fields to understand the connection between trauma and its impact on brain development, attachment, and academic achievement, little attention has been given to Latino youth in this area. There is also a significant gap in understanding how the cultural arts can be a purposeful healing space for the undocumented and mixed-status families in the United States. While it is true that communities have historically used the arts to heal as

community, it is important that the mental health field understand the power of cultural arts and traditions be used as a specific healing methodology to treat trauma in Latino communities.

In recent years, scholars at Harvard, Baylor, UC Davis as well as other universities have generated research and medical recommendations for the general child population with trauma histories. Yet, what is missing are studies that explicitly focus on the mental health of undocumented or mixed-status Latino/a children. Studies also lack focus on the impact of chronic trauma stemming from racial profiling, ongoing discrimination, fear of immigration raids in their communities and forced separation of families etc. These phenomena can significantly impact the emotional and physical development of Latino/a children. Conradi (2007) notes,

In a national sample of traumatized children, the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN, 2005) found significant differences among groups in the types of trauma experienced. The Latino/Hispanic children sampled accounted for 72 percent with complex trauma. In addition, 22 percent of the sample experienced community violence and 42 percent had experienced traumatic loss. (p. 123)

The percentage of Latino/a children experiencing trauma in the abovementioned study is significantly high. However, the study does not account for whether or not the trauma experienced by the sampled Latino/a youth was a result of living as undocumented or mixed-status children. It is critical to uncover and document the impact of living a chronic “traumatic event” that is not limited to one specific moment or one isolated experience, but is rather a persistent experience of fear brought about by living on the periphery of society.

Just as the research understands the profound connection between trauma and academic performance for the general population (Schoore 2001) so too must the literature reflect the same interest in undocumented and mixed-status Latino children. In addition, we must continue to explore alternative ways to support healing for these children and families through culture, arts, advocacy, and a commitment to honoring them for the most important papers they hold, that of strong cultural citizens with an abundance of cultural wealth that makes America great every day. Specifically, this research looks at how one program's combination of the Mexican cultural arts of *ballet folklórico*, Mariachi education, and music combined with social justice advocacy and education has become a powerful *temascal* of healing and transformation for a group of children and families.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study will be to use *testimonios* to analyze how community spaces – in the form of cultural arts, education, and social justice – support undocumented and mixed-status children of Mexican immigrants in an agricultural community to engage in the process of healing from chronic trauma. In other words, the cultural arts will serve as entry point to document how children involved in a local community program are empowered to explore the psychological “monster” that takes the form of fear, panic, stress, and anxiety of the looming threat of having their families suddenly separated. The presence of the monster in these children's lives is often evident in the mental health symptoms they exhibit in school and at home, such as fear of the dark or something menacing lurking in the closet or under the bed. Most children outgrow these fears as they transition into young adolescence. However, for undocumented and mixed-status children, their monsters, symbolized by the familiar

legend of the Chupacabra, come alive with fear of sudden separation from family or a persistent feeling of not belonging that is perpetuated by pervasive criminalization of undocumented immigrants and anti-immigrant rhetoric.

Children that have lost a parent through deportation experience a complete loss of a significant attachment and caregiver in their lives. The sudden grief they experience is life-altering. It is critical to understand and consider the psychological harm that happens to a child and the impact on their development when a parent is involuntarily torn from the family. To further compound the trauma of deportation, it is often true that the parent and child have relatively no or very limited physical contact when they are separated from one another. There is a general assumption that most undocumented children are impacted most by the fear of deportation. However, this is also a reality in the case of mixed-status families with a child who is a citizen and is equally impacted by fear of deportation of an undocumented parent.

This study represents an opportunity to give voice to the psychological experiences undocumented and mixed-status children live with and provides a framework to explore emotional conditions that I have witnessed but have not been able to conceptualize. This study will seek to challenge and expand the consideration of psychological implications of trauma in a group of children. Finally, this study delves into the experience of youth and families in the program of 11 Millones de Sueños to understand how the cultural arts, social justice, education, cultural citizenship and the honoring of the cultural wealth of a community becomes an indigenous healing space to address the emotional and social disparities of this population. The Mexican arts of *ballet folklórico* and Mariachi are rooted in culturally rich social justice practices, and are

evidence of how the arts can break through the chains of social stigma and oppression that can minimize the cultural wealth, leadership, and power these youths are born with. No longer are they seen as the “other”; rather, their smiles, poise, songs, stage presence, and *folklórico* pride demonstrate the passion of being proud of who they are. There are no papers to monitor their identity or that of their family; their *trajes* rich with color and movement honor the legacy that Mexico has had both in the United States and in the world. As Director Carlos Martinez of the well-known Mariachi Vargas said, “When we sing Mariachi in whatever part of the world we are in, we are the flag of Mexico” (C. Martinez, personal communication, December 3, 2016).

It is both the emotional experiences, resistance and the cultural strength of these undocumented and mixed-status children that I have captured using their *testimonios* in this study. In naming their fear and the traumatic conditions they suffer, they have uncovered ways to show others how they raise their voices in an attempt to assert their humanity. In the words of one youth, “When I speak, I want people to feel the pain that I go through, see the reality of what we all have to struggle with, we need to raise our voices to speak” (Hernandez-Arriaga, 2012, p. 75). In one rural Northern California community, these same youth voices are rising out of the shadows using the cultural arts as a space to create resistance, solidarity, community, and healing as they dance and sing unified with the power of the arts. Through the *zapateados* of the regional dances of Mexico, dressed with the *charro*-inspired *trajes* of Mariachi, these youth voices have transformed one community into advocates, reclaiming pride in their culture, honoring the rich traditions of their families, and refusing to hide their culture in the shadows. They have transformed fear into power and have uncovered how the cultural arts has

healed, inspired, and unified a community of immigrant Latino youth, both from mixed-status and undocumented experiences. These youth voices magnified through the arts are emphasizing a cultural resistance to counter the fear and trauma, moving forward to create indigenous counter-spaces of cultural therapy and heal as a community *con orgullo y cultura*.

Research Questions

The questions that this research addresses are the following:

1. What are the experiences of undocumented and mixed-status youth as expressed through their *testimonios*?
2. How do youth and their families demonstrate pain, hope, and resistance in the face of trauma and what is the cultural wealth that sustains them?
3. How does 11 Millones de Sueños' combination of cultural arts, education, and social justice advocacy provide collective and/or individual healing spaces for youth in the program?

Theoretical Framework

This study has allowed me to bear witness to the trauma of undocumented and mixed-status children who are often silent in their fear. It is a gift that has allowed me to narrate and uncover the rich cultural wealth that thrives in cultural arts, community leadership, and collective healing spaces. The three main theories I use to frame this study are cultural citizenship (Rosaldo 1994), cultural wealth (Yosso 2005) and racial trauma theory (Carter 2007). These theories highlight the individual voices and stories of the participants to understand their distinctive experiences as Latino/as, the societal and racial inequities they experience, and the resistance they demonstrate using the cultural

arts as a shield for their soul. For the purposes of this study, Latino critical race theory grounds the research in understanding how race, racism, social class, and political labels of identity and influence impact emotional states in Latino youth. To understand the psychological consequences that can present themselves as a result of chronic experiences with racism and continuously being placed in the category of the “other,” racial trauma theory offers a relevant and emerging concept regarding the psychological impact of racism.

Cultural citizenship, tearing down the wall

The framework for this research is grounded in cultural citizenship theory and its connection to healing, resistance, advocacy, and a rooted belonging in community. It is vital to understand the importance of being rooted in spaces that allow for one to reclaim their humanity of belonging and contributing to the greater society regardless of status. Cultural citizenship embraces one’s humanity and cultural wealth, shutting down the political agenda that only acknowledges belonging as having legal status. Renato (1994) developed this notion of cultural citizenship

as how Latinos conceive of community, where they do and do not feel a sense of “belonging,” and how they claim rights to belong to America. In our view, the process of claiming rights both defines communities (Rosaldo 1989) and comprises a renegotiation of belonging in America. Latinos' identity is, in part, shaped by discrimination and by collective efforts to achieve full membership for themselves and their culture. (p. 57)

Cultural citizenship molds the concrete of resistance for people to stand against the status quo of social inequities that dehumanizes them. It also gives voice to the collective and

individual strengths of the community, recognizing the indigenous assets and *mestiza knowledge* they own as a people. In 11 Milliones de Sueños, individuals, families and children stand strong with their bandera of culture and identity that recognizes their voice and their movement to reinforces a sense of belonging that is institutionalized as a strong cultural community with a vision that goes beyond status. Cultural citizenship disrupts the societal acceptance that only legal status allows you to be a citizen. For 11 Milliones de Sueños and for the millions of undocumented in this country, cultural citizenship stands as a beacon of humanity and affords each individual the right to claim their own founded citizenship in this country. Psychological walls are able to be torn down when there is a full acceptance of individuals for who they are, minimizing the daily societal vilifications that plague the undocumented community. Creating spaces of reclaiming a country that was once Mexico, cultural citizenship lifts up the voices of a community that can no longer accept the status quo of not belonging, rather they are lifted up individually to acknowledge the strengths and contributions they give the United States every day.

Racial trauma theory

Racial trauma theory (Helms 2011) adds to the discussion on trauma to include a psychological understanding of how racism and experiences of discrimination can have psychological outcomes that include symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. Carter and Helms (2009) expand the dialogue of racial injustice by connecting the “emotional, physical and psychological effects of chronic racism on its targets or victims” (p. 113). No longer can the chronic psychological effects of racism be solely focused on a social construct of language or politics as their works has expanded the impact of racism on mental health. Robert Carter’s (2007) work with racial trauma in the African-American

community explains, “When the moderating effects of type of psychological outcome (e.g., depression, anxiety, somatization, PTSD) are examined, the findings lend support to theorists who are calling for experiences of racism to be considered within the context of trauma” (Carter, 2007). This concept of racial trauma is a new field of study that speaks to the daily chronic emotional struggles of a community plagued by racism.

The reality that racism extends itself beyond culture to include the political marginalization of a group of people in this country is visible and felt by many. The connection between race and traumatic stress is necessary to understand and acknowledge as a staggering symptom in the emotional well-being of undocumented or mixed-status families. The statements in the political arena by Donald Trump demonizing Mexicans as rapists, drug dealers, and criminals is an example of the racism that has ignited an emotional trauma of fear and insecurity. Clearly these words incite racism, which triggers fear and insecurity that manifests itself both physically and socially. Emerging research in racial trauma theory speaks directly to the role of understanding racism and connecting the emotional and chronic effects this has on individuals. While Carter and Helms (2009) have primarily focused on African Americans in their study, there is a continued need to expand the understanding of the impact to examine racism faced by Latino youth and families. This theory is necessary, important, and clinically relevant for this study as it narrates the often unspoken lived experiences that occur at school, in the community, in the media, in immigration policy, and in attitudes that children encounter daily.

Cultural wealth as a rebozo of resistance

The third theory that frames this research is cultural wealth and its connection to healing, resistance, advocacy, and the bridge to cultural citizenship. It is vital to understand the embracing of culture as both a protective and healing tool for the community of children and families in this study. Further, it is imperative to acknowledge how cultural wealth informs the community that is actively engaged in creating healing spaces for themselves every day. The cultural wealth model represents a *rebozo* of strength. This model narrates all that is *familia*, culture capital, language, and aspirations that drive the Latino community to navigate a society that will embrace their humanity (Yosso, 2005). Cultural wealth molds the concrete of resistance for people to stand against the status quo of social inequities that dehumanizes them. It also gives voice to the collective and individual strengths of the community, recognizing the indigenous assets and *mestiza knowledge* they own as a people. Cultural wealth theory breaks down the deficit model that often frames the negative societal perspective of the undocumented community. Using a spotlight of pride and strength, cultural wealth theory ignites a new dialogue that honors *respeto*, *humildad*, *esfuerza* and embraces the spiritual and cultural wealth of this community as they stand firm on *nuestra tierra*.

Limitations of Study

There is a need to expand the research in understanding *undocu-trauma* in youth, as the literature is scarce, and because it specifically documents the psychological experiences of this community in terms of immigration status. However, as new mental health research is slowly emerging in this field, there is limited information to lean on for this study. There also has not been much literature documenting programs that have

purposefully used and written about how the cultural arts have healed the undocumented community. While we know that cultural arts programs around the country are critical to the well-being of children and communities, what is less researched is how they exist as a healing space and as a specific therapeutic modality for this specific population of children. The limited research does not mean that the phenomenon does not exist, but rather signals that there may be a minimization of the power of the arts as a form of cultural therapy for this community. This study would benefit from additional research that provides qualitative data to understand the emotional and psychological symptoms undocumented and mixed-status children suffer from and new cultural interventions for healing.

A final limitation of this study is that the participants and program explored in this study is located in the progressive area of Northern California. While the community where the research was conducted is a more conservative area of the region, there are still spaces of advocacy that undocumented individuals living in the Bay Area can access. This advocacy does not erase the fear they live with; however, there may be unique experiences that other undocumented individuals live with in other parts of the country in predominantly Republican regions where anti-immigrant sentiment is even higher. For example, it would be important to conduct similar studies in regions of the South, where undocumented and mixed-status children may feel a greater sense of alienation with fewer ally voices and spaced in their midst.

Significance of Study

This study is necessary because we are at a critical juncture in the United States where immigration policies can determine both the legal and psychological future of a

large group of children and families. The debate on immigration reform has come to occupy a central position in political and social discourse. Nevertheless, the political discourse is largely devoid of discussions about the very real impact of chronic trauma on undocumented and mixed-status children. These children internalize the feeling of being labeled as “other” and often live isolated from their peers who are citizens. The demonizing of their parents as “rapists, criminals, and sometimes, good people” (as Donald Trump said on the campaign trail in 2016) reinforces the negative messages of marginalization. Coming out of the 2016 election, Latinos have stood on the front lines of an assault on their character and culture. This escalating societal stigmatization causes some children to live in constant fear of friends and peers revealing their immigration status or questioning their cultural citizenship. These experiences can build a mountain of shame that further contributes to feelings of isolation, depression, and chronic fear that can drive them to hide their cultural identity. Messages of inclusiveness, cultural pride, *orgullo*, strength, and leadership are silenced or become muted whispers for these children and their families. However, it is clear that when given the opportunity, these children are overflowing with knowledge that can be used to understand how to stay emotionally strong when fighting the societal monsters of racism, oppression, trauma, and fear.

In lieu of waiting for immigration laws to change, the community spaces of these children and the cultural arts are utilized to heal this community. The rich culture of ballet *folklórico*, Mariachi, and indigenous celebrations that are used to revive our cultural communities should be documented with the purpose of healing our children and families. While these programs take place every day across the United States, the

significance of this research lies in defining, naming, and understanding how these spaces can heal the emotional trauma of this specific group of children and families. These cultural arts should be further understood by the counseling and social work profession as medicine for the soul, with properties that restore the brain-body balance and can add significant contributions to cultural sensory motor practices that impact the neurodevelopment of these youths. This study seeks to redefine the cultural arts as a practice of healing with critical cultural wealth properties that can impact the brain, heal undocu-trauma, and redefine new ways of understanding culturally relevant sensory motor interventions in the neuroscience treatment of trauma.

Gathering *testimonios* on the impact of being undocumented or mixed-status children in a rural community explores cultural resiliency and understands what is needed for these children to engage in healing that strengthens identity and creates critical spaces of community. Witnessing their suffering and strength has given me the opportunity to contribute to the field of psychology and education by providing a deeper understanding of the psychological consequences that arise as a result of marginalization. This study provides a gathering of stories and cultural immersion that I hope will help immigration activists and advocates envision new strategies for improving the lives of undocumented children and families in the United States. This work contributes to the field a new way of conceptualizing the cultural arts as a clinical therapeutic intervention, with a new focus on understanding their connection to sensory motor development and the treatment of trauma in Latino children.

Professionals in the mental health field are uniquely positioned to contribute perspectives on the psychological harm millions of undocumented and mixed-status

Latino/a children are living with each day. Therefore, it is critical to expand research that explores the *undocu-trauma* experienced by these children. This research also identifies tools mental health professionals who work with undocumented and/or mixed-status children can use in their practice, including *testimonios* and cultural arts. Through these youth *testimonios* we are able to understand the significance of embracing culture, traditions, art, *familia*, and *comunidad* as a healing space. Finally, this research highlights the need for mental health professionals to shift their perspective from a deficit model to one that recognizes the community cultural wealth and cultural citizenship these children possess, finding ways to bring culture and identity to the center of children's lives. It is time to help children reclaim a citizenship they can own, their own cultural strength and strong character that roots them in contributing to society in many ways. We can no longer ignore the "monsters" these children are living with. The fear and trauma are real. It is time to understand and further research how chronic trauma impacts undocumented and mixed-status Latino/a children living in the shadows of our country and identify best practices for supporting these children in healing. In addition, it is important that community cultural arts programs help participants develop counter-narratives and oppositional identities of belonging that can be grounded in recognition of their cultural citizenship. The notion of moving beyond the traditional definition of citizenship to the notion of cultural citizenship would help undocumented and mixed-status Latino/a children to resist racism and other forms of oppression to embrace the assets they possess in the form of language, mestiza knowledge, familia, cultura, esfuerza, respeto, humildad y corazón.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review is divided into four main sections. The first section highlights the history of Mexican immigration to the United States and provides an overview of the youth immigration advocacy movement. The second section focuses on psychological stressors and trauma related to undocumented status. The third section focuses on literature on healing and recognition of resistance in undocumented and mixed-status children, and the final section speaks to the cultural arts as a healing practice that contributes to the healing of this community of children.

The Undocumented Journey

I walked for four days on my own, the coyote left me behind, I was left to die. I saw snakes, almost got bit, almost died. I ate nopales so I wouldn't starve to death. When I couldn't walk no more and was about to give up, I thought of my children in the U.S. I looked up to the sky, prayed and rain started to fall. (Father of a child in the 11 Milliones program, January 15, 2016.)

History of Mexican immigration

Before I highlight the psychological stressors and trauma of the undocumented community in the United States, I must first start by acknowledging the indigenous roots of Mexican immigration to the country. Historically speaking, many undocumented or "illegal" Mexican immigrants are descendants of the original landowners of large portions of the western portion of the United States. Mexican territory included California, Texas, Nevada, and Utah, most of New Mexico and Arizona, and parts of Colorado and Wyoming. The discourse about the United States and Mexico is commonly presented as a matter of "us" and "them." This intentionally obfuscates the over 160-year

history between the two countries. On February 2, 1848, Mexican and U.S. officials met in Mexico City to sign the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The agreement ended the Mexican-American War after almost two years and extended U.S. territory to the Pacific Ocean; 525,000 square miles of former Mexican territory was surrendered in the process. The treaty drastically changed the two countries in many ways and granted U.S. citizenship to Mexican citizens who had been living on that land prior to the treaty.

Many legal problems have resulted due to the terms of this treaty. Although inhabitants of the lands that changed hands were granted citizenship, many did not want to change their nationality. Therefore, their families continued to identify Mexico as their homeland and felt the land was still part of Mexico. This idea created the belief among many people that it was their right to live on the lands of the Mexican Cession even though, according to the legislation enacted by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, it was no longer theirs. With the stripping of their land and forced displacement, Mexicans lived with the *dolor* of their stolen land. Vigil (2012) explains that migrants began to be further displaced as the politics around the land changed. Over the years, Mexicans became the “most important source for immigrants to the United States” (Zenteno & Massey, 2001, p.107) as they were needed for the labor force in this country. Even so, their presence was increasingly criminalized while their bodies were exploited for physical labor.

The labeling of undocumented Mexican immigrants as “illegal” is problematic in that they are a direct result of economic forces of supply and demand (Genova, 2002). The twentieth century saw many anti-immigration laws specifically targeting undocumented immigrants from Mexico. Zuniga and Hernandez (2005) stated, “Since

1848 primary migration patterns were limited to California, Texas, Arizona and New Mexico—to include Chicago” (p. 15). Migration continued as a necessity for both immigrants and for the economic benefit of the United States through agreements like the Bracero Program, which authorized the importation of temporary laborers from Mexico during World War II. By 1964, the program had been discontinued. Its success in creating employment opportunities for hundreds of thousands of Mexicans heralded in a new wave of Mexican immigration in the 1970s and 1980s.

The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 sparked a significant debate around immigration reform in the United States. The law criminalized knowingly hiring an unauthorized alien and established financial and other penalties for those employed them. It was believed fewer prospects for employment would reduce undocumented immigration (Bean & Edmonston, 1990). IRCA was intended to reduce the number of unauthorized immigrants in the United States; however, the opposite actually happened. What used to be a circular migration pattern suddenly ceased, forcing many Mexican families to stay in the United States out of fear. Any unauthorized immigrants who had already been living in the country continuously since 1982 became eligible for temporary legal status, after paying a fee and demonstrating “good moral character.” One and half years later, they became eligible for green cards as long as they learned to speak English. The law aimed to prevent illegal border crossings with new surveillance technology and more border patrol staff (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2005).

However, there were unintended consequences of the law. New border controls disrupted previous patterns of circular migration and prevented the regularization of immigration status of people with close family ties in the United States, which resulted in

a dramatic growth in the unauthorized immigrant population (Thompson & Gomez, 2009). Many people did not qualify for legal status under the law because they had arrived after 1982, and others were not aware of amnesty. In addition, the demand for foreign labor continued unabated. One of the most controversial immigrant laws was the 2010 Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act, most commonly known as SB 1070 in Arizona. SB 1070 allows police to search and arrest anyone whom they believe to be in the country illegally using racial profiling.

In 2014, there were approximately 11.3 million unauthorized immigrants in the United States (3.5% of the nation's population and 5.1% of the U.S. labor force). Mexicans comprise 49% of this group. Moreover, roughly 7% of K-12 students had at least one unauthorized immigrant parent in 2012; about 79% of them were born in the United States (Krogstad & Passel, 2014). While the number of children with undocumented parents is significant, the number of deportations increased in the last several years. Under the Obama administration, an escalating number of deportations grew as compared to those under President Bush. "In the first five and a half years of his presidency, President Obama deported more than two million people—more than the sum total of all people deported before 1997" (Golash-Boza, 2015, p. 5). As hopes for immigration reform was increasing with the Presidential Election of 2016, a storm of fear with the election of Trump erased all hope for dreams of significant reform. One of the biggest blows to hopes for immigration reform for children and their parents happened during the first months of the Trump presidency. Gonzales and Raphael (2017) wrote about a significant court decision that will have lasting implications for this community of children and families.

On June 23, 2016, the Supreme Court decided, by a 4-4 vote, to uphold the decisions of the lower courts, blocking President Obama's administrative actions on immigration. After years of congressional gridlock, the Obama plan would have bypassed Congress by expanding the 2012 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program to parents. The administrative action, known as Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA), would have extended deportation relief and work authorization to undocumented immigrants with citizen or lawful permanent resident children and to those who migrated at young ages but who did not meet the cutoffs for DACA. (p. 1)

Ni aquí ni allá: Mixed-status children and families

Even in a climate of rising Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids, increased border enforcement, and elevated fears of deportation, families have maintained deep roots in their adopted home. Nevertheless, many parents with no foreseeable path to citizenship or residency continue to live in the shadows. Cuadra (2009) vividly wrote,

Our newest citizens, the Latino children, live in constant fear and terror that their mother or father will be taken, will disappear, and will never be seen again. They carry and express this terror daily both verbally and with their actions. They take it to school with them daily, to bed with them every night, and it is constantly present in every interaction they have with others. The level of chronic stress and fear experienced is what anxiety disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are made of. (p. 32)

One out of every 10 Latino/a children lives in a mixed-status home, and 15% of low-income children are part of mixed-status families. A large proportion of children living in mixed-status families are from Mexico (Hernandez, 2004; Thronson, 2008). Mixed-status families have at least one unauthorized or undocumented immigrant parent and at least one U.S. citizen child. Of particular importance to consider are the emotional implications for the children of undocumented parents. For many of these children, there are assumptions made in schools and society that mixed status children are thriving because they are fortunate to be U.S. citizens. This assumption obscures the daily fear and concern children have for their undocumented parents (Thronson, 2008).

There is scant research on the mental health state of Latino/a children in the United States with undocumented parents. Drawing from data on 2,535 children from the Los Angeles Family and Neighborhood Survey, Landale, Hardie, Oropesa, and Hillemeier (2015) investigated how the legal status of immigrant parents shaped children's behavioral functioning. The researchers explored the variation in internalizing and externalizing problems among Mexican youth with undocumented mothers, documented or naturalized citizen mothers, and U.S.-born mothers and contrasted their experiences with that of other ethnic/racial groups. Their findings revealed that children of undocumented Mexican immigrants were at significantly higher risks for internalizing and externalizing behavior problems than their counterparts with documented or naturalized citizen mothers. They concluded their study by acknowledging that there is an unmet need for services among those who are most vulnerable, as well as a lack of awareness of unmet needs among teachers, health professionals, and others who are in a

position to help. Other researchers have made similar recommendations (Glick 2010; Massey & Bartley 2005; Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012).

Yo vengo solo: The unaccompanied minor

Discourse on undocumented immigrants largely centers on the journey of adults to the United States. However, the focus has recently shifted to unaccompanied children as well. The number of undocumented children or unaccompanied minors, mostly teenagers, crossing the border without parents or guardians has increased substantially, while the number of adults has decreased (Raphael, 2014). The majority of children come from Mexico and the Northern Triangle—Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. Many of the children undertake the treacherous journey to help their family in crushing poverty, join a parent who left before the recession and increased border enforcement slowed down adult immigration, or to escape violence from family members and gangs. According to Raphael (2014),

The number of unauthorized Latino children caught trying to enter the United States has doubled in less than a year: between Oct. 1, 2013, and May 31, 2014, 47,017 children under 18 traveling without a parent or guardian were taken into custody. That is almost twice as high as the entire previous year, which saw 24,493 such apprehensions. Three of four of these unaccompanied children came from Central America, although Mexico remains the top source of unauthorized immigrants to the U.S. overall. (p. 213)

The arrival of thousands of unaccompanied minors resembles a refugee crisis more than just an immigration issue. As their numbers rise, support for these children is quite limited.

Bloom (2014) shared that unaccompanied minors face identity concerns, challenging socioeconomic and environmental conditions, vulnerability to trauma, stress, substance abuse disorders, depression and other psychiatric disorders, not to mention multiple barriers to obtaining necessary treatment. Mirani (2014) also reported that unaccompanied minors experience trauma at three different points: 1) in their country; 2) during their journey; and 3) after arriving in the United States. Perez Foster (2005) stated,

For some children, traumatic experience occurring just before or during migration is emblematic of the chronic developmental deprivation of their formation. For other children, the point of migration trauma represents a sudden developmental shift that crudely reorients the subjective lens for all future formative experience.
(p. 22)

In other words, many of these children are permanently impacted by the treacherous journey in the hopes of escaping to begin new lives. Psychological distress, according to Perez Foster (2005), can occur at four points during the migration process. They include events before migration (e.g., extreme poverty, war exposure, torture); events during migration (e.g., parental separation, physical and sexual assault, theft of money, exploitation by human smugglers, hunger, and death of traveling companions); continued rejection and suffering while seeking asylum (e.g., chronic deprivation of basic needs); and survival as an immigrant (e.g., substandard living conditions, lack of sufficient income, racism).

In a 2016 Pew Research study, the number of unaccompanied minors crossing into the United States dropped significantly. (Krogstad 2016). The report explained that a

larger Mexican official presence has increased deportation back to their home country and reduced the number of unaccompanied minors entering the United States.

Nonetheless, thousands of unaccompanied minors remain in the United States with uncertain fates. Children who are not immediately deported ultimately have their cases heard in immigration courts, which are federal courts. They may appeal directly to United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Some minors may seek Special Immigrant Juveniles Status, which requires them to demonstrate they have been abused, abandoned, or neglected by a parent. If state courts determine that a child meets any of the criteria, they are made a ward of the state. From there, the immigration courts or USCIS determine their fate. Nevertheless, many children do not have legal representation to support them in navigating the byzantine U.S. legal system.

¿Quién soy yo?: The undocumented child in the United States

The undocumented child who arrives with their parents is also vulnerable to psychological distress. They face constant risk of apprehension and deportation, making them not only concerned for themselves, but also for their undocumented family members. One of the most substantial psychological burdens they carry is keeping their undocumented status a secret from their peers and others. Those who arrived as adults live in different social contexts than those who arrived as children. Of particular importance is understanding that fear and stigma become attached to the undocumented identity, and this impacts developing children. Abrego (2011) noted, “Undocumented immigrants are all banned from residing in the United States. As such, they constitute a vulnerable group, and their legal consciousness should presumably place them unvaryingly ‘against the law’ within national boundaries” (p. 341). The substantial

undocumented Latino/a population becomes vulnerable because they are increasingly targeted for detention and deportation (Abrego, 2011).

For undocumented children, they have the benefit of educational laws supporting their right to learn. States and localities cannot supersede the right of every child, regardless of their immigration status, to attend a U.S. public school from kindergarten through 12th grade. In 1982, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld this right in *Plyler v. Doe*. The majority ruled that preventing undocumented children from receiving an education would contribute to the creation of a caste or class system that would unfairly disadvantage minors who did not decide to gain unauthorized entry to the United States. This legal decision has remained remarkably untouched despite countless attempts by opponents, particularly at the state level, to overturn it.

The situation of undocumented children still remains fragile at best. For example, they can legally attend school, but they cannot work, vote, receive financial aid, or, in most states, drive (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010). As a result, “Their lives are fraught with feelings of fear, anxiety, uncertainty, and guilt” (Gonzalez, Suarez-Orozco, & Dedios-Sanguinetti, 2013, p. 2). Many of these children share a common perspective that they did not choose to come to the United States as undocumented, and thus should not be punished for the decisions of their parents.

Many undocumented children are not aware of their legal status until they are older. In some cases, they find out about their status while applying for admission to institutions of higher education or employment. Many of them develop acute consciousness of the negative connotations associated with their legal status (Abrego, 2011). Additionally, they sometimes have to navigate unstable home environments,

poverty, and depression related to multiple family separations and stressors (Suarez-Orozco, 2001).

Citizenship does not correlate to mental health, nor does being undocumented correlate to mental illness (Gonzalez et al., 2013). In reality, many undocumented children are extraordinarily resilient in the face of immense hardship. Therefore, mental health interventions for this group ought to be approached from the stand point of strengthening their capacity to shape narratives of identity that include, but are not restricted to, their undocumented status (Gonzalez et al., 2013). At the same time, these children should be encouraged raise their voices and resist fear of deportation to contribute to the movement for advocacy and immigration reform.

¡Sí, se puede! Youth advocacy and the immigration reform movement

The DREAMers movement developed from the organizational efforts of undocumented young people who were brought to the United States by their parents. It has been one of the most significant social movements in recent history. The movement was not successful in getting the federal Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act passed in 2007. However, DREAMers and their allies have secured a string of local and state victories, and in 2012 successfully lobbied the Obama administration to pass Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).

The activism and advocacy of undocumented youth demonstrates how tired they are of living with vast inequities and limited opportunities afforded to them because of their citizenship status (Suarez, 2010). They fight for access to higher education and a pathway to citizenship for 11 million undocumented individuals. These young people have built and are growing a movement based on principles of social inclusion and

justice. A Bay Area non-profit organization, 67 Sueños, is committed to supporting youth in learning organizing and advocacy skills, engaging in community actions, and hosting public events that seek to reshape national debates about immigration reform. The organization also works to oppose binary depictions of undocumented people as either criminals, drug dealers, or gang bangers—an image often perpetuated by right-wing pundits to argue against immigration reform—or the more sympathetic image of the hard-working, straight-A student—an image often perpetuated by left-wing pundits and immigration reform activists. The reality is that most undocumented youth are neither gang bangers or straight-A students. They often reside in underserved and under-resourced communities and are often the target of harassment and profiling by the police.

Organizations like 67 Sueños help youth to share their stories and engage in political activism and, in doing so, demand recognition of their human rights. Youth activist Carlos Madrigal stated,

Human rights should be addressed by getting the community together, making sure that you teach everybody, making sure the message gets out, making sure that *gente* keep pushing to want more, that they never stop, never give up.

Mientras que tengamos más, es mejor. (C. Madrigal, personal communication, August 11, 2012)

Likewise, Pablo Paredes identified the work of 67 Sueños as framed by human rights:

Our main mantra is that No Human Being Is Illegal. We did not originate this statement but we try to be true to it in all of our efforts. We advocate for the human and civil rights of all migrant people. Victimization and vulnerability is another issue to highlight for human rights violations. Undocumented people are

targets because they lack equal protection under the law. When people know you are vulnerable to threats of deportation you become a target. Many of our youth have stories of people in their own community taking advantage of them. Their parents are abused at work where pay is withheld, workload is increased...knowing this worker cannot advocate as freely for themselves due to status and language barriers. Threats to call *la migra* are part of our youth's lives. (P. Paredes, personal communication, April 20, 2012)

The collective activism of DREAMers has pushed the immigration dialogue forward and continues to be a source of healing for countless youth and their communities. They remain more active and energized than ever. DREAMers have become tremendously influential in anti-deportation campaigns and as volunteers, coalition partners, and community organizers. They have become a major force in the campaign to extend DACA to all undocumented immigrants. Sharing their stories and unapologetically asserting their right to be human are acts of resistance and harbingers of inevitable change (Jacobo & Ochoa, 2012).

The Monster in My House

My stomach hurts, I can't sleep at night. Mi mamá y papá don't know what's wrong. I feel afraid always. What if I come home one day and they are not there? I remember the time they stopped us for my dad not having a license and were left on the side of the road, we watched our car get taken away. (Gabriela, 9 years old. May 5, 2015)

Lágrimas y nervios: The emotional experience of being undocumented

The demonization of undocumented people as criminals or stereotyping of them as lazy or lacking in education is a widely-used tactic to dehumanize them and distract from the larger need for effective immigration reform. The dehumanization of undocumented immigrants, all while the United States simultaneously benefits culturally, economically, and socially from their presence, perpetuates their positioning in the shadows of mainstream society. In the process, this causes them to live lives replete with psychological distress, fear, and uncertainty. In the last several years, a surge of research has been published about the lived experiences of undocumented and immigrant youth and their communities. However, there is still a lack of substantial understanding about the psychological implications of being an undocumented youth in this country.

Consequently, “While previous scholarship has drawn some important implications to experiences of stress among undocumented youth and young adults, to our knowledge, no work has been done to explicitly draw the link to mental and emotional health” (Gonzalez et al., 2013, p. 3). Therefore, it is critical for those working with undocumented or mixed-status children to better understand the psychological stressors population can face. Cervantes, Mejia, and Mena (2010) stated, “Factory raids, the building of fences and walls across border towns and the levying of harsh financial sanctions on employers who hire undocumented individuals have inculcated anxiety and fear among many families” (p. 32). According to Arbona et al. (2010), there is a lack of awareness among many mental health practitioners of the connection between legal status and psychological stressors. Their research involved a comparative study of three

immigration-related challenges (separation from family, traditionality, and language difficulties) and psychological stress of undocumented and documented immigrants. The researchers interviewed 420 participants (416 were determined germane to the study) from Central America and Mexico. Results suggested immigration challenges and undocumented status were uniquely associated with extra-familial acculturative stress but not with intra-familial acculturative stress. In contrast, fear of deportation emerged as a unique predictor of both extra-familial and intra-familial acculturative stress.

Fortuna, Porche, and Alegria (2008) used the National Latino and Asian American Study (NLAAS) to obtain a probability sample of 1630 immigrant Latinos. NLAAS provides national information on the similarities and differences in mental illness and service use of Latino/as and Asian Americans. The researchers utilized a conceptual framework that assumed a strong influence of social and cultural factors in understanding the risk for psychopathology and mental health service use. Fortuna et al. were specifically interested in examining the link between the prevalence of political violence (PV) of immigrant Latino/as in the United States and the perceived need for and correlates of mental health services use. The results revealed that 11% of all immigrant Latinos reported PV exposure and 76% reported additional lifetime traumas. For those with a history of PV, an increased likelihood of using mental health services was associated with female gender, English language proficiency, experiencing personal assaults, higher perceived discrimination, and having an anxiety or substance disorder. Some subgroups of Latinos, including men and Mexican immigrants, were less likely to access mental health services after experiencing PV.

Most families that immigrate from Mexico and Central America do so to mitigate difficult living conditions, financial hardship, and lack of opportunity (Cervantes et al., 2010). Undocumented immigration can take a negative toll on the well-being of families. This is frequently due to, according to Cervantes et al., the negative impact of serial migration on family members as well as the negative impact deportation has on the family. First, families experience an initial disruption when one or more members leave the family system to immigrate to the United States. Second, disruptions occur each time a family member is reunited and attempts to integrate back into the family. Furthermore, with respect to the aftermath of deportation, remaining family members, including those with U.S. citizenship, must determine whether to stay in the country or reunite with the deported family member.

In addition, deportation has economic consequences for the families of undocumented migrants. Usually, a deportation involves a working adult. This results in housing instability and food hardship due to a loss of income. The aforementioned factors contribute to lack of a substantial support network and this triggers psychological stress that results in social isolation and an inability or unwillingness to share stressors with those in the home country (Cervantes et al., 2010). The impact of children being separated from a parent can be a predictor of prominent psychological impact on a child's socio-emotional development. For children who have been left behind by parents to be reunited in the future, they experience the loss of a significant relationship, resulting in destabilization of the family and depression (Mitrani, Santiseteban, & Muir 2004; Suarez-Orozco, 2001).

It is imperative to also mention children's chronic fear of ICE. After one raid in Massachusetts, the governor was forced to declare a humanitarian crisis because of the number of parents who had been taken into custody (Kaskade, 2009). The combination of a forced separation from a parent and then becoming a ward of the state can lead to PTSD, separation anxiety, and depression. These children also experience racial profiling, escalated community violence, human rights violations, and discrimination. There is no way to accurately collect data on a population that, by nature of its legal status, must remain invisible. Kaskade (2009) estimated that one in 20 American children have at least one undocumented immigrant parent. In recent years, courts have shifted their opinions in line with public sentiment, largely because of the efforts of immigration reform advocates. As result, the undocumented mother of a citizen child may petition to remain in the United States if she presents exceptional evidence and shows that an unusually extreme hardship will befall her citizen child if she is deported (Kaskade, 2009). Nevertheless, immigration judges still maintain a high level of discretion when making their determinations. The ever-shifting nature of the deportation process necessitates a more robust understanding of the trauma that can result for these children.

Who is this Chupacabra?

It is said St. Toribio sometimes appears to immigrants who travel from Mexico to the United States and guides them safely through the desert. I am praying to him for the immigrants in our country. (Anonymous)

The formal definition of trauma as outlined in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, 4th edition, Revised Text (DSM-IV-RT)* is as follows:

Direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one's physical integrity; or witnessing an event that involves death, injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of another person; or learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or other close associate (Criterion A1).

(American Psychiatric Association, 2000, p. 463)

People who experienced trauma have difficulty shaking off the experience, often reliving it and, thus, feel a great deal of anxiety. Duran (2011) identified three categories of trauma:

Direct trauma occurs when the person is the target of the trauma. Indirect trauma involves a person's response to difficult events sustained by another person with whom the person identifies closely. Insidious trauma occurs when individuals are devalued by those in power, and these experiences usually persist throughout a lifetime and have a cumulative effect. (p. 7)

Individuals who live with trauma also feel overwhelmed and scared. Their ability to accomplish daily tasks or function can be severely impacted (Levine, 1997). Foster addressed a more specific type of trauma concerning immigrants. Foster (2001) theorized immigrant trauma as occurring in four stages: pre-migration, in transit, resettlement, and post-migration.

When considering the large number of children who live with a least one

parent who is undocumented, it is imperative to consider the risk of psychological trauma, abandonment, and distress this population is exposed to in the face of heightened anti-immigrant sentiment. Levers (2011) stated,

These five million children, two thirds of whom are birthright citizens of the United States, are victims of a system that wants to ratify easy solutions to a complex problem. The children are not themselves at risk of deportation, but the risk to their undocumented parents leaves them at the mercy of immigration officials and exposes them to heightened and chronic sense of fear. (p. 73)

Trauma theory

Trauma theory stems from Cathy Cauth's (1995) research grounded in Freud's original work in psychoanalysis. The importance of trauma theory is that it frames trauma from the perspective of asking the primary question: What happened to you? with an open-ended opportunity for the victim to share his/her story (Bloom, 1997). Trauma theory further explores the impact of trauma on development:

Early trauma affects the neurological development of young children, who may not be able to develop the neuronal structures necessary to process information, regulate emotions, and categorize experiences. This can lead to poor impulse control, aggression, difficulty in interpersonal relationships, and poor academic performance because of their inability to concentrate. (Blaustein, 2005)

Trauma theory suggests the individual has been harmed by something or someone in connection to particular personal and socio-political environments (Bloom, 1997).

Cultural trauma

Another type of trauma that should be considered is cultural trauma. Cultural trauma results after a catastrophic loss of identity both as an individual and a group (Aranda, Vaquera, & Sousa-Rodriguez, 2015). This trauma is noticeable in communities struggling with social inequities, injustices, and fear. Alexander (2012) stated that cultural trauma

transpires when the components of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to an awful event that leaves ineradicable marks upon their group awareness, marking their memories forever and changing their future individuality in basic and irreversible ways. In connection to the subject, cultural trauma, people have constantly used the language of trauma to explain what happened, not only to themselves, but also to the collectivities to which they belong. (p. 64)

The shift from thinking of trauma as an isolated incident to conceiving of it as also stemming from societally-imposed harm and fear is what distinguishes cultural trauma. Cultural trauma can also be a part of the decay of a community. Another perspective of this type of trauma is that it is historically constructed. The three criteria for cultural trauma to be present is that it must be remembered, must be culturally relevant, and must have an impact on the identity of a group (Alexander, Eyerman, Giesen, Smelser, & Sztompka, 2004). This kind of trauma speaks to the impact of historical events, such as the Holocaust for Jews and slavery for African Americans, on the collective memory of generations. Aranda et al. (2015) explained that the examination of cultural consciousness in immigrants through *testimonios* has indicated no separation between their cultural and personal traumas. They exist as one.

The connection between personal and cultural trauma is significant in psychological distress in children. In recent years, ICE has increased the number of mass deportations of undocumented individuals, including parents. From 1997 to 2007, ICE reports show that more than 100,000 parents of U.S. citizen children were deported. Witnessing deportations and raids on family members and friends can have a staggering psychological effect on the children left behind. Children that witness these immigration raids have experienced emotional trauma, distrust, financial instability, and decreased sense of well-being (Ayers, 2013). Despite this crisis in the mental health of Latino/a children, there have been no governmental studies to explore the impact of ICE and immigration raids or heavy-handed policies on families (Stucchi-Duran, 2011). This permanent fear that is experienced by parents can be transmitted to their child by what is known as intergenerational trauma.

Intergenerational trauma

The transmission of trauma happens when children witness the reactions and behaviors of their parents or identify strongly with them (Lyons, 2004; Rosenbacck & Fontana, 1998; Stucchi-Duran 2011). Therefore, intergenerational trauma can be envisioned as “ghosts in the nursery,” as delineated in Frailberg, Adelson, and Shapiro’s influential 1975 study. What are the sources of these ghosts? They represent the voices of the past. They are the voices of ghosts that remain, haunt, and prolong the intergenerational transmission of past trauma. The authors posited that mothers who have experienced trauma are more likely to model similar patterns of rejection, maltreatment, and emotional detachment in their relationships with their children. The same can be true for parents’ exposure to extreme societal stress or violence.

Lieberman, Chu, Van Horn, and Harris (2011) stated that although children from 0-5 years old are disproportionately exposed to traumatic events relative to older children, they are underrepresented in the trauma research literature and in the development and implementation of clinical treatments and public policy initiatives to protect maltreated children. Children living in poverty and from ethnic and racial minority groups are significantly affected. Identifying subgroups of children exposed to particular types of experiences can inform screening procedures and facilitate more targeted interventions that can change problematic developmental paths and promote resilience.

Racial trauma

Recent research on racial trauma arose from the DSM's failure to address the experiences and emotional pain as a result of racism as source of trauma (Carter, 2006). Carter and Forsyth (2009) defined racial discrimination as a "form of avoidant racism, reflected in behaviors, thoughts, and policies that have the effect of maintaining distance or limiting contact between dominant and nondominant racial group members" (p. 14). Carter's work recognized that past studies involving people of color have repeatedly indicated they have heightened levels of trauma and PTSD equal to those of veterans, but racism is rarely accounted for as a contributing factor. Carter's (2007) Race-Based Traumatic Stress Symptoms Scale was developed as a self-report measurement to explore individual's experiences of discrimination and their reactions to stressful events. Carter began with the premise that

core stressor of trauma is emotional pain rather than threat to one's life,
distinguishing traumatic stress from PTSD and encounters with racism must be

experienced as emotionally painful, sudden and uncontrollable. These reactions are expressed as intrusion (recurring thoughts), avoidance (push away the events) and a cluster of symptoms: depression, anger, low self-esteem, physical reactions and may have psychological impairment. (p. 4)

His impetus for developing the instrument was a perceived need to connect particular experiences to the stress or traumatic stress that had remained largely unnoticed. Carter's instrument was created to determine when the stress of racism becomes traumatic.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork that included participant observation of a grassroots organization in New York City during 1999-2000 and tracing of Mexican immigrant youths' psychological development through societal and individual histories, Solis (2003) explored the types of violence they were exposed to and their reactions to it. Solis concluded that U.S. institutions, in concert with the media, foster a widespread racialized conception of undocumented immigrants as criminals and threats to the socioeconomic quality of the country. This view of undocumented immigrants can be the impetus for physical and psychological violence against them. This, in turn, can precipitate violent behaviors by children and youth. Solis's findings elucidate how some Mexican youth enter a cycle of violence, on a societal and personal level, as a result of their undocumented status, socioeconomic class, language, and ethnic/racial memberships.

When trauma goes untreated

The long-term and short-term impact on the mental health of Latino/a children who have experienced trauma or compounded psychological stressors is critical. Viridiana Martinez (2012), undocumented and co-founder of the North Carolina

Undocumented Dream Team, emphasized the need to address mental health in our undocumented youth community.

Whatever legislation is necessary to service our undocumented immigrant community, we first need those directly affected to speak for themselves. Our youth who are graduating from high school feel absolutely hopeless. This is very real, the pain, the anger, the confusion, and the lack of hope, because you don't see light at the end of the tunnel. There are cases where some have committed suicide. One of the biggest focuses right now is on the mental health of undocumented immigrants. We're hearing more and more stories of undocumented youth and adults living with mental health issues. Whether it is depression, anxiety or attempted suicide, or that we're hurting ourselves. (p.17)

The importance of addressing the mental health issues of these youth and their families speaks to the larger research that stresses the importance identifying and treating trauma early on in youth.

Accordingly, Lieberman et al. (2007) noted,

When their trauma goes unaddressed, children are at greater risk for school failure; anxiety and depression and other post-traumatic disorders; alcohol and drug abuse, and, later in life, engaging in violence similar to that to which they were originally exposed. In spite of the serious psychiatric/developmental sequelae of violence exposure, the majority of severely and chronically traumatized children and youth are not found in mental health clinics. Instead, they typically are seen as the "trouble-children" in schools or emerge in the child protective, law enforcement, substance abuse treatment, and criminal justice

systems, where the root of their problems in exposure to violence and abuse is typically not identified or addressed. (p. 392)

A more comprehensive understanding of symptoms of a traumatized child reveals they can be complex and varied. Exposure to trauma leads to dysregulation of neurobiological, cognitive, social, and affective processes. This has different behavioral manifestations that are dependent on a child's developmental stage (Lieberman et al., 2007). One of the noted problems that can arise out of trauma is a child's difficulty with learning. Often, they exhibit problems with focus and attention and are also withdrawn.

The research is clear that the brain functioning and overall development of a child who goes through traumatic experiences can be impacted (Lieberman et al., 2007). The scientific research further expands the discussion of the impact of trauma on children explaining that new science in brain imaging shows that there is "long-term alterations in the hypothalamic pituitary adrenal axis and the norepinephrine systems, as well as dysregulation in the prefrontal cortex, hippocampus, and amygdala" (Bremner, 2003, p. 445). These areas of the brain are key to development. The prefrontal cortex is the region for planning complex cognitive behavior, personality expression, decision making, and moderating social behavior. The hippocampus is part of the limbic system and plays important roles in the consolidation of information from short-term memory to long-term memory and spatial navigation. The amygdala, also part of the limbic system, performs a primary role in the processing of memory, decision-making, and emotional reaction. Noted concerns relate to children's poor problem-solving skills and the difficulty they have thinking things through. The impact of trauma can make them hypervigilant and they can have a difficult time self-regulating behaviors and emotions. Other learning

challenges connected to trauma are memory problems, disorientation, and loss of objectivity (Ziegler, 2003).

Our societal response to healing trauma in Latino communities is critical for the well-being of our youth and families. Protective systems are necessary for children's healing and functioning. These protective systems can be contextualized as both familial and societal:

The greatest threats to resilience appear to follow the breakdown of protective systems. This results in damage to brain development and associated cognitive and self-regulatory capacities, compromised caregiver-child relationships, and loss of motivation to interact with one's environment. (Cook & Spinaloza, 2007, p. 390)

Our societal response to how we heal undocu-trauma in Latino families must be understood within the context of how we address the emotional consequences for undocumented and mixed-status Latino children. As we seek to understand society's role in the process of addressing this trauma, we also must contextualize our notion of how we accept and account for resiliency that can be seen in these same youths and families. Every day we witness the determination and hard work they contribute to our country. As we witness the strengths of this community to stand in the storm of adversity and struggle, it is important to discuss how society responds to the notion of resilience and the actions, advocacy, and human rights available to these families.

Resistance vs. resilience

Some scholars define grit and success as resiliency, emphasizing people's ability to rise above adversity and to continue day after day despite the odds that are stacked

against them. Others argue that along with the notion of resiliency comes an acceptance of the status quo, whether intentional or unintentional. One way to understand resilience is through the notion of grit, which glamorizes the narrative of making it while poor. Countering resilience with resistance is critical to recognizing the strengths of these youth. Valerie Strauss explained,

Real harm can come from romanticizing poverty as a character-building experience. If privileged classes see poor children as potential role models for their own offspring, they risk losing sight of the enormous harms caused by a childhood without high-quality housing, health care, nutrition, and education.

The grit discourse does not teach that poor children deserve poverty; it teaches that poverty itself is not so bad. (personal communication, May 10, 2106)

When we then seek to focus only on resiliency and consider that this community of children are expected to continue in their situations, we are feeding the monster of fear that accepts the immigration status of millions of youth in this country.

Cultural resiliency theory speaks to the importance of culture as a source of healing in communities of color. Cardoso and Thompson (2010) stated, “Immigrants’ cultural traditions can foster a sense of ethnic and cultural identity that protect against mental illness and substance abuse and promotes academic and psychological resilience” (p. 1). These researchers also acknowledged the psychological risk factors associated with migration, stating “the experiences for children of immigrants are especially important because they are frequently exposed to significant disadvantage” (p. 2). Cardoso 2010 recognized the internal strengths of the Latino community as protective factors in the resiliency of this community. The significance of community networks and

spaces influencing healing and resiliency are recognized as a significant factor in this theory of cultural resiliency. Cardoso and Thompson stated, “Given that Latino culture focuses on the collective rather than the individual experience, characteristics of resilience must be interpreted within this context” (p. 3). This theory clearly outlines the concept that culture matters in healing. However, in the era of Trump and beyond, it is critical to acknowledge resistance as the counter-story to resiliency. Shifting the conversation from how these youth and families are understood must include counter-stories of resistance for the undocumented and mixed-status community. Resistance becomes the powerbroker of *yo soy!*

Finally, this research is framed from a critical space of social justice advocacy, practice, and resistance that narrates the role of racism and social stigmatization as community traumas while looking to the same community to create cultural healing spaces for undocumented, mixed-status children and their families.

Cultural Arts as Healing Interventions

While there is an abundance of literature and studies written on youth resiliency and youth empowerment, this research seeks to specifically address how Latino youth heal through culture and the cultural arts. As the Latino/a influence in the United States continues to grow, the cultural response to how Latinos heal from psychological wounds suffered by society continues to be a challenge for mental health professionals. On the spectrum of recent immigration status and those fully assimilated, the challenge of working to address the mental health of Latinos continues to be studied and immediate demands for cultural competency in the counseling profession point to the need for creative approaches for this population. Ferman, Neji, and Kenji (2009) explained that in

order for cultural competency to be genuine, Latino/a social workers and clinicians must constantly explore and seek to understand the depth and shifting social needs of Latino/a communities. As we grapple with new ways to heal trauma, racism, and the societal scars that dehumanize Latino/a communities we must resuscitate indigenous and culturally rich practices to collectively heal communities, extending beyond the western practices that are predominantly used to treat trauma. A review of the literature demonstrates what is possible in healing trauma for communities that have suffered generations of societal oppression.

Cultura cura: Healing spaces in our communities

The cultural arts have always existed as a foundation in communities that have energized cultures, influenced politics, defined societies, shaped identities, and rooted generations to indigenous traditions. The cultural arts have inspired and shaped the identity of communities of color. However, in the field of psychology and mental health, the cultural arts has had a very limited role in being used as a purposeful and specific therapeutic modality of intervention that has been researched and recognized. While we know these cultural practices are embedded in communities through *familia*, non-profits, schools, community centers, churches, and in underground organic spaces, there is limited research documenting this important work. Exposing the cultural arts as a therapeutic intervention in healing marginalized communities must be given recognition for its sacred power. The *dicho* of *cultura cura* is indigenous lived knowledge passed down. As communities of color, we must own this knowledge and carve it into professional spaces. Over the past several years, the cultural arts as therapeutic practice has caught the attention of numerous professions and provoked new interest (Sonn &

Baker, 2015). In an effort to capture the work being done, the *International Journal of Inclusive Education* (based in Australia) dedicated a special issue to “Exploring the Transformative Potential of Arts and Cultural Practice” (2015). This issue discusses the impact of community arts and community development, or CACD (Sonn & Baker, 2015). This issue links CACD to the field of community psychology, emphasizing that the community arts as an intervention is an effective model of healing marginalized and oppressed communities, primarily in Australia. Sonn and Baker (2015) stated,

CACD activities are often formed in contexts of exclusion and in response to oppressive social, political, and economic conditions. Such projects can take the form of music and dance, community radio, altars and memorials, storytelling circles, theatre practices, film and video, and the use of arts in Participatory Action Research.

Paglicci, Steward, and Rowe (2012) discussed the emerging identification of cultural arts as a purposeful youth intervention, explaining that while cultural arts have always held a significant space in society, they have only recently been defined as a therapeutic intervention.

A blessing way

In the quest to find ways to collectively heal trauma in communities of color and beyond, there must be a recognition of the indigenous healing that has taken place over generations that has been effective. Social workers, clinicians, and educators should look deep inside the spaces of marginalized communities to understand how trauma can be turned into resistance. Every day there are culturally relevant practices that are happening within communities to make significant change and contribute to a deeper

healing. We do not have to look beyond the natural healing practices that already exist, but are not recognized by Western practices as necessary and important in healing trauma of people that are vilified by society.

Dr. Tommy Begay (2016), whose work focuses on the Navajo of Arizona, wrote about the use of a Therapeutic Talking Circle to support a collective healing of a community. Dr. Begay works closely to include sacred elements of the Navajo that open spaces for them to develop trust and feel safe to open and share. He wrote,

Talking Circle involves a group seated in a circular fashion; the burning of sage, cedar, or sweetgrass—a process referred to as “smudging”; the use of an eagle feather; and prayer. Smudging purifies the circle of negativity and “darkness.” Prayer sets the stage for acknowledgment of the sacred, lending to a safe, confidential environment—to guide the sharing of thoughts and feelings. It is believed that the healing capacity of Talking Circle is associated with the release of negative and positive thoughts and feelings out into the sacred circle. (T. Begay, personal communication, March 2017).

Dr. Begay’s work is on the front lines of connecting child wounds to the neuropsychology of how we understand the impact trauma has on brain development, while using cultural practices for healing. He stated, “A number of tribes have already embarked on community-level healing processes by reinstating traditional social practices and structures” (T. Begay, personal communication, March 2017). Begay also discussed the use of the Blessing Way as a cultural ritual of healing. Culture is interconnected with spirituality, which gives strength in healing. He stated,

Blessing way is the backbone of every ceremony in Navajo. There is a protection way prayer and it is a powerful component. Here is what protection way means to me, it comes with song and the medicine man sings, in this blessing way prayer in our dominant hand we carry a corn pollen pouch, it is a symbol for the sacred of goodness. We carry the sacred and protect the sacred in our dominant hand. In our less dominant hand, we carry the arrow, teaching us to take a stand. It represents that you fight for the sacred, your relationship to the children, to the goodness, to the beauty of hope” (T. Begay, personal communication, March 2017).

The quilt of cultural protection for the Navajo wraps their spirituality, ceremony, and community together to collectively heal from generational chronic trauma.

Freedom bus

In the conflicted zone of Israel and Palestine, activists have developed the Freedom Bus Initiative that integrates playback theatre to be able to invoke the stories of the community to share and stand as a resistance in the face of the battle zone between Palestine and Israel (Rivers, 2015). Rivers (2015) stated, “Playback Theatre offers one avenue for an amplified form of grassroots ‘truth telling’, alliance building and community mobilization—especially in regions that feel alienated by top-down political processes” (p. 162). Participants in this theatre share that acting channels a lived storytelling opportunity on stage, transforming words into a visual experience that is felt by the audience. What is unique about the Freedom Bus Initiative is that those that are telling their story are the audience. An individual comes up to narrate their personal story and it is then played out by an actor on stage. Rivers talked about the sensory impact that the audience feels in hearing these stories and seeing them come alive, which leads to an

emotional discharge of feelings. The Freedom Bus Initiative is transforms moments of empathy that uses the arts as a space to build bridges and compassion.

Flor de piña

Another space of healing that we find woven into corner spaces of communities is that of the Mexican regional art and dance of *ballet folklórico*. *Ballet folklórico* as an art and voice of a people rises as a creative opportunity for resistance, hope, and celebration of identity on a stage against colonization, acculturation, and injustice. The historical roots of *ballet folklórico* in the United States can clearly be differentiated from the role it plays in Mexico. Najera-Ramirez (1989) stated, “Folklórico groups in Mexico represented an acceptance of the dominant ideology of national unity whereas the emergence of folklórico groups in the United States represented a resistance to acculturation efforts by Anglo-American hegemonic forces” (p. 29). Najera Ramirez wrote about the emergence of *ballet folklórico* in the 1960s and 70s in universities as a way to open doors and attract safe spaces for first-generation college students. *Folklórico* was a safe and familiar language of cultural identity that students could escape to, while committing themselves to study in higher education spaces that did not understand their Chicano communities (Najera Ramirez, 1989).

Manuel Perez (2016) wrote about *folklórico* as healing in his work “Recetas de Testimonio”:

Folklórico became an essential element to my schooling beyond the classroom.

Folklórico became a moment of liberation in which I was able to learn about my ethnicity and cultural heritage in a space that embraced my brown skin, that

welcomed my Spanish/English/Spanglish, and that provided a brave space for me to explore my sexuality. (p. 34)

In his piece on *testimonio*, Perez brings to life the power of *folklórico* in the lives of three friends that supported their identity and gave voice to their sexuality as the tradition became a sanctuary for them, a place to escape to a familiar home they knew. Prieto (2016) reminded us of the importance for schools and non-profit organizations to appreciate the impact that the cultural arts and *danza* can have in the reclaiming of identity and committing ourselves to social justice practices (p. 99). “Mexican ballet folklórico exemplifies an art form that responds to rhythms of a colonial past that extend into contemporary acts of discrimination and racism” (Martinez).

In San Francisco, one group that has been a cultural heartbeat for the city is Ensembles Ballet Folklórico, founded by Director Zenon Barron. Ensembles has risen as the *corazón* of Mexico in San Francisco. The colorful representation of rich culture and the traditional dances come alive in performances throughout the city. One review stated, “Their work showcases how Mexican folklore is a continually evolving dance form based on tradition and ritual that touches performers’ and audiences’ souls” (World Arts West, n.d., para. 1). This powerful image of how culture reaches out to touch the soul is profound in how we begin to articulate what can be defined as healing. The power of *danza* to be able to reach down inside the dancer’s spirit embodies the indigenous healing practices that often have gone beyond what medicine and talk therapy may represent to an individual’s healing of their *alma*.

Using music, dance, and rhythm as cultural shields of strength for communities of color is necessary. One social worker in Oakland is using hip hop as therapy with Black

urban youth, which has proved to be effective for this community. Nate Alvarez III, co-founder of Beat, Rhymes and Life, shared the story of how the inspiration to use the cultural wealth of hip hop transformed a community mental health practice. Alvarez explained, “They come for hip hop but they stay for the healing” (Calhoun 2016). Using the culture of hip hop to transform these youths has had an impact in Oakland and is allowing them to come together collectively in a safe space for therapy to happen. Using the cultural wealth of the neighborhood, the organization repaired an old building, which now sports a sleek, hip hop music space dazzled with art, record labels photos, poetry, and other creative expressions of the youth in the program. Angela Scott (2015) stated,

Because BRL has a social justice framework, it actively addresses the dynamics of oppression, privilege, isms, as well as gentrification and asks the youth to look at these things critically. In doing so, it challenges traditional mental health paradigms and changes the lives of at-risk/at-promise youth as well as the face of mental health in the 21st century.

Alvarez spoke to the power of hip hop as transformative healing for these youths, as it gives them agency to share their narratives and a mic to tell their story. Alvarez was named a CNN hero for the creative work he is doing to address mental health using culturally relevant and creative lenses.

El sistema: música y resistencia

A powerful movement that has shaped a country of youth as music *guerreros* is El Sistema of Venezuela. El Sistema has mobilized resistance and social action behind the curtain of orchestra instruction to youth from all ages, nationalities, and backgrounds with a particular focus on high risk youth. El Sistema has used music to leverage a social

justice intervention to youth in a country struggling with violence. It has become a foundation for children to rise out of societal oppression that has given them recognition of who they can dream to be as well as organizing parents to build community and lead with the cultural capital they have harnessed together. Uy (2012) stated,

In El Sistema today, these sociedades de padres are an important part of the overall functioning of the program. And the realization of self-empowerment and self-efficacy has reinforced the community aspect of each núcleo, because parents and students realize that they are equal partners in this relationship: they are not just consumers, but also producers. They believe that the community is strengthened the more actively one participates, engages and gives back to the program. This involvement, therefore, is one of the ways that parents (and their children) can actively transform their environment. (p. 16)

El Sistema has utilized music as a social bridge to support the development of youth through music, community building, academic support, and recognition of their potential. Further, El Sistema utilizes a cultural arts model to establish a new programmatic vision for strengthening youth and their families that is now being understood as effective and impactful. The eyes of the world have been on El Sistema as the program has grown with positive outcomes that have captured the spirit of a country.

There are five fundamental principles that fuel El Sistema's success and mission; the first of these is social transformation. Govias (2011) explained that musical excellence and social change are reliant on one another; neither exists on its own. The second is that the orchestra and community are built as a team, learning how to work together to make their music come alive. The three additional principles of frequency,

accessibility, and connectivity are key principles to El Sistema's success, opening doors for free to all youth, meeting and practicing with consistency, and connecting all the programs as one has fueled El Sistema's transformational change (Govias, 2011).

The healing spaces created by these programs using culture, music, theatre, dance, and *ceremonia* have given agency and voice to underground communities. They have opened doors for soul stories to be shared and social transformation to rise with cultural power. The building of community happens naturally in these spaces as there are no walls when one enters; rather, these programs commit to using cultural wealth, indigenous, and creative practices to create resistance and transformation that has social impact. It is clear that these programs have committed to a process that gives individuals a space to be heard and seen in society on their own terms and with their own gifts. Zavala (2013) stated, "To decolonize, is to look within and undo/rework the colonizing oppressive structures from the inside-out and then look again from the outside-in" (p. 57). The healing that happens in these spaces extends beyond a cognitive therapeutic intervention; rather, it is a cultural and social metamorphosis that has been given space to rise from its dormancy and fly. The power that lies in these programs is fueled by the people itself and the indigenous and cultural wealth that rises from within.

Summary of Literature Review

The research in the field of trauma is vast. Over time, the definition and understanding of trauma has grown. No longer is it marked by one defined catastrophic moment, but rather, has grown to include complex trauma, racial trauma, and chronic trauma. In each form, trauma is destructive and impactful on an individual's psyche. For children, learning is impacted, as well as development and emotional stability. Growth in

the research on trauma, its connection to the brain, and its impact on development has initiated new studies and programs to address an increasing number of traumatized children in our country.

Missing from this discourse is the emotional impact and psychological consequences that being undocumented carries for Latino/a children. Painfully absent from the discussion is a critical analysis of how we can work to heal this population of children and families. Little is known about the *testimonios* and lived experiences of these children. The research stops short of giving narrative accounts of the psychological stressors these children experience as they live in the shadows of society. To be more specific, the literature does not define the experience of being undocumented as a variable to consider when assessing for PTSD in children. The literature also gives minimal recognition of the cultural wealth and the power of the arts to heal this community of children.

The literature does not fully describe the psychological stressors of racism, societal violence, chronic fear, and oppressive power structures that immigrant children live with. While studies discuss the impact of rigid immigration enforcement that separates families and children, there has been a failure to acknowledge how the repeated fears these children are plagued with should be understood through the context of a psychological trauma.

Understanding the narratives of undocumented or mixed-status child is imperative as it can inform a broader understanding of Latino/a children in the U.S. educational system. In educational research, there is very little mention about poor academic performance of the undocumented or mixed-status Latino/a child and a possible link to

trauma. Trauma does impact school and academic performance in children. Clearly there is an important discussion missing in discussions around poor academic performance of Latino/a children and serious psychological stressors that many have suffered without appropriate intervention.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study centers the voices of undocumented and mixed-status youth to address a gap that exists in the current scholarship in the fields of psychology, mental health, education, and immigration reform. Specifically, it addresses the use of cultural arts, social work, and social justice as active interventions in the healing of racial and societal trauma. This effort to engage in transformative research in mental health to understand undocu-trauma and mental health with undocumented and mixed status children can be understood from a qualitative approach that allows for *testimonios* to be rooted in creative space and dialogue with this community.

This research is of particular importance because it examines a cultural healing space developed in a rural Northern California community rich in Mexican immigrant families. 11 Millones de Sueños was developed as a grassroots program embedded in cultural arts, social work, education, and social justice practice to work with both undocumented and mixed-status children to celebrate the cultural wealth of a community that has generally lived in the shadows. 11 Millones de Sueños focuses on the healing of a community that has had relatively little access to advocacy in the immigrant rights movement. With no advocacy programs in our community or other Latinx-focused nonprofits, the purposeful development of 11 Millones de Sueños as an intervention will be examined in this study. This program was created to serve Latino/a children and families who were experiencing emotional challenges both personally and academically, later growing into a community space energized by *familia* and cultural wealth.

As the founder of 11 Millones de Sueños, I have positioned myself in this work as both researcher and social worker in an effort to expand understanding of alternative

healing spaces for our Latinx children. Of particular importance is to understand how the development of a cultural arts program, framed by social justice principles, can be focused on the preservation of tradition, culture, and community while simultaneously constructing healing spaces for children and families that have experienced trauma and emotional crisis. This research explores the *testimonios* of program participants as well as insights from parents and teachers to understand the various ways that this program has impacted their emotional well-being and mental health. This study also seeks to expand understanding of ways to support undocumented and mixed-status children to improve their well-being and academic success.

Research Design

In considering the best methodology for this research, *testimonios* are used to capture the narratives and experiences of the children, family, and teachers with 11 Millones de Sueños. The use of *testimonio* gets to the *corazón* of their stories, and allows them to share their *historias*, *emociones*, and *pensamientos* in raw form. There is no complicated design to form an analysis of who they are; rather, their story becomes the vessel for hearing their voices. *Testimonio* also gives space for the information they share to be organic and natural in creating the space they enter for the interview itself. As I see it, *testimonio* is as natural as gathering around the table to eat as a family; it is the circle that we sit in to share our *historias* with one another. *Testimonio* is a familiar space and language, it is that of its people, storytellers. *Testimonio* as methodology has breathed new life into research. Villela (2012) stated,

Within the field of education, scholars are increasingly taking up *testimonio* as a pedagogical, methodological, and activist approach to social justice that

transgresses traditional paradigms in academia. Unlike the more common training of researchers to produce unbiased knowledge, *testimonio* challenges objectivity by situating the individual in communion with a collective experience marked by marginalization, oppression, or resistance. These approaches have resulted in new understandings about how marginalized communities build solidarity and respond to and resist dominant culture, laws, and policies that perpetuate inequity. (p. 13)

Testimonio in this study is necessary because it has the potential to transcend colonized experiences to allow marginalized communities of people to have an active voice and agency in narrating their stories. In other words,

testimonio is a translation of the hegemonic discourse into the language of the colonized which privileges collective reality over that of the individual, it informs the ways in which we, as psychologists, facilitate and understand the subaltern voice expressed in therapeutic and public testimony. Due to its unique construction, testimonio allows for both solidarity between researcher and participant as well as cultural distance that maintains difference and engenders respect. (Brabeck, 2001, p. 32)

In seeking to understand both the psychological experiences of a group of individuals, as well as their process of resiliency and healing, *testimonio* enables a genuine voice to emerge. Specifically, *testimonio* fosters a safe space for participants to share their story rather than answering a questionnaire or being a part of a guided testing process.

In our community in particular, as the first Latino/a nonprofit in a predominantly Mexican community, it is imperative that the methodology used is one that does not

exacerbate the fear or anxiety the community already feels, or that serves to disenfranchise them:

Testimonio, a form of storytelling, uncovers the way that systems of oppression conspire in the lives of Latinos and Latinas. This methodology is predicated on an understanding the theoretical implications of lived experience. Testimonio is an exercise of agency; the very insistence on storytelling is an act of resistance against the silencing and subordination of the Latino/a experience. (Yosso 2005)

Testimonio is an indigenous reclaiming of a people's story. It parallels with the qualitative research of narrative analysis, which is also intertwined with this research study. Merriam (2009) explained that stories are how we open the door to understand experiences:

The key to this type of qualitative research is the use of stories as data, and more specifically, first person accounts of experience told in story form having a beginning, middle, and end. Whether the account is in the form of autobiography, life history, interview, journal, letters, or other materials that we collect, the text is analyzed for the meaning it has for its author. (p. 32)

A psychological approach to the analysis of the *testimonios* is a critical formation in the design of this research study as it seeks to understand the emotional and psychological experiences of this group of children. In the analysis of *testimonios*, critical attention was given to the psychological impact that being undocumented or a mixed-status child has. In this study, participants were also able to share songs, art, dances, or other creative forms of telling the story of their journey.

Research Questions

The questions that this research seeks to address are as follows:

1. What are the experiences of undocumented youth and those from mixed-status families as expressed through their *testimonios*?
2. How do youth and their families demonstrate pain, hope, and resilience in the face of trauma?
3. In what ways does 11 Millones de Sueños provide collective and/or individual healing spaces for undocumented youth and those from mixed-status families?

Research Setting

Using indigenous gifts of dance, music, song, and stories, our children and families are embedded in a collective experience of community rich with the presence of our Mexican ancestors. 11 Millones de Sueños was founded in 2011 in a small rural community in Northern California. It is significant to understand that this community is a small, rural coastal community that is located within a mountainous area along Highway 1. The roads to get in and out of the community are single lanes, and there is limited public transportation for residents or others. The town is known for its beautiful beaches, restaurants, and agricultural nurseries. The hard-working Mexican community is responsible for much of the success of the tourism that drives the local economy. Yet, even with their hard work, there is little representation of Latino/a voices in politics and on school boards, or opportunities to obtain local leadership roles. Many of our families are forced into the shadows as they work two jobs a day and struggle to pay the high cost of rent in a community that does little to consider the economic hardships that exist.

11 Millones de Sueños' mission is to create a space for the Latino/a community to strengthen their identity and cultural presence in our town. While it is open to all that would like to participate, its main purpose is to serve the Latinx community that has limited access to other resources. It is the first cultural arts social services Latino/a nonprofit in our community.

The motto of 11 Millones de Sueños, *we all live under the same moon*, is centered on the idea we all carry one another's struggle, we are one in our collective struggle for recognition of our humanity. While I was the initial founder of the project, the reality is that the Latino/a community co-developed and co-created 11 Millones de Sueños. Individual families and children come to the program voluntarily. Each parent and family is recognized for the cultural treasures they possess. Participants are actively involved and recognized for their leadership contributions. Specifically, all the programs of 11 Millones de Sueños are supported and organized by parent coordinators who work as volunteers. I also work on a completely voluntary basis because we operate on very limited funding. Currently, there are four core programs. The first is our *ballet folklórico* project and was the initial project of 11 Millones de Sueños. Second is our Mariachi education project. Third is our tutoring and education program, and finally we have the our social justice and advocacy program. Each of these projects addresses the child and family from an assets-based and cultural wealth perspective. The development of cultural citizens in the program is evident in the change we see in the children and families as they take ownership of the spaces they co-create and maintain.

The original participants selected the Nahuatl or Aztec word for Mother Earth, as the name that embodies the mother that protects us. For the purpose of this research and

to keep the name confidential for the youth, I have used the name of Corazon to represent the Ballet Folklórico program of 11 Millones de Sueños. Intertwined with Catholic roots and ties to the Virgen de Guadalupe, Corazon holds a respected place in our everyday lives, and gives rise to the imagery of love, the warmth of a mother, and the protection that her touch offers us. With limited space in our tourist town, a local Catholic church opened its doors for our grassroots dream to come to fruition. Programming occurs twice a week with six classes offered. The children and families come to dance and share in community. Under the artistic direction of Zenon Barron, a master teacher, the children are exposed to dance as a vehicle for empowerment and connection to community and cultural roots. Zenon's commitment to 11 Millones de Sueños is inspired by his desire to give back to a rural community of children that would otherwise be challenged to receive opportunities for cultural programming. Zenon comes each week from San Francisco because he is committed to preserving the traditions and art of the *danza*.

Corazon offers the opportunity to share the voices of our ancestors with the greater community and beyond. For the children, their hours of practice come to life when they see the smiles on the faces of the elders, families, and others who beam with joy watching the children dance with pride. Another key component of the project is parental involvement and community development. This is true for all of the 11 Millones de Sueños programs.

The second project was inspired by the many families that live in our community who are originally from Cocula, located in the Jalisco state of Mexico and known as the birthplace of Mariachi. As we began dreaming of the possibility of a Mariachi program, we sought out maestros willing to travel from out of the area to come and work with our

youth on a weekly basis. Through learning the violin, guitar, *vihuela*, *guitarrón*, and trumpet, along with voice instruction, the students have developed the ability to read music and play an instruments. Mariachi Alegria exists as the sole Mariachi program in the area and is the only program of its kind within a 40-plus mile radius. The program allows for a metamorphosis to happen with our students, in that so many come in quite shy and cautious with minimal musical skills. They transform into confident musicians and performers who take to the stage with *orgullo*. Of critical importance is the involvement and excitement of the parents, who witness how their child expresses pride in their culture through Mariachi.

When the Mariachi program began, 11 Millones de Sueños was able to continue using space at the church to hold classes. A partnership was soon developed with the principal of the local middle school, and Mariachi Alegria found a new home. This shift to the school facility was significant because it allowed the students to have their instruction in a band room and have access to other facilities to enhance their learning. The partnership with the middle school opened doors for increased collaboration with the school district as well as ongoing opportunities to partner with other local programs. In addition to weekly practices, the students are often invited to perform at community events or fundraisers, including local cultural celebrations during holidays. Over time, many of the participants have become local heroes, praised for representing our voice and *cultura*. Most recently, they were invited to perform for the world-renowned Mariachi Vargas de Tenochtitlan from Mexico.

The children have been exposed to performance opportunities at venues that have raised the bar for them both personally and artistically. While the expectation is not

artistic perfection, our children have developed a passion for performance and art that extends beyond their classes. What has been evident to all who participate is that the projects represent the voices of our community. When we go out into the community to dance or sing, community members relish the chance to highlight the cultural arts of Mexico. Our presence calls out: *¡México presente!* With their smiles and regional *trajes* of Mexico, the *zapatadios*, *fiestas* and *cultura en vivo*, 11 Millones de Sueños has become a space that represents home for many.

The fusion of social work with the cultural arts as a purposeful intervention is a unique combination. What is important to note is that 11 Millones de Sueños does not stand alone as a cultural arts program, but rather uses the arts as a base and then combines it with social work as a tool in the healing process. My work as a social worker in this area is important because I have been able to witness the safety net that has been built for the families who participate in 11 Millones de Sueños. Through our program, Juntos, a name chosen to convey the message that we all live together under the same moon, a space for social justice and advocacy in our community has been created. For this research, Juntos was selected as a fictitious name that still gives meaning to the original name selected by the community organizers. Using social work interventions in the form of case management, resource support, accompaniment and counseling, Juntos has opened spaces for *testimonios* to arise around complicated and difficult events surrounding immigration and deportation in our community.

Juntos has taken an active role in advocating for our community to rise up against the escalating fear of ICE that has been ignited as a result of Trump's threats against immigrant communities. Organizing community groups and working with other groups

to provide education and meetings with local political officials, 11 Millones de Sueños is working to strengthen safety nets of support and minimize families' feelings of isolation during this time of crisis. Equally important to Juntos is mitigating the fear that is present by using social media to advise of active ICE threats, connecting with local police officials to advocate for families, and providing direct case management and response.

Families regularly talk about situations they are struggling with surrounding issues of immigration, including the emotional struggles of their children. We embrace the program as model of *charlas*, *pláticas*, and *café*. In other words, families meet with us either during Mariachi classes and dance classes or afterwards in their homes, at coffee shops, at church, or wherever is best for them. As cases progress, critical care is taken to make sure that we meet with the family or individual in a confidential space, but most important is that they no longer struggle in silence.

Juntos also works with the community to create events that provide opportunities for healing or sharing. This has included creating Día de los Muertos *altares* representing those who have died at *la frontera* and facilitating “know your rights” campaign during ICE raids. La Misma Luna is always working to develop new models of intervention and support for our community. For example, I work closely with families to support the psychological evaluations of U Visas for undocumented victims who have suffered a crime and provide counseling support for individuals granted asylum, and provide counseling for the children and families impacted by forced deportations or crises around issues of deportation or separation.

The final program is our education program, Sol, another protected name for this research represents the light offered to the youth for their education. Sol is a critical part

of the success of many of our youth as it provides educational support using tutoring to increase their learning and academic performance. Originally, the program began with several local youth leaders teaching the children each week. Over time, 11 Millones de Sueños has grown the tutoring program to add a credentialed teacher as the coordinator and has developed a strong partnership with Notre Dame de Namur University.

Through close collaboration with University of San Francisco doctoral candidate and lecturer Kelly Delaney, a close partnership with a local university was formed to develop a connection with student-teachers. As a result, approximately 10 to 15 student-teachers from Notre Dame de Namur come twice a week to our local church hall to provide tutoring to participants. Tutoring classes are offered so that students can attend tutoring before or after other classes. Generally, the children and youth have access to personalized instruction because of the low student to tutor ratio. The personalized attention provided by student-teachers has propelled the participants to academic success. Most report they have significantly increased their reading levels. Others, at risk of repeating a grade, have worked diligently to be promoted to the next grade.

In order to make the program available to the community, it was important at the onset to offer the classes at a very reasonable price. Because we do not have to pay for space at the church hall or at the local middle school, parents pay forty dollars a month for either of the cultural arts programs. At all levels of 11 Millones de Sueños, parents are deeply involved in the program. Parent participation is a key component for sustaining the work of the program. In addition, 11 Millones de Sueños received its first grant in 2015, and became a 501(c)(3) organization. Our hope is that our program will

continue to grow as we acquire more resources to be able to support the development and healing of our children and families.

The spirit of *comunidad* is the foundation of 11 Milliones de Sueños and contributes one of the most important pieces of the program. Both parents and the youth are active in growing each piece of the program. 11 Milliones Cultural Arts Director, Zenon Barron brings an energy of enthusiasm and *orgullo* each week, opening the doors for Mexico to come alive in our space. Every week the Mariachi teachers make the music of Mexico come alive with the cantos of our youth. Parents spend their time visiting with one another, sharing information and make the time spent together one of *familia* in many ways. The youth dance, sing and play together before and after class- making friends the day they begin, sharing in the spirit of “*tocayo*” carrying the same spirit, dream, struggle and cultural pride. Their spirit of *amistad* is evident in their *sonrisas* as they dance, sing, play and visit. 11 Milliones of Sueños has also seen families come and go as they participate for a season, but in that time, each family and youth leave a footprint of their spirit and energy. Just like families, when someone is gone, there is always a sacred space that remains with a memory of the gifts they gave to the program. The spirit of belonging ignites the mission of cultural citizenship that exists. While the focus is not on status, there is a focus on cultural pride and cultural contributions that the youth give each time they take stage. This celebration of identity and an acknowledgement of each youth as important is what 11 Milliones immerses its programs in, understanding the cultural arts as a creative space to honor the gifts of each child.

As founder of the program my own work is committed to passing down the legacies of a rich Mexican culture from our ancestors on a land that they once danced and

sang on as theirs. My therapeutic work is founded in sensory practices of zapateados, cantos, the strum of the vihuela, the blaring of trumpets and the rhythm of the dance. At times when my own energy is low, I also play and sing my vihuela, healing my own soul with the alegría that our Mexican music brings. Each week I am committed to being part of the journey of the families and that of my own to gather, share, listen, cry and laugh together. 11 Millones has become a place of familia that is sheltered under a temascal of hope, sweating out the fear and taking in the alegría of our community that we have created. Undocu-fear becomes undocu-hope within a space of family that brings not only amistad but also the joy of Mexico that comes alive each week in our community.

Participant Selection

Purposeful sampling was used to recruit 14 participants. In understanding both the emotional experiences and healing of this community, it was important to interview youth participants of the program, parents in the program, and the *healers* or teachers of 11 Millones de Sueños. I used the cultural *familia* style of *plática* to introduce the purpose of the study and invited participants from the program of 11 Millones de Sueños individually to see if they would like to participate and share their *testimonio*. In considering who to invite to participate, I considered youth that had been in the program for a lengthy amount of time and had a foundation of trust with the researcher. This was critical as I wanted them to feel safe to share their story, as it related to experiences and emotions around their immigration status and that of their family. I also selected youth that had strong family support. Specific to this research study, I also considered immigration status in the process of interviewing them. Six student participants were invited and all agreed to participate in the study. Two of the students identify as

undocumented, and one of them is a DACA recipient. Four of the participants are U.S. citizens but have parents who are undocumented. These participants represent youth from a mixed-status home.

For the selection of parents, I interviewed three parents of the youth participants. All three parents identify as undocumented. A fourth parent asked to share some of her thoughts as she identifies as documented with citizen children. In interviewing the healers/maestros of the program I chose two specific teachers. Our maestro of *ballet folklórico* was committed to being part of the research, as well as the Educational Director for our tutoring program. I also invited an MSW graduate student who facilitated a summer program to be interviewed. Finally, I asked a parent coordinator to participate as she has a long history of advocacy and community organizing in 11 Millones de Sueños.

Cultural Considerations

As a researcher, I was mindful of the vulnerability of the participating children and their parents, as well as the escalating anti-immigrant political climate we are living in. With each interview, I entered the space with a deep respect for their agreement to be part of this work, and found it to be an honor to sit with them and witness their *testimonios*. We met in spaces that they felt comfortable at. I met with them in my home, their home and at dance and Mariachi class. While I attempted to do a formal interview with each one in a private space, they also wanted to continue conversation beyond the first interview. We spoke at events we were at together. Several of us also spent time eating and sharing at their favorite restaurant. I met with them in spaces of school, community and even back stage at events. A few of them spoke While my formal

testimonies were done. I gave them the opportunity to use creative and personal ways to share their story. From spoken word, to Mariachi songs, to Día de Los Muertos photos, to pizzas and *danza*, these *testimonios* rose out of real moments of truth with no traditional filters of research. *Palabras* spoken, heard, and witnessed.

I also recognized the challenges that traditional research might pose to these youths and their families. Using *testimonio* allows for a culturally sensitive approach. Language was also critical, as the research was conducted in both Spanish and English. Recognizing spirituality in the space was also important as this community is embedded in rich faith practices. This research supported participants to write, journal or tell personal stories about how faith practices and cultural spirituality is part of their personal story. Understanding *familia* as an important piece of this research was necessary when opening the space for these youth and families.

Data Collection

The *testimonio* of each participant was primarily collected through dialogues between me and them. In addition, participants were able to share any art, poetry, pictures, letters, and/or cultural art form that they wanted to bring as part of narrating their *testimonio*. Each interview was audio taped with permission for future transcription. Interviews were guided by the participant, sharing their story from a space of personal power, giving voice to what was important for them. In each session, I used open-ended questions to begin the process of sharing. I used *conocimiento* as a grounded tool to begin the dialogue. “Conocimiento is a process that unfolds in the context of unearthing knowledge in relationship to the daily life we engage with others as we come to Self-knowledge” (Mendez-Negrete, 2013, p. 226).

This allowed participants to initiate the introduction of their story in a way they considered most appropriate. Listening, taking notes, and validating their thoughts and exploring their ideas was part of my research interview process that made them feel *que estaban en casa* (at home). In addition to meeting with each participant at least once, I also observed them in the program, taking note of their interactions with the cultural arts and the community. Due to the relationship of trust that had already been built in my work with them, the barriers of mistrust and resistance were not an obstacle in the research. For this study, trust was an important variable given the sensitive nature of the *testimonios* as they related to immigration status and the connected emotional experiences.

Data Analysis

The collected *testimonios* were analyzed to uncover themes. These themes were contextualized from a psychological framework that allowed for the psychological impact of undocumented and mixed-status children to be understood. In addition to gathering data on the impact of being undocumented or mixed-status, the study focused on exploring resiliency and understanding how the child's participation in 11 Milliones de Sueños impacted their development, education, and mental health, and identifying the ways 11 Milliones served as a healing space.

Each *testimonio* was coded to identify themes. Themes were evident in the form of words, phrases, or passages. I then reviewed each *testimonio* again to locate common or generative themes. I connected generative themes to understand undocumented experiences within the larger socio-economic and political patterns within U.S. society.

Ethical Considerations

For this study, I was very aware of ethical considerations that were important for this specific research. The first was the interviewing of minors. As I began to select the youth participants, I focused on those who were between the ages of ten and seventeen. I also interviewed youths who had participated for over a year in the program and had a trusting relationship with me. I selected youths that appeared to be emotionally stable and thriving in school and other areas of their life. This was important, considering the complicated topic of immigration experience that they were being asked about. I also made sure that I spoke with their parents and measured their comfort level with their children giving *testimonio* for this research study.

At all times, I was aware of my role as researcher, but also specifically connected to my training as a clinician to assess the safety and emotional well-being of the participants in this study. When meeting with them I observed their body language and emotions, and took note of times that they might need to stop or take a break. I let them know from the beginning that they could share as much or little as they wanted, also emphasizing the anonymity of their identities. I took time to make sure they understood the purpose of the research and spoke about the importance of their stories as giving agency to other youth. I discussed their strengths and revealed why they were selected to be part of the research. It was important for me to share that their stories represented strength and resistance, and allowed them to amplify their voice in at a time when they might feel like they were silenced.

The framework of this research purposely engaged with the participants from a cultural wealth perspective. The process of engaging with them to share their *testimonios*

began with the process of creating *ceremonia* in the first session. Each participant began the process by being recognized for their gifts and their power to tell their story, and deciding what they wanted to share and when. In this research context, the participant became the teacher. I was aware of any power dynamic and made sure to stress that their *testimonio* was important and powerful, and that they had an open platform and should feel a sense of agency in the process.

To address the ethical concern of potentially re-traumatizing the child through the sharing of their memories, this research recognized the wrap-around case management, community support, and rich cultural arts programs that the participants had as a base for their participation in 11 Millones de Sueños. The wealth of community support in 11 Millones de Sueños was a significant factor as a built-in protective layer for the participants going through this process. In addition, my clinical training and years in the field working with youth allowed me to recognize distress or any symptoms of post-traumatic stress in the process of sharing a memory or experience. I felt prepared and ready to identify any of these difficult moments and to be able to redirect and minimize any escalating emotional distress during their *testimonio*. I also was very clear to share with the youth participants that they could stop at any time and that they could choose not to speak about any issues that would cause significant distress. In one case, there was a moment when a story of bullying was being shared, and the child began to cry; I could see that finishing the story was going to be too hard. We stopped, took a breath, and began listening to Mariachi music, changing the topic to what songs were special for him. As we did this, he went into a space of music and memories, and began a new line of storytelling about Mariachi songs that told his mother's story. Later we went back to

close the space of this difficult memory, and I reminded him of the resources and care that were present for him through these times.

My mental health training also prepared me to understand the importance of concluding a child's session in a way that honors their story and recognizes the importance of closing their *testimonio* with care for their spirit as they leave. Engaging in a cultural context of Latinos, I was aware of *dando gracias* for their stories, *palabras*, and *alma* that all made for a sacred space in the room and in our hearts. To address this issue, I took time at the end of each session to build in a process for each child to decompress. Specifically, through the use of art, music, dance, song, or story, I made space for the child to tap into their positive energy. The inclusion of creating closure for each *testimonio* was especially important as their words penetrated my spirit and exposed me to their emotional journey.

Another critical ethical consideration was that of the youth's emotional condition after their *testimonio* sessions. Children process information long after an experience or an interaction. I understood the importance of being aware of any reactions they were having after sharing their *testimonio*. In thinking about this, I made sure I did a follow-up call several days after the interview to check in with the youth participants. In several cases I texted them to check in and say thanks. I also knew that they would be participating in the program during the week, so I made sure I visited with them to see how they were. All of them were positive, smiling, and talkative, each sharing unique responses to sharing their story. In all cases the child felt strong, valued, and noted a sense of leadership either directly or as observed in their actions at 11 Millones de Sueños.

Protection of Human Subjects

All procedures established by the University of San Francisco's Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) were strictly followed for this study. The researcher also instituted specific procedures outside of IRBPHS procedures, such as making sure each child was physically and emotionally stable enough to be part of the study. Secondly, in order to protect the identity of the child and their family, the researcher shared that their names would not be used in the study and their *testimonio* would be identified by a fictitious name. At no time would the address or physical location of the family be shared outside of the research setting. No photos or videos would be taken or included in the research to protect identities at all times. Finally, all the collected data was kept on a password-protected computer that only I had access to. All field notes and transcriptions were also kept in a secured location. Each youth participant had a file labeled with their pseudonym and has been identified by that name at all times in the study. Adult participants were also given the option of having a pseudonym; however, some elected to use their name instead. For the parents of the children, I decided it was important to also give them a pseudonym as their *testimonio* included immigration status in their stories.

Participants in Research Study

All the youth and parent participants have been given a pseudonym to protect the confidentiality of the participants. For the Maestros and or teachers in the program, I am using their names, as this was requested from Zenon Barron, as one of the main cultural founders, healers and folklorico teacher in our program. I have given a description of each participant in the study as follows.

Table 1

Student Participants' Age, Status, and Program Participation in 11 Milliones

Participant Name	Age	Immigration Status	11 Milliones Programs
Luz	17	Identifies unodcumented, DACA	Mariachi Ballet Folklorico Social Justice
Juan Diego	10	undocumented	Ballet Folklorico Education Program
Esperanza	16	citizen, mixed status	Ballet Folklorico Mariachi Social Justice Project Education program
Graciela	17	citizen, mixed status	Mariachi Social Justice Project
Fabian	17	citizen, mixed status	Mariachi Social Justice Project
Juan	13	citizen, mixed status	Mariachi Social Justice Project
Dalia	10	citizen, mixed status	Ballet Folklorico Education Program

Table 2

Parent Participants in Research with Immigration Status and Occupation

Parent Participant	Immigration Status	Occupation
Rosa	undocumented	community leader/volunteer
Soledad	undocumented	hotel industry, community leader/volunteer
Consuelo	undocumented	house cleaning
Margarita	undocumented	house cleaning
Manuel	undocumented	restaurant

Table 3

Program’s Participant Instructors

11 Milliones Program Directors	Program	Occupation
Zenon Barron	Director, Ballet Folklorico	Maestro de Bellas Artes
Kelly Delaney	Education Program	Teacher, Professor

Luz is a 17-year-old female who identifies as Mexican. She is the oldest child of three, and she is currently part of the DACA program. She is a senior in high school and is about to become a first-generation college student. She has become a leader in the community and has done extensive youth work, organizing and cultivating trust circles. Her parents were originally from Oaxaca and have undocumented status in the United States. They have lived in the United States over 15 years, with many years of

community service and volunteerism. She has been active in 11 Millones de Sueños since the program began in 2011.

Juan Diego is a 10-year-old Mexican male who came at age seven to the United States and is currently in 5th grade. He is a bright, talkative young male, very eager to learn and grow in the United States. Both he and his parents are undocumented. His younger brother was born in the United States, and as a result, he is part of a mixed-status family. Currently he is classified as an English Learner in school and is part of the ELD program for Spanish speakers. At church, he volunteers to give his time to help in mass. Recently, he began volunteering with the food pantry program to help support families. He also is very proud to be a big brother. He is active in 11 Millones de Sueños's dance program and has a love for Mexico and the United States.

Esperanza is a 16-year-old female who identifies as Mexican; she was born in the United States and is a citizen. She has three siblings, and currently she is separated from her parents, who have to live in Mexico as they were kidnapped attempting to cross the border. Esperanza was able to fly with her siblings, and when her parents attempted to cross, they were held hostage for several weeks. Esperanza works hard in school in 10th grade and has hopes of being able to graduate in several years and attend college as the first in her family. She is currently in the English Learner program and shares she has not been able to reclassify to regular classes that she hopes to take. She is a hard worker, making it through day by day without her parents. She is active in both the ballet folklorico and Mariachi program of 11 Millones de Sueños. Currently she and her brother live with her aunt and uncle in the United States. Esperanza participates in

volunteer programs in the community, in particular she is active in a local food distribution program that she participates in bimonthly.

Graciela is a 17-year-old graduating senior in high school. She was born in the United States and is a citizen. She identifies as Mexican. She is the oldest of two, and both her parents are undocumented and have lived in the United States for 19 years. She is active in school and has active leadership roles. In 11 Millones de Sueños, she is very active in the Mariachi program and has been part of the program since it initiated. In school, she is an Advanced Placement student, taking advanced classes for college. She will be the first in her family to attend college, and her dream is to complete graduate school. In the community, she is active in volunteer work in numerous programs.

Fabian is a 17-year-old Mexican male who identifies as Mexican. He was born in the United States and is a citizen. He is the oldest of five siblings who are all citizens. His parents are from Mexico, have lived in the United States for 19 years, and are undocumented. Fabian works hard to help his family, working on his own and with his father in his gardening business. He is active in sports, playing soccer since he was young. Fabian has participated in the youth program of 11 Millones de Sueños and volunteers in special programs as he is able. He will be attending college this year as the first in his family. In school, he has been categorized as an English Learner, taking special classes for remediation. He has struggled in school, but in his last two years he received extra support he needed to improve his grades and achievement. Many of the youth in his neighborhood look up to him for his local grassroots leadership.

Juan is a 13-year-old Mexican male who identifies as Mexican but is a citizen born in the United States. He is currently in 7th grade and admits to struggling in school.

He has not been able to be reclassified to regular English classes and is part of the ELD program for Spanish learners. He shares that this has been difficult as he has not been able to fully learn how to read. However, in the community he is a leader amongst friends and is sought after in his neighborhood. He has a love for playing soccer and Mariachi. He is a big brother to several siblings, and his parents are both Mexican and undocumented. He shares that his dream is to one day be a psychologist. He is an active part of the Mariachi program in 11 Milliones de Sueños and has been in the program for four years. He also is a volunteer in the food program.

Dalia is a 10-year-old Mexican female who was born in the United States. She identifies as Mexican and is the youngest in her family with two older sisters. Her mother is a resident, but her father is undocumented. She a bubbly young girl, full of smiles and care for others. She has been dancing since she was six years old, and she is very active in the dance program of 11 Milliones de Sueños. Her mother and father work hard for their family as they are often separated due their father's work. Dalia is a leader in many ways, as she always is working hard and always has a smile to give others when she is dancing. She has lots of friends in the program and is active in the local church.

Rosa, a mother for our program and an active volunteer in the project, gives countless hours of her time to support the project and the families of 11 Milliones de Sueños. Her work in Mexico was committed to supporting education and advocacy. Coming her to the United States years ago, she often found herself limiting her leadership roles and activism due to language and educational status in the United States. In 11 Milliones de Sueños, her leadership skills have come alive as she is a significant part of

the development of the program. She is committed to working with the most vulnerable youth and their parents—aiming always at equity for the future of our children.

Soledad is a leader in the community, working hard to support church activities and her children. She has a passion for dancing and shared that she wished she could have had the dream of dancing folklorico as a child like her son. Coming from Mexico with great skills, in the United States she works hard, giving back in many ways. Both she and her husband identify as undocumented with two children who are citizens. Her dream is that she will have an opportunity to one day be a resident. Her children are both doing well in school, her husband is also a leader at church and in his Oaxacan community. As a family, they lead with enthusiasm to preserve the danza and culture.

Consuelo has been in the United States for three years. She came to the United States determined to help her family back in Mexico and have a better life for herself and her children. Back in Mexico, she was active in her community. In the United States, she works long hours cleaning houses to be able to contribute financially in a very high cost of living. She is talkative, a motivator who cares so much for others. She is always willing to help—often struggling with navigating the United States feeling alone and without her family. She has no extended family in the area but shares that 11 Milliones de Sueños has become her family. She shares that she, her husband, and her older son are undocumented. Her youngest is a citizen of the United States.

Margarita, originally from Oaxaca, has dedicated her life to her children and her family. Both she and her husband have built a house cleaning business, working long hours to provide for her children. She is active in church and always has a smile to give to others. She has gone through difficult childhood experiences that have heightened her

anxiety here in the United States. As an undocumented mother, she worries often about what would happen to her children should she have to return to Mexico. This fear is something she holds deeply in silence.

Manuel currently lives in Mexico. Almost two years ago, he was kidnapped with his wife while crossing the border; they suffered two weeks of intense fear and violence. Manuel is sad to be separated from his children but believes that their school is important. He is hopeful that he will be with them together again, but he also is struggling to survive in Mexico. The pay he receives is minimal, and he, his wife, and younger son are struggling to make it in Mexico. He is proud of his daughter Estrella, believing in a dream for her to one day go to college.

Zenon began his career as a dancer at the age of four in the group Matlachines. Since then, he has studied classical and folkloric dance in depth. Zenon is a researcher of Mexican and Latin American folklore, costume design, and scenic design. He graduated from Instituto de Artes Escenicas in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico, and in 2009, he earned his certificate from the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes in Mexico City. In 2012, he received the Lifetime Achievement Award from World Arts West and celebrated the group's 20th anniversary. He is the founder and artistic director of Ensembles Ballet Folklórico de San Francisco. Prior to founding Ensembles, Zenon toured throughout the United States and Europe as a member of The Ballet Folklórico Nacional de Mexico de Amalia Hernandez.

My inspiration for this study was to hear from the youth and participants to understand the questions I wanted to learn more about. While I had many initial thoughts at the beginning of developing this research, the three core questions I focused on

allowed me to understand a wide range of experiences. I was privileged to sit with each of their participants to listen to their *testimonios*. Each word spoken represented courage and power. In their free space to share, the participants were willing to open doors to narrate their experiences with hopes to make a difference for other youth and families.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

This chapter is the corazón of this research, representing the voices of the participants as they share their emotional journeys. This work also captures the journey that I began years ago on the road to engaging in Latino mental health and my own development as a Latina clinician in the field. Central to this study is the use of testimonio as the primary methodology. Testimonio captured the participants' soulful *cuentos de la vida* [stories of their life]. This particular methodology was culturally relevant for this study as it invited a platica-style conversation that opened a raw exchange of emotion with the participants. Their stories were rich with emotional testimonio that opened spaces to understand the feelings and emotional journeys they have lived and witnessed. Our time together unfolded as a culturally powerful and uncensored process. I was able to enter emotional caves these youth had sat in alone, often keeping their feelings closed in for fear of worrying others or letting out the secret of their families' status. While some shared these experiences with their parents, others never talked about the fears that are hidden in the shadows. There was a sharp contrast in their sharing when the participants switched to talk about the healing space of danza, Mariachi, canto, gritos y orgullo. The colors and energy of Mexico came alive in their faces and in the experiences they shared in their testimonio research. In each testimonio, there was a transformation from trauma to hope, ebbing and flowing in their narratives from La Migra fear to Mariachi pride.

For many Latinos, storytelling in different forms is a natural space for us. For generations, we have carried the legacy of cuentos, dichos, historias, and testimonios as maps for our soul. Gathering around the fire to hear the stories of our abuelos or sitting

together drinking cafesito and eating pan dulce, our stories are alive with the color, sounds, rhythm, pain, strength, faith, and power of who we are as a Latinos in this country and beyond. Testimonio in this research allowed for the same engagement of cuentos to be shared, coming from a place of participants sharing what was important for them.

My Testimonio Journey

In developing this research and in the foundation of the of 11 Milliones de Sueños non-profit, my own testimonio is critical to this research process in that I also understood my own unspoken trauma as a fourth-generation Mexican-American growing up in rural South Texas. In many ways, my life mirrored some of the participants' journeys: growing up in a rural community void of any cultural outlets or experiences that represented our lives as Mexicans on colonized land. The cultural oppression that I lived as a young girl was painful and lasted throughout my development as the societal messages that were forced upon me devalued my Mexican culture. Speaking Spanish at home in Tejas meant that we were "less than," not American enough. My mom, a third-generation Mexicana in Tejas, was 72 years old before she would understand that her great-grandmother was born in a part of Mexico that has now become Tejas. The blatant dismissal of our history in my textbooks in school, the whitewashing of my education, and my mom's time attending segregated schools on Mexican soil spat in the face of all that is beautiful in my culture. My life was a cultural desert, void of any immersed connection to my identity. As a result, I grew up drowning. Inside I craved a life of danza, musica, canto, familia, alegria y cultura. Según soy Americana, but always feeling an outsider on this land.

Lyrics of Los Tigres de Norte resonate in looking for the palabras to understand the story of stolen land and the displacement and now criminalization of our people.

Ya me gritaron mil veces que me regrese
 A mi tierra porque aquí no quepo yo
 Quiero recordarlo al gringo
 Yo no cruce la frontera la frontera me cruzo
 América nació libre el hombre la dividió

Ellos Pintaron la raya, Para que yo la brincara
 Y me llaman invasor
 Es un error bien marcado nos quitaron ocho estados
 Quien es aqui el invasor
 Soy extranjero en mi tierra y no vengo A darles guerra
 Soy hombre trabajador (Somos Americanos, Los Tigres del Norte)

From Piaget's perspective on development, my earliest stages of formation were founded in my time growing up in Central America. From ages two to six years old, the sounds of Spanish, the colorful rebozos of mother love swaddling their children, the mango trees I climbed, and my evenings watching the cultural performances of the Panamanian dancers in the ruins of Panama were alive in my soul. My move to Tejas suffocated my cultural pride, confusing me as a young girl to understand my identity in a society that was comfortable in using painful terms like "wetback," "mojado," and "Mesican" to describe my people. Most sad to me as a little girl was watching Mexican-Americans take on this same language with ownership, attempting to give the message that "we were born here, we are not Mexican." As a little girl, I knew this was wrong and wanted to crawl out of my own self to escape, but I had no shelter to run to. When I looked around, images of pick-up trucks, oil wells, cowboy hats, and the Texas flag dominated my development and my emotional space and forced me into silence throughout my childhood. Gone were the days when I looked forward to seeing the Cuna Indians displaying their mola art or wishing I could wear a beautiful dress one day to

dance. Gone were my days when I woke up thinking and speaking in Spanish, my first language. These moments were erased and forced shut by the chanting that reverberates today from Trump's pulpit of "Make America Great." The vilification of Mexicans in the United States has grown stronger in 2017.

The second part of my life allowed me to understand that my culture and identity had been ripped from me in a way that was forced. My spirit of who I was had been displaced during a critical part of my development. I never had the opportunity to be proud of being Mexican; rather, I was forced to hide my culture, my pride, my brownness, my language and push them far down in my quest to be accepted, go to college, and find my way out. I was forced to assimilate as an effort to survive. In all of this, my soul was crushed, and there was a confusion and depression I lived that I did not understand. For myself, I have understood my experience as traumatic; transitioning from living a rich life of culture in Panama, where I was free to be who I was, to being completely immersed in a culture that devalues my identity was painful and shocking to my spirit.

Every day while I was growing up, I was conflicted with what I felt internally and what I presented externally. This daily, forced identity displacement and rejection of my culture was traumatic. That internalized trauma did not begin to heal until I was able to reclaim my identity. While this happened slowly over time as I entered graduate school and beyond, I found myself healing from these painful experiences in the development of *11 Milliones de Sueños*. Seeing the opportunity for other children to be immersed in rich cultural experiences I never had was a gift to my own soul. In many ways, I understood their journey. While I can't deny my citizenship privilege or pretend to understand what

that journey is every day, I do understand what it means to feel emotionally unwelcomed in spaces that do not embrace who we are as Latinos in this country. The development of 11 Milliones de Sueños came directly out of the need to increase opportunities for the youth of my community to celebrate who they were and improve their emotional wellness. While I was driven to create a healing space out of a direct response to the cases and children I was working with in my private practice, I did not realize how much of my own story was embedded in this process. Over time, my own testimonio speaks to the reality that 11 Milliones has become a healing space for my own soul. It has given me permission and opportunity to celebrate nuestras tradiciones and nuestra cultura. It has allowed me to feel the orgullo of Mexico, hearing the gritos of parents from Guadalajara, Michoacan, Oaxaca, and Zacatecas stand with Mexican pride, marching in our community parade. No longer am I hiding who I am, no longer do I have to hide my Spanish language, no longer do I have to feel the confusion of who I am. Soy libre! Soy Yo!

Entering ballet folklorico class each week lifts my soul as I hear the zapateados to the rhythm of beautiful Mexican songs blaring with the sounds of La Negra echoing in the background. Seeing the brightly colored Mexican dresses with smiles and spirits celebrating the dances of Mexico is energizing. Seeing our youth sing in the Mariachi program, watching them learn the songs of their abuelitos and sing in front of a community that immigrated to this country is powerful. The claps and cheers as the children wave at the audience in the Mexican trajes lifts a pride that resonates beyond the walls of the spaces we perform in. Watching the mothers and fathers gather to talk and exchange stories of their life in Mexico while waiting for their children invites a space of

comunidad and cultural citizenship to grow. In 11 Milliones de Sueños, comadres and compadres are founded in friendship and a connection to culture.

Healing undocu-trauma happens collectively and individually through shared spaces of struggle, community, cultural celebration of traditions, identity and a recognition of cultural citizenship that is grounded in the rich contributions made by immigrants every day. It is critical that we develop our own temescals of healing for our undocumented and mixed-status community. These testimonios and my own contribution to this research is grounded in understanding undocu-trauma, trauma of forced displacement of cultural identity, the formation of cultural citizenship, and what heals these soul wounds that run deep. Together this work contributes to expanding scholarship in this field.

Our Voices Together

Participants' testimonios are rooted from a place of strength in this work. Their stories are presented and organized around themes I developed for the research data of their testimonios. Capturing their narratives and weaving them into familiar themes they all shared in common allows for the data to be visible and clear in hearing the voices of these youth, their families, and community healers. Sharing their stories together captures the idea of *tocayo*, which represents the Spanish term of what we would call another individual who carries our same name. Dr. Cristobal Salinas (personal communication, May 8, 2016) explains *Tocayo* as carrying the same struggle, understanding each other from a place of familiarity. These testimonios represent the *tocayo* spirit of the participants. Organizing their voices around themes allows their words to be in

conversation with one another. This presentation of the data connects the experiences of the participants, amplifying their voices and stories.

The four central themes that were excavated in this process of testimonio, tocayo, and platica are

1. Psychological and Racial Battlegrounds of Trauma;
2. Trump, Witches, La Migra, y Memorias de Mi Alma;
3. Escuela, We Are in This World; and
4. Cultura Cura, A Temascal of Hope, 11 Milliones de Sueños.

These themes represent common emotional spaces through which the participants have all journeyed. They tell the story of struggle, strength, and healing. These stories and this research come at one of the most critical times in our political history. The bravery of these youth to share their journey is resistance in action.

Testimonio Moments

In our meetings together, we gathered in familiar spaces that represented casa, familia and seguridad. I invited each of the participants to select where they felt most comfortable to hold our platicas. I met with each participant individually and observed them in the program of 11 Milliones de Sueños. Before each platica, I framed the process with care to make sure they understood the research and shared that their names would be changed for privacy. Most of them noted that they didn't need to have their names changed; however, I assured them that I wanted to commit to this process with anonymity. The teachers of the program requested to have their names used as-is. As I met with them, I was critically aware of myself as a researcher and the deep relationships I have built with them over the years working with them in 11 Milliones de Sueños. I

shared with them the importance of their participation and voice in this research, explaining that their testimonios open doors for others to be understood con palabras del alma. We also reflected on the gift they were giving others to have their story told through the testimonios shared in this research. It was clear they embraced this truth. Hablando en Ingles or Español, the conversations were open, fluid, and full of a poder in the sharing of their journeys.

During this process, there were moments when I was thrown into visions of trauma, capturing narratives of intense fear, and other times I was energized by sacred spaces of orgullo, musica, y alegria. All of us were very aware that these testimonios spoken are happening during one of the most painful times for Latinos living in the United States and in Mexico. In the silence, it was clear that the social political climate was the Chupacabra in the room for all of us. Without naming it or engaging in it as a point of reference or question, the effect of Trump is largely amplified in people's psyche, represented by their stories. This research comes at a vulnerable time for so many youth, families, and communities, and I acknowledge that my journey on this road has been privileged to witness, listen, and be in community with these guerreros that have participated in this necessary research. These are their spoken words, their corazones exposed with their cuentos of who they are as Mexicanos, youth, maestros, familia, y comunidad on this journey.

True testimonio enters the room when the space is given for participants to share their story as they chose to speak it. For each participant, I opened up the testimonio platica by asking what their life has been like living in the United States and growing up in our community as Mexicano or Mexicana. As they shared, I followed their thoughts,

opening other doors they led me through in the sharing of their personal stories. Their words are present, powerful, and moving. The sharing of their experiences represented in the themes below uncovers a temascal of their emotional experiences in the United States.

Ceremonia: Opening Sacred Space to Honor Palabras Shared

During this research process, I have been deeply inspired and moved by the profound moments I shared with each one of these guerreros as youth, teacher, and community. Everyone who participated in this study left a gift of themselves. In presenting their voices in this chapter, I am committed to honoring these youths' voices beyond the pages of this research. The words spoken breathe life, trauma, struggle, orgullo, resistance, and esfuerzo. As a first-generation Latina researcher, I see these words as sacred life. This is testimonio in the flesh. Reaching deep within and listening to the voices of nuestro antepasados, I am carving a circle in the sand to make space for ceremonia to open this chapter. Ceremonia is deeply embedded in our indigenous spirits. Our spirituality in all forms calls on us to honor the sacred, gathering around to open and close the circle of those significant moments. In this blank space, I propose ceremonia spoken and imagined, giving special honor to the sacred stories shared that follow. I honor the voices spoken. We recognize in the space the trauma, the struggle, the racism, the pain, and all at the same time resistance, strength, familia, orgullo, y poder.

Imagine a circle with all of us together, In Lak'ech Ala K'in. We remember the Mayan teachings that hold us to the spirit of *you are my other self*. Each participant and their story is part of this circle holding us all together. With the sound of the concha blaring, we acknowledge that each palabra spoken is sacred. In the voice of these

children, rise the voices of generations before them. In this space, we remember our ancestors, those who paved these roads before we walked them. We recognize the pain of colonization and remember that our land that was stolen. We are not undocumented, we are cultural citizens rich with gifts we give the earth and community every day. We acknowledge the history of our ancestors who were displaced, vilified, and criminalized and see their voices present in our struggle today. A candle sits in the circle that honors the struggle and the spiritual power that so many have held to light our way. Santo Toribio, the Saint of the undocumented, is present, as he has walked the desert with many, stories of miracles that have been witnessed. Border walls broken with help from heaven, a determined faith and spirituality. Nuestra Virgen de Guadalupe bless these words and embrace them as mother, healer, and guide in our journeys.

We honor the voices of these youth who have shared their strength, left their tears, and given us an opportunity to walk beside them during the first miles on their road of life. We thank God for the strength he gives them every day to rise up and see the power they hold even in powerless situations. We recognize in this circle the maestros of 11 Millones de Sueños who give tirelessly week after week, always believing and seeing the best of these youth. We honor the culture, art, traditions, and constant commitment they have to pass down nuestra cultura to the next generation. We honor all the maestras who have taught our children and opened the door for this research to be a reality, thank you for honoring nuestras palabras as necessary. Finally, we recognize and celebrate the parents and familias in this work, those that spoke, those that witnessed and those that stand on the front lines every day. You are the heroes that we know, y cada uno de uds. en este circulo de vida son guerreros! Sus testimonios son luz, poder y vida. Gracias por

compartir y ser parte de este estudio. Sus palabras son testigos de mucho más. Adelante, estamos presente! Let the copal burn and the smoke cleanse the space for these words to penetrate far beyond these pages.

Theme 1: Psychological and Racial Battlegrounds of Trauma

Critical to this research is unveiling the psychological and emotional experiences that undocumented and mixed-status youth experience that goes beyond naming their fear. Emotions for this population of children that were already present have magnified during the Trump presidency. The societal racism and negative messages that these children experience are the battlefields they find themselves defending against. This notion of battleground speaks to this idea of fighting emotional battles that one is forced to engage in as a result of status. Racism, trauma, stress, fear, anxiety, worry, and unidentified psychological experiences all create this battle both internally and externally. Another important consideration of this concept of battleground is to consider how we are equipping our youth to be able to rise out of this struggle, which I discuss in the findings.

No longer can we minimize the trauma these children are living with; it is imperative for us to understand the psychological and emotional experiences to be able to move from a place of hurting to healing. Turning undocu-trauma into undocu-hope is necessary. As we immerse ourselves in immigration reform and advocacy, we are minimally addressing the psychological battlefields that are continuing daily for undocumented and mixed-status youth. Their narratives give stronger clarity to understanding this emotional tornado they survive in and addressing the urgency to support their healing. The fear that the participants all spoke to stands out as one of the

most urgent symptoms with which they grapple. Wrapped around the fear and trauma battles that these youth fight daily are other societal inequities that add to the emotional war with which these children struggle. Issues of poverty, racism, victimization, and societal attacks on Latinos in the United States all impact the emotional and psychological experiences with which this community of children and their families live. The emotional experience that is at the root of all of these forces pressing against the undocumented and mixed-status children in this study is fear.

At the young age of six, Luz documents her first experience with La Migra as fear.

I remember all of that. It was scary, and it was something very scary that I went through, and I didn't know. I didn't know. I was just a kid; I was really little and to go through that marked my fear. I was six. I was scared definitely. I grew a fear, and I knew I had to watch out because I was different, so I was told, I wasn't like every other kid, I had to watch out, I had to watch out.

At age 10, Juan Diego, who defines his status as undocumented, explained a pressing fear he is struggling with. He was animated as he shared, "El dia que me dijo mi mama me quedé asustado, cuando mi mama me dijo "ganó Trump" me puse triste. A veces me siento con miedo". (The day that my mom told me Trump won, I got scared. When she told me I was sad. Sometimes I feel afraid.) Fabian, a citizen child who lives with both of his parents who are undocumented, talks about the fear that has always been present since he was little.

There is always fear, you know, you wake up one day, and you think, "Something could happen to my parents." You know, you hear how immigration comes here, 'cause that happened to my mom once. My mom was working at the nursery, and the border patrol got there, and the owner there and the manager told them to stay quiet and hide where no one could see them, so my mom did it with some other friends from the nursery, but this was a couple of years ago because I was really small. I remember she was telling my dad, and ever since, sometimes I have fear because my mom works, but there is fear for my mom and my dad too.

Fabian reflected on having to keep this fear to himself, sharing that he does not talk about this fear to anyone. In his development, he has learned to be silent about what he feels. He talked with me about crying and having to stop after being bullied.

You know, but for me, I do cry, but I don't cry just to cry. For school I cried once in third grade, from that day on, for school I haven't cried, I know how to defend myself now. My brother used to get bullied too, you know. I told him if someone is bothering you, tell me.

Miguel, a father who participated in my study from Mexico is currently separated from his children and is a victim of kidnapping at the border. His daughter Estrella, who is in 11 Milliones de Sueños, has been part of the program since their separation. Miguel often checks in with this writer to share his status and talked about the hope he has for his family to be together one day soon as he is in process for a U-Visa. He gave his testimonio over several phone calls together as he accentuated the fear he lives with daily.

Mexico is hard. We have so much fear, and when the kids are here with us, we are scared things could happen to them. I have been assaulted again this week. They put a gun to me and threatened me as I did my delivery route for work. Things are not easy on the border, lots of bad things are happening. We are scared something could happen to the kids, and it's so hard for us to be separated, but we don't know what could happen here, we are very scared. When the kids come, we can't let them out of the house, we can't go out. They can only stay inside, and I am always worried about something happening to them. My wife is healing little by little, but she lives in fear and is having to receive therapy to heal from all that happened to us at the border.

Miguel's daughter Estrella, a high school sophomore and who was born in the United States but was forced to be separated from her parents at the border, explains her own fear.

With everything that has happened, I think this is the reason why I get so scared and am starting to feel traumatized. Every day, I am scared that something can happen to my parents. Since they got kidnapped, I feel really scared, everything changed. When I call my dad, he sounds sad, and I am worried about them, especially because what just happened to him again. They put a gun to his head.

His blood pressure is high right now, and I am so worried about my parents. But it's also dangerous for us to be there, and I want to finish school. Over there, I wouldn't be able to go to school.

Luz talked about holding in her emotions, saying, “For some people, I might cry when I tell my story, for others not.” Graciela explained this further: “We try to keep the stuff that happens at our house private; in fifth grade, I started having to deal with immigration policies.” These feelings of having to hold fear inside and be strong against the societal traumas that come against them is psychologically impactful. When 10-year-old Juan Diego talked about what he felt after the Trump election, his fear comes alive, and he speaks in a louder voice with animated emotion and hand movements as he shares his story.

El dia que me dijo mi mama me quedé asustado. A veces me siento con miedo. El dia que fueron a marchar las personas, muchas de mis amigos fueron a marcha. Yo no quise ir porque mi papa me dijo al mejor va estar allí la migra y no hay que ir.

(The day that my mom told me Trump won, I was really scared. Sometimes, I feel afraid. When friends I knew went to march, I didn't want to go because my dad said that ICE might be there, and they could deport us).

Juan Diego's mom, Consuelo, shared more about the fear he talks about at home.

El tiene mucho miedo porque el no es nacido aqui y tiene miedo que lo separan de su hermano porque es su único hermano que nacio aqui, y el lloré. Y cuando pase en el tele lo que estan diciendo él llora y dice, Que voy hacer sin mi hermano? Ahora lo que estoy haciendo es hacer un a carta, creo con ese carta se va sentir mas seguro. Es una carta de poder porque su hermano no va quedar desprotegido, y yo siempre lo que le digo es decir hay que rezar a Dios. No quiero involucrar en estas cosas porque esta muy chiquito para tener que preocuparse, y él es muy buen niño.

(He is really scared because he is afraid to be separated from his only brother who was born here and is a citizen. I am working on getting a letter that will have my son be taken care of should something happen to us. So, I tell my oldest not to worry, that his brother will be protected if something happens. He is too young to have to be worrying about these things.)

Rosario, an undocumented mom to three daughters who are citizens in the United States, was quick to share the psychological impact immigration status has on her daughters.

Psicológicamente los niños están mal. Mi hija sacó su licencia y hace poco tiempo fue a la tienda y paso que estaba un retén de la policía porque había un accidente. Y cuando las policías estaba con el retén. Ella dijo wow, me va llegar migración y me van a deportar. Y le digo, Mija migración no te va a llevar porque estas nacido aquí. Y ella dijo pero tu eres Mexicano y mi papa tambien y tengo miedo que nos van a sacar de aquí. Y Emily, nueve años, no se quien le dijo o lo vio en las noticias—no me gusta como habla el Presidente de nosotros, es bien mal como el habla de nosotros de Mexicanos. Le dije a ella nada va pasar a ti porque tiene papeles y nada te va pasar.

(Psychologically our kids are doing bad. My oldest daughter, who is able to drive, got caught in a police stop due to an accident closure with police present and she was shaken up, scared that they would deport her. She got so scared and started to think ICE was going to come and take her. I told her she has papers and nothing is going to happen to her, but she said because her parents are Mexican, she is Mexican, she feels scared. My youngest daughter, age 9, is upset and does not like Trump, says that he is mean because of how he talks about Mexicans. I assured her that nothing is going to happen to her because she has papers.)

For 11 years, Luz has carried a fear that rises to the surface when she talks about it. She was emotional as she asked me to drive her past the field where she hid from La Migra as a young girl. She wanted me to see the place that marked her initial fear. The field runs along a highway we pass by daily.

The fear always has stayed, and this is the field where they told me to hide, right there. They sent me here to hide. So, whenever I see this field, it reminds me of that time I was sent to hide. That was 11 years ago. It definitely is something that I haven't forgotten about. I don't think about it every day, but it was in my head for a long time.

For Julian, a worry he carries is one that is centered on losing his abuela before his father can see her. Since he has been able to visit her as a citizen child, he started to realize that something could happen to her. “The first time I got really sad was after I went to Mexico to visit, and then I came back and had to leave my abuela. Every night, I would lay in bed

and wonder what would happen if something happens to her and I wouldn't see her again?"

Maestro Zenon Barron, who is a cultural icon in the Bay Area and is well known for his Ballet Folklórico company in San Francisco, is a pillar of cultural strength in the Latino community. Zenon's work in 11 Millones de Sueños is as cofounder in the development of a cultural temascal for these youth in our community. His own journey of struggle is what also inspires him to work tirelessly to reclaim culture. "Cuando yo vine a este país a iniciar el ballet folklórico Mexicana yo mismo me caí en un depression emocional, por el cambio de país y el cambio de cultura." (When I came to this country to start Ballet Folklórico of Mexico, I also fell into the same depression because of the change of country and the change of culture.)

Another factor that is emotionally challenging for our youth is unpacking the racism and fear around legal status. Regardless of status, their life stories begin just like every other child in this country: with hope for a future. Yet wrapped around status are emotional experiences that they both psychologically and physically experience, which are spoken in their testimonio palabras that speak to their life in the United States.

During a day that Esperanza was with me and she was with the program in a leadership role, she began crying, sharing with me that she was feeling bad lately and had begun cutting. She shared in her testimonio with me that she felt like cutting herself again, and she explained she used to do this before when her parents were kidnapped.

Whenever I am in dance class, I forget about everything. But once I am home, it comes back, I feel sad because we are not with my parents, and when I am in school, sometimes I feel ok and then all of a sudden feel really sad. Sometimes in the night, I start crying, and my cousin says, "Why are you crying?" He is always making fun. Honestly if they were in the situation that we are in, separated from

my parents, we would be so different. Sometimes I feel alone, even though I know I have people. I feel like I am in a jail.

Fighting against status, understanding the seeds of fear

Estrella explains that she is a citizen child, with both parents undocumented. Her citizenship as a mixed-status child does not seem to offer any significant protection in her experience of separation from her parents.

I was born here in California. I have two brothers who were born here, and one sister, she was born in Mexico. She is the oldest. We moved to Mexico with my parents and brothers four years ago. And tried moving here again about one year ago, but that wasn't successful because my parents got kidnapped at the border. We didn't know anything about them for two weeks. My grandma would always think negative stuff, and now I am traumatized. My life hasn't been easy this past year being separated from them. I have been like a mom to my two younger brothers. It's been hard for me because we can't be with my parents; we can't be together like a family.

Luz was originally born in Mexico, and her mother and father were separated for some time while her dad came to the United States “because we didn't know how we were going to be able to feed Luz when she was born, we didn't have money for food” (Luz's mother, personal communication, November 12, 2016). While her father was in the United States, life was very difficult for Luz and her mother. With no support and no resources in Mexico, Luz's mother decided to make the journey to come to the United States. Coming as a very young child, Luz's memories of Mexico were dreams of what might have been. For Luz, her life and development was immersed in California and the United States. Luz shared she has little opportunity to express what she is feeling in her undocumented journey.

I always get anxious, I have gotten depressed, and I have to deal with it on my own. I've tried to talk to my parents, they say they grew up without dads, and they have to deal with it by themselves so we have to move on with this too. ‘Cause they didn't have parents, I've gotten mad because you say we have to trust you all, but then you tell us this story [referring to her being born in Mexico and coming to the United States].

I don't really talk to them, I just keep it to myself. When all of this happened, I wish they could have helped me because now I am tired of thinking about it, so I kind of just don't think about it anymore. It sunk in that it is what it is. But I have anxiety now, and it's getting worse, everything happening now with my DACA and worrying about what is happening with Trump, I am getting worse.

Being a citizen child in the United States does not provide an emotional shield of safety for Graciela. As a citizen child, her life experiences centered around her family's life, rooted in memories of Mexico. At a very young age, Graciela sensed a fear around her parents' status. Not being able to clearly understand, it seemed that she instinctively knew there was something to fear.

Even though I was born here, I have been with my mom through her entire time here. I have seen my mom, what she struggled through, I felt it. I heard it. So even though I am not an immigrant myself, I know how it feels like. I lived it. At a really young age, I had to keep my emotions inside because if I let my fear get out or, you know, those kind of emotions, it would just get worse. My parents worried a lot about us.

In this process of understanding how to navigate these emotional spaces, the youth talked about the conflict of having to negotiate their identities out of emotional confusion. Luz remembers her earliest developmental milestones being laced with a fear that something was wrong until she finally was physically introduced to who she was afraid of.

I am not sure how I found out.

I found that when I was little, I was really proud. I remember in elementary when I was little I would write about my best friend, and at the beginning of the story, I would write when I came from Mexico. She was from Mexico, and I was so proud. In middle school when we were trying to apply for private school, my parents were afraid to do that because we weren't from here, and this is when it all began.

Juan Diego said, "I found out I didn't have papeles because kids in school would make fun of me. They knew I had just come from Mexico, so they would talk about papeles, but I didn't know about this before." He moved from Mexico at age seven to

come to the United States, leaving the only home he knew. Adjusting to life in the United States also forced him to uncover this notion of legal or illegal by other peers his age. This has been emotionally hard for him, to feel outed in a way that he didn't understand. "Nadie es ilegal, todo somos de Dios, Dios no creo, como dice mi mama". (No one is illegal, we are all from God, God made us like my mom said.) Both Fabian and Julian were born in the United States but see themselves as Mexican in the sense that their papers do not really matter as they still have to fight battles of racism.

Understanding their journeys from a battleground perspective speaks to the struggle that is daily part of this process. Both the psychological and racial struggle often exist simultaneously, rarely independent of one another. Navigating this battlefield is stressful for youth in their fight to normalize this as their reality. In other words, this is not something one chooses, rather its societal oppressions that makes its dark mark on one's soul in ways that leave lifelong imprints.

The emotional war against racism

The participants' experiences of racismo have been woven into their lives at both macro and micro levels that have marked a part of their journey. The racism they experience happens from a societal level, where they feel criticized for being Mexican in messages that are spewed in politics or when they find themselves being bullied on the playground. At all spectrums in between, there are microaggressions that they share in their testimonios. The undocumented community has become a dartboard for racism with political powers landing the bullseye of igniting trauma.

“Cause I always knew I was from Mexico but didn't know that I had obstacles to that, but then in middle school, I found out I didn't have many rights since I was not a

citizen. Then I saw the obstacles,” shared Luz. Fabian, who is a senior in high school this year, swallowed tears that welled up as he talked about his experience as a mixed-status child growing up in the United States.

Well, there are always those people that are racist to you, even though you have papers, they say things to you like, “Oh, you come from Mexico,” even though we have papers. I always try to avoid those people, I mean sometimes even my friends, even though we are Hispanic, we make fun of each other. I have friends that call me *mojado*, they are jokes, but you see Trump now, and he makes fun of us too, he makes fun of girls too. But I mean, like I said, there are people that tell you stuff, but it depends on the person too, like my brother, they would always bully him too. For being Mexican and something, but why fight? It’s better to show them that even though we are Mexicans, we work hard, everything we have is from our sweat. Like Trump said, “we are drug dealers,” but not all Mexicans are the same. I know we make mistakes, but everyone makes mistakes. I know, I guess you could say gangsters, they have tattoos and stuff, but now they are trying to get their life straight. People always try to change.

Fabian and I talked about what could help him feel supported with protection against the bullying that he, his brothers, and others have experienced. For him, racism threads deeper into levels of trust with law enforcement.

Well if you think about it, look at it now, even the cops are doing things to us and even to Black people. We don’t have weapons, and they are shooting a lot of us, even when a White person has a gun, they do the shock thing to them, but to us, they shoot.

The fear of police leaves Fabian feeling vulnerable and unable to call for help during times he may need protection, so both in school and community, Fabian’s testimonio speaks to a sense of feeling alone as a Mexican adolescent in his community.

Rosario shared that her daughter came home from school and shared the hurtful comments students were saying to her. “En mi escuela estan diciendo que soy Mexican y no debo de estar aquí. En las escuelas le dicen muchas cosas.” (In my school, they are saying that we are Mexican and we shouldn’t be here; they are saying a lot of things in schools.) Rosario’s daughter Mia is a talkative, energetic, and charismatic fourth grader.

She is full of hugs and laughter, and at the same time, she presents herself in many ways as intellectually older. When she shared her testimonio, it was evident that her experiences and emotional challenges have stayed hidden behind her smile.

Sometimes I feel scared, but sometimes I don't because we are Mexican. We can stand up for ourselves, but it doesn't matter about our color or who we are. I want to say that you shouldn't build a wall. Don't be worried that Trump says you can't live here because we are not just anything: we are human, we talk, we can move, we can dance.

As a mom, Paola is very concerned about the racism that her 10-year-old son has to experience: “Esto ha prejudicado mucho a nuestros niños en la escuela.”(This election has affected many of our youth in school.) The day after the Trump election, Estella shared that kids in school were chanting, “Build a wall, build a wall. Several kids told us to pack our bags and get ready to go back to Mexico, it's time for you to go. No one said nothing, no one defended us.” Luz said, “It's painful to know everyone is not treated as equal. All of this that I have gone through is hard to explain to my brother because he doesn't have the same fear as I do” (personal communication, November 9, 2016).

Standing against the negative narratives of Mexico

The forced disconnection from Mexico, the land of their ancestors and family, is a pressure that is forced upon them both physically and emotionally. There is a pride in telling their stories about mi Mexico while at the same time navigating confusion about their status. “There are always those Mexican kids that you ask them and they say, ‘I am not Mexican.’ I have friends that say that too. They say, ‘I am not from over there, I am from here,’” shared Fabian. “I was born in the United States, but I consider myself Mexican as I lived in Mexico for the past four years until this year,” explains Estrella. In

navigating both worlds and experiences, she struggles to find ways to root herself as American while at the same time claim Mexico with pride.

Graciela's mom did not try to shield her from knowing about her status or experiences; on the contrary, her mom normalized this process so that she would have a plan from a very young age. She was eight years old when she concretely understood that her parents were undocumented.

My parents always have given us stories about Mexico and how hard it was. She was really tough. She didn't let people make a fool out of herself, treat her badly, or anything, and she has always had that tough spirit and personality, which has helped her. She knew how to tell us the stories, saying we don't have papers but you guys do. The sooner you can understand this, the better for you. I found out at around 8 years old.

She shared a story of how she began to understand the experience of being undocumented through a child's eyes.

I have a friend that got here in fifth grade; she was in fifth grade, I was in fourth. I would hang out with her because she was lonely. Her family came when she was in fifth grade, she didn't know any English, she had no friends, no family, and we would talk about stuff, we would sit down and talk at recess and at lunch. We played together, and we always talked about how it was for her to come here from Mexico. She physically crossed the border, so she talked to me about what my parents' journey must have been like crossing the border.

This moment with her friend came at a critical time in Graciela's developmental stage as she now emotionally understood both the journey and the fear of the border. In many ways her friend's story gave her a soul context to her parents story of crossing the border and what this experience was like for a child.

This was a big eye-opening experience for me, this is how I started understanding everything. She crossed the border, she physically crossed the border, so through a child's eyes, I understood how she saw her parents. Now it wasn't just my parents went through this; now my friend went through this.

The emotional impact of having to turn their back on the country of their family is not always discussed as an emotional challenge. In their testimonio, the youth talk about

their desire to visit Mexico or the ambivalence of having to forget Mexico. Fabian shared his mother's pain for not being able to go home to Mexico to see her parents:

“Sometimes, I find her crying when she is listening to this song.” He uploaded a song for me to listen to with great reverence for the words and the meaning that it holds for his mother. As we sat there, the words dug deep into our hearts, tears welled up for both of us. The song tells the story of a son who leaves his father to come to the United States. His father begs him to stay, saying that one day when he returns he may be dead. Living in the United States, the son thinks of his father and remembers his words, but at times he forgets until years pass by and he gets the call his father is ill, and he passes away.

Solo Deje A Mi Padre by Grupo Montez

Un día por sorpresa, le dije a mi padre
 Que avía decidido viajar hacia el norte
 Que estaba cansado, de tanta pobreza
 Y que yo quería, poderlo ayudar
 Con mucha tristeza, me dijo padre
 Hijo no te vallas, no me dejes solo
 Yo ya estoy muy viejo tal, ves cuando vuelvas
 Debajo de tierra me vas a encontrar

Solo deje yo a mi padre, solo labrando la tierra
 Cuentan que lo veían llorando, aya junto a su parcela
 Dicen que lo oían rezando, para que a mi bien me fuera
 Y que le pedía a los cielos, porque yo pronto volviera

Se fueron los años muy poco escribía
 Al paso del tiempo yo me fui olvidando
 Pero un día de pronto llego, la noticia
 Que mi viejecito estaba agonizando

Ahora que regreso, mi padre esta muerto
 Como el me lo dijo, esta bajo tierra
 A mi me destroza el remordimiento
 De haberlo dejado solo tanto tiempo

Solo deje yo a mi padre, solo labrando la tierra
 Cuentan que lo veían llorando, aya junto a su parcela

Dicen que lo oían rezando, para que a mi bien me fuera
Y que le pedía a los cielos, porque yo pronto volviera

This story reminded us of the memories and loved ones that so many carry in their hearts every day, often never stopping to share what they feel, but struggling to push down the Mexico they miss so much. The realization of what these families sacrifice to come to the United States is important to understand, as many are forced to make this difficult decision and often say goodbye to their loved ones for a lifetime.

The wall of poverty

Another psychological challenge that is fought by these families is the socioeconomic inequities that they worry about. Their families work hard; often, both parents work two jobs at a time. Graciela remembers this worry creeping into her life at a very young age. She knew her family's economic situation was challenging. As a young child, she also felt there was something wrong.

I didn't want to worry my parents. I didn't want to worry them about money, they would sometimes go a week or two with 20 dollars in their pocket, and she had two children to take care of, she had to keep herself healthy and my dad. I was really young, and they thought I didn't see what was going on, that they had to keep it low key, but I saw what was happening. I was in second or third grade. I was five or six when I first started to see, "Ok, this is actually what is going on." In fourth grade, my parents explained they were immigrants.

Fabian talks about the notion of how Mexicans see those in the United States as having a lot of money versus the reality of working hard every day with few breaks for the family.

I was telling my dad that people in Mexico think that we have a lot of money. But it's not what they think. We have to pay rent and everything. They think we are going to enjoy everything in the United States, but if you think about it, what you work from the morning til like five, you are so tired you can't do anything. That is one day that passes by, then on Saturdays people work. So, you only have Sundays. Sundays for us is the only day our parents are with us, and time goes flying.

Estrella is determined to find a job to send money to her parents so they can survive in Tijuana, Mexico. Knowing that her father has been assaulted several times, she continues to be scared for him to work his regular route as he keeps being threatened for the money he collects for deliveries.

I feel I have to work here to send some money back to my parents, even though it's going to be hard because I am in school. I want them to have food for my brother. It was hard for them just to have food for us because we were so many. If I can help a little bit, that would be important for them. Also, here I don't have money for my bus pass, and sometimes I don't eat lunch. I didn't have my glasses for a whole year because I don't have insurance to cover them. I can't see in school, and this is why my grades were down. Now I have them, thanks to you guys for helping me. I know I need to work, maybe McDonald's or waitressing, wherever, I just need to be able to help my family.

Luz worried about the safety of her parents cleaning houses. "Growing up, I had a fear that since my parents cleaned houses, immigration could get them, so I would tell them to watch out. I don't want you guys getting caught. I have that fear for myself and my family." Even going on family vacations and having fun as a child is not always a reality.

We didn't go out either, we didn't go out on vacations or nothing because we always worried there might be a reten, so we didn't go far because there was stoppings on the highway. So, we would ask someone to drive the car for us that did have a license. So for many years, we weren't able to travel around.

Edgar's mom also works cleaning houses to make ends meet. His dad is not home as often as he would like because he always is working. Recently they thought they were going to lose their housing. "Mis papas tiene que trabajar mucho, mis papas no tienen tiempo de estar juntos, como aquí en los Estados Unidos es difícil". (My parents work a lot. My parents don't have a lot of time to spend together because it is difficult here in the United States.)

Victimization

Being undocumented can force youth victims to remain in the shadows as they are scared to out themselves to police as undocumented. In Luz's case, she was victimized at age six, and no one took action until she was thirteen. This wasn't because they didn't believe her, but rather because of their fear to go to the police.

I told my parents I was sexually harassed when I was being babysat. I had told them before, but they didn't listen to me. They ignored it because they had fear to go to the police because they thought they would get deported or something 'cause we weren't from here. I told them again as I got older, but they still didn't do anything. The only reason the police got involved is because I told my teacher, and she reported it. I carried this since I was six years old.

Fabian told a story about a high school student from El Salvador who was bullied and victimized in school. He watched as no one helped him, and eventually he had to get involved.

I had to get into a fight because a kid from El Salvador got there the last four weeks of school. He had just gotten there, and you know, how there are the stair paths? They had him on the corner, and there were three White guys, and he was by himself, and he was shorter than me. They whacked him with a hat, and they were calling him names. I wasn't going to do anything because I didn't want to get in trouble. But I saw the three of them doing things to him. You see it everywhere. Not all White guys are the same. I know people are really nice with me, but there are also White people that treat you different. Because of who you are or where you come from. But I always try to respect because my parents taught me that I have to show people respect. But how can I respect people if they don't respect me?

Estrella speaks in trusting spaces about her parents' kidnapping and their continued victimization at the border. In numerous ways, Estrella has been a victim of both systems, criminality and forced family separation. She has been able to share her story with me through this process in several spaces that have captured her narrative but also given her agency to tell her story from a place of strength. She presented on a panel with me at a national conference and has shared her testimonio in three graduate

counseling classes to help emerging clinicians understand the importance of multicultural competency and practice with Latino youth like Estrella.

It's hard for me to talk about my feelings because I've had to push them down, and I've been a mom to by two younger brothers here in the United States, living without my parents, it's been really hard. My brothers and I had to go to therapy because my Tio felt we needed it. I wouldn't want to go to counseling because I felt I didn't need it. At first, I didn't want to talk to the counselor because I felt she wouldn't keep it confidential, what I would tell her. I didn't want to talk about anything. I didn't trust her at first. After a while, I started talking a bit, but I didn't want to talk about what happened with my parents 'cause I would get really emotional. I wouldn't bring nothing up unless she would ask me. What made me feel better was going to the different programs like Baile Folklorico and doing community hours with you. But I am here to share my story, and I hope other kids don't pass through this. I am worried about my dad's health and safety every day. I am scared something is going to happen to him all the time. [Tears flooded her eyes as she spoke her story.] But I am here to share my story, and I hope other kids don't pass through this.

Theme 2: Trump, Witches, La Migra, y Historias de Mi Alma

In the era of Trump, the escalating experience of trauma is the storm upon us. The fear that was always present has powered into a seismic wave of fear unknown. The Trump era has pushed a new agenda of the demonization of immigrants in our country. Our youth are not shielded from this emotional harm, which now bleeds into the stories of how they politically and emotionally position themselves during this moment in time. For these youth, Trump has become the face of fear and the anti-immigrant villain. He has opened spaces of anxiety and stress that have shifted from a perceived threat to daily fear of the separation of families in our country. Trump power has appeared to crush the dreams of immigration reform that so many activists and communities believed was about to happen. With the era of Trump comes the era of immigrant communities struggling to find new ways to be sanctuary for one another. In all the participants'

interviews, Trump is ever present in the minds and caves of fear with which these youth struggle.

When we consider the monster of fear these youth run from, the monster under the bed rises with the threats of Trump's administration to deport their families, fake news, real news, and alternative facts, and the facts do not discriminate in the psyche of these children, the societal fear is present with them daily. This fear becomes transformed into a character that makes its way into the minds of our next generation. These immigration monsters come alive in the testimonios of the participants in this study. Migra turning into witches, Trump as fear itself, and my own interpretation of fear unknown as La Chupacabra. These are the ICE villains living in the homes and spirits of these children every day.

During this process, as stories were told I observed the youth's facial reactions during their sharing. As they shared, observations I made is that they were deep in thought, going back in time to capture a story that was all too present for them emotionally. All of them shared their sacred palabras without pause. I did not see hesitation, no getting stuck in ideas; rather, a stream of thought flowed as they shared their testimonios. The idea of *memorias de mi alma* came up for me in developing this theme. *Memorias de mi alma* captures the idea of retelling not just a story, but a story that is buried deep within sacred spaces of the soul. They are imprinted emotional markers that are lived in one's life, and in many ways, they form identities and psychological maps in our body. These soul memories often dictate significant moments in our life that we do or do not speak about.

Trump trauma

“Hay muchos niños que están traumatados por Donald Trump. Cuando escuchen su nombre como se quieren correr, si sienten asustados”. (Rosario)

Before the election, Luz was already contemplating what this would mean to her life. Tears welling up in her eyes, she explained,

It’s a fear that one day we will be separated, especially now with the elections and what we have been hearing Trump say, it makes it worse and has also brought a lot of sadness to me, and my parents said if he wins and makes all these laws, then we will have to move back to Mexico, and to me that is unfair because this is the place that I know. I don’t know Mexico. I have done all my studies here, it’s not fair for us to have to leave after we have made all our life here.

Edgar was seven years old when he made the journey to the United States three years ago. During the time he spent sharing his testimonio, Edgar had so much energy in his message that he wanted to share. He focused on what he has felt with the election and the fear of being separated from his family.

Yo no tengo documentos. me ayuda venir a 11 Millones de Sueños. La mejor mucho familias no tiene papeles, tal vez no más un hijo o dos hijos, pero talvez tienen el otro papel de DACA, pero cuando tiene 10 como yo, no. Como nuestro Presidente Donald Trump nos puede agarrar y puede separar las familias del hijo. Cuando vengo a 11 millones de sueños me asusto, pero digo Hay Donald Trump que no venga aquí que no nos saca jamás. Porque si nos saca no voy a poder venir a 11 millones.

(I don’t have documents. It helps me to come to 11 millones de Sueños. There are probably a lot of families that don’t have papers, maybe one or two children in the family might have not have papers, but they might have DACA. But since I am 10, I don’t have this. President Trump can get us and separate children from their families. Sometimes when I come to 11 Millones de Sueños, I am scared, saying that I hope that President Donald Trump will never come and take us because then I won’t be able to come anymore to 11 Millones de Sueños).

Edgar asked his teacher if he could talk to Trump since he didn’t have papers. His mother shared with me that since the election Edgar is worried about being separated from his

little brother, who was born in the United States. Most importantly, he worries about his brother being alone in our community.

Yo le dije a mi maestra si yo quisiera hablar con Donald Trump y como yo no tengo papeles, me sacaría o que hiciera? Ella dijo no te puede hacer nada, no te puede sacar, la migra no te puede sacar, nadie hasta que estas mas grande.

Yo quisiera decir a Trump, como Lala la nina India, Lala se llama Lala (ella fue famosa) Ella le dijo a un Presidente que debe de hacer bien las cosas. Y yo quisiera decir a Trump como antes, tu quieres tener una guerra como el tiempo de civil rights? Y yo pienso el la película 42 cuando dijo el señor no importas el color que sea. Yo quisiera decirle no importa el color que sea pero que no saca nadie. Sacar las personas que han hecho un delito -algo malo. Yo estoy escribiendo en escuela un reporte que dice, Trump should not build the wall. Yo tengo ese escrito en escuela. Le voy a decir a mi maestra que me da una copia.

Yo vi un video que Trump quiere los Mexicanos pero lo dijo en inglés. Y yo mire un video que dice Trump “hay yo quiero los Mexicanos, son mis favoritos” y todos esas cosas. Pero lo dijo en ingles yo lo entendi. Y le dije a un niño mira escucha esto la mentiras que está diciendo Trump... y dijo. “Hay Mexicanos ha hecho bueno conmigo y luego dice y dice “hacen todo lo que yo quiera, yo si le digo que hacen algo lo hacen”.

I told my teacher that I want to talk to Donald Trump and ask him since I don't have papers are you going to make me leave or what are you going to do. My teacher said he can't do anything to me, that no one can make me leave until I am older. I would like to ask him do you want to have a civil rights war like before. I want to tell him it does not matter what color you are. I am writing a report at school that says Trump should not build the wall.

Fabian, speaking of how others make fun of Mexicans, including Trump, explained

If a person like him says that, what can you expect about other people? If you think about it, America wouldn't be the way it was if it wasn't for us. If you think about it, when do you see a White person working in the fields? It's probably the owners, but you will never see one working, so I mean... everywhere you go here, you see Mexicans working.

There was a time when Fabian was separated from his parents when they first came from Mexico for four months. Talking about this moment, he recalled the forced separation.

Every little kid cries for their parents, but as soon as we got to see them, we were happy again. Now with how the world, how it is turning out to be, you know how

President Trump is saying he is going to send us back, even Obama who was going to help us sent the most people. You can't really trust anyone.

In her testimonio, Graciela explained that while she always had fear, the election of Trump escalated an emotional rollercoaster for her and her family. Graciela's mother spoke with me, sharing that she thinks daily of what might happen. She requested information for a *carta de poder* [letter of power] to find someone to be in charge of her kids should they be separated through forced deportation. Graciela talked about Trump and what his spirit has done for her as a mixed-status child in the United States.

With the Trump election, it made us more cautious, it made us go back again to that time of immigration. After the Trump election, my parents started making more of a back-up plan. My mom says I have hopes and dreams that I am going to achieve, and they know I have people to back me up, saying that I am going to stay here, no matter what. My mom's first thought was to send me with you if something happens to me. She can send me to you and take my brother with her to Mexico.

Before the election and before stuff started happening, my parents were already thinking about what to do. They went to this workshop on Main Street so people could go and talk to the lawyers. We wanted to figure out how to get their papers. But I can't pedir mi papas. They said unless they have had problems with immigration before.

Graciela shared she is very "scared of what Trump might do." When she spoke of Trump, I could see she was emotional. After sharing these words about Trump, I purposely moved the conversation, focusing on what has been healing for her. As she talked about her school and her involvement with mariachi and her love for music, her spirit changed and she was again excited to talk about her culture and its influence on who she is.

Edgar turns to prayer for an answer to Trump. "Muchas personas han ido a Canada o Mexico porque tienen miedo, no hay que tener miedo, oramos y esperamos el mejor. Me puse triste porque ganó Trump pero solo Dios sabe porque". (A lot of people

have gone to Canada or Mexico because they are so afraid. But we shouldn't be afraid, we should hope for the best. I was sad when Trump won, but only God knows why.)

Witches in the field

Luz remembers her earliest developmental milestones being laced with a fear that she later identified as witches. "I was told INS was a witch, and that is how I got introduced to it, and I got scared and everything." She knew that something was wrong in her family and finally was physically introduced to who she was afraid of.

Well, for me as I was growing up, it was always very difficult. When I was little, I didn't really think much about it, like when I was five I didn't think about it, but once when I was seven, it really did hit me hard because my grandma was here, and I had gone through a situation before when I was a little younger where my babysitter was taking care of me, and they received a call that immigration was in town, so they took us out of the house, and there was a field next to their home, next to their house, and they told us go and hide, run. Immigration is here, and what they told me was that they were witches and that they were going to take me. So, I was terrified, and we ran into the field, and we were all hiding there, and I remember I was panicking, and I was really scared because I didn't know why I had to run, I didn't understand that, and later on, I was explained that I wasn't born here and that immigration would take me back to Mexico.

After this time, my parents around that time came to pick me up, they asked, "Where is Miriam?", and I was coming out the fields because they said it was safe to come back home, and um, I was scared, and I went to hug my mom, and I told her, "Oh, I had to go hide because the witches were coming for us, and they didn't understand what I was talking about because I said, "The witches, they were going to take me back to Mexico." They were confused as to what I meant by witches, and my babysitter explained that immigration was in town.

Later my parents explained that immigration agents are not good people, that they go knocking on doors, and if they open doors, they will take you.

This moment marked the first time Luz had an encounter as a child having to shield her identity from La Migra. From a young age, witches and La Migra occupied a space of fear in her home.

Guadalupe's son, who is 10 years old, is equally impacted by the fear of Trump's new threat of policies impacting families. Guadalupe originally brought her son to dance

in the program of 11 Millones de Sueños in hopes that her son could begin to develop confidence and stronger self-esteem. He was suffering from significant separation anxiety from his parents. Each time they would leave his side, he would cry and get visibly shaken. Two years after being in 11 Millones de Sueños, he has developed a new confidence, but with the rise of Trump, fear has emerged for him again. The day after the election, he refused to go to school because he was so scared.

We respect the laws of this country, but it's important to be fair. When Trump won, he cried and cried. He said, "They are going to take us," and he didn't just worry about himself but about all the other kids and said, "This is my home, this is where I was raised." He loves his culture here and our culture too.

La Migra

For many Latino youth, ICE has become a villain in the minds and conversations of immigrant families. Seen or unseen, ICE is a looming fear that many youth worry about daily. From media images on the news to reports and stories about deportation, La Migra's presence has moved beyond the border. For Juan Diego he is feeling an outsider amongst cousins who have bought into society's message of the vilification of being undocumented.

Algunos semanas atras mi prima estaba burlando de mí porque no tenía papeles. Me dijo mi tío va sacar papeles, ha ha ha y a ti no. Y luego me sentí mal. Y me estaba diciendo y luego la migra te va agarrar. Y yo voy a ser lo que quiera y luego tu no porque migra te va agarrar. Yo me puse mal. Comence de llorar.

A few weeks back my cousin was making fun of me because I don't have papers. He told me my Uncle is going to get me papers, (laughing) and not you! I felt really bad. Then he told me that La Migra (Immigration Customs and Enforcement) was going to get me. I am going to get to do what I want and you aren't because the Migra is going to get you. I felt really bad and I started to cry.

When Graciela talks about how she feels, she shared her emotions as matter of fact, void of sentiment in many ways. There was a sense that while she could verbalize what she feels, she has also normalized these internal feelings as a regular part of her life.

I feel worry, anger that this is happening asking, “Why, why is this happening, why?” Also, I have a little bit of sadness, wondering, “Why would my parents leave me, why?” But I also learned to appreciate the moments that we have together, whether we are just sitting on the couch watching a movie or going together to Lake Tahoe.

Graciela recalled a vivid memory and traumatic experience she had with immigration. She described it as a time when she freaked out at the same time as having to hold it together and be responsible for a plan in case of her parent’s deportation.

I remember this one time a couple of years ago immigration was around here, and I was freaking out because my parents have always focused on helping us feel safe no matter what happens. There will be someone caring for us, even if they have to go over there, they are going to try and come back. At a really young age, my parents started preparing me to take care of my brother, and they prepared my brother to listen to me, saying that I would take care of my brother if something happened. At a really young age, I had to keep my emotions inside, because if I let my fear get out, those kind of emotions, I would just get worse. My parents worried a lot about us.

My mom would tell us the stories at the dinner table, we would eat, talk, and sit at the dinner table. It was mainly my mom because my dad was working day and night. I think it was a good thing she told us because it started growing in our minds before we found out what it really meant. By the time we understood, we already had it in our minds. I didn’t really think of it as a big deal, well it was a big deal, but I knew my parents were with me and they would always support me no matter what, so how would this affect us at the moment? But then I started following immigration policies, that is when it got to me and stuff. I would really worry about if immigration would come and take my parents away. My parents were all I had basically, I wanted my parents around. They are my parents.

Throughout the years, my parents have really prepared me just in case something happened now that Trump is here. My parents have tried to not have us worry, they tell us focus and school and your future. Don’t worry about us, you all will get through.

Graciela talked about the importance of her parents being transparent with her about this process. She explained that since a very young age, her parents told her the truth. I also

witnessed her strong attachment to her parents, particularly her mother. Important to consider is how she conceptualized the possibility for a disrupted attachment to her parents living under a constant threat of deportation. While it was clear that her parents were very thorough in preparing her for the possibility of this fear coming true, Graciela was always thinking about the plan she had been drilled on.

I understand what is going on, if my parents leave. My parents' safety plan is this, basically since sixth grade, when we finally started staying home alone, when I was a middle school kid. My parents prepared for that, saying, "You can't open the door for anyone, no matter what. Don't answer the phone no matter what."

In 6th or 7th grade, immigration was going around, so my mom told me I have everything in this drawer, your social security number, your birth certificate, everything. The vaccination records, everything in the drawer in their room, which was accessible for us whenever we need it, just like if one day they don't come home, stay calm, open the window first, not the door, so immigration can't come in. If they need proof you are U.S. citizens, here is all the proof you need. If you guys have to go in a hurry if they take us, all you guys need is this envelope and this bag. My mom has this bag, I don't know what is in it, but she has told me. Don't forget this bag and the envelope with everything in it, do not forget it. I know where everything is at. My brother doesn't know, but I do. They started preparing me to take care of that stuff so I could take care of my brother. I need to take care of my brother.

Luz shared another story of La Migra that impacted her.

Its affected me in different stages of my life. There was this one time when I was seven, and we took the phone, and it worked, and we received a call from my mom, and she said "go home" because immigration is in town, my grandma was visiting from Mexico, and she didn't have papers, and we all ran home ,and we went into my parents' room, and we locked the door, and I hid under my bed. My brother was laughing, and he didn't know I was crying under the bed, telling my grandma, "Immigration is going to take us, they are going to hear us, and they are going to take us." And that was another really hard moment for me too. That happened a year after the first time.

With fear at the front door, many families are scared to trust anyone. Even within communities that may be reaching out, there is a lack of trust, that something could happen. Rosario shared, "Los Americanos no nos quieren, no sabes si nos va ayudar o

nos va a entregar”. (Americans don’t care for us. We don’t know if they are going to help us or they are going to turn us in.)

Papeles

In this country, there is an emphasis on *papeles* [papers] to define the legality of a person. In the process of defining who has a right to be in this country, the issue of do you have papeles en este pais is the targeted question for many. However, this question goes beyond an answer; it speaks to the soul of the individual who has to justify their existence with these “papeles.” En este pais, papeles matter at a macro-institutional level. At a personal level, papeles take on a very different meaning to these youth. For Edgar, at his young age, he examines the notion of papeles from both a literal and existential perspective. “Papers, you can rip them up, what is most important? Your family, your life, or those papers?”

Hay mucha gente que se presumen, se siente mal uno porque no tiene papeles, no debe de hacer malos con las personas. Porque un papel es el que está allí. Papeles lo puede romper. Que es más importante, su familia su vida o los papeles. Y los papeles los puede romper. Los papeles no es su hijo su amigo, si hablas a las papeles no te van a contestar.

Hay un niño y otro niño, me cai mal porque recuerdas cuando dijeron que la migra vino a Half Moon Bay, todos vinieron en cuenta de mi. Me estaba diciendo, Tengo papeles? Tienes papales? Ooh, te va allevar la migra. Los papeles no es nada es un papel que estas escondiendo. No es nada grande. En total no se porque hicieron los papeles. No se porque importa.

Yo me senti porque me preguntan eso? No me debe de preguntar? Quiere que me hacen sentir mal? A veces yo le digo, yo soy de aqui para que lo creen.

Hay muchas personas que a tener papeles significó algo grande para ellos. Es lo mismo si un niño tiene papeles y su papás no tienen, porque sus papas son Mexicanos y el se mire Mexicano.

Levántate y ponte a las pilas y ayuda a la gente. No estás allí de flojo levántate para ver cómo puedes ayudar, no presumir. Porque a presumir es algo malo. Yo me pongo a pensar porqué no quitan a ese President?

There is a lot of people that think they are better because they have papers. If you don't have papers you feel bad. People are more important than papers, papers you can tear up. What is more important your family, your life or papers? Papers are not your son, daughter or family, if you talk to the papers they are not going to talk back to you.

Remember when they said ICE was here the other day, the kids staring saying to me, I have papers do you have papers? ICE is going to get you. There are a lot of people who believe that papers is very important to them. It the same if a kid has papers and their parents do not because their parents are Mexican and he looks Mexican too.

Get up and help our community. Don't be lazy, find out how to help, don't think you are better. When you believe you are better it's bad. I often think, why don't they replace the President.

Esperanza explained how she sees papeles. As a citizen child, she has papers; however, she continues to be limited and forced to be separated from her parents, even with her status.

I see it in two ways about papeles. It does matter for people that want to work here or have a better life, or it would matter if they were teenagers because they can study because its better education here than in Mexico. Like in Mexico there are barely any jobs that don't pay well. I can say my parents, they never went to school because they couldn't afford school, so they didn't have an education That is what happened to a lot of people. Where I am from, there are a lot of little kids that don't go to school. Then you know, people in high school, they do drugs and *no saben valorar* [they do not know how to value] what they have here and what they wouldn't be doing in Mexico. They don't appreciate what they have.

Theme 3: Escuela, We are Part of this World

One prominent theme that was identified in all the testimonios was school.

The connection between how students were experiencing life at home and in the community had a space in school as well. Identity formation at this age is part of normal childhood development. Engaged learning is also critical at this stage, yet what has been identified as barriers for Latinos in education often misses the chronic trauma and mental health connection to this vulnerable population. How does status or the way we understand status impact a child's ability to learn? In our schools, how are we caring for

our undocumented or mixed-status students in a way that reduces trauma, not ignite it? In the testimonios spoken, the life of escuela has meaning beyond just grades. For many, escuela is a space of learning or heartbreak. It's that space where you fit in or you are further pushed out as an other. Escuela is a place where advocacy begins or systems support failed policies that do not address the needs of our vulnerable students. In these testimonios, school represents in many ways an accomplice to the discounted experiences of undocumented and mixed-status youth. Second language learners seen through deficit lenses, cultural wealth minimized and ignored, all while the mental health of this population is minimally addressed. According to neuroscientists, the stressed brain is not one that can function fully. Hearing the words of the students allows for their stories to be told in ways in which school becomes a prominent marker in their story.

Bullying in school

With the development of this theme, I observed that the youth in the study often felt that they were the other or were being seen as the other. The sense of being on the outside or forces against them were prevalent in the themes that came up. Fabian explained that he had two fears that have impacted him in life, La Migra, and bullying that happened in school.

When I was in third grade, I didn't want to go to school. Not that I didn't want to go, but I didn't like how kids made fun of me, so I would pretend to be sick, and I would tell my mom I was sick, and she would say, "Okay, mijo." I knew I was doing something wrong, and when I got to the high school, you try to be cool with your friends, and you forget about your homework to be with your friends.

At age ten, Emily spoke to her experience being bullied because of her culture.

“People bully me sometimes because I am Mexican or because we can't talk

English. 11 Millones has helped me with this because I feel I can be proud of who I am.

When they bully me, I feel like I am not part of this world, but I have to stand up and say I am part of this world.” At different times in her testimonio, Luz shared this feeling of being the other, with themes of being bullied, not being able to participate as others, feeling different, or societal racism that she experienced as a child. She talks about being bullied for her size and skin.

In school, I was friends with everyone, but one time in fourth grade, some girls told me not to hang out with a Filipino girl. From that day, I didn't understand why people had to be so harsh. One girl told me, “Look you're turning brown like her.” I remember her name and who she was. I didn't understand why people would say that about each other because I saw her as a normal girl. In middle school, I identified more with Mexican girls. I started to hang out with the Mexicans, the ones that I had were mostly guys, some girls, I felt safe with these friends because they always had my back even when I was getting bullied. I guess they were trying to protect me.

Luz's mom shared her need to emotionally protect her daughter, remembering her own suffering in Mexico.

I suffered a lot as a little girl, my mother too. Things that should have mattered to them didn't. There was no care, but now that I have my kids, I am going to defend them. I am going to try, and if I can't, I am going to find someone.

Yolis, Luz's mom, underscored bullying experiences that she witnessed with her daughter in a private school.

For my daughter Luz, it has been hard to be first generation, have to learn English, come here as a little girl and not feel connected. This is hard for her, and then to go to a predominantly all-American school where she can't be like the rest and enters into a confusion of why and I like this and why are they like that. But little by little, she has found her way to value who she is, we are another culture where we believe in God, have values, believes in improving always. This will help her to not fall into other ways. When she is able to find herself that she comes from a Latin culture, that we don't have money, and the responsibility that she feels to be someone in life to have a voice has pushed her to do more than the experiences of racism. These experiences that have lowered her self-esteem

That day you said you wouldn't be able to be there at the meeting with the principal, I felt helpless, but then found out that you would be there by phone. I felt confident, knowing that if I couldn't say something, you would be able to defend us. As a mother, I was very hurt at what they were saying about my

daughter Luz. The same happened with my son in school. I tell them they have to talk, they have to share and speak up. They have to raise their voice when someone is talking. If it is their fault, they need to recognize their behavior as wrong and make the corrections. But if they blame you for doing something because you are Latino, you need to say, "Teacher, I need to let you know that this is what happened." You need to be able to talk, tell me, and I will help. Not because you are Latino take the blame. I tell them behave, you have to behave always.

In my son's school, there is a teacher, he is new, and he picks on my son a lot at school. I tell him, "Don't worry, I see the teachers as very demanding." If our kids don't have money, I see that they don't value who the students are as Latinos. Even teachers that have been there for years recognize the good behavior of my son. But I see that this new teacher is difficult.

Fabian began his testimonio talking about school and his experiences. In the life of a child, one of the most important frameworks of his development is his earliest interactions with school.

I made two friends, but I also had friends that made fun of me because I didn't speak English. One time out of all the times, I cried once. My mom said, "Don't cry, you have to prove to them. Right now, you don't know any English, but that is because you just got here, but try to speak it with your dad, do your best," because my dad knew English.

Fabian went on to tell me a story that has been significant to him because he stood up to defend a kid in school who was being bullied for being Salvadoran.

I told the principal I did it because you guys never do anything for us. I am sure if a Hispanic boy would have come, you would have ignored him. This is why there are always people fighting, because you guys don't defend us. You leave the Mexicans to the side, and she just stood quiet. She said this wasn't the right act. I said, "Yeah, I know, but what was I supposed to do? Just stand there and watch him bully him. I am sure if I came and got one of you guys, you wouldn't have done anything. What is a suspension going to do to them?" And she just stood quiet. I told my dad and mom. My dad said, "I don't want to say I am proud of you for doing that, but you did the right thing." I asked the kid if they were still bothering him, and he said no because he said they used to bully him in the bus. But they don't do it anymore because they probably think that if they do something to me, I am going to tell you, I am not going to do anything to them, but I told him I wasn't going to leave him alone in that moment. And then he started crying, and then his mom two days later texted me, and she even called me to say thank you. But they went back to El Salvador already.

Rosario shared that “even in schools, there are teachers that are racist, I know this because staff told me, there are teachers here who are racist.” She worries the impact this is having on her children in school and the vulnerability that they feel. Julian shared his journey in school that has been difficult for him. He is currently behind in school and struggles with reading English.

In school, one kid kept calling me shorty. He wanted to fight me, and I had to defend myself, but I started running. Then I heard yelling at me, names, shorty and stuff. He was always calling me names. [Julian cried angry tears as he remembered the story.] The last day of school, this same kid jacked a backpack, but somehow I got blamed for it. Our principal called me in and said, “I don’t see you being nothing in the future.”

Tears raced down Julian’s cheeks as he remembered a statement made by the principal that has continued to emotionally impact him. “I try hard because I want to be something in the future, showing that I am someone.” Fabian, Julian’s brother, explained that “principals when they get power, they change, what can we do? He is the principal, and at the same time, it seems they always take the side of the White kids, they don’t listen to us as Mexicans.”

Ingles, mi segunda idioma

All of the youth in this study were classified as English learners in their educational journey. Only Luz and Graciela have been “reclassified,” a term that the students internalize as a badge of honor for mastering the English language. In this process of being reclassified or not being reclassified, there are undercover messages and experiences they internalize as second language learners that clearly impact them. Estrella shared that “I almost got reclassified” this year, but she came from being with her parents in Mexico this summer several days after school started. “Being in ELD classes

when you are not classified means that the teachers really don't get to teach you as much.

You don't learn the same as when you have regular class.”

Julian remembered his journey of being a second language learner.

Well, I was born in Fresno, when I was born, I lasted two years in Fresno, and then we went to Mexico, and I went to kinder. I wasn't scared, but I didn't know anyone because I was barely born. They would hit me with rulers because I didn't know anything. I thought they were going to do the same thing here, so I was scared, but they didn't. I didn't know English til I was in third, like in front of us there are algunas gemelas y su mama knows my dad well, and sometimes they would help me out with my school projects, they would tell me how to do it, and I got to 5th grade, and they stopped helping me out because I knew the basic part of English. When I went to sixth grade, it started to be more challenging because of the homework, it started to be harder. I met this teacher that was pretty cool. I had an F when I first started; at the end, I went up to a B. She was going to tell my dad I improved a lot, in my other classes I had D's and C's, I did good in her class 'cause she cared. Because I don't read a lot at home, I stay outside and play. I don't know why I don't do my homework. I say in my mind, “I am going to try, I am going to do it.” But then one time I was called into the office, there was problems in school, and I would always be the one called in, even though it wasn't me.

Countering the push for Julian to lose his Spanish in school, he speaks to the voice

Mariachi has in helping him keep his native language.

Going to Mariachi has helped me to remember the words in Spanish I was forgetting. Because I had to talk English, I was forgetting my words, and going to Mariachi helped me to remember my Spanish words. I mean, I already knew them, I but hadn't said them in a long time.

Fabian explained his experience as a second language learner.

I got here when I was third grade from Mexico. I am fully *Mexicano*, I do have papers, but I didn't know any English at all. So I was born here, we lived in Fresno from I turned four years old, and then we went to Chicago. I went to preschool in Chicago, and then we went to Mexico. I was in Mexico from kinder until third grade.

And then I got here, like, mid-third grade, and I remember that my parents weren't sure they wanted to send me to school when we got here because school had already started, but my mom said its better even if he repeats a grade to learn English. The lady in the office at Cesar Chavez helped my mom, saying we can put Fabian into an immersion program.

Sometimes, I would read books, and I would look at the pictures and imagine myself in the story. I had a teacher, Señora King, and she helped me a lot. She stayed after school to help me. When I graduated from fifth grade, at least I knew how to read already. When I went to 6th grade, I have friends too, but I also had friends that got into drugs and stuff, but my dad told me to avoid me, but you know, they are always there. One of them went to Arizona, and we didn't hear anything about him anymore. Sometimes we see him on Facebook, and it seems like he did better now. I started getting into ELD, and that helped me.

Navigating borders in school

Graciela in many ways is a perfectionist. She explains that she wants to do everything just right. In school homework, sports, and Mariachi, she gets very worried about doing everything just right. She talks about her experience as an A student and how she has had to navigate two worlds. In one world, she didn't want to stand out as a smarter student than her peers, and on the other hand, she wanted teachers to recognize that Latinos are smart students too, as if she had to prove a contrary belief. Graciela expanded the dialogue around how she has seen her peers struggle to ask for help from teachers and seem more comfortable asking her for help with subjects like math and science.

Before 11 Milliones, I was very quiet, very quiet. I was that person who didn't speak her mind. I only spoke up in math. I knew math, and I have always been good at it, even at the beginning of high school. I was really quiet, I was that one person understood everything because she listened, and she listened, and that is how she got to understand things, and she saw how things were. That is how I got all my knowledge. I would be there even in math class, the teacher would ask what was the answer for this questions, and I would sit there knowing the answer, but I didn't want to be the smart aleck in the class. I didn't want people to feel they weren't as smart because everyone is smart in their own way and has their unique personality, and I didn't want to bring them down. After I saw people weren't able to answer, I would speak up so that the teacher also wouldn't think that all of us weren't, at least one or two were understanding. Because now that students see us as I can get help from another student, not just the teacher. I have had so many students in my class come up to me and ask for help. What is this, what is that? How do you do this? Can you tutor me in this because I don't understand this, especially in math.

In school, Graciela finds herself often alone in Advanced Placement classes. In her testimonio, she brings up the idea of Latino youth who are in advanced classes as being whitewashed. She talks about the idea of being smart as being alone. The question to wonder about is why there are so few Latino in Advanced Placement programs in her school.

Usually in my classes, like my AP Cal class and AP gov class, the AP's is not necessarily for smart people, but I don't like the fact that in AP Cal I am the only Latina there. There are two Latinas, and I am the only one, and in my entire grade, there are only four and five Latinas, and two or three of them are, like, basically whitewashed. Umhm. And I am not saying as a bad thing, but that is how they grew up. They are good people.

Fabian struggled with navigating borders of trying or not trying hard enough.

Yes, when I didn't know English I would be scared because they would say, "We are presenting this, we are presenting that." I was worried they would make fun of me. But then my teacher in immersion would say, "If you didn't know how to say a word, say it in Spanish." But my mom always told me, "Even if she tells you not to do it, try to do it in English." My mom always helped me.

Barriers to parent participation

Luz's testimonio shows some of her emotions around the loss of getting to have her parents participate in school activities. When she was younger, she internalized their lack of participation in field trips, school outings, and other activities as a sign that they didn't want to be involved. She felt as if this didn't matter to them, and with no words spoken about it, she continued through her school years believing this assumed narrative. She also connects her fear to her parents' absence and explained the emotional impact this had on her.

I've grown up with fear, not understanding why my parents couldn't participate in school. So my fear—I grew up being scared of ICE, the migra—I grew up being scared of them, and then with school, I didn't understand why my parents couldn't drive other students to field trips or couldn't go with me. I thought they didn't like me or were too busy to pay attention to me. I got used to not asking anymore for anything, and since then, I had to get very independent.

Even driving to school field trips for most parents is something that is simple, but in thinking about it more deeply for undocumented families, it becomes a barrier to them being able to participate. Luz shared,

I didn't understand why my parents didn't have a license. I didn't understand why my parents couldn't drive to field trips. Other parents always drove, and they would always say, "No, I can't." I thought that they didn't care enough; it made me sad, but I didn't know that because they didn't have a license, they couldn't. So, I grew up for a really long time like that, and I just stopped asking them to take me. I just thought they were going to say no, but I didn't understand about the license. As a little girl, I didn't understand why my parents' didn't have a license

Estrella would love for her parents to be part of her school process, but they are separated by the border divide. Knowing that her parents are in Tijuana, Estrella navigates school on her own, relying on program staff and her extended family to support her. However, even this can be challenging as often she wishes that she could have her parents attend meetings, be present at outings, or simply pick her up from school. "It's hard not having my mom and dad here to help us with school. My brother is going down in his grades, and I can't help him. I don't know why. It's really hard without them being here." Estrella's father echoes the sentiment, "Yo quisiera estar alli para ayudarlos, para estar apoyando". (I wish I could be there to help them, to be able to support them.)

Muchas papas no le gustan la juntas de la escuela. Dicen que son aburridos. Mi mama fue a una junta porque iban a quitar toda las programas. Pero las juntas son importantes para sus hijo. Hay veces que mi mama no puede ir por mi hermano que es bebe. Muchas personas talvez tambien no van porque piensan que no van a tener traductores. (Edgar, personal communication, January 18, 2017).

Spirituality/Faith

Standing at the Virgen de Guadalupe fountain outside of church, Rosa and her children gathered to pray. On Sundays, Fabian and Julian take the bus to come to mass as their parents are working. Guadalupe and her family have a strong devotion to the

Oaxacan saint of Santo Santiago. In many homes of these families, Santo Torribio holds a special place as he is the saint of those who have crossed the Border. The story told is that Santo Torribio has appeared to many who were close to dying on the border and helped them cross when they were left to die. For many families, their faith is what gives them the strength to stand against the forces of these societal stressors.

Luz's mother shared how she uses her faith to make significant decisions in the lives of her family.

I ask God for help always before I make a decision. God, if this is going to help my children, let it happen. If you see that this is going to bring a lot of suffering, do not permit it, do not open the door. That is what I believe, why, because the day something happens, I know that God is with me. That there is a greater plan in this. Just like at work, sometimes I see a new job that is offered, and it pays 1,000 a month, and it seems good, but then I think, "Then I am going to have to leave my kids for a long period of time, or it's on Saturdays and Sundays and that means I can't go to church." I think to myself, "Is this what is good? I need to have some time with my children, and the most important thing is to be with God."

For Juan Diego, his faith is what shines a light on his humanity and is a protection over him.

Trump no es nada grande como Dios. Dios es diferente que Trump. Si Dios te diga que lo hace lo debes de hacer. Pero Trump es una persona que es Presidente pero no importa. Trump no es nada, no te puede hacer nada.

(Trump is not as big as God. God is different from Trump. If God tells you to do something, you should do it. But Trump is an individual that is Presidente—he can't do anything to you.)

Juan Diego's mom teaches him to be forgiving and respectable, even to Trump.

Mi mama me dice pa que pa que te enojas con Trump, no hay que tener su corazón negro, fey, no hay que tenerlo así, porque nomás se sabe porque entro ese Presidente. Yo le quisiera decir, Trump por favor regrese la gente que no tenga papeles y se haga un President que la gente que no ha hecho nada que no lo saquen. que no mas saca la gente con un delito. Y nosotros estamos haciendo todo para él para que él no nos saca. Mucha gente ha ido a Canadá o regresaron a México porque tienen miedo. Digo, no hay que tener miedo, oramos y pedimos a Dios es lo mejor.

(My mom tells me not to get mad at Trump, so my heart won't be black with hate. I want to tell Trump to please return the people that left with no papers. We are doing everything we can so he won't take us. We can't have fear, we have to pray and ask that God will help us.)

Fabian remembers the power of his grandmother's prayers in Mexico, holding on to the memory of her praying for all of them.

When my parents came across the border, we had to stay with my grandma for four months, and since we had papers, we didn't have to cross, but my dad said, "As soon as we get over, we will call you guys." I remember that we were all crying because my grandma was sad because they were leaving, and people die at the border. But I remember my grandma she would always pray. She was praying for my dad all the time. It was more than two days that I would ask my grandma, "Where are my parents?" After a while, my grandma told me that they made it to the United States. My mom called and said, "We are working so we can be together." One day my dad called, and they had the tickets for us to go.

Theme 4: Cultura Cura, a Temascal of Hope, 11 Millones de Sueños

Mariachi, dancing, singing, art, alegría, historias, cuentos, y tradiciones de Mexico come alive as a temascal for the soul in 11 Millones de Sueños. For this program, the idea of cultura cura is a critical part of an intentional, therapeutic modality being used to support the healing of both undocumented and mixed-status youth. Understanding how cultural arts become resistance can be seen in the words of the youth, sharing that when they perform in front of others, they feel seen and acknowledged with applause and gritos. They are no longer hiding or buried within a community; rather, they are front and center in parades, fiestas, and schools, performing at local universities and headlining significant events. Dancing Ballet Folklórico and singing Mariachi, the community sees them and joins in the representation of this cultural pride.

The idea of cultura cura has resonated in spaces that speak to the power of culture as all-healing and powerful. The idea that individuals can be strengthened through cultural arts reaches far back to indigenous practices. Connecting the youth to the

traditions and celebrations of elders and antepasados roots these youth to seeds of who they are. These moments of celebrating and honoring culture is seen everyday in 11 Millones de Sueños.

Resistance takes form when these youth stand to be proud of who they are in the program, amongst themselves, in their community, and in public. It is almost as if they dance against the hate or sing against the vilification of Latinos as criminals. Their willingness to own their culture through dance, Mariachi, performances, and more ignites a cultural power that represents the entire Latino community of this small town. For 11 Millones de Sueños, when the youth enter these spaces, there is a cultural temascal built from their sweat, purging out the racism, fear, and societal oppressions with which they enter. These youth enter intentional spaces focused on capturing the notion of “*Yo Soy!*” [I am]. No longer are they hiding; rather, they are vibrant and confident in spaces that can no longer ignore them. Dressed in their brightly colored trajes with Mexican gala, one cannot miss the pride that radiates from their appearance in their performances. For 11 Millones de Sueños, the stage lights up with shouts of “*Presente!*” Mexican music, zapateados, and gritos drown out the shouts of “*build the wall.*” In these moments, culture trumps fear.

Cultural arts as healing

In the journey of life, there are always significant individuals who are teachers and healers for us along the way. At 11 Millones de Sueños, Zenon Barron holds a position as maestro and artistic director; spiritually, he is a healer and cultural guide. His spirit and presence can be compared to the elder of a native tribe as his words are cemented in wisdom and guidance at all levels. Further, his leadership is centered in

capturing and reclaiming the culture, traditions, and orgullo of Mexico through danza.

Zenon is a pioneer in the work he tirelessly does to preserve our traditions of Mexico with a special focus on danza. There is no better person who could be the cultural guide for our children and our families. His contribution to this research is of significant importance as his testimonio brings 25 years of work to keep the cultural arts alive in the souls of nuestra gente in the Bay.

Our culture has healed me. I have helped many people stay off the street, I have guided them and supported them outside of dancing and my work to preserve la danza Mexicana. I have pushed my students to go out to the university. I believe it's important that we counter the new agenda that says because we are Latinos we can't do much in this country, which is the biggest lie. After 25 years of being here in the Ensembles Academy, 99% of my students have finished the university, and this is really important because the therapy in this case is the danza that has been a guide and kept these youth going

In his work with 11 Millones de Sueños, Zenon understands the need to infuse youth with cultural stimulation for healing. He sees the cultural arts as healing in his work with the community and the youth.

When people are caged into situations, locked into situations, rescuing the culture, being together, and celebrating who we are have put the kids into a better emotional space because the art includes all the family. From the time parents take them to class, when parents see them practicing, culminating up to the biggest performance, all of this is so important because then you see how the whole family is involved, that the parents who have to motivate them—that they are there too.

Yo creo que lo más importante aparte de la rescate cultural y conexiones con la cultura de México es crear un generacion de jovenes que tenga sensibilidad.

I think it is so important that apart from rescuing the culture and connections to the Mexican culture is to develop a generation of youth that has compassion.

The work Zenon is doing with youth to foster healing and instill cultural pride is centered on working with the entire family. In classes of 11 Millones de Sueños, there are brothers, sisters, babies, tias, abuelos, and parents who all join in to be part of the process.

Each of them transports the cultural elements of familia and support in 11 Millones de Sueños.

We all gathered to speak together at a university presentation with graduate counseling students to share about “Cultura Cura” as a therapeutic intervention healing through culture, art, and 11 Millones de Sueños. Rosa, a parent on the panel and part of this research, was poignant and captured the spirit of our families and program.

Cuando vinimos de México estamos desplazado a una nueva tierra, muchas veces nos sentimos solos pero lo que nos ayuda es preservar nuestra identidad. Si lo dejamos ir, poco a poco nos cambia de quienes somos. Para nuestras mamás 11 Millones de Sueños es un lugar donde podemos reunirnos y sentir en familia y sanar. Para las madres nos da un lugar donde nos podemos sentir en casa.

(When we come from Mexico, when we are displaced in a new land, many times we feel alone, but what helps us is our culture. It is important to keep our identity. Because if we let it go, little by little it takes a piece of who we are away. 11 Millones de Sueños is a place where we can gather as family. For mothers, it's more important than ever for us to have a place to gather to be in community together. It is what helps us to heal and we feel we are at home.

With zapateados echoing in the background of our weekly ballet folklorico program, Paola spoke with me about her experience being part of 11 Millones de Sueños. Paola who has been in the United States for the last three years shared that she would cry because she felt so alone coming from Mexico and not having family. She was taking her kids to school today, feeling so isolated when one of the mothers from 11 Millones de Sueños told her she should go to the program because she would find family there. Two years later, she is an active parent in the group, participating on the parent committee and volunteering in numerous projects to support the youth.

A mi me ha servido 11 Millones de Sueños, me abierto muchas puertas porque tengo poco en los Estado Unidos y ha conocido mucha gente y más porque como estoy aquí solo siento que tengo familia. Nunca van a saber que tan importante 11 Millones ha sido para mi vida y mi familia.

11 Millones de Sueños has opened a lot of doors because I have a short time living in the United States and I have met a lot of people and because I am part of the program I feel like I have a family. You will never know how important this program has been for me and my family.

In her testimonio, as Graciela opened up to talk about the fear that she has held onto since she was little, she also consistently referred to 11 Millones as family. She spoke to this sense of being community and together, a healing that happens when others share in the same struggle. Graciela talked about having to navigate other spaces “not being me.” There is a “relief” she feels in 11 Millones de Sueños, where she is able to be her authentic self, her whole self. She also speaks to the sensory healing that happens with her through music, helping her to be able to relax. It is as if there is a collective inhalation of healing that happens with the music, being all together and being grounded in culture for that moment.

When I am at 11 Millones de Sueños, the fear I have, it goes away. With the kids, you feel like, these kids know what I am going through. They understand this, they understand that. They are really good kids, and when I am with them, even though I am older and I know more what is going on with struggle, they give me a sense of relief. I can be free again with them. They are always making jokes, having fun, it feels like a sense of relief. You can be yourself without being judged or anything. Outside of 11 Millones and Mariachi, not me necessarily, but a lot of people feel I have to be this way or this way because this is how you have to be to do this. But once you go into Mariachi, it’s just about music and having fun, and music brings a sense of relief, calms you down. Even though I have a lot of homework, I still go to Mariachi, and it doesn’t matter if I have to stay up til one or two in the morning to do my homework, it helps me relax.

For Julian the healing is present in his ability to trust in a space where doors of trust have closed for him.

Mariachi has helped me the most with trust. In mariachi, you have trust because if you do something, they won’t laugh at you. If you mess up, they won’t make fun of you, they will help you. In school, if you fall or you mess up right away, they tell you they suck, or they start cracking up on you or make fun of you. But not in Mariachi. Mariachi is pretty much like a family.

Cultural citizenship & cultural pride

Being part of 11 Millones for Graciela has opened the doors for her to connect to a cultural pride that she shared at home but was isolated in the community. The Mexican pride her parents fostered at home was disconnected from other areas of her life. This feeling of being alone was present in school and was represented in her being shy and not wanting to talk or give answers until she had to. There is this conscious and unconscious shutting down of her identity and who she was in spaces that she felt alone in. Being rooted in 11 Millones de Sueños gave Graciela a space to feel connected to her identity. Listening to her speak, seeing her face light up in her sharing, it is as if she entered a space that was familiar, safe, a comfort for her to be all that she is as a whole person. She was no longer boxed into identities, such as just a student or just at home with her family, but rather her whole self. She explains what she felt coming to 11 Millones de Sueños:

It brings a sense of familiarity, a sense of safety. This is who I am, this is what I am part of, and this is me. You can't hide someone's personality and who they are, you can't just hide it. It's going to come out eventually, it's better to come out sooner than later, or later you are going to have a struggle of who am I? Or if you already have a sense of this, this is who is me. 11 Millones de Sueños started making me feel more comfortable with speaking up with the kids the teachers, like the good relationships that I had with everyone. If you say something, they will listen to what you say in 11 Millones.

For Edgar, danza is healing. What he was not able to do in Mexico he has found in the United States.

Y también me gusta bailar mucho y cuando yo estaba chiquito y queria bailar en Mexico y me gustaba bailar mucho y vine a Estados Unidos y encontré un ballet folklórico y me gusta porque estamos representando Mexico. Estamos representando otro país aquí. No bailaba en México porque no sabíamos donde había bailes, como baile folklórico. Y cuando vine me gusto mucho, y dije ha me gusta porque estamos representando Mexico, estamos representando nuestro país. 11 Millones de Sueños me ayuda como que yo estoy respetando mi Mexico y estoy dándole poder y cuando yo presento, yo digo que estoy aqui en Mexico porque bailo a Mexico y me quito ese duda. Ya no pienso tanto en eso, de Trump.

(And I also love dancing, when I was little and wanted to dance in Mexico, and I liked dancing a lot, and I came to the United States, and I found a ballet folklórico, and I like it because we are representing Mexico. We are representing another country. I didn't dance in Mexico because we didn't know where there was a dance program. When I came and started dancing, I liked it a lot because we are representing Mexico. I am giving my country power in representing them. I feel like I am in Mexico when I dance, and it helped me. I don't think so much about Trump during this time).

Juan shares how singing, Spanish, and Mariachi equal happiness for him.

I feel the same in Mariachi, you are still yourself, but it's not different. You are more happy if you do Mariachi because you sing Spanish. I don't know any song in Mariachi that has English words. I never have a bad day when I go to Mariachi.

Paola held her heart as tears welled up in her eyes as she spoke about 11 Millones de Sueños and what it has meant to her family. She sees that the program and the arts have helped her son's development.

Ha ayudado mucho a mi hijo, ha desarrollado mucho en el baile folklórico. Tiene muchas muchas cosas que le ayudó, la tutoría, baile folklórico, música y la danza. Y eso es muy bueno para los niños porque ellos están pensando un futuro para ellos, no están pensando en la calle. Esta entretenido, unos quieren hacer hasta maestro de baile, otros quieren llegar hacer músicos y más porque ellos son el futuro de aquí de Estados Unidos. Y más porque mi hijo como él es Latino se le han abierto muchas puertas y se ha conocido mucha gente, nadie es mala todo somos buenos. Estoy muy agradecida con 11 Millones de Sueños.

For Emily, dancing folklórico is an expression of happiness and resistance.

Dancing makes me happy because it helps me show Americans that we are Mexicans, and we are also part of the world, and we are not just standing around and not just being like I don't have friends. When I dance, I am proud of myself, and I feel like a real person. It's not about how we look or how we dress or the color of our hair, it's about our personality. It feels like we are not just being indoors all day, you can't be sad at the world, you are in this world. You shouldn't be just inside because you feel sad. 11 Millones de Sueños has helped me a lot in school, like if someone says you are not Mexican, I am able to stand up for myself.

Zenon talks about the pride he sees when the youth dance in our local parade.

What I see when we walk through the parade of our community is that you see that these kids are crossing a border so big because the people of this country are seeing them—so they are breaking borders. The kids are saying, "We are here,

these are our roots, we are not embarrassed to be here, this is who I am. Esto es quien yo soy!”

Hope

The topic of hope came up in Fabian’s testimonio. In the first part of his sharing, he presents the idea of no hope. “I don’t think there is hope, but we always try to find our ways. Like you are helping a lot of us, we need more people like you, but we don’t have a lot of people like you.” As he went on, he talked about the experience he had participating as a youth leader in a summer project with 11 Millones de Sueños. Talking about his connection to our youth leader, hope makes its appearance in his dream to graduate.

We were connected because when he started at first, he said that he didn’t know English when he came to the United States either, so I guess we were connected too. Helping him with my brothers and the other two kids is nice, and having you help us is nice. I know that if we do good, the five kids that are here, we can be someone in the future, we can be somebody. This year I hope to graduate. I want to do it for you guys, and that is the only thing.

Fabian’s experience as a citizen Latino male in the United States has been complicated for him as he sees himself often as “other.” For him, hope is having others believe in him and to see his dream of graduating come true. For Estrella, her hope is having her family come back to live with them in the United States. “I hope they get their U-Visa, my hope is to see us together, yeah, that is what I think about a lot.” Turning undocu-fear into undocu-hope is critical in our work with Latino youth and families.

Connecting to familia in Mexico, nuestras raices

I think Mexico is better than here, there is a good side here and a bad side too. It’s just harder for people to work over there. You get to work, but you don’t get paid good. Here people have to work all the time, there is not time to be together, here only Sundays is the time we get to be together.

Graciela talked about what her family felt when she played Mariachi. She talked about her roots to music in Mexico. She also identified how her connection to playing music in 11 Millones de Sueños also opened doors for new communication and relationships with family in Mexico she didn't talk to before. She talked about social media as being a new vessel to share the news about her Mariachi and music connection to her family in Mexico. She also talked about the legacy of struggle she carries while making her family proud now.

They are happy that their culture is carrying on through us and most likely to our children. What they worked so hard for, what they struggled so hard for, is paying off through us, our hard work, all the things we have accomplished and for my dad because he comes from a family of musicians. My uncle who plays is the one who gave me the guitar, when he first found out we were going to be in the Mariachi, he got really happy. My dad has 12 other brothers and sisters in Mexico. Lot of them, almost all of them know how to play one instrument. My dad has a lot of siblings that play in this band in Oaxaca, and my dad's brother signed an independent contract with a pretty big band. We have it in my blood for Mariachi. My aunts and uncles in Mexico were really happy when they found out too. Through Facebook, I am slowly making connections with them. Through social media, I am getting more connections with them, sharing about my music.

Somos familia, eres mi tocayo

Lo que tu has hecho a juntar tanta familias Mexicanas, no le hace si tenemos papeles somos ilegales o no, nos juntamos como una solo familia en 11 Millones de Sueños. Cada noche nos juntamos y cada cosa que estamos escuchando no sabemos como lo vamos a manejar todo esto. Nunca sabemos lo que podemos pasar.

Mariachi has helped me the most with trust. In Mariachi, you have trust because if you do something, they won't laugh at you. If you mess up, they won't make fun of you, they will help you. In school if you fall or you mess up, right away they tell you they suck or they start cracking up on you or make fun of you. But not in Mariachi. Mariachi is pretty much like a family. (personal communication, Juan February 20, 2017).

In the program of 11 Millones, Graciela quickly took on a leadership role. As she shared above, there was this drive in her to give back to her peers, particularly the

younger ones. She encouraged them and worked to make them believe in more. We spoke about her development of leadership and where this came from.

Taking a leadership role in 11 Milliones de Sueños was a little familiar because my parents made me grow up, saying, “You need to thrive, you need to take care of your brother, you need to take care of others.” In 11 Milliones, I am there again, they are younger than me, but I can see who they are, and it is a way of me helping them find who they are and speak up. In a way, it is like being at home, I am taking care of them, I want them to thrive, and I want them to be better people. If someone needs help in 11 Millones, I want to be there if I can.

Graciela discussed how programs like 11 Milliones and sports keep youth active and involved, keeping them busy and away from the opportunity to get into trouble. She shared that her parents push for them to be involved in programs outside of school for their growth, pushing them for more.

11 Milliones also helps keep us away from bad influences too. My parents went through the same struggles, my parents pushed us to be in sports, to be involved. A lot of the kids that live in [Moonridge] are doing really well because they just have school and work. The parents’ mentality is that they just need an education and to work hard. Most of the Hispanics don’t do sports, they get caught up with boyfriends and girlfriends or going to the mall, going to parties, that is what they call having fun. That is not a bad thing, but I feel if they are doing sports, doing programs that is positive influences. I see the other kids eventually get caught up with bad influences. 11 Millones gives you really good skills that you are going to need later on in life. In reality, some people wonder why would I give my time to 11 Millones or sports, they don’t realize that you get friends, this is a second family for me. You grow up with them, you learn new skills. You teach, and you learn. You get amazing skills you are going to need later on. You can’t just work by yourself; individually, you need support of some kind.

Graciela words echo her spirit of collectivism, in that she knows that we have to all work together to make things happen. In her world and how she operates, it is clear that she navigates spaces of trying to work to help others, embedded in her identity and culture. She speaks to this in the way that her mom has raised her to help her brother. She also speaks to this idea of collectivism and action to help in her school where she tutors others

with their homework and finally she sees herself as a leader in 11 Millones de Sueños because she believes “you can’t just work by yourself individually.”

Paola, a mom in our program, shares, “When people are alone here, 11 Millones becomes a family for them, somos familia.”

I would say our dance class is like a family. It’s hard to explain, but I feel happy being there. I don’t have the words to explain it. It’s ‘cause I feel more connected with Tonantzin, like if they cared more than my uncles. I wish there was dance class every day. That is why I don’t want to leave, ‘cause this is what I look dancing. Let’s say if I go to LA to study, it’s not going to be the same. There are not going to be all these programs.

For Estrella, when she is at dancing she is with her tocayos, that feeling of being with others just like you. There are no explanations to be given, no judgements, and no sense of outsider; rather, 11 Millones transforms into a space of home and familia.

Hay que bonito es mi tierra

Graciela talked about what it was like when she put on her Mariachi traje, ready to perform out in the community. There is no mistaking her cultural pride, which resonates when she is dressed up in her traje (Mariachi outfit). Holding her guitar on stage, singing songs of her abuelos she has never met and from a country that birthed her parents, she talked about her connection to pride.

Basically pride, I feel pride because when you are on stage, before going up you are really nervous, thinking about what if this happens? Like sometimes my greatest fear is not knowing the notes, but it’s if my pick is going to fall down.

“What do you feel when you are walking in the parade, when others see you?”

I feel happiness, pride. I also like it not just because of how I feel but because of how the people watching us feel. I see how they react when we play. It shows a lot of people want their culture to be heard. They want to be out there, to be themselves. and when they see us perform, it is a sense of relief. Like saying my culture is thriving here. A Sense of pride. A familiarity.

Before 11 Millones de Sueños, our culture was hidden. Everyone felt like a little enclosed, like in early 2000s you felt, “This is America, you have to be this way,

to act this way.” But once they found this group of people, it's changing everything, you are becoming more open, you don't just have to be American, you can be who you are. You can still work hard and get a great career while being yourself and being proud of who you are.

Para mi Alas se me hace bonito porque lo hacemos es bailamos y bailamos en frente de la gente y nosotros estamos representando nuestro México porque nuestro Presidente que no nos gusta los Mexicanos mejor puede mirar que estamos bailando por México. Vine a Estados Unidos y encontré un ballet folklórico y me gusta porque estamos representando Mexico. Estamos representando otro país aquí. (Juan Diego)

“Our youth are the future of this country, all of us are good, we have met a lot of good people and we believe in the children of our future,” says Paola.

Quando sueñe el Mariachi el mundo canta

Taken from Mariachi Vargas' performance and song “Cuando Sueñe El Mariachi El Mundo Canta,” the emotion of the words speaks to the emotional uplift that people feel in their soul when they hear the song of Mariachi. The title of this song translates as “When Mariachi Performs, the World Sings.” When the youth of 11 Milliones take the stage of Marichi, a pride resonates and fills the air that is soul provoking. With their trajes and instruments in hand, these youth transform to cultural pillars of power.

I feel that I am professional because when I play Mariachi, people look at me and they treat me good when I am in the Mariachi suit. They tell me you play good, you sing good, all good stuff. When I am in the parade, people that I don't even know, they smile at me. Being in Mariachi, I got a new nickname. My dad, he calls me charo or charrito. When my dad calls me charro, that means he's proud. I feel like I am in two worlds; in school, they see me as a trouble kid, and in 11 Millones de Sueños, they clap and see me as really good.

Fabian talks about the importance of preserving the music of Mariachi. These youth are carrying musical legacy forward in a space where it was nonexistent. There was a time when you could only capture the music of Mariachi from behind closed doors on Sunday mornings as families gathered to eat together. Now the sounds of Mariachi are heard in

our parades, school events at community performances and blaring out of the homes as youth practice.

What I see in 11 Millones de Sueños since I also have two of my younger brothers in there, I see that it is a great program for them. Like my dad says, I would rather have them there than in the streets, and it is also good that you are bringing the Mariachi back because nowadays it is all rap, hip hop, and corridos, but it is good that kids are growing up to do what we do. Mariachi, it's what we do more common in Mexico. I actually wanted to be in it. I am proud of my brother. I am so glad you are bringing Mariachi. It is amazing seeing my brother on the news. It is really special, seeing people say they saw my brother. I am really proud of him.

La danza y mi alma

“La danza ha sido una guía para los jóvenes” (Zenon, personal communication, January 28, 2017).

Zenon sees the danza as a cultural road map for the lives of these children and their parents. For many, the danza connects both the parents and the children to a country that is home to their soul but not a physical home they know. Dancing keeps the memories of parents they had as children alive in the United States. For children, they have the experience of living their parents' dreams. The dream of reclaiming identity, the dream of dancing many couldn't afford, and the dream of seeing their children fall in love with the country of their alma. For Guadalupe, seeing her son dance gives her a joy that she has carried since childhood. She explained that she had always dreamt of dancing in Mexico but was never able to do so as a young girl, not in the same way that her son is getting to dance on stage.

In Mexico, I always wanted to dance, I only got to dance in the school but never had a chance to do anything like this. When I see my son dance, I feel that he has the opportunity to keep his culture and that he has the blood of Mexican parents and that he keeps his language and his culture. I am emotional to keep this program going. These youth are the next generation.

Libros, libros y más libros

One of the most significant programs of 11 Millones de Sueños is the connection to supporting academic learning embedded in the cultural arts programs. Every week, the youth have the opportunity to attend tutoring during, before, or after their arts classes. The purpose of this piece is to give the youth a safe space to learn while in the midst of community. When we began to find ways to bring tutoring to the youth, Kelly Delaney from University of San Francisco decided connect her teacher learning class to our nonprofit, 11 Millones de Sueños. Students from the teacher education program come as part of their class requirements to read and engage with our youth in learning together.

Kelly explains that “11 Millones de Sueños is a place where kids are not only learners, but teachers. Students learn that their teachers are also learning and that school should be a place where students and teachers work together toward common goals.” She further explains the connection of the arts and learning.

The program at 11 Millones de Sueños is a place where youth are able to discover their own power and see more clearly the precious value of their families and their community. In addition to the huge academic gains in reading and writing English that we have seen with kids in the program, students gain confidence and a sense of pride based on knowledge about their own culture and its importance in the wider community. They learn about the history and legacy of their traditions and their connections to other communities around the country and around the world. Many also develop leadership skills as they mentor peers and younger kids.

Rosa describes the tutoring process as a life line for the youth in the program.

Es impresionante como estos niños estan cambiando con el ayuda de la programa de tutoria. Nuestros hijos estan agrando confianza para leer y estudiar. Estan aprendiendo y creciendo un amor para el estudio. Es diferente el ayuda que reciben en nuestra programa de 11 Millones de Sueños y sus experiencias en escuela, porque aqui vemos que los niños son valorados.

It is amazing how are kids are changing with the help of the tutoring program. Our kids are gaining confidence to read and study. They are falling in love with studying. The help they receive in our program of 11 Milliones de Sueños is different from that of school because here we see these kids are valued for who they are.

CHAPTER V: EN ESTE PAIS, MI PAIS, TU PAIS

“Papeles no son nada, papeles se rompen facil, no significan nada”. “No hay nadie más grande Que Dios”. “We are in this world.” “Estamos representando a Mi México”. These words thread the woven rebozo that is wrapped around the testimonios of these guerreros. With multiple layers of stories that give color to sadness, fear, isolation, depression, and separation contrasted with orgullo, familia, alegria, musica, danza, y cultura weave the complexities these undocumented and mixed-status heroes shared in this study. Their blood bleeds a legacy of struggle, strength, respect, and sacred traditions that fill the soul. Living on conquered land that was once Mexico, these youth fight emotional battles to prove themselves in a society that has vilified the hard work of a community that has given their sweat and compromiso to make this country what it is. From the fields to the courtroom, Mexicans in this country have given so much to fight for land that was taken from them. Now, they fight against the criminalization of a culture that was built on the values of humildad, respecto, fe, y amistad. In every home that I entered for this study, cuadros de La Virgen de Guadalupe y Dios were present. Blessing themselves on stage before a performance or wearing their cross on their neck, these youth represent all that is goodness, yet their spirits are struggling to fight the battle to prove their humanity with a set of papers. Edgar said it perfectly when he looked me straight in the eye and said, “Papeles no son nada, somos humanos primero.” His words put the exclamation point on this research study; he captured the human spirit, the beauty of who they are as children and leaders in this community.

This research was a gift to hear the voices of these youth and maestros who have paved the way for a cultural revolution to happen within the hearts and spirits of these

children. Zenon has opened a lock that may have never been pried open with the danza. Only he could do this—he has transformed the spirit of these children to believe in who they are as Mexicans in this country. The Mariachi pride alive in the songs sung by the youth of 11 Millones de Sueños has captured the spirit of a country to which many cannot return. Seeing the zapateados and hearing the words of Mariachi transforms the spirit to a place of cultural orgullo that cannot be found American culture. “It’s in our blood, it’s who we are, even if we don’t know we have it or haven’t been able to celebrate here in the United States, once these doors are open, it’s there, it’s in our blood” (Gilbert Arriaga, personal communication, April 9, 2017). This is what has happened with these children in 11 Millones de Sueños. These youth have dreams in this country. There are more than 11 Million dreams in the United States waiting to happen that have been put on hold because of papers or no papers. We cannot get stuck seeing our youth, categorizing them as undocumented or documented; there is so much more to consider than the societal label that is given to them.

This research study has given me the gift to hear testimonios del corazon. Every word they spoke was intentional. I observed them to be eager to share in this process. In many ways, they were eager to tell their stories. It was if each of them understood the importance of their stories as a platform for others to witness their experiences. Their tears were razors of pain they suffered at the hands of sheer racism and intolerance. The dehumanization and looming fear they suffer is for many incomprehensible. Like the death of a loved one, you only understand if you have lived it. Yet at the same time, these youth are cultural heroes of strength, pride, and talents that often are dormant in the darkness of society’s ignorance to appreciate who they are. Emotionally, these youth

wear shields of familial and community protection that helps them to weather the long-term storm of racism, fear, trauma, and undocu-fear. At the same time, they are taking the stage to chase away these emotional storms through cultural interventions of healing, using traditional medicine of zapateados and musica. What better therapy can these youth have than being able to claim their identity in a land that has also demanded they turn their back on the border, which for many has given hope to their family? The heavens have opened for this research dream to happen.

Written on papeles, these words speak to generations of Mexican pride that have given us life in this tierra. My own mother, who was a product of segregation, my great-grandfather, who abandoned his life in Mexico, and my own childhood struggle growing up in Southern Texas has left marks on my soul that have forced me to face my own roots of cultural abandonment. The words of these children captured hidden stories that I didn't know existed in my own soul. I found moments of *tocayo* in this process with the participants. As a third-generation Mexicana, born in rural Texas, I connected deeply to moments of the emotional undocu-struggle. My own emotional struggle is that of feeling a stranger in the tierra of Tejas—even as my mom repeatedly told me I was third-generation on this land. For me, each generation represented a deep wound that left me disconnected and incomplete from who I truly am. The racism and isolation I felt left me confused of who I was in this country. I knew I was not accepted as Mexican, and I constantly worked to prove myself as good enough. Hearing the words of these children at times echoed a similar pain I carried. There were many times in my life where I felt this *tierra* was not mine, even though the blood of my ancestors mark the land of Tejas. In this research, I celebrated the *tocayo* moments that the participants and I shared to

expose nuestra corazones Mexicana. They put their hearts on the line to share their words, and what they gave to this process is significant for the field of research and beyond.

Psychological and Racial Battlegrounds of Trauma

There is no ignoring that both undocumented and mixed-status youth are impacted by the fear of deportation or family separation. Critical to this research are the findings of this research study, which speak directly to the emotional turmoil with which both of these populations live. It was clear that in all their stories, the participants spoke of fear, distress, anxiety, or worry that they carried as either undocumented or mixed status. The experience of a battleground is contextualized as the daily battles that they are having to fight against at all levels.

The testimonios of these participants, their parents, and maestros of the programs all documented fear as a factor in the lives of these youth. Important to this study was the glaring similarities of fear, stress, anxiety, depression, anger, and worry that both the mixed-status youth and the undocumented youth discussed. The mixed-status youth in this study, as compared to the DACA and undocumented youth, did not have less fear than those who were born in Mexico. Both seemed to exhibit similar heightened emotional experiences as they both relied on their parents as their primary attachment. In this study, the qualitative testimonios of participants did not give any indication that United States citizenship for children is a shield protecting against emotional distress in mixed-status families. Rather, what was shared by these youth participants is that they carry a similar fear that centers around their family's wellbeing, the safety of their parents, and the fear of being targeted by racism, political dehumanization, and the ICE

villain. Some had to grow up preparing for an imagined forced separation from their parents. Their childhood was stripped of the innocence of believing that their life was protected. Rather, they had to consider early on what it would mean to lose their parents suddenly. They lived with this monster of fear looming in their home, not knowing when, how, or what, but awaiting the what if. This uncertainty is emotionally impactful to a child. The long-term fear or anxiety they spoke of is certainly a mental health concern. From a clinical perspective, this can be considered to be chronic trauma. As the literature discussed, this cultural trauma strips away the dignity of these youth to believe in all they are as Mexican Americans, forcing them into a spiral of identity and familial crisis on different levels. While for some it is not visible in their physical presentation, what they are carrying emotionally is alarming.

Graciela in many ways a parentified child. She has had to grow up quickly as a result of her parents explaining she had to be prepared and responsible to act if La Migra should take them. There is the hidden box she knows exactly where to find. Fabian wonders what can happen to his parents as they leave for work every day. Esperanza cries daily without her parents by her side, forced to be separated by a border wall, eight hours from each other. Emily repeatedly justifies that she is part of this world and that she matters when talking about her immigration status. While she is a citizen, it is clear that she is more connected to the emotions of undocumented status. Edgar tiene miedo of what will happen if he is separated from his brother. I saw this for all of the citizen youth in this study. Their daily life experiences mirrored that of perhaps their parents, a fear of sudden separation or deportation. Rosa shared that her daughter, who is a citizen, is extremely afraid, as she is “Mexican because her parents are Mexican, so she feels she

can be deported.” The constant anxiety and experiences of trauma are a concern for the mental health of this population of children and their parents.

No longer can we ignore the suffering that we are hearing so many talk about. Since the election, there has been a greater recognition of the fear this community of children struggle with daily. The urgency is in the mental health community, recognizing undocu-trauma as a crisis. There must be a societal response to address and recognize culturally rich interventions to support the emotional development of this community of children. No longer can these children suffer in silence; rather, there must be a significant push to directly recognize and address these emotional experiences as equally important as other forms of trauma that the literature discusses.

Exposing Trauma Narratives

For the undocumented students in this study, the chronic and collective trauma they have internalized is concerning. The fear they have about La Migra or witches coming for them is the true Chupacabra or monster they live with daily. The legendary folklore of the Chupacabra tells the story of a monster who lives in spaces that others cannot see. Under the covers or around the fire, stories of La Chupacabra ignite a fear that cannot be ignored, and at the same time, La Chupacabra cannot be seen until he finally comes to get you. For these children, La Migra is this same fear. Luz talked about a fear that she grew. For her personally, La Migra takes the form of witches. For Edgar, when he asked me about the title of my paper, he flatly stated “to me Trump is the monster.” This monster is the fear of forced separation from his family. For Edgar, the fear has grown so big that he now believes that if he is forced to leave his brother behind, “He might have to stay with people that could kill him because they wouldn’t love him as

much as his parents do, and then what would we do without him?” While this may seem illogical, this study points specifically to the real emotional crisis that these children live with. The clinical mental health symptoms that were present in their testimonios included fear, miedo, anxiety, worry, sadness, trauma, and depression. The clinical implications for this research are significant as they speak directly to the psychological impact that immigration status has on a child’s life. Most importantly, this study specifically understands the categories of trauma to which these children are exposed. The literature review identifies several categories of trauma. This research makes a connection to the trauma experienced by the undocumented and mixed-status youth participants in this study. A review of the clinical symptoms they experience in their testimonios as well as the narratives of societal stressors, they meet criteria for exposure to racial trauma; direct, indirect, and insidious trauma; cultural trauma; and intergenerational trauma. These trauma categories intersect with one another in lived experiences of these youth participants and their parents. An analysis to further understand how undocumented and mixed-status youths’ emotional, psychological, and societal experiences meet criteria for trauma exposure is further explored.

Racial trauma theory speaks directly to the emotional spiral of which these participants and their parents spoke. Racial trauma has recently risen out of Carter and Helms’s (2009) work to understand how racism directly impacts individuals in a way that is psychologically altering and impactful. Carter (2007) defines racial trauma differently from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in that the

core stressor of trauma is emotional pain rather than threat to one’s life, distinguishing traumatic stress from PTSD and encounters with racism must be

experienced as emotionally painful, sudden and uncontrollable. These reactions are expressed as intrusion (recurring thoughts), avoidance (push away the events) and a cluster of symptoms: depression, anger, low self-esteem, physical reactions and may have psychological impairment. (p. 4)

For the participants in this study, their lives as Mexican youth in a society that has criminalized them or their parents for being undocumented is a consistent theme of racism that has had a significant impact on their emotional development. Edgar worries about his loss of humanity in the effort for others to justify papeles as more important than that of his family's well being in the United States. Fabian repeatedly discusses the inequities and racism he has lived with as a mixed-status youth in the United States. Graciela shares that she could not fully embrace who she was and is as Mexican until she entered the program of 11 Milliones de Sueños. From the time she was young until high school, she had to hide her orgullo and pride of who she was as a first-generation Mexican citizen.

This sense of living a double life and hiding identity is an emotional trauma; having to lose cultural identity often happens unassumingly. It's a forced assimilation by harsh societal standards of inequity and racism that bleeds into an emotional crisis of identity confusion. For these participants, racial trauma in the flesh are the societal threats against their culture, immigration status, family, and identity that are all wrapped in a blanket of shame that is forced upon them by outside forces. Within their families, these youth are strong, their parents are pillars of strength and faith. These foundations of cultural wealth exist to counter the trauma that they journey with and stand against. While it is true that these youth and families have strong internal foundations to weather

the storms of trauma that they come up against, it is still critical to acknowledge the psychological elements they battle against. These are the battlefields that mixed-status and undocumented youth navigate in their physical and emotional process of development.

Another connection to the literature and finding in this research is that of the impact of migration on the psyche and development of these youth. Perez Foster (2005) discussed psychological distress happening at four unique points in the migration process for unaccompanied children migrating to the United States, pre-migration, during migration, continued rejection, and suffering while seeking asylum and survival as an immigrant. In this study, both the mixed-status and undocumented children showed similar patterns of psychological impact. Specifically, the two areas that Perez Foster (2005) discussed as stages three and four, continued rejection and survival as an immigrant. While Perez Foster's study specified continued rejection and suffering while seeking asylum, our own citizen children reported feeling continued experiences of rejection and suffering. In stage four, survival as an immigrant, both groups of children shared the struggles they have gone through at such young ages to thrive in this country. Julian explains that in school he struggles with being bullied for being Mexican. He cries remembering the story in school where he was told he would never be anything in life. His internalization of this message is that I am not good enough as a Mexican male. Further, he explains while he is a citizen child, he feels connected to the fear of being undocumented due his parents' status. Emotionally he does not distinguish a difference between his status and the status of his parents. Both he and Fabian talked about the continuous rejection they feel in their testimonios. Luz, Graciela, Estrella, and Emily also

narrated experiences of rejection as Mexican youth. These incidents have been continuous throughout their development. As a result, their developmental process is challenged with the psychological stressors they are faced with over time. Clearly, they are not isolated incidents but a continuation throughout their childhood and adolescence.

These accumulated stressors are significant to understand and advance research with this population of children as these stressors wear down these youth and their families over time and increase their vulnerability in our communities. Abrego (2011) suggested that their vulnerability increases as they are on the front lines of being detained and deported. All the participants in this study spoke to this element of vulnerability. Both at school and in the community, they encounter experiences where they are cornered into spaces of isolation, fear, rejection, or suffering that often can seem invisible to others. However, what they have held are experiences that live in the soul. As a result, “their lives are fraught with feelings of fear, anxiety, uncertainty, and guilt” (Gonzales, Suarez-Orozco, & Dedios-Sanguinetti, 2013, p. 2).

All of the youth participants in this study reported at least one incident of trauma that they had identified as something scary impacting their life as a result of immigration status. In most of the testimonios, there were multiple incidents that they discussed as scary events surrounding being either an undocumented or a mixed-status child. Both groups reported similar incidents of fear, stress, anxiety, worry, and depression. Duran (2011) explained three categories of trauma:

Direct trauma occurs when the person is the target of the trauma. Indirect trauma involves a person’s response to difficult events sustained by another person with

whom the person identifies closely. Insidious trauma occurs when individuals are devalued by those in power, and these experiences usually persist throughout a lifetime and have a cumulative effect. (p.7)

For the youth in this study, their testimonios speak to experiences of all three forms of trauma: direct trauma, indirect trauma, and insidious trauma. When Luz ran into fields and had to hide because she was physically and psychologically scared of the witches in the field (La Migra) coming to get her, she was paralyzed both in the moment and in time. She was impacted directly by a fear that she still holds till this day, which is often triggered by seeing the field or a black police car. Estrella has suffered greatly at the kidnapping and forced separation of her parents. She cries regularly and lives with the consequence of having to be alone in the United States without them. This is an indirect trauma that obviously is impactful to her development and wellbeing. Finally, all the participants in this study have suffered from insidious trauma, which is described as having a “cumulative effect” (Duran, 2011). This cumulative effect is significant to understand and further study to understand chronic trauma on the development of these youth. Their wellbeing and academic learning must be examined through the lens of consequences of cumulative trauma for this population of children.

Undocu-trauma

A significant finding of this study addresses a gap in the literature and the mental health field that specifically addresses the trauma of being undocumented or part of a mixed-status family with loved ones who are undocumented. “While previous scholarship has drawn some important implications to experiences of stress among undocumented youth and young adults, to our knowledge no work has been done to

explicitly draw the link to mental and emotional health” (Gonzales, Suarez-Orozco, & Didios-Sanguinetti, 2013, p. 3).

There also is limited discussion around trauma that identifies the separation of parents and families as a result of status. The mixed-status child who is a citizen but has an undocumented parent must be understood beyond their life as a citizen in the United States. There also is limited discussion around trauma that identifies the separation of parents and families as a result of status. Cuadra (2009) vividly wrote,

Our newest citizens, the Latino children, live in constant fear and terror that their mother or father will be taken, will disappear, and will never be seen again. They carry and express this terror daily both verbally and with their actions. They take it to school with them daily, to bed with them every night, and it is constantly present in every interaction they have with others. The level of chronic stress and fear experienced is what anxiety disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are made of. (p. 32)

While it is clear that trauma exists in this community and can be categorized into varying subsets of clinical definitions of trauma, there is not one trauma that specifically accounts for the intense and pervasive, ongoing fear of being undocumented. In addition, the combination of fear, accumulated emotional stressors of political criminalization, racism targeted at immigration status, and the psychological symptoms of threats or physically being separated from one’s family are not addressed in other trauma categories. While we can adapt and fit the symptoms these children experience in other categories, it is imperative that the mental health field address this specific trauma of our youth. For this reason, I have developed the term undocu-trauma to specifically name the trauma these

children are feeling and have spoken of in this study. Concern for the trauma this community of children are living with cannot be separated from the advocacy work being done to push for fair immigration policies.

There must be an urgent and direct response to further understand and address the long-term trauma and emotional stressors that these children live with. Levine (1997) shared that the consequences for these children to perform daily tasks as a result of trauma can be significant. The need for these children to feel safe is critical to understand as a basic need to their wellbeing. When their family is constantly under threat of being separated or deported, there is a clear threat to their life as they know it. That safety is not present as others understand it. Even on the calmest of days, the reality of what they live with must be understood as a variable of fear that is always looming, impacting their ability to feel fully feel safe. In essence, they have a false sense of security that they co-exist with. At times, they may not think about these issues, pushing them down only to flare up by triggers that weave in and out to impact their emotional stability.

Basic Needs

Another emotional symptom of wellbeing that rose out of the participants' testimonios addressed the basic needs of their families. In the trauma dialogues with undocumented and mixed-status youth, this research underscores understanding the basic needs that are necessary for their healthy emotional development. Discussions around the hard work of their parents was recognized in their stories. Their testimonio narratives admired their parents as hard workers. At the same time, they struggled with the reality that their parents had to work long hours and sacrifice spending time with them. Some parents had to work two jobs, others were limited in being able to go on outings due to

status, which also limited their time on the road, afraid of retenes or border patrol checks. The mothers in the study talked about working long hours to give their children a future. Manuel is in Mexico, struggling to go out to work on the other side of the border, risking his safety each day to do so. As a young girl, Graciela remembers her mother having only 20 dollars to last a week for her family. Rosa examines income more deeply, recognizing the inhumanity children and families suffer through the high cost of living in the Bay Area and its impact on healthy development.

El hecho es que hoy estaba analizando porque estamos dehumanizando? Por que estamos viendo el costo de vida carismo en una locura. Para mi el salud mental para mi es establicacion de papa y mama. Necesitan emociones estables y los que mas nos afecta es la economía. En el area de la costa desafortunadamente nuestra familias viven inhumanamente porque es una casa para compartir con tres or cuatro families.

All of the participants talked about a career or obtaining higher education to give back to their family in the future. Graciela shares she is struggling to finish school here in the United States, even if it means being separated from her parents so she can help them “survive.”

In the process of survival, the participants in this study also uncover faith as a weapon on the battlefields. When I was speaking to Juan Diego about his name being protected and changed in this study for confidentiality, he quickly chose a name to use. “Can you please give me the name of Juan Diego in your paper because I believe in La Virgencita and in Diegito. Juan Diego. I am writing a play right now about him in school. Yes, that is the name I want.” On December 12th, I watched these youth participants

participate in the Virgen de Guadalupe celebration at our local church, rising early at five in the morning to be at the mañanitas or mass. Graciela danced an Aztec dance, crowded around others remembering their childhood in Mexico on this day. Tears streamed down her face, sharing with me she wished she could be home with her parents, but at the same time, she was grateful to be dancing for “Nuestra Virgen.” All the parents in the study also referred to their faith as part of their cultural wealth and ability to withstand daily challenges. Their faith can be understood as a weapon used to fight on the battlefield. Oraciones, velas, faith, Nuestra Virgen, Misa, and prayers of their abuelas are all mentioned in the testimonios as elements of hope.

Trump, Witches, La Migra, and Historias de Mi Alma

When the conception of this study began several years ago, I entered the space with an intention to expand and further advance this important study with undocumented and mixed-status youth. At the same time, I had an increased hope that our country was on the verge of significant immigration reform. I was not prepared for the rise of Trump and finally the election of Trump at the time I began the qualitative process of this research study. The rawness of what the participants were feeling was evident in their testimonios. All of the youth participants and the parents of the study spoke specifically about Trump, connecting his name to the heightened fear they were experiencing. Juan Diego shared that “Trump is not greater than God. He made me.” Graciela’s mother has begun filling her hidden box with all the papers that are needed for her daughter to prepare should she be deported. This scary feeling of what can happen from one night to the next sits on the shoulders of Trump at this moment. While it is true that Obama had an increased number of deportations and separated many families under his presidency,

the heightened criminalization of immigrants in this country has led to them suffering a greater setback with a president who many feel does not recognize their humanity. The participants in this study spoke to the clarity of the emotional escalation that has happened in their lives during the era of Trump.

All the participants in the study also alluded to Trump or ICE in their narratives. Important to understand in this study is the internalization of these images as real threats to their psyche. Luz talked about ICE as witches, and Juan Diego believes that “Trump is the monster” he fears at night. Each of them talked about the fear they have of ICE agents enforcing sudden raids or deportation. Graciela has decided to be an ICE agent as a career to “help” other families from being separated. Parents in the study shared concerns about the criminalization of them as Mexicans and fear about what the next four years will bring to their community. They explained that people look at them differently now when they walk down the street. “It’s as if they have permission to treat us bad now,” shared Rosa.

The literature discusses the immigrant movement of activism that happened pre-Trump around the undocumented and unafraid in their fight for immigration reform. The activism and advocacy of undocumented youth demonstrates how tired they are of living with vast inequities and limited opportunities afforded to them because of their citizenship status (Suarez, 2010). With hopes that this movement continues, there also appears to be a caution with Trump in office. The youth of this study did not speak to any engagement on the political level to fight against the policies of homeland security. The Dreamer participant in this study specifically shared that she is hoping to attend a college that gives sanctuary for Dreamer students so she will not be threatened for deportation.

The fear of Trump, ICE, and the immigration monster that lurks in underground spaces is real and growing in the first 100 days of the Trump presidency. At the same time, these youth participants all echo that 11 Milliones and the arts helps them to forget about the Trump factor when they are in class or performing. The fear of Trump becomes a shadow when the cultural arts are infused into the daily lives of these youth.

Undocu-trauma, the Brain Connection, and Escuela

One of the most significant elements of this research is to connect the testimonios of these youth to understand trauma brain connection and its relationship to the neurological development of these children and their academic learning. As stated in the literature review, trauma theory explores the impact of trauma on development:

Early trauma affects the neurological development of young children, who may not be able to develop the neuronal structures necessary to process information, regulate emotions, and categorize experiences. This can lead to poor impulse control, aggression, difficulty in interpersonal relationships, and poor academic performance because of their inability to concentrate. (Blaustein, 2005)

In the work done with attachment theory and the advancement of understanding the trauma and attachment, Liberman (2011) further explained the potential consequences of untreated trauma on development.

When their trauma goes unaddressed, children are at greater risk for school failure; anxiety and depression and other post-traumatic disorders; alcohol and drug abuse, and, later in life, engaging in violence similar to that to which they were originally exposed. (p. 42)

The literature clearly lays out the importance of addressing trauma as part of early interventions to be most impactful. The literature also bridges the impact that trauma in children can have on their learning process. How the brain is able to take in and process information is dependent on a stress-free brain. While exchanging a brief conversation in passing on a plane about my work to understand undocu-trauma, a neuroscientist from Stanford University shared with me that “a stressed brain is not a functioning brain; it cannot learn under chronic stress.” As we departed, she stated, “Make sure you let others know what I shared.” The literature lays out concerns that are directed at children’s poor problem solving skills and the difficulty they have thinking things through. The trauma impact can make them hypervigilant, and they can have a difficult time self-regulating behaviors and emotions. Other learning challenges that can be connected to trauma brain are memory problems, disorientation, and loss of objectivity (Ziegler, 2003). Significant in the findings of this study is the attention the participants gave to traumatic experiences in school that have impacted them. These compounded negative and traumatic events in school, ignited by racism, bullying, and specific incidents related to their immigration status, pushes for us to understand how these painful experiences impact this community of children in their academic development.

Escuela, We Are in This World

In this study, it was clear that escuela or school was also a critical part of the testimonio dialogues and theme that rose out of the participants’ sharing. The environment of school in the lives of these participants were laced with experiences of bullying, racism, and learning challenges as well as an experience of learning. In this study, all the participants shared that they entered the school system as a second language

learner. They all were placed in the English learner program and have had to stay in the program until they are reclassified as English proficient. For the three boys in my study, they all continue to be in the ELD program, one a senior, one a seventh grader, and one in fifth grade. They have all remained unclassified, meaning they cannot advance to regular classes at their grade level. For the four girls in my study, two have reclassified or tested out of being in ELD, and two remain classified in grades fifth and tenth. All of them shared they are frustrated at not being able to reclassify as there is often a stigma associated with being in the Spanish learning classes. Estrella stated, “When we are in these classes, it’s like the teachers don’t teach us that good, it’s like they don’t think we can learn that much or at least not like the other kids, so we don’t really learn much, we just stay the same.”

Out of the seven youth participants, six of them identified one or more experiences at school that provoked fear, anger, or stress. Of these stories, all of them surrounded themes of bullying or teasing that made fun of or challenged their immigration status or that of their parents. When Fabian told the story of having to protect the Salvadoran student who was getting bullied by kids making fun of him for his culture and status, he jumped in to defend him. At the same time, he also was defending himself, his friends, family, and community of friends who have grown up being teased as Mexicans in school. Both Emily and Juan Diego talk about the bullying they endure on the playground regularly. Emily has to stand up to convince others of her humanity, saying, “we are in this world” Juan Diego fights his way in school to hide that he is undocumented when others pick on him for assuming he is from Mexico. Juan has had to fight in school to defend himself as others have picked on him regularly because of being

“Mexican.” Luz left the private school she attended because of the flagrant racism she fought against for three years until she could take it no more in the middle of her senior year. She preferred to leave in the middle of her senior year “than to take one more day of struggle. I am losing sleep, feeling more depressed, and I can’t fight it no more, I am starting to feel so depressed I can’t take it.” Graciela explains that the students’ comments about her needing to pack her bags and go back to Mexico are making her angry. Graciela explains that while she is a strong student, she fights against those she has to constantly prove herself to as a Latina Advanced Placement student. These macro and micro-aggressions at all levels are impactful to these youth in many ways. In particular, it is significant to note that five out of the seven participants reported that they were struggling in school with learning.

When asked if there was someone who took action to help them, it was clear that they often navigated these moments of bullying and/or racism alone. In three of the participants’ stories, they shared racial aggressions they experienced by teachers or principals. Three of the five participants shared that they had witnessed their child experience a racially provoked experience in school specifically related to status. “It’s a very difficult time for our children in our school.” There was a sense that neither the child nor the parent felt that the school was a space where they were fully accepted and had to act or navigate these spaces alone or with limited support. The literature discusses these unmet needs as an issue to be addressed; there is an unmet need for services among those who are most vulnerable as well as an awareness of unmet needs among teachers, health professionals, and others who are in a position to help. Other researchers have made similar recommendations (Glick, 2010; Massey & Bartley, 2005; Viruell-Fuentes et al.,

2012). The fact that the youth participants in this study focused on the challenges in school that include lowered academic expectations reinforces that for these participants, school is a challenging space for them to be in both emotionally and at times physically. An examination of how these youth disconnect from school as a warm and welcoming place coupled with the research on the trauma brain identifies significant barriers in the educational pipeline for these Mexican youth. Julian explained it best when he described his school experience and compared it to his time at 11 Milliones de Sueños.

Mariachi has helped me the most with trust. In Mariachi, you have trust because if you do something, they won't laugh at you. If you mess up, they won't make fun of you, they will help you. In school, if you fall or you mess up, right away they tell you they suck, or they start cracking up on you or make fun of you. But not in Mariachi. Mariachi is pretty much like a family.

This study explores cultural arts as a healing that can be significant in steering our youth youth into positive academic experiences stemming from the arts.

Cultura Cura, Una Temascal con 11 Milliones de Sueños

One of the most exciting and significant findings of this study is centered on the exploration of the cultural arts as a healing space for this population of youth and their families. This specific study sets out to examine and understand how the cultural arts can become a temascal of healing. A temescal or sweat lodge allows for individuals to sweat out their impurities; the sweat is a healing for their body, relieving all the toxins and stress that has accumulated. More than just sweat, the temescal is a cocoon of healing, a journey of the soul. 11 Milliones replicates that journey of the soul, not just for the participant but for those who witness the youth and families. A danza memory, the música of Mariachi, a smile, un grito, a circle of community, Mexico—all that is 11 Milliones de Sueños is transformative. For the youth, they are strengthened by the

community of family, the unity of themselves as a group, the celebration of their cultural identity with pride. The literature supports the need to strengthen children through culture and identity. Cultural resiliency theory speaks to the importance of culture as a source of healing in communities of color. “Immigrants’ cultural traditions can foster a sense of ethnic and cultural identity that protect against mental illness and substance abuse and promotes academic and psychological resilience” (Cardoso & Thompson, 2010, p. 1). Critical race theory grounds the testimonios of these participants in their belief in themselves as proud cultural units with families that thrive together, standing strong against the daily societal threats. In reality, many undocumented children are extraordinarily resilient in the face of immense hardship. Therefore, mental health interventions for this group ought to be approached from the standpoint of strengthening their capacity to shape narratives of identity that include but are not restricted to their undocumented status (Gonzales, Suárez-Orozco, & Dedios-Sanguinetti, 2013). Yosso’s (2005) critical race theory embraces the tides of racism, societal inequities, and emotional struggle of these participants with a counter strength of cultural wealth that is at the core of each of the youth and participants in this study. Each describe a resurgence or reclaiming of their culture as they entered 11 Millones de Sueños.

It was clear in the words of the participants that their participation in the program was significant in supporting the healing of this fear and attack on their identity as Mexican youth in a rural community. Furthermore, the healing in the program through the arts has been developed as an intervention in the community to strengthen the identity of the youth, to increase self esteem, to develop community and safe spaces, and to provide individual and collective advocacy for immigration and mental health stressors.

The purposeful model of using the culture arts as an intervention is necessary to expand in our mental health development of best practice multicultural models of therapy. We are at a time when new models of treatment for communities of color must seek to expand effective community practices that speak to the needs of the individuals and families who live there. 11 Millones de Sueños is clearly present as a space of *tocayo*, emotional sanctuary, and cultural resistance that allows for a deeper engagement of a cultural healing.

While there is minimal research that connects the cultural arts as a mental health intervention for Latino communities, it is clear that the literature underscores the importance of cultural arts for the wellness of the community. Both Mariachi and Folklorico are vessels of sensory and cultural healing that come alive in the soul, body, and mind. It's cultural medicine, a dose of connection to familia, canto, danza, cultura, orgullo, y historias de nuestra familia. Prieto (2016) reminds us of the importance for schools, nonprofits, and organizations to appreciate the impact that the cultural arts and danza can have in the reclaiming of identity and committing ourselves to social justice practices. A similar thread of work being done with El Sistema is replicated with 11 Millones de Sueños. Using music as a key to open doors, strengthen youth, and build teamwork is evident in the work of the Mariachi program. In 11 Millones de Sueños, Ballet Folklorico danza dreams are created by Zenon's work with the youth to bridge them to a culture many have never experienced. All the participants in this study point to the significant impact 11 Millones has had on their life.

Undocumented and Mixed-Status Cultural and Emotional Needs Theory for Latino Children

A final result of this research study was the development of a model that builds on the cultural and emotional needs of this population of children. The development of this model rose out of the testimonios of these youth and the significant contributions their narratives made in this research study. In particular, their voices have spoken for so many other youth who continue to live in silence and fear. Just as Maslow's hierarchy of needs discusses what is needed for self-actualization, this model understands the emotional and cultural needs of this community of children to rise as emotionally strong and secure youth in our community.

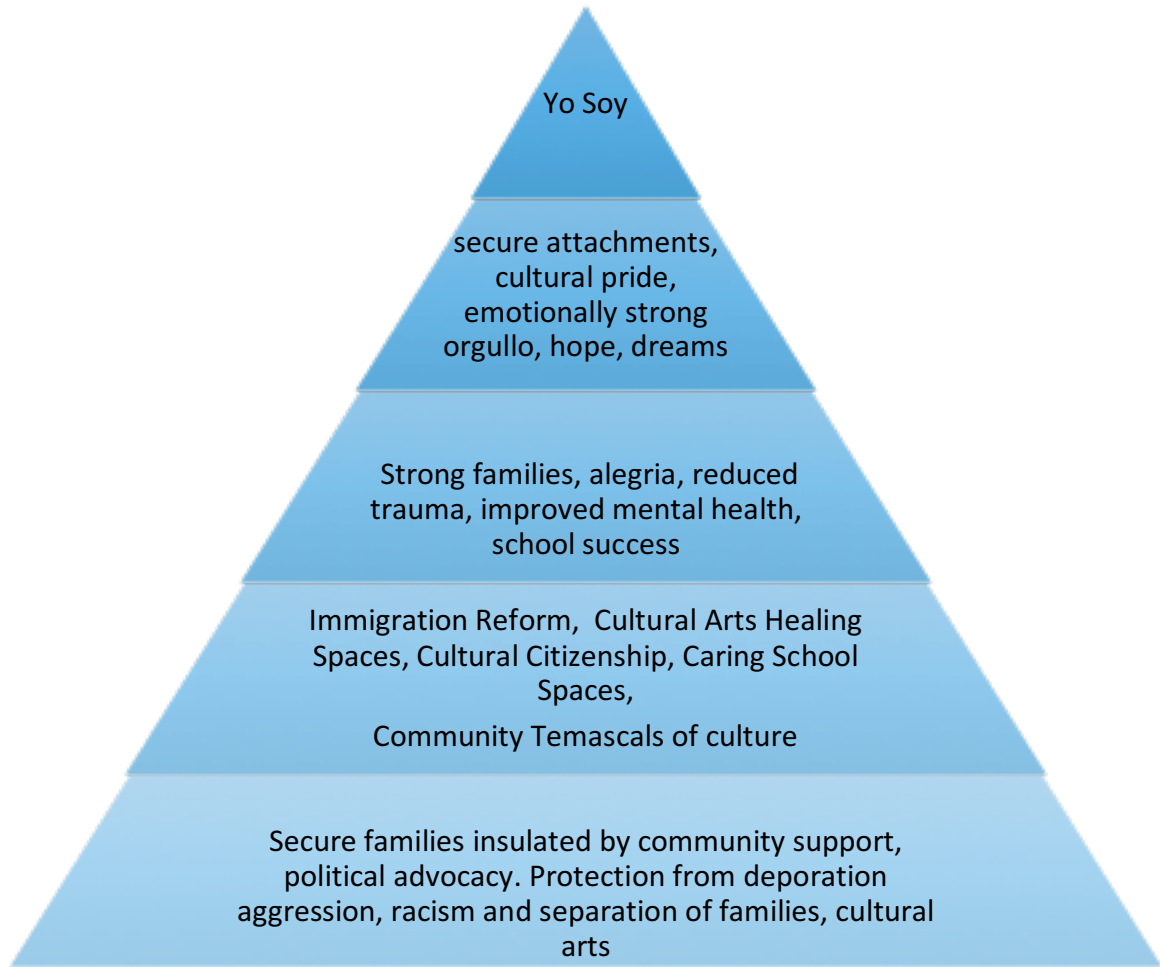


Figure 1. Undocumented and Mixed-Status Cultural and Emotional Needs Theory for Latino Children

At the basic level, the need for secure families, free from fear of deportation, is the foundation of these youth. Each participant's testimonios and experiences intersected with one another to connect the common worry they all share about forced separation from their primary caregivers, regardless of their status. Secure families that are insulated by community support and political advocacy give these youth the opportunity to see that others care. In addition, political advocacy is urgent and needed to protect the future of these children and their families. Immigration advocacy and resistance must

continue forward with courage as it has through time. We must rally against the social injustices and inequities that are ever present in 2017.

Protection from deportation, separation of families, and ongoing racism is critical for the emotional well being of both mixed-status and undocumented children. In this study, it was clear that the youth participants who held citizenship with undocumented parents carried the same fear as those youth who identified as undocumented. Significant trauma research understands that healthy child development happens when children have reduced stress and minimal fear. Undocumented and mixed-status children should not be subjected to constant fear of deportation for themselves or loved ones. This chronic fear can have long lasting effects, impacting their young lives and emotional well being into adulthood. Communities, nonprofits, arts programs, schools, churches, the mental health community, and individuals must respond to provide outreach, intervention, and direct programs that insulate and welcome these children and families. Undocu-trauma must be addressed with urgency. While we wait for larger policy changes to be addressed, communities, schools, and local governments should take action for these youth so that they feel safe in the neighborhoods in which they live.

Youth should have access to healthy food that all parents can afford. In the Bay Area, with the high cost of living many youth are living in inhumane conditions. It should be a basic human right that our children have healthy living conditions for their emotional well being, reducing stress and psychological stressors. Surrounding these youth at the basic level with culture, family, community, and support wraps a rebozo of strength around these youth. Finally, a recognition of their humanity is important and necessary regardless of status. These are the basic foundations of what the undocumented and

mixed-status children in this study explain is important to them. Equally important in this model is to understand that youth can move up and then back down based on societal factors that push against them.

The second tier of the model focuses on school environments and learning for these youth. In particular, it is of necessary importance that we develop and maintain caring schools for this emotionally vulnerable population of children. School cannot continue to function as usual without considering the support these youth need around learning, reducing emotional barriers, increasing access, and providing cultural connections in their learning experience. Schools must also reduce experiences of bullying for these youth in schools. Many do their best to show up every day despite the numerous challenges they are coping with, only to experience bullying for their culture or status. Schools have to build in new opportunities to have safe spaces, increased lunch or after school cultural arts programming, and more visible support for these youth. Finally, there must be an increase in community cultural arts programs that have an intentional purpose to use the arts as a healing space. Bringing in danza, musica, drumming, art, and more can inspire the souls and cultural identities of these youth. A pride of who they are is given permission to shine in these spaces. As a result, their testimonios are shared in spaces of safety. It is here at the second level that these children begin to dance away their fear as the schools and community are directly responding to their emotional and cultural needs.

As these youth get stronger, the third level of the model introduces the development of stronger youth leaders with positive self-esteem. It is here that families continue to be stronger with all the support that they are receiving. In 11 Milliones, we

have seen the youth grow into strong community leaders, serving at food pantries, at church, in school, and in the community. There is a true happiness that radiates when they have a space to share in community and find relief from the trauma they experienced. These elements all build up to these youth having secure attachments and strong relationships with loved ones. Through the ongoing cultural support that is offered, we see a cultural pride alive in these youth. When they dance, the stage lights up with the legacy of danza that has been gifted to this community by Zenon. Taking the stage to perform Mariachi, our youth sing with an orgullo that comes from the heart. Their music is alive with the gritos of many generations that have sung before them. Hope and dreams take the stage of their mind as they begin to consider all the possibilities that await them. No longer are they hidden in the shadows; rather, their strength is reflected in the positive way they see themselves. Rising to the top is the actualization of them as youth with power and cultural pride; they can now say, “*Yo Soy!*” [I am.] This work is dedicated to turning undocu-trauma into undocu-hope with a specific focus on improving the emotional and physical well being of both undocumented and mixed-status children, youth, and their families.

Future Implications for Expanded Research

Testimonio as methodology has expanded new ways of engaging and understanding participants in research. This qualitative method is particularly useful in understanding the lives and experiences of Latinos in the United States. This research study is possible because of testimonio. Expanded research with this population of children and their families is necessary and important. A collective effort with culturally competent mental health clinicians, cultural art programs, elders, advocates for

immigration reform, and academic researchers must continue to work together to understand the new frontiers of cultural and emotional needs for undocumented and mixed-status youth and their families.

Research must be continued and explored to better understand and develop the notion of undocu-trauma. It is urgent that the mental health field recognize the specific chronic and lasting trauma that these youth are living with in the shadows. Their mental health must be addressed in the fight for immigration reform. Furthermore, the political and societal damage that is being done to these children and their families must be discussed beyond political discourse; their mental health must be addressed as a crisis in this country. The vilification of these youth and their families cannot be ignored in the discourse of the impact that it is having on their wellbeing and development as children. Advocates, allies, professionals, and political circles must attend to the crisis of fear these children are living with that has escalated. We must push for fair and humane immigration practices that do not attempt to dehumanize our undocumented community.

Finally, we must continue to push for the ongoing development of cultural arts programs in communities that can support the cultural identity and development of these youth. The arts must be understood as a therapeutic intervention that improves the mental health of this community of children and their families. Funding and development of cultural arts must be understood as a necessity, not simply seen as an afterschool program. We must stop the invisible colonization that continues to happen in the minds of our youth—stripping them from experiencing and claiming their cultural identity with pride. The blood in their veins carries generations of cultural wealth that is pulsating and full of energy. However, this cultural wealth is often muted in the face of racism, chronic

emotional challenges, bullying, societal inequities, and limited opportunities for cultural expression. While the arts are not the only solution to a macro-problem of fear experienced by these children, it is critical to understand the cultural arts as a weapon for these youth to use on the battlefield they navigate. The testimonios of these guerreros (warriors) in this study highlight the power of culture in healing. They also give us the gift of understanding the healing powers of Mariachi, folklórico, danza, and comunidad as a temascal for the soul. The moments with them have been inspiring and life changing for me as a researcher. It is my hope that other youth can have the same opportunity to be swaddled with rebozos of strength, care, and cariño in their journey to be the warriors they are. Anzaldúa's words remind us of the cultural power we must stand with during this time in our history. Her words ring powerfully true for this research, our youth, and our families. "Though we tremble before uncertain futures... may we dance in the face of our fears." Guadalupe's words frame the spirit of the work of *11 Millones de Sueños*: "Hay nuevas generaciones que vienen. Lo que estamos sembrando estamos cosechando". (There are new generations that are coming. What we are planting is what will grow.) Moving forward in 2017 and beyond, we must commit to becoming sanctuary for one another, building cultural arts temescals as healing spaces for our Latino children and families. We must commit to turn undocu-fear into undocu-hope one dance at a time.

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