

**From Critical Theory to Community Action:
The Unrecorded Voices of Immigrant Latina/Indigenous Promotoras and Doulas**

By

Mariela Victoria Quesada Centeno

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The dissertation is approved by the following members of the Final Oral Committee:
Larissa Duncan, Associate Professor, Human Development and Family Studies (Chair)
Janean Dilworth-Bart, Professor, Human Development and Family Studies
Kristin Litzelman, Associate Professor, Human Development and Family Studies
Mary Louise Gomez, Professor, Curriculum and Instruction
Karen Menéndez Coller, Executive Director of Centro Hispano of Dane County
Araceli Alonso, Distinguished Lecturer, Gender and Women's Studies

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Dedication

To the women of my life...in the past, the present, and the future.

Acknowledgements

I feel a profound sense of gratitude for many people, some whose names or stories are written in these pages, and some whose influence are written in the story of my life. I believe gratitude is best expressed as a tender and binding offering, capable of touching the hearts of those involved. I want to extend what I have to offer to those who were indispensable during this journey: my words.

Gracias for holding me during all the times I was not able to do for myself. Now, I am ready to glide.

A mami y papi, porque en sus corazones nunca hubo dudas acerca mi camino.

Elena and Isabela, thank you for changing the path of my life. When you were born, I became a better human. You are the feathers of my wings.

A million drops of gratitude to my hazel-eyed partner. You provided groundedness to my path.

Thank you, serendipity for bringing to my life an open-hearted and clever advisor.

Gracias to the “*el sol que me quema,*” you provided a refuge and an escape for my dreams.

Gracias agentes de cambio. Les estaré eternamente agradecida. ¡Al infinito y más allá!

Finally, thank you stories for healing me and providing hope to their storytellers by way of the telling.

Abstract

The current state of maternal and child health equity and non-clinical care availability for Latina/Indigenous birthing families in the U.S. is deficient, directly impacting the beginning of life of the fastest growing ethnic group in the state of Wisconsin. This dissertation presents critical and exploratory research seeking to understand the personal and professional transformation of six immigrant Latina/Indigenous owners of the first maternal and child health cooperative in the state. They work as doulas and promotoras de salud (community health workers) in the midst of medical and public health systems ill-prepared to fully recognize them as key partners. The study uses life history narrative methodology to tell the stories of three important timelines for the promotoras (i.e., life agents), to include their emigrant, migrant, and immigrant identities, as these transitions are typically analyzed as separate events, and not as a continuum.

Using Roy Bhaskar and Margaret Archer's Critical Realism (CR) as the main theoretical frameworks, I reach the depths of what makes the life agents' process of transformation and new roles emancipatory. This research was also guided by Ignacio Martín-Baró's Liberation Psychology (LP), Paulo Freire's emancipatory pedagogy, and Orlando Fals-Borda's participatory action research, incorporating these theories from a non-White feminist perspective. Life history narrative was chosen as the methodological approach to position the narratives within time, place, and relational axis.

The resultant contribution of this study is an initial draft of the Model of Becoming. This model is an emergent blueprint to study processes of personal and collective transformation, and it is intended to be empirically tested in close collaboration with communities, specifically those whose stories are silenced or dismissed by structures of power.

Table of Contents

DEDICATION	i
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
LIST OF APPENDICES	ix
 GENERAL INTRODUCTION	
1. Key Foundations of this Research.....	1
2. Dissertation Outline.....	5
 CHAPTER ONE: Internal and External Context Informing this Research	
1. Positionality and Context.....	9
2. Need Statement	12
3. Literature Review: The Layered Accounts of Realities	14
4. Proposed Research Questions	24
 CHAPTER TWO. Theoretical Underpinnings	
1. Theoretical Foundations of Emergence	26
2. Theoretical Foundations of Liberation Psychology (LP)	27
3. Influential Schools of Thought Supporting Liberation Psychology	32
4. Critical Realism (CR): An Ontological Stance on Understanding	40
5. Making Critical Realism Methodologically Feasible	47
6. CR & LP: Bridging Geographical Boundaries	51
7. Theoretical Frameworks: A Collective Blueprint for Transformation	53
8. Creating a Theoretical and Methodological Model for Praxis	54
 CHAPTER THREE. Methodology	
1. A Multidimensional Approach for Understanding.....	62
2. Life History: A Methodology to Understand the Particular	62
Internal Validity: An Issue of Trustworthiness	64
Methodological Components to Build Trustworthiness	67

3. Pairing Life History with CR and LP	68
4. Statement of Methodological Ownership	70
5. Data Collection: A Layered and Intentional Design	71
Demographics of Life Agents	71
Timeline and General Logistics	78
Entry, Power, and Exit: Intentional Procedures for Data Collection.....	81
Focus Groups and Interviews: A Discursive and Reflective Journey	86
Supplemental Information for the Stories Told.....	91
Concluding Reflection on Data Collection as the Dorr for Data Analysis	93
Translated Vignettes	96
6. Data Analysis Compass: Chapter Organization	98
Methodological Considerations on Data Analysis	101
7. Step One: Submerged Theory-Laden Coding	102
First Phase: Data Familiarization.....	105
Second Phase: Deductive Code Development	108
Sub-Step 1: Extraction of Code Excerpts	111
Sub-Step 2: Development of Code Labels and Code Type Classification .	113
Analytical Detour Throughout Code Labels and Code Types	118
Sub-Step 3: From Code Labels to Code Categories	122
Third Phase: Reflexive Theme Generation	125
Reflexive Thematic Analysis (TA)	126
Development of Working Themes	128
From Code Categories to Root Themes (1 st Pass)	131
From Root Themes to Overarching Themes (2 nd Pass).....	133
From Overarching Themes to Generative Themes (3 rd Pass).....	137
Step Two: Submersion into Data-Laden Coding	141
General Methodological Layout.....	143
Sub-step One: Working the Generative Themes	142
Sub-step Two: Deconstruction Process.....	146
Sub-step Three: New Understandings of my Research Questions	152
 CHAPTER FOUR: Results	
1. Chapter Organization.....	154
2. Part One	
Sub-section One: Patterned Themes as Scaffoldings of Meaning.....	157
Theme #1: Lengua (language): An Invisible Veil of Meaning	157
Theme #2: Territorios (Territories): Objective and Metaphorical Meanings	160
Theme #3: Voz: An Evolutionary Process of the Internal Conversation	168
Sub-section Two: Expansion of Archer's Definitions of the Self	170
Brief Commentary to Locate the Meaning of the Self with the Other	170
Emergent Definitions of Other	172
Sub-section Three: Identification of Operative and Hidden Structures.....	180
Emergent Social Structures: Findings from Focal Agents (FA)	181
Emergent Social Structures: Findings from Extended Agents (EA)	185
Translated Vignettes	189

3. Part Two:	
General Overview	192
Sub-section One: Theoretical Opening for the Model of Becoming	192
Exploration of the Internal Voices of our Conversations	196
From Self to We: Becoming Corporate Agents.....	197
Becoming a Social Actor.....	197
Sub-section Two: An Initial Blueprint of the Model of Becoming	198
Research Questions: A Cyclical Journey Towards Conscientization	199
Sub section Three: Freire’s conscientization and Future Emergent Phase	206
Translated Vignettes	208

CHAPTER FIVE: Study Contributions and Discussion

1. Study Contributions.....	210
2. Study Implications: Theoretical	211
3. Study Implications: Methodological	213
4. Study Implications: Practical	214
5. Stories as the Glue for Theory, Methodology, and Practice.....	216
6. Conclusions	216
7. Final Reflection	218
Words as the Research Within	219

REFERENCES	221
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List of Tables

Table 1. Three components to build methodological trustworthiness	67
Table 2. Focal and Extended Agents: Selected Demographic Information.....	73
Table 3. Relationship Between Focal Agents (FA) and Extended Agents (EA).....	77
Table 4. Data Collection Timeline and Activities	80
Table 5. “Rest Stops” as Frontiers for Outlining Theoretical Constructs.....	112
Table 6. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria During Code Labeling Development.....	116
Table 7. Examples of Code Labels Converted into a Code Category	123
Table 8. Key Patterned Root Themes and their Corresponding Sub-themes	132
Table 9. Example of the Theme Development Aided by the Utilization of Word Cloud	137
Table 10. Individual Examples of Trifectas from Two Focal Agents	150
Table 11. Example of Abductive Reconceptualization of Research Questions	153
Table 12. Summary of the Four Structures Developed from the Testimonios of EA	186

List of Figures

Figure 1. Bhaskar Transformation Model of the Society/Person Connection (TMSA)	44
Figure 2. Margaret Archer’s Morphogenetic Approach	48
Figure 3. Theoretical Foundations of Critical Realism (CR) & Liberation Psychology (LP) .	50
Figure 4. Alignment of LP, CR and the Process of Conscientization.....	61
Figure 5. Lather’s Path of Liberation.....	66
Figure 6. Symbolic Words Informing a State of Being	88
Figure 7. Methodological Roadmap	100
Figure 8. Analysis of the Transcripts: Intra-grouping and Inter-grouping	103
Figure 9. Data Analysis Roadmap	104
Figure 10. Example Emotion Arc as a Methodological Tool to Display Data	107
Figure 11. Deductive Code Development Phase and its Three Sub-Steps	110
Figure 12. Selected Code Types across Life Agents Timelines	122
Figure 13. Excel Sheet of Development Process from Codes to Rooted Themes	130
Figure 14. Excel Sheet from Rooted Themes to Overarching Themes	134
Figure 15. Word Cloud during Theme Development	136
Figure 16. Methodological Sub-Steps During the Critical Theming Phase.....	144
Figure 17. Example of Data Analysis: Seeking for Structures	147
Figure 18. Extended Agent’s Emic and Etic Voice	148
Figure 19. Relationship Between Personal Identity with Alterity and Othering	179
Figure 20. Example of a Focal Agent’s Trifecta Archetype	183
Figure 21. Marcela’s Journey	188
Figure 22. Archer’s Stratified Model of Agency	194
Figure 23. Model of Becoming: A Theoretical Draft.....	201

List of Appendices

Appendix A. Informed Consent	
A1. Informed Consent: Focal Agents	240
A2. Informed Consent: Extended Agents	242
Appendix B. Life Agents Questions: Interviews and Focus Group	244
Appendix C. Development of Code Labels: Selected Code Types	249
Appendix D. Intra-specific Analysis of Code Types within Focal Agent’s Lifespan	252
Appendix E. Inter-specific Analysis of Code Types across the Focal Agents Timelines	255
Appendix F. Selected Root Themes and Corresponding Sub-themes	256
Appendix G. Examples of Generative Themes	263
Appendix H. Summary of Analytical Metrics of Submerged Step	265
Appendix I. Theory Behind Information Power	266
Appendix J. Time Spent in Each Step of the Analytical Process	272
Appendix K. Sara Sofia’s Process of the Evolution of her Voice	273
Appendix L. Constructed Social Structures and their Trifectas for Focal Agents	274
Appendix M. Constructed Global Social Structures and Trifectas for Extended Agents	279

Introduction

Key Foundations of this Research

Every story has a beginning, and everything is context (Mishler, 1990). This research study is not different. The following pages outline the theoretical, methodological, and empirical borders of my area of inquiry: an exploratory, qualitative study seeking to deconstruct the life histories of immigrant Latina/Indigenous women (life agents) as they negotiate their emergent identities as immigrants, women, mothers, and community leaders in the maternal and child health arena, in their role as doulas and community health workers (CHW), in a state failing to provide the necessary environments for the flourishing of their lives and of their community. Throughout I write in first person, and enact the epistemic authority of my own intersectionalities, while recognizing the fallibility of my own interpretation of my results, as any researcher should acknowledge. However, I offer an in-depth account of my methodological rationale to trace my steps for the purposes of revision, critique, and clarifying. Furthermore, my voice is not the only one echoing in these pages. The untranslated voices of the life agents are present in each section, as a reminder that these are their stories, the ones being undressed under the light of my own reflexivity.

Three core foundations bound this research and give shape to its contours: **1)** Theory plays a fundamental role as the blueprint for understanding the processes informing identity formation of the life agents, **2)** Explanatory methodology is the key to deciphering the empirical application of theory, as well, as its shortfalls, and **3)** Subjectivity (reflexivity) is the necessary tool to access retroductive and abductive discoveries. The common denominator defining these foundations is

layered nature, aimed at unearthing causal mechanisms¹ shaping the observable (empirical) layers. Below, I will briefly describe each of these foundations to set the stage for what is to come.

Centrality of Theory

Critical Realism (CR) is the main theoretical framework for this inquiry. CR's purpose is to dive past the constructivist interpretation of meaning, to reach the depths of what makes their role emancipatory, first to self, and then to others. I rely on Bhaskar's (2008) CR as the meta-theory, and adapt it to incorporate Archer's empirical models to operationalize CR's agency and structure into workable constructs for empirical studies (Brock, 2016).

CR's anti-colonialist stance is provided by the work of Ignacio Martín-Baró's (1996b, 2018) Liberation Psychology (LP), Paulo Freire's (1998, 2000b) emancipatory pedagogy, and Orlando Fals-Borda's (1985) participatory action research. As theory is also contextual, by using theories born in América Latina, I am also decentralizing Western theories of being². Lastly, feminist theory from the perspectives of women of color and resistance movements in América Latina is a persistent theoretical undercurrent informing this research. Research and emergence are always changing and expecting to offer something new to the world. Hence, this theoretical effort is an attempt to expand CR's philosophical borders, to become an action-oriented framework for researchers and practitioners, who are also activists and leaders, interested in not just sharing their own interpretations based on scientific inference, but by also working on challenging the

¹ Causal mechanisms in the theoretical context of Critical Realism are not based on empiricism (cause and effect), but rather on the structures informing a social phenomenon. See Dissertation Chapter Two: Theoretical Underpinnings, and Chapter Four: Results.

² Throughout this research I use the term *América Latina* to be true to my heritage, recognizing that even this name is the result of colonization.

current patriarchal, cisgender, Christian, Western, and white supremacist discourses salient in academia, education, and social movements (Leck, 1987).

Centrality of Exploratory Methodology

This study utilizes a methodological plan to tell a story of emergence of each of the life agents and their collective efforts to develop their identity as community educators. The understanding of emergence requires the active participation of those whose emergence is under study, as it is an inner and private evolutionary process. In the case of the current research, the approach to reach this understanding was based on a critical standpoint trying to reveal hidden knowledge about the operationalization of the process of conscientization: a process involved in the liberation of oppressed people, one characterized by praxis (theory and action) (Freire, 2000; Martín-Baró, 1996b). As a result, my interest was to uncover the mechanisms by which the process of conscientization activates self-agency, a needed ingredient for the creation of collective power and liberation amid oppressive systems (Fals-Borda, 1985; Freire, 2000). Ironically, to understand emergence (upward direction), I needed to deeply submerge (downward direction) into the realities of the life agents.

Life histories are used as the methodology to dissect the stories told through qualitative and quantitative approaches to understand my data in a multidimensional manner during the analytical process. By quantitative, I do not mean descriptive statistics or regression-based analysis, rather the utilization of a data analysis floor plan for the assessment of coding and theme development decisions, which provided a different perspective on the nuanced hermeneutical visualization of the narratives (Saldaña, 2021). Qualitatively, I used Reflexive Thematic Analysis to guide the analysis of the life stories during the theme development phase (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The synergic capacity of these analytical frameworks welcomed the use

of deductive, inductive, retroductive, and abductive inferences, which served as checkpoint to avoid epistemic fallacy,³ by not just searching for regularities in the data (codes and themes), but instead pushed me to search for the mechanism informing such regularities (Danermark et al., 2002).

Centrality of Subjectivity (Reflexivity) and Epistemic Authority (Praxis)

All knowledge is fallible, but some knowledge is more complete than others. As a social activist scholar (Valente, 2019) I relied on reflexivity as the key to enter the depths of my own subjectivity, and as a result activate my own agential emergent properties, such as: questioning of my data using multiple inferential approaches, problematizing my interpretations by continuing questioning, and serving as a mediator between my embodied realities (e.g., implicit bias, feeling of discomfort) and the mechanisms informing them by the exercise of critical thinking. This activation is done by the presence of my internal conversation, which is the place where the first-person authority resides. (Brock et al., 2017). First person (epistemic) authority, the 'I', is a requirement to convert current knowledge into a new way of looking at it, which in turn, has the capacity to develop a subjective ontology, and hence create a new frame of mind, not just as a researcher, but as a person (Brock et al., 2017). However, LP rests on the need to look at ontology as a way to understand root causes, which cannot be found just in the mind, it needs to be exercised in the praxis of everyday struggles (Martín-Baró, 1996b). During the phases involved in the making of this research, I understood that praxis can be also exercised inside the walls of academic inquiry, by allowing the methodology to become a worker of liberation. The tools used to ask the questions we as researchers are seeking an answer(s) to, are

³ Fail to see that reality has an ontological root, by giving preponderance to an epistemological perspective.

inert in their own right, but come to life when we make use of them. Our inquiry becomes the conduit for them to be activated.

Throughout these pages, as a reader you will find two salient practices, both aligned with CR, LP, and feminist theory, as well, as with Life Histories: **1)** The use of raw quotes and vignettes of the life agents (a proxy for their voices) and memo entries created during the field research and data analysis are intentionally added to support my rationale and to make this research a multivocal account of lives lived, and **2)** Theory and methods are not constricted to their own chapter, and hence forgotten in the sections of data collection and analysis, instead they appear there as well, to provide structure and depth to the ways data was collected and analyzed.

Dissertation Outline

Each chapter is initiated with a “3,000-foot view” of the landscape and eventually lands in the focal area, which is often structured following a layering approach, congruent with CR. This organization derives from theoretical positioning, which requires the researcher to consider space, time, and relational constructs when analyzing a phenomenon (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Harvey, 2002; Martín-Baró, 1996b). The structure of this dissertation is as follows:

Chapter One

Researcher Positionality and Context. I present a brief description on the origins of this study and a three-layered positionality statement, with the intention to first locate the study within its context, and then to position the researcher (me), within that context.

Need Statement for this Study Within the Current Context. I ponder the importance of stories of emergence as I ask questions about relevance and visibility. I stratify different layers

of realities, to bring to light often overlooked themes affecting the lives of Latino/Indigenous communities.

Literature Review. This section outlines societal factors affecting the development of equitable frameworks of care for maternal and child well-being, particularly those led by lay health workers of color. I critique hidden forms of oppression within our micro- and macro-communities and talk about the need for social visibility. I pose my research questions as the gateway to theory.

Proposed Research Questions. I pose three questions to be answered by each of the life agents and as a collective of people working together.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Underpinnings. In this section, I foreground the CR and LP constructs as they directly inform my methodological design. By doing so, I present a detailed overview of the origins and support theories for LP, and endeavor in defining Bhaskar's CR and Archer's morphogenetic approach. These theories are meta-theories; hence, I do not intend to fully grasp the complexity of all their enunciations, however, I present key components to have a well-rounded understanding of their ontological premises.

Creating a Theoretical and Methodological Model for Praxis. The development of a step-by-step conceptual understanding of the core tenets of LP is included for two reasons:

- 1) To provide an up-close view of how this theory can be explained.
- 2) To make this dissertation more accessible to those foreign to the theory and those outside of academia.

Chapter Three

Methodological Foundations. The qualitative and narrative nature of this proposal merits a strong description of their methodological nuances. I do not compare qualitative and quantitative approaches, but rather, provide a basis for how a qualitative methodological approach is well fitted for this study.

Data Collection. An in-depth description of how I collected my data is provided to serve as a guide for critical positioning and liberatory praxis. The blanket description of an interview or focus group does not suffice the need for transparency on the power dynamics involved in the process, nor the decision-making process involved the field work. As a critical researcher who is also part of the community she studied, transparency became my currency.

Data Analysis. Structured as two parts for heuristic purposes, the data analysis process was a labor of detailed observation and reflexivity. The first chapter describes how I relied on deductive and reflexive inductive processes to dissect the large pieces of data (interviews) into workable concepts of meaning. The second chapter, exercises retroductive and abductive inference as its main way to deconstruct the data to decipher the role of agency and structure during the process of becoming.

Chapter Four

Results. The results are presented in two parts as well, to align with my analytical processes. A Model of Becoming makes its debut, with the caveat that it is not a final product, rather a draft of an emergent framework.

Chapter Five

Future Implications for Research, Methodology, and Practice. Gaps in the understanding of immigrant Latino/Indigenous people cannot continue to be accepted as the

norm. The possible implications of this research at best will pave a theoretical and methodological roadmap for critical researchers and practitioners, and at the least, it has been a evidentiary process to expose the lives of immigrant women on their own terms and their constant resistance to comply with the norms created to keep them in the shadows.

Conclusions. Short reflections are offered on the embodied experience of having done this research.

Appendices

As a visual learner and due to the complexity nested within layered methodologies, I relied on tables and figures to assist my own thought process of understanding and with the hope to facilitate the reading/critiquing process.

Chapter One

Internal and External Context Informing this Research

My Own Positionality

During this research, I encountered three kinds of positionalities: theory-based, methodologically based, and relational-based. All of them run against the grain of assumptions about empirical and “bias-free” research so prevalent in clinical psychology and public health research. I am grateful that my theoretical and methodological foundations expect and support the opposite, without affecting the validity of the research, nor its real-world applications.

Statement of Positionality: Locating my Voice within the Theory

The theoretical analysis presented is both academic and experiential. I ascribe to the notion that knowledge is a generational and culturally-driven process dependent on daily social relations or *vivimiento*: “las raíces están ahí y con esas raíces el árbol no puede ser otro”⁴ (Moreno Olmedo, 2015, p. 17). Searching for my theoretical roots, opened the possibility of locating critical epistemes born at the heart of my own history: América Latina.⁵ Supported by Freire’s (2013) description on transitions, I became an integrated subject, seeking a deeper understanding of the process of psychosocial liberation contextualized in my reality, instead of perpetuating a view of my identity as an adaptive object or a product of centuries of dehumanization.

This intellectual-reflexive journey relied on knowledge germinated first in Spanish following Dussel’s (1995) words: “language is the place of the self; it is the place protecting the meaning of everything” (p. 116). As a reader, this means that you are reading a text that has lost

⁴ Direct Translation: “The roots are here, and with these roots the tree cannot be of a different kind.” (Moreno Olmedo, 2015, p. 17).

⁵ América Latina is used throughout, except when directly quoting focal agents or other sources.

some contextual meaning in the process of translation, because language and life-worlds are inexorably linked (Moreno Olmedo, 2015; Temple & Young, 2004). As a result, these words are written in the first person as a way to be true to my critical stance and also to allow voices often unheard in academia to be heard. This process of self-authoring is teaching me the power of my words, as they represent the social and cultural heteroglossia of my being, and serving as an act of academic resistance (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1981; Holland, et al., 1998).

Statement of Positionality: Locating my Voice Within the Methodology

The deliberately narrative nature of this proposal is a way to engage in a conversation grounded in academic curiosity and reflection. I did my best to follow the “Guidelines for Proposals: Qualitative Research” suggested by my department; after all this is an academic endeavor. However, I took the liberty to make this writing also a layered phenomenological experience centering the process of doing research with one’s own people.

This methodological decision carries within it not only a heavy weight of ethical responsibility, but added another identity, and I had to become “someone else” to my community during this process. I learned to wear a new cloak, one that created a different layer in my relationship with the community; not negative or positive, just different. Goodson and Sikes (2001) warned researchers about “doing research in your ‘own backyard’” because it can result in unintended consequences, the implications of which can go far beyond the data that are collected (p.25). However, the words of Lieblich (1996) provided me with some clarity: “Is it ethics or friendship? I believe that a researcher who resents this entanglement should not start narrative research about people who belong to his or her own culture and society” (p.184). Personally, this entanglement was and continues to be my motor. It is what grounds my inquiries, and what has made my path in academia less hostile.

Statement of Positionality: Relationship between Researcher and Life Agents

My journey brought me to these women almost eight years ago. In 2014, I started working at the largest nonprofit serving Latinos in Dane County, Wisconsin, as the Director of Adult Programs. This position gave me the opportunity to work with the community in a more stable and deep manner. One of my first steps was to listen to what people were saying about well-being and health; I asked questions about what they wanted to see at the center as part of its programming priorities and found themes in their responses. It was then that a community health wellness model was gestated: the community wanted to develop a bottom-up approach for wellness, with a specific focus on women and children. Six women applied to receive training to become lay health promoters (terms also used in this proposal: community health workers [CHWs], or “promotoras de salud,” and community-based doulas), and by doing so, they started a journey of discovery (not recognized as such back then). These women are the protagonists of this research, the life agents.⁶

This research is a statement of self-authorship where my private and public I, Me, Self-intersects with the I, Me, and Selves of the life agents. Our stories have a lot of parallels, but I hold palpable privileges: I am married to a white Anglo, which comes with a societal and immigration status affordance, and I had access to higher education both in my country, Costa Rica, and in the United States (U.S.). Some of these privileges I sought out, others were just an act of serendipity. My role as the researcher leading this project adds another layer of tangible privilege. To the eyes of people outside our communities, we are all Latinas, but we know that

⁶ I share the perspective of Mbilinyi (1989) in bringing research participants to the light as a whole person, by deviating from the objectifying labels of “informants or subjects.” Mbilinyi suggested the term life historians, as a way to create an alternative, while she confesses that the decision was arbitrary and serendipitous (as cited in Munro, 1998). The reason why I decided to call the participants of this research life agents stems from the action-driven nature of this research.

explicit differences exist. During this process, I have resisted to fall victim of the trap of academism and have pushed to embody the role of an activist scholar, despite the added effort needed to do so. Transparency was a core principle, exercised by mutual accountability as its common practice.

Need Statement for this Study Within the Current Context

When talking about life histories, reading Clandinin (2013) invited me to reflect on the interconnection of all our stories and the significance of looking at the trajectories of our experiences: “Their lives and ours are also shaped by attending to past, present and future unfolding social, cultural, institutional, linguistic, and familial narratives” (p.43).

This awareness led me to inquire about the relevance of this study against the backdrop of the layered realities informing the lives of the life agents and their work. I also understood that “my outsiders within” in both of my worlds, academic and professional, have not let my own lived experiences guide my inquiry, probably for fear of having my work deemed as suboptimal, or illegitimate (Apple, 2009). I asked myself two questions: 1) *Why is it important to talk about the experiences of immigrant Latina/Indigenous doulas and community health workers?* and 2) *For whom am I writing these accounts?*

Why is this Study Important? Bourdieu’s Call to Praxis

From my current positionality as a participatory scholar in training, and from feminist and liberation standpoints, the words of Bourdieu (2003) resonated with me:

Those who have the good fortune to be able to devote their lives to the study of the social world cannot stand aside, neutral, and indifferent, from the struggles in which the future of the world is at stake. (p. 17).

That is why at the beginning of this research process, I recognized my desire to work on building an academic platform where the personal and social hidden mechanisms informing the

life agents' praxis as liaisons, role models and advocate, becomes more than grassroots efforts (Bachlakova, 2016). I have witnessed how this knowledge can provide needed evidence to develop novel mobilization and educational approaches not engendered inside the minds of established leaders outside/inside their communities, but rather, inside their underground networks, and guided by their own cultural wisdom. Here, I am talking about an agency, broadly defined as the power to construct individual meanings and make individual decisions, to start the process of structural change (Martín-Baró, 1996b; Maynes et al., 2008).

I also viewed this research as a venue to gain deeper understanding of the hidden characteristics of being an immigrant parent in a primarily white medical and social context, which is key when designing research studies, creating community-based programs and/or allocating funding (Elsasser et al., 1980). Even though the former (agency versus structure) is the focus of this study, the latter is part of the realities the life agents navigate, as mothers and as service providers. I hope that findings from this study will generate more knowledge to inform future participatory and multidisciplinary research on parenting in Latino/Indigenous communities.

For Whom is this Research Conducted? Dr. Seuss's Horton and the Speck of Dust

Dr. Seuss's book (1954) tells the story of Horton, a kind elephant in the Jungle of Nool, who can hear the voice of the Mayor of Who-ville, a village inside a speck of dust. The mayor desperately asks Horton for help to save his village from destruction. Horton is the only animal who can hear the voices coming from the speck, and his acts of allyship saves all the Whos and teaches the other animals in the jungle a lesson about kindness and inclusion. I found this book to be a good analogy for what happens in the life agent's social and political ecosystems, where they represent the village inside the speck of dust, and the largest system is the Jungle of Nool.

Latino⁷/Indigenous⁸ communities residing in this Midwest state and self-proclaimed progressive county, have become accustomed to relying on others to interpret, translate, and advocate for them. These other people, regardless of their allyship, demographic similarities, and interest for the well-being of the community become gatekeepers, filters, and homogenizers (Liko, 2018). They are the Hortons of Who-ville. Furthermore, for immigrant communities, the lack of representation at all levels of government, education, and community leadership has become our invisible cloak. When a community must rely on others to advocate for them, to protect their interests, and to understand their needs and assets, they are left without political power.

Bourdieu and Dr. Seuss' writings sedimented the intentionality of this research: to create a critical and participatory account about becoming and visibility, written by/for people who are willing to invest in their own development as social beings to initiate challenging conversations within their communities about *what is possible*. This becoming is an essential building block to access higher levels of representation and resistance (Menocal Rocha, 2014). From a liberation psychology perspective, agency and the process of conscientization (Freire, 2000) are the active ingredients, the personal and social particles capable of permeating the gateway to the unexplored realities. Finally, I believe that foregrounding the narratives of those living inside the speck of dust: immigrants, women, mothers, people of color, and lay providers of maternal and childcare, is a revolutionary act.

Literature Review: The Layered Accounts of Realities

To talk about emergence and visibility for the Latino community in general, and Latina/Indigenous lay health advocates, specifically, one needs to make obvious the macro- and

⁷ The terms Latina/Latino are used in this research, as these are the terms by which the life agents self-identify and use to identify their communities.

⁸ Indigenous, referring to people from Pueblos Originarios in América Latina.

micro-systems of “imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy” informing their lives. (hooks, 2013). To provide a contextual account of where this study takes place, I follow Sommers’s (1992) suggestion to “disaggregate the parts of a setting from any presumed covarying whole, and then reconfigure them in their temporal and geographic relationality” (p. 610). If disaggregation of epidemiological data is capable of eliciting trends not seen before, it can be inferred that thematic layering can do the same in qualitative methodologies.

Disaggregating this research in a specific time, place, and geohistorical context allows me to see three layers of significance (or realities): 1) the public, cultural and institutional sphere, or open systems (empirical realm), 2) the conceptual space of analysis of realities (theory realm), and 3) the sacred space (praxis realm) (Sommers, 1992). Even though these three layers are important to interrogate, as they directly and indirectly affect the well-being of families, I focus my methodology on the *sacred space*, because a deeper understanding on how the self-reported evolution of personal and collective agency in Latino/Indigenous communities is a missing link between maternal health equity, action, and the construction of new possibilities. Zooming in on this sacred place, I identified two issues that inform my research questions: 1) The Latino/Indigenous communities have not fully realized the individual and collective power they have as group in this state, and 2) The lack of stories, role models, and spaces emerging from the roots of these *communities* causes people to feel isolated.

Overview of the Empirical, Theoretical, and Praxis Layers of Reality

I provide a brief account of the empirical and theoretical layers of reality influencing the maternal and child health landscape and directly and indirectly affecting the development of CHWs and immigrant doulas of color. Then, I dive into the praxis realm, the place where I center this research. The descriptions below assume the position that neither of these layers of

significance represent the “whole story,” but that by looking at them as an interdependent system, we can start asking questions not reviewed in the literature and/or addressed in our local setting (Sommers, 1992).

The Empirical Realm: Open Systems in Society

The current knowledge about the state of health disparities, in general, and of maternal and child health, is dominated by majority Anglo and English-speaking people in leadership positions within anchor institutions, government, or non-profits. For example: the enactment of a Health Equity Council (Evers, 2019, section 14.019) which has as a priority improving maternal and child health outcomes in the state, does not include the representation of even one Latino/a health care professional (clinical or allied health provider) or researcher. This implicit omission sends a strong signal to our community that, despite our fiscal contributions in the local economy (American Immigration Council, 2020) and our important share in the workforce landscape of the state (Cornelius, 2018) we continue to be socially invisible.

I want to concisely summarize some structural characteristics concurrently existing in the maternal and child health arena and how directly and indirectly they affect the well-being of immigrant families: **1)** Policies operating in the “invisibilization” of immigrant bodies or jeopardizing access to maternal and child services, **2)** Challenges faced by allied health providers (CHW and doulas), **3)** Continuing deficiencies in cultural and racial diversification of the health care workforce, and **4)** Epidemiological gaps in data collection and dissemination. Each of these sublayers inform in a unique way the macro- and microenvironments affecting the development of self/collective agency of community-based doulas of color, as they are placed in the middle of the lives of those providing care and those receiving care.

Enactment of Policies: Missing Protections

Policies aimed at providing protections for birthing parents, such as the Mommies Act (City of Madison, 2018) often lack protections for immigrant communities and their families, either by omission or because some of their protections or benefits are overridden by immigration policies (Zug, 2014) or executive action (National Immigration Law Center [NILC], 2013). As a result, current programs that support pregnant bodies for the general population continue to provide lukewarm support services for immigrant families and for lay health workers who might themselves be undocumented (The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), 2015).

Even though not currently in effect, President Trump's Public Charge Rule increased the level of difficulty for immigrants able to opt to become U.S. citizens under the grounds of inadmissibility. Even though this rule did not affect all immigrants, as it directly targeted people who are applying for green-card status and people applying for a visa to come to the U.S. (Immigrant Legal (ILRC), 2020), it was able to cast a shadow on the whole family, regardless of documentation, due to the mixed-status family composition that characterizes immigrant families (American Immigration Council, 2020). This public charge is an example of how the lives of immigrant families are used as political pawns, which has real implications for people and their health and social services providers. It is time to stop thinking of immigration status as a separate issue from maternal and child health outcomes in immigrant families (Martinez et al., 2015; Richardson et al., 2020), due to the ripple effects immigration status has on the lives of people.

Adequate Institutionalization of Programs for Community Health Workers and Doulas

Ample evidence exists about the why, who, how, when, and where-s health care systems, local governments, and federally qualified health centers would benefit from implementing

mechanisms to hire or contract with community health workers (CHW) and doulas (Ayala et al., 2010; Cosgrove et al., 2014; Grossman et al., 2010; Kangovi et al., 2018; Zephyring et al., 2020). However, the challenges to do so are multilayered, context-specific, and not inclusive to all key stakeholders. Below is a brief description of the challenges faced by allied health providers.

Community Health Workers. Overall support exists to train and hire CHWs, at least in theory. However, many of these efforts have failed to accomplish such goals either due to: **1)** lack of buy-in from health care systems (Butler & Kangovi, 2019), **2)** system-wide implicit bias and professional elitism (Cohen et al., 2002), **3)** lack of a consensus on moving towards certification vs. state accreditation, which in turn drives reimbursement rates from Medicaid (London et al., 2016), and **4)** palpable absence of actual CHWs in spaces where these plans and decisions are being made (personal and professional experience). The work ahead to enact the recommendations to incorporate community health workers as part of the patient care centered model (Grossman et al., 2010, pp. 255–257) is far from being achieved, without stronger advocacy work done by communities benefiting from CHWs services and CHWs themselves.

Doulas (or Community-based doulas). Doulas of color and immigrant doulas have been advocating for their incorporation into the healthcare system as a direct response to wide health inequities faced by Black, Latina, and Indigenous bodies during their perinatal journeys (Ellmann, 2020). Due to their role as cultural brokers and culturally-aware individuals, they have the capacity to support their clients' innate knowledge about their bodies, and their birthing rights as full humans (Kang, 2014). Despite the evidence, doulas (and specifically, doulas of color in our context), continue to face push back from the medical establishment, have to rely on their community gatekeepers (i.e., the Hortons) to push their agenda, encounter provider

mistreatment at the hospital level, and have difficulty accessing training that is culturally and linguistically accessible (Bobrow, 2018; Bohren et al., 2017; Davidson, 2015).

Unfortunately, the role of doulas, particularly doulas of color, and CHWs is being talked about inside hospital board rooms and Medicaid office without the active participation of these providers at the table (Ellmann, 2020). This top-to-bottom approach from the system is another enactment of oppression via perpetuation of the idea that Black, Indigenous, and immigrant people's work, although essential, can be free or low-paid (Lucas & Wright, 2019). The challenges faced by them will continue to persist until increased mobilization campaigns, active client support, and collective efforts among doulas of color are able to change current administrative and financial blocks (Adams, 2019).

Workforce Diversity in Health Care: Why Does it Matter?

The work of community-based doulas requires interaction with healthcare providers, insurance companies, and on occasion, researchers, and health care administrators. These interactions either at the clinic or in the delivery room are directly informed by the established systems of implicit bias based on professional titles, gender, and race (FitzGerald & Hurst, 2017).

Cultural awareness and bias inside the healthcare field cannot be decontextualized from the sheer lack of ethnic diversity corroding the field. In 2012, Latinos represented 17% of the total U.S. population while making up only 7% of the physicians graduating that year (Ansell & McDonald, 2015; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012) and in 2018, the percentage of Latino doctors was 5.8% (Association of American Medical Colleges [AAMC], 2019). In a study aimed at understanding the reasons why there are not more African Americans in medicine, Rao & Flores (2007) concluded that financial constraints, lack of a social connectivity to the profession, and

lack of role models and family support might play important social and environmental challenges for this population. I concur with this conclusion as it also resonates in the Latino community, but for the Latino community would also include documentation of the status of the person and/or their immediate family as additional challenges.

The lack of diversity in health care professions is not random, instead it has been the result of carefully crafted policies to create a system of exclusivity for white people (Grumbach & Mendoza, 2008). A vivid and convenient example of these strategies is how traditional midwives had been banned and made almost extinct by the medical complex, starting in the first quarter of the 20th century in the U.S. (Farrell, 2022; Thompson, 2016). Now, we are experiencing a resurgence of their role, but unfortunately it comes in the form of a middle- and upper-class privilege.

The Faulty Data Lens to Describe the World

Epidemiological data continues to fail in presenting disaggregated data on maternal and child health outcomes in immigrant communities in the U.S., while continuing to utilize the Latino Paradox and Acculturation Framework as blanket empirical foundations (Lara et al., 2005). Fortunately, increasing interest in understanding the health of Latinas/os, can be attributed to their population growth and documented health differentials by immigration status, place of birth, and time of residency in the country (Novak et al., 2017). This interest is particularly salient in research on maternal and child health outcomes because the infant mortality rate (IMR), low birth weight, and preterm births are sentinel indicators of the health of a population. However, these indicators are the tip of the iceberg of a more complex and deeply rooted system of health inequalities.

The heterogeneous and vast cultural differences among Foreign born and U.S. born immigrant co-ethnic groups needs to stop being a methodological complication (Pew Research Center, 2018). It is not my intent to dwell on this topic, as it would be outside of the scope of this research. However, it is important to highlight the issue that public health efforts cannot continue to use statistics as a fixed tool of description, they need to evolve with the demographic shifts in populations (Gee et al., 2012). It is simple: data drives policy, policy drives funding, and funding has the potential for the creation of opportunities to improve the lives of people (Minnesota Health Department, 2018).

The Theoretical Realm: Knowledge Voids in Academia

As the second layer of reality, there is void in the academic literature about life histories of recent immigrant Latinas/Indigenous women, contributing to the invisibility of their (our) lives in the U.S. context. Also missing is a theoretical understanding of how the histories of motherhood of immigrant women informs their perceived personal and collective agency as the engine to develop a sense of self and groupness (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 2003).

Despite this theoretical void, I was able to review some exemplars bringing to the forefront important aspects of the experiences of Latina/Indigenous women, particularly Mexican American, Mexican, or Chicana women, or Latino women in other contexts. For example Rigoberta Mechú's (2009) autobiography is a beautiful read about her life as an indigenous woman, her culture, the struggles over socially persistent colonization strategies, and her rise as an international advocate for Indigenous People's rights. In her autobiography, she speaks of how the process of becoming a leader found its anchor in her ancestral roots. Two studies about women in the Midwest (working and middle class), and one from transnational

Mexican women, vividly describe the lives of the participants as they navigate societal and multicultural expectations of self (Barron-McKeagney, 2001; Hirsch, 2003).

Lindborg and Ovando's (1977) study is a narrative account of five women from migrant families in the Midwest. This study provides a close view of how symbolic interaction and transaction theory allow us to understand the life decisions made by the women. Finally, the story of Jesusita, a traditional midwife in New Mexico, opens a door to the pre-Anglo folk medical system, characterized by women in charge of birthing activities, and provides a stark contrast with the highly mechanized perinatal care in the U.S. (Leeper Buss, 1980). In general, these studies provide evidence to challenge the dominant narrative about the lives of this demographic in issues related to relationships and sexuality, immigrant experience, and their identities as midwives, mothers, farmworkers, advocates, or teachers. Importantly, most authors express their intention to increase the current knowledge on how to develop educational programs better suited to serve these populations.

I also want to acknowledge the important works from feminist poets, mothers, activists, and community organizers sharing their experiences as the "other" (Gumbs et al., 2016; Morága, 1983; Morága & Anzaldúa, 2015; Smith Silva, 2011). The work of these authors is a testament of the need to make visible what has been only spoken among friends and advocates: the power of the spoken word when it emerges from the mouths of those closer to the issues.

The Praxis Realm: Community Spaces of Sense-Making

The calling of Indigenous, and immigrant community-based doulas and CHWs goes beyond "being there" for the birthing person, as they sometimes become the only lifeline many people have during this massive life transformation (Gilliland, 2015). This is because, by

definition, they come from the same community as the people they serve, increasing the cultural understanding of the nuances that characterize their clients' experiences.

Birth becomes a microcosm where culture, genetics, life experiences, fears, and expectations are packaged to form a new self. This new self: mother/parent, is the focal point in literature, while the doula becomes the ally, the caretaker, a cultural broker, the one providing continuous care, and assisting in the reduction of adverse health outcomes (Kang, 2014).

Therefore, the role of the lay provider is backgrounded, leaving in the shadows the person whose role is being studied (Greiner et al., 2019; Kane Low et al., 2006; Mkandawire-Valhmu et al., 2018). The result of this backgrounding causes the invisibility of their personal evolution as a provider of care, while consequently decreasing the opportunity to showcase their individual contributions in the medical field, weakening their capacity to center the stories of pregnant bodies like theirs, and creating a gap in the current understanding of the mechanism informing their journey of personal emergent and collective power (Harvey, 2002).

My academic curiosity seeks to make the invisible visible, by gaining a deeper understanding of the worldviews (micro-environments) informing, supporting, protecting, and fueling the individual and collective mission of becoming, without losing sight of their social and financial macro-environments, and their cultural and historical contexts.

I feel as if I am standing in the intersection of two roads: one leads to the exploration on how immigrant women, in this case lay workers, who are residing in oppressive societal contexts conceive, interpret, and enact agency (Wheelahan, 2007). The other leads to the connections that exist between the process of personal conscientization and development of collective power and mobilization (Martín-Baró, 1994; Freire, 2000). It is important to notice that even though neither of these roads are directly correlated with being a community-based doula or promotora, the

innate positionalities of lay health workers of color represent unique opportunities to explore such processes, as they represent an outlier case for the study of liberation and action-oriented praxis (Davidson, 2015; Ellmann, 2020). Mapping out these roads (processes) is essential in the development of theoretical and action driven knowledge capable of promoting what Bhaskar (1994) called “self-as-process” with a predisposition to act. This process in turn requires agency and resources, which are indispensable in changing corrosive social structures via the morphogenesis of a new reality (Archer, 1998b; Wheelaban, 2007). The transformative capacity of the agent depends upon competences and facilities (access to resources), while the acts performed in or by her actions will depend upon the extent and manner in which she is able to mobilize these resources (including “inner” ones – curiosity, hope, imagination, drive, bodily gesture, self-esteem) and the circumstances of her actions (Bhaskar, 1994).

In summary, the combination of the three aforementioned realms and sublayers help to stage the complexity of being a doula or CHW of color within the U.S. and/or the medical context. However, it is the praxis realm I am challenging myself to dive into, due to its potential to activate change and to challenge what is *taken for granted* in empirical and theoretical realities, as well as in the inner caves of the life agents’ worldviews.

Proposed Research Questions: From Lived Experience to Academic Inquiry

The research questions guiding this study are born from a place of urgency and are intended to be activators of critical thinking and of reflexive and reflective dialogue among people residing in the different layers of reality:

1. How are the experiences of immigrant women about the “I, ME, and Self” informed and transformed by their context, time, space, and relational networks?

2. How does the process of becoming a [_____] ⁹ inform the women's individual and group sense of agency and groupness?
3. What are the pathways for identity transformation and conscientization used by lay-health care workers to recognize and denounce systems of oppression, while co-creating spaces of belonging and collective power?

These questions turn traditional inquiries about development of community mobilization, and reduction of maternal and child health inequalities in immigrant communities, inside-out. This is because no radical change can happen at the meso- and macro-system levels until the agents (people) inhabiting them activate their agential powers to challenge established and normalized structural mechanisms. For immigrant women, whose positionality in the host country continuously reminds them of their “place in society,” is imperative to understand how to access their inner agency, informed by their lived experiences even before the acquisition of their immigrant identity, and all its historical hues (Blanco, 2018).

⁹ Note: [_____] is intentional. My hope is that it can be filled with the world views of the life agents. Narrative research questions are framed as puzzles: “the narrative inquiry is an experience....it is people in relation studying people in relation” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 189).

Chapter Two

Theoretical Underpinnings

Theoretical Foundations of Emergence

Two theoretical meta-theories give the foundational ontological perspective to this research: Liberation Psychology (LP) and Critical Realism (CR). Together, LP and CR are lesser known theories in the area of human development in general, and psychology and public health in particular (Blanco, 2018; Botha, 2021; Williams et al., 2017). I invested a large amount of space in the elaboration of LP's origins in América Latina, and complementary theories, because LP is rooted in the interconnections between socio-historical factors, economic forces, division of labor, colonization history, and cultural views of the Self and the collective (Martín-Baró, 1996b). Hence, it shares contextual and cultural roots with the life agents and mine, which is critical when trying to understand the emigrant experience.

In the case of CR, I include Archer's (2013b; 2020) Morphogenetic Model, as an intelligible route for the applicability of both theories in open systems (real life), and as their philosophical foundations require translation into practical and palpable concepts that can be empirically tested. This chapter cannot embrace the complexity of each of these theories, but it attempts to:

- 1) Provide a comprehensive overview of their core assumptions or tenets, as they relate to a critical view about systems of oppression, and agential capacities for change.
- 2) Present a case on how the theoretical combination of their tenets can serve as a solid foundation for the understanding of the process of conscientization and collective transformation.

I open my case by providing a brief historical overview on the people behind the theories, in order to humanize them.

3) Present an example on how to explain core tenants of LP.

Theoretical Foundations of Liberation Psychology

Ignacio Martín-Baró (1942-1989), social psychologist, Jesuit priest, and philosopher is considered the father of LP. His work among the most impoverished people and with students at the Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas (UCA) informed his praxis. His activism, combined with his fierce intellectual and political battles against the invisible forces of power, ended on November 16, 1989, on university grounds, when he and seven others were assassinated (El País, 1989). Records state that his last words to the United States (U.S.) trained troops of the Atlacatl Battalion were, “This is an injustice!” (Martín-Baró, 1996b, p. 1). Trained in El Salvador and in the U.S. as a social psychologist and scientist, Martín-Baró expressed the need for psychology in general, and social psychology in particular, to be liberated. He saw the need to redesign its de-contextualized theoretical, analytical, and practical tools into ones centering the views of those suffering within their social-historical realities (Martín-Baró, 1996b). He believed that statistical data collected with those affected by injustices could serve as a mechanism for de-ideologization, because it offers a tangible problematization of their circumstances (Freire, 2000; Martín-Baró, 1996b). As a result of this core belief, in 1986, he founded the Instituto Universitario de Opinión Pública (IUdOP), an academic-community effort to collect, analyze, and disseminate information about the reality of the Salvadorian people (Martín-Baró, 1996b). The institute continues to be a source of quantitative data and research in El Salvador.

Despite his training, Martín-Baró was critical of social constructionism due to its emphasis on relativism, anti-empirical stances, and lack of critical positioning against social injustices (Gergen, 1985, 2011; Martín Baró, 2006; Schwandt, 2000). He also critiqued

assumptions about the self in western psychology, centered on positivistic, hedonic, ahistorical, individualistic, and homeostatic methodologies (Martín-Baró, 1996b; Martín-Baró, 2006).

Instead, he viewed social reality through the lenses of transcendental realism and employed critical realism theory as his theoretical base (Martín-Baró, 2018).

Despite Martín-Baró's distancing from social constructionism, he did what a philosopher and dialogical theorist would do: he repurposed key components in a search to "relativize knowledge and critically revise it from the perspective of the popular majorities" (Martín-Baró, 1996b, p. 28). Thus, he used Berger and Luckmann's theory (1966) of social construction of reality, focusing on their thesis about the evolution of institutionalized reality in societies. However, he expanded the theory by adding political socialization as an extra step in the process of social formation (Blanco et al., 2018; Martín-Baró, 1996b).

The socialization process outlined by Berger and Luckmann (1966) includes: **1)** Objectivation/externalization: the a priori nature of the social construction into which people are born, and **2)** Retrojection into consciousness/internalization: the process involving the sedimentation of the social world as something permanent (p. 78). Their relationship relies on the fact that even though society is not externally created, and humans are the producers of the social order, it is the process of socialization that gives meaning to the institutions regulating people's lives. Consequently, the institutionalization of behaviors and norms is possible via the mechanisms of habitualization and legitimization of reality, which use language or symbolic systems as communicative tools (pp. 71-82). By adding political socialization, Martín-Baró explicitly includes political views as institutions of social order/control, created to protect the interests and values of the dominant classes (Martín-Baró, 1996b).

In addition to socialization, LP also shares with social construction theory special attention to language as a transmitter of culture; viewing culture as a conglomerate of external and internal meaning; and meaning as a variable placed in the intersection of historical time and geographical locality (Liu & Matthews, 2005; Schwandt, 2000).

Furthermore, Martín-Baró expanded the field of the construction of knowledge by attaching Freire's concept of prescriptive reality, which is the reality assumed by the oppressed internalizing process, which in turn negates an alternative reality, based on freedom and agency (Freire, 2000). This concept follows the Marxian concepts of the substructures and superstructures, where the majority masses internalize the prevailing realities, becoming the Objects, the labor, and the substructures. Meanwhile the minority masses are the creators of the objectified reality, making them the beneficiaries of the work of others, the owners, and the superstructure (Marx as cited in Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 18).

Liberation Psychology's Ethical Compass and Tenets

According to Montero and Sonn (2009), liberation psychology should not be viewed as a branch of social psychology, but instead as an ethical paradigm for all psychologists and social leaders seeking an epistemology of relatedness (Montero, 1994). The essential tasks for liberation praxis according to Martín-Baró include: **1)** recovery of historical memory, **2)** de-ideologizing everyday experience, and **3)** utilizing people's virtues (Martín-Baró, 1996b). The relevance of these tasks takes an amplified meaning when employing liberation principles and praxis to Latinos/as/Indigenous immigrants in the U.S. context. This is because the opportunities to foster the recovery of their (our) own history, traditions, and languages are often dismissed and de-incentivized, and the value of their (our) labor and culture are constantly under attack by

racist policies, misleading propaganda, and exploitative working conditions (Duncan et al., 2006; Torres et al., 2011; Torres Rivera et al., 2013).

For Martín-Baró, LP was first and foremost inspired by liberation theology, and even though I will not get into the hermeneutical explanations of Christian scriptures, it is important to recognize the salient role of religion in the histories of Latin American people and how it informed LP's basic tenets. Three main concepts extracted from the Christian faith include: **1)** A search for historical conditions that give people life (or death), **2)** Orthopraxis over orthodoxy, i.e., actions are more important than affirmations, and **3)** Focus on the poor, the refugee, and immigrant, women, and children (Martín-Baró, 1996b). From these concepts, LP creates a triad of its basic tenets: **1)** a new horizon, **2)** a new epistemology, and **3)** a new praxis.

A new horizon, a New Being. Martín-Baró (1996b) calls for a departure from the dualist psychological obsession with the individual as the center of analysis, and the false belief that communities are an isolated construction, removed from the individuals developing within them. By the creation of this intellectual self-us dichotomy, psychology has no clear path to unite the “intimate relationship between individual control and collective power, between the liberation of each person and the liberation of a whole people” (p. 27). LP defines power as a disparity of resources among social interactions, allowing some people to have their social and economic interests prevail. Hence, in order to achieve a power balance capable of breaking the chains of oppression and misery, psychologists need to dwell in the explorative and painful process of self-conscientization, to then be able to support this process in others (Martín-Baró, 1996b). Seedat (1997), from his South African post-apartheid context, identifies two steps that Eurocentric and Anglo-Saxon psychology theory and methods need to undergo to change their dogma of power and universality: disillusionment, accompanied by a sense of disempowerment,

and reactive critical engagement, which is the process of opening the gate of self and collective conscious raising.

A New Epistemology. Liberation approaches center the realities of “other”: the farmer, the inner-city child, the single mother, the transgender daughter or son, the victim of human trafficking, the migrant worker, or the addict, and urges psychologists to construct meaning from these realities, world views, and developmental processes (Martín-Baró, 1996b).

I want to bring specific attention to the struggle of women of color in general and immigrant Latina/Indigenous women in particular, in their fight for reclaiming their rights within the feminist movement. Despite being a movement of resistance, feminism has not been immune to racism, color-blindness, and post-colonist approaches in academia and grassroots efforts alike (Kurtiş & Adams, 2015). Thankfully scholars, activists, and poets of color are bringing their own voices and intellect to the forefront of the movement (Collins, 2015; Roberts, 1993). Bluntly said by Roberts (1993), “racism and patriarchy are not two separate institutions but one, in the lives of black women [as well as other women of color]” (p. 3). Martín-Baró extensively studied the role of women, machismo, and family dynamics in Latin America and in El Salvador, and one common conclusion throughout his work was that machismo is an ideology rooted in the psyche of all people, causing the naturalization of an oppressive system that has become a taken-for-granted reality (Martín-Baró, 1968, 1996a, 1996b). Thus, he sees de-ideologization as a key first step in the process towards liberation.

A New Praxis. *Cum verba*, acts with words, provides the foundational stance of liberation efforts. Defined as a cyclical, dynamic, imperfect, and continuous dialogue between theory and practice, with an inquiring process of particularity-totality-particularity. This cycle departs from the prevailing mode of thinking of European and Anglo-centric social and human

sciences focused on cognitive creation (Montero & Sonn, 2009). Liberation psychology uses regenerative processes to critique societal structures of oppression, by simultaneously influencing such critique (Montero, 2007).

In summary, the emancipatory capacity of this new praxis provides psychologists and other social scientists with a new theory and new practices. The former demands a stop to studying the “other” as someone external from their (my) historical and cultural context, and instead requires an endeavor into the process of relatedness, where One (I) and the Other (You) exist in the same plane, and are constantly constructing each other (Montero, 2007, p. 526). The latter refers to the action-driven nature of praxis, which can only be experienced by walking alongside those affected by inequality, those who are not at the margins of society, but rather inside the “belly of the beast” (Freire, 2000).

Influential Schools of Thought Supporting Liberation Psychology

This section will briefly highlight some of more tangible concepts and methodological processes informing liberation praxis. I visualize these contributions as materials needed for a freedom tapestry, with no predetermined pattern in mind, but with a vision to tell a story sewn by the hands of people seeking to break away from the hegemonic forces residing inside their struggles.

Philosophy of Liberation

Developed by the Argentine philosopher Enrique Dussel, who introduces a new concept of dialectics, which contests the ontological views of totality defended by Husserl, Hegel, and Marx about knowledge and experience. According to Dussel, their ontology never assumed the perspective of the “other:” the peasant, the poor, the colonized (Dussel, 1995). Dussel’s ana-dialectic method (vs. dialectics) is able to expand the horizons of totality to incorporate the other.

His thought transcends the Eurocentric totality by including the alterity of the “other,” the people residing outside the totality (Dussel, 1995; García Ruiz, 2014).

Education of Pedagogy

Pedagogy of the Oppressed, is one of the most prominent works of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, which centered on the conscientization process involved in the liberation of people. Freire professed the premise that words without actions are empty, and actions without reflection are volatile activism (Freire, 2000). He shared W.E.B. Du Bois’ concept of a double consciousness residing in the lives of those submerged by systems of chains: “how can the oppressed, as divided, authentic beings, participate in developing the pedagogy of their liberation?” (Freire, 2000, p. 48). His educational approach is capable of making visible the invisible or “limit-situations,” and by using a process based on problem-posing education, provides ways for people to collectively free their minds from the ties of idealism and fatalism (Freire, 2000, p. 84). By conscientization he talks about an emergent process of critical consciousness rather than stages of development. Freire (2000b) uses the image of re-birth to illustrate this emergence: “Those who undergo it [conscientization] must take on a new form of existence” (Freire, 2000, p. 61). Conscientization seeks liberation of humans not things, and the humanization of those racialized and minoritized.

Theory of Dependency (TD)

I will not attempt to summarize global trade and economics, however, I am obliged to briefly mention the role of economics and social history in the context of América Latina during the second half of the 20th century, as its political, economic, and human rights consequences are still manifesting in the favelas, barrios del sur, slums, and tugurios of these countries, as well as

in the gentrified neighborhoods in the U.S. with high concentrations of Latino/a residents (Jones-Webb & Wall, 2008; Ludwig-Dehm & Iceland, 2017)

Concepts of development and underdevelopment, international accumulation of capital, and diversified industrial patterns for development are central themes in this theory (Montero & Sonn, 2009). Two streams of TD took the center stage. One, a more radical version led by André Gunder Frank which supported economic isolation, using the rationale that the center grew outward at the expense of the periphery (Velasco, 2002). The second approach was created and implemented by Fernando Enrique Cardoso, who would become Brazil's 34th president, and Enzo Fletto. They explain that capitalism does not have to be evil and that both rich and poor countries can benefit, with the caveat that these benefits would not be equal (Halperin-Donghi, 1982; Velasco, 2002). The latter social-economic stream prevailed.

Dos Santos (1974) explains in detail the dialectic relationship between development and dependence as its consequences in Latin America's societal structures and relationships with other economies. For Dos Santos (1974), dependency is not an "external factor," but rather an internal condition of global and historical events and can only be studied from the perspective of those whose economies rely on the buying power and regulatory requirements of global markets. Capitalism, on the other hand, can only be explained from the hegemonic position of colonialism and expansionist economics.

The result of this dependency was and continues to be a web of social, political, and economical consequences in the Southern Hemisphere, from internal corrosion of local governments capacity to regulate tariffs (Chatzky et al., 2020), increased mechanization of labor (Hellinger & Hellinger, 1975), U.S. interference in the politics of América Latina (Tharoor et al., 2016), displacement of people from their lands making them laborers of multinational fruit

companies (Chapman, 2007; Vargas Llosa, 2019), and a large exodus of refugees, jobless, and war-displaced people to the U.S. (Pagnotta, 2014).

Liberation Sociology

Orlando Fals-Borda, Colombian sociologist is most well-known for his contributions to making Participatory Action Research (PAR) a methodological force in the social sciences. Trained in the positivistic stew of the 1940s and 1950s, he is able to explore other ways to gain knowledge, by centering its inquiry in the human not the data point, instead of aseptic and controlled pseudo-realities (Fals-Borda, 1996). PAR, defined as “*vivencia*” (life-experience), challenges the social sciences to shift its inquiry approach from a distant-seeking position to an empathetic position towards others (Fals-Borda, 2006). Engaging iterative, multi-voiced, multidisciplinary, and transnational collaborations, PAR asks a key question: “What do we do with the knowledge thus obtained?” (p.31). This question is answered with two commitments: knowledge has to be used for liberation and must employ a praxis-driven methodology.

PAR is as much a methodology as it is a theory grounded in the reality of people. Its internal workings seek access to these realities, inquiring always alongside people, to situate their *vivencia* within a specific historical context. The collective goal is to use critical memory to activate an emergent understanding of liberation, one that can become action (Fals-Borda, 1985). PAR becomes an intrinsic methodological ally for liberation psychology, as it assists in the emergence of new perspectives, and breaks with the asymmetrical relationship of submission in the subject/object duality (Martín-Baró, 1996b).

Liberation Theology

Nobel Peace Prize recipient Rigoberta Menchú (1984/2009) was able to distill the core relationship between religion and social justice: “We don’t need a leader to show us where God

is, to say whether he exists or not, because, through our own conception of God... [we know] he does not wish even one of his children to die..." (p. 158). She explains that the Bible for her indigenous people is not per se the instrument that brings them freedom, but it serves as a guide to mirror their reality.

Theologian and physician Gustavo Gutiérrez (2000, 2014), considered the father of liberation theology, spoke about the Christian faith not as a dogma, but a practice of understanding, and action. He condemned the presence of oppressive systems in the lives of indigenous people, women, and the poor, leading to their dehumanization. Gutiérrez (2014) denounces that "poverty has its causes. It is not a fatality, is a condition; is not an injury, it is an injustice" (p. 209). As mentioned previously, Martín-Baró, considered the Christian faith as a central piece of his work. He expressed the importance of understanding the role of Christianity on the life-worlds of the oppressed of Latin America, because without it, it is impossible to uncover the ways religion has been used by the oppressor as a weapon for submersion, but also how faith has been used by the people as a protective "vaccine" against systemic aggressions (Martín-Baró, 1996b).

Theories Influencing LP outside of the borders of América Latina. Interpretivism and Marxism are two major influences in the liberation praxis and understanding how they are included in LP's DNA provides a deeper perspective of its ontological and praxis-oriented philosophy. In addition, Critical Race Theory (CRT) and LatCrit serve to work in uncovering the struggle of the *other*, but from a more policy-cultural structural perspective, while mostly residing in the academic realm of knowledge generation.

Interpretivism and Marxism. Max Weber's (1864-1920) interpretivism suggested that human sciences are in search of understanding (Verstehen), in contrast with the well-established

search for explanation (Erklaren) in the natural/social sciences (Crotty, 1998). He proposed an interpretative approach to understand social phenomena, one that employs methodological approaches capable of capturing meanings and values in search of subjectivity. Two interpretivist branches inform LP methodological approaches and aim at gaining a deeper understanding on meaning-making processes: **1)** hermeneutics, with Wilhelm Dilthey, Martin Heidegger, and Hans-Georg Gadamer as its most influential architects, and **2)** symbolic interpretivism, developed by George Herbert Mead (Crotty, 1998). Martín-Baró (2018), reiterates on multiple occasions the “principle of liberation” left by great thinkers such as Weber, Marx, and Durkheim, as it creates a frame of reference that is both theoretical and based on lives-lived.

Karl Marx’s (1818-1883) critical theories of capital and the classes and labor divisions it produces, has had an enormous influence on critical theory, and community/labor mobilization movements (Crotty, 1998). Marx’s definition of ideology is key in liberation approaches, as it analyzes how ideas ingrained in people and communities’ histories serve to create false consciousness in service of elitist powers (Marx as cited in Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 19). According to LP one of the steps toward personal and collective liberation and real consciousness formation is de-ideologization, a conceptual social mirror for looking at oneself within her/his/their reality(ies) (Martín-Baró, 1996b).

Marx and Martín-Baró based their resistance on the systems that saw the laborer as an object, by dehumanizing their work and their essence as humans: “labor does not only create goods; it also produces itself and the worker as a commodity, and indeed in the same proportion as it produces goods” (Marx, 1963/2001, p. 74). Marxism and liberation psychology’s inquiries

looked at societal ills manifested in unequal and orchestrated class divisions, rather than race-driven struggles.

This is an important epistemological distinction from critical theories developed within the U.S. socio-historical context, specifically Critical Race theory, LatCrit, and Intersectionality theory, which focus on social injustices based on race and gender, as well as the compounded inequalities resulting from intersecting identities (Antonio, 1983; Crenshaw, 1991; Delgado & Stefanic, 2012). Two glaring exceptions to this overarching statement about an emphasis on labor vs. race is visible in the work of the legal scholars Hernández-Truyol (1997, 2000, 2008, 2017) and Elvia R. Arriola (1999; 2003). Both bring to a male-dominated field the perspective of labor (immigration), race (those now racialized as “people of color” in the host culture), and gender (cultural roles and stigma). Arriola’s work (2003; 2007) also exposes the dehumanization of and crimes committed against women working in maquiladoras on the U.S.-Mexico border, and the role of the capitalistic system as a loyal partner of comprehensive immigration “reform.”

Critical Race Theory (CRT) and LatCrit. I find it important to give some narrative space to LatCrit Theory in this conversation, because even though it uncovers oppression affecting immigrant scholars and people identified as Latino/a, I have always felt that something was missing in its epistemology of resistance, especially regarding the day-to-day of people’s lives. My academic journey up to this point has led me to see that LatCrit and CR are also susceptible to the Euro- and Anglo-myopic theoretical views on understanding, lack of dialogical praxis on the ground, and historical amnesia, three fundamental theoretical voids critiqued by LP (Martín-Baró, 1996b).

LaCrit and Chicana Critical Studies have focused on parts of Latinoamerican history regarding colonialism and immigration to the North within the field of legal studies and

international law (Guerra, 1998; Padilla, 1999). Although both are vitally important, they paint an incomplete picture of América Latina and the Caribbean, and its people. On one hand, their focus on colonialism does not acknowledge the history of struggle of the Indigenous people, who were slaughtered, and then colonized by Spaniards and Portuguese. Nor do they focus on the slave trade between Africa and the colonies. Instead, their perspective is mostly Chicana and mestiza (I am a mestiza, a mixed race), and in whose work mostly academic voices are heard (Anzaldúa, 1987; Gómez, 1998). As a consequence, LatCrit leaves a large proportion of América's history (the continent) outside scholarly work. In addition, such as strong focus on immigration issues at the border—by that I mean when people are already “en el otro lado” (on the other side)—creates a pixelated image of the causes of immigration or displacement in the first place (Garcia, 2003; Hernández-Truyol, 2000).

By looking intensively at these two points in history from a primarily mestizo/a and academic perspective, we are left with a gap in our understanding of the relationship between the domination of Latin American and Indigenous people: the ones who stayed and the ones who migrated to the North (Espinoza, 1998; García Ramírez et al., 2011) with the transnational links involved in the development of immigrant families in the U.S. and their countries of origin (Upergui-Hernández, 2011). Employing liberation approaches to understand this gap instead provides a bridge between the past and the present, with the promise of reimagining a better future (Albar et al., 2010).

I want to finish this theoretical maze with the words of novelist and journalist Eduardo Galeano (1971) taken from his book *Venas abiertas de Latinoamérica* (The open veins of Latin America):

Along the way we have even lost the right to call ourselves Americans, although the Haitians and the Cubans appeared in history as new people a century before the

Mayflower pilgrims settled on the Plymouth coast. For the world today, America is just the United States; the region we inhabit is a sub-America, a second-class America of nebulous identity (p. 2).

Critical Realism (CR): An Ontological Stance on Understanding

Scientific realism emerges where the clear waters of relativism and realism ontologies merge and form a nutrient rich estuary of possibilities for the social and historical theorist (Mackay & Petocz, 2011). Critical Realism (CR) shifts the perception of the mind from a computer metaphor to one in which the mind is embedded in sensorimotor experiences and by bringing phenomenology and pragmatism as ways to look at the world (Mackay & Petocz, 2011).

In the social sciences, CR was proposed as the main representative of scientific realism under the work of Roy Bhaskar (2008b), who explained a way to uncover the unseen by proposing a return to a transcendental ontology. However, his theory moves beyond Kant's transcendental idealism and away from positivist empirical realism, by rejecting from the former that the imaginary world does not have a component of reality, and from the latter its regularity as an ultimate goal and obsession for variance. Instead, he builds a paradigm that incorporates open systems or transcendental realism, which are suited to study the world and people as independent structures, where the former is created by the latter, but in which functioning mechanisms of control can still remain hidden from its causal creators. Phenomena, according to Bhaskar, can happen without human awareness of them, despite the consequences of such events (Durdovic, 2018). For CR, when a piece of reality comes to the awareness of the observer, then the process of construction and testing for possible explanations occur (Bhaskar, 2008).

Using open systems of inquiry allows science to be understood as a process-in-motion, with the procedural requirement to be dialectical, always seeking to gain awareness and confront

the imaginary with the real. Bhaskar argues that people using their available agency shape their social world but are also constrained by social and cultural structures embedded in the historical context of their realities (Houston, 2014). He deploys two methods of understanding reality:

1) Transitive dimension (TD) based on immanent critique, rejecting empiricism and idealism.

TD is viewed as an epistemology, where science is a creative social process with transformative capacity, looking to discover the necessary conditions to achieve freedom (Bhaskar, 2008).

2) Intransitive dimension (ID) based on science, mechanism, sensorimotor experiences, hence present in the realm of empirical and actual. Objects in ID are subject to scientific inquiry and usually exist independently from human conditions or knowledge (Bhaskar, 2008). ID is placed in the realm of ontological reality, adding to it a dispositional realism seeking emergence as a necessary condition for freedom (Bhaskar, 2008).

Bhaskar expanded on these dimensions by classifying three stratified realities, each of them with ontological and epistemological properties: **1) Empirical:** The experiences people have about reality can be viewed as the superficial layer of gaining understanding, **2) Actual:** Corresponds to the events happening in reality, even those outside of our experience, and **3) Causal:** Referring to real happenings as the result of social and object-to-object interactions, which have an unforeseeable continuation, and are hard to access because structures exist independently from people's experience (Durdovic, 2018; Thorpe, 2020).

For a transcendental (critical) realist, knowledge of reality does not happen in a vacuum, but rather is the result of continuous social activity, perpetually extended, making knowledge always incomplete. However, this does not mean that there is not particular knowledge accessible for critical inquiry (Bhaskar, 2008). Martín-Baró within his own praxis, denounced

the prevailing intransitive ontology of oppression led by economic and class-struggles, while working to uncover the transitive epistemologies prevalent in people's daily lives.

Critical Realism's Key Tenets

For a critical inquiry to bear any weight in scholarship it needs to cross its ontological roots into the boundaries of epistemology. Its capacity to work in between both philosophical strands is mostly due to its capacity to see their independent nature as well as their interdependence, specifically by: **1)** Avoiding the conflation of being and knowing as explanatory solutions for observed social or individual phenomena (Bhaskar, 2020), **2)** Centering reflexivity as gateway to connect the Private Self with her Social Self (Brock, 2016), and **3)** Utilization of retroductive and abductive thinking as the knife to dissect the causal mechanisms informing observable phenomena (Danermark et al., 2002).

Lastly, due to CR's quality as a philosophical meta-theory, its analysis of empirical studies, although not impossible, does not provide a detailed roadmap to follow. Thus, I am concluding this section with a brief description of Margaret Archer's Morphogenetic Approach, which aims at dissecting the relationship between agency and structure, while incorporating the evolution of the personal Self and the social Self. Archer's approach is developed in great detail in the methodology section. Below each of these tenets are developed further.

Ontological Commitment and Epistemic Relativism. Bhaskar develops his transcendental ontology by taking Kant's *a priori* principles or categories of human understanding, which are independent of human experience (Harvey, 2002). For part of his thesis, he calls *Transcendental Realism: Society* → **Socialization** → **Individual**.

On the other hand, he asks *what are the rules of society and human behavior and can they be studied using natural laws?* By utilizing the work of Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, and

Peter Berger, Bhaskar develops the Society/Person Connection Model, which locates society as the cause for individual and societal development. However, his model continues to subsequently evolve to include two concepts: agency and transformation (or reproduction) as mediators between condition, outcome, and production (Archer, 1998b). His complete model becomes the Transformational Model of the Society/Person Connection (TMSA), which allows for a more fluid reciprocal relationship among human agency and society. The TMSA Model is depicted in Figure 1. In addition, it sets time and space boundaries to the naturalistic phenomena under study. His non-positivist naturalism is called Critical Naturalism (Harvey, 2002). Eventually these two terms became Critical Realism (Souza, 2014).

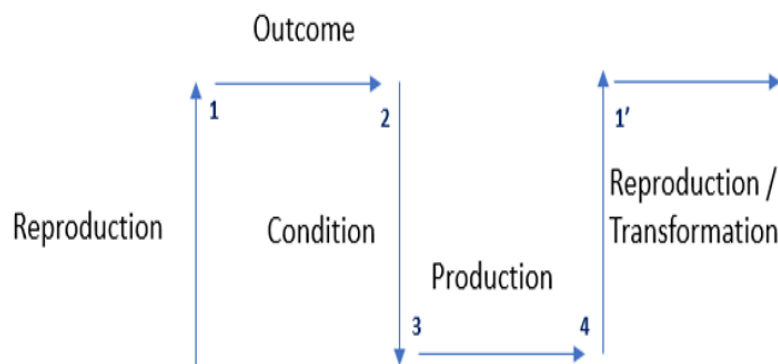
Bhaskar's conceptualization of society cannot be separated from human agency: "[society] is both the condition and outcome of human agency....and human agency both the production and reproduction of (or transformation) of society" (as cited in Harvey, 2002, p.173), or activity-dependence. However, agency is executed in something, and that something is society, or context-dependence. The relationship, its maintenance or transformation is possible due to human ideas, or concept-dependence (Archer, 2020). By layering reality into empirical, actual, and real, Bhaskar aimed at the study of human phenomena that cannot be reducible to what is seem, and it set out to resolve the issue of dualism, by stating that ontology (agency or intransitive dimension) is different from structure (micro, meso, and macro systems, or transitive dimension) (Bhaskar, 2020). The former is his ontological stance and the latter the epistemological consequence.

CR created a theoretical fracture, as it gives priority to neither ontology or epistemology, but rather embraces both as necessary components for the understanding of causal roots. The contributions of Archer (1998a, 1998b) in developing a social realist theory with epistemological

stance (Morphogenetic Approach), and Pawson and Tilley's (1997) contributions on realist evaluations of programs and policies, are essential in expanding the empirical and programmatic application of CR.

Figure 1

Bhaskar Transformation Model of the Society/Person Connection (TMSA)



Gives a Central Place to Reflexivity.¹⁰ Reflexivity becomes an intersubjective action mediating the mutual meanings emerging from the inner Self and the social Self. It is a conversation in first person, which emerges in our childhood in our relationships with our body (and its limits) and our necessary relation with our realities (natural, practical, and social)¹¹ (Archer, 2003).

Reflexivity gives humans the capacity to relate to the Self (I, Me, You) as a being different from other beings and things. It provides us with access to our inner concerns via our internal conversation, which provide the direction for our actions (agency). This first-person

¹⁰ Reflexivity as a practice of academic and personal inquiry is discussed in the Methodology Chapter, as a way to exemplify its applicability.

¹¹ Bhaskar calls the layers of realities empirical, actual, and real, whereas Archer refers to them as natural, practical, and social. Throughout this research I use both classifications interchangeably.

authorship is essential when going about our lives, as it is an essential component to function in society.

The epistemic authority of the first-person however, is not perfect. Humans are wrong in their predictions, assumptions, and plans all the time. Our thoughts or beliefs are never infallible, indubitable, incorrigible, or omniscient, even when utilizing the “best research” methods (Archer, 2003). The catch here is that without reflexivity we cannot modify our lives because we require its emergent powers to mediate between the inner self and the external world (society, culture).

Abduction and Retroduction as its inference’s modes. The negotiation between the inconsistencies found in theory and practice requires the constant awareness of one’s positionality. As aforementioned, CR inquiry becomes an intersubjective reflection, mediating the mutual meanings emerging from a personal and social relationship. This process requires the incorporation of hermeneutical inferences¹² aimed at increasing one’s capacities to expand the horizons of understanding the emergent properties of the personal and social realms (Archer, 1998b).

For CR one way to accomplish this is by looking at a phenomenon beyond a deductive or inductive lens, to one with abductive or retroductive capacity. A tangible example: imagine the difference between an X-Ray and an MRI. Both produce a different perspective (knowledge) of what lies underneath, but the former provides a unidimensional view of structural components, while the latter allows for the multidimensional understanding of how the structural components relate to one another, and the interconnectedness between them. Allowing the theory to move from naturalistic and concrete phenomena to reconstruct the basic conditions of these

¹² Retroductive and abductive inference require deeper layers of abstraction and creative thinking in our personal lives, as well as in research.

phenomena. In critical realism abduction is deemed as the first step after obtaining empirical results.

Abduction. It differs from induction as it is not a purely empirical generalizations (as in Grounded Theory), and from deduction as it does not follow a logically rigorous process (as in theoretically driven methods) (Danermark, et al., 2002). It is a new way to interpret a phenomenon within the frame of a new set of ideas or recontextualization. Abductive thinking gives space to creativity and innovative thinking is using a different lens to view the world, while making associations not evident before. Jagosh (2020) refers to abduction as a “hunch or informed imagination that leads to new ideas for generating theories and testing possible mechanisms” (p.22). When using abductive thinking we move from one set of ideas to another set of ideas, this happens by “placing and interpreting the original set ideas about a phenomenon in the frame of a new set of ideas [and contexts]” (Danermark, et al., 2002, p. 91). It allows researchers to create new frameworks or theories, and it owns an epistemological stance.

Retroduction. Unlike deductive inference, which is guided by theoretical constructs to “unpack the typicality through a close analysis of the discursive contours of the social practice” (Rogers, 2013, p.72) or inductive inference, aided by observations of multiple events; retroductive inference does not take a one-way direction, instead it is a process of finding what is not seen at the empirical level, it is the “activity of unearthing causal mechanisms” (Jagosh 2020, p.121), and it searches to identify the necessary conditions for a particular causal mechanism to take effect and to result in the empirical trends observed” (Fletcher, 2017, p. 189).

By using retroductive reasoning one might ask: what are the external and internal *conditions* in which X can emerge? What are the *mechanisms* making X possible? (Meyer & Lunnay, 2013). These questions encapsulate three important components in Bhaskar’s ontology:

mechanism (*real*, which is latent), condition (*actual*), and outcome (*empirical*). Retroductive thinking allows for the activation (eruption) of the *real*, which will flow upward to the actual and empirical. Then, as a researcher we will be able to see what was before hidden (Jagosh, 2020). Importantly, retroduction welcomes reflexivity in the researcher, which in turn has the potential to influence their behavior (participatory inquiry) (Willis, 2019).

Making Critical Realism Methodologically Feasible¹³

Despite the great contributions of CR as a theory of emergence, I argue that it cannot be taken to be liberatory without a direct pathway to be empirically tested. Thankfully, Archer's contributions moved CR to a social theory through the introduction of the Morphogenesis/Morphostasis Model (M/M), by looking at the development of the self within three layers of reality (Archer, 1998b). In her model, Archer operationalizes the concepts of agency and structure as two different forces (people and the parts), arguing that each is different and irreducible to one another: "we need to move beyond identification to unpacking" (Archer, 1998b, p. 379). She uses analytical dualism to allow agency and structure to be studied separately, regardless of their interwoven relationship. Two main differences among them making it possible to analyze them separately, and hence identify their effects in social systems are:

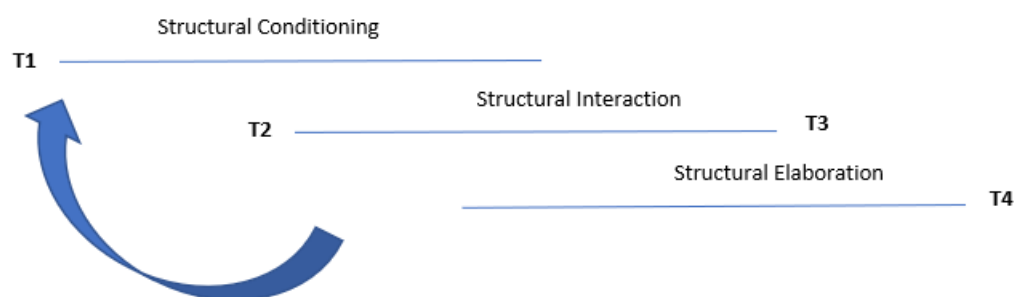
1) They are different types of emergent entities, possessing different powers and properties. For example, a health care system can be centralized but patients cannot, and a patient can experience severe pain, while a health system cannot.

¹³ I used the image of a tree as a symbolic and dialectical image to exemplify theoretical and methodological concepts and steps, respectively.

2) Both occur diachronically over different timelines: social structures pre-date the actions of agents that change them, and changes in social structures occur after those changes were implemented. (Seal, 2016). Figure 2 illustrates the approach

Figure 2

Margaret Archer's Morphogenic Approach



Because nothing in society is static, a new elaboration, T4 (e.g., the understanding of the use of gender pronouns) will become conditioned, T1 (expectation to use gender pronouns as part of people's introductions in certain settings) by its normalization, until a new interaction, T2-T3 (e.g., social movements) triggers a social fault line resulting in the emergence of new elaboration.¹⁴ Even when social conditioning comes first, agents can react to their current conditioning and change, *in time*, the operating social and cultural structures within which future agents will function (generation of a new social structure) (Seal, 2016). This morphogenetic model relies on the interaction and action of agents to break structural conditioning. In the process those agents will be changed by the resultant organization of the new structures (double morphogenesis).

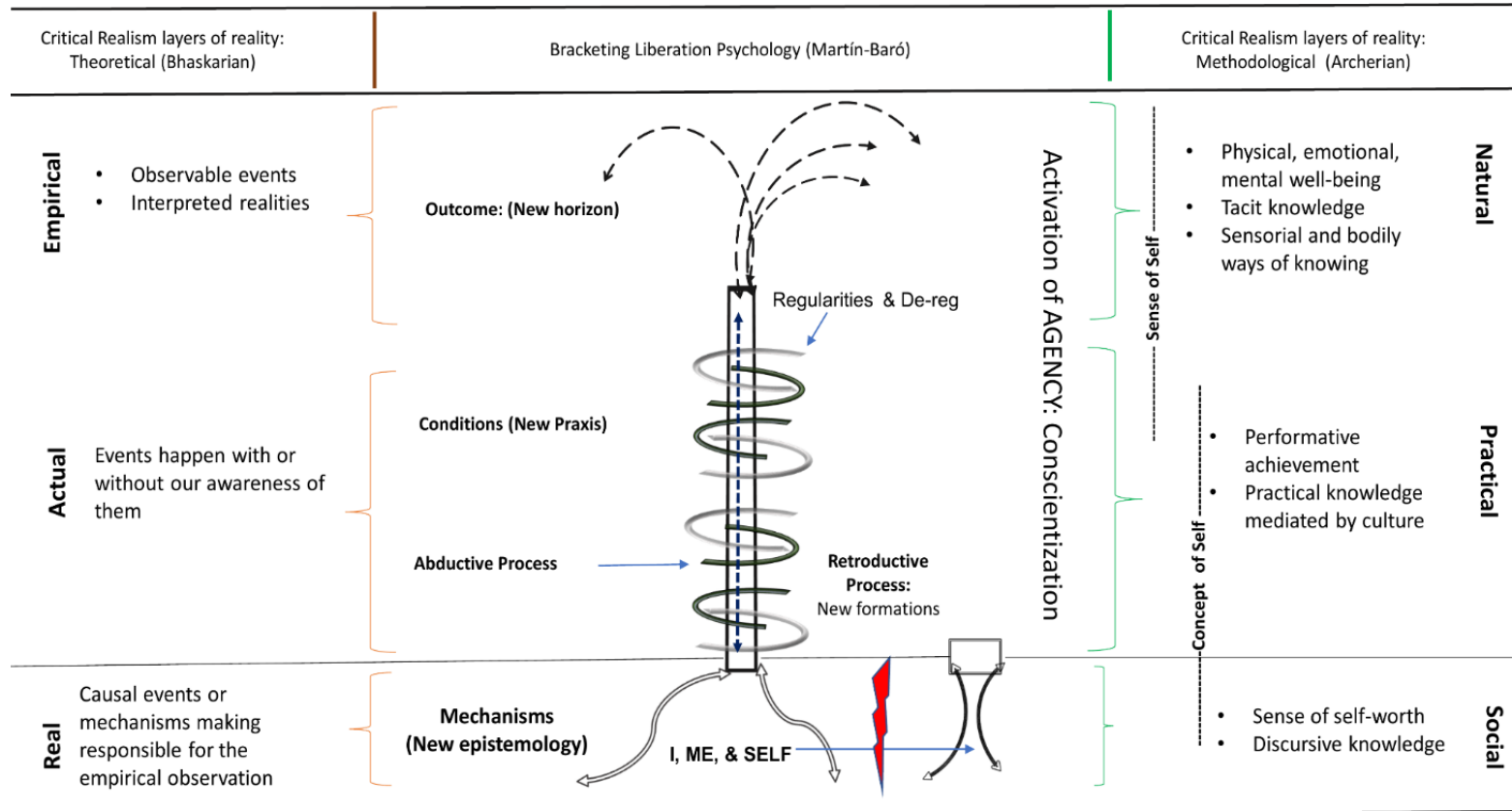
Differentiating agency from structures, both of which are time- and context-dependent, allows for the teasing apart of each of them analytically. First, one needs to understand how

¹⁴ Social elaborations can occur in larger proportion on society, but also within sectors or communities.

structures inform the realities of the agents and their actions. Then, according to Archer, the social researcher will be able to understand how those interactions in turn reproduce (morphostasis) or transform (morphogenesis) the agent's initial context (Archer, 1998b; Seal, 2016). The visual theoretical depiction of the relationship between the ontological and epistemological realities central to CR and its variants, and LP is found in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Theoretical Foundations of Critical Realism (CR) and Liberation Psychology (LP)



Note: Left and right side: depict Bhaskar’s ontological, and Archer’s epistemological understandings of layered realities, respectively. Sense of Self and Concept of Self are explained in next chapters. Center: reflects a complementary relationship between conscientization, a core component of Liberation Psychology. Regularities *and* de-regularities are expected and emergent/outlier events, respectively.

Critical Realism (CR) & Liberation Psychology (LP): Bridging Geographical Boundaries

Martín-Baró used critical realism as his framework of inquiry, however it took me some time to understand the reasoning behind his theoretical positioning, mostly because only one of his major papers, *El Realismo Crítico: Fundamentos y Aplicaciones*,¹⁵ directly mentions it (Martín-Baró, 2018). By reading the title I thought that I hit a jackpot in this literature review, and was going to be able to simply find LP's connection with CR. But to my surprise, after reviewing a 350-page document, not once were CR or Bhaskar mentioned. I needed to reflect on why it bothered me that Martín-Baró used a theory from a philosopher from an imperialist country. Not that the theory was less legitimate because of that, but because I did not draw *contextual parallels* between a theory developed in England with one developed in El Salvador.

As a novice scholar of color developing theory inside a system that continuously oppresses all my identities in different ways, I needed to feel that Martín-Baró's approach was an epistemology engendered in the experience of those embodying the concept of double consciousness. I owed it to myself to understand more about not just the theory, but about the person behind it, because when an individual life is explored using a temporal lens, the "line between individual and social tends to dissolve" (Maynes et al., 2008, p. 3). This quote gave me the idea to read about Bhaskar's Anglo-Saxon environment. It was then when I started to understand the axiology of emancipation guiding his critical realism theory. By reading his bibliography, it is Bhaskar's need and personal desire to fuse two worlds became evident: metaphorically representing two social science philosophies (transcendental realism and critical naturalism), but pragmatically representing his own life as the son of immigrants. His father was an Indian doctor who migrated to England after World War II, without any safety net beneath his

¹⁵ Translation: *Critical Realism: Fundamentals and Applications*

feet, and his mother was an English woman raised in South Africa. As a biracial child raised according to the religion of Hinduism, he was exposed to racism and “otherness” (Bhaskar, 2008, p. xi). Bhaskar’s context and upbringing carries the weight of being an outcast in two worlds, but at the same time he was at the center of such worlds, giving him the tools from a young age to navigate British individualism and colonizing mentality, and Indian collective and colonized mental frame, which informed his own calling. My assumption is that his own lived experience gave him the intellectual malleability to navigate the waters of different ontological views of reality, in search of a theory that embraces objectivity and subjectivity with the commitment to never cease to discover what lies hidden from our consciousness.

This reflection was important in two ways: **1)** As a researcher understanding my underlying theory is an essential component of inquiry, otherwise, attempting improvements on our current understanding of specific social or physical phenomena does not have an anchor, and **2)** As a woman researcher of color in the United States, I carry the weight of ever-present internalized patriarchal-colonizing-capitalist unspoken constraint elements, in addition to downward pulling of my multiple truths. My inner conversations are always navigating possible translated narratives to be used in different occasions. The only times when I can let my guard down is when I am interacting with my family and working with my community. During the journey of this research, I needed to *see* the humans behind the theories because as a critical inquirer I needed to let my guard down to let reflexivity take place during each step of the way.

Theoretical Frameworks: A Collective Blueprint for Transformation

To deny the existence of oppressive systems is to deny our social and historical past (Martín-Baró, 1996b). On the other hand, to talk about oppression without reflecting on the capacity for disruption and transformation is to deny human’s capacity as change agents (Hu,

2018). In this vein, CR (morphogenesis) and LP (conscientization) are complementary paths searching for emergence. Each requires intersubjective dialogue, reflexive reasoning, and social awareness, to move from one level of consciousness to another (Archer, 1998a; Freire, 2000). According to these theories, due to the geographical-time-relational nature of knowledge the agent cannot be understood in isolation, simply because social life is not a sterile petri dish. In addition to their commitment to unearth root causes (mechanisms) informing, reinforcing, and transforming human interaction, they are committed to engage in methodologies that allow for long conversations and creative data collection methods. In other words, emergence operates in stratified reality(ies), and a feedback loop of social, physical (nature), and agency (Souza, 2014). Critical realism is a philosophical position that negates the omnipresence of objectivity worshiped by positivist traditions, while denouncing the realism and uncritical relativism permeating post-structural thought (Archer, 2014). However, as mentioned before, how to employ CR in the practical world is not easy. Even Archer's social application of critical realism, does not connect autonomy of an individual (requirement for praxis) to the processes required to achieve such autonomy (emancipation). Hence, it is LP and its rootedness in conscientization (Freire, 2000) that is needed to imagine actionable participatory approaches for the co-creation of understanding (Fals Borda, 1985), to complete the iterative cycle of transformation (Harvey, 2002).

The next section of this chapter gives space to popular education example. The concepts utilized by Liberation Psychology are not easy to understand, as they are the result of an internal process of transformation that eventually can become public. In my effort to operationalize such concepts in ways that could also be explained to non-academics, I developed a step-by-step

allegory to dissect complex terms into more digestible concepts. After this section, you will enter the realm of praxis (Methodology Chapter), in which I exercise the muscles of reflexivity.

Creating a Theoretical and Methodological Model for Praxis

In the next pages I use Freire's (2013) adult educational approach of codification, which on one hand mediates between concrete and theoretical contexts of reality, and on the other, mediates between the dialogue among educators and learners, who are simultaneously "seeking to unveil the action-object whole" (p. 22). Furthermore, this communicative approach must be understood by anyone who tries to interpret it, even when purely pictorial.

From the Roots to the Seeds: Codification of Liberation Methodologies

The steps I use to exemplify LP come with a twist: I have taken Freire's codification steps, Martín-Baró's theoretical tenets, and Farls-Borda's participatory action, to recreate an alternative inquiry process for critical researchers, public health practitioners, and human ecologists in general.

Freire's methods for adult education use drawings or stories of a situation known to the people involved in the process to initiate the problem-posing conversation. Preliminary research including contextual knowledge, common beliefs, descriptive statistical data, and historical data needs to be included during this step, in order to situate the social, political, and historical ecosystem influencing and/or affecting people's lives (Freire, 1998). In addition, researchers must understand that the participatory nature of liberation theories requires that people's stories are the departing step for the process. Narrative methods such as life stories, narrative inquiry, art, music, and other forms of cultural-situated expressions are not just welcomed, but required methods of inquiry (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Larceda Júnior & Souza Lobo Guzzo, 2012.; Maynes et al., 2008; Riessman, 2008).

Trees are a symbol in my life, and I am not alone. Freire (1998) talks in his book *Pedagogy of the Heart*, about the comforting shade of a mango tree, where he “finds refuge under its shade” while being secluded from the world and immersed in a conversation with self (p.1). Dordel’s (2016) movie reveals the underground world of tree roots as an ancient and interconnected community, always in constant relationship. In their training manual for community health workers, Smith et al. (2015) use the metaphor of a tree to address the root cause of illness, with the trunk the analogy of women’s health. Pregnant bodies create placental trees able to nurture and communicate with their babies via the intricate mesh of arteries and veins. By using a tree as my code, I am intending to illustrate the cyclical and interdependent nature of this process, from roots to seeds and back to the ground. This is because emancipatory knowledge never settles, it is always evolving, and capable of creating societal change (Martín-Baró, 1996b). A graphic representation of this conceptual explanation is in Figure 4 at the end of this chapter.

First step: The Roots

The reason why the process of rooting is the beginning of the methodological dialogue and exploration between community and facilitators (researchers, psychologists), is because liberation methodologies give a central importance to the socio-historical contexts affecting the development of people and communities. Importantly, they see time as a continuum, where history is a function of people’s creations, always in a constant process of transformation within each epochal unit (Freire, 2000). Using this root system as an ethical and methodological base allows the researcher and communities to create the tools needed to co-facilitate generative praxis (Freire, 2013). The critical importance of understanding the realities of people (the soil), the evolving intersubjectivity among the researcher and communities (the forest), and the

resources available to people in real time (water, and sunlight), are aspects that make liberation methodologies and their findings empirical, causal, and emancipatory (Durdovic, 2018).

This step initiates the process of conscientization, which has an emergent nature; it cannot be dictated from the outside of its context (Martín-Baró, 1996b). This process starts with the process of deconstruction of I, Me, and Self, because it understands that in oppressive systems human beings become Objects, whose goal is to produce wealth for the master (Freire, 2000; Martín-Baró, 1990a ; Mead, 1962). This step is fundamental in the consciousness-raising process, as it challenges the taken-for-granted situations of oppression by questioning their blinding power over one's life and naming them as limit-situations, instead of "the way things are" (Montero, 1994). Being faced with this new perspective allows people to move onto limit-acts, where they can start to problematize, the forces negating their humanity (Freire, 2000, p. 99).

Second step: A Grafted Trunk

The trunk of this model is grafted for two reasons: **1)** Liberation theories in general, and liberation psychology in particular, have emerged from the influences of multiple theories, and **2)** When working with immigrant communities, their culture is inserted into the mainstream culture, causing the acceptance or rejection of new life-worlds. Dussel (1995), talks about alterity (the-other-in-me), which allows for the emergence of a collective consciousness even if still naïve and immature (Freire, 2000).

The grafted trunk has a central and secondary vertical axis, problematization and de-ideologization, respectively. The central axis works at de-codifying the view of a world as unchangeable and static (Martín-Baró, 1996b, p. 40). The oppressed can only liberate themselves, hence they have to be the ones waging the battle for liberation by using problem-

posing situations as their weapon, and with problematization as their strategy (Freire, 2000). Problem-posing situations are the way to start bringing single elements of one's life into a foregrounded awareness to reflect on them. Freire (2000) explains that "these elements are now objects of their (the oppressed) consideration, and as such, objects of their action and cognition" (p. 83). De-ideologization, on the other hand, serves as the process of moving away from the semi-intransitive or submerged popular consciousness, and allows for the emergence of an image of the world one lives in and its totality (p. 50). From this totality, people are capable of seeing beyond ideology, and to perceive their reality with a critical perspective (Montero, 2007, 2015).

Third Step: Branches of De-construction

Freire refers to the process of liberation as one of giving birth, guided by the midwifery wisdom of the collective (Freire, 2000). The branches are guided by the praxis emerging from dialogic authoring selves (Holland et al., 1998). They grow seeking the light coming from people's new knowledge of their surroundings and their social identities (Martín-Baró, 1996b). Each branch represents a type of de-constructive process, which includes:

De-fetishization

Corresponds to the counter-narrative of how people are valued in capitalist societies and how they experience the relationships between Subject and Object. Therefore, de-fetishization is the visceral process of "undoing the capital-labor relation" (Torres Rivera et al., 2013).

De-alienation

The resulting smackdown between a raised consciousness and the experienced realities of one's life. The emancipatory outcome is one that allows for people to move into action in order to change their circumstances, even in small amounts (Montero, 2015).

De-naturalization

Defined as the active process of breaking down and understanding the conditions, and origins of the naturalized and institutionalized beliefs used by oppressive systems and codified inside people's world views (Montero, 2015). Part of this process is combined with the counterstrategy of de-habituating. Pierre Bourdieu (as cited in Montero, 2015), defines the concept of habitus as a structured reality capable of reproducing itself in the unconsciousness of people and populations. Furthermore, it creates patterns of behaviors and follows codified personal and social responses, submerging people in a mental and emotional numbness (p. 146). Hence, *de-habituating* intends to uncover the invisible ideological roots of oppression, externally created portraits of self and one's group, which have been internalized and transmitted generationally (Montero, 2015).

De-colonization

Memmi (1965), offers a must-read incisive and detailed dissection of the evolution of the dual relationship between colonizer/colonized, from the perspective of individual lives, and its social and economic consequences inside whole populations. Also, Fanon (1986), talks about the colonized people, as in whose souls reside an inferiority complex that has been "created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality..." (p. 9). Tuck and Yang (2012) develop the meaning of decolonization not as a metaphor for change, but as an unsettling and iterative process that cannot have its foundations resting on the pre-existing discourses and frameworks. It is important to understand that each branch has two polarities, on one end resides the work of the oppressed to liberate themselves, and on the other, the work of the facilitator who is usually someone born with the privileges engendered from oppressive systems, or someone like me navigating the "outsider within" (Collins, 1986). Thankfully, the methodological target of

liberation theories is the horizontally oriented, where both poles are able to meet at the center and work towards the construction of new realities (Held, 2019).

Fourth Step: Foliage of Agency

Liberation methodologies are political, seeking to play a role in social confrontation and transformation, even when the term agency is not used as an outcome in itself (Martín-Baró, 1996b). I agree with Maynes et al. (2008) that for psychologists (and for health care providers) agency is defined in individual terms of meaning-making, thus narrowing its developmental capacity for collective efforts. In contrast, for liberation approaches, agency happens at the core of ana-dialectical and dialogical interactions, allowing people to act upon their realities purposively and reflectively (Holland et al., 1998). Furthermore, for agency to develop, people need role models and spaces for self-authoring as they expand their learning capacities to what Vygotsky (1966/ 2016) called the zone of proximal development. Emergent stories or new codes resulting from this process enable the denunciation of dehumanization, pain, poverty, death, and at the same time, the announcing of the transformation happening throughout the process of conscientization (Freire, 2000).

Fifth Step: The Fruits of Regenerative Action

The emergence from the emotional and societal coma caused by years and even generations of dehumanization, is evident when people arrive at a type of solidarity knowledge (being with). Freire (1998a) reflects that arriving at this knowledge is necessary in order to see the future as something that is constructed with others and not as an inexorable fate. This emergent knowledge is political (Freire, 1998, p. 91). People become primed to take off on a journey of critical inquiry, seeking to discover the truth of reality, without submitting it to his/her/their own truth, but instead being able to construct bridges between worldviews and

traditions (Diniz Pereira, 2013; Rahman, 1991). For academia, this is the fruit of the understanding that teaching is a human act, which requires more than intellectual and self-serving curiosity. Furthermore, the vertical researcher-subject dichotomy is abolished, and in its place a horizontal relationship among collaborators is built (Freire, 1998).

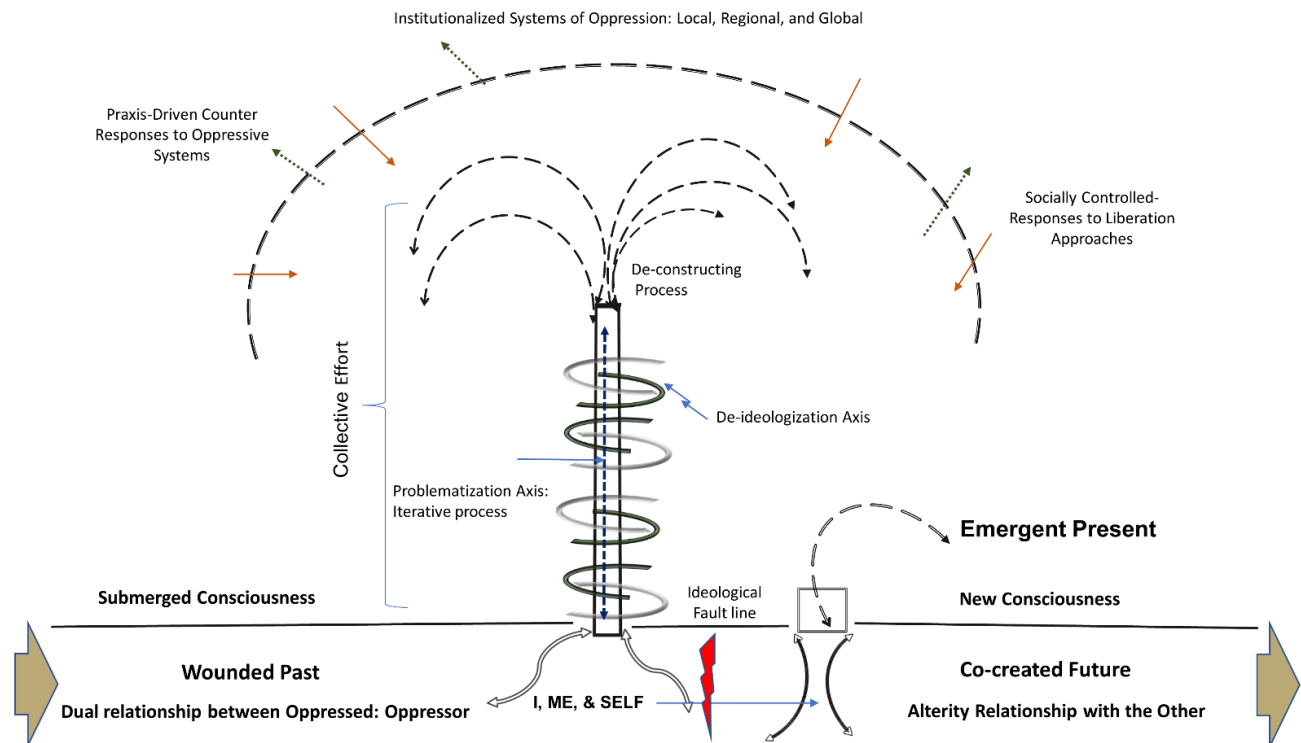
Sixth Step: The Seeds of Freedom

Inside each seed, the history of the tree is contained. Liberation theories focus attention on the past, and the *now* of people's lives in order to change their future. Martín-Baró (1996) demonstrated the importance of recovering historical memory as the missing link in the relationship between the roots of oppressed people and classes. This recovery has the capacity to reset people's own present and their views in search for new horizons (p. 40). The seeds of freedom represent new knowledge, new norms, new institutions, all seeking to transform the realities of the future trees within them.

During the methodological and results chapters, this conceptual explanation will be embodied by the realities of the life agents, and many of the concepts will be further explored from the lenses of reflexivity, particularly submerging into the processes of individual and collective emergence.

Figure 4

Alignment of Liberation Psychology and Critical Realism's and the Process of Conscientization



Note: Liberation theories focus on the lived experiences of those suffering as result of historical systems of control and oppression. The development of conscientization is a cyclical and iterative process, starting at the individual level and moving up to a collective understanding of people's realities. Deconstruction components of liberation praxis work interdependently with the process of problematization and de-ideologization. The collective and emergent consciousness represents a threat to the normalized and dominant realities; hence they will face constant opposition. Finally, new consciousness emerges from the ashes of trauma, injustices, and human rights violations, and disparities.

Red Arrows: Messages received from the social reality.

Dotted arrows: Individual/collective responses to such stimuli.

Chapter Three

Methodology

A Multidimensional Approach for Understanding

This research employs life histories as its foundational methodology. The stories were told by Latina/Indigenous immigrant women working as maternal and child health educators and centered on their process of emergence of a sense of Self and concept of Self.¹⁶ As Critical Realism (CR) and Liberation Psychology (LP) are the blueprints of this proposal, this section covers the architectural design used in the exploration of findings and interpretations for individual and collective accounts of power, agency, and cultural transformation. Methods for data collection and analysis follow this section.

This introductory section of this chapter is structured as follows:

- 1) Exploration of narrative history and its methodological “anatomy.” Particular focus is given to trustworthiness as a core goal in qualitative research.
- 2) Explanation on the usefulness of narrative research for investigating hidden realities from a critical and liberatory perspective (Riessman, 2008).
- 3) Elaboration of a statement of ownership of the methodological approaches and interpretative outputs of this research.

Life History: A Methodology to Understand the Particular

Life history as a method is concerned with the study of the “particular” and contingent on the how and why of the events told in the story (Riessman, 2008). As a qualitative method of inquiry, it finds roots in phenomenological understandings bonded by the temporal, relational, and spatial characteristics of the told story (Mishler, 1995). The richness of the story lies in its

¹⁶ Sense of self and concept of Self are described in the Results Chapter.

thickness, the discovery of new perspectives. Peattie (2001) describes this richness as the capacity to deeply present the embeddedness of the characteristics of the actors and their own inputs and how they interact with their context. It is in this interpenetrating nature that issues of power, social justice, and democracy can be understood. So instead of summing up, or being concise, using less words (basically naturalistic traditional scientific writing), life histories strive to do the opposite: open up new possibilities of understanding by providing rich interpretations of other people's lives (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

The ubiquitousness of stories makes some qualitative researchers weary of their use, as mentioned by Riessman (2008): "In the world, narrative is everywhere, but not everything is narrative" (p. 4). Life history is the story of subjectivities developing in a particular time and content, and by doing so it offers the possibility of disrupting the normal assumptions of what is 'known' about an issue. Goodson and Sikes (2001), discuss that when "conducted successfully, they [life histories] force a confrontation with other people's subjective perceptions" (p. 7). This is because people tell stories to understand their realities and those stories solidify cultural values, beliefs, and traditions (Holland et al., 1998), hence they represent a window to the personal and social self. Furthermore, the use of language, its meaning, and symbols are the way that people construct layers of the self as a political act (Munro, 1998). The development of a story affects the research triad (research-life agent-reader/listener) by speaking to the universality of hidden experiences (Riessman, 2008).

I want to pause to clarify the difference between "life stories" and "life histories," since they are often clumped together. As part of the narrative inquiry family, both engage in the study of lives and how people experience their context (Clandinin, 2013). However, according with Cole and Knowles (2001), the difference between them is that life histories "take the narrative

one step further, going beyond the individual or the personal and places narrative accounts and interpretations within a broader context” (p. 20). Hence, they account for the dimensions of time, space, and relationships. This multidimensionality allows narrative history to take from people’s individual experiences to make broader connections with their own and other contexts and realities.

Internal Validity: An Issue of Trustworthiness

Internal validity is at the core of narrative. As such, I will take more space to elaborate on its components, since it will provide a methodological frame of reference for the data collection and data analysis sections of this chapter.

What type of information is valid? Can it be measurable as variables representing the concept under study? How do we create a narratively rich and realistic life history? The first two questions are irrelevant, because the story in itself is a labyrinth of variables, which can have more than one interpretation (Lub, 2015). In the case of critical realism, this does not mean that real mechanisms operating to affect or control individual and social behaviors do not exist, but the way to understand how those mechanisms work needs to be found inside the labyrinth, it cannot happen by just surveying from above. Following this analogy, life histories are the labyrinth and the theoretical framework, the map. For the third question, in general, life histories are situated in truths, by that I mean situated in a specific time, space, historical and cultural context. They are relational. From a critical realist standpoint, this stratification allows us to accept that many aspects that affect people’s lives, which are independent variables (or entities) cannot be compared or contrasted with our current empirical or natural awareness (Maxwell, 1992). It is by stratifying their experiences that allows people to notice the minutia, the hidden

meanings. As a result of this distinction, life history scholars prefer to use the term trustworthiness instead of validity (Riessman, 2008).

The Anatomy of Trustworthiness

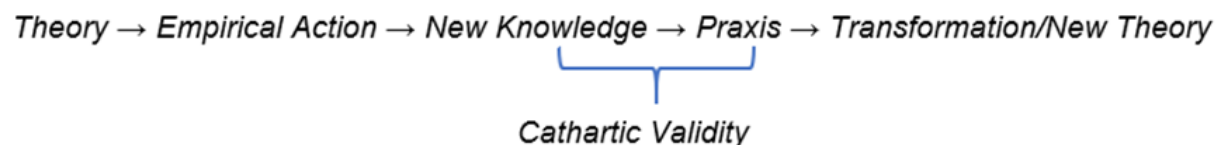
A researcher using realist epistemology with life histories needs to create an account that presents historical accuracies and correspondence. Both terms are related to their need to establish a historical trail of evidence. The first is self-explanatory and the second relates to the text's capacity to create the connection between matching events in a way that is credible and possibly verifiable, "give and take expected degrees of variation" (Riessman, 2008; p.187). Data triangulation, supplementary interviews, and timelines are good examples of methods that can be employed in this case (Hirsch & Philbin, 2016; Munro, 1998; Patai, 1988). The anatomy of trustworthiness is defined by three main components: coherence, persuasion, and presentation.

Coherence and Fidelity: Two Nested Terms. Coherence refers to how the events told seem consistent, or not, throughout the narrative (Clandinin, 2013). Fidelity is presented when an account appears truthful and congruent with our own experiences (Dainton, 2005). In other words, *are the events part of the whole? (coherence), and is the whole a logical account of the events for others, for me? (fidelity)*. It is important to note that the absence of coherence in part of a life history should not be dismissed as "data noise," as it could signal a deeply hidden account. The researcher's ability to stitch coherence into a personal narrative is challenging and sometimes not even possible. In these cases, one methodological approach is to search for coexistent realities (multiple life agents or similar events) to allow for the creation of a thematic community of experiences (Flyvbjerg, 2006). It is important to remember that life history is a methodology of close contact, hence internal validity is tested by converging and diverging realities (Clandinin, 2013).

Narrative Persuasion is as Much an Art as it is a Science. The author strives to make the case that her conclusions inspire an “Oh, my! That makes so much sense!”-type of response from the reader. It is a combination of stating facts supported by theoretical frameworks, negative cases, and alternative interpretations (Barwell, 2009, Clandinin, 2013). However, evidence alone will not cut it, the author needs to open a window to allow the reader to see the universality of human experiences: what makes that person or event something that I -Me-You (Self) can relate to? This embodied need is capable of triggering questions such as: ‘How can I take action?’ This taking action is what Lather (1986) calls cathartic validity (See Figure 5), and within CR’s terms is analogous to the activation of agential powers.

Figure 5

Lather's Path of Liberation



Presentation: The Looks and the Flow of Writing. Presentation refers to the aesthetics of the narrative in terms of appeal (research, prose, poem, art, or film), and quality. Quality is independently tested by the following questions: **1)** Are the events based on a theoretical framework (realism vs. constructivism vs. critical), and **2)** Are the stories and their interpretations able to evoke emotions (use of vignettes vs. quotations vs. sections of transcripts) (Smuts, 2009). Presentation relies on the author's capacity to link the storied accounts with a believable succession of events, while using the best canvas for communicating them.

Methodological Components to Build Trustworthiness

The heart of life histories are the stories, and as such, researchers understand that when interviewing people, they are not “collecting the exact events” described by the narrator, instead

they are being interpreted by the person who is providing the information they want the researcher to know (Reissman, 2008). As soon as the story is told, the analysis of such a story has begun, as it is an interactive and dialectic endeavor.

Clandinin (2013) and Cole and Knowles (2001) remind researchers, particularly us novices, of the importance of keeping a well-documented account of our observations, emergent themes, and conclusions. The use of field diaries, memos, and timelines allow the researcher to trace back the reasoning and reflexive steps that led her from X observations to Y conclusions. I view Clandinin's (2013) process of working with the raw material (recordings, transcripts, and translations) as one of transformation, in which one moves from superficially unlinked experiences to the creation of an interim text of thematic metamorphosis, that finally will emerge as [co]-created research texts. A summary of three key components to build trustworthiness is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Three Components to Build Methodological Trustworthiness

Triangulation	Reflexivity	Member Checks
<p>Achieved by the inclusion of not just different methods, but also multiple data sources and theoretical frameworks. The goal is to be able to find convergent and divergent patterns. Using this approach reduces bias towards verification (Lub, 2015, Hirsch, 2003; Munro, 1998).</p>	<p>A continued and systematic reflexivity throughout the study creates a new door from which to enter the analysis of the <i>a priori</i> theory and offer new insights on the development of new ones (Lather, 1986). Reflexivity allows the researcher to submerge in the multiplicity of the cultural particulars, to return with a retroductive account for new epistemological possibilities (Harvey, 2002).</p>	<p>This component is inherent in participatory research as a way to actively give participants the opportunity to “assess the credibility of the author’s accounts” (Kang, 2014; Lub, 2015). Clandinin (2013), provides a good review of how and when to “bring back the texts” to the participants to further engage and negotiate with them about emerging patterns.</p>

Pairing Life History with Critical Realism and Liberation Psychology

Having established a working understanding about the methodological components of life histories, the rest of this chapter's section will explain how life histories provide a good methodology for pairing with CR and LP. During my literature review and reflection on the methods, I found four areas of epistemological and methodological convergence that makes life history an exciting method to use with CR and LP, as it provides a scaffolding flow for theory building:

- 1) Its temporal, spatial, and relational nature (context).
- 2) Its focus on layering realities (subjectivities).
- 3) Its capacity to become a tool to de-construct the "house of the master" (liberation or catalytic validity).

Life histories' tridimensional approach to locate a history within a larger context (#1) has already been mentioned elsewhere in this proposal. I will just briefly comment on the layering of realities (#2) and dismantling the house of the master characteristics (#3), as they are central aspects for this proposal.

Layering of Realities

Its interest in *the particular* makes life history a method to interrogate mechanisms not seen on the surface, and that can only be found by layering the types of narratives accessible to the life agents and the researcher: ontological (personal), public (empirical), conceptual (analytical), and meta-narratives (historical eras) (Sommers, 1992; Worth, 2008).

Methodologically, this research design has the capacity to interrogate each of these types of stories. Life histories provided me with the tools to dive into the deep waters of how the de-constructed Self and the Collective We, were able to navigate through the layers of their realities

(perceived, learned, and hidden), to make sense of their ever-evolving identities within the boundaries of time, place, and relations.

Dismantling Structures of Oppression?

Life histories want to become an ethical praxis via the enactment of catalytic validity (Lather, 1986, Mishler, 1999). Five main reasons are attributed to the capacity of life history to be a methodology of empowerment.

- 1) Practical use of research with an inherent application for social change (Riessman, 2008).
- 2) Foreground the voices of the “voiceless,” by creating counternarratives of resistance (Diniz-Pereira, 2013).
- 3) Collaborative research methods and sharing of power with all the participants (Goodson, & Sikes, 2001).
- 4) Create a feeling of “I am not alone,” by providing ideas for coping or reframing cultural or personal uncomfortable (or prohibited) topics (Plummer, 1995).
- 5) Illuminate the agency and hegemonic forces nested within intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships (Munro, 1998).

Despite these characteristics, I am careful in calling a method liberatory merely due to its academic/empirical reputation to empower people. This is because both qualities, *being* free and *being* empowered are not an isolated state, instead they are also interlinked with the person’s context and cultural values, and their ways to gain understanding (Diniz-Pereira, 2013). I view both as processes in the making, and not a static state that one ever ceases to fully accomplish. Ethically a researcher cannot ensure that a study will liberate participants, nor that the act of sharing stories will create a space of safety (Goodson & Sikes, 2001). Nevertheless, the process employed by the researcher throughout the study can allow all people involved to find glimpses

of resistance and the expansion of horizons of understanding by: 1) continually reflecting on and checking in with each other about emergent themes and conflicts in the data, 2) maintaining the critical awareness that the account being researched (e.g., transcript) is not a clone of the experiences that were shared, but rather a representation of them, and 3) allowing the social agents to exercise their right of agency (Munro, 1998).

Statement of Methodological Ownership

As the positionality statement is a key component of any critical study, I deemed necessary to develop an ownership statement, in which I take full responsibility of the data collection, interpretation, and results contained within this research. Below is my statement: I am the person who interpreted the life histories, even after member checks, co-analysis (when appropriate), and sharing of transcripts to review possible misunderstandings. Approval of the quality of the research is mine, as it was engendered from my own interpretative processes. In other words, the life agents' stories analyzed in these pages are not entirely theirs anymore, as they were mediated by the analytic process of creating public knowledge (Riesman, 2008). As stated by Josselson (2012): "After the meeting (s) with the participants, the text belongs to the researcher, and what we write is our interpretation of it" (p.14). Hence, the experience as such, as it happened, has been changed during the process of analysis, and now is vested with a more linear timeline and coherent plot, causing a rupture from its original owner (Clandinin, 2013).

This consequence is inherent in any research study, participatory or not, critical, or not (Flyvbjerg, 2006); hence, the best I strive for is to create an account that honors and respects the integrity of each of the life agents, while providing a nuanced view of emergent knowledge on how personal and collective processes for liberation are operationalized in immigrant women.

As part of exemplifying accountability as a researcher, the next section of this chapter presents a detailed account of how I collected my data. Often in the qualitative research literature, data collection is narrowed to a descriptive summary of its components and not its process. This void, due either to omission or publishing constraints, creates an incomplete picture of the researcher's thought process and ethical consideration, while extracting power from the people involved in the research, as they are the ones making the researcher change on the spot a pre-crafted script, her assumptions, or research strategy. Furthermore, for liberation theories to be effective when put to the test on the ground, they need to be nested within. It is during the data collection phase where researchers and people (agents, participants) come in contact, as humans in the midst of their lives. Hence, data collection becomes an important testing ground for the development of LP's theory and practice.

Data Collection: A Layered and Intentional Design

This section details the how, when, and what of my data collection strategies as follows:

- 1) A brief overview and selected demographics describing the identities of the life agents.
- 2) Timeline and general logistics of the data collection process.
- 3) Entry, Power, and Exit as activities that bracketed and informed my conduct.
- 4) Details on the focus groups and interviews.
- 5) Description of supplemental resources employed to increase trustworthiness.
- 6) Reflection on data collection as the gateway to data analysis (although analysis as an ever-present activity).

In order to be true to the title of this study, the unscripted voices of the life agents (including mine) have been curated to enter these pages throughout this section and the sections to follow.

Quotes or vignettes are left in Spanish in the main text,¹⁷ since the translation of meaning or its foreignizing would constitute a semantic transgression to the spoken *lengua*: the vehicle of the expression of one's identity (Giasson, 2000), and consequently violate the voices of a memory (Agar, 2011).

Demographics of Life Agents

Focal Agents (FA) and Extended Agents (EA)

Six immigrant Latina/Indigenous women, owners of the only maternal and child health cooperative cooperative in the state were interviewed. I have worked with the FA for almost 8 years; hence this research and methodological design was intentionally built around a statement of self-authorship where my private and public I, Me, Self-intersected with the I, Me, and Selves of the life agents.

Following Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, during the informed consent process, I explained to each FA my rationale for wanting to interview them and someone else close to their circle. I was clear that the information provided by the EA was going to be confidential and was not going to be shared with the paired FA. Table 2 shows selected demographic characteristics of the life agents (FA and EA).

I gave the FA four questions to ask themselves as the eligibility criteria when selecting an EA: **1)** Do you trust this person, deeply? **2)** Why do you trust this person? **3)** Has this person been part of your life for at least the past 6 years? (timeframe since the FAs came together). **4)** Where did you meet this person? **5)** What word comes to mind when you think about this person? **6)** What is the language you use to communicate with this person

¹⁷ Direct translation will be added as footnotes. Longer vignettes are translated and included at the end of each section.

Table 2*Focal and Extended Agents: Selected Demographic Information*

Participant ID	Age	County of Birth	Age when Migrated to the U.S.	# of Years in the U.S.	First Place to Reside in the U.S.	Relationship Status	Do you have children?	English Level	Where is your extended family?	What is your occupation?
Azucena (FA-E) ¹	46	Ecuador	26	20	Madison, WI	Married	Yes	Proficient	Ecuador	Craft-woman, doula, CHW. ³
Blanca Silvia (FA / D)	42	México	24	18	Madison, WI	Domestic Partner	Yes	Intermediate	México	CHW, business owner
Extended Agent- D (EA / D) ²	37	México	30	7	Madison, WI	Married	Yes	Proficient	Mexico	Nonprofit organization
Catalina (FA / C)	43	Mexico	23	20	Chicago, IL	Married	Yes	Intermediate	Chicago, IL	Doula, CHW
Extended Agent- C (EA / C)	35	Mexico	19	16	Chicago, IL	Single	No	Low	Chicago, IL	Quality Inspector
Luna Roja - (FA / B)	50	Ecuador	30	20	Madison, WI	Married	Yes	Intermediate	Madison, WI	Craft-woman, doula, CHW.
Extended Agent-B (EA / B)	25	Ecuador	6	19	Madison, WI	Single	No	Proficient	Madison, WI	Recently a high school teacher
Marcela (FA / A)	37	México	18	19	Temple, TX	Married	Yes	Intermediate	Mexico	Doula, CHW
Extended Agent (EA / A)	39	Mexico	34	5	Madison, WI	Married	Yes	Intermediate	Mexico	Housewife & entrepreneur of wellness products
Sara Sofía (FA / F)	35	Colombia	18	17	Gastonia, NC	Single	Yes	Low	Gastonia, NC	CHW
Community Researcher	42	Costa Rica	26	16	Madison, WI	Married	Yes	Proficient	Costa Rica	Activist scholar

Note. 1. FA: Focal Agent (A-F). 2. EA: Extended Agent: four FA invited an EA to be interviewed (A, B, C, and D). 3. CHW=Community Health Workers. Gender Pronouns: All Agents identified as She, Ella

Four out of six FA referred me to an EA. The FA's thoughts about their decision to invite their EA to the study is shown in Table 3. As part of my own collection and analytical process, I created a schematic visualization of their relationship, as it depicts the way in which their embodied and geographical territories intersected each other within their life course (Zaragocin, 2020).

Extended Agents (EA) As Vital Informants

To increase the trustworthiness of the accounts shared by the FA, I interviewed four Extended Agents (EA) referred to me by the FAs. I wanted to interview people with a deep knowledge about the FA, and with whom I could explore possible gaps in the FA's story line, delve deeper into how the process of becoming was viewed from the outside of the FA (e.g., her family, close community), and to validate historical points on the FA's timelines. The EA also needed to accept taking part in the research on their own accord without being encouraged by the FA. The cultural, linguistic, and generational diversity contained in this sample directly informed the data collection process, in three main ways:

1) It allowed me to interact with nuanced cultural regularities and most importantly, de-regularities in their individual and collective accounts (Fletcher, 2017; Goodson & Sikes, 2001). One particular de-regularity was the differences due to their racial realities during their lives:

The mestizos became pseudo-powerful, assassins of part of their roots, working on the development of a collective identity, and orphans as a result of their mixed blood. They became a power solicitor and a blood and fresh frontier among their own cultural roots. Their liberation will require a closer look at their past, the trail of pain left behind, demystification of the lies told about their "superior" DNA, and the social constructs of superiority feeding their concept of self. Their power resides in their own cultural diversity, but they need to own all parts of it, its symbolic and dialectical power of the duality of their being: the oppressor and the oppressed. (Researcher memo, 1/14/2021)

When you come over here, you do have like an immigrant identity and like there's that Latinx identity. But oftentimes, I feel like the indigenous roots get forgotten or like they're not... yeah, forgotten or pushed aside because that immigrant experience is so overwhelming. So, like people only see you as an immigrant. They don't see you as like indigenous." (FA-B, 6/15/2021)

2) Locating the interview within the geopolitical contexts informing the lives of the FA and EA allowed me to deepen my understanding on key macro conditions that informed and continue to inform their evolution.

Vignette One

El movimiento indígena... del levantamiento indígena del Ecuador. Eso es lo que me llenó a mí porque como antes de... no teníamos derecho ni a ponernos nuestros nombres, como dije. Ya con la lucha de nuestras... de nuestras antepasadas, o sea, de la generación atrás mío. (Luna Roja #1, 02/15/2021)

Vignette Two

Entonces ya la gente comenzaba a emigrar y por ese medio, fue que el pueblo, ya no se hizo más cambios, porque en el Pueblo, ya no habían [sic], ya había más señoras, pocos eran pocas eran las señoras, que tenían a su esposo, juntos, pero ya la mayoría estaba, había emigrado, porque no había dinero. Ahí para la manera que se sostenían era con la cosecha de maíz, maíz, frijol, trabajando las tierras, el ganado, pero no había agua, de repente, entonces ya no había agua, pues ya tampoco podías tener tanto ganado, porque, tenías que ir por agua hasta acá, era muy lejos, era pesado, eh. (Marcela #1, 02/13/2021)

3) My awareness of the salient emic and etic voices coming from the life agents was increased as they recounted their stories employing a sourced linguacultural: the symbolic meaning of their lengua materna the nuances of its cadence, silences, or its “between the lines” (Murano, 1994), versus a targeted linguacultural, a more transactional, and socially understood language by the dominant culture or social group (Agar, 2011, p. 40). The symbolic and transactional translation of these voices happened all the time during this discovery process because each of us shared common worldviews, lived experiences, and spoke a dominant language (our collective emic), but at the same time, we are different in multiple ways and navigate vastly different social, discursive, and embodied realities (our collective etic). Even though the interviews happened in languages I am fluent in, the process of domestication and foreignization of the accounts forced me to migrate back and forth within the interpretative boundaries given by my own reflective capacity, and

ideological positions (Radstone & Wilson, 2020). The next excerpt depicts the moment when I saw the emic and etic voices in my transcripts:

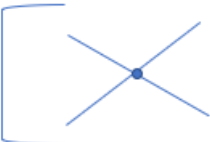
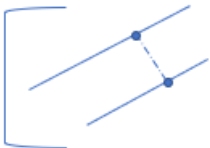
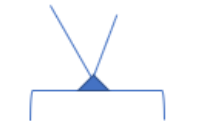

Why do the terms EMIC and ETIC become important and how did I not see it before?

I will start with the latter. When analyzing the FA's stories, I felt as part of their story. It was when I reflected and dissected the accounts from the EAs that I saw myself as a naturalized foreigner in the stories of the FAs. EA's talked about from the perspective of their evolution, the trade-offs of their decisions, and what this evolution of the FAs meant for them-as people sharing an intersecting life path, either by choice or by blood.

It was then, that I was able to see myself as someone who resided in the borders of the FA's evolution: as a foreigner who found a place inside their lives (etic to emic), but who was also transformed by the journey of liberation, the etic became emic for me. A new state of being was developed in the space of individual-collectivism, we were able to translate our experiences into an ever-expansive language, first to the sense of self, and then to the relational other. We experienced de-colonization by embodying the "other" within ourselves, which in turn activated our internal conversation of de-alienation.

(Researcher memo, 02/24/2022)

Table 3*Relationship Between Focal Agents (FA) and Extended Agents (EA)*

FA	Relationship Configuration	FA words on the selection of an EA
Marcela (FA-A)	<p>Peer-Relationship</p> 	<p>“She’s one of those few true friends that I have, her honesty, her respect for others, her positivism, her loyalty, her empathy, her prompt support, her critical mind, has given me the confidence to tell her so much about my life and gave my soul space to create a friendship. I trust her because she’s been my accomplice in some life events, she’s listened to my confessions without judgment. She’s encouraged me to follow my dreams. She was there for my most vulnerable moments. I must confess though, she does have a bit of stubbornness in her character, and that’s good too because when I wanted to give up she would tell me “nooo, keep going.” She defends her ideas without hesitation [sic] her flexibility is also worth mentioning as part of her virtue and values. For this, and much more, I place my trust in her.”</p>
Blanca Silvia (FA-D)	<p>Mentor & Peer-Relationship</p> 	<p>“She is the person who has been closest to me throughout this process and knows my virtues, but also my weaknesses. She helped me during a lot of difficult times throughout this process. With her, I feel that I can be myself and that she understands me, but she also helps me see things from different perspectives. I love her personality, she is strong, direct, open-minded, and at the same time understandable and always ready to help you when you need it the most, etc, etc.”</p>
Catalina (FA-C)	<p>Stem Relationship</p> 	<p>“She has supported me since I started on this adventure, she is a person with values. She is very committed to her family, she is always there to support others, she is a good daughter, good sister, she’s independent, sensitive, prudent, respectful, empathetic, humble, and responsible.”</p>
Luna Roja (FA-B)	<p>Primary Relationship</p> 	<p>“She’s the person that puts the house in order.”</p>

Timeline And General Logistics

The FA and EA interviews happened from February 2021 to June 2021. Twenty-two interviews were conducted with a total of 51.26 hours invested in the process (88% time spent with FAs and 22% with EAs). This sample size fits within the methodological standards of life histories, where in-depth and thick narratives are an expected outcome (Goodson & Sikes, 2001). Twenty-one interviews were in Spanish, and one in English. The focus groups with the FAs took place in February 2021 (FG #1) and in March 2022 (FG#2); both were done virtually. The order of the interactions with life agents was as following: 1) FG#1, 2) Focal Agent interviews, 3) Extended Agent interviews, and 4) FG#2:

- 1) Focus groups: Data collection was launched with a *virtual focus group* with the FAs using UW-Madison Blackboard Virtual Platform.
- 2) Interviews with FAs and EAs: The FAs' interviews were designed to follow a timeline in their life course: #1) Pre-Immigration, #2) During Migration, and #3) Post Immigration.
- 3) Transcription process (not translation). All interviews and focus groups were transcribed by a professional transcription company. Translation of the final quotes and vignettes were done at the end of the process of data analysis and reviews.
- 4) Continuous check-ins with agents throughout the data and analysis process. Life agents were generous with their time throughout by allowing me to ask clarifying questions and/or request for geographical or historical information to support their accounts. The timeline for these activities is presented in Table 4.

During the time of the interviews public health restrictions were still in effect due to COVID-19, hence we discussed which venue worked better for them: in person or virtual conversations. Three out of six FAs felt more comfortable holding the conversations via Zoom. In

addition, 3 of out the 4 EAs were living in other states during this period, and one felt more comfortable doing the interview via Zoom, making the virtual interviews our default option for all EAs. During the informed consent phase, I spoke with each of the agents about the research in general, and about what their participation would entail. These conversations lasted at least one hour and allowed spaces for them to ask questions about the nuances of the process, share their concerns, and expectations. It also allowed me to refine my own discursive capacity to share my own internal reflections, fears, and hopes more effectively.

The life agents' names are not employed, despite the initial desire from some of the FA to do so, due to the testimonial nature of this research. After conversing about the pros and cons of providing their name, all FA chose a pseudonym to identify their accounts. For key geographical places in their stories, some agents decided to maintain the real names, others invented a fictional one. All EAs are identified by a letter (A to C) attached to their corresponding FA (e.g., EA/B, B=Luna Roja).

Table 4

Data Collection Timeline and Activities

Activity/Timeline	Feb-21	Mar-21	Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul 21	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22
Interviews (FA ¹ and EA ²) & Focus Groups	Focus Group #1	Marcela (FA-A) #3 ^c	Sara Sofía #3		Blanca Silvia #3				Focus Group #2
	Marcela (FA-A) #1 ^a & #2 ^b	Luna Roja (FA-B) #3	Blanca Silvia (FA-D) #2		EA-B [Luna Roja]				
	Luna Roja (FA-B) #1 & #2	Catalina (FA-C) #3			EA-C [Catalina]				
	Catalina (FA-C) #1 & #2	Azucena (FA) #1, #2 & #3			EA-D [Blanca Silva]				
		Sara Sofía (FA) #1 & #2							
		Blanca Silvia (FA-D) #1							
		EA-A [Marcela]							
Transcriptions									
Checks-in with Agents									

Note. Color coded for easier visualization. 1. Focal Agents (FA). 2. Extended Agent (FA) [Correspondent Focal Agent. a. #1= Pre-Immigration; b. #2= During Migration, and c. #3= Post-Immigration.

Entry, Power, and Exit: Intentional Procedures for Data Collection

My conversations with the agents are the central event informing this research, particularly because I was aware of my intention to center their realities (embodied, practical, and discursive) in the midst of their life stories, while paying attention to my own life and ultimate concerns as the researcher. Each of the data collection activities were designed in accordance with my emic experience with the life agents and in alignment with the theories of liberation running through the ontological and epistemological veins of this research.

In other words, during the process of focus groups, the interviews, and collection of supplemental materials, I was able to find methodological congruence between the being, the ways of knowing, the values, and the practical realities of life agents and myself.

This section describes methodological reflections and decisions taken prior to collecting the data, as well as decisions that became evident while I was actively engaging with my data collection.

Entering the Field

Academically speaking, I entered my fieldwork after the approval from the IRB for Education/Social and Behavioral Sciences. Refer to the informed consent form for the FA and EA in Appendices A1 and A2, respectively. I completed this phase and obtained IRB approval in November 2020 since I wanted to be sure of the viability of this study prior to the proposal process. The study was also granted a waiver and a NIH Certificate of Confidentiality to “*protect research subjects by prohibiting disclosure of identifiable, sensitive research information to anyone not connected to the research except when the subject consents or in a few other specific situations.*”

However, *entering* the field from a community-based perspective requires other protocols. I co-created a ground rules document with the life agents participating in the study. During my conversation with each life agent, we talked about the nature of the research I was inviting them to

be a part of, and we spoke about ground rules each of us as a research dyad wanted to follow.

During FG#1, as a group, we discuss the particulars of our expected behavior.

Vignette Three

Researcher: Yo como investigadora, puedo asegurarles que su confidencialidad va a ser guardada lo más posible, por eso se llama quitar la identificación a sus identidades, en los nombres, y cosas así, pero yo no puedo controlar lo que ustedes hablan en su casa.... Entonces, yo creo que una de las reglas entre nosotras es que lo que se dice aquí, ¡se queda aquí! Obviamente, en la parte de la investigación va a haber análisis de datos, y todo eso es distinto. ...Si alguna de ustedes empezará a tener un poquito de ansiedad o algo por lo que se contó, yo pueda buscar recursos para poder apoyarlas.

Sara Sofía:Ok, pues yo la verdad, como dice Azucena, preguntas no tengo, van a surgir en el camino, hasta el momento siento que ha sido muy sincera, muy clara en decirnos las cosas, que quiere y lo que pretende hacer. Por el momento no tengo ninguna inquietud ni nada. (Focus Group #1, 02/09/21)

Strategies to Acknowledge and Address Power Dynamics

This section elaborates on how I positioned myself in the middle of the research (focus groups and interviews) for the life agents to be able to see and engage with me and the research from an angle that felt safe and comfortable to them. In her research with transnational Mexican women and about their identities as sexual and emotional beings. Hirsch (2003), addresses the issue of power by providing clear and deep descriptions of her methodological and ethical decisions for how she went about collecting data in the U.S. and in Mexico. Her research offered me a path for how to see palpable power dynamics, describing it as: “power is not a quality that one has or not, but rather power is a force that is either imposed or resisted” (p. 32). This academic endeavor is a transaction; thus, it can allow for contractual agreements, and mutual understandings on boundaries, responsibilities, and allowances. Both me, the researcher, and each life agent/extended agent individually and as a collective, hold power. By stating this, I am not shedding my ethical responsibility of beneficence, nor am I oblivious to the fact that ultimately, I am the one interpreting and contextualizing their stories (Ceceña, 2012, Josselson, 2012), but I am acknowledging the power dynamics at play.

Employing Pragmatic Intentionality. I had two main methodological objectives I wanted to accomplish with my collection/methodological design: **1)** researcher burden of proof, and **2)** centering power and its dynamics.

Burned of Proof: Delineate and make clear my own identity, responsibilities, liabilities, and ethics. Being as transparent as possible was a fundamental step for me, as I work with the group on a regular basis, hence creating an “invisible” frontier between Me: the researcher and Me: the partner. This frontier was not a divisive one, but rather helped guide the development of a new ethos of engagement, founded on the premises of trust and convivencia.

Vignette Four

Realmente les agradezco a todas por su anuencia y su apertura para participar, y tenemos como noventa minutos juntas... ojalá que no nos sintamos aburridas, pero básicamente esta primera conversación... no es para conocernos, porque ya nos conocemos, pero... quiero dividirla en tres partes: la primera parte, para darles espacio a ustedes unos que, unos diez-quinque minutos para ver si ha habido preguntas que hayan nacido después de nuestra conversación [consentimiento informado] acerca del estudio como tal.

Para mi participación con ustedes durante este tiempo, cosas que a ustedes les gustaría ver en cuanto a mi comportamiento, como investigadora, no como Mariela en [la cooperativa] sino como como investigadora, como Mariela en Raíces voy a seguir siendo mandona y regañona, y todo eso, pero como investigadora si hay cosas que ustedes quieren que se haga durante el proceso que vamos a caminar juntos durante la investigación.

Entonces, si gustan comentar que ustedes me digan, si ha habido algo que les ha preocupado, que les ha salido durante de que hablamos hasta ahora, y cosas que a ustedes les gustaría ver mi comportamiento con ustedes, entonces les dejo que me [*sic*] conversen. (Researcher, virtual focus group #1, 02/09/2021)

Center power and how it functions within the research context. I wanted to make this dynamic visible, and air it for all of us to see it. Hence, I intentionally crafted spaces for as many questions the FAs had about the research, their concerns about their role, investment, and possible gains or liabilities. I was clear on the emergent nature of this research design but tried to be open and vulnerable to be interrogated by them.

Due to the narrative nature of this methodology, I sought to bring to the forefront the voices of the FA's and EA's and not just mine, and to give space for a deeper understanding of our combined "colonial and diasporic conditions" as immigrants (The Latina Feminist Group, 2001).

Vignette Five

Azucena: Ahorita me surgió una pregunta Mariela, ¿qué es lo que quieren investigar, o sea cuál es el objetivo, cual es el principal objetivo, que es lo que quieren extraer de todo este trabajo.

Researcher: Estoy interesada en entender el proceso de evolución de ustedes desde emergencia, no sé si le dije a alguna de ustedes, no emergencia que hay un incendio, sino de emergente ¡verdad! Y entender cuáles fueron los mecanismos. Hay poca investigación de la historia de vida de las mujeres inmigrantes, que ata los nudos de antes de emigrar, durante el proceso de migración, y después del proceso de migración, y esta evasión a la literatura causa mucho problema, porque no hay mucho entendimiento de cómo emigrantes evolucionamos en este país, específicamente mujeres, y también ustedes en este proceso se han convertido en modelos, en líderes, y lideresas a diferentes escalas, entonces [de] su evolución casi no hay mucha información. "

Y por qué estoy interesada en los mecanismos, en los mecanismos de emergencias, en los mecanismos de concientización de muchas cosas individuales y colectivas? Porque una de las cosas que hay mucha necesidad en nuestras comunidades es ese tipo de movilización común [que] cambia a la persona internamente, una cosas es la educación, como dicen ... "Lo que natura no da, Salamanca no lo otorga", en el sentido que a veces nacemos con un tipo de genético, físico o lo que sea cultural," pero... la educación a uno lo modela, pero se necesitan las dos, la educación y lo que uno ya trae, ¡verdad! (Focus Group #1, 02/09/2021)

Negotiation of Exit

Institutional Review Boards require the researcher to explain in detail how they are going to approach and recruit possible "subjects," but they are not particularly worried about how the researcher is going to leave the field after the conclusion of data collection. However, for participatory research approaches, exiting the field is as important as entering, mostly when the relationships forged during the "in between" are intended to continue past the conclusion of the study or program (Freire, 1998).

Due to my nuanced relationship with the life agents, "exiting" the field was not a clear-cut process since I continued to work with them in the cooperative. Now, I can see that the interviews

and focus groups became a protected and bracketed space where collectively *we* reflected on our individual and collective path. Reflecting on this aspect of my research etiquette, I came to understand that exiting was not *a one-time* closure, but rather every time we entered the aforementioned spaces, I as the researcher and they as the interviewees, needed to provide a time of silence to soak in what was said and felt. We gave our farewell to the moment, and not to the journey, *per se*.

Vignette Six

Creo que estas tres charlas que quede con ganas de más (...risas), como que es bueno recordar, contar cosas que de pronto uno a veces piensa que no es importante para, que es algo del cotidiano de pronto, algo que le paso a uno, que pasó, listo y ya, y de pronto, como que de ver de que si se puede sacar por ejemplo, para la investigación, puede que muchas de las cosas que yo dije si sirvan para todo lo que usted está haciendo, entonces como que también me da satisfacción saber que de pronto mis vivencias han servido para algún producto para algo. (Sara Sofía #3, 04/07/2021)

Focus Groups and Interviews: A Discursive and Reflective Journey

A two-hour virtual focus group served the purpose of providing a “browsing” technique for identifying possible emergent and/or guiding concepts from each FA and their collective mind frame, which could better prepare me before delving into the one-to-one interviews. I refer to this step as *Methodological Window Shopping*. I designed two main activities for data collection in FG#1: 1) Word activity to set the tone of the conversation (warm-up), and 2) Seven questions from which the FA were free to choose which to answer. All research questions can be found in Appendix B.¹⁸

¹⁸ Research questions were used as a guide, however, during each interview I assessed their appropriateness. Not all questions were asked, and others emerged during the interviews.

Word Activity

FAs were asked to “spin” a virtual wheel and without overthinking, say what is the first thing they *felt* when they heard the randomly selected word. Four words were discussed: *education, immigrant, woman, and patriarchy*. This exercise allowed for spontaneous, raw accounts of the symbolic and real meanings of these societal constructs made words, with the power to be felt in the flesh of their stories, and directly addressing the first research question: *How are the experiences of immigrant women about the “I, ME, and Self” informed and transformed by their context, time, space, and relational networks?* The words chosen aligned with theory and our collective experiential knowledge.

This simple exercise allowed me to enter what Gloria Anzaldúa (2002), described as *nepantla*, a stage required in the acquisition of *conocimiento* (knowledge). While in *Nepantla*¹⁹ people are invited to interrogate the forces influencing, interacting, obstructing, and inspiring their actions, in other words, the spaces found in between the transitions of our existence. Furthermore, it was a warm-up activity to awaken emotions, memories, and thoughts, and to prepare the space to become a sharing conduit, despite all the other distractions happening around them at the time (e.g., breastfeeding babies, children requiring attention).

Living between cultures results in “seeing” double, first from the perspective of one culture, then from the perspective of another. ... Removed from that culture’s center, you glimpse the sea in which you’ve been immersed but to which you were oblivious, no longer seeing the world the way you were enculturated [and acculturated] to see it. ... As you struggle to form a new identity, a demythologization of race occurs. You begin to see race [gender, and level of education] as an experience of reality from a particular perspective and a specific time and place (history), not as a fixed feature of personality or identity. (2002, p. 549)

¹⁹ I will return to this term, *Nepantla*, during the Results Chapter.

As part of the organic process of a focus group, I felt the need to introduce another word activity. This decision came after one of the FAs spoke about the Andean concept of *ayllu*, which refers to their social-community organization, informing their cosmovision of connection with all beings, the Pachamama²⁰, and their territories (Carballo, 2016).

Vignette Seven

Ayllu es familia, y dentro de nuestra ideología el ayllu no es solamente el hogar, el ayllu abarca el concepto universal, el de una comunidad, de una sociedad, de una sociedad. Entonces, si uno está bien, es porque queremos que la comunidad esté bien, o sea nosotros funcionamos como una sola unidad, como comunidad, pero como una sola unidad. Entonces, no somos vidas aparte, estamos conectados, de algún modo estamos conectados entre todos. Entonces, el hecho de saber que una de mis acciones, una de mis acciones está aportando positivamente a otra familia pues, que también está, de alguna forma la energía de cada uno de nosotros, siendo modificada. (Azucena, Focus Group #1, 02/09/2021)

Ayllu was so powerful and yet so elusive for my mestiza-westernized mind, that I wanted to take the opportunity to allow for our own internal “translation” of the term. For this activity, I just gave a premise: *What are you?* and asked the agents to come up with their correlated meanings. By asking *What* instead of *Who*, I tried to bypass the automatic default of jumping to our roles as members of a society, instead I wanted to make evident the phenomenon of being. Figure 6 depicts the words chosen by the FA. During the interviewing process I came back to these words, as they help me as a prelude to initiate our sessions. Without realizing it at the time, this activity helped set the stage to answer my second research question: *How does the process of becoming a [_____] inform the women's individual and group sense of agency and groupness?*

²⁰ Pachamama: Andean deity representing Mother Earth.

Figure 6

Symbolic Words Informing a State of Being



Seven Questions

If the word activities were a warm-up for our conversation, the focus group questions were the marathon I designed these questions as the ground preparation for my third research question: *What are the pathways for identity transformation and conscientization used by lay-health care workers to recognize and denounce systems of oppression, while co-creating spaces of belonging and collective power?* The conversation around these questions took the majority of our 120 minutes, and provided great insight into their transformation, and allowed them to hear each other's perspectives in a nuanced and facilitated manner. The full transcript of the focus group was shared with the FAs with the intention to use it as a reminder of their journey together.

Vignette Eight

Yo creo que, en este proceso, nosotros no hemos caminado solos, hemos tenido una familia, que eso sería el ayllu, ahí estaría [sic] nuestros hijos, nuestros maridos, nuestros niños. Entonces ahí nosotros hemos trabajado en comunidad, en familia, nosotros somos más que una familia, hemos formado un ayllu: que nosotros seamos una fuente fortaleza.
(Luna Roja, Focus Group #1, 02/09/2021)

Interviews: The Journey

The FA's interviews were structured to follow their life history before, during, and after their migration journey, because it is impossible to understand a process of becoming with only a partial lens of the Self: *the immigrant*. As part of my theoretical frameworks, I needed to interrogate three key developmental identities: 1) *The emigrant* and what she left behind, or what I came to understand, as the trail of her story (Sayad, 1999/2004), and 2) *The transitional being*, where the continuity of life was fractured, resulting in a discontinuity of the Self, her environment, and her sense of self Archer, 2003).

Vignette Nine

No soy la misma que salí de mi país, porque yo era una Blanca Silvia feliz, alegre, para mí no había obstáculos, para mí no había personas malas no había malas intenciones, para mí todo el mundo se iba a acercar con buenas intenciones, y si alguien me decía algo era porque era verdad, si quieres llamarlo ingenuidad, yo lo llamaría tonta. (Blanca Silvia, Interview #3, 06/24/2021)

The interviews, which in reality were open-ended conversations, guided by a particular set of questions, followed the rhythm of the life agent lead. Together, we took detours from the centered interrogatives to make time to appreciate the scenic routes hidden behind my own ideas or research "agenda." During these detours, I talked about two key theoretical concepts underlying this proposal: agency and structure. The methodological decision to provide a mutually clear frame of reference for these concepts, instead of letting them "emerge" organically during the interviews, goes against an inductive or phenomenological approach. However, it aligns with Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000) and Martín-Baró's (1996, p. 75), concept of political socialization, which require an awareness of the micro- and macro- processes influencing the dialectical understanding of their embodied, social, and discursive realities (p. 69). In other words,

my intention for the interviews was not solely to collect data, I wanted to use our time together to mutually offer gifts of emergence.

O sea lo miro y lo vuelvo a analizar las cosas que compartí contigo y lo digo, qué bonito no, como recorrí esos tiempos por allá, oh que paso aquí, como un autoanálisis, todas las palabras que te había compartido, me pareció, muy, muy, muy bonito, que me sanaba. (Azucena #2, 03/22/2021) ²¹

Locating the understanding of these concepts within agents' stories had the intention to open the door *with them* to think about our own journey, specifically times where we were able to exert (or not) and to witness the embodiment of agency (active agency). Correspondingly, it was important to offer the space to reflect on the role(s) structures play (or do not play) in the development agential motion. This methodological decision was grounded in the premise that I wanted to trigger an internal conversation on the spot, where the agents had the opportunity to practice reflective thinking, guided by a new concept. They dug into their memories trying to recount events when they felt that they enacted their personal powers to ignite agency (even when they were not sure) (Brock et al., 2017). For me as a researcher and close person in their life, those comments were filled with a sense of “Aha!,” “I have done that!,” which in turn allowed them to see themselves in a mirror:

A ver, tal vez en la agencia, a mis 16 años que tuve la capacidad de salir ya del rancho para poder estudiar corte y confección esa fue una de las capacidades que, si tuve, tal vez porque *si me llené de valor* [emphasis added].²² (Catalina #2, 02/24/2021)

During the interviews, I was very cognizant of not taking up a lot of space with my voice.

This was an original concern for me, due to not only my capacity to extend myself talking, but also

²¹ Direct translation: In other words, I look at it and I re-analyze the things that I shared with you, and I say it, how nice, how I went through those times over there, oh what happened here, like a self-analysis, all the words that I had shared with you, it seemed to me, very, very, very beautiful, that healed me. (Azucena #2, 03/22/2021)

²² Direct Translation: Let's see, maybe at the agency, when I was 16 years old, when I had the ability to leave the ranch to be able to study tailoring, that was one of the abilities that, if I had, perhaps because I was filled with value [emphasis added]. (Catalina #2, 02/24/2021)

because historically, we (me and the focal agents) have traditionally operated with me teaching, presenting to them, or mentoring them. So, the interviews became a place where my voice needed to be quiet and theirs to resonate.

Finally, I often wrote a letter to the agent after interviews or data analysis, which offered me another way to work on my own understanding of the accounts shared.

Letter from Researcher to Focal Agent

I just “finished” if that is even possible, with the first pass of theme development for our conversation #1. I tried as much as I could to stay close to your voice and meaning, but it is inevitable that I included my own understanding of your meanings. As a critical realist in training, I was also trying to stay close to the theory informing this research. I am trying to make sense of your story, and it is not easy, as you tell particular aspects of a bigger story.

I am trying to patch it, trying to see logical explanations of how you are becoming and what are the mechanisms informing your transformation as a woman, a mother, a daughter, and a community leader. I find wisdom in your words, and the place of nature, of the smells and feelings of your childhood are ever-present in your accounts.

Your mother was a force of nature, someone who gave you wings, and from time to time, conjured the winds for you to take your flight, even then her own wings were tied by responsibilities not shared equally.

You talked a lot about traditions and how you were formed, wounded, and blessed by them. I find it so interesting how our traditions and belief systems are capable of giving birth to our views of our world for good or for bad.

You earned freedom, the freedom that comes from being able to be who your own internal Self wants to be or want to become. You sought the freedom that comes from being in direct contact with bodies of water, of trees, and mountains. Your *pozo* (*well*), the one you dig for your dreams never dried out, even when the geopolitical circumstances surrounding your upbringing constantly challenged you. (Researcher’s letter to Marcela, 01/03/22)

Supplemental Information for the Stories Told

Due to the importance of symbolic representation of meaning, I wanted to make sure to create opportunities where the life and extended agents can share aspects of their lives using music, drawings, art, photographs, objects, or any other medium they chose (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Hirsch & Philbin, 2016). Life agents were asked to keep a record of their experiences during the duration of the research (at least one entry per month) and we decided that their entries were theirs to keep and only to share with me if they decided to do so. I encouraged them to use art as a

way of expression, and to feel free to share it with me. I gave each FA: one notebook, coloring pencils, and three white boards to use at their leisure and/or during our conversations.

Almost all life history researchers recommend the use of secondary sources of data to support the accounts told by their participants. Using data triangulation is an important methodological tool to assess coherence and fidelity of the stories shared with the researcher (Goodson & Sykes, 2001; Munro, 1998; Riesman, 2008). I relied on publicly available information regarding historical events described by the life agents to cross-reference the accuracy of their stories.

Reconstructing Meaning: Timelines and Audit Trails (Memos)

Life histories view narratives as the part and the whole, where each event is linked to a broader context. However, also due to its reliance on memory, people tell the stories how they remember them (or choose to tell them), increasing the chance for recall bias.

The use of timelines and memos (reflexive journaling and audit trail) are recommended as methods to address this data bias. They can assist in finding regularities, de-regularities, and inconsistencies with the data, being one of the main purposes of data collection triangulation (Lub, 2015; Sokolovsky, 1996). I used Adriansen's (2012) interview timeline method throughout the duration of the study, which helped FAs to locate their stories within the temporal-historical context prevailing during the three analyzed timelines (pre-during-post immigration).

Also, I have kept throughout this process a paper trail (e.g., memos, notes, journal entries, and doodles) containing my methodological and analytical decisions, reflections, and thought processes. I continuously and critically interrogated my biases, positionalities, and emergent ideas by confronting them with theory, historical accounts, my embodied reality in relation with the FAs, and my research questions. This process took place in the privacy of my own internal conversations. Archer's (2000; 2003) dissection of the internal conversation provided me with a

theoretical window from which I was able to contemplate the different stages of my inner reflections:

- 1) Discernment: recognition of my emotions, interests, and purposes within the context of the research and my personal relationship with the life agents.
- 2) Deliberations: back and forth dialogic questioning within the Self trying to reach a deeper understanding of a particular issue, theme, concept, or worldview.
- 3) Dedication: making sense and prioritizing the different realities evolving my life as a researcher, the agent's accounts, and the research itself. The latter is important as it is a by-product of my interactions and relationship with the life agents. Reflective journaling became a *must do activity*, as my internal and external environments were challenged by my contexts and positionalities, and the world around all of us during the active period of this research.

Concluding reflection on data collection as the door for data analysis

During this data collection process, I navigated through the waters of bilingualism as a salient presence, one that I did not question. By questioning I do not mean I did not see it, but rather, that it was an expected presence as an English as a Second Language individual. However, when the time came to move from my data collection to data analysis and writing, I realized that I had to “leave” my Spanish bubble of safety found in the conversations with the life agents, the literature in Spanish, and my own personal journaling. There was a point during my research that I realized the inevitable: I had to cross over the estuary of my analytical process, in order to make my writing public to the academic world.

Literature available on cross-language translational research (Temple & Young, 2004), outside-insider researcher identities (Macam, 2017; Mohanty et al., 1991), bilingual/critical research and education (Birbili, 2000; Flores & Garcia, 2009; Ramos & Ramirez, 2021), and

translation of worldviews (Radstone & Wilson, 2021), showcase the lack of analytical detail on methodological and reflective processes involved when moving from one epistemological understanding to another. This gap is particularly salient when the language in which one is moving towards deems your own as inferior; from both a subjective (racial supremacy) and objective (western academic knowledge) perspective. So, I was warned, methodologically speaking.

Throughout my analytical process, I asked myself two questions: **1)** How do I interpret the words of the life agents in a language that does not strike a chord inside of me as the language rooted in the ontology of my being? and **2)** What are the ethical consequences when acting as the translator and the interpreter of meaning? I was caught in the middle of a *being* and *knowing* (interpreting) conundrum. The words of Manulani Aluli Meyers contained in the Authentic Dissertation (2008), gave me some solace. She talks about a different way of engaging with research, away from a just purely epistemological [and ontological] stance, to one that involves a hermeneutical effort to pay attention to how we reach an understanding of a particular phenomenon; it's the process and bifurcations. By giving meaning to our research, we enter into an epistemology of spirit which propels us to be “of service, not to get drawn into the ego nurtured in academia, and to keep diving into the wellspring of our own awe” (p. 18). As a reflexive pragmatic, who is also seeking to develop theoretical frameworks for liberation, I designed a checklist to guide me through the process of interpretation during this methodological journey:

- 1) Form a bilingual and culturally diverse dissertation committee.
- 2) Write my memos and notes in English, in this way the rest of my monolingual committee members can see my thought process as it happens or can assess it at any time.
- 3) Have only Spanish speaking transcriptionists work on the initial recordings.

- 4) Tackle the continuous process of data collection (formal and semi-informal) and data analysis in Spanish as a way to make this material fully accessible to the life agents, if needed or requested by them.
- 5) Continuously go back to the etymological meaning of a word when in doubt, to be able to produce the closest translation possible.
- 6) Use metaphoric coding, as a way to encapsulate universal meaning which can transcend language restrictions.

Lastly, as a bilingual immigrant doing research in two worlds and who is always second guessing the use of the word, its cadences and meaning, I have come to understand that the strategies utilized to collect them for future academic curation need to be part of a process where their ontological and epistemological meanings are understood from their emanant power to inflict harm or to welcome healing. Words do not make meanings, but all meanings are made of words (or signs).

Data Collection: Translated Vignettes

Vignette One

The Indigenous movement... of the Indigenous uprising in Ecuador. That's what filled me because before... we didn't even have the right to bear our own names, like I said. With the fight of our... of our ancestors, that is, of the generations behind me. (Luna Roja #21, 02/15/2021)

Vignette Two

Then, the people began to emigrate and because of that, in the town, there were no longer any changes being made, because in the town, there were no longer [sic], there were more women, there were few, few women had husbands, together, but most of them were already, had emigrated, because there was no money. There, the way that they sustained themselves was with the harvesting of corn, maiz, beans, working the land, with cattle, but there was no water, suddenly, there was no more water, so then you couldn't have any more cattle, because you had to go far to get water up here, it was very fast and it was heavy. (Marcela #1, 02/13/2021)

Vignette Three

Researcher: As a researcher, I can assure you that your confidentiality will be kept as much as possible, that's why it's called de-identifying your identities, names, and things like that, but I can't control what you talk about at home... So, I think that one of the rules between us is that what is said here, stays here! Obviously, in the research part there is going to be a data analysis, and all that is different... If any of you have to start to have a little bit of anxiety or something about what was said, I can find resources to support you.

Sara Sofia:... Okay, well the truth is, as Azucena said, I have no questions, they will come up along the way, so far I feel that you've been very sincere, very clear in telling us things, what you want, and what you intend to do. At the moment I don't have any concerns or anything. (Focus Group #1, 02/09/21)

Vignette Four

I really appreciate you all for your consent and openness in participating, and we have like ninety minutes together... Hopefully we don't feel bored, but basically this is our first conversation... it's not to get to know each other, since we already know each other, but ... I want to divide this time into three parts: the first part, to give you all space, for about ten, fifteen minutes to see if there are any questions born after our conversation [after the conversation about the informed consent] about the study itself.

For my participation with you guys during this time, things that you would all like to see in terms of my behavior, as researcher, not as Mariela from Roots, but as a researcher, as Mariela from Roots I'm going to continue to be bossy and scolding, and all that, but as a researcher if there are things that you guys want done during the process, we will walk together during the investigation. So then, if you would like to comment, that you tell me, if there has been something that has worried you, that has come up during what we've talked about so far, and things that you would like to see, my behavior with you, then I'll let you tell me [sic] talk. (Researcher, virtual focus group #1, 02/09/2021)

Vignette Five

Azucena: A question just came to me Mariela, what are you researching, or like what's the objective, the main objective, what do you want to extract from all of this work?

Researcher: I'm interested in understanding the evolution process, from emerging, I don't know if I told any of you, but not an emergency as in with a fire, but emergent, right! And to understand what those mechanisms were. There is very little research on the life history of immigrant women, which ties the knots before migrating, during the migration process, and after the migration process, and this evasion of literature causes a lot of issues, because there isn't a lot of understanding of how we emigrants/immigrants evolve in this country, specifically women, and during this process you all have also become models, leaders, leaders [female] at different scales, so [of] your evolution there is hardly any information. And why am I interested in these mechanisms, in the emergent mechanisms in the awareness mechanisms of many individual and collective things? Because one of the things that is greatly needed in our communities is that type of common mobilization [that] changes the person internally, one thing is education, as they say ... "what nature does not give, Salamanca does not grant," in the sense that sometimes we are born with a type of genetic, physical, or whatever is cultural, but... education shapes one, but both are needed, an education and what one already has, right! (Focus Group #1, 02/09/2021)

Vignette Six

I think that these three chats have left us with wanting more (...laughs), like it's good to remember, to tell things that we might not view as important for, of something from the daily life, something that happened that us, it happened and that's it, and suddenly, now looking at it, for example, to see if they can be used for research, maybe many of the things I said were useful for the things that you're doing, it also gives me satisfaction to know that my experiences served for something. (Sara Sofía #3, 04/07/2021)

Vignette Seven

Ayllu is family, and within our ideology that ayllu is not only the home, the ayllu encompasses the universal concept, of a community, of a society, of a society. So, if one if well, it's because we want the community to be well, that is, we function as a single unit, as a community, but as a single unit. So we are not separate lives, we are connected, in some way we are connected to each other. So, the fact of knowing that one of my actions, one of my actions is positively contributing to another family, well, that the energy of each one of us is also constantly being modified in some way. (Azucena, Focus Group #1, 02/09/2021)

Vignette Eight

I think that, during this process, we haven't walked alone, we've had a family, that that would be the ayllu, our children would be there, our husbands, our children. So there we have worked as a community, as a family, we are more than a family, we have formed an ayllu: that we be a source of strength. (Luna Roja, Focus Group #1, 02/09/2021)

Vignette Nine

I am not the same woman as that who left my country, because I was a happy, cheerful Blanca Silvia, for me there were no obstacles, for me there were no bad people, there were no bad intentions, for me everyone was going to approach me with good intentions, and if someone said something to me it was because it was true, if you want to call it naivete, i would call it stupid/dumb. (Blanca Silvia, Interview #3, 06/24/2021)

Data Analysis Compass

Chapter Organization

I divided my data analysis into two parts for a cleaner presentation, and as a template for a future didactic strategy. The first part includes Step One: Submerged Theory-laden Coding, which is subdivided into three defined phases²³: **1) Data Familiarization**, **2) Deductive Code Development Phase**, and **3) Reflexive Theme Generation**. This section looks at the analysis of the data from the guiding light of theory, and follows a more conventional qualitative analysis approach, employing code and theme development methods. Even though a deductive lens was largely employed in this phase of the data analysis, that does not mean that subjectivity and critical thinking were not employed.

The second part is comprised of Step Two: Submersion into Data-laden Themes, and it is subdivided into three sub-steps: **1) Working the Generative Themes**, **2) Deconstruction Process**, and **3) New Understandings of Research Questions**. This second section elaborates upon the methods used to deconstruct the data developed during the deductive steps, using the lenses of retroductive and abductive inference, as proposed by Critical Realism (CR) and Liberation Psychology (LP). Within this section, I briefly mentioned Step Three: Emergent, as the continuation of the work initiated during this study.

Each part is structured as a **roadmap** providing context on the methodological and theoretical decisions made during the journey, as a way to be transparent and accountable. The methodological roadmap is in Figure 7. Also, I have included “landmarks” to assist you in finding your location within the data analysis throughout this document.

²³ Naming the different stages of analysis as phases (in Part One) and sub-sections (in Part Two), was a decision made based on methodological assertiveness. By this I mean that Part One was heavily guided by well-developed methods of inference (deductive), which created a better lighted path or phase. On the contrary Part Two was a path I developed during this research, and I was walking really slow, like baby steps, trying to find my way through the data.

Combined, both parts stand on their own merit, due to the comprehensive explanation of a nuanced methodological approach. A relatable analogy of this process is a double-sided puzzle with one side rotated at a 90 angle. One side or submerged corresponds with the creation of the generative themes (Part One). Then, I deconstructed the puzzle and turned each piece to the other side, and started all again, now with a new perspective and a different angle. This second side was Submersion (Part Two).

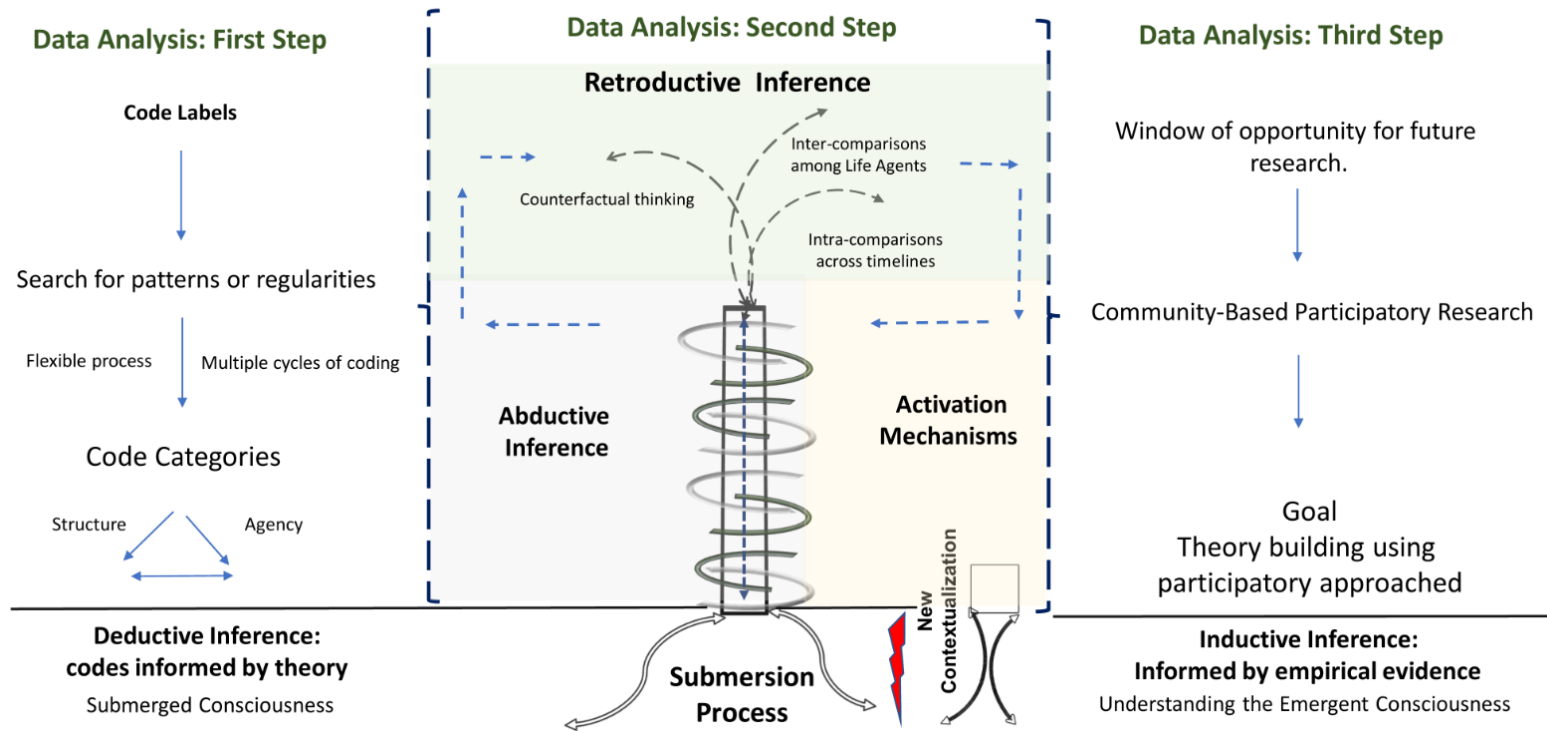
I used matrices, network maps, diagrams, and art forms of expression, to represent comparisons and contiguities. Due to the narrative nature of my data and my own thought process, matrices well suited for coding data, and emotion arcs helped me organize events and/concepts by time, space, and causal connections (Maxwell, 2012). Art forms (e.g., drawings, poems, prose) were used as cathartic ways to express my internal conversations about my own experiences and to “translate” the experiences of the life agents into emic voices. As with the Data Collection Section, I include vignettes²⁴ of interviews and my personal research memos, to provide evidence of my analytical process.

Finally, as part of the participatory and emic nature of this research, communication with the life agents was a constant activity during the field work/data collection and data analysis, which provided me with the opportunity to go back to them for clarification and/or engage in conversations about a particular discovery.

²⁴ All translations are verbatim, using the words closer to the original meaning in Spanish

Figure 7

Methodological Roadmap



Methodological Considerations on Data Analysis

I made the methodological decision not to use analytical software for coding and arranging my data. Personally, I wanted to have the experience of creating my own sorting and reflexive methods, for two main reasons: **1)** I wanted to “play” with the data without an intermediary, since one of my methodological intentions was to create a pathway for empirical research using CR and LP, and **2)** I wanted to have the experience of directly interacting with the data in ways that can be easily accessible when doing research with non-English speaking community members. Due to the prospective pedagogical nature of this analysis, I present the steps (metrics) involved in this methodological analysis. The importance of adding this extra layer of information has two aims, to: **1)** Serve as a proof of my methodological approach and its intricacies, and **2)** Align with CR’s philosophy of being a realist ontology, and a subjective epistemology, and as such its methods and analysis need to be in alignment.

I combined four main analytical approaches to tackle my 22 interviews and supplemental data: **1)** Coding and Code Analysis (Saldaña, 2021; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018) and Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022), **2)** CR’s nuanced data analysis (Danermark et al., 2002; Maxwell, 2012). **3)** LP’s concepts (e.g., conscientization, problematization: problem-solving, de-naturalization, etc.), and **4)** Archer’s morphogenesis pathways. Approaches #1 and #2, were specifically employed during the Submerged Deductive Phase, and approaches #3 and #4 became activated during the Submersion Phase, when more conceptual analysis of an abstract language (themes) was reached (Danermark et al., 2002). Finally, as mentioned, the analysis was done all in Spanish, including all of the coding and theming, but I wrote most of the memos in English, in order to open the door for my full committee to be able to review my process.

Step One. Submerged Theory-Laden Coding

This analytical space was characterized by a continuing increase in my relationship with the data. Following Maxwell's (1992) realism coding advice when categorizing data (pp. 112-113), and Saldaña's (2021) coding strategies, I initiated my interaction with the data close to the voices of the life agents. I learned the contours of their stories by listening to the transcripts, doodling ideas to create graphical representations, and recording my own mental processes (materialization of my internal conversation). Three phases comprise this step:

- 1) Data Familiarization Phase: Prior to any coding effort, I invested time to "get to know" my data by interacting with it via my senses and reflexive thinking. I was only "browsing around," non-committal to any assumption or code, with the exception of *structure and agency* as overarching codes, as they are central to my research questions.
- 2) Deductive Code Development Phase: Informed by a flexible list of organizational codes from literature review, theoretical frameworks, and personal knowledge on the topic.
- 3) Reflexive Theme Generation Phase: Engagement with the resulting code categories to create overarching and generative themes. The further I got from the initial transcripts and deductive coding/theming methods, I entered into the realm of abstract contextualization. However, I was always bound by the critical nature of my theories.

Throughout these phases, I read the Focal Agents (FA) transcripts as inter-group sets and intra-groups sets, as a way to interact with the data in two-dimensionality to make visible hidden patterns or codes.

- a) X-axis: timeline specific across all the focal agents (FA), looking at their pre-immigration, during migration and post-immigration accounts.
- b) Y-axis: lifespan specific for each FA, for example: Marcela #1, #2, and #3.

Figure 8 illustrates the intra- and inter-specific analysis of the transcripts. Transcripts from Extended Agents (EA) were read as a set to create inter-group comparisons and pattern recognition. This chapter ends with the development of generative themes. Figure 9 depicts an overall roadmap that is provided to guide the reader through the data analysis, as well as orienting “marks” before the initiation of each sub-section.

Figure 8

Analysis of the Transcripts: Intra-grouping and Inter-grouping

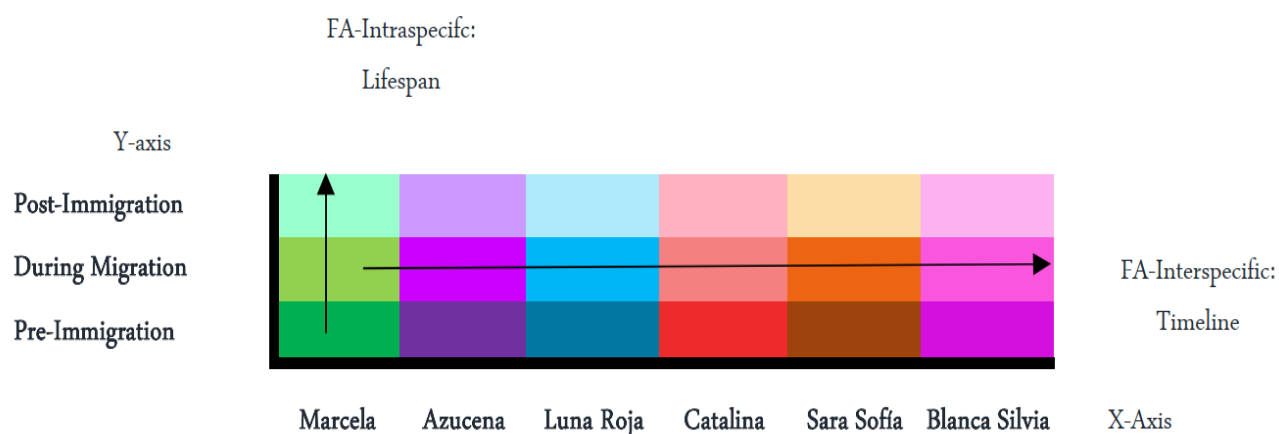
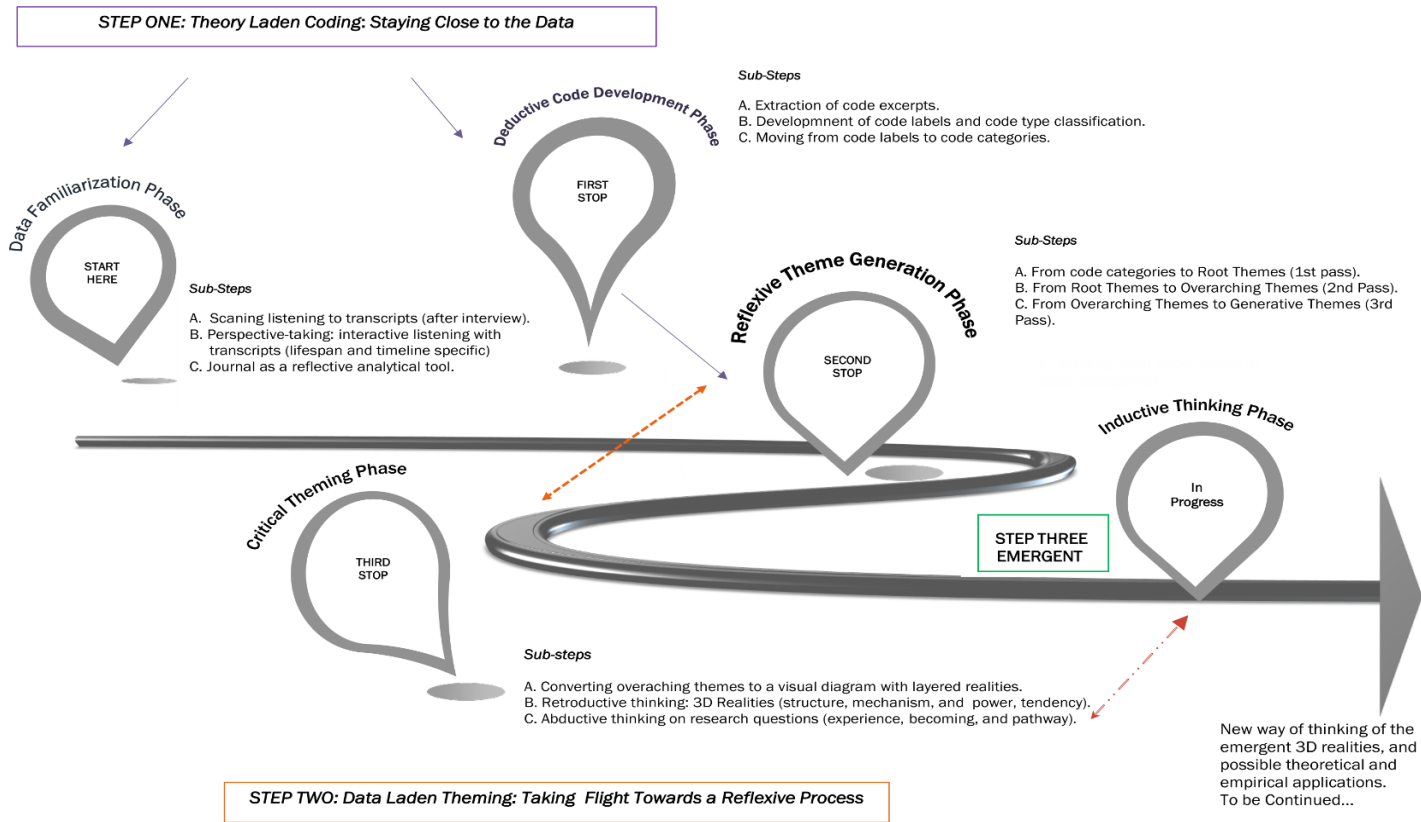
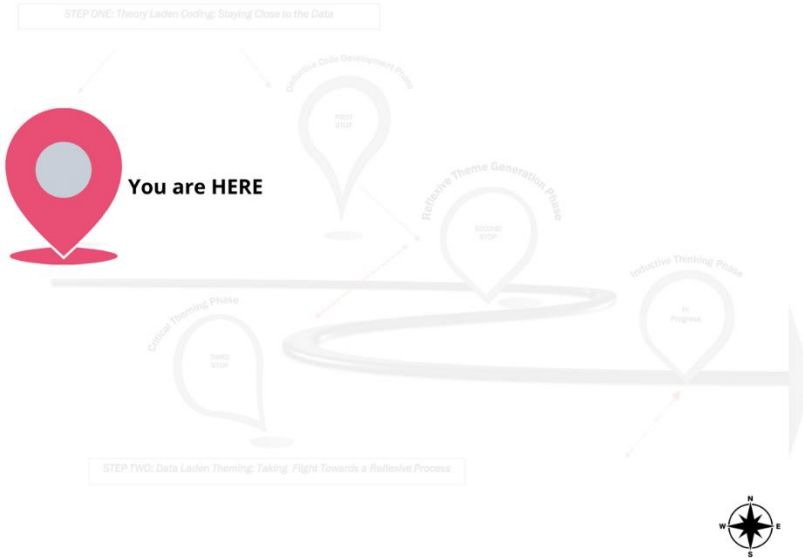


Figure 9

Data Analysis Roadmap



First Phase: Data Familiarization



Data familiarization initiated my direct relationship with the interviews. Like kneading a dough, I let the data “rise” four times, using four sub-steps consisting of perspective-taking, active interaction with the data, and journaling.

1. Distant Perspective: FA-lifespan specific scanning of each transcript within two days of its recording, as a way to highlight notes made during my time with each life agent. This action was aimed at general confirmation of my notes, and not as a comprehensive reading.
2. X-Ray Perspective: Reading of the transcripts for each FA-lifespan, as one reads a magazine.
3. Contextual Perspective: FA-timeline specific reading of transcripts and listening to the recording. I wrote on the side of the transcripts. I also watch the video of the interviews done via Zoom.
4. Embodied Perspective: FA-timeline specific reading of transcripts and listening to the recording. Equipped with paper and pen, I divided the paper into two columns, one for

writing transcript excerpts and the other one for my memos. I used the memos as a cross-reference and paper trail to check my own interpretations during the next deductive coding phase.

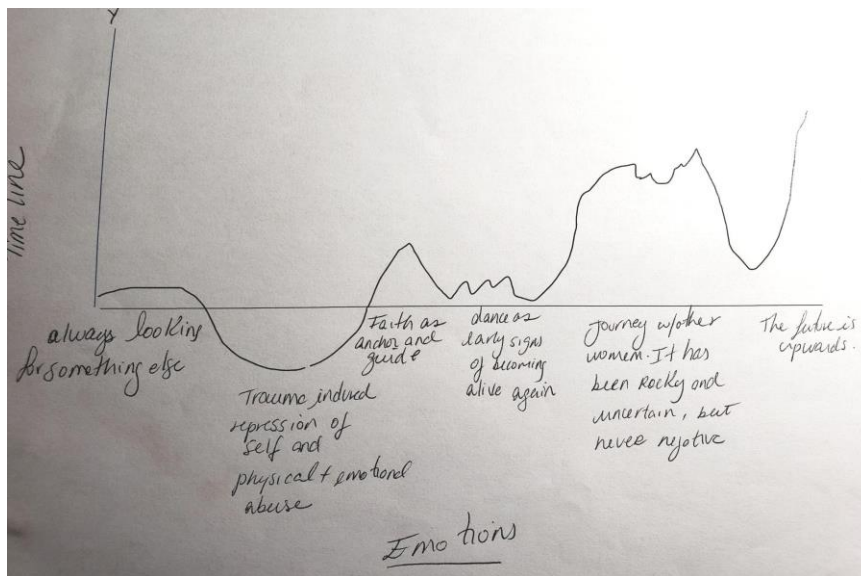
5. Creative Perspective: I employed visuals as part of my analysis, such as emotional arcs. They served as a heuristic technique to add tempo to the most prevalent emotions in their migration timelines (Saldaña, 2021). The immeasurable rawness of contained in the life histories many times they left me with a feeling of complete inadequacy in how to *translate* an emotion, a memory, or a metaphor into a workable piece of data. During these occasions, I took refuge in poetry and drawing. See Figure 10 for an example of emotion arc. To write poems or prose was a literary tool to *encarnar*²⁵ the account through my own body. The redacted poem below permitted me to conceptualize an intricate account during my second interview with Catalina.

It is good or bad...
 I do not know.
 You say, “difference makes you unique!”
 But...
 Know that there are consequences
 to your uniqueness
 Your body will endure pain and transformation
 While your need to bear a child expands,
 Inside of you grows a dream to see beyond.
 Doubts will be cast upon your worth
 Your worth as a woman. Continue...
 Finding spaces where you can be YOU
 Where YOU are one with others
 And others are WITHIN you
 Inhabit this space.
 Co-created with effort and sweat
 You are here.
 You have arrived for a while. But...
 Gestate your next journey.

²⁵ To embody

Figure 10

Example Emotion Arc as a Methodological Tool to Display Data



Data Analysis Metrics

The average interview for FAs was 120 minutes in duration, and for EAs was 85 minutes in duration. This phase was done with hard copies of the transcripts, a pen, and my field journal.

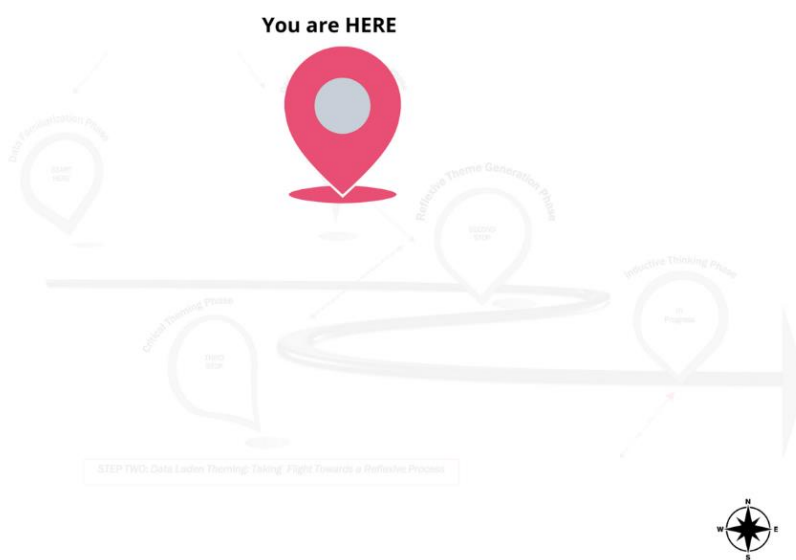
- 1) Distant perspective: average initial reading per transcript: 1.5 hours
- 2) X-Ray perspective: 1 hour
- 3) Recognition of general conversational shapes: 2.5 hours
- 4) Embodied perspective: 4 hours
- 5) Creative perspective: 1 hour

Reflexive Commentary on Current Section

This step helped me notice the differences between the voices, strength of the memories, and cadence of their stories. Having the opportunity to have conversations with the same person three times about specific life course events created a rich analytical environment to savor the undertones of their words. For example, when talking about their growing up experiences, their

natal families, and the context of their upbringing, often the narratives were felt as stories of refuge, happiness, and nostalgia. The importance of noting these differences is relevant, when trying to find the mechanisms involved in the development of a sense of belonging, becoming, and collective power. Transformational processes are being created by mechanisms that cannot be found by just looking at the immediacy of current lives, instead one needs to dig deeper to find the realities informing their emergence within their original natural, social, and discursive contexts, which contain the clues for each person's constraints or allowances to their personal growth.

Second Phase: Deductive Code Development



General Layout

The second phase was an analytical space ranging from flying low and close to the data while holding close my theoretical GPS coordinates, to gliding across the data, acquiring the capacity to see the categorical shapes of the agent's life stories.

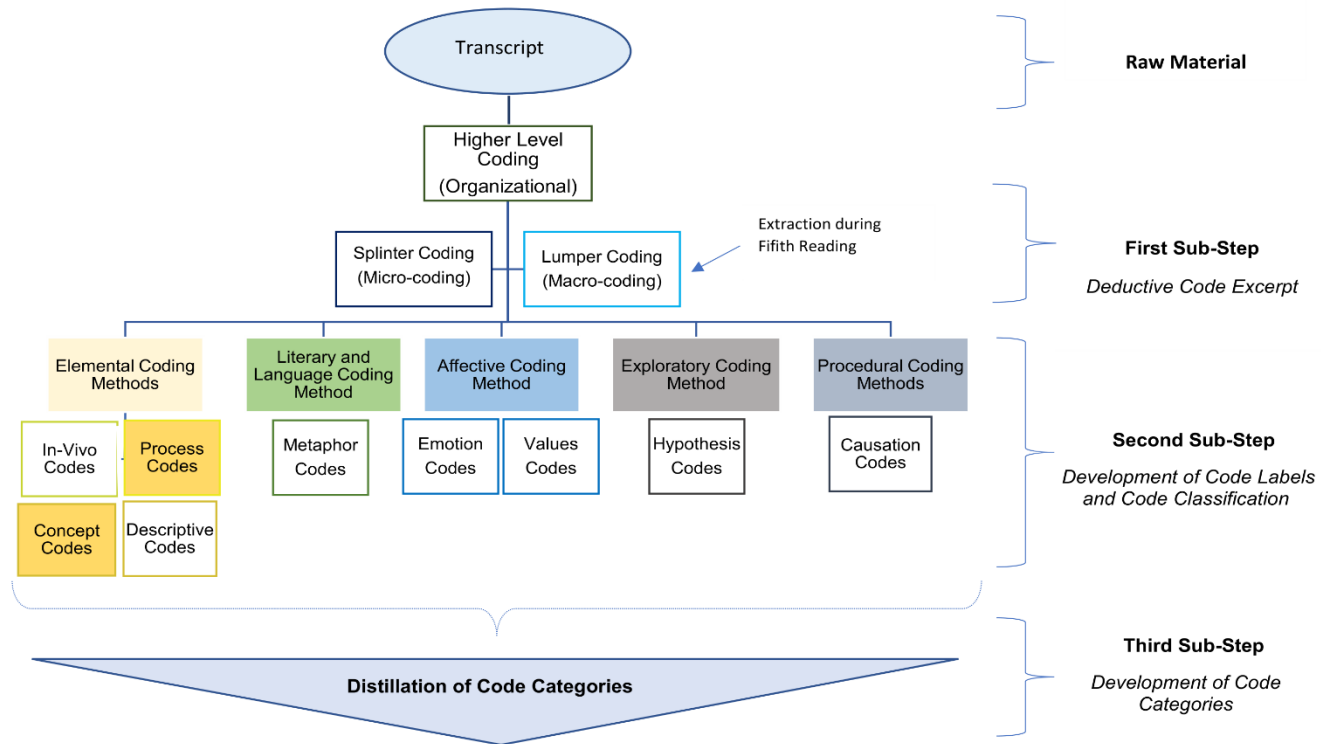
This flight went something like this: encountering my data corpus with fresh eyes after data familiarization, gave me a deeper understanding of its richness and complexity, but yet I

experienced terrifying feelings of not knowing where to start. No methodological class or book ever fully prepares you to confront the data laying in front of you. I decided to take time to create a method that worked for my way of thinking, which consisted in fragmenting this phase into three distinct sub-steps²⁶ for data distillation: **1)** extraction of code excerpts, **2)** development of code labels, and **3)** code labels to code categories. Each sub-step is described in detail below and illustrated in Figure 11.

²⁶ The utilization of the word sub-steps instead of sub-phases is purely rhythmic, as it sounds better when read out loud.

Figure 11

Deductive Code Development Phase and its Three Sub-Steps: From Deductive to Conceptualization Thinking



Note. Coding Methods used were guided by Saldaña (2021) data analysis processes for qualitative research.

^a Coding Categorization according with Maxell (2012).

Sub-Step 1: Extraction of Code Excerpts

This deductive sub-step was initiated by defined, yet flexible theory-laden codes, which at the same time were informed by my own knowledge of the agents, and my own embodied experience as an immigrant.

Listening to the transcriptions a fifth time, I used splinter (less than 7 words) or lumper coding (larger sentences) methods to start mincing the conversations into analytical pieces. The analytical decision of extracting an excerpt as a splinter or a lumper, was completely based on the cadence and idea developed by the life agent, as I wanted to preserve the meaning of their thought. For example, I noticed more splintering of the data when stories had more pauses or when I needed to interject more to either elaborate on my question, or to ask follow-up questions. Code lumping was more prevalent when the life agents spoke using storytelling as a way of recounting memories. Needless to say, the extraction of data employed a free-style fashion, but still resided within the boundaries of my research questions.

I developed a strategy called “rest stops,” whose aim was to assist me in preventing the development of “code proliferation” (a novice coding default) (Saldaña, 2021). The flexible boundaries of these stops were found in my research questions. I also used this strategy as my analytical lighthouse to not lose sight of two of CR’s key premises: structure (real or naturalist) and agency (phenomenological characteristics) residing in layered realities (natural, practical, and discursive) (Archer, 2000; Danermark, 2002). Table 5 summarizes the “rest stops” and their boundaries.

Table 5*“Rest Stops” as Frontiers for Outlining Theoretical Constructs during Extraction of Transcript Excerpts*

Realities	Structure	Agency
Empirical (Natural)	<p>Try to find Childhood memories imprinted in their embodied experiences. When working with immigrant communities, this aspect is often overlooked in research.</p> <p>Ask about Interactions with the environment, the importance of the mother tongue, and acquisition of a foreign language.</p>	<p>Try to find Sense of self, the I, Me, & You.</p> <p>Ask about Occasions when internal conversations happened (based on rhythm of interview).</p>
Actual (Practical)	<p>Try to find Family and environmental context hindering and or allowing taking risks (allowances or constraints are determined by the Cultural System).</p> <p>Ask about Their context in each of the migration phases.</p>	<p>Try to find Actionable decisions to break norms and push boundaries.</p> <p>Ask about Role of self-reflection to analyze their disconformity with the state of affairs surrounding them.</p>
Real (Discursive)	<p>Try to find Historical events that ruptured the routine of their days. This is part of structure; however, I take it as a fracture line in the “expected” life course of the agent, either induced by the agent or by another person or circumstance.</p> <p>Ask about: Their thoughts, feelings, or bodily experiences or understanding of these events.</p>	

Data Analysis Metrics

An average of 19% of the entire FA interview transcripts and 20% of EA transcripts were extracted during this sub-step (total amount of lines extracted / total number of lines in transcript * 100). An average of 4 hours were invested in this sub-step per transcript.

Reflexive Commentary on Current Section

This memo summarizes my experience as it was felt during the actual coding process:

Sitting down to review the extracted segments of the transcripts, more than 150 lines of segments for 18 conversations, is making me really nervous. I am getting the feeling that coding is like riding a bike: just get on it and practice. If you fall, you learn how to fall, learning tricks require to try new moves, to speed up requires gaining proficiency, and stopping requires knowing that you have reached your destination... because there is not

anywhere else to go, [or] because you learned the course well-enough, and there is nothing else new to see. (12/17/2021)

Sub-Step 2: Development of Code Labels and Code Type Classification

During the second sub-step in the Deductive Code Development Phase, I made Saldaña (2021) imperative to “code smart, not hard” my analytical motto (p. 28). In this sub-step, I moved from excerpts to *code labels*. The latter became my analytical foundation for the rest of my analysis. Methodologically, I welded together two coding approaches: **1)** coding categorization (Saldaña, 2021; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018), and **2)** thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022)

At the beginning of my data analysis, I thought that the development of a codebook was the expected thing to do. Saldaña’s pedagogical skills guided me in the methodical yet artful process of extracting codes and dissecting their types, which were born to be aggregated into a codebook. However, it was during this step where I encountered a sudden halt. Viscerally, I understood that my analytical search was for a coding strategy orderly enough to be traceable, but flexible enough to allow for emergence. I was in search of a different type of lens to “see through” the data, mostly as I was intending to do a deep submersion into CR’s layered realities. Methodologically, I needed to come to terms that my preconceived plan to create a codebook was going to be constricting and limiting,²⁷ and I had to be methodologically prepared to defend this decision.

Conveniently, it was Saldaña himself who introduced me to Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke and their work with thematic analysis (TA). Employing the TA method allowed my codification strategies to metamorphosize from latent codes to salient codes and then into emergent themes.

²⁷ Saldaña’s methodology does not stop at coding, and it offers the researcher a map to move from codes to themes. However, I needed a deeper understanding of the mechanisms involved in developing themes and their relationship with ontological and epistemological positions.

The TA process was possible by the continuing practice of reflexivity, using abductive and retroductive inference. TA is not tackled here, as I will go into deep detail during the next phase, Reflexive Theme Generation.

Methodological Actions Involved in this Sub-Step

Guided by Saldaña's (2021) comprehensive compendium on coding analysis, I went "code methods shopping" with the developed code labels. I made the analytical decision to employ an eclectic coding process (use of several code methods) for characterizing my data. This step allowed me to pay attention to the conversational style of the life agents (e.g., use of metaphors, descriptive or procedural rationing, or value-laden comments). This sub-step was the most labor intensive of this phase, and it was comprised of three actions:

- a) Development of code labels was done with an average of two passes: the initial labeling, and the second one to prune (edit, change, added, or discard) labels.
- b) Assigning code types to each code label (e.g., in-vivo, value, process, etc.). I often performed this action right after pruning the code labels. A second pass was done to review all the created code labels and assign code types to have a sense of their pairing adequacy. This action was not static, which allowed me to rethink my decision; however, an end point was reached organically in the process.
- c) Alphabetize the code labels to easily display similar labels that feel and look alike (see Saldaña, 2021). Quantification of the number of code types used was also performed. See Data Analysis Metrics.

Appendix C lists the selected code types with a brief explanation on their use and provides examples directly from the data corpus (excerpt and its corresponding code label). One of my memo entries reflects how *coding smart* was not as simple as it might seem:

Starting to do my coding, I am keeping the transcripts close to me, as they allow me to go back to read the context from where the raw material (longer quotes) was extracted from. This is also helping “double check” myself on my intuitive decision on selecting those quotes, while keeping in mind my 3 main research questions. They are my bonds, my frontiers for this analysis. So much richness is contained in these transcripts, that it can be really easy (and actually is) to code things that are not addressing my questions. Another aspect I am encountering in this second pass [deductive phase] is the need to expand the code with my own interpretative contributions, instead of limiting my coding to the boundaries of the excerpt. Again, I need to stay confined within the data. However, having spent a good deal of time learning more about coding categorizations, is becoming useful in this process. (Researcher memo entry, 11/08/21)

Data Analysis Metrics

Table 6 describes the inclusion and exclusion criteria used to assess the code excerpts to further categorization as code labels and assign them code types. An average of 53% and 55% of all FA and EA excerpts, respectively, moved down in the distilling process. I invested an average of four hours per transcript.

Table 6

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria During Code Labeling Development

Inclusion Criteria	
Brief Explanation	Example

Alignment with the three research questions. I was looking for particular keywords (semantic and latent) meanings: experience, transformation, and pathways.	“[The Cooperative] has given me the wings to keep dreaming... I am finding what I wanted to find. The infinite comes to you, it dictates what you have to do.” (Luna Roja #2, 02/22/2021)
	“So that moment was such a crucial moment to recognize and reflect on the change and the transformations that we were going to have in life. I’m speaking in general, no, that transformation that we’re going to have and that connection that exists between all the beings here in the world, no, more than anything it confirms, these experiences confirm how connected we are to one another through energy or in other ways in this universe.” (Azucena #2, 03/22/2021)
Account about structure and agency either as examples or implicitly.	“Let’s see, maybe with the agency, when I was 16 years old, I had the ability to leave the ranch in order to study dressmaking, that was one of the abilities that, if I had, maybe it would have filled me with courage.” (Catalina #2, 02/24/2021)
Account telling stories about key forces in their lives (e.g., people, dreams, resources).	“As I mentioned this well, or this project took a lot of money and there was no one there to direct us, in a more oriented way, it was nothing more than scraping/digging to see if there was water, but there was no one. So then as I mentioned, an engineer was hired, and he says, no well, this is how we’re going to do it and we’re going to put pipes here, we have to buy from here, and he needed a certain amount of money... The engineer was hired and then he took off with the money. (Marcela #1, 02/13/2021)
Accounts talking about oppression, colonialism, classism, misogyny, and neoliberal capitalism.	“My grandparents on my mother’s side- they did live through more of the oppression of the conquest, from the landowners, estates... They were victims during the fight for land.” (Azucena #1, 03/08/2021)

Brief Description	Inclusion Criteria	Example
Excerpts telling a nuanced idea that challenged the research questions and my own worldview. For excerpts that I ‘felt viscerally,’ I wrote memos to try to digest why they made me feel the way they did.		Taking into account, also with respect to culture, let’s say white supremacy, Anglo-saxon culture, everything that refers to oppression, not conquest, well, I have realized that there are many people that like feel guilty of being, or having contested (impugnado) the existence of

Inclusion was supported when other accounts referring to the same event, quality, or historical event supplemented or challenged each other (*versus*).

Native Americans, there seems to be a lot people with this like acknowledgment of guilt, something that does not happen in my country, not even by the grace of God.” (Azucena #2, 03/22/2021)

VERSUS

I think [Latinamerican Native People] are a lot more forgiving to white folks than a lot of like... even mestizos. I don't know why. Maybe it's like the tourism with [Latinoamerican Indigenous community] or anything. There was like always excuses. Like, 'Oh they didn't mean to do that.' Like, 'It wasn't racism. They're just trying to appreciate our culture' or something like that. I think Luna Roja finally understood what I was trying to say when I was younger. Now we have conversations.” EA-B/ Luna Roja, 06/15/2021)

Experiences that challenged the life agents' perspectives about their lives or the lives of others.

"They probably know what they're doing.” But then when I realized, 'Oh, [Luna Roja] actually wants to do other things,' it was like, 'Oh, I actually don't know everything about [them].’ They're like not these just people that raised me. They have their own dreams.” (EA-B/ Luna Roja, 06/15/2021)

Exclusion Criteria

The agent requested not to analyze a particular section of the transcription.

Referred to accounts not related to the research questions.

Codes presenting Inconsistencies found within the life agents' transcripts that were not able to be addressed (e.g., events, timeline, changing narrative from one transcript to another).

Analytical Detour Throughout Code Labels and Code Types

This section mixes the under-labouring process informing the data analysis, and the results found on the way through this sub-step. The editorial decision to include this description under this chapter and not in the Results chapter was informed by narrative aesthetics and not by research formatting.

My analytical curiosity to dive deeper on the code types was informed by my desire to bring to the surface a more holistic view of their accounts, in a way to *objectively diagnose* how and when emotional or conceptual thinking was activated. The selection of a code type on a code label was not an arbitrary decision, and it was informed by hours of familiarization with the data plus my theoretical backdrop as a guide.

During code labeling and code typing method, I performed three different types of analysis: 1) Intra-specific analysis within the FA lifespans, and 2) Inter-specific analysis across the FA timelines. A total of 2,281 code types were assigned to the FA code labels during this process. EA labels were not assigned code types, as they were treated as testimonios (See Chapter's Step Two).

The quantification of the times a particular code type was used, helped me confirm my own embodied feelings (*interpretive gut feeling*) about intra-specific and inter-specific differences across agents and timelines, for example: capacity to operationalize events affecting their lives, use of metaphoric language, talking with *las palabras a flor de piel*²⁸, rhythmic tempo, and self-reflection. These nuanced differences were either sensed and/or recorded during the actual interview, or they became evident during the analytical process.

²⁸ Heightened emotions, jittery, emotional.

Intra-specific analysis within lifespans

Each life agent had a rhythm to their story. A rhythm I had to learn to be able to lead and to let go when needed. The quantification of the code types was a tedious task but allowed me to see hidden patterns in their stories. Below, I briefly describe main observations about how I converted this data into analytical tools. Appendix D illustrates the intraspecific analysis of code types for within the of the FA's lifespans.

1) Catalina: descriptive codes were more prevalent across her first two interviews, but presented a decline trend (39% pre-immigration, 27% during migration), whereas concept codes showed an increase in use (10% pre-immigration, 22% during migration, and 40% post-immigration). These trends were indicative of her increased capacity to recount her stories using more abstract thinking.

2) Luna Roja: in-vivo codes were best suited for her narratives and my own interpretation of them. This is because these codes allow the “native” words to stay close to the raw material for a longer period of time. In my case with Luna Roja, her narrative presented many interpretative challenges for me, as her life story is really different from mine, and it confronted me with my mestiza identity, its privileges, and history. Keeping her words as intact as possible while I was interpreting her story throughout the three timelines gave me time to read more about the historical context of her upbringing specifically, and of other communities like hers in Abya Yala²⁹.

3) Marcela: three code types were used in higher percentages, one for each timeline: 28% concept codes during pre-immigration, 28% description codes during migration, and 32%

²⁹ *Abya Yala*, means “tierra viva,” (land that is alive) or “tierra madura” (mature land). The name is used by Indigenous people and mestizo allies as a symbolic construction for political resistance against the Spanish-imposed name of América Latina.

emotion codes in the post-immigration timeline. Marcela's storytelling capacity was immense, and her tone, the cadence of her story, and the “building up” of each of the interviews was characterized by deep reflective thinking.

4) Azucena: descriptive code types were the most prevalent in her stories, as she recounts her story with great detail and is able to transport the listener to the places (internal and external environments) described with her words. In-vivo and concept code types are also the second-front runners, which provided grounding (use of her own words), and bigger picture view, respectively.

5) Sara Sofía: descriptive code types were more prevalent during pre-immigration and during migration timelines (45% and 23%, respectively), whereas in-vivo code type was employed at a 1:3 rate in the post-immigration timeline. This reflexive transition was evident, as she is able to develop a framework to illustrate the process of the development of her voice (See Results Chapter, Section One).

5) Blanca Silvia: three code types were used in higher percentages, one for each timeline; 27% descriptive codes during pre-immigration, 23% concept codes during migration, and 28% in-vivo codes during the post-immigration timeline. The accounts shared during the post-immigration timeline opened a window onto her internal world, which I wanted to leave as intact as possible during this phase.

Inter-specific Analysis Across Timelines

The interpretation of code type across timelines presented the challenge to see all the collected code labels and code types not from the life agent perspective, but from the timeline perspective, which requires a deeper understanding of their whole life story (within the confines of this research). Three main code types are easily observable across the three timelines:

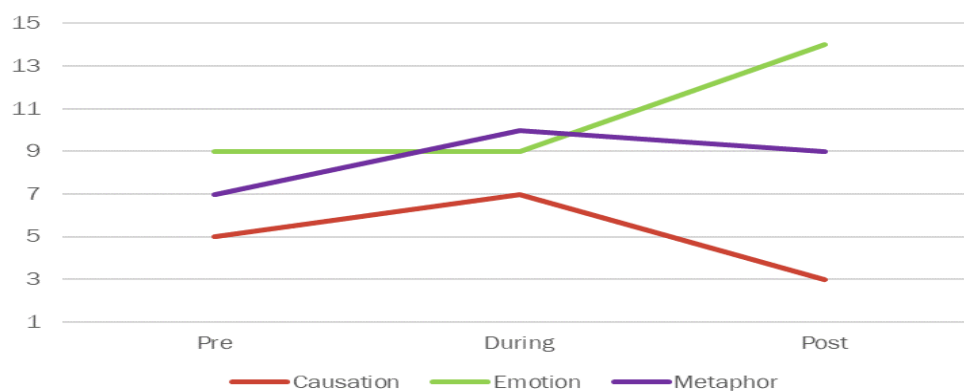
descriptive, 25%, and concept and in-vivo, 18% each. Three other code types required more attention as they were not as obvious: Causation, Emotion, and Metaphor. Appendix E summarizes the inter-specific analysis of code types per timelines.

Azucena's account of how she felt after the first interview illustrates these three types of codes:

Me pareció muy interesante de que somos un baúl con mucho objeto guardado, objeto valioso guardado [METAPHOR] y que muchas veces se nos hace difícil sacarlo, que a veces las circunstancias colaboran para que se lo saquemos verdad y pienso, que eso fue lo que me sucedió...[CAUSATION] y me sentía un poco rara después de haber compartido, de haber sacado el objeto tan valioso y sagrado, que me sentí un poco incómoda [EMOTION], pero luego y hasta luego de unos días, quizá un par de días, ha ido cambiando mi sentimientos y digo, qué bonito. O sea lo miro y lo vuelvo a analizar las cosas que compartí contigo y lo digo, qué bonito [EMOTION]..., como recorrí esos tiempos por allá, oh que paso aquí, como un autoanálisis, todas las palabras que te había compartido [CAUSATION], me pareció, muy, muy, muy bonito, que me sanaba. (Azucena #2, 03/22/2022)³⁰

Overall, I found three main trends for these code types, confirming the importance of understanding the two sides of the migration journey, as they are felt and told using two different perspectives: the one who left and the one who arrived. Across timelines, Causation code types were higher during the process of immigration, which is a logical finding as people rationalized their decision to migrate. Metaphor code types also presented higher percentages during migration, which I attribute to their need to symbolically define their physical, emotional, and spiritual journey, as a way to be more universally understood. Emotion code types reached a high tone in the post-immigration timeline, which aligned with the depth and reflexive quality of the last interviews. Figure 12 illustrates the relationship between these code types.

³⁰ Translation not performed, as it is not always advised or needed when interpreting meanings.

Figure 12*Selected Code Types Across Life Agents Timelines*

Sub-Step 3: From Code Labels to Code Categories

During the last sub-step of the Deductive Code Development Phase, I encountered a sense of freedom for the first time during the analysis, as I started to “take flight” with the data but was still supported by the voices (in-vivo codes) of the life agents. I encountered the richness of my mother tongue, with its intricacies and metaphorical shapes, as I was trying to create categories from multiple code labels. It was in this particular step where I started to recognize major components of my research questions from the previous methodological distillation process. The raw materials which were foraged, harvested, and picked based on the guide of the research questions, are transformed into conceptualized meaning or universal³¹ understanding of a particular phenomenon. These categories can also be called an initial theme — a cluster of codes, requiring further exploration (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Again, all code categories are alphabetized to make it easier to analyze (look alike). Examples of code labels to code categories as presented in Table 7.

³¹ Universal within this research framework.

Table 7*Examples of Code Labels Converted into a Code Category*

<i>Code Label</i>	<i>Code Category</i>
Return to my body through dance. Get in touch with my body. “Zumba was that space to reconstruct/rebuild my wings.” Get in touch with my body.	Dance as a bridge between soul and body
I felt the same, the same uncertainty.” “Don’t/Do we know where we’re going?” The uncertainty of the journey took away her sleep.	Collective uncertainty of the way
Woman comes into their life to break the monotony. Inspiration to again take care of her body. Woman (counted on/told me with) her presence Voice of wisdom/experience calmed her fears. Having a mentor before would have changed my life.	Woman as a messenger of hope
“We did not go out knowing that there would be stonings “ The payment was collected in the search for a better life.	Venture without knowing the cost
Discrimination by social classes. Teasing others for their clothes. Type of clothing as a label of social status.	Social classism
Mother with very limited gender expectations. Mother with children demanded financial responsibility. Mother did not impose culturally expected tasks on daughter.	Gender roles based on experiences
Social violence obliterated the ability to appreciate the culture that surrounded them. Trauma from social violence during development. Trauma that prevented sleep. Perception that there was no future for a sister in the country. Violence exists but is not visible.	Consequences of social violence

Note. Code labels in (“) correspond to in-vivo codes

Data Analysis Metrics

An average of 60% of all FA code labels moved down to be further analyzed and I spent approximately 3 hours on each FA transcript.

Reflexive Commentary on Current Section

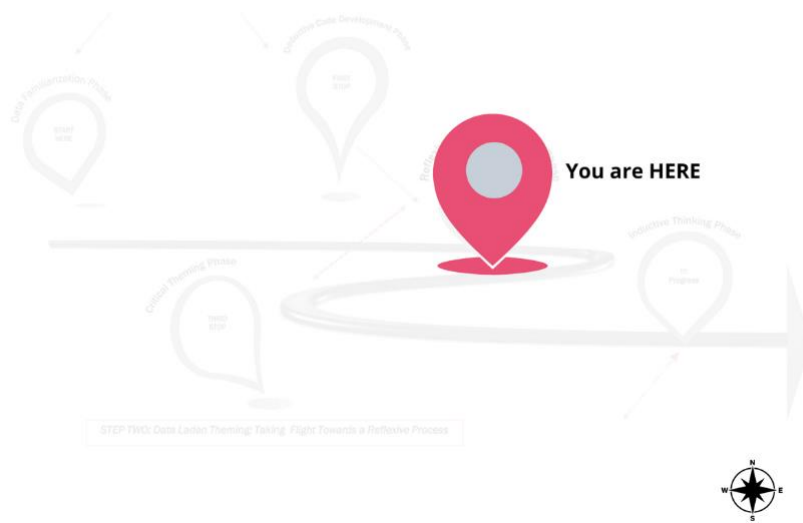
This memo summarizes my experience as it was felt during the actual coding process up to this point in my analysis. Note that coding is not a barricaded process, it evolves and undergoes an iterative progression.

This is how I am feeling in regard to the analytic process: It invades your life!!!! I feel like someone trying to roller skate, with already some practice under her belt, but still a beginner. I want to grab the railing of the arena, stay close to its contour as it provides me with a sense of safety and structure. This is my staying close to the theory, which is not antagonistic with CR, as it allows the use of all inference approaches.

I am noticing that I stay closer during the first phase of the coding process, when I am categorizing possible codes. But then, as I move to the development of look-alike codes, I want to wander inside the area of abductive thinking trying to see the mechanisms and to recontextualize the codes under a new light, which in this case is my own interpretation and background theoretical knowledge. But I resist the temptation!

During this process, I am consciously trying to leave my own knowledge of the agents at the edge of my interpretation, by this I mean, that I do not expect to be “objective” as it is not possible, instead, I am trying to see the accounts from the perspective of an inquirer and not a person close to the agent. I am splitting my identity. Interesting enough, this has not proven to be as hard as I suspected during this phase. The reason why is because, I already had spent many hours on the transcripts and the recordings and making my own initial memos [in Data Familiarization // Embodied Perspective], in which I wrote areas where I felt conflicted with my own thoughts/feelings or with the narrative of the agent. Writing those memos was like putting out in the open my own biases, doubts, and conflicting arguments. (Researcher memo, 01/04/2022)

Third Phase: Reflexive Theme Generation



General Layout

During this analysis, I started to enter the waters of data-laden approach and represents the “take-off” of my methodological bracketing. Metaphorically, entering this phase felt like air was under my analytical wings, elevating me through three analytical transformations: **a)** From Code categories to Root Themes (1st Pass), **b)** From Root Themes to Overarching Themes (2nd Pass), and **c)** From Overarching Themes to Generative Themes (3rd Pass). I provide examples of each of these sub-steps. This section is structured as follows:

- 1)** A brief explanation of reflective Thematic Analysis (TA), its alignment with Critical Realism (CR). TA’s analytical steps have been taken in previous sub-steps; it is this sub-step the one displaying TA as an analytical method embracing complexity (Braun & Clarke, 2022).
- 2)** Detailed account of the methods used for working the themes and their development (Pass #1-#3).
- 3)** Brief recount on the quantitative metrics resulting from the analysis.

4) Reflexive commentary on the current section to provide a window into my own subjectivity and thought process.

Reflexive Thematic Analysis (TA): A Gateway to the Conceptualization of Meaning

Thematic Analysis' (TA) origins are unclear, but it seems have begun from the 1980's to 1990's. Several leads point to thematic coding as its predecessor (Braun & Clarke, 2022; see also Flick, 2014, for a detailed chronology on qualitative research development), and belongs to a qualitative family including two more methods: Coding reliability and Codebook (See Braun & Clarke, 2022; pp. 247-248).

Using reflexive Thematic Analysis (TA) was in complete alignment with my value-positioning of centering this research as a reflexive study from its theoretical foundations to its analytical mechanisms. Specifically, CR and life histories lend themselves to be analyzed with TA's approaches, because TA: **1)** Requires the dataset to be located within the wider context, time, and realities, **2)** Locates the story and voice of the participants at the center of meaning-making efforts, **3)** Requires the researcher to employ reflexive thinking and explain such inner conversations, and **4)** Allows for the use of alternative coding or theming tools (e.g., concept maps, drawings).

For the purposes of locating TA within the spectrum of qualitative analysis, I will enumerate the six phases making TA what it is: **1)** Familiarization with the dataset, **2)** Coding, **3)** Generation of initial themes, **4)** Developing and reviewing themes, **5)** Refining, defining, and naming themes, and **6)** Write up (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

TA³² is compromised by ten core assumptions informing methodological decisions, which set it aside from other qualitative data analysis (See Braun & Clarke, 2022):

³² I deviate from TA's axiology, as part of my own theoretical and methodological journey. See below for an explanation.

- 1) Recognition that subjectivity is an undeniable reality in all research and should be handled with care and openness by the researcher or research team. Bias is not treated as a controllable variable.
- 2) Analysis and interpretation are never complete or infallible, but training and preparation can improve the quality of the data and its interpretation for the development of nuanced, insightful, and cutting-edge knowledge.
- 3) Good coding can be a solo or collective effort.
- 4) The perfect code or theme does not exist, but the right code or theme of a specific context can be achieved with immersion and depth with the data and taking time away from the data (to let the codes or themes percolate inside the mind).
- 5) Themes are not just a Russian doll of codes, instead they are the result of a transformative process in the search for meaning and concept development.
- 6) Themes are analytic outputs, whose building blocks are codes. They cannot be identified ahead of time.
- 7) Themes do not “emerge” from the data, they are the result of actively engaging and analyzing the data and all supplemental artifacts.
- 8) Data analysis happens within a theoretical framework, and as such the research needs to clear connections between both.
- 9) Reflexivity is essential in this process and researchers need to be responsible and accountable for their own perspectives.
- 10) Analytical processes are an art not a science and creativity “is central to the process, situated within a framework of rigour” (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p.7).

I employed TA for most of the theme development, however, I cannot proclaim to have developed an TA-pure analysis, specifically when looking at Assumptions #1 and #6.

Assumption #1: Subjectivity Through and Through

CR requires the researcher to reflect on the layers of realities informing a particular phenomenon (empirical, actual, and real). As a result, her subjectivity is tasked to ask questions of ontological nature, of epistemological soundness, and on the appropriateness of deciding on a causal power as the likely trigger of the phenomenon. Even though the *true nature* of any social event cannot ever be fully understood³³ or completely tested within an open system (empirical research), does not mean that every explanation can be accepted, solely by enacting the “power of subjectivity” or exercising direct natural observation (Archer, 2020).

Assumption #6: Reliance of Inductive Inference for the Generation of Codes and Themes

I employed deductively created code guides as “rest stops” during the extraction of code excerpts. In addition, I quantified each phase and sub-step of my analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The former decision was based on my theoretical stance as a critical realist and not purely as a constructivist or grounded theorist. The latter was informed by my own journey as a graduate student thirsty to learn the ropes of qualitative research beyond phenomenological or hermeneutical approaches, which often lack a more detailed explanation on how to “walk the walk” of discovery.

Development of Themes: “Working” the Themes

During each pass, Root, Overarching, and Generative, the transcripts were analyzed intra-specifically within each focal agent lifespan account (e.g., Marcela #1- #3; Azucena #1- #3, and

³³ Humans do not have direct and/or infallible access to “how the world is,” but we can analyze the multiple mechanisms affecting, interacting with, or containing the expression or absence of expression of a particular individual or social phenomenon.

so on). The EA excerpts were analyzed as one dataset, not the four of them individually. Inductive inference was the queen on this sub-step, but retroductive and abductive thinking were lurking on the edges of theme development. As I did with the code categories, I alphabetized the themes to recognize look-alikes at first glance. A snapshot of an Excel data tab with the development process of code categories to rooted themes is depicted in Figure 13.

Up to this point in my analysis, I worked on one Excel tab containing the agent's excerpts, the code labels and their respective code types, and categories, labeled: *A. Agent initials_Timeline (pre-during-post)_Date*. To start theme development, I copy-pasted the code categories from Tab A and arranged them in alphabetical order in a new tab (Tab B), keeping the alphabetized code categories on the right-side column: *B. Agent initials_Timeline [#1, #2, or #3] _Codes Look Alike/Themes _Date*. I glanced at all the categories and one by one, started to move them into a higher-level theme category. I also used the same theme organizing strategy for the Generative Themes or 3rd Pass: *C. Agent_Initials_Timeline [#1, #2, or #3]_3rd Theme _Date*. Something I found useful was the fact that I always was able to go back to the original excerpt when in doubt. I used a color-coded scheme in order to:

1. Denote exclusion: light blue color code categories or themes were excluded from the analytical process. I used two exclusion criteria: a) category or theme had reached saturation, so adding it was redundant, and b) category or theme did not provide extra information to answer the research questions.
2. Keeping the voices of the life agents: light yellow was used to highlight in-vivo code categories kept intact for further analysis.

Figure 13

Example of Excel Sheet from Codes to Rooted Themes Development Process

Codes categories	First theme phase (Root Themes)
" Yo pienso que siempre está mi tierra presente"	Simbolismo de complementaridad de la tierra con la comunidad
"Agua es sanación"	Permanencia de la tierra a través del tiempo (tierra: territorio)
"Ellos nos ponían los nombres"	Crecer en medio del mestizos
"la naturaleza es Dios"	Espacio geográfico donde podía regresar a sus raíces
"Mi pueblo a sobrevivido"	Espacio social donde volver a las raíces
"Otavaleños. Carita de maqueños"	Lugar de nacimiento como referencia de identidad
"Yaku. Agua"	Pedirse fue alejarse de raíces
Abuelo contador de tradiciones	Relevancia de respetar a la tierra
Abuelo contador de tradiciones	Resistencia territorial-8
Amalgamar la creencias religiosas con la cosmovisión andina	Despojo constitucional de identidad indígena
Apellido como etiqueta social	Nombres personales batizados por el opresor
Artes como salvaconducto de la cultura	Apellido como etiqueta social
Cabello largo como símbolo social de las raíces	Crecer lejos de las raíces-11
Calidad de la educación depende de uno	Distancia ha fortalecido las enseñanzas
Conexión visceral con el agua	Huellas de la conquista en nuestro nombres
Confianza en sus raíces se engrandese ante el opresor	Nombre impuesto
Crecer en medio del mestizos	Penalización por mostrar lo que se es
Crecer lejos de las raíces	Permiso condescendido por el "otro" a ser YO:
Danza y música como conducto para recuperar identidad	Religión impuesta
Danza y música como conducto para regresar a mí	Uniformidad borra diversidad
Desarrollo personal después de cumplimiento de misión madre	Voz restringida -18
Diferencia como riqueza	Naturaleza, mujer sanadora y omnipresente
Distancia ha fortalecido las enseñanzas	"la naturaleza es Dios"
Educación racista marcó vida	"Agua es sanación"
Educándose en ambiente de mestizos, racista	"Yaku. Agua"
Enraizando identidad- el resto fluye	Conexión visceral con el agua

Working the themes, although labor consuming was the process where visible discovery occurred. I did not necessarily see it during the Root Phase, but it was during the Overarching Theming Process, when having all the themes sorted in alphabetical order allowed me to sort them between themes and sub-themes. These sub-themes were not intended as topic themes or a summary of multiple themes, but as ideas sharing a meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2022). I named these sub-themes *Thematic Vertices*, for their function of providing structure to a central idea or meaning.

During the Data Familiarization Phase, I used the analogy of “kneading dough,” and I think the analogy stands when working with the themes. Initially, I just did two passes through my themes. However, after completing all the FA and EA themes, I came back to the dataset and felt the need to do a third pass. This third pass elicited evidence supporting trustworthiness of my data analysis and unearthing new mechanisms and patterns to help explain how the liberatory process of becoming is informed and/or created. Seventy-seven percent of the FA-Overarching Themes (2nd pass) had significant analytical edits.

From Code Categories to Root Themes (1st Pass)

The bifurcation from Code Categories to Root Themes, involved the process of converting the meaning of the words into more conceptual understanding of an experience or a cluster of look-alike/feel-alike experiences. This phase represented a methodological shift for me, as I started to get farther from the native accounts into a more interpretative and heuristic frame of thought. As much as possible, I followed this pass with the development of Overarching Themes. This memo summarizes my thought process during this sub-step:

During the phase of development of the themes and subthemes, is where I am skating around the arena. I am able to remain aware of the theoretical constructs, but at the same time, I am able to think reproductively- trying to discover patterns or evidence of the inner-working operating underneath the interpretative accounts. In this phase- the voices of the agents still can be heard, but they are accompanied by the instruments of my reflective and analytic melody. (01/04/2022)

Patterned Root Themes

The recognition of Patterned Root Themes happened after a full review of all the memo notes up to this analytical sub-step, and a review of all the Root Themes/Sub-themes created across all the FA datasets. Hence, it was the result of a submersion into the deeper waters of analysis, revealing semantic and symbolic meanings. I used the discovery of these patterns as a guide during the refinement of my Rooted Themes and the creation of sub-themes. This was not

hierarchical positioning, as a concept classified as a Root Theme in one instance, was a supporting sub-theme for another. Importantly, these patterns became the theme headings of this pass. Table 8 succinctly displays key Patterned Root Themes and their corresponding sub-themes. A more comprehensive list of the most explicit patterned root themes paired with directed quotes from the life agents is found in Appendix F.

Table 8

Key Patterned Root Themes and their Corresponding Sub-themes

Theme	Sub-Theme
Art	artistic expression freedom healing/nurture way of life
Community Service	being there
Collective Power	cultural roots empowerment rebellious shared experiences and stories shared voice
Dual Identity: woman/mother	dreams protection resilience
Education	dreams emic/etic empowerment liberation oppressive
Immigrant	curiosity oppression (external and internalized) rebellious resiliency stereotypes human being

Theme	Sub-theme
Independence	curiosity education exploration internal need
Knowing	embodied knowledge empowerment learning
Nature	freedom healing higher power provider reflection
Power	education faith companionship role of mother
Power of stories	belonging creation of stereotypes dreams for sale tradition
Oppression	colonization/coloniality capitalism control/machismo doubt lack of questioning racism/classism
Territories	Body/minds/ symbolic self Limits of frontiers Mother as the first territory Spaces-in-between traditions

From Root Themes to Overarching Themes (2nd Pass)

Moving along in Tab B on my master Excel sheet, I kept the alphabetized Root Themes to the right side of the code categories. On a new column with the heading Second Pass Themes,

I started to group each Patterned Root Theme into clusters. An example of this method is in Figure 14. This phase was characterized by a faster interpretation flow, as I started to notice the thematic silhouette of my data set. I made the decision to exit my Excel master sheet at this point in the analysis, as a way to let the themes settle inside of my mind.

Figure 14

Example of Excel Sheet from Rooted Themes to Overarching Themes

First theme phase (Root Themes)		Second theme phase (Overarching Themes)
Simbolismo de complementaridad de la tierra con la comunidad	A	Tierra como término holístico informado por la historia de resistencia, raíces sociales y geografía
Permanencia de la tierra a través del tiempo (tierra: territorio)	a1	Lugar de nacimiento como referencia de identidad (Ver NAC Pacari, 2008)
Crecer en medio del mestizos	a2	Lugar de resistencia histórico
Espacio geográfico donde podía regresar a sus raíces	a3	Lugar de relacionalidad con el opresor
Espacio social donde volver a las raíces	B	Estrategias constitucionales y prácticas para el despojo de identidad indígena
Lugar de nacimiento como referencia de identidad	b1	Heridas abiertas de la conquista en nuestros nosotros cristianos
Pedirse fue alejarse de raíces	b2	Acciones para forzarnos a para salir de nuestra tierras
Relevancia de respetar a la tierra	b3	El "otro" como consedor de permiso para la existencia del "Yo"
Resistencia territorial-8	b4	Borramiento de la diversidad cultural por medio de la uniformidad
Despojo constitucional de identidad indígena	b5	Educación como medio para estrangular la voz (D42-46)
Nombres personales batizados por el opresor	C	Naturaleza, mujer sanadora y ominipresente
Apellido como etiqueta social	c1	Autoridad femeNAC de resistencia
Crecer lejos de las raíces -11	c2	La agua (Yaku) como ente físico sanador
Distancia ha fortalecido las enseñanzas	D	Sobrevivencia individual y colectiva como marca de resistencia
Huellas de la conquista en nuestro nombres	d1	Desarrollo de estrategias personales para sobrevivir
Nombre impuesto	d2	Complementación de creencias para la sobrevivencia cultural indígena
Penalización por mostrar lo que se es	d3	Vivir es hoy, sobrevivir es mañana
Permiso consedido por el "otro" a ser YO-	E	Enseñanzas culturales y políticas de resistencia en la individualidad- colectiva
Religion impuesta	e1	Mayor orgullo es la fuente de daño inflingido
Uniformidad borra diversidad	e2	Características físicas como fuente de identidad individual y poder colectivo
Voz restringida -18	e3	Identificadores culturales como actos de resistencia y homogeneidad

This pass presented some visual challenges to me, probably because I had been *staring at the data* from the same plane. I took a break from Excel and followed the advice of Saldaña (2021) of using code landscaping to integrate “textual and visual methods to see both the forest and the trees” (p. 285). Figure 15 shows an example of a word cloud. The following excerpt describes in detail how I used this method:

I tried to have a different experience when coding Sara Sofia's Second Pass Themes- since I had a lot of subcategories under each theme. I used Word Cloud to see what would happen. To my surprise it did help me to see more clearly the bigger picture of the subcategories, so creating the Overarching Themes as more fluid, still challenging, but allowed me to see the parts of the theme even before I saw the theme. Then, what I did instead of *creating sub themes in this phase, I wrote the borders of the theme, using as marks the sub-themes* [emphasis added for didactic purposes].

This way allowed me to give more substance to the THEME but initiating the process of conceptualizing them. I do not know if this was "easier" to do with Sara Sofia's transcription (or it was just a methodological nuance), but I will attempt to do the same in another Blanca Silvia (my last transcript) and see how it flows analytically. If it does, I will go back at the rest of the transcripts to give it a try. (01/24/2022).

What does "*borders of the theme*" mean? The word cloud helped me give some perspective to the words, but eliminating repetitive words, such as personal nouns, adverbs, or prepositions, connecting verbs (e.g., *era, estaba, iba, dijo, he, hubo, allá*) which were grammatical noise for me at this point, covering up relevant words (meanings). The imputation of these words was not done lightly, and I was aware of their syntax function in the excerpts. The words of the cloud became key words capable of uprooting latent (hidden) boundaries of meaning. A display of a theming example belonging to Sara Sofia interview #3 is depicted in Table 9. The information contained in parenthesis represents the boundaries of the theme, which analytically correspond to a specific Root Theme and its locating on the Excel tab.

Table 9

Example of the Theme Development Aided by the Utilization of Word Cloud

Theme	Description
Aprendizaje como un florecimiento del deseo de desafiar la cotidianidad individuo-colectiva.	I used the Word Cloud to help me see word patterns. Learning as a process of renewal (budding) infers the inner capacity that all people have to do it (agency), in which the germane becomes material for emergence. As teachings that relate first to one-self and her reality, and then to the relational-others. It is a challenge to take on this budding, as it is to go against the grain of what is expected. As a process it requires a beginning phase:
<i>Translation</i>	
Learning as a budding desire to challenge individual and collective daily routines.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Take on the challenge (this requires that the inner self is already prepared to do it) (G24,23,27,29, 30).^a A challenge to explore the unknown (G30, 32). 2) Recognition of self-improvement as a way to keep going (G20, 19). 3) Understanding of the journey as one that requires her own effort and the support of the relational other (G37, 19). 4) Capacity to understand the importance of different ways of knowledge (G31, 35, 37). 5) View of mentoring as an essential complement in the journey (G33, 34)

Note. ^aCoordinates to find the theme codes making up the theme category in the Excel sheet.

From Overarching Themes to Generative Themes (3rd Pass)

This pass was used to curate as much the distilled themes, specifically, I aimed at dissecting the sub-themes into a finer conceptual shape. Sub-themes were developed to avoid converting themes into a topic theme (Braun & Clark, 2022), and an explanatory comment was developed to set the boundaries and semantic meaning to the theme. After I was “done” with this pass, I moved all the themes of each FA into one Excel tab and was able for the first time to visualize the bigger picture of their interrelation and nuanced differences. Appendix G shows two examples of FA Generative Themes.

In the case of the EA themes, they were analyzed as testimonios, from which generative themes were extracted, and then combined into one global generative theme for further analysis (See Chapter Four for a more detailed explanation). Although not designed as a testimony in the

methodological sense, I am making a pragmatic decision as the researcher to use the FA conversations as an example of untranslated and interdependent solidarity.

My methodological journey throughout this sub-step ended with 19 tables (18 from the FA's themes and the 1 for the combined FA's themes). The development of the Generative Themes was the gateway to reflect on development of new conceptual aspects of the Self, to include the Self in relation with other Selves.³⁴

It took me several days to come back to the themes, as I did not have a map on how to find my way through the bracketed path of my Submersion Step. The next section is dedicated to telling the methodological journey of a liberatory data analysis.

Data Analysis Metrics

Stonehouse (2019) debates the usefulness of using full transcripts, as its time effectiveness is so reduced. According to him, "less than 4% of data is used from a whole transcript" (p.7). In my case, I distilled 5% into code categories out of 24,753 FA transcript lines, which became the material from which the themes were developed. Below is a summary of the FA's theme concentration process involved in this sub-step:

- 1) An average of 11% of code categories were used as material for the development of Root Themes. Time invested to review the code categories and create initial themes was approximately 3 hours.
- 2) An average of 76% of Root Themes were used to create the Overarching Themes. These themes had a high proportion of sub-themes (Vertices Themes). Time invested was approximately 2 hours.

³⁴ Concept will be elaborated during the Result Chapter, as is central in the transformation pathway observed in the EAs.

- 3) An average of 88% of Overarching Themes were condensed to Generative Themes. I was able to closely review the sub-themes to assess their overall effectiveness as meaning units, and to merge similar themes and impute others. Time invested was approximately 3 hours. A summary of analytical metrics of Step One, its phases and sub-steps is depicted in Appendix H.

Due to the layered analysis embarked during this study, code saturation was a salient warning for me, as to when to stop coding. However, instead of saturation, I relied on Malterud et al., (2016) perspective of information power. An in-depth explanation of this process is found in Appendix I.

Reflexive Commentary on Current Section

These three memo entries provide a glimpse on my own reflective process when developing themes, particularly how I went back and forth with my own internal reflexivity, theory, and embodied experience as my guide.

[During the first theming pass], I felt that other mechanisms were present in the narrative, but were hidden, they were not mentioned directly... instead- it was more the feeling of what was not being said that intrigued me. Of course, I needed to be aware that I did not want to fall into an epistemic fallacy: “wrongly substitute how agents take things to be for how they really are” (Archer, 2003, p 15)... That is why I looked at the data using a retroductive lens: looked at her words as multidimensional narrative informed by the external reality, the inner reality (individual intentions for the actions or thoughts), and normatively (collective norms and values) (Danermark et al., 2002, p. 98). I noticed that Catalina tended to talk more about the external reality and the normative reality, but her inner voice, her inner thoughts were not coming to the surface. Causing what I themed as Incomplete Problematization of a Lived Reality. (04/20/2022).

Luna Roja #3, challenged me when developing the themes. Trying to find in my own interpretation the closer meaning to what she constructed in our interview. She allowed me to see parcels of her being, using an epistemology really different from my own. The fact that I have walked many years with the Agent and have read about Andean cosmovision and history, helped me tremendously in making sense of my own internal voices, and allowed me to sit with the uncomfortable feeling of not being able to

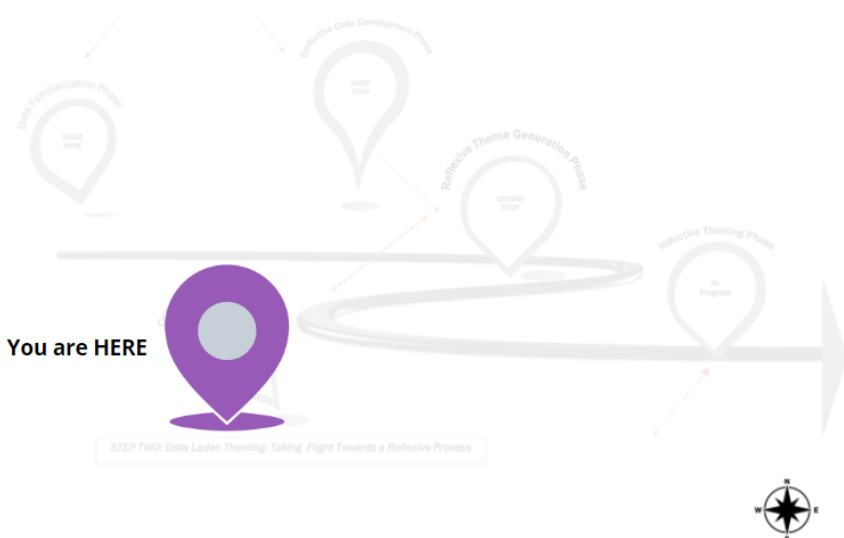
articulate a concept. Her temporo-contextual narrative is never linear, and that makes the analysis challenging, like a scavenger hunt for meaning.

New concepts were actively dug from this last narrative: 1) construction of difference and complementarity (which align with feminist theory and Andean cosmovision). 2)

Collectivity (WE): which is an action-driven and a theoretical construct on Archer's morphogenetic framework, and 3) Relationality, which corresponds to Indigenous philosophy, which deeply informs Luna Roja's perspective of life and her actions, and I am denoting a phenomenological construct of relation *with* the external. (01/13/22)

The themes generated during this Reflective TA (Thematic Analysis), was really challenging, not for lack of information but because I was faced with a different perspective of life. Not that is completely foreign to me, as I share a lot of the ways in which the Agent relates with the world, but because my own education and training in institutions have never exposed me with theoretical underpinnings and/or critical thinking on this type of knowledge. So my arsenal of reflective and reflexive capacities was mostly data and experiential-driven, and not as much theory driven. So, it leaned towards the narrator subjectivity (Agent), her first-person intra-subjectivity (SELF) during the analysis, and combined intersubjectivity during the interview process (HER's and MINE. During the analysis the parity/duality of Azucena's perspective of life and her ontological stance- was salient, every event had two parts, one usually hard and painful, and the other an opportunity for growth and expansion. Ontology is emerging as a stand-alone theme. (01/14/2022)

Step Two: Submersion into Data-Laden Themes



General Theoretical Layout

This Critical Theming Phase, was bracketed by emancipatory thinking using abductive and retroductive inference, requiring a deeper elaboration on the themes developed so far during the Theory Laden Step. Time and submersion in the data allowed me to practice the art (and science) of abductive and retroductive thinking, resulting in my own capacity to see beyond what was in front of me, or to find what Bhaskar (1994) calls *absences*, which reside in the relationship space-time. He explains absences as a product (something that is not there) or a process (making something absent or absenting). Simply put, my capacity to *unearth hidden absences* in my data set, was possible by the recontextualization of theoretical and emergent concepts using creative reasoning processes or abductive thinking, and by asking “*what conditions are needed for X to exist and to make X what it is?*”, or retroductive thinking (Danermark, 2002). Sprinkled throughout the chapter are theoretical concepts to help understand a particular methodological approach, but the elaboration of such concepts will be presented during the Result Chapter.

Due to the inexorable relationship between the data corpus and the contextualized realities from which it was collected, I continued to immerse myself in feminist thought located within the confines of América Latina (Curiel, 2007; Mohanty et al., 1991; Rowlands, 1997), searched for other complementary perspectives on Liberation Psychology from the continental South (de Sousa Santos, 2014; Freire, 2013, 2000; Martín-Baró, 1996a), expanded knowledge on anti-colonial thought (Mazorco Irureta, 2010; Memmi, 1965; Quijano, 2007), surrounded myself with theory on immigration sociology and the role of culture (Homi K., 1994; Sayad, 2004), and finally found inspiration on borderlands theoretical thought (Alzaldúa, 2007; Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002). This rich theoretical backdrop was always present during the analysis, but I was intentional (not without fallibility) to not “cage” data within the frontiers of these theories, by making the data fit a particular mold. Furthermore, these theories supported me during this process of intense and at many times painful discovery. I found strength in these readings, and felt less lonely:

I moved from abductive to retroductive inference during the coding and thematic analysis, allowing for deep reflexivity, development of new concepts based on the patterns observed, and search for documents and/or works of mostly feminist-women of color-third world people on these emergent patterns. During my prelims and proposal, I did not know about these other works, and it has been the immersion in the data that has made them visible. In addition, during my prelims, I focused on liberation psychology as my conceptual theory, and argued the need to turn my eyes to feminist works- action I was not able to fully understand how to do. It has been during this submerging process of reflection and wondrous thought process of discovery- that I have been able to see how easy it is to conflate luchas (struggles) and homogenize women's experiences into liberation processes from the Oppressor. This is because the multiplicity of struggles are not one in the same, nor equal to ALL women of color, or even equal to the same women at different stages of their development.

And this is the trap of hegemonic narratives. It shows us the forest, when we are trying to find the rhizomes that lie underneath in vast connection, functioning, and development. Liberation is the end goal, but it is the process of liberation which is diverse and multidimensional. (Researcher memo entry, 01/12/2022)

General Methodological Layout

In part one of this chapter, I used the analogy of a two-sided puzzle with one side having the same image but on a 90-degree angle. The next lines will attempt to explain how I further analyzed the completed side of the puzzle, which concluded with the development of generative codes.

I wanted to witness what it was like to see the image through another angle. I left the generative codes simmer inside my mind, and after one week, I came back to them with the intention to flip each piece of the puzzle into the other side. Up to this point in the analytical process, I had worked with the transcripts, codes, and themes as independent data corpus (e.g., Marcela #1, #2, and #3), while keeping a certain proximity to the excerpts. However, during this next step I started to distance myself from the trees in my attempt to contemplate the forest they reside in.

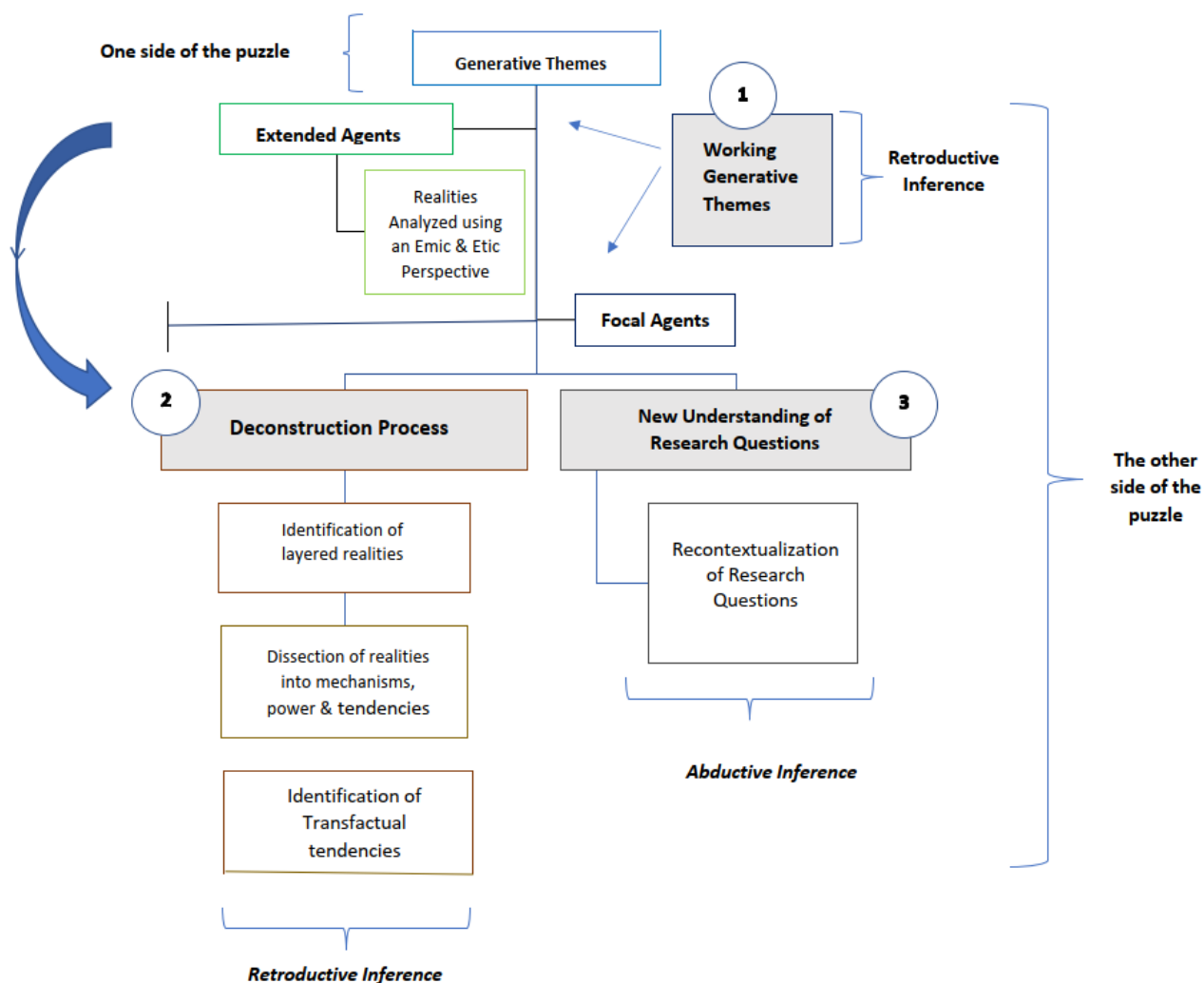
This part is structured into three main sub-steps, each porous enough to allow for continuous transference of meaning units: **1) Working the Generative Themes, 2) Deconstruction Process, and 3) New Understanding of my Research Questions.** In total I worked with 34 Generative Themes and 4 testimonios, plus my analytical memos and artifacts shared by the agents (e.g., art) as my new “raw material.” Figure 16 illustrates in detail the sub-steps of this phase.

It is important to highlight that my attempt to explain this methodological process is for heuristic purposes, and not as a clear and straightforward strategy to follow, as it will require more refinement, testing, and new observations. Critical analysis of open systems is never linear or unidimensional, as they are layered and residing within contextual boundaries, hence, it is my

scholarly curiosity to explore the finding presented in this study during a forthcoming Step Three: Emergent.

Figure 16

Methodological Sub-Steps During the Step Two: Critical Theming Phase



Sub-Step One: Working the Generative Themes

This sub-step was done separately for the FA's Generative Themes and the EA's testimonios. I will initiate with the FA themes as they form the spinal cord of the analysis. During this sub-step, I went back to colored pens and paper to start working on each set of the FA's generated themes with their accompanying subthemes and explanatory comments (Refer to

Appendix G). I worked with one focal agent at the time, displaying the three tables of their Generative Themes in chronological order (pre-, during, and post-immigration). It was my own personal gallery of themes, and my intention was to dig deeper beyond the contours of their shapes and meaning.

As a visual learner I was finally able to create an image from a curated collection of words, and each image was inspired by the semantic rhythm of the themes. This process was intense, taking several hours to feel “good enough” about the image created. The drawing was annotated as a map, and it provided the material for further analysis. I worked only with one FA a day, over consecutive days. By creating a time window between each FA, I was trying to cleanse my analytical mind of residual outputs to reduce the change of transfer of inference. For the EA, I used a different strategy, as I worked with them as a testimonio (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Flores & Garcia, 2009; The Latina Feminist Group, 2001). Their testimonios were dissected into individual generative themes and then combined into a global generative theme. Below is a memo entry encapsulating my thought process for analyzing the EA’s transcripts:

How different does it feel to talk with the extended agents? It has shifted my methodological approach so far- their accounts feel more like a testimonio than an interview. Doing coding/theming does not feel right, probably because they are locating the Agent in the center of their story, while reflecting on how this person has influenced their own life and how the becoming of the Agent has been a process, they have witnessed first-hand- serving as a reflection for their own self. The latter statement can be explained by using the mental allegory of a mirrored conversation, where the EA agent saw herself reflected in the life of the FA agent.

She [EA] was able to retrace her steps when she first met the FA, and re-tell, re-live, and reflect on the role this person has played in her life. These conversations served as a space of the recognition of the relational other-in-me, by allowing time to disarm their (our) internalized and ideological informed armors of knowledge, by first explicitly acknowledging the intersections informing each other’s territorial identities of Latinidades/Indigenism and our [collective] geo-political identities defined by the U.S. immigration’s perspective.

Another reason I felt these conversations took the shape of testimonios is because their central stories are struggles and collective experiences of being a Latina, Indigenous, woman finding their way in now a land called home. There were

conversations where collating pieces of the EA recounts serve to confirm the histories told by the FAs, as well as to directly see the impact of the role the FA has played in the development of the relational-other. (02/05/2022)

It was this sub-step when the terms Emic and Etic were employed for the first time within the context of the analysis, as a clear difference in voices perceived (Agar, 2011). I was able to dissect our voices into voices that move from the known (emic) to the foreigner (etic), and how this going back and forth happens all the time, becoming more evident during physical and symbolic migration.³⁵ How the EA's accounts relate to the research questions was not a direct pathway, as their views of the FA are being filtered twice, once by them, and a second time by the interpreter of their accounts (me). That is why I made the methodological decision to leave their narratives as intact as possible, as a way to only intervene at the point of joining, weaving, and molding their global narrative.

Sub-step Two: Deconstruction Process

During the second sub-step, I analyzed the drawings created, using a trifocal magnifying glass to identify the natural (empirical), the practical (real), and the discursive (social)³⁶ layers of reality. An important methodological action was to recognize within the three realities the *structures*³⁷ informing, transforming, and challenging the process of becoming and transformation of the FAs. Themes and testimonios were again analyzed differently. This

³⁵ Migration denoting move between symbolic and geographical territories. See a deeper explanation in the Results Chapter.

³⁶ Realities according to Bhaskar (2008) are Empirical, Actual, and Real. Archer (2000) refers to them as Natural, Practical, and Discourse (Social). I used both classifications interchangeably.

³⁷ According to Critical Realism, structure is the "inner composition making each object what it is, and not something else" (Danermark et al., 2020, p. 47). Structures can be analyzed at all levels of life and in any area: cellular level, dyad structures, linguistic and personality structures, all the way to organization/system structures. The recognition of what type of structure is being studied is essential to understand its mechanisms of action, inner powers, and tendencies.

deconstructive process was a three-step submerging exercise into the depths of the data: **1)** Identification of layered realities and their structures, **2)** Dissection of each reality into mechanisms and powers, and **3)** Identification of transfactual tendencies (causal roots).

Identification of Layered Realities and their Structures

I started labeling the notations on the FA's drawings with CR's three realities: empirical, actual, and real. This excursion allowed me to initiate my submersion into the depths of my themes, now converted into a multidimensional image of meaning (See Figure 17). I continuously asked these questions: **1)** What are the internal characteristics of each reality? and **2)** What cannot be removed without making the observed themes (action) cease to exist as is? For the EA's testimonios, I created an analytical three-layered visual of their global generative themes to locate the emic and etic voices contained in their accounts (See Figure 18). This process was a space in-between, where I maintained an intra-specific focus on the set of themes/testimonios, but I also began to bridge between concepts and stories, which led me to start noticing "trans-territorial patterns" among all the focal/extended agents.

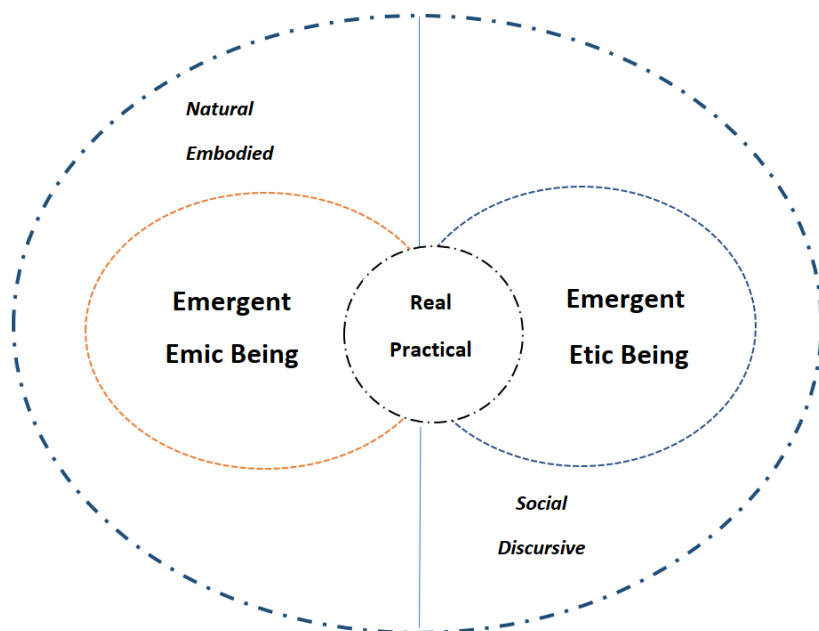
Figure 17

Example of Data Analysis: Seeking for Structures



Figure 18

Extended Agent's Emic and Etic Voices within Natural, Practical, and Social Realities^a



Note: ^a In the Results Chapter- Section Two, I elaborate in more detail the steps taken with the EA's testimonies, as it is easier to understand the analysis vis à vis their interpretation.

Dissection of Each Reality: Mechanisms, Powers, and Tendencies

After locating the realities at play in my data and recognizing the structures operating within it, I searched for the mechanisms affecting their expression (allowance or constrictions), and the causal mechanisms (roots)³⁸ anchoring their absencing or absences.

I relied on retroductive inference, and continued to focus on each tree, but I was becoming very aware of the other trees around me, and how they related to each other. I used two guiding questions during my excursion to unearth the powers of the observed structures, and to make visible the tendencies residing within them:

³⁸ Causal mechanisms in CR and in the context of this research, do not mean cause-effect as in empirical research. It refers to what an object or event is and the powers/things it can do by the virtue of its nature (Danermark et al., 2002).

- 1) Power: What are the mechanisms necessary for the expression of “X” structure to be expressed, and what are the persistent/salient powers³⁹ nested within the “X” mechanism to make them what they are?
- 2) Tendency: What is the tendency informing the underlying behavior (individual, collective, or systematic) present within the structure?⁴⁰

At the end of this part, I created several trifectas of mechanism >>powers>>tendencies for each of the FA accounts (See Table 10 for two individual examples), and five overarching structures to provide the 90-degree angle of my data. Since the focal agents share similar life stories, I was able to analyze them to create a global trifecta for each structure.

³⁹ Powers refer to the innate properties of structures that can be activated under specific circumstances (Brock et al., 2017). They are relational in nature (e.g., teacher—student relationship allows the development of educational curricula).

⁴⁰ Tendency (transfactual nature) is a causal law under CR. However, it does not mean the empirical regularity, instead it means that structures are “working independently of the factual outcome” (Danermark et al., 2002). In other words, all things tend to behave in a certain way all the time (e.g., teaching as a mechanism has the tendency to instruct, teach, mentor, and learning as an activity has the tendency to absorb, retain, receive knowledge. These tendencies might or might not behave as expected).

Table 10

Individual Examples of Trifectas from Two Focal Agents

Structure: Territories as places to make sense of the Self (Azucena #3)

Concept/level	Empirical (The Observed)	Actual (Activation of Conscientization)	Real (New ontology absences or absenting absences)
Mechanism ^a	Understanding the difference between the acquisition of knowledge and the embodiment of knowledge (saberes).	Development of spaces of collective learning and practice.	Activation of collective learning takes place within spaces of resistance.
Power ^b	Capacity of the Self to share what has been learned.	Capacity to activate belonging.	Curiosity as the threshold to move between understandings and meanings.
Tendency ^c	Expansion of liberatory epistemologies born from new understandings of the Self and the Relational Other.		

Note. ^a Mechanism: Inherent of structures they belong to.

^b Power: Inherent in the structure and mechanism they belong to.

^c Tendency: Transfactual permanence.

Structure: Territories as places to make sense of the Self (Marcela #3)

Concept/level	Empirical (The Observed)	Actual (Activation of Conscientization)	Real (New ontology absences or absenting absences)
Mechanism ^a	Primordial women/mother relationship	Direct connection with identity roots.	Nature as a corporal and physical embodiment- the first space of the Self.
Power ^b	Perpetual memories encoded in the self.	Salient and persistent search for freedom.	Nature (corporal and physical) as the space of freedom.
Tendency ^c	Migration between thresholds of spiritual identities and territories (corporeal and physical).		

Note. ^a Mechanism: Inherent of structures they belong to.
^b Power: Inherent in the structure and mechanism they belong to.
^c Tendency: Transfactual permanence.

Sub-step Three: New Understanding of my Research Questions

During this last sub-step, I came back to the place I started this journey: my questions. Even though they have been with me since their scholarly birth, more than one year ago, it was in this particular analytical space where I *saw* them as a layered inquiry. Abductive thinking allowed me to creatively look at the data in a recontextualized manner. I did this by foregrounding my research questions using as my backdrop the structures discovered in the previous sub-step. Then, I layered each of the research questions into the three realities, displayed as a 3x3 matrix. An example of the themes developed with a matrix is in Table 11. and a deeper explanation will be provided in the Results Chapter.

Looking at my research questions throughout the life of the emerging structures, the anatomy of the self-became evident, in order worlds the ontological understanding of the transformational journey of becoming. It was here, where the agential powers of the life agents unearthed, as they transformed their innate power as individual agents to emerge as corporate agents (change agents).⁴¹

It took care of many doulas for me to accomplish a deeper reflexivity, one with first-person authority. It was the wisdom of this tribe of women, which triggered my intuitive and embodied *saberes* (knowledge). They gave me security and trust to distance myself from the individual trees, to be able to contemplate the forest inhabited by us.

⁴¹ Archer (2000, 2003, 2017) develops what I see as a chronology on the evolution of the Self, moving beyond Mead's concept of Self (I, ME, YOU). She provides a framework to understand how a human being with her innate agency powers, moves from selves to primary agents, and from there to actors, and corporate agents (henceforth, cooperative agents). These steps are in continuing progression and their development is contingent upon the agent's primary concern and her context.

Table 11

Example of Abductive Reconceptualization of Research Questions by Layered by Reality

Reality/Question	Experience	Process of Becoming	Pathways for transformation
Personal or Empirical	Capacity for self-improvement as an embodied reality	Reconnection with cultural roots	Shared lived experiences as a relational map
Practical or Real	Reflection on the state of the being	Practice of new skills for the improvement of one's life and the life of the Relational Other	Empowerment is a practice happening in the privacy of the Self
Social or Actual	Capacity to have freedom to choose	Process of development of the Women/Mother carries social and cultural debts	Difference as a desirable quality

Reflexive Commentary on Chapter

Overall, the time invested during Step One and Two, was approximately 729 hours, almost 5 months of a full-time job (See Appendix J). As I completed my data analysis, I looked back at my memos to find the following excerpt I wrote when I was finishing with this analytical phase (bracketed by retroductive and abductive inference). Within it are all the emotions felt during my analytical journey: scared and confused, but never feeling alone or without a purpose:

There is a woman-you just see her silhouette at the distance. It can be any woman. It is dark, damp, and foggy. Although she seems ready to start what looks like a race, the funny thing is that she is just racing by herself. As she starts to run, at a tempo that is just hers. She falls down, slips many times, makes detours in search for more lighted paths, she stops-just a few moments here and there. For some reason I now can enter her head space and hear her thoughts: she is carrying all this power inside of her, she just needs to get "there." She wonders about why this road is so bumpy, lacking signage or lighting. Although- it seems that she is accustomed to these types of roads from where she comes from- some better some worst. She does not stop thinking about what is surrounding her, she enjoys the smell of the damped soil and feels her hips tempo with each stride. She knows she is powerful; she is not sure what for. She knows that she will continue running in search of a spot that feels safe and open for her presence.

She is looking for something, and she has the feeling that will recognize it when she sees it. Or at least she hopes so. She runs as if she were escaping- but she is not sure what she is escaping from in particular. She is certain that her legs will not stop moving. As her image fades and her thoughts become silent- I look at my hands as they run through the keyboard- to realize that I am her, she is me- I am YOU, YOU are ME- and US are WE. We are all running, hoping to find a spot where we can be. (01/26/2022)

Chapter Four:

Results

Chapter Organization

I begin the presentation of my results with the premise that they are not conclusive. I do not mean they lack explanation, but rather they are not the final culmination of the theoretical-methodological proposition brought forth in this dissertation research. Furthermore, these findings are open to debate and deliberations as they are the result of my own critical interpretation of events and experiences spanning decades and multiple contexts. However, my comprehensive methodology with its built-in interpretative checkpoints, and a strong theoretical foundation, provides a backbone of trustworthiness to the flesh that are my results.

The GPS guiding my research was reflexivity and methodological abstraction. I was able to create some boundaries within my analytical processes, with what Archer (2010b) calls “reflexive imperative,” or moving from habitual ways of thinking about a phenomenon to the reliance on reflexivity to “monitor agential commitments and correspondingly selective relationality...[which] generates an agency of reflexive, evaluative engagement” (p. 285). This evaluative engagement allowed me to dissect complex phenomena into workable components, which then could be reassembled into more easily recognizable concepts, eventually suitable for empirical testing.

Although not directly addressed in this section, it is important to highlight that the data analysis approach itself is an important product of this endeavor and can stand on its own. This is because the depths of this research cannot be fully understood without the methodological logistics involved in accomplishing the act of submersion.

It is important to clarify that both theory and praxis are not clearly divided in this section, as both are required to inhabit a space of mutual reciprocity and contradiction. In other words, the findings described in this chapter are not cataloged as one or the other, instead they are presented as stepwise maps outlining a pathway for new theoretical and action-oriented understanding of the development of the Self and the Collective.

The results are divided into two main parts for heuristic purposes, aligning with the methodological approach. Results Part One includes three subsections: **1)** Patterned Themes as Scaffoldings of Meaning, **2)** Expansion of Archer's definitions of the Self, and **3)** Identification of Operative Structures. Results Part Two is an in-depth explanation of the Model of the Process of Becoming and how it was developed. Each part of the Results can be read as a separate, stand-alone component, but it is its combination which provides a comprehensive understanding of the previously unheard voices of the life agents.

These results are intended to narrate the journey of creation of meaning, one that relied on an eclectic combination of theories and methodologies. As a scholar, I took the liberty of exploring outside the boundaries of the disciplines I have been indoctrinated in, and by doing so, I freed myself from constrictions created by the White and Eurocentric academic complex, and most importantly, by my own internal walls of understanding and being. I will continue with the use of vignettes⁴² to represent the depth of each of these themes, and as a tool to continue to make *visible* the voices of the life agents. Three main results are outlined in this chapter and their ordering is for aesthetic purposes (not due to a hierarchal positioning), as they are interwoven throughout this chapter:

⁴² The translation of vignettes titled with a number can be found at the end of the chapter. Translation of block quotes are added as footnotes.

1) To offer evidence of an alternative/counter-narrative to the prevailing theories on the “immigrant experience,” that have only offered an incomplete lens focused primarily on the experience of immigrants from a need-based perspective. These limiting perspectives have inundated the “immigrant experience” with cultural blanket characterizations (e.g., *marianismo*, *familiarismo*), while omitting the experience of the emigrant residing within, and her historical realities prior to, during, and after migrating, and the complex heterogeneity of those experiences.

2) To present a deviation from the normalized feminist theory which tends to bracket all experiences of being a woman inside the borders of Western, White, and middle-class feminist epistemologies. I do so by exposing the experiences of women from the Third World⁴³ in relation to realities of colonialism, colorism, and racism (Curiel, 2007). Importantly, I offer a feminist view that is not fully *latinoamericana*,⁴⁴ either, as the identities of the life agents have expanded beyond their national origins.

3) To demonstrate a pathway to understanding the process of conscientization from the perspective *de ser mujer inmigrante e Indígena* (perspective of being immigrant and Indigenous women) --women residing in-between territories, identities, and *saberes* (knowledge) (Ceceña, 2012).

⁴³ Mohanty (1991) talks about the cartography of struggle among women across the world and denotes women of the third world as women residing in non-European continents, in addition with black, Latina, Asian, and Indigenous women in the United States.

⁴⁴ I intentionally use the term *latinoamericana* instead of Latin American.

Results: Part One

Sub-section One: Patterned Themes as Scaffolding of Meaning

Fourteen patterned themes were distilled from the deductive process. These themes provided the coordinates for the development of generative themes and the bracketed analysis using Critical Realism (CR) and Liberation Psychology (LP). Individually they provide an important representation of often omitted aspects informing the lives of immigrant people, and collectively, they provide a window into a deeper understanding of the complexity of the immigrant experience, beyond acculturation or enculturation.

My scholarly intuition tells me that these themes can become important constructs for social research when working with immigrant communities, as they can serve as structural concepts for coding methods. Three patterned themes were identified as central in understanding the process of becoming and transformation, and each of them is composed of the following theme vertices: **1) Lengua/lenguaje** (as markers of cultural and historical importance), **2) Territorios** of existence and learning (symbolic and objective), and **3) Voz** (process of emic and etic development and transformation).

Theme #1: Lengua (language): An Invisible Veil of Meaning

The direct translation of *lengua* or *lenguas* is tongue (s), not to be confused with “speaking in tongues” as in glossolalia,⁴⁵ or with the buccal muscle. Within the context of these results, *lengua* is used to denote the origin of meaning, while *language* refers to the language people speak in a country or region (*idioma*). This differentiation was given by the life agents,

⁴⁵ Glossolalia meaning the “vocalizing of speech-like syllables that lack any readily comprehended meaning,” practiced in certain Christian religions (Rose, 1983).

who spoke about *lengua* and *lenguaje* as two very different constructs, even though both words are often used interchangeably in Spanish.

Lengua comes to life in moments when the linguistic system of signs is embedded in the innate part of the being: *la lengua materna* (mother tongue). The words of Andrea Franulic Depix (2021), better describe this concept:

La lengua es una y es la lengua materna, que no coincide siempre con las lenguas nacionales. Es la lengua que aprendemos de la madre, o de quien ocupe su lugar, en la primerísima infancia e incluso antes, en la vida intrauterina. Y aprendemos la lengua completa y, junto con ella, el simbólico de la madre.⁴⁶ (pp. 123-124)

Here, *lengua* is connecting the sense of the self⁴⁷ or the meaning of the self. By centering its feminine status it is possible to uncover its power of giving life and nurturing tradition (Murano, 1994), but it also puts a target on its back, making it vulnerable to the mercy of oppressive systems, continuously working at weakening people's connections with their origins (e.g., colonization of language).

The following vignette is a memo entry I wrote after an interview with Luna Roja,⁴⁸ when she narrates the symbolic relationship she has with her given name (“Christian name”) as a remnant of colonization (See Inostroza Ponce, 2019 for historical context of the ritual of baptism and naming during colonial times in Latino América),

Vignette One

El perder una lengua, ya sea porque desaparece socialmente, o a consecuencia de una conquista o porque una persona no es enseñada (otro tipo de conquista), representa la

⁴⁶ Direct translation: The *lengua* is one and it is the mother tongue, which does not always coincide with the national languages. It is the *lengua* that we learn from the mother, or from whoever takes her place, in very early childhood and even before, in intrauterine life. And we learn the complete *lengua* and, along with it, the symbol of the mother.

⁴⁷ Sense of self develops pre-linguistically and it is an internal and individual process taking place in the natural reality (Archer, 2000, pp. 124–126).

⁴⁸ The life agents chose the pseudonym they wanted to be used for this research. One of the agents decided to use the pseudonym Luna Roja or Puka-Killa in Kichwa. For the purposes of consistency, I use Luna Roja throughout this research.

pérdida definitiva de un conocimiento innato, personal y único. El desarrollo del ser y su relación con el mundo no es intercambiable en otra lengua. Aunque la adquisición de una lengua durante el proceso de crecimiento- sí [puede] ofrecer oportunidades de ver el mundo desde otra perspectiva, no sustituye el saber interno de la lengua materna.

On the other hand, idioma was used to denote acquisition, but it had a double meaning: as a personal decision of returning to one's roots (positively charged), and as a necessity for personal and social survival charged by the debris of centuries of cultural annihilation and internalized oppression (negatively charged). The next vignette is a compilation of six voices about their views about idioma. They are shown as one vignette, to demonstrate how idioma is a cross-national, intergenerational, and multiethnic structure, and how it is continuously informing people's views of themselves and of others. The separation between voices is given by the italicization of the first world.

Vignette Two

[*Creciendo*] entendí que el idioma era muy valioso. *Y ahora* que están [immigrant and Indigenous youth] también quieren aprender el idioma. Y eso es bien importante, porque una cosa que no hicieron conmigo también [*sic*].

[*En*] cualquier lugar en donde uno viva, si hay oportunidades así, y nosotros como latinos luchamos, obvio que hay que salir adelante, por ser mujeres, por ser Latinas, porque no es nuestro país, ... el idioma ¡uff!, difícilísimo, la emigración está a flor de piel. *Entonces*, hay veces negación a ir a mi lugar de origen, a negación a que mis hijos hablen el idioma, mi idioma, ... ellos empezaron a cerrar puertas y entonces se hizo una desconexión.

Pero el idioma inglés va a ser la base y lo que la va a catapultar a otras dimensiones. *On the other hand*, Spanish is always comfortable to hear because it reminds me of things like my house or like my mom speaking or like just being at home. But yes, in my heart, I would want to say Kichwa, but I don't know if I can say that yet because I don't know it as well.

En Ecuador cuando aprendí el español, pues así cómo tu mencionas y yo siento en tu idioma nativo, y pues hay frases que me causa risa, pero porque lo siento en mi idioma. *Pero* pienso que el Kichwa nos fue impuesto también, porque vinieron los Incas y el idioma de ellos era el Quichua.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ A focus on Amerindian languages in América Latina is outside of the scope of this research, however, it is important to highlight that Kichwa and Quichua are different lenguas, with geo-political differences. See Limerick (2017) for an explanation on this topic.

Ellos (Inkas) conquistaron y perdimos casi nuestro idioma, por eso hablamos desde Bolivia hasta casi Colombia a Quichua y cada uno... Quichua de Ecuador, es un poquito diferente al Quichua del Perú, pero se combinaron los dos idiomas.

Al final, una mañana que tú te levantas, sales de tu casa, estás en tu patio... y visualizas el sol grande, o sea no ves ningún apuro al exterior, es una calma, las plantas verdes, todo soleadito no hay un apuro para ti, entonces el retroceder tu vida a esas experiencias, o el retroceder tu vida a que tu abuelita te esté hablando en el idioma quichua, o retroceder la vida de uno a que tu abuelito te esté contando las mejores historias mitológicas de los espacios, de las estrellas del universo y la tierra, o sea para mí es sagrado, es un pensamiento sagrado que puede ayudarme a que mis aguas puedan correr suavemente, tranquilas, apacibles no.

Finally, my personal relationship with the meaning and the concretization of language (idioma) was ever-present during this research. I spoke only two of the languages spoken by the life agents (Spanish and English), both of them expansionist languages used in the conquest of territories and economic markets. In this process, I had to become my own shuttling of meaning between two linguistics destinations. Coming back to Spanish was my safe harbor, while English represented a semantic challenge during the search for conceptual equivalence (Squires, 2009) due to my resistance to equating semantic value to the same translated word (Chakravorty Spivak, 2000). This is because Spanish for me will always have a higher level of abstraction and meaning.

Theme #2: Territorios (Territories): Objective and Metaphorical Meanings

Throughout the narratives the word territorios was either directly addressed or it was distilled from around the edges of coding and theme development. Territories became definitions beyond geography or nature, to expand to other meaning units. Regato's (2007) definition of territory serves as an example of its expansive definition:

Appropriate space, traced, routed, delimited. It is an area under the control of its presence and therefore inseparable from the categories of domain and power. For the same reason, there is no idea of territory that is not accompanied by an idea of border. Limit and territory are a definition indebted to the notion of territoriality (p. 72).

During the interviews, natural territories were a trusted thematic companion, from stories about lakes, mountains, volcanos, rivers, from their role as healing structures and safe keepers of traditions, to the transcendental connection to the land even before it was conquered:

For me, family and land are so interconnected.... We've been in our land way before like the Spanish or Christopher Columbus. We've been there forever. So, I guess, land and family is [*sic*] almost really interwoven. You can't really separate them. (EA-B, 06/15/2021)

However, two less obvious yet essential concepts were also categorized as territories:

- 1) Women's bodies and minds as territories continuously fighting for freedom and autonomy.
- 2) Symbolic territories of learning (spaces in-between), where a sense of healing and creativity are cultivated.

Body and Mind as Battlefields

“La opresión fue ingresada en mí.”⁵⁰ The life agents talked about their bodies and minds as territories with a particular geographical and cultural nature, always moving across symbolic and geo-political borders (constant migrations),⁵¹ which were characterized by specific allowances and constrictions. Their identities as women shape their lives and the lives of their mothers, often due to control from male dominated realities:

Vignette Three

Pero, si recuerdo eso, que mi tío le decía a mi papá, mi papá sí era muy machista creo yo, porque si recuerdo que decían que no las dejaba salir mucho, bueno a ningún lado. Con nosotros ya no fue tanto, pero tú sabes que cuando se le, tienen algo, yo diría entre machismo y celos, por ser mujeres como dices tú. (EA-C)

⁵⁰ Azucena #1, 03/08/2021. Translation: *Oppression was inserted in me*. It refers to internalized oppression.

⁵¹ *Concept for future development*. An interesting finding was to understand that the physical migration to new territories was only one kind of movement the agents encountered. The other types included: symbolic, spiritual, intellectual, and bodily (pregnancy), which were even more salient and significant in their narratives.

Or, due to lack of opportunities as a result of social and economic barriers: “mi mamá desde muy pequeña tuvo que trabajar, no fue a la escuela, dejó de estudiar cuando ella iba al sexto grado”⁵² (Blanca Silvia #1).

Lorena Cabnal (2017), Guatemalan Indigenous woman, and a member of the Red de Sanadoras Ancestrales del Feminismo Comunitario (Tzk’at in Mayan) developed the concept of Feminismo Comunitario Territorial (Community Territorial Feminism), which supports this finding. This indigenous epistemology establishes a different cosmovision to the feminist and environmental movements led by non-Indigenous women (particularly mestizas and white women). It was incubated by the women from several communities in Guatemala (and not academics). Her proposal has four pillars: **1)** the defense of the body-land territory, **2)** the defense of territories against neoliberal expansionism, **3)** alliances with other communities, and **4)** creation of safe spaces for women, part of the Red de Sanadoras whose lives are threatened by political hegemonic powers (Cabnal, 2010). Segato and Cabnal talk about the direct relation between the abuse, usurpation, and destruction of women's bodies at the hands of patriarchal norms, and the destruction of ancestral territories, as a result of neoliberal expansionism (colonial, post-colonial, and neoliberal).

At its core this result is talking about the importance of paying attention to the intersecting realities informing and affecting the territories occupied by immigrant women. This perspective will help expand the framework of intersectionality (Migliaro González, et al., 2020), as it also incorporates nature as the first place for interaction with the world and with past generations.⁵³ It assumes that women’s identities are more than overlapping categories of social

⁵² Direct Translation: My mother had to work from a very young age, she did not go to school, she stopped studying when she was in the sixth grade.

⁵³ Term coined for this research to mean past generations (roots) residing in different geographical locations from the focal person.

inequities (e.g., immigrant, Indigenous, working class), as they are also a sovereign territory with geo-political and organizing power.

Symbolic Territories of Learning

“Encender de nuevo esa chispa de querer aprender.”⁵⁴ Learning was an ever-present concept across all the life agents, and it presented two branches: 1) internal learning, and 2) collective learning. These branches were related to two main processes of development: Zone of Proximal Development,⁵⁵ and Empowerment, and at the same time were interdependent processes.

Internal Learning. Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) refers to an area where potential development (capacity) is latent (gap), but yet not achieved by a learner, hence it represents as an opportunity for growth (Matusov, 2001). Filling this gap is done via the scaffolding of learning, exposure to peers, and continuous mentoring, which foster the move towards higher levels of understanding. Within the context of this research each life agent (including the person writing these lines) acted as an accelerant to each other’s learning capacities:

Ahorita la verdad, si me dan muchas ganas, viendo a Luna Roja, si me dan muchas ganas de ... Saber mucho más acerca de Colombia pero, creo que [las] bases no las tuve, aunque si le enseñan a uno en la escuela, con mis papás.⁵⁶ (Sara Sofía #2, 03/31/2021).

⁵⁴ Direct translation: Rekindle that spark of wanting to learn (Sara Sofía #2, 03/31/2022).

⁵⁵ The concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is commonly used in child education and developmental psychology. For the purposes of this research, I am extrapolating the concept to adult learning, as the process of migration is a process of returning to a child-like understanding of the new context [world], especially when the acquisition of a new language is required for survival.

⁵⁶ Direct translation: Right now, the truth is, I really want to, watching Luna Roja, I really want to... know a lot more about Colombia, but I think I didn't have [the] bases, although they do teach you at school, with my parents.

An important aspect of this learning zone was that the life agents create it together, molding it according to their own limits, capacities, and contexts. Azucena metaphorically speaks about the context of this creation:

Vignette Four

Y eso es lo bonito, y eso es lo que le valoro tanto, el hecho de que se plantó una semillita, desde buscar la tierra propia, donde se pueda sembrar y trabajarla-esa tierra, suavizarla la tierra para que la semilla pueda agarrar sus raíces en ese suelo, desde el principio. No tuvimos un terreno trabajado, y decir aquí puede sembrar, no nosotros tuvimos que ir a quitar los matorrales, a sacar las hierbas malas para poder suavizar el terreno y sembrar la semilla. (#3, 03/29/2021)

This kind of learning aligns with Freire's pedagogy for liberation, in which the agent is an active participant in the act of learning and teaching, in other words, it is an act of reflexive cognition and not transactional exchanges of information (Freire, 2000). Furthermore, the agents' capacity for feedback and peer mentoring, provided an extra layer of growth, mediated by relationality and dialogue: a zone of relational empowerment.⁵⁷

External Learning. Although only one of the agents directly mentioned empowerment as an outcome of her involvement with the group, all of them talked about their increased agency to organize and speak-up, which was directly associated with their augmented capacity to understand the mechanisms of operation of the systems they interact with on a regular basis. Below is a vignette compiling three accounts from Sara Sofía, Azucena and Blanca Silvia, respectively. Bracketed are words for editorial purposes and each account is separated by italicized worlds.

Vignette Five

Entonces siento que sí, como el sistema, pues no nos ve, saben que estamos ahí, pero como no quieren vernos. [¡Pero] claro, podemos hacerlo! ... Porque somos una colectiva.

⁵⁷ Coined to merge two important concepts: learning as a relational process and empowerment as the intended outcome.

No somos solamente una voz, somos varias personas no, somos un colectivo y eso tiene mayor incidencia, y así podemos ir tocando otros sistemas también de educación o el de salud. [Sé] *que* no puedo volver a ser la misma, la que fui en esa época, y como dije que ya estaba siendo consumida por el sistema, por los sistemas, ya no veía más que la forma de sobrevivir.

These accounts are talking about what Rowlands (1997) calls dimensions of power: **1)** power from within, **2)** power with, **3)** power on top of, and **4)** powder for or of. The first one, power from within, refers to intra-reflexivity and its capacity to increase one's inner mobilization (which happens at the level of the 'I' in conversation with the 'Me').⁵⁸ The other three refer to the interactions in the social realm:

- *Power with:* is the search for a collective identity and is often creative and horizontal.
- *Power on top:* is a coercive power, normalized by established hierarchical relationships, and aid by manipulation, fear, and lack of options.
- *Power for or of:* interpersonal capacity to generate change and alternatives. It is consolidated by the creation of the 'We.'⁵⁹

This finding opens the door to think of empowerment as a multidimensional phenomenon, occurring at the personal, close relationship, and collective levels:

1) The personal dimension resides in the embodied and reflexive spaces of the Self. Abductively, I inferred an interesting mechanism residing in this dimension: chameleonic capacity.⁶⁰ This capacity can serve as a "life jacket" for the Self in moments of great uncertainty and transition

⁵⁸ See Archer's development of personal identity in Sub-Section Two.

⁵⁹ See Archer's development of social identity in Sub-Section Two.

⁶⁰ This concept was brought up during my interviews with Azucena. She did not call her tendency to "blend in" as chameleonic. When I used the metaphor of a "being as chameleon", she agreed on its appropriateness within the context of her narrative.

(e.g., immigration), but which can also, if left unattended, affect the transformation of the self, by creating a mimic-like mind frame without reflexive input.

Vignette Six

El mismo hecho de camaleonar⁶¹ también es de explorar no, y de explorar de cómo están funcionando los entes que nos rodean, y como vemos hay mucha desigualdad, hay mucha opresión, hay mucha injusticia. ...Me voy a camaleonar que y tratar de hacer válido mi existencia también (Azucena #2, 03/22/21)

2) Close relationships refer to the capacity to operate in the practical reality by being able to negotiate, bargain, and advocate for rights and interests of a particular group or of the self.

3) The collective dimension acts in the social order reality and represents a visible commitment to a cause. However, this dimension can also include mechanisms of oppression, for example, the Crabs in the Barrel Syndrome, which is more commonly presented as uncivil comments or actions towards someone of the same in-group characteristics, who is displaying a non-expected behavior for their social or gender positioning (Miller, 2019). Silvia Blanca offers a great example of this behavior, and the consequences on her own self-esteem:

En las fábricas lo que me decían es que, “ay... siempre estás leyendo.” Porque eso sí tenía, la lectura pues, siempre me ha gustado, por eso me rechazan. [En las fábricas] me decían:” ¿y qué es esa palabra?” ¿Qué significa esto? Es que hablas bien raro.” ...Siempre me sentí rechazada.⁶² (#2, 04/06/2022)

Lastly, this collective dimension accounts to what Archer (2017) calls Corporate Agency,⁶³ in which the Self-engages to “bring about social transformation, which simultaneously transforms society’s extant role array” (p. 32). This is a cyclical continuum transforming the

⁶¹ Made up word in Spanish, converting a noun (chameleon) to an infinitive verb.

⁶² Direct translation: “In the factories what they told me is that, ‘oh... you’re always reading.’ Because I did have that, reading well, I’ve always liked it, that’s why they reject me. [In the factories] they told me: ‘and what is that word? What does this mean? It’s just that you speak very strangely.’ ... I always felt rejected.”

⁶³ I converted this term into Collective Protagonist in Part Two of this chapter where I develop my theoretical model.

group and the self-contained within it. Inside this dimension the agent has become an Actor (p. 32).

An important characteristic of these two kinds of learning is that they differentiate between education and teaching as two independent modes of knowledge acquisition. The former refers to systematic and organized (institutionalized or not) educational approaches, and the latter is the transfer of embodied, epistemic, and historical knowledge (saberes). Both of them have their role in the transformation of the Self and the collective, and both carry with them the power of liberation and oppression. All the Focal Agents (FA) talk about the importance of gaining knowledge, either through organized educational systems/programs or as a lifelong process, but is Azucena, who again articulates a critical difference between both:

Vignette Seven

Si tocamos el tema, por ejemplo; ya desde el punto de vista social, económico, político, educativo y todo ello pues, claro se utiliza como la educación, como algo primordial para la humanidad. Pero este sistema de educación, yo pienso que son curriculums [*sic*] creados... para un mundo occidental, no para un mundo, no para una tierra de este continente.

Entonces, la educación, los currículos... no está hecho [*sic*] para nosotros como inmigrantes. Me considero como un arbolito, una plantita que de un árbol no, que mi aprendizaje ha sido desde la semillita que es tan minúscula no, y esa semillita quiere, esa semillita tan minúscula para mi significa un aprendizaje base, desde cero, y que la semillita va a ir brotando no, va creciendo como una plantita, entonces mientras más grande se va haciendo la plantita pues, más se va enriqueciendo, y eso ha sido para mí el aprendizaje, los entrenamientos que hemos tenido.

Muchas veces incluso no está en nuestro plan de someternos al aprendizaje, pero la vida nos pone experiencias en las que tenemos que aprender. (#3, 03/29/2022)

These findings shine a light on how to foster the creation of territories sourced with the needed resources for people to develop their paths of understanding and critical reflection. In addition, they provide evidence of the need to work on debunking the fallacy that empowerment is a phenomenon that can be taught or given. Instead, it represents a process of inner transformation with outer personal and social repercussions. Empowerment requires from the

agents a sense of accountability to each other and to the cause, which in turn, asks for a great deal of performative capacity and self-awareness of one's capacities and limits within the borders of a team/group. Finally, it necessitates a collective sense of solidarity and sisterhood, which is only accomplished with shared vulnerability and time. In her testimonio, Aurora Levins Morales (2011) talks about how in her journey to belong, she found the company of women of color to be a territory to share laughter, home cooked foods, and collective healing. It was this territory that gave her the power to learn and teach freely:

This tribe called “women of color” is not an ethnicity. It is one of the inventions of solidarity, an alliance, a political necessity that is not the given name of every female with dark skin and colonized tongue, but rather a choice about how to resist and with whom (pp. 102-103).

Theme #3: Voz (Voice): An Evolutionary Process of the Internal Conversation

Critical studies and grassroots movements use the metaphor of raising one voice or the voices of the unheard (as depicted in the title of this dissertation research), as a symbol of active rebellion against the clamping forces of discriminatory practices. However, what does it mean to raise one/our voice(s)? How can it be described in order to trace its origins? I developed a three-layered process to activate the voice of an agent:

1) *The activation of agency* will move a person to become a primary agent. This activation is a personal, and often unannounced, experience in which the agent becomes aware of her desire to be part “in the re-shaping of society’s resource distribution” (Archer, 2000, p. 11). This voice is still hidden in the depths of the emic understanding of the agent.

2) *The translation of an embodied experience* requires its conversion into coherent words shared by a group of people. This translation is the exploration of the waters of the external etic.

Bakhtin (1934/1982) used the concept “speaking consciousness,” which is the active communication of a person (written or spoken) in a particular time and place. Because agents

carry inside of them the social contexts of their lives (e.g., culture, norms, roles), this translation has a dialogical nature mediated by an internal conversation between the personal ‘I’ and her social ‘Me’ (Archer, 2000).

3) *The discovery of spaces* to exercise with others the liberatory power of one’s voice. These spaces of action do not happen spontaneously, they need to be created by those who will inhabit them. Here, the emic voice has learned to recognize the sounds and accents of the etic voices, and with both is able to navigate multiple symbolic and linguistic contexts. Blanca Silvia’s EA summarizes this concept:

Si hablamos de voz, para ser un líder genuino creo que ellas tendrían, las miembros del grupo, tendrían que desarrollar sus ideas, crear un plan de acción y saber cuál es el rumbo que ellas desean de su vida, y de sus familiares.⁶⁴ (EA/C, 06/11/2021)

Finally, Appendix K includes Sara Sofía’s unaltered description of her definition of how the process of the development of her voice happened. In her description, she moves from the known (emic) to a voice capable of entering etic spaces of knowledge. She utilizes the metaphor of a sunflower to describe the evolution of this process. My decision to leave this profound finding untouched by my analytical process is because I want it to be credited to her, in her own terms in future iterations of this research.

Concluding Reflections

The intense relationship I developed with all the patterned themes, and in particular the ones elaborated here, allowed me to start looking at the data from a completely different perspective, and to start asking questions about the nature of being. My intuition was confirmed by the words of Luna Roja’s EA,

I didn't think that it was possible to change as much as my Luna Roja did. And like her

⁶⁴ Direct translation: “If we talk about voice, to be a genuine leader, I think that they, the members of the group, will have to develop their ideas, an action plan and know what direction they want from their lives, and from their families.”

determination, it's just something that I really, really admire. She literally is my role model. I mean, I think it would have been a different way of *knowing how to be* [emphasis added]. (EA/B, 06/15/2021)

I will conclude this section by opening a door to the conceptualization of this latent concept hidden in the patterned themes, and which will be elaborated in the following section of this section: becoming is not the re-marking of the Self, it is the process of *being reborn*. This next vignette corresponds to the day I had this theoretical breakthrough:

I'm coming to see that the act of BECOMING is the acquisition of a new ONTOLOGY. Is the realization of the SELF, of what is her existence, her relationship with herself and the world? It is the recognition of her as an acting being, a someone with internal depth, mysteries, and dreams.

It is the awakening of wanting to know the SELF and her circumstance and to look to the inside of one's private thoughts, to be able to recognize the multiple territories she inhabits. BECOMING is not a new type of knowledge or the provision of a new perspective in life, it is the complete shift of her internal consciousness, as it requires to ask questions not asked before to oneself, and to question the realities so far taken as a "given." BECOMING is to be born from within- not erasing what once we were (as that is impossible), but to see ourselves under a new study light, one that shines from within.⁶⁵ (03/02/2022)

Subsection Two: Expansion of Archer's Definitions of the Self

Brief Commentary to Locate the Meaning of the Self in Relation with the Other

According to Archer (2016), having a personal identity is the predecessor of social identity. This is because of the necessity for the sense of self (individual process) to be distinct from the social variations of the concepts of selves, as society will not function "without people who have a continuation of consciousness" (p. 23).

Personal identity is what is constant in our lifespans, and it is the gateway of interaction with the social worlds we encounter (Archer, 2003). Furthermore, the coexistence of the three realities

⁶⁵ This idea is developed at the in Part Two of this chapter.

complicates the exchanges of understanding of the norms regulating each context. For example, one can be a mother at home, a role that has its primary preoccupations, and a surgeon at work interacting with a different set of responsibilities. The constant is her sense of self (her personal identity), which was consolidated before her concept of self (her social identity) (Archer, 2000). Her internal conversation allows her to debate, facilitate, and decide the course of action. Following the previous example: her search for self-care and inner balance (embodied reality) might compete with the need to secure a position as an attending surgeon (practical reality), while she is wondering altogether about her sense of accomplishment and self-worth as a woman, who is also a mother, and a doctor (discursive reality).

This wondering is possible due to her inner conversations with her most trusted companions: her I, Me, and You. It is also during these conversations where she is able to recognize the *others* residing in her, either as identities or constructs created on her own accord using available information, or socially constructed identities or constructs created by influential powers at the sociocultural level. These “others” might represent objects/subjects aligning with her worldview or might be an antithesis to it.

It is precisely these “others” I want to talk about in this section: **1) Relational Other, 2) Uprooted Other, and 3) Frontier Other.** Archer (2000) relies on Merleau-Ponty’s development of the concept of the *sense of self* as a necessary step for the development of the other, whose progression “always involves work, which is undertaken in the interest of our natural needs” (p. 130). People develop a sense of self by differentiating themselves from others and establishing an understanding of their own affordances and limits in relation to the other. However, neither Archer or Bhaskar mentions how the “other selves or objects” are treated or welcomed by the stratified I (I, Me, You). In other words, their ontological stance does not account for the parallel

processes of othering/alterity which happen in tandem with the development of the sense of self within the agent,⁶⁶ even before differentiating herself as an actor (Archer, 2000)

Is not surprising that this is a topic discussed by feminist, anti-colonial, and sub-altern⁶⁷ theorists and practitioners, as their own senses of self are at odds with hegemonic realities. Via my epistemic authority as a subaltern individual, I was able to dissect three emergent concepts branching out from the meaning of “other.” These concepts expand on the meaning of *otredad* (othering) and *alteridad* (alterity) and provide new conceptualizations to help explain the relationships between people different from us.

This finding is relevant because it provides a new perspective on the “other” from an immigrant lens. The other is always present in the Self, as society is always present in the agent, and it is through the process of embodiment of one’s feelings, sensations, and imagination, in relation with the territories of the “other,” where it is possible to achieve a critical consciousness and compassion (Martín-Baró, 1996b). This kind of consciousness offers a new way of seeing the world, of decoding it. It offers a new way of being in the world. Consciousness is never complete, or without blinders, but the more the Self is able to expand her multidimensional perimeter of understanding, the greater her horizons will become.

Emergent Definitions of Other

Before introducing these definitions, I will briefly define alterity and othering, as they serve as two opposite charged mechanisms, creating a dichromatic relationship of the Self with the *not-the-I*. Both are in constant transformation occurring at the level of intrasubjectivity,

⁶⁶ Everyone is an agent, born within a particular socio-cultural reality (an involuntary assignation). Agents are capable of becoming actors (voluntary actions) to occupy a social role aligned with their concerns and values (Archer, 2003).

⁶⁷ By subaltern I mean educational efforts standing in direct opposition to the hegemonic narratives invading such systems of knowledge in mainstream research or educational systems.

expressed in the intersubjectivity realm (Pincheira Muñoz et al., 2020), and maintained by structures of control.

Framed by Emmanuel Levinas, alterity is an ethical relationship with the other, one in which she/he/they are important to me as their well-being affects my life; I see myself in the other. She stops being an object to become a transcendental subject. The other and I enter a dialectical relationship, based on the recognition of a complex identity (Pincheira Muñoz et al., 2020). Expanding alterity to the context of Latino América, as a continent where imperialist/capitalist forces continue to suppress its development and of its people, alterity takes the shape of relationality with the collective others, seeking freedom and sovereignty. It becomes a collective ethic (de Sousa Santos, 2014; Vázquez Fernández, 2014).

On the other end, othering (*otredad*) has to be understood within the context of power. It is a symbolic representation of the superiority embodied by a group/person against the other, who is not-the-I, different, and lacking (Vázquez Fernández, 2014). Within this hegemonic relationship, the other is infested with absences needed to be corrected, eradicated, or converted. The “superior” is able to create a *Zone of Being*, in which his/her/their humanity is respected and acknowledged. They reside in the zone of regulation, order, and emancipation. They are the possessor of racial/gender privilege. On the other hand, the inferior other is created to become a non-human or less-human identity, and they need charity, pity, and assistance to put order to their lives. They reside in the *Zone of the Not-Being*, their bodies, minds, cultures, and territories become battlefields for oppression, destitutions, murder, rape, and disadvantage, with all its objective/real and subjective/metaphoric consequences (Grosfoguel, 2004, 2011).

The presence of these mechanisms of relationship and power were palpable during the interviews and data analysis, which was not surprising due to the contextual realities of the life

agents. However, as part of the unearthing mission of my research, I was able to develop three new concepts of relationality, located between alterity and otherness. By this I mean that these mechanisms are not static, nor deterministic; they are subject to change and move from one end to the other. I will be clear that these terms require theoretical and practical refinement, hence, I am just revealing a clunky and unpolished version of them.

The Relational Other (or the Other Reflected)

As Latinas each of the life agents were socially and culturally indoctrinated on the superiority of the white race, the western culture⁶⁸ and its abundance, and English as the language of success.⁶⁹ This has created a division between people residing in the same territory and sharing cultural roots. Our rich ethnic, linguistic, and racial diversity has been used against us to separate our struggles by color, gender, and language. The internalization of the oppressor is one of the strategies used to maintain our separateness. However, it is also due to being situated in realities such as nations in general, and as women in particular, that we can use the duality of our different-similar (*diferente-semejante*) positionality, to find the reflection of the other. This different-similar paradigm is not multiculturalism⁷⁰ or intersectionality, but rather the recognition of how the commonalities of our struggles as colonized women as similar, and our differences (e.g., *mestiza vs. Indigenous vs. Black; rural vs. urban*) have been weaponized to

⁶⁸ Referring to the importation of the idea of the United States as being the standard goal of progress.

⁶⁹ I am locating these concepts in the era of neoliberalism, as it is the context in which the life agents were born, without forgetting centuries of colonization and annihilation by European rule.

⁷⁰ Multiculturalism is a term with a central role in the celebration of culture and diversity. However, it is susceptible to be used to denote the panacea to eradicate systems of exclusion at the political or educational levels. In particular when talking about Indigenous People's rights and rights of Indigenous women, multiculturalism becomes a muddy area, as it tends to overshadow the struggles of women (Cumes, 2009).

divide us, with a range of operation residing in the empirical, actual, and real worlds of our existence.

The Relational Other was created to denote the relationship between people sharing a history of oppression but experiencing different strategies of control and manipulation. The capacity of a person to “see” the nature of the Relational Other as a human being, who is not the normalized oppressor, but someone who has taken some of her/his/their traits consciously or unconsciously, is via dialogue, confrontation, forgiveness, and vulnerable coexistence. Within this relation the action of reflection becomes a constant, by bringing “the agent’s experiences into focus from as many angles as possible: people, place, relationships, timing, chronology, causality, connections, the social and political contexts, and so on” (Bolton, 2018, p. 9). It is a conversation between the ‘I’ and the ‘Me,’ while facing the image of the person who is becoming a full human in front of my eyes. This conversation is critical for the development of a reflexive self to turn the mirror to my internal world. Then, by doing this the ‘I’ can interact with the future ‘You,’ and the person becomes capable of foreseeing how her actions might or might affect not just my life, but the lives of others.

By shining a light into the inner self, she creates a reflective light capable of bringing from the shadows the life the ‘Other,’ who so far has been a distant similar, and whom she can now see without the distortions created by social and cultural masks. With time this relationship might grow into allyship and even friendship, but what is important is that the Other can become a Relational Other, a similar-different.

The Uprooted Other

This person is the one who by force or decision⁷¹ has been stripped from her origin story of her roots. This person can be the mestiza who was not taught about her Black or Indigenous blood, and who bought the lie of superiority, or they can be the child of an immigrant who was never taught the mother tongue of his parents for fear of not blending in. The harm perpetrated to this person can be expressed as a sense of incompleteness and longing. Luna Roja's EA talks about this feeling that something is missing:

I think I just picked a good group and I wanted to match or like I wanted to match the activities, too. So, like I would read what they were reading, watch what they were watching. It did help me with school. I loved reading. But I think I was mostly fitting in and just not talking too much about my indigenous or... like not even my immigrant experience because there was no one to talk to as well, too. (EA-B, 06/15/2021)

In América Latina, one of the consequences of this uprootedness is the salient invisibility of race as a construct of control and privilege. Mestizaje was created by the rape and exploitation of Black and Indigenous women, and it was used as political weapon to deal with race relations not directly, but by planting the seed of separation within disposed people, via the “whitening” of their descendants (Curiel, 2007). This practice followed the creation of policies to normalize the separation and mistreatment of people based on their skin color and gave birth to the illusion that “white or mestizo” people were socially and economically better off than Black or Indigenous people, due to their individual effort and grit, and not as a direct result of policies making it easier for them to climb the social ladder (Diniz-Pereira, 2013).

When people migrate, they do not shed their culture or history in the process. Immigrant Latinos/Indigenous people come to the United States with a preconceived understanding of which race is given more opportunities. Hence, when working with immigrants from different

⁷¹ The decision of letting go of one's language and roots is often due to internalized oppression and a need to adapt to a new environment.

cultural, ethics, and linguistic backgrounds, is it essential to operate under the assumption that their views of the “other” are informed based on their own history of uprootedness about the reality of racial tensions or racial invisibility.

Otro Fronterizo (Frontier Other)

Of the three concepts, this one is the one requiring more theoretical refinement. It represents a symbolic geographic separation between immigrants and people of the host county. In the context of this research, I am looking at a relationship between White-Anglo U.S. citizens and immigrants from América Latina. I want to differentiate this concept from Borderlands, a term coined by Alzaldúa in 1987, to represent a place of historical conflict, carried inside the biographies of millions of Chicanos/as.

The Otro Fronterizo intends to capture the subalternity nature of the relationship between immigrants and the “Americanos.”⁷² It does not imply an internal condition of the Self (interiorized oppression), but rather it is a relational/transactional relationship. Despite its unbalanced power dynamics, the Frontier Other is only at the reach of the immigrant, not capable of seeing the qualities of her borders. Because of this, it is the immigrant who decides to make her frontier permeable to the Frontier Other, either as an ally or as an informant.

Another meaning captured in this concept is the centrality of the space in-between as a symbolic frontier, in which the immigrant is always aware of the limits of the territory she occupies in this land, without losing hope to of expansion. Blanca Sofía narrates how she continued to look for an opportunity to emerge despite the real restrictions of her frontier,

⁷² “Americanos” is in quotation marks as it is a self-given nationality by the people born in the United States (U.S.), and not for its geographical accuracy. In América Latina the term used for U.S. born people is *estadounidenses* (Martinez-Carter, 2013).

Vignette Eight

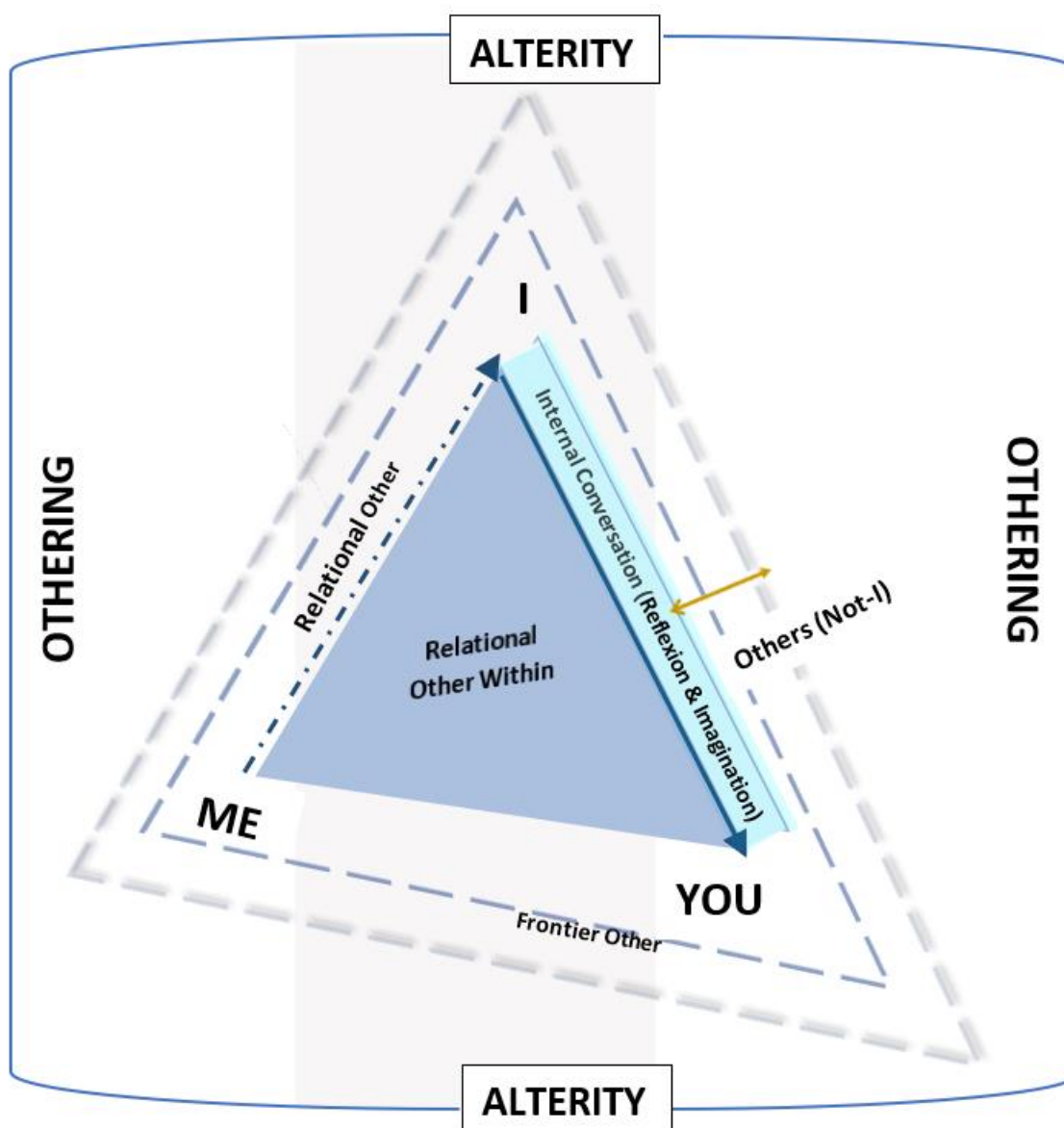
Creo que todo es sinergia, y todo se va dando, y se va acomodando. Porque, por ejemplo; si no hubiera yo tenido a mis niños, nunca me hubiera salido de ese hoyo, o como quieras llamarle, que yo me fui sumergiendo, sumergiendo, sumergiendo, yo hubiera seguido ahí, de verdad que tú ya no ves ni para arriba, ni para abajo, ni para los lados, solamente te preocupas por sobrevivir.

Entonces, yo con la pregunta que ahorita me haces, hubiera sido difícil porque igual yo hubiera estado ahí, yo no hubiera buscado, hubiera seguido pensando que [*sic*] regresarme a México. Creo que todo fue sinergia, todo se fue dando, se fue dando, se fue acomodando. ... Qué es muy cierto que detrás de una tormenta, siempre viene la luz o el sol. (06/24/2021)

As mentioned, these three concepts were ever-present in the narratives of the life agents, and they provide an important anchor to gain a deeper understanding of how social relationships among immigrant people and between immigrants and locals are informed by a historical context prior to their arrival to a host country. In addition, the role of the internal conversation becomes essential in the capacity of a person to symbolically migrate from one state of blindness and prejudice to another of openness and curiosity. Figure 19 illustrates the relationship between these five concepts.

Figure 19

Diagram on the Relationship Between Personal Identity with Alterity and Othering



Note. The two polarities of these relationships are denoted Alterity and Othering. The 'I' represents the present time, while communicating to the 'Me,' located in the past (of my own experiences). The 'You,' still has not come to pass, as it is the projection of my own identity, a place where the "I" discusses possibilities. The Relational Other inhabits the space between the 'I' and the 'Me,' because it is in the now, where I think about past concepts attached to the 'other.' On the other hand, the Frontier Other, is kept at bay, until deliberations with the 'You' renders she/he/them an ally or an informant. Dotted arrows denote directionality to the relationship.

Sub-section Three: Identification of Operative and Hidden Structures

People (agents) execute their agency on something, either the social-cultural structures into which they were born, or the structures they transform (Brock et al., 2017). These structures are always the water in which Primary Agents, Social Agents and Actors are immersed, but their preservation, or deconstruction is only done by Social Actors (Banifatemeh et al., 2018). The mechanisms supporting these structures, which are often not visible in their totality by the people (agents) residing within them, require a layered analysis of causality, to avoid conflating them as if they were the same phenomenon, but rather to analyze them as two distinct strata of reality, because “they have different, irreducible and causally efficacious properties and powers” (Brock et al., 2017), p. 152). This kind of layered analysis is easier said than done in empirical practices. Although it is particularly important to employ when working with critical approaches seeking not just understanding of social phenomena, but also action-driven approaches for change.

What I found through my analysis was a potential answer to the question: *What cannot be removed without making the observed themes cease to exist as is?* This question targeted straight at the heart of structures and the mechanisms that makes them possible. By structures I mean relational structures between an object and a subject/collective, not a macro-structure, e.g., health care system (Danermark, 2002). My intellectual search was seeking to understand the layered process of becoming, and the construction of a pathway towards transformation, hence my inquiry process needed to rely on abstraction, on seeing what was *not* there as much as, what was there. It was through the continual practice of abduction and retroduction (plus heavy loads of reflection) that I was able to capture main structures housing the phenomena of my inquiry. Finding these structures was a journey taken with a layered methodological approach designed to

link theory with ontological realities, to avoid a reductionist analysis of the data and subsequent interpretation of their meaning (Brock et al., 2017).

I was able to construct from my data five main structures influencing the lives of the FA, while the Extended Agents (EA) were constructed from the perspective of emic and etic voices, since their relationships with the FA evolved with time, and influenced their own views on the FAs development. I was pleasantly surprised to observe that the structures from FA and EA were complementary to each other. Furthermore, I sought to find what were the mechanisms and powers nested within the social structures, as well as the transfactual tendencies informing their action. These combinations created my trifectas: mechanisms>>power>> tendency. Below are key concepts to understand about these trifectas (Danermark, 2002):

- 1) Social structures can have more than one operational power at the time, as they are present in virtue of the composition.
- 2) Powers might cancel each other out, amplify each other, or not be activated at all.
- 3) Mechanisms are present in the three layers of reality.
- 4) Powers, mechanisms, and their outcomes are not determined, but contingent on external forces, hence are only activated when triggered.
- 5) Mechanisms and powers might operate outside of the awareness of the agent.
- 6) Tendency is the potentializing of powers and works independently of external influences.

Emergent Social Structures: Findings from Focal Agents (FA)

These findings are not fallible, as nothing in research ever is, however, they offer an important contribution to our understanding on how immigrant women in the path of

transformation make sense of their layered environments. I was able to construct five social structures, as follows, and Appendix L illustrates them with their corresponding trifectas:

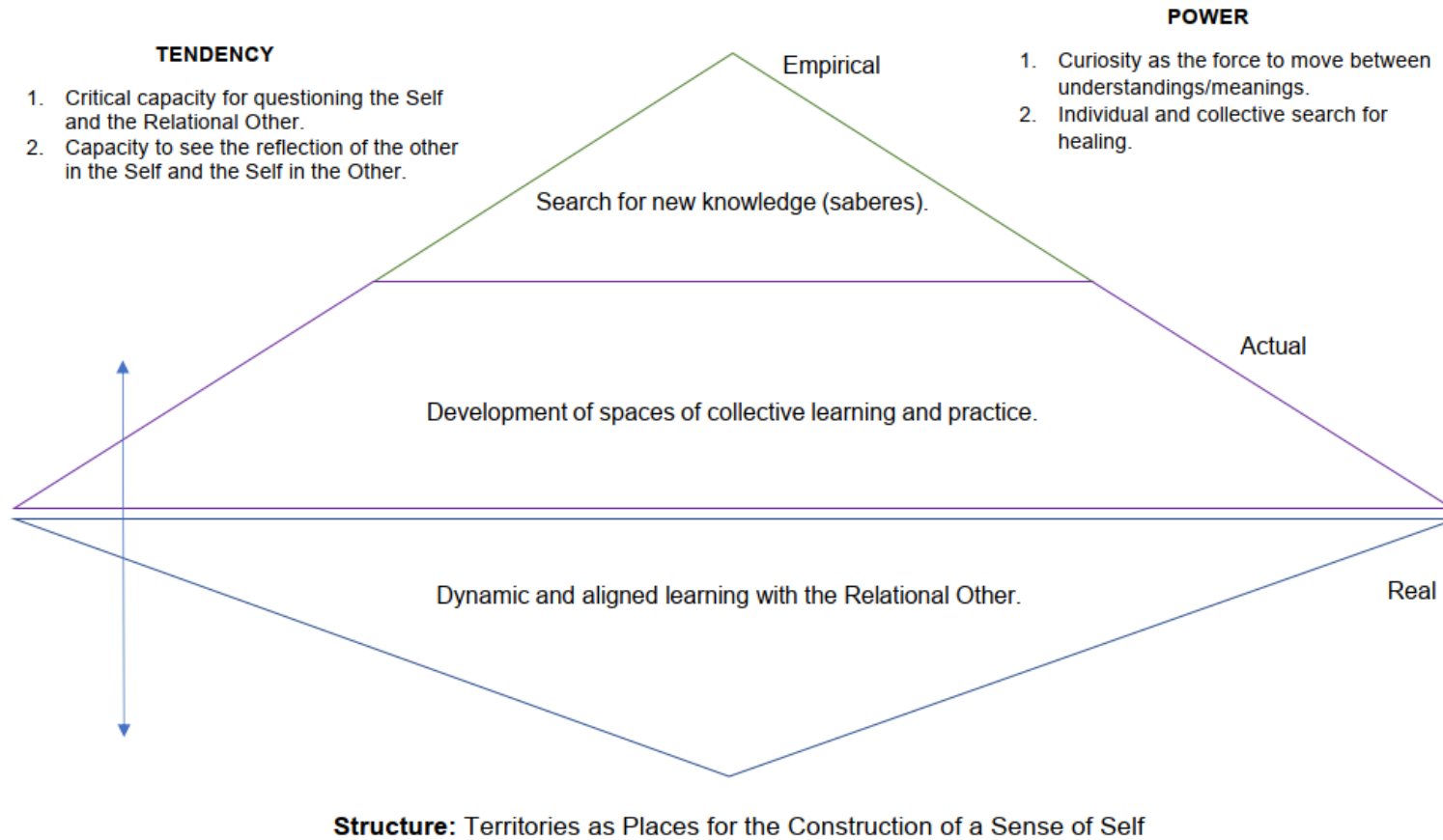
- 1) Identities created by physical and metaphorical migrations;
- 2) Oppressive social/cultural/political environments;
- 3) Space of belonging and accountability;
- 4) Territories as places for the construction of a sense of the self;
- 5) Spaces for dialogue and dialectical exchanges.

Explanation of Territories as Places for the Construction of a Sense of the Self

Each of these structures are relational in nature but allow for the individualization of the agent. I will attempt to assemble a trifecta with all its parts in order to demonstrate the epistemological depth that can be achieved by looking at a social phenomenon in a multidimensional way. I use Territories as Places for the Construction of a Sense of the Self as my model example, as its patterned theme was well-developed in the previous section. An example of structure archetype is in Figure 20.

Figure 20

Example of a Focal Agent's Trifecta Archetype



Looking at the Empirical Reality, a concept that was relatively easy to code and theme was the desire to learn, to search for new knowledge or *saberes*. This is a desire of many people at different stages of their lives, however I wanted to find the sustaining power for the emergence of this desire.

Submerging deeper into my abstraction, I realized that it was the hunger for learning that triggered the curiosity (innate power) inside each of them to make the decision to become part of an educational opportunity to become community health workers and *doulas*. What they found in this group was their individual and collective capacity to heal (emergent power). They were able to create together a space for collective learning and practice, without having the intention to do it, or the realization of what they were creating (Actual Reality). It was their own personal yearning for healing (emergent power) that triggered this development. But how did this healing happen? A deeper mechanism was discovered: the presence of a space of learning where each of them was involved in a dynamic and aligned relationship with a Relational Other. It was this relationship that allowed for the emergence of healing spaces and sustained the desire to keep learning.

Two tendencies involved in this social structure were always present, independent of the reality: their capacity to critically question their environment, and their capacity to relate with the Relational Other, employing an alterity ethic. From the perspective of improving the health and well-being of Latina/Indigenous dyads, this structure and its *trifecta* serves as a baseline for the development of community-led programs, locating the Self and the Relational Other as the base of all activities, instead of the thematic content.

Emergent Social Structures: Findings from Extended Agents (EA)

When analyzing the EA's stories, I felt as if I was a part of the story, as I heard my voice and saw my persona represented in their accounts. I understood the nuances of their experiences and I was able to go back and forth without having to think about the differences that existed *between* us and our stories. Each EA talked about the FA from the perspective of their evolution, the trade-offs of the FA's decisions, and what the FA's evolution meant for them personally, as people sharing a life path with them, either by choice or by blood. It was then that I was able to see myself as someone who resided in the borders of the FA's evolution, as a foreigner who found a place inside their lives (etic to emic), but who was also transformed by the journey of liberation. A new state of being was developed in the space of individual-collectivism, we were able to translate our experiences into an ever-expansive language, first to the Self, and then to the Relational Other. We experienced decolonization by embodying the "other" within ourselves, which in turn activated our internal conversation of de-alienation (Mazorco Irureta, 2010).

The EA conversations served as an example of untranslated and interdependent solidarity, because during these conversations I was able to let my guard down from my role as inquirer and was able to participate in dialogue about people we deeply care about, and with whom we have learned from, cried with, and known for a really long time.

The testimonios of the EAs served to understand the developmental process of the FAs from four different structures: Emic/Etic Individual Emergence and Emic/Etic Collective Emergence. The way the EAs spoke about their relationship with their respective FA and their understanding of the process the FA went through as an individual, and then as part of a collective, was interpreted as the translation of an experience. After analyzing each of the FA's

layered structures (four-4x4 matrices), I looked at them as a global social structure. Table 12 illustrates the four emergent structures.

Table 12

Summary of the Four Structures Developed from the Testimonios of the Extended Agents

Inner Voices	Outer Voices
<p>Emergent Emic Personal Journey: Resurgence of the Self from the ashes of what she was</p>	<p>Emergent Etic Collective Learning: Being a bridge in the liberation of the Relational Other</p>
<p>Collective Emic Nepantla, Liminality, or interstitial spaces</p>	<p>Collective Etic Foreignization and confrontation of collective learning to external realities</p>

I called these emergent voices because they were the result of the EAs witnessing the development of the FAs from a distance, while experiencing the aftermath effects of their transformation. From these sets, I created a global matrix for each of the levels of voice. This helped me to further see regularities in the results. The following descriptions are based on the global matrix. The constructed global social structures and their trifectas for the EA's are found in Appendix M.

Emergent Individual Emic

This structure is about the EA's understanding of the mechanisms involved in the personal journey that has taken place within the world of the FA, including the forces (powers) enabling or constricting the journey. The activated tendencies of curiosity, faith, and genuine ethos were found to be a common denominator in these accounts. These two examples from Blanca Silvia and Marcela's EAs, respectively, allude about the conditions encountered by the FAs.

Yes, there are really good opportunities, that's true, perhaps it's fear always telling you know, like fear holds you back from doing various things. ... Give them the tools so that they can believe in themselves too: "look I am a woman who weaves her own wings." They have the tools... many times, I saw them with the tools, I saw the potential, but they

simply were afraid of being weavers. (EA/D)

I have seen Marcela's growth, in the way that, I don't know if she was in second grade, and I would suddenly see her, not sure if in 7 or 8 grade. How she expresses new concepts that she is handling, her resilience. (EA/A)

Emergent Individual Etic

This structure emerged as a result of the relationship between the FAs. According to the EAs, it was when the life agents became part of a learning environment that they were able to liberate each other, as a result of the activated sense of solidarity. The life agents never lost their individuality, but the close relationship with other women with similar circumstances allowed each of them to learn a different way of expressing themselves, which lead them to improve their understanding of the other people around them. The next two quotes from Blanca Silvia and Catalina's EAs provide an example of the emergence of the etic voice.

We were, well I would see us as an army working, not for them, but in general it was support from the community, because seeing them fly we knew that we were going to see a different future, different butterflies in the garden. (EA/D)

With Catalina in particular, I see in the way that she speaks with her son, because she doesn't speak like any regular mother, no, no, no, like, she educates him in a different way (...), her preparation has helped her a lot, to know how to express yourself in front of the child. (EA/C)

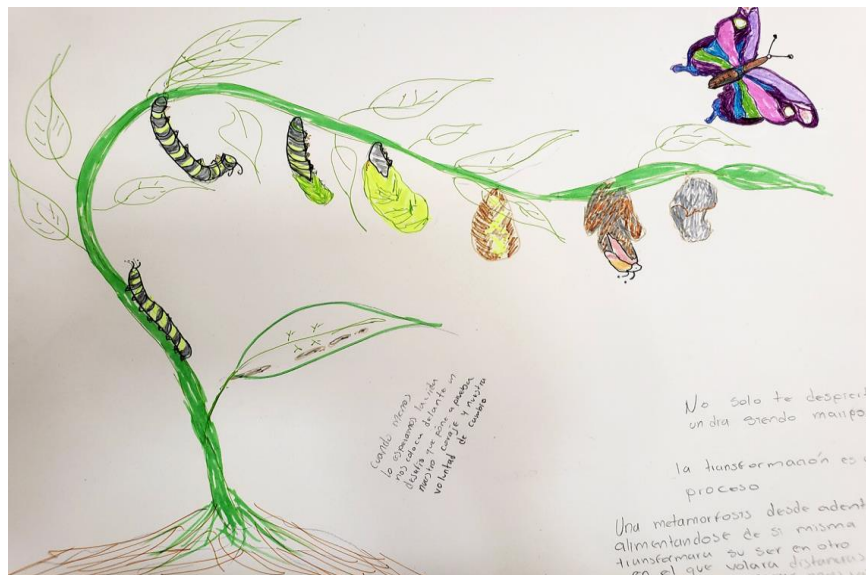
Emergent Collective Emic

An uplifting finding was to discover the capacity of each of the EAs to witness the birth of a collective sense of meaning shared by all the FAs. I believe this is *Nepantla*, a kind of knowledge (*saber*) found in Alzaldúa's (2002) seven levels of *conocimiento*. *Nepantla* is characterized to be a stage "of transformation, the place where different perspectives come into conflict and where you question the basic ideas, tenets, and identities inherited by your family, your education, and your different cultures" (p. 548). During this level of knowledge, the agents become liminalities, or beings that are not here or there, but are in the process of becoming,

moving into a different stage in their development (Turner, 1969). Lastly, Figure 21 shows the best way to explain this emergence and it was drawn by Marcela, when I asked them to draw their journey together.

Figure 21

Marcela's Journey



Note. Translation of the words in the painting: When we least expect it, life gives us a challenge testing our courage and will. Not only do you wake up being a butterfly, but it is also a process of transformation. There is a metamorphosis within, nurturing from the "other." It will be the transformation from one being to another, one with the capacity to fly long distances and generate more lives.

Emergent Collective Etic

The last quarter of the EA's global set of structure and trifecta shows the emergence of a collective etic voice, which is able to interact with the external world. Captured in this voice is also how the world continues to see the agents as a group and individuals as the "other" and as subalterns. This is the space where confrontational conversations happen within the group, when inequities are revealed and contested, and where stories of resistance are spoken and shared. An identity crisis will happen within each person and inside the collective, the desire to retreat creeps out once in a while. But it is also in this space where rituals are offered, and prayers sung. The voice of Blanca Silvia's EA succinctly describes the transition from collective emic to collective

etic, and how this transition affected the agent: “becoming a part of society again well, it was something, it was something that was shocking, and it was sudden and so her self-esteem, I saw it was fragile.” (EA/D). Anzaldúa’s (2002) wisdom is called upon again, for she called this space *the blow-up...a clash of realities*, where,

Our dreams have been sucked out of us, la nepantlera leads us in celebrating la comunidad soñada, reminding us that the spirit connects the irreconcilable warring parts para que todo el mundo se haga un país, so that the whole world may become un pueblo. (p. 568)

These findings provide mucha tela que cortar⁷³ from a theoretical and empirical perspective, as they can serve as a basis for the understanding of mentoring and camaraderie as mechanisms for critical thinking, problematization, and liberation among immigrant women. In addition, they contribute to locating the process of becoming within the borders of ontological knowledge and the political and social context clouding the epistemological understandings of what it could be *if*. In other words, connecting different forms of consciousness and realities (Saavedra & Salazar Pérez, 2017)

Results: Part One Translated Vignettes

Vignette One

Losing a lengua, either because it disappears socially as a result of a conquest or because a person is not taught (another type of conquest), represents the definitive loss of an innate, personal and unique knowledge. The development of being and its relationship with the world is not interchangeable in another language. Although the acquisition of a language during the process of growth- yes [can] offer opportunities to see the world from another perspective, it does not replace the internal knowledge of the mother tongue. (Researcher, memo entry)

Vignette Two:

[*Growing up*] I understood that language was extremely valuable. *And now that* they are [immigrant and Indigenous youth] they also want to learn the language. And that’s really important because that was something that hadn’t been done for me [*sic*].

[*In*] whatever place one lives, if there are opportunities like that, and we as Latinos fight for it, there’s obviously something for us to move forward from, for being women,

⁷³ Tela que cortar, meaning a rich concept or situation lending itself to be further developed.

for being Latinas, because it's not our country... the language, uff! It's so difficult, emigration is just on the surface. *Sometimes* there are times where there's a refusal/denial to go to my place of origin, denying/not allowing my children to speak the language, my language... the doors started to close and then the disconnect began.

But the English language is going to be the base/basis and what will catapult us into other dimensions. *On the other hand*, Spanish is always comfortable to hear because it reminds me of things like my house or like my mom speaking or like just being at home. But yes, in my heart, I would want to say Kichwa, but I don't know if I can say that yet because I don't know it as well.

In Ecuador when I learned Spanish, just like you mentioned, I feel it in my native language, and well there are phrases that make me laugh because I feel it in my language. *But* I think Kichwa was imposed on us as well, because the Incas came and their language was Quichua. They (Inka) conquered, and we almost lost our language completely, that's why we speak it all the way from Bolivia to Colombia to Quichua and every one... Quichua from Ecuador is a little bit different from the Quichua of Peru, but the two languages were combined.

In the end, one morning when you wake up, you step out of your house, you're on your patio... and you visualize this giant sun, that is, you don't see any commotion outside, there's this calmness, the greenery, everything's sunny and there's no rush for you, so then going back to your life, to those experiences, or going back to the life where your grandmother spoke to you in the Quechua language, or going back to the life where your grandfather was telling you the best mythological stories of spaces, of the stars, the universe, and the earth, you see, for me this is sacred, it's a sacred form of thinking so that my waters can run smoothly, calmly, peacefully.

Vignette Three

But I do remember that, that my uncle would tell my dad, my dad was very much so a machista I think, because I do remember that they would say that he didn't let them go out often, well anywhere. With us it wasn't as much, but you know that when you are told that they have something, I would say that between machismo and jealousy, for being women as you said. (EA-C)

Vignette Four

And that's the beautiful part, and that's why I value it so much, the fact that a tiny seed was planted, from looking for the proper land, where it could be planted and worked - that land, softening it so that the seed could root in that ground, from the beginning. We didn't have land that was ready to go and to say we could harvest there, no we had to get rid of the shrubs, to take out the bad weeds in order to soften the earth and plant the seed. (#3, 03/29/2021)

Vignette Five

So I feel like, like the system, it doesn't see us, they know that we're there, but they don't want to see us. [But] *of course*, we can do it!... Because we're a collective. We're not only one voice, we're many people, right, we're a collective and that has a higher rates of incidence, and in this way we can also begin to touch other systems too like education or

health. [I know] *that* I can't be the same person again, who I was during that time, and as I said that I was already being consumed, by the systems, I couldn't see anything else but the way to survive.

Vignette Six

The same action as camouflaging (chameleon-ing) is to explore no, and to explore the ways in which the entities around us are working, and we observe that there is so much inequality, there is a lot of oppression, there is a lot of injustice... I'm going to chameleon/camouflage here and try to make my existence valid as well. (Azucena #2, 03/22/21)

Vignette Seven

If we touch on the topic for example, like from the social, economic, political, educational points of view and all of that well, of course we utilize things like an education, something that's essential for humanity. But this educational system, I think that the curriculums were created... for a western world, not for a world, not for a land from this continent.

So then, the education, the curriculums... they're not made [*sic*] for us as immigrants. I consider myself like a little tree, a little plant from a tree, moreso that my learning has been since that seedling that's so tiny, and that little seed wants to, that teeny tiny seed to me signifies basic learning, from zero, and that the little seed is going to sprout, going to become a plant, so the bigger that the little plant gets, well, the richer it gets, and for me, that's what learning has been for me, the trainings that we've had. Many times, it's not even in our plan to submit to learning, but life gives us experiences that we have to learn from. (#3, 03/29/2022)

Vignette Eight:

I think that everything is synergy, and everything is giving, and everything shifts. Because, for example, if I hadn't had my children, I never would have gotten out of that hole, or whatever you want to call it, where I kept drowning, drowning, drowning, and I would've continued to be there, honestly, you're no longer able to see up, nor down, nor to the sides, you only worry about surviving.

So, with that question that you just asked me, it would have been difficult because just like if I had been there, I wouldn't have kept looking, I would've kept thinking [*sic*] returning to Mexico. I think that everything was synergy, everything kept giving, and giving, and it began to shift into place... And it's very true that behind every storm, always comes the light or the sun. (06/24/2021)

Results: Part Two

General Overview

Compared with Part One of the Results, this second part feels raw, objectively, and metaphorically. Without planning it in advance, the analytic process led me to observe my research questions from a completely different angle: not as independent questions seeking to understand a process, instead they all were beads of the same collar, woven with different patterns and color, but all part of the whole. Throughout this research, I kept my research questions pinned on a board, as a reminder to not “stray away” from them during my data analysis process. They were my anchor. But little did I know that they themselves were a layered dance between agency and structure, occurring over time. Archer’s morphogenetic approach served as a model to provide theoretical support for the findings described here.

This part is comprised of three subsections delving into the discoveries about the life agents’ processes of becoming and transformation, as they worked their way out to change the structures of their environments: **1)** Theoretical opening for the Model of Becoming, **2)** A rough blueprint of the Model of Becoming, and **3)** An overview of how this model aligns with Freire’s conscientization process and its empirical capacity (future Emergent Phase).

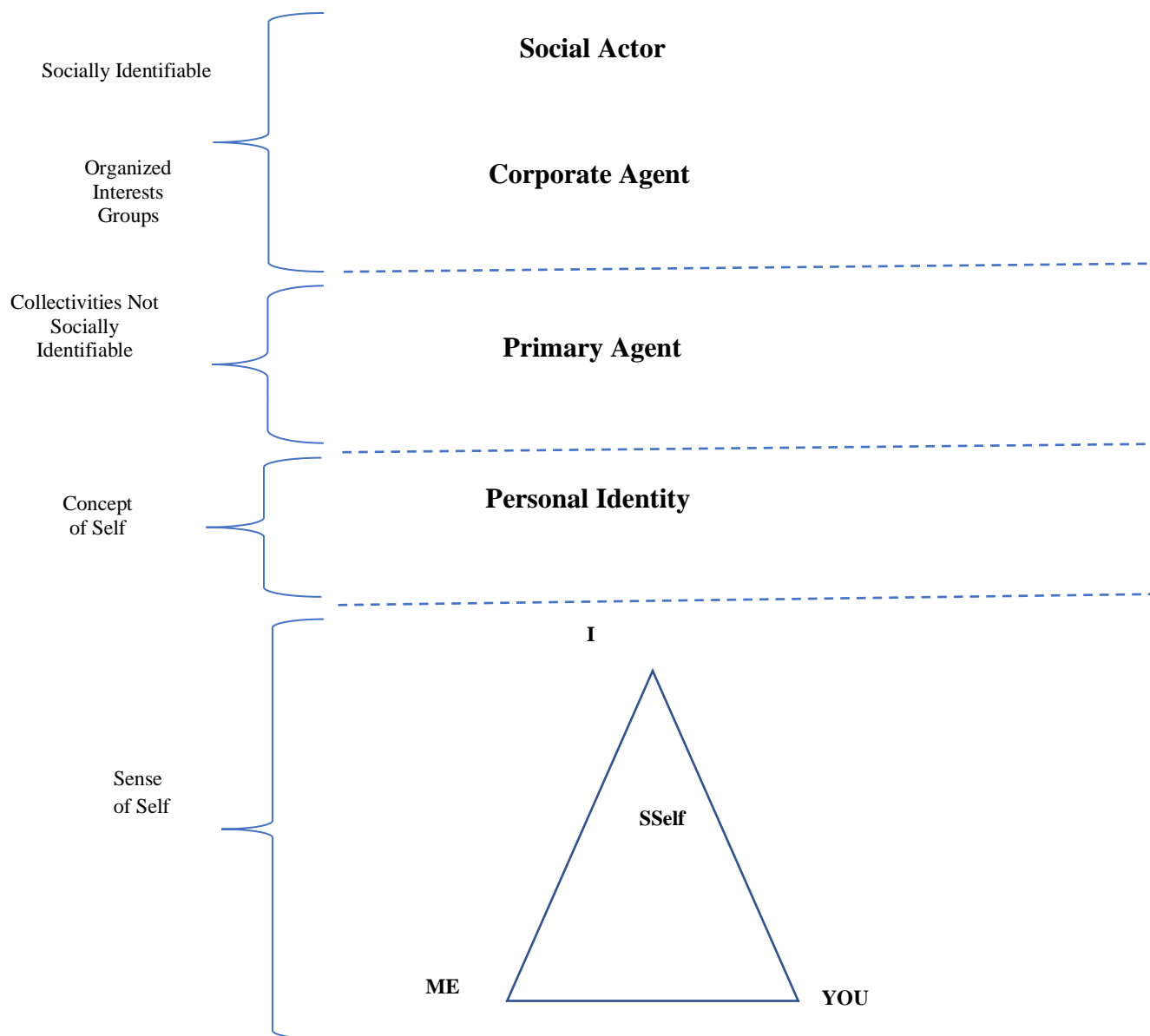
Subsection One: Theoretical Opening for the Model of Becoming

The agent lives and interacts, knowingly or unknowingly, with three realities: embodied, practical, and social or discursive, starting with the *sense of self* (comprised by the ‘I’, ‘Me’, and ‘You’). The sense of self is initiated prior to socialization and continues through a lifetime. It is first developed even before language, when humans are able to recognize that they are a different being from the others around them (e.g., toddler understand he needs his mom to satisfy his hunger). The Self executes meaningful introspection to analyze the realities informing her life.

This introspection corresponds to the active practice of internal conversation (awareness). This is a dialectic dialogue⁷⁴ within the Self that involves: **1)** The ‘Me’ as the referee between her inner self and the outer world, as it holds her past experiences, memories, and traumas; **2)** The ‘You’ that represents her direct line to a prospective state of being -- the one allowing her to “see beyond today;” **3)** The ‘I’ that is always residing in the present (Archer, 2000).

However, the Self does not live in solitude, as it is part of a social environment, in which it is granted personal emergent properties (e.g., language, self-consciousness). This interaction with the social creates the *concept of self*, which is always interacting with structural and cultural emergent properties and responsible for the development of personal identity and people’s *modus vivendi* (Brock et al., 2017)). To assist in reading this section, see Figure 22.

⁷⁴ Defined as an intricate process of conceptual, social, or embodied conflict trying to accomplish interconnection and change among the relationship of opposite perspectives or states of being, with the goal to find a new perspective that transcends the original premises (Bhaskar, 1994).

Figure 22*Archer's Stratified Model of Agency*

Note: I want to highlight that a person can move through these layers of agency multiple times a day, as sometimes, they are primary agents in one context and a social actor in another.

The development of the *concept of the self* happens around other people, family, and society when a person comes in contact with the layered realities of their environment. Here she learns to execute meaningful action to challenge her realities or to secure their maintenance, by enacting her identity as a person (Archer, 2000). Her personal identity will be developed in the course of defining her priorities or ultimate concerns available to her in the realities she is immersed in.

The Self and the personal identity (Person) constitute a Primary Agent. According to Archer (2003), Primary Agents are defined as “collectivities sharing the same life-chances. Because of this everyone is an agent” (p. 118). Hence agency is a term always employed in plural. People are born in a particular geographical, historical, and social-economic context. Their positioning in society is involuntary, and the resources they have at their disposal are created before their birth. This does not mean that people are static in any contextual positioning. Thanks to the reflexivity of the Self and the Person people can conceive projects to move across roles and placements during their lifespan, although always in contingent relationship with their structures.

For people residing at the margins of societies, the intersection between the sense of self and the concept of self is often poisoned by cultural and social constructs created to make them believe they are “less than.” The societal mirror on which they see the self-reflected is charged with negative stereotypes and false narratives about them, their families, and their communities. In these instances, the “Me” is always at odds with her inner beliefs of worth, while the words and actions of others inflict pain. Here is where the Self either internalizes what is said about her or breaks free from it. Usually, the former takes a seat on the throne. The power of the internal conversation to become a reflective voice that heals and awakens the Self requires her to enter in

contact with other internal voices embodied in other people (Relational Others) who are holding a different mirror, in which the Self can experience her reflection in all her beauty.

Exploration of the Internal Voices of our Conversations in the formation of the ‘We’

The evolution of the Self and the Person is a private endeavor. Our human capacity to talk with ourselves, with our inner selves, away from the noise of the outside world is a way to be able to hear our inner voices; the inner voices telling the stories learned as part of the social mosaic we encountered when we arrive to this world, the ones we archive for future reference, the ones we hear as projections for future plans, and the ones we are producing in the now, the today of our own existence, are what give us our capacity to evolve. These voices are our place of both refuge and war. They are who we are, ought to be, and inform us on how the world sees us. All of this happens in silence, in private, it is non-verbal, and it is completely ours.

These conversations happen while we are living in the three layers of realities, most times probably unknowingly. They are shaped, informed, and deformed by our natural encounters, by our trades or activities, by our discursive selves and language. They can ignite our agency to become action and to generate new emergent powers (e.g., critical thinking, conscientization, organization). From a liberatory perspective since regularity (normalization) is often what is sought out by hegemonic forces, this internal conversation becomes the key for constant disruption of our inner life, in order to make our internal thoughts an external action. This action will need to happen with others, the becoming “We,” in order to shake the conditioning structures operating in the depths of what is not seen before (Baskhar’s real layer of reality).

From Self to We: Becoming Corporate Agents (i.e., Collective Protagonists)⁷⁵

When the Self and the Person enter in contact with other people in search for a new *modus vivendi*, these groups coalesce on an expressed common goal, because “only those who are aware of what they want can articulate it to themselves and to others” (Archer, 2000, p. 265). Together, they can activate social tectonic plates to reshape their own lives and the lives of others like them. The “We” represents the collective action in which the Corporate Agents (Collective Protagonists) engage (Archer, 2013). This move is a break to the *habitus* of each person, characterized by the discontinuity of their *modus vivendi*. Breaking this *habitus* on their own terms, allows the person to sit at the table with newly defined social identity, as new Social Actor (i.e., Conscious Protagonist).⁷⁶

The resulting collective agency has its own emergent powers, different from each of its members, including capacity to organize, generate social movements and trends, influence policy, and create alternative lifestyles (Archer, 2000). From the point of view of oppressed people, becoming a corporate agent can represent the break from chains of pain, poverty, and social isolation, while being able to uplift their communities in the next morphogenetic cycle.

Becoming a Social Actor

The new Social Actor/Conscious Protagonist seeks to establish her new social identity, in which she will need to identify herself with a “particular role and to personify it in a particularistic way” (Brock et al., 2017).

The Actor/Protagonist emerges after a morphogenic cycle, as before there was not space for this emergent socialidentity. The presence of the actor in this new cycle by default informs

⁷⁵ I re-labeled Corporate Agents as “Collective Protagonists” for the purposes of my own model. I use Corporate Agents when I am talking from the perspective of Archer’s model.

⁷⁶ I re-labeled Social Actor as “Conscious Protagonist” for the purposes of my own model.

new rules and norms. In these instances, the “I” will be able to converse with a “You” whose prospective opportunities have changed and broadened.

In the specific example of immigrant women becoming visible at the macro-level of their environments, becoming a Conscious Protagonist serves as inspiration to other women like them, as Luna Roja’s FA expressed: “But I think for other women, I think it inspired them to also do the same. Like my other aunt, she also started taking classes...just smaller things like that.”

Subsection Two: An Initial Blueprint of the Model of Becoming

Abductive thinking and framing the FA’s and EA’s data in 3x3 matrices allowed me to interact with my research questions as an example of a morphogenic cycle, while allowing me to understand the depth of the journey taken by the life agents. The three realities were unearthed in each of the agents and in each step of the cyclical journey (Experience, Becoming, and Transformation). This fine dissection provided a 4-D image of the immigration experience throughout a particular lifespan and across different lifespans, hence offering an incredible amount of starting “data points” for future development and investigation. This section focuses on answering the research questions that guided my testing of the Model of Becoming through:

1. Core themes and structures involved in informing the *experiences* of immigrant women (the Self) as they navigate multidimensional realities (First Research Question).
2. Understanding the relationship of Self within the limits of alterity and othering, which are the parameters informing the limits and opportunities for the *process of becoming* of the Primary Agent (Second Research Question).
3. Providing a theoretical map for the development of the Self, the Agent, and the Actor in order to operationalize the elusive *process of conscientization* (Third Research Question).

Research Questions: A Cyclical Journey Towards Conscientization

To simplify the explanation of the findings, I will divide the three realities nested in this journey. Also, methodologically, I was able to separate each step of the cycle into delineated processes of personal and collective development, with the understanding that people's actions are rarely unidirectional or linear.

At the center of the model are the structures, their mechanisms, powers, and tendencies, which directly affect the development of people, due to their allowances and constraints. Furthermore, the emancipatory quality accounts for the fact that these structures will “fight” back to remain unchanged and unchallenged until the morphogenetic cycle is done, and the agents are able to create new structures. Figure 23 depicts the Model of Becoming.

First Research Question: Experiences and its Layers of Reality

The *embodied* and similar **experiences** of immigrant women (Self & Person) became the compass that brought them together. As the saying goes, “all roads lead to Rome,” in this case, all questioning and dreams led to an opportunity. A predominant finding in the Embodied Reality⁷⁷ was to observe how phenomenological experiences informed, propelled, or deterred the FA's abilities and decision-making capacities. The preponderance of nature as a Relational Other, the embodiment of the Relational Other as a healing adjuvant, and the desire to explore outside of the frontiers of their context, were a common thread in all the FAs. Azucena makes a clear point in the importance of nature as being part of embodied self: “El tener los animales, todos somos parte de la Pachamama y somos recíprocos. ...por eso yo nunca me sentí sola. yo sabía que los animalitos también eran entes, sintientes”⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Embodied (Quesada Centeno) =Natural (Archer) =Empirical (Bhaskar)

⁷⁸ Direct Translation: “In having the animals, we're all part of the Pachamama and we are reciprocal... because of that, I never felt alone. I knew that the little animals were also beings, sentient.”

In the *Practical Reality*,⁷⁹ main constructs belonged to the area of learning while practicing. It was the act of constant exposure to a cultural or spiritual activity (e.g., craft making, praying) or the inner capacity of the body to constantly repeat generative actions (e.g., healing) that oriented their individual practices in community. Luna Roja comments on this regard: "Me daba cuenta de cómo yo tenía poder en mis manos, eso sentía. ...y te viene el conocimiento de tus ancestros porque mi bisabuelita, la mamá de mi abuelita."⁸⁰

The experience in the Social Reality was characterized by the prevalence of stories told among the Relational Other, the recognition of oppressive powers residing at the cellular level, and a collective sense of adventure aided by a newly found freedom. Sara Sofía mentions stories as a powerful tool, but one requiring the development of a voice: "[Ser] una voz que cuenta historias, porque las historias son importantes, porque pueden crear cambios."⁸¹

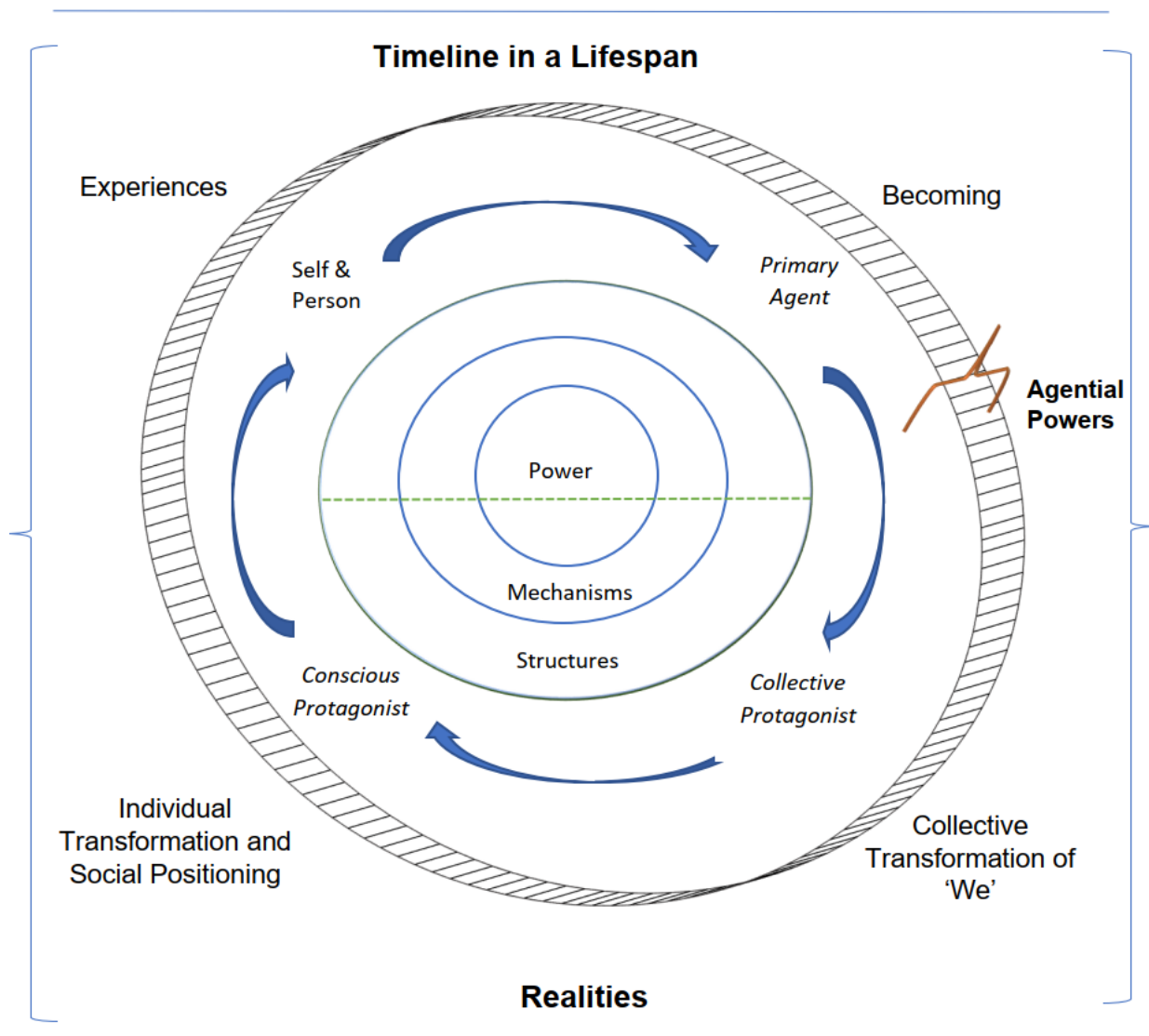
⁷⁹ Practical (Archer)= Actual (Bhaskar)

⁸⁰ Direct Translation: "I noticed how I had power in my hands, that's what I felt... and the knowledge of your ancestors comes to you from my great grandmother, the mother of my grandmother Juanita, the mother of my father."

⁸¹ Direct Translation: "Being a voice that tells stories, because the stories are important, because they can create change."

Figure 23

Model of Becoming: A Theoretical Draft



Note. In each layer of realities, a person is always living within the duality of structures and agency. Agential powers when exercised are able to change the course of a pre-established structure. It is in this constant exercise where the agent has the capacity to move from one state of development (conscientization) to another.

Dotted green line represents tendencies as transfactual forces.

Second Research Question: Becoming and its Layers of Reality

As people, the life agents enter this process as Primary Agents. Together, they allow themselves to create spaces for *embodied* experiences to take place. In these spaces they consolidated a commitment to a dream, encountered the power of the Self, had recognition of knowledge as a necessary tool for self-improvement, and made a reconnection with their cultural roots. The following narrative told by Marcela encapsules these constructs:

Vignette One

Y creo que mi proceso, en esto de ser promotora, ha habido de agrios y dulces, como estar embarazada, el miedo, el que va a pasar en el futuro, como se parecerá mi bebé. Lo quiero criar así, con estos valores, que sea genuino, sin pretender hacer altivo, entonces todo eso es todo ese bebe del proyecto que estamos ahora, que yo puedo decir, que ha costado, que ha sido doloroso, que ha sido parte de mi formación personal y intelectual también, porque he aprendido muchísimo, muchísimo, porque antes no me hubiese gestionado tantas cosas, como lo hago ahora, y que, pues ahí seguimos andando, para ver a ese hijo crecer, para ver cómo se parecerá (Marcela #3).

The *practical reality* is always in continual movement, in which the internal conversation allows the agents to engage in a cost-benefit analysis of their decisions based on their responsibilities (e.g., societal, and familial costs of investing in education versus its benefits). This journey triggers their resilience, exposes them to new realities and contexts, and creates a framework for accountability. They learn that the journey is a teacher in its own right. The voice of Catalina is strong regarding this reality:

Vignette Two

Lucha, convivir con las demás, enfrentar cosas que no me imaginé haber enfrentado [sic] antes. ...en mi vida pensé que yo iba a ver nacimientos de bebés, esto es como la luz para otra persona, o sea dar la vida, y esto me llena mucho ..., es como el sentimiento de emoción, sí pude hacer algo en mi vida, o estoy haciendo algo en mi vida. (Interview #3)

The process of becoming was painful and generative at the same time, and it allowed for the emergence of a *social reality* in which new awareness and action were enacted. They were

able to find a mentor in the Self and in each other, teach about the diversity of their own culture and heritage via the use of storytelling, and model a personal and collective development as a continuing conquest that carries within it social and cultural benefits and debts. Importantly, they became aware that people and territories are complementary constructs, but not the same. Blanca Silvia's words are a good example of this reality: "Porque tú puedes tener todo el deseo, como yo lo tenía cuando yo llegué, pero se te van poniendo barreras, y bueno ahí lo único que te va a sacar, es una persona que te ayude en este caso como pasó conmigo. ... ven algo en ti que tú ya dabas por desaparecido, no sé cómo llamarlo. Y que te impulsen otra vez." ⁸²

Third Research Question: Pathway for Transformation and its Layers of Reality

The practice of becoming gave room for the emergence of the Collective Protagonist, which required each of them to cross the borders of what was known, including their habitual routines (*modus vivendi*), to be able to metaphorize and change their contexts.

The Collective Protagonist exists because each of the life agents maintains their independence, and autonomy, while being an essential part of this space. The new context is more than its components, as it has generated a life of its own, like Oxygen and Hydrogen together making water, which has properties quantifiably different than each of them individually. Here is where the "We" is able to transform societal and cultural structures.

The *embodied reality* happening in this process allowed the live agents to acquire a keen eye for perspective-taking, which in turn required the awareness and knowledge to locate the boundaries of the Self and the Relational Other. They were able to ground themselves with the

⁸² Direct translation: "Because you can have all the desire, as I had when I arrived, but barriers are being placed on you, and well there the only thing that will get you out is a person who helps you in this case, as it happened with me. ... They see something in you, that you already thought had disappeared." (Blanca Silvia)

roots of their past, while expanding their understanding of the realities of other immigrants, hence debunking inter-group prejudice and distrust. Azucena talks about this embodied transformation:

Vignette Three

Como, como nosotros como inmigrantes como venimos con un objetivo quizá, quizá sea el de trabajar sí, otros vendrán de estudiar, otros vendrán con otros objetivos no, pero la clase con la que yo me relaciono, con la que estoy trabajando me ha enseñado... a valorarme más como ser humano también... a hacer válido de que nosotros venimos de este mundo, no sólo para existir, sino también para dejar algo en este mundo. (Interview #3).

The practical reality was comprised by the process of empowerment, which started in the privacy of the Self and was sedimented by the struggle of becoming. However, this path was not taken alone, as it was parallel with the paths of other women. In collective, they understood the value to relate with the Relational Other through a compassionate lens, and to believe that personal and collective evolution was a feasible reality. Catalina talks about this reality succinctly:

Vignette Four

En esos cinco años, cuando yo escuché la palabra como empoderamiento aquí [en el programa]. ... empoderamiento sí, pero como de poder de gobierno, de poder de algún nivel muchísimo más alto. No que yo una simple persona, una muchacha pudiera yo [sic] empoderar a alguien más. O a mí misma, ¿yo poder empoderarme? Aunque en este tiempo también me doy cuenta de que yo estaba empoderada ya, sin darme cuenta tal vez. (Interview #3)

Finally, the *social reality* nested within this transformation, was defined by the development of an emergent collective etic voice (as in the previous section). Five main constructs were identified as responsible for this emergence: **1)** An epistemological alignment between the Self and the Relational Other as a requirement to understand each other's learning needs and mentoring capabilities; **2)** Curiosity as the mediator between the interaction with other worldviews and the pursuit of a common goal; **3)** Access to spaces with the capacity to integrate

emergent knowledge within their structures; **4)** Transformative events planted in relationship and nurtured by dialogue; and **5)** Difference as a desirable quality. I want to illustrate this reality with all the voices of the life agents, as a chorus of transformative evolution:

Vignette Five

Porque es que en la comunidad somos como una ensalada, hay cebolla, y que la cebolla a veces la tienes que comer, si te gusta pues la comes bien, y si no, poquito porque pica. Si te gusta la lechuga de qué tipo de lechuga, y con todos esos sabores tienes que tratar, y todos, aunque traigan mal carácter algo te quieren enseñar, algo nos quieren enseñar y no es que sea contra nosotros, ni contra ellos, es algo de la vida no. (Marcela #2)

Vignette Six

Creo que cuando estábamos con los grupos de posparto todas estábamos muy alineadas en eso, y por lo menos lo que fue el segundo grupo de posparto pues, todo el año tuvimos muy buena audiencia, todas las personas asistieron todo el año, y muchas de esas mujeres pues sí, es de las que lo ven a uno, y todavía se acuerdan, y ay si todavía me acuerdo del grupo de posparto, me acuerdo de lo que me decían también, de pronto de que yo estaba en ese momento de que, lo que necesitaba era alguien que me escuchara. Entonces, se pudo generar un cambio, en ese grupo de personas, no a nivel de sistema más grande, pero por lo menos, en ese grupo de personas, pues sí más en ese entonces se pudo generar un cambio. (Sara Sofía #3)

Vignette Seven

Todas nos conocimos poquito a poco, algunas cosas no nos gustarían, pero había que aceptarnos cada una, su mundo. ... teníamos esa espinita de que queríamos hacer algo de nosotras. (Luna Roja #3)

Vignette Eight

Lo bonito de esto, fue que fue un proyecto que no estaba por sentado. ...sino que tuvo la oportunidad de tener matices, y hacer los cambios necesarios, y los ajustes para que todo saliera como salió. (Blanca Silvia #3)

Vignette Nine

No podré hacer [grandes] cambios, como te digo, cambios al mundo entero, pero cambiar, al menos ayudar a alguien..., o la semillita que yo puse en una familia, o en una persona ahí, que le fue útil para mejorar su bienestar, o mejorar su estilo de vida pues. Sé que es bueno... que hice algo de apoyo, no, algo bueno para aquella persona. Le fue útil mi semillita. (Azucena #3)

The last step on this cycle is the transformation of the Collective Protagonist into a Conscious Protagonist,⁸³ where each of them is able to occupy a different role, one of mentor, activist, social entrepreneur, and collectively they are capable of affecting each of the realities they occupy. It is with the appearance of the Conscious Protagonist where the cycle of resistance is completed, just to give space for its normalization and conditioning. As with any cycle, eventually another group of agents will come to challenge this process of experience → becoming → transformation, and alter its reach, presentation, and impact.

Looking at these findings, I can confirm that the life agents have evolved from Primary Agents to Collective Protagonists, while working to disrupt many of the structures keeping them from fully activating a morphogenic cycle (as Conscious Protagonists). I assume, based on the data and my direct relationships with them, that the inner transformation of their sense of self and personal identity will have far reaching implications in other realities of their lives, regardless of whether they as a collective are able to activate a new cycle. This is because each of them initiated a personal journey of becoming and conscientization, in which their internal conversation became critical, and their capacities to embrace the Relational Other have been transformed.

Sub-section Three: Freire's conscientization and the Becoming Model

The development of this model made Freire's four levels for consciousness development (2013), Bhaskar's layered ontology (2008), and Archer's morphogenetic model (1998b), more tangible and applicable for empirical research. Below, I will focus on Freire's level of consciousness because its understanding brought me closer to my own epistemological realities and serves as the opening gate for a future Emergent Phase to test the model.

⁸³ Conscious as part of the critical process of liberation.

1. Semi-intransitivity: sense of perception is limited, impermeable to changes outside of her natural needs. Here I can situate the Self and the Person before they are aware of the forces impacting their lives.
2. Transitive: becoming permeable (aware), from disengagement of the world to engagement, to internal conversations with the social being, where the person becomes a historical being (becomes visible). This consciousness is related with the development of the Primary Agent, where the Self and the Person enter in connection with her social contexts, aided by her internal conversations. People on this stage are in a perfect space to be engaged and supported.
3. Naive transitivity: can be a transitional stage of conscious development or a long residency. It is characterized by an oversimplification of problems, nostalgia about the past, gregariousness, disinterest to investigate, and seeking polemic dialogue instead of complex exchanges (common in immigrants, due to the double loss phenomenon). This phase is a preparation for either critical transitivity or sectarian/fanaticism. Here the development of the Collective Protagonist might flourish, if properly supported to continue the breakthrough of her own fears, doubts, and internalized oppression.
4. Critical transitivity: is an investigative mind, curious and questioning, seeking to engage in sound dialogue, and open to new perspectives. From the process of becoming to transformation, there are many years of inner and collective practice and reflexivity. A mature Collective Protagonist and the emergence of the Conscious Protagonist makes her residence in this stage (Brock et al., 2017).

Results Chapter: Part Two Translated Vignettes

Vignette One

And I think that my process, in being a health promoter, has been sour and sweet, like being pregnant, that fear, of what is going to happen in the future, what my baby will look like. I want to raise him like this, with these values, that he be genuine, without pretending to be proud, so all of that is that project, that baby that we're with right now, that I can say, that it has cost us, that it has been painful, that it has been part of my personal and intellectual development too, because I have learned a lot, so much, because before I would not have managed so many things at once, as I do now, and that, well, we continue to move forward, to see that baby grow up, to see what he will look like. (Marcela #3)

Vignette Two

Fight, live alongside others, face things I never imagined I would ever face [sic] before... in my life I thought that I was going to see the birth of babies, this is like light for another person, that is, to give life, and this fills me a lot..., it is like this feeling of emotions, yes I did something in my life, or I am doing something in my life. (Catalina #3)

Vignette Three

How, like us as immigrants, we came here with an objective perhaps, maybe it was to work, yeah, others came to study, others came with other goals no, but the class which I relate with the one I'm working with has taught me... to value myself as a human being too... to validate that we come from this world, not just to exist, but also to leave something behind. (Azucena #3)

Vignette Four

In those five years, when I heard the word 'empowerment' [in the program]... empowerment, yes, but like governmental power, of being able to make change on a much higher level. Not that I, a simple person, a young woman I could [sic] empower someone else. Or myself, could I empower? Although at this time I also realized that I was already empowered, perhaps without realizing it. (Catalina #3)

Vignette Five

Because in the community we are like a salad, there is onion, and sometimes you have to eat onions, if you like it, then you eat it well, and if not, just a little because it stings. If you like lettuce, what type of lettuce, and with all those flavors do you have to try, and all of them, even if they have a bad character, they want to teach you something, they want to teach us something, and it's not that it's against us, or against them, it's something of life, no. (Marcela #2)

Vignette Six

I think that when we were with the postpartum groups we were all very aligned on that, and at least what was the second postpartum group well, the whole year we had a very good audience, all the people attended the whole year, and many of those women well yeah, are one of those people who see you and they still remember, and oh yes, I remember the postpartum group, I remember what they told me, and suddenly when I was in that moment, what I needed was for someone to listen to me. So, it was possible to generate a change, in that group of people, not at the level of a larger system, but at least, in that group of people, well, more when it happened, a change could be generated. (Sara Sofia #3)

Vignette Seven

We all got to know each other little by little, some things we didn't like, but we had to accept one another, their worlds, we had that little thorn of wanting to make something of ourselves. (Luna Roja #3)

Vignette Eight

The beauty of this was that it was a project that wasn't taken for granted... but it had the opportunity to have nuances, and make the necessary changes, and the adjustments so that everything would come out as it did. (Blanca Silvia #3)

Vignette Nine

I might not be able to make [big] changes, like I was telling you, changes to the entire world, but to change, at least to help someone... or the little seed that I planted in my family, or in a person over there, that it was useful in improving their well-being or bettering their life. I know that it's good... that I did something supportive, no, something good for those people. My little seed was useful to them. (Azucena #3)

Chapter Five

Study Contributions

Findings from this study challenge and contribute to current research approaches and theoretical foundations in three different ways. First, this research showed immigrants do not possess a unidimensional identity (Sayad, 2004). The path taken by the migrant is one in need of forgiveness and reconciliation with what was left behind (emigrant) and one of rebirth for the immigrant (Sánchez & Sánchez, 2020). Hence, immigrants undergo a third socialization process (Segredo & Pérez, 2007) which entails a process of reorganization, reintegration or readaptation (Freire, 2013), reappropriation or rejection, which happen during and after the physical and metaphorical crossing of a new border, particularly one tinted with political greed, racism, and historical exclusion.

Second, this study identified a direct link of the development of Freire's conscientization process (Freire, 2000) with a new state of being, the birth of becoming. As a process, it starts with the embodied realities of the agent, because the Self first needs to recognize her own humanity in order to recognize the other's. In other words, it is through the process of embodiment of one's feelings, sensations, thoughts, and imagination with one's body and the 'other' territories, where it is possible to achieve consciousness. Consciousness is never complete or without blinders, but the more the Self is able to expand its multidimensional perimeter of functional understanding, the greater her horizons will become.

Lastly, this research describes how the individual process of conscientization is not a distilled and pure form of the Self, it is rather the formation of new ways of seeing and understanding the practical and social world. Hence it requires the company of the

Relational Other to exercise the powers of a collective transformation, via a morphogenetic cycle for the disruption of habitus (Archer, 2010a).

All combined, these contributions open a sea of possibilities to engage in novel theory development, methodological design/redesign, and implementation of new practices and policies requiring a critical and layered understanding of immigrant communities in general, and immigrant women in particular.

Study Implications

Theoretical Implications

Symbolically speaking, I needed to create a theoretical quilt to be able to create a new paradigm, capable of responding to my own experience as an immigrant (not Chicana, not first-generation immigrant), as well as the ones told by the life agents. As standalone theories, neither CR, LP, nor feminist theory offered a comprehensive foundation to fully support my research questions. This is because my inquiries spanned many countries of origin, identity formation crossing translational borders, and social structures, and so I am confident to say that the study of the development of people who migrated will never be complete without contextual and linguistic understanding of their journey before they became immigrants.

Blanco et al., (2018) talks about critical theory as a science that does not just describe what happened or project what could happen, as it also works in building what it should be in the *now*, with the ultimate goal to create transformative social change aimed at the “promotion of new forms of social life ...of which new models of interpersonal and intergroup relationships will emerge, in recovering the leading role of the conditions of existence (the self) against the knowing, in defending the unity of theory and praxis” (p. 20). This study is doing just that:

shifting the notion of knowledge to one of being, as a necessary condition to support the personal and collective transformation of immigrants.

This is a reflexive memo in which I go over this rationale, and why it important to embrace the idea of a new way of being as the key to develop a more nuanced epistemological explanation about immigrants:

I am thinking that during the process of recognizing their new social reality, they (agents) are trying to locate themselves again. To recognize who they are and who they are not, as external inputs are providing to them a different mirror, one in which they do not see themselves. The 'I' and the 'Me' are in shock, and their internal conversations are at loss to provide a bridge to find a sense of direction. This is because the internal conversations are contingent on their own internal resources to analyze and question. This new transitive situation is confronting them with a new ontology, which they try to understand using a past epistemological frame of reference, which might or might not assist them. It is like being born again. (01/08/2022)

Here I am making the claim for the need to examine the process of becoming and transformation as an issue of ontology. Bhaskar says that ontology “really only becomes relevant when you are not satisfied with knowledge, when what passes for knowledge is patently wrong or absurd” (Bhaskar, 2007, p. 192). In the case of immigrant women, and women of color, the dissatisfaction with the current social, cultural, and theoretical narratives about themselves is as alive now as it was when Sojourner Truth professed her “Ain’t I a Woman” speech more than one hundred and fifty years ago.

Knowing is a product of being. It is the being who is tied with the external world, with nature, and hence it requires a vision of the self in relation with the totality in order to become an integrated human being (Mazorco Irueta, 2010). The transformation recorded in these lines did not start with learning, it started with recognizing the Self in the loving and compassionate eyes of the Relational Other. However, the Relational Other was not found unintentionally, as it required a process of relationality and vulnerability. Their transformation occurred within the co-created

territories designed and maintained by the each of them. Hence, everything was a process, nested within another process, whose transfactual nature (tendency) was the deconstruction of one's identities from the inside-out.

Methodological Implications

In research the bridge between theory and implementation (praxis) is methodology, and it is methodology gives theory a “corporeal” presence to guide the inquiry. Within research, reflexivity hopes to take residence to allow for problematization itself to occur in the midst of data collection and analysis. Specifically, when doing critical research with people or communities historically deemed as “less,” the researcher needs to have the awareness and responsibility to be a companion in the journey and not just an “expectator” hoping to extract knowledge. She is required to endeavor in the uncovering of stories and realities made invisible by hegemonic forces (Calderón, 2014). Furthermore, methodology carrying the flag of critical thought and liberation have higher stakes, because the search is not just to recount events, but to unearth causes and mechanisms used by normalized structures. In short, critical methodology needs to humanize the stories told.

Critical Realism as a metatheory and Liberation Psychology as a praxis-driven theory (Martín-Baró, 2010), are not easy theories to give a corporeal presence. Hence, the methods used needed to adapt to the theoretical pressures of unearthing. This adaptation was made possible by layering the methodological approach based on different types of inferences, which allowed for the dissection of data into multidimensional facets. As part of my methodological design, I created a model to depict the conscientization process, using the allegory and visual of a tree, starting from the roots and moving to its fruits. Now, at the end of these pages, I present the Model of Becoming, which is the core of this emergent framework. Curiously enough, its visual

depiction resembles the growing rings of a tree trunks, which for me represents the ever-growing capacity of humans to transform their surroundings.

The fact that this model was co-developed with immigrant women from América Latina offers a nuanced perspective on the experience of carrying a dual identity: an immigrant and an emigrant, as people change during the process of migration. Most importantly, it expands on the current knowledge on Latina immigrant women, not Chicanas nor Latinas, but rather a new version on the identities residing in the spaces-in-between.

Finally, the layered composition of the phenomena of conscientization unearthed during this research lends itself for further analysis and exploration. Beyond the borders of my research questions, lays an empirical landscape for testing the Model of Becoming in other Latino/Indigenous communities or organizations working on projects aimed at the improvement of their individual and collective lives.

Practical Implications

Research on public health, maternal and child health, child development, and human development needs to start paying attention to the unseen realities when interacting with immigrant “participants.” In practice, the profound lack of understanding of immigrant health (psychical, mental, spiritual) contributes to the implementation of western theoretical approaches (e.g., ecological perspectives, psychosocial frameworks, mindfulness practices, trauma-informed cognitive behaviors) without the necessary cultural, historical, and linguistic adaptations to best support clients and their families (Hilado & Lundy, 2018).

Spaces like the one analyzed on this research serve as an incubator for growth and individual-collective development. Giving voice to practitioners aimed at accessing knowledge of how health behaviors, parenting styles, or personal development are informed, created, sustained,

and nurtured within Latino communities, this research can serve as a guide to future efforts to understand:

- 1) How race relations among immigrant and their heritage generations are enacted. This focus requires decentering the immigrant experience which often casts a shadow on intra- and inter-groups relationships among mestizos, Black, Indigenous, and Asian Latinos/as (Mazorco Irureta, 2010; Quijano, 2007). Backgrounding Latino América's history of dependency, colonialism, slavery, and colorism negates the opportunity to challenge our own internalized racism and cultural trauma (Cumes, 2009; Keme & Coon, 2018).
- 2) How anti-colonial understandings are shared, transmitted, and molded during the process of individual and collective conscientization. This is because no outsider can genially trigger the process of becoming, as it resides in the depths of a person embodied, practical, and social histories (Ornelas, 2012).
- 3) How gender roles are disrupted, perpetuated, and challenged during the acquisition of new knowledge and the development of a new sense of self, aided by the support of other women (Cruz Hernández & Bayón Jiménez, 2020).

None of these spaces of new understanding are positively or negatively changed, instead they offer a new perspective for researchers, practitioners, and community organizers to enter spaces of interaction with immigrant people and families. They incorporate the whole person, not just the identity of immigrant, hence moving beyond the acculturation or enculturation frameworks and the need-based views on Latino families within the context of the U.S.

Stories as the Glue for Theory, Methodology, and Practice

Stories expanding multiple life course events were the central mechanism of understanding throughout my conversations with the life agents. People are their stories, either the ones told to them, or the ones they tell themselves. Together we attempted to reconstruct how stories have shaped their (our) beliefs and realities (own life vs. lives lived someplace else), how they carry traditions (sense of belonging), myths (discrimination or imagination), how they inform one's sense of worth (plots of abuse or encouragement). Everything is a story. In research, as in life, what makes a story or finding "stick," can be passed onto future generations, propel people to radically change their lives, or have the power to decide who gets in and who gets out.

Due to the current reality, we live in, the trustworthiness of a story is not a requirement to be believed by millions of people, it just needs to be presented in a way that feels authentic and is aesthetically pleasant and capable of moving us viscerally. Hence, now more than ever, to harness the power of a story in search for critical understanding of lives lived, while providing evidence of the thought process involved in the gestational development of such a story, is of extreme importance. Particularly those narratives not often curated to be read, told, or sung for and by the people with less political and economic power.

Conclusions

This research was a rebellious act, as is often found with research performed by women of color. The activation of agency requires being rebellious because all resistance is political. Hence, it might be that one of the steps for liberation is to find our way to rebel against what is holding us back. A rebellious mind is an essential component in questioning the state of affairs and requires access to external information on the operationalization of the mechanisms of control.

Collectively, the life agents' stories form a strategic resistance against the incomplete characterization of their realities in research and in practice. For example: their immigration status was not the central variable dictating their evolution; their role as mothers did not overshadow their identity as women; their English proficiency did not stop their capacity to study or participate in public and mainstream opportunities. What makes their stories a testament of resistance is that for them, being an immigrant was more than the negative label attached to it, because they were able to remain anchored to their cultural or family roots. Also, despite the centrality of being a mother, there was always an internal need to be defined as something more than as a mother, which led each of them to build a path where there was none before. Lastly, together they were able to take space and become visible, while activating their voices, and without apologizing for their presence. These might look like simple acts, but for immigrant women in the U.S., being recognized as something more than as an immigrant of color⁸⁴ who are collectively creating a map for personal and professional development, and who are constantly announcing their presence in white-led spaces, these examples are of immeasurable value.

One of my research questions asked: How does the process of becoming a [_____] inform the women's individual and group sense of agency and groupness? Intentionally, I left the blank space hoping to fill it with an accurate representation. Now, I understand that this space cannot be filled, because as humans exercising our capacity to transform, we are always becoming, and this process cannot be constrained to a timeline or a specific role.

Following the progression of the Model of Becoming, I hypothesize that the life agents might be entering the developmental stage of the Conscious Protagonist, where the cycle of resistance is completed and gives space for the establishment of new models of conduct,

⁸⁴ Special clarification by adding "immigrant of color," as not all immigrants are valued the same in this country.

expectations, and social normalization. However, they will need to bring forth their own template of “being” in order to be able to guide their progress forward. The enactment of their being will require the creation and articulation of a new epistemology (Mazorco Irureta, 2010), one combining thought and feeling, past and future, while deconstructing the dichromic relationship between the emigrant and the immigrant, the South, and the North.

Prior experiences are encoded in traditions and cultural norms, they are place-based. Although not all traditions and rites and rituals are benevolent or harmless, particularly for women, they do connect us with our own history as people, language, and our ways of understanding/knowing. Having a severe blunt trauma severing these connections, which happens during migration, creates a gush of vital force and knowledge that weakens our capacity to talk with the I, Me, and You from a place of groundedness. So, the creation of knowledge based on the reality of the one who left and the one who arrived, has the capacity for the construction of a new sense of self, and consequently a emergent concept of self (Archer, 2000). I like the words of Aurora Levins Morales (2011) when she says: “feeling like a ghost trying to communicate with the living” (p. 100). Like a newborn or child, our memories, language, and socialization will inform our sense of self, but they are not settled or fully formed. However, adults initiating a new relationship with unknown realities have the capacity to utilize prior experiences and capacities to restructure (to their detriment or benefit) their sense of self and concept of self.

Final Reflection

This study opened a window for a new understanding of the development of immigrant Latina/Indigenous women working on their own personal and collective transformation. These particular women are nested in the field of maternal and child health, which is fitting with the analogy of birth of a person, a dyad, triad, or whole community. This window was opened by the

development of the Model of Becoming. This in-the-making model is the result of a theoretical and methodological endeavor seeking to find an empirical roadmap to study the process of conscientization and becoming. This search aimed to move from surface level knowledge of empowerment and community development to the depths of transformative change, at the individual and collective levels.

The Model of Becoming represents the next step in the development of theory and empirical testing of open systems involving the evolution of immigrant communities. It holds potential for supporting the examination of liberation practices informing the stratified lives of people, mostly of those whose experiences and stories have not been participants in the development of current societal norms and practices. This stratification allows us to see hidden absences often confounded when looking at the whole. Furthermore, this model allows for the analysis of agency and structure as independent, yet complementary, entities, and by doing so, it provides spaces to: 1) investigate the embodied and socially constructed structures affecting the lives of agents with or without their awareness, 2) give space for the emergent nature of humans (agents) to rebel against such structures, hence avoiding following into fatalism and desperation often found in oppressed people and communities (Martín-Baró, 1996b), and 3) provides an open road for the use of complementary methodological approaches, requiring an intensive empirical procedure (Danermark, et al., 2002).

Words as the Researcher Within

Gail Simon's (2021) description of the therapist experience resonates a lot with my own experience with this research and with each of the life agents:

Collaborative map makers and followers of those mapping-as-we-go. We sway between pointing and following as paths open up or close down. Each conversation generates its own temporality through sequentiality, through pause and pace, through exchange, refrain [*sic*] and emotion. We do a lot of reviewing as we go along- in the moment of practice. ...

Sometimes we have a sense confirming old theories and familiar ways of doing things. At other times, we are in a new territory and need to respond by developing new practice to fit the context; then we theorise it, justify it, explain ourselves” (p. 89).

This reflection fits my own internal experience with my research. It moved my world, my own assumptions about the agents, and made me question how lives and theory are part of a complementary continuum. This continuum is not static and evolves at its own pace. My own process of becoming as a full person during this research was painful, beautiful, visceral, intellectually demanding, and symbolically liberating. I think research should feel just like this.

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Appendix A1

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON Research Participant Information and Consent Form Focal Participants

Title: The Unrecorded Voices of Immigrant Latina/Indigenous Promotoras de Salud /Doulas

Principal Investigator: Dr. Larissa Duncan (phone: 608-263-4026, email: larissa.duncan@wisc.edu)

Student Researcher: Mariela Quesada Centeno (phone: 608-217-5982, email: mqcenteno@wisc.edu)

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH. This study wants to uncover the voices and experiences of Latin@/Indigenous promotor@s de salud and doulas in Dane County, as they navigate their role as community leaders, while developing a more equitable health care delivery model to provide support and education to people like them. Study purpose: to gain a deep understanding of the personal and professional and collective evolution as a promotor/as de salud/doula working with birthing people and families during their journey to parenthood. One of the results of this study is to publish a book.

Individual interviews and focus groups in Spanish will be conducted. These conversations will be audio-recorded. Mariela Quesada Centeno (bilingual graduate student) will listen to the recordings, transcribe and translate the scripts. It is possible that a third person (professional transcriber) could listen to the recordings. In addition, it might be necessary to contract with a native English Speaker to assist in proof-reading the translations in English, having the original Spanish transcription as their guide.

WHAT WILL MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE? You will be asked to participate in at least 3 in-depth interviews (2 hours per interview), and 2 focus groups (2 hours duration time). We will ask you to complete a short survey to identify at least one person to participate in the study, as well as referring this person to the study's team. We want you to think of someone who has been a permanent presence in your journey, as we would like to interview this person as well. The information you share in interviews and focus groups will not be shared with the extended participant you name, unless you give us permission. In addition, if you want, your assistance will be requested to review the transcriptions of **your** interviews and excerpts of **your** participation in the focus groups. All the interviews will take place in a place and time of your choosing. Also, you will be invited to share your stories by using multiple mediums: keeping a journal during the duration of the study, using art, and photo-voice., just to mention some examples. All materials collected during the study will be kept for at least 5 years before they are destroyed.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS TO ME? **There is a risk for breach of confidentiality**, as you may reveal information about illegal behavior/activities and may be additional legal risks to you if a breach of confidentiality were to occur. You are encouraged not to share anything you do not wish to have included in the research data. Also, there is a chance you may become fatigued or frustrated due to group dynamics.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS TO ME? No directly.

WILL I BE COMPENSATED FOR MY PARTICIPATION? You will receive \$230 for participating in this study. If you withdraw before the end of the interviews/focus groups, you will receive \$25/hr. for the number of hours of interview you completed, and \$20/hr. for the number of hours you participate in a focus group. If done in person, childcare and refreshments will be provided for the focus groups.

HOW WILL MY CONFIDENTIALITY BE PROTECTED? The study team received the Certificate of Confidentiality from the National Institutes of Health number CC-OD-20-1026. This Certificate of Confidentiality prohibits researchers from disclosing information that may identify you in a legal proceeding or in response to a legal request without your consent. Once issued, the Certificate retroactively covers information collected since the beginning of the study. **We request from each participant to maintain the confidentiality of the group, as well.** All participants in the group are asked to respect each other's privacy and not repeat what is discussed outside the group without permission. However, the researcher cannot guarantee that participants will maintain full confidentiality outside the focus groups.

If you participate in this study, we would like to be able to quote you directly in publication without using your name. As mentioned, this research aims to write a book based on the data and stories gathered during this research protocol. Participants will have the opportunity to accept or decline if they want their stories to be used as material for such book. The same protections laid out in the beginning of this section will also be applied when compiling the book material. A separate form will be provided to each participant at the end of this research to follow-up on their decision of participating in the process of writing the book.

If you agree to allow us to quote you in publications, use your journal entries & art, and are interested in participating in the book, please initial the statement at the bottom of this form.

WHOM SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS? You may ask any questions about the study at any time. Please contact the Principal Investigator Dr. Larissa Duncan at 608-263-4026. You may also call the student researcher, Mariela Quesada Centeno at 608-217-5982. If you are not satisfied with response of researcher or Principal Investigator have more questions or want to talk with someone about your rights as a research participant, you should contact the Education and Social/Behavioral Science IRB Office at 608-263-2320.

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate or wish to withdraw your participation, you may do so at any time. By typing your name below, you provide your electronic signature and indicate that you have read this consent form, had an opportunity to ask any questions about your participation in this research and voluntarily consent to participate. You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Please type your name: _____ Date (Mo/day/Yr) _____

_____ *I give my permission to be quoted directly in publications without using my name.*

_____ *I give my permission to use my journal entries, photos, and other materials created during the duration of the study.*

_____ *I give my permission to include transcriptions of my contributions during the interviews and focus group discussion into an archive to be used as material for the writing process of a book.*

Appendix A2

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON Research Participant Information and Consent Form Extended Participants

Title: The Unrecorded Voices of Immigrant Latina/Indigenous Promotoras de Salud /Doulas

Principal Investigator: Dr. Larissa Duncan (phone: 608-263-4026, email: larissa.duncan@wisc.edu)

Student Researcher: Mariela Quesada Centeno (phone: 608-217-5982, email: mqcenteno@wisc.edu)

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH. This study wants to uncover the voices and experiences of Latin@/Indigenous promotor@s de salud and doulas in Dane County, as they navigate their role as community leaders, while developing a more equitable health care delivery model to provide support and education to people like them. Please know, that one of the results of this study is to publish a book.

Study purpose: to gain a deep understanding of the personal and professional evolution of promotor/as de salud working with birthing people and families during their journey to parenthood. You are being invited because one of the study members provided your name as someone who can speak in great detail about their personal and professional development as a promotor/a de salud and/or doula.

Individual interviews in Spanish will be conducted. These conversations will be audio-recorded. Mariela Quesada Centeno (bilingual graduate student) will listen to the recordings, transcribe and translate the scripts. It is possible that a third person (professional transcriber) could listen to the recordings. In addition, it might be necessary to contract with a native English Speaker to assist in proof-reading the translations in English, having the original Spanish transcription as their guide. The tapes will be kept for at least 5 years before they are destroyed.

WHAT WILL MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE? You will be asked to participate in at least one in-depth interview. In addition, if you want, your assistance will be requested to review the transcriptions of **your** interview. The interview will take place in a place and time of your choosing.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS TO ME? There is a risk of breach of confidentiality, as you may reveal information about illegal behavior/activities and may be additional legal risks to you if a breach of confidentiality were to occur. You are encouraged not to share anything you do not wish to have included in the research data.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS TO ME? Not directly.

WILL I BE COMPENSATED FOR MY PARTICIPATION? You will receive \$50 for participating in this study.

HOW WILL MY CONFIDENTIALITY BE PROTECTED? The study team received the Certificate of Confidentiality from the National Institutes of Health number CC-OD-20-1026. This Certificate of Confidentiality prohibits researchers from disclosing information that may identify you in a legal proceeding or in response to a legal request without your consent. Once issued, the Certificate retroactively covers information collected since the beginning of the study.

If you participate in this study, we would like to be able to quote you directly in publication without using your name. As mentioned, this research aims to write a book based on the data and stories gathered during this research protocol. Participants will have the opportunity to accept or decline if they want their stories to be used as material for such book. The same protections laid out in the beginning of this section will also be applied when compiling the book material. A separate form will be provided to each participant at the end of this research to follow-up on their decision of participating in the process of writing the book.

If you agree to allow us to quote you in publications, and are interested in participating in the book, please initial the statement at the bottom of this form.

WHOM SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS? You may ask any questions about the study at any time. Please contact the Principal Investigator Dr. Larissa Duncan at 608-263-4026. You may also call the student researcher, Mariela Quesada Centeno at 608-217-5982. If you are not satisfied with response of researcher or Principal Investigator have more questions or want to talk with someone about your rights as a research participant, you should contact the Education and Social/Behavioral Science IRB Office at 608-263-2320.

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate or wish to withdraw your participation, you may do so at any time. By typing your name below, you provide your electronic signature and indicate that you have read this consent form, had an opportunity to ask any questions about your participation in this research and voluntarily consent to participate. You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Please type your name:

Date (Month/Day/Year): _____

_____ *I give my permission to be quoted directly in publications without using my name.*

_____ *I give my permission to include transcriptions of my contributions during the interviews into an archive to be used as material for the writing process of a book.*

Appendix B

Life History Interview Protocol: Community Health Workers/Doulas

This list is an extensive list of open-ended questions; however, the researcher will use life histories methodology to guide the interviewing process, which will follow a different pattern with each participant, hence not all the questions will be asked to each participant.

Most questions were created for the Focal Agents (FA), few for the Expanded Agents (EA), and some can be asked to both participants (FA and EA). Assume that questions without specification (FA or EA) are intended for FA.

Demographic questions:

1. Full name
2. Age
3. Sex
4. Gender
5. Place of Birth
6. Year when moved to the United States:
7. State where first arrived:
8. Years in Dane County:
9. What is your preferred language at home?
10. What is your English proficiency?
11. Do you have children?
 - i) If yes, how pregnancies have to had?
 - ii) How many children?
 - iii) How old are they?
12. Are you married or are in a long -term relationship?
13. Are your parents alive?
14. Where is the majority of your family?
15. What is your profession?
16. How do you define your identities?
17. In one word, how would you define yourself.

Interview Questions:

1. How the individual stories of each woman/Extended Participant created a network for developing collective meaning?

- Can you tell me about how old were you when you started thinking about your dreams, aspirations as a woman?
- Why do you think those memories have stayed with you all your life?
- Who were important role models for you growing up, that to open your views about your identity as a woman?
- What kind of support did you have or would have like to have to pursue your dreams and aspirations?
- Can you walk with me back in history to give me a sense on how was growing up in your city/pueblo?
- What was the role other women had in your life?
- What was the role men had in your life?

- Can you talk about the transitions in your life that you think defined you being here today? **(FA and EA)**
- What would you like to say about the decision of moving to the United States, and how did you end up in Madison, WI?
- How would you define your identity as an immigrant?
- What do you think about your identity as an immigrant woman?
- Which relationships in your life are important in supporting your identity as immigrant woman?
- What is your general view of _____ (name of CHW/doula)? **(EA)**
- Comparing with your life in your county or that of family back there, what would you say that is different in terms of your employment opportunities, your social and financial status and your educational opportunities? **(FA and EA)**
- What would you say about gender roles in the US and your county? **(FA and EA)**
- As a (nationality), tell me about how you see the history of your country in regards with immigration waves and/or the treatment of native populations. **(FA and EA)**
- As a (nationality/region), tell me about how your country labels or classifies sociality constructed hierarchies. **(FA and EA)**
- Where would situate your family and yourself within these classifications?
- Can you reflect on the role these classifications had in the life trajectories you chose to follow?
- How would you define discrimination based on gender, nationality, race, class, religion affiliation in the context of your country and historical story? (Note to self- *note other classifications mentioned by the participant*)
- How would you define discrimination based on gender, nationality, class, religion affiliation in the context of the United States in your present life? **(FA and EA)**
- How do you think exposure to discrimination (first or second hand) has informed your view on “othering”?
- How your relationship with _____ (name of CHW/doula) has evolved since she started this path of education and community work? **(EA)**

2. How the process of identity reformulation of immigrant Latina women is informed by their sense of agency and historical background?

- When do you hear the word agency what do you think it means? [note to self- have the definition of agency, to locate participant in the context of the meaning]. **(FA and EA)**
- Can you reflect on the meaning of agency in your life, and provide some examples of situations in your life where you were able to exercise agency?
- How do you remember feeling when you exercised agency? **(FA and EA)**
- What ingredients were present, in your opinion, that facilitating the exercise of agency?
- Now, can you provide some examples of situations in your life where you were not able to exercise agency?
- How do you remember feeling when you were not able to exercise agency?
- What was different in these situations, in your opinion, that obstructed you from exercising agency?
- If you were to define agency to another person, how would you define it?
- How would you define the agency of _____ (name of CHW/doula)? **(EA)**

- How would you define yourself when you were in your county, before immigrating to the United States? [Note to self- ask how many years the person has reside in the US?]- To provide a baseline on observed acculturation stages- which can be contrasted with current literature on the topic. **(FA and EA)**
- Now, what about the person you remember you were the first years after immigrating? [note to self- ask about that is the timeline for this reference]. **(FA and EA)**
- If **EA** is an US-born Latinx or Indigenous person: what do you think are important cultural characteristics _____ (name of CHW/doula) still preserve and have help her evolve in the US? **(EA)**
- [If you have been here more than 5 years]- tell me about, how you think your identity has changed from the person you remember being X years ago (refer to number of years since immigration).
- How do you think your time in the United States, has influenced your perception of self-agency?
- What do you think you gained in the process of acculturation? And what have you lost?
- Do you feel attach to your cultural roots or those of your parents? (Denoting enculturation) **(FA and EA)**
- Do you think is important to think about these things? If so, tell me why? If not, tell me, why? **(FA and EA)**
-

3. How the acquisition of knowledge and expansion of social connections clashed with the women's previous notion of "selves"?

- How do you practice literacy in your life? (note to self: provide examples of literacy if needed).
- How do you think your desire to acquire more knowledge (increase your literacy) have driven important decisions in your life?
- In your experience, which barriers have been between literacy acquisition and agency, in your county and in the Unites States?
- Could you talk about the role of other people in the development of your literacy? Can you provide examples?
- How would you define the importance of the creation of learning opportunities for immigrants, especially women and young girls? **(FA and EA)**
- During the process of gaining more knowledge, what were some of the dilemmas you encountered within yourself (personal expectations) that challenged your multiple roles?
- How did you resolve such dilemmas? If you have not, how do you cope with that?
- Which mechanisms you used to navigate your new roles with existent roles?
- **(EA)** What do you think have been the biggest challenges _____ (name of CHW/doula) have encounter during her involvement as a CHW/doula?
- **(EA)** What do you think have been the biggest satisfactions _____ (name of CHW/doula) have had during her involvement as a CHW/doula?

4.How each woman negotiate/grapple with the meaning (s) of their newly acquired positionality as para-health professionals transformed their roles in their families and communities as individuals and as a group?

- Could you draw how do you see your self-now? Can you walk me through your drawing?

- How do you think your identities are informing your newly acquire role of community health worker/doula?
- So, this is a group effort, how do you see your role in the group?
- Can you recall a moment when you said: this is it, this is what I want to do?
- Can you recall a moment when you said: I cannot do this anyone? What was happening?
- Which ingredients (within yourself and your external environment) you think were present that allowed to continue?
- Do you think this group of community health workers and doulas have the capacity to create change in their community? Yes- can you explain how. No- can you explain why? **(FA and EA)**

Focus groups questions (two focus groups are expected). Just for Focal Agents

1. Questions about before migration

- Let us talk about what are the reasons you think or know that people move to the United States in general, and to WI in particular?
- What was the socio-political context of your county the year you migrated? (Year, president, for example)
- What was your knowledge and notion the United States before you migrated?

2. 360 View about ground about the community

- Please let me what you think about the Latino/Indigenous communities in Dane County.
- I have chosen some key words, please without overthinking, say what is the first thing you feel when you hear each word [words can be divided among the focus groups]:

Immigrant	Woman	Cervix	Power	Culture	Patriarchy
Oppression	Voice	Indigenous	Mother	White	Education
Father	Migration	ICE	Cooperative	Silence	Doctor
Children	Past	Racism	C-section	Sex	Latina/a
Family	Prior migration	EEUU	English language	Papers	Present (time)
Obstetric Violence	Home	Collective	Mobilization	Future	Trauma

3. Collective Power

- From your perspective in your work with other community health workers/doulas, what would you say this role has influenced you?
- What would you say about the process of becoming a CHW/Doula serving women like you?
- From the perspective of an immigrant, mestiza, or indigenous CHW/doula, what would you say about your work and its impact in the families you serve?

- If you were to define a leader in these communities, how would you define some of her/his/their characteristics?
- What would you say are the ingredients you used to achieve your goals as a community health worker, either as in individual or as part of a team?
- Please talk about the internal and external stressors you have encountered during your journey as a community health worker.
- When you work with a group of colleagues, what would you say are the type of personalities, skills, and strengths that make for an impactful team?

First Focus group questions to select an Extend Participant

If you agree, I would like to ask you to think about ONE person who knows you pretty well. Someone with whom you share stories together in your personal and professional live (if professional, please think of other people than the other focal participants of this study). This person is one that has walked with you during your journey of becoming a CHW/doula, either in the U.S or in your county. It needs to be a person you trust. I am asking you this, because I would like to interview this person to understand more about your journey from someone else's perspective. If you are willing to participate in this part of the study, these are some questions that could help you think of who this person might be.

1. Name at least two people that come to your mind that:
 - Have known you well for the past 5 years (at least).
 - You have work with them or are related to them.
 - Are 18 years and older.
 - You think of them when you need to talk about something important in your life.
 - You will entrust them an important secret.
 - You communicate with them in the language you feel more at ease speaking.
2. Of those two people, think who:
 - You will feel comfortable speaking about your role as a CHW/doula with me.
 - You think she/he/they will be willing to sit down with me for an interview.
 - You will feel comfortable asking them to participate in this study.

Then, I will ask you if you feel comfortable talking with the person you came up with, and explain this study, and ask him/her /them if participating in the study is something that interested them. If the answer is YES, please given her/him/they my contact information so they can call me directly. If the answer is NO, is OK too. You or they need to safe participating.

Appendix C

Development of Code Labels: Selected Code Types

Code type	Description	Example quote from transcript	Label code
Causation	This coding technique is well suited to work with abductive and retroductive inference, as it guides the research to scope codes looking at the “where— means— leads to” process responsible for a condition. This code is multidimensional, as it looks at causality from an internal/external; global/specific; stability/instability; personal/universal, and controllable or uncontrollable perceptions.	“They’ve always told me, my father, my mother, and my brothers have always told me, they’d say this house belongs to you, because you were born there.” (Catalina #1, 02/17/2021)	Inheritance of a physical and emotional space
Concept	Used to extract meso and macro meaning to the data itself. It can be employed when using lumpers codes for a section of a transcript, as it suggests an idea rather than an action.	They made me president of the journalism club. I mean... things that they would’ve never let me had in the French school. (Luna Roja #1, 02/15/2021)	Given opportunities to flourish
Description	One of the most common coding types and uses topic-based nouns and general qualities of characteristics of the people, context, or structure under study.	“We were stripped of our homes.” (Azucena #1, 03/08/2021)	Local displacement, usurpation
Emotion	Intra/interpersonal experiences	“From the radio, because I liked it a lot, I was a person who didn’t watch television, I really liked listening to music, a lot, a lot of musicians, and curiously, I liked cumbia.” (Blanca Silvia, #2, 04/06/2021)	Embodied activities (music) bring joy.

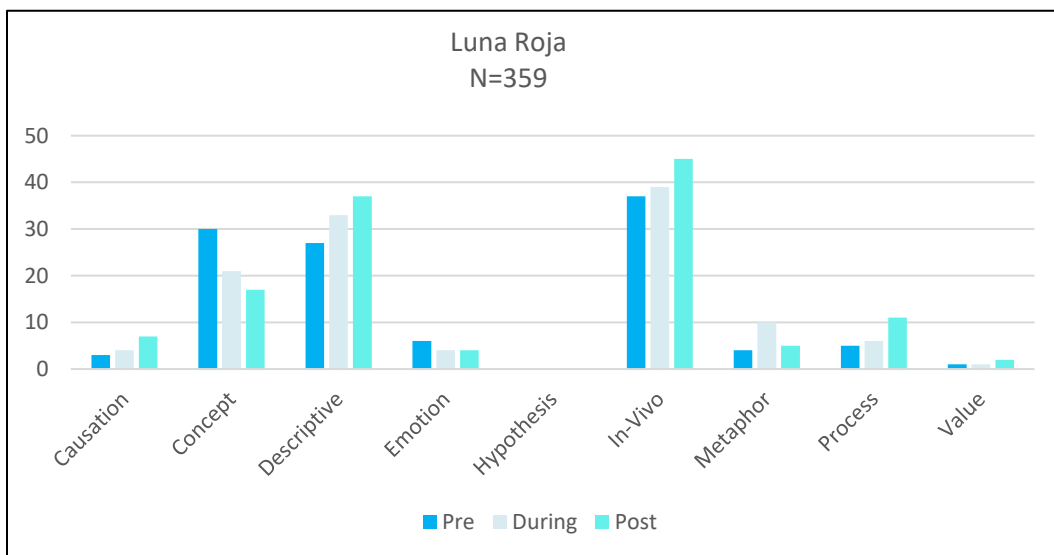
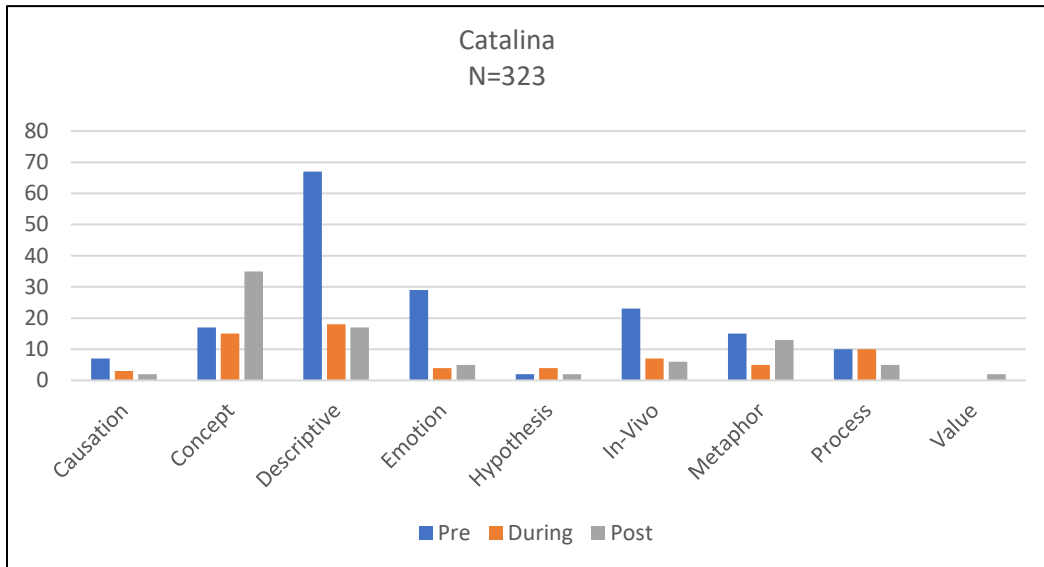
Code type	Description	Example quote from transcript	Label code
Hypothesis	Useful for analytic induction when seeking rules, causes, and explanations in the data. During the <i>Extraction of Excerpts Sub-step</i> , I was able to identify my own codes, based on my theoretical frameworks, which I paired with data excerpts talking about: 1) Deconstructing the Sense of Self, the concept of self, and internal conversation, 2) problematization: problem-solving, 3) de-ideologization, 4) de-fetishization, 5) de-alienation, 6) de-naturalization: breaking habitus via reflection (morphogenesis), 7) de-colonization, 8) denunciation and confrontation, and 9) H/healing practices (embodied new experiences).	"I put the other one as a voice that tells stories, and a voice that suddenly has more power, that already makes itself heard a little, that is not fully developed, that is not fully flourished, but well, at least has come out of the earth." (Sara Sofía #3, 04/07/2021)	Internal conversation as a reflexive practice.
In-Vivo	<p>Use of the agents' verbatim statements or words, which is key in preserving their input and stories even after the analytical curation process has occurred. In other words, their voice can always be traced back to their original transcription.</p> <p>Another reason, for using in-vivo coding, is because the interviews were held in Spanish, and only the final codes or vignettes will be translated into English, so in order to preserve the original meaning of their words using unadulterated codes is important to me. I want the agents to read their words as they were said by them.</p>	And then there was the concern of what's beyond. You know, those mountains, who's to say there's more beyond those mountains?" (Marcela #2, 2/20/2021)	The uneasiness to know what lays beyond the known.
Metaphor	Based on the narratives and linguistic characteristics of Spanish, I decided to use this code to catch the meaning of abstract concepts narrated by the agents, while preserving the cultural and historical concept nested in the metaphorical phrase.	"English and it's a reality that one starts like a baby in this country, from my point of view of course, because others may perceive it... may perceive it differently, but for me it was starting from zero, no." (Azucena #3, 03/29/2021)	Immigration as a new birth of the self. *.

Code type	Description	Example quote from transcript	Label code
Process	To denote actions or states still in progress. All codes used the gerund form -ando, -endo (counterpart in English, -ing).	"But I would see my comrades/peers/friends and we were like those little girls that would say, 'well we're all going to jump, on three, hold on,' I saw them like that. 'We're going to hold on to one another,' and I said well, let's do it. (Marcela #3, 03/04/2021)	Holding hands to keep going.
Value	Codes include the elements of: 1) Value: what do you think/feel is important, 2) Attitude: how do you think/feel about something or someone, and 3) Belief: what do you personally believe is true. I deviated from Saldaña's (2021) method for collecting these codes, since I did not follow the V, A, B recipe, but rather coded as "value" core beliefs held by the agents based on their worldview and context.	"I think that, I sincerely believe that there is a divine force. I don't know if it is divine, from heaven, what happens, that when you really want something, and you have it in your heart and you make an effort, and you fight, sooner or later your compensation comes. (Blanca Silvia #3, 06/24/2021)	Faith as personal compass.

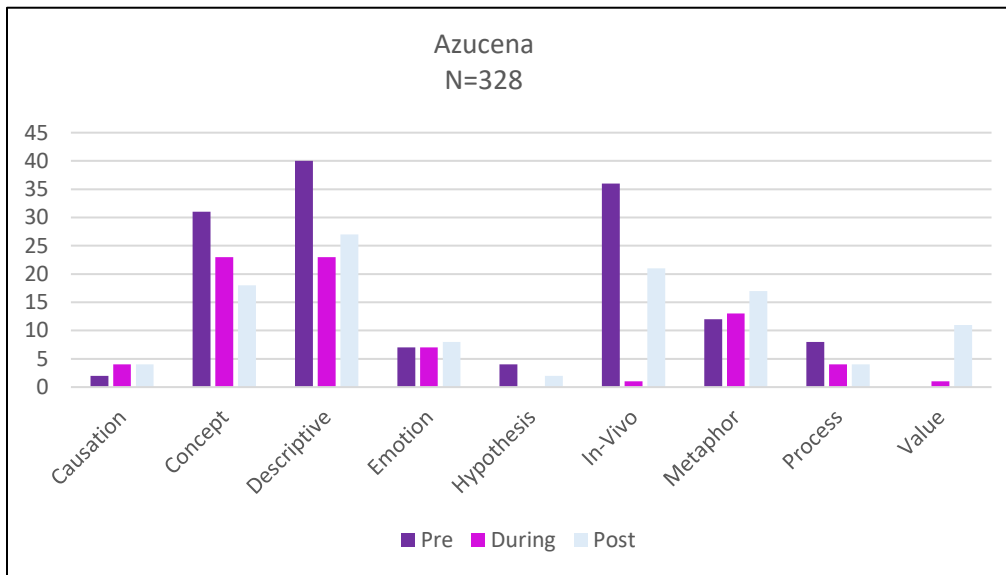
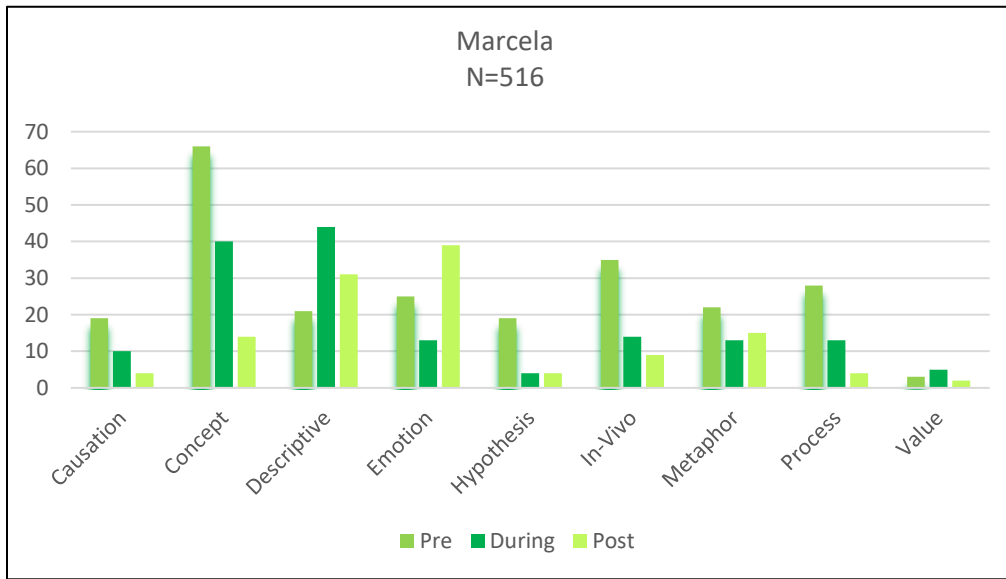
Note. Development of label codes was guided by Saldaña's (2021) qualitative coding methods.

Appendix D

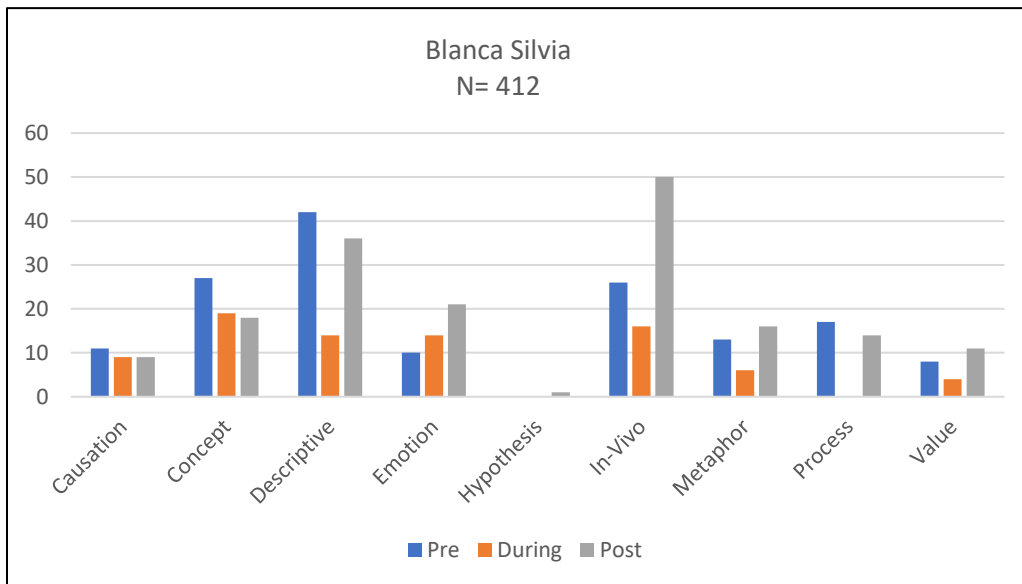
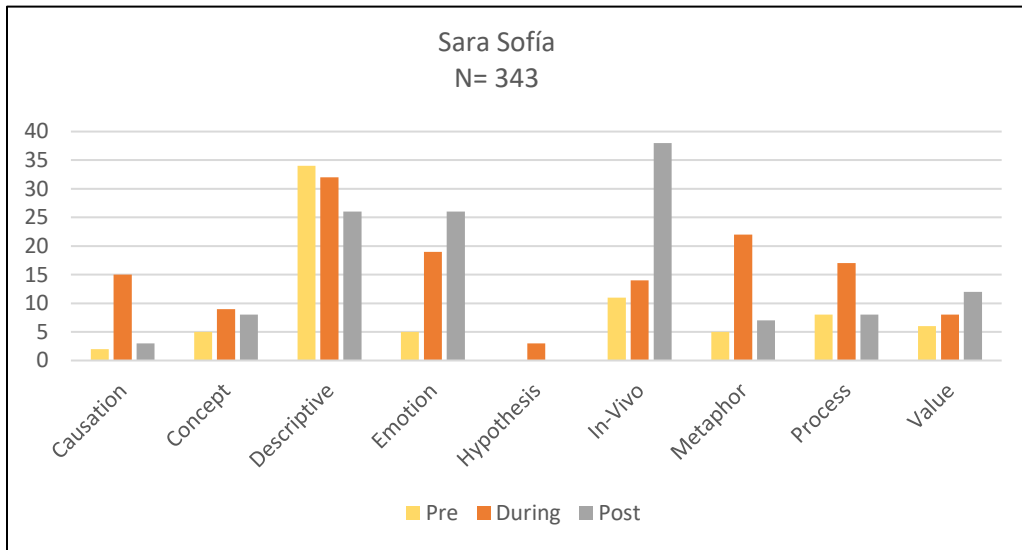
Intra-specific Analysis of Code Types within Focal Agent's Lifespan



Intra-specific Analysis within each Focal Agent Lifespan

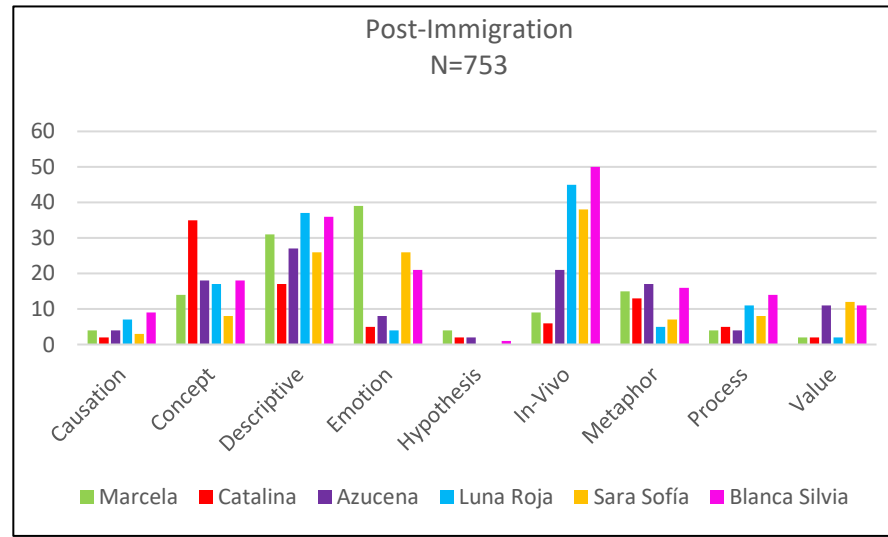
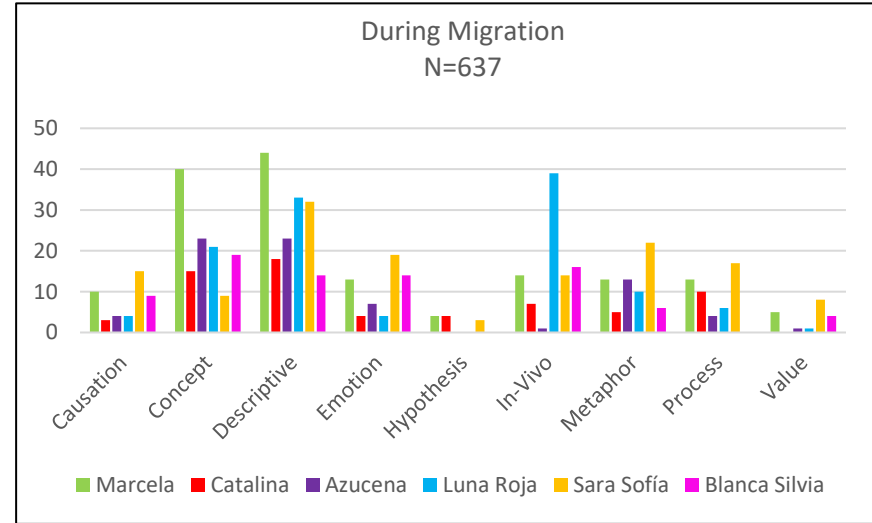
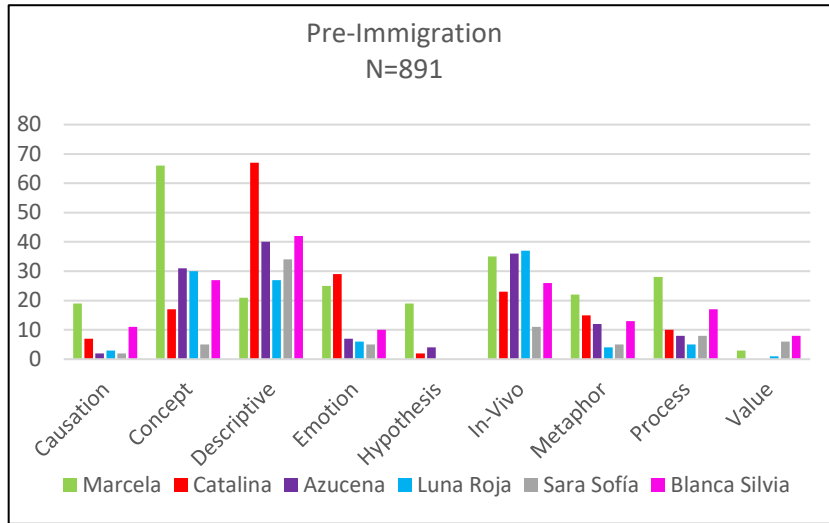


Intra-specific Analysis within each Focal Agent's Lifespan



Appendix E

Inter-specific Analysis of Code Types across Focal Agents Timelines



APPENDIX F

Selected Root Themes and their Corresponding Sub-Themes with Examples from Transcripts

Theme	Sub-theme	Excerpt
Art	Way of life	“It has been our artisanal work that has also been like a companion to us during the war that we’ve had here, of that fight that we’ve had here, it has given us a way of subsist, it has given us to, to exist.” (Azucena #2, 03/22/2021)
	Freedom	“So I also made music, danced, and that is where I recovered my identity.” (Luna Roja, #1, 02/15/2021)
	Artistic Expression	“So it was a way of exploring if I really liked it, I loved theater, it truly is an art, it’s not that I wanted to be an actress, no, no, no, it was more for, I don’t know, representing what you would have liked to be in life.” (Blanca Silvia #2, 04/06/2021)
	Healing	“Every song for me was like uffff, I don’t know!!... There was a [song] in particular, I don’t even know the name of it, but every time they played it I would fight back tears, but it was like, the dance, the [sic] zumba was that space to rebuild my wings, I would say, ‘Hey you’re alive! You can dance! You can laugh! It’s okay.’” (Marcela #3, 03/04/2021)
Voice	Identity	“More than doing for the Community, I think that we do more for ourselves, or to me, we’re the mirror. So, I think that when we say, I want to help the Community, maybe it’s me that I want to help, it is me that I want to listen to.” (Marcela #3, 03/04/2021)
	Resistance	“Let’s not talk about powers, rather let us talk about the levels of resistance, right, about levels of voice recognition, I think that, because both in the Indigenous community of South America, like the Indigenous community here, to have power exists, but rather it is the level of resistance, right, the level of information, that would be it.” (Azucena #2, 03/22/2021)

Theme	Sub-theme	Excerpt
Voice	Frontier between You and Me	“But even so, that voice continues to follow you, you’re a manager, you have to do something, like you’re not here just to be here, your calling is to do something and it does not mean that you need to be on a platform and shining in front of people, it is that there are more things to do.” (Marcela #3, 03/04/2021)
	Lenguaje	“My dad was very determined that I learn Spanish, because he would say that ‘I would need it, because an education opens doors for you.’” (Azucena #1, 03/08/2021)
	Process of Evolution	“And the last one I put as my voice, my power when I feel that I’m beginning to reach that level, and that nothing can stop me when it comes to speaking, and that I can be without prejudice or anything, and flourish, like this flower here.” (Sara Sofía #2, 03/31/20021)
Oppression	Coloniality & Capitalism	“Even, and it is interesting because the guests who visited the hotel were clients, owners, owners of flower plantations... they had implemented sources of work for the Community, but... the Town did not realize the damage that was being done through the use of insecticides and all of the chemicals being used, then the damage began to occur in people’s physical systems and the number of sick people, headaches, and vomiting began to increase.” (Azucena #2, 03/22/2021)
Community Service	Being There	“The ones that are over there, the leaders from above always say Roots, but it ends there, I don’t even know! But the Community is getting to know us, those that we’re truly working with.” (Marcela #3, 03/04/2021)
		“It’s something else that’s also mine, that I enjoy, independent of whether or not the person or the community is grateful.” (Sara Sofia #3, 04/07/2021)
		“If I work in the community, I don’t have to feel alone.” (Luna Roja, #3, 03/05/2021)
		“One of the reasons that made me enter is what, what we were sure of, which is that we work with people who are immigrants just like us, that they are, that they, that maybe we all had almost the same objectives of keeping our languages, keeping our culture, at least, no.” (Azucena #3, 03/29/2021)

Theme	Sub-theme	Excerpt
	Diverse Cultural Roots	“That is and to think that this is thinking together, that makes [<i>sic</i>] us unique.” (Catalina #3, 03/06/2021)
	Voice	“Sure, we can do it [Create Change]!... because we are a collective no, we’re not just one voice, we’re several people no, we are a collective and that has greater power, and this way we can touch other systems, and education or of health.” (Azucena #3, 03/29/2021)
	Shared Experiences	<p>“The same interests, no, the same interests, the same needs and desires to work together, the objective that we all have together.” (Azucena #3, 03/29/2021)</p> <p>“One of the reasons that made me enter is what, what we were sure of which is that we work with people who are immigrants just like us, that they are, that they, that maybe we all had almost the same objectives of keeping our languages, keeping our culture, at least, no. (Azucena #3, 03/29/2021)</p>
Power of Stories	Creation of Stereotypes	“Just like in Colombia that they put the most beautiful ones in novelas and everything, that the most beautiful ones come out in novelas, and also the most beautiful landscapes.” (Sara Sofía #2, 03/31/2021)
	Dreams for Sale	“You know, because people here [United States] sometimes tell you that money grows on trees.” (Blanca Silvia #2, 04/06/2021)
Knowing	Empowerment	“I’m not saying I’m an expert and polished, but I think that each of us is unique and we have different stories and every time, every time I have a person, a mom, or a family, I’m going to require a different approach, it’s a new form of learning, it’s a new, each person is a new dawn, right.” (Azucena #3, 03/29/2021)
	Embodied Knowledge	“On the hills I felt wild, curious.” (Marcela #1, 02/15/2021)

Theme	Sub-theme	Excerpt
Territories	Traditions	“But I was already grown up when the struggles during the Indigenous revolutions finally allowed us to wear our own names.” (Luna Roja #1, 02/15/2021)
	Limits or Frontiers	“If I was in the city, I would have had more opportunities to go to school, to know more” (Catalina #2, 02/24/2021)
	Mother (lineage) as First Territory	“And the ancestral knowledge comes to one because of my great grandmother, my grandmother’s mother, the mother of my father. (Luna Roja #2, 02/22/2021)
	Symbolic Self	“I was already entered by oppression.”(Azucena #1, 03/08/2021)
Education	Oppressive	“From the education itself, it was made for the oppressor to win.” (Azucena #1, 03/08/2021)
	Liberation	“Pues haciendo, depende de donde quieras hacer el cambio sistémico no, primero saber qué tipo de cambio sistémico queremos hacer, el de educación o el de salud.” Azucena #3, 03/29/2021)
	Dreams	“It was like going back to school... there were several times that I would tell myself:... ‘Marcela, if you had studied during your time, before becoming a mom, maybe things would have been more practical for you, now you have to study and take care of your babies.” (Marcela #2, 02/20/2021)
Nature	Provider	“Living in the earth, in the dust, the gray, the brown, gives you. It feeds your stomach and your soul.” (Azucena #1, 03/08/2021)
	Higher power	“Of the “my God, my God,” that’s how I grew up... but... nature is God.” (Luna Roja #1, 02/15/2021)
	Healing	“Also, I think what made life easier for me there, is that there were so many natural places, I loved going out into nature.” (Blanca Silvia #1, 03/30/2021)

Theme	Sub-theme	Excerpt
Power	Companionship	"We have already seen the simple fact of being accompanied by the mother, the simple act of listening to her, a seed has already been sown there, something from the promotoras right there." (Marcela #3, 03/04/2021)
	Faith	"And that was like, what prompted me, one day it will come, and if my eyes don't see it, my children will." (Marcela #3, 03/04/2021)
	Role of Mother	"As a matter of fact, from my childhood, I think my environment is more, because in itself, I had everything I needed with my mother, especially love, and my brothers and I always loved each other very much, we took care of each other." (Blanca Silvia #1, 03/30/2021)
Dual Identity: Woman/Mother	Dreams	"I wanted to make something of my life, not just be a mom... because moms dream, too." (Luna Roja #3, 03/05/2021)
	Being there	"My mom told me, 'my daughter I'm broken, but you have to live your life, I'm going to respect your decision, I love you so much that if you decided to fly I'm going to accept it and I'm going to leave you, and I wish you the best of luck. good luck, and I will always be praying for you,'... those were the words of my mom." (Blanca Silvia #2, 06/04/2021)
	Resilience	"My mom always worked in different things, and that's why she couldn't finish school." (Sara Sofía #1, 03/19/2021)
Migrant (immigrant & emigrant)	Social Injustices	"There were very few women who supported their husbands. The majority had emigrated because there was no money." (Marcela #1, 02/15/2021)
	Human Being	"Like, like us as immigrants, how we come with a goal like maybe, maybe it's to work right, others will come to study, others will come with other goals no, but the group with which I relate to, with which I am working has taught to make one more person, as I say one more person, to value myself more as a human being too, to value myself as a human being, to validate that we come from this world, not only to exist, but also to leave something in this world." (Azucena #3, 03/29/2021)
	Stereotypes	"Immigrants [sic] have been frowned upon...until now." (Marcela #1, 02/13/2021)

Theme	Sub-theme	Excerpt
Migrant (emigrant & immigrant)	Internalized Oppression	"It was one of the things that the Colombians told me when I first arrived, it's not that you have to believe that all Mexicans are the same as those in novelas, it's not like that... But also, one of the things that if I saw there, was in how they expressed themselves about the Mexicans, that if they expressed themselves, it was in a very despotic way, truthfully." (Sara Sofía #2, 03/31/2021)
	Internal Need	"I wanted like a little bit of independence, to not depend as much on my mom or dad... of being able to earn a little bit of money on my own, because, like, my dad always, he was always the one who gave us everything, and he would barely let us work in other people's things." (Catalina #2, 02/24/2021)
	Exploration	"At that time, it was already passing through my mind, I was already thinking Machiavellian that I was going to look for other paths and explore other lands, to see if I found what I was looking for, an opportunity, right! Yes, because there it was going to be very difficult to study my degree, because if it wasn't at the university, it had to be at a private one." (Azucena #3, 03/29/201)
	Education	"So then between the fear and everything, well I threw myself into the ring. They began to train me... I went all the way to Point for leadership classes, management classes, and I took the food service exam." (Marcela #3, 03/04/2021)
Independence	Curiosity	"Curiosity led to discovery." (Marcela #1, 02/15/2021)

Appendix G

Examples of Generative Themes Developed during Step One: Submerged Theory-Laden Coding

Azucena #1	
Generative Theme	Borders of the Generative Theme
Indigenous Epistemology focuses on the understanding of the individual collective as a being inseparable from the natural world.	This epistemology or cosmovision decrees a moral compass guiding a <i>modus vivendi</i> , in which territories are holders of history, traditions, knowledge, and honor. Knowledge is knowledge within temporal-spatial paradigms.
Language as a portal to access feelings of belonging or exclusion and separation.	Language becomes a channel through which the SELF can navigate the internal and external worlds. Dissonance between these worlds causes separation, Language <i>a/so</i> becomes a medium to prepare the SELF to activate resiliency.
Feeling of belonging as an activator in processes of individual-collective liberation.	Belonging is key in the search and acquisition of freedom (like an umbilical cord giving connecting two lives). Belonging allows for the expansion and dynamic learning processes. Belonging starts within the person and it is supported by external/social input.
Symbolism of the feminine and its territories within the processes of resistance and violence is present during the development of spaces of belonging.	From the Pachamama to the human feminine spaces - they have a significance of resistance
Wounds caused by capitalism-patriarchy and extractivism (colonial before and now) cross the territories of the womb and the earth.	Conquest as a physical and metaphorical violation through the individual-collective SELF causing the usurpation of spaces, dignities and known knowledge. It breaks the balance of life.

Blanca Silvia #1

Generative Theme	Borders of the Generative Theme
Normalized female body as an object of social use.	Used word cloud to assist. Word "MUJER" appeared 4 times in the initial WC, I took it off from the list and the word SOCIAL emerged. I found this a more accurate description as the meaning of MUJER the Agent describes, where MUJER-SUBJECT, does not exist (socially), but rather who she is converted to the MUJER-OBJECT the other. By being a subject is then easily dehumanized (D4-5) while normalizing acts of terror and violence on her body and life (D6-7). ^a
Mother as a militant in the construction of spaces of protection and freedom.	Used word cloud to assist. I changed the word Context to TERRITORIES to denote a deeper meaning of spaces people occupied either by choice (D11-12) or not (e.g., family D14-15, 17). The natural and physical characteristics of these spaces influence the state of the self in a continued feedback loop (D16, 18). Furthermore, note that even though people inhabit territories and territories affect people's life- they constitute two independent realities (D9).
Search for actions of resistance against the pain of discrimination to make sense of visceral experiences, acted out reactions, and assumed as real.	Resistance to oppressive actions start by asking questions and preserving in the path leading to finding the explanations (vs. answers, as explanations can be corrected, changed, or challenged).
Forms of oppression transcend lives, territories, and generations through strategies of dehumanization, dissociation, and normalization.	Dehumanization, dissociation, and normalization are fueled by determinism and fatalism (D21-24).
Active search and frequent contact of/with knowledge such as liberation route, critical thinking, and inspiration.	The continued perseverance to keep looking, of the ever-present curiosity on how think work and why (D82-86), The importance of role models is an important component of this curiosity either as a channel to gain deeper understanding or as encouragement (D77,80,86).

Note. ^a Corresponds to the digital location of the Overarching Codes comprising the Generative Codes in the Excel tab.

Appendix H

Summary of Analytical Metrics of Submerged Step: From Transcripts to Generative Themes

	Marcela	Blanca Silvia	Catalina	Luna Roja	Azucena	Sara Sofía
Raw Material						
Length of Interview (minutes)	133.59	123.89	109.06	117.91	112.27	114.87
% of Excerpts from raw transcripts	18	21	22	15	19	20
Raw Material to Code Labels & Categories¹						
% of Code Labels Developed from Raw Transcripts	11	11	8	6	10	10
% of Code Labels to Code Categories from Raw Transcripts ¹	5	7	5	4	5	5
Transition from Code Categories to Themes²						
% of Root Themes Developed from Code Categories	9	8	9	14	14	10
Themes						
% Overarching Themes from Root Themes	87	84	60	67	64	95
% Generative Themes from Overarching Themes	95	100	83	85	88	79
# of Generative Themes Developed	7	6	5	6	5	5

Note. STEP ONE included the following phases: 1) Data Familiarization, Deductive Code Development, and Reflexive Theme Generation.

¹ Stonehouse (2019) explains that less than 4% of the full interviews is used as material for further analysis.

² Analysis of Extended Agents did not comprise the Deductive Code Development Phase. My average was 5%.

Appendix I

Theory Behind Information Power

When to stop coding is as critical of a question as is how to start. However, as with exiting a study site having less regulations than entering it, finding a way “out” of the data analysis is less defined or questioned. During my field work, data collection, and analysis, I was aware of this concept, however elusive it can be in practice. Reaching a point of “enough”¹ during the interviews, the continuing circling back to agents for clarification, process of extraction of excerpts, coding, and theme development, was never a planned event, it happened almost organically. By organically, I do not mean it lacked methodological rigor or analytical precision, just that it was a process based on relations: first with the theory, then with the agents and their stories, and lastly with my own subjectivity.

In qualitative research the exit door is known as saturation. Originally coined by Glaser and Strauss as a guide for sampling, to serve as a “criterion for judging when to stop sampling the different groups pertinent to a category is the category’s theoretical saturation”(Glaser & Strauss, 1967, as cited in Saunders et al., 2018). The term has expanded also to include data analysis, which is defined as the point in data analysis when no more new discoveries (codes or themes) are being harvested from the dataset by the tools of inference and reflexivity (Braun & Clark, 2022). It is when redundancy and data sedimentation occur. Looking at saturation as a process designed for Grounded Theory, part of me did not fully embrace it, first because my research design and methodological approach were not entirely of an inductive nature, and most importantly it was not a theory-less or constructivist study. However, my pragmatic mind needed to reconcile the

¹ Enough is in quotation because Critical Realism as a theory does not adhere to the notion of absolute causality. In addition, qualitative research in general, does not intend to discover everything on a particular phenomenon. Finally, data analysis does not seek to be generalizable, but to be trustworthy, transferable, and persuasive.

visceral feeling of reaching the point of “enough” aforementioned with a tangible and coherent process.

Malterud et al. (2016), used the term information power as an alternative to saturation. Information power is intended as a guide to assist the researcher in defining its research sampling strategy, and subsequent data condensation. Information power in a qualitative study can be viewed as power calculations in qualitative research. The framework proposed is compromised by five dimensions, and each has a range of power based on the research design needs and/or analysis:

- 1) Aim: narrow or broad aims will require less or a greater number of participants or data points to achieve high information power.
- 2) Sample specificity: the more dense or specific the sample (and its data) is, the less the number of participants required. Addition of data from different perspectives from the target group, also increasing the power.
- 3) Established theory: grounding the research in an explicit theory will increase the power of the sample.
- 4) Quality of dialogue: analytical value depends on the “skills of the interviewer, the articulateness of the participants, and the chemistry between them” (Malterud et al., 2016; p. 1755). It is a balance between structured and unstructured interviews and trust.
- 5) Analysis strategy: life stories or any in-depth narrative methodology will require less participants, as the breath of information is greater than cross-case studies, for example.

Guided by these dimensions, I went back to review my memos during the analytical process to see when I expressed reaching an “enough” point with a particular data set. I developed a criteria protocol to find the analytical spaces where power information was present,

compromising a theoretical, a methodological, and a reflexive level. Not surprisingly, I found three spaces of power information, each conveniently located in the coding and theming methods explained in this chapter. The table below, outlines my analytical effort when reaching or finding information power. For the purpose of this research, I use saturation and informational power interchangeably, having denoted their different origins and applications.

Finding Information Power (Saturation) During Data Analysis

Data Analysis Phase	Dimension	Criteria Used: Theoretical, Methodological, Reflexive	Example
Data Familiarization Phase	Study Aim & Sample Specificity	<p>Theoretical: Entering the dataset as multilayer accounts across multiple life stages.</p> <p>Methodological: Repetitive review of the transcripts (using lifespan and timeline perspectives), with no analytical benchmark.</p> <p>Reflexive: Journal and memo writing to sketch the contours of the data sets.</p>	<p>Reading the transcriptions and listening to the recordings the same time, allowed me to have a “surround system” experience of the stories. For the recorded interviews, I also watched the video once during this phase. This extra layer of visual input, added to the experience of being-present with the stories. Investing approximately 10 hours per transcript, was “enough” time to feel that my rehearsal was concluded. Now, I was ready to enter the coding dance.</p>
Deductive Code Development Phase	Quality of the Dialogue & Establish Theory	<p>Theoretical: Development of “rest stops” at the beginning of the coding phase (extraction of code excerpts), allowed for the soft delimitation of the theoretical bounds, without creating a bottle neck constriction (as found during strict deductive inference).</p> <p>Methodological: The quality of the conversations was addressed by the researcher and the life agent (data not coded), and it served to assess for the need to change in interview approach, or to continue the same format.</p> <p>Reflexive: Incessant memo writing. These entries became the in-situ scan of my inner conversation.</p>	<p>“Life stories as my methodology allowed me to engage in a bidirectional and dialectical nature and form. ...The interviews were long, probably longer than conventional research interviews, however, they lasted the time they needed to last. A sense of saturation was felt for both the agent and the interviewer.” (Memo entry, 12/07/21)</p>

Data Analysis Phase	Dimension	Criteria Used: Theoretical, Methodological, Reflexive	Example
Reflexive Theme Generation Phase	Study Aim & Sample Specificity	<p>Theoretical: Entering the dataset as multilayer accounts across multiple life stages.</p> <p>Methodological: Repetitive review of the transcripts (using lifespan and timeline perspectives), with no analytical benchmark.</p> <p>Reflexive: Journal and memo writing to sketch the contours of the data sets.</p>	<p>“This saturation is more visible when I am moving from overarching themes to genealogy themes, because- I can see that the themes created well encapsulate a large number of subthemes. This could not happen if some kind of repetitive theming is not present. In addition, I feel that having coding experience is also a way to “retrace” the accuracy of my coding scheme and to be able to find the initial excerpts that gave origin to the theme category.” (Memo entry 01/11/2021)</p>
Critical Deconstructive Phase	Quality of the Dialogue & Establish Theory	<p>Theoretical: Development of “rest stops” at the beginning of the coding phase (extraction of code excerpts), allowed for the soft delimitation of the theoretical bounds, without creating a bottle neck constriction (as found during strict deductive inference).</p> <p>Methodological: Making my coding technique more methodical (which sometimes was tedious), I found out that code saturation was being reached at around ¾ of the way through second and third interviews, when no more new code labels were developed.</p> <p>Reflexive: Locating my own experience within the themes developed, as a way to remove blinders and accept methodological responsibility.</p>	<p>“I found my way through this phase, by locating themes using deconstructivity as my ally. By telling the stories of our lives, we are playing with all these components- bordering realities with imagination [layered realities].</p> <p>What helped to bring to the surface actual events is the confluence of logical mechanisms shaping such events: repetition of events told in similar ways, logical timelines guided by reported public events, multiplicity of recounts from different people describing an event or phenomenon, and consistency of events over time. Finding the mechanism, was my stop sign.” (Memo entry, 01/26/2022)</p>

Note. Malterud et al. (2016) guidelines are tailored to fit the methodological nuances of this research.

Appendix J

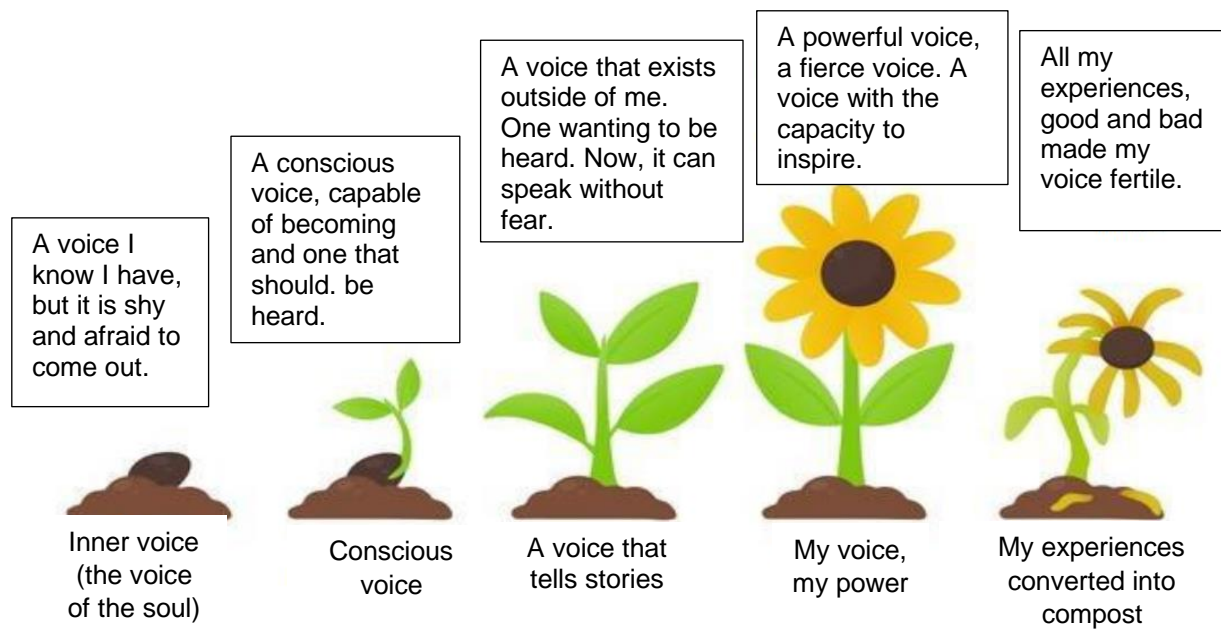
Time Spent in Each Step of the Analytical Process

	Data Familiarization Phase	Time Invested per Transcript¹ (ave. hours)
STEP ONE SUBMERGED	Scanning of Transcripts	1.5
	Distant perspective	1.5
	X-Ray perspective	1
	Recognition of general conversational shapes	2.5
	Embodied perspective	4
	Creative perspective	1
	Deductive Code Development Phase	
	Extraction of code excerpts	4
	Development of code labels and code type classification	5
	Moving from code labels to code categories	3
STEP TWO SUBMERSION	Reflexive Theme Generation Phase	
	From code categories to Root Themes	2
	From General Themes to Overarching Themes	3
	Development of Generative Themes	4
	Critical Theming Phase	
	Retroductive thinking about 3-D realities	3
STEP THREE EMERGENT	Abductive thinking on research questions	5
	Inductive Thinking Phase³	
	Development of Theoretical Framework	2
	Total Time Invested Per Transcript on Average	40.5 hours
	Total Time Invested	729 hours

*Note.*¹Time invested in Focal Agents Transcripts (6x). ²Time invested with Extended Agents is not calculated, as they transcripts were analyzed as testimonios. ³Step Three was initiated during the data analysis, but its development is outside of the boundaries of this thesis.

Appendix K

Sara Sofia's Process of the Evolution of her Voice



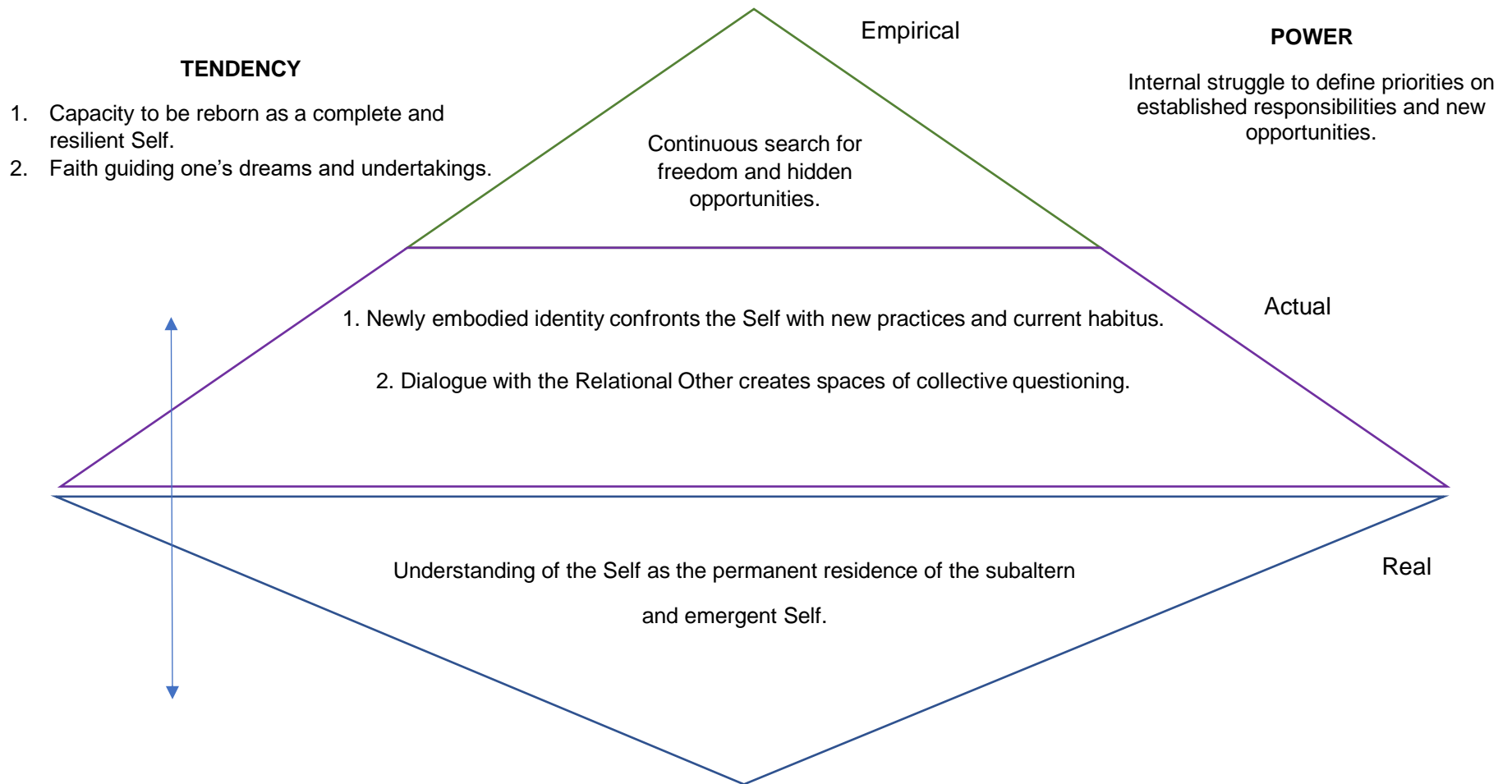
Vignette

The growth of the flower is, the first thing I put as the internal voice of the soul, it is a voice that suddenly, one hears, that resonates in one's head, but one does not know what it is.

The second, well, the second stage I put as a conscious voice, because when you know what I *do have* [emphasis on her tone] a voice that resonates with, one way or another, it has to be something, you have to at least think about making noise. I put the other one as a voice that tells stories, and a voice that suddenly has more power, that already makes itself heard a little, that is not fully developed, that is not fully flourished, but well, at least it came out from the earth.

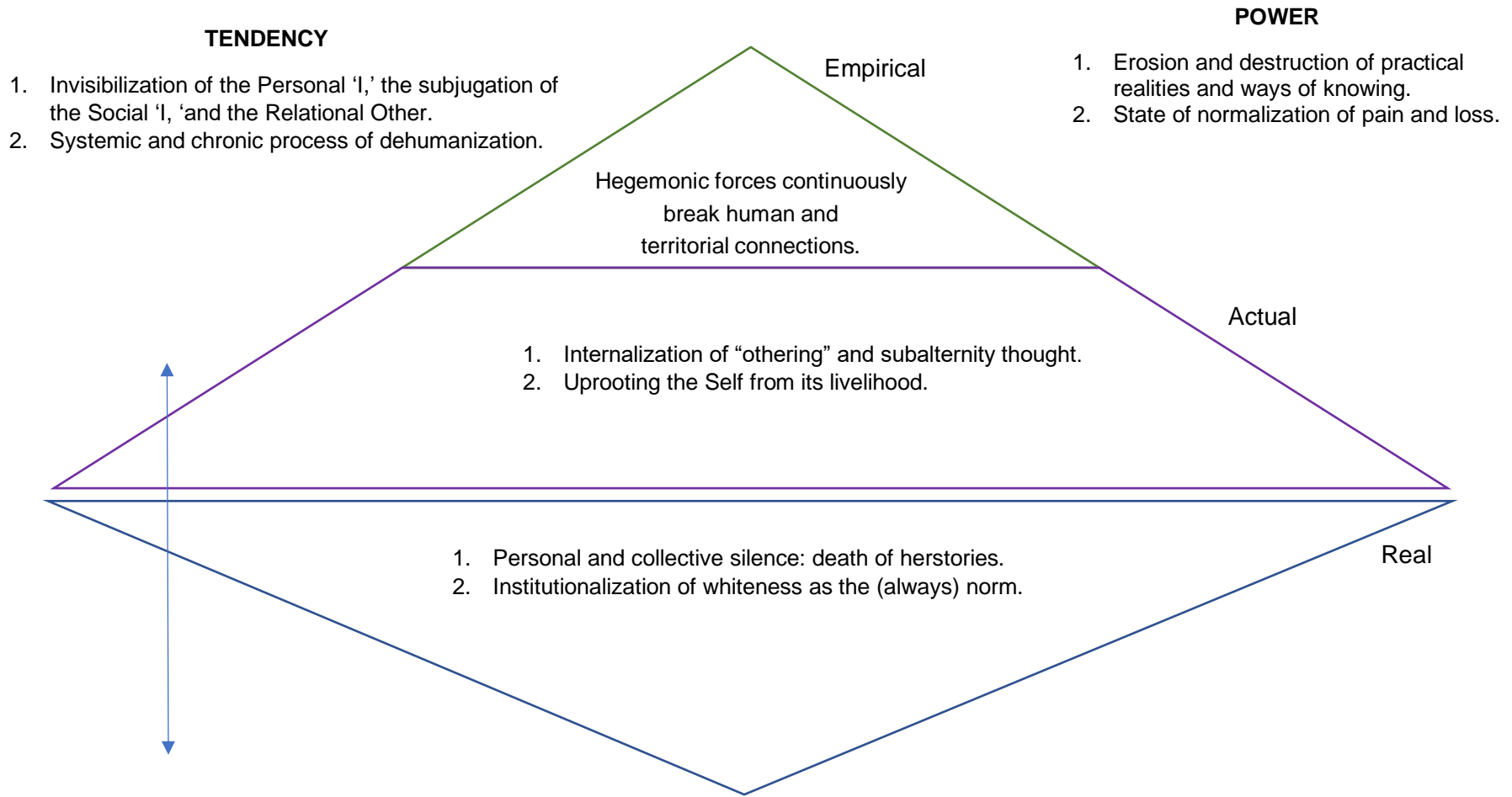
And the last one I put as my voice, my power when I already feel that I hope very soon to reach that level, and since nothing stops me when it comes to speaking, and that I can be without any prejudice or anything, and flourish, like this flower here. (Sara Sofía)

Appendix L

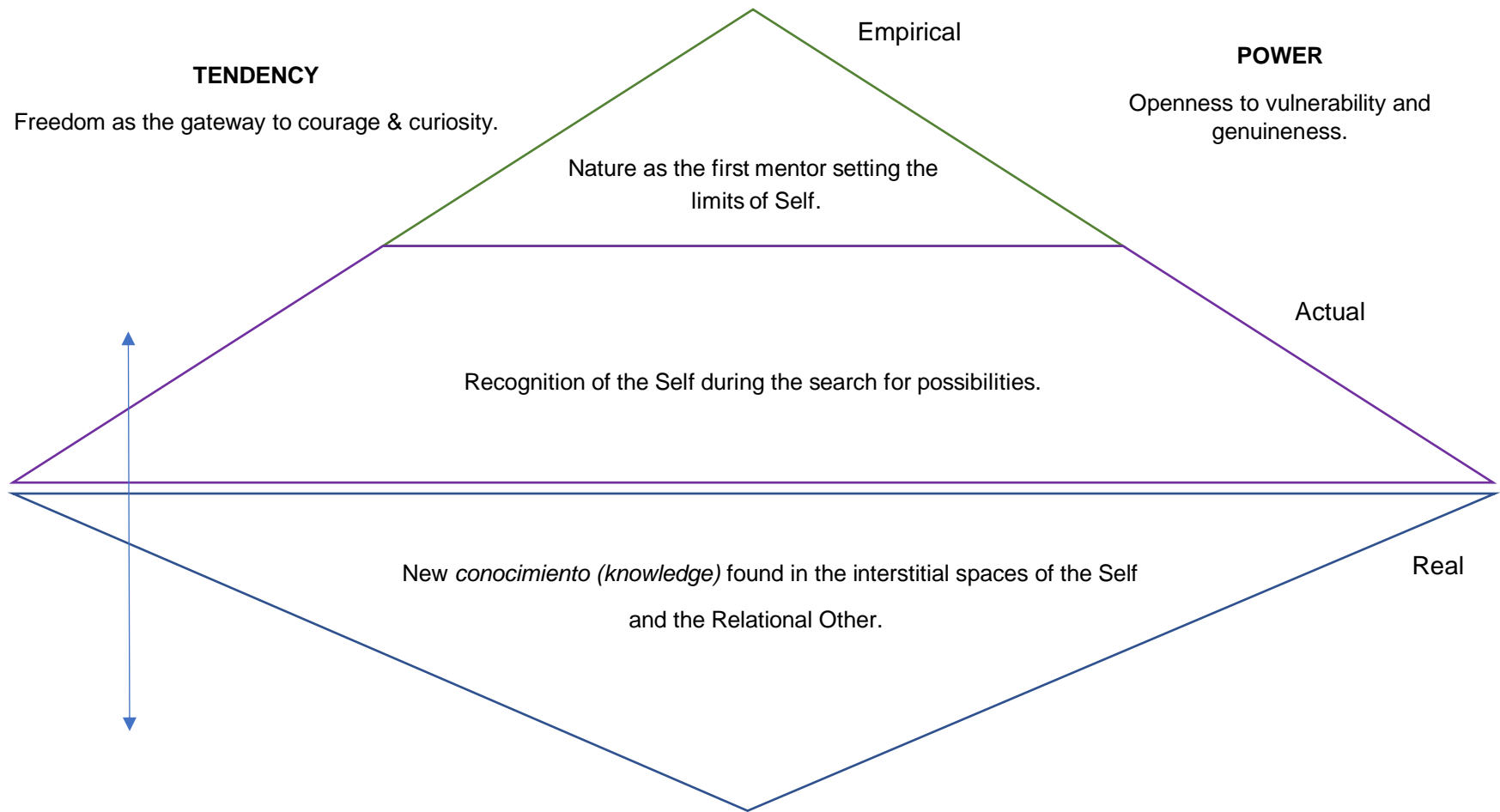


1. **Structure:** Identities Created by Physical and Metaphorical Migrations

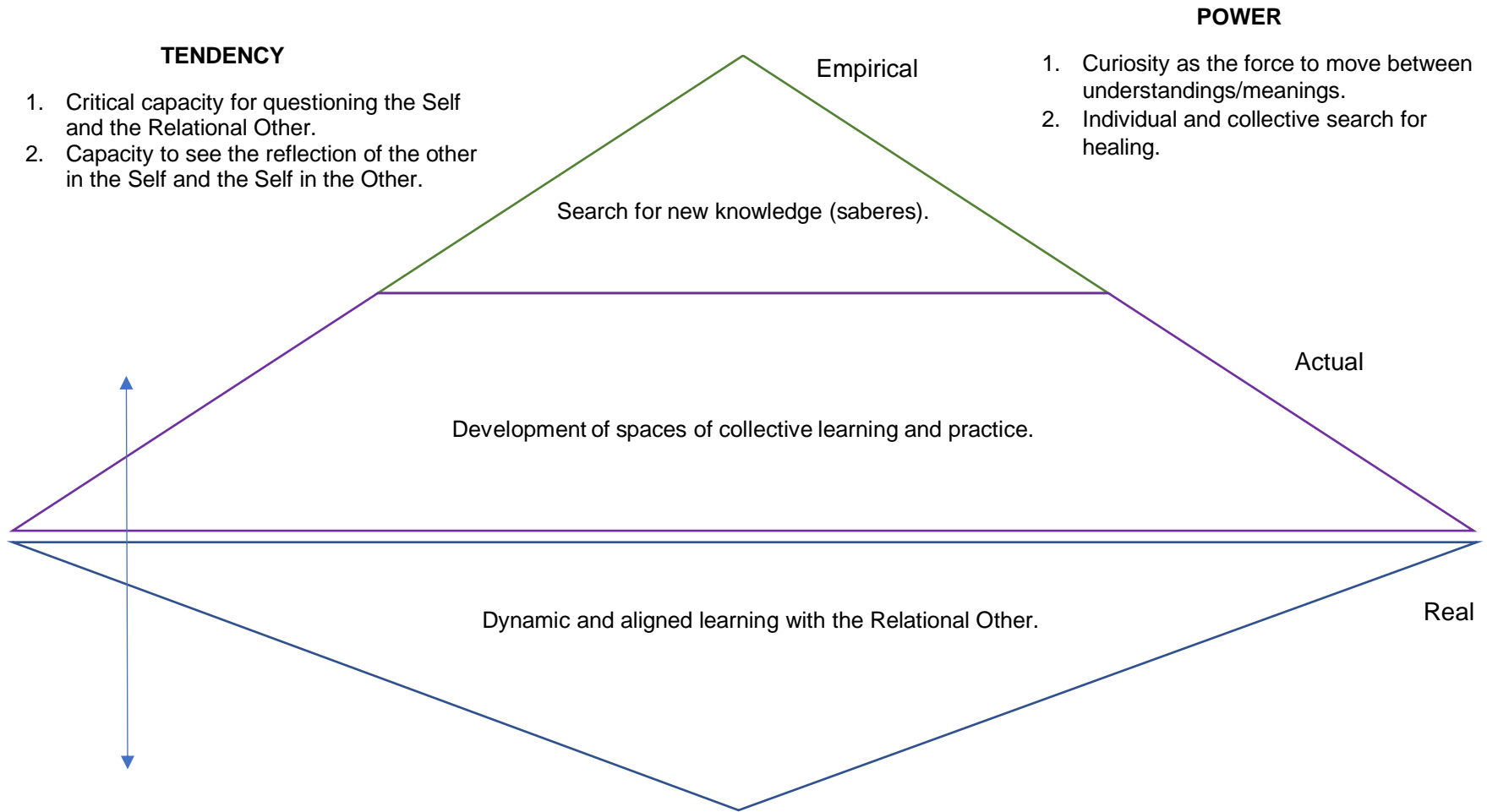
Note. Intersecting arrow represents Tendency (always active and present).



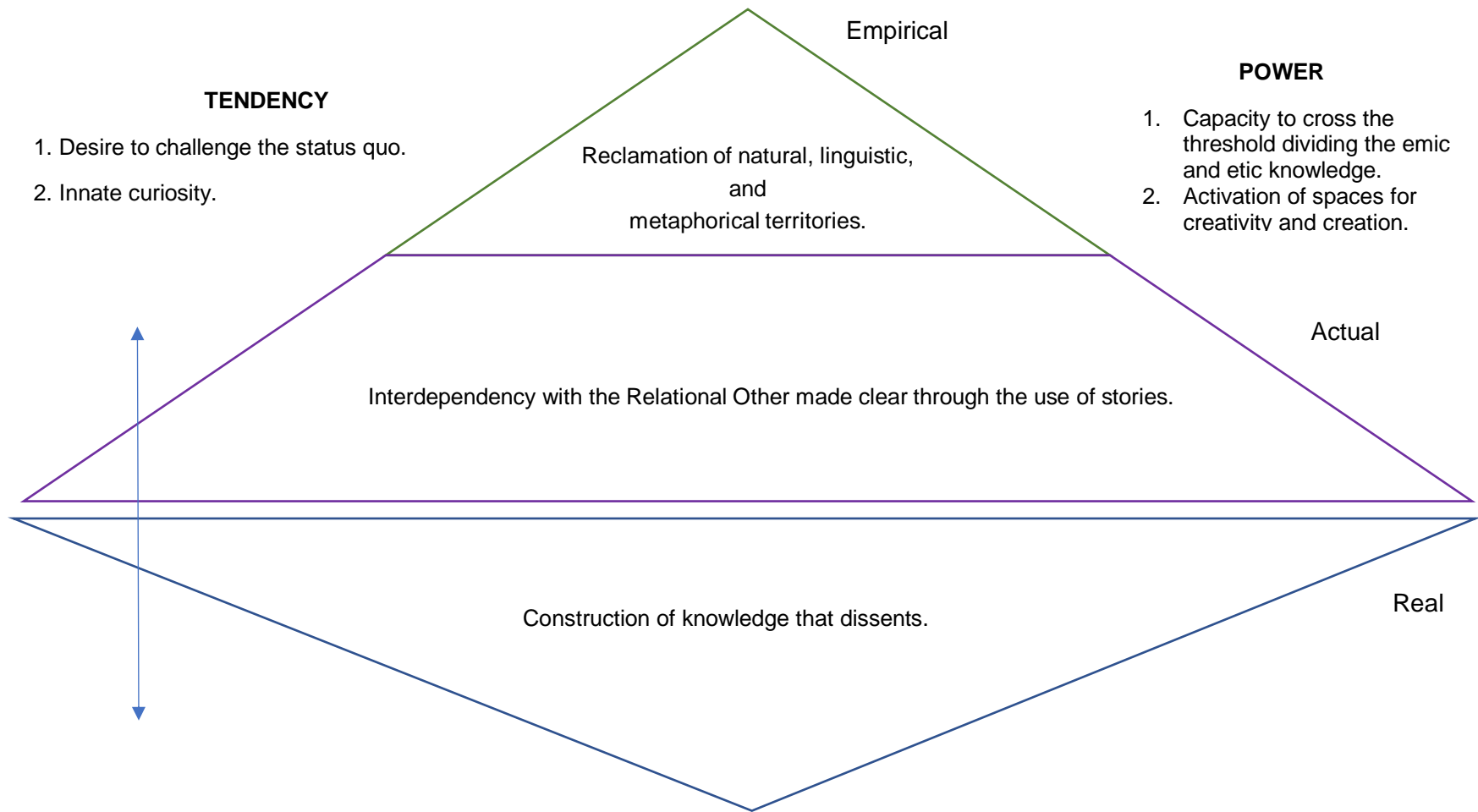
2. Structure: Oppressive Social/Cultural/Political Environments



3. Structure: Space of Belonging and Accountability



4. Structure: Territories as Places for the Construction of a Sense of Self



5. Structure: Spaces for Dialogue and Dialectical Exchanges

Appendix M

Constructed Global Social Structures and their Trifectas for Extended Agents

Emergent Emic	Mechanism	Power	Tendency
	Inner voice curating the Self with beauty and capacity.	Never-ending search for something more	Curiosity
Personal Journey: Resurgence of the Self from the ashes of what she was	Internal search for hidden shackles (traits and habits) keeping the Self from using all her faculties.	Have a source of inspiration to give form to a vision of the desired “ <i>You</i> ” (future “ <i>I</i> ”)	Faith
	Fear as conservative and habitual mediator between gains and risks (“ <i>Me</i> ” as the conversational broker).	Targeted disciple	Genuine ethos

Emergent Etic	Mechanism	Power	Tendency
Co-owned Learning: Being a bridge in the liberation of the Relational Other	Regenerative creation of mirrors for the Sense of Self and the Concept of Self.	Collective Knowing (vs. learning)	Solidarity
	Calling to support others as a compass and guide.	Desire to support the growth of the Relational Other	

Collective Emergent Emic	Mechanism	Power	Tendency
	Design of territories based on past and current realities	Vision for personal and collective liberation	Centrality of native/natural/embodyed knowledge
Growth within Nepantla, Liminality, or interstitial spaces	Constant realization of the Sense of Self in the mirror of the Relational Other (e.g., mujer/madre)	Embodiment of one's whole humanity	Belonging and permanence
	Enactment of defined boundaries for the individual-collective or different-similar	Sense of groupness/ accountability to the group	Intentionality of action and reflection

Collective Emergent Etic	Mechanism	Power	Tendency
	Awareness of “othering” and subalternity systems	Embodied identities as political and gender targets of oppressive missiles	Creation of new pathways
Foreignization and confrontation of collective learning with external realities	Competitive priorities in the growth process of the individual-collective	Negotiation of capacities between the Self and We	Pride and awe from close “expectators”
	Translation of meaning (worlds) as a constant exercise or dissonance in the semiotic landscape		Constant exercise of becoming visible to the Self, the Relational Other, and the Frontier Other