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WE RESIST, WE HEAL, WE TRANSFORM: EXPLORING YOUTH OF COLOR JOURNEYS TOWARDS HEALING JUSTICE IN A GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATION IN URBAN BOSTON.

A Master's Thesis Presented
by
RHYANN L. ROBINSON

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies,
University of Massachusetts Boston,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

December 2023

Clinical Psychology Program

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WE RESIST, WE HEAL, WE TRANSFORM: EXPLORING YOUTH OF COLOR JOURNEYS TOWARDS HEALING JUSTICE IN A GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATION IN URBAN BOSTON.

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ABSTRACT

WE RESIST, WE HEAL, WE TRANSFORM: EXPLORING YOUTH OF COLOR JOURNEYS TOWARDS HEALING JUSTICE IN A GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATION IN URBAN BOSTON.

December 2023

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While many would say otherwise, the current system is not a broken one (Kaba, 2021). The colonial systems, frameworks, and theories we have in place are working exactly how they are supposed to: in favor of and in tandem with systems that seek to oppress marginalized communities. This realization calls for a shift, including shifts in research in ways that builds from below (Atallah & Dutta, 2021; Fernández, 2018; Tang-Yan, 2022). The current study aims to explicitly interrogate coloniality and colonial violence in a United States socio historical context, exploring youth of color development in conditions of adversity, looking at the ways that coloniality and colonial violence impact youth of color.

The current literature in psychological sciences and related disciplines on the impact of centuries of colonial violence and ongoing coloniality and youth resistance and resilience often

take a “whitestream” (Bell, 2018) – Eurocentric – approach. In this paper, this “whitestream” literature on youth development and resilience is reviewed before shifting to introduce frameworks on decolonial resistance and healing justice that will be engaged in the current study.

This study aims to enact a decolonial turn both theoretically and methodologically. Decolonial theory and methods are linked to decolonial resistance movements and frontliners contesting coloniality in everyday lives (Atallah & Dutta, 2021). Youth-focused grassroots organizations can play pivotal roles in cultivating decolonial resistance processes, intergenerational resilience, and healing justice with youth of color who contest structural violence associated with coloniality and interrelated systems of oppression (e.g. Atallah, 2017; Burgess, Prescod, Bryan, & Chatters, 2021). The City School (TCS), located in Boston, Massachusetts, is a grassroots organization that provides youth-focused programming in the form of their Summer Leadership Program (SLP) for young people between fourteen and nineteen years of age. SLP’s curriculum engages leadership development pedagogies, healing justice practices, community building exercises, and critical education to support youth resistance and resilience journeys. This study aimed to explore and evaluate the situations in which TCS staff create conditions of healing justice in support of youth of color decolonial resistance and resilience journeys during the SLP. With the support of TCS leadership, semi-structured, individual interviews were completed with a total of 8 ($N = 8$) protagonists who were former or current staff members and youth members of TCS SLP. Utilizing *situational analysis* (Clarke, Friese, and Washburn, 2018), a qualitative method developed as an extension of *grounded theory* (Creswell, 2007), the findings were organized in a representation entitled *The City School Fern of Collective Care & Decolonial Love: Making healing Imaginable for Young People*. These findings explain the processes by which SLP staff and structures support the youths’ healing

journeys in terms of 4 major themes: prioritizing youths' feelings and vulnerabilities (facilitating healing at an individualized pace); uplifting youth's value & humanity; practices of accompaniment, interdependence, and joy; radical love & (re)creating community and spaces of belonging. The study findings shed light on the complex multifaceted processes of healing- and justice-promoting youth-focused community practice. Findings contribute to abolitionist futures with the goal of visioning the creation of new ways of being, relating, and knowing. Results may be relevant to understanding the potential of grassroots, youth focused, organizations like The City School in fostering decolonial love and healing among youth of color. Results may also be relevant to education and curriculum development during a time where the integration of youth centered humanizing inclusive curricula are under threat. Understanding and applying these insights can have implications for addressing the impacts of coloniality, colonial violence, and intersecting systems of oppression on marginalized communities, particularly youth of color.

Keywords: healing journeys, resisting coloniality, flourishing lives of urban youth.

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CHAPTER 1

IINTRODUCTION

Specific Aims

This study aims to enact a decolonial turn, a way of thought opposing the colonial Western ideas propagating capitalism, racism, and the like (Maldonado-Torres, 2011), both theoretically and methodologically. Decolonial theory and methods are linked to decolonial resistance movements and frontliners contesting coloniality in everyday lives (Atallah & Dutta, 2021). Youth-focused grassroots organizations can play pivotal roles in cultivating decolonial resistance processes, intergenerational resilience, and healing justice with youth of color who contest structural violence associated with coloniality and interrelated systems of oppression (e.g. Atallah, 2017; Burgess, Prescod, Bryan, & Chatters, 2021). The City School (TCS), located in Boston, Massachusetts, is a grassroots organization that provides youth-focused programming in the form of their Summer Leadership Program (SLP) for young people between fourteen and nineteen years of age. SLP's curriculum engages leadership development pedagogies, healing justice practices, community building exercises, and critical education to support youth resistance and resilience journeys.

This study also seeks to explore and evaluate the situations in which TCS staff create conditions of healing justice in support of youth of color decolonial resistance and resilience journeys during the SLP. Utilizing *situational analysis* (Clarke, Friese, and Washburn, 2018), a qualitative method developed as an extension of *grounded theory* (Creswell, 2007), the current study seeks to explore complex multifaceted processes of healing- and justice-promoting youth-

focused community practice. Specifically, this study uses semi-structured interviews, informed by decolonial decolonial feminist methodologies and participatory theoretical approaches, to enable TCS staff to individually generate rich descriptions and testimonies illuminating how they perceive the ways in which the SLP potentially impacts the journeys towards healing justice for youth of color in urban Boston. In doing so, this study seeks to answer the following overarching research question and three interrelated sub questions:

1. How does a grassroots organization in Boston support youth of color in their journeys towards healing justice in the face of coloniality and interrelated systems of oppression?
    a. How do youth workers in the grassroots organization perceive the ways in which their programming supports youths of color healing journeys?
    b. How do youth workers in the grassroots organization perceive the processes of supporting youth of color in their journeys of resisting coloniality and interrelated systems of oppression?
    c. What are the situational elements that contribute to creating conditions for healing and resistance to take root and flourish within the lives of the youth of color in urban Boston?

Background and Significance

"*After the struggle is over, there is not only the demise of colonialism, but also the demise of the colonized."* (Fanon, 1963; p.178)

When colonialism ends, oppression continues. Decolonial scholars call this continuation of oppression "coloniality" (e.g. Lugones, 2010; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Quijano, 2000). While struggles defuse, genocides stop, and so-called 'peace' times unfold - a multiplicity of patterns of destructive power and interlocking systems of oppression persists through coloniality to dehumanize and damage the lives of historically colonized communities, even after they won their 'freedom' (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). Resisting these intergenerational processes of coloniality - the continual dehumanization and "demise of the colonized" - requires the reclamation of marginalized narratives and the intergenerational processes of continual healing justice as key dimensions of decoloniality (Atallah, 2017; Atallah & Dutta, 2021; Del Rio & Robinson, in press; Fanon, 1950; 1963). Colonialism represents a political and economic power relation in which the sovereignty of a nation relies on the power of another nation; on the other hand, "coloniality, instead, refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations" (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; pg. 243). Racism and coloniality are inextricably tied, as race defines the two axes of power that characterize America: The categorization of the conquerors and the conquered and biological differences making some people naturally inferior to others (Quijano, 2000). These are the cornerstones of coloniality and the "so-called blacks were not only the most important exploited group… they were, above all, the most important colonized race" (Quijano, 2000; pg. 534).

Black and Indigenous peoples were exploited by colonizers for their lands or for their unpaid labors. In these processes, the concept of race was created to build a structure of racial hierarchies where whites were constructed as fully human while nonwhites were forced to take their positions as not human enough, or not human at all (Maldonado-Torres, 2016).

While many would say otherwise, the current system is not a broken one (Kaba, 2021). The colonial systems, frameworks, and theories we have in place are working exactly how they are supposed to: in favor of and in tandem with systems that seek to oppress marginalized communities, maintaining the status quo. This realization calls for a shift including shifts in research in ways that builds from below (Atallah & Dutta, 2021; Fernández, 2018; Tang-Yan, 2022). We need to start rethinking youth work (e.g., working with youth in afterschool programs or summer programs) from decolonial and anti-racism perspectives, as the current literature corresponds with a system created to perpetuate racism and coloniality. The labels, "youth" and "adolescents" are constructs that change depending on culture and context; it is important to contextualize these constructs for the purpose of this study which works primarily with Black and Brown youth, as these populations are often seen in society as older than they are. Youth of color, particularly Black and Brown youth, are often surveilled, policed, disciplined, and punished in ways that simultaneously make them into adults while still being positioned as subordinate. In this study, we have partnered with a youth focused organization in Boston, MA using an age-based definition for youth of 14-19 years old (The City School website). Youth work, in the context of this study, is conceptualized as "the theory knowledge and practice of providing support and developmental guidance for …adolescents" (Vasudevan, 2017, pg. 8).

There needs to be focus on frameworks/theories/ways of being that center the voices, experiences, and knowledges of those at the margins who have been deeply impacted by

coloniality and interrelated systems of oppression (Atallah, Bacigalupe, & Repetto, 2019). In particular, the voices and journeys towards healing and justice of youth of color are especially important to center because of the ways that they unfold at the crossroads of intergenerational processes of coloniality (Atallah, 2017; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2019; Burgess et al., 2021, Fernández, 2021). However, the current literature in psychological sciences and related disciplines on the impact of centuries of colonial violence and ongoing coloniality and youth resistance and resilience often take a "whitestream" (Bell, 2018) – Eurocentric – approach. This literature focuses on psychological trauma and resilience (Masten, 2015; Ungar, 2003) to research and theorize youth development in ways that rarely center the voices and knowledges of grassroots frontliners who promote youth healing justice journeys despite all the odds (Volpe, Dawson, Rahal, Wiley, & Vesslee, 2019; Toraif et al., 2021; Bhatia & Priya, 2021). This 'whitestream' literature on youth development and resilience is reviewed below, before shifting to introduce frameworks on decolonial resistance and healing justice that is oriented toward the unique positionalities or lived experiences of youth.

Eurocentric trauma and resilience theories: The **ACE Study and "Bounce Back" Frameworks**

Psychological trauma and resilience theories have contributed to understandings of youth processes of facing oppression in minoritized and racialized communities (e.g., Saleem, Anderson, & Williams, 2020; Comas-Díaz, Hall, & Neville, 2019; Masten, 2015; Ungar, 2000). These deficit perspectives need to be challenged, and even the epistemologies behind them require a shift – often rooted in deficit biomedical perspectives (Tuck & Yang, 2014; Menakem, 2021). However, conventional trauma and resilience frameworks are often rooted in mainstream and Eurocentric discourses on youth experience and development. These discourses perpetuate

coloniality and systems of oppression that youth of color struggle against. In fact, Atallah, Bacigalupe, and Repetto (2019) suggests that "resilience" as a construct has direct origins in Europe and Eurocentric frameworks on human adaptation rooted in coloniality. Atallah et al. (2019) argue that concepts of resilience can be categorized within three 'waves' in psychology and related disciplines. The first is the "bounce back" wave, which is the belief in the ability of a person or system to protect its state of equilibrium after an adverse event, arguing that this tends to focus on better understanding individual-level resilience and the interplay of vulnerability and protective factors. (Wright, Masten, & Narayan, 2013; Atallah et. al, 2019). Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) framework overlaps with the "bounce back" wave of resilience, conceptualizing trauma, and resilience within an understanding of individual level response to adverse events (e.g., Bonanno, 2010; Garmzey, 1989; Holling, 1986; Luthar, 2006).

The Adverse childhood experiences (ACE) study was the largest, and best-known study on the negative effects of trauma on the body and was conducted by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention alongside Kaiser Permanente (Felitti, Anda, Nordenberg, Williamson, Spitz, Edwards, & Marks, 1998). The study examined 17,000 people over three decades (Feletti et. al., 1998). The ACE study was able to link various forms of childhood trauma to a range of longer-term health and social consequences including but not limited to illness, social problems, and early mortality rates (Whitfield, 1998; Larkin, Sheilds & Anda, 2012; Zarse et. al., 2019). There is also significant evidence to support the association between ACE scores and overall health and wellbeing (Feletti et. al., 1998). The ACE study led to the creation of the ACE questionnaire, which has influenced mainstream discourse of youth experiences from minoritized and racialized communities (Maguire-Jack, Lanier, & Lombardi, 2020).

The ACE questionnaire consists of ten "adverse events" wherein the protagonist should indicate whether they have experienced this event. These events include, but are not limited to physical abuse, emotional neglect, substance abuse within the household, and a family member in prison. In the USA, when compared with middle- and upper-class white communities, the prevalence of these types of adverse events can be higher in minoritized and racialized communities, such as in African American populations and Indigenous populations, particularly when socio-economic status is considered (Slack, Font, & Jones, 2017; Smith, Milaney, Henderson, 2021). Much like in the literature in the first wave of the resilience theory, there should be discussion of coloniality and societal violence that impacts high ACE scores (e.g., the prison industrial complex) in communities of color. In fact, with all the talk of racism in the public sphere in the USA, the ACE questionnaire remains completely silent when it comes to questions about people's adverse experiences navigating through racist systems and relations, contributing to the reproduction of coloniality and epistemic violence through the erasure of those experiences of youth of color. Socioeconomic conditions are also often overlooked (Taylor-Robinson et al 2018; Kelly-Irving & Delpierre 2019; Anderson, 2019; via Walsh, 2019). A review of ACEs research conducted by Glasgow Centre for Population Health found that only six out of close to 3,000 papers mentioned any socio-economic conditions (Walsh, 2019). The largely biomedical focus within the studies conducted on the ACE measure and the negation of any mention about structures and systems of oppression only contribute to the individualization that are typical of how psychology views youthhood as well as the lack of discourse on root causes of oppression in mainstream/whitestream research. The ACE's measure exemplifies the mainstream perspective that is seen in the "bounce back" wave of resilience theory where the

focus lies within the individual and neglects the structural implications of coloniality and systemic racism.

"Bounce Forward" Resilience and Positive Youth Development

The second wave resilience theory that Atallah et. al, (2019) discuss is called the "bounce forward" wave, where adaptation is re-conceptualized to focus on process oriented human phenomena, whereas the "bounce back" wave conceptualized resilience as a person's ability to protect their state of equilibrium and recover after an adverse event. This *second wave* (Atallah et. al, 2019) takes a more holistic approach where resilience is seen as deeply relational and intergenerational, stemming from changing resources and rights (Atallah, 2016; Masten, 2015; Shapiro, 2008; Tol et al., 2011; Ungar, 2010). The "bounce forward" approach to resilience tends to provide a strength-based perspective, and a more nuanced view of human suffering and adaptation compared with "bounce back" frameworks (Atallah, 2019). For example, interventionists and researchers who apply a bounce forward perspective may view people that present with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as experiencing significant distress. These same interventionists and researchers, however, may also be particularly interested in the ways that the people diagnosed with PTSD simultaneously enact post-traumatic growth and develop new strategies for coping, demonstrate new talents, as well as connect with intergenerational, spiritual, and cultural resources that show extraordinary determination (Atallah, 2019). This framing for resilience decenters the person's (or system's) ability as we see in the bounce back/first wave, and instead, incorporates an emphasis on culture, resources, community, and environment. This is captured by Ungar's (2010) statement that "individual capacity is far less important than the quality of the child's social ecology" (p. 425; Atallah, 2019). Kara et al.

(2021) presents an example of "bounce forward" resilience in their empirical study on longitudinally examining protective factors relevant to the resilience of young people.

In a school-based prevention program in the United Kingdom called Bounce Forward, 441 elementary aged students with majority low family income took part in a 2-year program that aimed to increase their resilience by building their mental health and resilience skills. This program sought to "improve aspects of their resilience and bounce forward when times are tough" (Kara, et al., 2021, pg.11). They found that the Bounce Forward program has a positive impact in building their knowledge of resilience and mental health which in turn helped reduce the likelihood of behavioral difficulties (Kara, et al., 2021). This study provides a clear example of "bounce forward" resilience and, while there was an obvious positive impact on these students' wellbeing, the authors acknowledged that "Bounce Forward focused more on equipping young people to 'beat the odds,' rather than 'change the odds,'" (Kara, et al., 2021, pg. 11). This demonstrates the element that is often discarded in Eurocentric resilience frameworks.

Like the "bounce back" framing of resilience, "bounce forward" also tends to neglect the impact of interlocking systems of oppression and the way that marginalized students are affected by them are not addressed in a direct way. This study also demonstrates that, while programs like Bounce Forward can operate from a social justice lens while "using a whole-town approach" (Kara, et al., 2021, pg.12), they still may neglect the systemic impact of oppression and thereby puts the onus on the students to beat the odds against them in an individualized way by making them the focal point of their oppression, rather than the systems it comes from.

Reminiscent of the *second wave* resilience framework is the Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework (e.g., Ungar, 2010; Masten, 2013). PYD is a framework that was developed in response to the predominantly deficit focus that researchers usually take when looking at the

capacities of young people (Damon, 2004). While stretching across fields, including but not limited to psychology, public health, and social work, PYD is an umbrella term that comprises research, philosophy, and can even serve as a professional identity (Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Sesma, 2007). This strengths-based approach to understanding and promoting youth development encourages the idea that all youth have the potential to thrive (Williams & Deutsch, 2016). The five C's of PYD, or the five desired outcomes, include: competence, character, connection, confidence, and caring and compassion with the goal of getting to the sixth C of 'contribution' (Lerner, Fisher, & Weinberg, 2000; Fraser-Thomas, Côté, & Deakin, 2005). These principles are rooted in Eurocentric constructs and whitestream neoliberal values of productivity and individual contribution to the economic workplace and the broader sociopolitical status quo (Maldonado-Torres, 2016), as well as the erasure of relational and communal experiences of youth engagement, as some models of youth development prioritize individualism as a mode of success.

When these principles are applied uncritically to minoritized and racialized young people, PYD risks contributing to systems of oppression in significant ways, such as invalidating their experiences of systemic oppression; nonetheless, many youth development programs specifically target minoritized and racialized young people by focusing on economically disenfranchised communities where Black folks are overrepresented (Williams & Deutsch, 2016). The strengths that PYD aims to build in youth of color through programming along with its discourse in the literature often invisibilize their experiences of interlocking systems of oppression such as racism, classism and the school to prison pipeline that afflict the communities that the programs seek to serve. Not taking these oppressive systems into consideration as they affect youth of color risks perpetuating the narrative that not having/being any of "the 5 C's" is their fault, rather

than the fault of outside systems that were created specifically to preventing their achievement. Though PYD claims to critique other mainstream modes of youth development (Williams & Deutsch, 2016), PYD itself and the discourse surrounding it, contributes to the largely individualistic and whitestream lens that excludes systemic oppression and its damaging effects on youth of color from the narrative.

Anderson & Mezuk (2015) provide an example of PYD in action through their empirical longitudinal study with Chicago public school students (N = 12,197) looking at the connections between psychosocial factors and participation in a debate league as well as academic performance using a positive youth development framework. They found that those who participated in the debate league demonstrated "greater social conscience, social competence, civic commitment, and importance of education compared to non-debaters" (Anderson & Mezuk, 2015, pg. 371) and concluded that "participation may have important and long-lasting social benefits to communities independent of its apparent positive impact on student academic performance" (Anderson & Mezuk, 2015, pg. 372). This study demonstrates the strengths-based approach and the ways that PYD focuses on thinking about young people as having a lot to offer.; in addition, similarly to the bounce forward resilience framework, it focuses on self-development. At the same time, the study neglects to see young people as parts of broader intergenerational and deep-rooted social conditions where racial trauma (Menakem, 2021), coloniality (Maldonado-Torres, 2007), and structural violence (Dutta, Sonn, & Lykes, 2016) are present. The largely individualistic, apolitical framework of PYD leaves little capacity for explorations and interventions with youth of color that address the impacts of intergenerational, interlocking systems of oppression. The studies that were reviewed (Anderson & Mezuk, 2015; Williams & Deutsch, 2016) focus on social markers that only tell a part of the story in ways that

are saturated with eurocentrism and individuality. There are theories and methods, however, that do focus on understanding impacts of coloniality, racism, and related interlocking systems of oppression and opportunities for resistance in the lives of youth of color. These literatures are reviewed below.

Intergenerational Trauma, Racial Trauma, Colonial Trauma, and 'Unchilding'

"Looking at children as political capital is an analytical approach that can navigate psychocriminological binaries between the colonized and colonizer, insisting on the raciality in which unchilding functions politically and rhetorically in the settler colony" (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2021, pg. 500)

It is important to discuss the ways in which systems of oppression impact the lives of marginalized youth, as this is something that is often ignored in the field of psychology generally due to psychology playing a role in perpetuating systems of power, as well as in areas of research that deal specifically with youth. This can be largely encompassed in the concept of structural violence, which "refers to social systems as well as the mechanisms through which they produce and normalize marginalization, exclusion, and exploitation along lines of [race], class, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and other invidious categories" (Dutta, Sonn & Lykes, 2016; pg. 1-2). Structural violence functions through getting rid of social and political origins of psychosocial problems rather than blaming the struggling communities and individuals for their problems; examples include sexism, hunger, health inequities, and racism (Dutta, Sonn & Lykes, 2016; pg. 2).

Racism is a multilevel type of oppression ranging from internalized to institutional and intergenerational (Jones, 2000). The rootedness of racism in society is due to coloniality and the

historical colonial patterns of power that are socially constructed around the concept of race, but intersect across power, privilege and oppression with effects passed down to the next generation of youth (Collins, 2017; Fanon, 1963; Ford & Airhihenbuwa, 2010; Jones, 2000; Krieger, 2003). Racism increases the advantages of the dominant racialized groups (e.g., White, European Americans) and increases the disadvantages of non-dominant groups (e.g., Black, Indigenous, people of color). Racism, like other forms of structural violence, is ordinary. It is embedded in the fabric of society, and this includes research and knowledge production processes. As people of color, racism is not only something that happens *to* us, racism also happens *in* us. Racism is embodied and intergenerational. Menakem (2021) discusses trauma as spreading interpersonally from the oppressed and marginalized to their children, mentioning that children are particularly susceptible "because their young nervous systems are easily overwhelmed by things that older, more experienced nervous systems are able to override" (Menakem, 2021, pg. 42). Menakem (2021) refers to this transfer of trauma from generation to generation as historical trauma, "like a bomb going off, over and over again" (Menakem, 2021, pg. 39). Historical trauma, as defined by Kirmayer, Gone, & Moses (2014) "as a construct to describe the impact of colonization, cultural suppression, and historical oppression of Indigenous peoples in North America" (pg. 299). Menakem (2021) discusses the various forms of trauma such as historical, intergenerational, institutionalized, and personal trauma, can not only interact with each other, but compound each other and create "ever increasing damage" to people with marginalized identities (Menakem, 2021, pg. 45). Understanding this for youth of color is particularly important when engaging in work that seeks to address the oppression and coloniality that they experience.

Furthermore, it is important to underscore that frameworks on racial, colonial, and historical trauma are global in quality, as they are unbound by the borders of the nation-state

(Atallah & Dutta, 2021). For example, decolonial research and practice in colonized Palestine have been foundational to current decolonial turns in the field, especially when it comes to supporting young people facing active settler colonialism. As the Palestinian decolonial feminist scholar Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2021) argues, colonialism not only directly targets children, but it targets childhoods. Palestinians create counterspaces and counternarratives in the face of violent militarized oppression and the brutal 'unchilding' that is part of the weapon of Israeli colonial racist systems (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2021). Shalhoub Kevorkian (2019) defines 'unchilding' as "an uncompromising practice and ideology whereby violence against Palestinian childhood becomes part of the war machine" (p. 16). It is the deprivation of children's childhood that "operates profoundly through the disruption of the intimate that is embodied in the biopolitical and visceral as well as through the global and local politics of silence, negligence, intervention, and inaction… [it] may result in feelings of confusion, anxiety, constant fear and homelessness at home." (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2021; pg. 7). Recognizing and addressing 'unchilding' in colonized youth is rooted in the dismantling of structures of power that are rooted in the control of youth who are othered. Working against 'unchilding' is a rehumanizing decolonial praxis to support youth in finding power to protect spaces of livability (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2019), despite the conditions of structural violence that so often go unmarked and unchecked.

Moreover, Atallah and Masud (2021) uplift the concept of transformative justice which centers the "idea 'that oppression is at the root of all forms of harm... [and] as a practice it therefore aims to address and confront those oppressions on all levels and treats this concept as an integral part to accountability and healing' (Mia Mingus, cited in Kaba and Hassan, 2019: 21)'" (Atallah and Masud, 2021, pg. 235). This form of praxis "powerfully underscore[s] the need for complex, collective struggles that can challenge the embodied, relational, racialised,

interpersonal, intrapersonal and intergenerational expressions of harm" (Atallah and Masud, 2021, pg. 253). These frameworks and practices help deepen understandings and contextualize the experiences of marginalization and oppression that youth of color experience. Rather than centering youth capacities for bouncing back or forward and neglecting to view youth from racialized communities in broader contexts of marginalization, these frameworks (racial trauma, historical trauma, colonial violence and 'unchilding', and 'transformative justice') center at the margins in ways that account for experiences of systemic oppression.

As an example of unchilding in the context of the United States, when engaging decolonial theory applied to youth of color's experiences with oppression in schools, Watts and Erevelles (2004) argue that Black students are frequently pathologized into symptoms of the DSM-V diagnosis oppositional defiant disorder (ODD). Watts & Erevelles (2004) explain:

> "Internal coloniality theory explains that colonized people are forced to interact with oppressive institutions within the colony; this necessity creates feelings of vulnerability, which when left unattended can lead to violent reactions by the colonized people toward the institutions and toward one another. When applying this concept to the context of schools, the internal colonies become those educational contexts where "savage inequalities" (Kozol, 1991) are endemic."

As "Hoffman et al. (2016) remind us that 'with regard to racism and other forms of prejudice, psychology too often has encouraged people to become comfortable in their role of being oppressed and marginalized instead of empowering people to stand up to injustice'" (Klukoff, Kanani, Gaglione, & Alexander, 2021, p. 607). Black students are put in systems that were not meant for them to succeed in and expected to operate according to those rules, but there is a great violence that occurs when oppressed peoples are forced into systemic oppression (Watts &

Erevelles, 2004) and into institutions or systems that were constructed with whitestream ideologies and discourses as the standard and norm.

Rather than changing the oppressive conditions, when researchers and practitioners avoid centering at the margins in their work, they risk contributing to youth being pathologized as deviant and violent, thus thinking of these phenomena as individual problems rather than systematic ones. Watts and Erevelles (2004) share examples of things like strict dress code, zero tolerance policies, and metal detectors in schools as being ineffective prevention strategies employed that "fail to address the broader social context that plays a significant part in constructing the violent or socially aggressive student" (p. 273) Black children are often targeted based on these prevention strategies and school faculty and staff assume the worst out of Black students: "Glaring, making noise, and violating the school dress code can all lead to suspension. the consequences are significant…they're more likely to do worse academically, become truant, drop out, and eventually come into contact with the juvenile-justice system" (McClain, 2019, para. 3). This demonstrates a concept, related to 'unchilding', called adultification that Black youth are often subjected to, wherein "adults perceive children in the absence of knowledge of children's behavior and verbalizations" (Epstein, Blake, & González, 2017, pg. 4). Adultification is heavily "rooted in the legacy of racial discrimination in this country, which historically included responding to Black youths' child-like behavior more punitively" (Epstein, Blake, & González, 2017, pg. 4). Black youth are expected to conform to the often-oppressive environments that are supposed to provide them with an education; they are expected to adhere to the norm while under constant pressure, surveillance, and threat from the educational system. What schools constitute as "normal' has become so hegemonic that any student who disrupts the norm is seen as dangerous and therefore in need of discipline, segregation in special classrooms

or alternative schools, or expulsion" (Watts & Erevelles, 2004). This is that trauma, dehumanization, and criminalization that Black young people face in the school system.

When healing the pain of living with racial trauma intergenerationally and each and every day, we must discuss decoloniality as it "refers to efforts at re-humanizing the world [and] to breaking hierarchies of difference that dehumanize subjects and communities" (Bell, 2018; pg. 252). Healing justice, which "is a framework that identifies how we can holistically respond to and intervene on generational trauma and violence and to bring collective practices that can impact and transform the consequences of oppression on our bodies, hearts and minds" (Young Women's Empowerment Project and the Chicago Healing Justice Learning Circle, 2020, para. 2), can be a starting place for this. To begin healing the wounds of coloniality, we must understand the psychological nature of how coloniality defeats the self (Bell, 2018).

Centering the margins: Developing frameworks for journeys towards healing justice

There is a *third wave* of the resilience framework that Atallah et. al (2019) called "centering at the margins" inspired by critical race theoretical and methodological traditions, which is grounded on intersectionality and antiracism praxis and is also part of a broader 'decolonial turn' (Atallah, 2018; Maldonado-Torres, 2007). The authors describe the promotion of resilience in ways that "center at the margins" as involving multileveled transformations that increase people's equitable access to culturally-relevant resources and rights and work for healing and justice (e.g. Atallah, 2016; Kirmayer et al., 2015; Norris et al., 2013; Wexler et al., 2009). As we reviewed in the literature above, the first and second waves of resilience do little to address the social conditions of suffering and compounding traumas as well as how they impact youth of color trajectories. Atallah et. al. (2021) asserts that the "bounce back" and "bounce

forward" "waves of resilience thinking often engage frameworks drawing unmarked metaphors from physical and biomedical sciences while erroneously applying analysis across levels and scales (Atallah, 2016)." (Atallah et al., 2021, pg. 884). The *third wave*, however, emphasizes that experiences of oppression and compounded traumas impacting resilience for youth of color "are determined by intersecting material and social realities and are marked by complex power relations such as coloniality" (Atallah et al., 2021, pg. 884).

An example of this "third wave" can be seen in the empirical study by Kubiliene, Yan, Kumsa & Burman, (2015) in their qualitative study looking at 18 youth and emerging adults' responses to experiences of racial discrimination. They found that protagonists often utilize non-confrontational approaches when encountering racial violence. Importantly, they also found that youth of color "are not uniformly impacted by racialized events, and therefore the coping strategies they use vary based on individual and contextual factors" (Kubiliene et al., 2015, pg. 338). More specifically, they found that "young people choose to remove themselves from situations when they have encountered racism mainly because they see racial violence embedded in social conditions over which they do not have control" (Kubiliene et al., 2015, pg. 354). Kubiliene et al. (2015) discuss their findings in the context of coping and resilience theoretical frameworks, highlighting "the value of studying individual adaptations along with structural issues that profoundly influence adolescents' adjustments" (Kubiliene et al., 2015, pg. 353). This study exemplifies what previous waves of resilience theory frameworks were unable to achieve: attending to, and integrating, the impacts of systemic injustice that youth of color face.

Centering the margins, both theoretically and methodologically, is a necessary step in research and practice aimed at challenging coloniality while supporting youth of color in their journeys for healing from racial and historical trauma and for transforming their lives and

communities. We owe it to youth of color to put in the work ourselves as researchers towards taking this 'decolonial turn' in our thinking, research, practice, and programming. Not to do this is to perpetuate the system, including the field of psychology, which pathologizes youth of color often without accounting for their experiences of systemic oppression and racial trauma.

Healing Justice Journeys

"*We are re-infusing the art and practice of healing with our souls, listening to our bodies and to our ancestors, and remembering that we don't heal only for the sake of feeling good. We heal so that we can act and organize. We heal so that we can use the lessons gained through the wounds of our trauma to make necessary change in our world*." (Hemphill, 2017)

Healing is an important aspect of psychology, especially involving youth of color; it is the reason that many psychologists do the work or research that they do: to facilitate others' healing processes. The healing justice framework emerged out of the work from the Kindred Southern Healing Justice Collective "to intervene and respond on generational trauma and systemic oppression and build community/survivor led responses rooted in southern traditions of resiliency to sustain our emotional/physical/spiritual/psychic and environmental wellbeing" (Kindred: Southern Healing Justice Collective). Through her organization and community work, Black Queer Feminist cultural/memory worker, curator, and organizer Cara Page cultivated the healing justice framework to "identify how we can holistically respond to and intervene on intergenerational trauma and violence, and to bring collective practices that can impact and transform the consequences of oppression on our collective bodies, hearts, and minds" (Cara Page, Kindred: Southern Healing Justice Collective, 'what is healing justice' section). This movement subverts the current whitestream model of healing and taps into Indigenous

knowledges and ways of being (Rosales, 2021). In addition, healing justice is a concept that emerged from social movements from the past decade, emphasiz[ing] how embodied, contemplative, and interpersonal healing work can transform historical trauma and internalized oppression within social movements" (Pyles, 2020; pg. 179). Scholar activist Angela Davis described healing justice as "'thinking deeply about the connection between interior life and what happens in the social world'" (Pyles, 2020; pg. 179), which is in the same vein as a similar framework known as transformative justice, which recognizes oppression as the root of all forms of harm. Healing justice, as a critical aspect of the healing journey, is a relational, ongoing, and iterative intersectional process whereby the connection of what happens internally to what happens socially can be explored and cultivated through an organization that centers this type of healing; it is what people do and enact, and what people strive to facilitate in relation and community with others.

Whitestream models of healing and wellness are frameworks that center individualized practices and treatments with little to no importance placed on community care and resistance to injustices, both key components of healing justice. These teachings are often rooted in colonial paradigms within the neoliberal education systems that center dominant European narratives of wellness. These Eurocentric healing methodologies address "simplistic notions of cognitive pain, dressed as symptoms without a contextual analysis of the pain situated in histories of coloniality" (Almeida & Kumalo, 2018, p. 142; Rosales, 2021). Healing justice frameworks have emerged in the field in dialectic with these Eurocentric, conventional approaches. Linking individual and collective healing, Ginwright (2018) discusses the concept of 'healing-centered engagement' as: "holistic involving culture, spirituality, civic action, and collective healing…view[ing] trauma

not simply as an individual isolated experience, but rather highlights the ways in which trauma and healing are experienced collectively" (Ginwright, 2018; pg. 3).

As an example of the healing justice framework in action, Chavez-Diaz and Lee (2015) conducted a conceptual mapping of healing centered engagement wherein they identified youth centered organizations that had social change models focused on healing and wellness. Using a healing justice framework, Chavez-Diaz and Lee (2015) conducted semi-structured interviews and protagonist observations with youth organizations and identified four principles (e.g., healing is in response to the needs of the community; healing is political; healing and organizing intersect; healing is found in culture and spirituality). These four principles inform healing centered organizing and the authors offered four suggestions (e.g., embed and institutionalize healing practice into social justice organizations; build capacity of social justice leaders to foster healing; develop key partnerships between community leaders; increase investment to sustaining healing centered organizing) to expand and strengthen their healing centered organizing efforts (Chavez-Diaz & Lee, 2015). These principles and recommendations put into praxis the healing justice framework in a way that decentralizes the whitestream view of health and wellness putting into place the building blocks for turning towards a decolonial way of community healing.

Healing justice subverts the inherent coloniality perpetrated within the whitestream vision of healing, particularly as it affects marginalized communities of color. It is a process that moves beyond paradigms and frameworks of resilience because it is about transforming the systems that wound as well as the narratives of wellness, taking them back from colonial power and putting them back in the hands of the community. The community care and social change that lie at the center of healing justice are the antithesis of, and antidote for, coloniality and the violences that it

has wrought on marginalized communities. It is a critical aspect of future decolonial work and praxis, as operating from a healing justice framework involves not only a holistic response to trauma caused by coloniality but does so in a way that centers collectivity in the healing process, directly opposing the individualized nature of whitestream wellness methodologies.

Lastly, when conceptualizing the movement of youth of color towards healing in ways that include justice-seeking processes, the current study engages the concept of "journeys". The construct of "journeys" is often employed in interdisciplinary qualitative research, documenting subjective experiences of inequality and transformations towards equity, wellness, and recovery (e.g. Chamberlayne, Rustin & Wengraf, 2002; Ray & McFadden, 2001; Strickland, 1999). The word "journey" should not imply that there is a destination to healing, rather that healing is an ongoing experience where the focus is on the process. The current study will explore these "journeys" using qualitative methods to map (i.e., identify and locate) ever evolving person/community/historical context/sociopolitical environment relationships in both space and time (Shapiro, 2005; Cicchetti & Valentino, 2006; Ungar, 2005; Chamberlayne, Rustin & Wengraf, 2002; Ray & McFadden, 2001; Strickland, 1999). In this light, understood ecologically and developmentally, this study seeks to explore "journeys toward healing justice" for marginalized youth of color within a grassroots organization in urban Boston. By focusing on "journeys," this study will examine how a grassroots organization impacts youth of color in moving through intersections of resources, relationships, and hierarchies of power as they resist and heal in the face of multiple interlocking systems of oppression rooted in coloniality. This language and the framing of healing justice through the use of journeys directly correspond to the qualitative methodological approach used in the current study.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS

Methods

"The conditions of the situation are in the situation. There is no such thing as 'context.'"

– Adele Clarke, 2005 (p.71)

Researcher Positionalities

In decolonial, feminist, and qualitative approaches to inquiry, including the relationally embedded process from the researcher can be critical strategies to disrupt Eurocentric epistemic practices in research (Bell, Canham, Dutta, & Fernández, 2020). I (Rhyann) write from atop the shoulders of my ancestors. I operate from the spaces that Franz Fanon, Audrey Lorde, and Angela Davis have created for me and from the roads that my grandmother Beatrice, an educator, and my great-great grandfather Elias Miller, who was fondly known as "the professor", paved for me. I follow in these footsteps and carry their legacies into the decolonial future that they dreamt of and that I base my praxis on. As a Black woman, I carry these legacies not only in my work as an academician, but on my skin and in the essence of my very being. Being born and raised on the south side of Chicago, IL in the early 2000s, I was brought up in the implicit and embedded racism of redlining and colorblind attitudes, facilitating the hyper-visibilization and erasure of my Blackness, that is, until 2012 when Trayvon Martin was murdered and I

experienced an awakening that set me on my journey of critical consciousness (something most people in 2012 would refer to as becoming "woke"). This journey has led me on the path towards decolonial resistance and working with grassroots communities of color. As a former youth worker, working with youth of color in Chicago, IL, I have also sought to specifically work with frontliners working with youth of color.

To acknowledge with the struggles of Black people in the U.S. is to acknowledge the trauma and violence that systems of oppression have perpetuated and inflicted on Black communities. However, we are in the midst of a transformation; a shift in thought and process that brings a reckoning on the ways that we've previously thought about and sought to address colonial violence on BIPOC (Black Indigenous People of Color), particularly youth of color. We are seeing firsthand how past ways addressing these violences are becoming insufficient and that there is a need for a decolonial shift that focuses on healing intergenerational trauma communally and through active social change. I honor the legacy of my foremothers and fathers by engaging in this struggle towards a decolonial future of healing.

My critical consciousness development and understanding of my position in the world has directly influenced the design of this study including the development of each research question, the observation of the SLP retreat 2022, interviews, and data analysis. My journey is the lens through which I see the methodology for this study and is what drives the focus on healing justice for BIPOC youth. The following methods detailed below are directly in line with the praxis that I continue to develop out of my own experience with systems of oppression in tandem with philosophies that center decoloniality and anti-racism.

Philosophy of science, epistemic justice, community partnerships and decolonial approaches to research

The current study sought to explore the impacts that The City School's (TCP Summer Leadership Program (SLP) have had on their youths' healing justice from the interlocking systems of oppression they face. This study operates outside of whitestream (mainstream views of scholarship with bias skewed towards White people and whiteness) and individualistic frameworks. This study also centers the narrative of the young people from TCS and their experiences during the SLP, taking into consideration the conditions, of which are often oppressing and dehumanizing, that staff members operate within on a daily basis. Therefore, this study worked from a decolonial philosophy of science, going beyond social constructivist work, rooted in Black Consciousness and transnational feminist philosophy and emphasizing pragmatism.

As described in the specific aims, the goal of this study was to explore and evaluate how The City School's Summer Leadership Program support youth of color in their journeys towards healing justice in the face of complex interlocking systems of oppression. To answer the questions posed, this study utilized the extended grounded theory qualitative methodology of situational analysis (Clarke, Friese, & Washburn, 2018) to map the staff's relationships to the program that seeks to provide support with the goal of identifying important shifts that have occurred during their journeys. This process of mapping, reflection, and acknowledging staff shifts and positionalities is a form of decolonizing knowledge and relationships as well as transforming systems.

To accomplish these aims, the research team, comprised of researchers all identifying as BIPOC, partnered with The City School and the staff of the Summer Leadership Program. As

community members are the strongest experts on their own needs and goals (Israel, Schulz, Parker, Becker, Allen, Guzman, & Lichtenstein, 2017), this partnership was central to the evaluation of the SLP program. Therefore, through the use of situational analysis (Clarke et al., 2018) we evaluated the SLP program through mapping the experiences of youth of color who have participated in the program and seek to gain understanding around their healing justice journeys.

Study Procedures

Qualitative interviews enabled researchers to have in-depth conversations with TCS leaders and youth workers/mentors to explore the impact of the SLP on young people's processes of gaining skills for developing their own praxis as organizers and agents of change in their communities. One on one voluntary interviews of 8 TCS SLP staff conducted by UMB research team from September 2022-November 2022. These interviews had two goals: (1) to assess the impact of TCS SLP on youth leaders; and youth workers/mentors and TCS staff, and (2) to lay foundations to be able to assess the longitudinal impact of TCS's SLP.

Exploratory questions were asked by researchers in order to draw information from protagonists that explored their processes around situations of inquiry (see appendix B) and specific examples from their life experiences. Additionally, more specific questions were asked following the particular themes that the interviewees introduced into the conversation along with questions that clarified or queried further into previous statements. Not all interviewees were asked the same questions, as per the nature of the semi-structured interview process. This interview procedure is congruent with the decolonial philosophy of science and situational analysis methodology implemented throughout the study (Clarke, Friese, and Washburn, 2017).

The UMB research team met with TCS staff and community stakeholders during four recruitment planning meetings. Interview protocols were co-developed with input from the community stakeholders. The interviews were audio recorded and range between 60 to 90 minutes.

Because TCS is a small organization the research team did not include details of participant demographics so that they cannot identify each other so easily. We also do not feel comfortable identifying these participants since we did not explicitly ask them how they identify. Participants do speak to how their identities are impacted in the responses to our questions, which we have kept in; yet, beyond the description of their identities emerging in their statements, we did not feel comfortable speaking with certainty about the complexity of their identities without having asked directly how they would chose to self-identify.

Inclusion & Exclusion Criteria

Consistent with Community-based Participatory Research (CBPR) approaches calls for "a partnership approach to research that equitably involves, for example, community members, organizational representatives, and researchers in all aspects of the research process" (Israel et. al., 2017, pg.48). The protagonists were TCS staff, including administrators, youth workers, and program coordinators; TCS staff aided in the recruitment of these protagonists. The UMB research team and TCS staff members, together, determined the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Through a series of 4 recruitment planning meetings with TCS staff and leadership, and after initially planning for 10 protagonists, we determined that because of the scope and timeframe of this project, 8 SLP staff members were included in this project. TCS leadership helped with outreach and recruitment of the 8 SLP staff members to engage in the qualitative interviews.

Research Study Protagonists

The City School is located in Dorchester, a neighborhood of Boston in which 45.5% of residents identify as Black or African American, 21.4% as white, 18.6% as Latinx, 9.9% as Asian, and 4.6% as another race or multiple races (Boston Planning & Development Agency Research Division, Feb 2020). The City School (TCS) program serves a diverse range of high school students from Boston and its surrounding suburbs with staff members coming from similar backgrounds. TCS's Summer Leadership Program (SLP) connects adult mentors with youth to build community together, gain leadership development, learn tools to take action and organize in their communities, and gain political education. The program works with a diverse community of youth. For example, 2019's SLP served 69% Black, 19% Latinx, 9% Asian, and 3% white identifying youth with 64% identifying as women, 33% identifying as men, and 3% identifying as gender queer (The City School website). All 8 study protagonists were either current or former staff members of SLP at the time of each interview, with 4 being active staff, and 4 being former staff. Additionally, 6 of the 8 study protagonists were also former SLP youth themselves. Specific demographic information from study protagonists was not gathered as TCS has a small and closeknit staff and this would increase the likelihood of identification from other staff members; our research team did not want to impact workplace dynamics by revealing staff demographic information.

Informed Consent

After engaging in outreach with the 8 SLP staff members who were identified in recruitment planning meetings with TCS leadership, they were asked to confirm their willingness to participate in this study. Informed consent was obtained following the specifications of the human subjects review board of the University of Massachusetts at Boston. The consent form can be seen in Appendix C. It should also be noted that the IRB itself is representative of an institution that reproduces coloniality and the marginalization of youth of color, despite seeking to protect the rights of "subjects" of research. This study, while working within the system, is working at the margins of the center by acknowledging and actively pushing against these constructs. The principles and intentions by which we have conducted this study are all in service of creating decoloniality in spaces that have often perpetuated coloniality and making room for our protagonists' voices.

Data Confidentiality

All information collected by the research team in the baseline and follow-up interviews with the youth were uploaded to UMass Boston Psychology Department shared drive and remain deidentified and confidential. Once on the server, interviews' audio was immediately deleted from the audio recording devices and only the research team had access to the data in the server. The research team also regularly monitored the data and ensured it was uploaded appropriately with no identifying information. There were no identifiers attached to either data set. Protagonists were asked to use only pseudonyms throughout the evaluation sessions and were also reminded that it is their choice to answer or not to answer the questions, and that they could withdraw from the study without being penalized at any time. The research team also offered to

connect protagonists who expressed further interest in navigating available services in the community should they need additional support.

Data analysis methodology

The research team analyzed our data set consisting of 8 interviews from TCS SLP staff members following the elements and analytic exercises of Situational Analysis (Clarke, Friese, & Washburn, 2018), which is a form of Grounded Theory (e.g., Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Situational Analysis places an emphasis on linking complex micro-level and relationally mediated phenomena with macro-level structures to better attend to contextually embedded processes and the complexity of how human behaviors, relationships, and institutions interconnect and impact situations of interest. In this case, our research team was interested in evaluating and illuminating the situational elements, and processes which facilitated and sustained healing justice among youth protagonists of TCS SLP based primarily on the interview data we gathered.

First, our research team began our coding of the contents of the interview transcripts iteratively, whereby relevant key words, phrases, facts, and data were extracted. During this process, each protagonists' responses were fully coded and then compared for similarities and differences using NVivo software. During this initial stage, which overlaps with open coding from Grounded Theory (e.g., Strauss & Corbin, 1990), and consistent with Clark et. al.'s (2018) situational map-making exercises, descriptive and reflective memos were written and illustrated by all research team members. In total, over 278 open codes were created and constantly adapted, erased, combined, and changed (see Appendix D for example list of open codes). Next,

various cycles of coding, including pattern coding, were completed to generate initial categories (Saldaña, 2009).

During pattern coding, consistent with Clarke et. al.'s (2018) situational map-making exercises, research team members further generated reflective memos (including the visual analytic exercises of messy situational maps, relational analysis, social worlds/arenas maps, and positional maps) focusing on our attempts to explain key contextual elements that emerged in protagonists' descriptions of processes of supporting youth of color in their journeys towards healing (see Appendix E for examples of our situational maps). After pattern coding, the research team conducted axial coding, consistent with Clarke et. al.'s (2018) drawing attention to the 'social ecology' of relations between codes, and later, amongst categories most relevant to TCS SLP's inquiry-based process. Out of the axial coding emerged 4 major themes addressing the how a grassroots organization supports youth of color in their journeys towards healing justice in the face of coloniality and interrelated systems of oppression. After axial coding, the research team engaged in theoretical coding, also consistent with Clarke et. al. (2018). After a meeting with the TCS leadership, themes shifted as new theories were applied.

During this collaborative process, it emerged that what TCS was creating with young people surpassed constraints in our understandings of healing. More specifically, TCS were, and are, generating new ways of healing that go beyond just responding to alienation and dehumanization, which were two themes that emerged from our theoretical coding. TCS staff members' processes of theorizing with us DARA Collective researchers was insightful in how TCS staff invited us to reflect how TCS feels to them to be much more than a space of responding to wounds and oppression. TCS staff members theorized their space as a community where young people are able to bring their full humanities; it is a space where young people can

recreate and not just respond to the injustices they face. We, as a research team, were encouraged to consider the generative aspects of TCS rather than the responsive aspects as mainstream/whitestream clinical psychology primarily focuses on. Out of theoretical coding, and after a collaborative process meeting with TCS leadership, 6 more subtypes emerged to create the final project map (see Figure 1).

Reflective memos also documented our ongoing insights and questions and were shared during weekly research team meetings. These memos were integrated into our research team's conceptual development of the overarching themes and allowed for the identification of broader categories in the data (Saldaña, 2009). In total, our research team held 8 data analysis meetings (at approximately 2 hours in length for each meeting) from January 2023 through May of 2023. When developing the categories, specific focus was placed on how the TCS SLP staff members viewed youths' experiences in SLP around building relationality, the shifts and transformations that occurred, moments of care and support in youths' healing journeys as well as critical reflections on the program itself. Further, our research team met with TCS leadership in May of 2023 for 2-hour periods to share our progress in the data analysis process, and we were able to learn of their feedback and perspectives. As previously mentioned, SLP staff served as key supports for recruitment and participation as well as data analysis feedback; therefore, SLP staff held experience-near knowledge of the change process in the program. Thus, our learning of their reflections on our analysis improved the validity and trustworthiness of our findings (Marrow, 2005). Ultimately, the outcome of this analysis resulted in the organization of the data through a conceptual model or Project Map (Clarke et. al., 2018). Each version of the Project Map is derived from coding of empirical data as it emerged grounded in protagonists' terminologies and descriptions of their own perspectives, expertise, and diverse experiences in

youth programing. Please revisit Figure 1, the Project Map—a visual representation of the reported process by which TCS SLP staff members accompanied youth on their journeys towards healing justice. Also, please refer to Table 1 for a description of key situational elements of this Project Map, which is further explained in the Findings and Interpretations section below.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Findings and Interpretation

The following analysis emerged from 8 protagonist interviews with our research team's deep immersion into the subsequent transcripts and protagonists' narratives on youth journeys towards healing in the face of coloniality and interrelated systems of oppression. Ultimately, the research team's Situational Analysis methodology (see detailed description of data analysis above) generated a theoretical Project Map entitled "The City School Fern of Collective Care and Decolonial Love: Making Healing Imaginable for Young People" (Figure 1) to articulate the process of a grassroots organization supporting youth of color on their journeys towards healing in the face of coloniality and interrelated systems of oppression that emerged from the data. The metaphor of the Fern was inspired by one of adrienne maree brown's (2017) emergent strategy principles: "Fractals", which proposes that "the large is a reflection of the small" (brown, 2017; pg. 27). A fractal is a never-ending pattern, created by repeating a simple process over and over through a feedback loop whereby change starts small in order to make a larger impact. What we practice at small scales set the patterns for entire systems, and vice versa. This principle, in combination with the themes that emerged from the data, encapsulates the "…one child at a time" (The City School, mission statement section) approach that TCS takes to youth focused

programming and youth development overall. See Figure 1 for this illustration of the data, in addition to Table 1 for a verbal description of key elements. I will discuss each theme following the image of Figure 1, going from bottom to top, or *roots* up through the *fernicles* and into the *spores*. I will discuss each theme, or *fernicle,* moving from left to right. I will also introduce the subtheme that falls under each of the *fernicles* and explain them using quotes from protagonists, identifying them by their chosen pseudonym, as evidence to substantiate each subtheme. All aspects of the project map will be described in greater detail below.

Figure 1.

The City School Fern of Collective Care & Decolonial Love: Making healing Imaginable for Young People

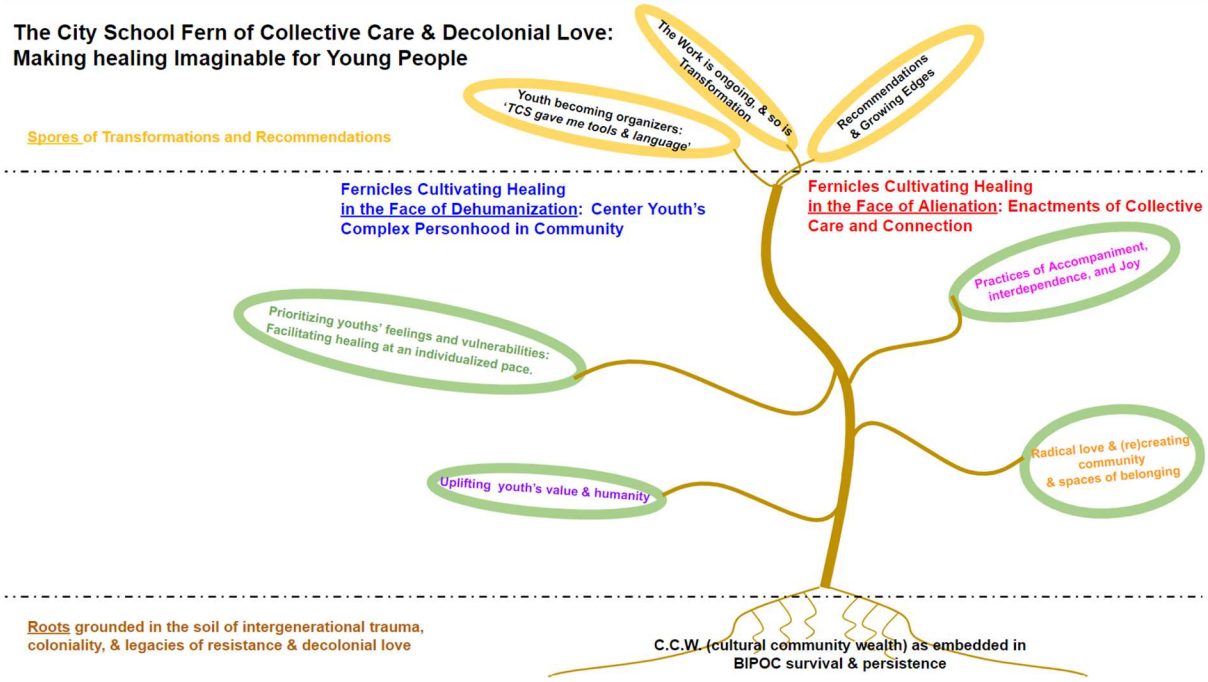

Table 1.

Descriptions of all Key Empirical Elements and subthemes of the Project Map

Key Situational Elements	**Cultivating Healing in the Face of Dehumanization: Centering youth's complex personhood in community**		**Cultivating Healing in the Face of Alienation: Enactments of collective care and connection**	
Subthemes	Dehumanization through the limiting humanity: having no room for emotions or mistakes	Systems of oppression limiting youths' choices and access to resources due to intersecting marginalized identity	Feeling alienated due to others' lack of understanding of social justice outside of TCS	Feeling alienated due to isolation and anger from limited opportunities to explore intersecting marginalized identities
The Overarching, Emergent Categories: Four Emergent Themes	**Prioritizing youths' feelings and vulnerabilities: Facilitating healing at an individualized pace.**	**Uplifting youth's value & humanity**	**Practices of Accompaniment, interdependence, and Joy**	**Radical love & (re)creating community & spaces of belonging.**
Subthemes	1. TCS SLP is a "bubble" and space of protection for youth of color that is uplifting yet distinct from the "*outside world*." 2. community connection between young people aids in emotional vulnerability and allows for healing to occur. 3. TCS SLP facilitates space for youth to "*break down*" and be vulnerable in the safety of community.	1. "*We believe that young people are valuable*": foundational supports necessary for youth to feel valuable 2. SLP staff "*make sure that young people see themselves*": the importance of youth seeing their identities being represented and modeled.	1. Joy practice: meeting youth where they are at and co-creating joyful community. 2. "*We're not going to learn it through theory, we're going to learn through practice.*" 3. "*One is none, and two is one*": wrap around care practices with youth of color.	1. "*We're here for you*": staff enactments of love for youth of color. 2. "*youth build [and heal] with each other*": creating space for youth to heal in community with personal and collective processes. 3. "*affinity spaces are ...spaces of healing*": building community and connections through identity work. 4. shifts occurring to support youth in healing journeys: making explicit the curriculum around collective care.
Temporal-Based Levels of Change	**Roots** The groundwork for a youth protagonist, and later staff member, has been laid since before entering TCS SLP.	**Fernicles** The processes by which SLP creates opportunities for healing and collective care.		**Spores** The outcomes, ways work is continuous and room for growth–journey is the work and work is the journey, iterative cycles.

Within the project map, you will notice several overarching themes put into various categories that are mapped onto the ecological inspiration of the fern. Through theoretical coding, and community-based participatory methods in dialogue with protagonists, we created this image/figure to capture the complexity and relationships between the themes, processes, and concepts. I will guide you through the figure, using the key empirical elements denoted in the project map (Table 1), the dotted lines on Figure 1 to help annotate the separation between the three dimensions, and color coding to aid in the organization of the themes under each key situational element. Each color attributed to the 4 overarching emergent categories are either cool colors (green and purple) to denote that they are categorized under the dehumanization situational element (blue) or warm colors (pink and orange) to denote that they are categorized under the alienation situational element (red). The *roots* are also coded as brown to denote the soil of intergenerational trauma, coloniality, and legacies of resistance and decolonial love, along with the *spores* coded as yellow to demote the transformations and recommendations that emerged from the data. This color coding serves not only as an organizational tool, but also as an aspect of aesthetic awakening that contributes to the beauty and generative nature of this research.

Figure 1 and Table 1 depict the two themes related to the key situational elements and four themes related to healing practices alongside their respective subthemes that emerged from the data.

Key Situational Elements

Beginning with the atmosphere, or elements, surrounding the fern, we discuss the key situational elements. Change never has an origin but is an intergenerational process; even where we can see the core emergent themes that make the process possible, they continue to change and transform under these elements. Change is also interspatial and transversal; it happens across time, space, place, and relationships among human and non-human actors.

Cultivating Healing in the Face of Dehumanization: Centering youth's complex personhood

As primarily BIPOC youth, many protagonists came into TCS SLP having experienced dehumanization as a result of their intersecting marginalized identities. The first subtheme to emerge from the data under this theme was **dehumanization through the limiting humanity: having no room for emotions or mistakes**. SLP staff and former youth protagonist Mina illustrates this by sharing her experience as a Black woman having no room for human error:

> *I think one of the things also like for like Black people or like for me as a Black woman it's just oftentimes I think that there's only one time to mess up, there's not really a time to mess up or try to get it right the first time because if you messed up like this is gonna be you for the rest of your life. You're gonna be known as the person that messed up.*

Mina's experience demonstrates dehumanization as she was deprived of the very human feature of being able to "mess up" without the consequence of that mistake becoming a fixed and representative attribute. Another subtheme to emerge was **systems of oppression limiting youths' choices and access to resources due to intersecting marginalized identity**. Azizah, an

SLP staff and former youth protagonist, described how, *"...as an immigrant…as a somebody who escaped war or someone who came here for opportunities, I should be focusing and, I had this opportunity to …live in America and…be the best I could, even though my school had no resources and had actual… racial disparities. My school had no resources, we had [the] same teachers…who were just teaching like ten different subjects…"*. Azizah's experience illustrates the dehumanizing nature of her experience as an immigrant coming to the U.S. and being expected to thrive with limited access to resources on top of the racial disparities she faced in school. The experiences shared by protagonists like Mina and Azizah highlight the profound dehumanizing experiences they encountered outside of the TCS SLP program.

Cultivating Healing in the Face of Alienation: Enactments of collective care

Alongside these key situational elements of dehumanization were also situational elements of alienation before coming to TCS SLP. Alienation also emerged as a common theme experienced by youth before coming to TCS SLP. The first subtheme to emerge from the data under this theme was youth **feeling alienated due to others' lack of understanding of social justice outside of TCS**. For example, SLP staff member and former youth protagonist Omar described:

> *...when I was when I was like at school, I didn't go to a predominantly white school; everyone who worked there was predominantly white, though. I went to [name of Boston Public School], which is when they try to make it like racially diverse so it's like on split evenly among like different races. But it just made me not like white people like I was there, and I was just like wow y'all think you could get away with saying the N-word and there's really nothing I can do about it on like a personal level, and there's just like the teachers*

don't hear you, they don't care so like y'all are getting away with it, but I hate you. My black friends didn't understand what the issue was with anything. I just felt like I was stranded on an island, but you know, like I'm kind of used to that so like it did feel alienating for that, but I also like was used to it…

Omar describing the racism he faced from teachers in school and a lack of understanding from friends highlights the alienation he experienced outside of TCS SLP. Another subtheme that emerged from the data was youth **feeling alienated due to isolation and anger from limited opportunities to explore intersecting marginalized identities**. Joy describes the following experience of isolation in exploring her gender identity:

I think at that at that time it was also going through …what my gender was meaning to me and so it was kind of isolating so that I could find more information but it wasn't available cuz I wasn't seeing any Black people questioning their gender around me in school and I didn't have access …but I didn't want to access any outside …youth organizations that probably primarily would have white people in it …and so I think [that the teacher that referred me to TCS SLP] definitely saw that need for me to be like around people who either had information, had seen people who existed like me, or have actual literal people who exist like me on a daily basis.

Joy demonstrates how feeling racially isolated from conversations around gender contributes to being alienated from people who have intersecting identity experiences like her own as a Black person negotiating their gender identity. The experiences shared by protagonists like Mina,

Azizah, Omar, and Joy shed light on the profound dehumanization and alienation they encountered before starting the TCS SLP program. The key situational elements of dehumanization and alienation serve as the backdrop for many protagonists' introduction to TCS SLP.

Temporal-Based Levels of Change

In combination with the key situational elements, dehumanization, and alienation, serving as the key situational elements within which youth enter TCS SLP, the temporal-based levels of change, which represents the ways in which these elements are transformative through time and practice, composed of the *roots, the fernicals, and the spores*, make up the empirical components of the project map (see Table 1). Each aspect is symbolized by a key piece of the fern's anatomy with the intention of disrupting the normalization of the experiences of dehumanization and alienation that youth enter TCS SLP with. Each represents a distinct element of the journey towards healing for the youth that TCS SLP serves, and this journey begins at the bottom, or the *roots*, with the cultural community wealth that is foundational to the SLP experience and will later move upward.

Roots

Cultural Community Wealth as embedded in BIPOC survival & persistence.

Before working with or participating in TCS SLP, many come into the space with groundwork rooted in cultural community wealth, a framework that… as it is embedded in the survival and persistence of BIPOC (Yosso, 2006). Yosso (2006) describes CCW as an "array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color

to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression" (pg. 77). These preparations, these roots, were cited by many protagonists when they were asked how they got involved with TCS, as former SLP staff member Reginald reflected the following:

> *So I knew the city school before I started working for them, for a number of years…originally was working at a youth leadership organization…being another product of youth organizing groups in in the city…we had come in contact with the city school, so I at that time, I had a number of occasions to work with the co-directors of TCS and then …a TCS staff had reached out and was like you know what we're planning on going to [a] youth event that was happening in Philadelphia. And they know that I had experience with taking people on trips and coordinate, so she was like "could you do it" and I was like "of course" like you know love going down to spaces with young people…so did the… trip to Philly did that with young people. And then, as like my conversation with a TCS staff continued, and they told me that TCS was in the midst of transition, and they were hiring this is when one of the staff actually like came on and they were looking for another somebody to do some, what do you call it, to do some work with young people, as well as to do some fundraising. And I was available so that's how I came into the city school. And yeah it was interesting because I wasn't able to be a part of SLP proper for that first year that I came on but I didn't meet some SLP young people and start to be able to build with them, but when I came on in the in the fall…there were young people that had already built relationships with other staff and each other, because they were part of SLP, but this was their first time being part of fall session first*

time meeting me so I just got a chance to start to build with them. Yeah and it was amazing.

The journey that brought Reginald to TCS included the sourcing of legacy support and the practices that came from different experiences of youth work that he engaged in. Reginald's previous experiences with youth work in different cities and contexts is foundational; it influences and impacts the trajectory of youths' healing journeys in TCS SLP. And it is out of this foundation that the *fernicals*, addressing the direct impact of TCS SLP on youths' journeys towards healing, can grow and transform.

Fernicals

The *fernicals*, as a level of change, house the 4 major themes and 12 sub-themes that emerged from the research team's analysis of the data. These represent the process by which TCS SLP creates opportunities for healing and collective care through their programming and staff support. Moving up to the *fernicles* section, the following themes are discussed in order of the dimension of change it addresses from left to right, as indicated in Figure 1 and Table 1.

Theme 1. Prioritizing youths' feelings and vulnerabilities (Facilitating healing at an individualized pace).

The first of the four major themes that emerged from the data that addressed the experience of dehumanization was centering youths' feelings, vulnerabilities and complex personhood as a part of their journey towards healing. The first sub-theme to emerge was that **TCS SLP is a "*bubble*" and space of protection for youth of color that is uplifting yet distinct from the**

"*outside world*". Staff member Sage describes the supportive, yet insulated nature of SLP as the following:

> *The world doesn't look like this outside of here. You may get versions of it, but the world doesn't look like SLP and I done said this to them a lot of times, they don't always like it when I say it, but… the world doesn't look like SLP so if you create a system in which young people have to depend on you right completely to do anything, they can't function in the world outside of the context of the six weeks of this program. That's not acceptable, right, so it's a bubble where you are to be encouraged to be, can be yourself and adults that care about you and other folks right care about you before you even get into the room are creating space right and are meeting you where you're at. So I think that's the first thing I would say: it's a bubble and people love that bubble. It has its challenges in the bubble, child, it surely does, but it's a bubble and it's a bubble where these folks that are continuing to come back can always be themselves.*

Sage's description of the differences between the SLP space and the "outside world" indicates how the SLP space is an escape where youth can be themselves, though this may come at the cost of not being prepared to encounter outside systems.

The second sub-theme that emerged was that **community connection between young people aids in emotional vulnerability and allows for healing to occur**. Omar talks about the ways that SLP allows for young people to be

...so emotionally vulnerable and they're…not being forced to …and … it starts off with a retreat. There's a three day retreat overnight and just eating with someone three times a day…sleeping in the same dorm just…having those late night conversations about nothing and then …we do we do freedom stories,... we get an object and say why it makes you feel free and nobody tells you to have any emotional story, but for some reason they always do have one and everyone cries and it's this thing where like people just feel connected and just learning with somebody, learning with people who like share the same issues as you just feels like that's your family and it just always works, and last year was the only year I saw that it didn't work, and it really made me feel bad.

Omar's illustration of the SLP retreat exemplifies the ways that SLP facilitates community connection and emotional vulnerability not only through words from staff members, but also through specific programming and built in time for young people to connect with each other on a deeper level.

The third sub-theme that emerged was **TCS SLP facilitates space for youth to "*break down*" and be vulnerable in the safety of community**. Omar gives the example of freedom stories, wherein youth are encouraged to bring an object and tell the group why it makes them feel free:

...when freedom stories are going on, or like when there is action and someone's breaking down that person breaking down has tons of friends who like come over and like you know with consent like "Yo. Do you need a hug? like I got you" and, you know talk about how

important it is that we tell our stories, that we have this vulnerability, that we learn this stuff, you know all the trauma that we have, and you know how we have to heal from it.

Omar's description of the process of facilitating a safe space for youth to explore and discuss their emotions and be vulnerable illustrates the process of "breaking down" and others making sure that the young person can stand back up afterwards. This is care in community. These sub-themes highlight the importance of creating a safe space for youth to be vulnerable, the distinct and protective nature of the SLP program, and the transformative power of community connection and emotional vulnerability. The subthemes also emphasize how TCS SLP allows space for youths' complexities and gives room for youth to exist in the multiplicity of their identities and how they show up. SLP staff recognize the need for these spaces where youth can explore their complex personhood in their still developing and evolving intersecting identities. Together, these subthemes demonstrate the commitment to caring for the complex personhood of youth, providing a nurturing environment for their healing journey, and fostering a sense of care and support within the SLP community.

Theme 2. Uplifting youth's value and humanity

The second major theme that emerged from the data addressing the experience of dehumanization was uplifting youth's value and humanity as a part of supporting youth of color in their healing journeys. One sub-theme that emerged here was that **"*we believe that young people are valuable*": foundational supports necessary for youth to feel valuable**. Sage talks about how TCS SLP staff inherently *"... believe that young people are valuable, deserve to sit in spaces that are safe and have power to speak on those things and drastically shift the way we*

engage in this world and in this country, right? That belief guides the rest of our work, right? If we don't believe that young people are inherently strong, have the ability to be resilient, powerful, and can lead, then…it doesn't matter what we do after that, right? You have to like genuinely believe it." Sage describes the foundation that SLP staff have created for youth, upon which youth are able to build on in seeing their own value and humanity. Another sub-theme that emerged was that **SLP staff "*make sure that young people see themselves*": the importance of youth seeing their identities being represented and modeled**. Sage also talks here about how important it is for young people to see themselves and their identities reflected in different aspects of the SLP programming:

> *And then the other thing that I think is important is that these the staff reflect what like our young people experiences, they reflect what they look like, what they feel like, what kind of bodies they live in, what kind of like bodies they are trying to move from living in, right, like they reflect them, and so when you see yourself in something… I was listening to a book and this guy said 'I was dancing with this woman and she flew her head back, in this way,' and he was like, 'this is a universal …sign for Black women that they're feeling the song.' And I was like, 'Oh yeah, I know exactly what she did, How she did it and what it looked like,' and I think that that feels like the kind of culture that we build, right, which is that I may not know everything that looks. You know what it looks like for a young person who's Cape Verdean, but I know that there's some rice in your foods of where you're from and where your family's from so I can relate to that whereas if we had a bunch of like white folks working in our predominantly black and brown program, they're going to be like "what's cachupa," right, and Cape Verdean would be like "OK,*

they don't know anything", right? And the Haitians will be like "I brought some sosua" right and they'll be like "what do you mean," right? So I think that we make sure that young people see themselves, and in seeing themselves, right, there's this idea that like not only is it going through the curriculum, but in seeing yourself and somebody who is on the path to liberation for themselves and community actually gives them the autonomy and space and room to do the work for liberation for their communities and the folks that they're accountable to.

This demonstrates the ways that SLP not only the importance of visual identity representation, but also the importance of cultural nuances in community spaces and the roles that these play in staff members supporting young on their healing journeys.

Theme 3. Accompaniment and interdependence practices: Fostering collective care and support networks

Now moving to the right side of the *fernicle* section in Figure 1, the first of the major themes that emerged from the data addressing the experience of alienation experienced by youth is accompaniment and interdependence practices implemented by TCS SLP staff to aid in youth's healing journeys. The first sub-theme that emerged from the data was **Joy practice: meeting youth where they are at and co-creating joyful community.** Former youth participant and current staff member Sarah describes this in the context of their shift in the way SLP staff provide care for the young people and understand the ways that they can care for themselves:

I think we've gotten a lot less afraid like I think we…we used to really see you support in actually a very adultist way and like care in a very adultist way where like the adults will be providing the care like and it's actually like wrong in some ways. I wouldn't say everyone felt this, but I think it's a protectiveness and maybe in adultism in that protectiveness of like young people shouldn't have to provide care to each other, and that's that we could talk about that, that's real, but young people are providing care to each other, whether or not we think they should have to or shouldn't have to. That's the reality. And so, to both really distinguish that there are correct roles for the youth worker versus the young person, we don't want to put burden on young people to have to support each other, but we want to acknowledge they are doing that work and so want skills around it … and also how do we make care a joyful practice, not just a crisis based practice I think as better last shift. So a lot of our collective care challenges are like let's make playlists for each other let's make a cookbook together, let's make a TikTok about what collective care is like, let's do things that are fun, so it's not just like okay, and now we're all supporting each other around this difficult experience like it's joyful.

Sarah describes the ways that SLP staff have understood the nuances of support: They have shifted from protective adultism to care based directly on the needs of the young person. Staff took into account their capabilities, community network and trusting that the young people have the tools to care for themselves while accompanying them every step of the way. The second sub-theme that emerged centered on the idea that **"*we're not going to learn it through theory, we're gonna learn through practice*"**. The name of this theme is a quote from staff member Sarah referring to the importance of making the collective care framework tangible

within SLP. This subtheme is connected to the understanding of collective care as not something that is necessarily thought about, or articulated in brochures and talking points, but it lives and breathes in spaces of practice. Sarah gives an example of how collective care is practiced as well as ways that it can grow:

> *I think young people, especially in 2020, got very into the idea of collective care and like really took it on and we said we're exciting and it really it seemed to speak to a lot of people, I think it's spoke to a lot of us in that moment too, because of what we're experiencing. And… I think those are the main other things. It also just felt very tangible, I guess that's the last thing I'll say, like it was a way that we could put things into practice. That was a big thing that felt important to me is that collective care, we're not going to learn it through theory, we're gonna learn through practice and I think… it's a little intangible to say, but it … felt real in the context of the program. I think the last thing is [collective care] supported some very important conversation about redistribution actually, especially of money in the context of the program. So I had young people afterwards reaching out around like immigration situations or school situations in which they needed like several thousand dollars programming situations, and I think because of talking about collective care and mutual aid that was something we could talk about more explicitly, especially being a program that again working across difference we have access to folks like myself with degrees of wealth and class privilege, like how can we be accountable about redistributing that in the context of collective care and mutual aid. So, I think it allowed for that in a way that otherwise, would have reinforced power dynamics in a way that could have felt very ugly and really like reinforcing a lot of*

those that causes them and it gave us a different frame to think about doing some of that work.

Sarah demonstrates the ways that collective care has been and can further be practiced in SLP, as it is an integral aspect of the healing journey for young people. The third sub-theme that emerged was the idea in TCS SLP that **"*one is none, and two is one*": wrap around care practices with youth of color**. Former SLP youth and staff member Laurel, who referred the TCS policy of "*one is none, two is one*" as staff's way to ensure that more than one staff member is tending to a young person in crisis, describes the first time she, as a staff member, practiced accompanying a young person through a hard time:

...there was a protagonist who I was supporting who disclosed to me that she had been assaulted and like we were like sitting by the beach for an hour and a half, I later learned the skill of containing the check in… I did not know how to check in …and really trying to figure out…who who are the people obviously…talking with my supervisor about it but also figuring out what is the internal program support we need, what's the external support we need, so I learned so much about what therapy resources are available and what ones need to go through your insurance that your parents need to know about them what ones aren't and, how do you do all of that in Boston and…one of the young people I was supporting was…suicidal so then like we were supporting, we were talking to his mom and his therapist there's just a lot of intense multi-network things and then there was also the less intense [things]… like learning how to [do] pod mapping and these

resource mapping and these other tools that I think were really helpful to then be able to teach youth or bring to youth and offer youth

Laurel demonstrates the framework of “one is none, and two is one” through her experience of supporting young people as one part of a multi-network of support systems. It is never just one person supporting a young person, but many. The sub-themes within this theme underscore the significance of accompaniment and interdependence practices in the healing journeys of youth. By understanding the nuances of support, engaging in practical applications of collective care, and embracing the philosophy of "one is none, and two is one," TCS SLP staff create a robust network of wrap around care that meets young people where they are and uplifts and accompanies them throughout their healing journeys.

Theme 4. Radical love and (re)creating community and spaces of belonging.

The final theme to emerge from the data that addressed the experience of alienation was radical love and (re)creating community and spaces of belonging as a part of supporting youth of color in their journeys towards healing justice in the face of coloniality and interrelated systems of oppression. The first sub-theme to emerge here was **“*we’re here for you*”: staff enactments of love for youth of color.** Omar describes the ways that TCS SLP has been there for him as a young person:

yeah, I would feel like wanting to cry like I'm even feeling some of that now like…I feel like when the world is like coming for you and you have nobody and like. You feel like you have nobody, and then you have, like everybody that you would ever need around, It

just like it is an amazing feeling and somebody telling you like you know, like "we're here for you" ...This is what this work's about what we have… just makes you feel like not even supported but held. Probably one of the best feelings ever is just like love.

Omar feeling held by the TCS SLP community demonstrates the ways that staff supporting youth goes deeper than helping them to understand concepts around identity and social justice, and into beloved community. The sub-themes within this theme highlight the significance of uplifting youth's value and humanity as a cornerstone of supporting youth of color in their healing journeys. Through believing in their inherent strength and power, reflecting their identities in staff representation, and providing unwavering support, the TCS SLP program fosters an environment where young people can reclaim their sense of worth. The second sub-theme that emerged from this theme was that **"*youth build [and heal] with each other*": creating space for youth to heal in community with personal and collective processes**. As current staff member Sage points out:

*"My job is to create space for them to do what they're doing right now, which is to **build with each other** and in their communities to heal themselves and communities"*

This statement demonstrates the framing that SLP gives for creating the space to heal, and to do so in community. A third sub-theme that emerged was that **"*affinity spaces are …spaces of healing*": building community and connections through identity work**. Reginald reflected that

...I see healing happening in SLP and number of different spaces, so, ***affinity spaces…are definitely place for healing****, like when… we did breaking up into people of color spaces are Black affinity, Latinx affinity, White affinity, being able to be in those spaces and to talk to each other about what it is in the misconceptions… I feel like one of those places that… folks don't have those conversations and they don't have space to have those conversations so being able to be there and to be able to talk about it, it has always… been at a deep healing space…In the same way with gender affinity for folks that prescribed to the gender male prescribe the gender female or gender non conforming to be able to have those spaces and to be able to like you know talk about …those misconceptions that are in those spaces, or the preconceptions when you come into being in those spaces those are also healing spaces, so I think affinity spaces are definitely spaces of healing*

Reginald cites affinity spaces as a specific and integral space in SLP for healing around a marginalized identity. The final distinct sub-theme that emerged was around **shifts occurring to support youth in healing journeys: making explicit the curriculum around collective care**. SLP staff member Sarah describes the process by which collective care was organically incorporated into the summer curriculum:

There were different things about that year, so we didn't do our full affinity curriculum and our full like "here are the five I's of oppression, here's the power chart" 'cause we were…it was exclusively returning young people…so that year allowed us to try some new things and ***one of the major things that we tried was this piece around collective***

care and transformative justice being a central theme. *And so I think…that made explicit in our summer program what has… always existed within our summer programs which is a real focus on care and people's mental health and wellbeing. I think the ways that I've seen it have mostly been really grounded in a sense of young people getting to build a deep relationship in which they feel supported and can be honest about their mental health challenges but can also be supported to like find peers and find adults in their life who will listen and care about them like a…therapeutic relationships but in community and not like formally called therapeutic relationships. That's one key aspect that has, I think, always existed. I think the small groups that are safe spaces to share, which we call family groups and so those family groups are places where you get more individualized support and attention.*

Sarah's description of how SLP staff made the implicit explicit in centering the mental health and wellbeing of youth demonstrates the shift that staff made to aid in youth's healing journeys in community. The sub-themes within this theme emphasize the importance of radical love and (re)creating community and spaces of belonging in supporting youth of color on their healing justice journeys. By fostering healing in community through personal and collective processes, providing affinity spaces for marginalized identities to heal and connect, and implementing a formalized collective care framework, TCS SLP creates an environment where youth can build deep relationships, find support, and engage in transformative conversations. This approach acknowledges and challenges the interrelated systems of oppression while nurturing the mental health and well-being of young individuals, ultimately fostering healing, and belonging within a supportive community.

Spores

Moving up to the very top of the diagram in Figure 1 to the final level of change that emerged from the data, the outcomes, or *spores*, of youths' experiences at TCS SLP as a part of their journey towards healing. These spores represent the fact that this work is continuous and that there is room for growth, The journey *is* the work, and the work *is* the journey, which continues to create possibility as the process continues in iterative cycles.

The work is ongoing and so is the transformation.

The spores of growth and continuous development evident in the data affirm that TCS SLP's work is an ongoing journey, always evolving and creating space for further exploration. These spores grow from the fernicles and create opportunities for the cycles to continue, just as protagonist Sarah mentioned in the previous section, discussing how the changes to the curriculum, to focus on collective care and transformative justice, were made to accommodate the all-returning youth protagonists of SLP.

The first spore to emerged from the data was that the work that SLP is doing is ongoing and so is the transformation. Laurel illustrates this theme by describing how she

> *...came out of the program as a protagonist really energized. I went back to (Boston neighborhood) ...I was really grateful to have done a SLP with four other of my classmates. We went back to (Same Boston neighborhood) together and really started organizing and did all these things.*

Laurel describing how she and her classmates came out of SLP energized and ready to carry on the work that they learned demonstrates the ongoing and continuous nature of the organizing and healing work done in SLP. Youth protagonists carry this forward, not only into their outside work, but by coming back as staff members, as Laurel and many others did, and passing forward their wisdom and knowledge gained in SLP. This passing on of wisdom and knowledge thereby perpetuates the continuous and transformative nature of the organizing and healing work in SLP.

Youth becoming organizers: "*TCS gave me the tools and language*."

The second spore to emerge from the data was youth becoming organizers after SLP: "*TCS gave me the tools and language*". Mina illustrates this by discussing an aha moment for her while in SLP as a young person:

> *That was an a-ha moment for me um to just be like Oh, what is, how can I be part of this movement like, how can I like be involved, how can I learn about like the people that I'm share I'm sharing space with, so I think…that's when I got involved because I saw like the spaces that needed for me to step in and like also knowing that if I step into it, the city school would give me the tools to like forward too.*

Mina demonstrates how SLP not only gave her the tools to be an organizer, but also how SLP leaves the door open for youth to continue to receive tools to help them on their journeys going forward. She highlights the transformative impact of SLP, empowering young people to step into their roles as changemakers and offering them the tools to thrive and contribute to the movement.

Recommendations and growing edges for TCS SLP

The third and final spore to emerge from the data was the recommendations and growing edges that protagonists noted for TCS SLP. Reginald discusses how, in SLP, *"...we often are walking into or meeting young people…at moments in their lives, that are sometimes turbulent and tumultuous and there's some shit that's going down that you maybe were not ready for as a staff person. So, making sure that staff is trained up around that as well, I think, is always going to be like super helpful, we do a certain level of training, I don't think there's always enough time for that either. So, like yeah being able to deal with trauma responses and things of that nature is definitely I think a place where staff could definitely use some more skill building around and support around."* Reginald alludes to the ways that TCS SLP can grow in how staff handle youth traumas, pointing out that it would be helpful to have training in this area to continue doing their important work in a trauma informed way. By providing more comprehensive training and resources, the program can continue its vital work in a trauma-informed manner, ensuring that staff members are equipped to meet the turbulent and tumultuous moments in young people's lives with empathy and proficiency.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

Discussion

"What is easy is sustainable. Birds coast when they can." (brown, 2017, pg. 43)

The purpose of this study was to contribute to the understanding of how a grassroots organization in Boston supports youth of color in their journeys towards healing justice in the face of coloniality and interrelated systems of oppression. To accomplish this goal, the research team built collaborative partnerships with The City School (TCS), a youth-focused organization serving primarily marginalized youth, and evaluated their Summer Leadership Program (SLP). The research team conducted 8 interviews with former and current staff members, many of whom were also youth protagonists. Out of the data gathered and analyzed, and after a collaborative process meeting with TCS leadership, 10 themes emerged to generate a theoretical Project Map entitled "The City School Fern of Collective Care and Decolonial Love: Making Healing Imaginable for Young People" (Table 1).

The image and life cycle of the fern depict each dimension and level of change, including the four major emergent themes, working from bottom to top, or *root* to *spores* with each of the 4 themes, or *fernicles*, described from left to right. The dimensions and levels of change as well as

the 4 major emergent themes are descriptively outlined in Table 1. Results articulate the dimensions of change as both cultivating healing in the face of dehumanization: centering youth's complex personhood and cultivating healing in the face of alienation: enactments of collective care. The levels of change include the roots, the fernicals, and the spores. Housed within the fernicals are the 4 major emergent themes including prioritizing youths' feelings and vulnerabilities: facilitating healing at an individualized pace; uplifting youth's value & humanity; practices of accompaniment, interdependence, and joy; radical love & (re)creating community and spaces of belonging. Overall, results suggest that TCS's SLP supports youth of color protagonists in their journeys towards healing justice through shifting focus to youth mental health and wellbeing, centering youths' wholeness, humanity, and joy, implementing collective care practiced in community and practicing accompaniment. These findings contribute to the reconceptualization of what healing in community looks like in youth focused programing while identifying meaningful strategies of care. I will discuss each theme, demonstrating important connections to previous literature to highlight the significance of these findings, bridging them into the broader context of healing justice research and praxis.

Key Situational Elements

Consistent with previous research on decolonial approaches as refusing dehumanization and alienation while harnessing the power of community and radical love (Atallah & Dutta, 2023), the present study demonstrates the elements under which youth are operating under while they persist and engage in healing journeys through generative, collective practices in community. This study conceptualizes alienation and dehumanization as interrelated and normalized in coloniality, which is a core element of "the colonial wound" transmitted intergenerationally across BIPOC communities (Atallah & Dutta, 2023). These colonial wounds,

though, are not widely seen as wounds or problems, but rather are normalized and considered an expected part of everyday life (Atallah & Dutta, 2023). These are the elements that SLP youth are journeying under; they are what make up parts of the atmosphere that the fern of collective care and decolonial love must grow in.

Cultivating Healing in the Face of Dehumanization: Centering youth's complex personhood

Our results are consistent with previous literature on 'dehumanization', which decolonial scholars have theorized as the depth of pain, anguish, grief, and human suffering associated with the multiplicity of violences that colonial systems employ when educating and disciplining colonized bodies to fit into the white supremacist heteropatriarchal imaginations, laws, and ideologies of settlers or (neo)colonial nation-states (Atallah & Dutta, 2022; Dutta et al., 2022). In this study, our findings suggest that BIPOC youth in Boston experience dehumanization in their daily lives, which shapes their ways of entering and arriving at TCS and the SLP each summer. For example, in our results we showed how protagonist Azizah's experience with lacking resources and racial disparities at school, alongside Joy's experience of being "*taught to not talk about [her] experiences"* and to *"adapt [and] to be quiet"* (see Table 2) demonstrate violence and damage that forcing colonized bodies into white supremacist systems can have on young people. These experiences highlight the impact of the violence imposed upon colonized peoples as well as the role systems, like schools, play in revealing the profound extent of dehumanization endured by TCS SLP youth.

Cultivating Healing in the Face of Alienation: Enactments of collective care

In addition, our results are consistent with previous literature on 'alienation', which decolonial scholars have theorized as the depth of pain, anguish, grief, and human suffering associated with the multiplicity of violences that colonial systems employ when separating and alienating colonized bodies from place (Atallah & Dutta, 2023; Bell, 2016; Fanon, 2018; Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2020). In this study, similar to 'dehumanization', our findings suggest that BIPOC youth in Boston experiences of alienation in their daily lives, which also shapes their ways of entering and arriving at TCS and the SLP each summer. For example, in our results we showed how protagonist Omar's experience of being separated, or alienated, from place came in the form of attending a predominantly White school where he felt like he was "*stranded on an island*" due to the lack of care from White students and teachers and lack of understanding from his Black friends. This is an example of violence via isolation, and these violences involve all the ways systems in settler colonies and (neo)colonial states displace, remove, disaffect the colonized from sense of belonging to the lands, belonging to Indigenous and complex identities, belonging to community, and belonging to 'humanity' (Canham, 2023). The examples given by protagonists exemplify the detrimental impact of alienation, as experienced by TCS SLP youth, who face isolation and displacement from their sense of belonging, community, and even their own humanity.

Temporal-Based Levels of Change

Roots

Cultural Community Wealth as embedded in BIPOC survival & persistence.

Our results overlap with previous literature on 'Cultural community wealth' (CCW), which we included as a name of one of our themes. Consistent with literature on CCW, housed within the critical race theory (CRT) framework used to challenge traditional understandings of cultural capital (Yosso, 2005), the experiences that youth reported having prior to their time with TCS SLP highlights the ways in which young people engaging in TCS were bringing in their daily struggles with dehumanization and alienation. BIPOC youth in Boston also arrive and enter TCS with complex and rich legacies and intergenerational processes rooted in CCW. Study protagonists cited coming into TCS with experiences of community and protection, healing and youth power, interwoven with their experiences in their families and in previous youth-focused social justice work in Boston and beyond. While much of this work and cultural capital may have gone unnoticed or underappreciated in more mainstream/Whitestream spaces like a predominantly White school, SLP youth were able to bring their knowledges from their previous youth work, communities, and homes into the TCS SLP spaces (Yosso, 2005). Their CCW is valued and expanded upon in TCS SLP, as protagonist Joy demonstrates when discussing their experiences of their grandmother expanding their definition of family to more than "*blood ties*" bringing an "*additional family*" framework with her entering TCS SLP and, further, using it as a tool as SLP staff, which also highlights the cyclical and transformative nature of this work (see Table 2). CCW is not only an integral part of the roots with which youth are entering into SLP but is also something that they continue to cultivate and grow within the program, as strengthening the *roots* allow for the *fernicles* to continue flourishing.

Fernicals

Theme 1. Prioritizing youths' feelings and vulnerabilities: Facilitating healing at an individualized pace.

Our results support previous research on the importance of understanding transformative justice and internal coloniality theory as it relates to confronting oppression at all levels as a part of the healing process (Atallah and Masud, 2021) as well as tending to colonial wounds in safety. We found that prioritizing youths' feelings and vulnerabilities and facilitating their healing at an individualized pace was an important component to youths' healing journeys and experiences at TCS SLP. SLP staff supporting youth in having a space to "break down" in the "bubble" of protection, as protagonists Omar and Sage described illustrates an integral aspect of transformative justice at the interpersonal level. Doing this both in community and at an individualized pace also embodies the praxis Atallah and Masud (2021) discuss as complex and collective struggle, which help to center the individual and collective needs of each young person, rather than centering their abilities to bounce back or forward from the colonial wound they have endured. Additionally, having to endure the colonial wounds inflicted upon them due to their interactions with systems of oppression, particularly those around experiences of dehumanization as previously mentioned, demonstrates youths' experiences with internal coloniality. By providing the bubble of SLP, as distinct from the outside world and the systems that oppress youth of color, and the community setting to explore the vulnerabilities they come in with in safety, SLP staff are able to help youth tend to their wounds without threat of being re-traumatized (Watts & Erevelles, 2004). This theme demonstrates the importance of safe community spaces to address their colonial wounds at the pace that makes sense for their journey

is integral to their healing journeys and gives room for staff to not only aid in their processing, but also to uplift their inherent value.

Theme 2. Uplifting youth's value and humanity

Additionally, our results support previous literature on the importance of understanding the continual impact of intergenerational and colonial trauma on BIPOC youth, finding that uplifting youth's value and humanity during SLP aids in their process of rehumanization in the face of the dehumanization they have experienced outside of TCS. Consistent with the experience of 'unchilding' (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2019), the dehumanization which results in anxiety and "homelessness at home" (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2021; pg. 7) that so many of the SLP youth came in experiencing. This experience was not only addressed in response to the unchilding but was also circumvented through staff support systems that transcend the traditional understanding. This is demonstrated by the foundation upon which TCS SLP operates, which protagonist Sage discusses as believing that young people are inherently valuable and deserve to see themselves and experiences reflected in community spaces. This support is a key aspect of youths' healing journeys during SLP. It goes beyond the curriculum and programming that helps youth understand and give name to their experiences of systemic oppression into dismantling power structures, at the interpersonal level, rooted in the control of BIPOC youth through creating a space of livability and beloved community (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2019). This theme demonstrates SLP staff's commitment to supporting young people on their journeys towards healing in the face of systemic oppression by both counteracting dehumanization and fostering a new foundation, giving the young people the room to experience a joy that they may not have had access to otherwise.

Theme 3. Practices of accompaniment, interdependence, and joy

Further, our results are also consistent with previous literature on solidarity practices and praxis as it relates to BIPOC and Global South communities (Atallah et al., 2022). This is supported by the third major theme to emerge from the data around practices of accompaniment, interdependence and joy. During the research team's meetings with TCS SLP leadership, there was time spent discussing the responsive, rather than generative nature of this theme. In accordance with staff requests, the research team agreed that this, and other themes, should reflect the generative nature of their work.

Building on decolonial theory and practice, the concept of refusal runs throughout this theme, both in the praxis of collective care (Ginwright, 2018; Wilson & Richardson, 2020) and wraparound care (Walker & Bruns, 2006) implemented by TCS SLP staff and in the co-creation of joyful community (Barracks, 2020; Southerners on New Ground, 2019). Refusal is the act of rejecting the current "state of normalized brutality, alienation, and dehumanization" (Atallah and Dutta, 2023, pg. 79) experienced by BIPOC people experience in the U.S. and globally. Similar to the process of rehumanization mentioned above, this refusal is not only pushing back, but also a cultivation of joy and love in marginalized communities. Author adrianne marie brown (2017) discusses how there will always be things for marginalized communities to respond to, and the need for practices to move from a place of being paralyzed by trauma into healing liberated ways of being is more important than ever. In her chapter on Spells and Practices from her book *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*, she talks about how the trauma will never stop, and "…[i]f we hope to advance, we have to find ways to move through and out of the vice grip of trauma that so drastically limits our choices" (brown, 2017, pg. 117). This, among

other Black queer feminist theories around social justice work and healing, is an important framework for understanding the nuances of healing while in the midst of oppression. The work colonized people do in order to understand, address, and undo the harm that oppressive systems do, to some extent, requires the collective movement and transformation of grief. This transformation takes that which is hurting and the grief that follows and turns it into that which keeps us remembering that we can love while refusing the ruinous affective states of being that our bodies are bombarded with every day. And it is the practice of this transformation that takes place in TCS SLP, through the implementation of the collective care framework, wraparound care, and the co-creation of joyful community, that actively and collectively embody their efforts to politicize the grief and pain of marginalized youth towards creating collective opportunities for joy and the celebration of life. Joy being a central part of this theme is critical to the healing journey that youth embark on during SLP, as it centers the expressions of joy as refusal rather than the expression of trauma (Barracks, 2020). This is important because it allows room for the (re)creation of beloved community spaces of belonging for BIPOC youth.

Theme 4. Radical love and (re)creating community and spaces of belonging.

Finally, the fourth emergent theme in this study provides evidence of the power of community and co-creating spaces of belonging and care in BIPOC communities. These findings are consistent with literature 'healing-centered engagement' (Ginwright, 2018), radical love (Atallah, 2022), and radical hope (Mosley, Neville, Chavez-Dueñas, Adames, Lewis, & French, 2020) whereby staff highlighted the importance of (re)creating community and spaces of belonging with wide-ranging care practices when seeking to facilitate youths' healing journeys. Healing-centered engagement views trauma, not as an individual or isolated experience, but as a

collective process to be done in community (Ginwright, 2018). Consistent with this understanding, SLP staff subverts whitestream mechanisms for healing in isolation by creating the space for youth to "build with each other" and "heal themselves and communities", as protagonist Sage mentions. Healing in community helps youth feeling "less and less alone", as protagonist Omar stated (see Table 2) when discussing his SLP experience.

Additionally, healing centered engagement "expands how we think about responses to trauma and offers [a] more holistic approach to fostering well-being" (Ginwright, 2018, pg. 3). This is what SLP staff accomplished through creating community spaces that center identity exploration, representation and affirmation as protagonist Reginald mentioned when discussing the healing that occurs in their affinity spaces. This, along with making explicit their curriculum around collective care and, as protagonist Omar started, staff just being there for them, also demonstrates the wholistic approach taken by SLP staff to support youth in their healing journeys (Ginwright, 2018), which is a powerful expression of racial love. SLP is not individual therapy, rather, it is community healing in spaces created for youth to safely process their emotions while learning about the systems that have impacted their lives and do so with people who have not only gone through the same struggles, but are also shepherding them through this healing process via creating spaces (e.g., racial affinity, family pods systems, storytelling spaces/speak outs) and just being there for the youth. SLP staff's enactment of radical love is the driving force of this work, and as protagonist Omar mentions, "this is what this work's about what we have… just makes you feel like not even supported but held."

Spores

The work is ongoing and so is the transformation; youth becoming organizers: "TCS gave me the tools and language"; recommendations and growing edges for TCS SLP.

The outcomes, or *spores*, the emerged from our data embody the work that not only TCS SLP is doing, but also the work that other grassroots, youth focused organizations, programs, and schools are striving towards, as the work done by Chavez-Diaz and Lee (2015), mentioned previously, demonstrates. Out of the 4 recommendations that emerged from their conceptual mapping of healing centered youth organizing, 3 (e.g., embed and institutionalize healing practice into social justice organizations; increase investment to sustaining healing centered organizing; build capacity of social justice leaders to foster healing; Chavez-Diaz & Lee, 2015) are consistent with the outcomes that emerged from our data. The first outcome, or *spore* to emerge was around the work that TCS SLP staff do, as well as the transformation that youth go through, being ongoing. Protagonist Mina demonstrates this when describing how

> *…oftentimes when you get into a space with like a lot of people with the same identity as you … when you share your experience it can be it can come off as trauma bonding, but …for the city school, I think the way that its different, is [doesn't] just stop at just sharing our life experiences…the learning never stop and the commitment to change, the commitment to getting better…,just the commitment to each other, I think that's part of like what makes it possible for people to heal* (see Table 2)

The ongoing nature of the work is rooted in the embedded healing practices that SLP has implemented, particularly through their collective care framework (Chavez-Diaz & Lee, 2015).

The second *spore* to emerge was that youth became organizers after TCS SLP gave the tools and language to do so, consistent with the recommendation from Chavez-Diaz and Lee (2015) to increase investment to sustaining healing centered organizing. This is demonstrated by protagonist Mina as describing her a-ha moment around getting involved in social justice actions, knowing that TCS would give her the tools to be involved in movements. By giving youth the tools to embark on their own organizing journeys, and with many youth protagonists returning to become staff members, SLP has implemented practices that sustain their healing centered organizing.

The third *spore* to emerge were the recommendations and growing edges that TCS SLP former youth and staff members had for the program going forward. One of these growing edges was, as protagonist Reginald discussed, around having trainings to make sure that staff are equipped to deal with the youths' traumas that they come in with. Reginald's recommendation to build the capacity of SLP staff members to foster healing in the most effective and caring way possible is the same as the recommendation given by Chavez-Diaz and Lee (2015), highlighting a possible common concern among youth focused social justice programming. Taken together, each spore that emerged from our data aligns with the recommendations of other grassroots, youth-focused programs, as exemplified by the research conducted by Chavez-Diaz and Lee (2015). The outcomes emphasize the ongoing nature of the work, rooted in embedded healing practices and a collective care framework. By providing the tools and language for youth to become organizers, as well as addressing growing edges such as staff capacity to deal with trauma, TCS SLP has demonstrated practices that sustain healing-centered organizing and foster a commitment to change and growth.

Limitations

A major limitation of our study, and a common challenge of in-depth qualitative research, was the small number of protagonists (N = 8). Our research team did not include youth currently participating in TCS SLP due to time amount of outreach work required conflicting with the time constraints of a master's thesis. While each protagonist was a former staff member, 6 of the 8 protagonists were also former SLP youth, therefore, the perspective of former youth protagonists that later became staff is not generalizable to all youth who participated in SLP. This study did not ask for demographics information on the protagonists, which could have enriched and helped to deepen our analysis. We did not ask for demographic information because part of our ethics of 'do no harm' as researchers partnering with a small grassroots organization was, as we promised, to engage in the research in ways that would protect privacy of the staff and ensure their responses would not impact their employment in any way.

Additionally, the research team did not ask protagonists to clarify if they were speaking from the youth perspective or the staff perspective when answering certain questions during interviews, therefore we cannot generalize study results to all youth who participated in SLP. It should also be noted that these 6 protagonists were young people who chose to return to TCS SLP, as we did not randomize or ask for a broad range of protagonists due to time constraints and feasibility of the project for the master's thesis. Emergent from protagonists' interviews were understandings of intersections of race, gender, and sexuality, where conceptualization of healing was inextricably bound to their journeys towards more full and complex selves. A limitation of this study was that, from the review of the literature to the data analysis, I did not include strong intersectional analysis. Future studies should focus on understanding the intersections between racism, gender inequity, sexuality, and ability that defy the nature of colonial categorization.

The small number of protagonists limits the ability of our findings to represent TCS SLP staff processes generally, although this was not one of the specific aims of the current study. Rather, we focused on using critical theories and community-engaged methods while paying a high level of attention to both culturally and contextually specific experiences, allowing for nuanced and collaborative co-constructions of healing justice through dialogue and with respect for staff knowledge. Taken together, this allowed for our generation of an initial, exploratory model of making healing imaginable for young people, with insights into the impact of racism, long-lasting colonial violence, and recurrent adversities in their community.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Applications and Future Directions

Based on the literature reviewed and the findings from this study, the following statements and suggestions are recommended to The City School Summer Leadership Program, the city of Boston, as well as other grassroots youth focused organizations.

The City School Summer Leadership Program:

- Implement staff training to ensure that staff are equipped to deal with the youths' traumas that surface during programming with empathy and proficiency.
- Incorporate the implementation of collective care praxis more wholistically throughout the curriculum.
- Strengthen understanding and practice of incorporating marginalized intersecting identities (e.g., disability justice and gender justice) into the curriculum to create a more inclusive and accountable space.

The city of Boston:

- Support grassroots organizations like The City School that are dedicated to empowering marginalized youth.

- Foster collaborative partnerships between community organizations to gain a deeper understanding of the needs and experiences of marginalized youth.
- Advocate for policies that address systemic oppression and promote healing and justice for all youth in the city.

Grassroots youth focused organizations:

- Prioritize the mental health and wellbeing of youth participants by incorporating mental health resources and support systems into the program.
- Practice accompaniment by providing mentors and support systems for youth throughout their journeys.
- Incorporate decolonial and participatory theoretical approaches in program development and evaluation to ensure that the program is culturally responsive and empowering for youth of color.

Closing Reflections

This paper represents an attempt to explore the psychosocial processes that TCS SLP staff go through to support youth of color in their journeys towards healing justice in the face of coloniality and interrelated systems of oppression. In doing so, our research team co-constructed knowledge within a collaborative research partnership with TCS SLP staff leadership, consistent with our decolonial theory and methodological approach to this study. In both the interviews and in the subsequent meetings with TCS staff leadership, highlighting the generative nature of each theme was of utmost importance, as it incorporates the fruitful aspects of the fight against systemic oppression. The generative component of each theme to emerge is what allows for youth to embark on their healing journeys.

This study aimed to explore and evaluate the situations in which TCS staff create conditions of healing justice in support of youth of color decolonial resistance and resilience journeys during the SLP. Specifically, this study used semi-structured interviews, informed by decolonial and participatory theoretical approaches, to enable TCS staff to individually generate rich descriptions and testimonies illuminating how they perceive the ways in which the SLP potentially impacts the journeys towards healing justice for youth of color in urban Boston. Just as the fern analogy used to depict this process, TCS SLP are taking what youth are coming in with, the alienating and dehumanizing atmospheric elements surrounding them alongside their *roots* in cultural community wealth, filtering it through generative process of growing *fernicles*, and by the end are releasing *spores* that spread, transform, and begin the process again, often from the perspective of a staff member. This is the ongoing and transformative process of healing: A constant struggle, practice and process that can be pursued in community, as demonstrated in this study. I, as researcher, have too journeyed through cycles of trauma and liberation as I, alongside my research team, have borne witness to the testimonies of the peoples and communities that have opened themselves to our inquiries and curiosities. This healing process demonstrates that, while marginalized people with colonial wounds "can only heal as much as the larger society allows for them to [as] as long as injustices continue [they] cannot fully heal" (Lipscomb & Ashley, 2020, pg. 234), it *is* possible to create spaces to tend to those wounds in the safety of community.

Table 2.

More Illustrative Quotes for themes and subthemes

Theme and Subthemes	Illustrative Quotes
Cultivating Healing in the Face of Dehumanization: Centering youth's complex personhood	
Dehumanization through the limiting humanity: having no room for emotions or mistakes	*"I think specifically for marginalized folks… you're taught to not talk about your experiences you're taught to not you're taught to take it you're taught to adapt you're taught to be quiet you're like shh don't don't don't joke about that white person they're right over there you know like don't do that you know and that's a constant that we hear all the time every time we experience it a feeling or an emotion it's always in private" - Joy*
Systems of oppression limiting youths' choices and access to resources due to intersecting marginalized identity	*"As somebody that was not like somebody that's grows and is was growing up as a young adult so on so forth, and then my family is my family is, I guess middle class, I think, really honestly at that time, when I was thing is like more like working for like I understood that, if my dad or my mother didn't go to work and they missed a paycheck like it would have would you call it missed one paycheck it would have instrumental like what do you call it detrimental things happen nothing so like totally understood that it was like it's funny because even growing up in Boston and like being like I went to a high school and you know it's different than being in other places and other affluent maybe high school we joke about it, like we talked about being poor like you know like "we not rich we broke" like, and these are like like things that we like we joked about so like even be like those are also pieces that I can relate to a lot of like a lot of the young people that were at the sequel like coming out of the same situation like. We don't have this thing because, like and I don't like like folks don't like shit on their parents because they don't have it, because we all here, trying to survive, we understand like. One two paychecks away, we might not have a home type thing so yeah so those I think those are some of the others so being a black man was being black." - Reginald*
Cultivating Healing in the Face of Alienation: Enactments of collective care	

Feeling alienated due to others lack of understanding of SJ outside of TCS	*"It was just hard to be around friends they didn't. Like I had to be around people with open minds and like or open to like hearing me I was just like really about social justice um. And people were like "Omar he's just he's talking that stupid shit again" there was a time when like I feel like the Internet is very aware of social justice, now, it was a time where like nobody I was talking and nobody was, everyone was like what are you talking about. Like racism is like if someone calls you the N word or like beat you up because you're black and thats it, they didn't understand no matter what I was talking about the system that slavery impacted us like forever and like this and that they're just like "what are you talking about". there were like literally debates for a while that black lives don't matter like there were black people telling me that, it was actually like a question and people are like "How would I say that, like you know that's like not inclusive". I think my friends from high school have come around now and, like we're closer now than we were like around that time before a long time, like I would get like migraines being around them, because just it wouldn't make sense. Then my teacher, like being in school they thought it was appropriate to have like debates about if Mike Brown was at fault or not. I just remember this white girl saying "Okay, but everyone. Black people like to talk about police brutality, but what about Black on Black crime, they kill each other, so why would they be mad at the police". Like I had heard that argument so many times. I was just like again like I don't understand how people jump to that conclusion like this doesn't make sense, like there is just like no critical thought there's just like only racist vibes like it just didn't make sense. So, I had like my little pocket of friends who like got it and then everyone else just didn't end, you know, like I could be like superficial with them about like other things I could talk about like anime we could talk about like sports, and then I have like my close friends, and I would have my social justice friends." - Omar*
Feeling alienated due to isolation and anger from limited opportunities to explore intersecting marginalized identities	*"Yes, so like um I felt isolated in the outside world, but like you know, I was able to; I think my birthday was on the weekend. So, I was able to go back like in a couple days and the City School kind of held space, but like I felt like no one else got it my age and I kind of there was like anger and a lot of stuff and like coming up for me i'm like*

	yo like. It was it was kind of on I was like yo like. I don't remember if that was when black lives matter started or was it for on Mike Brown. But I just kind of felt like you're like people have to understand, that what happens to us matters and I was really confused, I was like yo Why do people think that he's not at fault like there was nothing that happened he went up to to Trayvon Martin and like assaulted him have been shot and killed him for no reason so Adams like I just didn't understand it, and I was just angry and I felt scared. It was kind of like the first time I thought about who I was as a black person." - Omar
C.C.W. (cultural community wealth) as embedded in BIPOC survival & persistence	*"mm-hmm yeah I think I think it bringing that experience of everybody is your family I think that's that's the meaning for us and so everybody is your family you're you have to take care of them because you don't you're not taking care of yourself and so I remember all the time my mom complain about how much or my grandmother took care of people like she would take little kids off of the street and put them in our house we make sure all the time even now we have extra beds extra rooms available for people who need it um and so that's always been something that I have had in my head always being available for people even if like you could you could feel bad right you could not have the resources but even so you we always make sure we have a reserve for our family um and family never it was never defined by blood ties and so when I got here I was like oh wow yeah like this is my additional family like this feels really good um to be able to really know that I'm taking care of myself and these young people at the same time um and introducing them for that sense of family as well because I know that that's not the case for everybody else they don't think of sometimes they don't think of terms of in that terms um and so yeah I think the resonance was there for me cuz even in the referral process that was like basically go talk to your auntie you know go talk to you that's what it felt like go talk to your auntie about this particular thing that you're going to join because I'm not giving you a chance because I love you so much. You know I'm not giving you a chance to pass this up. Um and so that's what it felt like and I think that's kind of what led to me continuing with SLP yeah" - Joy*

Prioritizing youths' feelings and vulnerabilities (Facilitating healing at an individualized pace).	
TCS SLP is a "bubble" and space of protection for youth of color that is uplifting yet distinct from the "outside world".	*"yeah it was like it was kind of like the matrix. I hadn't watched a matrix but it's so funny. I had to watch the matrix as a little kid but only the second one and only parts of it so like I understand the concept of it like they would go in to this like. I thought it was like a video game don't want to the video game, and they would come out and they would have like these dirty clothes, but in the video game to have superpowers, I was kind of all I know about the matrix. But even in SLP that year they had us in groups, called on morpheus and trinity. I just didn't understand what the like why they named after the matrix but I guess like you go in the real world is like the fake world like the matrix, SLP was like I forget what they call on the land in the matrix that all the humans stayed at, but it was kind of like but*." - Omar
Community connection between young people aids in emotional vulnerability and allows for healing to occur	*"wouldn't identify myself as a healer, but only because I think that, uhm, I would identify myself as a space holder in which like healing can happen for people. I think it is…. I think healing is both communal but deeply personal, and so I think creating space–I'm sorry I'm moving back to your questions– like I think creating space creates the environment in which people can do the work of healing but through community right, I don't…I've never seen anybody even like if somebody fractures...they fracture their leg or their ankle, you don't just sit there and let it stay. You have to go to physical therapy, you have to like take whatever medication you have to like stretch it around you have to move, it involves a process in which other people are involved.It's not a process that just happens on its own you have to go visit doctors, you visit it, you know your local apothecary, I don't know whoever is in community with you to get your leg healed, right has to happen and I think that's what we do here. Young people come and we say, let's deconstruct some things and as they're deconstructing they're realizing that their connection to wholeness has been what their parents have told them what society has told them, and they find themselves being like "actually, this may not be who I want to be or who I am" And and so through our like practices of transformative justice and collective care and the embodiment of understanding that we have to hold and*

	take care of each other in real ways and tangible ways meaning both like making sure you have food and water and access to those basic things while also making sure that if you continue to show up late for programming, you need to be held accountable, right, and you need to hold yourself accountable, culminates into the the larger like where and how healing happens. To me it's done in a very organic way. Yeah, and I think the interactions that they have with one another can be healing for them even without us like I don't, I'm not here to save young people from themselves. That's not my job. That's literally, and I don't mean that like, oh, that's not my job description, I mean, like, that's not my job as a human being to do that. My job is to create space for them to do what they're doing right now, which is to build with each other and in their communities to heal themselves and communities." - Sage
TCS SLP facilitates space for youth to "break down" and be vulnerable in the safety of community	*"we have this thing called like family group so its just like a smaller group that breaks down and just like to debrief like whatever it is that you're learning and also like a group of like young people and, like a staff person to also talk about what's happening for you in the program or like if something were to happen outside of programming you want to talk about. I think having those kind of connection with each other, is also like part of like what makes it easier for young people to come and like trust the space and like trust the people in the space as well." - Mina*
Uplifting youth's value & humanity	
"We believe that young people are valuable": foundational supports necessary for youth to feel valuable	*"When I first got here, folks would, uh, identify The the city school and SLP as a countercultural space. And I would use this language as well before and I started to realize that part of the problem is that if we're saying counter, then it implies in some way and maybe it doesn't imply, but there's something about the like asserting of dominance and the culture that that we're saying we're going against, which in reality again that the culture is problematic it's based on white supremacy, but if we don't assume that that's the…This idea that like the cultures that we exist in that are connected to white supremacy are the norm is where I think the problem comes in right? So is our work really countercultural? I don't know. Maybe it's actually just in line with the*

	culture that we want to be in and exist in and frame for ourselves, so. I think it creates a space where young people get to be safe and vulnerable and ask the hard questions and and create room for them to be able to take the things that they've been thinking about questioning, and folks are willing to engage in that dialogue with that. There are a lot of young people who identity formation is shaped very much by their families, right? And they've not had an environment where they can say, "well, I don't think I like this I think I like that. I believe this. I don't believe that" right and be able to like challenge people in that way. And part of that's just really hard to do. Uhm, when I first became developed as an organizer, I was annoying as hell to my sister. I mean, I just was the worst like I thought she was racist all the time, which was like not possible.Uh,but I was like "your adult is because you want me to wash the dishes" and she was like "no, you have to wash the dishes." You know, so I think I think it creates room for you to be able to challenge you know for young people to be able to challenge the spaces that they've been in that they've experienced and helps them to do some level of identity formation or deconstructing in a way that feels valuable." - Sage
SLP staff "make sure that young people see themselves": the importance of youth seeing their identities being represented and modeled.	*"But anyway in this group that like we'll find somebody will find something to relate to, but most importantly, I think that it creates space for young people to share their own stories and make sense of their own experiences. And I'm sure we've all experienced that as youth workers…in different ways that like when we share, it creates room actually rather than taking up room. So I think that is a really important part of the theory of change." - Sarah*
Accompaniment and interdependence practices: Fostering collective care and support networks	
Joy practice: meeting youth where they are at and co-creating joyful community	*"the second thing is our approach we use popular education as an approach to really engage young people which creates room for them to have agency in their own way of engaging with the material right. So, and like strong facilitation that doesn't say well, I'm here to teach you about this thing but I'm here to create space for there to be an exchange around learning, and I think that those two major things is what creates the space" - Sage*

"We're not going to learn it through theory, we're gonna learn through practice"	*"Aha moment did I have as a staff person… Um I think so in terms of like youth support um yeah in terms of youth support I think my Aha moment was um we do like youth support for the young people like making sure that like um they have one on ones, and things like that and oftentimes what happens is that um we talked about like savior complex, oh we don't support savior complex until you're in the position and you're like what am I doing like why do I think like it's my world to just it's just it's just so interesting how like we oftentimes don't think we're going to step into this world until you step into and you're like no the young people have the tools, like they can take care of themselves, they know what is best for them. Just like they can tell you what they need from you, you don't have to tell the young people what they need so oftentimes coming from a young people young person in the program you're like I experienced this program and went to it and know what's best and know what I enjoyed how I learned so just like oftentimes you want to like re um repeat everything that happened so like because you experienced the program and you enjoyed it so much you want to repeat it, and everybody have the same experience but that's not true at all, and I think one of the things that I realized is just like a part of loving the program is being committed to its change like the knowing that like like of course you love it and you want to keep it the same, but like change also is a way to practice like your care like and your love for the program as well, so I think that's when it was just that clicked for me and Im like… the program can change, like the young people can like experience it differently, like not everybody has to have the same experience and that not everybody's gonna feel centered the same way um but yeah." - Mina*
"One is none, and two is one": wrap around care practices with youth of color	*"I think, particularly the first year that I was on staff…um.I just got so much support like I was like I was really holding some like very intense situations with a few different young people and, like, I was being held so intensely by my supervisor um so I think there was like a shift, both in like how much I understood, I could could.Like.Help contain and how much I needed, like, I think um and I think that was really important for me like as a person who tends to like take on like be a caretaker in a lot of my relationships be like oh and caretaking takes work and I need care too um and that summer*

	definitely taught me that.yeah there was like a there was some, like equation that they used to say in staff training of like.One is none and two is one and like for every one person you're supporting you need two other people who are like helping who you're like sounding that off of with um yeah." - Laurel
Radical love & (re)creating community & spaces of belonging	
"We're here for you": staff enactments of love for youth of color.	*"it was a little bit unfamiliar area for me so I was he saw us in Wendy's and he was like oh do y'all need money for lunch like that stuff like stuff like that like was just for me it was just like okay i this is who i aspire to both be and also like i'm glad that i have people who are both down to earth and also like can like i could i could i i knew that like i could trust (TCS staff member) um in what he's saying because he like spoke mostly from his experience like there wasn't jargon there wasn't there wasn't a lot of like things that we didn't know like he was most of the things that he spoke about like he was there for as well um like when he was speaking about like asthma like all of those things like he it was his experience as well that was teaching and i think that that's true though most of the slp staff like there's a lot of time for story sharing um and like bringing yourself which i think is like the most important aspect of slp um a lot of the staff people of color and does that matter or what are your thoughts about that i think it does i think to see like people of color be different things um and show up in so many different ways like that was i don't know for me it was like okay this is this is it like i as someone who was like forming how i wanted to show up it was easy to pick out like combination of who who i want to be like um uh like and it also like there it was i saw people who i lived with like that com like (TCS staff member) doing that like like the like offering food like that's just that's something that people do in sudan like there's no way like if i see you in in the store there's no way like i'm not gonna offer to pay <laugh> mm-hmm <affirmative> um which is ridiculous but like that's just normal so for me like it was like okay this is this feels like" - Azizah*
"Youth build [and heal] with each other": creating space for youth to	*"I was just angry. I wanted to really just not feel anger, I wanted things to be fixed and I feel like in some ways. I would like even turn to like apathy as a way of healing*

heal in community with personal and collective processes.	*like you're like this world is so bad that I just I can't even care about anything anymore. Like it's weighing down on me, I just have to get rid of that, like, I just have to suppress that some times and i'm not even sure if, like, I found healing since then, but I think I found like family, and I feel like that was kind of like it's just as good you know, like If, I was feeling something at least I know my TCS family, it was feeling it too. And also like the fact that there was more people; I felt like every time something happened, I felt less and less alone and I think that definitely helped." - Omar*
"Affinity spaces are …spaces of healing": building community and connections through identity work	*"I think it actually looked really different over time um I think my like bare like first answer is that I think a lot of my role as staff was like really, especially at the beginning, like really helping to hold down of like white affinity and like hold down a lot of the Youth support that needed to happen, specifically with white young people um and I think…I mean i'm sure this will come up more about like youth support and support around like healing and addressing trauma is like so important throughout SLP and I think for me it was also really important when I was a young person it was like one of the first places where I would like to actually talk about some of the trauma that happened to me um and then also like I think slp really holds like how are we, who is who's being asked to hold the like majority of the labor of that work and, like, how is that racialized and how are we mindful as a staff team of like balancing who's holding which protagonists which ways um…" - Laurel*
Shifts occurring to support youth in healing journeys: making explicit the curriculum around collective care.	*"I feel like different years like training as staff that I definitely felt different goals um I think something like the most recent year I was on staff in a like formal staff role would be like...I think I was like working with a couple other people around some goals of like really bringing in and strengthening that like collective care framework as like I think that framework was always there and I don't know if it was always visible and so like making it more visible and like more part of what um…getting people on staff who were like explicitly learning and like then being able to like also credit people for that work" - Laurel*
The work is ongoing and so is the transformation	*"…oftentimes when you get into a space with like a lot of people with the same identity as you … when you share your experience it can be it can come off as trauma*

	bonding, but …for the city school, I think the way that its different, is [doesn't] just stop at just sharing our life experiences…the learning never stop and the commitment to change, the commitment to getting better…,just the commitment to each other, I think that's part of like what makes it possible for people to heal"- Mina
Youth becoming organizers: "TCS gave me the tools and language"	*"yeah of course um I think there are many things I think when I came back to SLP I think, after you do SLP the first year its hard to go back um to like school and different environment because you keep on noticing small things you're like Oh, this is what they're talking about like oh like that you keep on picking up things so there's like oftentimes like the first year even though like it's it's really intense, but at the same time, you want to like go back and just be like so now what? Um so I think that's when I went back um the second year I was just like so now what? I saw like you're giving me the names to my experiences so like what what am I supposed to do" - Mina*
Recommendations and growing edges for TCS SLP	*"I think the thing that I am hoping that we– there's some things I'm hoping we figure out about SLP in the next stretch of time, so those are the things that like I would offer. The things that I am hoping we figure out are… let's see, so this summer, I think some of the main things that came up are we want to strengthen our understanding of disability, justice and how we practice disability justice within the context of the program, and I think that there are just a lot of questions that we have about that this is the first number we engaged in bar explicitly, and that was really important, and we're also still like very much a growing edge around that so that's one thing comes to mind. I think we have a like unearthing and set of work to do around our gender justice curriculum and around privilege and cis-sexism I think that we– so in a lot of ways, we are one of the ways that we create a space that challenges power and oppression is by being a majority– like a group that is majority folks most impacted in like pretty much every form of identity that we tackle except for cisness right, in which we are a majority cis space and so that creates I think a lot of pain and it, just like replicates a lot of cis sexism in the program that we have we came up against this summer and so that's one of the things I think we*

	also are trying to figure out is like how, just how can we not do that and how can we–have a, have work around gender justice that really like honors people experiences with gender in a wide variety of ways, but also holds like those of us, for example, like spends meaningful time on, as a cis woman, I would say like sounds meaningful, time on the experience of what it means to be a cis woman moving through the world but also like has a rigorous degree of accountability around like sexism in terms of yeah so I think that there's just a lot we need to parse and figure out there, so that's a conversation I'm Interested to have. I think there's like a few others…those are two of the main growing–I just, I think, a third growing edge is this question around like what does sustainability continue to look like in the context of like what can we expect from each other, what is a reasonable set of like hours and commitments for a summer program like this, knowing that people want to cover everything and at the same time do not want to work hours that are unreal, completely understandably, and also what is a–like meaningful rate of pay and compensation look like in the context of doing this work, so those are three of the growing edges I see for where we are currently in the program there's probably a lot more, but those are like three that have come up with this summer in particular." - Sarah

APPENDIX A: DATA ANALYTIC PROCESS

Evaluation of The City School (TCS)'s Processes of Promoting Youth Leadership and Social Justice Praxis

Table. 1 Research Team's* step-by-step analytic process

Steps	Type of Analytic Activity	Dates	Description of Analytic Activity	
1	**Open Coding** (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1990)	September 2021 – March 2022	Research team will evaluate textual content and create initial codes and begin to describe the properties and dimensions of each emergent code.	Consistent analytic and reflexive memoing by individual research team members (Saldaña, 2009). Regular/weekly team meetings and dialogues considering emergent themes and broader categories. Research team members engaging in consistent individual and
2	**Pattern Coding** (Saldaña, 2009)	March 2022 – April 2022	Research team will identify emergent themes collectively and explore patterns in the open codes while dropping redundant or marginal codes and consolidating broader categories towards being able to explain and pull together material and make more meaningful units of analysis.	
3	**Axial Coding** (Charmaz, 2006; Morrow, 2005; Saldaña, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1990)	April 2022 – May 2022	Research team will describe the properties and dimensions of the boarder units of analysis, themes, or categories, and work collectively to fit these categories in with each other by exploring and illuminating the relations between categories. Furthermore, the research team will meet and engage in member checking with each The City School (TCS) leader and staff protagonist for initial feedback on	

			progress of data analysis to improve validity and trustworthiness of the study.	group diagramming of visually based and reflexive analyses, or 'situational mapping' (Clarke, Friese, & Washburn, 2018), drawing attention to the 'social ecology' of relations between codes, and later, amongst categories most relevant to TCS's Inquiry based Process.
4	The research team will engage in Theoretical Coding and final situational mapping that will lead to the generation of a comprehensive visually based representation, model, or Project Map (Clarke, Friese, & Washburn, 2018) which attempts to tell the team's full analytic story of TCS's Inquiry-based Process			
5	Writing up of Initial Results and sharing the visually based representation, model, or Project Map with TCS for feedback to improve validity and trustworthiness of analysis.			
6	Writing up of Final Report, with quotes from protagonists substantiating emergent themes outlined in tables and a Project Map.			

**Research team includes PI Devin Atallah, doctoral students Ms. Michelle Del Rio & Ms. Rhyann Robinson, M.S.; and undergraduate student Ms. Zaina Abdalla whom will all have access to full data*

APPENDIX B: SITUATIONS OF INQUIRY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Evaluation of The City School (TCS)'s Processes of Promoting Youth Leadership and Social Justice Praxis

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1. **Building relationality and** identity **introductions:** In this situation of inquiry, the interview will be giving space to explore their journeys towards and through SLP as facilitators. The following are example questions that might be used:
    a. *I want to take the time for us to name ourselves in this space. If you feel comfortable, we can both take a moment to share about our identities and who we are-you can decide who shares first*
    b. *(if they share some salient identities, follow up by asking them more in depth) What does it mean to you to be_____?*
    c. *We talked earlier about naming ourselves in our own words. Has there ever been a time that you have encountered a narrative- a stereotype, an understanding about your identity that did not reflect how you see yourself?*
        i. *(If they say yes) Did engaging with The City School's program change how you engage with these stories? If so, how?*
    d. *Can you share about how your identity impacted your work as a facilitator or other role as staff during SLP?*
2. **Grounding The City School in the broader context of the lives of staff**: In this situation of inquiry, the interview will explore the ways in which staff initially gravitated towards/ connected with TCS. The following are example questions that might be used:
    a. *It is important for us to be able to understand how folks have been able to connect with programs like TCS, as things like it are not always available . Can you tell the story of how you got connected with TCS?*
    b. *What was it about TCS that made you want to be a part of it/its community/its program?*
    c. *What made you ready to support youth in their journeys through TCS at that time*
        i. *Was there something in your life before joining that allowed you to be able to support youth in TCS SLP?*
    d. *What were you trying to achieve in SLP? What were your goals for the program*
        i. *How did you see these goals enacted during the program?*
        ii. *What was your part in enacting these goals?*
        iii. *Where are you in your own self reflection about these goals?*
3. **Shifts and transformations:** In this situation of inquiry, the interview will explore the ways in which staff experienced shifts in their understandings about themselves and the world around them before, during, and after helping to facilitate TCS SLP. The following are example questions that might be used:

a. *Lets go back to before you experienced The City School Summer Leadership Program. How did you understand yourself or your identity back then?*
b. *Now let's think about going through the Summer Leadership Program-did anything shift in how you understood or saw yourself, how did your understanding of yourself change as you worked through the program?*
    i. *(If they do indicate that something changed) Can you share an experience you had like an a-ha moment that was transformative or shaped change for yourself in a meaningful way?*
        1. *NOTE TO RESEARCHERS: Make sure to practice active-listening and attend to the ways that when sharing examples of their lived experiences you verify back that you heard them and thank them for their gift of sharing their truth.*
    ii. *(If they say that nothing changed) What do you think would have had to happen in the program to facilitate a shift for you?*
        1. *What made it so that SLP wasn't transformative? What would have made it transformative?*

4. **Moments of care/support in healing journey:** In this area of inquiry, the interview will be exploring how staff supported youth in TCS SLP. The following are example questions that might be used:
    a. *Thank you for sharing about a time when you felt changed.*
        i. *Can you share an experience you had where you felt you were healing during SLP in a meaningful way?*
        ii. *Were there parts of yourself that were seen in TCS not seen in other places?*
        iii. *Were there any encounters where you felt like you could be your whole self in TCS SLP?*
    b. *Can you share a time where you found yourself providing healing support for another person in the program?*
    c. *What support strategies have you found most helpful for youth in SLP?*
        i. *Are there any examples of ways that you enacted this form of support towards youth during your time as a staff member?*
        ii. *Where are you at as you reflect on these support strategies?*
    d. *What support strategies did you find that were not as helpful?*
        i. *Are there any examples of ways that you enacted this form of support towards youth during your time as a staff member?*
        ii. *Where are you at as you reflect on these support strategies?*
    e. *Were there times/instances where TCS was not resonating with you?*
    f. *What is it about The City School's Summer Leadership Program space that is so different/that facilitates this kind of healing and growth?*
5. **Suggestions and closing questions:** In this situation of inquiry, the interview will explore ways in which TCS SLP can be strengthened in the future. The following are example questions that might be used:
    a. *What did you need that TCS SLP fell short on?*

b. *What ways would you suggest to help SLP improve on this?*
c. *What suggestions do you have in regards to ways that SLP can better support youth?*
d. *Based on your understanding of this project, is there any question that we should have asked?*

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Evaluation of The City School (TCS)'s Processes of Promoting Youth Leadership and Social Justice Praxis

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

University of Massachusetts Boston
Department of Clinical Psychology
100 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, MA 02125-3393

Consent Form for Evaluation of The City School (TCS)'s Processes of Promoting Youth Leadership and Social Justice Praxis

Introduction and Contact Information
You are asked to take part in a research study. **Participation is voluntary.** The researchers are Michelle Del Rio and Rhyann Robinson, graduate students in the clinical psychology program. The faculty advisor is Dr. Devin Atallah in the clinical psychology program. Please read this form and feel free to ask questions. If you have questions, Dr. Devin Atallah will discuss them with you. His email address is Devin.Atallah@umb.edu.

Description of the Project:
The purpose of this research is to develop and evaluate an anti-racist and trauma-informed youth leadership group focused on healing justice models with City School youth and staff attending who attended or helped facilitate The City School's Summer Leadership program (SLP), a Boston public urban youth program, during the summers of 2017, 2018, and 2019. This project is guided by the values and principles of a decolonial, anti-racist approach to critical inquiry within a community-case study qualitative design, utilizing Situational Analysis and aims to conduct in-depth qualitative interviews with TCS leaders, youth workers/mentors, and the youth mentees. These interviews will enable researchers to have in-depth conversations with the TCS leaders, youth workers/mentors, and the youth mentees to explore the impact of SLP on young people's processes of gaining skills for developing their own praxis as organizers and agents of change in their communities.

Your participation will take one meeting of about 90 to 120 minutes where the interview will take place. The decision whether or not to take part in this research study is completely voluntary. If you do decide to take part in this study, you can decide to stop participating at any time. If you wish to stop participating, you should tell the interviewer. Whatever you decide will not result in any penalty to you.

Risks or Discomforts:
A risk of participation is a loss of confidentiality. We will do everything we can to protect your information. You may feel uncomfortable when completing the research materials. You may skip any questions or stop participating at any time.

You understand that there is minimal risk associated with this study. The primary risk may be the emergence of uncomfortable feelings when participating in the interview. If you begin to feel uncomfortable with talking about certain topics, please let the researcher know how you are feeling so that your participation can be a more positive experience. You may speak with Dr. Devin Atallah to discuss any distress or other issues related to study participation.

Benefits:
There is no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. Your participation may help us learn more about the impact of The City School's Summer Leadership Program (SLP), allowing for the researchers to explore ongoing shifts within TCS as an organization to deepen understanding of TCS's effective programming and processes while identifying areas of growth.

Recording the Interview:
In addition to deciding to participate in the interview, you are also deciding to agree to be audio recorded. The interview will be recorded electronically. Immediately following the interview, you will be given the opportunity to have the recording erased if you decide you don't agree to participate in the study or to be audio recorded. The recording will be transcribed and erased once the transcription is checked for accuracy. Neither your name nor any other identifying information will be associated with the recording or the transcript. Only the research team will be able to listen to the recordings. The recording of your interview will be destroyed no later than a year from today. Also, the researchers will gather notes during the interview regarding ethnographic information including nonverbal behavior. The research team would be happy to share my notes at the end of the interview to check for accuracy and ensure all protagonists are comfortable with the information recorded.

The written words of your interview may be reproduced in whole or in part for use in presentations or written products that result from this study. Neither your name nor any other identifying information (such as your voice or your picture) will be used in presentations or in written products resulting from the study.

Confidentiality:
Your part in this research is **confidential**. That is, the information gathered for this project will not be published or presented in a way that would allow anyone to identify you. Information gathered for this project will be password protected or stored in a locked file cabinet and only the research team will have access to the data. The University of Massachusetts Boston Institutional Review Board (IRB) that oversees human research and other representatives of this organization may inspect and copy your information.

All identifiable information that could directly identify you (e.g., your name) will be removed from the information collected in this study. After transcribing and checking for accuracy, the recording will be erased and there will be no way of linking your identity to the data collected. After we remove all identifiers, the information may also be used for future research or shared with other researchers without additional consent. Information gathered for this project will be stored in a locked file cabinet and/or password protected on a private computer and only the research team will have access to the data.

Voluntary Participation:

The decision whether or not to take part in this research study is voluntary. If you do decide to take part in this study, you may end your participation at any time without consequence. If you wish to end your participation, you should contact Dr. Devin Atallah with your decision. Whatever you decide will in no way penalize you or involve a loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Questions:
You have the right to ask questions about this research before you agree to be in this study and at any time during the study. If you have further questions about this research or if you have a research-related problem, you can reach Dr. Devin Atallah via email Devin.Atallah@umb.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research protagonist, please contact a representative of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, which oversees research involving human protagonists. The Institutional Review Board may be reached by telephone or e-mail at (617) 287-5374 or at human.subjects@umb.edu.

Signatures:

I HAVE READ THE CONSENT FORM. MY QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. MY SIGNATURE ON THIS FORM MEANS THAT I CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.
I CERTIFY THAT I AM 18 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER.

_____ _____

Signature of Protagonist Date Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

_____ _____

Printed Name of Protagonist Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

By participating in the interview, you will be agreeing to participate in the research. Please keep a copy of this form for your records or if you need to contact me.

APPENDIX D: LIST OF OPEN CODES

(counter)storytelling
absence of counterspace as a young person
Access to needs, food, water, etc
accompanying, being with, meeting youth where they are at
Accountability
activities around socio economic status; involving parents
advise to youth in TCS
After TCS
allowing space for youth emotion expression
allowing space for youth to be called in vs called out and using it as a learning moment
amount of years connected to TCS
art or self expression as specific to connecting with TCS
asking - 'what does this organization need'
Base building and Supporting Movement Infrastructure
Becoming an Executive Director
Being a youth organizer since a young age
Being Called In-Recognized-Recruited as Previous Youth Leader
being challenged to question 'giving up' privileges related to identity
being educated by youth (LGBTQ+)
being praised for organizing work as a White person while Black co-leaders are survailed
Being Wrong
Black and Brown Majority Space
Black manhood
Black Pride and Love
Black Womanhood
bravery from youth in speaking out against master narratives
breaking misconceptions, the process of unlearning
Bubble, space of proection and UPlifting yet distinct from 'outside' world
building analysis out of stories and experiences
building community as a part of the curriculum
Building community as central to TCS process
building community in racial affinity
building knowledge and understanding of LGBTQ+ experiences
can't have one event was there was some youth event that was happening in Philadelphia. And you know they wanted to go like they know that I had experience with taking people on trips and coordinate because, like that so she was like “could you do it” and
carrying through formative principles learned as youth into being SLP staff
centrality of relationships in TCS culture-approach
challenging dominant narratives
Challenging punitive and carceral logics and practices
changes made to the program
Changing the program bc of COVID
changing the program to center more identities
collaborative relationships between staff members help create container for youth
Collective Care
collective care as rooted in social movements and organizing history
collective care related to pandemic and virtual SLP
Commitment to Change and transforming the org
Complex Personhood and Connection to Wholeness
connecting with youth (based on socio-economic status)

Connection to a specific TCS staff member (as a youth)
consciousness around who holds labor in slp
constructive criticism of TCS
contending with power dynamics (TCS staff)
continuous care
countercultural space
Counterspaces
Creating harm
Creating space, or room, to question
creating spaces for understnading concepts that take longer to process
creating systems that are necessary (to develop youth organizers)
Creating the Conditions - Harnessing, Fostering Power of Community
Desire to connect with larger group of youth outside of SLP or TCS
Desire-based framework
Difference between thinking (or speaking) complexity and PRACTICING Complexity
difficulties sharing emotions due to virtual SLP
Dignity
Diplomacy
discomfort discussing privileged identities e.g., class privielge
discussions of oppression at different levels e.g., interpersonal, institutional
discussions on patriarchy
discussions on race and culture across distance
discussions on systems of oppression
doing community action projects that center organizing work
doing organizing work after SLP
excited about youth work
excitement of being apart of actions as a youth
experience as youth in SLP informing experience as staff member
experience of supervision outside of TCS is different
experience process of becoming staff
Experiencing discrimination (youth)
experiencing growth in first year as TCS staff
experiencing White spaces as uncaring as a White person
Exploring and (re)creating identity (youth)
Facilitating and Building Young People, NOT workshops or programs
Facilitative, Spiritual Leadership vs. Problem-solving Leadership
feeling alienated due to others lack of understanding of SJ outside of TCS
feeling less alone in TCS
feeling not just supported but held
Feeling supported in SLP experience (youth)
finding a middle path between cultural heritage and SJ work
finding purpose when engaging in youth work
finding validation in TCS
Food and connection to culture and liberation
formalizing curriculum around collective care
formative activities during SLP as youth
found family in TCS
freedom circles
From Youth Organzer (as a young person onself) to Becoming a Leader
Funding needs and Space needs of TCS
gaining language for their expeirences toward liberation (youth)
gaining lanugage for experiences towards liberation (staff)
gaining tools and language to talk about systems of oppression

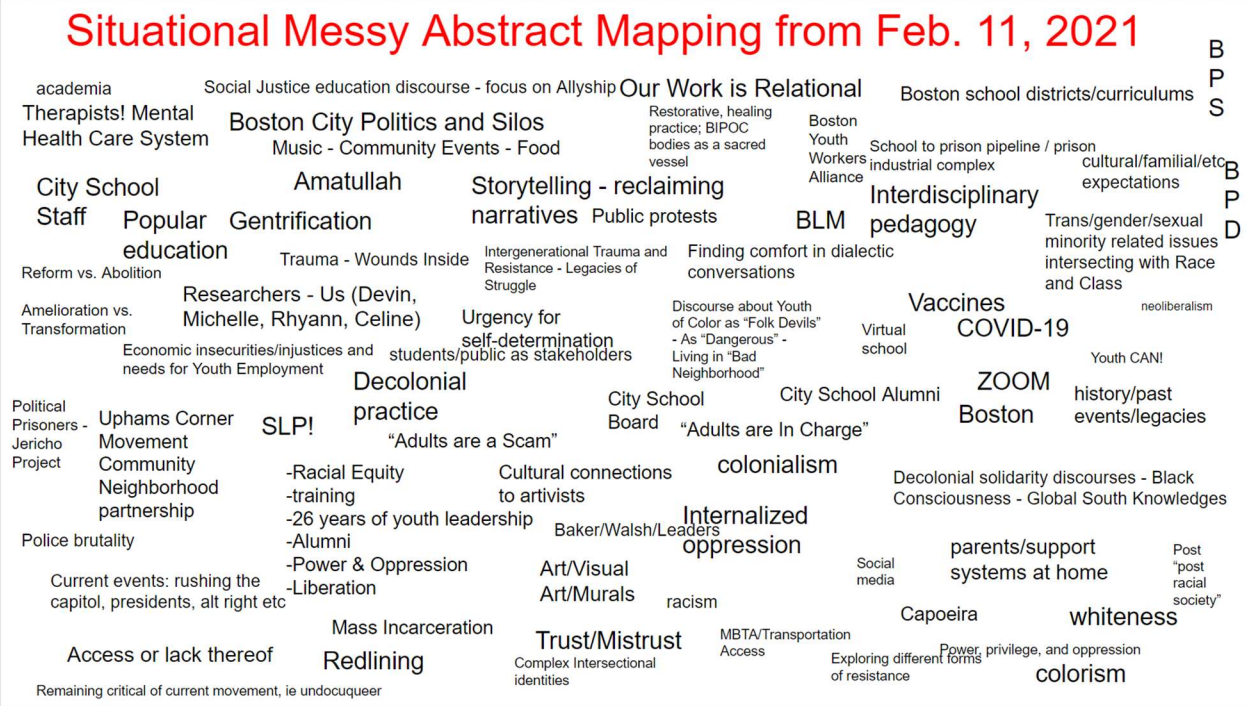
gaining understanding of own privileged identity and youths' oppressed identities
gender, sexuality, orientation, queer identity
Generational differences
Genuienness, embodiment, integrity
Being genuine as important aspect of TCS staff
getting to the core elements of what makes SLP powerful
Having hard conversations
healing as affirmation
Healing as rooted in community, with personal and collective processes
healing from trauma via storytelling
helping to build the culture that is needed as staff members and supervisors
History of Being Inivolved in Boston Youth Movement, Work
Holding Space
humanizing leadership and organizing practices - Supporting the humanity and integrity of people
Humility
'I try not to take up too much space'
identities vs personhood
identity formation (youth) - against systems of oppression
identity informing youth work
importance of youth having a space to talk about racial violence
Intentionality and principled struggle
Interdependence vs. Dependency
interpersonal relationships demonstrating care
isolation anger and feeling scared as a result of position as a Black person
lack of preparation for world outside of TCS
lack of training for organizing
lack of understanding of systems and internalized racism
Love for Youth Work
Making desicions grounded on Youth Power while still holding complexity of lack of experience
making explicit the focus on care and mental health and wellbeing
making room for what is needed
making social justice language more accessible
Master narratives
matrix analogy for SLP vs real world
Mattering - BLM
mental health in the context of organizing
moments of conocimiento or reptilian eye opening
more training around staff responses to youth trauma
moving from mainstream SJ to more radical and left SJ
multi-network of support for youth
Mutual Aid
need to make explicit that this is a majority Black organization
NGOization issues
not acknowledging own privilege due to lack of language
not enough time to get deep into concepts
not understanding consequenses of organizing while in SLP
'one is none and two is one'
ongoing learning and understanding process
openness from building with others
Openness to change (as staff) - and openness to being challenged
oppression negatively impacting ID (youth)
org structural issues (such as board)
Organizer vs. Activist

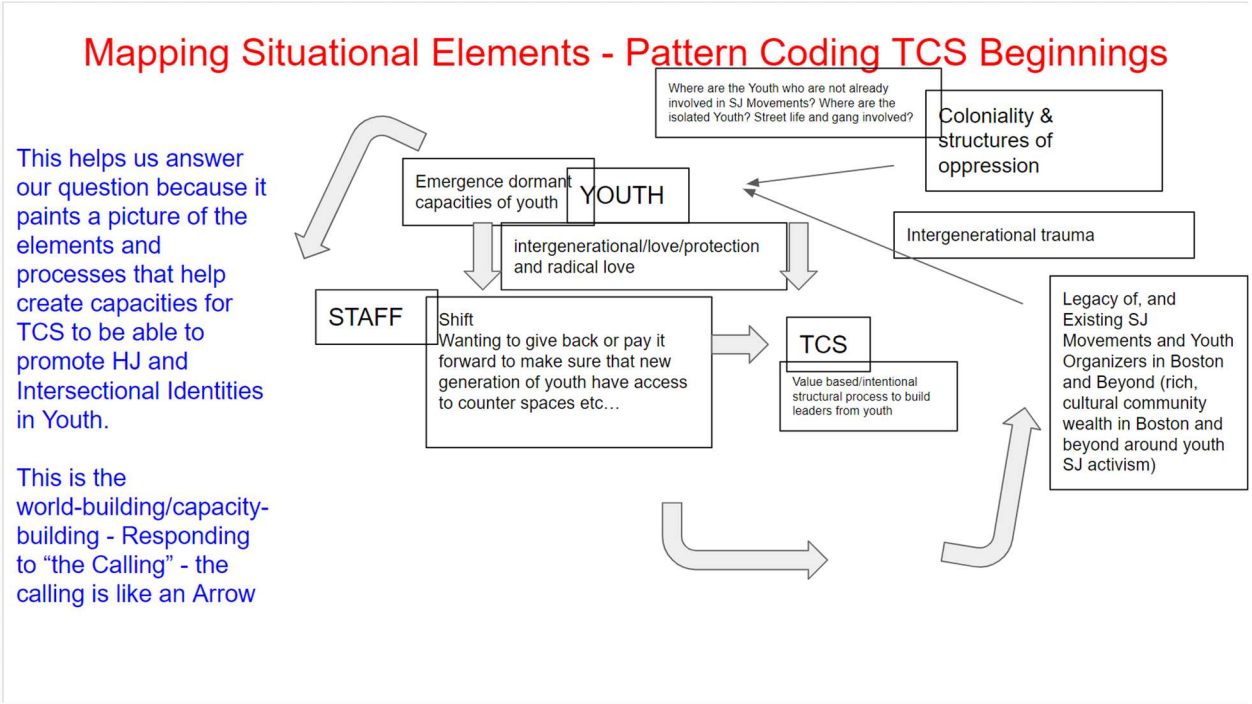
Organizer vs. Healer
Organizers vs Leaders
Organizing as connected to Caregiving & Healing (shift to focus on healing justice)
Parent impact on youth learning
Part of loving the program is being committed to its change
past and present merging during transition from youth to staff member
people can support each other and still have complicated relationships
'people were so honest'
Popular Education (Freire)
practicing what you are learning
previous TCS model-- focus on difference less on power
Probably one of the best feelings ever, is just like love.
processing feelings around White priviege with another White staff member
Process-oriented leadership, importance of process
program sustainability
publicizing voices of marginalized youth
questions for SLP staff
Racial Affinity space (in SLP)
racial identity impact on experiences with systems of opression
racial identity informing work with youth and organizing
Radical Love
receiving criticism for talking about social justice
recognizing salience of racial identity in all white school space
Resisting White Supremacy Culture
Responding to a Calling
searching for healing
Seeing representation at TCS (youth)
sharing things that felt unnamable
shift from adultist and protective models to collective and collaborative care taking processes
shift from intensive and exhausting programing to focus on collective care
shift in SLP culture
shift into feeling and emotion at TCS
Shift of focus of TCS towards developing Organizers
shifting focus towards healing
shifting from focus on difference to focus on power
shifting towards family group structure and pods of staff
SJ understandings that youth were coming into TCS with
SLP activities as central to community building
SLP facilitating self confidence in curriculum delivery and facilitation skills
SLP leadership structure
SLP not preparing youth to become organizers
SLP takes a race first lens
small Asian affinity group
space for community building and healing
Space to be safe and deconstruct, question and organize to resist
space to be self
spaces for healing
spiritual identity development as a call to organizing and youth work
Staff burn out
Staff choosing to take a break from TCS
staff creating system to follow up with youth on traumas they've shared
staff modeling for youth
staff sharing similar expereinces with youth

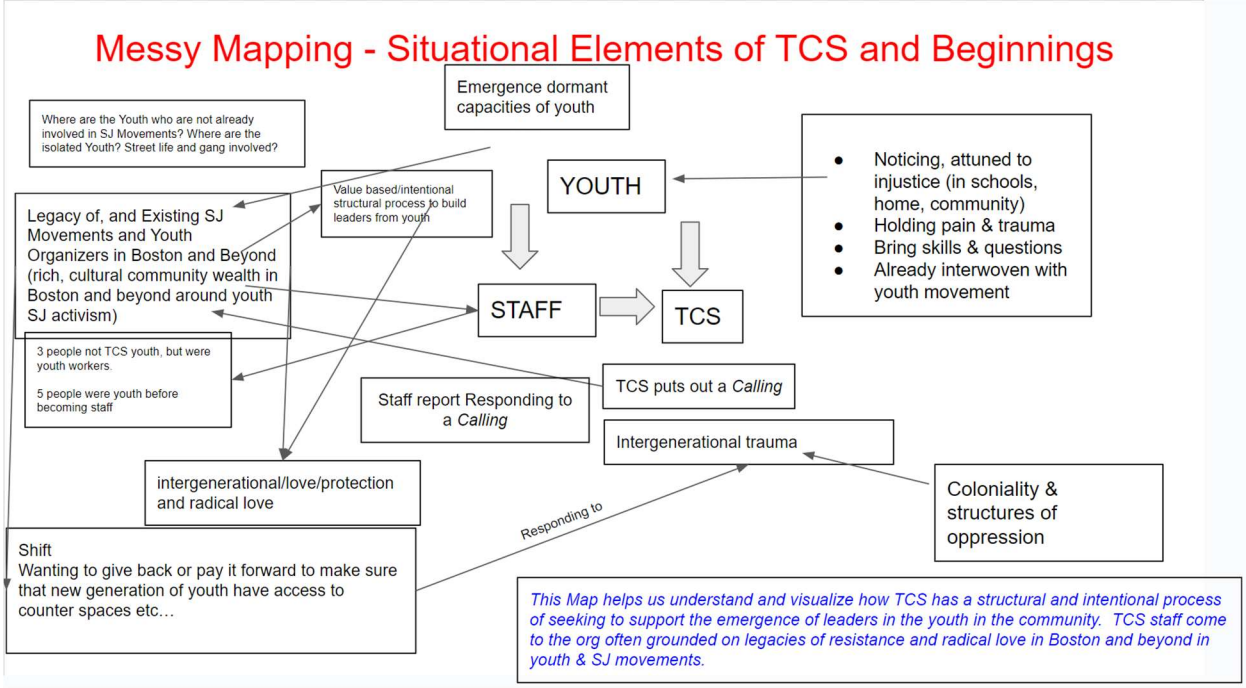
staff supporting each other
staff supporting youth in healing and addressing trauma
staff taking care of youth
staff using, and being held accountable for, power and privilege
'staffing an SLP summer is one of the hardest things'; labor
Staying grounded and rooted in your base as an organizer
Story of TCS initial connection
Strategies put in place to address staff burn out
Strong network of Youth Orgs in Boston
Suggesting Question for DARA Collective Researchers
supervision
support systems
supporting youth in bridging back when harm has been done
supporting youth without needing full understanding
systems of oppression limiting choices and access
Taking a break becasue I'm not letting it kill me
taking back permission to feel valuable
TCS alumni becoming adult organizers
TCS as something different from other youth organizations
TCS as something similar to other youth programs
TCS as utopia and outside world as real life
TCS centers experiences of marginalized people
TCS connecting youth to resources
TCS Core Values, Approach
TCS curriculum, TCS teaching methods
TCS empowers young people
TCS explicitly wokring across difference
TCS felt the way community is supposed to feel
TCS focus on only growth and no healing
TCS is a give and take
TCS is not punitive
'the answer is in the room'
There are more youth than there are youth orgs
this work doesn't move without emotion, a movement without emotion doesn't exist
transformative experiences (Aha moments)
Transformative Justice, Healing Justice, Restorative Justice
Restorative justice
transition from youth to staff, seeing behind the magic of SLP
Translocation dimension of youth work
Traumatization
trust
understanding my power (staff)
understanding of compunding intersectional oppressed identities
Value-based work
view of wealth as interpersonal vs systemic
visibilizing both oppressed and privileged identities
Vulnerability
Wanting Autonomy as an Org (re funding and space)
We are Not Saviours or Therapists
we have to love the program enough to let it change
we sometimes enact the problematic systems and institutions we are trying to change
'we're here for you'
'what does it mean to engage white protagonists of the program'

where Healing 'really' happens
Womanhood
working closely with other staff members
Working for sexual orientation and gender justice
Worst Moment as Youth Worker - Never failure, Always lesson
Young people have the tools...
Youth autonomy and room to work for liberation
youth educating other youth
Youth Power
Youth Power vs Youth Support
Youth Service org vs. Youth-Led Org
youths returning to program

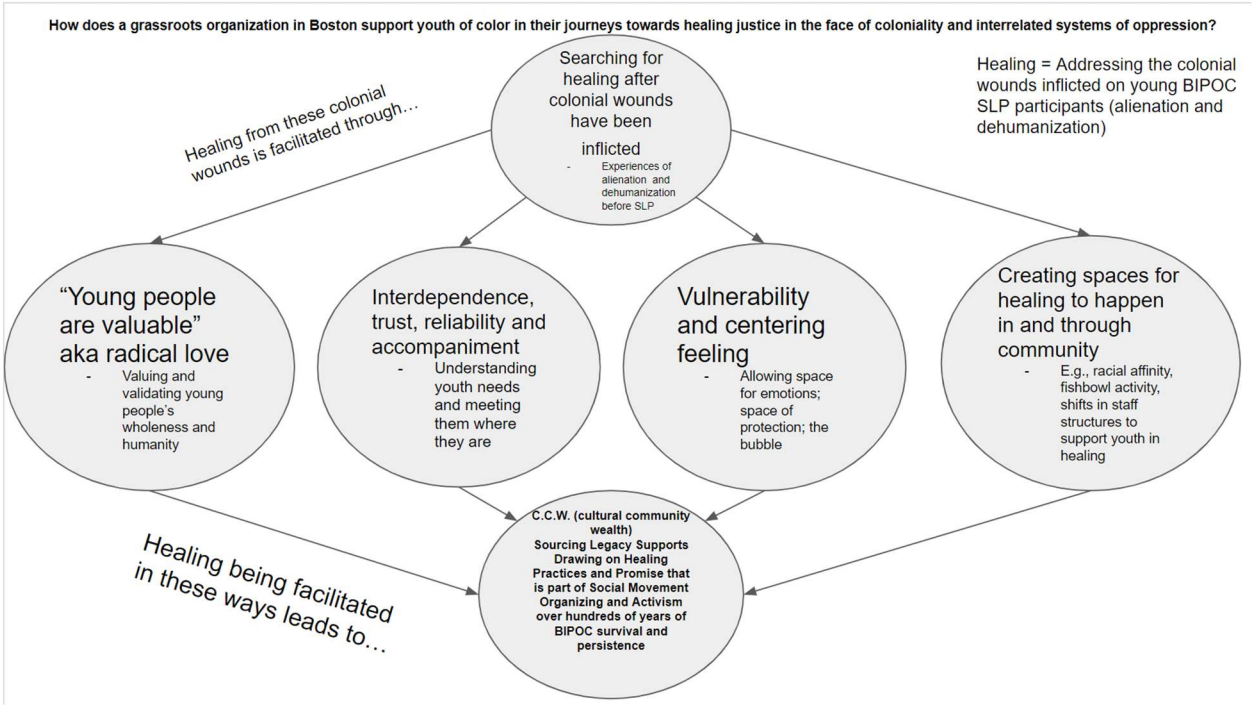
APPENDIX E: EXAMPLES OF SITUATIONAL MAPS






Messy Mapping - Situational Elements of TCS and Beginnings
Emergence dormant capacities of youth
Where are the Youth who are not already involved in SJ Movements? Where are the isolated Youth? Street life and gang involved?
Value based/intentional structural process to build leaders from youth
YOUTH
Noticing, attuned to injustice (in schools, home, community)
Holding pain & trauma
Bring skills & questions
Already interwoven with youth movement
Legacy of, and Existing SJ Movements and Youth Organizers in Boston and Beyond (rich, cultural community wealth in Boston and beyond around youth SJ activism)
STAFF
TCS
3 people not TCS youth, but were youth workers.
5 people were youth before becoming staff
TCS puts out a Calling
Staff report Responding to a Calling
Intergenerational trauma
intergenerational/love/protection and radical love
Coloniality & structures of oppression
Responding to
Shift
Wanting to give back or pay it forward to make sure that new generation of youth have access to counter spaces etc…
This Map helps us understand and visualize how TCS has a structural and intentional process of seeking to support the emergence of leaders in the youth in the community. TCS staff come to the org often grounded on legacies of resistance and radical love in Boston and beyond in youth & SJ movements.

How does a grassroots organization in Boston support youth of color in their journeys towards healing justice in the face of coloniality and interrelated systems of oppression?
Searching for healing after colonial wounds have been inflicted
- Experiences of alienation and dehumanization before SLP
Coming into SLP
Interdependence, trust, reliability and accompaniment
- Understanding youth needs and meeting them where they are
"Young people are valuable" aka radical love
- Valuing and validating young people's wholeness and humanity
C.C.W. (cultural community wealth)
Sourcing Legacy Supports
Drawing on Healing Practices and Promise that is part of Social Movement Organizing and Activism over hundreds of years of BIPOC survival and persistence
Vulnerability and centering feeling
- Allowing space for emotions; space of protection; the bubble
Creating spaces for healing to happen in and through community: addressing the wounds
- E.g., racial affinity, fishbowl activity, shifts in staff structures to support youth in healing


How does a grassroots organization in Boston support youth of color in their journeys towards healing justice in the face of coloniality and interrelated systems of oppression?
Healing from these colonial wounds is facilitated through…
Searching for healing after colonial wounds have been inflicted
- Experiences of alienation and dehumanization before SLP
Healing = Addressing the colonial wounds inflicted on young BIPOC SLP participants (alienation and dehumanization)
"Young people are valuable" aka radical love
- Valuing and validating young people's wholeness and humanity
Interdependence, trust, reliability and accompaniment
- Understanding youth needs and meeting them where they are
Vulnerability and centering feeling
- Allowing space for emotions; space of protection; the bubble
Creating spaces for healing to happen in and through community
- E.g., racial affinity, fishbowl activity, shifts in staff structures to support youth in healing
Healing being facilitated in these ways leads to…
C.C.W. (cultural community wealth)
Sourcing Legacy Supports Drawing on Healing Practices and Promise that is part of Social Movement Organizing and Activism over hundreds of years of BIPOC survival and persistence

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